



ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the relation between the traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy developed by the Labour Party before 1945 and the principles actually employed by the Labour Government from 1945-51, and to consider how members of the Party challenged the Government's foreign policy in the name of traditional values and how the Government successfully resisted these challenges.

(Chapter I) The most significant events influencing the development of Labour foreign policy were: the outbreak of World War I; the Russian revolution; the reaction against war and balance of power politics; the creation of the League of Nations and the achievements of the two minority Labour governments there; the rise of Fascism; the Spanish Civil War; and the co-operation of the Big Three during World War II. From the Party's responses to these and other situations one can abstract the following as its basic principles: international co-operation, class-consciousness in foreign affairs, supra-nationalism and anti-militarism. In the following four chapters these principles are related to specific problems faced by the 1945-51 Labour Government.

(Chapter II) The idea that since the peoples of all nations have essentially the same interests their governments could co-operate was tested by the Government and proved a failure. In the case of German reparations, the Government from the first held that its differences with Russia were irreconcilable. Russia wanted reparations payments immediately; this would create deficits in Germany that the British would have to pay. In Anglo-Russian relations from 1945 until 1948, Bevin pursued a dual policy. He worked simultaneously to secure co-operation with Russia and to safeguard British interests without regard to Russia, by agreement with America and other nations. Finally, Russian intransigence and threats of aggression drove the Government to abandon all efforts at co-operation. In Palestine, the Government sought to co-operate with the United States in arranging a settlement, because of their similar economic and military interests. The United States, in spite of its close alliance with Britain in Europe, would not co-operate. Britain solved this problem by unilateral action.

(Chapter III) The principle of class-consciousness meant that a Labour Government would work especially well with other governments representative of the common people, and oppose reactionary governments. The Labour

Government consistently refused to admit ideological affinity as a ground for closer diplomatic relations with Russia; after the Communist purge of Eastern European Socialists, it made Russian Communism its major ideological enemy. A minority in the Party pressed for a continued close association with Russia, but without success. A larger group of MPs attacked the Government for its close association with capitalist America. The Government did not let this criticism prevent it from strengthening the Anglo-American alliance. The critics, by rapid shifts in their assessment of America, showed it was not American capitalism that they disliked, but certain aspects of American foreign policy. The Government was recurrently pressed by some of its supporters to organise a "third force", so that Socialism would provide an alternative allegiance for nations wishing to disengage from the cold war between Russia and America. In Spain the Labour Government consistently opposed strong diplomatic action against Franco, and worked to expand trade. In its treatment of Communist China, the Government was careful not to take sides in the battle between the forces of social revolution and reaction. Government leaders carefully refrained from associating themselves with the International Socialist Conference. This was <sup>job</sup> done by people who

were only Party officials.

(Chapter IV) The internationalism of the Labour Party was not maintained once the government of Britain came into its hands. At the United Nations it did make an effort to establish a supra-national organisation for atomic energy, but the failure was more significant than the proposal. The inability of the International Court of Justice and of the Security Council to defend British interests made the Government conclude that using the machinery of international government was not the way to secure the peaceful settlement of disputes between major nations. The varied negotiations and proposals for European unity tested the Government's attitude towards ceding sovereignty in a limited area. The Government consistently opposed all such proposals, although the Party gave lip-service to the idea of a United Socialist Europe. Its reaction to the Schuman plan for a supra-national coal and steel authority showed how the nationalisation of British industry stimulated the nationalisation of Labour's foreign policy.

(Chapter V) Traditionally the Labour Party opposed the use of military force and balance of power politics as immoral and unsuccessful; it relied primarily upon moral, economic and diplomatic influence. Economic difficulties following the end of World War

II made the Government a recipient, rather than a distributor, of large-scale economic assistance. The Government's desire to protect vital interests by military force led it to continue conscription in peacetime. The opposition to this bill produced the one partially successful back-bench revolt on foreign affairs in this period. The signing of NATO marked the Government's full acceptance of the balance of power system, which Socialists had traditionally abjured. In the Korean War, the Labour Government supported plans for the re-unification of Korea by military force -- until Communist China intervened. At the same time as the Government was denying the advisability of settling the Korean dispute by military force, it was making its final and greatest commitment to rearmament in Europe. In spite of criticism on Socialist, on pragmatic and on economic grounds, the Government continued its large-scale rearmament programme. | The traditional anti-militarism within the Party greatly strengthened Aneurin Bevan politically when he resigned in April, 1951, because it provided a principle to justify his attack upon the Government and to attract support to his group. In its final diplomatic problem, the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute, the Government did act upon the belief that military force would not enable it to get its way, and when negotiations failed, it

left Abadan, in spite of severe criticism from the Conservatives.

(Chapter VI) Many Socialists had criticised British diplomats because they were recruited from a relatively small and privileged social group and not from the classes which formed the great bulk of the Labour movement. Bevin rejected the idea that diplomats should be judged by their social origins; instead, he applied standards of business efficiency. The charge that Bevin's mind was made up for him by the Foreign Office was used by some critics to explain why the Labour Government abandoned its traditional Socialist principles. The charge was developed without regard to the power that Ernest Bevin's personality, his understanding of foreign affairs and his position as head of a department gave him.

(Chapter VII) Policy-making in the Labour Party was radically altered by the sudden creation of a Labour Government, with sources of strength and responsibility that extended far beyond the active membership of the Labour Party. Within the Cabinet Bevin was the strongest political figure. Because representatives of all sections of the Labour movement were in the Cabinet, and were thus bound by the rule of collective responsibility to uphold its decisions, the Cabinet became the place where Party foreign policy was

effectively determined. The Party machinery was used to support the Government, rather than to apply pressure to it. Most Party members were little concerned with foreign policy; rank-and-file MPs and members were interested primarily in domestic reform. Numerous and far-reaching achievements in domestic policy maintained support for the Government from most MPs and the great bulk of the trade unions. Since the trade unions commanded the majority of votes in the NEC and in Annual Conference, these organs did not challenge the Government's foreign policy. The majority factions in the major unions had industrial interests that paralleled the interests of the Government, and conflicted with those of the rebels. Attlee and Bevin exercised complementary leadership. Bevin was outspoken in defending the Government's foreign policy, and in rejecting traditional Socialist ideas. Attlee was a conciliator, ready to give a soft or an ambiguous answer, rather than precipitate a quarrel about words or abstract principles. He was content with winning on points of substance.

(Chapter VIII) The attack upon the Government's foreign policy centred in the Parliamentary Labour Party. The critics, while ostensibly speaking in order to advance traditional Socialist ideas, in fact had a

variety of motives, some political and some personal. Within the PLP there was a silent and dominant group, consisting of ministers and aspiring ministers, trade union MPs and MPs interested in domestic affairs; all were willing to trust their chosen leaders on foreign policy. By making matters of foreign policy questions of confidence, the Cabinet always secured support for its actions from the PLP. Informal groups quickly sprang up outside established channels to express opposition. The Keep Left group was weak, lacking a leader of senior status. The Bevanites were strong, because they were able to offer alternative leadership and because the rearmament programme, which they attacked, adversely affected the interests of many Party members in greater prosperity and welfare services. The Government paid heed only to the opposition of the anti-conscriptionists, who were normally loyal supporters; given a concession on this one issue, they would not seek more.

(Chapter IX) The study shows that the traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy developed by the Labour Party during decades of opposition were in fact a "domestic foreign policy", formed primarily in response to demands within the Party for a policy that would remake the world of international relations,

rather than with regard to specific and immediate problems of external affairs. The leaders of the Party learned, during the Coalition of World War II, how difficult these problems were. With the political powers of office, a popular domestic programme and harmony among leaders, the Government succeeded in carrying out a programme based upon principles radically different from those formerly held by the Party. The shift in Party foreign policy since 1951, and particularly since Aneurin Bevan became shadow foreign secretary in 1957, has shown that although traditional Socialist suppositions could be subdued while Labour was in office, they have remained strong enough to be asserted in opposition. The result is that Labour has had two foreign policies, not one.

THE RELATION OF SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES  
TO  
BRITISH LABOUR FOREIGN POLICY, 1945-51

"Between the idea and the act  
falls the shadow."

T.S. Eliot, "Four Quartets"

D. Phil. Thesis.

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Abbreviations

GA	General Assembly of the United Nations
HC	House of Commons Debates (5th series)
HL	House of Lords Debates
ISC	International Socialist Conference
LP	Labour Party
LPCR	Labour Party Conference Report
NEC	National Executive Committee
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
SC	Security Council of the United Nations
TUCR	Trades Union Congress Report

## INTRODUCTION

"The only sound test of a political doctrine is its practical effect on the lives of human beings."  
R.H. Tawney, quoted in Review of Politics  
(1946) p. 227.

The diplomatic achievements of the Labour Government and the controversy they engendered cannot be understood properly without considering the historical attitude of the Labour Party towards foreign affairs and the distribution of power within it. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is first to analyse the relation between the traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy developed by the Labour Party and the principles actually employed by the Labour Government from 1945 to 1951, and secondly, to analyse the political methods by which the Government's policy was challenged within the Labour Party by self-styled defenders of the tradition, and the way in which the Government successfully resisted these challenges. The thesis is not intended to be a narrative history of the Labour Government's foreign policy. It is an analysis of the interplay of ideas, Government responsibilities and party politics, and the Government's foreign policy is considered selectively from this point of view.

For generations in Britain political propagandists have not only dissented from Government foreign policy but also rejected the existing system of international

relations.<sup>1</sup> For decades before the 1945 general election the Labour Party was the party of dissent on foreign policy. Like earlier counterparts, it rejected the claim that there could be only one way of conducting British foreign policy, regardless of what party was in power, just as it rejected the claim that there could be only one way of regarding property rights. Views about foreign policy have varied not only in relation to events, but also in relation to the principles by which facts<sup>2</sup> about events were accepted and ordered. Thus, the world of international relations as seen by Arthur Henderson in part reflected those principles of co-operation and morality that he brought to it; to a Churchill, the same world returned indications of a more bellicose nature. The Labour Party proudly preached that it rejected the existing system of international relations and asserted the desirability of adopting a radically different approach. Clement Attlee explained in 1937:

"There is a deep difference of opinion between the Labour Party and the capitalist parties on foreign as well as on home policy, because the two cannot be separated. The foreign policy of a Government is the reflection of its internal policy ... Particular instances of action which can be approved by Socialists

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1. See e.g., A.J.P. Taylor The Trouble Makers (1957) and L.W. Martin Peace Without Victory (1958).
  2. This elementary but extremely important point is very well brought out by R.A. Dahl Congress and Foreign Policy (1950) p. 17ff, "The Pictures in his Head".

do not affect the truth of the general proposition that there is no agreement on foreign policy between a Labour Opposition and a capitalist government." <sup>1</sup>

In contrast with some of the 19th century isolationists and pleaders of special interests, the Labour Party was not trying simply to avoid international commitments or to sound a single note. It accepted the need for Great Britain to take a leading part in international politics, and framed comprehensive proposals for action in keeping with its role as a political party prepared to form an alternative government. The Party was ready to consider a wide range of problems with confidence because of its belief that Socialist analysis would produce the correct solution. As Arthur Henderson said:

"Labour's policy at home and abroad forms one organic whole, because our foreign policy is a function of our domestic policy and both spring from our faith that the future belongs to Socialism." <sup>2</sup>

It was confident because Socialist theory asserted that, beneath the superstructure of national conflicts, there were common interests shared by all peoples. Thus, conflicts between nations were not inherent in the nature of international relations. The duty of a Labour Government would be to further the common interest of all peoples in peace and prosperity, thus securing their support.

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1. Labour Party in Perspective (1937) pp. 226-7.

2. LPCR 1934, p. 156.

The difference in kind between domestic problems, in which a British government had complete sovereignty, and international problems, which could only be settled by multi-lateral bargaining between sovereign states, was largely ignored. The Party assumed that the foreign policy of a Labour Government would have behind it the compelling power of self-evident truth. Its proposals would be accepted by other nations because of Britain's diplomatic influence, reinforced by moral exhortation, economic benefits and the power of world public opinion. It regarded the achievements of the two minority Labour Governments of the 1920s in foreign affairs as a promise of what would begin to happen when Labour was returned to full power.

Most dissenting groups were saved by exclusion from office from the consequences of relating their preconceptions about foreign policy to the often intractable material with which a Foreign Secretary works. Although the Labour Party was, after 1922, the second party in Parliament, it did not gain full power until 1945, when it was returned to office with a majority of 150. The principles of foreign policy that the Party had developed in decades of opposition could now be put into practice; the transformation of international relations could take place simultaneously with the alteration of domestic society. There were few geographical limits to the Party members'

expectation of a brave new world. But the Government's actions in foreign affairs usually appeared to contradict or to ignore the Party's previously declared principles. The Labour Government, although bred in dissent, nevertheless accepted the existing system of diplomacy, with all its restrictions upon achievement. The support for the traditional expectations was strong enough, however, to result in dissension and revolt within the Party, within the House of Commons and, finally, within the Cabinet itself.

Before proceeding further, it would be well to define the recurring phrase "traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy." Traditions are difficult to describe and difficult to uproot. The hand of the past rested heavily upon the Labour Party. Until 1945 it had been primarily devoted to planning a new society. The Party was relatively less concerned with immediate solutions to immediate problems, because it was normally in opposition. The early visions of Socialist pioneers had been preserved through the decades and strengthened by repetition, familiarity and by the failures of Conservative governments. These traditions were neither exhausted by success nor shattered by responsibility. The intellectual, social and physical isolation of most of the Labour movement from the leaders of the nation shielded the Party against the full impact of changes in international politics,

and created a noticeable time-lag in the Party's response to many events outside Britain. It could concern itself primarily with those aspects of foreign policy that most interested the Labour movement, and ignore factors that those in office could not ignore.

The hold of tradition was strengthened by the Party's commitment to making policy through its mass-membership Conference. A change in Party policy could not take place simply because a few particularly well informed leaders believed it should. Instead, changes in Party policy required the assent of Annual Conference, and the consideration of myriad groups, not all of them interested in foreign affairs. The Party had recruited a number of prominent members because of its position on international questions at the end of World War I, and converted many members to a specific set of views about disarmament, power politics, the League of Nations, etc. Having once been converted to dissenting principles, many had no wish to change. While all Party policy statements contained an element of propaganda, a basic requirement for their success, even as propaganda, was that they must be believed to be true by many who were meant to read them. Hence, the importance of traditional beliefs in policy-making, and the small impact that the participation of the leaders in the 1940-45 Coalition had upon the rank-and-file.

The first chapter will show that the assumptions which the Party accepted about foreign affairs were homogeneous and capable of definition. While one may now make the retrospective judgment that they represent an outdated way of thinking about foreign affairs, this was not recognised within the Labour Party in 1945.<sup>1</sup> How, why and to what extent these traditional views were rejected by the Government and the Party after that date is the point of this thesis. There is, after all, no automatic invalidation of principles of action by the passage of time. Consider, for example, the present-day respect for Eyre Crowe's observations on the balance of power, which were made in 1907.

The principles are called Socialist because this was the term commonly used within the Labour Party to describe its traditional (that is, pre-1945) position on foreign affairs. The term was current in political debate; it was used by Party members with a favourable connotation, by opponents, as a term of disparagement.

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1. Significantly, of the many ex-Labour ministers interviewed in the course of preparing this thesis, all agreed that before 1945 the Labour Party was committed to a distinctively different approach to foreign policy from that of the Conservatives; only one, P.J. Noel-Baker, maintained that the Labour Government followed its traditional principles after 1945.

The word Socialism, like other words in politics, has many meanings and uses, depending upon its context. The Party's own claim to a Socialist basis was recognised in 1908 by the Second International, the largest and most representative association of Socialist parties,<sup>1</sup> and was openly declared by the Party in 1918.<sup>2</sup> The claim of Socialist theorists to have achieved final and universal truth in their analysis gave Party policy sanctions of permanence and rightness. This in turn stimulated in many Party members a strong emotional enthusiasm, and even a quasi-religious fervour and faith in the Party's ability to remake Britain and the world.

Principles of foreign policy are neither distant and general like goals nor immediate and specific like policies. While the broad goals defined by the Labour Party -- the full material and spiritual development of each individual within a classless society and a world at peace under brotherhood and law -- might influence policy, they could not be a substitute for it. Likewise, policies towards particular events were not formed by

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1. See LPCR 1909, p. 14. The Labour Party later became one of the founding members of the post-1918 Labour and Socialist International and of its successor, the Socialist International, organised after World War II.
  2. See G.D.H. Cole A History of the Labour Party From 1914 (1948) p. 53ff.

objective observers devoid of all intellectual preconceptions and prior commitments. When a series of policy statements can be shown to have reflected an underlying assumption, this assumption can be abstracted and referred to as a principle. Thus, principles have immediate application to specific situations yet maintain a relevance not restricted to any one situation.<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, the Party maintained that its principles of foreign policy were as necessary to the achievement of a Socialist society as its domestic principles, for international peace and social justice were mutually dependent.

The task of isolating the essential principles of Labour foreign policy has been greatly simplified by the policy-making structure of the Party, which regularly defined, through Annual Conference, its National Executive Committee and the associated Parliamentary Labour Party, what was official Party policy. As in any Party long out of office, a certain number of personalities were minority-minded, content with the role of perpetual opposition. But the persons chiefly responsible for framing traditional Party policy were men who had held,

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1. For the way in which such rules of action can be derived within the Foreign Office see Lord Strang (Permanent Under-Secretary to Ernest Bevin) "The Formation and Control of Foreign Policy" Durham University Journal (June, 1957) p. 98.

or were to hold, ministerial posts relating to foreign affairs. They included the two Labour Prime Ministers, MacDonald and Attlee, the four Labour foreign secretaries, MacDonald, Henderson, Bevin and Morrison, and junior ministers at the Foreign Office such as Ponsonby, Dalton and Noel-Baker. These men and their associates worked for decades to convince their cohorts and the country that a Labour Government would inaugurate a new order in international relations. They succeeded in convincing the rank-and-file of the righteousness of their cause, and they created expectations they were not to fulfil.

## Chapter I

### DEVELOPING THE PRINCIPLES

"War, with all its horrors, is always inimical to the interests of the working-class."  
Keir Hardie and Arthur Henderson, Joint statement, LPCR 1913, p. 123.

"The Conference looks to the strengthening of the foundations of international peace and the raising of the living standards of the peoples everywhere as vital. It believes that the spread of Socialist ideas and the increasing application of Socialist measures in all parts of the world are both fundamental to these ends."  
Resolution, LPCR 1944, p. 132.

A foreign policy can exist in theory without existing in fact. For almost all of its pre-1945 history, the Labour Party had a policy that could only exist in theory, because Labour never had a majority in the House of Commons. Instead of forming policy in direct response to the external responsibilities and conflicts that confronted a Government, the Labour Party's policy was immediately determined by internal Party pressures, and only indirectly by the course of external events.<sup>1</sup> Although Party policy statements rarely affected British diplomacy, the discussions on

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1. For a full discussion of the internal power structure of the Party and the Government see Chapters 7 and 8.

foreign affairs within the Labour Party were conducted with great earnestness. Many respected Labour leaders believed that it was the duty of the British Labour Party to lead the way to world peace. They tried, in their own way, to live up to this heavy obligation. Certain assumptions about foreign policy permitted this belief to flourish. The object of this chapter is to survey this response to international problems in order to determine the principles of action upon which the Labour Party based its foreign policy in the decades before 1945.

The impetus behind the formation of the Labour Party was not foreign policy. The Party was born of domestic discontent. As Keir Hardie explained:

"The population of these islands is roughly 43 millions, of whom 1 1/4 millions are rich, 3 1/2 millions are comfortable and 39 millions are poor; and of these, half are very poor. It is to remedy and redress that condition of things that we exist." 1

Within the Labour movement at the turn of the century there was general indifference to foreign affairs. In 1899 the Trades Union Congress voted against the exchange of publications with unions in

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1. LPCR 1910, p. 56. For detailed accounts of the formation of the Labour Party see F.W. Bealey and H.M. Pelling, Labour and Politics 1900-1906 (1958) and P.P. Poirier The Advent of the Labour Party (1958).

other countries, when this was proposed as a means of  
 furthering international labour co-operation.<sup>1</sup>

Congress denounced the Boer War in 1900 but "only by  
 a small majority. A large number of delegates remained  
 neutral."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, the Fabian Society was divided  
 into groups of pro-Boers, Imperialists, and those who  
 were neutral. To prevent a split within the Society,<sup>3</sup>  
 the members voted not to take any stand on the war.

The ILP was the centre of Labour opposition to the war.  
 Its resolution denouncing the war was carried without  
 discussion at the end of the 1901 Labour Conference.<sup>4</sup>

In its early days the fledgling Parliamentary Labour  
 Party, existing in obscurity as well as in opposition,

1. TUCR 1899, p. 71.

2. TUCR 1900, p. 55.

3. In 1920 Sidney Webb admitted that early Fabians  
 had been guilty of "a failure to 'think inter-  
 nationally'." See Fabian Essays in Socialism  
 (1920 edition) with an introduction by Sidney  
 Webb, p. x. See also E.R. Pease The History of  
the Fabian Society (1916) p. 128ff, and  
 Beatrice Webb Our Partnership (1948) pp. 217-9.

4. LPCR 1901, p. 20.

scarcely concerned itself with foreign affairs,<sup>1</sup> except for a small group of about ten Labour MPs representing dockyard, ordnance and heavy engineering constituencies. They welcomed the Government's rearmament programme and supported it with their votes. More arms meant more jobs.<sup>2</sup>

The Labour Party soon became important enough to be noticed abroad. The Second International invited it to send a deputation to its Congress at Amsterdam in 1904. The executive recommended that the Party join the International "so that when simultaneous action is advisable or necessary it can be taken." The Annual Conference approved this by a large majority.<sup>3</sup> The Social Democratic Federation, which was not affiliated to the Labour Party but which was affiliated to the International, protested to that body about the Labour Party's doctrine. The International, after reviewing the Party's objects, decided to admit it to full-fledged membership in the Socialist fraternity.

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1. In a lengthy summary of the policies of the Party and the PLP from 1906 to 1910, J.H.S. Reid does not once refer to foreign affairs. The Origins of the British Labour Party (1955) pp. 115-204.
  2. For details, see W.P. Maddox Foreign Relations in British Labour Politics (1934) pp. 208-10.
  3. LPCR 1905, pp. 27-8, p. 41.

Conference, in turn, endorsed the work of the International.<sup>1</sup>

At this time the chief theme of the meetings of the International was: "What could the members of the International do to prevent war?"<sup>2</sup> In 1907 at Stuttgart it resolved:

"If war threatens to break out, it is the duty of the working class in the countries concerned and of their parliamentary representatives, with the help of the International Socialist Bureau, as a means of co-ordinating their action, to use every effort to prevent war by all the means which seem to them most appropriate having regard to the sharpness of the class war and to the general political situation. Should the war nonetheless break out, their duty is to intervene to bring it promptly to an end."<sup>3</sup>

The Labour Party itself faced the question of the general strike against war at a special conference on disarmament and the international situation at Leicester in January, 1911. The Conference unanimously approved a resolution presented on behalf of the NEC which declared "disputes between nations should be settled, not by brute force, but by reason and arbitration." It called for the workers in all lands to join together to further international peace and social justice.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See LPCR 1908, pp. 10-11; LPCR 1909, p. 14, pp. 89-90.

2. James Joll The Second International 1889-1914 (1955) p. 126.

3. Labour Yearbook 1916, p. 15.

4. LPCR 1911, p. 113.

Nearly every speaker denounced the efforts of governments, capitalists and the press to seek private profit from war. Keir Hardie moved that the Bureau of the International take a poll of its members "on the utility of the strike as a means of preventing war."<sup>1</sup> Hardie argued that because of the machinations of capitalist governments, war was imminent, and that war would not benefit the workers any where. "When they had the power to stop the machinations of their enemies, they would be paltry cowards if they did not use that power," he said.<sup>2</sup> Arthur Henderson doubted Labour's strength; he argued that such a strike would only lead to working-class suffering and detract from the Party's claim to be a parliamentary organisation. The motion was only just defeated, 125-119.

At the same time a group of British rationalists, utilitarians and moralists was gathering around Norman Angell to oppose war on grounds similar to those espoused by the Labour Party. This group believed, as Angell put it:

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1. LPCR 1911, p. 116.

2. Ibid. p. 117.

"That human nature is not unchanging; that the warlike nations do not inherit the earth; that warfare does not make for the success of the fittest or virile; that the struggle between nations is no part of the evolutionary law of man's advance ... that society is classifying itself by interests rather than by state divisions; that the modern state is losing its homogeneity and that all these multiple factors are making rapidly for the disappearance of state rivalries." <sup>1</sup>

Keir Hardie was so impressed with The Great Illusion that he wanted the ILP to publish a penny edition of it. Angell and his friends were drawn towards the Labour Party because it was rationalist in its approach to foreign affairs and "because it seemed to mean business about its internationalism." <sup>2</sup>

The Labour Party recognised the growth of mutual fear between England and Germany, and tried to combat it, because, as the 1912 Conference declared, regardless of the bickerings of governments, "There is no quarrel between the peoples of Germany and England." <sup>3</sup> It also exchanged fraternal delegations with the strong German Social Democratic Party, and upon one occasion gave a German fraternal delegate a set of Shakespeare's works. In spite of such tangible and intangible signs of regard,

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1. Norman Angell The Great Illusion (1910) p. ix.
  2. Norman Angell After All (1951) p. 170. Angell formally joined the Labour Party in 1920 and became a Labour MP.
  3. LPCR 1912, p. 103. Italics supplied.

the German Socialists derided the Labour Party for supporting a Liberal Government which, it asserted, was arming against Germany.<sup>1</sup>

### War

"The country they lived in, bad as it was, was the best he knew of."

Jack Jones, General Workers Union,  
18th Annual Conference of the Labour Party (1918) p. 35.

The outbreak of general war in 1914 had a deep and long-lasting effect upon the Labour Party. The PLP on July 30th, 1914 called upon the Government to keep Britain out of a conflict in which "we have no direct or indirect interest." This declaration was in harmony with the statement issued the day before by the Bureau of the International at Brussels, with Keir Hardie's approval. That called upon the British workers to use "all the power at their command" to secure peace in Europe. On August 1st, Arthur Henderson and Hardie issued on behalf of the British affiliates to the International a manifesto which denounced the idea of war and called upon the workers to "compel" the governing class to keep Britain from war.<sup>2</sup> The following day the Party sponsored a rally in Trafalgar Square, which reaffirmed the idea of the international

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1. Joll op. cit. pp. 140-2.

2. See Labour Year Book 1916, p. 16, for all quotations.

unity of the workers to keep the peace. It also urged<sup>1</sup> the British Government not to enter the war.

MacDonald, speaking in the House of Commons on August 3rd as leader of the PLP, opposed Britain's participation in the war. He declared that neither her interest nor her honour was involved in the conflict of powers on the Continent.<sup>2</sup> The next day, following the attack upon Belgium, Great Britain went to war. The same day the German Social Democratic Party voted for war credits in the Reichstag. The meeting of the International Socialist Congress originally scheduled for Vienna in late August was never held.

These abrupt changes caused the Labour Party, in an NEC statement of August 7th, to announce that it would now concentrate its efforts upon mitigating the destitution that war would cause. It strongly denounced the way in which the politics of the balance of power had led to war. While reiterating its faith in international Socialist co-operation, the Party did<sup>3</sup> not threaten to oppose the war effort in Britain.

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1. Ibid. p. 17. Beatrice Webb wrote: "It was an undignified and futile exhibition." Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1912-24 (edited by M.I. Cole, 1952) p. 25. The Webbs refused to sign petitions for or against the war. Kingsley Martin, New Statesman 9.11.46.

2. See 65 HC 1829ff.

3. G.D.H. Cole Labour in War-Time (1915) pp. 29-30.

Ramsay MacDonald could not remain silent. In disagreement with the PLP on the question of war credits, he resigned his position as leader and denounced the war as the futile result of balance of power alliances and commercial rivalries.<sup>1</sup> By the end of August, 1914 the Party was co-operating with other British parties in support of recruiting. In announcing its participation in the recruiting drive the PLP added the qualification that "speakers in the campaign would not necessarily be responsible for any contrary opinions regarding the original causes of the war, or the chain of circumstances which led up to it."<sup>2</sup> MacDonald equivocally declared that volunteers "will be in the right",<sup>3</sup> regardless of the merit of the war. The NEC agreed to an electoral truce with its political opponents on August 29th, in the interest of the war effort, a few days after TUC representatives had pledged themselves to terminate trade disputes without resort to strikes.<sup>4</sup> By October, 1914, the Labour Party leaders were unreservedly justifying the war and denouncing aggressive

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1. G.D.H. Cole Labour in War-Time (1915) p. 31.

2. LPCR 1916, p. 51.

3. Cole op.cit. p. 31.

4. LPCR 1916, p. 4; Labour Year Book 1916, p. 22.

German militarism. Military victory was given first priority; national interest was not concealed by a fig-leaf of international ideals.<sup>1</sup> A similar position was outlined, albeit with reservations, by a convention of Socialist parties of Allied nations which met in London in February, 1915.

The co-operation of the Labour Party with its peace-time opponents in defence of the nation was given formal expression when Arthur Henderson entered the Cabinet in May, 1915, to handle labour problems.<sup>2</sup> When the subject came up for discussion at the January, 1916 Annual Conference, the first held since the outbreak of war, G.H. Roberts, MP, summing up for the NEC, said that the resolution on the Coalition simply asked: "Were they for or were they against their country in this great war?"<sup>3</sup> MacDonald evaded all such pointed questions in his speech, which was primarily a plea for tolerance. G.J. Wardle, the Party chairman, asserted in the debate, "There is no way of meeting force except by force." He demanded

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1. Cf. the October 15th statement of Labour MPs, Labour Year Book pp. 20-1, with the statement of August 7th. The distance travelled in two months was great.
  2. The move was opposed by a majority of the PLP but gained approval at a joint meeting of the PLP and NEC. Cole Labour in War-Time p. 36.
  3. LPCR 1916, p. 105.

rhetorically: "Who has the right to speak on behalf of the Labour Movement? Was it the small coterie of the Independent Labour Party or the great trade unions of the country?"<sup>1</sup> The strongly anti-German resolution in support of the Coalition war effort was carried, 1,502,000 to 602,000. At the same time trade union leaders were prominent in two small labour groups organised to support the war effort, the Socialist National Defence Committee which included John Hodge, acting leader of the PLP, and H.M. Hyndman's National Socialist Party.<sup>2</sup>

Even the Government's introduction of conscription<sup>3</sup> against the opposition of the Labour Party and the TUC did not alter the course of the Labour movement's leaders. The traditional British antipathy to conscription had been strengthened in the Labour Party by fears that military conscription would lead to industrial conscription and by the feeling that conscription of manpower without conscription of wealth and property was discriminatory. Conference had

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1. LPCR 1916, p. 103. At this time the affiliated Party membership of the Socialist and co-operative societies was 42,000; of the trade unions, 2,170,000.
  2. See C.F. Brand British Labour's Rise to Power (1941) pp. 74-7, p. 172.
  3. See TUCR 1915, p. 91; LPCR 1916, p. 117; LPCR 1917, p. 4.

expressed itself on this point before the war.<sup>1</sup>  
 Nevertheless, when the question of approving the war  
 arose once again at the January, 1917 Conference, in  
 a resolution on Arthur Henderson's entry into the War  
 Cabinet, Conference approved this by almost as big a  
 majority as it had shown against conscription.<sup>2</sup> The  
 Party leaders, in the spring of 1917, saw no alternative  
 to military victory except military defeat.

#### The Reaction to War

"They [the UDC] were right and we [the soldiers]  
 were wrong."

Major C.R. Attlee, quoted in H.M.  
 Swanwick, Builders of Peace (1924) p. 60.

The events of 1914 showed members of the Labour  
 Party that foreign policy was too important a subject  
 to be ignored, or to be left to others to determine.  
 The initial consequence was the division of the Labour  
 Party. The majority put their allegiance to the  
 nation first, and supported the war as an act of  
 national self-defence, invested with idealistic aims.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See LPCR 1910, p. 94.

2. LPCR 1917, p. 98.

3. For comments on their psychology, see Beatrice  
 Webb's Diaries, 1912-24, especially pp. 73-4.

The leaders of this majority consistently supported the Coalition, and asked little in return, except for a few ministerial appointments for trade union MPs. Many of the rank-and-file benefited from the wartime boom in employment and wages. The minority placed the pre-war policy of international Socialist co-operation in the common interest of the workers before national interest. That the Party did not split was a tribute to Henderson's wisdom and MacDonald's tact and vagueness. Henderson believed the Party was stronger with its critics inside the ranks than with them expelled.<sup>1</sup> MacDonald regarded the war as a "purely passing affair".<sup>2</sup> By refusing to be specific and doctrinaire in his statements he gave his opponents little opportunity to expel him.

The centre of opposition to the war within the Labour Party was the ILP, which was also the centre of militant Socialist propaganda. The ILP was prompt to take its position and consistent in holding it. On August 13th, 1914, it reaffirmed the previous position of the Second International and of the Labour Party.

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1. M.A. Hamilton Arthur Henderson (1938) pp. 95-100.

2. LPCR 1916, p. 102.

Out of the darkness and the depth we hail our working-class comrades of every land. Across the roar of guns we send sympathy and greeting to the German Socialists. They have laboured unceasingly to promote good relations with Britain, as we with Germany. They are no enemies of ours, but faithful friends.

"In forcing this appalling crime upon the nations, it is the rulers, the diplomats, the militarists who have sealed their doom. In tears and blood and bitterness the greater democracy will be born." 1

In April, 1916, the ILP Conference declared:

"Socialist parties should refuse support to every war entered into by any Government whatever the ostensible object of the war, even if such war be nominally of a defensive character." 2

Because they remained loyal to the pre-war position of the International, the ILP leaders were violently abused by the war-time leaders of the Labour Party. The correctness of their deductions from principles was not questioned; the Party leaders simply denied the value of their conclusions. John Hodge, acting leader of the PLP, told a TUC meeting "The men who talk of peace today are traitors to their country." 3

When Keir Hardie's death in 1915 caused a by-election

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1. ILP Report of the National Administrative Council 1915, p. 33.
  2. ILP Report 1916, p. 83. Cf. LPCR 1922, p. 200 cited infra p.27.
  3. TUCR 1915, p. 328.

at Merthyr Tydvil, the ILP candidate nominated to retain his seat was opposed and defeated by a trade union supporter of the war. At the 1916 Annual Conference a motion on post-war aims in foreign policy proposed by a prominent member of the ILP was defeated, 688,000 to 1,045,000.<sup>1</sup>

The war also brought a number of Liberals into the Labour Party, albeit as members in agreement with the ILP position on foreign affairs rather than with the position of the war-time leaders of the Party. Most of them came to Labour via the Union of Democratic Control, formed in November, 1914. There Liberals such as Norman Angell, Arthur Ponsonby, C.P. Trevelyan and Noel-Buxton associated with ILP members such as Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden. The UDC platform called for self-determination, democratic control of foreign policy, an international council to guarantee peace, the reduction of armaments and free trade.<sup>2</sup> This was identical with the ILP platform on post-war aims except for its inclusion of free trade.

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1. LPCR 1916, p. 132. The resolution called for an end to the balance of power, disarmament, an international council to keep the peace, no secret diplomacy, and other objects that became standard features of the Party's foreign policy as from December 1917.
  2. H.M. Swanwick Builders of Peace (1924) p. 39. See also A.J.P. Taylor op. cit., p. 132ff and L.W. Martin op. cit. passim.

"The tremendous change occasioned in the whole international outlook by the success of the Russian Revolution"<sup>1</sup> in 1917 revived within the Labour Party the pre-war faith in joint action by Socialist parties as an effective force in international relations. Social revolution and joint working-class action offered a possible way to peace that avoided the harsh alternatives of military victory or military defeat. The importance of the Revolution to the Labour Party is indicated by the fact that, whereas early in 1917 the Party rejected requests from the ILP, from the French Socialist Party and from a group of Socialist parties in neutral nations to attend international meetings on war aims and peace plans,<sup>2</sup> when the Russian Council of Workers' and Soldiers' deputies shortly thereafter issued an invitation to Socialist parties of all nations to meet in Stockholm to formulate "a general working-class peace policy" the NEC recommended acceptance and a special Party conference on August 10th approved participation by a margin of

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1. In 1918 there were two conference reports, the Report of the Seventeenth Annual Conference, held in Nottingham on January 23-5, 1918, and in London on February 26th, 1918; and the Report of the Eighteenth Annual Conference, held in London, June 26-8th, 1918. These two will be cited as LPCR (17th) 1918 and LPCR (18th) 1918 respectively. The above quotation is from the NEC report in LPCR (17th) 1918 p. 3.
  2. See LPCR 1917, pp. 125-7, and LPCR (17th) 1918, p. 3.

3½-1.<sup>1</sup> Henderson, who had been in Russia for the Coalition Government, recommended attending the consultative meeting so that the British Labour point of view could be properly presented.

The distance that the Labour Party had moved in less than six months is indicated by the agenda that Conference endorsed. MacDonald and Henderson had drafted, with French and Russian delegates, a proposal that the Stockholm meeting discuss the war, the peace, the International and "the ways and means of realising this programme and bringing the war rapidly to an end."<sup>2</sup> The Labour Party delegation did not reach Stockholm because of domestic political opposition. The upshot was that Henderson resigned from the War Cabinet and transferred his energy and ability to work for the Party's domestic and international programme.<sup>3</sup> The momentum of the pro-peace and internationalist section of the Party was growing.<sup>4</sup> It secured at a joint Party-TUC Conference

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1. LPCR (17th) 1918, pp. 4-5.

2. Ibid. p. 46.

3. See M.A. Hamilton op.cit pp. 130-62, for an account of Henderson's position at this time, and also Henderson's speech of August 10th, 1917, LPCR (17th) 1918, pp. 47-51.

4. See LPCR (17th) 1918, p. 6ff.

on post-war aims on December 28th, 1917, the adoption of a manifesto which called for a "supernational authority or League of Nations," the settlement of disputes by adjudication or conciliation, the limitation of arms, an end to conscription, the spread of democracy, open diplomacy and the international allocation of scarce commodities.<sup>1</sup> The aims were immediately incorporated into the Party's new constitution, which was adopted in February, 1918 and marked the Party's formal commitment to Socialism. The constitution gave as the Labour object in international affairs:

"To co-operate with the Labour and Socialist organisations in other countries and to assist in organising a Federation of Nations for the maintenance of freedom and peace, for the establishment of suitable machinery for the adjustment and settlement of international disputes by conciliation or judicial arbitration and for such other international legislation as may be practicable."<sup>2</sup>

The assumptions of this new policy were to be reflected in virtually all the Party's statements on foreign affairs for more than a generation to come. Even Beatrice Webb was impressed by the intensity of the

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1. Text, Paul Kellogg and Arthur Gleason British Labour and the War (1919) pp. 343-351. Cf. "Labour and the New Social Order", (LP, 1918) pp. 22-3. The statement was drafted by Sidney Webb.
  2. LPCR (17th) 1918, p. 141. This section remained unaltered until 1953, when it was revised to make its language suitable to the era of the United Nations. Cf. LPCR 1953, p. 217.

Party's internationalism. She wrote in December, 1918:

"The one outstanding virtue of the Labour Party, a virtue which is its very own, not imposed upon it by its intellectuals, is its high sense of international morality. Alone among British politicians the leaders of the Labour Party do honestly believe in the brotherhood of man." <sup>1</sup>

The crucial event in the development of the Labour Party's foreign policy during the war was not the decision to support fighting in 1914 but the resignation of Arthur Henderson from the War Cabinet in 1917 to support international Socialist co-operation to secure peace. The joint efforts of Henderson and MacDonald were symbolic of the changed state of affairs.

Henderson had been forced to choose between the War Cabinet and the International, and had opted for the International. <sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the manner of his exit from the Cabinet gave him an intense dislike of Lloyd George and made him anxious to create a Party strong enough to have done with collaboration and coalition. The pro-peace section gained influence by the co-option of a number of UDC members to the Party's newly established advisory committee on international questions. <sup>3</sup> The Labour ministers who remained in the Coalition held

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1. Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1912-24. p. 139.

2. Ibid. p. 94. M.A. Hamilton op.cit. pp. 149-50, p. 199ff.

3. See W.P. Maddox op.cit. pp. 99-103.

office but lacked power, either in Government or in the Party. Of the pro-war Labour MPs, only Henderson was influential in foreign affairs after the war. Some of the wartime ministers left the Party to fight with the "coupon" in 1918; others dropped into relative obscurity.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1918 general election the Labour Party urged a peace of reconciliation and a foreign policy based upon the Conference declaration of December, 1917.<sup>2</sup> The election left the Labour Party weak in Parliament. Both Henderson and MacDonald were defeated. The only Labour man selected to attend the Peace Conference was G.N. Barnes, a prisoner of the Coalition, not a representative of the Party. Piqued at its exclusion from the official Peace Conference, the Labour Party, in collaboration with its associates in the International, held its own Peace Conference and drafted its own post-war settlement at Berne and Amsterdam early in 1919. The Amsterdam meeting recommended establishment of a League of Nations with supra-national authority, an international police force, an international court to settle disputes by adjudication instead of war, total national disarmament and open diplomacy.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See G.D.H. Cole A History of the Labour Party From 1914, (1948) pp. 87-8. J.R. Clynes, who did retain prominence, was not influential on foreign policy.
  2. LPCR 1919, p. 185.
  3. Ibid. p. 210. For further details see pp. 3-28 and pp. 196-230.

When the preliminary peace treaty's terms were announced, the NEC declared them "very defective from the standpoint of world peace."<sup>1</sup> The Annual Conference the following month carried "with enthusiasm" a resolution asking the League of Nations to revise "the harsh provisions"<sup>2</sup> of the Versailles Treaty. In particular the Party disapproved of the failure to make the League into a supra-national organisation and to establish general disarmament. It opposed the provisions on Germany as vindictive.<sup>3</sup> As Ramsay MacDonald said, denunciation of the Versailles Treaty was "like the Confession of Faith."<sup>4</sup>

The result of the Party's peace policy was to make it pro-German and anti-French. The Party held that both Labour and Germany had been treated unfairly by the peacemakers. It opposed the French desire for an Anglo-French alliance against Germany, because it believed this would be playing power politics, which could only lead to another war. MacDonald declared

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1. Ibid. p. 216.

2. Ibid. p. 142.

3. For a full account see "Labour and the Peace Treaty; an examination of Labour declarations and the Treaty terms," (LP, c. 1919) pp. 21-67.

4. LPCR 1922, p. 190.

the idea of military alliances was inspired by "a suicidal mania".<sup>1</sup> The National Joint Council, a coordinating committee for issuing joint Labour Party and TUC statements, declared:

"The Council is absolutely opposed to any Pact involving a guarantee of military assistance by this country and it demands that the Government do not enter into any such Pact without an appeal to the country. The Council believes that the only safe policy is that of a League of Nations in which all countries would reciprocally guarantee one another against unprovoked aggression and invasion. Until that League is created, the country should keep its hands absolutely free from any obligation of military assistance to any single power or group of powers."<sup>2</sup>

The Party said it was necessary to revise the treaty with Germany in order, "in the interests of the whole of Europe, to give Germany a chance to return to a position of stability."<sup>3</sup> The restoration of the German economy was believed to be important to Britain as well as to Germany. The Party regarded the disruption of normal channels of trade to be due largely to the war and the peace treaty. Unemployment in Britain rose to more than 2,000,000 in 1921.<sup>4</sup> In place of Britain

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1. See J. Ramsay MacDonald "Protocol or Pact?" (LP, c. 1925) p. 3. See also LPCR 1921, p. 201.

2. LPCR 1922, p. 31. 3. LPCR 1920, p. 50.

4. See LPCR 1922, pp. 5-6, p. 33; 1923, p. 20; C.L. Mowat Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940 (1955) pp. 125-32.

aligning itself with France against Germany, the Party urged the co-operation of all nations for the common good.

As a means of developing co-operation the Party pressed for the re-establishment of the International. This desire was based upon the belief that, although Socialists had different nationalities, their common ideological outlook and interests made it possible for them to agree upon a single foreign policy. The doubts that events of 1914 had cast upon this assumption were ignored. The effort to find a common basis for peace in 1917-18 was more recent and more encouraging; it was this that was taken as the model for the future. Because the International had failed the test of 1914 did not mean that the International was at fault, but that the test should never come again. The overthrow of reactionary governments in Germany and Russia and the rise of left-wing parties in many nations stimulated new hopes of success. As the revived International, meeting at Berne in 1919, declared:

"From now onward, the united working-classes of the whole world will prove the most powerful guarantee for the suppression of all militarism and of every attempt to destroy international democracy."<sup>1</sup>

The post-war Labour Party did not place the blame for the war entirely upon the Germans. Instead, it blamed

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1. LPCR 1919, p. 196.

the existing system of international relations -- balance of power politics -- which implicated all national governments. Its delegates to the International reported:

"Few sections are entitled to throw stones at others. We must judge of the future International not by the war years, but by the policy which it is now to pursue." <sup>1</sup>

The International was handicapped by the conflict within the left resulting from the success of the Russian Revolution. At Berne in 1919 the British delegation supported the Branting resolution, which declared that the Socialist society "rests upon triumphs of democracy and is rooted in the principles of liberty."<sup>2</sup> This principle became the basis for membership in the Labour and Socialist International. After lengthy negotiations and attempts to conciliate both the Communist International and the International Working Union of Socialist Parties (also called the Vienna Union, or the "2½" International), the Labour & Socialist International was formally constituted at Hamburg in 1923, as a legitimate descendant of the <sup>3</sup> Second International.

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1. LPCR 1921, p. 5.
  2. LPCR 1919, p. 198. This position was endorsed by the 1920 Annual Conference, 1,010,000 to 516,000, with approximately 1,600,000 abstentions, an unusually large number. LPCR 1920, p. 142.
  3. For details see LPCR 1919, p. 3ff; 1920, p. 3ff; 1921, p. 3ff; 1922, p. 13ff; 1923, p. 4ff, and C.F. Brand op.cit. Chapter VII.

The principles of the LSI in foreign policy were defined at the Hamburg Congress. It urged:

1. The use of international working-class activity to avert war, which could only mean the end of civilisation.
2. Self-determination and opposition to imperialism.
3. General disarmament.
4. The repudiation of military alliances.
5. Strengthening and democratising the League of Nations.
6. Opposition to capitalism.
7. International action against international reaction:
  - a. support of Russian independence
  - b. opposition to Russian persecution of Socialists.
  - c. opposition to the use of foreign policy to support reaction abroad.
  - d. opposition to Fascism. <sup>1</sup>

The LSI in its constitution asserted the effectiveness of common action by Socialist parties.

"The resolutions of the International will therefore imply a self-imposed limitation of the autonomy of the affiliated organisations.

"The LSI is not only an effective instrument in peace but just as absolutely essential during war.

"In conflicts between nations the International shall be recognised as the highest authority." <sup>2</sup>

During its life, there was no difficulty between the Labour Party and the LSI about the "self-imposed" limitation, because of the wide measure of agreement between Socialist parties, regardless of nationality, about the aims and methods of foreign policy.

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1. LPCR 1923, pp.11-15, "The Imperialist Peace" and "International Action against International Reaction." Sidney Webb was rapporteur for the former, and H.N. Brailsford presented the latter to the Congress.

2. Ibid. p. 16.

By the time that the LSI was constituted the internationalist anti-war section of the Labour Party had established its ascendancy. The 1922 general election, which made the Labour the official opposition, resulted in the return of 30 UDC members as Labour MPs and the election of Ramsay MacDonald as leader of the PLP. In the same year Annual Conference approved an ILP motion which declared:

"That this Conference is of the opinion that the Socialist and Labour Parties of all nations should agree to oppose any war entered into by any government, whatever the ostensible object of the war." <sup>1</sup>

The wheel had turned. The reaction against war was complete.

#### Governing -- On a Leash

"Labour stands for arbitration and disarmament."  
General Election Manifesto, LPCR 1929, p. 306.

Entry into office in 1924 provided the first test of the Party's views of international relations. Although the Government had only a short life and never was independent of Liberal support in the House of Commons, it was so active in foreign affairs that its achievements came to be regarded by its supporters as the major accomplishment of this term of office. MacDonald was Foreign Secretary as well as Prime Minister.

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1. LPCR 1922, p. 200. Cf. the ILP motion quoted supra, p. 15.

The chain reaction development of general war in 1914 was not forgotten. Dislike of sanctions and the particular guarantees involved led the Government to refuse to sign the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance because, as MacDonald wrote, "If the obligations created by the treaty be scrupulously carried out, they will involve an increase rather than a decrease in British armaments."<sup>1</sup> The Prime Minister had previously warned:

"Our interests for peace are far greater than our interests in creating machinery of defence. A machinery of defence is easy to create but beware lest in creating it you destroy the chances of peace."<sup>2</sup>

In place of the Draft Treaty the Labour Government supported the Geneva Protocol at the League of Nations. In contrast with the Treaty, which emphasized military sanctions, the Protocol was more concerned with settling international disputes by conciliation and arbitration before they led to war.<sup>3</sup> The sanctions of the Protocol were based upon the willingness of the signatories

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1. Cmd. 2200 (1924) p. 12.
  2. Arnold Toynbee Survey of International Affairs, 1924 (1926) p. 41. Henceforth, volumes in this series will be referred to as RIIA Survey. See also Angell After All, pp. 241-52, and W.M. Jordan Great Britain, France and the German Problem, 1918-1939 (1943) p. 202ff.
  3. See RIIA Survey 1924, p. 49ff for a detailed comparison of the two documents.

"... to co-operate loyally and effectively in support of the Covenant of the League of Nations and in resistance to any act of aggression in the degree which its geographical position and its particular situation as regards armaments allow." <sup>1</sup>

The determination of aggression was to be decided by international arbitration; the refusal of a nation to accept arbitration would be prima facie evidence of aggressive intent.

Although Arthur Henderson, who was the guiding force behind the British delegation at the drafting of the protocol, had no reservation about the use of sanctions under the Protocol, the Prime Minister had. MacDonald preferred to believe:

"The new order of the Protocol will be its own sanction. So soon as it has worked once or twice it will be impossible for a nation to defy it -- impossible not owing to the menace of force but to habit and other psychological and moral reasons. The nations will simply accept it. The era of peace will have come at last." <sup>2</sup>

Philip Noel-Baker, an advisor to the Labour delegation, argued that the risk of sanctions leading to a League of Nations war was only nominal, since sanctions by their very existence would lessen the risk of war. Besides, he pointed out, a British government would be free to choose the kind of assistance it supplied. <sup>3</sup>

1. Quoted in Ibid. p. 50.
2. J. Ramsay MacDonald "Protocol or Pact: The Alternative to War" (LP, c.1925) p. 5. For Henderson's views, see M.A. Hamilton op.cit. p. 242ff.
3. Noel-Baker The Geneva Protocol (1925) pp.132ff.

MacDonald prevented the British delegation from signing the Protocol at the same time as the French signed it, to the chagrin of Henderson and Lord Parmoor. Before the Labour Cabinet could discuss the Protocol, Labour was out of office. The 1925 Annual Conference and the Bureau of the LSI endorsed the agreement, but the Conservative Government refused to sign it.<sup>1</sup>

The Government demonstrated the regard the Labour Party had for the new Soviet regime by granting de jure recognition as one of its first acts. Trade and loan negotiations were also initiated. Accusations of "softness" to Communism arising out of the Campbell case precipitated a general election.<sup>2</sup> The Government fulfilled the Party's pledges about secret agreements by announcing it would lay all treaties with other nations on the table of the House of Commons for 21 days.<sup>3</sup> Conciliation between France and Germany was aided by agreement on the Dawes Plan and the evacuation of the Ruhr. Plans for the development of a naval base at Singapore were suspended, although the Government did begin eight ships for the Navy. MacDonald told Labour

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1. LPCR 1925, p. 252, p. 342 and Cmd. 2368 (1925).
  2. For an account of the Labour Government's policy toward Russia, see S.R. Graubard British Labour and The Russian Revolution, 1917-1924 (1956) Chapter XIII.
  3. 171 HC 2001-7, 1.4.24.

critics that these ships were only replacements, not additions to the Navy's strength, and construction would keep 4750 dockyard men from losing their jobs.<sup>1</sup> When the 1925 Conference reviewed the Government's record<sup>2</sup> it declared:

"with pride and appreciation that the nine months of the British Labour Government was an expression of a new spirit in diplomacy and the beginning of a policy for Great Britain of the promotion of peace and reconciliation among the peoples."<sup>3</sup>

The temper of the time is indicated by the willingness of a Conservative Government in 1928 to sign the Kellogg-Briand pact to "outlaw" war. Both Labour and Conservative parties agreed that another war was too terrible to contemplate.<sup>4</sup> So anti-war was the Labour Party that it again endorsed the idea of a general strike against war at the 1926 Annual Conference, five months after the collapse of the British general strike in May. When the Labour delegation brought this commitment to the attention of the LSI executive committee in February, 1927, the latter agreed to call a joint LSI and International Federation of Trade Unions conference in case of "an imminent danger of war."<sup>5</sup>

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1. 169 HC 2131-33, 2.2.24.

2. For this, see R.W. Lyman The First Labour Government, 1924 (1957).

3. LPCR 1925, p. 252.

4. Note the similarity between the LSI declaration, LPCR 1923, p. 11, and Stanley Baldwin's statement on the horrors of war, quoted in RIIA Survey 1928, p. 9.

5. LPCR 1926, p. 256; 1927, p. 63.

The Labour Party in the 1929 election urged, among other things, disarmament, the arbitration of international disputes and the re-establishment of relations with Russia.<sup>1</sup> In office, it lived up to these pledges. "On foreign affairs the Party was not only loyal it was enthusiastic. Foreign Office days were good days in the House."<sup>2</sup> Although Arthur Henderson had "a cheerful ignorance"<sup>3</sup> of geography and of foreign languages there was no doubt anywhere that he had a very clear idea of what he wanted to do as Foreign Secretary, and how to go about achieving security and disarmament. There was a subtle shift in emphasis between the League policy of the first and second MacDonald governments. The sanction of law was replacing the sanction of force. The first government tentatively agreed to support a loose form of military sanctions to maintain security. The second government stressed disarmament, rather than sanctions, as the way to maintain peace. Disarmament would stop war from beginning, whereas sanctions would risk bloodshed in order to stop war after it had begun.

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1. LPCR 1929, p. 306.

2. M.A. Hamilton op.cit. p. 348. For an account of the Government's achievements, see Ibid. p. 283ff, and Hugh Dalton Call Back Yesterday (1953) pp. 218-58. Henderson resigned as chairman of the LSI executive when appointment as Foreign Secretary made him ineligible for the former post under the LSI constitution. LPCR 1929, pp. 298-9.

3. M.A. Hamilton op.cit. p. 92.

The Government promptly authorised signature of the Optional Clause of the Statute of the Permanent Court of International Justice, which provided for the Court to settle justiciable disputes between nations, as had been urged by Annual Conference in 1926.<sup>1</sup> It also signed the General Act for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, which dealt with the arbitration of non-justiciable disputes between nations. The atmosphere of achievement was such that the Prime Minister was assuming the risk of war was virtually nil.<sup>2</sup> This was an assumption that Henderson was not ready to share, because international disarmament was not yet settled. "Of all security measures, disarmament is in itself the most important," he believed.<sup>3</sup> This showed in his efforts to call a World Disarmament Conference, long the aim of the Party. Henderson succeeded. The League fixed February 2nd, 1932, as the date for opening the Conference. Arthur Henderson was named its president. But before the Conference met, the Labour Government was out of office. The years of 'National' Government had begun. The Labour Party found itself without hope of immediately regaining responsibility

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1. LPCR 1926, p. 331.

2. Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, ed. by E.L. Woodward and R. Butler, second series, vol. I (HMSO 1946) p. 215.

3. M.A. Hamilton op.cit. p. 337.

for the nation's affairs.

From the collapse the Party salvaged the memory of the Government's achievements in foreign affairs. It had been active in working to strengthen the League of Nations and it had re-established relations with Soviet Russia. The Party could see fruits of the Labour campaign for disarmament in the suspension of work on the naval base at Singapore, started by the intervening Conservative administration, and in the signing of the five-power agreement at the London Naval Conference in 1930. The promise was even greater. Labour was increasing its recognition abroad too. In 1934 Arthur Henderson received the Nobel Prize for Peace; he was the second Englishman so honoured.<sup>1</sup>

### Collapse

The defection of MacDonald and the overwhelming defeat of Labour at the 1931 general election altered the temper and the leadership of the Party. Gradualism was discredited because it was associated with MacDonald and the Party's policy statements reflected this. The

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1. The other two Englishmen to receive the Peace Prize before 1945 were Norman Angell and Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, both of whom worked with Henderson.

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 46 members of the Parliamentary Labour Party, half of whom were miners, already embittered by the strikes of the previous decade, were living in a different world from their opponents, safe with a majority of almost 500. There were few contacts between the parties; each was deaf to the arguments of the other. George Lansbury became leader of the PLP and Clement Attlee was named his deputy. Sir Stafford Cripps quickly showed the ability to rank next to these two. All three rejected outright the existing system of international relations. As alternatives, Lansbury offered pacifism, Attlee urged a World Co-operative Commonwealth and Cripps, class war. They owed their prominence to the electoral defeat of better established men.<sup>2</sup>

The collapse of the PLP and the reaction against strong leadership gave increased influence to Annual Conference. Transport House officials were moving left. Beatrice Webb noticed the "relief" that the defection

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1. This number of Labour MPs is taken from the Party's official statement on the election, LPCR 1932, p. 9. Some books give larger figures; these are obtained by adding together officially sponsored MPs and those who, from the point of view of their parliamentary conduct, were Labour supporters.
  2. Defeated leaders included Henderson, Clynes, Tom Shaw, Charles Dukes, H.B. Lees-Smith, Wedgwood Benn and Fred Jowett. Younger MPs defeated included Arthur Greenwood, Dalton, Herbert Morrison, Emanuel Shinwell, Noel-Baker and A.V. Alexander. Bevin stood for Gateshead to demonstrate his support of the Party, and was defeated. Only one MP, Lansbury was on the NEC from 1931 to 1933.

had caused, since it was believed that the Party, while in opposition, could now develop a plan for governing that would not be smothered in office by the Court, the aristocracy and the City.<sup>1</sup> The trade unions, then in a period of militancy, took a more active interest in Labour Party affairs after 1931. The influence of Walter Citrine and Ernest Bevin was felt at meetings of the National Joint Council, which co-ordinated policy for the Labour Party and the TUC.<sup>2</sup>

In the atmosphere of betrayal, confusion and change, breakaway groups flourished.<sup>3</sup> The British Union of Fascists, formed in 1932 by an ex-Labour Cabinet Minister, made Labour supporters sensitive to the dangers of Fascism at home as well as abroad. The Independent Labour Party disaffiliated in July, 1932 to campaign militantly for a left-wing programme. A dissident

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1. Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1924-32 (1956) p. 292.
  2. After the 1933 Conference the body changed its name to the National Council of Labour. LPCR 1934, p. 14. This term will be used henceforth. In September, 1939, representatives of the Co-operative Union joined the group. LPCR 1939, p. 12.
  3. See J. Jupp The Left in Britain, 1931-40 (M.Sc.Econ. thesis, University of London, 1956) for a thorough study of these groups. Jupp warns, p. 248: "Individualism was a characteristic of the Left despite its ideological stress on the workings of social forces. An individualist inability to fit into conventional politics drove many dominant personalities into the unconventional minorities."

group within the ILP broke away to form the Socialist League, working nominally within the Labour Party, with Sir Stafford Cripps as its leading figure. The Communist Party of Great Britain used unemployment and fear of Fascism to recruit members from the Labour movement and to make friends within the Labour movement.

The one direct contact the Party had with foreign affairs was a personal one -- Arthur Henderson was chairman of the World Disarmament Conference which opened in Geneva in 1932. Henderson, however, was a man without a country. His personal efforts were defeated. The Labour Party blamed the British government in particular for the failure of the Conference and accused it of sabotaging disarmament.<sup>1</sup> The collapse of the Conference embittered relations between the parties and increased the determination of Labour to achieve international disarmament. Preoccupied with the faults of MacDonald, Baldwin and Simon, the Party spoke as if the return of a Labour Government would be followed by an all-around agreement to disarm. The opposition of other governments to disarmament was largely discounted.

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1. See M.A. Hamilton op.cit. pp. 404-444; LPCR 1932, pp. 59-60, p. 304ff; 1933, p. 192; 1935, p. 3ff; and "'National' Government's Disarmament Record" (LP, 1935).

"Take No Part in War"

"The pacifist is the realist."

C.R. Attlee, 286 HC 2044, 8.3.34.

The bitterness of the Labour Party toward the foreign policy of the 'National' Government was intensified by its conviction that the Government was wasting a great opportunity to secure peace by means of British influence. World War I had not shaken the confidence of Labour leaders in the dominant position of Britain among the major nations. As the 1934 manifesto declared, "No Government has more influence at Geneva than the British."<sup>1</sup> A Labour Government would increase Britain's influence by giving to it "the moral leadership of the world,"<sup>2</sup> a major asset in the minds of Party members.

Although the Party continually urged Britain to use the League of Nations to preserve peace, in the Manchurian crisis of 1931 it placed limits upon its demands for action. The military problems involved were not faced. Limited action was believed to be enough. As George Lansbury said:

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1. LPCR 1934, p. 242. Arthur Henderson was a product of Victorian England; Clement Attlee also shared in this upbringing and its long-term influence. C.R. Attlee As It Happened (1954), p. 97. Ernest Bevin, who was twenty when the Queen died, was raised in an environment of Victorian economic conflict, rather than of security.
  2. LPCR 1932, p. 321.

"There need not be war. The European powers, with the USA, have only got to make it plain that they will boycott Japan unless it acts reasonably and Japan will give away." <sup>1</sup>

When the National Council of Labour, taking a similar view, endorsed the withdrawal of ambassadors, if necessary, it added: "We trust this withdrawal will not be necessary." <sup>2</sup>  
Col. Josiah Wedgwood, no pacifist, expressed the implicit reservation of the Labour Party when he said of the Japanese:

"I do not think that they will be ideal governors of China but I am not prepared to go to war with them. I do not think that any of my honourable friends on these benches are prepared to do so." <sup>3</sup>

The Labour Party was not alone in its opposition to war. Stanley Baldwin's belief "The bomber will always get through" was quite the same as that of Attlee, who held, "There is no effective defence against air attack." <sup>4</sup>  
Public and political opinion had changed since the bellicose summer of 1914. The point of the Oxford Union's refusal to fight for King and country was that these undergraduates had been raised by their battle-weary

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1. Daily Herald, 2.2.32.

2. LPCR 1932, p. 68.

3. 275 HC 91, 27.2.33.

4. See 270 HC 632, 10.11.32 and 286 HC 2044, 8.3.34, respectively. Attlee quoted Baldwin's statement approvingly, Daily Herald, 4.4.35.

elders to believe that war was a terrible waste, not a romantic adventure.<sup>1</sup> The Fulham by-election of October, 1933 was widely interpreted at the time as a sign that the Labour Party's opposition to war had become a strong political asset. The Manchester Guardian said of John Wilmot, the Labour victor, "He made them believe that he was a peace man and his opponent was not."<sup>2</sup>

At this time, the Labour Party's attitude to pacifism was ambiguous. The 1925 Conference had endorsed the Geneva Protocol, which depended ultimately upon the sanction of force. A year later, the 1926 Conference endorsed the refusal to bear arms. The conflict between these two positions had not been resolved. There were three main views within the Party. Absolute pacifists opposed the use of force under any circumstances. They were a minority, but a very vocal, well organised and respected minority. One of their number was leader of the Party. At times Lansbury would speak as leader and at times as a private person. In a personal capacity he even asked world leaders to call a truce of God on

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1. See Oxford Magazine 16.2.33, pp. 426-7.
  2. Manchester Guardian 28.10.33. See also J.E. Wrench Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times (1955) p. 308; S. Baldwin, 317 HC 1144, 12.11.36, and the comments on this speech by R.O. Bassett, Max Beloff and J.C. Maxwell in the Cambridge Journal November 1948, p. 84ff; January, 1949 p. 237; and March 1949 p. 378.

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Mount Calvary.

The conditional pacifists were of two kinds.<sup>2</sup> One group opposed the use of force except in a war in defence of the working-class. Cripps was the chief spokesman for these class-conscious pacifists. He held:

"I am not opposed to working-class rearmament if it is necessary to provide protection for the workers against their class enemies in this or any other country, but I certainly am opposed most bitterly to rearming the British National Government for the purpose of increasing their power, so that they may do more evil in the future than they have done in the past."<sup>3</sup>

The absolute pacifists and the class-conscious pacifists successfully asserted themselves for the last time at the Hastings Conference in October, 1935. A resolution was offered by Sir Charles Trevelyan, reaffirming the 1922<sup>4</sup> and 1926 Conference decisions to take no part in war.

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1. The Times 19.8.35.

2. The word "pacifism" normally suggests an unconditional position, but to describe the Labour Party policy in the early 1930s without using this word conditionally involves awkward circumlocutions and does not convey the vehemence with which views were expressed.

3. S. Cripps "The Political Reaction to Rearmament" in Dare We Look Ahead? (1938) p. 124. Cf. P.S. Mumford An Introduction to Pacifism (1937) p. 97: "So many of the anti-militants fall to the old temptation of hating war -- except against their particular enemies."

4. These decisions had not lapsed. In 1932 Arthur Henderson said of the 1926 resolution: "If the time comes, if the necessity arises, that resolution will still be the policy of the Party." LPCR 1932, p. 232.

In view of the dramatic changes in Europe since 1926, pacifism was a more dangerous policy than it had been in the generally exhausted Europe of the 1920s. The resolution asked the Party:

"To pledge itself to take no part in war and to resist it with the whole force of the Labour Movement, and to seek consultation forthwith with the trade union and co-operative movements with a view to deciding and announcing to the country what steps, including a general strike, are to be taken to organise the opposition of the organised working-class movement in the event of war or threat of war, and urges the national joint bodies to make immediate approaches to endeavour to secure international action by the workers on the same lines."<sup>1</sup>

Hugh Dalton, who responded for the NEC, later declared:

"The Conference was in no mood to reject it or allow it to be withdrawn."<sup>2</sup> Dalton accepted the resolution with the misleading statement, "the resolution does not carry us perhaps quite far enough," that is, endorse economic and financial sanctions as well.<sup>3</sup> Henderson, speaking next, welcomed "this new spirit, this willingness to dare and to risk all things in the cause of peace."<sup>4</sup>

National pacifism may be used as a term to describe the doctrine that it is absolutely wrong to use force for national defence, although the use of force under

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1. LPCR 1933, p. 186.

2. Hugh Dalton The Fateful Years (1957) p. 45.

3. LPCR 1933, p. 188.

4. Ibid. p. 189.

international auspices is permissible. As Attlee explained to the House of Commons:

"We on these benches do not believe in national armaments; we could only agree to armaments if those armaments were part of a system of pooled security to be used on behalf of the League."<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine assumed that national governments could not be trusted to act with proper regard for the common interests of the people of all nations, but that the League of Nations (aided by a strong lead from a Labour Government) could subdue the rivalries and suspicions of national governments and act in the best interests of all.

Following the 1933 Conference, which had accepted a resolution approving an international military police force<sup>2</sup> as well as a resolution to take no part in war, the Party, in conjunction with the TUC, faced the task of reconciling these views at meetings of the National Council of Labour. The result was the memorandum "War and Peace", which was approved by the October, 1934 Conference, 1,519,000 to 673,000.<sup>3</sup> The document rejected the idea of a general strike against war because:

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1. 287 HC 466, 14.3.34.

2. LPCR 1933, p. 192.

3. LPCR 1934, p. 178. For the full text see pp. 242-6. This memorandum served as the basis for an official Party pamphlet "For Socialism and Peace."

"The lack of an independent trade union movement in such countries as Germany, Italy, Austria, etc., makes the calling of a general strike against their Governments an impossibility. In other countries such as Japan the trade union organisation is too weak to be able to restrain its Government.

"It is quite possible that aggressive action might come from some of those countries." <sup>1</sup>

It accepted national pacifism, maintaining that decisions on war and peace could not be left to a national government, that "loyalty to the world community on the issue of peace overrides any national duty and notably our duty to the government in war. We are world citizens because of our country's membership of a world community." The overriding claims of world citizenship were:

"1. Arbitration Insistence -- the duty to insist that our Government settle all its disputes by peaceful means and eschew force.

"2. Sanctions-Assistance -- the duty unflinchingly to support our Government in all the risks and consequences of fulfilling its duty to take part in collective action against a peace-breaker.

"3. War-Resistance -- the refusal to accept our Government's unsupported claim to be using force in self-defence; insistence on submitting this claim to the test of international judgment, or of willingness to arbitrate; refusal to serve or support our Government if it were ever condemned as an aggressor by the League or designated itself as an aggressor by becoming involved in war after refusing arbitration." <sup>2</sup>

An international police force was to be substituted for

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1. LPCR 1934, p. 245. See also Bevin's speech, TUCR 1934, pp. 331-3.

2. LPCR 1934, p. 245. Cf. these three duties of world citizenship with similar declarations of the LSI Congress, LPCR 1928, p. 332.

national armed forces. Preventive measures were to be co-ordinated with positive action to further economic and social justice by the use of "world planning, world action and world control in economic and financial questions, raw materials, transport, travel and communications, hours and conditions of labour, public health, etc."<sup>1</sup>

The small Parliamentary Labour Party in the House of Commons acted in accord with the manifesto, opposing the Government's service estimates for national defence. It offered motions calling for disarmament.<sup>2</sup> The gradual collapse of the World Disarmament Conference in the autumn of 1933 and the spring of 1934 increased Labour dissatisfaction with the MacDonald Government's foreign policy. It did not alter the Party's national pacifism, nor did the Government's disclosure in the spring of 1935 that Germany was rearming in violation of the Versailles Treaty. As Attlee said, "It is impossible for us to get any kind of security through re-armament. The only way we can have it is by trusting each other, and armaments breed distrust."<sup>3</sup> The PLP, the NEC and the General Council of the TUC discussed the question of rearmament in May 1935. Bevin, Citrine and Dalton urged the PLP to stop voting against the estimates,

1. LPCR 1934, p. 244.

2. See, e.g., 281 HC 579, 13.11.33. The vote was characteristic: 54 to 409.

3. Daily Herald 4.4.35.

Dalton accusing Attlee of wanting "to sponge on the Red Army."<sup>1</sup> Attlee emphatically supported the Party's position. There was no question of trying to match Germany in rearming, "equality and parity, in the present conditions of international anarchy, being but new names for the old balance of power and the old armaments race."<sup>2</sup>

Italian demands on Abyssinia brought home to the Labour Party in immediate terms the distance between the absolute pacifists and the class-conscious pacifists<sup>3</sup> on the one side, and the national pacifists on the other. At the Annual Conference debate on October 1st, 1935, Lord Ponsonby, a former under-secretary at the Foreign Office, argued that sanctions would not solve the real problem, which was to keep Mussolini from wanting to use force. Dr. Alfred Salter recommended the Abyssinians to offer hospitality to the invaders and "trust to the moral judgment and moral pressure of the whole world." George Lansbury, in a speech that was a moving personal testament, declared:

"God intended us to live peaceably and quietly with one another. If some people do not allow us to do so, I am ready to stand as the early Christians did, and say, 'This is our faith, this is where we stand, and, if necessary, this is where we will die.'"

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1. Dalton Fateful Years p. 64. See also LPCR 1935, p. 88.
  2. NEC statement, LPCR 1935, p. 5.
  3. See LPCR 1935, p. 153ff for all quotations.

To Sir Stafford Cripps the important thing was not what should be done but who should do it. He would not trust a capitalist government in war, even in defence of League principles. "It is unfortunate, tragic, but inescapably true that the British workers cannot at this moment be effective."

By contrast, Attlee defended the use of sanctions "for insuring the rule of law." Bevin bluntly pointed out to the Conference that the Party had already endorsed the principle of sanctions in 1934. To suggest they should not be followed now was to be disloyal to the Party. A Mineworkers delegate simply declared: "Force is the only thing the bully and the blackguard understands. Yet force works both ways; that the bully also understands. He will surrender only when faced with a stronger force than himself." There were only 103,000 votes against sanctions; 2,168,000 votes were cast in favour of sanctions.<sup>1</sup> The Conference decision made Lansbury's position impossible. Attlee succeeded him shortly before the general election, which, by returning 154 Labour MPs, restored the PLP to prominence in Party affairs and increased its quality and debating strength.

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1. Noel-Baker reported in an interview in April, 1958 that Hugh Dalton was at this time canvassing privately within the Labour Party for support for the Stresa front. Dalton confirmed this, in an interview in February, 1959.

The entry of German troops into the Rhineland faced the Labour Party with an awkward situation. It was firm in its opposition to Nazism in Germany, yet it was also firm in denouncing the Versailles Treaty, which had originally limited German rearmament and military re-occupation of the Rhineland. The NEC the year before had even assigned to the Treaty "a not inconsiderable share of responsibility for the present German menace, in so far as it has been created by external factors."<sup>1</sup> Consciousness of German grievances and the dislike of using force kept the PLP from protesting strongly against the German action. In the House of Commons Attlee made it clear that the Party attached no military significance to the Rhineland. Its motion in the debate simply declared support for "the rule of law and not particular territories."<sup>2</sup> Dalton wound up by frankly stating:

"Public opinion in this country would not support and certainly the Labour Party would not support, the taking of military sanctions or even economic sanctions against Germany at this time in order to put German troops out of the German Rhineland."<sup>3</sup>

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1. LPCR 1935, p. 3.
  2. 310 HC 1535, 26.3.36. Continental fears of Germany made the LSI take a more strongly anti-German line on the Rhineland crisis. See the joint statement of the LSI and the IFTU, 20.3.36, LPCR 1936, pp. 302-3.
  3. 310 HC 1454, 26.3.36. Dalton does not quote this in his usually thorough autobiography. He does record that at the time he had a high regard for the German air force. Fateful Years p. 88.

Afterwards, Dalton tried to get the PLP to abandon its practice of opposing the estimates, but he was defeated by a vote of 57 to 39.<sup>1</sup> The Party preferred to have clean hands rather than strong hands. Some Labour MPs preferred to have things both ways. Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, charged in the House that both front and back-benchers in the PLP had "besought me to place orders for munitions of war in their constituencies."<sup>2</sup> Inskip's statement went unchallenged.

The National Council of Labour, where Bevin and Citrine, as well as Dalton, Attlee and Morrison, were present, reacted more sharply to the invasion of the Rhineland, denouncing it as a violation of the Locarno Treaty, which Germany had freely signed. It called the action an indication of "the clear determination of Nazi Germany to repudiate its obligations and take what it wants by force."<sup>3</sup> The Council scorned the idea that Hitler recognised the rule of law and denounced him as an aggressor, but it nevertheless urged "a sincere effort must be made to discover a basis of negotiations with Hitler."<sup>4</sup> Although its analysis of the European

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1. Hugh Dalton Fateful Years p. 90. He noted in his diary: "Hitler's rearmament races on. Few people in the Labour Party seem to know or care anything about it."
  2. 315 HC 74, 20.7.36.
  3. "Labour and the Defence of Peace" (May, 1936) p. 3.
  4. Ibid. p. 9.

situation indicated the need for strong military forces, the pamphlet spoke of collective agreement among League powers as leading to "the lightening of the burden of armaments which are pressing on the world."<sup>1</sup> It welcomed the prospect of German participation in an all-in European settlement. It firmly rejected the notion that military alliances could be relied upon because "war is the inevitable result. British Labour cannot and will not support such a system."<sup>2</sup> That the more militant views interpolated in this pamphlet did not represent Party views is shown by the NEC resolution offered to the Annual Conference at Edinburgh in October 1936. While the resolution declared "Armed strength of the countries loyal to the League of Nations must be conditioned by the armed strength of the potential aggressors" it added, "having regard to the deplorable record of the Government, the Labour Party declines to accept responsibility for a purely competitive armament policy."<sup>3</sup> Amidst some confusion,<sup>4</sup>

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1. "Labour and the Defence of Peace" (May, 1936) p. 10.
  2. Ibid. p. 5.
  3. LPCR 1936, p. 182.
  4. See in particular, Morrison's speech, LPCR 1936, pp. 192-4, for a good example of the kind of distinctions drawn at that time regarding the use of force. Bevin called the speech "one of the worst pieces of tight-rope walking I had ever seen in this Conference." p. 203.

the resolution was passed. The meaning of the resolution was made clear in the House of Commons: the PLP continued to oppose the estimates.<sup>1</sup> If only rearmament could be limited, then, in time, a British Labour Government could give a lead, a lead that would result in the submersion of national antagonisms and an era of international peace.

From 1931 until 1937 the Labour Party remained optimistic about maintaining peace and disarmament through negotiation and discounted fears of German rearmament, because it believed that time was on the side of the peacemakers. As Arthur Greenwood, deputy-leader of the PLP, said in a Rhineland debate in the House of Commons on March 10th, 1936:

"No one believes there is a danger of war tomorrow. Everyone knows that there is time in which to talk."<sup>2</sup>

The Party framed its policy upon the assumption that there would be ample time to provide arms for an international police force or for sanctions after an all-round international security agreement had been signed.<sup>3</sup> To support rearmament under a Conservative

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1. See LPCR 1936, pp. 109-11 for a summary of its opposition.
  2. 309 HC 1936.
  3. See e.g., Attlee, 305 HC 45-6, 22.10.35. Henderson lived just long enough to conclude that the failure to put security before disarmament was the chief short-coming of Labour foreign policy. Angell, After All p. 252.

Government was regarded as increasing the chance of war, not strengthening peace by providing the resources for sanctions. As Aneurin Bevan put it, "It is no argument to say that because I may need a sword in the future that I should therefore put a sword in the hands of my enemy now."<sup>1</sup>

The continued existence of the League of Nations as a facade for co-operation strengthened the Party's faith; a Labour Government would stop the deterioration of the League as a force for peace. Labour leaders, by strongly advocating meetings at the League, supported "the comfortable impression that as long as these went on, all would be well."<sup>2</sup> The belief in common interests with the German, Italian and Japanese peoples and in real grievances of Germany gave the Party the idea that war could be stopped by eliminating these grievances. Britain's superior military strength was regarded as a legitimate German grievance. There was, as Clement Attlee recognised, little knowledge of or interest in military matters. "Until 1935 the Parliamentary Labour Party had given little or no serious attention to defence problems."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Tribune 19.2.37, quoted in Tribune 21 (1959) p. 29.
  2. Harold Butler The Lost Peace (1941) p. 36.
  3. As It Happened p. 136. See also Labour Party in Perspective (1937) p. 248. The PLP did not have a committee on defence until 1935.

Comrades Aiding Comrades

The Spanish Civil War revealed a significant difference between the views of the Party's nominal leaders on foreign affairs and those of the rank-and-file delegates. The attitude of the leadership, after consultation with Leon Blum, Socialist Premier in France, and with British Government leaders, was to avoid all risks of spreading the flames of war. The attitude of the rank-and-file was to rush into the fire to aid their Spanish comrades. The chief point at issue within the Party was whether the Republican Government should be allowed to buy arms from Britain.<sup>1</sup>

The Trades Union Congress faced the question on September 10th, 1936, a month before the Party's Annual Conference met. Citrine argued in favour of non-intervention, because, "Whatever the rights and wrongs of the situation might be, whatever the technical rights of the Spanish Government, they had to be considered against a much larger and much greater and much graver question":<sup>2</sup> the risk of general war. Citrine accepted reports

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1. The LSI on 28.7.36 called for "concrete, material and immediate" aid for the Spanish Government. LPCR 1936, p. 304. The National Council, faced with Fascist aid to Spanish rebels, in a statement of 28.8.36 expressed hope for the success of the Conservative Government's non-intervention policy. Ibid. p. 29. See also Dalton Fateful Years p. 95ff.
  2. TUCR 1936, p. 362.

that Germany and Italy were supplying men and arms to the Spanish rebels. He said this meant Anglo-French non-intervention was necessary to lessen the risk of general war. Citrine admitted, "It is a most difficult policy for Socialists to follow with all their sympathies the other way."<sup>1</sup> The Congress approved non-intervention, 3,029,000 to 51,000. The confusion of the period is illustrated by the interruption of this debate so that Congress could approve overwhelmingly a resolution stating that it would "actively resist"<sup>2</sup> conscription in the event of war.

