Chapter 1

Introduction: Social Background of Shaw's Plays and Shaw as a Socialist

George Bernard Shaw, born of Protestant stock on July 26, 1856 in Ireland, grew up in the socio-economic, political and religious conditions that helped him to turn finally into a humanist, a free-thinker, a crusader against all sorts of tyranny, and, above all, a Socialist. "Ireland, at the time of his birth", says St John Ervine "was suffering severely from the effects of the Famine of the Forties, which is still known among country people as the Great Hunger." This was by no means the first or last famine in that country but it had a far different effect on the Irish. "For the first time in their history, they panicked. They had been deprived suddenly of their main supply of food, and the loss had been accompanied by a plague. A man would walk down a street and suddenly collapse and die." Millions left the country in the wake of the great calamity. "The frightened Irish went away in vessels that were soon to be called coffin ships, most of them to America, where many of them died in the Southern swamps."  

2 Ibid., p. 3.  
3 Ibid., p. 4
Side by side went on the ruthless exploitation of the peasants by the Irish landlords which worsened their condition, an echo of which one finds in John Bull's Other Island. "On his walks through Dublin with his nurse the child's aesthetic sense was shocked by the unsightly tenements unfit for human habitation; and the slum dwellers, shabby, slatternly, and debauched appeared to the impressionable child as scarcely to be regarded as fellow creatures."

In the realm of religion the outlook was no less gloomy. Henderson quotes Shaw as saying: "If religion is that which binds men to one another, and irreligion that which sunders, then must I testify that I found the religion of my country in its musical genius and its irreligion in its churches and drawing rooms." 4

"In later life," according to Henderson, "Shaw reached the unalterable conclusion that Ireland, as far as the Protestant gentry are concerned, is the most irreligious country in the world. Just as in England the church people persecuted the Dissenters and the Dissenters for their part hated the Church with the deepest bitterness; so in Ireland the Protestants and Catholics 'despised, insulted, and ostracised one another as a matter of course'." 5

5 Ibid., p. 43
6 Ibid., p. 45.
Again quoting Shaw, the biographer writes: "Protestantism in Ireland is not a religion; it is a side in political faction, a class prejudice, a conviction that Roman Catholics are socially inferior persons, who will go to hell when they die, and leave heaven in the exclusive possession of ladies and gentlemen." It was natural that such happenings would affect the sensitive mind of Shaw who in later life was to be a great free-thinker and the propagator of a new religion called Creative Evolution. Even as a boy he felt that he could not say his prayers without betraying his conscience and so stopped saying them. From his boyhood Shaw regarded himself "as a sceptic outside institutional religion, and therefore one to whom the conventional religious observances were fair game for scoffing." Politically, too, Ireland, having been under the British Rule, was unhappy. Shaw grew into a young man when political discontent among his countrymen was simmering, a discontent which reached its climax in the abortive attempt of Sir Roger Casement, an Ulsterman, to secure the freedom of Ireland by German aid.

In 1876, at the age of 20, Shaw left Townshend’s estate agency in Ireland where he had worked for about five years as an assistant (tax-collector), and joined his mother, who had

8 Ibid., p. 46.
been earning her livelihood as a music teacher, in London. He looked around and found things no better. England looked like a "derelict ship", and Europe a "heartbreak house", a faithful picture of which he drew later in Heartbreak House.

In the preface to Heartbreak House Shaw wrote: "Just as Ibsen's intensely Norwegian plays exactly fitted every middle and professional class suburb in Europe, these intensely Russian plays (Tchekov's Plays staged by the State Society in London) fitted all the country houses in Europe in which the pleasure of music, art, literature and the theatre had supplanted, hunting, shooting, fishing, flirting, eating and drinking. The same nice people, the same utter futility. The nice people could read; some of them could write, and they were the only repositories of culture who had social opportunities of contact with our politicians, administrators and newspaper proprietors, or any chance of sharing, or influencing their activities. But they shrank from that contact. They hated politics. They did not wish to realize Utopia for the common people. They wished to realize their favorite fictions and poems in their own lives, and, when they could, they lived without scruple on incomes which they did nothing to earn. The women in their girlhood made themselves look like variety theatre stars, and settled down later with the types of beauty imagined by the previous generation of painters. They took the only part of our society in which there was leisure for high culture, and made it an
economic, political, and, as far as practicable, a moral vacuum, immediately filled it up with sex and with all sorts of refined pleasures, it was a very delightful place at its best for moments of relaxation. In other moments it was disastrous. 

"The alternative to Heartbreak House was Horseback Hall, consisting of a prison for horses with an annex for the ladies and gentlemen who rode them, hunted them, talked about them, bought them and sold them, and gave nine-tenths of their lives to them, dividing the other tenth between charity, churchgoing (as a substitute for religion), and conservative electioneering (as a substitute for politics)." 

On the other side of the picture were the politicians whose heads were filled with outdated ideas and who did not care to know what was happening in the world around them. Those who dabbled in culture knew nothing of politics and those who dabbled in politics knew nothing of culture. "In short," as Shaw observed, "power and culture were in separate compartments. The barbarians were not only literally in the saddle, but on the front bench in the House of Commons, with nobody to correct their incredible ignorance of modern thought and political science but upstarts from the counting house, who had spent their lives furnishing their pockets instead of

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10 Ibid., p. 379.
their minds.

In the economic sphere things were still worse. Early in the eighties of the 19th century England faced for the first time a terrible economic problem. Unemployment which was hitherto unknown in the country posed a serious threat to its political stability. The unemployed got out of control, grew more and more violent, broke the windows of the rich men's clubs, marched to Trafalgar Square and fought a battle with the police on November 13, 1887, popularly known as Bloody Sunday. This was followed by London docks strike in 1889. Four years later started the Thirteen Weeks' Coal Strike. Keeping this background in mind Shaw's socialist plays are to be studied.

Shaw had already heard Henry George speaking on Land Nationalization and the Single Tax at the Memorial Hall in 1882. Now he came under the influence of Karl Marx after reading his Das Kapital in the British Museum. This was the single greatest force in his life which revolutionized his attitude to society. He felt as if he had found a new religion, a new mission in life. "Until I heard George that night," says Shaw, "I had been chiefly interested, as an atheist, in the


conflict between science and religion. George switched me over to economics. I became very excited over his Progress and Poverty, which I got for six pence, so excited that I brought the subject up at a meeting of Hyndman's Democratic Federation, where I was told that no one was qualified to discuss the question until he had read Karl Marx. Off I went to the British Museum, where I read Das Kapital in Deville's French translation - it had not then been done in English. That was the turning point in my career. Marx was a revelation. His abstract economics, I discovered later, was wrong, but he rent the veil. He opened my eyes to the facts of history and civilization, gave me an entirely fresh conception of the universe, provided me with a purpose and a mission in life. I went back to the Democratic Federation, buring with the new zeal, full of the new gospel, only to find that not a single soul there except Hyndman and myself had read a word of Marx.13

As a free-thinker Shaw could not, however, accept George, or Marx, or, for that matter, any other thinker or 'ism' in toto. Rather he freely modified or corrected them whenever he found them wanting in reasoning, and then only he accepted them. The reason why, even after his conversion to Marx, he joined the Fabian Society in 1884 and not the Socialist League of William Morris, was that, although not opposed to the

revolutionary means, he could not reconcile himself to the idea of planning a revolution on Sunday, accomplishing it on Tuesday, and converting all the First and Third Class coaches into Second class on Thursday.

Now that he had found "a purpose and a mission in life", he needed a medium for its fulfilment. He was fully conscious of his literary talent but he was not sure of the form; hence he had spent five years trying his hand in novel writing before he discovered the right form, suited to his genius, the drama. One obsession with which Shaw appeared on the English Stage in 1890's was to make the world a better place to live in. To him all other considerations were secondary. With the same end in view he made use of the revolutionary political ideas in his dramas, as he was doing work for the Fabian Society, field work for the Labour Party and other fraternal organisations. These are the basic political ideas and ideals which he formulated early in life and which he tried to develop and project in their different forms through all his subsequent dramatic and non-dramatic writing. For Shaw, however, politics was not a thing apart — it was inextricably connected with religion, economics, biology etc.; in fact, with all the different aspects of human life. A study of his political ideas, therefore, involves a study of his general attitude to life and society, for, strictly speaking, Shaw did not write any pure political play, but all his plays are concerned in one form or another with political problems which are the results of the interaction of various social
forces.

Just as *The Unsocial Socialist* has been the first Socialist novel in England, *Widowers' Houses* written in 1892 is the first Socialist play in England, giving a powerful dramatic exposition of the evil of slum landlordism. Not that the play presents a faithful account of the class struggle leading to the overthrow of Capitalism but there is a penetrating insight, for the first time in dramatic form, into the economic cause as determining social relations between the classes. This is what makes it a Socialist play. Happily, both come from G.B.S. who took to writing with the deliberate aim of converting the nation to his own creed. Slum landlordism, like prostitution and war, is a conspicuous offshoot of Capitalism causing inhuman suffering to the bulk of the population but bringing in immense wealth for the few like Sartorius so that they can wallow in pomp and luxury and provide their children with the best of education and a high standard of living. This is what outrages the sensibility of Shaw and his play *Widowers' Houses* is a bold protest against the Capitalist system which results in such socio-economic evils as we see in the life of the working class people figuring in the play. His purpose is to create an awareness in his audience of the economic system prevalent in England, a system which has divided the society into two classes, the rich and the poor. Shaw finds no reason why one class should toil all the time and yet remain poor, starving and suffering, and the other class would do nothing except to indulge in
wasteful luxuries and unhealthy enjoyment. Since he has chosen the theatre for his pulpit, he comes out with a play on the horror of slum landlordism. When a Socialist writes a play, he begins with the economic question, for it is the most vital of all questions and he knows that when it goes wrong, other things in life cannot go right. The task is, however, difficult and more so for one who happens to be a pioneer in the field. This is the reason why Shaw met with strong opposition from the English Theatrical Society which was accustomed to plays devoted to romantic happenings in life. Shaw's purpose, as he himself said, is to say what other people do not say and to mention the unmentionable.

Shaw, like Proudhon and Marx, believes that all property is theft, that it is the result of heartless exploitation of the poor by the rich. But this does not prevent him from his dramatic treatment of the problem. He allows even the devil his share. In Widowers' Houses, Sartorius, the typical English landlord, enjoys as much freedom to justify his deeds and misdeeds as the Devil in Man and Superman. Nevertheless the sympathy of Shaw lies with the tenants who "live like pigs" at No. 13 Robbins's Row owned by Sartorius.

As the play opens, we see Sartorius out on his travels with his daughter Blanche in the fashionable parts of Bonn near the Rhine. Among the tourists is a young Englishman Dr. Harry Trench who has already exchanged talks with Blanche
on board the steamer even before meeting her father. She is a good-looking strong-minded young girl, feeling glad when left alone in the company of Dr. Trench. Sartorius takes keen interest in Dr. Trench when Cokane tells him that he is a nephew of Lady Roxdale, but makes it clear that he will never give his daughter in marriage to a family "in which she will not be received with the full consideration to which her education and her breeding - I say, her breeding - entitle her". (Act I).

As a vestryman (his secondary occupation) Sartorius lives in the parish in Bedford Square but he has a "furnished villa at Surbiton for the summer". He has a liking for the place, because, as Lickcheese his rent collector says, "he likes a low death-rate and a gravel soil for himself, he does. You come down with me to Robbins' Row; and I'll shew you a soil and a death-rate, I will!" (Act II). Sartorius's properties, consisting of "tenement houses, let from week to week by the room or half room: aye, or quarter room" and extending to St. Giles's, Marylebone, Bethnal Green and Robbins's Row yield him a revenue beyond all proportions. He knows the art of squeezing money by calculating the rent "on the cubic foot of space". He always gets "higher rents letting by the room than you can for a mansion in Park Lane". And

15 Ibid., p. 13.
what houses are these? "Houses" as Lickcheese says to Trench, "that you wouldn't hardly look at without holding your nose." Yet Sartorius is not satisfied. He gives Lickcheese, his faithful rent collector, "the sack" for charging "him four-and-twenty shilling to mend a staircase that three women have been hurt on and that would have got him prosecuted for manslaughter if it had been let go much longer,"¹⁶(Act II). The job of a slum landlord's rent collector is by no means easy. No man with a little sense of justice and decency can ever do it without being hurt at heart. Lickcheese himself could not have done it if it hadn't been for the thought of my own children depending on me." He has four children looking to him for their bread. Naturally he feels helpless like every other poor man. Thus he describes his own plight to Dr. Trench— "I've took money there when no other collector alive would have wrung it out ... Look at that bag of money on the table. Hardly a penny of that but there was a hungry child crying for the bread it would have bought. But I got it for him—screwed and worried and bullied it out of them"¹⁷(Act II).

Shaw has little faith in the working of so-called democratic government in Capitalist society. It is a government by the people only in name; in practice it is the landlords and industrialists who exercise the power and always to their

¹⁶Plays, p. 13.
¹⁷Ibid., p. 12.
advantage. Whenever the law of the land comes in conflict with their interest, they flout it without scruples. In Sartorius we see a true specimen of this class of people. When Lickcheese tells him that "the Sanitary Inspector has been complaining again about No.13 Robbins's Row", he peremptorily asks him to write down the name of the man in the diary for the day of the next meeting of the Health Committee, for he "will teach Mr Speakman [Sanitary Inspector] his duty to the members of the vestry." However he has a rebuff when Lickcheese says, "The vestry can't hurt him, sir, he's under the Local Government."

The emotional content of the play, at this stage, with contrasted pictures emerging, one of riches and luxury and the other of poverty and destitution, must have been strong enough to make the audience ask themselves if such a state of affairs is ordained by God or a creation of men. Shaw does not give any answer to it. But should he when the answer is too obvious?

Dr. Trench has got the green signal from his uncle John Harry Trench and aunt Lady Roxdale to go ahead with his marriage proposal but his sense of justice stands outraged when he comes to know of the nature of Sartorius's property. In his words "it is a damnable business from beginning to end." He has seen the sufferings of the poor among the outpatients at the hospital; and it used to make my blood boil
to think that such things couldn't be prevented" (Act II). He protests when Sartorius calls himself a "self-made man", and says that his fortune has been "made out of a parcel of unfortunate creatures that have hardly enough to keep body and soul together - made by screwing, and bullying, and all sorts of pettifogging tyranny" (Act II). So he declines to accept "the seven hundred" which Sartorius would give his daughter as a marriage gift. Blanche in her turn says to Dr. Trench: "Papa will never consent to my being absolutely dependent on you; and I don't like the idea of it myself."

Thus the tussle continues between the two until the revelation that Trench's own "seven hundred" originates from the same source as Sartorius's, from interest at the rate of 7 percent on a mortgage on Sartorius's property. This is too much for the young, sensitive man who thought his hands were clean or that his house was not "a glass one." Now there is nothing to stand in his way and he comes back to Blanche in the final Act. But the interest of this Act lies in the transformation of Lickcheese who has marks of riches about him and has Cokane for his "sekketary". Indeed Shaw has lent another dimension to his picture of the Capitalist system by presenting Lickcheese as a changed man who now knows all the crooked ways of earning money, buying promoters' shares of a company on speculation and so on.

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18 Plays, p. 13.

19 Ibid., p. 17.
Shaw pursues his objective of exposing the injustices of the Capitalist system with another play, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, his third in the chronological chart. Prostitution, like slum landlordism, is an undesirable and painful excrescence of Capitalism which Shaw, inspired by his Socialistic outlook, brings under his dramatic focus not as "feminine concupiscence" but as an economic evil. His angle of vision, his treatment of the problem, his eagerness to make his audience aware of the evils which surround them leave no doubt as to his mission. Shaw still upholds the Fabian method of "permeation, penetration and prevarication" and makes use of it in his plays.

Mrs. Warren represents the class of women who try hard to earn their living by honest work but fail and are compelled to sell their body for subsistence. What is worse is that their helplessness is taken advantage of by the rich people whose carnal desires are as insatiable as their greed for money. This side of the picture finds expression in the life of Sir George Crofts, one of the idle rich for whom Shaw has nothing but contempt. They are the real parasites, harmful pests of society. He has already been intimate to Mrs Warren whom poverty compelled to take to the immoral but easy way of livelihood. Her mother had a struggling life, "She called herself a widow and had a fried-fish shop down by the Mint, and kept herself and four daughters out of it" (Act II). Mrs Warren and Liz were sisters, both "good-looking and well made", and the other two were only half-sisters, *Mrs Warren's Profession in Plays*, p. 75.
undersized, ugly, starved looking, hard working, honest poor creatures. "One of them [Anne Jane] worked in a white lead factory twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week until she died of lead poisoning." The other was married to a Government labourer who, with eighteen shillings a week, kept his room and the three children neat and tidy until he took to drink. Mrs Warren and Liz went to a church school and stayed there until the latter went out one night and never came back. Then started Mrs Warren's struggle for existence. The clergyman got her a situation as scullery maid in a temperance restaurant. Later on she became a waitress and then she went to the bar at Waterloo station; fourteen hours a day serving drinks and washing glasses for four shillings a week and board. About this time suddenly appeared Liz at the bar, dressed in a long fur cloak, elegant and comfortable "with a lot of sovereigns in her purse" and asking for a half of Scotch. Across the bar she whispered to Mrs Warren, pointing out the foolishness of wearing out her health and her appearance for other people's profit. Liz was a first-rate business woman, and she had already got a house for herself in Brussels. She lent Mrs. Warren some money and gave her a start. Thus the partnership between the two sisters in prostitution, in keeping a private hotel, as Sir George Crofts calls it, started but it flourished like other trades when the baronet himself made an investment of £40000 in it, earning an interest at the rate of 35 percent and persuading Mrs Warren to be its Managing Director. Now the business has
a powerful network in Brussels, Vienna, Budapest etc. Indeed here is a realistic presentation of a social evil which, until Shaw wrote his play, almost everybody attributed to feminine depravity. His encounter with a prostitute in a London Street, who apparently mistook him for a good customer and so ran after him until he turned his purse upside down to show that he was penniless, has gone into the making of the play as much as his grasp of Capitalism which renders thousands of young girls economically helpless and compels them to take to prostitution. When Shaw was writing *Mrs Warren's Profession* in 1894, most of the hotels around the three big railway stations in London were brothels. It is this economic system which he has attacked so bitterly in the play and the lesson which he drives home to his audience is that there is no escape from the evil in the ordinary way; for it is as widespread as society itself. What appears to be decent society is at bottom a society dominated by Sir George Crofts and his or his mother's cousins. When Vivie Warren, daughter of Mrs Warren, whose well built body and youth have already aroused the passion of Sir George Crofts, protests against his ways of living, he says: "If you're going to pick and choose your acquaintance on moral principles, you'd better clear out of this country, unless you want to cut yourself out of all decent society." His argument justifying his investment in sex business continues - "Why the devil shouldn't I invest my money that way? I take the interest on my capital like other people: I hope you don't think I dirty my own hands with my work. Come! you wouldn't refuse the
acquaintance of my mother's cousin the Duke of Belgravia because some of the rents he gets are earned in queer ways...

Do you remember your Crofts scholarship at Newnham? Well, that was founded by my brother the M.P. He gets his 22 percent out of a factory with 600 girls in it, and not one of them getting wages enough to live on. How d'ye suppose they manage when they have no family to fall back on? Ask your mother." Yes, her mother Mrs Warren knows from her experience that poor girls are helpless in a society in which landlords, baronets, industrialists, capitalists dictate the terms. They cannot keep their body and soul together with four shillings a week. Mrs Warren asks Vivie: "Where would we be now if we'd minded the clergyman's foolishness? Scrubbing floors for one and six pence a day and nothing to look forward to but the workhouse infirmary." But Vivie is not yet convinced. She argues that her mother, with "saving money and good management", might succeed in any business and so there is little justification for her choosing "that business". Mrs Warren answers: "But where can a woman get the money to save in any other business?" Although she says that "it's far better than any other employment open" to a poor girl, there is no reason to think that she has no scruple in the matter. She dislikes it no less than any other sane person and she feels the injustice of the situation.