At the Labour Party Annual Conference in Edinburgh the following month, Arthur Greenwood moved a resolution<sup>3</sup> that meant continuance of the non-intervention policy. He said the governing consideration was "the fear of general war". In support of the prudent NEC position Greenwood invoked the wishes of the common people to avoid war. After he spoke there was silence. The chairman finally had to ask the audience of 1200 delegates: "Will someone second the resolution?" Someone finally did. Sir Charles Trevelyan, who had moved the Hastings resolution, opposed non-intervention;

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1. TUCR 1936, p. 366. Bevin supported him.

2. Ibid. p. 389.

3. See LPCR 1936, p. 169ff, for the debate and quotations.

he said the Spaniards' immediate need was arms, not bandages and cigarettes. The resolution carried, 1,836,000 to 519,000. A Manchester Guardian reporter<sup>1</sup> noted, "If decisions were counted by hearts, not heads, the Labour Party Conference today saw the heavy defeat of the official policy of non-intervention."

The NEC line held for only two days. On October 7th, Conference heard two speeches from Spanish fraternal delegates which greatly increased the sentiment for ending the non-intervention policy immediately. A private session of the National Council of Labour was held afterwards. It decided to send Attlee and Greenwood at once to London to consult the Government<sup>2</sup> about violations of the non-intervention agreement. Two days later Attlee reported back that there was good reason to believe that the non-intervention agreement had broken down. Before the month was out the National Council admitted the failure of non-intervention and was supporting the right of the Spanish Government to buy arms, notwithstanding its previous statements about the risk of an arms race in Spain leading to general war. When the Conference met the following year, Sir Charles Trevelyan moved the unanimous resolution calling for the sale of arms to Spain. The NEC spokesman in the debate

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1. Manchester Guardian 6.10.36. Dalton called this "wallowing in sheer emotion, in vicarious valour." Fateful Years p. 100.
  2. LPCR 1936, p. 215.

anxiously assured delegates that the Executive had been eager to implement this policy.<sup>1</sup> The sense of fraternal solidarity with Spanish workers had proved strong enough to make the leaders follow their supporters along a path they did not wish to tread.

### The Commitment to War.

"Whatever the risks involved, Great Britain must make its stand against aggression. There is now no room for doubts or hesitation."

C.R. Attlee, Manchester Guardian 27.9.38.

The Spanish Civil War had a strong impact upon many members of the Labour Party.<sup>2</sup> It made immediately evident the strength of the military forces ready to challenge peace and the speed with which they could strike. The threat of general war seemed nearer. Pacifists were isolated, or, like Fenner Brockway and Sir Charles Trevelyan, converted to the use of force.

This vicarious baptism of fire was followed by the alteration of the Party's position on rearmament. For several years members had been in a quandary. They distrusted both the British Government and the Fascist governments. Because they feared the consequences of Conservative rearmament for national

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1. See LPCR 1937, pp. 5-16, pp. 214-5.

2. See e.g., M.I. Cole Growing Up into Revolution (1949) p. 182; Mowat op.cit. pp. 572-82; George Orwell "Inside the Whale" Selected Essays (1957) passim.

self-defence, they had opposed the service estimates. But in July, 1937 after extensive lobbying by Dalton, the PLP voted 45 to 39, to stop opposing the estimates. Advocates of the change argued that war might break out at any moment. If it was right to arm Spain to fight Fascism it was right to arm Britain similarly.<sup>1</sup> While the PLP stopped opposing the estimates it continued to harass the Government in defence debates.<sup>2</sup>

Under the pressure of events, the NEC prepared with much care for the October, 1937 Conference a statement, "International Policy and Defence," which accepted the temporary need for British rearmament because of the failure of the Conservative Government's foreign policy. It added that a Labour Government would continue rearmament "until the change in the international situation caused by its advent had had its effect."<sup>3</sup> The pamphlet urged renewed efforts to develop collective security within the framework of the League of Nations. It maintained that the security system would not be an "exclusive alliance of the pre-war pattern." Instead, the League "must be open to any nation to join and to

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1. Dalton Fateful Years pp. 132-140; Daily Herald 23.7.37.
  2. See Interim Report of the NEC 1938, pp. 65-9, for a summary of such actions.
  3. "International Policy and Defence" (LP, 1937) p. 4.

share its benefits." <sup>1</sup> It refused to accept the inevitability of war. There was, however, a grand confusion between theory and practice. In theory the Party was not markedly altering its early position, except for a change of Parliamentary tactics. It still remained committed to the idea of defence through the League. <sup>2</sup> Because of Fascist defections, however, the League was dominated by Britain, France and Russia. Therefore, to argue for collective security within the League was to argue in practice for a revival of the Triple Entente. Supporters of rearmament within the Party, recognising the political strength of their opponents, were satisfied with a policy statement that reaffirmed the old Party doctrines, although they now had a new significance.

When the Czech crisis was at its height in September, 1938 the threat of war was immediate. Slit trenches were dug in London parks and gas masks distributed. The Labour Party's position was clear but qualified: "The British Government must leave no doubt in the mind of the German Government that they will unite with the French and Soviet Governments to resist any attack on Czechoslovakia." <sup>3</sup> This was the position maintained

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1. "International Policy and Defence" (LP, 1937) p. 7.
  2. See e.g., PLP motion and debate of 7.3.38, 332 HC 1567ff.
  3. National Council of Labour statement, 8.9.38. LPCR 1939, p. 14.

throughout the tense period -- a firm stand on behalf of Czechoslovakia was coupled with the assumption that Britain would be acting in conjunction with its fellow League members, France and Russia. This was an assumption that British cabinet ministers did not share. The Party gave no indication of what the Government should do if France or Russia was unwilling or unable to act effectively. The motives stressed were those of morality, compassion and international law. The military consequences of opposing Hitler were not talked about.

When Chamberlain came back from Munich, the Party was in a very difficult position. It was politically impossible to call for rejection of the Munich agreement and invite war, yet the Party leaders did not like the terms that had forestalled war. The PLP had to step with special care, for fear that if it opposed Chamberlain too strongly he would call an election on the issue of war or peace, with electoral results as disastrous for Labour as 1918 or 1931. Its motion in the Commons debate cautiously welcomed the avoidance of war but disapproved the Czech concessions and called for renewed efforts for a security alliance without regard to German participation. Attlee said Munich left him with the same emotions he had at the evacuation of Gallipoli, a mixture of shame and relief.

"We all feel relief that war has not come this time. Every one of us has been passing through days of anxiety; we cannot, however, feel that peace has been established but that we have nothing but an armistice in a state of war. We have been unable to go in for carefree rejoicing. We have felt that we are in the midst of a tragedy. We have felt humiliation. This has not been a victory for reason and humanity. It has been a victory for brute force." <sup>1</sup>

Among the few who took exception to this from the Labour side during the lengthy debate were Lansbury, an absolute <sup>2</sup> pacifist, and James Maxton, a class-conscious pacifist.

After Munich there were second thoughts within the Party about the imminence of war. An attempt was made to rationalise the conflict between the Party's readiness to fight Hitler and its antipathy to war. In November, 1938, an official pamphlet asserted that at the time of Munich "war was not the alternative." <sup>3</sup> It accused Chamberlain of failing to make use of Britain's strong military position, fortified by mobilisation of the British fleet, and the unwillingness of German generals to fight. Interpretations like this made it much easier for Labour to continue opposing conscription when it was proposed by the Government. Bevin and Citrine protested strongly against conscription when consulted

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1. 339 HC 51, 3.10.38.

2. P.J. Noel-Baker told the 1941 Conference: "The road to war, and I say it with all veneration, was paved with Lansbury's good intentions." LPCR 1941, p. 142.

3. "The Full Facts of the Czech Crisis" (LP, 1938) p. 13.

by Chamberlain.<sup>1</sup> The trade unions did not wish to give a strongly distrusted government powers of compulsion over their members. The National Council of Labour in April, 1939<sup>2</sup> announced its "uncompromising opposition" to conscription.<sup>3</sup> The PLP opposed it in the House. In May, Conference endorsed its opposition to conscription, 1,967,000 to 574,000.

Although it refused to support conscription, in April, 1939 the Party was ready to support military guarantees to Poland, Greece and Rumania. The chief criticism was that these guarantees did not go far enough, that is, that they did not include a formal military alliance with Russia and France. Behind the scenes Labour leaders tried to develop support for an Anglo-Russian alliance, with little success.<sup>3</sup> Arthur Greenwood, deputy leader of the PLP, even invoked strategic considerations to favour the pact: Russia's "immense resources in raw materials and men, her huge area, her rapidly developing industry and her powerful

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1. Viscount Templewood Nine Troubled Years (1954) p.338.

2. LPCR 1939, p. 23. See also Attlee, 346 HC 1353, 7.4.39.

3. Contrast Dalton Fateful Years pp. 246-57 with Keith Feiling The Life of Neville Chamberlain (1946) p. 403ff. These Labour activities were in marked contrast to 20 years of Party criticism of the entangling alliances that led to World War I.

military forces." <sup>1</sup> When the House of Commons met on August 24th, Labour policy was in ruins, destroyed by the Russo-German Pact. <sup>2</sup> The National Council of Labour maintained after this surprise that "the obligations undertaken by Britain in defence of the independence of Poland shall be honoured to the full." <sup>3</sup>

The morning after Germany invaded Poland the NEC and the executive committee of the PLP jointly agreed that Britain should go to war in fulfilment of its pledges. Later in the day, the PLP voted 51 to 15 to support conscription. <sup>4</sup> Arthur Greenwood, the chief PLP speaker in the debate in the House that day, asked the Government to declare war forthwith. In contrast to August, 1914, it was the Government that appeared hesitant and the Labour Party that was pressing for war. The accumulation of Fascist triumphs in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Albania and Spain had impressed the Party with the need to adapt its policy in order to oppose Fascism

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1. "The Soviets' Fighting Forces" (1939) p.3.
  2. Tribune, which welcomed the Pact because it "reinforced the power for peace" (25.8.39) was outside the Labour Party ambit at this time. Cripps and his associates had been expelled earlier in 1939 for advocating co-operation with Communists. LPCR 1939, p. 44ff, p. 219ff, p. 274.
  3. LPCR 1940, p. 8.
  4. Dalton Fateful Years p. 265ff.

with military force. Just as the cry for the revival of the Triple Entente had been disguised in League of Nations language, so the Party's readiness to bear arms for the nation was justified by reference to accepted Party values. Fascism was not so much treated as a threat to the national interest but as a threat to the interests of the working-class everywhere. As Ernest Bevin put it:

"The middle classes are not doing too badly as a class under capitalism and Fascism. The thing that is being wiped out is the trade union movement. It is the only defence that the workers have got." <sup>1</sup>

Attlee explained the need to fight by telling critics at the May, 1940 Conference:

"We have to preserve the hope of our movement. Whatever may be the conditions in capitalist democracies, there is always that hope, there is always that opportunity; but where Nazism reigns all hope has gone." <sup>2</sup>

Such an interpretation of Labour's stake in the war harmonised with decades of Party propaganda. It did not make the war a broad challenge to the presuppositions upon which Party foreign policy statements had earlier rested.

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1. LPCR 1935, p. 179.

2. LPCR 1940, p. 124. The ILP declaration of September 15th 1939 echoed the 1914 declaration, but its reverberations were as slight as the earlier declaration's were great. Cf. J. McNair James Maxton: the Beloved Rebel (1955) p. 287, and supra, p.15.

In retrospect, one can see that the Labour Party tended to keep its head in the clouds while the Conservative Party buried its head in the sand. From the Labour point of view, the most important feature of the period is that the Party was not responsible for governing Britain; responsibility rested overwhelmingly with the Conservative Party, which had great majorities throughout the period, and was ready enough to govern without regard for the Labour Party's wishes.<sup>1</sup> Both parties were willing and anxious to believe that war could be averted; they feared that the alternative was the destruction of Britain. They differed more on means than ends. But war came. Ernest Bevin was not speaking for the Labour Party but as a Coalition minister when he delivered his judgment:

"If anybody asks me who was responsible for the British policy leading up to the war, I will, as a Labour man myself, make a confession and say, 'All of us.' We refused absolutely to face the facts. When the issue came of arming or rearming millions of people in this country, people who have an inherent love of peace, we refused to face the real issue at a critical moment. But what is the good of blaming anybody?"<sup>2</sup>

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1. Dalton later apportioned blame between the parties "according to our degrees of responsibility." 395 HC 1065, 8.12.43.
  2. 373 HC 1362, 29.7.41. Cf. Stanley Baldwin's comment in April, 1939: "There are statesmen who have never made a mistake. I am not one of them. I leave judgment to those who come after. None of us is free from blame." G.M. Young Stanley Baldwin (1952) p. 248.

War Again

"This war is a war in which the workers are involved."

C.R. Attlee, LPCR 1940, p. 124.

When the NEC and the executive committee of the PLP jointly agreed that Britain should support Poland they also decided that the Party should not go into coalition with the Chamberlain Government. Their deep distrust of Chamberlain was strengthened by the failure of Munich to prevent war. Attlee also believed that "in the conditions obtaining there was much to be said<sup>1</sup> for having an alternative administration available." The Party agreed to an electoral truce.<sup>2</sup> The electoral truce did not, however, rule out political activity. The PLP "challenged the Government repeatedly in the division lobby and has vigorously fought to uphold the declared policy of the Party in foreign and home affairs alike," the PLP report to Conference in 1940<sup>3</sup> declared.

Ideas on foreign policy maintained by the Party were not abandoned because of the outbreak of war. For example, Attlee told a Labour audience in November 1939:

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1. As It Happened p. 105.
  2. LPCR 1940, p. 19.
  3. Ibid. p. 93. See the Conservative Party's "Notes For Speakers and Workers" (1945) pp. 245-7 for further details of this.

"We are firm in our determination today, but we do hate the thought of the continuance of this war with all its cruelty, misery and waste, and we would seize any opportunity that may present itself to bring it to an end, provided that in so doing we can secure the aims for which we have entered upon it, and the conditions necessary to acquire a lasting peace." <sup>1</sup>

In February, 1940 the NEC declaration "Labour the War and the Peace" supported the war, but it stated hopefully:

"Before the peoples are still further estranged by hatred and suffering, a lasting and just peace may be brought nearer by stating clearly now what our immediate war purpose is." <sup>2</sup>

It recognised the legitimacy of the German claim to equality as well as the French claim to security, but declared that German evacuation of Poland and Czechoslovakia must come before peace. In the traditional manner of the International, the NEC spoke of the Nazi Government collapsing because of an internal revolution.

The reconstruction of the Government in May, 1940 followed the Labour Party's decision to press for a vote of no confidence against Chamberlain, but directly <sup>3</sup> resulted from the defection of Conservative MPs. Chamberlain immediately began negotiations with Labour

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1. C.R. Attlee, speech of 8.11.39 in War Comes to Britain (1940) p. 238.
  2. LPCR 1940, p. 188.
  3. See Dalton Fateful Years p. 297ff; Attlee As It Happened p. 112ff; J.W. Wheeler-Bennett King George VI: His Life and Reign (1958) p. 441ff.

leaders on the terms of coalition. "It was not a pleasant task to tell a Prime Minister that he ought to go, but I had no option but to tell him the truth," Attlee later related.<sup>1</sup> Attlee, keeping in close touch with the NEC, accepted the offer of places for himself and Arthur Greenwood in the five-man War Cabinet of Winston Churchill. Since the Labour Party held only one-quarter of the seats in the House of Commons, it was treated generously. The Annual Conference overwhelmingly endorsed the coalition three days later. Arthur Greenwood explained:

"If we stand out of the effective prosecution of the war, what right have we to ask for terms of peace? ... The deeper we get our foot in now, the more certain it is that we can impose on the other elements in the Government the kind of peace which we believe in."<sup>2</sup>

### Coalition

"We go in, as we say, as partners and  
not as hostages."

C.R. Attlee, LPCR 1940, p. 124.

The chief problem of the Labour Ministers in the Coalition Government was to keep in touch with their followers in the Party while keeping in step with their colleagues in the Cabinet. Because the Labour Party leadership was determined to maintain the Coalition until after victory in Europe, whenever the interests

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1. As It Happened p. 158.

2. LPCR 1940, p. 132.

of the Party and the Cabinet could not be reconciled, Party interests had to be temporarily suspended. But this did not happen often. Party differences had little to do with disagreements about how best to achieve the all-party aim of military victory. The varied complexion of the Cabinet meant that pragmatic, rather than doctrinaire reasons had to be used to justify actions. As Winston Churchill said of his war-time association with Attlee: "Our only differences in outlook were about Socialism, but these were swamped."<sup>1</sup> In contrast to World War I, the Labour members of the Government had power as well as responsibility. The power enabled them to do things to satisfy their supporters. The spread of Socialist ideas in war-time planning was evident from the first. On May 22nd, 1940, Attlee introduced the Emergency Powers Bill, which called for all persons to place themselves, their services and their property<sup>2</sup> at the disposal of His Majesty's Government. Strong Labour leaders were placed in charge of many fields of special interest to the Labour Party. Bevin became Minister of Labour and National Service, Morrison Home Secretary, and Cripps ambassador to Russia. While

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1. Winston Churchill The Second World War: Volume II (1949) p. 11.

2. 361 HC 151. See Attlee's speech, Daily Herald 12.7.43, for a list of Coalition actions in harmony with Labour's domestic principles.

Labour ministers did not occupy departmental positions in foreign affairs, a few were actively involved in the War Cabinet's consideration of foreign policy; all ministers shared responsibility for it.<sup>1</sup> For six months of the war Attlee presided over the Cabinet in the absence of Churchill.<sup>2</sup>

There was frequent consultation between Labour ministers and backbench members, both formally and informally.<sup>3</sup> The entry of Soviet Russia into the war had eliminated all opposition to the war, except for that of absolute pacifists,<sup>4</sup> but within the PLP a small ginger element, including Aneurin Bevan and Emanuel Shinwell, frequently criticised the Government's conduct of the war. The critics moved a number of motions against the Government. Divisions showed their weakness. For example, in a division in July, 1942, Aneurin Bevan found himself one of 25 in company with James Maxton, Hore-

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1. See Attlee's reminder on this point to the PLP, 408 HC 1614, 1.3.45. Churchill was more restricted by his Coalition colleagues than Roosevelt by his Cabinet. See R. Sherwood The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins: Volume I (1948) p. 362, and J.G. Winant A Letter from Grosvenor Square (1947) pp. 150-1.
  2. See R. Jenkins Mr. Attlee; an Interim Biography (1946) p. 222ff for a good sketch of Attlee's work in the War Cabinet and his relations with the PLP then.
  3. Interviews. Letter of 13.1.59 from Lord Pethick-Lawrence, an acting chairman of the PLP then.
  4. Rhys Davies continued to present the absolute pacifist line at Conference. See LPCR 1942, p. 102; 1943 p. 122.

Belisha and Sir Roger Keyes.<sup>1</sup> One organisation within the PLP, the Parliamentary Peace Aims group, campaigned, like the UDC and ILP in World War I, for a 'Socialist' statement of peace terms.<sup>2</sup> But unlike the UDC, its leaders, Rhys Davies, W.G. Cove and R.R. Stokes, were political lightweights and remained so after the war. The Coalition was so broad that it could only be opposed from within. Labour ministers were loyal. Because of their influence, they had little cause to complain.

The Party organisation was maintained at reduced force throughout the war, but was diverted to presenting propaganda for the war effort.<sup>3</sup> Conferences were of shortened duration. Differences within the Party on foreign affairs were obscured by the immediate aims of the war effort. So strong was support for the Coalition within the Conference that even the Government's highly unpopular Greek policy was carried, as a question of confidence in the Coalition, by the overwhelming majority of 2,455,000 to 137,000.<sup>4</sup> In the country, the atmosphere of the war effort, with its emphasis upon co-operation,

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1. 381 HC 610, 2.7.42.

2. See Parliamentary Peace Aims Group "Ignored Speeches" (1941); "More Ignored Speeches" (c. 1942).

3. See LPCR 1940, pp. 19-20, and following reports.

4. LPCR 1944, p. 150.

planning, government control and securing peace, was congenial to the Labour Party's philosophy. Several hundred meetings were held under Party auspices during the war to discuss post-war policy. Transport House<sup>1</sup> was more active than the Conservative Central Office. In addition, independent and Commonwealth candidates opposing Conservatives in many by-elections often put the case for Socialism without being restricted in defining the term by the NEC.

The principles of foreign policy which the Labour Party had supported before the war were reiterated regularly during the course of the conflict since, as Attlee put it, "If our policy had been followed, you would never have had this war."<sup>2</sup> The disappointments of the inter-war years strengthened the determination that after the Second World War international relations must be different. As an NEC report succinctly concluded:

"No peace, therefore, which does not aim at a Socialist reconstruction of international society can be accepted by the Labour Party as adequate."<sup>3</sup>

The first comprehensive treatment of post-war plans was "The Old World and the New Society", an NEC interim

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1. The opinion of R.B. McCallum and A. Readman The British General Election of 1945 (1947) pp. 3-5.
  2. LPCR 1941, p. 133.
  3. Ibid. p. 4.

pamphlet issued in the spring of 1942. The statement was generally in agreement with pre-war statements of Party principles on foreign affairs; in so far as it differed in tone it was because of a bias to the left. This was not simply due to Harold Laski's influence upon the drafting of the document. The report was considered by a broadly representative policy committee, which included Attlee, Dalton and Morrison as members. It was released as a Transport House document, and the Party organised 33 regional conferences to discuss it.<sup>1</sup> In retrospect, Hugh Dalton declared, "It fairly reflected what we were thinking at the time," although adding the qualification that because of the very heavy demands ministerial jobs made upon the time of leading NEC members, "it was not profoundly analysed."<sup>2</sup>

The document reaffirmed Labour assumptions about the international nature of the interests of the common people in an elaborate description of the coming world government. It defended the League, which "failed less because of any inherent error in the objects at which it aimed, or in the rules of law it established and the institutions through which it worked, than because selfish

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1. The collective nature of the manifesto was strongly emphasized by a Transport House official when interviewed in January, 1959.
  2. Interview, February, 1959.

national interest deprived it of the conditions precedent to success." <sup>1</sup> War-time allied co-operation was seen as foreshadowing post-war co-operation between the Big Three. With left-wing logic the pamphlet indicted capitalism: "Conflict is the necessary consequence of dictatorship, and dictatorship is the logical outcome of a capitalist economy." Support for the working-class movement in other countries was given:

"It would be a grave disservice to the future of the world to use the power of the victors, under penalty of postponement of recovery, to promote in any country where revolution may occur the claims of any privileged interest, whether of class or religion or dynasty, against which that revolution is a protest."

The foreign policy resolution presented by the NEC to the 1942 Conference was based upon this statement. It was more moderate than the manifesto in some respects, but gave even greater prominence to support of the Soviet Union. It recognised also: "The British Labour movement has a special responsibility to the international working-class." <sup>2</sup>

In response to agitation from the floor at the 1943 Conference for a more specific statement of post-war aims, the NEC agreed to prepare a new statement. Hugh Dalton, a prominent member of the International Subcommittee of the NEC, was appointed to prepare the first

1. All quotations: "The Old World and the New Society" pp. 22-6.

2. LPCR 1942, p. 152.

draft. Dalton was determined to impress his personal views on the statement, and saw to it that he was named to prepare each revision of the document, so that he could prevent sections containing his own strong opinions on Germany, the need for military self-defence, etc., from being diluted. In order to placate critics, after "a long struggle of successive revisions, compromises and conciliations," it was agreed to accept "substantial new sections" from Laski and Noel-Baker.<sup>1</sup> Dalton later recalled, "I didn't care what vague generalities got in as long as the much more precise and practical sections I wrote remained substantially unchanged."<sup>2</sup> The most noteworthy feature is not the difference between the manifestos written two years apart, but the internal contradictions of the later one. Leonard Woolf commented that "The International Post-war Settlement" spoke with

"Two contradictory voices, one that of international Socialism and the other of an apologetic Socialism which assures the world that it is just as 'realist' and 'strong' as Tory nationalism and not really very different from it."<sup>3</sup>

Such were the internal contrasts that Konni Zilliacus cited it frequently to support his criticism of Ernest

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1. Dalton Fateful Years p. 423.

2. Interview, February, 1959.

3. "The International Post-War Settlement" (Fabian Society Research Series #85, 1944) p. 3.

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Bevin's actions after the war, although in parts it anticipated Bevin's own handling of immediate post-VE Day problems.

Of the traditional Labour principles, the "International Post-War Settlement" unequivocally affirmed only one: the need for co-operation, particularly between Britain, Russia and America. As regards internationalism, the document faced two ways. In a section headed "Nucleus of a World Organisation", the basis of the forthcoming international organisation was seen as the Big Three, and the limits of the organisation were defined as the limits of Big Three agreement, without regard to traditional Party ideas of a supra-national organisation.<sup>2</sup> The idea of an international police force was rejected as "Utopian"; instead, joint occupation of Germany was suggested as "a practical experiment in an international force."<sup>3</sup> In contrast to this was the tone of the section headed "International Political Organisation." It stated: "The international political organisation must establish the binding force of international law" and proclaimed the need for military

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1. See, e.g., LPCR 1947, pp. 160-1. G.D.H. Cole, A History of the Labour Party gives a thorough account of the "Old World and the New Society" pp. 414-9, but does not refer to the "International Post-War Settlement".

2. LPCR 1944, p. 5.

3. Ibid. p. 6.

enforcement of decisions of the world court.<sup>1</sup> The document contained contrasting attitudes as regards military forces. One section stated "It is better to have too much armed force than too little"; a subsequent section presented disarmament as a major<sup>2</sup> object of the international political organisation. The conclusion, which was headed "The Further Future", stressed the need for Socialism throughout the world to insure peace and justice. It did not match the tone of the opening sections.

The NEC resolution approved by the December, 1944 Annual Conference in conjunction with the policy statement<sup>3</sup> emphasized those elements consistent with the traditional Labour outlook and not the characteristically Dalton views. It urged "an international staff disposing of an adequate armed force," as well as a world court and an effective economic organisation "to secure full employment and rising standards of life." It reaffirmed the need for a reduction of arms, international co-operation and the close association of Socialist parties in all countries. In moving the resolution, Attlee looked backwards, emphasizing the continuity of the Party's views, rather than anticipating difficulties in post-war foreign affairs. Dalton, in

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1. LPCR 1944, pp. 7-8.

2. Ibid. pp. 6-7.

3. Ibid. pp. 131-2.

summing up for the NEC, dealt primarily with amendments and speeches from the floor; he did not stress reservations about the effectiveness of traditional Labour ideas on foreign affairs. The tenor of the debate, which included speeches by Will Lawther, of the Mineworkers Federation, and Arthur Deakin, of the Transport and General Workers Union, indicates that the delegates agreed with Attlee about the need to reform the conduct of international relations. At meetings with foreign Socialist parties held about the same time NEC delegates again affirmed their commitments to their pre-war ideas.<sup>1</sup>

During the war, the articulate rank-and-file repeated with increased militancy the traditional Party demand for reorganising international relations. Militants talked as if the post-war world could be made safe by the accession of Labour and Socialist parties to power. As Michael Foot recalled:

"There was a general belief that Europe was going left. 1945 would be like 1848 all over again, with left-wing governments everywhere, and a Labour Government in Britain that would take the lead."<sup>2</sup>

Disagreements and worries within the Cabinet did not affect

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1. See LPCR 1944, pp. 212-4 and LPCR 1945, pp. 163-70.
  2. Interview, January 1959. To this he added: "We didn't stop to think then that we would be faced with the problem of considering what kind of a Labour Government we would get."

the rank-and-file in the country, whence came the great majority of members of the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1945, and also the great majority of Ernest Bevin's post-war critics. The job of the Labour ministers in Coalition was to maintain the confidence of their supporters at that moment, not to risk losing it by uttering unpalatable truths about what might be necessary in the post-war world. Only by maintaining confidence in themselves within the Party could Labour ministers maintain their position in the Coalition. There were precedents to remind them what would happen if they became estranged from their supporters while in Coalition. Attlee was content, when speaking of the post-war situation, to act as spokesman for the Party, voicing the hopes of the ordinary member, rather than to act as an educator of the Party, measuring hopes against specific difficulties of government. Nor was Attlee alone among British and American leaders in encouraging optimism in war-time about post-war possibilities. He had a personal reason for going along with the NEC and the rank-and-file in their optimism, instead of trying to stand against it. His own political position as leader was not fully secure. Taking an unpopular line on foreign affairs could have lost him supporters, and presented his opponents with an issue upon which they might have capitalised. It would also have been out

of character for Attlee to say more than was absolutely necessary.

The nearer victory came the more hopes rose that the post-war world would see a revolution in international relations.<sup>1</sup> Major Denis Healey summed up this point of view when, speaking as a returning soldier, he told the May, 1945 pre-election Conference:

"The crucial principle of our own foreign policy should be to protect, assist, encourage and aid in every way the Socialist revolution wherever it appears ... If the Labour Movement in Europe finds it necessary to introduce a greater degree of police supervision and more immediate and drastic punishment for their opponents than we in this country would be prepared to tolerate, we must be prepared to understand their point of view."<sup>2</sup>

When Ernest Bevin addressed the same Conference on foreign affairs it was not his warning, "You will not do it by slogans" or his plea to the Party "not to bury its head in the sand" that was remembered. The phrase that stuck in the minds of many Party members was his claim<sup>3</sup> "Left understands left." Attlee, recently returned from the difficult negotiations of the San Francisco Conference of the United Nations, for the first time spoke cautiously, instead of optimistically, about the immediate post-war world. He distinguished between traditional Labour foreign policy and what a prospective

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1. See Tribune, 30.3.45.

2. LPCR 1945, p. 114.

3. Ibid. p. 115, p. 117

Labour Government might be able to do. "I am afraid that sometimes people think that if only we get the nations together, they will accept our ideas," he said, but it is "not so easy."<sup>1</sup> Conference delegates were working up enthusiasm for the general election; they were not meeting to anticipate the problem of government. In two speeches, Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin could hardly redirect the faith developed by decades of propaganda and experience, and defined and continually reaffirmed by the leaders of the Labour Party.

#### The General Election

"The future will not be easy. But this time the peace must be won."

"Let us Face the Future"  
(LP, 1945) p. 2.

The differences in opinion that were just beginning to emerge in the Party on questions<sup>of</sup> foreign affairs were of little importance in the general election campaign; if anything they were a slight asset. The moderate statements by Attlee and Bevin could appeal to independent voters; the militant prediction of drastic changes in international relations could stimulate enthusiasm among the converted. As long as the Party could keep foreign affairs from becoming a major issue it stood to gain, because domestic issues more immediately concerned voters,

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1. LPCR 1945, p. 107. The NEC did not present a foreign policy resolution to the 1945 Conference.

and here the inter-war record of the Conservative Governments was considered especially vulnerable. A British Institute of Public Opinion poll, for example, found 41% interested in housing and only 5% interested in problems of international security.<sup>1</sup> The Labour Party's manifesto, "Let us Face the Future," relegated foreign affairs to the end. Under the heading "What the Election will be About" it listed food, work, homes and welfare services. An effective foreign policy, it said, required successful handling of domestic affairs.<sup>2</sup> The section on foreign policy was broad enough to encompass the views of almost all members of the Party; it reiterated Labour's faith in co-operation, in internationalism and in working-class interests that transcended national boundaries.

During the campaign, two contrasting themes emerged in Labour speeches. Attlee and Bevin expressed hopes that Coalition agreement on foreign policy would continue in the post-war world, hopes that were also echoed by a variety of persons, including Eden, Viscount Templewood,<sup>3</sup> the Archbishop of York and The Times itself. Bevin declared, during the campaign:

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1. McCallum and Readman op.cit. p. 150.

2. p. 3.

3. The Times 28.6, 22.2, 31.5 and 5.7 1945, respectively.

"The foreign policy being pursued at the moment was devised by the Coalition Government, not by the Tory members alone, but by a combined effort and is based upon collective security, a policy for which Labour has always stood. As long as that object is vigorously pursued, then Labour will find an opportunity of co-operating with all other parties." <sup>1</sup>

Attlee faced both ways. When he accepted Churchill's invitation to attend the Potsdam Conference, he said, "I do not anticipate that we should differ on the main lines of policy, which we have discussed together so often." <sup>2</sup> In his exchange of letters with Churchill in early July about his position at Potsdam, he pointed out:

"The fact that in the late Government members of all parties were in accord on the main lines of our foreign policy does not alter the fact that the complexion of the new House of Commons will decide the course of future policy as it did before the war, when you and I both disagreed with the policy of the Conservative Party." <sup>3</sup>

Simultaneously, other Party figures were emphasizing the differences between a foreign policy based upon Socialist principles and a Conservative foreign policy. Harold Laski, in questioning the appearance of Attlee at Potsdam, was not only trying to assert the authority of the Party chairman but also to draw a sharp distinction between the foreign policy of Mr. Churchill and what a

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1. The Times 23.6.45.

2. The Times 16.6.45.

3. The Times 3.7.45.

Labour foreign policy would be. Attlee could not bind the Party to support Churchill's Potsdam commitments unconditionally, Laski declared, because:

"When we win this election, we want to be free in Socialist terms to make our policy for our own Socialist purpose." <sup>1</sup>

Sir Stafford Cripps frequently repeated the point, made by Dalton and Bevin at Conference, that the Labour Party would be better able to co-operate with Soviet Russia than the Conservatives because of a community of class interests. <sup>2</sup> Labour's election manifesto warned:

"Let it not be forgotten that in the years leading up to the war the Tories were so scared of Russia that they missed the chance to establish a partnership which might well have prevented the war." <sup>3</sup>

As had been the case before the war, Labour candidates for the House of Commons distinguished themselves from Conservative candidates in their approach to foreign policy. The chroniclers of the election noted that while 84 per cent mentioned foreign affairs in their addresses, "Much of the attention which they gave to foreign policy in the nineteen thirties survives, and also much of the spirit of that period." <sup>4</sup> Conservative

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1. The Times 20.6.45. See also New Statesman 23.6.45, and Kingsley Martin Harold Laski (1953) p. 169ff.
  2. See McCallum and Readman op. cit. pp. 114-5, p. 138.
  3. "Let Us Face the Future" (LP, 1945) p. 11.
  4. Ibid. p. 97. See e.g., the election address of Konni Zilliacus, reprinted in his pamphlet "Why I was Expelled" (1949) p. 10. It was approved by Transport House.

candidates, they added, treated foreign affairs "with more vigour and in less facile language than the Labour candidates, and they link the question of foreign policy to the maintenance of strong armed forces." <sup>1</sup> Only 12 per cent of Labour candidates mentioned this need, compared with 59 per cent of the Conservatives.

The general election did not depend upon fine distinctions. The result was a landslide; 393 Labour MPs were returned, 198 Conservatives and 49 members of other groups. The afternoon the results were announced a "very surprised" Clement Attlee went to Buckingham Palace and received a commission from the King to form the Government. <sup>2</sup> The following day, after hesitations, <sup>3</sup> he settled upon Ernest Bevin as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Attlee and Bevin flew to Potsdam the following morning, to resume the Big Three Conference.

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1. McCallum and Readman op.cit. p. 98.

2. As It Happened p. 148.

3. Wheeler-Bennett op. cit. p. 638, quotes the King as writing in his diary for the evening of July 26th that Attlee "suggested" Dalton as Foreign Secretary. "The King said 'I hoped he would make Mr. Bevin take it.' He said he would." (The underscored he is ambiguous.) The following day Attlee told Dalton just before lunch, "Almost certainly the Foreign Office." At 4 p.m. he named Dalton Chancellor of the Exchequer. Dalton Fateful Years p. 468. Attlee denied that the King determined the matter. (Interview, January, 1959). Questions of personality quite unrelated to foreign affairs also entered into the decision. See The Observer 23.8.59.

The Labour Party, for the first time in its history, was fully responsible for the conduct of British foreign policy.

### The Principles Defined

In its political development the Labour Party showed the inclusive and absorptive character of an Established Church, rather than the divisive sectarianism of some Continental Socialist groups. Politically, it rested first upon the trade unions, whose immediate interest in political action was motivated by a desire to protect and advance their members. The energy that raised Labour to a national party came primarily from salvationist Socialists, who preached the Socialist cause, not as a means of piecemeal industrial gain, but as a means of sweeping away the existing structure of society and bringing about a world-wide millenium. Important in developing the Party into a body capable of forming a government were the middle-class social reformers, who found in Socialism a method for remaking the world along humanitarian and rational lines. One notable element in the Party was devoted to Socialism in order to promote pacifism; another, to wage class war. Like any political organisation, the Labour Party attracted a number of cranks and opportunists.

British Socialists differed in their manner of thinking about politics. Pragmatic Socialists were

concerned chiefly with short-term programmes. The gains envisaged were immediate, as in the trade union world; the Socialist society was placed above the battle, a sign of the world to come -- at a somewhat later date. These people ran the risk of meeting problems in which their pragmatism prescribed one solution and their Socialism another. Utopian Socialists always kept their goals immediately before them, as a guide and subject for analysis, a constant inspiration for propaganda. Because the gap between these goals and the world was great, Utopian Socialists ran the risk of being compromised or being ignored. The two outlooks interacted, within the Party and within individuals.

Because of the diversity of political pressures in a mass-membership party, the principles of action that Labour developed in foreign policy were not as systematic, logical or original as the principles developed by seminal writers on Socialist theory and international relations. But the job of a political party is not to make an original contribution to political philosophy but to influence government. The relative freedom of the Labour Party from doctrinal splits helped it to become one of the most successful of the parties affiliated to the International.

From the preceding survey, the following emerge as the traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy

developed by the Labour Party prior to its achievement of power in 1945.

A Labour Government would:

1. Act in the belief that there were no essential conflicts of interest between nations and therefore bring about increased co-operation between nations, by means of the mutual recognition of common interests. (Co-operation)

2. Rely upon common class interests with left-wing governments in other countries to provide the original nucleus of states to practise international economic and political co-operation, and oppose the continued existence of reactionary governments. (Class-consciousness)

3. Surrender national sovereignty in military, economic and judicial matters in order to create a European or global organisation with sufficient power to maintain permanent peace. (Supra-nationalism)

4. Use diplomatic, economic and moral influence to secure its ends and reject the use of military force for national ends and the system of balance of power politics. (Anti-militarism)

An underlying assumption of these four principles was the reality of internationalism, that is, of regarding the interests of the British people as transcending the boundaries of the United Kingdom and fundamentally the same as those of the majority of peoples in other countries. As Arthur Henderson explained:

"The Labour and Socialist movement is international to the core. We are against national and racial as well as class barriers. We stand for economic organisation, social justice and freedom, not only within one country but throughout the world. We know that Socialism in any one country

will live poorly and dangerously so long as the rest of the world is a prey to capitalist anarchy. We know that in order to get on safely and swiftly with building the Socialist commonwealth we must underpin its foundations by making peace more secure than it is today. We recognise that international anarchy is as much the enemy of Socialism as economic anarchy." <sup>1</sup>

It was this commitment to internationalism as a viable alternative to the existing practice of basing foreign policy upon national interests that gave the Party a positive as well as a negative programme. No Labour leader was more the weathervane of the movement in the 1930s than Clement Attlee; none was more emphatic in his assertion of internationalism as the basis of the foreign policy of the next Labour Government.

The enduring nature of these traditional Socialist principles is illustrated by the declaration, "International Democracy", issued by the Socialist International upon its rebirth in July, 1951, as a statement of the basic principles of international Socialism. The British Labour Party concurred in maintaining, among other things, that:

"Absolute national sovereignty must be transcended."

"Democratic Socialism is international because it aims at liberating all men from every form of economic, spiritual and political bondage."

"Democracy must therefore be established on an international scale under an international rule of law."

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1. LPCR 1933, p. 189.

"Democracy, prosperity and peace require a redistribution of the world's wealth and an increase in the productivity of the underdeveloped areas."

"Peace can be secured only by a system of collective security. This will create the conditions for international disarmament." 1

But durability is not the only standard by which to judge political principles. The next section will consider their utility, in the light of the experience of the 1945-51 Labour Government.

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1. All quotations from S. Rose "The Socialist International" (LP, 1955) p. 19. The original text was drafted by Solomon Grumbach, a French Socialist, and revised by a committee of which Denis Healey was one of the three members.

## Chapter II

## CO-OPERATION DOES NOT COME

"We are confident that the vital interests of all nations are the same. They all need peace."  
 "The International Post-War Settlement"  
LPCR 1944, p. 4.

Traditionally, co-operation was both a means and an end in Labour foreign policy. By means of co-operation the peoples of the world would secure peace and prosperity. The aim of international relations was to build the World Co-Operative Commonwealth, an international Socialist society in which all peoples would achieve fulfilment by working harmoniously for the good of all.<sup>1</sup> The Party regarded diplomatic co-operation as something quite distinct from compromise. The two terms should not be confused. Co-operation meant action in the common interest of all. Compromise meant action acceptable to all parties, although it might not be in complete accord with the interests of any of them. For example, to the Labour Party, the Dawes Plan was not an example of international co-operation but of compromise. The principle was justified on the grounds that: "Although states differ in their internal

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1. For an outline of this society see "War and Peace"  
LPCR 1934 p. 242ff.

constitution and methods of government, the interests of all demand their co-operation for the common end of peace."<sup>1</sup>

To talk of irreconcilable conflicts of interests was to speak in the outmoded and discredited language of power politics. It was to introduce the serpent of knowledge into the Socialist Eden. The Labour Party held as a basic tenet that exclusively national interests were illusory or based upon transitory misconceptions. 'Real' interests were international. They were rooted in the nature of man, as defined by the Party's thinkers. International co-operation meant that the old system of power politics, in which groups of nations co-operated with each other, to the exclusion or at the expense of mutual opponents, was wrong. Limited co-operation for selfish ends had always led to quarrels and then to war. By contrast, a Labour Government in Britain, by acting in the common interests of all peoples, could lead the peoples of the world to global co-operation and peace.

This faith in co-operation gave the Party's internationalism a very tender-hearted quality, in marked contrast to the internationalism of the believers in class

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1. "Labour and the Defence of Peace" (National Council of Labour, 1936) p. 11.

war. The Party's special and immediate interest in working with left-wing forces in other nations<sup>1</sup> was not allowed to obscure the greater and wider goal: the elimination of all class and regional differences by the establishment of an international society. The two policies were complementary and derived from different strands in the Party's heritage. They did not conflict, since the Party's class-consciousness never led it to assert that class differences would inevitably cause an international class war.

The optimism within the Party about the prospects for all-round international co-operation was greatly reinforced by the achievements in foreign affairs of the two Labour governments of the 1920s. The Party had not developed before 1945 a mature and informed approach to irreconcilable conflicts of interests between nations or to political dilemmas since, ex hypothesi, nations should and could be brought to discard these selfish interests for the sake of the common good. For example, the Party did not see any great difficulty in resolving the post-Versailles conflict between France and Germany. Labour proclaimed that the conflict could be ended by the development of

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1. The Government's record in the light of this principle is discussed in Chapter III.

international legal institutions to preserve the peace. Even the rise to power of Nazi Germany did not alter the Party's faith in co-operation. Within the Labour Party Hitlerism was interpreted as a result of the Allied failure to conciliate Germany after the 1918 Armistice; it was cited as another example of the danger of trying to secure the interests of some nations at the expense of others. World War II, like World War I, was explained as the result of the failure of the existing order of international relations. Like earlier conflicts, it was further proof of the need for a new international order based upon Socialism.<sup>1</sup>

Allied co-operation to achieve victory in World War II raised hopes in the Labour Party of post-war co-operation. In 1942 "The Old World and the New Society" declared:

"Our partnership in war can, if properly organised, be the basis of an international experiment from the experience of which a creative peace may emerge."<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the war, co-operation, in the first instance, meant Big Three unity. The December, 1944 Annual Conference, facing this issue, triumphantly reaffirmed the Party's traditional position, by quoting and

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1. See e.g., Aneurin Bevan Tribune 7.4.44.

2. p. 22.

endorsing the words of Stalin:

"The alliance between the U.S.S.R., Great Britain and the United States is founded not on accidental transitory considerations but on vitally important and long-term interests." <sup>1</sup>

Many problems that confronted the Labour Government could be examined in order to study how it responded to irreconcilable diplomatic conflicts. For example, the Government failed to find grounds for compromise, let alone co-operation, in its relations with Communist China,<sup>2</sup> in the Schuman Plan and in the Anglo-Iranian Oil dispute. Here, problems of co-operation among the Big Three will be used as case histories, because hopes for Big Three co-operation were so great in 1945 and because these relations were so important to the Labour Government.

### "A Snag of Reality"<sup>3</sup>

Ernest Bevin brought to the Foreign Office a mind developed by a lifetime of trade union work. Because he knew the high cost of industrial conflict, Bevin was a strong believer in co-operation. He deprecated militancy for its own sake, and the militant's conception of essentially antagonistic interests. Ever since

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1. LPCR 1944, p. 131.

2. These topics are examined from other points of view in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, respectively.

3. The phrase is that of James F. Byrnes Speaking Frankly (1947) p. 82.

visiting America in 1915 he had before him the vision of the fruits that could be garnered by co-operation on a continental and worldwide scale. As a transport workers' leader in a trading nation, he knew from first-hand experience how much Britain depended upon good relations with other nations, and the reciprocal benefits which other nations received from good relations with her. Bevin was unusually skilled in keeping long-term as well as short-term aims simultaneously in mind.

Co-operation was not the only element in Bevin's negotiating technique. He also knew from his trade union experience that the terms of co-operation reflected the power relationships of the parties concerned. In foreign policy, Bevin considered co-operation as the resultant of disparate national policies, instead of the consequence of the general recognition of the rightness of a single policy in the interest of all nations.

As soon as Bevin took office he was confronted with the problem of German reparations. After World War I the Labour Party had found it possible to conceive of a 'practical' settlement of the reparations problem; since its proposals were never put to a test, the irreconcilable nature of the interests involved was not properly recognised within the Party. In 1945 Labour was responsible for putting a solution into practice. In

office, the Labour Government never pretended that there was a single solution that would satisfy all. From the first, the conflict between the British (and the United States) and the Russian (and often the French) interests was recognised and accepted. The reparations problem refuted the traditional Socialist idea of harmonious interests. Russia wanted German reparations payments of capital goods and of current manufactures to begin at once, so that they could be used to help rebuild Russia, which had suffered so severely from the German invasion. The Labour Government, which did not have the same need of German goods, was concerned in the first place with making Germany self-supporting, so that it would not need to divert scarce dollars and foodstuffs to the British occupation zone. Russia, victorious in war, could see no reason why its claims should wait upon the rebuilding of Germany. Since the occupying powers had pledged themselves to maintain the economic unity of Germany, the Labour Government did not see why it should pay for deficits in Western Germany while Russia was taking so much in capital and products from East Germany. British experts said that the Russian proposals treated Germany like a cow, fed by Britain and milked by the Soviet Union. Within the limits of occupation policy agreed to before Labour

took office, there was no way to reconcile these  
<sup>1</sup>  
differences.

The conflict on reparations had begun before the war ended. At Yalta, the Big Three accepted Russia's claim of \$10,000 million in reparations as the basis for discussions. The American representative on the Reparations Commission publicly proclaimed that an amicable settlement could easily be reached.<sup>2</sup> The British were not satisfied until the Potsdam Conference, where the powers declared that:

"Payment of reparations should leave enough resources to enable the German people to subsist without external assistance. In working out the economic balance of Germany the necessary means must be provided to pay for imports approved by the Control Council in Germany. The proceeds of exports from current production and stock shall be available in the first place for payment for such imports."<sup>3</sup>

The Labour Government soon found that the appearance of co-operation at Potsdam could not be translated into

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1. For an outline of occupation policies, see M. Balfour & John Mair Four Power Control in Germany and Austria 1945-46 (RIIA, 1956) p. 14ff and Lord Strang Home and Abroad (1956) Chapter VI. For a criticism, see E.F. Penrose Economic Planning for the Peace (1953) p. 216ff. A first-hand account of American policy is contained in General Clay's Decision in Germany (1950).
  2. See Penrose op. cit. p. 277ff.
  3. Cmd. 7534 (1948) p. 9. An exception was made to cover the shipment at once of some industrial capital equipment from the Western occupation zones to Russia.

reality, because the parties involved still held fast to their original conflicting claims. In the next two and a half years Russia made the most of the "ambiguity" and the "opportunities for dissension" in the Potsdam agreement.<sup>1</sup> Disagreements on the German standard of living, the dismantling of German industry and German government were no less important than those on reparations,<sup>2</sup> but the disagreement on reparations can be isolated because it shows clearly the conflict of major power interests.

The first shock to the Potsdam policy, ironically, came from France. In the autumn of 1945 the French unexpectedly blocked the efforts of the Allied Control Council to establish an all-German economic policy in conjunction with the payment of reparations.<sup>3</sup> France feared that a Germany with a strong central administration would be a greater threat to French security than a weak and decentralised Germany. Here again was another conflict of interests which scarcely permitted compromise, let alone co-operation. Each occupation zone was thus administered solely by its occupying power. There was

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1. The phrases are those of Penrose op.cit. p. 284.
  2. They are conveniently summarised in Balfour and Mair op. cit. p. 123ff.
  3. For details, see Byrnes op.cit. p. 167ff; Balfour and Mair op.cit. pp. 123-6; and Ernest Bevin LPCR 1947, p. 178.

a de facto division of Germany. Britain had less chance of influencing Russian occupation policy, but more freedom in its own zone.

The collapse of plans for a co-ordinated German economic policy greatly increased Britain's occupation difficulties, because the British zone was unable to feed itself. It had great industrial resources, but before the war it had relied upon the exchange of its hard coal, steel, fertilisers and manufactured goods with East Germany, which supplied grain, potatoes, brown coal and timber.<sup>1</sup> Food was needed before workers could produce, and particularly for miners. By February, 1946 the British zone was only providing itself with food sufficient for a ration of 400 calories a day, well below minimum human needs.<sup>2</sup> Russia, which was intent upon securing speedy delivery of reparations from its own zone, was not interested in alleviating the plight of the British zone by sending food from East Germany. Between June 1st, 1945 and April 15th, 1946, the Labour Government had to import more than one million tons of foodstuffs into the British zone, including 500,000<sup>3</sup> tons originally intended for British consumption.

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1. See Cmd. 7534, p. 10.

2. Statement of John Hynd, then responsible for German occupation policy, 420 HC 499-500, 7.3.46.

3. H. Morrison, 423 HC 1511, 31.5.46.

Shortly thereafter, the worldwide food shortage, which faced Britain with special responsibilities in India, caused the Labour Government to ration bread in Britain.<sup>1</sup> In 1946 it cost Britain £80,000,000 to feed its occupation zone, and much of this was spent in dollars. Bevin blamed Russia for the creation of this "terrific" financial liability.<sup>2</sup> Since East Germany could only supply Western Germany at the immediate expense of its reparations to Russia, there was no basis for agreement. Because the occupying powers were then committed to a low ceiling on German industrial growth, the British could not argue that the Eastern zone's short-term sacrifice would be offset by long-term Russian gains. It was precisely the short-term gains that interested Russia, just as it was the immediate drain that worried Britain.

Faced with such conflicts, the Labour Government spent little time in attempts to establish all-round co-operation, since success was unlikely. Nor did it consider modifying its demands in order to achieve co-operation with Russia on Russian terms. Its Germans had to be fed to prevent chaos. But what

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1. For details of the world food shortage, see Cmd. 6785 and Cmd. 6879 (1946).

2. 446 HC 386ff, 22.1.48. See also LPCR 1947, p. 178.

the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton, called "British payment of reparations to the Germans," also had to stop.<sup>1</sup> Because of the de facto sovereignty of each occupying power within its zone, the Government was able to act promptly. It stopped the delivery of reparations to Russia from the British zone in May, 1946.<sup>2</sup> In the summer of 1946 it solved its problems, not by four-power co-operation but by a bilateral agreement with the United States. The American Government, like the British, was primarily concerned with cutting its occupation costs and in seeing that its subsidies to Germany did not finance reparations to other nations.<sup>3</sup> In July, 1946 the United States and Britain announced plans to merge their occupation zones and share the costs of occupation.<sup>4</sup> Although both parties announced that they would welcome France and Russia as partners in this new arrangement, no more time was wasted in efforts to secure all-round co-operation.<sup>5</sup> The bizonal agreement, signed in

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1. The Times 17.10.46. Note also Bevin's reference to Dalton's protests about the dollar drain in Germany, LPCR 1949, p. 187.
  2. See B.U. Rathford and William Ross Berlin Reparations Assignment (1947) pp. 193-4.
  3. Byrnes op.cit. p. 82.
  4. Ibid. p. 195 and P.J. Noel-Baker, 426 HC 554-5, 29.7.46.
  5. For France, see Byrnes op.cit. p. 197 and D.M. Pickles French Politics; the first years of the Fourth Republic (1953) p. 188ff. France did not integrate its zone with those of Britain and America until 1948. See Clay op.cit. Chapter 21.

December, 1946,<sup>1</sup> was successful in its short-term and long-term aims. It cut the estimated 1947 British deficit in Germany from \$400 million to \$300 million, and it laid the foundations for rebuilding the shattered and fragmented West German economy. The agreement was criticised from the traditional Socialist standpoint by Tribune, which charged that it frustrated chances of all-round co-operation by excluding the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> The Labour Government paid no heed to such criticism.

From the first, the Labour Government, in its handling of the reparations problem and German occupation costs, ignored the traditional Socialist principle of co-operation, even though its American associates were originally quite optimistic about four-power agreement there.<sup>3</sup> The Government was never optimistic about the chances of reconciling its claims with Russian ones. It disliked Russian policy and was irritated by the

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1. For the terms, see Cmd. 7001 (1946).

2. 2.8.46.

3. Robert Sherwood later noted that the reparations problem "was not permitted to die of inanition, as Roosevelt undoubtedly hoped it would be." The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins (1948) p. 851. Penrose notes, op.cit. p. 282: "Mr. Pauley and Mr. Byrnes both conceived of negotiations with the Russians as a process of bargaining in which real compromises were made by both sides."

French. It did not act as if differences were transitory or could be dispelled by the forces of 'right' action and 'right' reason. It did not reconsider its demands in order to make its policy more acceptable to Russia or France -- at the expense of the British Exchequer. Instead, after brief and futile attempts to administer Germany by co-operation, the Labour Government decided to work with the one nation which was able and willing to work with it.

#### The Response to Intransigence

"With the support of every member of the Cabinet I tried from the day I took office until 1947 to be friends with Russia ... What did we get? Nothing but aggression or threats of aggression.  
Ernest Bevin, LPCR 1950, pp. 146-7.

German occupation problems faced the Labour Government from the first with irreconcilable conflicts of aims. In 1945 Anglo-Russian relations did not present clearcut antagonisms. There were differences, to be sure, particularly in Germany. But the wartime allies, in the initial view of the Labour Government, had a common interest in European peace and prosperity. As "The International Post-War Settlement" declared in 1944: "Our first aim, therefore, must be to continue the

closest possible Anglo-American-Russian co-operation." <sup>1</sup>  
Since Anglo-American co-operation was of long standing and had deep roots, the future of Big Three relations turned upon British (and American) co-operation with Russia. The Labour desire to work with Russia was reinforced within the Party by a traditional sympathy for its left-wing government.

Ernest Bevin's policy towards Russia evolved slowly; it was shaped by Russian actions and by Bevin's appreciation of Britain's needs. While in retrospect it appears as a simple and consistent policy, it did not begin with a single end. It started as a dual policy and continued to have two objects from 1945 until January, 1948. On the one hand, the Government tried to secure co-operation among the Big Three because such a concert of powers could best insure peace and promote economic reconstruction. On the other hand, it was ready, in case of disagreement to forgo co-operation with Russia and work with those nations that would work with it. As Bevin told the House of Commons on November

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1. LPCR 1944, p. 5. Optimism was not confined to the Labour Party. The Times stated in a leader of November 6th, 1944: "Russia, like Great Britain, has no aggressive or expansive designs in Europe. ... It is certainly not true that Russia is at present using her influence in other countries to promote 'Communism' or anything like it; nor is there any reason to suppose that her attitude in this respect will change."

23rd, 1945: "I cannot accept the view that all my policy and the policy of His Majesty's Government must be based entirely on the Big Three."<sup>1</sup> The first part of this policy was in harmony with traditional Socialist ideas. The second part of the policy was not in keeping with Labour expectations: it was in keeping with the existing system of international relations. The dual policy seems an obvious, almost a platitudinous basis for action, but the 'obvious' is not always ascertained at the time, and different people may disagree as to which of several policies is 'obviously' right. At the end of the war Churchill stood primarily for the second approach and Roosevelt almost exclusively for the first. Similarly, before the war, Baldwin and Chamberlain placed virtually all their hopes upon the co-operation of the Locarno Powers, and for too long neglected to make alternative arrangements.

The two strands of the dual policy reflected two contrasting aspects of Ernest Bevin's mind. The first showed Bevin the believer, the passionate democrat who at an early age transferred his energies from preaching Methodist salvation in the next world to preaching Socialist salvation in this one. The second reflected

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1. 416 HC 762.

Bevin the fighter, the suspicious trade union leader who secured tangible advantages for his own interest group by whatever method would bring results. The two parts of the dual policy were applied simultaneously, for there was no necessary conflict between them. Russia's sphere of influence was contiguous with Britain's, but at the end of the war there was no consciousness of antagonisms like those which had for so long poisoned relations between France and Germany or Poland and Russia.

The story of Anglo-Russian relations for the next two years is one of repeated British attempts to find areas of co-operation and of Russian intransigence. Conflict with Russia over Germany was not unexpected. Russian opposition to British proposals was disliked but it was understandable. On the other hand, Russian efforts to use the peace settlement to get a foothold in the Mediterranean created suspicions and distrust. Britain recognised Russia's sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Bevin told Molotov at the London Conference in the autumn of 1945 that he expected Russia to recognise Britain's strategic interests in the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> Russia, however, tried to secure

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1. Byrnes op. cit. p. 95.

a trusteeship in Tripolitania, to put pressure on Turkey in hopes of gaining control of the Dardanelles, to encourage guerilla war in Greece and finally, to threaten British interests in the Persian Gulf. Bevin's reaction was blunt. He told the House of Commons on November 7th, 1945:

"One cannot help being a little suspicious if a great power wants to come right across, shall I say, the throat of the British Commonwealth, which has done no harm to anybody." <sup>1</sup>

Simultaneously, Russia launched an anti-British propaganda offensive, a further obstacle to co-operation. <sup>2</sup> It refused to co-operate with the British Government in such minor matters as educational exchange. Bevin took private note of such actions as signs of possible trouble. <sup>3</sup> Publicly he said that he was "a little resentful" of Moscow radio's charge that "I am to be regarded as a criminal." <sup>4</sup>

The London Conference of Foreign Ministers in September and October, 1945 broke down as the result of a sudden Russian show of intransigence on the question

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1. 415 HC 1342.
  2. For details, see W.H. McNeill America, Britain and Russia (1953) p. 653ff.
  3. Interviews, P.J. Noel-Baker, April, 1958 and Hugh Dalton, February, 1959.
  4. 415 HC 1338, 7.11.45.

of the peace treaties with the minor Axis powers.<sup>1</sup> It was notable also as the first of a series of slanging matches between Bevin and Molotov. At one point Bevin told Molotov that he was talking like Hitler. Molotov "flew into a passion" and started to walk out, until Bevin laughed and withdrew his remarks. Molotov spoke with bitterness of Bevin and regretfully recalled happier days with Anthony Eden.<sup>2</sup> Such remarks were not the cause of conflict; they were symptomatic of disagreements on substantive matters. The quick-tempered Bevin was not only ready to show irritation, but also to laugh and apologise, once his anger had been released. It was his normal way of doing business. As he explained to the House of Commons:

"After all, those who make up the Soviet Union are members of the proletariat and so am I. We are used to hard hitting, but our friendship remains. I do not think an exchange of views of this kind does any more harm than the exchanges of views at a Labour Party Conference."<sup>3</sup>

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1. For a summary of this controversy see McNeill, op.cit. p. 696ff.
  2. Duff Cooper Old Men Forget (1953) p. 363. See Byrnes op.cit. p. 277ff for an account of Molotov's irritations, and The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg (1953) pp. 271-88.
  3. 419 HC 1359, 14.3.46. Bevin ignored the bitterness felt toward him by some whom he had attacked from Conference platforms.

At Annual Conference, once Bevin's views had been criticised and, as usually happened, his critics defeated, the matter was settled. But in meetings of the Foreign Ministers, once Bevin's views had been criticised and his principal critic voted down, the trouble had only begun.

In January, 1946 Russia went out of its way to court further trouble with Britain by formally charging in the Security Council that the continued presence of British troops in Greece endangered the peace.<sup>1</sup> The same day the Ukraine presented to the Security Council a complaint against the presence of British troops in Indonesia, notwithstanding Bevin's refusal to use difficulties in Iran as the basis for a diplomatic attack upon Russia.<sup>2</sup> The Russian attack on Britain's Greek policy touched the Labour Government at a sensitive point, because many Labour MPs had been outspoken in opposing the aid that was being given to the right-wing Greek government. The Government had been equally firm in continuing to support the existing Greek Government, in spite of backbench resentment.

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1. SC 6th meeting, 1.2.46, p. 74.
  2. The Persian dispute, while a temporary source of anxiety at this time, was settled to the satisfaction of Britain. The fact that Russia did back down on its original claims there contributed to uncertainty about Russia's diplomatic intentions.

The Russian attack upon Britain brought forth countercharges from Bevin, who resented the implication that by threatening the peace he had committed "the most diabolical crime against humanity."

"The danger to the peace of the world has been the incessant propaganda from Moscow against the British Commonwealth and the incessant utilization of the Communist parties in every country of the world to attack the British people and the British Government, as if no friendship existed between us."<sup>1</sup>

The blunt-spoken Foreign Secretary demanded of the Security Council "a straight verdict" on Britain's innocence or guilt.<sup>2</sup> The Government's defence was that British troops in Greece were helping to establish and protect democracy; it was the insurgents, rather than the Greek Government, who constituted the threat to peace. Because of the veto in the Security Council, a straight verdict was the one thing it could not give. Ernest Bevin, who lived his life by the majority rule, saw the majority's willingness to acquit Britain frustrated by a Russian veto. The Security Council finally disposed of the matter in a resolution that took note of the charge and recorded its removal from the agenda.<sup>3</sup>

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1. SC 6th meeting, 1.2.46, p. 88.

2. Ibid.

3. SC 10th meeting, 6.2.46, p. 165ff. When Russia returned the matter to the agenda in August, 1946 the British delegate, Sir Alexander Cadogan, dismissed the complaint as "unbridled propaganda." SC 62nd meeting, 5.9.46, p. 243.

Russia, by diplomatic attack, had only succeeded in rousing resentment and suspicion in the mind of the Foreign Secretary.<sup>1</sup>

These Russian charges did not deter Bevin from seeking co-operation with Russia. The reward of success was great enough to justify repeated efforts to find common ground. The Government carefully tried to maintain friendly relations with Russia. In a House of Commons speech that followed the outburst of ill-will on Greece, Bevin offered to extend the Anglo-Russian Friendship Treaty of 1942 from 20 to 50 years.<sup>2</sup> He also invited the Russian Government to have frank high-level talks with British officials, as was the practice in Anglo-American relations.

Bevin explained to the July, 1946 Annual Conference: "I have not pressed unduly even for an alliance with France or with the Western Powers because I have been actuated all the time in this approach by the wish not to divide Europe."<sup>3</sup> The two elements of the Government's dual policy were both represented at that Conference.

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1. The ill-feeling displayed in this debate "deeply shocked" Trygve Lie. See Lie In the Cause of Peace (1954) pp. 31-2.
  2. 419 HC 1349, 21.2.46.
  3. LPCR 1946, p. 168. The Treaty of Dunkirk was not signed until March 4th, 1947.

Philip Noel-Baker, then Minister of State, opened the debate by reaffirming the traditional Labour view:

"The only way in which we can remain united with the Soviet Union and the United States is ... to accept the Socialist principle that the interests of nations are not in conflict but are common interests which can only be promoted by common action." <sup>1</sup>

Bevin was less sanguine in his review of the "bewildering" problems resulting from the war and from the breakdown in Big Three co-operation in Germany.

"If I cannot get reciprocity, what can I do? I cannot make them reciprocate. I cannot go to war and force them ... No one nation is going to keep me in a state of war forever with other countries. I do not commit myself to any method, but a way will have to be found. We cannot go on in this way. It is indefensible." <sup>2</sup>

Because there was friction where co-operation was desired, Bevin tried hard to minimise its effect. After Morgan Phillips, the secretary of the Labour Party, returned from a goodwill tour to Russia in August, 1946, he discussed with the Foreign Secretary the line he should take on Russia in some articles for the Daily Herald. Bevin emphatically urged: "For God's sake, Morgan, be friendly." <sup>3</sup> Bevin's inherent optimism about the future

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1. LPCR 1946, p. 150.

2. Ibid. pp. 167-8.

3. Interview, Phillips, February, 1959. For another example of Bevin's efforts to "cheer up" public opinion, see his optimistic comments in 427 HC 1511, 22.10.46.

made the first part of his dual policy as congenial as the second. He differed from a number of Socialists in that he did not use hopes of the future to veil difficulties in the present.

In negotiations Bevin repeatedly presented to the Russians the diplomatic alternatives in Europe.<sup>1</sup> There could be a balance of power between blocs of equal strength; the Continent could be dominated by one power, or the Big Three, with their associates, could act in concert to stabilise Europe. Bevin stressed that the Labour Government was not seeking to re-establish the balance of power and that it would not permit the hegemony in Europe of a single power, i.e., Russia. The aim of the Labour Government was to establish a concert of powers, because this was the course most likely to produce stability and peace. The Government's German policy showed, however, that it was not prepared to let the desire to work in concert lead it to conclude agreements that denied minimum British demands. If forced to choose, Bevin was ready to sacrifice hopes of co-operation rather than his appreciation of Britain's needs.

While the Labour Foreign Secretary tried to steer a

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1. See e.g., statements to Molotov at the Paris Peace Conference in July, 1946 (Byrnes *op.cit.* pp. 175-6) and in the House of Commons on October 22nd, 1946 (427 HC 1510).

difficult course between the Scylla of appeasement and the Charybdis of intransigence, he was violently attacked from both sides of the House of Commons. Conservatives accused him of conceding too much to Russia for the sake of co-operation; some Labour critics accused him of conceding too little. The Iron Curtain speech of Winston Churchill in March, 1946<sup>1</sup> was a considerable political and diplomatic embarrassment to the Labour Government's efforts to pursue, and, just as important, to appear to pursue, a policy of co-operating with Russia. Many outside Britain still regarded Churchill as the spokesman for the British nation, and considered the former Prime Minister's plea for an Anglo-American alliance against Russian expansion an expression of official British and/or American policy. At first the Government tried to ignore the speech. Bevin refused to disavow it when requested to do so by Russia.<sup>2</sup> In the House of Commons, 120 members of the PLP, representing many different shades of Party opinion, tabled a motion which strongly criticised the Fulton speech and urged Big Three unity and world government.<sup>3</sup> Tribune

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1. For the text, see The Times 6.3.46.

2. T. Lie op.cit. p. 37.

3. Parliamentary Papers Notices of Motions (1945-46 session) p. 3894.

headlined, "Nothing doing, Mr. Churchill!"<sup>1</sup> The  
Manchester Guardian political correspondent reported  
that many MPs believed that the Foreign Secretary  
sympathised with Churchill's view.<sup>2</sup> Protests and  
speculation drove Bevin to declare of the Fulton speech:  
"There was no consultation. We are not a party to it."<sup>3</sup>  
The speech handicapped the Government's later efforts to  
secure support from Labour members for its evolving  
policy toward Russia because it identified the checking  
of Russian expansion with Churchill, whose views on  
Russia had always been suspect within the Labour Party.<sup>4</sup>  
Thus, when the Labour Government, in response to the  
events of the following two years, adopted a similar  
policy of working to halt Russian expansion, its critics  
within the Party could denounce it for following a  
'Tory' foreign policy. These critics impugned the good  
faith of the Government in its negotiations with Russia  
in 1946-47 by ante-dating its consistent resistance to  
Russia to the time of the Fulton speech.

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1. 8.3.46.

2. 7.3.46.

3. The Times 18.3.46.

4. On the other hand, the speech did alert persons outside the Labour Party to the danger of diplomatic difficulties with Russia and the need to counteract Russian expansion. For this reason, one of Bevin's principal assistants regarded the speech as a useful stimulus to public opinion outside the Labour Party. Interview.

In the autumn of 1946 the Foreign Secretary was faced with strong but ineffective criticism within his own party for his handling of Anglo-Russian relations. On October 29th, two days after Bevin sailed from Southampton to attend diplomatic meetings in New York and a week after he had reaffirmed in the House of Commons his desire for a concert of powers, a group of 21 members of the PLP sent a private letter to the Prime Minister which strongly criticised the Government. They asked the Government to abandon its misguided foreign policy and act upon "our basic social democratic creed" in international relations.<sup>1</sup> When a Government spokesman privately told the rebels that the Government would not change its ways, the rebels tabled an amendment to the Address that was hostile to the Government's foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> It was signed by 55 Labour MPs, including R.H.S. Crossman, Michael Foot and Sydney Silverman. In the debate on the Amendment, Crossman charged that the Government had gone back on its 1945 campaign pledge

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1. For the text of the letter, see Manchester Guardian 16.11.46. In this thesis the term "rebels" will be used to describe those Labour MPs who signed this letter and those who tabled the Amendment to the Address a fortnight later.

The emphasis of the rebels upon a foreign policy based upon class-consciousness is discussed in the next chapter. The political tactics and failure of the group are analysed in Chapter 8.

2. Text, Manchester Guardian 14.11.46.

to co-operate with both Russia and America.<sup>1</sup> Crossman argued that war losses made Russian aggression "out of the question";<sup>2</sup> therefore, the Government had no need to worry about the alleged strategic risk from Russia. By confusing military and diplomatic aggression, Crossman did not have to face the problem that the Government foresaw. A number of the Labour MPs in the debate, particularly those who were pro-Russian on grounds of class, spoke as if the Labour Government could, by unilateral action, insure international co-operation. Since Crossman and his fellows demanded that the Labour Government end its close association with the United States, it was the rebels, in fact, who were denying the correctness of the traditional Party principle of co-operation with all nations.

In answering for the Government, Attlee denied that it was committed to co-operation as an end in itself. Instead, Britain was determining its policy according to the merits of each issue. It was not the Government's fault if the Russian position was often inconsistent with the merits of a case.<sup>3</sup> He then proceeded to read

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1. 430 HC 527, 18.11.46. The reference was to the statement in "Let Us Face the Future" p. 11: "We must consolidate in peace the great war-time association of the British Commonwealth with the USA and the USSR."
  2. Ibid. Col. 537.
  3. Ibid. Cols. 582-3.

his critics a lecture on the difficulties of conducting foreign policy in a world of conflicting interests.

The gist of it was that co-operation would not come through the acceptance by all nations of a policy based upon common interests, as the Labour Party (and as he) used to preach. Foreign policy consisted of an endless series of compromises. The Amendment failed ignominiously.

The Council of Foreign Ministers did agree on peace treaties for the minor Axis powers at their New York meeting in December, 1946.<sup>1</sup> But there was no attempt to settle the German problem. Bevin used these minor successes to justify an optimistic pre-Christmas broadcast on Big Three relations.<sup>2</sup> Pravda seized upon Bevin's innocuous statement that Britain only owed allegiance to the United Nations as proof that it had repudiated the Anglo-Russian Friendship Treaty of 1942. The Government promptly denied this. Stalin thereupon corrected Pravda and re-pledged friendship. Bevin used this tempest as another occasion for offering to extend the treaty,<sup>3</sup> but Russia was not interested.

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1. McNeill op.cit. p. 722, notes that Russia stood to gain more than Britain and America from the signature of these treaties.
  2. Among other things, he declared, "I believe we have entered the first stage of establishing concord and harmony between the great powers." The Listener 26.12.46, p. 940.
  3. See The Times 20.1.47, 25.1.47 and 433 HC 2301-2, 27.2.47.

In 1947 the tempo of diplomacy quickened. It was not a small matter that created misunderstandings at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in the spring; it was Germany. The Foreign Ministers could only agree to abolish the Prussian state. After several weeks of talking at cross-purposes, Bevin declared, "There doesn't appear to be any agreement anywhere."<sup>1</sup> While disagreements flourished Bevin held to his dual policy. By this time, however, the emphasis was upon the second part. Shortly before the Conference opened, the Government had arranged for the United States to take from it the task of aiding Greece and Turkey to withstand Russian pressure. Yet the first part of the policy was not discarded. At the same time as the Foreign Secretary was faced with a diplomatic impasse, he was urging the Board of Trade to commence negotiations for an Anglo-Russian trade agreement. Bevin hoped a trade agreement could keep open lines of communication with Russia. Agreement on trade might, to some extent, offset political disagree-<sup>2</sup>ments. The government met with some success, but no trade agreement could counterbalance the conflicts ahead.<sup>3</sup>

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1. General W.B. Smith Moscow Mission 1946-49 (1950) p. 208. For a summary of the discussions see RIIA Survey 1947-48, pp. 227-36.

2. Interview, Harold Wilson, July, 1959.

3. The trade agreement is discussed infra p. 174.

The American offer of Marshall Aid in June, 1947 provided the acid test of Russian intentions. It faced Russia, in plain and public terms, with a choice between co-operating or contracting out of European reconstruction. Russian co-operation in a programme of Marshall Aid could regain much of the diplomatic ground lost in two years of wrangling at the Council of Foreign Ministers.<sup>1</sup> All-round co-operation might be a first step toward the development of an international Socialist economy, as well as an immediate solution to pressing problems. On the other hand, Russian obstruction in a planning committee might prevent the birth of the programme, or negate much of its value. In keeping with Bevin's dual policy, Britain and France agreed that the Russians "must be invited to participate and at the same time they must be given no opportunity to cause delay and obstruction."<sup>2</sup> When the Anglo-French invitation to the preliminary conference on planning was issued to Russia, Bevin told the House of Commons, "The guiding principle that I shall follow in any talks on this matter will be speed."<sup>3</sup>

The first Paris Conference on Marshall Aid opened on

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1. See Ernest Bevin LPCR 1948, p. 196.
  2. Duff Cooper op.cit. p. 375. He added in his diary: "This will not be easy."
  3. 438 HC 2338, 19.6.47.

June 27. Molotov, after several days of sparring, soon made his position clear. Russia, he said, did not need American aid; capitalism compelled America to export to Europe. Russia would be willing to receive assistance from the United States, but it refused to present its claims as part of a co-ordinated programme, a pre-condition Marshall had placed upon aid. Such co-ordination would constitute an infringement of Soviet sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> The Conference adjourned on July 2nd. Less than a week was devoted to negotiating with Russia. Russia had, however, stayed long enough to demonstrate its completely intransigent attitude toward co-operation, in spite of the immense importance of aid to all nations, Russia and its satellites not excepted. A Low cartoon depicted Molotov bowing, and ready to step behind an Iron Curtain. It was labelled "Final Performance."<sup>2</sup> There were hints of ominous consequences. Before leaving Paris, Molotov warned Britain and France that their co-operation with America would lead to further estrangement in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The Times 30.6.47. On the same day the Manchester Guardian reported Harold Laski as saying in Paris, "Without any doubt whatsoever Generalissimo Stalin wants to reconcile Russia with the West." See RIIA Survey 1947-8, p. 32ff and French Yellow Book (Documents of the Paris Conference, 1947) especially p. 25ff, for details of the Russian position.
  2. Manchester Guardian 4.7.47.
  3. The Times 3.7.47.

While Molotov's intransigent role at Paris was not quite his final performance, it did mark the beginning of the end of Bevin's dual policy. Clement Attlee called the Russian action "a declaration of the cold war."<sup>1</sup> The opening of the Western European conference on Marshall Aid in mid-July showed ~~the~~ growing emphasis upon the second part of the dual policy.

The dual policy survived for another five months, but hopes of co-operation were now fading fast. Russia, by its suppression of political opposition in Eastern Europe and by the organisation of the Cominform, in the autumn of 1947, was hinting at further trouble.<sup>2</sup> The setting was hardly auspicious for the London Conference of Foreign Ministers in November. Bevin rightly regarded it as "almost the last chance for Anglo-Russian co-operation."<sup>3</sup> The subject was equally unpromising. Again it was Germany. The gradual drawing together of France with Britain and America accentuated the gap between Russia and the three Western powers on this question. After two years of conferring, the Foreign Ministers were still far from agreement, and in the process they had lost their hopes. The Labour Government was not only

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1. As It Happened p. 170.

2. See in particular the Cominform declaration of September, 1947 Documents on International Affairs 1947-48 pp. 122-5.

3. The Times 25.11.47.

disillusioned but also impatient. Shortly after the Conference began, Bevin warned Molotov, "We cannot go on forever with chaos in Europe."<sup>1</sup> Molotov soon made clear that Russia saw no reason to co-operate. After several particularly stormy discussions of German reparations, the Conference adjourned on December 15th. The adjournment was sine die.<sup>2</sup>

This was the end of Ernest Bevin's dual policy. The Labour Government had tried, in accordance with traditional Labour principles, to co-operate with Russia in order to bring about peace and prosperity in Europe. But in fact, co-operation did not come. The longer Britain negotiated, the stronger was the impression of Russian intransigence, and the wider were the gaps between the interests and objects of the two nations. Faced with a Russian policy in conflict with his own, Bevin did not try to purchase co-operation at the price of appeasement, nor was he at a loss for an alternative policy. Efforts at co-operation had not prevented prompt and effective action without Russia. The latter half of Bevin's dual policy served as the

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1. The Times 29.11.47.

2. For a summary of the points immediately at issue see RIIA Survey 1947-8, pp. 238-41.

foundation for the second phase in the Labour Government's policy towards Russia, after the Soviet Union had, by its repeated refusal to work with Britain, demonstrated publicly and clearly that common interests did not then exist.

### Stalemate

"Negotiations can sometimes be worse than useless, they can be a source of irritation, they can be a source of dangerous illusions."

C. Mayhew, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 450 HC 2470, 14.5.48.

In January, 1948, the Labour Government accepted stalemate as its norm for Anglo-Russian relations. It no longer hoped that negotiations might lead to co-operation. Further negotiations were regarded as time-wasting, and potentially harmful to British public opinion, because diplomatic conversations would encourage those who still believed in the possibility of Anglo-Russian agreement. Ernest Bevin, in his House of Commons speech of January 22nd, 1948, not only sought to extend co-operation with Western Europe, but also to exclude Russia and its satellites from further ventures in economic, political and military co-operation.<sup>1</sup> The second part of the dual policy -- working with a limited number of allies -- now stood by itself; the

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1. European unity, the main theme of Bevin's speech, is discussed in Chapter 4. NATO is analysed in Chapter 5.

first part had been abandoned.

The coup d'état in Czechoslovakia in February showed that Russia was not satisfied with the equilibrium of stalemate. It was trying to swing the balance in its favour by means of indirect aggression. Even the New Statesman accepted the coup as proof of the partition of Europe, although it denied that it could be called "in any sense Russian aggression."<sup>1</sup> The blow gave impetus to negotiations for the Brussels Pact, which was signed on March 17th, 1948, and became the forerunner of NATO.

It was in Germany, long the bone of contention, that the great test came. Russia tried, by a blockade of Berlin, to force Britain and its allies to agree about occupation policy -- on Russian terms. Soviet pressure started on March 30th, 1948. By July 10th, the land and water blockade was complete.<sup>2</sup> The Labour Government recognised the symbolic importance of Berlin. The alternatives were to maintain its occupation rights, regardless of Russian pressure and the danger of war, or to co-operate with Russia on terms that would be equivalent to capitulation. While the screws were being tightened,

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1. 6.3.48. See also Crossman's dispatches from Prague, New Statesman 20.3.48 and 27.3.48.
  2. For an account of the steps involved, see Cmd. 7534 pp. 15-20.

Bevin made it clear that he was ready for the trial of strength and was uninterested in further parleying.