"I always thought that oughtn't to be. It can't be right, Vivie, that there shouldn't be better opportunities for women. I

21 Mrs Warren's Profession in Plays, p. 83.
stick to that: it's wrong. But it's so, right or wrong; and a girl must make the best of it. But of course it's not worth while for a lady. If you took to it you'd be a fool; but I should have been a fool if I'd taken to anything else." This is how Shaw takes his audience into the crux of the problem and strongly pleads that the remedy for it is to be sought not in morals but in economics, in ensuring economic freedom of women.

The Censor banned the play on the ground of immorality for many years. No surprise in that, for he could not allow anything that would go against the vested interests. But what about the audience? They took it merely as a protest against prostitution and nothing more. In fact, this is the most powerful of Shaw's plays exposing the evils of Capitalism in England in the last quarter of the 19th century and ruthlessly shattering the Victorian hypocrisy that everything is fair in the country. When a young revolutionary, a Socialist like Shaw, speaks out in dramatic accent, the result is more often than not an unpleasant play. Whether we like it or not is not his concern, he must hold up the mirror to Reality.

Vivie Warren is not only the forerunner of New Woman whom Shaw has popularised in many of his plays, as Ibsen has done in his, but also she is humanity's conscience, looking critically into the affairs and making a commentary on

Mrs Warren's Profession in Plays, p. 77
them. Sir George Crofts, who had had easy access to Mrs Warren in her youth, now feels attracted to her daughter inspite of the suspicion that he himself might be her father. Who else but Shaw can create such a situation to bring out the rottenness in the State of England? The 'unmentionable' has been mentioned. The passion of Sir George Crofts, however, grows irresistible when the Reverend Samuel Gardner seems more probable as father of Vivie. He tempts her with his usual bait, his inherited property, but Vivie is made of different stuff. She has been boiling in rage ever since she saw this "brute whom anyone can see to be the most vicious sort of London man about town". The fear that she may "have the contaminated blood of that brutal waster" in her veins torments her and she feels relieved only when Mrs Warren tells her "on my oath it's not he." Here is Vivie's commentary, which is also the commentary of her creator, on the society that protects him. "When I think of the society that tolerates you, and the laws that protect you! when I think of how helpless nine out of ten young girls would be in the hands of you and my mother! the unmentionable woman and her capitalist bully - "23 (Act III). This inevitably leads to her rejection of her mother Mrs Warren, for she knows no compromise where principle is involved. To trade in sex in a state of helplessness or under the pressing circumstances of poverty is one thing, but to continue the business when one can be

23 Mrs Warren's Profession in Plays, p. 83.
independent of it is a different thing. Thus the rejection of Mrs Warren, however painful, is dramatically sound and if it symbolically means anything, it means Shaw's rejection of the capitalist society.

As part of his Socialist mission Shaw chooses to destroy the illusion and romanticism which have wrapped up both War and Love in the eyes of the people. The unpleasant truth about both is brought out in a pleasant manner in Arms and the Man (1894). Love is brought down from the imaginary world of eternal sunshine to reality and heroism stands exposed as a "coward's art."

Although war is a profitable business of the Capitalists and a periodic necessity of Capitalism to get rid of its economic depression, soldiers die from a sense of patriotism and heroism. They never understand the real game behind the scene. This is the reason why Captain Bluntschli in the person of the fugitive soldier, taking shelter in Raina's bed chamber, says: "Nine soldiers out of ten are born fools". Raina's sense of soldiering is outraged when he says: "What use are cartridges in battle? I always carry chocolate instead." Raina's reaction is natural and everybody else brought up in the conventional manner would react exactly as she does. Her ideal of a heroic soldier is still Sergius Saranoff whose gallant victory in the Cavalry charge against the Serbs as reported has sent her into ecstasy. But the bubble of gallantry does not last; it is pricked by the prosaic fugitive
soldier who, as a professional soldier in the Serbian army, saw the Bulgarian Don Quixote in action. He says to Raina, "Of all the fools ever let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest. He and his regiment simply committed suicide; only the pistol missed fire: that's all." (Act I). Raina, betrothed of Sergius, must have had a terrible shock at this stage but she does not lose faith in her hero as yet. On his return from the battle field the two lovers resume their old game of romantic love, one eulogising the other and both discovering the "higher love" between them. "Dearest," says Sergius, "all my deeds have been yours. You inspired me. I have gone through the war like a knight in a tournament with his lady, looking down at him!" Raina replies: "I trust you, I love you. You will never disappoint me, Sergius." Here is true dramatic irony, for Sergius, the apostle of the higher love, loses all control over himself in a moment. The physical charm of his lady's maidservant Louka arouses his passion beyond control and he seeks "some relief" from her saying that the higher love is a "very fatiguing thing to keep up for any length of time." Thus the dis-illusionment of the romantic lover begins and it ends in his calling Raina names and suspecting her as faithless. To be true to his mission a Socialist has to be an iconoclast. He must knock down all that is sham and false.

24 Arms and the Man in Plays, p. 98.
25 Ibid., p. 105.
On the other side of the picture there is the same disillusionment! Sergius is no longer a soldier. He himself explains it to Catherine thus: "Soldiering, my dear madam, is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak. That is the whole secret of successful fighting. Get your enemy at a disadvantage; and never, on any account, fight him on equal terms." This is how Shaw accomplishes his task as an iconoclast, and when he decides to destroy something, he destroys it mercilessly. This is what may be called Shavian shock therapy at its best.

It is interesting to note that long before the outbreak of the First World War, which, besides killing thousands of men, women and children, caused a "normal pestilence" all over Europe and America and of which Shaw wrote exhaustively in 1919 in his Preface to Heartbreak House, he foresaw the evil. In Sergius's explanation of his own cynicism the readers can have a glimpse of it - "The glimpses I have had of the seamy side of life during the last few months have made me cynical; but I should not have brought my cynicism here: least of all into your presence, Raina." Shaw, however, fires his final shot when he makes the Bulgarian hero cry out: "And how ridiculous! Oh, war! war! the dream of patriots and heroes! A fraud, Bluntschli, A hollow sham, like love." 

26 Arms and the Man in Plays, p. 105.
27 Ibid., p. 118.
This would have been the reaction of other soldiers as well if they had known the truth about war. As Shaw says in the preface to *Heartbreak House*: "It is impossible to estimate what proportion of us, in khaki or out of it, grasped the war and its political antecedents as a whole in the light of any philosophy of history or knowledge of what war is. I doubt whether it was as high as our proportion of higher mathematicians. But there can be no doubt that it was prodigiously outnumbered by the comparatively ignorant and childish. Remember that these people had to be stimulated to make the sacrifices demanded by the war, and that this could not be done by appeals to a knowledge which they did not possess and a comprehension of which they were incapable. When the armistice at last set me free to tell the truth about the war at the following general election, a soldier said to a candidate whom I was supporting - 'If I had known all that in 1914, they would never have got me into khaki', And that, of course, was precisely why it had been necessary to stuff him with a romance that any diplomat would have laughed at."  

No one was more mortified than Shaw to see the moral pestilence which the war was spreading not only in the affected countries like England in which the people had to "hide in cellars and underground railway stations, or lie quaking in bed whilst bombs crashed, houses crumbled, and aircraft guns distributed shrapnel on friend and foe alike' but also

28 Prefaces, p. 384.
in America "where nobody slept the worse for the war*. While there was some justification for it in the case of the former, there was none in the case of the latter. Yet it was in the United States of America" that the war fever went beyond all sense and reason". To quote Shaw, "in European Courts there was vindictive illegality; in American Courts there was raving lunacy."\(^{29}\) The pestilence was by no means confined to the lower stratum of the society; it infected all, the Christian priest, the respectable school governor who expelled "the German professor with insult and bodily violence", declaring that no "English child should ever again be taught the language of Luther and Goethe",\(^{30}\) university Professors, historians, philosophers and men of science who were the accredited "custodians of culture". And it came to end in the "frantic denunciations of German chemistry, German biology, German poetry, German music, German literature, German philosophy, and even German engineering."\(^{31}\)

Shaw could not reconcile himself to it as a Socialist, much less as a dramatist. He wrote two pamphlets, one, entitled Common Sense about the War (1914) during the First World War, and the other Uncommonsense about the War (1939) just before the outbreak of the Second. In the first he contended that England might have avoided getting involved in the war and

\(^{29}\) Prefaces, p. 384.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 385.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 385.
that the English were no less responsible than the Germans for the catastrophe. This naturally enraged his countrymen and even his friends who were suffering from the war fever. They decided to ostracise him and everybody left the club or the party the moment he entered. Some went as far as calling him a quisling. But Shaw the Socialist, dedicated to the noblest cause of mankind, paid no heed to it. He went on to say, "To the truly civilized man, to the good European, the slaughter of the German youth was as disastrous as the slaughter of the English. Fools exulted in 'German losses.' They were our losses as well. Imagine exulting in the death of Beethoven because Bill Sikes dealt him his death blow!"

Arms and the Man, strictly speaking, is not a play on war, for a war play has to show us the motive, the forces working behind it. In this play Shaw has destroyed, inasmuch as it is concerned with war, only the romantic illusion under which soldiers join the war. Many will be curious to know why he has not written a play on war. Shaw's own explanation is: "You cannot make war on war and on your neighbor at the same time. War cannot bear the terrible castigation of comedy, the ruthless light of laughter that glares on the stage. When men are heroically dying for their country, it is not time to show their lovers and wives and fathers and mothers how they are being sacrificed to the blunders of boobies, the

32 Prefaces, p. 387.
cupidity of capitalists, the ambition of conquerors, the
electioneering of demagogues, the Pharisaism of patriots, the
lusts and lies and rancors and bloodthirsts that love war
because it opens their prison doors, and sets them in the
thrones of power and popularity. For unless these things are
mercilessly exposed they will hide under the mantle of the
ideals on the stage just as they do in real life.... That is
why comedy, though sorely tempted, had to be loyally silent;
for the art of the dramatic poet knows no patriotism; recog­
nizes no obligation but truth to natural history; cares not
whether Germany or England perish; ..."\textsuperscript{33} After going through
such a penetrating analysis one can have no doubt about his
Socialist principles.

\textit{Man and Superman} (written in 1901-3) is a philosophical
comedy, "a careful attempt to write a new Book of Genesis
for the Bible of Evolutionists", but its effect, as Shaw
himself says, "was so vertiginous, apparently, that nobody
noticed the new religion in the centre of intellectual whirl­
pool". Equally true it is that few noticed then or have noticed
since the political aspect of the play which is as important
as its other aspects. Once again it shows Shaw's preoccupation
with Socialist thought, his eagerness to make his audience
and readers aware of the necessity of destroying the economic

\textsuperscript{33} Prefaces, p. 399.
system which, above all, results in inequality between man and man, creates class system and hinders the emergence of the Superman.

John Tanner, the hero of the play is a Socialist revolutionary and is the author of The Revolutionist's Hand-book. Roebuck Ramsden who represents conventional morality is very much opposed to him and throws down the book into the waste paper basket in sheer disgust. He cannot stand even the sight of Tanner and feels outraged at the revelation that he has been made a joint guardian of Ann and of her sister Rhoda with this despicable fellow. But what is there in the book that Ramsden will not read it or that the newspapers decry it? Clearly it preaches the gospel of destruction of the system of which Ramsden and the newspaper proprietors are the typical products and who in the name of morality would do everything to ensure its continuance. Hence their hostility to Tanner. But we know it is the awakening of a moral passion in him that makes him a revolutionary and prompts him to write The Revolutionist's Hand-book. He himself explains it to Ann: "All the other passions were in me before; but they were idle and aimless - mere childish greediness and cruelties, curiosities and fancies; habits and superstitions, grotesque and ridiculous to the mature intelligence. When they suddenly began to shine like newly lit flames it was by no light of their own, but by the radiance of the dawning moral passion. That passion dignified them, gave them conscience and meaning,
found them a mob of appetites and organized them into an army of purposes and principles. My soul was born of that passion
(Act I). Ann hopes that he would no longer be the "dreadfully destructive boy" he was when he "broke all the cucumber frames" and "set fire to the common". Tanner protests that he "was only mischievous", not destructive. But now as a grown up man, guided by the moral passion, he is "ten times more destructive" than he was then. "The moral passion has taken my destructiveness in hand and directed it to moral ends. I have become a reformer, and, like all reformers, an iconoclast. I no longer break cucumber frames and burn gorse bushes; I shatter creeds and demolish idols." \(^{35}\)

The spirit of *The Revolutionist's Hand-book* is in harmony with this self-analysis of Tanner and significantly the Handbook begins with a quotation which reads: "No one can contemplate the present condition of the masses of the people without desiring something like a revolution for the better." \(^{36}\) This is an echo of what Shaw wrote in the *Manifesto of the Fabian Society* in 1884, but at that time he was not so sure of the revolution as when he was writing *Man and Superman*. That was the time when he differed from William Morris, founder of the Socialist League, who accepted revolutionary means as the only means to overthrow Capitalism.

\(^{34}\) *Man and Superman in Plays*, p. 346.

\(^{35}\) *Ibid.*, p. 346

\(^{36}\) *Prefaces*, p. 167.
and had no faith in Constitutionalism to which Shaw was still subscribing.

Coming back to Tanner, we find him defining a revolutionist as "one who desires to discard the existing social order and try another". Now, what social order Tanner finds around him? Why, a class-ridden society in which one class has all the money but no appetite, and the other class has all the appetite but no money. Nothing can be more unnatural or more immoral than such a state of affairs. Above all, as Tanner says, good breeding is impossible in a society which does not provide for Equality. "Equality is essential to good breeding, and equality, as all economists know, is incompatible with property."^{37} The implication is too obvious; a nation bent on committing suicide alone can ignore such a vital necessity for its bright and healthy future. Tanner differs from other revolutionists in that his vision goes far beyond the present; he is as much concerned with the future of the human race as with its present. Within the existing set up, he argues, mankind cannot do much, can never attain real progress. So long as Property persists, classes also persist which means limiting the choice of individuals in breeding to their respective classes. Natural selection, the basis of sound breeding, cannot be practised under the Property system, for a countess cannot marry a navvy nor a duke can marry a charwoman, although in both cases the

attraction is very great. In other words, property is a positive hindrance to the birth of the Superman. Naturally, the Shavian hero advocates the abolition of Property not only for economic justice but for eugenic reasons also. Another revolutionary suggestion that comes from Tanner is the dissociation of conjugation from Marriage. Now it is not difficult to understand why Tanner's views affect the sentiment, the morality of Ramsden and his class.

Shaw's art, by his own profession, is didactic; for the sake of art alone he would not face the toil of writing even a single sentence, let alone a complete play. The Revolutionary's Handbook supplied as an Appendix to Man and Superman is part of this didactic art. True, the audience misses the Handbook on the stage, but those who want to have a correct understanding of Tanner the Socialist can't help reading it.

Since the beginning of his literary career, first, as a novelist, then as a Fabian essayist and finally, as a dramatist, political ideas have played a dominant role in his writings. As we pass on from Man and Superman to Back to Methuselah through John Bull's Other Island, Major Barbara and Heartbreak House, we find how his socialist ideas influence them as they have inspired his earlier plays.

To a Socialist of Shaw's stature, Patriotism is of little significance. Although John Bull's Other Island was written in 1904 at the request of William Butler Yeats as a
patriotic contribution to the repertory of the Irish Literary Theatre, it is no wonder that one does not find any partisan or insular attitude (which often accompanies Patriotism) in the play. He brought out as dispassionately the agony of Ireland as a nation under the British Rule as he focussed her faults and foibles. This was the country which millions had left and never wanted to come back to. The tyranny of the landlords, the domination of the Protestants over the Catholics, made life unbearable to the masses of the people.

"Matthew Haffigan and his brother Andy made a farm out of a patch of stones on the hillside: cleared it and dug it with their own naked hands and bought their first spade out of their first crop of potatoes. Talk of making two blades of wheat grow where one grew before! those two men made a whole field of wheat grow where not even a furze bush had ever got its head up between the stones...What good was it to them? The moment they'd done it, the landlords put a rent of £5 a year on them, and turned them out because they couldn't pay it" 38 (Act III). This was the lot of the Irish farmers. Towards the end of the play we are told that Haffigan came to own a few fields but it was not enough to keep his body and soul together without mortgaging them, a possibility of which Tom Broadbent, a Liberal representative of England, had no doubt and on which he would depend for the success of his

38 John Bull's Other Island in Plays, p. 426.
ambitious project. He came to Ireland "to develop an estate
there for the Land Development Syndicate" in which he was
interested. But presently his sense of duty as an Englishman
towards Ireland prompted him to seek election to British
Parliament from the Irish Constituency. His head was full of
Liberal plans and ideas without which, he believed, the fate
of Ireland could never improve. For example, his plans
included the disestablishment of the Irish Church, the esta-
blishment of "public institutions: a library, a polytechnic,
a gymnasium, a cricket club, perhaps an art school" (Act IV),
and also the making of golf links, the building of hotels, the
raising of wages by bringing money from England. English
"business habits" and "efficiency", he argued, would simply
do miracles. Pitted against him was Larry Doyle, his friend
and colleague but a Tory, an Anglicised Irishman as Father
Keegan would call him. There was no basic difference between
them in their economic programme. He differed from Broadbent
in one respect; he was against the disestablishment of the
Irish Church. Both agreed that men like Haffigan are good for
nothing; they must be thrown out of employment, after their
mortgages had been foreclosed, on the ground that it would
not pay "to take on men over forty even for unskilled labor".
By drudging over his clods and pigs, they remarked,
Haffigan himself became a clod and a pig. Father Keegan, who

39 John Bull's Other Island in Plays, p. 440.
resembles Shaw in his philanthropic fervour and who has an insight into the soul of Ireland, laughed at the silly ideas of Larry Doyle and Tom Broadbent, representative of "Anglicised Irishman and Gladstonized Englishman", and posing as the saviour of the country which was groaning under the yoke of the English Rule. In his eyes Ireland appeared as hell, as he stood on a rock near the Round Tower at sunset. When the Grasshopper shrieked thrice before him, he felt as if it were raising three cheers for old Ireland so that it might help it to face out the misery and the poverty and the torment. The lives of Patsy Farrell and Matthew Haffigan, apart from the millions who had deserted Ireland, because "it is a hungry land, a naked land, an ignorant and oppressed land" bore testimony to this painful truth. Keegan had no illusion about "English business habits and efficiency." He knew it well how Broadbent and Larry would efficiently build the hotel in Ireland, how their English business habits would "secure the thorough efficiency of the liquidation", how they would "reorganize the scheme efficiently" and again how they would "liquidate its second bankruptcy efficiently", how they would get rid of its "original shareholders efficiently after efficiently ruining them"; how they would "finally profit very efficiently by getting that hotel for a few shillings in the pound". "For four wicked centuries the world

has dreamed this foolish dream of efficiency; and the end is not yet. But the end will come"⁴¹ observed Keegan (Act IV). He was convinced that even if, as Broadbent proudly said, the idlers would bring "money from England to Ireland", her plight would not end. Irish idlers had taken money for so many generations from Ireland to England but "has that saved England from poverty and degradation more horrible than we have ever dreamed of?"⁴² asked Keegan (Act IV). These arguments one would expect to hear from Shaw the Socialist as well.

The weakness of Broadbent, as Keegan said, was that he spent his life "inefficiently admiring the thoughts of great men and efficiently serving the cupidity of base money hunters."⁴³ Such men and their party can have no remedy for the diseases from which Ireland was suffering - the disease of "injustice and starvation".

Speaking of the Irish folly, Shaw wrote, "Ireland has been deliberately ruined again and again by England. Unable to compete with us industrially, she has destroyed our industries by the brute force of prohibitive taxation. She was perfectly right. That brute force was a more honorable weapon than the poverty which we used to undersell her."⁴⁴ In

⁴³ Ibid., p. 451
⁴⁴ Prefaces, p. 458.
the play itself he made Larry Doyle say, "... it was by using Patsy's poverty to undersell England in the markets of the world that we drove England to ruin Ireland. And she'll ruin us again the moment we lift our heads from the dust if we trade in cheap labor; and serve us right too!"\(^45\) (Act III). 

Shaw's hatred of poverty was greater than his patriotism. He was more a lover of the world than of Ireland or England, and would not tolerate poverty in any form and in any country. In fact, he became a Socialist when he asked himself why some are rich and some poor.