He told the House of Commons on May 12th:

"I am not anxious to enter into further conferences until the ground has been cleared. I have had too many failures. It is absolutely essential that a good deal of preparatory work is done and a good deal of what I once called 'putting the cards on the table face upwards' has to take place ... I really think that to have a conference and to have it break down again would cause terrible disappointment in the world." <sup>1</sup>

Bevin firmly committed the Government to remaining in Berlin, "whatever the provocation may be" and "in spite of the danger of war." <sup>2</sup> Bevin viewed the Berlin blockade as a conflict between irreconcilable interests. The choice in Berlin was "either to stand firm there or turn and go to another Munich." <sup>3</sup>

To stay in Berlin in order to maintain the deadlock in Germany involved grave risks of war. In March, 1948, the American commander in Germany, General Clay, had warned of "a subtle change in Soviet attitude which I cannot define but which now gives me a feeling that it [i.e., war] may come with dramatic suddenness." <sup>4</sup> Bevin

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1. 450 HC 2125.

2. LPCR 1948, p. 195, speech of May 20th. See also Bevin, 452 HC 2230ff, 30.6.48.

3. 456 HC 910, 22.9.48.

4. The Forrestal Diaries, edited by W. Millis (1951) p. 387.

was very concerned about the risk of war. American visitors found him "highly volatile and explosive" in his concern with Britain's exposed military position "in the front line."<sup>1</sup> The Western powers could rely upon the American atom bomb,<sup>2</sup> but little else. Russia had military superiority on the ground and superior lines of communications. The Western sectors of Berlin were continuously exposed to surprise attack from Russian troops. In the event of war, the city would have been untenable. Worst of all, the British forces were not ready. On July 7th Viscount Montgomery, the C.I.G.S., advised the Minister of Defence that the Army was not properly prepared for war in Europe.<sup>3</sup> In spite of such unfavourable circumstances, the Labour Government preferred to risk war rather than purchase Russian co-operation at a dear price.

The major weapons upon which the Western powers relied were the airlift and the morale of the West Berliners. Both were unknown quantities when the

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1. The Forrestal Diaries, edited by W. Millis (1951) p. 469, p. 489.
  2. Forrestal wrote that Attlee told him that the Labour Government was willing to use the atomic bomb if necessary to maintain the Allied position in Berlin. Ibid. p. 523.
  3. Viscount Montgomery Memoirs (1958) pp. 482-3. He indicates that A.V. Alexander, the Minister of Defence, was too irresolute to face up to the implications of this gap between diplomatic risks and military capabilities.

governments committed themselves to stay in Berlin. The morale of the Berliners quickly became an Allied asset.<sup>1</sup> Many responsible Anglo-American officials, including General Clay, at first doubted that Berlin could be supplied indefinitely by airlift.<sup>2</sup> Within the Party, the crisis called forth bellicosity and timorousness. Aneurin Bevan urged that the Government supply West Berlin by an armed land convoy, whatever the consequences.<sup>3</sup> The New Statesman urged that the Government come to terms with Russia by negotiation. It did not pretend that there were common interests. It said, in defeatist fashion, that the Allied position was "neither logically nor militarily tenable."<sup>4</sup>

Because Russia could end the dispute by unilateral action, the Government agreed to confer in Moscow on the German problem, including Berlin, in late July, even though earlier that month it had made the end of the blockade a prerequisite for the start of negotiations on Germany.<sup>5</sup> While the negotiations dragged on for

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1. See W.P. Davison The Berlin Blockade (1958), especially p. 307ff.
  2. Ibid. p. 105ff and The Times 25.6.48. Cf. Clay op.cit. p. 365, p. 376.
  3. Later reported in the New Statesman 30.9.50, and by J. & S. Aleop "The Washington Correspondent" Encounter (January, 1959) p. 58.
  4. New Statesman 14.8.48.
  5. For details of this meeting, see Cmd. 7534, pp. 20-43.

eight weeks, the Western allies worked feverishly to make the airlift a success. Without this, the stalemate policy would collapse. The minimum daily requirements of West Berlin were estimated at 3500 tons of freight in summer and 4500 tons of freight in winter. A week before the talks in Moscow began, General Clay reported that the airlift was carrying about 2400 tons of freight daily.<sup>1</sup> The discussion that followed this report to the American National Security Council reflected doubts the same as those in Britain. The American Air Force Chief of Staff disliked the airlift. He feared it would place too great a strain on his limited number of planes and manpower, and greatly reduce air defences elsewhere. By August 20th, the joint Anglo-American operation, in which Britain carried about one-third of the freight, was bringing in an average of 3300 tons daily. Stockpiles of food and coal were growing. On September 9th it was reported that the airlift was carrying an average of 4000 tons of supplies daily, and 5000 tons could be carried easily if additional cargo planes were made available. By the time the Moscow meeting ended on September 27th, the airlift had proven

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1. Harry Truman Years of Trial and Hope (1956) p. 131. (Henceforth, this will be cited as Truman Volume II.) The information that follows is derived from Truman's narration, pp. 131-9. See also Clay op.cit. Chapter XX.

its ability to meet the essential needs of Berliners indefinitely. Furthermore, the allied counterblockade of trade from West to East Germany was beginning to have effects.<sup>1</sup> The American presidential campaign was not jeopardizing American support for the airlift.<sup>2</sup> The policy of stalemate was technically and politically possible, as well as diplomatically desirable.

Given previous experience of Russian intransigence at the United Nations, the Allied decision to appeal to that agency on September 27th, 1948, was not a departure from the policy of stalemate.<sup>3</sup> It was a propaganda gesture. The Labour Government had even advised against it for fear that public debate at a time of crisis might increase tension.<sup>4</sup> The discussions at the United Nations were sterile.<sup>5</sup> Terms of settlement acceptable to the Allies were vetoed by Russia. The Allies were unwilling to enter into any agreement that depended upon four-power co-operation for its results.<sup>6</sup> The efforts of the UN Secretary-General; of Dr. Evatt, then

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1. Reported later in The Times 5.2.49.
  2. For the negotiations that produced this result see H. Bradford Westerfield Foreign Policy and Party Politics (1955) p. 306ff.
  3. See SC Document S/1020 (29.9.48) for the full statement of the Allied case.
  4. The Forrestal Diaries p. 486ff.
  5. For an account, see RIIA Survey 1947-48, pp. 247-50.
  6. See Truman Volume II p. 137.

President of the General Assembly, and of representatives of minor powers to bring the opposed nations together were of no avail.<sup>1</sup> The Labour Government and its associates preferred the certainty of stalemate to the uncertainties and dangers of trying to co-operate with Russia.

When the settlement came, it was not, as Labour tradition would have suggested, the result of conciliatory action by a Labour Government. Negotiation and then settlement were the outgrowth of a reply by Stalin on January 27th, 1949 to an American newspaperman's questions. The initial reaction of the Labour Government to Stalin's answers was negative. Hector McNeil dismissed them as a propaganda gesture.<sup>2</sup> It fell to an American representative at the United Nations to sound out Russian representatives informally. Terms were agreed on May 5th, 1949.<sup>3</sup> As a part of the agreement another meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers was scheduled for later in May. There was no pretence or hope of co-operation. The North Atlantic Treaty, designed to guard Britain against Russian aggression, had been signed the previous month.

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1. See Lie op.cit. Chapter XII and RIIA Survey 1947-48, pp. 249-50.
  2. 461 HC 159-63, 7.2.49.
  3. See The Times 6.5.49 for text.

The day that the Foreign Ministers met, a basic law for the new West German Government was approved in Bonn. The foundations for the Government's revised European policy were complete; they were not to alter substantially as long as the Government remained in office. Within the Government no hope remained, even in a modified form, for the traditional Labour principle of co-operation. As a Transport House publication put it:

"After striving at Conference after Conference to get these problems solved or to get agreement, the Government was forced to the conclusion that the only way out of the difficulty was to work with those who would work with us." <sup>1</sup>

#### Conflict on Palestine

"Most of the policy in recent years has been run from New York and how can I deal with American nationals?"

Ernest Bevin, LPCR 1947, p. 177

"One of our main problems was that Palestine was not ours to dispose of. It had been legally entrusted to the British."

Harry Truman, Volume II, p. 154.

The Palestine problem embraced many irreconcilable interests. In this section the emphasis will be upon the Labour Government's attempts to co-operate with the United States in order to settle the future of Palestine. Although the Labour Government soon learned that no common basis for co-operation could be found between Jews and Arabs, it hoped that a common basis could be found

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1. Labour Party Speakers' Handbook 1949-50, p. 411.

with the United States. Both nations had interests in the military security of the Middle East, in the area's political stability and in its oil reserves. Notwithstanding these factors co-operation did not come. This was another instance in which the traditional Labour principle of co-operation showed itself to be irrelevant to the conditions in which the Government framed its policy. The failure of the United States and Britain to co-operate is more noteworthy than the failure of Britain to co-operate with Russia in Germany, since Anglo-American differences on Palestine were contemporaneous with Anglo-American agreement in Europe.

Conflict in Palestine transcended the narrow question of Anglo-American policy there.<sup>1</sup> The Labour Government inherited in Palestine fundamentally contradictory British pledges. The Balfour declaration of 1917 had called for the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. The Government's White Paper of May, 1939, had placed strict limitations on Jewish

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1. For background on the Palestine question see A Survey of Palestine, two volumes (Government Printer, Palestine, 1946), especially Chapters I-IV, XXII, XXIII. A chronicle of events from the British point of view is found in G.E. Kirk The Middle East 1945-50 (RIIA, 1954) pp. 187-319, and from that of an American ex-State Department adviser in J.C. Hurewitz The Struggle for Palestine (1950), especially Part III.

immigration and declared that after 1944 "no further Jewish immigration will be permitted unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it." <sup>1</sup> The Jews, <sup>2</sup> in their Biltmore programme, adopted in New York in May, 1942, demanded the establishment of a Jewish state with control over immigration. The Arab League, formed in March, 1945, was pledged by its charter to oppose Zionism and Jewish immigration into Palestine.

From the first the Labour Party had been sympathetic to the Zionist cause, for reasons which were as much accidental and personal as ideological. <sup>3</sup> In 1917 it <sup>4</sup> hailed the issuance of the Balfour Declaration.

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1. Cmd. 6019 (1939) p. 11.
  2. The distinction between non-Zionist, anti-Zionist and pro-Zionist Jew is one of the points outside the terms of reference of this section.
  3. Party principles could be used to support contrasting arguments. The nationalism of the Zionists and their religious exclusiveness was opposed to the Labour belief in the internationalisation of interests. Bevin consistently stated his opposition to Jewish exclusiveness. See e.g., LPCR 1946, p. 166, and 415 HC 1934, 13.11.45. Crossman, who had originally suspected Zionists because of their exclusiveness, came to support their cause after visiting Palestine. He was impressed by the achievements of Zionist Social Democrats. See his Palestine Mission (n.d., 1946-47) passim. Pro-Zionists in the Labour Party referred to Zionism as an outpost of social progress in the Middle East.
  4. "Memorandum on War Aims" (Labour Party and TUC, 1917) p. 5.

"The International Post-War Settlement", approved in 1944, was extremely optimistic about Zionist claims. The section on Palestine, drafted by Dalton himself, argued that there was an "irresistible case" for establishing Palestine as a Jewish state. Arabs could be evacuated to other Arab states.<sup>1</sup> When justifying this declaration later, Dalton relied heavily upon traditional Socialist assumptions.<sup>2</sup> First, he declared that conflicts deeply rooted in history, in nationalism and in religion could be destroyed overnight, because "we were at a point of sharp discontinuity in world history." A new order could be built up, after the break with the past, by extensive changes in the economies of Jews and Arabs. Within three months after taking office, the leaders of the Labour Party had completely reversed their position on Palestine. Instead of putting Zionist claims first they now gave precedence to Arab demands.<sup>3</sup> The abruptness of the shift in views is an indication of

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1. LPCR 1944, p. 9. Dalton took the same line at the May, 1945 conference, when speaking as a member of the NEC. LPCR 1945, p. 103.
  2. Fateful Years, pp. 426-7.
  3. See e.g., the Government's communication to President Truman in October, 1945. Truman Volume II pp. 149-51.

the extent of previous ignorance within the Party of the Arab case, and of the glib way in which the Party could commit itself to a position on foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> That the Party had not thought about the question deeply did not, of course, prevent later critics from charging it with apostasy and selling out to the Arabs.

The Labour Government's interest in Palestine was immediately oriented towards questions of military security. It desired friends in the Middle East to guard its oil and the route to India and Asia. Because of trouble with Arab nationalists in Egypt, the Government even considered using Palestine as its major Middle Eastern base. The Government's first object was to maintain its friendship with the Arab states, which were numerically and geographically preponderant. There was always a fear that if Britain alienated the Arabs in Palestine, Russia, then fishing in the troubled waters of the Mediterranean, might secure alliances in an area deemed vital to British security. The Labour Government's appreciation of the Palestine problem was shared by the United States State Department and by its

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1. Kimche Seven Fallen Pillars (1950) Chapter XIII, gives an excellent account of the factors behind the Party's earlier pro-Zionist policy, and the reaction of the new ministers to the issue, once in office. For the political position of British Jews generally, see Mark Raven "British Jewry in Heavy Weather" Commentary (May, 1947) especially pp. 450ff.

Army and Navy experts, including James V. Forrestal,  
Secretary of Defence.<sup>1</sup> Oil and concern about Russian  
expansion were strong reasons for accommodating the Arabs.

British hopes for the recognition of a common Anglo-  
American interest in Palestine were to come to nothing.  
Truman from the first was sceptical of "some of the  
views and attitudes assumed by the 'striped pants boys'  
in the State Department."<sup>2</sup> The President took personal  
charge of his government's Palestine policy. He gave  
precedence to the claims of the Jews for greater  
immigration and a state of their own. He believed that  
they had reparation due to them for their sufferings  
under Hitler.<sup>3</sup> American Jews believed that Palestine  
should become a Zionist state, and were active lobbyists.  
The President was under continuous pressure to support  
the Zionist cause. He found the best way to meet this  
pressure was to give in to it, and give in promptly, so

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1. See Truman Volume II p. 141ff, for quotes from a number of State Department recommendations to the President about the issue. Truman usually ignored this advice. See also The Forrestal Diaries, passim. Hurewitz op.cit. p. 174ff, gives details of America's oil interests in the Middle East at that time.
  2. Truman Year of Decisions --1945 (1955) p. 72. Henceforth, this will be cited as Truman Volume I.
  3. This was one of the strongest Zionist arguments. It particularly influenced Crossman.

that his Republican opponents would not steal the credit for being first to support this important pressure group in its demands. As one student wrote, "Palestine is the classic case in recent years of the determination of American foreign policy by domestic political considerations."<sup>1</sup>

Differences between America and Britain on Palestine arose at once. When Attlee returned to Potsdam as Prime Minister he was confronted with a note from Truman which asked for Britain to abandon the "drastic restrictions" upon immigration contained in the 1939 White Paper. Truman made no mention of Arab views. Attlee noncommittally acknowledged receipt of the note. Upon returning from Potsdam, Truman told his first press conference that he favoured greatly increased Jewish immigration into Palestine, and that the United States was not prepared to commit troops to keep the peace there.<sup>2</sup> British policy on immigration changed little. Britain offered the Zionists the right to bring in 1500 immigrants monthly;<sup>3</sup> they refused this as insufficient to meet their needs.

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1. Westerfield op. cit. p. 227. See pp. 227-39 for his account of the pressure upon Truman. Congress, similarly lobbied, sided with the President against the State Department.
  2. Truman Volume II pp. 143-4.
  3. Manchester Guardian 25.9.45.

The Labour Government continued to seek common ground with the United States, in spite of these marked differences, because by itself it could not maintain peace and stability in Palestine indefinitely. The exigencies of post-war economic reconstruction and of worldwide military commitments limited what Britain could do there. It sought to surmount the difficulties posed by the Arab-Jew conflict through co-operation with America. Together the two countries might impose a settlement. The Labour Government thus proposed, and Truman accepted, the establishment of a joint Anglo-American Commission to inquire into the problem of Palestine and the position of the Jews in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Bevin, in announcing the appointment of the Commission to the House on November 13th, 1945, stressed arguments of the Arabs and the anti-Zionists.<sup>2</sup> Truman, in accepting the proposal, made it clear to the Labour Government that he continued to favour the prompt admission of 100,000 Jewish immigrants.<sup>3</sup> The Commission deliberated under strong political pressure from Zionists, who made much of the real plight of Jewish refugees.<sup>4</sup> Crossman

1. For its terms of reference, see Cmd. 6822 (1946).

2. See 415 HC 1929ff.

3. Truman Volume II p. 151.

4. For acidulous comments on Zionist publicity, see Kirk op.cit. p. 203ff. Two members of the Commission later published accounts of its work. See Crossman Palestine Mission, and Bartley Crum Behind the Silken Curtain (1947).

was "surprised and irritated" by the "almost complete disregard of the Arab case" shown in Washington by all but a few Middle Eastern experts.<sup>1</sup>

In April, 1946, the Commission issued a unanimous report, in hopes that Bevin would live up to his statement to them that he would do his best to implement their report, if unanimous.<sup>2</sup> The recommendations were diffuse; they alternately conciliated and alienated Arabs and Zionists. The Commission recommended against the establishment of a Jewish state; it preferred regional autonomy within a framework of central government administered by Britain as a trustee. It recommended the prompt admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees from Europe and an end to Jewish and Arab terrorism.<sup>3</sup> A British suggestion that the United States join with Britain to maintain order in Palestine was rejected at the behest of American members.<sup>4</sup>

The report of the Commission did not bridge the differences between the British and the American

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1. Palestine Mission p. 42.

2. Ibid. p. 66.

3. For the text, see Cmd. 6808 (1946). There is a lengthy summary in The Times 1.5.46.

4. Crossman Palestine Mission pp. 185-6 and J.G. McDonald My Mission in Israel (1951) p. 22.

governments. Truman immediately endorsed the Commission's call for the prompt admission of 100,000 immigrants. Its recommendations for a political settlement were said to require further study.<sup>1</sup> Attlee at once told the House of Commons that so large a number of immigrants could not be admitted until Jewish terrorists were disarmed; he asked to what extent the United States would share in the additional military and financial responsibilities that would follow renewal of immigration.<sup>2</sup> (At this time the American Joint Chiefs of Staff were urging that American troops should not become involved in Palestine).<sup>3</sup> Bevin, writes his biographer, flew into "one of the blackest rages I ever saw him in"<sup>4</sup> upon hearing of Truman's statement on immigration. The Labour Government recognised that acceptance of the report would alienate the Arabs without satisfying Zionist demands for a Jewish state. It was not prepared to furnish the division of troops and £200,000,000, which it estimated would be required to

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1. See The Times 2.5.46 and Truman Volume II (letter to Attlee of 8.5.46) pp. 156-8.
  2. 422 HC 197, 1.5.46.
  3. Truman Volume II p. 159.
  4. F. Williams Ernest Bevin p. 260.

keep order after the admission of more immigrants. Truman, on the other hand, continued to press for the unconditional admission of the immigrants.<sup>1</sup>

The situation became increasingly turbulent. Jewish terrorism was making the British position in Palestine difficult and awkward.<sup>2</sup> Bevin further alienated American opinion by charging at the Labour Party Annual Conference in June that the United States was interested in Palestine because "they did not want too many Jews in New York."<sup>3</sup> This and similar later comments helped to strengthen the bonds between Zionists and the President and to widen the gaps between them and the British Foreign Secretary.

The anti-Zionist policy of the Labour Government created only a limited amount of unrest within the Labour Party. Jewish terrorism strengthened support for the Government's ostensible campaign to maintain law and order, although some backbench Labour MPs strongly attacked the Government for arresting leading Zionists in Palestine to curb terrorism. Sydney

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1. See Bevin LPCR 1946, p. 165 and Truman Volume II p. 158ff.
  2. See Cmd. 6873 "Palestine: Statement of Information Relating to Acts of Violence" (July, 1946).
  3. LPCR 1946, p. 165. The United States Government was unwilling to admit large numbers of Jewish refugees into America. See Kirk op.cit. pp. 188-9.

Silverman succeeded in moving an emergency adjournment of the House on July 1st, 1946, and Crossman and Michael Foot, among others, joined him in protest --<sup>1</sup> to no avail. The foreign affairs group of the PLP recommended that the Government accept the Commission's report. By late 1946 Crossman recognised:

"There was no hope of modifying the Cabinet's policy by any parliamentary action. It could rely on the Conservative opposition; and the majority of Labour members, knowing little of Palestine and anxious that nothing should disturb the Government's domestic programme, either supported it strongly or gave it the benefit of the doubt."<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding their known differences, the Labour Government and the United States Government established the Grady-Morrison committee, to consider the Commission's report. It met in London in July. The upshot was that in late July Herbert Morrison presented, on behalf of the ailing Foreign Secretary,<sup>3</sup> another proposal to settle the Palestine problem. The plan provided for provincial autonomy under a strong central authority, which would control immigration. Admission of 100,000 Jewish immigrants was made

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1. See Attlee 424 HC 1795-1801 for the Government's position and Silverman, et al., Col. 1859ff.
  2. Palestine Mission p. 203.
  3. See 426 HC 962ff. Full details are in Cmd. 7044 (1947) pp. 3-8.

conditional upon the acceptance by Jews and Arabs of the whole proposal. Morrison declared, "The full implementation of the experts' plan as a whole depends on United States co-operation."<sup>1</sup> A fortnight later Truman rejected it. He wrote Attlee that American public opinion made acceptance impossible.<sup>2</sup> The Jews and the Arabs likewise rejected the plan.

After this second failure in four months to find common ground with the United States, the Labour Government decided to negotiate directly with Arabs and Jews. Conferences in London began in September, 1946. Although the United States was nominally excluded from these negotiations, which lasted until early in 1947, it did intervene. On October 4th, President Truman publicly urged the creation of a viable Jewish state with control of its own immigration, and the immediate admission into Palestine of 100,000 Jewish immigrants.<sup>3</sup> The declaration was intended to anticipate a statement from Governor Dewey, so that the Democratic Party could keep the support of American Jews in the November, 1946

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1. 426 HC 970.

2. Volume II pp. 162-3. He was at that time receiving "all sorts of pressure" from Zionists. See also Kirk op.cit. p. 226.

3. See "The Month in History" Commentary (November, 1946) p. 452ff.

Congressional election. Bevin "begged" the State Department to prevent issuance of the President's statement.<sup>1</sup> Once again Bevin found his plans upset by Anglo-American disagreement. At that moment he had high hopes of a settlement, but following Truman's declaration, negotiations broke down.<sup>2</sup> Bevin was left with a very strong distaste for the way in which Truman let his Palestine policy be influenced by domestic political considerations.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Labour Government no longer sought American co-operation in Palestine, it could not ignore American support for Zionism, and the difficulties this caused. In Palestine, the two allies in Europe could only agree to differ. After the failure of negotiations with Jews and Arabs, the Labour Government turned the problem over to the United Nations.<sup>4</sup> Ostensibly, the Government was prepared to co-operate with the United Nations to settle the future of Palestine, but the conditions placed on this offer were devastating. Sir Alexander Cadogan told a UN committee on May 9th, 1947

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1. 433 HC 1908, 25.2.47.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. For Truman's rebuttal, see Volume II p. 164.

4. See Bevin, 433 HC 985-994, 18.2.47.

that the United Kingdom

"... should not have the sole responsibility for enforcing a solution which is not accepted by both parties and which we cannot reconcile with our conscience." 1

In other words, the Labour Government had abandoned all hope of finding agreement, as traditional Socialist principles had suggested, by co-operation in an international assembly. Because both sides were doomed to disagree, the Government reserved its right to act unilaterally, without regard to United Nations declarations. It pressed forward its plans for evacuating Palestine oblivious of the protests of the United States and of the resolutions of the UN. The creation of the independent Jewish state of Israel was a triple defeat. It was a defeat for the Arabs, it was a defeat for the Government, which gave the Arabs its support, and it was a defeat for the traditional Labour principle of co-operation. The Labour Government had left the Palestine problem to be resolved by the trial of war.

### Conclusion

There is "a clear divergence of fundamental principle which seems almost impossible to be bridged."

Ernest Bevin The Times 8.6.49

In some instances under review the Labour Government

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1. GA 1st committee, 52nd meeting, p. 184.

failed to seek co-operation with its fellow nations in matters of common concern. In other cases, co-operation was sought but it did not come. The shift in the Labour position was immediate and abrupt. In 1944 "The International Post-War Settlement" could still declare, "We must begin, without delay, to build a world order in which all peoples unite to pursue their common interests."<sup>1</sup> Two years later Clement Attlee expressed an opposite view:

"We can formulate a most admirable policy, the policy which we think the world should follow, but we cannot get the world to follow it just by formulating it, because other nations have their views. We have to work with them, and sooner or later, with whatever particular policy we go into foreign affairs, we find that we are up against this question: 'Shall I compromise on this point or shall I refuse co-operation and break?'"<sup>2</sup>

In the final sentence quoted above, Attlee typically confuses the issue by using "co-operation" to mean "compromise". He ignored the emphasis that pre-war Labour statements had placed upon achieving co-operation by uncompromising British efforts. This dogmatic policy was often urged upon the Government by post-war Labour critics.

The apparent inconsistency of the Labour Government

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1. LPCR 1944, p. 4. Italics supplied.
  2. 430 HC 579, 18.11.46, the debate on the amendment to the Address.

disappears upon closer examination. The traditional Labour faith was based upon a belief in the common interests of all peoples -- and in the ability of a single Labour Government to take a great many steps towards realising them. From the first, the 1945-51 Labour Government rejected these assumptions. It did not frame its policy in relation to a set of assumed common interests. As the above quotation from Attlee illustrates, the Government used specifically British interests as its touchstone. The Prime Minister had to point out that "other nations have their views" since this maxim had not been sufficiently appreciated<sup>1</sup> by the makers of Labour foreign policy before 1945. The traditional Labour principle of co-operation was logical, given Labour assumptions. It was rejected by the Government because the assumptions were found to be impractical.

The Labour Government adopted policies calculated in relation to vital British interests. This in turn was possible because the Government put its obligations to the people of Britain before wider but vaguer

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1. Nor has the maxim been given full weight in Labour policy - making in the past several years. Labour statements on summit conferences, on Suez, on disarmament, the H-bomb and the Middle East assume a much greater amount of common interest than the Labour Government ever did.

obligations to the peoples of the world. Policies were sometimes justified on supranational grounds but they were framed with regard to vital national interests. The Government reasoned from established military and strategic concepts that had often been scorned by the Party before 1945.

In practice, the Government had little difficulty in defining what were the British interests that could not be forfeited or placed in jeopardy for the sake of co-operation. Co-operation was no longer a goal of the Labour leaders: it was only one of several means to the ends of greater British security and prosperity. In the occupation of Germany, the Government held that Britain could not agree to any proposal that would increase its deficit there; it would only accept all-German economic unity if the plan would reduce its occupation costs and not affect its military security. In Berlin, Britain's interest was in morale and in diplomatic face. The high value placed upon these intangible factors was shown by the grave military risks that the Government ran, while uncertain about the success of the airlift.

In two of the instances under consideration, Anglo-American relations and Anglo-Russian relations, the Labour Government did not regard its vital interests as opposed to those of the other parties. It tried

to advance them by co-operation. With regard to America, the Labour Government was mistaken in its hope that the United States would agree with Britain on mutually acceptable terms in Palestine. It failed to reckon with the strength of Zionist influence in America and the weakness of the Government's Middle Eastern advisers. When the Labour Government finally resolved the Palestine problem it did so by unilateral action, not co-operation.

Ernest Bevin's dual policy in Anglo-Russian relations was a compound of hope and self-interest. The first part was in accord with traditional Socialist thinking. The principle of co-operation played an important part in the development of Britain's Russian policy, even though co-operation did not come. Because the Labour Party was so committed to co-operation, particularly with Russia, it was politically wise to strive for it, and to appear to strive for it, until Russian initiative made even the attempt to co-operate impossible. While Churchill was pressing for an Anglo-American alliance against Russia and while some Labour rebels were writing off co-operation with both Russia and America, the Foreign Secretary was actively seeking, until the end of 1947, to find a basis for agreement. When the break came, there was the minimum of doubt about where the blame should be placed. In contrast with Chamberlain, who sacrificed Czechoslovakia before discovering that

Hitler would not co-operate, Bevin sacrificed nothing in the course of demonstrating Russia's intransigence. When the dual policy ended, public opinion within the Labour Party and in Britain was willing to accept the burdens of defence.<sup>1</sup> It is unlikely that advocacy of a policy of stalemate and non-co-operation, say, from the date of Churchill's Iron Curtain speech, or even after the end of the Moscow Conference in March, 1947, would have produced as strong a desire and will to develop NATO. The result of Bevin's efforts to co-operate and to appear to co-operate was that his later policy of stalemate was, until 1951, widely accepted within the Party, even by many of his earlier critics, although it was clearly opposed to a traditional Socialist principle of foreign policy.

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1. Contrast this with the Party's readiness in the 1930s to blame the British Government rather than other governments for the failure to secure all-round co-operation for European disarmament and security.

## Chapter III

## LEFT AND RIGHT IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

"Left understands left; but right does not."  
Ernest Bevin, LPCR 1945, p. 119.

"We are not acting as the representatives of an ideological abstraction but as representatives of the people of this country."  
C.R. Attlee, 430 HC 581, 18.11.46

The principle of class-consciousness in foreign policy had deep roots in the Labour Party. It was a pledge to assist left-wing forces in other countries, and to oppose reactionary ones.<sup>1</sup> It was based upon two assumptions: that the working-class of Britain had common interests with the working-classes in other countries and that permanent peace required the eventual realisation of Socialism everywhere.<sup>2</sup> The Party first acted upon these assumptions when it joined the Second International. At that time the International stressed joint extra-parliamentary action by Socialist parties to preserve peace. The collapse of the International in 1914 revealed the fragile nature of this policy.

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1. In this chapter the term "left-wing" includes labour, Socialist, Marxist and other working-class parties outside Britain.
  2. For typical examples of the place of these assumptions in policy statements, see Conference resolution, LPCR 1933, p. 188 and "War and Peace" LPCR 1934, p. 243.

As from 1917, the reaction against war within the Labour Party revived faith in international Socialist action. The object -- world Socialism -- was the same, but tactical principles were altered. The Labour Party recognised the limits of joint action by Socialist parties in opposition. The split of the old International into Communist and Socialist groups further increased the difficulty of acting through parties. Primary emphasis was now placed upon joint action by left-wing governments. Labour was moving towards office in Britain. The workers had seized control in Russia. Hopes were great for social revolution in other countries. Action through governments was consistent with the Labour Party's non-revolutionary domestic policy. The Party preached that the best way to advance Socialism internationally was to secure permanent peace and economic co-operation through the League of Nations.<sup>1</sup> This would create conditions conducive to the growth of Socialist parties; in turn, the spread of Socialist governments would hasten the day when the League could be converted into the World Co-operative Commonwealth. In the interim, left-wing governments would work together to further their common aims. The Labour

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1. For example, the 1934 policy statement "War and Peace" makes no mention of the International, although it showed a very class-conscious approach to the League of Nations.

and Socialist International served as a meeting place for parties of all nations, but the British Labour Party regarded party talks as supplementing governmental talks at the League. The Labour Party was much quicker to recognise fraternal links in international relations than it was in domestic matters. In foreign policy statements, co-operation with the workers of the Soviet Union was frequently mentioned. Domestically, the Party rejected repeated requests for joint action from the Communist Party of Great Britain in the 1920s and 1930s.

The spread of Fascism on the Continent and the creation of the British Union of Fascists in 1932 further emphasized to Labour Party members the connection between class interests, domestic and international problems.<sup>1</sup> The special advocates of co-operation and of class-consciousness were united in demanding a League of Nations security system, which would be based upon Britain, France and Russia. Class-conscious Party members thought in terms of an Attlee-Blum-Stalin front. This, as Attlee pointed out in his Labour Party in Perspective in 1937,<sup>2</sup> could result in economic as well as security agreements.

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1. See e.g., National Council of Labour statement of March 24th, 1933, LPCR 1933, pp. 277-8.

2. p. 225.

In 1936 the sense of class-consciousness was strong enough within the Party to force the leadership to shift its position on the question of intervention in the Spanish Civil War. Intervention was justified on the grounds that the fight between left and right "is an international war. The duty [to assist] which is imposed upon us is an international Socialist duty." <sup>1</sup> As the threat of war came closer, the estimated military strength of Russia greatly increased the already strong desire within the Party for an Anglo-Russian alliance. The Party regarded the Conservative Government's appeasement policy and its lack of interest in Russia as a further proof of the importance of class considerations in foreign affairs.

In World War II the military enemy and the ideological enemy were one. It was convenient and common for the Party to give war an ideological gloss. In 1939 and 1940 the Party even held out the hope of peace coming as the result of a working-class revolution in Germany. <sup>2</sup> After Russia entered the war, Britain's chief European ally was, for the Labour Party, an ideological ally as

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1. "Spain Campaign Appeal", November, 1937. Interim Report of the NEC 1938, p. 86. See also LPCR 1937, p. 212.
  2. LPCR 1940, p. 9f, p. 188. Fenner Brockway, then in the ILP, received eight messages from German trade unionists before the invasion of Holland. In July, 1942, he was informed of the revival of the Spartacus Bund in Hamburg. Brockway Inside the Left (1947) p. 324.

well. The mood of the times is indicated by the National Council of Labour's May Day manifesto in 1942, issued "in the spirit of international solidarity."

"Upon the victory of the free nations every possibility of social progress depends. The maintenance of international solidarity among the workers of the world is essential to the realisation of their common aim to make an end of poverty, unemployment, low wages, excessive hours of toil, and to raise the standard of life, health and education for all." <sup>1</sup>

The liberation of occupied countries in Europe faced the Coalition government with political problems of post-war significance. A major difference of opinion arose between many back-bench Labour MPs and Labour ministers on Coalition policy in Greece. Seymour Cocks moved an amendment to the Address on December 8th, 1944, which regretted the Coalition policy as out of harmony with the traditional Labour principles of supporting left-wing groups. <sup>2</sup> Labour critics saw the action as suppression of a working-class uprising in Greece. They equated the policy of the Churchill Government with Churchill's anti-Communist policy towards Russia after World War I. Incidents in Belgium and

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1. LPCR 1942, p. 9. The manifesto also called upon the German and Italian workers to overthrow their governments.
  2. 406 HC 908. See also "Mr. Churchill's New War", New Statesman 16.12.44.

Italy were adduced to amplify the charge that the Coalition was following an anti-working-class policy. Arthur Greenwood, acting leader of the PLP, spoke against the Coalition policy but abstained from voting. No Labour minister spoke in support of the Government, although ministers voted for it. The division result was 279 to 30.<sup>1</sup> At the 1944 Annual Conference, held the following week, Ernest Bevin strongly supported Coalition policy in Greece, saying, "The British Empire cannot abandon the position in the Mediterranean."<sup>2</sup> Jim Griffiths, winding up the debate for the NEC, invoked the need to maintain the Coalition. The non-committal motion, an implicit vote of confidence, was approved, 2,455,000 to 137,000.<sup>3</sup>

Opposition continued within the Party. Back-bench Labour MPs were well supplied with complaints from left-

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1. 406 HC 1011.

2. LPCR 1944, p. 147. There was only a brief reference to strategic considerations. Bevin spoke much more explicitly six years later. "It is all moonshine, you know -- this attack on Greece. It is strategic, my friends, and why do you not recognise that it is strategic? ... This country could not have afforded to stand by and see the whole Middle East down to India go. You could not maintain your standard of life; you could not maintain your power; you could not maintain your position if that were to happen." LPCR 1950, p. 147. Churchill twice commended Bevin's support of the Greek policy in writing to Roosevelt. Churchill The Second World War: Volume VI (1954) pp. 261-2, p. 265.

3. LPCR 1944, p. 150.

wing guerillas.<sup>1</sup> The NEC sent a delegation of protest to Churchill in January, 1945.<sup>2</sup> Aneurin Bevan, from a back bench, urged conciliation of the left-wing guerillas.

"If we can persuade the Greek people of the bona fides of the British Government, the difficulty will be over. (Laughter)." <sup>3</sup>

A committee of leaders in the Labour movement, headed by Sir Walter Citrine, made a first-hand investigation of events in Greece. Their report endorsed the Coalition policy, but it did not eliminate differences between Labour ministers and back-bench Labour MPs on the point of principle.<sup>4</sup> When Attlee spoke out in January, 1945, justifying the Coalition action, he invoked a Government claim to superior knowledge and asked for trust.<sup>5</sup>

While the 1945 Conference did not vote on foreign policy resolutions, there was no mistaking the temper of the Conference; it favoured left-wing co-operation. As Hugh Dalton said:

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1. C.M. Woodhouse Apple of Discord (1948) passim.
  2. LPCR 1945, p. 12.
  3. 407 HC 571, 19.1.45.
  4. See Manchester Guardian 9.2.45, for a summary. Woodhouse, op.cit. p. 225, declares that the committee made a point of interviewing British soldiers in the ranks, rather than officers, in order to get more expression of British working-class views. He adds: "There was a good deal more bias against EAM/ELAS among the former, who had just fought them at grimly close quarters, than among the latter, who had not."
  5. 407 HC 487ff, 18.1.45.

"One of the great arguments which we should address, not only to ourselves but to the electorate at large, is that a British Labour Government would be more likely to create more quickly a state of confidence and mutual trust between London and Moscow than any alternative Government in this country." <sup>1</sup>

Bevin repeated Dalton's claim that Labour would work better with Russia than a Conservative Government would. He also held out the prospect of special relations with French Socialists and Indian nationalists. <sup>2</sup> Attlee, uncharacteristically speaking against the tide of opinion, nevertheless recognised the strength of class-consciousness by cautioning against it.

"It is just as well to remember that all who shout for democracy are not democrats and that both on the right and on the left in some of these countries are people who seek to enforce the will of the minority on the majority by force. It is no good ignoring these things." <sup>3</sup>

The campaign manifesto invoked the old faith instead of Attlee's new doubts.

"The British Labour movement comes to the tasks of international organisation with one great asset: it has a common bond with the working peoples of all countries, who have achieved a new dignity and influence through their long struggle against Nazi tyranny." <sup>4</sup>

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1. LPCR 1945, p. 104.
  2. LPCR 1945, p. 115ff. Bevin used the phrase "Left understands left" to refer to the future of Anglo-French relations.
  3. Ibid. p. 108. Cf. the remarks of Healey and Foot, cited supra, pp. 77-79.
  4. "Let Us Face the Future" p. 11.

In principle, these bonds were relevant to problems that the Labour Government faced in its relations with Russia, America, Spain, China and the International Socialist Conference. The object of this chapter is to consider their influence in practice.

### Russia

"Russia would deal better and with greater confidence with a Labour Government than with the historical men of Munich. Left can speak to left in comradeship and confidence."

Ernest Bevin Daily Worker, 9.6.45.

"Soviet Communism pursues a policy of imperialism in a new form -- ideological, economic and strategic -- which threatens the welfare and the way of life of the other nations of Europe."

C.R. Attlee The Times, 5.1.48.

The traditional sympathy within the Labour Party for Russia "developed not from an intellectual affinity but from an emotional attraction."<sup>1</sup> The emotion was grounded in fact. The Russian Revolution threw over Czarist tyranny and capitalism in one of the great countries of Europe, and brought to life a government acting in the name of the common people.<sup>2</sup> In Russia the Socialist dream was to become a reality.

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1. S.R. Graubard British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917-24 (1956) p. 243.
  2. Conference had earlier associated itself with anti-Czarist activities. See LPCR 1905, p. 40. The British alliance with Russia in World War I had been cited by the Labour Party in attacking the claim the war was fought for democracy.

The impact of the Revolution was demonstrated at the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates at Leeds in June, 1917. It approved the establishment of Councils of Action for "initiating and co-ordinating working-class activity" in support of the Russian Revolution, a negotiated peace, civil liberties and industrial rights.<sup>1</sup> Among prominent Labour figures speaking at the Conference in support of this policy were four future Cabinet ministers -- MacDonald, Snowden, Pethick-Lawrence and Lansbury. Ernest Bevin was shouted down after he denounced the group as dominated by the "fatuous friends of the ILP" and "the professional politicians of the Labour Party."<sup>2</sup> The temper of the meeting was taken by Robert Williams, general secretary of the Transport Workers' Federation, who said:

"We are competent to speak in the name of our own class and damn the Constitution. (Loud cheers) Had the Russian revolutionaries been disposed to be concerned with the Constitution of Holy Russia the Romanoffs would have been on the throne to-day, and I say to you: Have as little concern for the British Constitution as the Russians you are praising had for the dynasty of the Romanoffs. (Cheers) ... "If you are really sincere in sending greetings to Russia, I say to you: 'Go thou and do likewise.' (Cheers)"<sup>3</sup>

The programme was forgotten, but the emotion lingered. In 1951 Aneurin Bevan spoke of the Revolution as "one

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1. "What Happened at Leeds" (Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates, second edition, 1917) pp. 13-14.
  2. Ibid. pp. 10-11.
  3. Ibid. pp. 16-17.

of the most emancipating events in the history of mankind". He called forth the memory of "the miners, when they heard that the Czarist tyranny had been overthrown, rushing to meet each other in the streets with tears streaming down their cheeks, shaking hands and saying: 'At last it has happened.'<sup>1</sup>"

The emotional support in the Party for the new government in Russia was increased when the Western allies intervened against it in the Russian Civil War. At the 1919 Conference the Party threatened "the unreserved use of their political and industrial power" to stop intervention. The vote was 1,893,000 to 935,000, in spite of an NEC recommendation against the policy.<sup>2</sup> At the June, 1920 Annual Conference, J.H. Thomas and Ernest Bevin were successful in securing rejection of a resolution endorsing a general strike to stop British intervention in Russia; they said British workers would not support such a resolution by their actions.<sup>3</sup> Two months later, however, when there was great fear in the Labour Party that the British Government might soon declare war on Communist Russia, a Council of Action was officially established to plan industrial

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1. LPCR 1951, p. 121.

2. LPCR 1919, p. 156, p. 161. Rhys Davies presented the motion.

3. LPCR 1920, p. 132ff. Bevin's speech should be read and contrasted with his later claim to have been the great British protector of the Russian Revolution after World War I.

measures to stop such a war.<sup>1</sup> Since the British Government did not declare war, and peace was concluded in October, the strength of pro-Russian sentiment was not fully tested. The Party regarded its August demonstration as an important factor in the conclusion of peace.

The ambivalence of the Labour Party's attitude towards Communism was demonstrated by the NEC rejection of the first request of the Communist Party of Great Britain for affiliation on September 11th, 1920, when the Council of Action spirit was very strong. Henry Pelling later wrote:

"The main explanation of the Labour Party's duality of attitude -- friendliness to Bolshevism abroad, hostility at home -- is surely to be found in the basic trade-union principle of undivided jurisdiction. Lenin and Chicherin were not challenging the jurisdiction of the British unions but MacManus and Murphy, the Shop Stewards' leaders, were."<sup>2</sup>

The 1921 Annual Conference endorsed the NEC action,<sup>3</sup> 4,115,000 to 224,000; the decision was continually reaffirmed by large majorities throughout the inter-war

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1. LPCR 1921, p. 11ff. See also "The Council of Action: Report of the Special Conference on Labour and the Russo-Polish War, August 13th, 1920" (LP, 1920). Bevin's speech, pp. 6-13, is in sharp contrast to the previously cited one of June, 1920.
  2. H. Pelling, review of S.R. Graubard op. cit., Political Studies (1957) p. 203. See also Pelling The Communist Party of Great Britain (1958) p. 24ff and C.E. Brand op. cit. p. 232ff.
  3. LPCR 1921, p. 166.

period. While refusing the request of the Communist Party of Great Britain for affiliation, Annual Conferences were simultaneously demanding British recognition of the Soviet government.<sup>1</sup> An interest in Russian trade reinforced the political bias of the Party. To counter the charge of having Bolshevik tendencies, the Labour Party opposed Bolshevism in Britain, but it suffered Communists and pro-Communists in the Party and trade unions.<sup>2</sup> The 1924 Labour Government granted full recognition to Russia and the 1929 Government renewed diplomatic relations with it.

The sudden deposition of the Labour Government in 1931 greatly increased suspicion of capitalism and to some extent, of parliamentary government within the Labour Party, thus producing a reaction in favour of Communist Russia. The 1933 Hastings Conference approved a resolution stating:

"That this Conference condemns all efforts to discredit the practice of Socialism in Russia ... and instructs the NEC to establish such cordial relations with the Socialist rulers of Russia as ought to characterise two bodies professing a similar economic and social objective under different conditions."<sup>3</sup>

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1. LPCR 1920, p. 132; 1922, p. 193; 1923, p. 221.
  2. See e.g. Bevin's speech LPCR 1925 pp. 183-4; for MacDonald's views, LPCR 1927, pp. 243-4; statement of the Anglo-Russian Joint Advisory Council TUCR 1927, p. 369; Mowat op. cit. p. 287ff; Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1924-32, passim; M.A. Hamilton op. cit. p. 284, pp. 309-13.
  3. LPCR 1933, p. 230. The same Conference debated and maintained the practice of proscribing Communist-front organisations. See p. 18, pp. 143-6.

In the 1920s the Labour Party believed Russia would be the immediate beneficiary of improved relations. In the 1930s it maintained that Western European nations would benefit greatly if Russia joined the League's security system. "War and Peace" in 1934 asserted that "a condition for carrying out this policy is to bring the USSR into the League."<sup>1</sup> The presence of Russia in the League was used to increase the stature of the League in the Labour Party.<sup>2</sup> The militancy of British Communists in fighting Fascism led to a blurring of differences between the Labour Party and the Communist Party by ~~xxxxxxx~~ Labour figures such as Cripps and Laski. In 1936 the Communist Party's regular plea for affiliation received the relatively high total of 592,000 votes, with 1,728,000 against.<sup>3</sup> In 1936 the National Council of Labour specifically rejected any European settlement that would leave Germany free to attack Russia.<sup>4</sup>

The drive of the Labour Party for closer links with Russia reached its climax in 1939. Chairman George Dallas told the Annual Conference in May: "Moscow is the

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1. LPCR 1934, p. 244.

2. See e.g., E. Bevin, LPCR 1935, p. 179.

3. LPCR 1936, p. 211. See also, Pelling The Communist Party p. 80ff, and Will Lawther's speech as president of the M.F.G.B., LPCR 1936, p. 210.

4. "Labour and the Defence of Peace" p. 9.

custodian of peace."<sup>1</sup> It was "a difficult job" to get the PLP to support the Polish guarantee without a Russian alliance.<sup>2</sup> The signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August was a shock, but the Party's own propaganda about the anti-Russian character of the Chamberlain government gave Labour Party members grounds for justifying the Pact, if they wished to do so. When the National Council of Labour denounced the Pact it avoided direct criticism of the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> The following spring the Party urged aid to Finland, but it "indignantly repudiated" the suggestion this would risk the "grave misfortune" of war with Russia.<sup>4</sup>

The German invasion of Russia showed, by the flood of pro-Russian sentiment released within the Labour Party, that such feeling had been dammed up rather than dried up by events since August, 1939. The National Council of Labour's "Help for Russia" fund totalled £762,000 before the war's end.<sup>5</sup> The wartime aura of Big Three co-operation and the military achievements of the Russian Army

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1. LPCR 1939, p. 215.
  2. Dalton Fateful Years p. 242.
  3. LPCR 1940, p. 8.
  4. Ibid. p. 14.
  5. LPCR 1945, p. 4.

strengthened ties that were already strong.<sup>1</sup> Hugh Dalton accurately described the atmosphere when he later wrote:<sup>2</sup> "Most of us were Russophile but not Communist."

Against such forces, pamphlets from Transport House cautioning members about Communist activities availed little.<sup>3</sup> Pro-Russian sentiment reached such a height that a resolution calling for "progressive unity" in the 1945 general election failed of passage by only 95,000 votes at the 1945 Annual Conference, the best showing ever in 25 years of attempts at a common Labour-Communist front.<sup>4</sup> In the 1945 general election the Party stood to benefit tactically by emphasizing, as did Sir Stafford Cripps, among others, that "the most cardinal feature in our future foreign policy was whether or not we could maintain a sincere friendship with the Soviet Union," and that only a Labour Government would be able to do this.<sup>5</sup>

Pro-Russian sentiment appeared strong at the May, 1946 Bournemouth Conference because Harold Laski, as chairman, gave the opening address. He emphasized the

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1. And, incidentally, strengthened the Communist Party. Pelling The Communist Party p. 120ff.
  2. Dalton Fateful Years p. 240.
  3. See e.g., "The Communist Party and the War; a Record of Hypocrisy and Treachery to the Workers of Europe" (LP, 1943).
  4. LPCR 1945, pp. 81-2.
  5. The Times 2.7.45.

need for co-operation with Russia because:

"The achievements of their Revolution are one of the pillars of our own strength ... Let capitalist governments mistrust one another; that mistrust is inherent in capitalist society. But governments like the Russian and our own are the surest hope of peace."

The retiring Party chairman referred to "alleged" Russian espionage in Canada only to cite this as an argument against keeping atomic secrets from Russia.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, at the same Conference the tide of wartime goodwill began to recede visibly within the Party. A few months before, Herbert Morrison had seen "ominous signs" that the Communist Party might gain sufficient Conference votes to carry its request for affiliation.<sup>2</sup> The Manchester Guardian reported on March 26th, 1946 that four of the six largest trade unions affiliated to the Party (the NUM, NUR, NUDAW and the AEU) were in favour of admitting it, and Communists were "working very hard to get others." This early show of strength was belied at Conference. The NEC was carefully prepared, not only to secure rejection of Communist affiliation but also to secure approval of an amendment to the Party Constitution which would make the Communist Party permanently ineligible for affiliation. The amendment carried, although

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1. LPCR 1946, p. 106. See H.A. Deane The Political Ideas of Harold J. Laski (1955) pp. 302-29 for a critical analysis of Laski's post-war ideas on foreign affairs.
  2. LPCR 1946, p. 169.

Morrison, when recommending it, was careful to confine his criticisms to the C.P.G.B. and not to attack Russia.<sup>1</sup> The chief substantive motion criticising the Government's Russian policy asked for "co-operation with the progressive forces throughout the world, and in particular with the U.S.S.R." and "reaffirms the pledges made by Conferences of the Labour Party in the past to ... assist in every possible way the struggles of the working-class movements in all countries towards Socialism."<sup>2</sup> Supporters of the resolution were members of the Labour Party who had been led to believe in Russia's rightness by previous propaganda within and without the Labour Party.<sup>3</sup> Bevin, in answering this resolution, posed as the victim of Russian ingratitude.

"Is there any man in this Conference who historically did more to defend the Russian revolution than I did? ... The thanks I got for it was an attempt by the Communists to break up the Union that I built."<sup>4</sup>

The resolution was defeated.

After the 1946 Annual Conference it became increasingly apparent that in Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations left was not understanding left. A minority of members in the Labour Party were so firmly attached to the traditional

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1. LPCR 1946, p. 14, p. 169ff.

2. Ibid. p. 157. See also p. 151 and pp. 159-60.

3. For a discussion of the role of Communists within the Labour Party at this time see infra p. 491ff.

4. LPCR 1946, p. 167.

Socialist principle of friendship with Russia that when friendship did not come, they decided that it must be the Labour Government, not the principle (or the Russians) that was at fault. These apologists can be styled Russophiles, although one might more awkwardly call them Sovietophiles, since their attachment was not to Russia but to the Soviet Union's political institutions. The basis of their position was succinctly stated by Jack Tanner of the AEU:

"Russia was the first and is still the only country in the world where capitalism has been abolished and whether we like their methods or not, we cannot escape from that fact." <sup>1</sup>

Since Russia had already abolished capitalism, it was, as another speaker said, "up to us to show the Soviet Union that a new spirit is now ruling Great Britain." <sup>2</sup>

Some but by no means all of the 1946 rebels were Russophiles. The letter sent by 21 rebels to the Prime Minister ambiguously referred to Russia's "security" measures as "the greatest cause of preoccupation to the Government in the field of foreign affairs." More explicitly, it recognised Communism as "ill-suited" to the United Kingdom but assumed it was well suited to some societies. <sup>3</sup> The amendment to the Address drew as sharp

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1. LPCR 1946, p. 173.

2. Ibid. p. 158.

3. Manchester Guardian 16.11.46.

a line between Communist Russia and Labour Britain as it did between Labour Britain and capitalist America. Crossman, who moved the amendment, emphasized the differences between Russia and Britain.<sup>1</sup> Other speakers looked at matters differently. The seconder, Joe Reeves, a Co-op member of the NEC, spoke of the affinity of interests between Russia and Labour Britain.<sup>2</sup> Sydney Silverman, winding up the debate for the rebel group, expressed "intense admiration and affection for the Socialist achievements of Russia" and asserted that the Labour Government had no right to insist upon freely elected governments in states bordering Russia.<sup>3</sup> Although the rebels had a relatively high degree of discipline, they had neither the means nor the desire to eliminate the conflict in their views on Russia.<sup>4</sup> Attlee rejected the idea that the Government should frame its foreign policy with regard to class interests.

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1. 430 HC 526ff, 18. 11. 46.

2. Ibid. Col. 540-2.

3. Ibid. Col. 575-6. Silverman was strongly criticised afterwards by Foot and others for taking such a pro-Russian line. Interview S. Silverman, June, 1959.

4. One of the prominent rebels said in an interview that he believed that Silverman had deliberately sought critics of Bevin who were also critics of Russia to support the motion, in order to give it greater respectability and influence.

"Keep Left", issued by a rebel group in the following April, also contained contrasting statements on Anglo-Russian relations. While seeking diplomatic disengagement from Russo-American conflicts, which concerned two alien ideologies, the pamphleteers nevertheless foresaw an eventual merger of economic plans for Western Europe, Germany and Russia.<sup>1</sup> Like the Russophiles, it placed upon the Labour Government the burden of proving "the sincerity of our Socialist intentions." As part proof it suggested withdrawing British troops from Greece, Palestine and Egypt and internationalising the Dardanelles and Suez,<sup>2</sup> a policy completely in contradiction to that of the Labour Government.<sup>3</sup>

For the first eighteen months of the Government, the staff at Transport House maintained the Party's traditional ambivalence toward Communist Russia and Russian Communism. This complemented Bevin's dual policy at the Foreign Office. NEC members on a goodwill mission to Russia in July, 1946 reminisced with Stalin about acts of solidarity in 1905 and 1926. The mission reported the visit was "well worth-while, although it would be foolish to assume that

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1. "Keep Left" (1947) p. 41.

2. Ibid. p. 43.

3. "Keeping Left", published in the much different environment of January, 1950, accepted that "the foreign policy in which we believed in 1945 had to be scrapped," but nevertheless urged the Government to secure atomic disarmament, without reference to Russian non-co-operation on this point at the UN. p. 19, p. 22.

difficulties and differences do not exist or that all misunderstanding has been dispelled." <sup>1</sup> A sign of the beginning of a change in temper occurred at the 1947 Conference, when a delegate tried to move the reference back of this report on the ground that it was an affront to the "slaves" in Eastern Europe and Russia. <sup>2</sup> Harold Davies commented: "Never before in my recollection have I heard a speech like the last one coming from the rostrum of the Labour Conference." <sup>3</sup> The reference back died for lack of a seconder.

In the spring of 1947 the Party organisation explicitly began to deny traditional Socialist ideas about Anglo-Russian relations. This was done emphatically in "Cards on the Table", prepared by Denis Healey, the international secretary of the Party. The pamphlet admitted that the Government came into office "pro-Soviet" and also that "for many people, non-communist means capitalist and capitalist means Fascist." <sup>4</sup> Ideological principles were shown as contradicting strategic principles. Russia was opposing vital British interests and America would support Britain in defending them. The statement concluded that security considerations rightfully determined foreign policy, and accepted Anglo-Russian antagonism.

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1. LPCR 1947, p. 219.

2. Ibid. p. 102.

3. Ibid.

4. p. 12. See infra pp. 417-19 for a discussion of the publication of this pamphlet.

The Russophiles were not to be convinced by logic or by considerations of military strategy. At the May, 1947 Conference, shortly before General Marshall's Harvard speech, their attack was repeated, this time emphasizing the advantages of Anglo-Russian trade and the dangers of Anglo-American trade. Konni Zilliacus asked Conference to declare:

"It believes that subservience to capitalist America will inevitably draw us into an anticipated slump and that the only way to avoid this is to co-operate with all countries with Socialist-planned economies." <sup>1</sup>

The resolution was defeated. A moderately phrased resolution asking for increased Anglo-Russian trade was accepted by the NEC, with Bevin adding the comment, "There is no need to call on us to speed up trade. I have been trying for 18 months now to get negotiations going with Russia on this question." <sup>2</sup>

A trade agreement was finally signed in Moscow in December, 1947, after negotiations had once broken down because of the British difficulty in bargaining with Russian delegates. <sup>3</sup> A Manchester Guardian correspondent noted that the agreement would "help the Government politically at home. Lack of a trade agreement with Russia has been a sore point with the left-wing elements

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1. LPCR 1947, p. 160.

2. Ibid. p. 181.

3. See Cripps 441 HC 37, 28.7.47, and Manchester Guardian 29.7.47.

of the Labour Party and of the trade unions." <sup>1</sup> The Govern-  
ment, however, was not trading with Russia because of  
supposed similarities between the two countries' economic  
or social systems but because, as Harold Wilson, the  
chief negotiator put it, "It was to our economic advantage  
to do so." <sup>2</sup> Britain, in this period of shortages, had  
good use for the grain, fish, timber and plywood from  
the Soviet Union. Russia, in turn, benefited by receiving  
British machinery, woollens and re-exports of cocoa, wool  
and rubber. The proof that trade was a business proposi-  
tion is that as diplomatic relations worsened, trade  
increased. In 1947 Britain retained £6,689,000 in Russian  
imports, in 1948, £26,197,000 and in 1951, when rearmament  
against Russia was straining the economy, £53,775,000.  
Similarly, Russian imports from Britain increased from  
£7,078,000 in 1948 to £14,210,000 in 1950 and £24,145,000  
in 1951. <sup>3</sup> The Labour Government rejected pleas from its  
left-wing supporters to increase trade for ideological  
reasons, and from Republican Senators in America to decrease  
trade for the same reason. <sup>4</sup>

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1. 29.12.47. For the text of the agreement, see The Times 29.12.47.
  2. The Times 8.2.49.
  3. Trade figures from Annual Statement of the Trade of the United Kingdom 1950, Vol. IV (HMSO, 1952) pp. 131-3; 1951, Vol. IV (HMSO, 1953) p. 56.
  4. See e.g., The Times 25.3.49, 12.7.49. Gaitskell told American critics: "We do not import luxuries from Russia but necessities." New York Times 22.9.51.

The systematic purging of Socialists by Communists in Eastern Europe after the war had an impact upon all but the most strongly convinced of the Russophiles within the Party. It led Aneurin Bevan to write, in reviewing this "grim, depressing narrative", that

"It is necessary for Socialists to understand that they are not now talking the same language as those who have come under the influence of Stalinist doctrines." <sup>1</sup>

Many members of the Labour Party, and even Transport House itself, did not believe in 1945 that the co-operation of Communists and Socialists in Eastern Europe would have such a bloody and disastrous end. When the remnants of the Labour and Socialist International constituted the Socialist Information and Liaison Office (SILO) in 1946, Socialist parties collaborating with Communists in Eastern Europe were admitted to full membership. Even Leon Blum, who had long been respected at Transport House, headed a government in France with Communists in its Cabinet. Through its International Department, the NEC maintained contact with East European Socialist parties in 1946 and 1947. It sent a number of fraternal delegates to Socialist Party congresses in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Rumania, and received their delegates. <sup>2</sup> Some militant members of the Labour

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1. "The Curtain Falls" (edited by D. Healey, 1951) p. 6. Italics supplied.
  2. LPCR 1947, p. 17ff; 1948, p. 20ff.

Party were ready to defend undemocratic procedures in Eastern European countries as necessary because of the rapidity and scale of their transition to "Socialism".<sup>1</sup> The Labour Government, like Transport House, followed a policy of publicly seeking co-operation between Eastern and Western Europe.

By means of its contacts with East European Socialists the Party was able to get firsthand private accounts of Russian pressures on its satellites. When the Russian purge of Eastern European Socialists began, the impact upon the Labour Party leadership was strengthened by their personal knowledge of the victims.<sup>2</sup> The coup d'état in Czechoslovakia in February, 1948, was the final blow to hopes, within the Labour Government and at Transport House, that Socialists and Communists might be able to work together politically. The NEC statement on the Czech coup declared:

"For Democratic Socialists still free to choose their future the fall of Czechoslovakia is a warning and a lesson ... Individual Socialists, by permitting or abetting Communist attacks on democracy have connived at their own destruction."<sup>3</sup>

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1. See e.g., D. Healey, LPCR 1945, p. 114; Tom Driberg, LPCR 1947, p. 173; G.D.H. Cole "Labour's Foreign Policy" (1946) p. 10; the letter of 21 rebels, Manchester Guardian 16.11.46.
  2. For a more complete account of events in Eastern Europe and their impact upon the Labour Party see LPCR 1948, pp. 23-5; 1949, pp. 23-5. "The Curtain Falls" contains detailed accounts of events in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, as well as comments by Healey and Bevan. For the reaction of the International Socialist Conference see infra p. 226f.
  3. LPCR 1948, p. 23.

The Labour Government promptly decided to remove Communists<sup>1</sup> from jobs affecting the nation's security. By May Day, 1948 the usually mild-mannered Clement Attlee was comparing Communism with Fascism and denouncing the "busy little people" in the Labour Party who were urging support for Russia's foreign policy.<sup>2</sup>

The most conspicuous of the Russophiles remaining in the Labour Party after this date was Konni Zilliacus. Perhaps the most concise statement of his position was made at the May, 1948 Annual Conference in support of a lengthy 12-point resolution on foreign policy.

"We must either co-operate with the working-class leadership of Europe, such as it is, as it really exists in fact, or else we will be driven into the position of getting ready with Mr. Churchill to fight the Socialist Revolution in Europe."<sup>3</sup>

The resolution was defeated, 4,097,000 to 224,000. The irrepressible Zilli was not to be prevented by the Cold War from maintaining his beliefs. In 1949 the NEC expelled him for being "more in sympathy with Communist international policy than with the policy of the Labour Party."<sup>4</sup> In his defence at Conference, one delegate

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1. See Attlee's statement, 448 HC 1703-9, 15.3.48.

2. The Times 3.5.48.

3. LPCR 1948, pp. 186-7. See also Zilliacus Why I Was Expelled (1949).

4. LPCR 1949, p. 18.

pleaded with good reason that the chief trouble with the veteran Labour propagandist was "that Zilliacus's foreign policy has never changed."<sup>1</sup>

The distance that the Party had moved from its pre-war position was emphatically shown in the February, 1950 general election campaign. In 1945 Labour had sought votes with the claim that it could work better with Russia than the Conservatives could. In 1950 Churchill asserted that he was much better qualified to reach agreement with Russia. Four days after Clement Attlee had turned down a Quaker appeal for a great power conference because "it would be presumptuous to suppose that personal contact ... would do anything but raise hopes unduly,"<sup>2</sup> Churchill declared at Edinburgh:

"I cannot help coming back to this idea of another talk with Soviet Russia upon the highest level. The idea appeals to me of a supreme effort to bridge the gulf between the two worlds, so that each can live their life, if not in friendship, at least without the hatreds and manoeuvres of the cold war. I am grateful to you for marking my words in these matters, because I have not always been proved wrong."<sup>3</sup>

With considerable rhetorical skill Churchill contrasted his wartime co-operation with Stalin and the postwar disagreements between Russia and the Labour Government.

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1. LPCR 1949, p. 122. See also infra p. 492ff.

2. Quoted in H.G. Nicholas The British General Election of 1950 (1951) p. 102.

3. The Times 15.2.50.

Labour did not file a counter-claim for Russian friendship. Instead, it rejected the idea that any British government could hope to end the stalemate in the near future. Bevin said, "If Russia shows the slightest change of attitude and indicates her readiness to settle these relationships and give the world complete peace, then we shall be ready to enter into discussions."<sup>1</sup> Although the election came a week after Churchill's Edinburgh speech, there was still time for numerous Labour leaders to declare<sup>2</sup> that hopes of agreement with Russia were empty ones. Only the New Statesman, among Labour supporters, favoured<sup>3</sup> Churchill's proposal, but it scorned Churchill as an agent.

The Government was soon given another opportunity to show its opposition to Russia when Trygve Lie proposed, in the spring of 1950, a 20-year peace plan to include the major powers.<sup>4</sup> Pro-peace and pro-Russian sentiment within the Party was reflected within the PLP; 150 Labour MPs, almost half the total, signed a motion supporting the

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1. The Times 16.2.50. Italics supplied. See the same paper for Attlee's rejection of Churchill's proposal.
  2. A detailed account of these speeches is contained in Nicholas op. cit. p. 102ff.
  3. 18.2.50. In the 1951 general election, Churchill said of his Edinburgh speech: "It might be that if such a meeting as I urged had taken place at that time the violent dangers of the Korean War and all that might spring out of it would not have come upon us." The Listener 11.10.51, p. 605.
  4. UN Document A/1304 (1950).

Secretary-General's efforts.<sup>1</sup> The Government firmly rejected the proposals. Attlee told Lie that if he wished, he would put the matter up to the Cabinet, but without recommending it.<sup>2</sup> Lie declined the offer.<sup>3</sup> Bevin likewise rejected the idea, because of the existence of so many specific disagreements.

The chief political problem for the Labour Party in maintaining its stalemate policy was not the handful of MPs who accepted Russia as a Socialist state, but the larger number of MPs who retained a limited amount of such sympathy, its importance varying in relation to other international events. Just as the Czech coup caused a great reaction against Communist Russia in the Labour Party, so the spectre of German rearmament, approved in principle by the Labour Government in September, 1950, gave rise once more to hopes that common ground could be found by negotiations between Britain and Russia. Russia encouraged such hopes through the Stockholm Peace Appeal, issued in March, 1950.<sup>4</sup> The Russian Government's Prague proposals in September and November, 1950 for a four-

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1. Parliamentary Papers Notices of Motions (1950) p. 970.
  2. Lie op. cit. p. 312. The Secretary-General noted that Attlee had "the appearance of agreeing without this seeming to produce the positive results the other person is led to expect."
  3. Ibid. p. 309.
  4. See RIIA Survey 1949-50 p. 58ff.

power conference to discuss Germany, found a number of willing advocates within the Labour Party. The Government rejected the Russian offer as an inadequate basis for a Conference.<sup>1</sup> The October, 1950 Annual Conference easily defeated an omnibus left-wing motion which included a plea for friendly relations with Russia, but the fact that it gained 881,000 votes is indicative of the increase in disquiet on foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> In November, 83 members of the PLP signed two motions supporting the Russian proposal for a four-power conference on Germany.<sup>3</sup> Tribune said<sup>4</sup> it would be "madness" not to discuss keeping Germany disarmed. Pressure was rising, not only within the Party, but also in France. The Labour Government, in agreement with America and France, made counter-proposals in December for a deputy foreign ministers' meeting.<sup>5</sup> The decision to have a meeting came as a "surprise" to the British deputy, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,<sup>6</sup> Ernest Davies.

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1. See Bevin 480 HC 1384, 13.11.50.
  2. LPCR 1950, p. 141ff.
  3. See Parliamentary Papers Notices of Motions, 20.11.50, p. 384, 21.11.50, p. 404; and statement of Keeping Left group, Daily Herald 18.11.50.
  4. 15.12.50.
  5. The Times 23.12.50.
  6. Interview, July, 1958. Davies added that he had warned Bevin in September, 1950, following announcement of plans for West German rearmament, that the dissatisfaction within the PLP on foreign affairs was too great to be ignored, and required conciliation.

While the Labour Government did talk with Russia at the 74 sessions of the deputy foreign ministers' conference at the Palais Rose in Paris from March 5th, 1951, this did not alter its acceptance of stalemate.<sup>1</sup> The Russian Government wanted to lessen tension by weakening NATO.<sup>2</sup> But for the Labour Government "The Atlantic Treaty is not open for discussion."<sup>3</sup> The Conference ended in complete disagreement on June 21st.

The Labour critics of the Government's Russian policy failed in their efforts to uphold the Party's traditional policy partly because of their politically weak position,<sup>4</sup> and partly because of a major shift in the Party's assessment of itself, brought about by postwar developments. Before World War II the Labour Party had emphasized the need for economic democracy as a complement to political democracy. The Soviet Union was regarded as pursuing the same goal, although in reverse order. Even after the war Attlee could speak of similarities between British Socialism and Russian Communism. He told the House in his reply to the amendment to the Address:

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1. For details, see RIIA Survey 1951, pp. 130-44.
  2. Manchester Guardian 31.3.51.
  3. Statement of Ernest Davies The Times 1.6.51.
  4. This is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

"In matters of economic planning we agree with Soviet Russia ... When it comes to a matter of what we consider to be democracy -- a matter of freedom of thought and of the individual -- we agree with the Americans and disagree with the Russians." <sup>1</sup>

The development of the concept of "fair shares" in domestic planning satisfied many class grievances and weakened the importance of class-consciousness in foreign policy. <sup>2</sup> The attacks of Communists upon Socialists in Eastern Europe impressed many backbenchers with the danger of collaboration with Communists. Factional disputes with Communists in the British trade union movement underscored this point. <sup>3</sup> The result was that the Labour Party placed increasing emphasis upon the primary importance of political democracy, as the Government found diplomatic allies among politically free but non-Socialist governments. The frequent use of the phrases "Social democracy" and "Democratic Socialism" is indicative of the shift. <sup>4</sup> Attlee recognised this change when he declared in 1949:

"There is great danger in this repetition of old slogans without any realisation of changed circumstances. There are some of our own people who still think that the Communists are the left wing of the Socialist movement. They are not. The Socialist movement was a movement for freedom." <sup>5</sup>

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1. 430 HC 580, 18.11.46.
  2. It also stimulated the growth of nationalistic feeling within the Party. This point is developed in the conclusion to Chapter 4.
  3. See infra p. 421f.
  4. See in particular the ISC resolution of June, 1948, LPCR 1949, pp. 226-7.
  5. The Times 11.4.49.

### America

"The people of this country simply will not follow him [Ernest Bevin] to war, now or in five years time, against Soviet Russia in partnership with the barbaric thugs of Detroit and the Mammon imperialists of Washington and Wall Street."

T.E.N. Driberg, 430 HC 365, 14.11.46.

"They are not all millionaires in the United States. They are ordinary human folk like ourselves, and their actions spring in the same way as ours. We are bound together by our common belief in civil liberties and the rights of the individual. Therefore our basic approach to the future is the same and we intuitively understand one another."

Ernest Bevin The Times, 13.12.47.

Whereas opponents of the Labour Government's policy towards Russia could always claim that it contradicted traditional Labour principles, backbench critics of the Anglo-American alliance could justify no such claim. While the Labour Party was committed to work specially well with working-class governments in other nations, and to oppose Fascist governments, it recognised that most governments were neither Socialist nor Fascist. As Walter Citrine said:

"The Labour movement is based upon the assumption we can do something in combination to restrain other elements now operating under the capitalist system." <sup>1</sup>

Since the Labour Government was greatly in need of foreign aid, and since the American government was willing to give it, the Anglo-American alliance was of crucial importance to the Government's economic programme as

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1. TUCR 1934, p. 335.

well as <sup>to</sup> its diplomatic aims.<sup>1</sup> Ernest Bevin rightly regarded as one of his greatest achievements the way in which he helped involve the United States in postwar Europe through the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan and NATO. Such co-operation did not come automatically. Attlee later said of American diplomacy at the end of the war:

"At first, you know, they thought the two big boys could manage everything, and we were rather an obsolete old imperialist, colonial power. That was very much Roosevelt's line at Yalta. However, the tendencies, even at Potsdam, were to think they could run the whole show. They learnt very, very slowly the facts of life, the facts of European life particularly."<sup>2</sup>

Thus when Labour critics attacked the alliance as making the Labour Government subservient to capitalism ( a charge scarcely substantiated by the Government's domestic programme), they were attacking one of its fundamental supports. They were even without past Conference resolutions to cite against the Government, because of pre-war lack of interest in America.<sup>3</sup> The critics found

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1. Labour Party views on Anglo-American relations in this period are described at length by Leon Epstein Britain -- Uneasy Ally (1954).
  2. Listener 22.1.59, p. 155. Cf. Truman Volume II, pp. 13-15.
  3. Occasional comments are found in LPCR 1922, pp. 38-9; "War and Peace" LPCR 1934, p. 244; and "International Policy and Defence" (LP, 1937) p. 9.

that denouncing American policy was an indirect way of striking at the Labour Government. Faults in Government policy were caused, the critics charged, by American dictation. Ending the Anglo-American alliance was the necessary first step towards a "Socialist" foreign policy. Projecting blame for the disillusioning diplomacy of the Government on to the United States was a convenient way for critics to ignore the shortcomings of the principles that had created their expectations.

The Anglo-American loan, announced in December, 1945, stimulated the first major attack upon the alliance. Jennie Lee, one of the few Labour critics who spoke in the House of Commons debate, denounced the loan because it would strengthen the influence of American capitalism over Britain. The "hardfaced businessman's government" in Washington <sup>1</sup> would be as ready to squeeze the British worker as it was to squeeze his poor American counterpart. Tribune <sup>2</sup> denounced the loan as "a savage bargain". In the division <sup>3</sup> 23 Labour MPs voted against the Government and 321 members of the PLP voted for the bill.

The rebels, in their letter to Attlee in October, 1946, denounced:

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1. 417 HC 670, 13.12.45.
  2. 14.12.45.
  3. 417 HC 735, 13.12.45.

"the extension of United States military bases from Greenland to the Faroes, from Japan to the Pacific islands and in the Mediterranean itself, ... the United States monopoly of the atomic bomb, her inflated military budget and the capitalist expansionist nature of her economy." <sup>1</sup>

In the House of Commons debate on the Amendment, Crossman charged that America was endangering peace by playing balance of power politics as described in Churchill's Fulton speech. America was the only nation with the economic and physical potential for aggression. Joint Anglo-American military staff conversations were provocative to Russia. America, Crossman said, was manoeuvring to secure a position in which "Britain provides the soldiers and America the guns." <sup>2</sup>

The Republican victory in the 1946 Congressional election had delivered American Government into the hands of "the vested interests." <sup>3</sup> Attlee, on the other hand, called Americans "the people who can help and who are helping Europe." <sup>4</sup>

"Keep Left", issued in the following spring, also contained a strong attack upon the Anglo-American alliance; it charged that the Labour Government was becoming "a pensioner

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1. Manchester Guardian 16.11.46.
  2. 430 HC 533, 18.11.46. Cf. "Cards on the Table" p. 15: "That suits us better than providing both the men and the money!"
  3. Ibid. Col. 534. Personally, Crossman was quite fond of Americans. He wrote at that time: "The atmosphere I liked best of all [his] Anglo-American teamwork." Palestine Mission p. 12.
  4. Ibid. Col. 583.

of America, earning its living by fighting America's wars overseas". Such a military alliance would make a third world war "absolutely inevitable."<sup>1</sup> Unlike many critics of the Anglo-American loan, these pamphleteers accepted that "for some years at least" Britain was still dependent upon America.<sup>2</sup> The real issue, therefore was the terms of the relations. The group stated, in a typical Crossman paradox:

"Work on the assumption that we are in a strong bargaining position as a debtor country which is the greatest importer in the world -- but don't get any further into debt."<sup>3</sup>

Recognising common interests along class rather than national lines, the Labour rebels claimed to speak for the underprivileged American worker as well as the British worker; they dreamed of an Anglo-American left-wing front.<sup>4</sup> Ironically, the comparable left-wing American critics of foreign policy, led by Henry Wallace, originally distrusted the Anglo-American alliance, fearing

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1. p. 33.

2. p. 37.

3. "Keep Left" p. 46.

4. See e.g., The Observer, 15.12.46. The class interest common to both groups was that of the middle-class intellectual.

British, rather than American, imperialism.<sup>1</sup> The rebels and the Wallace group soon recognised their kindred outlook. The two groups exchanged ideas through Wallace's New Republic and the New Statesman, which called Wallace "the most lovable and most individual figure in American politics."<sup>2</sup>

When America did, through Marshall Aid, win the rebels' approval, it was not due to Wallace but to a President whom the New Statesman had recently denounced for "Babbit-like incompetence"<sup>3</sup> and with the support of a Republican Congress that Crossman had said was dominated by "the vested interests." Wallace himself opposed the aid programme. Even the New Statesman welcomed Marshall Aid -- although declaring it was prompted by pressure from the American left and by business's need for markets.<sup>4</sup> This view Transport House decisively rejected.<sup>5</sup> The Government's reaction was never in doubt. Even before a conference was held Bevin hailed the offer as "one of the greatest speeches made in world history",<sup>6</sup> a judgment he often repeated. From April, 1948 to December 31st, 1950, Marshall Aid to Britain totalled £ 2,784million, of which

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1. See Hopkins op. cit. passim. Crossman reported distrust of British imperialism widespread after a trip to the United States. New Statesman 9.2.46.
  2. 12.4.47.                      3. 28.9.46.                      4. 14.6.47.
  5. See LPCR 1948, pp. 222-6.
  6. The Times 14.6.47.

\$1,827million took the form of direct gifts.<sup>1</sup> The prospect of such gigantic generosity prompted Jennie Lee, an opponent of the loan, to call America "the most perplexing country in the world."<sup>2</sup> The impact upon the Government's programme for domestic reconstruction and full employment was great, and was recognised by virtually all members of the Labour Party. Sir Stafford Cripps told a 1948 press conference:

"Without Marshall Aid something like 1½ million might have been thrown out of work for lack of raw materials, unless we had all accepted a very much lower standard of living, too low to allow us to produce efficiently."<sup>3</sup>

R.H.S. Crossman testified to the impact of the Marshall Plan upon backbench critics. He told the House of Commons on January 23rd, 1948:

"My own views about America have changed a great deal in the last six months. Many members have had a similar experience. I could not have believed six months ago that a plan of this sort would have been worked out in this detail with as few political conditions."<sup>4</sup>

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1. See "United States Aid to the World, 1945-55" (English-Speaking Union, 1956) pp. 10-11. See p. 21 for a list of products received.
  2. Tribune 5.12.47.
  3. Daily Telegraph 15.7.48.
  4. 466 HC 566. There was some displeasure in Washington about this absence of conditions. See The Forrestal Diaries, passim. Forrestal, his editor notes, p. 80, "seemed to have a mild obsession with Laski." Contrast this with the following Vandenberg statement to a constituent: "We are not entitled to dictate to the British what kind of a government they shall freely choose for themselves. (I do not like the Labour Government in many respects any better than you do.)" Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg, p. 490.

The victory of Harry Truman in November, 1948 and his announcement of the Point Four and the Fair Deal programmes in the following January brought pro-alliance feeling to a peak among the quondam critics of both the Labour and the Truman governments. The former critics justified their pro-Americanism by arguing that with allowance for differences in tactics due to different environments, the two governments had common ideological interests and both represented the working-class. In "Keeping Left", published in January, 1950, the Crossman group declared:

"The Fair Deal, backed at last by a politically conscious Labour movement, is based on the three moral principles which inspire our Socialism. Though it is most unlikely that the American labour movement will ever adopt an explicitly Socialist programme, over a wide field the Truman administration and the Labour Government have the same interests and ideals -- and the same enemies." <sup>1</sup>

The rearmament which followed the development of NATO revived discontent about the Anglo-American alliance among Labour back-benchers. At first the doubts were confined to the columns of the New Statesman. In its issue of December 31st, 1949, it declared: "Russians are much more afraid -- and rightly -- of the Americans than Americans can possibly be of the Soviet Union." Turning to Asia, where Anglo-American differences on China and Formosa were just becoming prominent, it urged further

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1. p. 25.

grounds for disagreement.<sup>1</sup> When it declared, on May 20th, 1950, "War hysteria in Washington has reached a new high," it was once more referring to Europe. After the outbreak of the Korean War, the New Statesman called repeatedly for America to leave Formosa to Communist China, without going into the military implications of such a gesture.<sup>2</sup> Crossman, by contrast, was praising America for defending collective security.<sup>3</sup> Disquiet had spread far enough by October, 1950, for Bevin to take note of it in his speech to Annual Conference. He argued, "there is no atom in their policy" that justifies fear of American aggression.<sup>4</sup>

The American military drive into North Korea, and the consequent Chinese Communist intervention, spread concern about American intentions in Asia through the Party and the Government. This did not so much reflect anti-Americanism, as it did different British and American conceptions of interests in Asia. Simultaneously, the American demand for increased British rearmament and for German rearmament created opposition to the European policy of the alliance. Further differences arose in the Middle East as the result of the dispute with Persia about the

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1. 7.1.50, 14.1.50.