Writing in 1904, he hoped "when Home Rule is at last achieved, one of our first legislative acts will be to fortify the subsistence of our people behind the bulwark of a standard wage, and to impose crushing import duties on every English trade that flourishes in the slum and fattens on the starvation of our unfortunate English neighbours."\(^46\) As a Socialist he wanted to see every man well fed, every country well developed with no artificial barrier between man and man.

Another important feature of the play is that while writing a play on Ireland and its problems Shaw once again gave his audience a glimpse of the miserable condition of the poor people in England, its implication being that "English efficiency" was no remedy for the economic malady in John

\(^{45}\) *Plays*, p. 430

\(^{46}\) *Prefaces*, p. 459
Bull's Other Island, for it failed to solve the problems in his own land. Going a step further, one might say that Shaw had no faith in the Tory or in the Liberal way of life. Hodson, the valet of Broadbent, accompanied his master to Ireland. When he heard Matthew Haffigan murmuring about the injustice to him, he felt provoked to deliver a short lecture in cockney by way of comparison. "You talk of your rotten little fawm cause you mide it by slack in a few stonns dahn a ill! Well, wot price maw granfawther, Oi should lawk to knaw, that fitted ap a fust clawss shop and bult ap a fust clawss dripery business in Landon by sixty years work, and then was chacked sht of it on is ed at the end of is lease withaht a penny for his goodwill. You talk of eviction! you that cawnt be moved until your ran ap eighteen months rent. Oi once ran ap four weeks in Lembeth wen oi was aht of a job in winter. They took the door off its inges and the winder aht of its seshes on me, an gev mew wawf pneumownia. oi'm a widower nah" 47 (Act III). Hodson's wife caught pneumonia and died when the landlord's men took the door out of its hinges and the window out of its sashes in winter. Once again Shaw's didactic art reveals in a flash the world of hypocrisy just as Karl Marx tore off its mask in Das Kapital years ago.

At the turn of the century the Movement for Home Rule in Ireland was gaining momentum both inside and outside

47 Plays, p. 435.
British Parliament. Shaw strongly advocated the Irish cause by arguing that Ireland had as much right to self-government as England and that it is a natural right of every nation. He did not agree with the English Universities which denied the existence of natural rights on the ground that they could not be deduced "from the principles of any known political system." "If they could," argued Shaw, "they would not be natural rights but acquired ones. Acquired rights are deduced from political constitutions; but political constitutions are deduced from natural rights." With the formation of the Irish Free State in 1921, the political aspect of the play has lost its significance, no doubt, but, in other respects, it will continue to appeal to the reformers and revolutionists who believe that the sufferings of the toiling masses end not with the transfer of power from one ruling party of landlords and capitalists to another but with the change in the economic system which makes farmers the real owners of the land and workers the real masters of the trade.

Major Barbara written in 1905 is, from the point of view of a Socialist, the greatest of Shaw's plays. By that time Shaw became disillusioned of Fabianism which he had embraced in 1884 and grew more and more revolutionary in his political beliefs. The influence of Marx is clearer and more marked in this play than in any other play of his. For the first time

48 Prefaces, p. 458.
in his dramatic career he justified "killing" as a means for the realisation of social objectives, the abolition of "poverty and slavery". Those who undermine Shaw as a Utopian Socialist would find enough food in Major Barbara for a rethinking on the subject. His biographers including A. Henderson and St John Ervine suggest that Shaw took a turn to the Left, became a Communist, only after his visit to Russia in 1931. It is difficult to accept such a contention in the context of this play. The truth is that he was a Revolutionary in spirit from the beginning and its manifestation in his creative work, the primary force behind Major Barbara, came 12 years before the October Revolution and 26 years before his visit to Russia. As in the case of Man and Superman, the readers missed the new religion in the intellectual whirlpool, here also they have missed the new dimension of Shaw's politics in the excitement of the Salvation Army Shelter at West Ham in which Adolphus Cusins, a professor of Greek, now attracted to Barbara, appears with the drum.

The whole of the second Act in the play is a magnificent piece of Shaw's dramatic art, as realistic in its presentation of the victim of Capitalist economy as in its exposure of the weakness of the Salvation Army which secures salvation for Snobby Price, Peter Shirley and Rummy Mitchens by holding a scrap of bread and treacle in one hand and the Bible in the other. Price is a young workman, "a real painter" but now out of employment, the reason being that he is "intelligent
beyond the station of life into which it has pleased the Capitalists to call him; "and they don't like a man that sees through em" (Act II). Secondly, as an intelligent being he needs a due share of happiness; so he drinks something cruel when he gets the chance. Thirdly, he stands by his class and does as little as he can so as to leave half the job for his fellow creatures and he suffers no scruple for it, for he, while in Rome, does as the Romans do. Fourthly, he is clever enough to know what is "inside the law" and what is "outside it", and inside it he does "as the capitalists do": pinch what he can lay his hands on. And what is the consequence of it? When trade is bad, as it is "rotten bad" now, the employers have to sack half their men and he becomes the first victim. Hence his enlistment in the Salvation Army register!

Rummy Mitchens, a "respectable married woman", as Price calls her, is the second recruit, "getting rescued by the Salvation Army by pretending to be a bad one. It is the "same old game." But she is helpless; she can't do anything else. "What am I to do? I can't starve" (Act II). Thus the fear of starvation compels these people to make false confessions, some of which are so sensational that the assembly of onlookers

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49 Plays, p. 470
50 Ibid., p. 471.
begin to make generous contribution to the Salvation Army collection box, as in the case of Price's confession in Cripps's lane. Barbara says, "Oh Snobby, if you had given your poor mother just one more kick, we should have got the whole five shillings!"\(^{51}\) (Act II). Now they are short of just two pence. Whatever it may be, Snobby's soul is saved. However, one does not take much time to see the anti-climax of the situation. At about half past twelve in the morning he was saved but he "pinched Bill's sovereign, lying on the table in the Salvation Army shelter, 'at a quarter to two."

The plight of Peter Shirley, an honest worker but thrown out of employment on the pretext that his hair has turned grey, is as great as that of the other two. He, too, is a starving man. The question he raises is linked with the main problem of the play, the problem of Poverty and it cannot be solved by the existing economic system. Here comes Andrew Undershaft, a born crusader against Poverty and Slavery. Shaw brings out the hopelessness, the rottenness of Capitalist economy when he makes Shirley say: "I'm not an old man. I'm ony 46. I'm as good as ever I was. The grey patch come in my hair before I was thirty. All it wants is three pennorth o hair dye: am I to be turned on the streets to starve for it? Holy God! I've worked ten to twelve hours a day since I was thirteen, and paid my way all through; and now am I to be thrown into the gutter and

\(^{51}\) Plays, p. 471.
my job given to a young man that can do it no better than me because I've black hair that goes white at the first change?" (Act II). On hearing this Price replies: "Make the thievin' swine give you a meal: they've stole many a one from you. Get a bit o your own back." Undershaft does not believe in it, for, in essence, it means 'What a thief stole steal thou from the thief.' In his scheme of things there should be no thieves. The system which breeds thieves and other pests should be discarded outright.

In the person of Andrew Undershaft, father of Barbara and a manufacturer of arms and ammunitions, Shaw presents not only a man of vigorous industry, exceptional business capacity, tremendous organisational power but also a socially conscious man, eager to help the children of the common people "to climb up" beside him, Barbara and Cusins. But his ways, like those of his creator, are unconventional. For example, while others make a virtue of Poverty and Suffering, abhor ill-gotten money from the sale of gunpowder and aerial battleships, he denounces the first and defends the second. He asks Cusins, "Have you ever been in love with Poverty, like St Francis? Have you ever been in love with Dirt, like St Simeon? Have you ever been in love with disease and suffering, like our nurses and philanthropist?" and says, "Such passions are not virtues,

52 Plays, p. 472.

53 Prefaces p. 350
but the most unnatural of all the vices" (Act II). He has a religion and his religion is that he is "a Millionaire". That is how he answers his daughter Barbara when she asks him about his religion. Again, the two things necessary to Salvation, according to him, are "money and gunpowder."

"Is there any place in your religion for honor, justice, truth, love, mercy and so forth?" asks Cusins. He replies: "Yes: they are the graces and luxuries of a rich, strong and safe life." The new Salvationist pursues the point further by asking: "Suppose one is forced to choose between them and money or gunpowder?" From Undershft comes the clear, forceful reply: "Choose money and gunpowder; for without enough of both you cannot afford the others." He characterises the two things as "command of life and command of death."

This naturally shocks Cusins and Barbara and outrages their moral and religious sense. But the Prince of Darkness, as Cusins calls him, does not stop there. He directs his onslaught on the Salvation Army, the "church of the poor" itself. "All religious organizations exist by selling themselves to the rich," says Undershft, and that he "can buy the Salvation

54 Plays, p. 480
55 Ibid., p. 478.
56 Ibid., p. 478.
57 Ibid., p. 479.
Army. When Cusins says that he does not quite know what "the Army does for the poor" but he knows that it makes them "sober", "honest", "happy" and "unselfish" workmen, Undershaw retorts: he prefers sober workmen, because the "profits are larger"; honest workmen, because they are the "most economical"; happy workmen, because they are "an invaluable safeguard against revolution", unselfish workmen, because they have "their thoughts on heavenly things" and "not an Trade Unionism nor Socialism". Could Shaw ever sympathise with the Salvation Army in the face of it all? Those who consider Major Barbara a tribute to the Salvation Army would do well to reconsider their view.

Real conflict in the play starts when Undershaw proposes to contribute "the millionaire's mite" to the Salvation Army and his daughter Barbara refuses it on the ground that "there is blood on your hands; and nothing but good blood can cleanse them." However, this happens at a time when the Salvation Army is facing a great financial crisis. Barbara says, "The starvation this winter is beating us: everybody is unemployed. The General says we must close this shelter if we can't get more money." And a little later, 'I can't talk religion to a man with bodily hunger in his eyes.'

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56 Plays, p. 480
59 Ibid., p. 480
60 Ibid., p. 481.
Then, naturally, comes out Mrs Baines pleading with Under shaft to persuade his "rich friends" to make donation of £5000 as a fulfilment of the condition on which Lord Saxmundham, manufacturer of Bodger's Whisky, promised to donate the other £5000. She reminds him how in 1886 the "rich gentlemen hardened" their hearts "against the cry of the poor" (an echo of the real happening) and how the poor "broke the windows" of their "clubs in Pall Mall." Undershaft remembers it quite well and remarks: "And the Mansion House Fund went up next day from thirty thousand pounds to seventynine thousand!" She also wants him to appreciate the service done by the Salvation Army to the rich. "You see," says Mrs Baines, "how we take the anger and the bitterness against you out of their hearts, Mr Undershaft." "It is certainly most convenient and gratifying to all large employers of labor, Mrs Baines," comes the appreciation. Finally he agrees to donate £5000 to the Salvation Army fund. Mrs Baines feels happy, believing that her prayers have been answered favourably by Heaven! But Major Barbara cannot reconcile herself to such an outrageous act, the donation from a manufacturer of "death and destruction." She silently withdraws from the Salvation Army with tears in her eyes.

61 Plays, p. 481.
62 Ibid., p. 483.
The conversion of Barbara and Cusins to Undershaft's creed of "money and gunpowder" is the most important fact about the play. Barbara asks her father if poverty is a crime. This sends the crusader of poverty into a reasoned outburst:

"The worst of crimes. All the other crimes are virtues beside it: all the other dishonors are chivalry itself by comparison. Poverty blights whole cities; spreads horrible pestilence; strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound, or smell of it. What you call crime is nothing: a murder here and a theft there, a blow now and a curse then; what do they matter? they are only the accidents and illnesses of life: there are not fifty genuine professional criminals in London. But there are millions of poor people, abject people, dirty people, ill fed, ill clothed people. They poison us morally and physically: they kill the happiness of society: they force us to do away with our own liberties and to organize unnatural cruelties for fear they should rise against us and drag us down into their abyss" (Act III).

And how to abolish poverty and slavery? Poverty and slavery have stood up for centuries to your sermons and leading articles: they will not stand up to my machine guns. Don't preach at them: don't reason with them. Kill them." At this stage one feels Shaw is dramatising Marx. Anyway this is the gospel of Andraw Undershaft in the play. His daughter Barbara

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63 Plays, p. 483.
64 Ibid., p. 498.
does not, however, accept it. Killing as a means seems too immoral, however lofty the objective might be, to her. "Is that your remedy for everything?" asks Barbara. Undershaft replies: "It is the final test of conviction, the only lever strong enough to overturn a social system, the only way of saying Must." He has little faith in vote. "When you vote, you only change the names of the cabinet. When you shoot, you pull down governments, inaugurate new epochs, abolish old orders and set up new." Indeed, Undershaft is an inspired revolutionary and in these words he overwhelms his antagonists Barbara and Cusins. After the October Revolution Henderson made taunting remarks to Shaw to which he replied, "Logic is futile in face of the accomplished fact and monumental triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution. You might as well argue with an earthquake." In the same way Undershaft's daughter and his future son-in-law find it difficult to argue farther with him. They are simply amazed at his achievements, at the township he has built up around his Arsenal where hundreds of workers work and live in the midst of amenities, physical and cultural, of discipline, cleanliness and respectability and where "they find their own dreams" and he looks after the drainage. 

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65 *Plays*, p. 499.
66 Ibid., p. 499.
68 *Plays*, p. 498.
(Act III). "It is cheap work* says Undershaft, "converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other. I will undertake to convert West Ham to Mahometanism on the same terms". He challenges his daughter to try her hand on his men: "their minds are hungry because their bodies are full."

Lady Britomart, wife of Undershaft, and Stephen his son, who decried him at the beginning, stand flabbergasted at the sheer beauty and resources of his estate where they find, besides economic prosperity, the "nursing home", "libraries and schools", "the ball room", "the banqueting chamber", "the pension fund", "the insurance fund", the building society, "two chapels and a William Morris Labor Church". Under no circumstances will Lady Britomart agree to part with such a wonderful estate. She wants Cusins to be Undershaft's legal successor. The professor of Greek is as much a lover of the common people as Barbara. Undershaft, too, by his own profession, is a lover of the common people. And this is the common factor between them. Cusins has "tried to make spiritual power by teaching Greek. But the world can never be touched by a dead language and a dead civilization. The people must have power; and the people cannot have Greek. Now the power that is made here [the

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69 Plays, p. 498.
"Foundry" can be wielded by all men (Act III). So long, as a teacher of Greek, he "gave the intellectual man weapons against the common man". "I now want to give the common man weapons against the intellectual man. I love the common people. I want to arm them against the lawyers, the doctors, the priests, the literary men, the professors, the artists, and the politicians, who, once in authority, are more disastrous and tyrannical than all the fools, rascals, and impostors. I want a power simple enough for common men to use, yet strong enough to force the intellectual oligarchy to use its genius for the general good (Act III). His conversion is complete; but Barbara? She argues how "power to burn women's houses down and kill their sons and tear their husbands to pieces" can be any good. Cusins has to convince her by pointing out that "you cannot have power for good without having power for evil too. Even mother's milk nourishes murderers as well as heroes. This power which only tears men's bodies to pieces has never been so horribly abused as the intellectual power, the imaginative power, the poetic, religious power that can enslave man's souls." She poses still a bigger question — "Is there no higher power than that?" "Yes," replies Cusins, "but that power can destroy the higher powers just as a tiger can destroy a man:

70 Plays, p. 502.
71 Ibid., p 502.
therefore Man must master that power first" (Act III).
Slowly Barbara yields as the realisation dawns on her that "turning our backs on Bodger and Undershaft is turning our backs on life" and that "there is no wicked side : life is all one." Finally she tells her Dolly that she would have given him up if he had refused her papa's offer. Indeed Shaw reveals himself as a greater revolutionary in his plays than in his prose writings.

Since the beginning of his dramatic career with Widowers' Houses in 1892 Shaw attacked Capitalism, the greatest demon of the modern world, again and again but never before he became so impetuous, so impatient of the capitalist system as when he undertook to write Heartbreak House (1913), a play over which many stumbled and of the significance of which he himself cryptically replied : "How should I know? I am only the author."73 This is one of the most powerful, most moving of Shaw's plays, the heartbreak house being a symbolic representation of England (also of Europe) steeped in moral bankruptcy and economic helplessness. The hope with which he joined the Fabian Society in 1884, popularising Socialism through pamphlets, public speeches, and the labour he had been doing since then for the formation of the Independent Labour

72 Plays, p. 502

Party seemed to have gone in vain. Although the Labour Party came into existence in 1893, the conditions of the working class population were fast deteriorating. At the turn of the twentieth century trade depression, falling real wages presented a gloomy outlook on the national scene. From Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London* and Seebohm Rowntree's *Poverty, A Study of Town Life* came out disconcerting statistics. "One in three or four of the urban population was living in poverty." 74 "During the hot summer of 1911 one strike followed another, seamen, dockers, railwaymen and others. Never before had all the railways been stopped. Alarmists asked if this was the beginning of the syndicalist revolution. There was some violence and loss of life and much more was feared." 75 The curse of Capitalism manifested itself more crushingly in the life of the teeming millions as the price index rose higher and higher. "During the Edwardian period cost of living had risen steadily, 14 per cent in seven years according to a 1913 Board of Trade Survey. But meanwhile capitalists had grown ostentatious in their wealth." 76

The political aspect of *Heartbreak House* can be appreciated better if we bear in mind the above background and also

75 Ibid., p. 31.
76 Ibid., p. 31.
the fact that Shaw resigned his membership (from) the Executive Committee of the Fabian Society about this time (1911). Undoubtedly there was a great change in his thinking about the working of the Fabian Society and the efficacy of its constitutional method. In 1884, when Shaw joined the Fabian Society, he believed the objective of Socialism could be better realised and more certainly on the principle of "gradualness" rather than by the catastrophic method. But now from the conditions prevailing in England he felt that without the destruction of the Capitalist system there could be no real progress in society. The problem of poverty, of unemployment, which Capitalism creates, cannot be solved by legislative measures like the dole system, redistributive taxation, regulation of wages and factories. In the eye of Shaw redistributive taxation is based on a policy of "what a thief stole steal thou from the thief", the dole encourages idleness and regulation of wages and factories does not help the unemployed.

In Heartbreak House we come across a bloated capitalist, Boss Mangan, aged about 50, having an income of $50,000 a year, eager to marry Ellie, teen-aged daughter of Mazzini whom he had helped with money to start a business but whom he ruined "on purpose". He is frank enough to confess to Ellie: "Not out of ill-nature, you know. And you'll admit that I kept a job for him when I had finished with him. But business is business and I ruined him as a matter of
business" (Act II). He has ruined many others also. His success, in fact, has been on the ruin of others. He entered into a business when three or four others had tried it but failed. He is a typical business magnate known as entrepreneur in Capitalism. Does he own factories? "They belong to syndicates and shareholders and all sorts of lazy good-for-nothing capitalists. I get money from such people to start the factories. I find people like Miss Dunn's father to work them and keep a tight hand so as to make them pay. Of course, I make them keep me going pretty well..." (Act III).

"As a practical business man", to quote his own words, he has been asked by "the Prime Minister of this country" to join "the Government without even going through the nonsense of an election, as the dictator of a great public department." The three ladies who "have been playing cat and mouse all the evening" with him in the house of Captain Shotover are greatly amused at his words. They know what a duffer he is. So Lady Utterwood infers that he "must have given an immense sum to the party funds." Mangan replies: "Not a penny out of my own pocket. The syndicate found the money: they knew how useful I should be to them in the

77 Plays, p. 776.
78 Ibid., p. 796.
79 Ibid., p. 796.
Government. And his achievements so far have been to put a stop to the games of the other fellows in the other departments. Every man of them thought he was going to save the country all by himself, and do me out of the credit and out of my chance of a title. I took good care that if they wouldnt let me do it they shouldnt do it themselves either. I may not know anything about my own machinery; but I know how to stick a ramrod into the other fellow's. And now they all look the biggest fools going. On hearing this can any same man keep up patience? Will not he react as Hector does in the play - "Is this England or is it a madhouse?" Yet it is the Mangans who wield "powers of life and death" over the multitude. Captain Shotover, who resembles his creator in some respects, is thoroughly disgusted with this class. When Hector asks him, "What is the dynamite for?", he replies "to kill fellows like Mangan" (Act I). He cannot endure the present state of affairs longer. The suffering of stifled humanity finds expression when he asks, "Are we to be kept for ever in the mud by these hogs to whom the universe is nothing but a machine for greasing their bristles and filling their snouts?" (Act I). He is convinced that

80 Plays, p. 796
81 Ibid., p. 796
82 Ibid., p. 796
83 Ibid., p. 773
84 Ibid., p. 773
there is enmity between our seed and their seed. They know it and act on it, strangling our souls. They believe in themselves. When we believe in ourselves we shall kill them.\(^85\)

On the assumption that the play was finished before the Russian Revolution, as Shaw himself says, he had to withhold it from the footlights during the war. Captain Shotover's words proved prophetic. Within a short time the world saw the killing of the Mangans and their cousins in the October Revolution and the establishment of Socialism. In the play itself when "the Judgment" comes in the shape of explosions from the sky, it is Mangan and the burglar or "the two burglars" hiding in the gravel pit that are destroyed. The dramatic significance of the incident seems to have escaped notice. Those who emphasise Shaw's preoccupation with Constitutionalism to show that he can never be anything but a Fabian would do well to look at the play once again.