2. See e.g., 2.9.50.

3. See e.g., 478 HC 718, 27.7.50; 478 HC 1269, 14.9.50.

4. LPCR 1950, p. 146.

Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

The Bevanite movement stressed Britain's differences with America when attacking the Government's foreign policy. Furthermore, it fundamentally disagreed with the Government about the amount of influence Britain had upon America.<sup>1</sup> In July, 1951, the group argued:

"The whole present American strategy is founded on the possession of bases in Britain ... The existence of these vital American bases on our territory gives us the right to play a much bolder part in shaping the strategy of the alliance than we have yet exercised."<sup>2</sup>

The Government could, in collaboration with progressive Americans such as Walter Reuther, put a "British peace initiative" before America and help "assist the Truman Administration in its battle against MacArthurism."<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously the Bevanites were reviving the idea that the United States might be a greater risk to peace than Russia. Discussing the immediate military superiority of America in terms of atomic weapons, the pamphlet noted, "It is not unknown for a giant to wish to use his strength, even though he is not attacked."<sup>4</sup> In the Bevanite arguments of this period, there is ambiguity as to whether

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1. Gaitskell had the reputation of being one of the most pro-American members in the Cabinet.
  2. "One Way Only" (1951) p. 12.
  3. Ibid. p. 4.
  4. Ibid. p. 10.

or not the group would accept a break in the alliance.<sup>1</sup>  
The tone of their argument suggested a readiness to break. Because of the way they analysed the international situation, they did not need to face the question publicly. The Government rejected the idea of trying to rest the alliance upon the insecure foundations of American liberal strength, in view of the dominant conservative coalition in Congress. It rated much higher than the Bevanites the strength of American isolationism and of the "Asia First" group, and regarded British bases as of only limited interest to the United States.<sup>2</sup>

The quick shifts in the attitude of back-bench critics towards America show that while they claimed to be influenced by ideological factors in fact they were not. The same Congress that approved the 'liberal' Marshall Plan also passed the 'reactionary' Taft-Hartley Act. The critics' estimation of Truman veered from one extreme to another. The rebels were really not concerned with the nature of American intentions during the period under

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1. One Bevanite said in an interview in 1959 that Britain need not have worried about retaining a formal alliance. "The Americans could no more have sacrificed us to the Russians than they could have sacrificed the South Koreans. Bases in the Atlantic were too important to them."
  2. For details of the Government policy, see Chapter 5.

review. They showed ignorance of the dominant forces in American government, as well as of the relative bargaining power of the British and American governments. What they favoured was a particular foreign policy. When the Anglo-American alliance acted in accord with this policy, as in the Marshall Plan and in resistance to aggression in Korea, they praised the United States, and tacked on ideological reasons afterwards. When America acted otherwise, they damned it.<sup>1</sup>

### The Third Force

"Democratic Socialism is the only final basis for world government and can therefore provide a genuine middle way between the extreme alternatives of American free enterprise economics and Russian totalitarian socio-political life."

Letter of the Rebels, Manchester Guardian 16.11.46.

The idea of a European "third force" acting in accord with traditional Socialist principles was the main positive alternative offered by critics of the Labour Government's foreign policy. The persons using the term "force" thought much more of moral, diplomatic and economic pressure than of military strength. The idea rested upon the assumption that Britain (and other European countries) were strong enough economically, militarily and diplomatically to disengage from both

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1. See Epstein op. cit. for a detailed exposition of this point.

Russia and America. Such disengagement would lessen the risk of a global conflict between the two colossi by creating a group to check aggression by either side. By the attractiveness of its example, it was also expected to lead the domestic and foreign policies of both nations in a more "Socialist" direction.<sup>1</sup> Smaller nations that did not wish to choose sides in the cold war could join the "third force".

The "third force" idea was stressed in the 1946 rebellion on foreign policy. The idea had been brought forward almost as soon as the Labour Government took office; Crossman proposed in the preceding winter a "natural<sup>2</sup> neutrality union" of Britain and Western Europe. The rebels wrote to Attlee in October that the Government should "bridge the antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union by the vigorous pursuit of Socialist policies at home and abroad." They likewise charged that the Government "have not only alienated the newly

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1. A minority of "third force" advocates defined the policy as one of splendid isolation; it would allow British Labour to contract out of international political conflict. See e.g., L. Woolf, "Foreign Policy: The Labour Party Dilemma (Fabian Research Series #121, 1947) p. 14ff.
  2. R.H.S. Crossman, "Britain and Western Europe" Political Quarterly (1946) p. 9. G.D.H. Cole also argued for a Socialist "third force" in an April, 1946 pamphlet, "Labour's Foreign Policy." A major premise of his argument was that Britain must co-operate with Russia because Britain was militarily weaker. pp. 35-6.

emergent Communist societies but have also brought discouragement to the Democratic Socialists in countries where Western Socialism was ripe for establishment, had we cared to assist them." <sup>1</sup> In the amendment to the address the rebels:

"express the urgent hope that His Majesty's Government will so review and recast its conduct of international affairs as to afford the utmost encouragement to, and collaboration with, all nations and groups striving to secure full social planning and control of the world's resources and thus provide a democratic and constructive Socialist alternative to an otherwise inevitable conflict between American capitalism and Soviet Communism in which all hope of world government would be destroyed." <sup>2</sup>

Crossman declared that the job "of a British Socialist government was to show the world that it was not faced with the bleak and blank alternative of American free enterprise or Russian Communism, but that there was a better way of living." <sup>3</sup> In order to do this, he said, the Government should:

"refuse all exclusive commitments on either side and remain really independent, even at economic cost to ourselves, and through that independence ... exert <sup>4</sup> that moral influence which alone can save the world."

In replying to the rebels the Prime Minister, as was often his custom, used two contrasting themes to justify Government policy. First, he showed how the Government's foreign policy was conditioned by non-ideological factors, such as geography. Secondly, he emphasized

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1. Manchester Guardian 16.11.46.

2. 430 HC 526, 18.11.46.

3. Ibid. Col. 530.

4. Ibid. Col. 538.

the extent to which the policy was in accord with traditional Labour principles, particularly as regards the United Nations. Both arguments were employed to reject the idea of a "third force": the former to demonstrate that diplomatic co-operation could not be determined by ideological preferences, and the second to deny the propriety of anything so exclusive as a 'third' force. He also accused his critics of over-simplifying problems of foreign affairs. "They have got a theory and they stretch out for facts to support it."<sup>1</sup>

The tactical defeat of the rebels did not deter their leaders. In April, 1947, the Keep Left group made the "third force" a major point in the programme it presented to the Labour Government. Alliance with Russia would be "betrayal" of Socialism but acceptance of American leadership would be "equally fatal."<sup>2</sup> The group declared that a "United Europe, strong enough to deter an aggressor but voluntarily renouncing the most deadly offensive weapon of modern warfare, would be the best guarantor of world peace."<sup>3</sup> This argument was knocked down in "Cards on the Table". It denied the logic of a "third force" because:

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1. 430 HC 582, 18.11.46.

2. "Keep Left" p. 35.

3. Ibid. p. 41.

"Britain herself was too weak to cut herself off from American aid, and as such she could offer little to attract any European country away from the rival appeals of American money and Russian military power ...

"The idea that we should have extricated ourselves from the quarrel between Russia and the USA does not make sense; during the period under review, Britain was the main target of Russian hostility, while until a few months ago America was an undecided spectator." <sup>1</sup>

Events did more than speeches to repress enthusiasm for a "third force." The Marshall Plan, the Berlin blockade and the formation of NATO firmly bound the Labour Government to alliance with America. As Tribune now saw it, the question was no longer whether Britain would act independently of America but whether the Anglo-American <sup>2</sup> alliance was to be a liberal or a reactionary one. A few supporters of the idea transferred their enthusiasm to planning a European Union, free of Russo-American conflict, but this group was neither as practical nor as <sup>3</sup> important as the earlier critics. The election of Truman in 1948 suggested to many former critics that Socialism could now be advanced internationally by working through a liberal Anglo-American alliance. Crossman confessed in the House of Commons a few days before the outbreak of the Korean War:

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1. pp. 17-18.

2. 6.2.48.

3. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of their views.

"I was a third forcer ... It seemed the only thing to do in 1947 and 1948, to try to create a third middle group because America was not going far enough for most of us who took that position. We could not foresee what would happen. We were wrong in our failure to see the great expansion of American foreign policy and possibilities since that date." 1

No sooner had Crossman spoken than the Korean War began and events once more released among back-bench critics, and finally within the Cabinet, ideas which had been repressed for several years. America appeared less attractive and more demanding; Russia was conducting a 'peace' campaign. The potential rewards for a "third force" policy were great, in the minds of the Government's critics. Advocates now included India as a major partner in the group. Aneurin Bevan set his seal of approval upon the policy in his resignation speech:

"This great nation has a message for the world which is distinct from that of America or that of the Soviet Union." 2

The Bevanite pamphlets issued in 1951 did not call for an outright break with America, although they argued for a strong British line in opposition to American foreign policy. The Bevanites called for an immediate effort by the Labour Government to redirect the policy of the alliance along Socialist lines, so that the "third force" would become a 'second' force, a viable alternative to Communism. 3

The leadership claimed such a position had

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1. 476 HC 2040, 26.6.50.

2. 487 HC 38, 23.4.51.

3. See e.g. "One Way Only" (July, 1951) pp. 10-13.

already been reached and denounced the idea of a neutral third grouping as a "sterile and dangerous concept."<sup>1</sup>

The advocates of the "third force" were in the mainstream of Socialist thinking, only deviating from traditional Party policy in rejecting alliance with Russia. The appeal of this class-conscious alternative policy is shown by the way in which it was continually brought up, although often in slightly altered form. The reason for the Government's rejection of the "third force" was simple; it believed that the only feasible basis of national military security and economic well-being was the Anglo-American alliance.

### Spain

"The Spanish Government is defending democracy against Fascism and is entitled to the support of all democrats and Socialists ... A victory for Fascism in Spain would be a tragedy and a disaster in itself. It would also be an encouragement to Germany and Italy to repeat the same tactics elsewhere in Europe."

"International Policy and Defence"  
(LP, 1937) pp. 10-11.

The strength of the traditional Socialist principle of co-operation along ideological lines was most clearly shown by Labour Party support of the Spanish Republican government in the 1930s. The Conservative Government's advocacy of non-intervention during the struggle between the forces of dark and the forces of light was regarded as one of its

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1. "European Unity" (LP, 1950) p. 9.

greatest sins. The defeat of the Republican government did not alter the Party's position. The May, 1939 Conference approved an NEC resolution which stated:

"The Conference declares that the cause of Spain is not lost, and calls upon the National Executive and the whole Labour movement to continue unremittingly their efforts to aid the Spanish people in Spain and elsewhere." <sup>1</sup>

In moving the resolution, Ellen Wilkinson declared, "We are still in the Spanish fight, only in a different setting." The resolution was easily carried; a few objections came from delegates who protested that the leadership had not been staunch enough in support of Spain. <sup>2</sup> During World War II the weapon of intervention was aimed against Britain instead of Spain. The Labour Party could scarcely hope to crush Franco as long as Britain's own survival was in doubt. Spain was a threat to Britain, looming over Gibraltar, North Africa and the route through the Mediterranean to India. The Party was discreetly silent about Franco until after D-Day. Then Churchill made some favourable comments about the Spanish Government. The National Council of Labour on June 27th, 1944 replied by denouncing Franco and expressing hopes for "a great act <sup>3</sup> of democratic self-liberation" by the Spanish people.

The end of the war and the victory of the Labour

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1. LPCR 1939, p. 257.

2. LPCR 1939, p. 258.

3. LPCR 1944, p. 41.

Party in the 1945 general election brought about another reversal of roles. Now the weapon of intervention could benefit Spanish workers and harm Franco. The reaction in Madrid to the Labour victory was described by The Times as expectant and wary.<sup>1</sup> Harold Laski, Party chairman, told an election night audience that "Franco and every other rotten dictator left in the world would quake in his shoes."<sup>2</sup> The New Statesman announced: "Franco must now realise that the days of his dictatorship are numbered."<sup>3</sup> At the Potsdam Conference in early August the Labour Government joined in a Big Three declaration which denounced Franco and declared that his government would be kept out of the United Nations because it was founded with the support of the Axis Powers.

The exuberance over the impending removal of Franco was short indeed. When Ernest Bevin made his first major foreign affairs speech to the House of Commons on August 20th, 1945, he committed the Government to a policy of non-intervention in Spain's internal affairs, the policy that the Party had formerly opposed. He said, "The question of the régime in Spain is one for the Spanish people to decide."<sup>4</sup> The Foreign Secretary asserted that British

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1. 30.7.45.

2. Quoted by R.T. McKenzie, "Laski and the Social Bases of the Constitution" British Journal of Sociology (1952) p. 263.

3. 18.8.45.

4. 413 HC 296.

intervention in Spain's internal affairs would only strengthen support for Franco among the Spanish people and encourage civil war.<sup>1</sup> The policy of non-intervention, he said, would be approved by "many ardent Spanish Republicans." The Manchester Guardian commented: "It seems that Franco's régime has been granted a new lease of life."<sup>2</sup>

The announcement of the Labour Government's non-intervention policy called forth comments from all sections of the Party. The NEC, while approving Bevin's speech, expressed in January, 1946 the hope that the Labour Government would "in conjunction with its Allies, seek to restore in Spain the democratic régime so wantonly destroyed by Hitler and Mussolini." It reaffirmed its conviction that the persistence of a Fascist government in Spain was a threat "to freedom and peace."<sup>3</sup> Hector McNeil, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, told a Fabian Society gathering that the Government was "impatient" to see Franco go.<sup>4</sup> An "Emergency Committee in Aid of Democratic Spain" was established at a London rally under

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1. Bevin frequently compared the quarrelling Spanish parties to husband and wife, often disagreeing but ready to unite against anyone else who might tell them what to do. Interview, C. Mayhew, November, 1958.
  2. 22.8.45.
  3. LPCR 1946, p. 26.
  4. New Statesman 15.12.45.

the chairmanship of Kingsley Martin. It asked for Britain<sup>1</sup> to sever diplomatic and economic relations with Spain. Tribune, which at first opposed intervention, changed its line to demand material assistance for Spaniards trying to get rid of Franco.<sup>2</sup> Bevin went so far as to repeat in the House of Commons his dislike for the Franco régime.<sup>3</sup> With the United States and France, the Labour Government issued a statement expressing dislike and distrust of Franco, but it carried the qualification: "There is no intention of interfering with the internal affairs of Spain. The Spanish people themselves must in the long run work out their own destiny."<sup>4</sup>

When Poland introduced a resolution into the Security Council on April 17th, 1946 which charged that Franco's Government "endangered international peace and security"<sup>5</sup> and asked UN members to sever diplomatic relations, the Labour Government opposed even this limited action against Spain. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that removing Franco

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1. The Times 10.12.45.

2. Contrast 4.1.46 and 8.3.46.

3. 416 HC 2315, 5.12.45, and 418 HC 142, 23.1.46.

4. Text, The Times 5.3.46.

5. SC 34th meeting, p. 167. See John A. Houston "The United Nations and Spain", Journal of Politics (1952) pp. 683-709, for a detailed account of the U.N. discussion. Broadly speaking, Russia and France were in favour of much stronger action than Britain and America.

was "not so simple as it might at first sight appear."<sup>1</sup> He pointed out the importance of the principle of non-intervention and doubted whether the Franco régime was strong enough to threaten international peace. The special committee on this question later reported that Spain was not an existing but only a "potential" threat to peace.<sup>2</sup> It recommended that members break off diplomatic relations if Franco remained. Cadogan reaffirmed Britain's non-intervention policy; he tried to delete from the report references to breaking off diplomatic relations.<sup>3</sup> Tribune commented, "Britain now stands out as the champion of Fascist Spain."<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding its protests, the Labour Government voted in favour of the report, but only because it did not wish to oppose the majority.<sup>5</sup>

The Government had to answer for its Spanish policy <sup>the</sup> at/1946 Annual Conference, held in June. A resolution was offered calling for an end to diplomatic relations, a stoppage of all exports to Spain except food supplies, and appointment of a representative to the Republican government-in-exile.<sup>6</sup> The mover declared: "To leave

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1. SC 35th meeting, 18.4.46, p. 180.

2. SC S/75, 31.5.46, p. 5.

3. SC 46th meeting, 17.6.46, p. 344ff.

4. 21.6.46.

5. SC 47th meeting, 18.6.48, p. 379.

6. LPCR 1946, p. 155.

the Spanish people to work out their own salvation is as cynical and as unrealistic as to ask a prisoner to saw through the iron bars of his own cage with his bare hands."<sup>1</sup> Francis Noel-Baker, who had visited "underground" groups opposing Franco in Spain, urged sending them "technical assistance" and giving aid through "methods which we used in occupied Europe throughout the war."<sup>2</sup> In answer, Bevin declared that the Government's policy was in the interest of the workers in Spain, who "dread civil war ... If you start troubles you will get the resentment of the Spanish people instead of their support." Bevin dismissed economic sanctions as penalising "the ordinary working-man in Spain." Severing diplomatic relations was, as an isolated act, valueless, "a gesture without a positive policy behind it."<sup>3</sup> The resolution was defeated by a voice vote. The vote against aiding Spanish Republicans did not, however, keep Conference from approving by acclamation Harold Laski's proposal to send a telegram of good wishes to the provisional Spanish Government-in-exile.<sup>4</sup>

The pressure on the Government from within the Labour movement<sup>5</sup> was matched by diplomatic pressure at the United

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1. LPCR 1946, p. 156.

2. Ibid. p. 159.

3. LPCR 1946, p. 166-7.

4. Ibid. p. 176.

5. See the manifesto of nearly 100 Labour MPs, Manchester Guardian 18.7.46; statement of General Council of the TUC, TUCR 1946, pp. 139-40; vote of the Trades Union Congress, 1946, in support of severing economic and diplomatic relations with Spain, 4,534,000 to 1,391,000, Ibid. pp. 473-4.

Nations, where Britain stood alone among the Big Five in approving diplomatic relations with Spain, as it was alone in having an ambassador in Madrid. When a vote was finally taken in the General Assembly, the Labour Government preferred to vote with the majority although disagreeing with it. The resolution not only asked for the recall of ambassadors from Madrid if Franco remained in power, but also suggested that "adequate measures" be taken if this was not sufficient to bring about a change<sup>1</sup> in government.

When Franco's Government refused to fall, in spite of the huffing and puffing at the United Nations, the General Assembly's first committee decided reluctantly that the non-recognition policy was a failure, and threatened, by its ineffectiveness, to diminish the prestige of the international organisation.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in 1949 the committee recommended restoring full freedom to member nations to treat Spain as they wished. The Labour Government abstained from voting on this recommendation, which failed of adoption. Hector McNeil explained that the Government did not want to favour "a relic of Fascism" yet it did not like the UN policy of non-recognition.<sup>3</sup> When

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1. GA 1st committee, 43rd meeting, 9.12.46, p. 305. See also The Times, 14.12.46.
  2. UN Document A/852, 1949, p. 60.
  3. GA 214th meeting, 16.5.49, pp. 474-5.

pressed on the point in the House of Commons, Bevin replied,<sup>1</sup>  
 "We do not attach great importance to this question."

When the question came up again the following year in the  
 General Assembly, the Labour Government once more abstained.<sup>2</sup>  
 This time the earlier decision was rescinded.<sup>2</sup> The United  
 Nations position was now the British one:

"The establishment of diplomatic relations and  
 the exchange of ambassadors and ministers with a  
 government does not imply any judgment upon the  
 domestic policy of that government."<sup>3</sup>

The Government was prompt to appoint a career diplomat  
 as ambassador to supersede its chargé d'affaires.<sup>4</sup>

While the Government was now in agreement with the United  
 Nations, it was also in complete contradiction to traditional  
 Labour principles. Tribune denounced its policy as "a  
 disastrous blow to the cause of liberty."<sup>5</sup>

The relative weakening of the British position after  
 the outbreak of the Korean War brought one more change  
 in the course of Anglo-Spanish relations. Franco now  
 began a press campaign in Spain demanding the restoration  
 of Gibraltar. The British base was described as "a fruit

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1. See 464 HC 1827, 11.5.49.

2. GA 304th meeting, 4.11.50, pp. 380-1.

3. Ad Hoc Political Committee A/1473, 2.11.50, p. 4.

4. 12.1.51.

5. The Times 9.1.51.

which is ripe and ready to fall" although "not worth a war."<sup>1</sup> At the same time the Labour Government was kept busy denying recurrent rumours that Franco was about to become an ally through NATO.<sup>2</sup> As Viscount Alexander explained in the House of Lords:

"The project should not be proceeded with on the ground that the bad effect on Western morale in Europe of the association of Spain with Western defence arrangements outweighed any military or other advantages of the proposal."<sup>3</sup>

The Government knew that Spanish bases for Allied protection against Russia did not require Spanish membership in NATO.

The Labour Government made no effort to deny its dislike of Franco, just as it made no effort to support any proposal that would involve it in Spain's domestic affairs. It opted for traditional principles of international law rather than traditional Socialist principles as the basis of diplomatic recognition. From 1945, Labour leaders carried out, with the additional political strength given them by virtue of Government, the policy they had been thwarted in carrying out in 1936. A major cause of the Government's consistent defence of relations with Franco Spain was the importance of Spanish imports to Britain at a time when food stocks and raw materials were in

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1. Manchester Guardian 11.12.50.

2. See e.g. Manchester Guardian 17.2.51; The Times 17.7.51, 19.7.51.

3. 172 HL 1069, 18.7.51.

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gravely short supply. Sir Hartley Shawcross indicated the importance the Labour Government put upon this trade when he told a UN group considering economic sanctions against Spain:

"In the present situation Spain was the only source of supply for Great Britain of fresh fruits among other things and the United Kingdom Government could not be responsible for a course which would reduce the present low food standard of its own people and adversely affect their health. The only British economic interest at stake was the health of its children and the welfare of its common people." 2

1. The following are figures of Spanish imports to Britain:  
(£000s omitted).

<u>Principal Categories</u>	<u>1946</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1951</u>
Oranges, grapes, onions etc.	6,272	9,243	11,583	12,200	15,690	23,064
Raw materials especially scrap iron	3,046	3,133	3,252	3,350	3,676	7,056
Manufactured & processed goods: cork, chemicals etc.	2,910	2,162	2,128	2,529	4,654	7,711
Canary Islands: tomatoes etc.	<u>4,272</u>	<u>8,765</u>	<u>12,220</u>	<u>14,065</u>	<u>8,798</u>	<u>11,496</u>
Totals	£16,440	23,150	28,921	32,146	32,870	49,355

British exports to Spain more than doubled at the same time as imports were tripling. In 1946 exports were £6,666,000 and in 1951, £15,339,000.

Sources: Annual Statement of the Trade of the United Kingdom with British Countries and Foreign Countries, 1948, Vol. IV (HMSO 1950) p. 179, p. 182, p. 223; Ibid. 1950 Vol. IV (HMSO 1952) p. 189ff, p. 233; Ibid. 1951, Vol. IV (HMSO 1953) pp. 87-8, p. 108. The figures listed for principal products do not add up to the totals given because minor imports are not itemised.

2. GA 1st committee, 43rd meeting, 9.12.46, p. 306. Economic sanctions were defeated, 32 to 10. See also H. McNeil, GA 1st committee, 261st meeting, 7.5.49, p. 223; W.G. Hall, 436 HC 1206, 23.4.47.

There were other reasons that made the Labour Government loath to involve itself in Spain. The over-extension of British military power would have greatly handicapped it in giving military support for economic sanctions. As Bevin saw the position, "Directly you start sanctions you must be prepared for war."<sup>1</sup> There was no certainty within the Government that the successor of Franco would be an improvement.<sup>2</sup> Bevin feared that a Communist government might result from a collapse of Franco.<sup>3</sup> It would not make sense to oppose Communist seizure of Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean and at the same time invite its success in the Western Mediterranean, since the Mediterranean was an area of vital British interest.

By 1951 the great Socialist crusade of the 1930s to aid the Spanish workers had become a subject better left unmentioned because, as Herbert Morrison, a strong supporter of the Spanish cause before 1939 said, the points of morals involved in recognising and dealing with such governments are "a little difficult."<sup>4</sup> Among the rank-and-file of the Party, the sense of Socialist solidarity with Spanish workers died

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1. LPCR 1946, p. 167.

2. C.R. Attlee, 423 HC 2035, 5.6.46. The International Socialist Conference did not agree until April, 1948 upon which of two competing factions should be recognised as the Spanish Socialist Party.

3. Interview, P.J. Noel-Baker, April, 1958.

4. 485 HC 2411, 21.3.51.

down after the war, when other issues came forward. In 1939 there were 21 resolutions presented to Annual Conference on Spain, but from 1944 until 1951 only five were submitted, all, of course, anti-Franco. In the pamphlet attacks upon the Government and in back-bench meetings in the House of Commons, Spain was usually ignored. When it was mentioned, back-benchers used it as a dart, which could sting the Government but not inflict a fatal wound. The one place where the Spanish question remained alive was at the International Socialist Conference, where representatives of exiled Spanish Socialists frequently appealed to their comrades for support. The Conference gave the exiles moral support,<sup>1</sup> Labour Party delegates concurring. The Party's identification with such resolutions did not, however, prevent the Government from continuing to enjoy satisfactory trade with Franco Spain.

### China

"We shall be ready to trade."

Ernest Bevin, LPCR June, 1949, p. 191.

While the Labour Government was engaged in the reconstruction of Europe, a civil war was raging in the largest country in Asia. To members of the Labour Party the rivals appeared as a reactionary Government and a revolutionary

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1. See e.g., the ISC resolution adopted at Vienna in June, 1948. This was not reprinted in the lengthy account of the meeting contained in LPCR 1949, pp. 226-7.

army of peasants, whose grievances, although propounded by Communists, were justified by the backward state of the Chinese social and economic order. Chinese Communists were not regarded as potential enemies in the cold war but as potential Titos. Traditional Socialist principles suggested that the Labour Government should offer the Chinese revolutionaries tangible or moral support. The Labour Government did neither. This is not to say that the Government was uninterested in the course of events in China. The contrary was the case. A Labour tendency to favour the Communists as the more progressive faction was balanced by the prudential desire not to intervene in a civil war. The size and nature of British property and trading interests also kept the Government from supporting one side or the other in the conflict.<sup>1</sup> The Labour Government was ready to overlook the politics of the contending forces in order to keep a foot in both camps. As Ernest Bevin told the House of Commons on December 9th, 1948:

"We cannot be indifferent to the fate of either our national or our extensive trading interests in China. I can assure the House that we are watching

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1. In 1941 the value of the physical property of British trading interests in China was £124,000,000, a figure which did not, of course, indicate the total value of British trade with China, or through Hong Kong. Only £14,000,000, was written off because of war damage. 475 HC 6-7, 8.5.50.

the matter very carefully, and it is our earnest hope that both parties in the conflict will respect British lives and property." <sup>1</sup>

In spite of the Government's effort to avoid involvement in the Chinese Civil War, four British ships were shelled by Communist forces, with the loss of 42 British lives, when the boats were caught between the two armies in the Yangtse River in April, 1949. <sup>2</sup> The Government made it clear it would not seek reprisals or register other than a diplomatic protest. In the resulting debate, the Defence Minister, A.V. Alexander, referred to the Chinese Communists as "ideologically opposed to our way of thinking," but this, he added, "does not of itself justify our intervention." <sup>3</sup> The Nationalist Chinese attack upon the British merchant ship *Anchises* in June gave the Labour Government a chance to demonstrate its impartiality by deploring the incident as it deplored the Yangtse shellings. Alexander reiterated, "Our object is to maintain the friendliest possible relations with whatever may be the Government of China." <sup>4</sup>

When it became clear that the Chinese Communists were going to be victorious, the Government was faced with

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1. 459 HC 566-7. See also Bevin, LPCR 1949, p. 191.
  2. See 464 HC 25ff, 26.4.49 for details.
  3. Ibid. Col. 1239, 5.5.49.
  4. 466 HC 208, 22.6.49.

pressure from British trading interests in China, as well as from Labour back-benchers,<sup>1</sup> to establish friendly and profitable relations with the new government. For example, The Times on September 3rd, 1949, carried a report from Hong Kong which stated that in spite of "heavy losses, frequent indignities and the mounting frustration" caused by the Communists, British businessmen were nevertheless firm in their desire to remain at their posts, ready to trade, instead of withdrawing like the Americans. Their view was that China wanted to industrialize rapidly and only Western nations could supply sufficient goods to make this possible. Hence, Chinese self-interest and the interest of British traders would coincide.<sup>2</sup>

After Mao Tze-tung proclaimed the People's Republic of China in Peking, on September 21st 1949, Bevin cautiously declared that British recognition would depend upon treatment of British nationals in China. So far, he added, speeches had "a familiar ring."<sup>3</sup> Within a few days of India, Pakistan and Ceylon granting diplomatic recognition to Communist China, the Labour Government announced it was

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1. See e.g., W. Wyatt, a Birmingham MP, 464 HC 1263, 5.5.49.
  2. See also The Times 4.10.49; Manchester Guardian 21.9.49.
  3. Manchester Guardian 5.10.49.

giving de jure recognition to the new régime.<sup>1</sup> Since the Commonwealth was going to be divided for some time on the issue of recognition, the Government was determined that it would not countenance the division being along racial lines.<sup>2</sup> A long-term consideration was that since America was withdrawing from China it behoved Britain to maintain contact to prevent China from being isolated from the West. Otherwise, Bevin believed, "We should have thrown away our position in the Far East for ever."<sup>3</sup> This emphasis upon not isolating the new government suggests that Labour leaders were recalling the policy of Britain towards Russia after its revolution. The exposed position of Hong Kong, dependent upon trade with China, was a consideration that was more thought about than talked about publicly. There was also, as Bevin acknowledged, "pressure on the Government from all our Chinese interests and experts to recognise."<sup>4</sup> The only group within the Labour Party to stress the ideological basis for recognising Communist China<sup>was</sup> "Keeping Left", a group consistently out of touch with Government thinking.<sup>5</sup> Although the Labour Government was

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1. The Times 7.1.50 for statement. Harold Wilson, President of the Board of Trade, had told the House a month before that there was "no evidence yet" that China was ready to receive a British trade mission. 470 HC 2062, 8.12.49.
  2. Interview, K. Younger, July, 1958.
  3. 475 HC 2083, 24.5.50.
  4. Ibid. Col. 2082.
  5. See "Keeping Left" p. 24.

ready to overlook potential ideological obstacles standing in the way of better relations, the Chinese Communists were not. British businessmen blamed Chinese subservience to ideology for its shift of trade to Russia. In April, 1950 The Times reported, "Nearly all the former optimism<sup>1</sup> of the British merchants has evaporated."

The issue of Communist Chinese participation in the United Nations found the Labour Government supporting the new régime in principle, although cautious as to the timing<sup>2</sup> of the change. In the spring of 1950 the British delegation began working for the admission of Communist China to the UN.<sup>3</sup> When India proposed the seating of the Peking government in September, 1950, Britain, with the Asian Commonwealth nations, supported this unsuccessful attempt because of Peking's de facto control of China.<sup>4</sup> As a British UN delegated noted, "moral considerations<sup>5</sup> were irrelevant."

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1. The Times 14.4.50. See also, 1.5.50.
  2. See SC 461st meeting, 13.1.50, p. 9; 459th meeting, 10.1.50, p. 6. See also T. Lie op. cit. pp. 258-9.
  3. Bevin, 475 HC 2085, 24.5.50.
  4. GA 277th meeting, 19.9.50, p. 15.
  5. Cmd. 8264 (1951) p. 45. Later Britain voted to postpone acceptance of Peking's membership in the Trusteeship Council, Trusteeship Council, 346th meeting, 5.6.51, p. 2.

The entrance of Communist China into the Korean War in November did not change the Labour Government's fundamental attitude towards that country, but it did change its sense of priorities. The first task was no longer to make recognition effective by the exchange of ambassadors and trade missions but to stop the fighting.<sup>1</sup> The Government promptly co-sponsored a resolution in the Security Council to assure China that its internal security was not being threatened by UN action in Korea.<sup>2</sup> Bevin himself was remarkably mild in his attitude towards the Chinese intervention.<sup>3</sup> The speeches of a number of back-benchers were strongly pro-Chinese.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the winter the Government's policy remained conciliatory, not because of ideological sympathy but because the Government feared the outbreak of general war in Asia.

The naming of Communist China as an aggressor by the United Nations made relevant to the situation another traditional Labour principle, that of applying economic sanctions against an aggressor. The Labour Government, which had already disregarded class considerations, now

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1. See Chapter 5, for a discussion of the Korean War.
  2. SC 530th meeting, 30.11.50, pp. 22-3.
  3. 482 HC 1456ff, 14.12.50.
  4. See eg., J. Paton, Col. 1423, and Harold Davies, Col. 1432.

hesitated to support full sanctions against an aggressor. It maintained, insofar as possible, trade with China. The policy quickly came under criticism, although not from Labour MPs, many of whom denied the validity of the UN ruling; they considered it extorted by American pressure and therefore not truly 'international'. Criticism came from General MacArthur, who told a Senate committee that exports from Hong Kong to China in February and March, 1951, had been of "substantial assistance" to the enemy.<sup>1</sup> Attlee could only give a qualified reply to such criticism; he informed the House of Commons that no strategic goods from the United Kingdom or the colonies had gone to China in the past three months, but that there were differences of opinion as to whether products such as natural rubber were strategic goods.<sup>2</sup> Sir Hartley Shawcross, President of the Board of Trade, justified the British policy of shipping goods to China with the argument that greater restrictions would adversely affect Hong Kong's trade, and create a centre of pro-Communist agitation there. Denial

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1. See Manchester Guardian 5.5.51. See Manchester Guardian 12.5.51, for a summary of American criticism, and R. Blackburn I Am An Alcoholic (1959) p. 129ff.
  2. 487 HC 1427, 3.5.51. Communist China had imported from Hong Kong 46,500 tons of natural rubber in the first quarter of 1951, as compared with 77,624 tons for the year 1950. See 486 HC 105, 12.4.51.

of rubber from British sources would not prevent the Chinese from getting supplies elsewhere in Asia, at the expense of British trade.<sup>1</sup> Singapore businessmen offered the same arguments.<sup>2</sup> American pressure, not respect for sanctions, resulted in the Labour Government limiting British trade with China. The United States successfully introduced into the General Assembly a resolution calling for an embargo on the shipment of all supplies useful as war material.<sup>3</sup> The Government then announced that license controls would be imposed upon all British exports to China and Hong Kong, but reiterated that trade in non-strategic materials would not be curtailed.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Labour Government ignored traditional Labour dicta in its China policy in hopes of greater trade, trade did not come. In the period 1946-51, British exports to China were at their peak in 1947, totalling £12,824,000. In 1951 they were nearly at their lowest, £2,696,000.<sup>5</sup> Communist China was trading in accordance

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1. 487 HC 2157ff, 10.5.51.

2. The Times 5.5.51. In general, Britain's China trade was declining and consular offices were being closed. See 485 HC 278-9, 21.3.51.

3. A/1802, 1951; approved, GA 330th meeting, 18.5.51, p.742.

4. 489 HC 245-52, 19.6.51.

5. See Annual Statement of the Trade of the U.K. 1950, Vol. IV (HMSO, 1952) pp.266-8; Ibid. Vol. IV 1951 (HMSO, 1953) pp.123-4. These figures do not indicate the full value of the China trade to Britain, since they exclude exports to Hong Kong (£36,058,000 in 1951), profits from internal Chinese and coastal trade, and invisible returns.

with its own ideological preferences. It was diverting<sup>1</sup> trade from Britain to Russia and Eastern Europe.

### The International Socialist Conference

"Socialism has always been an international movement because its principles are universal."  
S. Rose "Socialist International" p. 5.

Traditionally the Labour Party asserted its class-consciousness in foreign policy through membership in the International. Victory in the 1945 British general election greatly altered the attitude of the Labour Party towards the International. It was one thing for a Party in opposition to join with Socialist parties in other countries in statements that were critical of the British Government's foreign policy. It was quite another thing for a Labour Government to submit to such extra-parliamentary criticism. Therefore, the leaders of the Labour Government were anxious to disassociate themselves from their links with other Socialist parties. In contrast with the practice of a number of Continental parties, which sent ministers as delegates to meetings of the International Socialist Conference, the Labour Party was careful not to send ministers as delegates, once the Conference was fully established. This formal distinction between Party and Government was always clear to the chief Labour delegates,

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1. See RIIA Survey 1951, pp. 364-5.

Morgan Phillips and Denis Healey, although sometimes Continental members tried to hold Party representatives fully accountable for Government actions. There was no doubt that, as far as British Labour was concerned, its first obligation was to maintain its domestic position. As Morgan Phillips put it: "The best contribution that the Labour Party can make to international Socialism is to have a strong Labour Government in Britain."<sup>1</sup>

In February, 1946, Morgan Phillips, who was to become chairman of the new International, invited European Socialist parties to send delegates to an informal Conference to re-establish fraternal contacts and "to work out, if possible, common policies on problems of common and mutual interest." The Conference, held at Clacton in May, 1946, was attended by delegates of 19 Socialist parties. The chief question facing it was the organisational form their association should have. The French, Belgian and Austrian parties were the chief advocates of reconstituting the International.<sup>2</sup> Eastern European parties were opposed to this. Being in coalition governments with Communists, yet anxious to keep alive contacts with Western European groups, they did not wish to choose between having one but not the

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1. Interview, February, 1959.

2. D. Healey "The International Socialist Conference, 1946-50" International Affairs (1950) pp. 366-7.

other; they feared the formation of an International would force them to do this. The Labour Party delegates agreed with the East European group and favoured the maintenance of an informal organisation including Eastern European nations.<sup>1a</sup> Its point of view won. The Socialist Information and Liaison Office (SILO) was established in Transport House to exchange information between Socialist parties, without power to make political pronouncements. It was not until the Antwerp Conference in November, 1947, when the Committee of the International Socialist Conference (COMISCO) was established, that the group began making political statements.<sup>1b</sup>

One of the major aims of the Labour Party in having the Conference was to maintain contacts with East European Socialists. Similarly, the TUC was ready to co-operate with Communist trade unionists in the WFTU. The hopes raised by wartime co-operation did not last long. The typical Eastern European delegates at the ISC were "doctrinaire Marxists who differed from the Communists only on the degree of democracy required in a Socialist revolution, and, of course, on the need for automatic subservience to the Soviet Union."<sup>2</sup> The differences came to a head at

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1b. S. Rose op. cit. p. 6. For the sake of convenience, decisions taken by any of the organs of the Conference have been referred to as decisions of the ISC.

2. Healey "The International Socialist Conference" p. 366.

1a. Some Labour delegates privately explained their position as aimed at weakening the Socialist body in relation to the Government. Interview.

the November, 1947 meeting in Antwerp, simultaneously with the increase in cold-war tension and the creation of the Cominform. The Conference tried to frame a common European Socialist policy towards Marshall Aid as its first post-war policy statement. There was no basis for agreement between East and West. The majority of the Conference agreed that "Socialism is inseparable from democracy." The phrase was reminiscent of the Branting resolution at Berne in 1919; what followed also repeated the previous quarrel between Social Democrats and those who did not make democracy a necessary condition of Socialism. The Antwerp meeting was the last one attended by East European delegates. The break was the result of Russian pressure upon its satellites to fuse Socialist and Communist groups. The Czech coup d'état was the climax of Russian pressure, and the point of no return for the ISC. In March, 1948 it expelled the parties of Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary and excluded the Czech delegates. Appeals were made to Polish and Italian parties to sever their links with the Communists. At the same meeting the ISC once again began to make arrangements for refugee Socialists. The following year a Socialist Union of Central-Eastern Europe was established and the refugee parties admitted to the Conference with

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1. S. Rose op. cit. pp. 6-7.

observer status. The development within the ISC of conflicts between Eastern and Western Europe that paralleled the conflicts of the Labour Government with Russia gave increased political strength to the NEC in its campaign against Communism in the Labour movement and in Britain.<sup>1</sup> The fate of East European Socialists was cited as evidence of what could happen in Britain if the barriers between the Labour Party and the CPGB were lowered. The split was not a prime motive for the Government's foreign policy; it was a useful political adjunct.

The Labour Party found itself uncomfortably in the minority when the question of European unity began to dominate ISC discussions. The majority of the affiliates to the ISC favoured greater steps towards European Union than did the Labour Government.<sup>2</sup> Many of the Continental parties hoped that the organs of European unity would be means to the establishment of Socialist co-operation on a Continental scale. This was in harmony with earlier pronouncements of the International, and of the Labour

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1. Not all Continental Socialist Parties reacted as strongly against Communism as did Transport House. In March, 1951, COMISCO voted not to issue a May Day manifesto, rather than accept a draft proposed by the British Labour Party, which strongly attacked Communism and urged a high level of rearmament against Russia.
  2. See e.g., LPCR 1950, p. 202, p. 200. The subject of European unity is discussed at length in Chapter 4; see especially infra p. 269.

Party. But Labour in office took a different view. Denis Healey, in the climactic ISC debate on the issue in Paris in October, 1950, went so far as to assert that Socialist principles did not provide guidance on the question. The result was an impasse. At Frankfurt in June, 1951, Van der Goes van Naters reported that the special ISC committee on the subject could only deal with the theoretical aspects of the question; it could not agree upon specific proposals for action.

Only once during the Government's term of office did the Labour Party actively intervene in the domestic politics of another nation. This came about through the ISC, which nominated Denis Healey as one of its chief agents in negotiations that were intended to produce an independent and united Italian Socialist Party. This, it was hoped, would offer a democratic alternative to the CDU Government in Italy. Alcide de Gaspari, leader of the CDU coalition, protested to Bevin, when the latter was in Rome early in 1950, about the ISC's efforts to unite his political opponents, and asked him to intervene to stop them.<sup>1</sup> Bevin pointed out the formal difference between the Labour Government and the Party, and refused to put

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1. See The Times 2.2.50 and Healey "The International Socialist Conference" pp. 369-71.

pressure upon Healey. The Labour leadership, notwithstanding, allowed the Party, through the ISC, to continue to intervene in domestic Italian politics. This was a unique instance in which the distinction between the Party and the Government let the Party play an active, independent role in international politics. It was also the only instance in which the Government, albeit tactfully and indirectly, encouraged Labour intervention in the domestic politics of another nation for reasons of Socialist solidarity.

When the ISC became the new Socialist International in 1951 the organisation did not claim increased powers. In its founding declaration it stated:

"Socialist co-operation must be based on consent. The resolutions passed by an international Socialist body must reflect agreement freely reached. They can never constitute a binding command on parties which are individually responsible to their own members and to a national electorate. An international Socialist body cannot claim mandatory powers." <sup>1</sup>

A major aim of the earlier Internationals had been to make a common foreign policy in accordance with the common interests of the workers. In post-1945 Europe, when a number of Socialist parties had governmental responsibility, this was no longer the case. Socialist parties in government tended to put their national responsibilities ahead of their duty to the ideals of the International. As it grew, the Conference came to place more emphasis upon its experts'

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1. S. Rose op. cit. p. 8.

conferences, at which individuals could discuss subjects such as nationalisation and municipal administration from a Socialist viewpoint "without compromising the national parties themselves."<sup>1</sup> This development marked a tacit recognition that for the time being the common interests of Socialists were not sufficient to bridge the gaps between doctrinaires and empiricists, between federalists and nationalists, between Government parties and parties in permanent minority, and even between Northern Europe and Southern Europe. Denis Healey noted, "On major international issues the Socialist parties differed among themselves almost as widely as with other parties."<sup>2</sup> As Solomon Grumbach, a French Socialist, said to a Conference in 1947: "All agreed with Laski about the aims of world Socialism; the difficulty was the means of achieving them."

#### Conclusion

"It is not for me or any Foreign Minister to question the economic system of another country; Russia is Socialist, we are partly Socialist, America may believe in private enterprise. The great task of Great Britain is to weld these forces together to keep the peace."

Ernest Bevin LPCR 1946, p. 168

The Government rejected the traditional Party belief

1. Healey "The International Socialist Conference" p. 371. See also S. Rose op. cit. p. 7ff.
2. Healey "The International Socialist Conference" p. 368.

in the importance of class ties in foreign policy because that assumed that friends were on the left and the enemy on the right. This bipolarisation had<sup>been</sup>/strengthened by the unity of the Allies in fighting Fascism in World War II. The disappearance of a common enemy revealed the tenuousness of the links between parties of the left. The post-war experience of the Labour Government in the Council of Foreign Ministers, in Greece, in Germany and in Czechoslovakia firmly convinced it that while international diplomacy was still bipolarised, now friends were on the right and the enemy on the left. The opening of this gulf between Socialists and Communists greatly reduced the number and importance of parties with which Labour wished to claim ideological affinity. The emphasis that the Government placed upon curbing Russian expansion led it into alliances with right-wing governments, particularly with America, which throughout the period retained a capitalist government, notwithstanding occasional statements to the contrary from the less consistent of the Labour rebels. NATO was the culminating achievement of the Government. It rested upon the participation of a number of Christian Democratic governments, as well as ones that the Labour Party had always considered reactionary, such as the régimes of Portugal and Greece.

The majority of the backbench critics of the Government's foreign policy came to admit that the traditional

dichotomy of left and right was no longer valid. In its place they suggested a division of diplomatic forces into three, in which a Socialist Britain would stand between and above the extremes of capitalism and Communism. Although the Labour Government could and did maintain a domestic policy which placed it between these two forces and made it ideologically distinctive, it could not maintain a similar position in international relations once the danger of Russian aggression in Europe was recognised. The ideologically minded could and did interpret the Government's alliance with America as a sign that America itself was moving left. The ending of Marshall Aid and changes in American foreign policy in 1950-51 again revived arguments for a British foreign policy independent of the United States. The more sophisticated of the Bevanites saw this 'independent' policy being conducted within the framework of NATO. In fact, they were urging what might by analogy be called the "2½ Force."

The Labour Government recognised, as the Party had not and its critics did not, the limits that the change from opposition to office placed upon its relations with Socialist parties in other countries. Hugh Dalton tried to make the 1948 Conference understand that "a government must have amicable relations with every other government with whom it has diplomatic relations, whether that

government is Communist or capitalist or whatever else it is." <sup>1</sup> The International could ignore nations such as America or China if they lacked effective Socialist parties; a Labour Government could not do so and still play a leading part in world affairs. Those backbenchers who were intellectually least affected by the transition to Government charged the Government with the duty of strengthening Socialist parties on the Continent, and when left-wing governments began to dissolve, the Labour Government was assigned heavy blame. <sup>2</sup> The failings of the French and the Italian Socialist parties, the two most significant ones, were not of the Labour Government's making. Both were victims of the cold war, which forced upon them the unpalatable choice between alliance with Communists or capitalists, or ineffective opposition. The Labour Government did not intervene in French and Italian politics because it realised that any temporary advantage it might derive from the accession of a Socialist-led government would be more than offset by the long-term complications. In addition, differences within the ISC on European unity, an issue of great importance from 1948 to 1950, showed that ideological similarities could not overcome the great gulfs created by national differences.

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1. p. 119.

2. See e.g., "Keeping Left" p. 26; "Full Speed Ahead" (Tribune pamphlet, October, 1950) p. 22.

Only in the case of the Italian Socialist Party did Labour intervene in Continental domestic politics. Because the Government had prudently insisted upon keeping its ministers away from the activities of the International Socialist Conference, it could formally dissociate itself from the Conference's intervention in Italian politics.

As the issue of German reparations illustrated the straightforward conflict between national interests, so the issue of Franco Spain illustrated the conflicts created within the international working-class by national interests. Before and after the war there was no official doubt that the interests of the Spanish workers required the defeat of Franco and the establishment of a Republican Government. After the war the Labour Government realised that the immediate interest of the British workers dictated the importation of foodstuffs and raw materials from Spain. The Government decided against rocking the boats that brought fruit, vegetables and ores<sup>1</sup> to Britain from the land of the Spanish dictator. The traditional bonds of Labour and Socialist solidarity, put to the test, turned out to be no more than a rope of sand.

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1. Harold Wilson, President of the Board of Trade, had no use for left-wing sentiments in his job. He liked to refer to his standards as those of a greengrocer, who would buy and sell where terms were best.

## Chapter IV

## THE NATIONALISATION OF SOCIALISM

"We have absolutely abandoned every idea of nationalist loyalty. We are deliberately putting a world order before our loyalty towards our own country."

C.R. Attlee LPCR 1934, p. 174.

"The safety of our respective countries must be the first claim upon responsible statesmen."

Ernest Bevin 450 HC 1110, 4.5.48.

Traditionally the Labour Party was committed to a supra-national solution for problems of national foreign policy. It rejected the idea that the British Government should determine for itself whether or not to use force to protect its interests. Instead, Labour consistently asserted that Britain could only remain secure if it ceded its right to determine questions of such magnitude to an international organisation which would settle disputes peacefully by international law, or, if necessary, marshal sufficient military force to deter or arrest aggressors. The aim was as clear as the need was great.

The Party advocated a policy transcending the limits of national boundaries and national interests because it held that the divisions in society were not between nations but within nations. As Leonard Woolf put it:

"All arguments against international government based on assertions that it would endanger vital national interests should be regarded with the

greatest suspicion. The most vital interests of human beings are hardly ever national, almost always international. The interests which most nearly affect man's life are those of the international group, e.g., labour or capital." <sup>1</sup>

The nation-state was regarded as an instrument of the property-owning class. The rivalries within this class, expressed in the form of national conflicts, had led to an arms race and then the holocaust of war in 1914. To prevent this recurring required an international organisation with sufficient power to control distrusted national governments, if necessary by the use of military force. It could also lessen social injustice through international economic co-operation. The international organisation would represent the common people, who spoke through world public opinion. Together they would raise international relations to a new level of morality, which would prepare the way for the World Co-operative Commonwealth.

The disappointment within the Party at the terms of the Versailles Treaty led to a short reaction against the League of Nations, but this was soon overcome by hopes of strengthening the League. <sup>2</sup> The League, placed above the taint of national self-interest, stood for disarmament and international action to prevent war. The Party regarded the League diplomacy of its two minority governments as highly successful, and a promise of greater things to come.

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1. L. Woolf International Government (1916) p. 354
  2. See LPCR 1919, p. 139ff, p. 210; 1920, p. 132ff; 1922, p. 193.

After 1931, the Party continued to frame its policy in terms of what the League did, or, when the infirmities of the League became apparent, in terms of what the League ought to have done and what the League could have done -- if a Labour Foreign Secretary had been there. The Labour policy was fully developed in "War and Peace", the most characteristic of the Party's statements on foreign affairs in the 1930s. It made "loyalty to the world community" the first claim upon the individual Englishman.<sup>1</sup> The international organisation was to make it impossible for any British government to use force as an instrument of purely national policy without violating the laws of the land. Thus, to the charge that the League was too weak to stop war, the Labour answer was: Strengthen it. Even when the Party accepted British rearmament in 1937 it only did so in the name of League principles.<sup>2</sup>

In the reaction against the Great War within the Party, patriotism and nationalism were discredited. As Attlee wrote in 1937:

"A true Socialist cannot allow his sympathies to be bounded by anything so narrow as a nation, for nationalism is only egotism writ large. It follows

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1. LPCR 1934, p. 245. The statement was reprinted in full in January, 1938. See supra p. 43ff.
  2. LPCR 1937, p. 4.

that it is impossible for a Socialist Government to pursue a foreign policy that is at variance with its principles." <sup>1</sup>

The patriotic claim of loyalty to the state was repeatedly denied. For example, Attlee told the House of Commons in 1933:

"You have to put loyalty to the League of Nations above loyalty to your country ... If our country were declared to be an aggressor state, it would be right for all to go against her." <sup>2</sup>

The moral basis of this belief was simple. As the 1934 manifesto declared: "Because it is a Socialist Party, the Labour Party believes in the brotherhood of man ... It <sup>3</sup> detests national and racial as much as class barriers." Patriotism was rejected as an irrational and emotional appeal for a cause intrinsically wrong. Although the Party policy declarations made out a rational case for internationalism, much of its success was due to the widespread emotional revulsion from the slaughter of World War I. Moreover, the idealism of the Party's internationalism was in part founded upon a real sense of disaffection resulting from the exclusion of the working-class from affairs of state.

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1. The Labour Party in Perspective pp. 157-8. See also G. Orwell op. cit. passim, for comments upon Labour's anti-patriotism.
  2. 281 HC 148, 7.11.33. See also Attlee, LPCR 1934, p. 174, and "War and Peace".
  3. "For Socialism and Peace" (LP, 1934) p. 9.

Before 1945, the Party emphasized the goals of internationalism. There was an ample supply of information about what the world government would do and how its constitution would be formulated, but very little consideration of the problems of the transition to world government. It was assumed that the development of a Socialist society in Britain and the development of a world government would proceed simultaneously and harmoniously. The transfer of national sovereignty to the international organisation was regarded as a stimulus to the spread of Socialism. The Labour Party considered Europe as it was, only to turn from it with revulsion; it preferred to discuss Europe as it ought to be. Even Ernest Bevin, normally ready to point out the limitations of environment, could paint an optimistic picture of the future international order in May, 1939. He told the Annual Conference that it would come through Labour co-operation in the Commonwealth leading to co-operation with the United States. The Scandinavian powers, France, Russia and other nations would join thereafter. Finally an invitation would be extended to nations threatening peace to solve their problems by moving "towards a world order."<sup>1</sup>

The chaos of war gave added strength to old beliefs. An NEC manifesto of February 9th, 1940, stated that Labour's peace aim was the creation of:

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1. LPCR 1939, p. 244.

"...a new association or commonwealth of states, the collective authority of which must transcend, over a proper sphere, the sovereign rights of separate states. This authority must control such military and economic power as will enable it to enforce peaceful behaviour as between its members."

The organisation could only be secure if based on Socialism and democracy. All would fail "if the peoples remain divided internally into two nations, sundered by wide differences of wealth, privilege and opportunity." <sup>1</sup> The report was endorsed by a voice vote at the May, 1940 <sup>2</sup> Conference.

The shift from the Phoney War to the war of the United Nations gave even greater force to the Party's faith in world organisation to secure peace, because of the example of the unity of the nations in battle and because of the belief that the elimination of Fascism would mean the elimination of the major obstacle to international co-operation. <sup>3</sup> At the December, 1944 Annual Conference Attlee reaffirmed: "There must be an authority armed with power that transcends the will of the individual state." <sup>4</sup> It was not until after Attlee had attended the

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1. "Labour, the War and the Peace" LPCR 1940, pp. 189-90. See also Attlee Labour's Aims in War and Peace (1940) p. 102ff; E. Bevin The Job to be Done (1942) p. vii. Dalton "Hitler's War" (1940) p. 164, said that Britain must "dilute national sovereignty as much as possible over as wide an area as possible."
  2. LPCR 1940, p. 138.
  3. See e.g., "The Old World and the New Society" p. 22ff; NEC statement, LPCR 1943, p. 3.
  4. LPCR 1944, p. 133.

San Francisco Conference for drafting the UN charter that he began publicly to suggest to the Party that its traditional principle of supra-nationalism would not immediately fit the post-war world. In defending the veto from criticism (the New Statesman, for example, had called it "simply a pledge of anarchists to stick together."<sup>1</sup>), Attlee admitted, "It is very, very easy to criticise this arrangement" but added in mitigation:

"You have got to do your utmost to get a workable arrangement and that arrangement will be improved as time goes on; but the vital thing is that we should take the first step, that we should get a world organisation and that we should keep in step with our great allies."<sup>2</sup>

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1. 10.3.45.

2. LPCR 1945, p. 107. Attlee was not the only person disillusioned at San Francisco. Sir Walter Citrine was also chagrined. He had requested, on behalf of the TUC, permanent trade union representation "in the structure of the new world security organisation ... The trade union interest could not properly be represented by any organisation except one formed by the unions themselves." TUCR 1945, pp. 118-9. The Coalition Government, which had named Ellen Wilkinson (formerly of NUDAW) and George Tomlinson (UTWFA) to accompany Attlee and other ministers to San Francisco, turned down the request. The TUC pressed its claim unsuccessfully at San Francisco. The Labour Government was more conciliatory in manner but as firm in principle. Trade union representatives were appointed to go with the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 -- as were representatives of British industry. TUCR 1946, p. 157ff and The Times 15.1.46.

### The United Nations

"We are determined to use the institutes of the United Nations to kill power politics, in order that, by the methods of democracy, the will of the people shall prevail."

P.J. Noel-Baker, Minister of State,  
419 HC 1262, 20.2.46.

"The last few years have, however, shown that Soviet misuse of the veto and Slav intransigence have so hampered the United Nations that it can no longer provide the security which the nations desperately require."

Cmd. 7692 "Events Leading Up to the  
Signature of the North Atlantic Treaty"  
(1949) p. 2.

The traditional Socialist principle of supra-nationalism implied three things: a world political authority, international law and an international military force to uphold it. In the circumstances in which the Labour Government took office in 1945, the principle meant support of an international authority to control the atomic bomb, an international police force, the acceptance of a world court for settling disputes between nations and the elimination of the veto power in order to convert the United Nations into a truly supra-national organisation.

The Labour Government was willing to limit its sovereignty in order to promote the international control of atomic energy. Bevin announced this policy in his second speech as Foreign Secretary.<sup>1</sup> This position was in sharp contrast with previous British foreign policy,

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1. 413 HC 1946, 23.8.45.

just as it was in harmony with traditional Labour principles. Agreement on international control was quickly reached with America and Canada, which had shared in developing the bomb. The three governments were emphatic about the need to retain their secrets until international control was established.<sup>1</sup>

At the first meeting of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission on June 14th, 1946, the Baruch plan was presented by the United States, with the support of the Labour Government.<sup>2</sup> It called for the creation of an International Atomic Development Authority "to which should be entrusted all phases of the development and use of atomic energy." Upon establishment of a control system, existing stocks of bombs would be destroyed. The agency would operate without the veto. Baruch emphasized that effective punishment of violators of directives was at the heart of the scheme.<sup>3</sup> The Russian counterproposal was for an authority under the supervision of the veto-ridden Security Council; bombs were to be banned before it would be established. Then the discussion and the disagreement began. After more than a year of talk the

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1. See Attlee 416 HC 604-8, 22.11.45, and Truman Volume I p. 477ff.

2. See AEC 1st meeting, p. 7ff; 2nd meeting, 19.6.46, pp. 21-3.

3. There was reason for suspicion. A Canadian atom spy ring had already been broken and suspects charged. On this point, see also New Statesman 14.9.46.

Commission agreed to the creation of the supra-national agency. Russia rejected this as "radically unsound" and "contrary to the principle of national sovereignty."<sup>1</sup> Eight months later, when Britain and America still insisted upon supra-national control, the Commission reported it had reached an impasse.<sup>2</sup> Talks were suspended. Although they were resumed a year later, they again failed; the Commission reported that differences on the question of sovereignty were "irreconcilable."<sup>3</sup>

The unwillingness of Russia to co-operate should not obscure the fact that on a major military and economic issue the Labour Government was willing to cede initial technical and military advantages and final sovereignty. This was in accord with traditional Socialist principles. Because it had tested this principle by a firm diplomatic proposal, the Labour Government found in 1948-49, after negotiations had failed, that there was then relatively little political opposition within the Party to British rearmament. There was no doubt within the Government as to where the blame rested for the atomic arms race. Bevin bluntly told the General Assembly:

"If the black fury, the incalculable disaster of atomic war should fall upon us, one Power, by refusing

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1. AEC 13th meeting, 10.9.47, p. 44.
  2. AEC 15th meeting, 7.5.48, p. 2.
  3. AEC 24th meeting, 29.7.49, p. 38.

its co-operation in the control and development of these great new forces for the use of humanity, will alone be responsible for the evils which may be visited upon mankind." <sup>1</sup>

Parallel with the disagreement on supra-national control of atomic energy there was disagreement on the establishment of a multi-national armed force for use by the world organisation to preserve peace. <sup>2</sup> This was viewed as a first step towards an international police force. The Labour Government supported the idea strongly. Bevin told the House of Commons that he desired to "stretch it [the United Nations] to the limits of its capacity, from the security point of view." <sup>3</sup> By early 1947 the United Nations discussions were stalled. Britain demanded that contributions of forces by the Big Five should be comparable but not necessarily identical. Russia argued that contributions should be identical in composition. <sup>4</sup> Britain wished that provisions for military bases and rights of passage should be incorporated in the original agreement; Russia objected to the provision of military bases for international forces. <sup>5</sup> Russia opposed the stationing of troops reserved for UN use outside

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1. The Times 28.9.48.

2. See SC Special Supplement #1, 1947 Report of the Military Staff Committee pp. 8-32, for a point by point statement of differences between Russia and other nations. See RIIA Survey 1947-48, pp. 511ff, for a summary of events.

3. 416 HC 761, 23.11.45. Attlee had made similar pledges, LPCR 1944, p. 133, and 1945, p. 107. Bevin repeated his desire at the United Nations a year later, Manchester Guardian 22.11.46.

4. Report of the Military Staff Committee p. 11.

5. Ibid. p, 21.

national boundaries when not under international supervision, stating that such troops could threaten the independence of other nations. The Labour Government opposed this attempt to interfere with its disposition of troops for Imperial defence. It declared that as long as forces were legally accepted by other nations, there could be no infringement of national independence.<sup>1</sup> By 1948 Bevin was ready to write off the military staff committee talks as "a complete failure."<sup>2</sup>

When the Labour Party spoke before the war about the value of a world court it envisaged a tribunal with sufficient power and prestige to adjudicate major differences between nations, as well as settling minor commercial and treaty disputes. The Labour Government did test the effectiveness of the International Court of Justice in two instances, the Corfu Channel dispute with Albania and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company case. Both cases illustrate Geoffrey Goodwin's point that post-war Britain has had "a strong vested interest in the rule of law" because "her legal rights tend to outrun her capacity to defend them."<sup>3</sup> The Corfu Channel case was taken to the

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1. Report of the Military Staff Committee p. 27.
  2. LPCR 1948, p. 198.
  3. Goodwin Britain and the United Nations (1957) p. 379. See p. 386ff for a summary of proceedings in the two cases.

International Court after a Russian veto frustrated Britain's attempt to secure a settlement in the Security Council. Although the Court awarded judgment to Britain in 1949, the £843,000 award was not paid by Albania. The point of this failure was noted. In the Anglo-Iranian case, the Labour Government went to the Court before going to the Security Council, and was granted an interim order in its favour. The Court was unable to secure respect for its order. In both instances the use of the Court lost the Government nothing, and gained it some propaganda advantage. The real loser, from the Labour viewpoint, was the International Court.<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, Socialists had argued that international law would settle conflicts between nations. The Labour Government came to recognise that agreement between nations was a prior condition for the acceptance of international law.

The question of eliminating the veto in the United Nations to reduce dangers inherent in national sovereignty had been raised within the Labour Party as soon as the provisions of the Charter were made known. Attlee had justified the veto to the House, while still deputy prime minister. "If we insist on no power to veto, we simply will not get the thing started."<sup>2</sup> He agreed with

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1. See e.g., G. Jebb, SC 565th meeting, 19.10.51, pp. 7-8.

2. 410 HC 88, 17.4.45.

back-bench Labour critics<sup>1</sup> that the UN with a veto was  
 "a step forward," but not "a final step."<sup>2</sup>

During the first year of office, encouragement was given from the Labour front bench to those Socialists who maintained that only by limiting national sovereignty could peace be made secure. Bevin told the House of Commons on November 23rd, 1945 that the UN was only "a prelude to further development."

"We need a new study for the purpose of creating a world assembly elected directly from the people of the world, as a whole ... I am willing to sit with anybody of any party, of any nation, to try to devise a franchise or a constitution -- just as other great countries have done -- for a world assembly."<sup>3</sup>

The speech was greeted with "passionate cheers of approval."<sup>4</sup> The Foreign Secretary's declaration was reiterated to the House by P.J. Noel-Baker, then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, the following January, when he said the Government was "conscientiously and deliberately"

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1. See e.g., B. Levy, 413 HC 729, 22.8.45; K. Zilliacus, 413 HC 875, 23.8.45.
  2. 413 HC 670, 22.8.45.
  3. 416 HC 785-6. While always a believer in internationalist ideals, Bevin had never, like some of his colleagues, foresworn his sense of nationality. Attlee calls him "first and foremost a great Englishman." As It Happened p. 203. Francis Williams subtitled his biography of Bevin: "Portrait of a Great Englishman."
  4. Manchester Guardian 24.11.45.

working with the achievement of world government in mind.  
 The Government went as far as to introduce legislation  
 in April, 1946, which permitted Orders in Council to be  
 issued to compel British citizens to obey Security  
 Council decisions on measures "not involving the use of  
 armed force."<sup>2</sup> At its Whitsun Conference the Party  
 approved a resolution from the NUG&MW which called for

"the development of an international authority as  
 the only alternative to the old diplomacy of national  
 sovereignty and isolation and the groupings of  
 nations, which lead inevitably to international  
 conflict."<sup>3</sup>

By contrast, the Under-Secretary of State, Hector McNeil,  
 told the House, in an adjournment debate in March, 1946  
 that a supra-national United Nations was "not practical  
 politics," an objection as infuriating to Socialist  
 propagandists as it was familiar.<sup>4</sup> This time it did  
 not come from a Conservative but from a Labour Government.

The McNeil statement aptly represents the Government's  
 position in practice during its six years in office. It  
 did not regard the veto, but Russia, as the major stumbling  
 block to the achievement of peace in the United Nations.  
 Abolishing the veto would force Russia (and perhaps other

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1. 418 HC 630-1, 28.1.46.

2. 421 HC 1513, 5.4.46. Cf. the provisions of the Peace  
 Act supra p. 44.

3. LPCR 1946, p. 150.

4. 420 HC 1400, 14.3.46.

nations) to leave it. The modified body would be no more able to override the sovereign decisions of recalcitrant states than previously, and it would be less useful as a centre for diplomatic negotiation. Institutional changes could not resolve political conflicts. As Sir Hartley Shawcross said early in 1947:

"It is an over-simplification of the complex relationship between the nations of the world to suppose that everything can be settled by the simple device of a majority vote." <sup>1</sup>

By chance, the Korean War gave the United Nations the opportunity to act as Socialists had traditionally said it should. The temporary absence of Russia was regarded by the Government as a fluke, not a foretoken. When the United States sought, in its "Uniting for Peace" <sup>2</sup> resolution to by-pass the veto-bound Council by creating a special General Assembly committee, the Labour Government did support the action. Kenneth Younger argued publicly that the proposed changes would aid member nations to act <sup>3</sup> quickly in response to aggression. In private, however, he suggested to the United States delegation the danger of taking such a step, because it might lead Russia to withdraw from the United Nations and form another 'world' <sup>4</sup> organisation, centred on itself and Communist China.

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1. Cmd. 7320, 1948, p. 55.
  2. GA A/1456, 1950.
  3. GA 300th meeting, pp. 307-8, 2.11.50.
  4. See T. Lie op. cit. pp. 253ff, Goodwin op. cit. p. 249ff. Interview K. Younger, July, 1958.

The failure of the United Nations to meet Labour expectations was treated by the Government as a symptom of a disorder too deep to be cured by simply altering its constitution. As Sir Hartley Shawcross put it:

"The plain fact is that the machinery of the Security Council has shown itself to be ill-adapted to the circumstances of a stage in the world's history when the five Great Powers are no longer bound closely together in the pursuit of a common objective." <sup>1</sup>

The creation of a supra-national world body was now regarded as a hardly possible outcome of an all-round political settlement; it was no longer urged by Labour as the practical means of settling major differences between nations. The Government instead relied increasingly upon action outside the UN to achieve its diplomatic aims. It found that the UN was helpless to settle even relatively minor disputes, such as those in Greece, in the Corfu Channel case and in Persia, where British interests were involved. With regard to atomic energy, the Labour Government tried for a limited period of time, to bring about an international authority in accord with Socialist tradition. But it was not willing to sacrifice provisions it considered vital in order to secure the form of an authority at the risk of substance. Frustrated and disappointed in its efforts at the UN, the Government lowered its estimate of the

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1. GA 110th meeting, 13.11.47, p. 790.

organisation.<sup>1</sup> Ernest Bevin, long an advocate of international co-operation, finally admitted that "hopes had been set too high."<sup>2</sup> Only among Labour backbenchers did hopes for world government remain high.<sup>3</sup> But their speeches, pamphlets, motions and letters to The Times were of no avail.

#### European Unity

"It may be, after all, that if world government cannot come as we had hoped, out of those very regional structures to which the nations might now turn there might yet grow that world government for which humanity yearned and for which it had been striving and struggling for so long."

Ernest Bevin, GA 144th meeting,  
27.9.48, p. 160.

At the end of 1947 the first phase of the Labour Government's foreign policy was at an end. The United Nations had failed to provide international security. Russian intransigence made co-operation between the Big Three impossible. Bevin told the House of Commons after the conclusion of the 1947 London Foreign Ministers' Conference, "We cannot go on as we have been going on ...

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1. See e.g., Attlee's comments, 427 HC 1673ff, 23.10.46.
  2. GA 144th meeting, 27.9.48, p. 159. The Government's disappointment with the United Nations was reinforced by the personal friction between leading Labour ministers and the Secretary-General, Trygve Lie. A colleague of Bevin said that the Foreign Secretary regarded Lie as "a politician and a windbag, not a diplomatist." Interview. See also Lie op. cit. p. 31.
  3. See e.g., Parliamentary Papers Notices of Motions. (30.1.47) p. 1229, a motion signed by 72 Labour MPs supporting a world federal constitution; "Keep Left" p. 47; Rebels' amendment Manchester Guardian 16.11.46.

I do not know what is going to happen in the future."<sup>1</sup>  
 What happened was that the Foreign Secretary initiated a month later, in his House of Commons speech of January 22nd, 1948, the second phase of the Labour Government's European policy, based upon the close association of Western European nations. For two years the precise nature of the association remained in doubt. At the time, there were three major alternatives. First, forming a supra-national body, a European Union. Secondly, building institutions of European co-operation which might or might not override national sovereignty, depending upon their functions. Thirdly, proceeding, as in the Marshall Plan and OEEC, through inter-governmental co-operation to reach agreement between fully sovereign states. Traditionally the Labour Party had supported the first alternative, as a substitute for or a step towards world government.<sup>2</sup>

The distinctions between these types of association were not always made clear in discussion within and without the Labour movement. One can see in retrospect that Bevin's own mind was fixed upon developing organs for inter-governmental co-operation. But the speech with which Bevin brought the subject of European unity

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1. 445 HC 1881-2, 18.12.47.

2. In the following sections the underscored terms will be used as defined above. The phrase 'European unity' will be employed to describe the general subject.

to the immediate attention of governments had a double existence. First, there was the printed text, which may be examined in Hansard. Secondly, the speech must be considered in terms of its impact in Britain and on the Continent, an impact that owed something to the forcefulness with which Bevin delivered grand but not always clear phrases and even more, to the longing of many politicians to gain official British support for their plans for European union.

The printed text shows that Bevin made no firm commitment to European Union, or to ceding British sovereignty, but such a commitment could be fairly inferred from statements such as, "Britain cannot stand outside Europe and regard her problems as quite separate from those of her European neighbours,"<sup>1</sup> and "The time is ripe for a consolidation of Western Europe."<sup>2</sup> He also paid lip-service to the idea of fitting the group into a UN framework.<sup>3</sup> Unlike Winston Churchill in his Zurich<sup>4</sup> speech of 1946, Bevin did not explicitly rule out British participation in a European Union. He emphasized the importance of regarding Western Europe and its overseas

Like ?

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1. 446 HC 397, 22.1.48.

2. Ibid. Col. 396.

3. Ibid. Col. 401.

4. See The Times 20.9.46.

dependencies as a self-sufficient economic unit with a common cultural and spiritual heritage. About the means of association he was vague, but Bevin pledged the Labour Government to foster "both the spirit and the machinery of co-operation".<sup>1</sup> He added that unity should be "more of a brotherhood and less of a rigid system."<sup>2</sup> Given such sentiments it is not surprising that the speech was taken in some quarters as a promise of British participation in a European Union.<sup>3</sup>

The first product of the British initiative was the Brussels Treaty, signed on March 17th by Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France and the United Kingdom. It had a broad title: "The Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence."<sup>4</sup>

In retrospect, the Treaty can be seen as a prelude to the military alliance of NATO, which rested upon functional inter-governmental co-operation. At the time there was much hope of an association in keeping with the full title of the Brussels Treaty. Bevin, reporting to the House of Commons on May 4th, was pleased with the agreement.<sup>5</sup>

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1. 446 HC 397, 22.1.48. At this time Bevin was urging, against Treasury and Board of Trade advice, a customs union and common currency with France. Duff Cooper op. cit. p. 376.
  2. 446 HC 408, 22.1.48.
  3. See e.g., RIIA Survey 1947-8, p. 93ff, pp. 108-9, and Pickles op. cit. Chapter XIII.
  4. See Cmd. 7367 (1948) for the text.
  5. See 450 HC 1107ff.

Attlee, winding up the same debate, recognised immediate difficulties, but declared: "We are prepared with other powers to pool some degree of authority" with the eventual object of "federation of Europe."<sup>1</sup> E.W. Millington, a member of the Keep Left group, called for "the cosmic, the universal approach."<sup>2</sup>

Simultaneously the United Europe movement, led by Winston Churchill, was demanding closer British association with the nations of the Continent. The movement was ostensibly non-political and non-partisan. In view of its object it could not be non-political; in view of its sponsors, it could not be non-partisan. Its campaign, headed by a man who was still regarded by some as capable of speaking for Britain, helped confuse what was at this time an unclear Government position. Shortly after Bevin made his speech on January 22nd, the group invited the Labour Party to send official delegates to attend its Conference on European Unity at the Hague in May. The NEC refused the invitation.<sup>3</sup> This refusal was ignored by a number of Labour MPs, who regarded the question as in fact non-partisan. (Of the 91 MPs supporting a European Union motion tabled in the House in March, 1948, 43 were members of the PLP). A total of

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1. See 450 HC Cols. 1318, 1317, 5.5.48.

2. Ibid. Col. 1310.

3. The Times 13.2.48.

42 Labour MPs announced their intention of attending the Hague Conference. Transport House requested their withdrawal; the number of Labour MPs attending was thus reduced to 26.<sup>1</sup> They were a mixed lot, including R.W.G. Mackay, the Rev. Gordon Lang and R.R. Stokes. Their common characteristic was a certain dissatisfaction with the Government's foreign policy combined with very little political influence. This was not the first panacea many of them had urged.

There also arose at this time within the Labour Party a demand for a United Socialist Europe. As Fenner Brockway put it, when moving a resolution at the Annual Conference in May, 1948:

"The issue, therefore, is not whether we are to have a Western Union, but the kind of Western Union we are to have. The Churchill conception is a Europe in which capitalism is restored. Our conception is a new Europe, which moves toward Socialism."<sup>2</sup>

The idea of a United Socialist Europe was, of course, in accord with traditional Party principles. Advocates of the plan gave it a variety of nuances. For example, six Keep Left MPs, in a statement in January 1948, urged a "United Democratic Socialist Western Europe" as a diplomatic "third force."<sup>3</sup> Another group of 16 MPs, including

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1. For a full list see Notes on Current Politics (#11, 1948) p. 21. Continental Socialists also attended the meeting.
  2. LPCR 1948, p. 172.
  3. See Daily Herald 22.1.48.

William Warbey and Sydney Silverman, urged a Socialist Europe as a means of drawing together East and West European economies.<sup>1</sup> Other advocates advanced the idea without reference to details, in keeping with their naive and idealistic faith in the simple efficacy of traditional Socialist principles of action.

The Government regarded the proposal as irrelevant to its problems. The fragmentation of working-class parties, particularly in France and Italy, meant that there was no immediate prospect of a sufficient number of Socialist governments being formed on the Continent to make the idea attractive to other nations. Advocacy of a doctrinaire Socialist plan would only have antagonised continental governments, and complicated Labour's delicate task of immediately strengthening Western Europe's military defences against Communist Russia. The day after Bevin's January 22nd speech, Attlee made clear that the Government would not set ideological preconditions upon co-operation.

"I naturally desire to see all countries embracing the principles of democratic Socialism because I believe that here is a dynamic counter to Russian Communism, but it is no part of Socialist policy to force Socialism upon other nations."<sup>2</sup>

But at a meeting of the International Socialist Conference it was as difficult to deny the validity of these principles

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1. See their pamphlet, "Stop the Coming War" (c. 1948).

2. 446 HC 619.

as it was difficult to maintain them in Whitehall. Transport House took the initiative in keeping the old slogans alive. In February, 1948, the secretariat submitted a memorandum to an ISC meeting on Marshall Aid which asserted:

"Western Europe and democratic Socialism stand or fall together. The ideal of European unity can only be saved from corruption by reactionary politicians if the Socialists place themselves at the head of the movement for its realisation." <sup>1</sup>

At another meeting of Socialist parties in Paris on April 24th-25th, the Party delegation of Dalton, Phillips and Healey opposed planning a European Union as "premature" <sup>2</sup> but they were outnumbered and eventually joined in a unanimous resolution which repeatedly urged the development of European institutions limiting national sovereignty, although containing a provision, probably requested by the Labour Party, that the immediate emphasis should be upon inter-governmental co-operation through organs such as OEEC. <sup>3</sup> This saving clause could not detract from the general impression of the statement, which favoured a United Socialist Europe in substance if not in name.

The resolution that Brockway presented to Conference in May was specific as well as Utopian. It

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1. LPCR 1948, p. 231. The Conference declaration called for action "according to the principles of democratic Socialism." p. 232.
  2. The Times 24.4.48.
  3. LPCR 1949, pp. 224-5.

"... urges the Labour Party to co-operate with the European Socialist parties in taking practical steps to achieve the United Socialist States of Europe (including the establishment of supra-national agencies to take over from each nation powers to allocate and distribute coal, steel, timber, locomotives, rolling stock and imports from hard currency countries) in complete military<sup>1</sup> and political independence of the USA and USSR."

The declaration specifically endorsed the ISC manifesto of April 24th-25th. The first step would be for the Labour Party, "in combination with the Socialist parties of Europe to adopt one Socialist plan which we advocate across the frontiers, strengthening their hands and strengthening our hands."<sup>2</sup> International public opinion would then provide the momentum for success.

This resolution placed the NEC in an awkward position. It was not in harmony with the Government's policy, particularly in view of the rider advocating a third force, but it was in harmony with traditional Socialist principles. On the other hand, rejection of a resolution that endorsed a manifesto that Transport House had just accepted at the ISC would embarrass the Party in its relations with Continental Socialists, as well as requiring the NEC once again to attack traditional Party beliefs on foreign affairs. Undoubtedly, the NEC could have defeated the resolution through the support of

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1. LPCR 1948, p. 172.

2. LPCR 1948, p. 173.

the major trade unions; of 12 delegates speaking for the motion, only one, Walter Padley of USDAW, was a trade union delegate. Fortunately for the NEC the resolution, while specific about Socialist goals, did not deal with the problems immediately facing the Government. For example, it could be interpreted as favouring or opposing a European Union. Since the resolution was not so much in conflict with the Government's policy as irrelevant to its immediate tasks, the Executive could accept it without opposing the Government's policy of the moment. The NEC had things both ways. It conciliated Party members frequently critical of the Government's foreign policy by accepting the Brockway resolution. At the same time it protected itself and the Government against charges of neglecting the will of Conference by making its acceptance subject to reservations.

By the time Hugh Dalton had finished stating the NEC reservations it was clear to any detached observer that the Labour leaders were embracing the resolution only to smother it. Dalton's tribute to the idea of a Socialist Europe was confined to the conclusion of his 'accepting' speech. It was the only weak part of it. The rest of the speech was devoted to stating objections to the principle of Labour participation in a supra-national European organisation. His major argument

struck at the root of Socialist internationalism.

"We are not going to throw away the solid gains brought to us by a whole generation of political agitation and by the votes of our people and by three years of solid work in power in Parliament, in the trade unions and in the Government, upon any doctrinal altar of a federal Western Europe. When it comes to clever lawyers drafting a federal Constitution it must be made quite clear, I think, that we are not going to have chance majorities of reactionaries who might be thrown up from any part of Western Europe having the power to decree that we in Britain shall go back to the inter-war years of trade depression and all the rest of it." <sup>1</sup>

In addition, Dalton urged ethnic and Imperial claims to deny that Britain's primary external interest was in Europe.

"It is no good denying that we are very much closer in all respects except distance to Australia and New Zealand than we are to Western Europe. Australia and New Zealand are populated by our kinsmen. They live under Labour Governments, they are democracies, they speak our language, they have high standards of life and have the same political ideals as we have." <sup>2</sup>

In contrast to "conclaves of chatter-boxes," Dalton urged the advantages of "the practical British functional <sup>3</sup> approach" based upon inter-governmental co-operation.

During the summer of 1948 expectations rose of a great political advance within the European community. Bevin himself contributed to this feeling, with statements such as:

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1. LPCR 1948, p. 179.
  2. Ibid. p. 178. For a sample of statements from Commonwealth ministers favouring European co-operation, see RIIA Survey 1947-8, p. 139.
  3. LPCR 1948, p. 177.

"We must have more and more economic integration with Europe. We cannot go on killing each other -- I mean even in trade, or industrially, and we must, if we are to make a planned economy work here, get a planned economy over as wide an area as we can." <sup>1</sup>

The United States Government, whose assistance was vital to Britain in military as well as economic matters, publicly supported increased British participation in organs of European co-operation. <sup>2</sup> In September, Transport House issued an aptly titled policy pamphlet, "Feet on the Ground." In moderate language it argued that the immediate needs of European nations were so pressing that they must be met as quickly as possible; inter-governmental co-operation, as in OEEC, would be best for prompt action. <sup>3</sup> The statement did not make any objection in principle to a European Union. It hedged on the relationship of Socialism to European unity. After declaring that social justice and Socialist planning were necessary for European progress, it stated that such requirements could be met by parties that did not call themselves Socialist, and that the Labour Government should not judge other governments' actions on ideological grounds. It should be satisfied with a "realistic approach." <sup>4</sup> The idea of a United Socialist States of Europe was ignored. Unlike

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1. NUM Annual Conference Report (July, 1948) p. 118.

2. See e.g., The Times 28.8.48. The pressure continued throughout the lifetime of the Government.

3. See especially, p. 1, p. 13, p. 23. 4. p. 23.

the Dalton speech at Annual Conference in May, this NEC declaration was capable of satisfying moderate supporters of European Union as well as advocates of inter-governmental co-operation. Some Continental advocates of Union found this confusing and annoying.

Bevin was now sounding a note of caution. He told the House of Commons on September 15th that the proposed constitutions for European Union that he had seen "will not stand the test of examination for a moment."<sup>1</sup> The immediate need was for European nations to advance their interests jointly through inter-governmental co-operation. The relative economic weakness of Europe was also brought forward by the Foreign Secretary, who said, "I amalgamated a lot of unions into one big union, but the first thing I looked at was the assets."<sup>2</sup>

In the autumn of 1948 negotiations within the Council established by the Brussels Treaty forced the Labour Government to define its immediate attitude towards European unity. The appointment of Hugh Dalton to head the Government's delegation was regarded as an ill omen by federalists.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the negotiations the Labour

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1. 456 HC 104. See also LPCR 1949, p. 189.

2. Ibid. Col. 105.

3. See "A Poor Choice", Manchester Guardian leader, 19.11.48; RIIA Survey 1947-8, p. 145.

group strongly opposed attempts to form a political assembly that would serve as the basis for a European union. It proposed that all effective decisions be made by the unanimous consent of the foreign ministers. The result was a compromise. The Continental nations accepted the necessity of making the Foreign Ministers all-powerful, in order to secure British participation. The Labour Government accepted the creation of a European Assembly, so long as it was subject to the guidance of the ministers. While it could not get the other nations to agree that national delegations should vote as a national block, since some Continentals wished to develop the Assembly into a European Parliament, the Government did have the satisfaction of knowing that delegates from the PLP voted virtually as a block.

#### The Council of Europe Assembly

"This agreement lays the foundations of something new and hopeful in European life. We are witnessing today the establishment of a common democratic institution in this ancient continent of Europe. No one can tell what will be the future of this experiment which we are undertaking but we are all fixing our hopes upon it."

E. Bevin, at the signing of the Statute of Europe. Manchester Guardian 6.5.49.

"The only salvation for Europe and the West" -- NATO.

E. Davies, 480 HC 1398, 13.11.50.

The Labour Government, with a secure majority in its national parliament, opposed the creation of the

Assembly. When the idea was first proposed, Bevin is reported to have responded: "I don't like it. I don't like it. When you open that Pandora's box, you will find it full of Trojan horses."<sup>1</sup> After the Assembly began operation, Labour still criticised it. In June, 1950, a party pamphlet declared:

"In its present form the Assembly is quite unfitted to exert legislative powers. Its members sit as individuals, not as official representatives of countries or even of parties. Since most countries have refrained from appointing Ministers as delegates to the Assembly, the case of the European governments is not often adequately presented. In fact the Assembly has tended to become a sort of unofficial Opposition to the European governments as a whole."<sup>2</sup>

While the Labour delegation contained a very representative and heterogeneous group from the PLP, including such well-known critics of Ernest Bevin as Seymour Cocks, its members consistently voted with Labour ministers, except for R.W.G. Mackay, a member of the Keep Left group.<sup>3</sup> The Labour delegation made it clear at Strasbourg that it would act according to its own national interests; it did

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1. Strang Home and Abroad p. 290.
  2. "European Unity" p. 13. For government criticism, see e.g., E. Davies, 480 HC 1392ff, 13.11.50. Denis Healey was quick to reiterate Labour's opposition to the Assembly when the British delegation there was criticised by foreign Socialists at meetings of the ISC.
  3. Mackay once told the Assembly: "Unemployment in Rouen is as important to me as unemployment in my town of Hull." Consultative Assembly 6th sitting 17.8.49, p. 266. Mackay was the strongest advocate within the Labour Party of full and immediate Union. See his books: Britain in Wonderland (1948); Western Union in Crisis (1949); Heads in the Sand; a Criticism of the Official Labour Party Attitude to Unity (1950), etc.

not credit the multi-national Assembly with superior wisdom. For example, at the 1950 session a proposal was made that delegates should support in their national parliaments resolutions approved in the Assembly by a majority vote. This was firmly rejected by Dalton, in the name of British parliamentary procedure.<sup>1</sup> Again in 1950, when the Assembly initiated a discussion on European defence, at the instance of Churchill and Ramadier, the Labour MPs ignored it, considering, with some reason, that it was outside the Assembly's statutory powers. The Labour MPs at Strasbourg were treated with a reciprocal coolness. William Whiteley, chief whip of the PLP, was nominated to serve as a vice president at the first meeting of the Assembly, but Churchill questioned his eligibility, because the Assembly claimed to be "free from any ministerial authority."<sup>2</sup> The Assembly endorsed Churchill's view; Whiteley was defeated in the balloting. The Labour Government was willing to accept the Churchill idea. Individual parliamentarians could speak out at the Assembly, free from the restrictions of ministerial responsibility. In return the Ministers would meet and make decisions, free from responsibility to the Assembly.

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1. Consultative Assembly, 21st sitting, 28.8.50, p.1212. At this time the Government had a very small majority.
  2. Ibid. 2nd sitting, 11.8.49, p. 20. Herbert Morrison endorsed Whiteley's eligibility.

The Labour Party did accept the proposal of the French Socialist party in 1949 to maintain a secretariat for Socialist delegates at the Assembly, since this did not bind Socialist delegates to act together. The provision of a bureau could not resolve the differences between British and French Socialists about the future of the Council of Europe. While an NEC delegation agreed with its Continental comrades at Copenhagen in June, 1950 that the Council of Europe should be "a step on the road to a permanent European Union,"<sup>1</sup> two months later the British and French Socialists were quarrelling publicly at Strasbourg, because Hugh Dalton refused to support in the Assembly a motion he had supported in the General Affairs committee. Dalton explained that his committee vote had been dictated by personal opinion, but that he could not vote the same way in the Assembly since Ernest Bevin had opposed the committee action, and both were members of a Cabinet with joint responsibility.<sup>2</sup> Mollet was furious. The bitterness of Mollet was increased by the fact that Dalton and other Labour delegates were siding with his opponent within the SFIO, André Philip, in an internal French disagreement on European co-operation. Philip and his associates favoured a supra-national European organisation which would

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1. LPCR 1950, p. 202.

2. See Manchester Guardian 29.8.50, for a good summary of this incident; also The Times 29.8.50.

not surrender its supra-sovereign character simply to secure British participation. Mollet desired British participation as a sine qua non for further developments, so that SFIO would have the support of British Labour against the influence of Roman Catholic and German parties. Labour, by favouring European integration without British participation, encouraged the extreme federalists in SFIO, much to Mollet's disappointment.

These disagreements came to a head at a meeting of COMISCO in Paris on October 21st-22nd, 1950. Mollet denounced the Labour Party's negative attitude. Spaak called Dalton's attitude detestable. In answer, Morgan Phillips asserted, "The British Labour Party does not believe in absolute national sovereignty." This did not stop him from defending the Labour Government's opposition to French plans for European unity. The upshot was a resolution calling upon Socialist parties to urge their governments to take account of the strong desire for European unity; it declared that this would be valueless without British and Scandinavian participation. The resolution was ignored by the Labour Government and the development of the Coal and Steel Community was a de facto rejection of it.

The Labour Government consistently opposed strengthening the Council of Europe Assembly because it was jealous of the recently acquired power of Labour, and

because it was anxious not to detract from the strength of its extra-European ties with the Commonwealth and with the United States. These were the areas that offered more immediate military and economic advantage to Britain.

Glenvil Hall, chairman of the PLP, told the Assembly:

"Our first aim must now be to strengthen the developing links between the nations on this side of the Atlantic and those on the other side." <sup>1</sup>

The result was <sup>that</sup> the Council of Europe remained something much less than the Labour Party had traditionally supported, but much more than the Labour Government wished to accept.

#### The Last Chance -- the Schuman Plan

The French offer of the Schuman Plan was the final and the most significant proposal for European unity made to the Labour Government. In the words of the French ambassador to London, it was "the first concrete proposal to bring about unity of Western Europe." <sup>2</sup> Tribune called it "a plan to seize." <sup>3</sup> Here, if anywhere, was an opportunity for the Labour Government to follow its traditional principles, since the plan combined functional co-operation with supra-national controls. It did not do so.

The Labour position was complex, if not confusing.

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1. Manchester Guardian 15.5.51.
  2. Cmd. 7970 (1950) p. 3. For the text of the proposal see pp. 4-5.
  3. 19.5.50.

While the Party and the Government agreed in rejecting the French overtures, they gave very different reasons for doing so. The Government was inclined from the first to be sceptical about the plan, and particularly, about the French method of presentation.<sup>1</sup> Reports of negotiations suggested a caricature of national characteristics. The French argued for acceptance of principles first, and talks about procedure afterwards; the British delegates refused to commit themselves to the principle of supra-national control until they were informed how the principle would work in practice.<sup>2</sup> After a month of negotiations the Labour Government formally rejected the Schuman proposals. It gave as its reason an unwillingness to accept an authority in principle without knowing what the authority would be like in fact.

When it defended itself in the House of Commons, the Government justified its actions upon the much broader ground of national economic interest. It had been subjected to lobbying from a number of trade unions which opposed

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1. An ex-minister informed me in an interview that he believed the French were so insistent upon principles because they were not greatly concerned about British participation in the Plan. Germany was the object of their interest. British participation would not be necessary and would possibly be prejudicial to the achievement of a supra-national authority. See also Cripps, 476 HC 1937, 26.6.50.
  2. See Cmd 7970, pp. 6-15.

the loss of British sovereignty, particularly unions in the affected industries -- the NUM, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers. The strong NUM delegation in the PLP was outspoken in its opposition to placing control of the British coal industry in the hands of a non-British authority.<sup>1</sup> Sir Stafford Cripps argued that since the plan involved coal and steel, which were the dominant industries of the nation, no British government could let control of these basic industries pass into the hands of a supra-national authority and still be responsible in fact as well as in name for the British economy.<sup>2</sup> In the debate, the supra-national authority, which Labour had traditionally pictured as a means to peace and international prosperity, was now described as an anti-democratic, irresponsible agency unworthy of trust because it would not be directly responsible to any electorate.<sup>3</sup> Attlee once again justified a change in views by using a traditional Socialist phrase in an untraditional way. He denied that the government favoured retention of absolute national

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1. See Daily Herald 22.6.50; The Times 27.6.50. A motion supporting the Schuman Plan was easily defeated at the Trades Union Congress in September, 1950; the General Council recommended its rejection. TUCR 1950, pp. 397-402.
  2. 476 HC 1933ff, 26.6.50.
  3. See e.g., Arthur Greenwood, 476 HC 1957-8; J.B. Hynd, Col. 1978ff; G. Bing, Col. 2002, et al.

sovereignty, citing its adherence to the Atlantic Charter<sup>1</sup> and the United Nations as cases in point. The front-bench Labour speakers made no special reference to Socialist principles in explaining their rejection of the Schuman plan.

The Party gave tacit support to the Schuman plan at the International Socialist Conference but outspokenly rejected it in Transport House statements for domestic consumption. It agreed early in June, to an ISC resolution which supported "a permanent European Union with common administrative, economic and social services" and a "co-ordinated and planned economic programme" for European nations.<sup>2</sup> Morgan Phillips, in a forceful speech that gave the impression of being a frank statement, spoke as if in general agreement with the idea. He proclaimed: "Socialism is above all an international faith" and "The wealth of the world is at present dangerously concentrated in a few fortunate peoples and must be more equally distributed unless the world economy is to break down." A special conference of West European Socialist parties held in London to consider the Schuman plan, attended by a 15-member NEC delegation, issued an agreed resolution on June 17th welcoming the Schuman offer

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1. 476 HC 1957-8 Col. 2163-4.

2. LPCR 1950, p. 202.

as "a bold example of European initiative," and expressing agreement "with the general purposes" of the French <sup>1</sup> idea.

Four days before this endorsement of the Schuman plan was announced on behalf of all Socialist parties in Western Europe, including Britain, the National Executive Committee released a pamphlet entitled, ironically, "European Unity". It contrasted sharply with the ISC resolution. While the ISC statements stressed the views of what were called "International Socialists", <sup>2</sup> the NEC document very firmly presented the arguments on behalf of 'National Socialists'. It was, as the Daily Herald said, "the most important declaration on international <sup>3</sup> relations made by the British Labour Party since the war." The document was carefully considered over a period of months; originally it was intended to dampen enthusiasm at the second session of the Council of Europe's Assembly in August. <sup>4</sup> The NEC had thoroughly debated the draft

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1. LPCR 1950, p. 200. The qualifications the Conference attached to its support were that the authority must involve trade union participation and be based upon an expanding demand for its products and full employment for workers.
  2. See LPCR 1950, p. 200, paragraph two.
  3. Daily Herald 13.6.50.
  4. Statement of Arthur Greenwood, NEC member, 476 HC 1956, 26.6.50.

of the international sub-committee, as Denis Healey put it "going over it line by line."<sup>1</sup> While the blunt and forceful presentation of the argument<sup>2</sup> indicated the co-authorship of Healey and Dalton, the statement was not a personal manifesto but an agreed Party one.

The pamphlet addressed itself to "the central question":

"Should the peoples of the existing European states surrender to a supra-national authority some part or all of the constitutional powers which they exercise at present? Or should unity continue, as now, to be pursued through co-operation between responsible governments by mutual consent?"<sup>3</sup>

It stated that the answers it would give to this question would be dictated by the principles of democratic Socialism -- and by the interests of the British people.<sup>4</sup> The argument was derived from a simple calculation of national self-interest. The core of it was:

"The Labour Party could never accept any commitments which limited its own or others' freedom to pursue democratic Socialism and to apply the economic controls necessary to achieve it."<sup>5</sup>

The pamphlet referred to British connections with the Commonwealth, the sterling area and America, as obstacles

1. Interview, February, 1959.
2. Dalton described the document as "a plain-spoken essay in practical international co-operation based upon realism and common sense and not upon empty verbiage and airy-fairy theories." LPCR 1950, p. 166.
3. "European Unity" p. 3.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. p. 4.

to its co-operation with Europe. The statement even rejected the possibility that at some future date the basis would exist for a United Socialist Europe.

"No Socialist Party with the prospect of forming a government could accept a system by which important fields of national policy were surrendered to a supra-national European representative authority, since such an authority would have a permanent anti-Socialist majority." 1

The traditional Socialist ideal of human brotherhood was also subjected to a fiercely John Bull judgement:

"Civic and administrative traditions would prevent some countries from applying the methods of democratic Socialism as practised in Britain and Scandinavia even if their parliaments had a Socialist majority." 2

The pamphlet surprised and shocked politicians in other countries. American advocates of European Union and of free enterprise disliked its Socialist and isolationist tone. Paul Hoffman told a Senate committee that the pamphlet was "deplorable." 3 Continental advocates of European Union, Socialist and non-Socialist, were equally unhappy with this public notification that the Government was "no longer dragging their feet but treading a path of their own." 4 Because Attlee, Dalton and other Cabinet members belonged to the NEC, the pamphlet was treated in some quarters as virtually a white paper. Attlee, speaking as Prime Minister in the House, at first

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1. "European Unity" p. 8. Italics supplied. 2. Ibid. p.7.

3. The Times 16.6.50.

4. Ibid. 14.6.50.

disavowed any responsibility for the Party statement and refused to answer for it at question time.<sup>1</sup> Two weeks later he relented to the extent of accepting "my share of responsibility" for the pamphlet.

"It is equally true that, as it happened, I was away for a week at Whitsun and I did not know the date of publication and that when it came out it did surprise me as coming out then. But these things do happen."<sup>2</sup>

Debate in the House of Commons made clear that a strong case could be made against British participation in the Schuman plan by the Government without appeals to Socialist principles. Protection of the standard of living of the British worker against competition from lower-paid workers abroad was not a traditional Socialist principle<sup>3</sup> although it was a very wise principle for a Labour Government to base its case upon.

One last effort was made to confuse the issue at the 1950 Annual Conference. This indicated the tenacity with which some rank-and-file members could hold to traditional views, events and NEC declarations notwithstanding. The Holborn and St. Pancras South constituency party presented a resolution which asked the Government

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1. 476 HC 38ff, 13.6.50.
  2. 476 HC 2167-8, 27.6.50.
  3. For example, when the Labour Party abandoned its long-standing, but not essential, commitment to free trade in 1933 it simultaneously denounced tariffs, offering "International Socialist Co-operation" as the alternative to the Liberal free trade and the Conservative Imperial preference policies. LPCR 1933, p. 166.

to make a "constructive approach to the unification of European heavy industry on a policy of public ownership and full employment within the Socialist declarations of the Party."<sup>1</sup> The mover inquired politely why nothing had been done about the 1948 Brockway proposal. Hugh Dalton accepted this resolution "with thanks" on behalf of the NEC, even though it contradicted the essential argument of "European Unity".<sup>2</sup> In spite of this return to duplicity, there was now little misunderstanding, except perhaps in the mind of the delegate from Holborn and St. Pancras South, as to the position of British Labour on the issue of supra-nationalism and national sovereignty.

#### Conclusion

"The nations must sacrifice some of their past ideas of sovereignty ... The British Government, for its part, must turn a deaf ear to vested interests whose claims would conflict with the needs of international co-operation."

NEC statement, LPCR 1943, p. 3.

"Our people, the common people all of us in this hall spring from, have more to defend here than in any corner of the globe. The trade unions, the co-operatives and especially the Labour Party in the last six years, have given us more to defend."

Sam Watson, Chairman's address  
LPCR 1950, p. 78.

One of the most striking features of the traditional Socialist view of foreign policy was its strong commitment to the idea of a supra-national authority. Before 1945,

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1. LPCR 1950, p. 164.

2. Ibid. p. 166.

when the Labour Party offered to give up British sovereignty for the sake of peace and prosperity, it was offering something that it did not possess, i.e., control of the British Government. Furthermore, the sovereignty was to be assigned to an organisation that would be, if not Socialist in allegiance, at least working towards Socialist goals. After the 1945 election the Labour Party for the first time faced the prospect of surrendering its power to control the British Government in important matters and giving it, not to an ideal agency formed in the spirit of the Socialist International, but to an authority that would represent a compromise of the myriad wishes of many nations.

In one notable field -- control of atomic energy -- the Labour Government did act in accord with traditional Socialist principles. The Attlee Government saw its efforts for the international limitation of armaments carried to the bitter end, as the second MacDonal'd government had not. The result was the same with both attempts: disagreement, breakdown and increases in armaments. But the fact that the Labour Government had been in office when this occurred, and that it had sought an international convention to control atomic weapons and been blocked by Russian intransigence, did make it much easier for the Labour Government to secure support within the Party for its subsequent programme of rearmament. Similarly the

failure of the International Court of Justice, when tested, to settle international disputes to the satisfaction of the Labour Government, increased acceptance within the Party of the policy of protecting vital interests without regard to international adjudication.

Demands for the conversion of the United Nations into a supra-national political authority by the elimination of the veto were consistently opposed by the Labour Government. Its leaders took this line in the last days of the Coalition, and never abandoned it. The Government preferred to keep the UN's membership all-inclusive at the cost of greatly reducing the organisation's constitutional authority, rather than increase its nominal power and greatly diminish its membership and effectiveness. Traditionally, the Party had preferred a supra-national institution to one that was more inclusive but weaker.

European Union was an issue in which a strong British lead might well have produced significant results. The lead was not given although statements by leaders of the Labour movement created hopes that it would be given. For more than 30 years British Socialists had urged a supra-national authority to control the vested interests of the capitalist nation-states. When the Labour Government came into office, it found that British workers, as well as capitalists, had a vested interest

in national sovereignty. The electoral plea, "Put the Nation first"<sup>1</sup> had an unintended double meaning. The nationalisation of major British industries marked the achievement of domestic Socialist principles, but it was a defeat for Socialist principles of foreign policy. The Labour Government did not wish to exchange its exclusive control of British industry for a minority share in a larger combine. The failure of Continental nations to maintain full employment was contrasted unfavourably with the Labour Government's achievement.<sup>2</sup> High British wages, in comparison with those of France and Italy, were, in the words of an NEC statement, "the greatest of all obstacles to closer unity in Europe."<sup>3</sup> Ernest Bevin was speaking as a leader of the Labour movement as a whole when he said:

"I cannot be a party to an act or policy which would result in lowering the wages and purchasing power of Great Britain. Let those who want to do this be honest to their constituents and tell them what the effect of their ambitions would be on the pay packets of the people they represent."<sup>4</sup>

The Labour Government also found political, military and psychological arguments against ceding sovereignty to a European Union. World War II had shown many members

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1. "Let Us Win Through Together" (LP, 1950 election manifesto) p. 12.

2. See e.g., "European Unity" p. 13ff.

3. Ibid. p. 15.

4. 437 HC 1964-5, 16.5.47.

of the Labour Party that the nation per se was still worth defending. National governments were discredited with many Europeans by the war, and national morale low; the reverse was true in Britain. The Labour Government's domestic policies weakened the sense of class-consciousness and internationalism within the party, and increased the stature of the national Government. The "European Unity" pamphlet claimed, with some reason that: "Full employment and fair shares have created a degree of national unity never before known in peace-time Britain." <sup>1</sup> War-time reliance upon the Commonwealth and the United States continued in the post-war world. The Government feared that any closer association with Europe, especially one that limited British sovereignty, might reduce the value to Britain of its extra-European contacts. The Government also rejected the idea that Europe was still a self-contained entity; it viewed Western Europe as only a part of the North Atlantic area. Inter-governmental co-operation in groups such as NATO and OEEC was considered satisfactory and sufficient. Infirm coalition governments on the Continent, with large Communist minorities, were another factor militating against closer British identification with Europe.

The Labour Government's protection of British sovereignty would have been more readily understood, if it

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1. p. 7.

had not been for the verbal hold of traditional Socialist principles. Ernest Bevin usually showed an unusual ability to distinguish between short-term and long-term goals but on this question he mixed the two distinctly different approaches together in his speeches to the temporary hope and final disappointment of the "good Europeans."<sup>1</sup> Bevin's probably unintentional blurring of objects was combined with the more conscious confusion between the ideal and the immediate maintained by Transport House, which for two years gave lip-service to an ideal of a United Socialist States of Europe. Finally it concluded that this task was not worth the effort. In June, 1950, with the publication of "European Unity" the Labour Party admitted publicly that, having had experience of office, it would sooner trust itself than its traditional principle, for that would mean surrendering into uncertain hands the power it had worked so long to secure.

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1. Consider Bevin's speech of January 25th, 1949, made after the Government had become the major stumbling block to closer European political co-operation. The Foreign Secretary told a London meeting that "Europe's only salvation was unity"; it would be "the crowning thing of my life."

The speech buoyed up hopes among his pro-European critics. The usually unfavourable Manchester Guardian London correspondent proclaimed: "He is very far from breaking up. Of course, the Foreign Secretary did not finish all his sentences and there was more rhythm than logic in his peroration, but these are old weaknesses of his oratory." 26.1.49.

## Chapter V

## POWER IN FOREIGN POLICY

"The Party is agreed in its rejection of the policy of the Balance of Power and of the use of force as an instrument of policy."

C.R. Attlee Labour Party in Perspective, p. 214.

Power, the ability to get one's way, takes many forms.<sup>1</sup>  
 Traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy asserted that a Labour Government would achieve results by relying upon economic co-operation, diplomatic influence and moral example.<sup>2</sup> It would renounce the use of military force to achieve national ends and delegate responsibility and control of it to a supra-national authority. The negative part of this policy, keeping national armaments small and giving an international organisation the force to police the world, was supposed to prevent short-term

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1. In this thesis, the term "power" is used as defined by L.J. Halle: "The ability to get one's way." Civilization and Foreign Policy (1955) p. 53.
  2. Some members of the Labour Party thought of morality as a source of power; others, as an end in itself. For example, the 1934 statement "War and Peace" relied upon moral suasion for the achievement of its objects and the absolute pacifists in the Party saw non-resistance as a good thing in itself. In most issues of foreign policy, a sharp line could not be drawn between instrumental morality and morality as an end in itself. In any case, the distinction is usually a subjective one since even absolute pacifists could and did defend their views as practically desirable as well as ethically valid.

risks of war. The positive part of the policy was designed to eliminate, in the long run, the discontents and rivalries that Socialists believed caused wars. Since man was considered essentially pacific and good by nature, it required only the alteration of his environment to bring about fundamental changes for the better in international relations. This millennial conception was best summed up in the 1934 policy statement, "War and Peace".

"Labour believes we must abjure once for all the old negative, backward-looking, competitive idea of maintaining the 'Balance of Power' as the final goal of British foreign policy. That idea is based on belief in State absolutism, international anarchy and the inevitability of war. In its place Labour resolutely substitutes as its goal in foreign policy the constructive, positive forward-looking idea of a Co-Operative World Commonwealth. The 'Balance of Power' is based on belief in the necessity for eternal enmity between abstract entities known as States. It does not believe mankind can ever rise above the present stage of political organisation. It is a profoundly pessimistic doctrine, the product of a decaying social order without hope of saving civilisation ...

"The idea of a Co-Operative World Commonwealth is based on the Socialist faith in the brotherhood of man, on our belief that we can and must build a new world-wide society on the crumbling ruins of the class and nation-bound old order." 1

In theory the Party opposed power politics because that system assumed conflicts between nations; in practice it did so because the balance of power system, by stimulating national armaments, was believed to have caused World

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1. LPCR 1934, p. 243.

War I. After the event the Labour Party argued that the Great War was the Unnecessary War, because it was caused by the building up of military alliances in an attempt to maintain the balance.<sup>1</sup> In its place the Party desired an all-inclusive league for peace. The importance of the distinction between the two is that the balance of power implied armaments and distrust whereas planning peace implied disarmament and mutual confidence.

The Labour Party assumed that a Labour Government would be able to get its way in international relations because it would be so obviously acting in the best interests of the international community as well as in the best interests of the British community. Peace-loving, plain-speaking British Socialists could pioneer the "internationalist" approach to diplomacy and win converts by reason and inspiration, just as Socialist propagandists had won converts in Britain. As Noel-Baker told Conference in 1933: "The next war is not inevitable if the British people want to stop it."<sup>2</sup> Socialist governments in other countries would respond more quickly than other governments, but gradually the magnetic power of 'right'

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1. Herbert Morrison, in an aside, told the House of Commons in 1948: "I was against the first world war, bitterly against it and stood against it, and I see no reason still for differing in my opinion about it." 448 HC 3400, 25.3.48.

2. LPCR 1933, p. 188.

reason and 'right' action would bring all governments into agreement. Moral and diplomatic influence were to be prudently reinforced by economic co-operation, which would spread social justice and public ownership, thus eradicating the economic rivalries that, in the words of "War and Peace", "not only give rise to social injustice that imperils peace, but also breed vested interests whose scramble for markets and for fields of investment are a direct cause of war."<sup>1</sup>

Because the Party traditionally regarded reliance upon national armies as dangerous as well as morally wrong, the Labour Party opposed conscription. Since the Labour Party neither advocated violence, nor feared the army's intervention in domestic politics, it preferred a small standing army of professionals. The reasons adduced from principles of foreign policy were strongly reinforced by objections raised by trade unionists to military conscription. They feared it would be followed by industrial conscription and the consequent suspension of many trade union rights.

The Labour Party's theoretical bias towards pacifism and the pacific settlement of disputes had been greatly reinforced by the holocaust of World War I. Such sentiments were not confined to the Labour Party. Baldwin was especially notable for warning of the dangers of

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1. LPCR 1934, p. 243.

another war. The national revulsion from the use of force, and Britain's insular position, permitted the two minority Labour Governments to play important roles in foreign affairs without resorting to the sanction of military force. The World Disarmament Conference of 1932 was to climax their work. The collapse of the Government in 1931 gave the Party a perfect scapegoat for the subsequent failure of that conference. Labour policy could scarcely have remained the same if it had been a Labour, rather than a 'National' Government that had failed to secure agreement.

When the Labour Party finally began to shake itself free from its ambiguous relationship with absolute and class-conscious pacifism in 1934, it was only on the condition that force was used on behalf of an international authority.

"There might be circumstances under which the Government of Great Britain might have to use its military and naval forces in support of the League in restraining an aggressor nation which declined to submit to the authority of the League and which flagrantly used military measures in defiance of its pledged word." 1

The PLP continued to vote against arms estimates. The Party's decision to stop voting against the estimates in 1937 was presented as a temporary measure, required by the existence of unlawful dictators and corrupt governments that had failed to enforce international law. After a

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1. LPCR 1934, p. 244.

short time in office, a Labour Government would be able to undo the consequences of the Conservative Government's power politics, and return to traditional Socialist principles.

The outbreak of general war in September, 1939, once again faced the Party with the challenge of fighting for national self-defence. The Labour Party accepted it, not because it loved the Conservative Government more, but because it liked Hitler less. Only military force could stop Hitler; since he was the leader of the ideological reaction against the left, he had to be stopped. As Arthur Greenwood said:

"This man is not open to reason. This man has one method -- that of brutality in a thousand different forms, forms too frightful to repeat. The only thing to stand up to him, I grieve to say, is the use of force." 1

The war was regarded as a further proof of the bankruptcy of the existing system of international relations, and of the need after the war for a Labour Government, which would radically alter British foreign policy. The failure of Conservative governments, the Party charged, was not that they had rearmed too slowly, but that they had permitted an arms race to begin in the first place. The post-war world would be different. In the words of the 1945 Labour election manifesto:

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1. LPCR 1940, p. 133.

"An internationally protected peace should make possible a known expenditure on armaments as our contribution to the protection of peace; an expenditure that should diminish as the world becomes accustomed to the prohibition of war through an effective collective security." <sup>1</sup>

### From Big Three to Big Two

"The British Labour movement is fully aware of the special and proud position our country has come to occupy in the public opinion of the world. British aims and British conduct will determine in large measure the aims and conduct of all nations in the years which follow victory."

NEC statement "The Peace" LPCR 1941, p. 7.

World War II did shift slightly the Party's conception of Britain's role in world affairs. The war emphasized the relative decline of Britain's military force. The country had now become one of the Big Three, sharing with Russia and America the leadership of the world. While it was less than an equal of Russia and America in military power, the Party suggested, particularly in the 1945 general election, that a Labour Government could be the most important member of the Big Three, because it would be ideologically able to understand (and, by implication, influence) both nations. Neither Attlee nor Bevin, in their cautionary talks at the 1945 Annual Conference, suggested that Britain was anything less than one of the greatest powers.

Traditional Socialist principles had assumed that

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1. "Let Us Face the Future" p. 11.

the Labour Government's economic policy would, by strengthening the nation's economy, give it greater power abroad, as an exemplar and as a bargainer. In fact, it was Britain's economic difficulties that led to the Government's recognition, first in finance and secondly in foreign policy, that its sources of power had so diminished and its needs so increased that the country could no longer claim equality among the Big Three. The war, and especially lend-lease, had concealed the actual and relative depletion of British resources in the preceding decades. Shortly after the war ended, Britain was at its military height, but soon it started the precipitous and rapid economic plunge that was to reduce greatly its sources of power. The descent was immediate and obvious. It began with the end of lend-lease by the United States on August 21st, 1945, following the unexpectedly early conclusion of the war with Japan. In the typically mild phrase of the Prime Minister, this was "not anticipated."<sup>1</sup> Douglas Jay, one of Attlee's assistants at the time, called the news "a bombshell."<sup>2</sup> The Treasury

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1. 413 HC 956, 24.8.45. Truman felt he had no choice but to do this because of the strong opposition in the U.S. Senate to the use of lend-lease to aid post-war European reconstruction. To have acted otherwise would have caused "a lot of trouble", he believed. Truman, Volume I, p. 102; see also, pp. 410-11.

2. Interview, July, 1958.

was faced with an immediate deficit on imports of £1200 million. The country was in the worst possible economic position, having directed its entire economy to the now relatively useless demands of war, having depleted its overseas investments and having accumulated large debts.<sup>1</sup>

Within a month of assuming office the Labour Government was threatened with bankruptcy if it did not get economic aid from abroad. Keynes assured the Labour Cabinet that it would be easy to collect from America the dollars promised them for British reconstruction in discussion with Roosevelt and his associates shortly before the end of the war.<sup>2</sup> In recognition of Britain's war-time sacrifices, the country's leading economist expected the United States to provide about \$6,000,000,000 "as a free gift, or, failing that, as an interest-free loan."<sup>3</sup> The shock of negotiating with the representatives of the new American government in Washington was great. Keynes was quickly given to understand that his hopes were "not practical politics and that the Congress of the United States would never consent to any such arrangement."<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Cmd. 7046, "Economic Survey for 1947" p. 9. Only two per cent of the nation's manpower was engaged in producing exports and 42 per cent was directly engaged in work for the armed forces at the end of the war.
  2. See e.g., Sherwood op. cit. p. 805; C. Hull Memoirs (1948) p. 1613ff.
  3. Harrod The Life of John Maynard Keynes (1951) p. 596. Harrod commented: "This was surely within reason."
  4. H. Dalton, 417 HC 428, 12.12.45.

American negotiators were not interested in hearing of Britain's sacrifices for the common cause in 1940. They wanted to talk about specific arrangements for multi-lateral trade in the post-war world, and especially to bargain for an end to British discrimination against dollar trade and to secure the convertibility of sterling into dollars.<sup>1</sup> The recently elected Labour Government found that important decisions about the British economy were being debated 4000 miles from Downing Street. The basic point of reference was not traditional Socialist principles, or even PLP desires, but the interests of the United States Government in international trade. The fact that the loan was so important to the Labour Government only weakened its bargaining position, in a situation in which strength, not sentiment, determined decisions.<sup>2</sup> Lord Halifax, then Ambassador in Washington, did state that the failure of Britain to get a loan would reduce British imports from America, but this was a thrust that would cut both parties, and Britain was the more vulnerable.<sup>3</sup>

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1. For details of the negotiations see R.N. Gardner, Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy (1956) Chapter X; Harrod op. cit. Chapter XIV, especially pp. 591-616; Truman Volume I pp. 412-15.
  2. Secretary of the Treasury Fred M. Vinson proposed that the loan be for \$3,100,000,000, since this was the amount upon which Britain was believed capable of paying interest. Truman Volume I p. 414.
  3. Manchester Guardian 24.9.45.

The New Statesman argued that Socialist planning of resources and production would permit the Labour Government to dispense with a loan.<sup>1</sup> Other Labour critics said that if Britain refused the loan because of its terms the shock in America would be sufficient to make it soften the terms of the loan, and the Labour Government could then accept it.

When the details of the \$3,750,000,000 loan were announced,<sup>2</sup> opposition was expressed on both sides of the House of Commons. Ernest Bevin rested the Government's case for accepting the loan upon the weakness of Britain:

"The fact is that we have got to borrow and we are not in a position to dictate terms."<sup>3</sup>

The Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that Britain was dependent upon America for food, tobacco, cotton and other raw materials. To reject the loan would lead to a trade war, with Britain likely to lose. There was no sign that its overdrafts on current trade account would be ended for at least several years.<sup>4</sup> Labour MPs who opposed the loan argued that the American insistence upon changes in sterling policy would cripple the Government's Socialist planning and make Britain economically and militarily

1. 1.9.45.
2. See Cmd. 6708 (1945).
3. 417 HC 728, 13.12.45.
4. 417 HC 426ff, 13.12.45.

dependant upon American capitalism.<sup>1</sup> In the division, the Government was supported by 321 Labour MPs, more than 80 per cent of its members; only 23 opposed it.<sup>2</sup> The margin of support for the loan in the United States Congress was much less, for debates there were marked by "a great deal of bitterness and anti-British talk."<sup>3</sup> Congress approved the loan by a small majority.

In 1946 the rebels against the Government seized upon its failure to give a strong lead in foreign affairs.

"With few if notable exceptions the Government have appeared to act more in reaction to what other countries have done and to have lost that initiative in foreign affairs which was expected by democrats everywhere on its assumption of office. We have answered the power politics of others by pursuing power politics ourselves."<sup>4</sup>

They accused the Government of ignoring Socialist sources of power and making military force a major support of its policy. This, they said, was not only unnecessary but undesirable, because it drained off money and resources from the economy. Reducing military commitments in Greece, Palestine and the colonies would give it enough additional resources to make the economy strong enough

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1. See e.g., 417 HC 470ff, 665ff. Few Labour opponents of the loan were called to speak in the debate.
  2. Ibid. Col. 735.
  3. The Times 15.7.46. See also, Council on Foreign Relations The United States in World Affairs 1945-7, pp. 358-69; Gardner op. cit. p. 236ff; Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg pp. 230-1.
  4. Manchester Guardian 16.11.46. Rebels' letter of October 29th.

to form the nucleus of a Socialist "third force" in international relations. Its force, of course, would be derived more from moral, diplomatic and economic influence than from military power, since, as Crossman argued, there was no immediate risk of war. There was an ideological battle, and, ideological battles could not be won by military means.<sup>1</sup> The critics advanced similar ideas in "Keep Left" the following spring, although accepting that economically, at least, "We and the other nations of Western Europe are still dependent on America."<sup>2</sup> The development of the Marshall Plan, which symbolised further British reliance upon America, silenced most of these critics, because it was helping Britain to resume its role as an independent economic power in the foreseeable future and because it was aid in accordance with traditional Socialist principles.

Although the Labour Government was conscious of the uncertain economic basis upon which the country and its foreign policy rested, it continued during 1946 to carry heavy burdens of post-war military police work and to maintain an independent diplomatic position as one of the Big Three. Instead of improving, the country's economic position remained critical. The deficit on imports in 1946 was £450,000,000. A world food shortage

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1. See 430 HC 537ff, 18.11.46.

2. p. 37.

led to bread rationing. In the severe winter of 1946-47 coal reserves were rapidly depleted. Finally, on February 7th, 1947, electricity consumption was drastically reduced and many industries shut down. The test of convertibility was soon to come.<sup>1</sup>

One can date precisely the moment when the Labour Government formally took Britain out of the category of the greatest powers. It was Friday, February 21st, 1947, the day that the British ambassador in Washington notified the United States Government of its intention to withdraw support from Greece by March 30th.<sup>2</sup> The decision had been taken reluctantly by Ernest Bevin, after pressure had been steadily and intensely applied by Dalton at the Exchequer to reduce the cost of Britain's diplomatic commitments.<sup>3</sup> As the Economic Survey described the situation:

"The central fact of 1947 is that we have not enough resources to do all that we want to do. We have barely enough to do all that we must do."<sup>4</sup>

For more than two years, in the Labour Government and in the Coalition, Attlee and Bevin had worked to maintain the anti-Communist government in Greece, because they considered

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1. See Cmd. 7046, "Economic Survey for 1947" for details. See Cmd. 7210 (1947) for the suspension of convertibility.
  2. Truman Volume II p. 105. Byrnes had earlier been discussing in Washington the possibility of the United States supporting Greece and Turkey. Forrestal Diaries, p. 210, entry of 25.9.46.
  3. Interview, Dalton, February, 1959.
  4. Cmd. 7046, p. 16.

this necessary in order to defend a vital British interest in the Eastern Mediterranean. Notwithstanding the high importance that the Labour Government had given this aid, it now admitted that it no longer had the power to do what it wished to do. The United States was asked to assume the mantle that Britain had worn in generations past.

Ironically, economic factors did not enable the Labour Government to play a more influential role in international affairs: they prevented it from acting as much and as independently as it wished to do. As Ernest Bevin said in explanation of the diminished role of Britain:

"What could I offer? I had neither coal, goods nor credit. I was not in the same position as my predecessors at the end of the Napoleonic wars, who devised the policy for nearly 20 years, of spending our surplus exports to rehabilitate the world. It was a case of our exports then. I did not have them." <sup>1</sup>

"Cards on the Table" drew a good contrast between traditional expectations and Government experience.

"Many of us expect Britain to act as if she were still as in the nineteenth century, the only world power in existence, a mighty empire unchallenged either in the military or economic spheres. Even more seem to imagine that in 1945 the Labour Government could survey the world scene free from any immediate problems or commitments and choose among infinite possibilities the precise policy best calculated to achieve a world Socialist millenium." <sup>2</sup>

Instead, the Government, "too weak to cut herself off from American aid," could only play a very limited role

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1. 438 HC 2338, 19.6.47. See also, As It Happened p. 170.

2. "Cards on the Table" p. 4.

in international relations, and try to reduce "our foreign commitments as much and as fast as possible consistent with our security."<sup>1</sup>

### Conscription

"We consider conscription to be a bad thing in itself."

C.R. Attlee, 347 HC 152, 8.5.39.

The Labour Party had been unequivocally opposed to conscription before World War II. Absolute pacifists, class warriors, League of Nations enthusiasts and trade union leaders were united in resisting what Keir Hardie called "the badge of the slave." World War II showed the leaders of the Labour Party the importance of having arms at the ready, and arms required men. At the end of the war the leaders tried to impress this lesson upon their followers in the Party, although qualifying remarks about the value of military force by identifying it with an international police force. Ernest Bevin told the 1945 Conference:

"I do beg Labour not to bury its head in the sand. It is no use talking about an international police force unless you supply policemen."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore it was hardly surprising that the Labour Government decided to continue conscription after the war.

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1. "Cards on the Table" p. 17 and p. 6, respectively.
  2. LPCR 1945, p. 117. See also Attlee, ibid. p. 107; 410 HC 83, 17.4.45; The Times 6.6.45. Cf. "International Post-War Settlement" quoted supra pp. 75-6. The leaders were discreet about the means of raising levies.

Just because the arguments for conscription were so strong, the issue provides an excellent test of the extent to which a traditional Socialist principle could limit the conduct of foreign policy.

The Government showed its respect for the traditional views of the anti-conscriptionist by temporising on the issue when presenting its first white paper on defence in the spring of 1946.<sup>1</sup> It reviewed British military commitments in Germany, Japan, Austria, Venezia Giulia, Greece, Palestine and other territories in Asia and the Empire. In such unsettled places the Government could not hope to get its way simply by moral, diplomatic and economic influence. It was declared necessary to continue conscription on a short-term basis, while simultaneously running down the services from 5,100,000 men to 1,100,000 at the end of 1946. This survey was approved by the House with little criticism.

The leadership treated kindly two resolutions on the subject presented at Annual Conference in June, 1946. One sought to end conscription and the other to modify conditions under which conscripts served.<sup>2</sup> As the mover of one resolution declared, "I feel this is a subject upon which the heart sometimes, rather than the head,

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1. Cmd. 6743.

2. LPCR 1946, pp. 184-5.

should rule." <sup>1</sup> Arthur Greenwood, replying for the NEC, assured Conference that the Government "are not con-  
scriptionists at heart." <sup>2</sup> But, he declared, the difficulties in the way of a peace settlement and the uncertainty of UN demands upon Britain for an international police force meant that conscription would have to be continued for the time being. The NEC sought to avoid a vote on the issue by asking that the resolutions be withdrawn. They were put to the vote; both were defeated.

When the Government faced the question of long-term conscription in the autumn of 1946 there was division. In the Cabinet, Cripps led the opposition to the measure, which Attlee and Bevin favoured. Cripps was particularly concerned with finding sufficient manpower for the  
civilian economy. <sup>3</sup> After Cabinet agreement was secured to continue conscription the issue was broached to Labour supporters. The Government took the unusual step of consulting both the General Council of the TUC and the PLP privately before announcing its intentions. Opposition to conscription had already appeared within the PLP. In June, 1946, 68 Labour MPs had signed a motion tabled by two pacifists which asked for the end of conscription "as

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1. LPCR 1946, p. 184.

2. Ibid. p. 188.

3. Montgomery op. cit. pp. 476-7.

soon as practicable" and denounced it as "alien to the traditions of this country."<sup>1</sup> As soon as the Government's position became clear, opponents of conscription tabled another motion, opposing it. This was signed by 70 Labour MPs.<sup>2</sup> This was pressed to debate and division the same day as the amendment of the foreign policy rebels. In presenting it Victor Yates and his associates summoned up the ghosts of Labour leaders past to show how the Government was betraying traditional Socialist principles.<sup>3</sup> To the conventional arguments against conscription Yates added the suggestion that the atomic bomb had made it unnecessary since soldiers could provide no defence against the bomb. In the debate the Government received support from many of its foreign policy critics. Crossman declared, "I am not prepared to deny this country arms because its foreign policy is wrong."<sup>4</sup> Among prominent critics supporting the Government in the division were Crossman, Driberg, Jennie Lee and Michael Foot. The amendment was defeated, 320 to 53, with 211 Labour MPs supporting the motion and 45 opposed. The Government passed this test without trouble.

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1. Manchester Guardian 26.6.46.

2. The Government expected about 50 to protest. The Times 7.11.46.

3. 430 HC 594ff, 18.11.46.

4. 430 HC 528.

The major test came the following March, when a substantive measure, the National Service Bill, 1947, was introduced. It proposed conscription for 18 months as from January 1st, 1949. The white paper explained that a large pool of trained reserves was needed for national defence "in the unhappy event of a future war".<sup>1</sup> This assumption was conventional for a Government, but it was unconventional for a British Socialist. The opposition to the bill produced an alignment unlike<sup>2</sup> that on any other matter affecting foreign policy. Both the New Statesman and Tribune, frequent critics of the Government's foreign policy and often in disagreement with each other, supported conscription. In the New Statesman, Crossman and George Wigg argued that conscription was "a political necessity for a Socialist Britain conscious of its duty to Europe." It would provide a shield behind which a "third force" could develop. Conscription would be far better than making long term voluntary service attractive, thereby encouraging militarism.<sup>3</sup> Tribune defended conscription on grounds of national self-defence. This stand provoked so much criticism from its readers that the weekly had to

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1. Cmd. 7042 (1947) p. 7.

2. See infra p. 480ff

3. New Statesman 29.3.47. By 19.7.47, the weekly was urging cuts in the army to prevent economic collapse.

repeat its case at greater length. Then it argued that there could be nothing wrong with combining Socialism and conscription since this had long been done on the Continent.<sup>1</sup> Both papers argued, as did the Government, that full employment had destroyed the most effective recruiters of volunteers - hunger and unemployment - and that conscription was a small sacrifice to make in return.

The opponents of conscription were not active in the press, but within the PLP. A week after the Government bill was announced, a pacifist-arranged motion<sup>2</sup> opposing conscription was tabled with 66 signatures. The Government counter-attacked at a special PLP meeting on the morning of the first day's debate. After the meeting, the Guardian estimated that about 40 Labour MPs were expected to vote against the bill and about 60<sup>3</sup> abstain. The opponents of conscription brought forward few new arguments. Most of them based their opposition upon an absolute principle, which could not be sacrificed because of the special problems of post-war Britain. Some pointed out that since economic strength was more

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1. Tribune 4.4.47 and 25.4.47.
  2. The Times 21.3.47. Eight more names were later added. The Times 27.3.47.
  3. Manchester Guardian 1.4.47. The Times 1.4.47 had estimated about 35 were expected to vote against and many others abstain. Shortly before the meeting The Observer (30.3.47) put the Government's estimate of opponents at a maximum of 30.

important than military strength, the Government was wasting in the forces manpower that could be more usefully employed in building a Socialist economy in Britain. This traditional ranking of sources of power was rejected by the Government, which held that there was a military minimum<sup>1</sup> below which it could not go. The surprise was not in the speeches, but in the division lobbies. Voting against the Government were 70 members of the PLP. There were about 70 Labour abstentions, some of them public. Government spokesmen were shocked.<sup>2</sup> Even worse was to come, for R.H.S. Crossman had announced during the debate that he and his friends, while approving conscription in principle, would, in the committee stage of the bill move<sup>3</sup> to reduce the period of service to 12 months. Reducing conscription by six months would, this group felt, be an effective means of forcing an alteration in foreign policy since 12-month conscripts would be of limited value overseas; it would also increase the supply of manpower for the civilian economy. Neither the Government nor Crossman was certain how many more votes would be cast against the Government if such an amendment came to a

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1. See in particular Alexander, 435 HC 1954ff, 1.4.47.
  2. Manchester Guardian 3.4.47.
  3. 435 HC 1869. In the division, 12 members of the Keep Left group voted with the Government, two opposed, and one did not vote.

division. The Cabinet decided against risking another challenge in the lobbies. Two days later A.V. Alexander announced that he would cut the proposed length of service to 12 months after the Chiefs of Staff said that if overseas commitments were ended by January, 1949, this would be acceptable.<sup>1</sup> The Government had suffered a defeat that was humiliating in character, if not substantial in size.

While the result was humiliation, particularly for Alexander, the concession was only half a victory for opponents of conscription. The principle of conscription was accepted by the PLP. Alexander later claimed that this was why the Government changed its mind, since the important point to win was not conscription for 18 months but the rejection of the Party's traditional opposition to conscription.<sup>2</sup> For the 35 members of the PLP who voted against the amended National Service Bill in the third reading the result was defeat.<sup>3</sup> Never again was the Labour Government challenged strongly on conscription. As the cold war increased in intensity and the achievements of the Labour Government gave their supporters an increasing stake in the nation, the question of compelling men to help defend the nation was no longer an important one within the Party.

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1. Montgomery op. cit. p. 478.

2. 458 HC 2006ff, 1.12.48.

3. 437 HC 2619, 22.5.47.

Such changing circumstances, and a strong Cabinet lead, made the post-war Party as ready to accept conscription in principle as the pre-war Party had been to reject it.

Tribune commented:

"The British Labour movement could afford its anti-conscription attack only so long as Britain was the dominant world power, above all, the dominant naval power, and could rely for her defence on the Navy and a small standing Army. Today, however, Labour is responsible for Government policy, which includes defence policy, in a totally changed situation. It cannot contract out of this responsibility. Until an effective world organisation is formed, a Labour Government with teeth will be a far greater factor for peace than one with only pious resolutions at its disposal." 1

#### NATO -- The Acceptance of the Balance of Power

"The Labour Party rejects utterly and forever the maintenance of the balance of power as the aim of British foreign policy."

A. Henderson Labour's Way to Peace  
(1935) p. 104.

"The tragic lesson of the last few years is that Russia has no respect for goodwill without power."  
"Feet on the Ground" (LP, 1948) p. 18.

In retrospect nothing that the Labour Government did in foreign affairs seems more reasonable, necessary and obvious than helping to organise NATO to protect Britain and Western Europe from Russian military aggression. Likewise, nothing it did represented a greater divergence from traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy. Before 1945 balance of power politics was anathema to the

Labour Party; it was considered a certain means to war. From 1948 onwards the Labour Government believed that only by invoking the balance of power could war be avoided.

Socialists had two major objections to the balance of power system, also called "power politics". First, it set nation against nation and alliance against alliance. Second, it weighed nations in terms of military strength. The system was essentially negative; it was designed to prevent war or the development of threats to British security. It accepted the status quo. It did not offer hope of anything better. Given its interpretation of the causes of the Great War, the Labour Party was, as Attlee said, "entirely opposed to separate alliances." Conducting diplomacy in the light of military considerations was rejected because, as Henderson said, it put "force behind the litigants instead of behind the law." The two Labour Governments of the 1920s worked unceasingly at the League to stop the use of military force to settle disputes between nations. While accepting British rearmament in 1937, the Labour Party urged the creation of an all-round security system in which Germany and Japan would become members. Nothing could better illustrate the Party's approach. Collective security

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1. 292 HC 685, 13.7.34.

2. LPCR 1934, p. 156.

was to insure all nations equally against aggression by any one; it was not intended to protect one faction from another, but to eliminate factionalism by international co-operation and trust.<sup>1</sup> During the war the Labour Party continued to maintain that the post-war world would be kept at peace through the provision of international security, if not immediately through the United Nations, then by the de facto alliance of the Big Three, which would be so powerful that no counter-balance could be constructed.

At the end of the war the Labour Government was ready to conduct its foreign policy on the assumption that military alliances were unnecessary since there was no national enemy although, of course, there remained national interests to defend. Bevin was particularly conscious of the importance of not trying to build a divisive alliance,<sup>2</sup> because of the threat this might create to Big Three unity. This part of Bevin's dual policy was not to be fulfilled. The Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe became

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1. See e.g., "International Policy and Defence" (1937) p. 4ff; Labour Party in Perspective p. 224.

2. As late as November, 1947, the International Socialist Conference, meeting at Antwerp, could declare "That the existence of antagonistic blocs would constitute a perpetual danger of collision and conflict; that any policy which is directed to this end should be opposed by all Socialist parties."

a closed bloc, resisting British efforts to build up closer associations. The beginning of the Labour Government's reliance upon a divisive alliance was the Brussels Pact, agreed to in March, 1948. The Pact was not explicitly aimed at Russia, since Germany was also a threat to these nations. It provided for mutual defence in all instances. At the May, 1948, Annual Conference Bevin now put mutual defence ahead of all-round agreement, saying:

"We must proceed to develop regional pacts of collective security where we can, and not wait for the final agreement of everybody. Let those who will come in, come in." <sup>1</sup>

Developments in Russian foreign policy in the spring of 1948 made the Government fear the threat of Russian aggression. It anxiously sought to convert the Brussels Treaty into the nucleus of a military alliance that would provide countervailing power against Russia, along the traditional lines of the balance of power.

Ernest Bevin was not only prompt to recognise the need to restore the equilibrium of power in Europe, but also to see that Britain no longer had sufficient weight to prevail against a power as great as Russia. Therefore, he proposed to the United States on April 23rd, 1948, a formal treaty of association to give the North Atlantic nations protection against Russia. <sup>2</sup> The new world was

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1. LPCR 1948, p. 198.

2. Truman Volume II p. 257ff.

once more asked to come in to redress the balance of the old. The reason stated by Bevin clearly indicated the high value the Government placed upon military force and its low estimate of British power.

"It would be very difficult for the British or other free nations to stand up to new acts of aggression unless there was a definitely worked out arrangement, which included the United States, for collective resistance against aggression." <sup>1</sup>

Initial American hesitation was overcome in informal consultation; two months of hard and secret bargaining in Washington resulted in agreement on essentials in September, 1948. The North Atlantic Treaty was signed on April 4th, 1949. <sup>2</sup> There was no pretence that the Treaty was anything but an alliance against Russia. Bevin explicitly spoke of the pact as directed against Russia when debating it in the House, and a Government explanation of the Treaty declared: "Russia's Western neighbours fear her intentions." <sup>3</sup>

The Labour Government had learned from the disillusioning experience of the 1930s, what Arthur Henderson had learned -- the grave danger of putting disarmament before security. Ernest Bevin explained:

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1. Truman Volume II p. 259.
  2. Text, Cmd. 7789 (1949). See also Lord Ismay NATO: The First Five Years, 1949-1954 (n.d. c. 1955).
  3. 464 HC 2011ff, 12.5.49, and Cmd. 7692 (1949) p. 6, respectively.

"Now I am a believer in disarmament and small services, but I am not going to be a party to it until I have real collective security. That must be the fundamental basis. I represent a Labour constituency and I would never leave those people exposed to what the Conservatives left them exposed to in 1939 and 1940." <sup>1</sup>

The Government's reasoning was not an innovation at the Foreign Office, for Eyre Crowe had expressed similar views more than 40 years before, but it was a departure as radical as it was reasonable from traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy. Since words are Protean as well as politicians, there were those in the Labour Government who hailed NATO as the realisation of the collective security system traditionally sought by British Socialists. Bevin, for example, told the 1949 Conference that NATO was "the biggest step in collective security <sup>2</sup> that has ever been taken in the history of the world." The year before, however, he was still using the phrase in its pre-war sense of an inclusive agreement, within the framework of an international organisation. At the 1948 Conference he had said of collective security: "We cannot get it. The Military Committee <sup>3</sup> [of the UN] has been a complete failure."

Because the Government had, through its dual policy, given Russia the time and opportunity to show its

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1. TUCR 1947, p. 424.

2. LPCR 1949, p. 189.

3. LPCR 1948, p. 198.

intentions, there was very little opposition to the North Atlantic Treaty within the Labour Party when it was signed, in spite of its extreme deviation from the Party's traditional position. William Warbey was exceptional in charging in the debate in the House that the alliance was provocative, the traditional complaint against military alliances.<sup>1</sup>

In the division, only six MPs voted against the Treaty.<sup>2</sup> Crossman was strongly in favour of gaining American dollars for British defence; he called it the only way Britain could afford military security.<sup>3</sup>

Tribune supported NATO strongly and denounced Russian policy in terms as strong as those of Ernest Bevin.<sup>4</sup> One of its editors, Ian Mikardo, resigned as a result, because to him NATO meant the abandonment of the "arbitrament of reason" and hope for a Socialist "third force."<sup>5</sup> It is significant that Mikardo, for all his experience and interest

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1. 464 HC 2035ff, 12.5.49. Bevin himself had been worried, while the Treaty was being negotiated, about a Russian attack before security arrangements were completed. Truman Volume II pp. 258-9.
  2. Of the Keep Left members, seven supported the Treaty and eight did not vote. Since a large number of MPs did not vote in this division or in other divisions in the House that week, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusion from these figures.
  3. 456 HC 1151-2, 23.9.48. Contrast this with "Keep Left" p. 46.
  4. 25.3.49, 20.5.49.
  5. 20.5.49.

in organising opposition to the Government, could not do so on this issue. Later he explained, "There weren't enough opponents to organise."<sup>1</sup> Only six critical resolutions on foreign policy were submitted for the June, 1949 Annual Conference, by far the lowest number during the lifetime of the Labour Government. Even the usually critical New Statesman was willing to accept NATO; it declared that NATO would work so long as American and British taxpayers insisted that only a limited amount of money was spent on arms.<sup>2</sup> In answering the few critics of the balance of power politics alliance within the Party, Attlee charged that they were acting "just the same as the Nazis did when every attempt by the nations to get together was denounced as the encirclement of Germany."<sup>3</sup> The comparison was as apt as it was misleading, for during most of the inter-war period the leaders of the Labour Party were also denouncing military alliances as unholy manifestations of balance of power politics.

### Korea

"If the United Nations is not to go the way of the League of Nations, the members must be prepared to act when the need arises."

C.R. Attlee, 477 HC 493, 5.7.50.

The invasion of South Korea was an occasion when the

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1. Interview, March, 1959.
  2. New Statesman 9.4.49. The Government had previously announced a £107,500,000 increase in arms expenditure in February, 1949. Cmd. 7631, p. 7.
  3. The Times 11.4.49.

Labour Government was able and willing to act in accord with traditional Socialist principles. A report of aggression was presented to the UN, which immediately considered the case and called upon its members to assist the victim; members forthwith furnished assistance. The Government acted just as the Party said it should in the years before the war. Attlee's justification of defending South Korea might have been spoken in 1935:

"The salvation of all is dependent on prompt and effective measures to arrest aggression wherever it may occur, using for this purpose the international machinery which the peace-loving nations have set up for this very purpose ... This is naked aggression and it must be checked." 1

The first contingent of British forces was committed to serve under UN auspices on June 28th. That Britain was able to fight in the name of the UN was purely fortuitous, the result of the absence of Russia from the Security Council and its consequent failure to veto action.<sup>2</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that use of the UN flag was, for the Labour Government, a necessary condition of aid to South Korea. It was a flag of convenience, albeit

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1. 476 HC 2160-61, 27.6.50. See also SC 473rd meeting, 25.6.50, pp.8-9; 474th meeting, 27.6.50, p. 4ff, and Attlee, The Times 31.7.50.
  2. The New Statesman doubted the legality of acting without Russian participation in the Security Council decisions. (8.7.50). This argument was answered by Attlee, 477 HC 489, 5.7.50, and Younger, Manchester Guardian 10.10.50.

of considerable political convenience for Labour, given the moral and internationalist standards of many Party members and MPs.

The Government's action received strong support within the Labour Party. Tribune called resistance "the correct and inevitable course," although regretting that it had to be taken in aid of a reactionary Government.<sup>1</sup> Even the New Statesman, after a number of qualifications, supported the defence of South Korea.<sup>2</sup> When a group of 23 Labour MPs, led by Sydney Silverman, tabled a motion calling for the pacification of Korea by negotiation instead of by arms, the Cabinet succeeded in securing the withdrawal of five signatures.<sup>3</sup> Silverman defended himself from the charge of appeasement by saying, with an accurate sense of the Party's past, "Before Munich to seek peace was not dishonourable. Nor is it now."<sup>4</sup> Another opponent of the action, S.O. Davies, also recalled the days of Munich, probably unintentionally, by telling the House it was not worth risking world war over "a country 12,000 miles

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1. 30.6.50. Morrison declared that matters of domestic policy did not affect a nation's right to be free from external aggression. 477 HC 593, 5.7.50.
  2. 1.7.50.
  3. The Times 20.7.50, 21.7.50. A similar motion was defeated at Conference in October. LPCR 1950, p. 141.
  4. Tribune 28.7.50.

away and the people of the country are unknown to many of  
us." <sup>1</sup>

When the fortunes of battle changed, and the United Nations forces approached the 38th parallel in September, 1950, the Labour Government supported the American decision to cross the parallel and carry the war into North Korea, co-sponsoring a resolution to this end at the United Nations. <sup>2</sup> It rejected the proposal of Trygve Lie that the UN forces should halt at the parallel in order to attempt the settlement of the dispute by negotiation. <sup>3</sup> In late October Attlee, speaking on the Korean situation to the House of Commons, was optimistic about the progress of the UN forces in North Korea. <sup>4</sup> Tribune, which had suggested negotiating at the 38th parallel when UN troops were suffering defeats, declared in the flush of victory that there was an "indisputable moral right" to cross the parallel. <sup>5</sup> A TUC manifesto plainly stated, "The line must be erased." <sup>6</sup> The New Statesman, however, sounded warnings about the risk of crossing the parallel and

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1. 477 HC 547, 5.7.50.
  2. A/c.1/558, 29.9.50. See also Truman Volume II p. 380ff. There were, of course, legal arguments readily available to justify this action as a means to the end of establishing an all-Korean government under United Nations auspices.
  3. Lie op.cit. pp. 344-5.
  4. 480 HC 31, 31.10.50.
  5. Cf. 7.7.50 and 6.10.50.
  6. Quoted in Labour November, 1950, p. 88.

inviting Chinese intervention.<sup>1</sup> The Keep Left group of MPs on October 18th tabled a motion which asked the Government "to seek an immediate line beyond which the UN forces will not advance, with a view to bringing the fighting to an end as quickly as possible."<sup>2</sup>

The Labour Government did not publicly express doubts about the policy of settling the Korean dispute by military force, as long as the North Koreans remained weak and alone. On December 4th, 1950, Ernest Davies, speaking for the Government, repudiated a suggestion that MacArthur's drive north had been opposed by Britain.<sup>3</sup> While members of the Government may have had private reservations about MacArthur's tactics, the Government did not publicly question his authority or oppose the rapid advance of troops. As Kenneth Younger later explained:

"The idea was that we had a right to be consulted before the decisions were taken but it was recognised by both sides that the decisions would be taken in Washington."<sup>4</sup>

After Communist China entered the war, there was no time

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1. 23.9.50.

2. Daily Herald 18.11.50. 22 MPs signed the motion.

3. 482 HC 26-7.

4. Interview, April, 1959. For an indication of forces urging the United States to continue pressing north see, The United States in World Affairs 1950, p. 357ff.

lost by Labour ministers in claiming publicly that, while they shared joint responsibility for the attempt to reunify Korea by force, in fact they really had not expected it to be followed in the way that MacArthur did.<sup>1</sup>

The Chinese intervention caused an abrupt change in the Labour Government's Korean policy, and substantive disagreement with the United States. Britain abandoned its earlier support for a policy of military victory. Henceforth it sought peace by negotiation. Ernest Bevin announced on November 29th that Britain was willing to respond to the "slightest sign" from China that it was ready to end fighting and start negotiating.<sup>2</sup> A fortnight later he denied that negotiating a settlement would be appeasement; instead, he said, it would be compromise.<sup>3</sup> As Kenneth Younger summed up the Government's position:

"We see no alternative to a negotiated peace in the Far East which would not be a disaster both for China and for ourselves."<sup>4</sup>

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1. See e.g., Shinwell and Dalton, The Times 4.12.50; Bevin, 482 HC 1959-60, 14.12.50. Younger was insistent in two interviews (July, 1958, April, 1959) that British delegates at the UN were quite concerned about the risk of Chinese intervention in October and November, 1950, but he admitted that the British delegates, powerless to control the advance of MacArthur's troops, could not make a major issue of their concern. See also, A. Schlesinger and R. Rovere The General and the President (1952) p. 123ff.
  2. 481 HC 1166. See also British resolution, SC 530th meeting, 30.11.50, pp. 22-3.
  3. 482 HC 1461, 14.12.50.
  4. 484 HC 153, 12.2.51.

The differences between the United States and Britain were of two kinds. For military reasons, the Labour Government did not wish to risk a major war with China. It feared such a war would invite a Russian thrust against a weakened Western Europe. Since Western Europe was much more important to British security than was China, it preferred not to risk a major war for a relatively minor interest. The United States, with its vital interest in the command of the Pacific, had a major stake in checking Chinese power, and pressing forward to military victory in Korea.<sup>1</sup> The positive alternative that the Labour Government put forward was based upon value judgments that differed markedly from those of the United States. Labour, in accordance with traditional Socialist principles, argued that the best policy was to attempt to reform China by means of negotiation, conciliation and trade. The United States, equally insistent upon the rightness of its judgment, argued that military, not diplomatic, force was necessary to settle the conflict in Korea.<sup>2</sup>

These differences became quite apparent during Attlee's Washington conference with President Truman in December, 1950. When Attlee and Truman met, the first point that the Prime Minister raised was what would be

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1. Truman Volume II Chapter XXV, passim.

2. These differences are excellently summed up by Jebb, GA 1st Committee, 431st meeting, 25.1.51, p. 546.

the Chinese terms for a cease-fire. They were "apt to be distasteful" but no more so than any other alternative, he said. Secondly, Attlee wished to know what were the chances of the United States being pushed into an all-out war with China. To Attlee there were just two choices: "We would wind up either in a shooting war or in negotiations."<sup>1</sup> A number of American leaders strongly urged fighting to military victory, rather than accept stalemate through negotiation.<sup>2</sup> Probably as the result of British pressure,<sup>3</sup> the two groups agreed to seek an end to the Korean fighting by negotiation, with the implied threat that if the Chinese did not wish to negotiate,<sup>4</sup> further measures might have to be taken. Having secured a promise that the United States would not suddenly begin using atomic bombs or extend the war into Manchuria, Attlee was able to report to the House of Commons upon his return that he was satisfied with the limits placed upon UN action in Korea.<sup>5</sup>

The agreement was conditional and short-lived.

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1. Truman Volume II p. 421, p. 427.
  2. New York Times 8.12.50; The Times 9.12.50.
  3. See the claims by Attlee, The Listener 1.3.59, p. 156, and Morrison The Times 26.2.51. The Labour Government, of course, was not alone in urging the Truman Administration to negotiate a settlement in Korea.
  4. See Truman Volume II p. 436.
  5. 482 HC 1353, 14.12.50.

Efforts to negotiate a cease-fire with Communist China failed.<sup>1</sup> The United States then presented a resolution to the United Nations that gave it a mandate to consider "further measures" against China, i.e., extension of the war to Manchuria. The resolution also named Communist China as an aggressor. The British delegation argued that further attempts should be made to negotiate with China. Jebb added, as rebuke to MacArthur, "It might also be legitimately asked whether there might not have been some grave misunderstanding on the part of the Chinese of the real purposes of the UN in Korea."<sup>2</sup> The Labour Government argued that harmony was necessary for further action. As Jebb put it: "It would be wise to look well before leaping and desirable, if it became necessary to leap, that all should do so together."<sup>3</sup> But there was no harmony of aims between Britain and America at this moment. The American Government's proposal to use "further measures" was interpreted as increasing the risk of general war in Asia. At this point, the Labour Government was forced to choose between maintaining the unity of the Anglo-American alliance or risking a break with the United States on Asian policy,

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1. See e.g., Attlee, 483 HC 40, 23.1.51, G. Goodwin op. cit. p. 138ff.
  2. GA 1st Committee, 431st meeting, 25.1.51, p. 546.
  3. GA 1st Committee, 421st meeting, 8.1.51, p. 472.

with all the consequences that might entail for its position in Europe. The Labour Government's disagreement with America on this issue was so fundamental that the Cabinet decided to oppose the United States resolution at the UN, and accept the risks inherent in a split. Gladwyn Jebb announced that unless the section sanctioning "further measures" against Chinese aggression was deleted from the American resolution, the British Government would vote against it.<sup>1</sup>

The Labour Government was not then forced to risk a rupture with the United States over China policy because the American government, in the face of such strong opposition, was willing to compromise. The result was that America received satisfaction in form - China being named an aggressor - and the Labour Government won the victory of substance, - the clause on "further measures" being deleted. Shortly thereafter Younger claimed that it was "almost entirely" due to British pressure that the United States had modified its position.<sup>2</sup> Within six months, remarks made by Jacob Malik led to the beginning

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1. See GA 1st Committee, 437th and 438th meetings, both on 30.1.51, especially pp.591-2, p. 602.
  2. K. Younger "Socialist Foreign Policy" (Fabian Tract #287 April, 1951) p.26. Churchill later disclosed (495 HC 969ff, 26.2.52), that the Labour Government in May and September, 1951 had agreed to carrying military action beyond the Korean borders if heavy air attacks came from China. Morrison explained that the agreement was made, subject to consultation before retaliation, so that American officials would not feel they would be handicapped in the event of a major change in Chinese tactics. (Cols. 974-5).

of discussions on the terms of an armistice in Korea.<sup>1</sup>

The Labour Government originally based its Korean policy upon using military power, nominally on behalf of the United Nations. It rejected efforts by the UN secretary-general and pleas from a few of its backbenchers to seek an end to the Korean War by negotiation when its troops reached the 38th parallel. The entry of Communist China into the war created problems of a new magnitude. The Labour Government, fearful of the consequences of general war in Asia, promptly abandoned all hopes of achieving a settlement by military victory. Acting in accord with traditional Socialist ideas of power, it argued that the way to resolve the difficulties with China was by negotiation and conciliation. In its calculations, both fear of military disaster and faith in the long-term efficacy of negotiations played a part.

#### The Battle of Priorities

"Soviet Communism cannot conquer the world except as a result of social and economic collapse in the non-Communist world, and the first line of democracy's defence must be a policy of full employment and fair shares. Military strength, because it is a defence against the less immediate danger, is the second line."

"Keeping Left" p. 44.

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1. The differences between America and other nations were probably an advantage in negotiations, for it confronted the Chinese with the possibility that failure to negotiate an armistice might lead to a broader military attack upon them.

"World peace will not be safe until the free world has produced enough military strength on its frontiers to deter Russia from risking any such aggression."

"Our First Duty -- Peace" (LP, 1951) p. 3.

"Something has to go. Some pruning has to be done. The question is where is the pruning to be made?"

H. Gaitskell, 488 HC 1560, 8.6.51.

"The language of priorities is the religion of Socialism."

Aneurin Bevan, LPCR 1949, p. 172.

Socialist analysis traditionally assumed that peace can be established only if it is based on social justice, that moral and economic influences shaped society more than military force.<sup>1</sup> In foreign policy this meant that the Party's negative objection to armaments was complemented by a positive demand for the spread of social reform throughout the world. This would not only prevent aggression, but also destroy the desire within a nation to commit aggression. As Attlee explained in 1937:

"I believe that the way to meet Fascism is not by force of arms, but by showing that with co-operation in the economic sphere far better conditions are obtainable than by pursuing a policy of aggression."<sup>2</sup>

World War II, in which the planned economy and the principle of domestic "fair shares" were considered necessary to military victory, confirmed the Party in its belief

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1. LPCR 1934, "War and Peace" p. 243.

2. Labour Party in Perspective p. 224.

in the importance of domestic well-being to national defence.

This emphasis upon economic rather than military determinants was immediately relevant to the major problems facing Britain at the end of the war. The 1945 election manifesto spoke of "a new war on hunger, ignorance and want."<sup>1</sup> The failure of the Government to demobilise more quickly was criticised strongly from the back benches in 1946-7. "Keep Left", which devoted much of its argument to advocating ways of achieving a stronger economy, held: "It is not the numbers in uniform that decide prestige in the world. It is the strength of industrial potential."<sup>2</sup> The Party leadership rejected this view. "Cards on the Table" stated:

"The objection remains that our foreign policy entails a diversion of resources and manpower from home production which this country cannot afford. But our foreign policy costs much less than another war ... A nation which puts domestic comfort before its own security and independence is condemned to a foreign policy of appeasement leading inevitably to capitulation or to war under unfavourable circumstances."<sup>3</sup>

The differences within the Party were reflected within the Cabinet. Cripps, in charge of production, opposed conscription in early 1947; Attlee, concerned with military matters, and Bevin, in charge of foreign policy, favoured it.

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1. "Let Us Face the Future" p. 11.

2. p. 30.

3. p. 18.

Although conscription was introduced in response to the economic crisis of 1947, the Government altered its position somewhat, even setting a limit of £600 million<sup>1</sup> on the arms estimate in August, 1947.

The simultaneous development of the cold war and the Marshall Plan put most differences into abeyance. The need for military defence was increasingly recognised, but there was not a major rearmament programme. The economy grew stronger and better able to meet the demands made by all sections upon it. The criticism that was voiced came from advocates of a "third force", who defined the international conflict as essentially an ideological conflict, which could not be won by force of arms, pace the Russian Revolution. Socialism was ideologically right; if the Labour Government applied it in practice on an ever-increasing scale, victory in the ideological conflict would surely follow. R.H.S. Crossman explained:

"Communism does not follow the Red Army; it goes in advance of it, and it comes every time where Socialism has failed to hold the confidence of the workers. Our first job in foreign policy is to make it possible for the workers to be held by the Socialists. That means giving them a decent standard of living. The first line of defence against Communism is not military armament, it is Socialist policy." <sup>2</sup>

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1. Montgomery op.cit. p. 480. See also a motion to reduce the armed forces to strengthen the nation's economy, proposed by Harold Davies on behalf of the Keep Left group, LPCR 1947, p. 140ff. Although defeated, it received 1,109,000 votes.
  2. LPCR 1949, pp. 193-4.

The New Statesman, which was foremost in campaigning for a militarily weak and ideologically strong "third force,"<sup>1</sup> declared that unless money was diverted from military expenditure to raising the workers' standard of living there was the real danger that "the class struggle will turn into a world war."<sup>2</sup> Tribune much more moderately asked for greater emphasis upon long-range economic planning to underpin military security, but it did not deny the immediate need for military defence.<sup>3</sup>

"Keeping Left", issued in January, 1950, contained the first full statement of what was to become the basic idea of the Bevanites: the need for the Labour Government to combat Communism, not by rearmament, but by making international the benefits of Socialist economic planning and welfare services. The ginger group declared: "The first thing is to get the priorities right," and "Armaments ~~[are]~~ NOT the first priority."<sup>4</sup> The simple existence of the NATO alliance, by establishing a tripwire to define Russian penetration, was "an infinitely more effective deterrent against aggression than any number of

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1. See e.g., 9.10.48.

2. 27.3.48. Presumably, the working-class would side with Communist Russia, an indication of the difficulty the New Statesman had in deciding whether Britain or Russia was more nearly the Socialist society.

3. See e.g., 8.4.49.

4. p. 21.

divisions or a stockpile of atom bombs without an agreed policy." <sup>1</sup> Both NATO and the Russian group were "rearming ruinously out of fear of the other." This was foolish since "a policy which gives priority to armaments expenditure, and so accentuates the social crisis, actually increases our insecurity." <sup>2</sup> To continue to make military defence the first priority and to ignore the need to spread social justice was simply to play the Russians' game. As a first step the group recommended placing a ceiling of 6 per cent of the national income upon the defence estimates by the end of 1951. <sup>3</sup>

The critics suggested as an immediately practical programme a World Fair Deal, in which "Britain would be one of the givers and no longer one of the receivers." <sup>4</sup> The policy was based upon traditional Socialist principles of power:

"The most vital need today is that Britain and America should accept the view that the first line of defence is social and economic, and that armaments are the second line. If foreign policy is to be subordinated to military requirements by ourselves or by our allies, there is no chance of preventing another war. Our military commitments are not, as the Tories affirm, a first call on our resources; economic commitments at home and abroad must have priority over them." <sup>5</sup>

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1. p. 22.

2. Ibid. This was all italicised in the original text.

3. p. 23.

4. p. 7. The pamphlet mentioned incidentally that better markets for British exports would thereby be created. This point was not stressed, p. 45.

5. p. 23.

Whereas giving priority to the "trappings of military greatness" was dangerous in itself and would destroy Britain's moral leadership, advocacy of a World Fair Deal would insure that the country retained "the moral leadership which is her real power in the world today."<sup>1</sup> The pamphlet did concede that, while a Labour Government could provide moral leadership, it would be chiefly the responsibility of the United States to provide the cash.<sup>2</sup> The Marshall Plan, Point Four, and the Fair Deal were cited as evidence that President Truman would readily respond to a "moral lead" from Britain.

The Labour Party endorsed many of these arguments in the NEC document "Labour and the New Society", issued in August, 1950, and approved by Annual Conference in October. This comprehensive statement of party policy suggested development of a World Plan for Mutual Aid<sup>3</sup> following suspension of the Marshall Plan in 1952. Aneurin Bevan, in summing up the Conference debate on the

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1. p. 7.

2. A similar difficulty, although not so great in extent, faced the Labour Government in its development at the same time of the Colombo Plan. In spite of broad hints dropped by the Government that American finance would be welcome, the United States initially let this programme remain essentially a Commonwealth programme. For this reason, the Plan falls outside the ambit of this thesis. See Cmd. 8080 (1950), especially p. 1ff, p. 54ff; and RIIA Survey 1949-50, p. 531ff.

3. pp. 8-10.

pamphlet for the NEC, declared that the World Plan was necessary because world capitalism had failed to continue its policy of imperialist penetration.<sup>1</sup> The document did not, however, try to establish priorities for military and economic power. "Military preparedness together with economic development are part of a single plan for defending and developing the whole free world."<sup>2</sup> Bevan declared that the Government was going to have "a very difficult time" in settling the question of priorities.<sup>3</sup> He added that the World Plan meant "We shall be called upon to deny ourselves many things in order that we may give them to the underdeveloped parts of the world."<sup>4</sup> The unity on foreign policy that this document was designed to achieve did not come about, because of the outbreak of the Korean War.<sup>5</sup>

The Korean War hit the United Kingdom at a time when economic problems seemed to be nearing solution. On the day of the first debate on Korea, Sir Stafford

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1. LPCR 1950, p. 131.