Since 1884 when Shaw joined the Fabian Society and dominated its proceedings on policy matters he had been wavering between the Marxian principles of Socialism and those of the Fabians until 1905, the year of his writing Major Barbara.\(^6\) The Fabian Manifesto, Tract No.2, published in 1884, which Archibald Henderson has quoted in full for its "characteristically Shavian quality" testifies to Shaw's revolutionary spirit. Here is an extract from the Tract:

\(^{85}\) Plays, p. 773
"That it is the duty of each member of the State to provide for his or her wants by his or her own Labour.

That a life-interest in the Land and Capital of the nation is the birth-right of every individual born within its confines; and that access to this birth-right should not depend upon the will of any private person other than the person seeking it.

That the most striking result of our present system of farming out the national Land and Capital to private individuals has been the division of Society into hostile classes, with large appetites and no dinners at one extreme, and large dinners and no appetites at the other.

That the pretensions of Capitalism to encourage Invention and to distribute its benefits in the fairest way attainable, have been discredited by the experience of the nineteenth century.

That we had rather face a Civil War than such another century of suffering as the present one has been."

Shaw's method, so far as political aspect of his plays is concerned, has been, first, to focus dramatically the horror of Capitalism with its attendant evils such as slum landlordism, prostitution, war, in Widowers' Houses, Mrs

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Warren's Profession, Arms and the Man, then, to justify its destruction in Man and Superman and Major Barbara and, finally, to show its destruction symbolically in Heartbreak House.

In the Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas, second part of his pentateuch Back to Methuselah, written during the period 1918-1920, Shaw advocates Socialism for the first time in his plays as the panacea not only for economic malady but also for all sorts of evils he has so vigorously attacked since the beginning of his literary career. In a word, to organize Socialism is to organize civilized life. When he wrote Heartbreak House, not a shot was heard in Europe. But Back to Methuselah was written when the painful memory of the First World War was vivid in Shaw's mind, a war which left millions dead in Europe and destroyed human civilization beyond measure. The tragedy provoked him so much that, even while writing a play on the Creative Evolution, he brought into it the two living ex-Prime Ministers of Britain in the persons of Lubin and Burge to show once again the hollowness, the unscrupulous­ness of Liberal and Tory politics. He strongly felt that when persons, not qualified for public administration or government work, are at the helm of affairs, such disasters at the national and international spheres can not be averted. In a post-Marxian World and in a world of sophisticated weapons, Burge and Lubin, the two leaders of British politics, with their intellectual bankruptcy and lack of principles looked like round pegs in square holes.
Franklyn Barnabas, an ex-churchman, and Dr. Conrad Barnabas, a Professor of Biology, are the two brothers who have formulated a gospel known as the Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas. Franklyn finds that both religion and science should no longer be dry subjects, as they have been in the hands of their predecessors, and that both should be interesting and related to life. He says to Conrad, "Brother; if that is so; if biology as you have worked at it, and religion as I have worked at it, are dry subjects like the old stuff taught under these names, and we two are dry old codgers, like the old preachers and professors, then the Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas is a delusion. Unless this withered thing religion, and this dry thing science, have come alive in our hands, alive and intensely interesting, we may just as well go out and dig the garden until it is time to dig our graves."  

As the two brothers discuss the means by which they can see how the world will take their new gospel, Joyce Burge, who headed a Coalition Government but was chucked out of it by what he calls "a Tory conspiracy", comes in seeking Franklyn's support for the ensuing Parliamentary election. Franklyn has no faith in him; he frankly tells his brother: "These chaps never believe anything they say themselves; and naturally they cannot believe anything anyone else says." However, he agrees to let Burge meet him. But Conrad proposes to withdraw...
saying: "It was hard enough to stand the party politicians before the war; but now that they have managed to half kill Europe between them, I can't be civil to them, and I don't see why I should be." He gives in only when his brother remarks: "Party politicians are still unfortunately an important part of the world." Thus Burge happens to be the first person on whom the Barnabas brothers try their gospel. Their support to him in the election also depends on his reaction to it. So they begin the discussion in his own terms i.e. political terms. Franklyn says that neither he nor anyone else knows what his beliefs are, or even whether he has either belief or principles. "What we did know was that your Government was formed largely of men who regarded you as a robber of henroosts, and whom you regarded as enemies of the people." Even if he has principles, he has no programme, and when he has a programme, he has no principles. For example, as Franklyn observes, "When the terrible impact of real warfare swept your parliamentary sham warfare into the dustbin, you had to go behind the backs of your followers and make a secret agreement with the leaders of the opposition to keep you in power on condition that you dropped all legislation of which they did not approve. And you could not even hold them to their bargain; for they presently betrayed the secret and


89 Ibid. p. 873.

90 Ibid., p. 875.
forced the coalition on you." Burge, however, tries to defend himself by saying: "The Hun was at the gate. Our country, our lives, the honour of our wives and mothers and daughters, the tender flesh of our innocent babes were at stake. Was that a time to argue about principles?" Franklyn's last weapon in the form of a question puts him to silence: "Do you think the Hun would ever have come to the gate if he had known that it would be shut in his face on principles?"

At this moment comes in Lubin whom Burge calls a Tory, who is "as lazy as a cat on a hearth rug", whom you can't get "to attend to anything", who is "good for nothing but getting up and making speeches, with a peroration that goes down with the back benches." His ten years of rule ended, as his rival points out, "in plague, pestilence, and famine; battle, murder, and sudden death." During the war, as he himself says, "there have been Sundays within the last few years on which I have had to play as many as sixty-six games of bridge to keep my mind off the news from the front." What a Prime Minister! What a statesman! There may be a little exaggeration of Shavian satire in the portrayal of the two British Party Leaders, but the truth is kept up all through. Lubin's


92 Ibid., p. 875

93 Plays, p. 875.

94 Plays, p. 875.
muddled thinking, his shallow understanding, his compromising tendency in matters of principle are amply suggested in the play. He does not understand how there can be question of principles in election, for, to his thinking, "elections are unsettled things: principles are settled things." His understanding of political economy is no less shocking, "I found that the correct view is that all this Trade Unionism and Socialism and so forth is founded on the ignorant delusion that wages and the production and distribution of wealth, can be controlled by legislation or by any human action whatever. They obey fixed scientific laws, which have been ascertained and settled finally by the highest economic authorities. Naturally I do not at this distance of time remember the exact process of reasoning; but I can get up the case again at any time in a couple of days; and you may rely on me absolutely, should the occasion arise, to deal with all these ignorant and unpractical people in a conclusive and convincing way, except of course, as far as it may be advisable to indulge and flatter them a little so as to let them down without creating ill feeling in the working class electorate." Worst of all, when he says, "Do not be afraid of Socialism, Mr Barnabys. You need not tremble for your property or your position or your dignity. England will remain what England is, no matter what new political

95 Plays, p. 879-80.
names may come into vogue." In other words, Toryism, Liberalism, Socialism make no difference for him!

With such poor knowledge and still poorer performance of the two British leaders before them the Barnabas Brothers come out to preach their gospel of Back to Methuselah. "It is now absolutely certain", says Conrad, "that the political and social problems raised by our civilization cannot be solved by mere human mushrooms who decay and die when they are just beginning to have a glimmer of the wisdom and knowledge needed for their own government." There had been many attempts at civilization but "every one of them failed just as ours is failing." "They failed because the citizens and statesmen died of old age or over-eating before they had grown out of schoolboy games and savage sports and cigars and champagne. The signs of the end are always the same: Democracy, Socialism, Votes for Women. We shall go to smash within the lifetime of man now living unless we recognise that we must live longer." As usual, Lubin misses the point and says, "I am glad you agree with me that Socialism and Votes for Women are signs of decay." Naturally he is corrected by Franklyn who remonstrates, "Not at all: they are only the difficulties that overtax your capacity. If you cannot

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96 Plays, p. 881.
97 Ibid., p. 883
98 Ibid., p. 884.
organize Socialism you cannot organize civilized life; and you will relapse into barbarism accordingly." And to be able to overcome the difficulties by acquiring appropriate knowledge and wisdom man must live for at least three hundred years. This, in essence, is the ideal set forth through the Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas.