2. "Labour and the New Society" p. 7.

3. LPCR 1950, p. 132.

4. Ibid. p. 131.

5. For a "might-have-been" description of the plan see R. Hinden "Challenge of the Underdeveloped areas" Socialist Commentary (May, 1951) pp. 116-7, and R. Hinden "A World of Peace and Plenty" (LP, April 1951), especially p. 18ff. Denis Healey found the plan useful as a counterweight to European Union in a speech to the Frankfurt Congress of the ISC in 1951.

Cripps told the House that British gold and dollar reserves had risen \$438 million in the second quarter of 1950, bringing them up to \$2422 million.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the defence programme seemed to have reached a point at which it could be stabilised. Cripps had been pressing Shinwell to hold service estimates at £700 million a year,<sup>2</sup> and the March, 1950 estimate called for an expenditure of £780 million. The Russian development of its own atomic bomb had, however, modified the military balance of power. In the United States, upon whose military and economic support the Labour Government had relied, the Korean War produced a "general simplification and 'toughening up' of American foreign policy."<sup>3</sup>

The Labour Government's first reaction to the Korean War was to increase its arms expenditure by £100 million, a change announced to the House of Commons on July 26th by Emanuel Shinwell, the Minister of Defence.<sup>4</sup> Shinwell, discussing the difficulties of rearmament in detail, declared that, while a much greater increase would be

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1. 477 HC 479, 5.7.50.

2. E. Shinwell Conflict Without Malice (1955) pp. 197-8.

3. The United States in World Affairs 1950, p. 251.

4. 478 HC 473ff.

required in order to put Britain's defences in a condition of readiness, "We can do no more from our own resources than make a beginning on such a programme."

By this time the Labour Government had adopted a position which recognised three things: First, that the possibility of Russia provoking a war in Europe was great, and that Russia was militarily superior to NATO. Shinwell estimated there were 175 Russian divisions on active duty.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, Europe, including Britain, could not be defended without American soldiers, equipment and money. Thirdly, because of its greatly increased military commitments in Korea, and because of American domestic political pressures, there was a real danger that the United States might not help develop adequate European defences, and might place primary or exclusive emphasis upon defence in Asia.<sup>4</sup> The consequence of an American withdrawal from Europe would be a Russian advance which Britain could not effectively resist. Britain was only marginal to American security; America

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1. 478 HC Col. 479. Italics supplied. He also said that projects begun in the £100 million programme would eventually require more money for their fulfilment.
  2. The following pages have been checked for emphasis by off-the-record interviews with responsible ministers, and information from them has been incorporated.
  3. 478 HC 469ff, 26.7.50.
  4. The issue was debated, for example, at the Attlee-Truman Conference in Washington in December. New York Times, 5.12.50.

was indispensable to Britain. The one thing the Labour Government could offer the United States, military bases in the United Kingdom, was even more important for British security than for American. In the words of one senior minister, "None of us was taking the American alliance for granted."

Late in the summer of 1950 the United States began to cash in its goodwill. For almost five years the Labour Government had built up its European policy and its domestic economy, with American assistance. Now, the United States began to ask for assistance in return. One senior official at the Foreign Office described this American pressure for more British and for German rearmament as "by far the heaviest in the post-war era."<sup>1</sup> The first sign of this was a request from Washington asking how much the Labour Government was prepared to spend on rearming as its contribution to North Atlantic defence. (At this time the United States was in process of doubling its defence budget.) Given its assumptions, the Labour Government felt compelled to attempt a programme that would show America that Britain was making great sacrifices for defence, not only to strengthen Britain's own forces, but, more importantly, to assure doubting elements in the United States that its transatlantic allies deserved large-

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1. Interview.

scale American assistance in developing an effective NATO shield. Economic considerations were strictly secondary. "You can always do anything, if you want to badly enough," said one minister in an interview. "Look at what we spent in the war."<sup>1</sup> If one thought war an immediate danger, then any large defence programme, regardless of its cost, would be justified. In drawing up its revised defence programme, the Labour Government was not unconcerned with the costs and the prospects of American aid, because war, while a possibility, was not a certainty. The Government was given to understand that it could rely on approximately £500 million in three years.<sup>2</sup> In ten days the Government prepared a three-year defence programme costing £3400 million, an increase in spending on defence from nearly 8 to 10 per cent of the annual national income. In announcing it, the Government warned that this would "inevitably slow down" economic recovery and require "real and substantial

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1. Cf. Harold Wilson "In Place of Dollars" (December, 1951) p. 8: "It is one thing for financial experts ('little men doing their silly sums,' Mr. Aneurin Bevan has called them) to add up all the hundreds of millions and set them against their calculations of the total national income, and to say that this or that programme is 'economically practicable.' It is quite another, except under the compulsion of total war, to ensure that the raw materials, the skilled labour, the specialised factory space, the components and intermediate products will be available ... to guarantee that such programmes are carried out."
  2. Interviews. See also The United States in World Affairs 1950, p. 266.

sacrifices" by the British people. The £3400 million figure was, however, intended to be a maximum rather than a minimum. "How far it will be possible to go towards this new and upper limit will depend on the amount of United States assistance forthcoming." Any larger programme, the Government declared, would be inconsistent with the military need for further economic recovery.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, by extending conscription from 18 to 24 months, the cost of the three-year programme was increased 6 per cent, to £3600 million, later in the month.<sup>2</sup>

When the Government faced the House of Commons in a three-day September debate, it was caught in a cross-fire. A large number of Conservatives attacked the programme as insufficient, or denounced alleged Labour incompetence in previous defence spending. The Conservatives were unusually bellicose and vigorous because of the small margin by which the Government retained office. Simultaneously, a number of Labour back-benchers voiced concern with the level of spending on armaments. They argued that it was against traditional Socialist principles to

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1. Text, The Times 4.8.50. The Times parliamentary correspondent remarked this was "a much bigger increase than contemplated" before American pressure and promises of American aid were brought to bear.
  2. 478 HC 1410-1508, 15.9.50. See also Cmd. 8026 (1950).

give such a high priority to military defence.<sup>1</sup> In the debate Attlee emphasized:

"This great expenditure [£3600] represents the maximum we can do by expanding and using to the full our industrial capacity without resorting to the drastic expedient of war economy."<sup>2</sup>

At the Annual Conference in October, Ernest Bevin made his last appearance. He came to argue that the rearmament programme was not a subject for debate, but a necessity. "The man who would do that for fun would go to hell for pleasure."<sup>3</sup> The case that the Foreign Secretary drew upon for an analogy was not the traditional Socialist model of an arms race leading to the war of 1914, but his memory of the 1930s, when Britain's failure to rearm promptly had resulted in disaster and nearly in defeat. In spite of the fact that the military forces in Korea were progressing well and the economy was booming,<sup>4</sup>

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1. See 478 HC 1011ff, September 12th-14th. Among the Labour back-benchers questioning the wisdom of the Government's priorities were J. Lee, S. Silverman, R.W. Sorensen, G. Bing, J.H. Hudson and S.O. Davies. Crossman defended the programme, (Col. 1263) as a wise increase in the force behind the NATO tripwire, but he deplored any effort to match Russia man for man in military power, and called for economic aid to Asia. (Col. 1268).
  2. 478 HC 959, 12.9.50. Italics supplied.
  3. LPCR 1950, p. 149.
  4. Gaitskell spoke in the City of "a remarkable and favourable change in our circumstances." The Times, 4.10.50.

there was still sharp, if not strong opposition to the Government's programme. Harold Davies, a member of the Keep Left group, moved a resolution urging the Government to redirect its policy along traditional Socialist lines, including the creation of friendly relations with Russia and the establishment of "satisfactory economic and social conditions for the peoples in the backward countries." While the motion was defeated, 4,861,000 to 881,000, the Government's critics showed greater voting strength than in 1946-48.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time ~~was~~ the Government was, to the accompaniment of considerable heckling, putting its £3600 million defence programme through the House of Commons. Although it promised that this would be the limit, pressure was already developing in the United States for another round of increases, even if this meant cuts in what nations spent for social services.<sup>2</sup> The announcement by President Truman on September 9th that additional American troops would be committed to Western Europe was coupled with a warning to Britain and its allies: "Firm programmes for the development of their forces will be expected to keep full step with the

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1. LPCR 1950, p. 141, p. 150.

2. See The Times 5.9.50, a report of NATO deputies meeting.

dispatch of additional United States forces to Europe."<sup>1</sup>  
 The United States also began re-examining Marshall Aid. Britain's increasing balance of payments led the American government to conclude in the autumn of 1950 that its Marshall Aid could be discontinued, except for money in the pipeline, and so to inform the Chancellor in October.<sup>2</sup>  
 Yet by the time the decision was announced in December, the economic troubles that were to plague the Labour Government and its Conservative successor were becoming evident. Gaitskell, now Chancellor, told a London meeting on December 6th that changes in the terms of trade would increase defence costs by £300 million and require a further £300 million in exports to balance higher import prices. The situation was, he said, "bleak" but "in no way intolerable."<sup>3</sup> To the problems of a change in the terms of trade and a demand for more exports, the Minister of Supply added the materials shortage, due to the post-Korean rise in world demand. He said, "These

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1. The United States in World Affairs 1950, p. 264; Montgomery op.cit. p. 551ff, notes that about this time there was suspicion on the Continent that Britain was slacking in rearmament, and hesitant about committing its land forces in strength to defend that side of the Channel.
  2. ERP receipts: 4th quarter 1950, \$145 million; 1st quarter 1951, \$98 million; 2nd quarter 1951, \$55 million. Source: 489 HC 2320, 4.7.51. See also, Gaitskell's speech, 482 HC 1162-3, 13.12.50, and mimeographed text of his press conference, 13.12.50, especially p. 5.
  3. The Times 7.12.50.

changes are bound to lead to some redundancy or unemployment in some areas but it is quite impossible to estimate to what extent.<sup>1</sup>"

Military and political influences were pushing for yet another increase in the defence budget, economic difficulties notwithstanding. The entrance of Communist China into the Korean War, and doubts about the Russian reaction to plans for German rearmament, made the military situation in Europe and Asia fluid and ominous. Speed was important. Politically, relations between America and Britain had deteriorated due to differences about China. The result of the November Congressional elections placed Truman in a relatively weakened position as against his Republican critics, suspicious of Britain, suspicious of committing American troops to Europe and vitally concerned with Asia.<sup>2</sup> The attack led by Senator Taft and ex-President Hoover against the President's ability to send American troops to Europe without Congressional authority concerned British security as much<sup>25</sup>, if not more than, American security. The debate was not resolved until April, 1951, and the after-effects not dissipated until much later.<sup>25</sup> At a NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels in December, 1950, the decision was made to

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1. Manchester Guardian 29.12.50.

2. See United States in World Affairs 1950, p. 412ff, p. 437ff; 1951, p. 48ff.

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have another round of arms increases.

The Labour Government was threatened with grave economic disturbances if it did this, and grave military dangers if it did not. There were risks in both choices; there were sections within the Party and within the Cabinet that supported both points of view. Traditional Socialist principles suggested that greater priority be given to economic considerations, especially as the alternative was to enter an arms race. The Government, however, chose to put military considerations first. Having already come to the conclusion in the autumn that the £3600 million programme could be achieved without American aid, it now began to plan a second increase in armaments, without a firm commitment as to what American aid would be. In part, it would depend upon the size of the burden the Labour Government placed upon its own economy.<sup>2</sup> The Government came down firmly for increased arms to defend (in more senses than one) the Anglo-American alliance and NATO. On January 29th it presented

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1. The Times 21.12.50.

2. See The Times 14.12.50, 21.12.50. The NATO committee appointed to consider the problem of "burden-sharing" by the allies did not reach a definite decision while the Labour Government was in office. Eventually Britain received £351 million in American mutual aid during this three-year period including £35 million in surplus agricultural products. "United States Aid to the World," 1945-55 p. 20.

a three-year programme allocating £4700 million for  
 defence.<sup>1</sup> The Prime Minister insisted:

"The Government have one clear aim before them; to see that we carry as much of the load as possible ourselves now and refrain from mortgaging the future by running into debt abroad or reducing the investments on which our industrial efficiency depends. This will be a task of great difficulty, because the industries which will have to carry most of the increased defence orders, the engineering and metal-using industries, are the very ones on which he have relied to make the biggest contribution to exports and to industrial equipment." 2

The Prime Minister explicitly pointed out that the new programme would demand sacrifices from all.

The PLP had to have three meetings before criticisms of this £1100 million boost could be answered. The Times parliamentary correspondent declared: "Ministers are not finding it easy to convince all their supporters that the international outlook compels such precautions."<sup>3</sup> Politically, the Cabinet was handicapped in supporting the programme. Bevin was too weak to assume his official duties and Attlee was in and out of hospital. The Foreign Secretary had established a rule that no minister could talk about foreign affairs without first clearing his speech

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1. Shinwell op.cit. p. 217, declares that the new estimate did not so much represent a change in the defence chiefs' requests but in the Cabinet's attitude towards them.
  2. 483 HC 584.
  3. The Times 1.2.51.

with the Foreign Office.<sup>1</sup> Much of the work of defending the arms programme rested upon Gaitskell, a very junior senior minister, whose promotion had made him enemies. Although Gaitskell was conscious he was carrying too much of the political burden, he was unable to share it more widely. Trade union leaders were distracted by rank-and-file pressure for wage increases, which not only limited their ability to campaign for the Government but also forced them to adopt industrial policies that contradicted Government desires.<sup>2</sup>

Aneurin Bevan revived the flagging fervour of some Labour MPs by his defence of the new £4700 million programme when it was debated on February 15th.<sup>3</sup> The speech is notable for the fact that the recently appointed Minister of Labour, while nominally defending the arms increase, used many arguments that were shortly to be known as "Bevanite" arguments and denounced as heretical

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1. The Observer 7.1.51, 21.1.51.
  2. See infra p. 423ff.
  3. The Times 16.2.51, spoke of Bevan's skill in developing an argument that faced Labour critics of the Government's defence programme with the realisation that a Conservative defence budget would be even less palatable to them. The Manchester Guardian more fulsomely stated that Bevan brought the whole House "into enthusiastic agreement with him with a definition of the moral objects of our foreign policy and rearmament programme. Neither Mr. Bevin nor Mt. Attlee has ever done that." 17.2.51.

by defenders of the Government's policy. These discrepancies were not noticed then. The important point was not what Bevan said, but the position from which he spoke. Instead of discussing the need for more and more arms, Bevan asserted, "The essential pre-requisite for a modern war machine is the technical basis of civil industry."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, he inferred, from the fact that Russian industry produced less than 25 million tons of steel a year:

"I do not believe that a nation, however large its manpower, coldly contemplates launching 25 million tons of steel per annum against the combination of 140 million tons per annum."<sup>2</sup>

Because Bevan had so little regard for the economic resources of Russia he argued:

"For Heaven's sake do not let us have so much boggy man talk. I am speaking about those evil people in many parts of the world who are talking as if the third world war had already begun. We deny that ... Every opportunity must be eagerly sought in order to try to bring about an alleviation of international tension."<sup>3</sup>

The arguments that Aneurin Bevan used in defending the defence programme were based upon traditional Socialist

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1. 484 HC 733, 15.2.51.

2. Ibid. The Alsops op.cit. p. 58, reported that Bevan had once argued that if Russian steel production ever did reach a certain limit then there might be good reason for NATO to launch a preventive war against it.

3. 484 HC 733 and 735, 15.2.51.

ideas of the sources of power. The Cabinet's reasoning, however, was increasingly in conflict with these ideas. It placed more and more emphasis upon the needs of military defence, it made considerations of economic stability secondary, and it gave even less weight to the social services and the workers' standard of living. The conflict on priorities was quickly brought to a head in the discussions within the Cabinet on placing charges on the health service in the Budget. Bevan, who believed that the social services were as important as, if not more important than, armaments, opposed this. He and his associates argued that for industrial reasons Russia would not start a war, and moreover, the 1951-2 arms programme could not be achieved because of shortages; hence, there was no need to save money on the health services since the full sum estimated for defence could not be spent in the budget year.<sup>1</sup> The Chancellor's argument was that military power had first priority because of the risk of war with Russia, and equally, because of the need to maintain the confidence of America. The

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1. On this point the Bevanites were right. Even with inflation only £1,131 million of the estimated expenditure of £1300 million for defence in 1951-2 was actually required. Cf. Cmd. 8146 (1951) and Cmd. 8475 (1952), and Churchill's provocative explanation, 494 HC 2601ff, 6.12.51. See also H. Wilson "In Place of Dollars" p. 9.

Government was therefore obligated to try to hit its defence target (up £680 million from the previous year) and budget on the assumption that it would. The uncertainties in both arguments could not be resolved by appealing to facts, for they arose from differences of principles. Aneurin Bevan believed that the country's real strength was in its economic and social achievements. Gaitskell believed that the country had to rely first upon military strength and that the social services had to bear some of the defence burden.<sup>1</sup> The Cabinet supported the Chancellor's view of priorities; efforts by a four-man Cabinet committee to find a compromise failed. Neither Gaitskell nor Bevan was of a mind to make concessions.<sup>2</sup> Aneurin Bevan resigned. The last and strongest attack upon the Labour Government's foreign policy in the name of traditional Socialist principles began.

The Bevanite revolt moved on three interacting levels<sup>3</sup> -- the ideological, the psychological and the tactical.

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1. While Gaitskell, in his budget speech, 486 HC 851-2, 10.4.51, tried to make it appear that charges amounting to £25 million in a year on the health service were the only source of necessary additional revenue, this was not the case. He could have chosen to raise the money from any number of sources.
  2. See L. Hunter The Road to Brighton Pier (1959) pp.32-4.
  3. The political tactics of the Bevanites are analysed in Chapter 8.

To state that differences in ideas, clashes in personalities and calculations<sup>of</sup> political interest combined to drive the Minister of Labour out of the Cabinet and into a campaign against his own front bench is not hedging; it is to see the Bevanite movement as a whole. Aneurin Bevan, full of frustrations and tiring of office, could no more have resigned, giving as his reason pique at being passed over twice for promotion, than he would have resigned on an issue of principle if all his emotions and ambitions had suggested he should not.<sup>1</sup> A political leader needs issues with which to clothe his actions; political issues require leaders to carry them, if they are to become effective. That Bevan, in the words of his critics, resigned first and thought up his issues afterwards<sup>2</sup> does not alter the role of traditional Socialist principles in the conflict that followed. The existence of discontent within the Labour Party about the rearmament programme, founded upon long-held beliefs about the nature of international relations, presented Bevan with a ready-made cause to champion as soon as he left the Cabinet. Having

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1. Attlee commented later, a propos of the resignation: "In politics you have to take into account personalities as well as politics. Each has a pretty strong influence on events." News-Chronicle 20.4.59.
  2. See the exchange of letters between Bevan and Attlee, Manchester Guardian 23.4.51.

a cause rooted in traditional principles helped to make Bevanism a significant political movement. Without a cause, or with only the charges on teeth and spectacles to complain about, the Bevanites would have appeared as factious, niggling and disappointed critics. Long before resigning, Bevan had his own predispositions, for, as he once wrote, "In so far as I can be said to have had a political training at all, it has been in Marxism."<sup>1</sup>

With Bevan's resignation the backbench defenders of traditional principles were given a leader; the leader found principles that were congenial. The facile orator, with a tendency to base his arguments upon the smooth-flowing logic of "Socialism" rather than upon the detailed consideration of complex facts in specific situations had, by resigning, taken the cork out of the bottle and released forces long restrained under pressure by joint Cabinet responsibility.

Just as the Bevanite movement combined criticism of foreign policy, defence and the domestic economy, so its genesis was not simply in differences on foreign affairs, but due to a combination of domestic and external considerations. There was sharp disagreement within the Cabinet in the summer of 1949 on the question of nationalising

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1. Bevan In Place of Fear (1952) p. 17.

the iron and steel industries.<sup>1</sup> In the debate, Bevan found himself opposing Attlee and Morrison. From about this time there was a noticeable cleavage among the ministers between those who favoured, as a second five-year programme, more nationalisation, and those who preferred consolidation. Broadly speaking, the latter group won; Bevan was among the losers. The differences were reflected within the PLP and so was the unhappiness.<sup>2</sup>

The discontent was extended to include foreign policy after the announcement of the Government's decision to embark upon a three-year £3400 million rearmament programme in early August, 1950. In its issue of July 28th, 1950, Tribune had supported rearmament. "What can happen in the Far East can happen in Germany." Rearmament was called discouraging but inevitable. When the size of the demands was announced, the weekly, run by Bevan's friends, shifted its editorial policy. In a leader of August 18th, "Keep the Generals in their Place", it argued that the Government should pay more attention to rebuilding Britain's economic strength and the economies of other

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1. See LPCR 1950, pp. 59-60.

2. See L. Hunter op.cit. passim. Hunter quotes Bevan as saying shortly before the 1950 election, "I am not interested in the election of another Labour Government ... I am interested in the election of a Government that will make Britain a Socialist country." p. 22.

countries, and curb the excessive demands for military supplies. From this date onward the publication began advancing arguments that were to be used by Aneurin Bevan after he resigned. For example, a Tribune pamphlet, "Full Speed Ahead", issued pseudonymously on October 27th, 1950, argued that military rearmament should not have an over-riding priority because this would destroy the nation's economic strength. Whether it had already been given such a priority the author coyly refused to say. It argued that Russia lacked the economic potential and strategic advantages for starting a war. The pamphlet stated that the Labour Government could stand up more to American pressure because it had a good bargaining card -- British bases for American troops. It also suggested the use of a capital levy to raise money for armaments so as not to subtract revenue from the social services.

Differences within the Cabinet, based upon off-the-record interviews, on rearmament were reported in American publications in November, 1950. Bevan was said to be opposing any increase in British rearmament or receipt of American aid, so that the Labour Government could pursue a more independent policy.<sup>1</sup> The statements were

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1. See Newsweek 27.11.50 and 4.12.50, and New York Times, 19.11.50.

officially denied.<sup>1</sup> Attlee, however, discussed disagreements on rearmament in his visit to Truman in December. Domestic political difficulties at this time were giving Truman much greater leverage on Attlee than the latter had upon the former.<sup>2</sup>

The case against rearmament that Aneurin Bevan advanced in his resignation speech to the House of Commons on April 23rd, 1951, was broadly the same as that advanced by "Keeping Left" in January, 1950. Bevan showed the force of a priori principles by holding to them, in spite of intervening events in Asia, in America and in Europe. The resigning minister based his disagreement with his colleagues on differences in priorities.

"The defence programme must always be consistent with the maintenance of the standard of life of the British people and the maintenance of the social services ... as soon as it became clear we had engaged upon an arms programme inconsistent with those considerations, I could no longer remain a member of the Government." 3

The Cabinet's priorities were weakening the best means by which Communism could be combatted, the social services, which had given Britain "the moral leadership of the world." By contrast, the Cabinet's decision to rearm so much had resulted in a situation in which "the

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1. See The Times 28.11.50 and Tribune 1.12.50.

2. Truman Volume II p. 434

3. 487 HC 37, 23.4.51.

foundations of political liberty and parliamentary democracy will not be able to sustain the shock." <sup>1</sup> Bevan invoked once again the vision of a Socialist "third force":

"There is only one hope for mankind and that hope still remains in this little island. It is from here that we tell the world where to go and how to go there." <sup>2</sup>

In addition, he used pragmatic arguments to show that economic difficulties would prevent the Government from spending the amount it had budgeted for rearmament in the next twelve months, and hence the charges on the health service were unnecessary. <sup>3</sup> Materials shortages would bring "mass unemployment," he charged. <sup>4</sup> The speech of Harold Wilson, who resigned as President of the Board of Trade, and the statement of John Freeman, who resigned as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Supply, primarily emphasized practical arguments against the budget estimate of the amount that could be spent on defence. They also challenged the Government's priorities. <sup>5</sup>

The psychological basis of Aneurin Bevan's resignation

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1. 487 HC 37, 23.4.51.
  2. Ibid. Col. 39.
  3. Ibid. Col. 35.
  4. Ibid. Col. 37.
  5. See 487 HC 228ff, 24.4.51, and The Times 25.4.51. The Daily Express asserted that the exchange of letters between Wilson and Attlee was not printed because Wilson's was highly critical of Herbert Morrison's role in the controversy. 25.4.51.

There were expectations that G.R. Strauss, Minister of Supply, would also resign and some Bevanites felt bitterly towards him when he did not.

had long-term as well as short-term causes.<sup>1</sup> Temperamentally, he was always on the left, that is, given to drawing sharp verbal contrasts between the world as it was and the world of Socialist ideals, without detailed interest in or consideration of the complex difficulties and limitations of the moment. In the two previous major crises in the Labour Party, over unemployment in 1930-31, and over the Popular Front in the late 1930s, Aneurin Bevan both times left the Party in order to advocate more extreme courses. Even during the war Bevan gloried in the role of a backbench critic of the Coalition. It was only after 16 years of freedom from responsibility and administrative detail that he took a governmental post. He gained considerable personal credit from the establishment of the National Health Service. The success of the health service led him to hope for promotion in 1950, when the older Labour leaders were passing on, and men of Bevan's age were reaching their peak. The appointment of Gaitskell, his junior,

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1. Much of the following is based upon the correlating and cross-checking of published sources and confidential interviews with leading supporters of Aneurin Bevan from 1951.

as Chancellor wounded him deeply;<sup>1</sup> the naming of Morrison as Foreign Secretary was a second wound. Bevan, disliking the administrative reorganisation that was about to take place in his own department,<sup>2</sup> took the post of Minister of Labour in January, 1951, as a consolation prize. Attlee, by giving him this promotion, saddled the programme's major critic with the job of defending what he disliked. The temperamental minister's personal sense of frustration was played upon by some of his closest friends and political associates, equally opposed to the rearmament programme and to the general drift of the Cabinet. Bevan's wife, Jennie Lee,<sup>3</sup> Ian Mikardo<sup>4</sup> and Michael Foot were all pressing Bevan to resign long before he did. Foot urged him in the summer of 1950 to resign and start a nation-wide campaign for "more Socialism" in the Labour Party.<sup>5</sup> Bevan would have to have been a

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1. The removal of Cripps from the Cabinet was also important. Bevan had always looked up to Cripps, his leader in Socialist League days, as a person who could and would force a "left" line upon the Cabinet if convinced of its rightness. Attlee said later of Bevan: "He is one of those horses who work very well in harness. For six years the harness was Stafford Cripps." The Listener 22.1.59, p. 153.
  2. See The Observer 7.1.51.
  3. Jennie Lee was effervescent at the news of her husband's resignation, telling one associate happily: "We're out! We're out! I can hardly believe it." Interview.
  4. Mikardo has called Bevan "easily the greatest political intellect of this century."
  5. See e.g., The Observer 24.9.50.

degraded calculating machine to ignore the cumulative effect of these blandishments, which complemented so well his personal grievances. When the debate arose within the Cabinet on the health charges, personalities and principles united to make him oppose them. A week before the budget speech he said at a meeting in Bermondsey:

"I will never be a member of a Government which makes charges in the National Health Service for a patient." <sup>1</sup>

The gauntlet was thrown down. As one senior minister later characterised it, Bevan had turned to "blackmail." <sup>2</sup> Characteristically, it is impossible to determine whether the challenge to the Chancellor was fully premeditated or whether the orator had, in the course of his speech, suddenly hit upon a phrase that crystallized his complaints around an issue of principle, and offered release for his personal frustrations. At a minimum, it can be assumed that he had no long-term campaign against the Government in mind when he spoke. <sup>3</sup>

1. Quoted Manchester Guardian 23.4.51. Bevan had agreed in principle to putting charges on prescriptions when Minister of Health and Cripps was Chancellor, but this proposal had been abandoned as administratively impractical.
2. Interview.
3. Relevant here is the following character sketch, offered in an interview as a complimentary one, by one of Bevan's prominent supporters:  
 "Nye is one of the few creative men in Parliament. He can only think when he is talking. If you want to see Nye at his best, get him with a group of people and buy him a drink. Then put up a point to him, and watch him take what you have said and tear your idea to pieces. He won't leave anything. Then, a few days later in conversation elsewhere, you may hear him use exactly the point you had made."

Following the announcement of the health charges, there was a 13-day struggle between senior Cabinet ministers and backbench critics for the right to claim Nye Bevan as one of them. Bevan was taunted by Conservative MPs for not resigning at once, as he had pledged.<sup>1</sup> At a PLP meeting, Bevan, when asked if he intended to resign, declared he supported the budget generally.<sup>2</sup> Cabinet leaders sought to keep Bevan in office to prevent their critics from having a leader of senior stature, and also because a minister of Bevan's experience could not easily be spared at that time. Excluding Gaitskell's resignation, there was nothing that could be offered to him except toil and tears, mingled with the sackcloth and ashes that would be his for recanting his Bermondsey speech. The rewards that might have purchased his consent to the programme had already been given to others. His friends,<sup>3</sup>

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1. Manchester Guardian 12.4., 13.4.51. The New Statesman 14.4.51, and The Times parliamentary correspondent 12.4.51, both reported Bevan would not resign. Tribune denounced the Gaitskell budget as "dangerous" and compared Gaitskell with Snowden in 1931, the penultimate insult in the Labour anthology of maledictions. 20.4.51.
  2. Manchester Guardian 12.4.51. The meeting was dominated by news of the dismissal of General MacArthur, announced that morning. This led to speculation about a major shift in American foreign policy in the direction Bevan had suggested, for co-operation with "good" American liberals was part of the Bevanite policy. Truman, by firing MacArthur, had returned to the rank of "good" Americans, from which place he had been expelled the previous autumn.
  3. Not all the leading Bevanites were urging resignation, Barbara Castle and R.H.S. Crossman were reported as opposed, although accepting it when it occurred.

by contrast, could offer Bevan much: a chance to speak out in defence of his own version of Socialism; release from the arduous and unpleasant responsibilities of office, which involved defending things he did not like; the adulation and regard of many backbenchers and of many militant Party workers; and, at the end of all this, the opportunity of gaining the position of leader, already once denied him. Aneurin Bevan would have needed more self-control and more modesty than his best friends credit him with to have resisted all this. He resigned. His friends had won, and, as it later turned out, he was to lose.

The Bevanite group kept to its promise to support the Government in the House of Commons, so that it would not fall on a vote of confidence.<sup>1</sup> It also kept to its promises to raise a campaign against the rearmament programme in the country. Personal attacks upon ex-colleagues spiced arguments based on principles. At a Keir Hardie rally in Ayrshire, Bevan said:

"The movement should be careful to select its leaders in the main from those who have spent their lives in the Labour and trade union movement,

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1. Bevan could not, however, guarantee that some of his fellow-critics might not decide, independently of him, to refuse to support the Government on a vote of confidence. The Government whips and Herbert Morrison, by then Foreign Secretary, had to spend much energy and worry to make sure that this did not happen. Interview, Lord Shackleton (former PPS to Morrison) June, 1959.



first priority, the Bevanites said:

"The military rearmament of the Atlantic Powers should be subordinated to a World Plan for Mutual Aid. Britain should urge the use for this overriding purpose of a considerable part of labour and resources at present allocated to the combined rearmament programme; and we should give a lead by announcing our determination to do this with our own rearmament programme in the coming year." <sup>1</sup>

This should be done, the manifesto declared, because Socialists had "their proclaimed principle of fair shares <sup>2</sup> and their faith in the brotherhood of man." The July declaration urged that some of the 'extra' £1400 million scheduled for arms expenditure be transferred to meet the anticipated £700 million deficit in the six-year Colombo plan. The September pamphlet recommended cutting the rearmament programme to "something less than <sup>3</sup> £400 million." It was dubious about the value of any large military force in the cold war, because, as John Freeman put it:

"We cannot win it by arms; for the way of life to which we aspire cannot be imposed on others by force. We shall achieve it when we can demonstrate to the world -- to our own people, our allies, our opponents and those who have yet to choose -- that Socialism based upon political freedom offers the best opportunity for full and happy lives." <sup>4</sup>

The Labour Government did not let the Bevanite attacks pass without rebuttal. With Bevan and Wilson

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1. "One Way Only" p. 4.  
3. "Going Our Way?" p. 16.

2. Ibid. p. 5.  
4. Ibid. p. 11.

out of the Cabinet the balance of power within it shifted sharply to the right, in favour of consolidation of the domestic programme and heavy rearmament. This homogeneity of views within the Cabinet was, as The Observer pointed out, "a weakness, not a strength."<sup>1</sup> Gaitskell asserted in a speech on April 28th; "There must be priorities within the social service field as elsewhere within a planned economy."<sup>2</sup> Shinwell more pointedly declared, "Anyone who tries to persuade the public that in these times freedom can be defended without sacrifices and without hardships is deceiving himself and our people, and is doing a grave disservice to the nation."<sup>3</sup> George Strauss, Minister of Supply, said there was no reason to doubt that defence targets could be reached.<sup>4</sup> On April 26th Richard Stokes was named Lord Privy Seal and placed in charge of raw material supplies to counter criticism that the Government was not paying enough attention to materials shortages.

The greatest handicap at this time for the Government was that it was beginning to lose the wagers it had made upon the ability of the British economy to meet the demands

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1. 29.4.51.
  2. Mimeograph text of speech, p. 5. In fact, the total expenditure on social services was increased in the budget, with a notable rise in pensions. See Gaitskell 486 HC 847ff, 10.4.51.
  3. 487 HC 1137, 1.5.51.
  4. The Times 28.4.51.

of the rearmament programme. But because the heavy programme had been undertaken for military and diplomatic reasons, the Government could not suddenly abandon its commitments on account of economic difficulties. In 1950, when the Government first accepted commitments to rearm, the terms of trade, the balance of payments and exports were all highly favourable. By the summer of 1951, these factors had all become unfavourable; the reversal of fortunes took place with "incredible speed." The budget had been prepared in the spring with expectations of difficulties, but also with the expectation that the difficulties would be overcome.<sup>1</sup> The balance of payments, however, dropped \$304 million in the April-June quarter of 1951. By June exercises were started at the Treasury, but the difficulties, given a head start, outraced the Government's efforts to meet them. Many of them, such as materials shortages, terms of trade and American aid were beyond the control of the British Government. It was, as the TUC special committee on the economic situation politely phrased it, "a period of considerable social and industrial strain."<sup>2</sup> The

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1. Interviews.

2. TUCR 1951, p. 284. Trade unionists were doing their bit to contribute to the Chancellor's woes by pressing for higher wage claims in spite of his public and private pleas to union leaders for continued wage restraint.

Government struggled on. If not fully committed to a war-time psychology, ignoring civilian needs, it certainly put military needs first. This became clear after Gaitskell told the House on July 26th that the economic position had deteriorated considerably, and that exports would need to increase 25 per cent above those for the first six months of 1951.<sup>1</sup> Following this speech, which the Bevanites claimed as an admission that their criticisms were right,<sup>2</sup> the Government reiterated its commitment to the full rearmament budget. Shinwell stressed at a press conference promptly called to point up Russia's military strength:

"This is no time to talk of going slow or turning back. I am satisfied that the share of this general effort allotted to the United Kingdom is reasonable. We cannot do less."<sup>3</sup>

In August the economic situation became even worse. The drain on the gold and dollar balances was so severe that the Chancellor was recalled from his vacation to consider the matter.<sup>4</sup> The third quarter's loss was \$638 million. In spite of these heavy buffetings, in the short time left to it, the Labour Government did not waver in its

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1. 491 HC 651ff. See also The Times supplement; "The First Year of Rearmament; Financial Survey" 20.9.51.
  2. See "Going Our Way?" passim.
  3. The Times 28.7.51.
  4. Manchester Guardian 4.10.51.

commitment to place military considerations first. Before the Government was defeated at the general election on October 25th, there was no effort made within the Treasury or the Cabinet to calculate a defence programme based upon lower spending.

Ironically, a pamphlet that Transport House issued in August, 1951 to defend the Government's rearmament budget affirmed: "The allocation of resources to the various demands is a balance of priorities. In the choice between them lies the true nature of Socialism."<sup>1</sup> By the standards that the Labour Party itself had established in decades of propagandizing for Socialism, the Labour Government did not act in accord with traditional Socialist principles about the sources of power. In the debate on rearmament, the Bevanites were the defenders of the traditional Socialist faith. This did not bother the leaders of the Labour Government. Faced with the same set of facts as the Bevanites, they drew opposite conclusions from different principles. Military defence came first, and economic development and social services were very poor also. Attlee, Bevin, Morrison and Gaitskell looked back upon the results of the Labour Party's opposition to rearmament in the 1930s and its underestimation of immediate military dangers, and concluded that

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1. "Our First Duty -- Peace" p. 10.

traditional Socialist principles had been wrong and the advocates of priorities for military forces were right.

Neither Law Nor War.

"We have no right because we happen to be a stronger power in a number of cases to impose our views by force of arms upon the people of another country."

A. Bevan The Times 10.10.51.

While traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy justified the use of military force under international auspices, they also denied a nation the right to use force exclusively for its own benefit. What was true of disputes between European nations was even more strongly felt with regard to those between Britain and non-European nations. A guilt complex about imperialism compounded with other arguments to make Labour insist upon conciliation, reason and respect for native rights. For example, Arthur Henderson, while handling a dispute with Egypt as Foreign Secretary, said, "The policy of force is hardly worth a moment's discussion."<sup>1</sup> The Anglo-Iranian oil dispute of 1951 is a good case with which to measure the actions of the Labour Government in relation to this traditional principle.<sup>2</sup> The proposed Iranian

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1. M.A. Hamilton op.cit. p. 306.

2. The history of the events can be found in RIIA Survey, 1951 pp. 292-337; Cmd. 8425 (1951) and A.W. Ford The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute of 1951-2 (1954).

nationalisation of the Company threatened a British investment of £350 million, of which the British Government owned 51 per cent. The oil met 25 per cent of Britain's needs and sales of it were of "very great importance" as a dollar earner at a time of economic crisis.<sup>1</sup> The Labour Government had no doubt about the legal rights of the Company to exploit Persian oil until 1993, under terms of existing agreements. Within the Party and within the House of Commons there was absolute agreement as to the end to be achieved -- the protection of British property rights in Iran. The differences on means were considerable.

Throughout the dispute there was an undertone of demands from the Conservative benches for an assurance from the Government that military force would be used, if necessary, to protect the Company's rights.<sup>2</sup> The cumulative resentment of the Conservatives with the Labour Government's colonial policy had found a point of focus. Winston Churchill gave official approval to the backbench clamour when he told the House at the climax of a debate on July 30th, 1951:

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1. Interview, Douglas Jay, July, 1958. The former Financial Secretary at the Treasury particularly stressed the dollar value of the oil at the time. The long-term importance of the oil was being diminished by increased exploitation in Basra, Kuwait and Iraq. RIIA Survey 1951, p. 294.
  2. See RIIA Survey 1951, p. 322ff, and D. Sandys 489 HC 763-5, 21.6.51.

"They [the British in Abadan] must stay and we must never agree to their being withdrawn. If violence is offered to them we must not hesitate to intervene, if necessary, by force, and give all the necessary protection to our fellow subjects."

"Mr. Ellis Smith: 'That means war.'" <sup>1</sup>

The Labour Government rejected the use of force to secure its property. Throughout the dispute it relied upon diplomacy, negotiation and adjudication, the traditional Socialist means of settling disputes. <sup>2</sup> Of course, <sup>3</sup> pragmatic considerations influenced the Government. Many defenders of the Government's position mixed arguments of principle and of pragmatism. Sir Hartley Shawcross, for example, in one speech opposed the use of force because "the general climate of world opinion makes

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1. 491 HC 995. Italics supplied.
  2. Interviews strongly suggest that Herbert Morrison, the Foreign Secretary, was for some time personally in favour of defending British property with military force, but that his personal views never received serious consideration in the Cabinet. Morrison told the House of Commons, on April 13th, when questioned about riots resulting in British deaths in Iran: "We are watching the situation closely and reserve the right to act as we see fit to protect British lives and property. We must hold the Persian Government responsible for all injuries and loss that may be sustained by British nationals and interests." (486 HC 1333-4. See also Lord Henderson, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 170 HL 1094, 14.3.51.)  
The movement of British ships and paratroopers around the Middle East from March 23rd (RIIA Survey 1951, pp.311-2; New York Times 27.5.51) is not conclusive evidence that Morrison's view was ever official policy, since troops would have been held in readiness to protect British lives and their presence would serve as a bluff.
  3. They are best summed up by R.R. Stokes (an M.C. with bar) 494 HC 242, 20.11.51.

gunboat diplomacy no longer possible" and also because, even if force were employed, "It is most probable that the refinery would have been destroyed and the lives of the British staff at Abadan would have been endangered."<sup>1</sup>

The Government hoped for some time that the Persian need for oil revenue, for foreign technicians, transport and marketing facilities would prevent Persia from expelling the British.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, it feared that armed intervention would lead to the destruction of much of the Company's property in the oil fields and a refusal by Persians to work for the Company. These beliefs were also known to Conservative advocates of the use of force. That they should be determinant was only 'self-evident' if one believed that military force could not settle a political and economic grievance. If, however, one believed, as many Conservatives did, that military force was sufficient, these considerations could be discounted. The different values the two parties put on these considerations were differences of principle resulting from different ideas about the nature of power.<sup>3</sup>

When negotiations failed to progress, the Labour Government submitted the dispute to the International Court

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1. The Times 8.10.51. See also H. Morrison The Listener 25.10.51, pp. 650-1; LPCR 1951, p. 129, and 494 HC 65, 19.11.51.
  2. See e.g., Morrison 487 HC 1008ff, 1.5.51.
  3. The Conservative Government's Suez intervention in 1956 and the Labour Party's opposition to it underscore this point.

of Justice, although, as The Times diplomatic correspondent wrote, there was "no reason to be hopeful that a judgment in favour of this country would be honoured by a Persian government of the same character as that now in office."<sup>1</sup> The Court's interim opinion, issued July 5th, held that operations in the oilfields should continue on the terms of May 1st, without aggravation, pending settlement of the dispute.<sup>2</sup> This decision, which favoured Britain, was rejected by Iran.

The Government then turned once more to negotiation, upon the basis of Persia owning the oil company and Britain participating in operations and sales.<sup>3</sup> The Lord Privy Seal, Richard Stokes, was placed in charge of the British delegation to Tehran. After two weeks of negotiation optimism evaporated. There the xenophobic fervour was stronger than the commercial instinct. Negotiations broke down, nominally because of disagreement on the terms under which British technicians were to work.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the Labour Government decided to apply economic sanctions against Iran. Facilities for banking were

1. 28.5.51.
2. See International Court of Justice Reports 1951, pp. 89-94 for the text.
3. The Times 4.8.51. Given the British confidence in the inability of the Iranian Government to refine or sell oil, this concession to nationalisation was more symbolic than real.
4. See Cmd. 8425, p. 54ff, for details.

suspended and some supplies of goods from Britain to Iran were stopped <sup>1</sup> en route.

At this juncture the Labour Government could have decided to resort to military force, to the United Nations, to another attempt at negotiation without hope of settlement or do nothing. In spite of the fact that the United Nations had shown itself singularly unsuited to protect particular British interests, the Government appealed to it on September 28th. This could not overcome the basic difficulty -- the unwillingness of Iran to negotiate a settlement on any but its own terms. The way in which the Government viewed the situation was indicated by Sir Gladwyn Jebb's remark to the Council, that appealing to the UN was "the only course open to the United Kingdom at the present time." <sup>2</sup> The Security Council politely heard the British justification of the good works of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company <sup>3</sup> and its resolution, which called for the continued production of oil at Abadan by British staff under terms of the International Court's ruling. <sup>4</sup> The resolution was twice watered down. The final draft approved October 19th,

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1. The Times 11.9.51.

2. SC 559th meeting, 1.10.51, p. 11. Italics supplied. Kenneth Younger put a moral gloss upon this: "We encourage others to settle their disputes in the United Nations. We must do the same ourselves." The Times 10.10.51.

3. SC 559th meeting, 1.10.51, p. 11ff.

4. UN Document S/2358, 1951.

only noted that Britain accepted the Court's ruling and Iran did not. It also called for the resumption of negotiations.<sup>1</sup>

By the time the Security Council reached this compromise, the immediate problem had been resolved. The Labour Government, in response to Persian pressure, ordered the total evacuation of Abadan. This was completed on October 4th. Diplomatic debate at the UN had lasted long enough to provide a cover for the Government's refusal to use force, a policy for which it was strongly attacked<sup>2</sup> by Conservatives in the election campaign then raging.<sup>2</sup> Attlee's statement to the House of Commons on July 30th<sup>3</sup> - "Our intention is not to evacuate entirely"<sup>3</sup> - was frequently cited against the Government. The Prime Minister answered that while the Government had not intended to evacuate, it was equally its intention not to use force to keep Britain in Iran.<sup>4</sup> Compelled to choose between the use of force or evacuating an important British property overseas, the Labour Government chose not to use force.

Ironically, the immediate cause of the failure of the Labour Government's policy was that the Mossadeq government was acting directly contrary to traditional Socialist

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1. See UN Document S/2358, Rev. 2, 1951, and SC 565th meeting, p. 12.

2. See e.g., Churchill, The Times 3.10.51.

3. 491 HC 1072.

4. The Times 6.10.51.

expectations. It rejected arbitration, refused jurisdiction of the International Court, showed little willingness to negotiate and was truculent at the United Nations. The xenophobic nationalism of Dr. Mossadeq was as much unaccounted for in traditional Labour policy-making as the nationalism of Dr. Dalton. But the fact that the Persian Government had acted unexpectedly did not justify the use of military force to the Labour Government. As Ernest Davies explained:

"Because wrong methods are used and the rule of law set aside, it is no justification for resorting to force to insist on the maintenance of rights in the territories of foreign powers which wish to terminate those rights."<sup>1</sup>

The action of the Cabinet was in full harmony with sentiment within the PLP. The oil dispute was one of the few foreign policy issues on which the Government was not attacked by its own supporters. The imperialist basis of the British claims made the interest an unpopular one in the PLP. "Oil politics was one of the last things for which Labour members wanted to fight."<sup>2</sup> The Government's defeat in the general election of 1951 prevented it from being in office to enjoy fully the justification, in 1954,

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1. The Times 11.10.51. John Freeman, in a debate on the Egyptian question at about the same time, declared explicitly that public opinion and national claims took precedence over the legal rights of the British government. 495 HC 859, 5.2.52.
  2. Ernest Davies, Interview, July 1958. Even Ambassador Shepherd, in a letter to the Persian Prime Minister on February 23rd, 1951, did not deny charges of British imperialism; he only said they were "out of date". Cmd. 8425, p. 24.

of its action in accordance with traditional Socialist principles in 1951.

### Conclusion

"I accept that if we are to create and build up a Socialist society we have a right to face up to the responsibilities of the defence of that society."  
John McGovern (Ex-ILP) 458 HC 2088, 1.12.48.

"We believe that the rearmament programmes of the democracies offer the best hope for peace."  
H. Gaitskell, TUCR 1951, p. 363.

In the weakened state of Britain at the end of World War II, traditional Socialist principles of power appeared to offer a particularly congenial policy for a Labour Government to follow. The nation's economic weakness meant that only if moral and diplomatic sources of power were rated highest could Britain remain an equal among the Big Three. For example, Tribune argued that since Britain was the weakest of the Big Three it would gain most if it tried to exert a "Socialist" influence in international affairs rather than play power politics.<sup>1</sup>

The Labour Government, however, did not follow this traditional and congenial way of assessing its sources of power. After five years in the War Cabinet Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin were strongly devoted to defending British interests by military strength. Whereas

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1. 2.2.45.

traditional Socialist principles held that reducing armaments was the way to reduce international tension, the Labour Government held that only after the reduction of international (and colonial) tension would it dispense with a large military force. Given post-war full employment and low recruitment, the Government had to continue conscription, or else alter its policy. It chose to abandon one of the oldest Party principles rather than reduce its military manpower.

Because the appreciation of military power developed by Labour leaders in the wartime Coalition had not completely filtered down to the rank-and-file, there was strong opposition to conscription from a sizeable section of the PLP. The anti-conscriptionists won a single, limited and isolated victory. After that their claim to resist conscription on principle was shattered. A different and much less effective group of critics continuously criticised the Government's emphasis upon military force as a factor contributing to world tension and a drain upon the domestic economy. These backbench critics assumed either that there was no risk of military trouble in Europe, or, after the formation of NATO, that Russian aggression could be forestalled by the threat of American counterattack, rather than by the presence of substantial British and American arms. At this point, however, the Labour critics were accepting, often without

recognising it, the balance of power, long the chief ogre in the chamber of Socialist horrors. As the "Keeping Left" pamphlet illustrates, while most backbench critics accepted NATO, they retained their traditional Socialist notions about the sources of power. For the Government, the North Atlantic Treaty was only an extension of its 1945-46 policy of defending national interests by military force. As Sam Watson explained, in his speech as chairman of the Labour Party in 1950:

"The history of war is not the history of the attack of the strong on the strong, but of the strong on the weak." 1

By strong, Watson and the Government meant, strong in military force. By weak, they meant, supplied only with diplomatic and moral weapons to check an aggression. These were the weapons that had notably failed to stop the armies of Hitler.

Differences of principle once more came to the foreground in the debate within the Party and within the Cabinet on rearmament in 1950-51. Because the Bevanites placed economic and moral power first, they doubted the immediate threat of Russian aggression. They were concerned with continuing the development of welfare programmes, in Asia as in Britain. As John Freeman put it:

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1. LPCR 1950, p. 78. The whole speech is well worth reading.

"A power station in India, a ton of tinsplate in Denmark, a railway in West Africa or a health centre in Hong Kong are almost certainly worth far more in terms of cold war strategy than the equivalent industrial effort expended in armed men."<sup>1</sup>

The Government rejected the Bevanites' evaluation of the nation's dangers, and how to meet them. Instead, it ranked military force as the most important consideration. Woodrow Wyatt, once a Keep Left member but by 1951 Under-Secretary of State for War, explained:

"If Stalin or Mao Tse-Tung intend to march, they will only be deterred by arms and not by coffee-growing schemes in Africa or irrigation schemes in India."<sup>2</sup>

The Bevanites were right in their major practical charge: the 1951-52 service estimates were not fully realised, because of economic problems, and the three-year target of £4700 million was abandoned by no less a military expert than Winston Churchill. The Government could also claim it was right, in spite of the economic failure of its rearmament programme, for it was not framed with reference to economic criteria, nor was it designed to meet short-term or long-term economic problems. Instead, the programme was designed to meet an immediate military and, as regards America, a diplomatic danger. The NATO alliance held; war did not come. This was the object

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1. J. Freeman "Rearmament -- How Far?" (Fabian Tract #288, September 1951) p. 11.
  2. W. Wyatt "Outlook in the Cold War" Fabian Journal (#6, February, 1952) p. 24.

of Gaitskell's 1951 rearmament budget. At this point the Government was farthest from the world of Labour ideals, and at this point the discipline that the Government had exercised upon its critics failed to work. Aneurin Bevan resigned from the Cabinet and challenged the Government's policy. It is relatively unimportant whether it was primarily conviction or personal frustration that led Bevan to quit the Cabinet to campaign for traditional Socialist values. The important point is that once he had left, he collected a group of supporters sufficiently strong to result in the biggest split in either Party since the 1930s.

Two other major problems involving force faced the Government. Its action in helping resist the invasion of South Korea was a model of international collective security, made possible by the temporary absence of Russia from UN meetings. The differences between the United States and the Labour Government on the response to Chinese intervention illustrate different attitudes held by the two Governments when confronted with a given set of facts. The United States wished to punish China by inflicting military defeat; the Labour Government wished to reform China by diplomatic negotiation, moral <sup>1</sup>suasion and long-term economic co-operation. Each Government

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1. Broadly speaking, similar differences have been shown between Conservatives and Labour in debates in the House of Commons on crime.

believed that the other's policy threatened eventual disaster on the Asian mainland. The Labour Government's position was compounded of military prudence and traditional Socialist ideas of the nature of power.

The Anglo-Iranian oil dispute was notable as an instance in which the Conservative and Labour parties disagreed about the Government's conduct of foreign relations. Their differences on the use of force to secure British interests reflected a fundamental disagreement about the nature of power. The Government, by refraining from using force to secure its ends, was here acting in accord with traditional Socialist principles. Thus, it showed in one of its last acts in office that it was as unwilling to commit itself completely to military ideas of how to get one's way as it was to commit itself completely to traditional Socialist principles.

## Chapter VI

## THE FOREIGN OFFICE

"There must be an absolute broadening of the curriculum and of the right of entry into the diplomatic service. If the boys from the secondary schools can save us in the Spitfires, the same brains can be turned to produce the new world."

Ernest Bevin TUCR 1940, p. 325.

"I am not one of those who decry Eton and Harrow. I was very glad of them in the Battle of Britain. Those fellows paid the price in the RAF on those fatal days."

Ernest Bevin LPCR 1946, p. 164.

Traditionally, the Foreign Office and the diplomatic service were suspect within the Labour Party.<sup>1</sup> The identification of particular career diplomats such as Eyre Crowe and Sir Neville Henderson with policies especially disliked by the Party reflected general discredit upon the Foreign Office. The Party was against the existing system of diplomacy and the men who were an essential part

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1. Because the Party did not consistently and officially criticize the Foreign Office, its reform could not be considered a traditional principle of the same authority as those discussed earlier in this thesis.

For a sample of pre-1945 criticisms see "Control of Foreign Policy" (LP, c. 1920); J. Ramsay MacDonald LPCR 1921, pp. 172-3; R. Nightingale "The Personnel of the British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service, 1851-1929" (Fabian Tract #232, 1930); H.R.G. Greaves "The Parliamentary Control of Foreign Affairs (New Fabian Research Bureau #11, c.1933); F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, 387 HC 1373ff, 18.3.43.

of it. Both required reform. As Socialism emphasized the importance of environment, class and education, Labour Party members often drew from this the inference that persons born into relatively privileged and aristocratic homes and educated in the public schools would be unable to represent a Labour Government properly, because they could neither understand the British working-class nor the common people in countries where they served.<sup>1</sup> Since the traditional aim of Socialists was to realise in foreign policy the wishes of the common people everywhere,<sup>2</sup> it followed that a Labour Government would need to change the personnel as well as the direction of the Foreign Office.

Both MacDonald and Henderson selected as political associates at the Foreign Office men from relatively privileged and even aristocratic backgrounds. MacDonald was served by Arthur Ponsonby and Lord Parmoor; Henderson, by Dalton, Noel-Baker, and Viscount Cecil of Chelwood.<sup>3</sup>

Although MacDonald had denounced the Foreign Office for

1. Lord Strang wrote of such charges: "These criticisms were not entirely without substance." The Foreign Office (1955) p. 70. Until 1918 a candidate for the diplomatic service had to have a private income of £400 per annum. Thus, a large number of senior officials in 1945 (that is, men more than 50 years old) had private incomes.
2. For example, Konni Zilliacus in an interview in March, 1959, stressed several times the need for "democratic control" of foreign policy. This in turn reflected his early associations with the Union of Democratic Control.
3. Ponsonby was a son of Queen Victoria's private secretary; Dalton and Noel-Baker were both at King's College, Cambridge. Dalton was an Etonian and was raised at Windsor Castle, where his father was chaplain to the Royal Family.

requiring "as essential to its continuance not only secrecy but deceit,"<sup>1</sup> he did not attempt to reform the service.

While MacDonald annoyed some Party members interested in foreign affairs, including Norman Angell and Sir Charles Trevelyan,<sup>2</sup> his achievements as Foreign Secretary were sufficient to reflect credit upon Labour; they did not generate increased suspicion of diplomats. Arthur Henderson, upon his appointment as Foreign Secretary in 1929, felt that his permanent officials tried to dominate him at first by rushing him with recommendations.

Henderson refused to be rushed. When written orders sometimes failed to secure proper attention from subordinates, Henderson let his anger speak for him. In the words of his biographer: "He was at the helm and they all knew it."<sup>3</sup> Henderson and Dalton even circulated copies of "Labour and the Nation"<sup>4</sup> to the staff.

During World War II, arrangements were made by the War Cabinet to recruit and re-organise the foreign service after the war. The White Paper which announced these

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1. "A Policy for the Labour Party", quoted in L. MacNeil Weir The Tragedy of Ramsay MacDonald (n.d., c. 1938) p. 148.
  2. See Angell After All p. 239ff and Beatrice Webb Diaries, 1924-32 p. 60.
  3. M.A. Hamilton op.cit. p. 290.
  4. Dalton Call Back Yesterday p. 219ff. Dalton also investigated the number of Roman Catholics in the department.

changes admitted in part the Labour charge that British diplomats had not always been qualified to meet alterations in the conduct of international affairs. It stated:

"The conditions which the diplomatic service originally grew up to meet no longer exist unchanged in modern international affairs. Economics and finance have become inextricably interwoven with politics; an understanding of social problems and the labour movement is indispensable." <sup>1</sup>

The reforms announced in 1943 were intended to broaden the outlook of new recruits to the foreign service. <sup>2</sup> Bevin was particularly proud of the provisions made for labour attachés at major embassies, a reform in which the Party <sup>3</sup> had long been interested, and one he promoted.

The return of a Labour Government at a time when all Europe was believed to be going left made many Labour supporters expect that new diplomats would be found to represent the 'new' diplomacy. The New Statesman argued that this would be necessary since "professional diplomats", a term used with some contempt, were "quite incapable" of providing the Foreign Secretary with adequate information. <sup>4</sup> Socialist Commentary cautioned that it would take time to develop a foreign service that "represents the British people and not a section of its privileged

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1. Cmd. 6420 (1943) p. 2.
  2. See Strang The Foreign Office p. 68ff, and E. Bevin, 441 HC 223, 11.8.47.
  3. See F. Williams Ernest Bevin p. 236; LPCR 1946, p.164.
  4. 4.8.45. See also, 11.8.45.

classes," but it assumed that this change would come.<sup>1</sup>  
Major changes were not made.

Bevin explained why in his address to the June, 1946 Annual Conference. He told critics of the foreign service that he had decided "to stick to the career man."

"You talk of a Foreign Embassy as if it were a place dealing only with political things. It is a business and I am determined before I go out to make it a very efficient business ...

"I am not going to sack right and left. Before I make a change I want to know I can make a business change and carry on successfully." <sup>2</sup>

He said it was important to remember that there was a shortage of experienced personnel to cope with the many diplomatic problems at hand, that many members of the permanent staff had been doing good work, and that abandoning the seniority principle and giving high posts to inexperienced newcomers would destroy the morale of his diplomats. Bevin also believed that if ever he began to distribute some diplomatic appointments on a party basis he would be continually besieged by seekers after places, and the demand for jobs would always outrun the supply.

Arguments of administrative efficiency did not silence those who had long been suspicious of the professional diplomatic corps. The Government's retention of Duff

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1. Agust, 1945, p. 143.

2. LPCR 1946, p. 164.

Cooper, a prominent Conservative and society figure, as ambassador to France and the appointment of Sir Alexander Cadogan, who was Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office at the time of Munich, as permanent British representative to the Security Council, were particular causes of protest.<sup>1</sup> In the House of Commons Jennie Lee explained:

"The background of discontent on this issue is that the diplomatic service of this country is almost solely in the hands of people who apparently do not understand the philosophy of this Government."<sup>2</sup>

Hector McNeil denied charges that Cadogan was occupying a position concerned with making policy and declared he had been a civil servant trusted by Arthur Henderson. Private discussions of diplomatic appointments became "quite stormy"; Labour MPs wanted to know why survivors of the era of appeasement were not being discarded.<sup>3</sup>

There was an undertone of desire for patronage, if not personal advancement, in some of the criticism of the foreign service. The New Statesman reported that many Labour MPs "cannot stomach" some of the new diplomatic appointees because of their inability to understand Labour movements. It asked that the Government use men who had

1. Cooper was the son of a knight and nephew of a Duke; Cadogan, a younger son of the fifth Earl Cadogan. Both were Etonians and Oxonians. Cooper op.cit. p. 360ff, had expected to be sacked after the 1945 general election.
2. 418 HC 1350, 4.2.46.
3. See Manchester Guardian 5.2.46, for a detailed account of the views of the critics.

shown special understanding of conditions on the Continent by their work in wartime intelligence and propaganda activities.<sup>1</sup> This was the sort of war work for which R.H.S. Crossman, the assistant editor, had won an O.B.E. The PLP's foreign affairs group, chafing at its lowly status, lobbied for the establishment of a committee of full-time experts outside the foreign service to supervise the day-to-day execution of long-term policy. Tribune<sup>2</sup> supported this.

At the 1946 Annual Conference the critics of the foreign service presented a resolution which urged "a drastic revision of existing methods of recruitment" and the early retirement of men "whose whole background and tradition have rendered them incapable of understanding the first principles of such a policy," i.e., a "Socialist" foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> The mover of the resolution declared that diplomatic appointees should be sympathetic to

**Socialism:**

"They should not be men who were brought up in the old narrow ruling circles of Eton and Harrow and Rugby, followed by Oxford and Cambridge. These men are quite incapable of representing us."<sup>4</sup>

The seconder asserted, "Men who represented appeasement and were appointed by Tory Governments are not people who today

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1. 9.2.46. 2. 7.6.46. 3. LPCR 1946, p.152

4. Ibid. At that time, there were four Oxford or Cambridge graduates in the Cabinet (Attlee, Dalton, Jowitt and Pethick-Lawrence) and six Cabinet ministers who had attended public schools (Attlee, Dalton, Jowitt, Pethick-Lawrence, Cripps and Stansgate).

can understand the forces of revolution in Europe."<sup>1</sup>  
 Sir Richard Acland assumed that the full co-operation of  
 the foreign service in carrying out Bevin's policy would  
 be proof of the wrongness of it, since foreign service men  
 had also carried out, and presumably approved, the policy  
 of Munich.<sup>2</sup> The resolution failed.

Criticism nonetheless continued.<sup>3</sup> At the 1947  
 Annual Conference a resolution was presented which asked  
 for the appointment of diplomats "more in touch with the  
 aspirations of the common people of the world." The  
 mover, Bob Edwards, declared that since Socialists believed  
 that foreign affairs concerned the common people "the  
 people should be allowed to have a greater responsibility  
 in that field of activity."<sup>4</sup> One speaker suggested that  
 appointments be made in consultation with trade unions.  
 "It cannot be said that to use the existing machinery of  
 the trade unions can be patronage."<sup>5</sup> Bevin gave the

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1. LPCR 1946, p. 153. There were never any suspicions shown in the Labour Party about Foreign Office staff being too far left, as turned out to be the case with two Cambridge graduates, Burgess and Maclean, whose disappearance became known in June, 1951.
  2. Ibid. p. 160.
  3. See e.g., a report of a study by the foreign affairs group of the PLP. Manchester Guardian 11.12.46.
  4. Bevin more than once talked in a similar way. He told the Miners: "Foreign affairs in the past has been treated as if they were something over the heads of everybody; they were supposed to be matters for very clever diplomats. Believe me, that is all moonshine. Foreign affairs is commonsense people talking to commonsense people. That is all it amounts to." Conference Report, 1948, p. 117. NUM Annual
  5. All quotations, LPCR 1947, pp. 165-6.

request brief and somewhat humorous consideration. He assured Conference, "The new examination is such that with ordinary intelligence, people can win through."<sup>1</sup> In fact, the minimum academic qualification was a second class honours degree or the equivalent thereof. Of qualified candidates, only 8 per cent -- 64 out of 793 -- were successful in the period 1948-51. After that the percentage of successful candidates was cut in half.<sup>2</sup> The resolution was withdrawn after Bevin requested that it be rejected. Interest in reforming the foreign service then declined. Whereas 21 motions had been offered on the subject at the 1946 Conference and 4 in 1947, no resolutions were submitted in the four succeeding years.

The critics were correct when they charged that the advent of a Labour Government had not caused a marked change in the social characteristics of the new members of the foreign service. Of 250 candidates accepted from the end of the war up to 1950, about 180 had been at public schools in the Headmasters' Conference, and 53 at Eton, Winchester or Rugby. The lesser public schools educated a relatively larger number of successful candidates than before the war. Of university graduates 206 had been at

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1. LPCR 1947, p. 179.

2. See Cmnd. 232 "Recruitment to the Administrative Class of the Home Civil Service and the Senior Branch of the Foreign Service" (1957) p. 17.

Oxford or Cambridge; London, with 13 graduates, was third on the list. Of the staff of about 700, 32 were retired prematurely on pensions because of unsuitability, under terms of a change introduced in 1943.<sup>1</sup> In so far as the types of candidates from these backgrounds were different from before the war, this was largely due to Coalition decisions to fill vacancies created by the war through special recruitment. Bevin himself was not interested in the social characteristics of his assistants; all he asked was that they would assist him in carrying out the Government's foreign policy. Satisfied in this, he saw no need for change, and tried to protect his career civil servants from losing promotion because of their social class.<sup>2</sup>

#### Who Ran Whom?

"Bevin couldn't be any place where he wasn't in charge."

P.J. Noel-Baker, Interview, April, 1958.

"Class has nothing to do with success as Foreign Secretary. What it takes is ability. Some men have it and others don't."

Lord Henderson, Interview, May, 1959.

Critics of the foreign service were also critics of

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1. See The Times 17th April 1950. Similar figures were reported for the final two years of Labour in office. See Ernest Davies, "The Foreign and Commonwealth Services" Political Quarterly (1954) p. 347ff. Statistics in Cmnd. 232, p. 25ff, indicate that from 1948 to 1956 the class of persons recruited had not significantly altered; only 9.4% of successful candidates came from working-class or lower middle class families.
  2. See e.g., LPCR 1946, p. 164.

the Government's foreign policy. Instead of making a frontal attack upon one of the Government's foremost members, a number of critics attacked Bevin's policy by charging that, since it differed so much from traditional Labour expectations, it was not really determined by the Government but by the Foreign Office. A variant of this theme was to indict Bevin for carrying out a 'Tory' foreign policy. The foreign service was charged with conducting a successful conspiracy to maintain the existing order of international relations and prevent a Socialist foreign policy from being born. Bevin was sometimes pictured as an unwitting puppet of his subordinates and at other times as a ready convert to the so-called Foreign Office viewpoint. William Warbey, drawing upon his own difficulties in keeping up with foreign affairs as a backbench MP, concluded that Bevin "must inevitably to a very great extent rely upon his permanent officials." They, of course, were unreliable, from the Labour point of view.<sup>1</sup> The New Statesman, by contrast, charged:

"Never has the Foreign Office had a master with a more monumental power of putting over its policy as his very own, both to his own party and to the House of Commons. Instead of reforming the foreign

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1. LPCR 1946, p. 162. Ernest Davies op.cit. p. 354, found that the trouble sometimes was that officials leaned over backward to agree with or attempt to flatter the Foreign Secretary.

service as many Socialists hoped he would do, he has identified himself with it whole-heartedly." 1

Rather than believe that their traditional Socialist principles were unsuited to the post-war world, these Party members preferred to look elsewhere for faults.

These critics ignored, however, the fact that both Attlee and Cripps fully endorsed Bevin's actions. If critics had suggested that Attlee and Cripps had assented because of ignorance of foreign affairs, they would have been placed in the embarrassing position of asserting that the two best-known advocates of their ideas in the 1930s did not understand what they had been talking about. In fact, the critics of Ernest Bevin did not broaden the charges against him to include the whole Cabinet. Yet constitutionally and in practice, because of the ramifications of foreign policy into other fields, what was done in the Government's name required the continuing assent of senior ministers.

As an assistant of Bevin later pointed out, "The extent to which the Secretary of State will be influenced depends upon the strength of his personality and that of the permanent under-secretary." 2 Hugh Dalton adds as

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1. New Statesman 10.8.46. See also, Harold Laski Reflections on the Constitution (1951) passim.
  2. E. Davies op.cit. p. 356.

the second important consideration, "If you know what you want to do, you can tell your civil servants to do it."<sup>1</sup> Significantly, almost all the criticism directed at Bevin came from persons who had had least chance to work with him and few dealings with civil servants. Among those who worked with Bevin in the Government, there was no doubt about the commanding nature of his intellect and of his personality. In public, it was Bevin's personality that made an immediate impression; in private, it was, above all, his power of mind that impressed those who worked with him. As Lord Strang, a permanent under-secretary, said in paying tribute to Bevin's grasp of the world of foreign affairs:

"His knowledge of the world, in its essential aspects, was profound. It was drawn from transactions with trade union leaders in many lands and from conferences with governmental, trade union and employers' delegates at meetings of the International Labour Organisation. Nothing could be less professional in its formation than his equipment for his new office, yet nothing could have been more adequate, even for professional purposes." 2

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1. Interview, December, 1957. Bevin shared this view. LPCR 1946, p. 165. Bevin had the reputation of being a strong Minister of Labour and one of the few members of the War Cabinet who could stand up to Churchill. See Francis Williams Ernest Bevin Chapter XIX.
  2. Lord Strang Home and Abroad (1956) p. 288. See also, p. 292ff, where Strang speaks of what the permanent officials learned from Bevin. Alan Bullock, who is preparing a two-volume biography of Bevin shares this view.

Bevin had unique opportunities to put his own knowledge to use and to test information conveyed to him by the foreign service, because he so often had personal contact with leading officials from every continent except South America. At the Council of Foreign Ministers, Commonwealth conferences and NATO meetings, he not only talked with representatives of other nations, but also negotiated agreements with them. Few, if any, of his predecessors or contemporaries dealt personally with so many high-ranking foreign officials as did Ernest Bevin. He was well known for the emphasis he placed upon loyalty. If, at international conferences, he had felt himself poorly or dishonestly advised by his subordinates, there is no doubt that he would have let his resentment become known.

What Bevin's critics overlooked in constructing their model of decision-making at the Foreign Office was that the lines ran down as well as up. The Foreign Secretary, as the source of all authority in the department, could ultimately assert himself as well as initiate specific policies. No one ever accused Ernest Bevin of being unaware of the facts of power. The staff at the Foreign Office at all levels was personally devoted as well as loyal to the Foreign Secretary. This devotion still

shines in their recollections of him.<sup>1</sup> Bevin's willingness to protect them from criticism from the Labour backbenches, and his ability to insure an easy passage through the Cabinet for agreed policy, strengthened the bond between Bevin and his subordinates. Because of different responsibilities and different experiences of members, there were always grounds for differences of opinion within the service itself. In the process of briefs being minuted on their way up to the Foreign Secretary, a wide range of opinions could be presented for his consideration. To the charge that responsible professional diplomats were narrow-minded by virtue of their training, it could be answered that Labour critics were by training not responsible.

Ultimately, criticism of Ernest Bevin as a tool of the foreign service was not directed against the man, or even against the institution, but against the policy. As Max Beloff has pointed out, people wanted a more or less democratic foreign service in direct proportion to their desire to change foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> The foreign

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1. Strang Home and Abroad, passim, repeatedly emphasizes this point, which has been confirmed in numerous interviews.
  2. Foreign Policy and the Democratic Process (1955) p. 25.

service provided a much more attractive target for critics than the constitutional and real culprit -- the Labour Cabinet. That the objection was more to policy than to personnel is indicated by the fact that the foreign service under MacDonald and Henderson was even more suspect on social grounds than the personnel serving Bevin. Because the foreign policies of these men were popular in the Party, their professional assistants were not attacked strenuously, and credit and blame were placed where they rightfully belonged, with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

## Chapter VII

## THE POLITICS OF SUCCESS

"The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master -- that is all.'"

L. Carroll, Through the Looking-Glass.

The Labour Party originated as a movement of men hitherto excluded from government; it developed with the freedom from responsibility allowed in opposition. The Party was opposed to the domestic and foreign policy of the governing parties, and lacked experience of governing by itself. It was the Annual Conference of the membership, not a parliamentary caucus or a cabal of cabinet ministers, that was the centre of the Party's life and the place for ratifying policy. The members called forth the leaders, and maintained the show of rank-and-file direction of policy, since the leaders for so long lacked the prestige of Government office and the powers that go with it.<sup>1</sup> Before 1945 the Party had a relatively small membership in the House of Commons. For only three years between 1906 and 1945 did it constitute as much as one-quarter of the House, and never as much as one-half.

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1. Beatrice Webb noted in May, 1923, that in the Labour Party, in sharp contrast to the Liberals and Conservatives, "The leaders do not dominate; insofar as they lead, they lead by perpetual consultation with the rank-and-file members." Diaries, 1912-24 p. 237.

Debate in Annual Conference provided a focal point for the activity of Party members, and votes there afforded a psychological substitute for the traditional excitement of nineteenth century Parliamentary divisions. By making explicit in resolutions just what was supported, the Party could also disown ideas that opponents and erst-while supporters tried to foist on it in the name of Socialism. The concept of Conference determining future Government policy could be sustained because of the Party's growth as a party of opposition. There was little serious consideration of the practical difficulties of translating Party policy into Government achievement, especially in the field of foreign affairs, where British governments had to work through agreements with other sovereign states. The generally hesitant reformism of the two MacDonald governments was discounted later as evidence of incipient 'treason' or as the result of the dependence of a minority government upon Liberal support.<sup>1</sup>

Before 1945 the three policy-making sections of the Party were the Annual Conference, its National Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party. The groups interacted. Conference was regarded as "the fountain of

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1. For a detailed statement of these points see R.T. McKenzie British Political Parties (1955). McKenzie notes how the term "Labour Party" usually refers to participants in Annual Conference, whereas the term "Conservative Party" usually connotes Conservative members of parliament.

authority." <sup>1</sup> To it the Party Constitution gave the "direction and control" of the work of the Party. The constitution left to the NEC and the PLP considerable discretion in the task of giving effect "as far as may be practicable, to the principles from time to time approved by the Party Conference." <sup>2</sup> Such delegation of authority was necessary because the NEC and the PLP met frequently whereas Conference met annually. When issues arose on which Conference had not pronounced an opinion, or when events or pressures within the Party suggested changes in policy, the NEC and the PLP were able to take the initiative, although they always had to calculate what Conference would accept, or could be led to accept. The power of initiating statements and drafting resolutions and policy documents gave to the NEC the power to influence the tone and the nuance of declarations. Sometimes this power was used to emphasize differences within the Party on foreign affairs; sometimes it was used to gloss over them in compromise documents that were vague or contradictory. The PLP met much more often than the NEC and had opportunity for initiative in parliamentary debates. While in opposition, it was not so well suited for preparing

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1. The phrase of Sara Barker "How the Labour Party Works" (LP, 1955) p. 11.

2. LPCR 1945, p. 154.

long-term policy statements, for it lacked a research staff of its own and had only limited access to Annual Conference and the TUC. As members of the national legislature, the Labour MPs were subject to the British Constitution and to Erskine May's precedents, as well as to the Party constitution, but these restrictions rested lightly upon them. The PLP was not constantly manoeuvring in Westminster to shade foreign policy in one direction or another; the members had much more of an all-or-nothing approach. They worked for the day when they would have their majority, and all things would be made new.

The National Council of Labour, which consisted of representatives of the NEC, the PLP, the General Council of the TUC, and later, of the Co-operative Union, issued agreed statements on policy matters of broad general interest. It could claim, as no other body could, to speak in the name of the Labour movement. Labour propagandists, rarely with influential positions in the Party hierarchy, frequently usurped this claim in their sometimes strident, sometimes reasoned criticism of the existing order of society, both domestic and international. These propagandists were often writers, lecturers or orators first and only incidentally concerned with problems of Government. Many opposed the Party's official policies. They were prolific but not

influential, in contrast to the leadership, of whom G.D.H. Cole later said: "They didn't need to write any books; they had the power."<sup>1</sup>

Making policy for a mass-membership party has always been a difficult operation, involving at times the striking of a balance between factions, and at other times the use of one faction to defeat another. This was particularly so in the Labour Party, federal in form and in its structure of power. The major trade unions, the PLP, the Transport House secretariat and semi-autonomous bodies such as the ILP and the Socialist League had their own leaders and spokesmen, and their claims to partial independence. Ultimately, decisions were made in Conference. Initially, the direction of policy was pointed out by the PLP, the NEC, or the National Council of Labour. It would be false to speak of these bodies imposing their will upon Conference, or of Conference imposing its will upon the leadership. Different views on tactics and on policy were normally represented in all centres of decision-making. While the concentration of large block votes in the hands of a relatively few trade union leaders greatly facilitated harmony between the three policy-making bodies, it did not guarantee it, since trade unions often differed among themselves.

The Party has had few leaders. Generalisations are

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1. Interview, January, 1958.

dangerous. Henderson and MacDonald led their followers by voicing opinions on foreign affairs that were quickly accepted by them. The pre-war Attlee skilfully took the pulse of Conference, and acted much more as spokesman than as leader. Bevin, and, within the PLP, Dalton, took positions that were originally unpopular, waiting and working until gradually the majority came close to their views. Principles of foreign policy were also important in choosing the Party leader. MacDonald in 1914 and Lansbury in 1935 had to resign because of differences on foreign policy. For much of the 1930s, the leader's position was weak, being held by Lansbury and then Attlee. The 1936 Conference debate on Spain was the most notable example of the NEC miscalculating its ability to secure support in Conference. In 1933 at Hastings the Executive was caught by surprise and did not attempt to oppose the pacifist sentiment of Conference. The leadership was forced to spend much of its energy and authority in fighting splinter movements, and the immediate threat to the Party's political independence posed by the United Front and the Popular Front. The machinery of policy-making was suddenly altered when the 1945 general election established apart from and above the NEC, the PLP and Conference, a Cabinet of Labour ministers, making decisions first of all in the name of a Labour Government, and incidentally, in the name of the Party.

### The Cabinet

The formation of a Labour Government with a majority of 150 gave to the leaders of the PLP chosen for the Cabinet ex officio powers of initiative, administration, patronage and decision that had previously been denied them. The new ministers took office at a time when the exigencies of war-time Coalition government had raised their power and influence to a new peak. The Labour Cabinet, favouring centralised planning and anxious to secure maximum efficiency in passing an extensive legislative programme, continued as far as possible to strengthen the Cabinet in relation to its parliamentary supporters.

In foreign affairs, the effective power to influence and take decisions was concentrated in very few hands.

Clement Attlee, as Prime Minister, nominally had the final authority in all subjects. Attlee had grown in stature and authority as a member of the War Cabinet for five years. Previously, he had been regarded by many as a weak and stop-gap choice with few independent views on policy.

As Attlee himself later wrote, Coalition experience made him:

"... acquainted not only with all the outstanding problems but with the course of events out of which they had developed. I had had a full experience of high and responsible office, understood the machinery of government and knew personally the leading figures in the Civil Service and in the Fighting Services. I had many experienced colleagues." <sup>1</sup>

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1. As It Happened p. 151. The King also noted the value of Attlee's war-time post. See J.W. Wheeler-Bennett op.cit. p. 653, diary entry of November, 1945.

In the War Cabinet Attlee learned how to face up to immediate needs and solve problems with little regard for ideal solutions, and how to take the temper of the nation in a way that could not be learned in Opposition. This would have been much more difficult to learn if his first Cabinet post had been that of Labour Prime Minister. His wartime office and the passage of time strengthened Attlee's hold on the position of leader, as Morrison and Laski learned to their regret in 1945. When the authority of Prime Minister came, Attlee was ready to exercise it. Gradually he developed from an "efficient chairman" into a man who took advantage of his prerogative to summarise discussions and state conclusions.<sup>1</sup> Later he explained in a television interview:

"The job of the Prime Minister is to get the general feeling -- collect the voices, so to speak. I mean, his judgment when everything reasonable has been said is to get on with the job. Then, he says and here Attlee's voice speeded up considerably: 'Well, I think the decision of the Cabinet is -- this, that or the other. Any objections? No.'"<sup>2</sup>

As chairman of continuing Cabinet committees on economic

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1. F. Williams Triple Challenge (1948) p. 43.
  2. The Listener 22.1.59, p. 152. In an Oxford talk Attlee declared "The most important of the Prime Minister's functions is to give a firm lead in Cabinet so that decisions can be taken quickly." The Times 15.6.57.

policy and defence the Prime Minister could supervise departmental matters as well as preside over the Cabinet.