Shaw's unflinching faith in Socialism as the only remedy for economic evils in society and also as the only means for attaining true equality between man and man was the perpetual source of inspiration for his plays. *Geneva* (1938), last of Shaw's political plays, comes, on the top of all, as a vindication of Socialism in general, and as a testimony to the Russian brand of it in particular. The technique employed by Shaw in this play is, as usual, one of debate, and an important part of the debate is concerned with the claim that British Democracy is superior to Russian Socialism. The contenders are the Bishop and the Foreign Secretary on the British side and Commisar Posky on the Russian side. The English Bishop, as Shaw presents him, is thoroughly prejudiced in his attitude to Communism which he regards as the greatest of abominations on earth. The very mention of "Bolshevik" sends him into a fainting fit. He accuses Commisar Posky of having infected his diocese and his household by preaching the accursed Russian creed called Communism. "Is

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99 *Plays*, p. 384.
it any wonder, "he says "that I have a weak heart? Shock after shock\textsuperscript{100}(Act I). His grandson has joined a Communist club. His granddaughter has become a nudist and his footman, "son of the most respectable parents, and naturally an Anglo-Catholic", has become a communist. Posky denies the charge, saying: "I know nothing of your footman. If he is intelligent enough to become Communist, as so many famous Englishmen did long before the Russian revolution, we cannot prevent him. But we do not employ him as our agent nor support him financially in any way.\textsuperscript{101} And now he brings the counter charge, "We have just discovered that there is a most dangerous organization at work in Russia, financed from the British Isles, having for its object the overthrow of the Soviet system and the substitution of the Church of England and the British Constitution."\textsuperscript{102} The reaction of the Bishop to it clearly shows that he finds nothing wrong in it nor has he any doubt about the British superiority in the contest. He says, "And why not, sir? Why not? Could any object be more desirable, more natural? Would you in our blind hatred of British institutions and of all liberty of thought and speech, make it a crime to advocate a system which is universally admitted to be the best and freest in the world?\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{100} Plays, p. 884

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., pp 1296-97.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., p. 1297.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p. 1297.
He expresses the true British sentiment, a sentiment which, according to Shaw, has blinded them to other systems. He is, however, silenced by Posky with a short but firm answer: "We do not think so." A little later, it is Sir Orpheus who makes a big claim for his country thus: "There is only one way of reconciling all the nations in a real league and that is to convert them all to English ideas." (Act II). Commisar Posky, again, is quick to retort: "But all the world is in revolt against English ideas, especially the English themselves. The future is for Russian ideas." Whatever it may be, his critics do not stop; they bring other charges against his country. The English Bishop, continuing his attack against Marx and the Russians, says, "Karl Marx - Antichrist - said that the sweet and ennobling consolations of our faith are opium given to the poor to enable them to endure the hardships of that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them. Does your Komintern teach that blasphemy or does it not?" (Act I). Obviously he considers it too difficult a question for Posky to answer and naturally feels complacent. But when his Russian

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104 Plays, p. 1297.
105 Ibid., p. 1308
106 Ibid., p. 1308.
107 Ibid., p. 1298.
adversary replies that such things are "impossible" and that "there are no poor in Russia", the Bishop loses his mental equilibrium altogether and "drops dead" then and there. Indeed, the revelation has come as a terrible blow to his belief that Communism cannot mean anything but suffering in the present and damnation in the next world.

Another belief prevalent in the Western World is that foreigners are not tolerated in Russia and that Jews are shot dead. The widow from the Earthly Paradise, for example, says, "Do you realize that if I lived under the horrible tyranny of the Soviet I should be shot?"\textsuperscript{108} (Act II). She finds another fault with the Soviet in that "all Bolshevists are Jews." Shaw was fully aware of this type of propaganda carried on against Russia. The widow brings a serious charge against Russia but she herself is intolerant of the Jews. Her intolerance of the species called Jews is such that she has tried to shoot a fellow complainant in the League's office simply because he happens to be a Jew. But see how confidently Commissar Posky refutes the charges just brought against his country. "We do not shoot Jews as such: we civilize them. You see a Communist State is only possible for highly civilized people, trained to Communism from their childhood. The people we shoot are gangsters and speculators

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Plays}, p. 1308.
and exploiters and scoundrels of all sorts who are encouraged in other countries in the name of liberty and democracy.\textsuperscript{109} The accent in these lines is clearly Shaw's. Indeed his purpose all through the 3rd Act of the play has been to examine every popular current criticism of Socialism and then to answer it convincingly so that the readers can draw their own conclusion in the matter. Much of the suffering of the world, as Shaw has said repeatedly, is due to ignorance or to wrong information. This accounts for the didactic nature, which many call propaganda, of his dramatic art. Listen to the New-comer whose criticism of Russia is in the true English style: "Where did Russia get her ideas? From England. In Russia Karl Marx would have been sent to Siberia and flogged to death. In England he was kept in the British Museum at the public expense and let write what he liked. England is the country where, as the poet says, 'A man may say the thing he wills' - \textsuperscript{110} The first part of the criticism is true and Shaw makes the British Foreign Secretary also say a similar thing: "And John Ruskin's gospel compared with Karl Marx's was like boiling brandy compared with milk and water."\textsuperscript{111} But the second part is far from true and the

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Plays} p. 1308.  
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 1308-9.  
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 1313.
Judge of the International Court of Justice, now presiding over the proceedings in the play, himself says, "Pardon me: that is an illusion. I have gone into that question; and I can assure you that when the British Government is alarmed there are quite as many prosecutions for sedition, blasphemy and obscenity as in any other country. The British Government has just passed a new law under which any person obnoxious to the Government can be imprisoned for opening his mouth or dipping his pen in the ink." Sir Orpheus makes a vain attempt to defend it by saying that in the name of "freedom of thought and speech" England cannot be expected to allow Russian missionaries to preach Bolshevism. This provokes the Commissar to speak out the truth in the Shavian vein of terseness: "I dont expect any government to tolerate any doctrine that threatens its existence or the incomes of its rulers. The only difference is that in Russia we dont pretend to tolerate such doctrines; and in England you do. Why do you give yourselves that unnecessary and dangerous trouble?" The debate here aimed at correcting the wrong impressions and false propaganda about Russia which swayed the Western minds in Shaw's time. He lent his whole-hearted support to the Socialist Revolution in Russia and always looked upon it as a fulfilment of his dream. What the

112 Plays, p. 1309.
113 Ibid., p. 1309.
revolution has done and is capable of doing is not always known to the people outside Russia. The wind from that country hardly blows over the capitalist Press. Whatever it may be, Shaw as a playwright focusses the truth as he understands it. The Judge in the play has to hear different points of view, democratic, socialist, facist etc. before he gives his own opinion. After hearing the advocate of Democracy in the person of the Newcomer, who, although elected, is "kept out of parliament by the police", and so he has a complaint against the dictator of his country, the Judge turns to the Russian spokesman. He says, "I come to our Russian friend. He must be a man of ability, or he could not be a Commissar in a country where nothing but ability counts. He has no fears for the future, whereas we are distracted by the continual dread of war, of bankruptcy, of poverty. But there is no evidence that he is a superman. Twenty years ago he would have been talking as great nonsense as any of you (Act III). If Shaw reveals himself in his plays, as every dramatist does, unmistakably these are his words. It is the vindication of Socialism by a dramatist who used his art for the amelioration of suffering humanity.

The trial scene which occupies the whole of the 4th Act is the most interesting in the play. It presents, among

114 Plays, p. 1312.
others, Hitler and Mussolini, two great dictators between the Wars, in the persons of Battler and Bombardone and Shaw's handling of it shows once again his dramatic skill at its best. Against the bombast of the dictators whose power originates from the barrel of the gun is pitted the sober, subtle, diplomatic voice of Sir Orpheus, British Foreign Secretary. There is, however, a curious similarity, in spite of superficial differences, in their attitude to War. Batler, for example, speaks of himself as a prophet of peace but his peace must come from total armament. He says, "No, cousin: I am a man of peace; but it must be a voluntary peace, not an intimidated one. Not until I am armed to the teeth and ready to face all the world in arms is my Pacifism worth anything." Is it not peace of the graveyard? Now listen to Bombardone: "It is necessary for the cultivation of human character that a field should be reserved for war. Men decay when they do not fight." Continuing the gospel of war he says: "The object of war is not extermination: it is the preservation of man's noblest attribute, courage." So, according to the dictators, war should rage in the world. It is absurd to say that Shaw could ever have sympathy for such dictators. Sir Orpheus goes a step further when he says:

115 Plays, p. 1322.
116 Ibid., p. 1321
117 Ibid., p. 1322
"War is a part of civilized life. We cannot give it up because of its shocking casualties." He feels, war is terrible, war is shocking, but "we cannot help its happening." He explains before the Judge thus: "It is like the London traffic. We know that so many children will be run over and killed every week. But we cannot stop the traffic because of that. Motor traffic is a part of civilized life. So is coalmining. So is railway transport. So is flying. The explosions in the mines, the collisions of the trains, the accidents in the shunting yards, the aeroplane crashes, are most dreadful; but we cannot give up flying and coalmining and railway travelling on that account. They are a part of civilized life." The iconoclast in Shaw comes up once again, this time in the person of the Judge, and teaches the British Foreign Secretary a good lesson by pointing out the fallacy in his arguments. The Judge says, "But the mine explosions and railway collisions and aeroplane crashes are not the objects of industry. They are its accidents. They occur in spite of every possible precaution to prevent them. But war has no other object than to produce these casualties. The business and purpose of a coalminer is to hew the coal out of the earth to keep the home fires burning. But the soldier's business is to burn the homes and kill their inhabitants."

118 Plays, p. 1321.
119 Ibid., p. 1321.
That is not a part of civilization: it is a danger to it.\textsuperscript{120} This, undoubtedly, sobers Sir Orpheus in his attitude to war and a little later, we see him differing from Bombardone and Batler when they propose to settle "the point of the superior race and the divine leadership" by their "eight million" and "twelve million bayonets". He says, "This sort of talk is very dangerous. Besides, men do not fight with bayonets nowadays. In fact they do not fight at all in the old sense. Mr Battler can wipe out London, Portsmouth, and all our big provincial cities in a day. We should then be obliged to wipe out Hamburg and all the eastern cities from Munster to Salzburg. Signior Bombardone can wipe out Tunis, Nice, Algiers..., The process can go on until the European stock of munitions and air pilots is exhausted. But it is a process by which none of us can win, and all of us must lose frightfully\textsuperscript{121} (Act IV).

The rest of the trial scene is concerned with the dictators who answer the charges brought against them. They also quarrel among themselves, each claiming the superiority of his country. At this moment Commissar Posky comes in, focusing the irony of the situation thus: "These gentlemen talk of their countries. But they do not own their countries."

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Plays}, p. 1321.

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 1321.
Their people do not own the land they starve in. Their countries are owned by a handful of landlords and capitalists who allow them to live in it on condition that they work like bees and keep barely enough of the honey to keep themselves miserably alive. Russia belongs to the Russians. We shall look on whilst you eat each other up. When you have done that, Russia - Holy Russia - will save the soul of the world by teaching it to feed its people instead of robbing them."

It is not difficult to detect the voice of Shaw in the lines just quoted.

\[122\] *Plays*, p. 1330.