The existence of the Attlee Cabinet was scarcely challenged before the Bevanite split. During the economic crisis of 1947, attempts were made to drive a wedge between Attlee and Bevin and replace the Prime Minister. Bevin<sup>1</sup> scotched this effort by declaring his loyalty to Attlee. Another challenge occurred in January, 1949, as the consequence of continued uneasiness within the Party on Palestine. The Conservatives unexpectedly pressed a vote of censure on Palestine. The Government's majority dropped to 90; and at least 50 members of the PLP abstained<sup>2</sup> in the House. Recognition of Israel was announced shortly after this division. The abrupt challenge quickly disappeared, leaving only the crushed hopes of some back-bench Labour MPs, who had predicted that the King would ask Morrison or Cripps to form a Labour Government with Lord Mountbatten as Foreign Secretary.<sup>3</sup>

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1. F. Williams Ernest Bevin (1952) p. 240. See also Manchester Guardian 30.7.47. Characteristically, Attlee took care of the dissenters by giving some of them ministerial appointments. E. Shinwell op.cit. p. 134. Shinwell claimed that the differences centred on personality and ambition, not on policy. Interview, April, 1959. Leslie Hunter op.cit. p. 18ff, names Cripps as leader of the AMGO (Attlee must go) movement. Cripps was promoted to the position of Minister of Economic Affairs on September 29th, 1947.
  2. The Times 27.1, 28.1.49. 460 HC 1059ff, 26.1.49.
  3. Manchester Guardian 28.1.49.

There was no standing Cabinet committee on foreign affairs. Ernest Bevin was pre-eminent in this field. Bevin supported Attlee loyally against his critics within the Party; similarly, Attlee supported his Foreign Secretary, and there is no evidence that the two ever disagreed on a major issue, or that the initiative in foreign affairs rested with anyone but Bevin.<sup>1</sup> Attlee wrote of their relationship: "'If you have a good dog, don't bark yourself,' is a good proverb, and in Mr. Bevin I had an exceptionally good dog."<sup>2</sup> For Bevin, the Prime Minister was a man to be consulted daily, and to be squared in advance of Cabinet meetings, but not a man who was his superior in foreign affairs.<sup>3</sup> From an administrative point of view, it was to Attlee's advantage to let Bevin carry as much work as possible, since the Government's full legislative programme made so many demands upon his time. From a party point of view, Attlee was wise in letting responsibility for an unpopular part of the Government's programme fall upon the man most impervious to criticism. Temperamentally the arrangement suited both.

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1. During his final year of office, a certain amount of initiative devolved upon Attlee because of Bevin's poor health. The most notable example was Attlee's flying trip to Washington in December, 1950. Time was of the essence and Bevin was too ill to fly.
  2. As It Happened p. 169.
  3. Strang notes, "If he [Bevin] had the Prime Minister with him, and he usually made sure that he had, he knew that the Cabinet would support him." Home and Abroad p. 293.

Attlee was accustomed to keep quiet and in the background, as long as things were going his way. Bevin was accustomed to step forward and take full charge of whatever was his task.

Ernest Bevin was 64 years old when he became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. If he had not been invited to serve in the War Cabinet, he would probably have passed his life without entering Parliament. Bevin had grown up in the environment of trade unionism, an environment which produced, as Ben Roberts noted:

"... tough, self-reliant, pragmatic individuals, men of courage and determination who, better than most, know how to take a decision and stand by it. They tend to look with suspicion on theorists ... Though their manner of dealing with issues tends to be blunt and direct, it expresses their confidence in their own rightness of purpose and action. It is this self-confidence which makes them determined advocates and excellent negotiators." <sup>1</sup>

This environment conditioned half of Bevin, a half that was always very much in evidence. But there was also in him a touch of the poet, a visionary who kept in his mind a picture of the ideal society, a picture like that of many other inspired Socialists. Even after the Cold War had reached a peak in 1948, he could maintain that:

"He still pinned his faith on the ordinary people of the world, who would not be deceived in the end by

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1. B.C. Roberts Trade Union Government and Administration in Great Britain (1956) p. 303.

either dialectics or slogans. They might be confused for a time but in the end, the simple folk would discern the truth." <sup>1</sup>

Unlike many idealists in the Labour Party, Bevin was always conscious of the immediate limitations of his environment, and the need to deal with things as they were before things as they ought to be. Unlike many self-styled realists, Bevin had the ability to keep long-range goals immediately before him, and to connect immediate and long-range objects.

In contrast to Clement Attlee, Ernest Bevin made no attempt to hide his strength and self-confidence behind the facade of a humble chairman. Among the senior members of the Cabinet, he occupied a lonely eminence. Confident in his own power, he spoke of the Government as "I" and of the Cabinet as "they". <sup>2</sup> Politically, Bevin was strong because he was the leading trade unionist in the Cabinet. <sup>3</sup> He retained as the foundation of his personal influence an industrial base, which could not be easily challenged by opposition in the Cabinet. He was "singularly little

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1. GA 144th meeting, 27.9.48, p. 159. See also, his world government speech of 23.11.45, 416 HC 781ff and his European unity speech of 22.1.48, 446 HC 395ff.
  2. Strang Home and Abroad p. 287.
  3. One of Herbert Morrison's assistants as Leader of the House of Commons said in an interview that Bevin "left the dirty work of squaring the Party" with Morrison.

perturbed" by criticism within the Party, Lord Strang notes.<sup>1</sup> The reduced majority of 1950-51 did cramp Bevin's style, although there is no evidence that it resulted in major shifts in policy. Institutionally, Bevin was strong because he could base policy upon his department's special knowledge of conditions in other countries; this sort of information was very difficult for ministers in domestic departments to challenge, particularly when his recommendations were made during or after conferences of foreign ministers. Personally, Bevin was strong in Cabinet because of his power of mind, his understanding of problems of foreign affairs, his trade union connections, and his steadfastness in asserting the rightness of his policies. Among his associates and subordinates, Bevin left the sense of having worked with a great man, with a mind as original as it was powerful.<sup>2</sup> The job of Foreign

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1. Strang Home and Abroad p. 293. Ernest Davies, in a letter to the author on 23.7.58, pointed out a concession regarding arms shipments to Egypt as an example of the sort of influence critics did exercise at that time. See 481 HC 339 and 424ff especially columns 463-4, 22.11.50.

2. Denis Healey and Christopher Mayhew, in paying tributes to Bevin's insight, both used the word "non-rational" to emphasize its freedom from logical thought processes, and the instinctive rightness of his analysis. Another contrasted him with Simon, saying that Simon was a master at analysing reasons for action, but poor at choosing which action to take; Bevin was poor in explaining policy logically, but was usually right in his decisions.

For a very personal view of Bevin at the Foreign Office in comparison with Eden and Halifax, see an article by their one-time secretary, Valentine Lawford "Three Ministers" The Cornhill (Winter 1956-7, No. 1010) pp. 73-99.

Secretary, as one remarked, "fitted him like a glove."

In the exercise of effective leadership upon the Party outside the Cabinet, Attlee and Bevin were uniquely complementary. Attlee played the part of a humble servant of the Party, temporarily holding office, but always ready to do the will of the majority. The impression was strengthened by the fact that he showed few political desires and was uninterested in using debate to establish clearcut definitions. Attlee explained to the 1948 Conference:

"I have always felt that the right course is to put my views before my colleagues, discuss with them and then accept their decision. They may not convince me that they are right, but I believe that the foundation of democratic liberty is a willingness to believe that other people may perhaps be wiser than oneself." <sup>1</sup>

The implicit corollary of Attlee's argument was that it was also incumbent upon Party members to accept the will of the majority, as their leader did. It was Ernest Bevin's function to insure that the will of the majority was brought to favour the Attlee-Bevin foreign policy. By strength of argument, pressure of events, blunt speaking and resources of personal loyalty Bevin was consistently able to secure such a majority. Although controversial, Bevin was effective. And next to him was always the uncontroversial conciliator, Clement Attlee, nominally offering loyalty, while in fact demanding it.

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1. LPCR 1948, p. 160. See also Labour Party in Perspective p. 108ff.

Within the Cabinet there were usually two other persons with sufficient power and influence to command respect on questions as important as foreign affairs -- the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Herbert Morrison.<sup>1</sup> By virtue of the authority of his position as director of financial policy, the Chancellor's views on the cost of foreign policy commanded respect, and, on issues such as the occupation of Germany and the evacuation of Greece in 1947, economic considerations, as stressed by the Chancellor, influenced policy. Dalton, however, did not add much personal influence to the Chancellor's position. He was without a source of political strength independent of his office. Nor did he have much reason to wish to alter policy, for he had thought along the same lines as Bevin on foreign affairs since before the war.<sup>2</sup> It was probably anticipation of the need for a Foreign Secretary with a large reservoir of political strength that led Attlee to substitute Bevin for Dalton as Foreign Secretary the day before returning to the Potsdam Conference. As

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1. See F. Williams Triple Challenge pp.47-8. In a grudging tribute to the senior four ministers, the New Statesman said their real achievement was measured by the distance they had taken the Party from its 1945 platform. 21.4.51.
  2. For an interesting account of what might have happened if Dalton had become Foreign Secretary in 1945 see Triple Challenge pp.66-7. Dalton himself suggested similar consequences. Interview, December, 1957.

Attlee himself explained it later, "I thought the going might be rough and it would be the place for a heavy tank instead of a sniper."<sup>1</sup> Bevin could command loyalties that Hugh Dalton could not.

Cripps, who had proved his ability to hold office during the wartime Coalition, usually agreed with Bevin on foreign policy. When Cripps died, Attlee paid particular tribute to the way Cripps and Bevin "two Gloucester (sic) men coming from such very different social environments, worked closely and harmoniously together."<sup>2</sup> The acquiescence of Cripps in Bevin's policy was politically important, because of the influence Cripps commanded in the Cabinet,<sup>3</sup> and because he had been the leader of the Labour left wing, and a leader of great personal stature. When Cripps took office, the left-wing critics lost their one spokesman who merited real respect within the Labour movement.

Herbert Morrison did not concern himself particularly with foreign affairs until 1951, nor did he exert influence

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1. BBC broadcast, 16.2.58.

2. 499 HC 222, 22.4.52. See also C. Cooke The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps (1957) p. 358.

3. K. Younger said that when presenting Cabinet papers on foreign affairs during Bevin's illness, he felt, "If I could get Cripps on my side, I was all right." Interview, July, 1958.

there by virtue of his position as leader of the House of Commons. His interests had never concerned diplomacy. Personal animosity between him and Bevin was another reason for Morrison to avoid the subject.<sup>1</sup> Personal and political considerations, rather than reasons of foreign policy gave Morrison the job in 1951. As Attlee later explained:

"It was rather difficult just then. A lot of people were just a bit too young for the job. There was a considerable press move in Morrison's favour. He was a leading member of the Government."

..."I don't think it was quite his line of country. But he was very keen on it."<sup>2</sup>

Reading a life of Palmerston, one of Morrison's first acts after his appointment, could not immediately compensate him for his previous unfamiliarity with international affairs. There are indications that on matters of major importance, Attlee quickly took the work into his own hands. The one policy that is usually attributed to Morrison -- the plan to use British troops to defend the refinery at Abadan --<sup>3</sup> was never given serious consideration by the Cabinet.

The Cabinet that had begun in 1945 as a strong, stable

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1. Interviews. See Dalton Fateful Years p. 467ff, F. Williams Ernest Bevin pp. 183-7, for the background of this illwill. Attlee's desire to keep Morrison and Bevin as far apart as possible within the Cabinet was a factor in making Bevin Foreign Secretary.
  2. News Chronicle 20.4.59. Contrast this, however, with L. Hunter op.cit. p. 28. One associate said in an interview: "It was a mistake for Attlee to offer Morrison the Foreign Office and it was a mistake for Morrison to accept it."
  3. Interviews.

and relatively harmonious unit did not last out the Government's second term of office. By 1951 the tired were joined to the inexperienced; the ambitious and the dissatisfied were jostling the important and the content. When Aneurin Bevan resigned, the men who were left to defend themselves against the strongest challenge yet encountered formed a Cabinet that had been reduced, by illness, death, age and fatigue, to its weakest point.<sup>1</sup>

#### Transport House.

"My recollection of the function of Transport House when Labour was in power is that it was employed to convince the movement that what Ernest Bevin had already decided was right rather than to tell Ernest Bevin what the movement expected him to do."

K. Younger, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy"  
British Journal of Sociology (1955) p. 171.

Transport House is a term used to describe the National Executive Committee, which meets there about once a month, and the full-time secretariat which conducts Party business under the direction of the NEC. During the life of the Labour Government, Transport House was also the head office of the TUC and of the Transport and General

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1. The Manchester Guardian, in commenting upon Bevan's resignation, declared that it was "inconceivable" if Ernest Bevin had not died. 25.4.51. While an overstatement, it is undoubtedly true that if Bevin had remained in good health Bevan would have had a much tougher fight.

Workers' Union. Ernest Bevin had been responsible for this convenient and symbolic arrangement.

The question of the relationship between the NEC and a Labour Government was made an issue of the 1945 general election, by the ebullience of Harold Laski, then Party chairman, and of Winston Churchill. Laski declared of Attlee's position at the Potsdam Conference:

"The Labour Party cannot be committed to any decisions arrived at, for the Three-Power Conference will be discussing matters which have not been debated either in the Party executive or at meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party." <sup>1</sup>

Laski continued to press claims for the NEC and Conference to influence the Government. Attlee wrote to him later:

"You have no right whatever to speak on behalf of the Government. Foreign affairs are in the capable hands of Ernest Bevin. His task is quite sufficiently difficult without the embarrassment of irresponsible statements of the kind which you are making. I had hoped to have seen you but you were away in Paris. I can assure you there is widespread resentment in the Party at your activities and a period of silence on your part would be welcome." <sup>2</sup>

Laski's prominence was short-lived, since by custom the post of chairman was only held for one year by any individual. This was a good way to weaken the political power of its holder. With Laski's example fresh in their minds, no future chairman challenged the Government's

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1. K. Martin op.cit. p. 170. The incident is treated at length in R.T. McKenzie op.cit. p. 330ff. Attlee rejected Laski's right to speak for the Labour Party. Manchester Guardian 16.6.45.

2. K. Martin op.cit. p. 182.

freedom, and none, from 1945 to 1951 was so left-wing as  
<sup>1</sup>  
 Laski.

The duty of the NEC was to support Cabinet decisions, once arrived at, particularly in foreign affairs. This was constitutionally sound and politically practical, since all the major forces in the Labour movement were represented in the Cabinet of that time. At NEC meetings during the lifetime of the Government, Cabinet ministers tended to dominate discussions. This was, as one member<sup>2</sup> of the secretariat put it, "natural and inevitable." Ernest Bevin was never a member of the NEC, so that he could not be made to answer directly for his foreign policy, and Attlee, who could answer for him, was a past master at giving soft and unchallengeable explanations. Bevin did not ignore Party affairs. He continued to call in often at his union office, and then go down a floor to talk with Morgan Phillips, the Party secretary. Phillips<sup>3</sup> saw more of Bevin than of any other Cabinet minister.

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1. Contrast Sam Watson's speech as chairman, LPCR 1950, pp. 76-81, with that of Laski, LPCR 1946, pp. 105-8.
  2. W. Fienburgh (former head of the research department) "Put Policy on the Agenda" Fabian Journal (#6, February 1952) p. 25. Hugh Dalton regretted that ministers busied themselves with Party and NEC work, but explained, "Ministers, not surprisingly, think that they can do this work better than anyone else." Interview, February, 1959.
  3. Interview, M. Phillips, February, 1959.

Attlee attended less than half of the NEC meetings in the first three years of the Government.

In the formative years of the Government's foreign policy, 1945-48, Harold Laski, Alice Bacon and Joe Reeves were alone on the NEC as occasional critics of the Government's foreign policy. Laski was so depressed by his impotence that he did not stand for re-election in 1949.<sup>1</sup> By the autumn of 1950 there was a nucleus of members of the NEC who were known to be critical of the Government's foreign policy. They included Driberg, Mikardo, Reeves and Barbara Castle. After Aneurin Bevan resigned, Bevan, Castle, Driberg and Mikardo formed a recognised Bevanite block. The ineffectualness of their protest against the NEC endorsement of the rearmament programme demonstrates the relationship of the two bodies at that time. The argument of the Bevanites was an interesting development of Attlee's statement of the independence of the Cabinet vis à vis the NEC. They held that the NEC:

"... has rightly, no power to issue directives to the Government; in turn it should not be called on automatically to endorse Government policies, even major policies, which have not been pronounced upon by the Party Conference."

To this Morgan Phillips replied:

"I cannot believe that you would wish to confine National Executive Committee statements to problems of internal Party organisation, since some of you

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1. K. Martin op.cit. p. 218. His place was taken by Tom Driberg, an equally strong critic of Bevin's foreign policy.

have in the past subscribed to statements by the National Executive Committee on political issues which were not foreseen at the previous Party Conference." <sup>1</sup>

The NEC further endorsed the Government's rearmament programme in a pamphlet, "Our First Duty -- Peace", issued in August, 1951, but opponents in the NEC succeeded in moderating its language, which was much less provocative to the faithful than earlier pamphlets.

Within the secretariat, Denis Healey, the secretary of the international department of the Party, had the task of furthering the Party's policy in foreign affairs. Healey was directly responsible to Morgan Phillips, the Party's chief administrative officer, and Hugh Dalton, chairman of the international sub-committee of the NEC. In turn, all three were responsible to the National Executive. <sup>2</sup> The three were outspoken in defending the Government's foreign policy, agreeing among themselves and supporting the Government on every matter of consequence,

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1. Both quotations, LPCR 1951, pp.5-6.

2. The following section incorporates much information obtained in lengthy interviews with Denis Healey, Hugh Dalton and Morgan Phillips.

From May until November, 1947, Harold Laski was chairman of the international sub-committee. Dalton had relinquished the post because of the pressure of work at the Exchequer. Hedged in by supporters of the Government policy, Laski did not use this position to create trouble for the leadership, as he had done when Party chairman. Dalton resumed his chairmanship of the sub-committee after resigning as Chancellor.

although sometimes using as justification arguments clothed in the traditional language of Socialism, instead of the justifications of the Government. They had no doubt about their role in the Party: it was to follow Bevin's lead and secure support for what he did. Dalton could follow the direction of foreign policy in the Cabinet; Morgan Phillips had direct access to Ernest Bevin, both at the Foreign Office and at Transport House; Denis Healey, through "old boy" and political contacts, was able to talk freely with Bevin's political and foreign service assistants.

Healey was a brilliant and aggressive international secretary. His mind has tended to extremes. In May, 1945, he was advocating Labour Party support of revolutionary Communism on the Continent. Two years later, after becoming a Party official, he was equally strong in arguing, in harshest power politics terms, for the defence of British military interests against Communist pressure.<sup>1</sup> Healey's chief duties were educational work within the Party and representing it at meetings of the International Socialist Conference. Healey felt that re-educating the active Party members, most of whom retained faith in traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy in spite of post-1945 events, was an uphill and unending task. The chief ideological stumbling blocks were the continued prevalence

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1. Contrast LPCR 1945, p. 114 and his "Cards on the Table".

of Utopianism and parochialism within the Party.<sup>1</sup> He was handicapped in propaganda work by a shortage of speakers whom he could "trust."<sup>2</sup> While weekend schools and speeches in the constituencies could re-educate some Party members, the constant turnover in active members depreciated the value of these occasional contacts. When Tribune and the Bevanites began attacking the Government's foreign policy at meetings in the constituencies, Healey found his task further complicated by their efforts at counter-education. His ability to speak frankly was reduced by the absence of agreement in policy within the NEC.

In their desire to promote acceptance by the mass-membership of the Government's foreign policy, the secretariat once over-reached itself, by publishing "Cards on the Table" in the spring of 1947 without first receiving authority from the NEC. This very outspoken justification of Bevin's foreign policy was sharply in conflict with traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy. So harsh was the language, and the picture it presented of international politics, that Anthony Eden called it, "diplomacy by insult."<sup>3</sup> The pamphlet was drafted by Healey

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1. See D. Healey "Power Politics and the Labour Party" New Fabian Essays (1952) p. 161ff.
  2. Healey's own term. Interview, February, 1959.
  3. The Observer 23.5.47.

after he and Dalton agreed that a statement about the Government's foreign policy was needed to combat the criticism of the rebels within the Party.<sup>1</sup> Because the Annual Conference was soon to meet, Dalton was anxious to issue the pamphlet at once. Dalton told Healey he would, on his own authority, authorise release of the pamphlet, if Bevin approved its contents. Bevin was given a copy but he delegated to Hector McNeil the task of reviewing it.<sup>2</sup> McNeil approved the statement and Dalton authorised its release. As a courtesy he posted copies to members of the international sub-committee. The Daily Herald greeted it as "of course, an official Party publication."<sup>3</sup>

The style and content of "Cards on the Table" caused a sharp reaction against it among critics of the Government, who easily found out that it had not been approved by the NEC. At Conference, Crossman and Zilliacus raised the question of the status of the pamphlet. Dalton stalled, saying that the pamphlet was only a restatement of "certain accepted principles" in the Party; he promised a further statement.<sup>4</sup> He then presented it to the NEC and, after some debate, secured its approval as "a contribution to

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1. The following correlates information from published sources and from interviews with Dalton and Healey. The two agreed in substance in their account, but not in emphasis. See also R.H.S. Crossman New Statesman 7.6.47.

2. Healey said that after controversy arose Bevin read the document and approved of it.

3. 23.5.47.

4. LPCR 1947, pp. 106-7.

the discussion and interpretation of foreign policy."<sup>1</sup>  
 Zilliacus claimed this was a "face-saving repudiation"<sup>2</sup>  
 of the Government's policy. In fact, it was no more than  
 a mild rebuke by the Executive to Dalton and Healey for  
 acting rashly in defence of the Government. In 1950,  
 when Dalton and Healey again drafted a provocative state-  
 ment, "European Unity", they took the precaution of having  
 it first put through the formal Party policy-making  
 procedure so that official approval was secured for this  
 outspoken defence of the Labour Government and scathing  
 attack upon traditional Socialist principles.<sup>3</sup>

In the field of foreign policy the Government was  
 constantly presenting the National Executive with faits  
accomplis. Furthermore, it could claim special knowledge  
 and constitutional responsibility. To note that the NEC  
 and its secretariat accepted a very subordinate relationship  
 to the Government in matters of foreign policy is not to  
 say that the political forces the NEC represented could be  
 ignored. That this position was acceptable to the Executive  
 was to a large extent the result of the confidence placed in  
 the Government by the major trade unions, whose votes

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1. LPCR 1947, p. 159.

2. Manchester Guardian 29.5.47.

3. Interviews. Statement of Attlee, cited supra, p. 274ff.

elected the majority of the members of the NEC.<sup>1</sup>

### The Trades Union Congress

The Labour Party "is the partner, not the servant of the Trades Union Congress."

C.R. Attlee, Labour Party in Perspective p. 66.

"We owe this Government a vote every working day. It has done much for the worker."

Sam Watson, Daily Herald 28.6.49.

The work of the NEC in support of the Government was greatly simplified by the fact that most of the trade unions, which by their votes dominated the Executive and Annual Conference, approved the foreign policy of the Government. The trade unions were sleeping rather than active partners in the field of foreign affairs. The unions were organised for industrial ends, and put industrial and domestic policy first. The basis of their support for the Government was its economic and welfare policy, which directly benefited many of their members, and which through nationalisation particularly concerned, among others, the NUM, the NUR, the T&GWU, the G&MWU and the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation.<sup>2</sup>

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1. As M. Harrison notes, while the trade union section has not been monolithic, "its weight falls right of centre." The Political Attitudes of British Trade Unions, 1945-54 (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1958) p. 761.
  2. Of the 33 members of the TUC General Council in 1950-51, 13 were from unions which had many members employed in nationalised industries.

The Government was assisted in securing trade union support for its opposition to Russia by the parallel development within the TUC of internal and international issues which directly affected trade union activities and reflected Big Three discord. During this period there was continuous conflict within the leadership of five of the six major unions -- T&GWU, AEU, NUM, USDAW and NUR -- between groups of moderates who, among other things, supported the Government's foreign policy, and groups of Communists and left-wing militants who, among other things, attacked its foreign policy. Issues of foreign policy became important within trade unions as additional grounds upon which battles could be conducted between these competing factions.<sup>1</sup> Because of the structure of unions, control of the leadership meant effective control of union policy on non-industrial matters. While the moderates, led by Deakin, Williamson and Lawther, normally secured a majority in the TUC, the existence of a non-concurring minority could not be ignored.

In foreign affairs, Marshall Aid was of major importance to British trade unionists and was welcomed by them. The Communists and their associates were, however, compelled

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1. See M. Harrison op.cit. passim, and V. Tewson TUCR 1949, p. 349ff.

to attack it. At the September, 1947 Congress, the Fire Brigades Union presented a motion which opposed the Marshall Plan as a form of subservience to capitalism; it advocated instead more trade with Russia. This was "overwhelmingly defeated."<sup>1</sup> Two years later a similar motion failed for lack of a seconder.<sup>2</sup> Disagreement within the World Federation of Trade Unions, which had Arthur Deakin of the T&GWU as chairman and a French pro-Communist as general secretary, was intensified by Marshall Aid. Finally, the TUC, which had helped found the group in hopes of Russian co-operation broke with it in January, 1949.<sup>3</sup> In the following December the TUC helped to found the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which broadly reflected in its membership the division of Europe into rival alliances by the cold war.

The limits of the loyalty of the TUC to the Labour Government were well indicated in the 1950-51 controversy over foreign policy, rearmament and the domestic economy. Congress in September, 1950, faced two major questions: wages policy and rearmament. From the point of view of the Labour Government, it was desirable to continue wage-

1. TUCR 1947, p. 491

2. TUCR 1949, p. 349.

3. See particularly TUCR 1948, p. 176ff, p. 439ff; TUCR 1949, p. 321ff, p. 524ff; V.L. Allen Trade Union Leadership (1957) pp. 294-312. A detailed account of the organisation and split in the WFTU is contained in John P. Windmuller American Labor and the International Labor Movement, 1940 to 1953 (1954).

restraint and to carry out the rearmament programme fully. Because the requirements of rearmament adversely affected the real wages of workers, a narrow industrial construction of their interests would have led Congress to oppose both wage restraint and rearmament. In fact, Congress compromised. By a vote of 6,942,000 to 595,000 it gave the Government support in its military programme of rearmament, even though "There will inevitably be some diversion of the country's limited resources from the task of rebuilding the national economy."<sup>1</sup> At the same time it rejected the continuation of wage-restraint, the industrial complement to the military programme which it accepted.<sup>2</sup> Rank-and-file pressure within the unions for higher wages was strong enough to defeat the statesman-like efforts of the leaders of the General Council of the TUC to harmonise the organisation's industrial and political policies in favour of the Government. In February, 1951, after further increases in arms spending, Hugh Gaitskell and Aneurin Bevan approached the General Council to seek its co-operation in the restriction of wage claims. The Council declared itself unable to help the Government in such an industrial programme, because of continuing pressure from members for higher wages.

The value of the political support of the trade unions

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1. TUCR 1950, p. 425, p. 584.

2. Ibid. p. 473.

to the Government was best demonstrated when Aneurin Bevan resigned and protested against its domestic, economic and foreign policies. The General Council promptly squelched any Bevanite hopes of intensifying the split in the Labour movement by endorsing the Government's programme, 13 to 6.<sup>1</sup> The Council's policy of opposing Bevan, who was neither popular nor trusted among trade union leaders, was sustained by Congress in September. Resolutions opposing Government policy on East-West trade, British rearmament, German rearmament and the health service were defeated by large margins.<sup>2</sup> Significant of the strength of pro-Government sentiment at this critical time was the gesture of USDAW, which had often opposed the Government on foreign affairs issues; it seconded the motion on the cost of living, which accepted the need for the rearmament programme.<sup>3</sup>

Every foreign affairs issue that came before the TUC was not as important as rearmament. Occasionally on a minor matter Congress took a position opposed to that of the Government. For example, in 1946 it approved a resolution of the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen which called for the severance of economic as

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1. Manchester Guardian 26.4.51.

2. TUCR 1951, pp. 423, 437, 455, 501.

3. Ibid. p. 517.

well as diplomatic relations with Franco Spain.<sup>1</sup> The Government was even opposed to breaking off diplomatic relations. While Arthur Deakin, speaking for the General Council, indicated that the resolution went further than was desirable, there was no recommendation against it. This was an issue in which the Council judged that its opposition to the resolution would create more friction within the unions than approval of it would create between the unions and the Government. The resolution was carried by a majority of 3,143,000 votes. The General Council lived up to its obligations to Congress; it sent deputations to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary<sup>2</sup> to convey the position of Congress on Spain. The deputations did not secure their object, and the Council exercised its discretion not to pursue the matter further, having discharged its responsibilities. By contrast, the General Council proved itself willing to use its influence to defeat militants roundly on non-industrial matters which it considered of major importance. For example, when USDAW offered a resolution urging atomic disarmament in 1950, it was rejected on the grounds that<sup>3</sup> its terms played into the hands of the Communist Party.

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1. TUCR 1946, p. 473ff.

2. TUCR 1947, p. 204.

3. TUCR 1950, p. 411ff.

Detailed information about the mechanics of the relationships between the Government and the TUC is not available. Private consultations between the General Secretary, Sir Walter Citrine, and the Foreign Secretary of the day had begun during the 1930s. Because of the Government's ability to claim superior knowledge, its initiative and its constitutional responsibility, such talks could easily become a channel by which the Foreign Secretary might influence the trade unions on foreign policy. This did happen, notably on the question of non-intervention in Spain in 1936.<sup>1</sup> The practice continued after the war when Arthur Deakin, Bevin's former assistant and the head of the international sub-committee of the Council, frequently conferred with the Foreign Secretary. Both Deakin and Citrine used their talks with the Foreign Secretary to establish claims to superior knowledge when addressing Council in support of the Government.<sup>2</sup> Bevin was particularly able to appeal for trust from his former colleagues because of his previous record of leadership in the TUC. The political strength of the TUC after the end of the war was lessened, in part, by the replacement of a very strong General Secretary, Sir Walter Citrine,

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1. See Citrine's constant references to the difficult Government position in his speech to Congress. TUCR 1936, p. 359ff.

2. Interview.

by a relatively weak one, Sir Vincent Tewson.<sup>1</sup> There is no indication that the National Council of Labour, the formal co-ordinating agency for the TUC and the Party, was active in discussing foreign policy. The Council met less than eight times a year during the life of the Government. Bevin himself never formally reported to it. It confined its activity in foreign affairs to endorsing Government policy.<sup>2</sup>

Individual unions were poorly placed to put political pressure upon the Government in foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> Unless a union could secure TUC endorsement of its views, it would only represent a minority of the Labour movement to men who were accustomed to managing majorities. In a period of full employment and full order books, major unions were not individually affected by matters of foreign policy. The AEU, the most left-wing of the big six, was alone in once threatening to apply industrial pressure to support its criticism of foreign policy. After its 1946 policy conference recommended the severance of economic and diplomatic relations with Franco Spain, its executive considered ordering members not to work on engineering goods

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1. Contrast the description given of Citrine and his interest in foreign affairs, Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1924-32, p. 148, with comments on Tewson, The Observer 10.9.50.
  2. See e.g., statement on Korea, LPCR 1950, p. 11.
  3. See M. Harrison op.cit. Chapter IV, for a detailed treatment of the political activities of individual unions.

for export to Spain. It sought the opinion of the TUC General Council, and was informed that such action would not strengthen the machinery of the United Nations. The union did not press the point further.<sup>1</sup>

To say that the Trades Union Congress did support the Labour Government in its foreign policy and did not initiate or veto decisions is not to say that it had to give its support. The unions were organisationally independent of the Government and catered to a sectional interest group, rather than to the electorate as a whole. As Martin Harrison has observed, "It is difficult to continue to picture delegates of, say the T&GWU and the NUG&MWU as men of straw after meeting them at conference."<sup>2</sup> So indeterminate was the balance of power between moderates and militants in many unions shortly after the end of the war that it is possible to imagine how conflict between the TUC and the Government on foreign affairs might have arisen, given slightly altered circumstances. Such a hypothesis is usefully kept in mind so that a conclusion about a specific set of events is not turned into an iron law of necessity.

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1. AEU Report of Proceedings of the 29th National Committee 1947, p. 140.
  2. op. cit. p. 419.

### Annual Conference

"The Labour Party Conference lays down the policy of the Party and issues instructions which must be carried out by the Executive, the affiliated organisations and its representatives in Parliament."

C.R. Attlee Labour Party in Perspective p. 93.

So deeply was the condition of opposition rooted in the Labour Party that little realistic consideration was given, prior to 1945, to the question of the relationship between Annual Conference and a Labour Government. The differences between Conference views and the views of the two minority governments could always be explained away as evidence of 'treachery'. Philip Snowden declared, after leaving the Labour Party, that it was evidence of something else.

"There is all the difference in the world between the license and the irresponsibility of a Conference and the position of a Government which has to face practical difficulties and knows that no Government can move far ahead of public opinion. Nobody knows that better than the members of the Labour cabinets." 1

The traditional version of the relation between the PLP and the Annual Conference was reaffirmed by Transport House in a publication in 1948.

"In the Labour Party the final word rests with the Annual Party Conference and between conferences the National Executive Committee is the administrative authority. The Parliamentary Party carries through its duties within the framework of policy laid down by the Annual Party Conference to which it reports each year. The Parliamentary Party has no power to

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1. Philip Viscount Snowden An Autobiography: Volume I (1934) p. 83.

issue orders to the national executive, or the executive to the parliamentary party. Both are responsible only to the Party Conference." <sup>1</sup>

The Labour Government did not wish to have statements of responsible ministers judged by reference to Conference declarations because of its constitutional and de facto political allegiance to a much larger number of people. The Government viewpoint was best summed up by Herbert Morrison, when reading a sharp lesson to his East Lewisham constituents, who had submitted a resolution to Annual Conference which asked that its decisions be made binding <sup>2</sup> on the Government.

"Our Labour Government has to take proper account of Labour Party policy as declared at Annual Conference, and more particularly, as set out in "Let Us Face the Future", but the Government has to govern and impose taxation on all the people and it is democratically right for it to take into account the opinions of all the people. Otherwise the Government would be a dictatorship and we would not like that if we were in Opposition." <sup>3</sup>

Controversy about the relationship of Labour leaders with their followers was, during the lifetime of the Government, a controversy over shadows. The leaders, by keeping

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1. "The Rise of the Labour Party" (Labour Discussion Series #1, 1948) p. 14.
  2. See "Resolutions for the 47th Annual Conference of the Labour Party" (1948) p. 4.
  3. The Times 17.3.48. The difference between the position the leaders of the Party take when in Government and when in Opposition is illustrated by Morrison's statement at the 1954 Conference that a Conference decision against German rearmament would leave a future Labour Government "with a situation in which we are tied and fettered and cannot think in relation to the facts of a changing situation." LPCR 1954, p. 108.

the support of the great majority of the trade unions on foreign affairs, had no difficulty in securing Conference approval for their actions. On most occasions a majority of the constituency parties also supported the Government position.<sup>1</sup> Conference only rejected NEC recommendations nine times during the lifetime of the Government and not once on an issue involving foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally the leadership made concessions to the rank-and-file by accepting relatively minor foreign policy resolutions that did not harmonise with the declared policy or the future actions of the Cabinet, e.g., the Keep Left resolution on Germany and Brockway's United Socialist Europe resolution.<sup>3</sup> Acceptance of such resolutions was a sop to the militants, rather than a tribute to their influence. Their Conference 'victories' were not Whitehall victories.

Militant critics of the Government's foreign policy resented the fact that the Government could not be checked by the rank-and-file, and that Conference had so little influence upon the Government. After the 1946 meeting, in which ministers were prominently featured, Crossman publicly regretted the decline of Conference as a

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1. R.T. McKenzie op.cit. p. 502. His statement is confirmed by M. Harrison's study op.cit. p. 505ff. Because votes of delegates at Conference are not recorded separately, a precise analysis cannot be made.
  2. McKenzie op.cit. p. 513. Because most resolutions on foreign affairs in this period were not pressed to a card vote it is not possible to calculate shifts in the strength of the critical minority by reference to Conference votes.
  3. LPCR 1947 p. 163 and LPCR 1948 p. 172ff, respectively.

formulator of policy.<sup>1</sup> Mikardo declared two years later that Conference, as a policy-making institution, had become "as dead as a dodo."<sup>2</sup> Because of their impotence, these critics began to develop a theory which instead of asserting the right of Conference to dominate the Government, declared the independence of the two organisations. The reason for this ostensibly was, as Mikardo wrote, that since a Labour Government was "responsible to the electorate as a whole, it may therefore be compelled to take actions, temporarily or permanently, which are not in accordance with Party policy."<sup>3</sup> In fact, the reason was that the Government critics hoped that if the ministers were excluded from a major role in Party policy-making, their opponents might capture control of the Party. Then they could lobby the Government from a position of greater strength. Reflective of the permanent minority-mindedness of some critics is the idea that Labour ministers would never agree with the militants' conception of "Socialist" policy.

The place in the Party organisation in which the critics were strongest -- the constituency organisations -- was also

1. New Statesman 15.6.46.
2. Tribune 28.5.48.
3. I. Mikardo, "Do We Need a New Constitution?" Labour Forum (April-June, 1948) p. 19. Italics supplied.

the place where least power and influence rested. The constituency groups had about one-seventh of the votes in Conference. In 1930 Sidney Webb described them as "dominated by fanatics, and cranks and extremists,"<sup>1</sup> a description of some durability as regards those members interested in foreign affairs. Most active constituency members were interested in local politics, domestic policy or social activities, not in foreign affairs. Those who were interested in foreign affairs were sometimes cranks, even when judged by the relatively tolerant standards of the Labour movement. Consider the statement of Mrs. Dorothy Archibald, a delegate from Bath to the 1945 Annual Conference. "It is foreign policy primarily which produces war."<sup>2</sup> The constituency votes were fragmented among more than 600 groups, and never cast as a bloc. It was only after the Government went out in 1951 that a semblance of organisation and concerted action began to appear within the groups. It was not difficult for the active minority of members, often militant and critical of the Government, to express protests, but impossible to make them effective against strongly entrenched ministers.

The evidence of constituency discontent is in the

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1. Quoted in R.T. McKenzie op.cit. p. 506. For a description of the limits of political knowledge in a group of Manchester ward parties, see "Put Policy on the Agenda" Fabian Journal (#6 February, 1952) p. 27ff. See also, the Wilson Report, LPCR 1955, p. 70ff.
  2. LPCR 1945, p. 113.

resolutions presented to Annual Conference from 1946 to 1951. That the resolutions were overwhelmingly critical is not so important as that constituency groups did choose to use the one or two resolutions permitted them to raise a question of foreign affairs. The flow of resolutions indicates the intensity of feeling, just as the paucity of foreign policy resolutions from trade unions indicates less interest in foreign affairs there. The following table<sup>1</sup> shows how the interest ebbed and flowed.

Conference Resolutions

	<u>Government Favoured</u>	<u>Government Opposed</u>	<u>Unclassifiable</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>1946</u>				
Foreign Policy	2	38	7	47
Conscription	2	6	3	11--58
<u>1947</u>				
Foreign Policy	2	31	6	39
Conscription	1	11	1	13--52
		(Permitted Resolutions reduced from two to one per affiliate.)		
<u>1948</u>				
Foreign Policy	1	17	10	28--28
<u>1949</u>				
Foreign Policy	0	6	2	8---8
<u>1950</u>				
Foreign Policy	3	25	2	30--30 <sup>2</sup>
<u>1951</u>				
Foreign Policy	0	37	0	37
Rearmament	2	27	8	37--74

1. Source: "Resolutions for the Annual Conference of the Labour Party" 1946-51.
2. In 1950 there were also 58 resolutions on wages, prices, profits and the cost of living, many of them critical of the direction of the government's financial policy following the announcement of the rearmament programme.

Regardless of the number of resolutions, during the lifetime of the Labour Government they shared a common fate. Because the movers of the critical resolutions had a low proportion of votes, the governmental Goliath was never defeated by the small bands of assailants from the constituencies. Lacking the votes to pass resolutions against the Government's foreign policy, the critics also lacked the votes to change the rules that made them impotent.

#### Opinion Groups

Because the Labour Party originated in a class excluded at that time from the chief circles of 'informed' public opinion and political society, its leaders and active members developed the habit of paying little attention to opinions expressed outside the Labour movement. Convinced of the rightness of Socialist analysis and of their programme, Party members worked for the day when a Labour Government would come to power, without regard to the criticism and abuse of hostile sections of the community. The 1945 election created such a large Labour majority, and was so strong an endorsement of the Party, that a sense of security and self-confidence marked the attitude of the Party in power from 1945 to 1950, in notable contrast to the conditions prevailing in the two minority governments. The support the Conservative Party gave to Ernest Bevin's

foreign policy during his first five years in office strengthened the Government's political position in this field. Bevin often showed personal sensitivity to attacks upon his policy in the press and in debates, and answered his critics with great force, and sometimes harshly. He did not however, let critical comments alter the direction he gave to foreign policy.<sup>1</sup>

There was no tangible evidence of the Government redirecting its policy because of the influence of public opinion. Kenneth Younger declared, after reflecting upon the role of public opinion in the formation of the Government's foreign policy:

"I was somewhat shocked to find that I could not immediately recollect any occasion when I or my superiors had been greatly affected by public opinion in reaching important decisions."<sup>2</sup>

Younger qualified his statement by declaring that he referred to an absence of specific influence. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as the debate on the Anglo-American loan, was public opinion cited by the Government as a specific factor in its calculations. Then Dalton declared that the loan was necessary in order to maintain a standard of living acceptable to it.<sup>3</sup> But even in this case, the

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1. See Strang Home and Abroad pp. 293-4. It is possible that in his policy towards Jews and Arabs in Palestine he was sometimes forced to modify his position because of adverse criticism.
  2. K. Younger "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy" p. 169.
  3. 417 HC 441ff, 12.12.45.

primary factor was not fear of public opinion but fear of bankruptcy. There is no indication that the broad limits which public opinion imposes upon any government's freedom of action were ever in conflict with the Government's own wishes. Governors and electors shared common assumptions about the need for national defence and national prosperity. The Government never had public opinion veto the means it willed to these ends.<sup>1</sup> Ernest Bevin was supremely confident that when he spoke he was in fact expressing the views of the ordinary Englishman. The critics of the Government often asserted that it acted against the wishes of the people, but they produced little evidence to substantiate this claim.

Because of the Government's large majority in 1945, it had no special need to calculate the problematical and distant electoral consequence of its foreign policy during the first three years in office, when its pattern was determined. While Labour in Opposition could advocate diplomatically dangerous policies for reasons of political tactics, Labour in office was restricted in its political manoeuvres by responsibilities. The reduction of the Government's large majority at the 1950 general election created difficulties for the Government but did not make it

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1. Lord Strang, in discussing at length the vetoes by public opinion of policy decisions, did not cite any instance as occurring in the period 1945-51. "The Formation and Control of Foreign Policy" p. 98ff.

subject to electoral pressure, because of the magnitude of the problems facing it in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. One false step might have led to general war. Foreign policy entered marginally into the 1950 election, when Winston Churchill injected a call for a conference with Russia. The Nuffield survey concluded: "It is never possible to say how many voters are swayed by any single issue, but if one may judge by outward signs, Mr. Churchill's suggestion would seem neither to have won votes nor to have lost them."<sup>1</sup> In 1951 the Persian oil dispute became a major election issue and was cited by both sides. The Conservatives indicted Labour for weakness and Labour speakers declared the Conservatives would have risked war. This was the election in which the Daily Mirror demanded: "Whose finger do you want on the trigger?" Milne and Mackenzie found in a survey of a Bristol constituency that while voters in both parties regarded peace as a very important issue in the election, few gave it as the explanation of why they voted as they did.<sup>2</sup> Although these writers concluded that the Labour Party largely failed in its efforts there to identify the Conservative Party with war, they nevertheless credit the peace issue in that constituency with swinging about 400 votes (0.5 per cent) to Labour.<sup>3</sup> The Nuffield study

1. H.G. Nicholas op.cit. p. 107.

2. R.S. Milne and H.C. Mackenzie Straight Fight (1954). Cf. pp. 101-2 with Table 46, p. 126.

3. Ibid. p. 128 and p. 138.

concluded that in this exchange the Labour Party may have benefited slightly more than the Conservative Party.<sup>1</sup>

Besides the intangible and comprehensive public opinion that concerned itself with Government policy, there were smaller and highly compact opinion groups that were continuously interested in Labour policy. The most notable of these extra-parliamentary groups clustered around the New Statesman and Nation, Tribune and the Fabian Society.<sup>2</sup>

Among the political weeklies, the New Statesman was pre-eminently the journal of the left-wing, middle-class intellectual. One of the few things upon which Kingsley Martin, the editor, and Ernest Bevin would have agreed was that the periodical had no influence whatsoever on the Government's foreign policy. It has been cited in this study because it has, as George Orwell once noted, a "symptomatic value."<sup>3</sup> The editorial policy of the

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1. D.E. Butler The British General Election of 1951 (1952) pp. 118-28.
  2. Since the groups considered in this section did not have a discernible influence upon the Government's foreign policy, the following summary of their roles is not intended to be a comprehensive description of their activities in this period, but a brief explanation of their ineffectualness in one field.
  3. G. Orwell "Culture and Democracy" Victory or Vested Interest (1942) p. 84. For an analysis of the magazine's readership, see "Newstatesmanship" (1955) a pamphlet published by the weekly for advertisers.

paper was often in accord with traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy. Kingsley Martin could not bring himself to accept the importance of military defence or opposition to Russia. Woodrow Wyatt, at one time a contributor, noted:

"When there is a risk of war it seems as though he feels that all principles must be sacrificed to avert it. He has always (as he has often explained to me) had the uneasy feeling that the Communists are the heirs of the future, and that it is useless to expect victory against them in the long run. Therefore, he sees rearmament and a firm stand against Russian Communist militarism as provocative to the Russians. He hopes that if only we are polite to them they may leave us alone." 1

In signed articles the New Statesman gave prominence to a number of left-wing MPs, journalists and intellectuals, most notably, R.H.S. Crossman, the assistant editor, G.D.H. Cole and Harold Laski. Cole had alienated Ernest Bevin in 1932, when both were officers of the Socialist Society for Information and Propaganda, Laski alienated Attlee at the time of the 1945 general election and Crossman became persona non grata to Bevin the following spring, because of his comments on Palestine. The frustration of the group was given its most succinct expression by Cole in an article in February, 1951, in which he announced his intention to support China against America in the event of a military showdown in Asia.

"Not, of course that what I do personally will make a ha'p'orth of difference." 2

1. Wyatt Into the Dangerous World (1952) p. 152.
2. New Statesman 3.2.51.

Tribune, which originated as a vehicle of Sir Stafford Cripps, followed an uneven course between 1945 and 1951. At the end of the war the weekly was definitely on the left and critical of Party leadership. After the cold war began Tribune broadly supported the Government's foreign policy until the autumn of 1950. It was then more ginger than left-wing in its views. During part of this period it regularly published a supplement written and edited by Transport House. Late in the summer of 1950 it began to criticise the Government's foreign policy more sharply, and after the resignation of Aneurin Bevan, it became the recognised amplifier of the arguments of the Bevanite group. While Tribune veered from right to left, the Government moved steadily forward in its consistent policy, ignoring the weekly's advice. Aneurin Bevan, whose wife was an editor, successfully separated himself from the periodical's policies until after his resignation. The most significant feature of the period, perhaps, was the attempt of Tribune to appeal to both the intelligentsia and the rank-and-file. Writers were as likely to use football allusions as literary ones. Contributors were a heterogeneous lot. They included George Orwell, Randolph Churchill and Daniel George, as well as MPs such as Foot, Mikardo, J.P.W. Mallalieu and Jennie Lee.

The Fabian International Bureau, the branch of the Society concerned with international affairs, exercised no

influence within the Party or upon the Government during this period. Since the Government ministers concerned with foreign affairs had not previously been prominent in the Bureau, it had had no opportunity to influence their thinking prior to appointment. Ernest Bevin, unlike some other ministers, had no need to call in outside experts for advice, for he had a firm grip on his subject and his department. The Bureau was disorganised as well as ineffectual. Its stated purpose was to "prepare the ground for an international Socialist policy in international affairs." But the organisation, whose members included Leonard Woolf (chairman), Denis Healey, Harold Laski, Ernest Davies, Konni Zilliacus and R.H.S. Crossman, could not agree as to the content of this policy. The Bureau's first post-war pamphlet was called "Foreign Policy -- the Labour Party Dilemma." In fact, the dilemma was that of the Fabians. The pamphlet proposed three alternatives, two of them justified in the name of Socialism. Laski explained in the introduction:

"About a year ago the Fabian international committee set out to try and define the outlines of a Socialist foreign policy for Great Britain and to see whether agreement could be reached on its major principles. It was obvious that there were various, even opposed points of view in the Labour Party, and that these differences were pretty accurately represented among Fabians." <sup>1</sup>

Leonard Woolf offered as a distinctive feature of an inter-

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1. "Foreign Policy--the Labour Party Dilemma" (Fabian Research Series #121, 1947) p. 3.

national Socialist policy "no power politics" and "complete impartiality and dissociation from all strategic movements of the USA and the USSR."<sup>1</sup> W.N. Ewer, diplomatic correspondent of the Daily Herald, dismissed Woolf's proposals as having "small relation to reality" and suggested a policy in accord with that of the Government. Laski, noting the "striking contrast" between the two major contributors, proceeded to elucidate a third policy. The dilemma was far from resolved at the end of the Government's life, for "Rearmament -- How Far?" published in September, 1951, did not offer a single basis for an international Socialist policy, but two bases. It was a debate between Denis Healey and John Freeman, a Bevanite MP.

### Conclusions

"Parties are usually content to be led; but this is largely because there is no other way in which they can operate. This does not mean, however, that party leaders can ignore with impunity the moods and aspirations of their followers; they must carry their followers (and above all their followers in the parliamentary party) with them. And to do so, they have to take into account at every stage the clearly defined currents of opinion within their party. Blind appeals to loyalty (either to the person of the Leader or to the party itself) are frequently resorted to, and often they achieve their purpose. But they are rarely successful in bridging a real gulf when one does develop between the leaders and their followers."

R.T. McKenzie British Political Parties p. 587.

The Labour Government was constantly criticised

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1. "Foreign Policy--the Labour Party Dilemma" (Fabian Research Series 121, 1947) p. 17.

within the Party because it did not carry out a foreign policy based upon traditional Socialist principles. Nevertheless, it was strong enough to maintain itself for all but six months of its six years in office without a major split in the Party. At no time was it ever prevented by internal dissension from carrying out a major policy decision of its leaders. The Government's success in defending itself against internal criticism was due to a complex series of causes.

First, the leadership, when it took office in its own name, had behind it five years of experience and achievement in the war-time Coalition. The achievements in office gave them prestige; the experience gave them practice in governing the nation, and also, their followers. Accession to office fundamentally altered the task of the Labour leaders. In opposition, their job was to advance the welfare of the Party. Success was judged in terms of Party criteria. In office, they had a dual allegiance -- to govern the nation as well as to advance the Party. In the field of foreign affairs, it was the responsibilities of Government that altered Party policy, rather than traditional Socialist principles that revolutionised international relations. The Government was forced to act promptly in response to individual incidents of great magnitude, such as General Marshall's speech and the invasion of Korea. There was no time at the Foreign Office

to defer to opinion within the Party, as there might be at the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, a Foreign Secretary could not attach conditions to his plans, as could a maker of Party policy. He had to work with the world as it was, in all its imperfection. The result was that the Party policy-making machine was presented with a series of faits accomplis. Because of Cabinet responsibility, the accomplishments were presented to the Party, not in the name of an individual, but collectively in the name of all the major political figures in the Party. Former critics of the Party's foreign policy such as Stafford Cripps and John Strachey were ready enough to stifle any possible reservations on foreign affairs in return for the right to play an active part in formulating Government policy in another field. In facing backbench MPs the Cabinet was safely entrenched against its critics, until the Bevanite revolt, because the critics could not offer the Party membership alternative leadership. As long as the leadership was also the Government, the critics were hobbled by the need to support the Attlee Government or overthrow it and face the even less pleasant prospect of Churchill in office.

The existence of interlocking directorships within the Labour movement did not by itself make for Government control of the machinery, for this also permitted minority movements to fight simultaneously on several fronts. The distribution

of Privy Councillorships to Labour leaders did not automatically secure the Party machinery for the Government, for two-thirds of the NEC and approximately five-sixths<sup>1</sup> of Conference were controlled by trade union votes. The Government secured the support of the trade unions and of a part of the mass-membership, not because the merits of its foreign policy were fully understood and created enthusiasm among the rank-and-file, but because of a deep and widespread appreciation within the Labour movement of the many major accomplishments of the Government in domestic affairs. In a thesis devoted exclusively to foreign affairs it is sometimes difficult to keep in perspective the environment in which a Government works. To the average Party member or member of the PLP, questions of foreign policy were of limited interest. Questions of economic and social policy concerned him most, or exclusively.<sup>2</sup> Here the Government fulfilled the great expectations of all but the most Utopian of Party members. It could claim credit for maintaining full employment; directing a planned economy with a view to "fair shares";

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1. Strang notes of Bevin: "He had little fear about the attitude of the Party, if he could count on the support of the trade unions." Home and Abroad p. 293.
  2. The more astute of the Government's critics recognised this, and tried to show the allegedly harmful effects upon domestic policy of the Government's foreign, and particularly, its defence programme.

nationalising the mines, the Bank of England, gas, electricity, iron, steel, the railways and other forms of inland transport; heavy taxation of the rich and restrictions upon landlords and rentiers' rights; eliminating the means test; instituting the National Health Service and repealing the Trades Union and Trade Disputes Act of 1927. The major domestic pledge of its 1945 manifesto that it failed to meet was that to raise the school-leaving age to 16. Given such a quantity and range of achievements, it is hardly surprising that among the multiple loyalties of leaders of the Labour movement, loyalty to the achievements of the Labour Government was a pre-emptive loyalty.

In office, the leadership was both willing and able to use its position to develop support for its innovations in Labour foreign policy. Between the wars, the lead given to the mass-membership by the NEC had often been naive and unrealistic. In the years immediately before World War II, the leadership was sometimes a moderating influence upon extremist sections. It did not, however, try to educate its followers about the difficulties and dilemmas posed by problems in international relations. It was difficult enough to revise Party policy while in militant opposition without adding to this the burden of attempting to re-educate members. During the war the leadership secured endorsement of the Coalition's pragmatic

policy but it simultaneously encouraged expectations of a new era in foreign affairs after the war. It may be claimed that some Party leaders had conscious reservations about the value of traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy. If this is so, their silence is mute testimony to the power of Socialist principles within the Party. Alternately, if there were few doubts about principles within the leadership, this indicates how strongly the ideal and unreal world of Socialist principles was accepted as eminently capable of realisation.

After the war, the Labour Government was faced with a bill of expectations. In justifying their inability to satisfy these claims in foreign affairs, both Attlee and Bevin did their best to concentrate upon specific problems confronting them, instead of making broad attacks upon traditional Socialist assumptions about international relations. Bevin stirred anger because he would sometimes, when challenged, make declarations, in harsh and often personal fashion, in defiance of these preconceptions, and what was even worse from the point of view of the faithful, reinforce with votes his arguments based upon events. Attlee was a complete contrast. Verbal precision and historical accuracy were not his forte; given his pre-war views, these qualities would have been handicaps. Attlee frequently invoked the language of the 1930s to justify the very different policy of the 1940s. The use

of such language by Attlee and by various Transport House spokesmen was not so much a concession to critics as a confusion of critics. By pasting old labels onto new policies, the Government could and did justify its dependence upon American aid as working through the United Nations, the balance of power NATO pact as all-round collective security and opposition to the Schuman Plan as furthering Socialist planning. Clement Attlee was not a man to quibble over the meaning of words, particularly when he was winning arguments about matters of substance.

## Chapter VIII

## THE POLITICS OF REBELLION

"There are always a lot of silly asses on the back benches."

Anonymous minister.

The Parliamentary Labour Party was both an organisation with a corporate identity and a collection of 393 individuals, each seeking personal fulfilment.<sup>1</sup> As a corporate body, the chief function of the PLP was to support or oppose His Majesty's Government. The individuals collected within the PLP did not regard it with the single-mindedness of a constitutional lawyer. Activities described in this thesis have usually had an ostensible political aim and were justified in political terms, but it is as dangerous to ascribe all acts of politicians to rational motives<sup>2</sup> or to make political conflicts simply conflicts over principles, as it is to ascribe everything to personal likes and ambitions. It might be argued that in some cases,

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1. In W. Fienburgh's No Love for Johnnie (1959) p. 69, the hero speaks of the House of Commons as "the unpredictable, cruel destroyer of self-esteem. Six hundred and twenty-five egocentrics all locked up in their own ambitions, disappointments and successes. Six hundred and twenty-five politicians each deluding himself that the other 624 revolved around him." While this over-estimates the number of egocentrics in the House, it does indicate how an egocentric MP can regard Parliament.
  2. For example, at least two prominent critics of the Government were considered alcoholics. See e.g., R. Blackburn op.cit. p. 133ff.

particularly among dissenters, personal traits have been as important as Party principles in stimulating protest. In many respects, two MPs of different parties, both of whom were crusaders or journalists, may have had more in common than two MPs in a single party, who differed in occupations. A Foot and a Boothby; an Emrys Hughes and a Sir Waldron Smithers; a Follick and <sup>an</sup> I. J. Pitman have shown personal similarities as well as Party differences.

In practice, the corporate influence of the PLP upon the Government's foreign policy was minimal, because of the strength of the leadership, discussed previously. The PLP had the right to warn and to encourage but it lacked the power to be consulted in advance. Instead of asking advice before taking action the Government came to the group afterwards and sought ex post facto consent. The Cabinet had superior initiative, prestige, knowledge and leadership. The chief sanction of the PLP, the power to overturn the Government and invite dissolution, was a weapon that cut two ways.

With regard to foreign affairs, the PLP can be divided into several major groups. The majority consistently supported Cabinet policy. Foremost among the supporters were the office-holders. Ministers and junior ministers formed a bloc of about 65 who would, because they shared responsibility, be expected to support the Government. Their number was augmented by about 30 parliamentary private secretaries. In the first Labour Parliament they could

provide about half the votes required for a majority in the PLP, and in 1950-51, more than 60 per cent. The ministerial bloc was supplemented by a number of junior members of the PLP who coveted appointments. They did not wish to become known as persistent trouble-makers in foreign affairs, since Bevin, along with the Chief Whip, had considerable influence upon appointments, and both put a high premium on loyalty. By the time Morrison reached the Foreign Office the same was true of him. The carrot of office did not always work well at first, because so many Labour MPs were inexperienced, and thus ignorant about ways of advancement.<sup>1</sup>

The second major source of support for the Cabinet within the PLP consisted of trade union MPs.<sup>2</sup> While the 131 trade union-sponsored members returned in 1945 did not act as a conscious, disciplined group, the steadiness with which the great majority of them supported the Government on foreign policy and abstained from rebellion does permit of generalisation. While individuals varied from the pacifist, Rhys Davies of USDAW, to George Brown, a bellicose member of the T&GWU, most trade union MPs had little interest in foreign affairs. They were concerned with industrial matters. Because of their need to maintain goodwill with

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1. One observer commented that the difference between the PLP in 1945 and 1959 was that now there are "more careerists and fewer asses."
  2. Their interests are discussed in detail in M. Harrison op.cit. p. 711ff.

Party leaders in order to advance industrial interests, there was good reason for them to avoid identification with an anti-Government faction. Trade union MPs cannot be rigidly separated from a third important group, described by one dissenting MP as:

"... the many members of the PLP who looked at things in quite a simple way. They had been elected to support a Labour Government. Therefore, it was their duty to support their leaders in what they did, and to trust their judgment in foreign affairs. This outlook was typical of much of the Labour movement." <sup>1</sup>

Some of these MPs were actively concerned with the Government's domestic programme, as backbenchers or junior ministers. Others, like Willie Oldfield, a veteran Party agent who became MP for Gorton, Manchester, neither spoke rebellion nor thought rebellion. <sup>2</sup> As long as these three overlapping groups were in agreement, they could easily dominate the voting, if not the talk, in the PLP.

While there were pressures upon Labour MPs to support the Government, there were also conflicting pressures impelling some to dissent. The backbench MP, when his Party is in office, occupies an awkward position. He is elevated far above his fellows, an important man in his constituency and to the public, yet, in the House of Commons, he is the lowest of members, lacking even the freedom to criticise the Government that he had while in Opposition. This MP is

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1. Interview, S. Silverman, June, 1959.
  2. During the six years of the Labour Government, Oldfield, a borough councillor and a rugby fan, made only two speeches in the House of Commons, one on cotton and one on gas.

without office yet expected to show some sense of official responsibility. He must almost always support the Government, even though this makes him seem redundant, or a rubber stamp. Such irritations would not overcome the restraints of the ambitious, but they would spur those with a tendency toward minority-mindedness, especially when, as in foreign affairs, one could simultaneously attack the Government and appear as a defender of traditional Socialist ideals.

The institutional impulse toward criticism from the backbenches was strengthened in the PLP by the attitude of mind developed in many Party members by decades of attacking the status quo and the powers that be. The habit of criticism in the name of idealism and even millennialism was not easily discarded, especially when the Government's policy was so comfortless. Many of the more idealistic MPs were placed in a dilemma, although not all of them realised this. Either they were to support the Government's foreign policy loyally, thus abandoning their traditional hopes, or else attack the Government in the name of traditional ideas, and thus abandon loyalty to the leaders. As one prominent Keep Left and Bevanite MP, a veteran of Socialist League crusading in the 1930s, said later, "It's hell when your Party is the Government. You don't know whether to

follow your conscience or your loyalty to the Party."<sup>1</sup>  
 Often conscience won and loyalty lost.<sup>2</sup> Critics such as Michael Foot or Harold Davies saw themselves as idealists. Veteran propagandists on behalf of Socialism, they had no desire to mute their propaganda simply because there was a Labour Government, which had to deal with immediate and often intractable problems. Such idealists were closely related to the single-minded MPs -- Dick Stokes, the single-taxer, R.W.G. Mackay, the federalist, and Konni Zilliacus, the defender of the worldwide social revolution.

Temperamentally, many of the idealists were close to the journalist MPs, carefree and happy on the back benches. As backbenchers men such as R.H.S. Crossman, Tom Driberg and Maurice Edelman enjoyed the right to free-lance as they pleased, without regard to the restraints of office. They commanded large audiences and were centres of attention. One of the Keep Left journalists later admitted, "There was very little careerism in our group, but there was a certain amount of egotism." They could disdain the slight prestige

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1. This quotation, like much other information in this chapter, was obtained in one of a number of interviews with participants in the conflict on foreign policy. The interviews were conducted with the understanding that material was for quotation but not for attribution.
  2. Attlee has frequently quoted approvingly Tom Shaw's saying: "When I was young I was always talking about my conscience till one day I realised that what I called my conscience was just my own blooming conceit." See Attlee, "The Attitude of MPs and Active Peers", Political Quarterly 1959, p. 32. The article gives a very clear picture of how the Prime Minister sized up his associates in the PLP.

of being parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Works for the greater prestige offered by the Sunday press and the BBC. A political journalist earning £2,000 or £3,000 a year from his writing would not be tempted by the salary that went with office; or, as one of them put it, "We could afford to have ideals." In order to be interesting as journalists, these MPs were required to be provocative and this meant criticising<sup>1</sup> the Government, even though it was nominally their own.

R.H.S. Crossman was in a class by himself. He did not need to be compelled to be provocative; he was provocative by nature and gloried in the nickname of "Double-Crossman", which his unpredictable ways had earned him in the lobbies.

Illustrative of the determination with which he avoided the responsibility of office was his action in 1946, when he was appointed to the Anglo-American Palestine Commission as a preliminary to being offered an under-secretaryship at the Foreign Office.<sup>2</sup> Crossman chose to fling away his chance for appointment and advancement by using the Commission's report as the basis for his first violent attack upon Ernest Bevin.

Within the PLP there were some members with a propensity

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1. "An aspiring young politician should not commit himself to write periodically for the press," said Hugh Dalton, wise in the ways of the front bench, when discussing the tactics of advancement. Interview, February, 1959. Many of the Government critics did not necessarily aspire to places on the front bench.
  2. For the background to the offer, see Crossman Palestine Mission pp. 11-12.

for organisation, -- their enemies called it intrigue. Of these, Ian Mikardo was the most prominent; he was notoriously unsuccessful, but this did not deter him from planning numerous schemes for challenging the front bench. In his activities he was sometimes abetted by skilful parliamentarians such as Sydney Silverman and Geoffrey Bing. They found fertile ground, not only among the gullible and the idealists, but also among the disappointed office-seekers. The Government's patronage created enemies as well as friends. Persons named to office were silenced, while MPs passed over for appointment or promotion would sometimes be driven into opposition to the leadership out of spite. A critic such as Seymour Cocks would only have been human to resent his failure to get a position in 1945 after 16 years in the House of Commons and previous service to the Union of Democratic Control. Ivor Bulmer Thomas went to the extreme of quitting the Party after dismissal from office.

The minority-minded, the single-minded, the idealists, the free-lancers, the disgruntled and the organisers were united in one respect -- the gentle threats and promises of the Party whips had little relevance to their motives and ambitions. As long as the opposition faction remained large, expulsion was impractical as a normal method of discipline. Recantations and promises of future good behaviour were often

used by critics to counter threats of expulsion.<sup>1</sup>

The criticism of the Government's foreign policy was intensified because of the emphasis the Labour Party had traditionally placed upon the belief that foreign policy was not a difficult matter to be left to experts and aristocrats, but simple enough to be understood by anyone.<sup>2</sup> There were many self-appointed experts on foreign affairs in the PLP. It was common in the lobbies to refer to the "Amalgamated Society of Potential Foreign Secretaries."<sup>3</sup> Nor were these intending secretaries shy about pressing their claims. Attlee later recalled, "I've known some very ridiculous people. Without any experience. Thought they ought to be Foreign Secretary. Several."<sup>4</sup> The amateurs of foreign affairs were encouraged in their back-seat driving by trips abroad and contacts with embassies. For example, John Mack, after a trip to Bulgaria, then very unpopular in Britain, assured the House that:

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1. One parliamentarian said that this very readiness of some MPs, particularly those of the Keep Left group, to back down under pressure, and to apologise for 'unintentionally' embarrassing the government, only increased dislike for them among the PLP members loyal to the Government. They regarded this as indicating cowardice and lack of conviction.
  2. A national officer of USDAW commented in an interview that because of the mixed trades and skills of members, annual conferences of that union devoted a disproportionate amount of time to debating foreign policy because, among other reasons, "That was a subject upon which all members felt themselves equally well informed."
  3. Shinwell op.cit. p. 244.
  4. News Chronicle 20.4.59.

"The Bulgarian people have their faults, like everyone else and they are the first to admit it, but they are decent and honourable people with warm hearts who only want friendship with Britain." 1

The general election of 1945 was a landmark in the history of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Because there had been no general election in 1940, changes of personnel that would normally have taken place over two parliaments were compressed into one. When the House rose in May, 1945, the PLP still had two members, John Clynes and Will Thorne, who had become Labour MPs in 1906 and had entered the trade union movement well before that. When Parliament met again in August, the PLP had a large contingent of youthful MPs who came of age politically in the 1930s, a period of strenuous Labour campaigning for a Socialist foreign policy. It was this group that furnished many of the most prominent critics of the Government, which was led by men who had come of age politically before the outbreak of the Great War. The conflict of generations added to the conflict on policy. It was sharpened by the suddenness of change and by the fact that more than half of the Labour MPs were new to Parliament, and inexperienced in its ways.

The size and the unexpectedness of the Labour victory created further problems. The difficulties of selecting candidates after the dislocations of six years of war gave nomination and victory to a very heterogeneous lot, some of

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1. 443 HC 223, 22.11.47. The whole speech is worth reading.

whom, it was rumoured, had not previously been members of the Labour Party;<sup>1</sup> others had been Communists. As one veteran recalled, for a time there was "organised chaos".

"Dozens of people who had never expected to get into Parliament suddenly found themselves there. Some of them were not even members of the Labour Party. No one knew anybody else and this created difficulties at Party meetings. It was hard to anticipate what would happen, or to know for certain which were your men. A lot of members were green in Westminster. It took about three years for people to sort themselves out. A few were defeated in 1950 and left the House without ever learning how to act there."<sup>2</sup>

Inexperience, idealism, confusion and irresponsibility characterised many, but not all, of the new backbenchers. Michael Foot recalled:

"In 1945 we were a very new party and people did not know each other. Members had many different left-wing notions about foreign affairs. They were mostly similar, occasionally conflicted, and were never homogeneous. Therefore, there were no groups at first. There was confusion. I do not think most of us had much idea of how to go about things. I know I hadn't."<sup>3</sup>

#### The Foreign Affairs Group

The PLP formally maintained contact between backbenchers and ministers through a small liaison committee of MPs and ministers, and groups formed according to subject-matter. These groups were designed to provide MPs with special interests, such as foreign affairs, with a chance for their

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1. Raymond Blackburn op.cit. p. 52, writes of Woodrow Wyatt during World War II. "At the time he was a Liberal but was perfectly prepared to join the Labour Party if he would thereby gain the chance of getting into Parliament."
  2. Interview. See also, A. Baker The House is Sitting (1958) p. 236.
  3. Interview, January, 1959.

"initiative and individuality to have full scope." <sup>1</sup> From the beginning the Cabinet made clear that ministers, in discussions with groups interested in their departments, were to act "without prejudice to their responsibilities to Parliament." <sup>2</sup> This was a roundabout way of saying that the groups were not to be consulted regularly in advance of statements to the House, nor were they to be accorded the deference or influence given to some legislative committees.

Seymour Cocks, a veteran Labour MP, was offered the chairmanship of the foreign affairs group instead of receiving a ministerial appointment. <sup>3</sup> The group had sub-committees, which seriously discussed such questions as the best method for recruiting the international police force and what colour their uniforms should be. There was no limit upon the number who could attend a group meeting. An MP interested in getting the foreign affairs group to support a particular proposal could lobby friends to pack the meeting. In the early days of the Parliament, there was a sense, albeit mistaken, of purpose and promise about this group. <sup>2</sup> These hopes were quickly dissipated by contact with

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1. LPCR 1946, p. 56. See also J.M. Burns, "The Parliamentary Labour Party in Great Britain" American Political Science Review (1950) p. 858ff, and a very detailed report on the formation of subject groups, Manchester Guardian 1.9.45.

2. LPCR 1946, p. 56.

3. At this time it was known as the external affairs group. Following the establishment of a Commonwealth and Empire group in the 1946-47 session, the committee became known as the foreign affairs group. The more familiar term has been used throughout.

Ernest Bevin. Early in 1946 the group took up the question of Labour policy towards Greece, and came to conclusions opposite to those of the Foreign Secretary. Arrangements were made for it to express its disagreement with Cabinet policy at a PLP meeting in March, 1946, shortly before elections in Greece. Cocks opened the unusually well attended meeting with a statement of what the group believed was wrong with the Government's Greek policy. After some general discussion, Bevin spoke for an hour, justifying not only his policy in Greece but also the major outlines of his international policy. When he sat down a motion was promptly offered from the floor "that the Parliamentary Labour Party endorses the foreign policy of His Majesty's Government." It was approved on a show of hands, with more than 300 in favour, 6 opposing and about 30 abstentions. Most of the 70 or more members of the PLP who had shortly before signed a memorandum asking for changes in Greece did not back their signatures with votes.<sup>1</sup> Bevin's critics were reported to be "rather nonplussed" when faced with a vote of confidence.<sup>2</sup>

The same dilemma repeatedly faced the group throughout the lifetime of the Government. If it criticised the broad outlines of the policy of the strongest member of the Cabinet, it would be suggesting no confidence in the Government.

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1. New Statesman 23.3.46. See also Manchester Guardian 11.3.46.

2. The Times 28.3.46.

Bevin was too strong within the Labour movement to be turned out by a group of light-weights lacking strong support within the Cabinet. Alternatively, a criticism of a specific item of Bevin's policy could still be treated by the Foreign Secretary as a general question of confidence, and support secured on this basis. The critics were also faced with the disadvantage of presenting their case to an audience that was too big to deliberate on matters of policy. As one opponent of the Government explained later:

"The trouble with the PLP meeting was that we had a very large group, really too large for the committee rooms here [i.e., in the House of Commons]. Many people did not care to talk about, or listen to discussions on foreign policy. After perhaps 30 minutes of debate some of the members would begin to get hungry or thirsty and you would get a chant of 'Vote, Vote' from the back of the room.

"After a while I gave up going."

Members of the foreign affairs group quickly became disillu<sup>1</sup>tioned about the value of their committee work. Ernest Bevin regarded their activities as a nuisance, and complained about having to meet them when informed his presence was necessary in order to explain and defend Government policy.<sup>2</sup> In addressing the group, he spoke forcefully and made no effort to conciliate his critics. They were weak and he was strong. He did not hide his contempt for their activities. Herbert Morrison gave the

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1. This reaction was not, of course, the same in all PLP groups.
  2. Cf. the comment of one of Bevin's senior civil servants: "The House of Commons is like a lamp post in the dark. You recognise its existence in order to avoid collision."

groups an ambiguous tribute -- "valuable in clarifying the minds of members taking an interest in their work."<sup>1</sup> Because policy-making was excluded from the work of the groups, some MPs felt they were maintained as a device for keeping backbenchers occupied but impotent.<sup>2</sup> Cocks, disappointed with the futility of the foreign affairs group, resigned the chairmanship in 1947 and it passed to John Hynd, who had recently left the Government, and was heading for obscurity. Unlike Cocks, he was an inconspicuous chairman; like Cocks, he was politically impotent.

There were other recognised channels of protest in Parliament. Question time was useful for assessing Party opinion. Kenneth Younger recalled:

"From the Minister's point of view, ill-informed or even stupid questions may be quite as informative as those of experts, and the murmurs of approval or protest evoked from different sections of opinion in the House can be as significant as anything that is said."<sup>3</sup>

Questions and spontaneous comments could offset the expressions of opinions contained in motions that were tabled but not debated. After the suspension of the standing orders of the PLP in January, 1946, there was no Party regulation requiring that MPs had to consult the whips before tabling

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1. Morrison Government and Parliament (1954) p. 126.
  2. Burns op.cit. pp. 859-60.
  3. K. Younger "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy" p. 173.

motions or amendments.<sup>1</sup> The terms of many motions on foreign policy were often too vague to be meaningful, or, as in the case of motions on world government, irrelevant. The Government regarded many MPs as ready to sign anything, and signatures were discounted. The number of signatures was a tribute to the energy and the skill of the sponsors as well as to the ideas contained therein. Critics of the Government rarely secured more than 50 signatures for motions on foreign policy. This was less than 14 per cent of the PLP. The feelings of MPs could also be assessed through the network of Parliamentary Private Secretaries and through the whips. Such party-wide sampling of opinion gave due weight to the Government's quiet supporters whose votes spoke louder than their voices. This put into perspective the activities of the relatively small number of devoted amateurs.

#### The Rebels, Keep Left and Anti-Conscriptionists

Many Labour MPs entered the House of Commons in 1945 with the enthusiasm inspired by a double victory. The fight against Fascism had been won abroad; the fight against Toryism had been won at home. The old world of unemployment, poverty and power politics was to be

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1. See Manchester Guardian 31.1.46 and LPCR 1946 p. 221. Also, it meant the suspension of the rule forbidding Labour MPs to vote in the House contrary to the decisions of Party meetings.

transformed into a new society, in international relations as well as in domestic affairs.<sup>1</sup> Woodrow Wyatt, musing about this period, explained: "We thought we were going to change the world in a week. Three days had gone by already and nothing had happened. The Government must be at fault."<sup>2</sup> That these critics thought first of questioning their own Party leaders rather than the principles that had created great expectations underlines the importance they attached to traditional Socialist values.

The Labour Government quickly showed by its actions towards Greece, towards Franco, towards the United States and towards Russia, that the conduct of foreign affairs was not about to be transformed. Disappointment within the PLP did not take full shape at once. In the division on the Anglo-American loan on December 13th, 1945, later critics of the Government found themselves voting in opposite lobbies. Crossman, Mikardo and Sydney Silverman supported the Government; Jennie Lee, Barbara Castle and Michael Foot voted against it.<sup>3</sup> The New Statesman, however, which had praised Bevin as recently as December 1st, 1945, was declaring in March, 1946 that Labour MPs were asking, "What is to be done about Ernest Bevin?"<sup>4</sup> By July, 1946, Ian Mikardo was hinting

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1. See e.g., maiden speeches in the House by Michael Foot, 413 HC 336ff, 20.8.45, Benn Levy, 413 HC 729ff, 22.8.45, Captain Raymond Blackburn, 413 HC 908ff, 23.8.45 and T.F. Peart, 413 HC 357ff, 20.8.45.

2. Interview, February, 1959.

3. 417 HC 735 ff.

4. 23.3.46.

darkly that a "powerful" group of backbench MPs was dis-  
satisfied with Bevin.<sup>1</sup>

The springs of discontent overflowed the channels of normal PLP grievance procedure in the autumn of 1946, and while the floodwaters of protest were to rise and fall thereafter, they were not to be dammed up again during the lifetime of the 1945-51 Government. The confidence that the leaders had shown in their supporters by suspending standing orders, was premature. The first move against the Government was taken privately. A group of 21 members of the PLP, including Crossman, Michael Foot and Sydney Silverman, sent a letter to the Prime Minister on October 29th, two days after Ernest Bevin had sailed for New York.<sup>2</sup> They asked for the adoption of a "Socialist" foreign policy. A deputation from the dissatisfied MPs saw Hector McNeil, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, on November 12th. The highly critical Amendment to the Address was tabled that night. Its sponsors were Crossman, Foot, Mark Hewitson, Benn Levy, Joe Reeves, Silverman and Jennie Lee. The next day Attlee and Morrison spent two hours at a PLP

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1. Daily Mail 27.7.46.

2. Text and signatories, Manchester Guardian 16.11.46. Rebels were reported to be encouraged by the large minority vote against the Government's foreign policy at the Trades Union Congress in September. The Observer 27.10.46. Some of the dissenters, including Crossman, Foot and Silverman, had formed "an informal group" on Palestine following the adjournment debate of July 1st, 1946. See Crossman Palestine Mission p. 203.

meeting, seeking withdrawal of the Amendment. The PLP voted 126 to 32 in favour of withdrawal.<sup>1</sup> The rebels were well disciplined enough to agree, as a body, to press their Amendment to debate. As long as they numbered about 50, they were too big to need to fear harsh punishment.

In so far as the object of the rebels was to stimulate public discussion of the Government's foreign policy, they succeeded. The rebels had their day of debate in Parliament, in the PLP, and a run of several Sundays in the newspapers. But to the extent that the rebels wished to alter the foreign policy of the Cabinet, they failed. The awkwardness of their position became clear in the debate on the Amendment. Unwilling to vote against their own front bench, the rebels sought leave to withdraw the motion at the end of the debate. Leave was refused. Two members of the ILP volunteered to act as tellers for the Ayes. There were no Aye votes to record. Some 50-60 Labour MPs publicly abstained. At the same time, in spite of a three-line whip, only 231 of the 387 members of the PLP, or 59.7 per cent, voted for the Government. 52.3 per cent of Conservative MPs voted with the Labour ministers.<sup>2</sup> The critics of the Government's foreign policy revealed the limits of their opposition. They were willing to talk against the Government but loath to vote against it. On the

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1. Manchester Guardian 14.11.46.

2. See 430 HC 590ff, 18.11.46. The Evening Standard 19.11.46 had the percentage figures.

other hand, while the Government secured victory, its failure to poll 40 per cent of its MPs in an important division was evidence of the unpopularity of its foreign policy.

The Government counter-attacked the following week at a PLP meeting. A letter from the NEC was read, declaring that there must be no repetition of the rebellion because it would have disastrous electoral consequences. Morrison reminded members that all of them required NEC endorsement in order to stand as Labour candidates at the next election. Attlee delivered a very sharp speech, attacking the formation of a "party within a party".

"If you do not like your leader, you can go ahead and change him," he cried. "In the meantime, you must be loyal." <sup>1</sup>

Crossman confessed to the meeting, "It was a wrong thing to do" <sup>2</sup> thereby provoking laughter and distrust. The chief result of the attack upon the absent Foreign Secretary was to increase his contempt for his critics within the Party. The mentality of some of the rebels is indicated by their later claim that the success of the Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting in New York in December, 1946 was to a considerable extent due to the impression their protest had made upon the Foreign Secretary and the Russians <sup>3</sup>.

Recognising that the ad hoc demonstration against

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1. Evening Standard 28.11.46.

2. Ibid.

3. The Observer 29.12.46.

the Government was a wrong thing to do, a group of leading rebels decided that the right thing to do was to organise a faction that could continuously attack the Government. The result was Keep Left, which began meeting early in 1947. The original membership consisted of MPs who were already friends. Because the group used the blackball when considering new members it remained quite homogeneous.<sup>1</sup> The members who signed the "Keep Left" pamphlet in April, 1947, were Crossman, Foot, Mikardo, Bing, Donald Bruce, Harold Davies, Leslie Hale, Fred Lee, Benn Levy, Mackay, J.P.W. Mallalieu, Ernest Millington, Stephen Swingler, George Wigg and Woodrow Wyatt.<sup>2</sup> Most<sup>3</sup> of them had also signed the Amendment to the Address.

Ostensibly, the purpose of the group was to promote "a more drastic Socialist policy"; it proposed action "where the Government White Papers left off."<sup>4</sup> In fact, its real functions were diffuse and complex. First, the group did gain public attention for its views on policy.

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1. In explaining why trade union MPs were absent, one member said contemptuously: "You can't penetrate ivory." Much of the contempt was reciprocated.
  2. There were others who were considered members at one time or another but did not sign the pamphlet. These included L.J. Callaghan and Barbara Castle. Mrs. Castle did not sign because she felt constrained by her position as a P.P.S. to Cripps.
  3. Exceptions were Bing, Hale, Lee, Swingler and Wyatt. Only Lee, a trade unionist, had voted for the Government in the division.
  4. "Keep Left" inside cover.

With its regular meetings, formal organisation and recognised position as a ginger element within the PLP, Keep Left could amplify the voice of an individual MP, although the voice of the group as a whole was negligible in relation to that of the Government leaders. Since seven of the 15 were recognised journalists, the group easily attracted publicity for its views, at the cost of antagonising many in the PLP. The second major function of Keep Left was to plan tactics and concert efforts, so that the more drastic policy it advocated would be adopted by the Government. In retrospect, most members preferred to forget this function. "We were an educational group, like the Fabian Society," one member inaccurately recalled. But education was not its only function. The dislike and contempt that Keep Left inspired in the PLP was not caused by their efforts at self-education, but by their attempts to influence policy. Ian Mikardo and Geoffrey Bing were, as one member put it, "the schemers." Keep Left had an efficient internal organisation, perhaps modelling itself on the Cabinet. It met regularly and privately in Room 11 of the House of Commons. There was a chairman and a secretary and minutes were kept and approved. An agenda on policy was prepared, and papers were circulated to members in advance of meetings, where the papers were criticised. Crossman, for example, often wrote on foreign policy, and Dr. Thomas Balogh, on economic affairs. Following discussions, votes were taken to determine policy

for the group. "Otherwise," one member explained importantly, "We would have been just a mere discussion group."

The group tried to insinuate its recommendations into the policy-making sections of the Party and the Government. In foreign affairs it was singularly unsuccessful. The publication of "Keep Left", shortly before the 1947 Annual Conference, was the most publicised of its achievements. Another display of its activity was put on at the 1947 Conference itself. The group decided in advance not to confront Bevin with a broad criticism of his work, a method employed so unsuccessfully in the House the previous November.<sup>1</sup> Instead, it decided to concentrate its attention upon motions dealing specifically with Germany and with defence and manpower, on the grounds that these subjects were of more interest to delegates. Dalton, in recommending rejection of the resolution Harold Davies offered on defence, declared that it should really have been presented in the foreign policy debate instead of the production debate.<sup>2</sup> Mikardo and Crossman spoke in support of Davies' resolution. It was defeated, 1,109,000 to 2,357,000. The resolution that Crossman and Mikardo supported on Germany was, as Crossman

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1. As Crossman coyly explained, the group decided to abstain from the debate on foreign affairs because it could accept neither the Zilliacus nor the Bevin policy. New Statesman 7.6.47.
  2. LPCR 1947, p. 140, p. 153. Jennie Lee's constituency presented a similar resolution. It was withdrawn in keeping with a request from the NEC. p. 143ff.

noted, "rather surprisingly" accepted by Bevin, although, as it turned out, he later ignored it.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding their careful calculations, Bevin lashed out at his critics. It was at this Conference that he accused them of leaving him "stabbed in the back" when he was negotiating in America.<sup>2</sup> As Crossman reported, curiously enough, in the third person plural, "Completely out-maneuvred, they found themselves routed on the issue they had decided not to debate."<sup>3</sup> It was, he said, "a wholesome lesson."

The one tactical victory that the group could claim was a qualified victory. In the debate on conscription in the spring of 1947, the Keep Left MPs, in conjunction with opponents of conscription, were successful in forcing the reduction of the length of national service from 18 to 12 months. While providing reinforcements, the members neither fought the main battle nor did they contribute the bulk of the votes that made the Government change its policy. Their importance resulted from their threat to shift their votes in the committee stage of the bill. Without allies, it is doubtful whether this move would have

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1. LPCR 1947, p. 163ff.

2. Ibid. p. 179. To this he added, "I grew up in the trade union, you see, and I have never been used to this kind of thing."

3. New Statesman 7.6.47.

met with success.<sup>1</sup>

The third major function of the group was educational. Meeting together and discussing specific items of Government policy informally and critically was excellent preparation for speaking in major debates. The average backbench MP did not have this chance to prepare himself for debate in the House, or to hear and discuss privately papers on Government policy. Members have liked to compare these seminars with educational work by the Fabian Society. Here again, the comparison is mistaken. The Fabian Society succeeded by means of experts outside the House of Commons quietly presenting recommendations to powerful ministers within it. Keep Left operated by moderately informed backbench members of the House discussing expert papers, not with influential ministers, but with fellow malcontents.

Fourthly, the group gave pleasure and psychological fulfilment. Talking with a group of like-minded friends about what ought to be done satisfied wordmongers and idealists; it made them feel they were doing something constructive, although what they were in fact doing was antagonising those in control of Government and advertising themselves and their ideas to the public at large. The knowledge that one had friends who were in agreement and ready to make interjections was of benefit to any relatively

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1. See infra pp. 480-83 for a comparison of the anti-conscriptionists and the members of Keep Left.

new speaker in debates. Belonging to a group gave status; it helped unimportant backbenchers to stand out from their undistinguished comrades. The Cabinet procedure that the group incorporated was entertaining to some, who enjoyed playing at being ministers. As one prominent member recalled later:

"It was fun, tremendous fun. We were all friends, mostly bright, middle-class Oxford sort of idealists. I was sorry when the group broke up, for I missed seeing everyone regularly."

Although well organised for action, the Keep Left members were not able to stick together under the impact of shifts in British policy in 1947-48. The interests of the critics had been various to begin with. <sup>1</sup> Mackay began to put European federation before all else. Mikardo and Foot disagreed about the need for NATO. Crossman became strongly pro-American following the development of the Marshall Plan; others did not follow him. In response to a Tribune query, "What's Left?", Crossman replied that the group had disbanded because the Marshall Plan made its original proposal for a third force out of date, and the Government's response to the economic crisis of 1947 <sup>2</sup> had largely satisfied the group's domestic wishes. Furthermore, unity was needed in view of the approaching general election.

The pleasures of belonging to a recognised clique were

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1. For comments on the differences among the critics see e.g., T.E.N. Driberg Reynolds News 17.3.46; R.H.S. Crossman Sunday Pictorial 6.11.47; "Bevin's Parliamentary Critics" Socialist World (June-August 1947) pp. 7-10.
  2. Tribune 19.11, 26.11.48.

too strong to be denied; about eight months before the 1950 election, the group began meeting again. In the summer of 1949 there were new political issues to separate backbenchers from their leaders -- particularly, the pace of nationalisation and the relative importance of economic and military programmes. The re-organised group issued a second pamphlet, "Keeping Left", in January, 1950, shortly before the election.<sup>1</sup> The ostensible aim of the revived organisation was "re-thinking our whole policy in terms of the principles of Socialism." The group added "Sometimes principles have been over-ridden by expediency, and here it is the attitude of the leadership which is rightly questioned."<sup>2</sup> It carried on its discussion activities much as before, but the Government's very small majority did not give it as much room for manoeuvre within the House of Commons. These limitations became relatively unimportant with the advent of new issues of controversy following the Government's introduction of its rearmament programme. The Keep Left group was then superseded by the Bevanite movement.

The Keep Left group was the most important of the

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1. MPs who signed the first but not the second pamphlet were Bing, Lee, Levy, Mackay, Mallalieu, Millington, Wyatt and Foot. Foot did not sign because of his NEC membership. New signatories were Sir Richard Acland, Barbara Castle, Tom Hornabin, Marcus Lipton and Tom Williams (of S. Hammersmith.)
  2. "Keeping Left" inside cover.

organised factions consisting exclusively of backbenchers. The decision to organise was a conscious one. "We decided that unless we were well organised, we would not be important," one member explained. By organising, the members not only increased their efficiency, but also increased the opposition to their criticism of the leadership.<sup>1</sup> As Sydney Silverman, himself a prominent backbench critic, explained in discussing the tactics of opposition:

"I am against factionalism. An organised group becomes identified with certain ideas. When they make statements their ideas are no longer regarded objectively, but as what you would expect from a special-interest group. What they say is disregarded. The Keep Left members were ambitious and thought they were a spearhead, but their way of conducting themselves only antagonised the members who might have formed the shaft."<sup>2</sup>

In political terms, the group was not a party, for it lacked leaders of any stature, nor did it pretend that it was ready to form an alternative government to carry out its proposals. Instead, for once emulating the Fabians, the group sought to influence persons politically more important than themselves to do what Keep Left thought best. But by organising against the Government they were also challenging it, in contrast to the Webbs, who worked more by infiltration than by challenge. Keep Left's

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1. Ernest Davies said that when he heard a comment from a member of the Keep Left group that he thought ought to be reported to Bevin, he would usually try to disguise its source so that Bevin would consider it without prejudice. Interview, July, 1958.
  2. Interview, June, 1959.

public challenge of the Government insured that it would do its utmost to avoid any appearance of giving in to its critics. The saving grace of the Keep Left group was weakness, not strength. While a nuisance to the Government it was not a threat. Members had a formal organisation, but there was a touch of the comic about their efforts. Despite the illusions of a few schemers, the Keep Left group was "not a conspiracy."<sup>1</sup> Its activities caused a light-handed contempt or disdain, rather than bitter hatred.

In spite of the fact that the group was over-organised in terms of its capabilities, Ian Mikardo considered its failure as primarily the result of insufficient organisation. This organiser, thinking of his idealist and free-lance cohorts, declared harshly that the whole trouble with the left is that they hate organisation and they are "too bloody lazy." The groups would have done much more if he had had his way. What was needed was proper organisation, with votes, whips, careful watching of the order paper for opportunities to raise issues and get publicity, and more co-ordination of activities on the floor of the House.<sup>2</sup> But Mikardo, as he recognised, was in the minority

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1. In separate interviews several members of the group employed the same phrase.
  2. Interview, March, 1959. It is reasonable to assume that if the group had gone so far as to issue whips for votes against the Government, members would have been expelled from the PLP.

within this group of critics. He was seriously, if forlornly, thinking in terms of political effectiveness. Compare his view with that of another prominent Keep Left member:

"I can remember Evan Durbin saying to me, a few weeks before he was drowned, 'You're throwing yourself away by constantly criticising the Government.' He asked me if I didn't think politics was about power, and didn't I want to be a minister with power. But what would I or Michael Foot want with being P.P.S to the Minister of Pensions. We were idealists and we had secure positions as journalists. We liked being a ginger group. It was fun. I had no objection to being named a minister right off but that couldn't have happened in 1945. It didn't seem worth the trouble of compromising your ideals for so long in the hopes that someday you could do something. We were doing what we wanted to do already."

A comparison of the members of Keep Left with those who voted against conscription in the division of April 1st, 1947, is revealing, because the anti-conscriptionists did win the only backbench victory against Cabinet policy in foreign affairs during the lifetime of the Government. The first striking feature of the anti-conscriptionists is their lack of organisation. They did not meet regularly nor did they have a desire to fight the Government across a broad front. The opponents of conscription represented a coalition of MPs formed for the specific purpose of opposing a single bill. Opposition to conscription cut across almost every other classification within the Party. Pacificists and class warriors, trade unionists and constituency stalwarts united on this issue, but on little

else.<sup>1</sup> The only group under-represented among the 70 was Keep Left. Only Mikardo and Millington went into the lobby against conscription, and incidentally, against the majority of their group. Only 16 of the 55 rebels who signed the November, 1946 Amendment to the Address voted against conscription. The Government faced the opponents of conscription with the knowledge that any concessions granted it would not lead to more demands, but to dissolution of the ad hoc opposition.

Both anti-conscriptionists and Keep Left members were nominally appealing to traditional Socialist principles. The opponents of conscription, however, were talking about an issue that affected many of their constituents in an immediate, visible and personal fashion. By contrast, the Keep Left MPs were, in their foreign policy campaign, talking about conditions in almost every place but England. The relation of foreign policy to individual welfare was difficult to establish in most debates in 1946-47.

Sociologically, the two groups were quite different. Of the 70 who opposed conscription, 60 per cent were definitely working-class in origin; only 6 per cent had been to Oxford or Cambridge, compared with an average within the PLP of 15 per cent.<sup>2</sup> The opponents of the

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1. See Manchester Guardian 3.4.47, for an analysis of their divergencies.

2. The percentages for the PLP as a whole are derived from information in J.F.S. Ross Elections and Electors (1955). For the groups, they are based upon my calculations.

Government included 14 MPs sponsored by trade unions, including Ernest Bevin's P.F.S., Percy Wells of the T&GWU. Fifteen of the 70 had first entered Parliament before 1931. The division on conscription was one of the rare times when the usually subdued working-class members of the PLP with long records of service to the Labour movement publicly rebelled against their leaders.

By contrast, the foreign policy critics of Bevin were usually chronic critics, and scarcely distinguished for loyalty to the decisions of the leadership. Their most striking features were their Parliamentary inexperience and their middle-class background. Of the 55 Labour MPs who signed the amendment, 47 had not sat in Parliament before the 1945 general election. Only six had distinctively working-class occupations. Business and professional men comprised 38 of the signatories. As regards education, 57 per cent had been to a university, as compared with 33 per cent of the PLP, and 15 had been at Oxford or Cambridge. 49 were sponsored by divisional labour parties and only 4 by trade unions, a ratio of 12 to 1, as compared with the overall PLP ratio of less than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 1. Among those who signed the two Keep Left pamphlets, these characteristics appear even more strongly. Of the 20, only two had been in Parliament before 1945, both as Liberals. Eleven were Oxford graduates,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  times the PLP ratio. Fred Lee of the AEU was the lone trade unionist and manual worker in the group. Sixteen signatories were sponsored by divisional

labour parties and two were not elected in 1945 as Labour members.

The difference in the Party standing of the two sets of objectors is indicated by the reactions to their breaches of discipline. After the November, 1946 revolt, some 50 or 60 members of the PLP sought to reimpose standing orders to limit the activities of the rebels.<sup>1</sup> After the anti-conscription revolt, the Cabinet took the initiative; it offered to improve communications between itself and the backbenchers.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Bevanites

The resignation of Aneurin Bevan and Harold Wilson from the Cabinet in April, 1951 gave to backbench critics of the Government what they had previously lacked, leaders of senior Cabinet rank, men who could address the front bench as equals and as rivals. The opposition to the fatigued and weakened Cabinet was suddenly changed from a nuisance to a danger. With two Privy Councillors to provide leadership, the conditions for forming a "party within a party" were now met. The time for "conspiracy" was at hand.<sup>3</sup> Aneurin Bevan and Harold Wilson were

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1. Manchester Guardian 29.11.46.
  2. Manchester Guardian 24.4.47. Another sign of deference by the leadership was its action in consulting the PLP and the General Council of the TUC before its intention to continue conscription was announced to Parliament. Such consultation was exceptional. See Manchester Guardian 6.11.46 and Morrison op.cit. p. 136.
  3. Again, the word is quoted from conversation with Bevanite MPs.

complementary leaders. Bevan, a working-class firebrand, was at home on the platform as an orator and in the drawing-room as a Socialist intellectual; he was also considered a success in Whitehall.<sup>1</sup> Harold Wilson was a stable, methodical ex-don and ex-civil servant who had reached Cabinet rank at the age of 31. Both were a generation younger than the Cabinet leadership, with more vitality and more time for manoeuvre. There was not, however, an effort to spread the resignations within the Cabinet. Bevan unsuccessfully tried to talk John Freeman out of resigning and succeeded in preventing the resignation of an important junior minister, saying it was not necessary "ideologically."

Tactically, the Bevanites differed from previous critics of foreign policy because the issues on which they challenged the Government were ones in which its international policy had immediate and visible consequences at home, particularly on wages, prices, and welfare services. The Government could only offer the certainty of absolute cuts in the standard of living and restrictions on some social services. The justification of the Government's policy was incapable of proof, being negative -- to prevent war in Europe, to prevent the disintegration of NATO and to restrain America in Asia. The policy recommendations

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1. See Attlee's tribute to Bevan as a minister. News Chronicle 27.4.59.

of the Bevanites were incapable of disproof, because they were not being tested. The Government's admission of further economic difficulties after Bevan's resignation was played up by the Bevanites as proof of their rightness. The Bevanite appeal for salvation through building a Socialist Britain with an enviable living standard and social services as an example to other nations provided a unique opportunity for combining self-interest and idealism in one simple message.<sup>1</sup>

Although members of the Keep Left group were divided on the question of Bevan resigning -- Foot and Mikardo favouring resignation, Crossman and Barbara Castle opposing it -- the group joined up with Bevan as a body, except for George Wigg. It was the nucleus of the Bevanite movement. Crossman, Mikardo and Foot formed a sort of general staff, concerned with policy, organisation and publicity. As one of the members put it, "We saved Nye from being surrounded by his personal followers, the Nye-dolaters."<sup>2</sup> In addition to the members of the Keep Left group and personal followers, such as Jennie Lee,

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1. German rearmament did not become a major issue until after the Government left office.
  2. Cf. the remarks of one of Bevan's Cabinet colleagues: "Nye let his staff do the work when he was a minister; he had a good staff. When he got out of the Cabinet he found a much poorer staff in Foot, Crossman and company." Interview.

the movement attracted other MPs who had held themselves aloof from earlier attacks upon the Government and now saw the chance to be politically effective and/or satisfy personal ambitions. Desmond Donnelly, for example, refused an invitation to join Keep Left early in 1950, regarding it as only a talking shop. But after the conflict on rearmament and the creation of a party of opposition within the PLP, Donnelly came out as a full-fledged critic of the Government. There were also, of course, the disappointed and the ambitious, who were counting on what Cabinet jobs they would hold when Nye became P.M.

Although the Bevanites took over the form of the Keep Left group, having minutes, agendas and papers, the 30 or so MPs who met regularly after Bevan's resignation could not function as they had done previously. In Bevan they had not only a leader but also a prima donna. He did not take easily to discipline in dissent. As one critic complained:

"The addition to the group of Nye destroyed much of its usefulness as a committee for developing Socialist doctrine. He was very difficult to keep to a point. While he might be made to agree with the verdict of a meeting, he could always take a different line while talking in the country. Bevan is an orator, a terrific leader of men, but he is not a thinker."

With Bevan's reported claim that he was "the only member of the group who was not a Bevanite,"<sup>1</sup> a number of his

1. L. Hunter op.cit. p. 207.

associates would agree. As one said:

"There was never an ideology of Bevanism; there was Crossmanism on foreign affairs and Baloghism on economic policy."

Bevan's temperament (some of his friends called it laziness) kept the group from working as efficiently as Mikardo wished. It also disappointed some of the minority-minded idealists. One MP, comparing the Bevanites with the Keep Left group, said regretfully:

"Nye is a man who walks alone. With Nye as our leader we had too many crisis meetings and not so many serious intellectual discussions. You couldn't think so well in the Bevanites as in the Keep Left group."

The Bevanites carried on an active extra-parliamentary programme of propaganda, which aided them in securing support from constituency parties. Tribune served as a centre for these activities. In the autumn before Bevan's resignation it had begun publishing pamphlets critical of the government, and by December, 1950, it was holding Tribune brains trusts in the constituencies. Bevan's resignation, long urged by Michael Foot and Jennie Lee, co-editors, was greeted by the weekly with enthusiasm.

"Now that the first shock of the resignation is passed, the Labour movement is enjoying its new freedom. It is no longer tongue-tied, it is asking questions, making suggestions, offering advice ... The dynamism of free discussion is already carrying us forward to new positions of Socialist strength and Socialist unity." 1

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1. Tribune 4.5.51.

As its contribution to strength and unity, Tribune soon published two pamphlets, "One Way Only", with a foreword<sup>1</sup> by Bevan, Wilson and John Freeman, and "Going Our Way?". The former pamphlet was prepared in conjunction with discussion meetings of the Bevanite MPs. The object of the pamphlet was to present a comprehensive and relatively coherent criticism of the Government, and to state what the Bevanites were for and what they were against. Michael Foot wished, incidentally, to remove some of the bad taste left with many by Bevan's resignation speech in the House. The second pamphlet was drafted by members of the Tribune staff, and several Bevanites sought to dissociate themselves from it.<sup>2</sup> Both pamphlets, in their style and layout, showed the skilful hand of Michael Foot, an experienced Fleet Street editor.

The pamphlets indicate the Bevanites were hoping to make a show of strength at the Annual Conference in October, 1951.<sup>3</sup> These efforts were foredoomed to failure by the support the trade unions were giving the Government. The Bevanites tried to counter the opposition of trade union leaders by attacking them vigorously in their September pamphlet, charging they were going against their mandate

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1. For their contents, see supra p. 358ff.
  2. See e.g., B. Castle, Daily Express 22.9.51.
  3. See "One Way Only" p. 4.

from the rank-and-file.<sup>1</sup> Such gauche gestures only created resentment against the Bevanites among trade union leaders.<sup>2</sup> While unsuccessful in gaining much trade union backing while the Government was in office, the Bevanites, aided by widespread concern within the Party about the international situation, were supported in their views by 37 resolutions on foreign policy presented to the 1951 Annual Conference, including resolutions of the NUR and the ETU. This number of critical resolutions on foreign affairs was the largest in this category since 1946. On rearmament, 27 resolutions were critical, 16 more than the number against conscription in 1947.

The Conference debate which the Bevanites had been anticipating did not come. The general election was announced the day before "Going Our Way?" was published. The Annual Conference was reduced in length to three days and in nature to a pep rally. Bevan, in his Conference speech, concentrated upon attacking the Conservative Party.<sup>3</sup> The one Bevanite consolation at Conference was the surprise victory of Barbara Castle in the election for constituency representatives on the NEC. She replaced Emanuel Shinwell, Minister of Defence, and finished second in the

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1. See "Going Our Way?" p. 6ff, p. 13ff, 'The Mystery of Transport House' and 'The Deakinites Join In'. The criticism was answered by the NEC, The Times 8.11.51.
  2. See e.g. News Chronicle 25.9.51, L. Hunter op.cit. passim.
  3. LPCR 1951, p. 121.

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The defeat of the Labour Government at the election greatly altered the position of the Bevanites. From April until October, 1951, they were handicapped severely by the fact that they did not wish to force the Government out of office by withholding their support in the House of Commons. The Attlee-Gaitskell policy, while objectionable to them, was still more palatable than that of a Churchill Government. Since the Government was virtually certain of their votes, it could ignore them. After the Government fell, voting against the Labour leadership did not mean defeat; opposing the leadership was justified by Bevanites as the only way to secure Labour's return to office. The conflict between advocates of Socialist principles and defenders of the Government foreign policy entered a new phase.

### The Fringe

A great variety of special interest groups, such as the Socialist Fellowship (Ellis Smith, president), and Victory for Socialism, sponsored by Sir Richard Acland, Fenner Brockway and others, existed within the PLP.<sup>2</sup> The one fringe group that merits consideration consists of those MPs who co-operated with the Communist Party, either

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1. Mrs. Castle said she was "staggered" by her victory, Interview, March, 1959. She stood for the constituency section, expecting defeat, but believing her chances were better there than if she had stood for the women's section without the support of the major trade unions.
  2. See Manchester Guardian 28.11.49 and 5.3.51 respectively.

publicly or privately. Estimates of the number of crypto-Communists returned as Labour MPs in the 1945 general election vary from three to nine.<sup>1</sup> One cannot speak precisely because records of Communist Party membership are not public, and the charge that an MP is a Communist is potentially actionable. There was a small core of Labour MPs who were sometimes briefed in the lobbies by a correspondent of the Daily Worker. He would go over the order paper with 'his' members and point out opportunities for criticising the Government.<sup>2</sup> There were other MPs whose patterns of action were in nature, if not in intent, those of a fellow-traveller or a crypto-Communist. Consider, for example, the record of one of the earliest and most consistent of Bevin's critics. He apologised for Russia's rejection of Marshall Aid; he credited Russia with enjoying more "real Socialism" than Britain; he denounced Attlee for criticising Russia on May Day, 1948; he opposed NATO; he advertised signing the Stockholm Peace pledge in September, 1950; and he tried to incite Bevan to resign in January, 1951.

The pro-Communist clique within the Labour Party was able to appear larger than in fact it was, because there was a number of issues on which members of the CPGB, pacifists, idealists and free-wheeling Marxists might find

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1. The minimum figure is based upon NEC expulsions; the higher estimate is made by Douglas Hyde I Believed (1950) p. 212.

2. Interview.

themselves in agreement, and in opposition to the Government. The confusion before and during the war, between some elements of the Communist Party and the Labour Party, remained after victory. Not all ex-supporters of a Popular Front had, like John Strachey, the responsibilities of office to force them to dissociate themselves from former ideas and friends. The Communist Party as well as the Labour Party suffered from the confusion and misplaced trust. Douglas Hyde, formerly of the Daily Worker, has declared that some Communist Party members returned as Labour MPs in 1945 quietly dropped their membership in the Communist Party when they realised that it would hinder their political careers.<sup>1</sup>

When the lines between Communists and Social Democrats began to be drawn taut early in 1948, a show of strength was attempted by the pro-Communist faction. On the eve of the important Italian general election, a telegram of good wishes, purportedly signed by 37 members of the PLP,<sup>2</sup> was sent to the Nenni Socialists. The instigator of the message was Konni Zilliacus, who had been carefully watching developments in Italy and within the ISC. Physically and

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1. Hyde op.cit. p. 212.
  2. See Manchester Guardian 19.4.48, for names of signatories. In April, 1946, a telegram congratulating Social Democrats and Communists upon their merger in Berlin was signed by 27 Labour MPs. Their message was repudiated by the PLP, in a motion offered by Michael Foot and seconded by Jennie Lee. Manchester Guardian 20.4.46 and The Times 9.5.46.

emotionally tired out by his campaign against Bevin, he gave the job of securing signatures to John Platts-Mills.<sup>1</sup> The NEC reacted swiftly and strongly against the move, because only a few weeks before the ISC had presented an ultimatum to the Nenni group concerning its co-operation with the Italian Communist Party, and the Nenni representatives had walked out of their meeting.<sup>2</sup> The NEC publicly repudiated the telegram as contrary to the views of the "overwhelming mass of Labour supporters."<sup>3</sup> It used this first incident of mutiny since the Cold War had come into the open, as the occasion for tightening discipline. John Platts-Mills, whose political activities had already been under surveillance, was promptly expelled "in view of his general political conduct."<sup>4</sup> Of the remaining 36 signatories, 15 immediately withdrew their names. Some claimed they had never signed the telegram, others that they had signed as the result of a misunderstanding.<sup>5</sup> Considering

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1. Interview, K. Zilliacus, March, 1949.
  2. Manchester Guardian 22.3.48. The Nenni Socialists were not expelled from the ISC until a year later. D. Healey "The International Socialist Conference, 1946-50", pp. 369-71. There was at this time an important group within the Labour Party and the ISC that wished to maintain links with Nenni indefinitely, because he led the largest faction within the Italian Socialist Party.
  3. The Times 19.4.48.
  4. LPCR 1948, p. 17. Platts-Mills said on this occasion, "Bevin's policy is to surrender Great Britain and the Commonwealth to America for a handful of dollars." The Times 29.4.48. See also, Manchester Guardian 18.5.48.
  5. Zilliacus recalled, "Platts-Mills went around and got dunderheads to sign. I'm no good at getting signatures because I spend too much time explaining myself. John didn't bother. Interview, March, 1959.

that members were notorious for signing motions and messages without any real knowledge of their import, these excuses are plausible, and were accepted by the NEC. The NEC wrote to the remaining 21 that in view of their activities "subversive of Party policy" and because a number persisted "in acting as a group" they should give an undertaking to desist in future from such conduct or they would be expelled from the Labour Party.<sup>1</sup> The issue was hardly worth the penalty of expulsion. After protests, the 21 MPs pledged good behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

In 1949, three of those who had given the pledge, L.J. Solley, Lester Hutchinson and Konni Zilliacus were expelled from the Party. They, in company with Platts-Mills and D.N. Pritt, who had been expelled from the Labour Party in 1940 for his stand on the Russo-Finnish war, organised an independent Labour group in the House of Commons.<sup>3</sup> All five stood as independent Labour candidates in the 1950 general election; all were defeated. From this the critics drew a moral. Since that time no Labour MP has been expelled from the Party for his views on foreign affairs.<sup>4</sup>

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1. LPCR 1948, p. 17. Three of the 21 unwilling to recant signed Keep Left pamphlets.

2. See The Times 13.5.48.

3. See Manchester Guardian 21.6.49, 28.7.49; LPCR 1949, p. 18 and Zilliacus Why I Was Expelled.

4. The whip was withdrawn by the PLP from a number of MPs during the Bevanite controversy while Labour was in opposition, but this was a much less severe form of punishment than expulsion from the Party by the NEC.

Such were the vagaries of the far-left critics of the Government that Zilliacus, shortly after being expelled from the Party for being in general agreement with Communism, was then denounced by Communists as a Titoist and a tool of American agents. He was alleged to have organised a Social Democratic spy ring in Hungary in conjunction with Denis Healey and Morgan Phillips.<sup>1</sup> The Communists, like the Labour Party, at this period of international tension found Zilli was too independent-minded to be worth carrying.

#### Conclusion

The critics of the 1945-51 Labour Government were almost always correct in claiming that the Labour Government had failed to act upon traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy; they were often correct in claiming that the foreign policy they advocated was in accordance with traditional Socialist principles. Their ability to retain pre-war ideas in spite of the many major changes in international relations after the war is a tribute to their fidelity to Socialism and to their practice of reasoning from abstractions rather than from events.

The critics, until the time of the Bevanite resignation, were united in being "out of touch." First, they were out of touch with the Cabinet. They had no recognised spokesman there to put forward criticism on their behalf

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1. See Manchester Guardian 19.9.49; The Times 3.11.50.

when policy was being made. Decisions were taken without regard to their views, and then presented as faits accomplis for the PLP to endorse. Lack of a voice in the Cabinet reflected their lack of an established leader, whose ability would command a Cabinet post. Crossman stands out above other critics as a man with the ability to have reached the Cabinet in this period; but his love of being paradoxical, awkward and in the limelight, kept him on the back-benches. The gulf between the front-benchers and the back-benchers was widened by the tactics of the critics, which neither won friends nor influenced people. The critics were inexperienced and maladroit in their parliamentary operations. Their public efforts were a sign of weakness, not strength. A strong faction within a party does not need to publish pamphlets or table motions to address itself to the Cabinet; it is consulted by Cabinet representatives before decisions are made. Extra-parliamentary efforts, in the press and in the weeklies, were a further admission of weakness, a retreat from the centre of power to the outer perimeter. By their publicity campaign the critics forfeited all claim to attention from Ernest Bevin, who valued loyalty highly. They also irritated many of their comrades in the PLP, with their glibness, gaucherie and air of knowing better than most what was right. Conscientious supporters of the Government's domestic programme, slow-moving ex-borough

councillors and trade union officials preferred to trust their leaders to get on with the job. They resented the critics who flirted with disloyalty. The New Statesman realised the importance of this, before the first revolt began. It noted in August, 1946:

"Very early in the session the Party came to realise that foreign affairs was going to mean Ernest Bevin first and last. So long as the Government's domestic policy is unaffected by Mr. Bevin's foreign policy, he will be supported by that solid phalanx of Labour MPs who do not worry about events across the Channel." 1

After discussing the faults of the backbench critics, the weekly concluded: "Mr. Bevin is still a colossus among the pygmies."

The critics in the PLP, and the critics outside the PLP, were also out of touch with the world of international politics. A British MP, unlike his American counterpart, has no personal or committee staff to do research, nor can he supervise diplomacy as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee can. The critics had sources of information that were little different or little better than those of the journalist. None of them had served in a ministry previously, not even in the Coalition. They had no regular contacts with the chief diplomatic centres abroad, so that the full impact of Russian and American diplomacy was not felt. Likewise, when working out their alternatives of action, the critics did not

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1. 10.8.46.

have at their elbow advisers trained to point out all the possible awkward consequences of any proposed course of action. Given a limited amount of up-to-date factual knowledge, it was much easier for the critics to reason from principles, rather than from complex and changing sets of facts. Socialist analysis, based upon a very optimistic assessment of the strength of Britain in international relations, provided a much more pleasing prospect for the future than the conclusions of the Government. The critics, with a mixture of motives, chose to believe that in this conflict, the Government was wrong, and traditional Socialist principles remained right.

In so far as critics of the Government were simply moved by the urge to testify for Socialism, their political failure was irrelevant. By definition, the minority-minded refuse the responsibility of governing. Their protest, though political in form, can be psychological at its base. Herbert Morrison took the measure of some who insisted upon "writing down Labour's stock" when he told Conference in 1942:

"The fact is that this Party is never happy when it is in government. It was never happy in the two Labour Governments we have had. It is not happy with Labour in this Government, because the Party has got too much of the mind of perpetual opposition, because it has too much of the perpetual minority complex, and because some of you have too much of the perpetual inferiority complex as well." <sup>1</sup>

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1. LPCR 1942, p. 103.

The Bevanites stood apart from the other critics of the Government. While hardly free from all suspicions of minority-mindedness, they did have leaders who might have taken over direction of the Party, or alternatively, forced it to move in the direction they wished it to go. Their failure to check the Government while it remained in office was due to a sense of Party loyalty in the face of the Conservative opposition. Unlike critics of earlier periods, the Bevanites were unwilling to cross the floor of the House to oppose the leaders with whom they had quarrelled. Although they did not turn out the Government in April, their actions were a contributory factor in the defeat of the Government in the autumn. After that, a new period in Labour history began.

## Chapter IX

## CONCLUSIONS

"And the end always is, that a middle course is devised which looks as much as possible like what was suggested in opposition, but which is as much as possible what patent facts -- facts which seem to live in the office, so teasing and unceasing are they -- prove ought to be done."

Walter Bagehot The English Constitution  
(World's Classics edition) p. 128.

The internationalism of the British Labour Party began as anti-nationalism, a reaction against the governments and the governing class of Britain. Keir Hardie felt more at home with his comrades at the Second International than he did in a Parliament of aristocrats and capitalists. The disillusionment with British diplomacy that followed the elections of 1918 and 1931 was paralleled by Labour's strong antagonism to the Government in home affairs. Between the wars the Conservative governments' tolerance and appeasement of dictators who were the immediate enemies of Socialists and trade unionists widened an already great breach between the "Two Nations". Thus, the Party viewed British foreign policy from an internationalist perspective, instead of a national one. The Labour Party thought it had friends in Geneva, in Madrid and in Russia, but not in Whitehall. In 1936, Labour supported arms for the Spanish Republicans and opposed arming Britain.

The Labour Party held that the failures of British

diplomacy between the wars were largely the fault of the British Government. It did not place the blame primarily upon other nations, or accept that conflicts between nations' policies justified power politics. It accepted uncritically the idea that Britain occupied the commanding position in international relations, and could thereby determine their nature and direction. A Labour Government, reinforced by the popular appeal of the ideals of international Socialism, could bring about that era of international peace and harmony which Arthur Henderson and his associates worked so long to achieve. Successive crises which seemed to contradict Labour principles did not shake the fundamental beliefs of the Party; they only served as further proof of the bankruptcy of the old politics, and the need to change the government of Britain, not Labour principles.

Party policy-makers could scarcely have anticipated that they would gain full power only after five years apprenticeship in a wartime coalition. In the Coalition the Labour leaders learned to accept the existing order of international relations, when the alternative was not international Socialism but victory for Hitler. They were forced to deal with problems that had often been ignored or treated as ephemeral in Conference resolutions. The leaders were responsible first to the nation and only secondarily to the Party. Pre-war differences of principle between Labour and Conservative in foreign affairs were

swept away by the exigencies of war. Attlee said of the Coalition Cabinet, after one year as a member:

"There is a readiness to accept new expedients, a readiness to face problems with an open mind in men of all classes far greater than ever before." <sup>1</sup>

The war also brought Ernest Bevin, the statesman of the Labour movement, into the House of Commons and into the front rank of government. The harmony of leadership upon which postwar Labour foreign policy in part rested -- the Attlee-Bevin-Cripps axis -- was not formed in Annual Conference or on the NEC, but in the wartime Coalition. As the new outlook was formed in government, so it was most strongly felt there; during the war it did not dominate the statements made in the name of the Party. None of the critics of the foreign policy of the 1945-51 Labour Government held a ministerial post in the Coalition.

The exigencies of war, both political and strategic, prevented the leadership from attempting to convert the Party's rank-and-file to the new position of the Labour ministers. The leaders wished to maintain the confidence of their followers. They feared distracting consequences if a debate on basic Party principles was opened when the nation was fighting for its existence. The leaders acted one way, but often had to speak in another. When Harold Laski urged upon Attlee in May, 1944, the need for more

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1. LPCR 1941, p. 133.

Socialism in Government policy, the deputy prime minister could privately reply that it was beyond the power of Labour to make great forward leaps towards Socialism.

"Governments will have to work with the world and the country as it exists. There are limits to the extent to which the clock can be put forward or back." <sup>1</sup>

But publicly, Attlee, as leader of the Labour Party, in December, 1944 appeared before Annual Conference to endorse a lengthy resolution which embodied the traditional <sup>2</sup> optimism of Socialist thinkers about foreign affairs. Simultaneously, the War Cabinet, of which he was a member, faced problems in Poland and Greece that augured ill for the future.

In 1945 the new Labour Government faced in foreign affairs the dilemma of the pragmatic Socialist: concern for national security and military strength seemed the most suitable basis of action, but at many points this was in sharp conflict with the optimistic internationalism of the Party. Attlee and Bevin were discriminating enough to recognise that the inter-war failures of British foreign policy were not necessarily an indictment of traditional diplomatic principles. Trained by five years in the Coalition, the leaders did not spend months indecisively,

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1. K. Martin op.cit. p. 160. The lengthy letter, pp. 159-62 is well worth reading for the insight it gives into Attlee's thoughts at that time.
  2. LPCR 1944, pp. 131-3.

trying to re-appraise Party principles. From the first day they acted upon pragmatic appreciations of problems and left the examination and defence of Party principles to MPs on the back benches. The ministers found, as Herbert Morrison later explained:

"We must be willing to face the facts as they are today, and if we cannot face facts honestly, if we cannot deduce from the facts policies which are sensible in relation to the facts, then we are not fitted for the tasks of government. It is one of the first things one learns when one becomes a minister, or indeed, a member of a majority party on a local authority, that you bump up against a lot of facts which you wish you did not, but that is part of learning the facts of life in government." 1

The return of a Labour Government with a large majority shattered one of the chief supports of traditional Socialist principles: distrust of the British government. The less rigid members of the Labour Party now saw the idea of vital British interests<sup>2</sup> as relevant to the Labour movement. Such interests were no longer derided as a means by which Conservatives tried to advance their class at the expense of Labour. The ideal of co-operation was severely constricted by this acceptance of special British interests, for it

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1. LPCR 1951, p. 127. See also Aneurin Bevan, on what happens when "an abstract idea is married to contemporary realities." LPCR 1949, p. 169.
  2. The term "vital British interests" is used to describe those things that the Government tried to safeguard through its foreign policy, in order to protect the continued independent existence of the United Kingdom.

implied a readiness to distrust other governments and oppose them, if necessary, when these interests were involved. The leaders had clearly pledged themselves to this position during the closing days of the Coalition, in the debate on Greece.<sup>1</sup> Many backbench Labour MPs saw that problem in terms of a left-wing group fighting a reactionary group for control of Greece; Labour should, of course, support the left. The Government argued that Britain's concern with the Eastern Mediterranean made support of the right-wing faction imperative. As the result of controversy about international class co-operation in World War I, Arthur Henderson had resigned from the Government, and this was the keynote for much of Labour's policy for the next two decades. In 1944, however, Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin remained in the Coalition and strongly defended a balance of power policy against criticism from their class-conscious supporters.

The policies developed by other major nations after the war confirmed the Labour leaders in their decision to trust themselves to defend British interests, and to choose allies warily. Russia's threats to Britain's friends in the Eastern Mediterranean were quickly recognised and successfully opposed. In discussions on German reparations and in the Berlin blockade, the Government faced and resisted Russian efforts at aggrandizement. At the same

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1. But only 30 Labour MPs supported the Coalition in the division.

time as Communist Russia was becoming an enemy on the left, the United States, the world's greatest capitalist power, was showing itself able and willing to help in rebuilding the British economy, and then, through NATO, to throw its weight on the British side to maintain the balance of power in Europe. The Government regarded with suspicion the clamour on the Continent for a European Union. Having nationalised coal and steel for the benefit of the British workers, Labour had no desire to jeopardize such benefits by supra-nationalisation.

The failure of the Big Three to continue to work harmoniously led Labour leaders to stress, as a reason for not acting upon traditional Socialist principles, that their power was limited by the multilateral nature of international diplomacy. Ernest Bevin summed up the contrast between pre-war and post-war Labour experience when he told the 1949 Conference:

"Dealing with foreign affairs is not quite the same as dealing with a home programme. You cannot plan in quite the same way and with the same assurance of the path you will follow. At least when you plan in home affairs you are dealing with your own people. In foreign affairs you are dealing with nearly 60 states, all of equal status and all with different points of view, and with all of whom you must get agreement. Your course cannot be decided just by vote of a Conference like this." <sup>1</sup>

The idea of limited capability, and therefore, of limited liability for failure, was a customary assumption of diplomats,

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1. LPCR 1949, p. 187. See also, Attlee 430 HC 579, 18.11.46.

but it had played no significant part in pre-1945 Labour declarations on foreign policy. Then the emphasis was upon the lead a Labour Government in Britain could give to international relations. After four years of office, this hope was crushed. The Party policy statement prepared for the 1950 election opened with the statement:

"On foreign affairs no programme of action or legislation can be drafted in advance. World developments depend on the interaction of many separate policies, pursued in concert or in conflict by all the nations simultaneously." <sup>1</sup>

In the great majority of instances, the Conservative Party concurred in the means and ends of the Labour Government's foreign policy. Both parties accepted the need to defend a large number of Britain's worldwide interests by military means. The two parties usually agreed as to what those interests were. Broadly speaking, from 1945 up to 1951, there was concurrence in foreign policy. This phenomenon is often misleadingly referred to as evidence of a necessary continuity of British foreign policy, in spite of the notable differences on foreign policy between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party in the inter-war period, and the differences between the parties in recent years. The concurrence in views was forged in the wartime Coalition. Ernest Bevin explained to the House of Commons in 1950, in acknowledgement of a speech by Anthony Eden:

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1. "Labour Believes in Britain" (LP, 1949) p. 24. Contrast this with the tone of "Let Us Face the Future" (1945) p. 11.

"I worked with the right honourable gentleman very closely in the Coalition government. I think he will agree, and together we evolved a good deal of the basis of the policy we have followed since. The whole course a country is taking cannot suddenly be altered by a general election. Geography remains the same; the facts remain the same, stubborn as they are." <sup>1</sup>

Transport House repeatedly sought to explain to Party members that, pre-war Party declarations notwithstanding, British foreign policy was primarily determined by concerns that were national, rather than by concerns that were based upon the interests of classes.

"Whatever the domestic differences between Socialist and Conservative, an Englishman shares a common interest in some matters concerning relations with the outside world. This is particularly true of strategic interests. The right techniques for defending national security do not change according to the party in power." <sup>2</sup>

This case was supported by a majority of the Party, but dissent from it was widespread and vigorous. The dissenters took it as evidence that Bevin was simply carrying out that most despicable of things, a 'Tory' foreign policy. Sydney Silverman summed up their views when he said in winding up for the rebels in the debate on the Amendment to the Address:

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1. 473 HC 318, 28.3.50. See also Bevin Manchester Guardian 24.7.46; Eden & Bevin, 413 HC 312, 20.8.45; and Herbert Morrison, upon the return of the 1951 Conservative Government, 494 HC 54, 19.11.51.
  2. "Approach to Foreign Policy" (LP Discussion Series #11, 1946) p. 14. The same viewpoint is at the core of the argument of other pamphlets, such as "Cards on the Table" and "European Unity".

"Our complaint is that the Government's conduct of foreign affairs during these 15 or 16 months has been merely a continuance of Tory foreign policy, and that the enthusiastic support which the Foreign Secretary gets, in the absence of any repudiation from the Government front bench, is a confirmation that this is so. I am sure that no one on the Government front bench believes that there ought to be no difference between a Socialist foreign policy and a Tory foreign policy." <sup>1</sup>

The fact that the two parties, and more particularly, the two front benches usually concurred in their views on foreign policy does not mean that there were no differences between the two parties on foreign affairs in this period. In such differences can be seen the relation of traditional Socialist principles to Government views. The Government was pragmatic enough to approve policies in agreement with traditional Socialist principles when these were considered correct. It did not make the mistake of veering from one extreme to the other. The best example is the disagreement between Conservatives and Labour in the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute. Both parties were agreed about the importance of the issue. In accordance with traditional principles, Labour insisted that the dispute could not be settled by force, but only by negotiation. The Conservatives countered with the claim that force could settle the dispute. Another example is European

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1. 430 HC 572, 18.11.46. Silverman pointed out that Attlee himself had made the same point in Labour Party in Perspective pp.226-7, quoted supra pp.v-vi. Silverman's charge was common to almost all of Bevin's critics. See e.g., Zilliacus 427 HC 1724, 23.10.46; the New Statesman 22.3.47; Tribune 4.1.46.

unity; but in view of the later policy of the Churchill Government, one may dismiss the Conservative conflict with Labour on this subject as a difference created for the sake of propaganda, rather than a deeply rooted difference on principle.

A more subtle distinction arises from the importance of initiative in politics and foreign policy. The fact that the two parties concurred while Labour was in office does not mean that if a Conservative Government had been returned in 1945, policies would have been identical. In foreign affairs there were issues, such as the proposed international atomic energy authority and the demand for a negotiated peace in Korea from December, 1950, in which the Labour Government not only acted in accord with traditional Socialist principles of foreign policy, but also initiated policies that were not in harmony with the traditional bias of Conservatives. Likewise, in developing a co-operative European plan for Marshall Aid, it was the Labour leaders, not men like Churchill, who had been prepared for this role by decades of thinking about international economic co-operation.<sup>1</sup> In political terms, the importance of initiative is more easily seen. If a Conservative Government had followed broadly the policy that Ernest Bevin did carry out, the attack upon it from

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1. See e.g., Bevin, LPCR 1939, p. 243ff.

the Labour benches would have been much stronger, for intensely unpopular developments in British policy would have been identified with Churchill, whose views on foreign policy were anathema to many in the Labour Party.<sup>1</sup> The leaders of a Labour opposition, deprived of the prestige and power of office, would probably have been compelled to join their voices to the voices of their backbenchers in protest. Some Conservative leaders recognised the importance of letting the responsibility for the break with Russia and the Anglo-American military alliance rest with Labour. Winston Churchill told James Forrestal:

"There was considerable consolation in the victory of Bevin because Bevin was able to talk more firmly and clearly to Russia than he could have, by virtue of being a Labour government."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Harold Macmillan paid Bevin a backhanded tribute for his "substantial and valuable contribution" in educating "a very large part of the British people."<sup>3</sup>

It is also worth noting implications in the Government's attitude toward Britain's relations with ex-colonial

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1. This opposition would have been intensified if Churchill in office had precipitated a break with Russia in early 1946, as he suggested in his Fulton speech.
2. The Forrestal Diaries pp. 149-50.
3. 467 HC 1571, 21.7.49.

and underdeveloped nations, an attitude that sprang more from its opposition to imperialism than from its views on foreign policy. Significantly, a number of instances in which Labour did act in harmony with traditional principles -- in abortive support for a World Plan for Mutual Aid, in recognising Communist China and, of course, in withdrawing from Abadan -- did concern such relations.

Labour leaders relied upon compulsion, gratitude and persuasion in defending their foreign policy against attacks from within the Party. The Cabinet had great institutional advantages in initiating policy, in choosing means to ends and in interpreting to the Party and the public the facts and the judgements upon which it based its actions. Cabinet responsibility insured that so long as the major leaders of the Party remained in the Cabinet, the critics were without leaders of stature. The Government's domestic reforms caused great satisfaction. In a Party primarily concerned with domestic reform, this had a major impact upon the less militant sections of the rank-and-file, even if, as the Manchester Guardian noted: "Many of his [Bevin's] friends would wish him to win a victory by persuasion and gain not just acquiescence but real support from the people behind him." <sup>1</sup> Efforts were repeatedly made by Bevin, Dalton, Phillips and Healey to persuade the Party faithful to accept intellectually,

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1. 27.11.50.

as well as to support with their votes, the Government viewpoint on international politics. It was difficult, however, to unconvert those whom the Party had previously converted, especially when the Government's alternative to Socialist principles so flatly contradicted the hopes of the faithful. The blunt language and harsh attacks of Government spokesmen convinced some and closed the minds of others. Attlee stood apart; only infrequently did he deny the old beliefs. Instead, he relied upon confusion, using traditional Socialist phrases in ways and contexts that made them camouflage the very different motives of the Government. A few major figures, such as Philip Noel-Baker, declared with every appearance of sincerity that the Government had not deviated in the slightest from traditional Labour principles.<sup>1</sup> Sapping the word "Socialism" of almost all specific meaning in international politics helped the leadership to justify itself to the mass membership, although it had the disadvantage of leaving the old beliefs intact. They were only temporarily buried by the words and weight of the Government; they were not eradicated.

There remained a vocal and troublesome minority who insisted, as G.D.H. Cole put it, that:

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1. Noel-Baker, for example, took this position in a lengthy discussion of Labour foreign policy from 1924 until the present, in an interview in April, 1958.

"Socialism, if it is to have meaning in the world of today, in which international problems are the key problems and no country, not even the greatest, can hope to shape its destiny alone, must mean something internationally as well as on the national plane." <sup>1</sup>

Faced with a gap between promise and performance, these faithful had to abandon their cause or repudiate their leaders. True to their dissenting origins, and their psychology of opposition, they preferred to distrust the Government, although it was their own, and hold to the old principles. Those principles underwent some modification -- e.g., the left-right dichotomy of the pre-war period was converted into a tripartite division of ideologies to justify a third force -- but the a priori assumptions were virtually unaltered. Five years of Labour Government and rapid and far-reaching changes in international politics did not make critics readjust their fundamental outlook. This was conclusively demonstrated in 1951, when attachments to the old tradition resulted in the creation of the final and the strongest of the challenges to the Government, the Bevanite movement.

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1. New Statesman 17.1.48.

### The Aftermath

"Something is required simpler and more permanent, something which can be loved and trusted and which can be recognised at successive elections as being the same thing as was loved and trusted before."

Graham Wallas Human Nature and Politics  
(1910 edition) p. 83.

"Politics is above all the art of the possible."  
Morgan Phillips, ISC Congress, 1951.

When the Labour Cabinet surrendered its seals of office in October, 1951, the leaders of the Party parted with the last major source of support for their views on foreign policy. Previously, differences on domestic policy, the loss of Bevin and Cripps and the resignation of Bevan had greatly weakened other major supports for Government foreign policy. Ernest Bevin, unlike Arthur Henderson, did not leave a legacy of generally accepted principles, nor did he create a group of able young advocates for his ideas. The political strength of Bevin was related to his personal achievements. Nothing could quite replace it when he died. The leadership's loss was the critics' gain. Roy Jenkins aptly pointed out two years later:

"The foreign policy of the Labour Government never bit deep into the consciousness of the Party. It was never talked about at meetings by other than a handful of leaders and not too often by them. It was regarded by most of their supporters as a burden of government, which it was one's duty to bear, rather than something which was right in itself." <sup>1</sup>

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1. Pursuit of Progress (1953) p. 33. See also D. Healey, "Power Politics" New Fabian Essays (1952) p. 184.

As from the 1951 election, the ex-ministerialists no longer could ignore or easily crush those within the Party who attacked their views and urged a foreign policy more in keeping with traditional Socialist principles. The power of the leadership in opposition was much diminished, and also split.<sup>1</sup> The struggle with the Bevanites for control of the Party obscured and delayed the shift in Party policy on foreign affairs, because for the first three years of opposition, questions of foreign policy were also questions involving far-reaching decisions about the future of the Party.

The change in outlook nevertheless began shortly after the removal of Labour from office. It was not simply the result of external events. The death of Stalin, the problem of the hydrogen bomb and the irritations of the Eisenhower-Dulles approach to Europe came after the change had started. In 1951 and 1952, three prominent defenders of the Government's foreign policy -- Hugh Dalton, Herbert Morrison and Emanuel Shinwell -- were defeated by Bevanites when they stood for re-election to the National Executive. In 1952, Konni Zilliacus was re-admitted to the Party, without having substantially altered his earlier

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1. For a discussion of the diminished power of the ex-ministerialists from 1952 to 1955, see Saul Rose "Policy Decision in Opposition" Political Studies (1956) pp. 127-38. R.T. McKenzie, in his rejoinder, Political Studies (1957) p. 178, accepts the interpretation Rose puts upon events.

views. The NEC manifesto prepared for the 1952 Conference, "Labour's Foreign Policy", was innocuous and vague whereas similar documents prepared during the lifetime of the Government had been blunt and explicit. It contained many statements so general in terms that both Bevanites and ex-ministerialists could accept them. The increasing strength of the critics was demonstrated at that Conference. A Bevanite resolution on rearmament secured 2,288,000 votes and cut the NEC's margin of victory to 1,356,000.<sup>1</sup> This was far lower than it had been on any issue concerning foreign policy during the lifetime of the Labour Government.

Because, as Morgan Phillips put it, "Politics is above all the art of the possible," the leadership decided that the best way to fight its critics was to give ground to them. The long resolution presented to the 1953 Conference emphasized the Bevanite position on foreign affairs and relegated the basic points of the ex-ministerialists to qualifying clauses.<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Younger, formerly Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, complained that the resolution, after accepting the need for close co-operation with the United States, proceeded to devote most of its argument to urging policies "scarcely one of which corresponds

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1. LPCR 1952, p. 142ff.

2. Text, LPCR 1953, pp. 149-51.

with the policies of the United States."<sup>1</sup> The resolution was as optimistic about foreign affairs as the 1951 Bevanite pamphlets. The Bevanites offered no amendment to the declaration. Criticism came from Denis Healey, by this time an MP.<sup>2</sup> In commending the resolution to Conference, Attlee by implication undercut its promises. Because the resolution could mean all things to all men, it was passed almost unanimously. The following year the major Conference debate on foreign policy concerned a clearcut issue -- German rearmament. The ex-ministerialists barely secured endorsement for their views. The resolution was carried by a majority of 248,000 in a ballot of 6,292,000.<sup>3</sup> The ex-ministerialists recruited a considerable amount of support from trade unions on the grounds it was a vote of confidence in their leadership.<sup>4</sup> The German rearmament debate was the last major victory achieved in the name of the Labour Government's foreign policy.

The reconciliation of Hugh Gaitskell and Aneurin Bevan in 1957 symbolised the way in which the Party was

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1. Ibid. p. 161. For that matter, they also did not correspond to the policies of the Labour Government.
  2. Ibid. p. 160.
  3. LPCR 1954, p. 108.
  4. See L. Hunter op.cit. passim.

altering its policy on foreign affairs to accommodate advocates of "more Socialism". The NEC statement on foreign policy adopted at the 1958 Annual Conference was redolent with phrases and ideas from the era of Arthur Henderson. It called for making the United Nations "the keystone of Labour's foreign policy" and a strong British lead to settle all disputes between nations; it expressed the faith that "the rule of law and not war will prevail"; it urged an "all out campaign against poverty" to insure world peace and it pledged a Labour Government to work for "an agreement to end the arms race and to bring about a reconciliation of peoples and states hostile to one another"<sup>1</sup>. Denis Healey, one of the chief protagonists in the earlier attack upon such ideas, bowed to political forces stronger than himself in his speech on this statement. He told Conference:

"I have been coming to these Conferences for just over 12 years and at every Conference I have attended there has been a demand from the floor for a distinctive Socialist foreign policy. This year we have got it. We have had it outlined by Nye Bevan in what I think was the most inspiring speech of his career. It is a policy which unites our whole Party from left to right. Moreover, it is a policy which differs from the Conservative Government's policy on almost every issue ....

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1. LPCR 1958, p. 259.

"This policy which is put to you today is not one which consists just of slogans. It is a detailed practical programme of actions for the next Labour Government." 1

This thesis has tried to show that the Labour Party has maintained two sets of principles of foreign policy. While parties often alter their programmes when they change from opposition to office, the shifts of the Labour Party have been notable because they have represented changes in kind, instead of degree. Consequently, they have had political repercussions of an unusual intensity. Each set of principles has fulfilled certain functions. The Government's principles were framed with reference to problems presented in far from ideal situations, and judged with regard to their visible impact upon other nations. Traditional Socialist principles were only nominally concerned with Britain's relations with the rest of the world. In fact, they were the basis of a "domestic foreign policy", proposed and debated within the world of the Labour movement with regard to certain a priori beliefs commonly accepted within the Party and rejected by diplomats of the time. The principles were 'proved' right in Conference debates and in Labour literature;

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1. LPCR 1958, p. 201. See the caustic comments on Healey's "conversion" by Sydney Silverman, p. 214.

they were tested briefly during the two MacDonald governments and assumed to be justified by their experience.

The "domestic foreign policy" had great impact and appeal to members of the Labour Party. It was much less relevant to the world with which the 1945-51 Labour Government had to deal. Because of this, the Government from the first rejected the Party's traditional assumptions.

Since they were so strongly rooted, traces of Labour's older outlook were, however, visible in specific Government policies, such as the Persian oil dispute.

The post-1951 leadership, by contrast with the pre-1945 leadership, has shown an awareness of the difficulties involved in maintaining two contrasting sets of principles for one set of problems. It has recognised some responsibilities of office as well as the demands of the militants, and introduced qualifying phrases about NATO in policy statements that reiterate traditional views. The leaders have thus helped to sustain the old faith, while hedging against prospects of office. Tension remains. It was tension of this sort that bedevilled the foreign policy of the 1945-51 Labour Government. It did not alter the direction of its relations with other nations, but it was a constant source of irritation, criticism, and finally, of revolt.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

I GOVERNMENT SOURCES

A. Parliamentary Debates (5th series) were of major value for information about the declared policy of the Government. House of Commons debates were studied selectively before 1931, broadly from 1932 to 1944, and exhaustively for the period 1944-52. House of Lords debates were sampled for the duration of the Labour Government. The views of backbench Labour MPs were studied in the debates, in parliamentary questions and in Parliamentary Papers, Notices of Motions, 1945-51.

B. Command Papers. Certain annual publications, such as Defence Estimates, were useful for figures and comments. The following papers were of particular value.

"Economic Survey for 1947" Cmd. 7046, 1947.

"Germany: An account of the Events Leading up to a Reference of the Berlin Question to the United Nations" Cmd. 7534, 1948.

"Events Leading Up to the Signature of the North Atlantic Treaty" Cmd. 7692, 1949.

"Anglo-French Discussions Regarding French Proposals for the Western European Coal, Iron and Steel Industries" Cmd. 7970, 1950.

"Economic Survey for 1951" Cmd. 8195, 1951.

"Report on the Proceedings of the Fifth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 19th September-15th December, 1950" Cmd. 8264, 1951.

"Persia, Number 1" Cmd. 8425, 1951.

"Recruitment to the Administrative Class of the Home Civil Service and the Senior Branch of the Foreign Service" Cmd. 232, 1957.

C. United Nations proceedings were an excellent source for information about the motives and aims of British foreign policy, because at the UN the Labour Government was constantly called upon to justify its actions in the face of hostile criticism from foreign governments. The debates of the Security Council, the General Assembly and their political committees have been analysed exhaustively, as well as proceedings and reports of bodies such as the Atomic Energy Commission. The work was facilitated by using the United Nations library in Stratford Place, W.1, where all materials were immediately at hand in bound volumes or on microfilm.

D. Reports of the Council of Europe Consultative Assembly, 1949-51, were studied intensively. Because Assembly discussions had very little influence upon British foreign policy, this was of little positive value.

## II PRIMARY LABOUR SOURCES

A. Annual Conference Reports were the most important single source for information about the Labour Party. All reports from the first in 1901 have been studied in

detail. Official Party pamphlets on foreign affairs have been analysed exhaustively from 1917. The most important ones are:

- "Labour and the New Society" 1917.
- J. Ramsay MacDonald, "Protocol or Pact?" c. 1925.
- "For Socialism and Peace," 1934 (summarised as "War and Peace" LPCR 1934, pp. 242-46).
- "International Policy and Defence" 1937.
- "The Old World and the New Society" 1942.
- "The International Post-War Settlement" (contained in LPCR 1944, pp. 4-9).
- "Let Us Face the Future" 1945.
- "Cards on the Table" 1947.
- "European Unity" 1950.
- Saul Rose, "The Socialist International" 1955.

The following Party educational and propaganda publications have been consulted, but they were of limited value.

Fact, 1949-51, and its predecessor, the Labour Party Bulletin, 1945-48.

Labour Discussion Series, 1945-51.

Labour Forum, published from 1946 to 1948.

Labour Party Speakers Handbook, 1945; 1948-49, with supplement; 1949-50. Facts and Figures for Socialists, 1951.

Labour Year Book (Old Series) 1916, 1919; (New Series) 1946-47, 1947-48.

Unofficial Labour pamphlets exist in great profusion. The most significant ones for the period with which the thesis is primarily concerned are:

- Cole, G.D.H., "Labour's Foreign Policy" 1946.
- "Keep Left" 1947.
- "Keeping Left" 1950.
- National Peace Council, "Peace Aims Pamphlets" 1945-51.
- Parliamentary Peace Aims Group, "Ignored Speeches" 1941; "More Ignored Speeches" 1942.

"Stop the Coming War" c. 1948.  
Tribune "Full Speed Ahead" 1950; "One Way Only",  
 "Going Our Way?" 1951.

Fabian Research Pamphlets:

Laski, H., "Socialism as Internationalism" #132,  
 1948.  
 Woolf, L., "The International Post-War Settlement"  
 #85, 1944.  
 Woolf, L., W.N. Ewer and H.J. Laski, "Foreign Policy  
 -- the Labour Party's Dilemma" #121, 1947.

Fabian Tracts:

Crossman, R.H.S., and K. Younger, "Socialist  
 Foreign Policy" #287, 1951.  
 Freeman, J., and D. Healey, "Rearmament -- How  
 Far?" #288, 1951.  
 McKitterick, T.E.M., "Conditions of British  
 Foreign Policy" #289, 1951.

B. The Report of the Trades Union Congress is to the  
 TUC what the Annual Conference Report is to the Labour  
 Party. TUC reports have been examined in detail for the  
 period 1915-52. Labour, the TUC monthly, has been studied  
 from 1945 until 1952. Reports of the following unions  
 have also been analysed for the period of this thesis:  
 the Transport and General Workers Union, the National Union  
 of General and Municipal Workers, the National Union of  
 Miners, the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Union of  
 Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, 1947-52. Notes  
 on conferences of the National Union of Railwaymen were  
 made available.

### III UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

A. Interviews. Much of the stuff of post-war Labour politics has not been committed to paper, or published. Psychological and emotional factors cannot be studied merely from the printed page. Interviews have been employed, always in conjunction with the study of contemporary printed sources, to build up a picture of the people and events this thesis concerns. The following persons have provided information in interviews, and sometimes also in correspondence:

Rt. Hon. Earl Attlee, January, 1959.  
 Barbara Castle M.P., March, 1959.  
 G.D.H. Cole, January, 1958.  
 R.H.S. Crossman M.P., March, 1959.  
 Rt. Hon. Hugh Dalton, December, 1957; February, 1959.

Ernest Davies, July, 1958.  
 Desmond Donnelly M.P., December, 1958.  
 Rt. Hon. L. John Edwards M.P., December, 1958; May, 1959.  
 Michael Foot, January, 1959.  
 Rt. Hon. Hugh Gaitskell, M.P., March, 1959.

Denis Healey M.P., February, 1959; September, 1959.  
 Rt. Hon. Lord Henderson, May, 1959.  
 Rt. Hon. Douglas Jay M.P., July, 1958.  
 Christopher Mayhew M.P., November, 1958.  
 Ian Mikardo, March, 1959.

Rt. Hon. Herbert Morrison, November, 1958.  
 Rt. Hon. P.J. Noel-Baker M.P., April, 1958.  
 Morgan Phillips, February, 1959.  
 Lord Shackleton, June, 1959.  
 Rt. Hon. Emanuel Shinwell M.P., April, 1959.

Sydney Silverman M.P., June, 1959.  
 Rev. R.W. Sorensen M.P., March, 1959.  
 Lord Strang, April, 1959.  
 Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson M.P., July, 1959.  
 George Woodcock, January, 1959.  
 Rt. Hon. Kenneth Younger, July, 1958; April, 1959.  
 Konni Zilliacus M.P., March, 1959.

In addition to the above-mentioned, I remain indebted to 12 persons from the following organisations -- the PLP, the NEC, Keep Left, the Treasury, the Fabian Society, the T&GWU, the AEU, USDAW, the NUR and the G&MWU -- who must remain anonymous. The Rt. Hon. Lord Pethick-Lawrence and Mrs. M.A. Hamilton have discussed points in correspondence. Several of the persons cited above have read and commented upon parts of this thesis in manuscript.

B. International Socialist Conference files from 1946 until 1952 have been consulted. These private minutes and reports have been of particular interest for the light they throw upon differences between Socialist parties on foreign policy.

C. Theses about the Labour Party are numerous. Of the following relevant ones, Harrison and Jupp are the best organised and the most sophisticated.

Marjorie Bremner An Analysis of British Parliamentary Thought Concerning the United States in the Post-War Period, Ph.D. thesis, London, 1950.

Samuel Davis The British Labour Party and British Foreign Policy, 1933-39, Ph.D. Thesis, London, 1950.

Eleanor Farrar The British Labour Party and International Organisations; a study of the Labour Party and the League of Nations, the United Nations and Western Union. Ph.D. thesis, London, 1952.

Martin Harrison The Political Activities of British Trade Unions, 1945-54. D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1958.

J. Jupp The Left in Britain, 1931-40. M.S.(Econ.) thesis, London, 1956.

G.W. Shepherd The Theory and Practice of Internationalism in the British Labour Party, with Special reference to the Inter-War Period. Ph.D. thesis, London, 1951.

#### IV NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

A. The Times and the Manchester Guardian have been analysed exhaustively from 1944 until 1952, and selectively at earlier dates. In its political correspondence The Times emphasized the Government view; the Guardian complemented it by playing up the activities of the backbench critics of Bevin. The Observer was consulted extensively. The Evening Standard, while Garry Allingham was associated with it, had good reports of meetings of the PLP. The Daily Herald occasionally published items not in other papers. An extremely useful supplementary source of information was the file of press cuttings at Transport House, dating back to the 1920s. It contains cuttings from all national dailies, from weekly and provincial newspapers, with a number of interesting detailed reports of weekend constituency speeches, and biographical sketches.

Of the weeklies, the New Statesman and Nation and Tribune were the most significant from the point of view of the Labour movement. Complete files were studied from 1944 until 1952, and also files of Socialist Commentary and The Listener.

## V BIOGRAPHIES AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Memoirs vary greatly in quality and reliability. Because the majority of persons who concern this thesis have not published detailed autobiographies, interviews have been relatively more important. Among these books, Dalton's two volumes and M.A. Hamilton's Arthur Henderson are the major works. Norman Angell's After All is a first-rate source for the 1920s. The following is a list of memoirs that proved useful in part or in toto:

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Allen, V.L.      | <u>Trade Union Leadership</u> ; based on a study of Arthur Deakin, 1957.                                    |
| Angell, Norman   | <u>After All</u> , 1951.  |
| Attlee, C.R.     | <u>As It Happened</u> , 1954.   |
| Bevan, Aneurin   | <u>In Place of Fear</u> , 1954.   |
| Blackburn, R.    | <u>I Am An Alcoholic</u> , 1959.  |
| Brockway, Fenner | <u>Inside the Left</u> , 1947.  |
| Byrnes, James F. | <u>Speaking Frankly</u> , 1947.   |
| Churchill, W.S.  | <u>The Second World War</u> (Volumes II, VI) 1949, 1954.  |
| Clay, Lucius D.  | <u>Decision in Germany</u> , 1950.  |
| Cole, M.I.       | <u>Growing Up Into Revolution</u> , 1949.   |
| Cooke, C.        | <u>The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps</u> , 1957.  |
| Cooper, Duff     | <u>Old Men Forget</u> , 1953.   |
| Dalton, Hugh     | <u>Call Back Yesterday; Memoirs, 1887-1931</u> , 1953. <u>The Fateful Years; Memoirs, 1931-1945</u> , 1957. |
| Driberg, Tom     | <u>Guy Burgess</u> , 1956.  |
| Feiling, Keith   | <u>The Life of Neville Chamberlain</u> , 1946.  |
|                  | <u>The Forrestal Diaries</u> edited by W. Millis, 1951.   |
| Hamilton, M.A.   | <u>Arthur Henderson</u> , 1938.   |
| Harrod, R.F.     | <u>The Life of John Maynard Keynes</u> , 1951.  |
| Hyde, Douglas    | <u>I Believed</u> , 1950.   |
| Lie, Trygve      | <u>In the Cause of Peace</u> (New York) 1954.   |

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1. All books cited in the following pages were published in England, unless otherwise noted.

- McNair, James James Maxton; the Beloved Rebel. 1955.
- Martin, Kingsley Harold Laski, 1953.
- Montgomery, Viscount Memoirs, 1958.
- Murphy, J.T. Labour's Big Three, 1948; New Horizons, 1941.
- Parmoor, Lord A Retrospect, 1936.
- Pakenham, Lord Born to Believe, 1953.
- Pethick-Lawrence, F.W. Fate Has Been Kind, 1942.
- Postgate, R. The Life of George Lansbury, 1951.
- Sherwood, R. The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins, 1948.
- Shinwell, E. Conflict Without Malice, 1955.
- Smith, W.B. Moscow Mission, 1946-49, 1950.
- Strang, Lord Home and Abroad, 1956.
- Templewood, Viscount Nine Troubled Years, 1954.
- Truman, H.S. Year of Decisions 1945 (Volume I) 1955. Years of Trial and Hope (Volume II) 1956.
- Vandenberg, A.H. Jr. editor The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg, 1953.
- Webb, Beatrice Diaries, 1912-24, 1952; 1924-32, 1956. Edited by M.I. Cole.
- Wheeler-Bennett, J.W. King George VI, 1958.
- Winant, J.G. A Letter from Grosvenor Square, 1947.
- Williams, Francis Ernest Bevin, 1952.
- Wyatt, W. Into the Dangerous World, 1952.
- Young, G.M. Stanley Baldwin, 1952.
- Zilliacus, Konni Why I Was Expelled 1949.

## VI HISTORICAL AND SPECIAL STUDIES OF POLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY.

A. Labour Politics. Since historians have written much more about the Labour Party than have political scientists, books dealing with events well before World War II dominate this list.

- Attlee, C.R. The Labour Party in Perspective, 1937. War Comes to Britain; Speeches, 1940. Labour's Aims in War and Peace, 1941.
- Bealey, F.W. and H.M. Pelling Labour and Politics, 1900-1906, 1958.
- Bevin, Ernest  
Borkenau, F. The Job to be Done, 1942. Socialism: National or International? 1942.
- Brady, R.A. Crisis in Britain (Berkeley and Los Angeles) 1950.
- Brand, C.F. British Labour's Rise to Power. (Stanford) 1941.
- Butler, D.E. The British General Election of 1951, 1952.
- Cole, G.D.H. A History of the Labour Party from 1914, 1948. British Working-Class Politics, 1832-1914, 1941. Labour in War-Time, 1915.
- Crossman, R.H.S. The Charm of Politics, 1958.  
The Curtain Falls, edited by D. Healey, 1951.
- Dalton, H.  
Deane, H.A. Hitler's War -- Before and After, 1940. The Political Ideas of Harold J. Laski, (New York) 1955.
- Fabian Essays in Socialism, 1920 edition, with an introduction by Sidney Webb.
- Fienburgh, Wilfred  
Graubard, S.R. No Love for Johnnie, 1959. British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917-24 (Cambridge, Mass.) 1956.
- Henderson, A. Labour's Way to Peace, 1935.
- Hunter, L. The Road to Brighton Pier, 1959.
- Jenkins, R. Pursuit of Progress, 1953.
- Joll, James The Second International, 1889-1914, 1955.
- Kellogg, Paul and A. Gleason British Labour and the War, (New York) 1919.
- Laski, H.J. Reflections on the Constitution, 1951.
- Lyman, Richard The First Labour Government, 1957.
- McCallum, R.B. and A. Readman The British General Election of 1945, 1947.
- McKenzie, R.T. British Political Parties, 1955.
- Maddox, W.P. Foreign Relations in British Labour Politics (Cambridge, Mass.) 1934.

- Milne, R.S. and H.C. Mackenzie Straight Fight, 1954.  
 Morrison, Herbert Government and Parliament, 1954.  
 Mowat, C.L. Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940, 1955.
- Nicholas, H.G. The British General Election of 1950, 1951.
- Orwell, G. Selected Essays, 1957.  
 Pease, E.R. The History of the Fabian Society, 1916.
- Pelling, H. America and the British Left, 1956.  
The Communist Party of Great Britain, 1958.  
The Origins of the Labour Party, 1880-1900, 1954.
- Poirier, P.P. The Advent of the Labour Party, 1958.  
 Reid, J.H.S. The Origins of the British Labour Party (Minneapolis) 1955.
- Ross, J.F.S. Elections and Electors, 1955.  
 Richards, P.G. Honourable Members, 1959.
- Swanwick, H.M. Builders of Peace, 1924.  
 The Times House of Commons, 1945, 1950, 1951.  
 Tracey, H., editor The British Labour Party (three volumes) 1948.  
Tribune 21, edited by Elizabeth Thomas, 1958.
- Van Der Slice, A. International Labour, Diplomacy and Peace, 1914-1919, (Philadelphia) 1941.
- Wertheimer, Egon Portrait of the Labour Party, 1929.  
 Williams, Francis Triple Challenge, 1948.  
 Windmuller, J.P. American Labor and the International Labor Movement, 1940 to 1953 (Ithaca, N.Y.) 1954.
- Windrich, E. British Labour's Foreign Policy (Stanford) 1952.
- Yearbook of the International Socialist Labour Movement, 1956-7 (edited by J. Braunthal) 1956.

B. Conservative Party literature has been surveyed to measure the extent of agreement between the Labour Government and their Conservative opponents, in the country as well as in the House of Commons. The sources consulted were:

Campaign Guide, 1950, 1951.

General Election leaflets and pamphlets, 1945, 1950, 1951.

Notes on Current Politics 1946-52.

Notes for Speakers and Workers, 1945.

Party Conference Reports, 1947-50.

C. Foreign Policy. For chronological accounts of developments in foreign affairs during the period, the Royal Institute of International Affairs Survey and the Council on Foreign Relations series, The United States in World Affairs, have been relied upon, in conjunction with the daily press. The following books are among those particularly relevant in whole or in part.

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Angell, Norman            | <u>The Great Illusion</u> , 1910.   |
| Balfour, M. and John Mair | <u>Four Power Control in Germany and Austria 1945-46</u> , 1956.                                  |
| Beloff, Max               | <u>Foreign Policy and the Democratic Process (Baltimore)</u> 1955.                                |
| Butler, Harold            | <u>The Lost Peace</u> , 1941.   |
| Clay, Lucius D.           | <u>Decision in Germany</u> , 1950.  |
| Crosby, G.R.              | <u>Disarmament and Peace in British Politics 1914-1919 (Cambridge, Mass.)</u> 1957.               |
| Crossman, R.H.S.          | <u>Palestine Mission</u> , n.d., c. 1946-47.  |
| Dahl, R.A.                | <u>Congress and Foreign Policy (New York)</u> , 1950.   |
| Davison, W. Phillips,     | <u>The Berlin Blockade</u> , (Princeton) 1958.  |
| Epstein, Leon,            | <u>Britain -- Uneasy Ally (Chicago)</u> 1954.   |
| Fitzsimons, M.A.          | <u>The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Government, 1945-51</u> , (Notre Dame, Indiana) 1953. |
| Ford, A.W.                | <u>The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute, 1951-2 (Berkeley and Los Angeles)</u> 1954.                     |
| Gardner, R.N.             | <u>Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy</u> , 1956.  |
| Goodwin, G.               | <u>Britain and the United Nations</u> , 1957.   |
| Healey, D.                | "Power Politics" in <u>New Fabian Essays</u> , edited by R.H.S. Crossman, 1952.                   |
| Hurewitz, J.C.            | <u>The Struggle for Palestine</u> 1950.   |
| Jones, J.M.               | <u>The Fifteen Weeks; February 21-June 5, 1947 (New York)</u> 1955.                               |

- Kirk, G.E. The Middle East 1945-50, 1954.  
 McNeill, W.H. America, Britain and Russia, 1953.  
 Martin, L.W. Peace Without Victory (New Haven) 1958.
- Mass Observation Britain, edited by Charles Madge and Tom Harrisson, 1939.
- Noel-Baker, P.J. The Geneva Protocol, 1925.  
 Penrose, E.F. Economic Planning for the Peace, 1953.
- Pickles, D. French Politics; the First Years of the Fourth Republic, 1953.
- Schlesinger, A. and R. Rovere The General and the President, 1952.
- Strang, Lord The Foreign Office, 1955.  
 Tanner, Vaino The Winter War; Finland against Russia (Stanford) 1957.
- Taylor, A.J.P. The Trouble Makers, 1957.  
 Woodhouse, C.M. Apple of Discord, 1948.  
 Woolf, L. International Government, 1916.

## VII JOURNALS

The following articles in British and American journals are particularly relevant to the subject of this thesis.

- Attlee, Earl "The Attitude of M.P.s and Active Peers" Political Quarterly (1959) pp.29-32.
- Bassett, R. "Telling the Truth to the People" Cambridge Journal (November, 1948) pp. 84-95. See also January, 1949, pp. 237-242; March, 1949, p. 378.
- Burns, J.M. "The Parliamentary Labour Party in Great Britain" American Political Science Review (1950) pp. 855-71.
- Fienburgh, W. "Put Policy on the Agenda" Fabian Journal #6, (February, 1952) pp. 25-33.
- Healey, D. "The International Socialist Conference, 1946-50" International Affairs (1950) pp. 363-73.
- McKenzie, R.T. "Policy Decision in Opposition: A Rejoinder" Political Studies (1957) pp. 176-82.

- Miliband, R. "Party Democracy and Parliamentary Government" Political Studies (1958) pp. 170-4.
- Pelling, Henry, Review of S.R. Graubard op.cit. Political Studies (1957) p. 203.
- Rose, Saul "Policy Decision in Opposition" Political Studies (1956) pp. 128-38.
- Strang, Lord "The Formation and Control of Foreign Policy" Durham University Journal (June, 1957) pp. 98-108.
- Williams, P. "What Happened on 25th October?" Socialist Commentary (December, 1951) pp. 280-3.
- Younger, K. "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy" British Journal of Sociology (June, 1955) pp. 169-175.

