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WHERE LEADS THIS WAY?

There is nothing new in the loudly heralded *Tribune* pamphlet "One Way Only," which is summarised in its sub-title "A Socialist Analysis of the Present World Crisis." The foreword is signed by Aneurin Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman, the Ministers who resigned from the Government in protest against certain features of the 1951 Finance Bill. The presence of their signatures gives a clue to the apparent purpose of the document. It indemnifies them for deserting the Government, urges more Socialism, not less, and suggests by inference that they and their co-authors are the men to translate this policy into reality.

Inevitably, the co-operation of twenty-five or so modestly anonymous authors has involved compromise. The result is an impersonal presentation of the mean average of the beliefs of the group. Five principles are stated. (1) War is not inevitable but re-armament increases the danger of it; (2) the "under-privileged" colonial peoples have a right to complete their social revolutions which it is the task of British Socialism and the Western allies to assist; (3) from this it follows that the re-armament policies of the Atlantic nations should be subordinated to a grand World Plan for Mutual Aid; (4) re-armament should be limited to the degree required to deter the Russians from military adventures. Frankly and very significantly, the authors state that this "should be financed not by inflation"; they recommend instead a system of "Socialist controls"; (5) it is possible, desirable and necessary to continue the advance towards the establishment of a Socialist society in Britain.

"One Way Only" boils down to this. The Americans must be restrained, the Russians deterred, the poverty-stricken "backward areas" of the world modernised and enriched by mechanisation, and the people of Britain regimented into the doctrinaire strait-jacket of the Socialist Utopia of a classless, uniform, "Fair Shares" Welfare State.

American stock-piling, it is declared, threatens to wreck the economies of Europe and the world by raising prices, and to cause wide-scale unemployment—especially in Britain—by cornering all available raw materials. Her present policy of "guns and the whole cow" must give way to rigorous controls of domestic production, coupled with a fair allocation of raw materials to her allies. At present America is spending \$300 on armaments for every one cent given to the "backward areas." She must spend less on swords and more on ploughshares. "How oft the means to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done," remarks the pamphlet, expressing the fear that

when America is fully re-armed in 1953, or some time later, hysterical elements may precipitate her into aggressive war with Russia.

Despite the pamphlet's marked antagonism towards the United States, Russia is represented as the main cause of world tension. But "the policies of the West are based on a gross over-estimate of Soviet strength and a cringing inferiority complex about Soviet political warfare." Russia's failure to invade defiant Yugoslavia is taken as evidence of her military weakness.

Strong defence is necessary but breakneck re-armament is condemned. It would unbalance national economies, cause poverty and unemployment at home and leave no surplus with which to attack poverty abroad. Re-armament endangers peace. Momentarily the relationship between the land question and poverty is sighted. In a sentence the Italian Government is condemned for making only a "timid effort at land reform." The matter is not further pursued. Can it be that the Town and Country Planning Act is thought to have solved the problem in Britain? Or do these Socialists fear that by drawing attention to the land question abroad they will reveal to the thoughtful reader the ineptitude of the British Labour Government in its failure to tackle the problem at home?

The naïve belief that a World Plan for Mutual Aid will (somehow or other) solve all our difficulties is pathetic. Figures are quoted to prove the already well known fact that hundreds of millions of our fellow men and women are hungry, living in abysmal poverty and misery. The "unexampled scale" of the Labour Government's colonial development schemes, the enthusiastic support of the Labour Party's 1950 Margate Conference for a World Plan, and the American Trade Unionist William Reuther's Plan are mentioned approvingly. The Colombo Plan and Truman Point 4 Programme are praised as steps in the right direction, although they are woefully inadequate. Of existing proposals for economic aid, they ask: "Is the aim a partnership to fight poverty or a plan to purchase mercenaries in another kind of war? Is the aim to destroy malaria and provide tractors or to protect the landlords and prop up feudal regimes?" Here, and again in the phrase, "rising revolt against the landlord and the money-lender," a glimpse is caught of the ubiquitous land question but no plan for restoring the land to the landless is offered.

The World Plan is not defined. We are told that "the only sane policy for the West, the only reputable policy for Socialists, is to ally ourselves with the forces of social revolution and to prove by deeds that our aim is not dominion but honourable partnership." The Western nations have "to show a capacity for self-discipline and self-restraint hitherto scarcely imagined. They must put a check on their exorbitant demands while the rest of the human race is enabled to catch up in social and material standards and while some order is introduced into man's use of the earth's precious resources. That means the acceptance of planning by the community of nations. It means that the principle of fair shares, now only fitfully applied at home, must be extended into the international sphere."

The prospect is made abundantly clear. It is a bleak and horrible picture. We in Britain are to "mark time" while "under-privileged" Asia and Africa, with our aid, catch up in the industrial development which the Western nations have taken 150 years to achieve. Asia and Africa are to be forced into the confining

strait-jacket of Socialism. Wealth intended to help the poor and hungry is to be poured into the East, raising land values and enriching those who claim ownership of the land. The world shall not be tacked on to the vast Russian Empire to be ruled by the power-hungry men of the Kremlin; it shall come under the domination of their not readily distinguishable Socialist counterparts of the West.

In their two concluding chapters entitled "Guns and Margarine" and "The Cost of Living" these ambitious dissenters put their cards on the table. Re-armament is criticised on two counts. It will deprive the people of Britain of the good things which they allege the years of so-called "national self-discipline" would otherwise now yield. What is called "An attractive picture and a perfectly true one" is painted of the sort of development which would have been possible without the new arms programme. It includes "an extra 50,000 houses a year and an increase of £100 millions in the social services and an increase of 10 per cent. in the rate of capital investment in industry and another £100 millions worth of goods to help the economically backward countries and a 3 per cent. rise in living standards for all the people of Britain—and all this whilst still spending 7 per cent. of our national income in defence." Note that, even without re-armament, "national self-discipline"—the Socialist euphemism for punitive taxation and controls—would have continued. Workers would not have been free to spend a little more of their own money as they thought best; the tax-brake on production would not have been eased ever so gently. As far as it lay within the power of these planning-mad M.P.'s, Government would have collected as much as ever, but would have spent its revenues on houses and health schemes instead of tanks and planes.

Yet these men are opposed to the re-introduction of a war economy. They quarrel with the Prime Minister because on September 12, 1950, he announced an expansion of the armaments programme to a figure of £3,600 millions over a period of three years. "This great expenditure," he said, "represents the maximum that we can do—without resorting to the drastic expedients of a war economy." A few weeks later Mr. Attlee raised the programme to £4,700 millions and proposed to carry it out *without* resorting to the drastic expedients of a war economy. We sympathise when Mr. Bevan's friends ask plaintively: how had the impossible suddenly become possible? But they should surely know that to "planning" politicians nothing is impossible.

It is said that the sudden switch-over to the manufacture of war materials will cost £100 millions more in lost production resulting from the re-tooling of industry and "bottle-necks" than the officially advertised "intrinsic value" of these supplies. This £100 million, plus the other savings they recommend would have safeguarded the free dentures and spectacles, and old age pensions, etc., etc.

The Bevanites' domestic policy is summed up in the slogan "Prices must halt." To achieve this desirable end the Government must impose a capital levy, ban bonus share issues, ban, or put a heavy tax on, all dividend increases over the level of 1947-8. War-time controls on the allocation of materials should be re-imposed. "Check the expenditure of the rich by making luxuries unavailable." Devise a new, true cost-of-living index and plan the whole of Government expenditure so as to ensure that the index stays stable for at least

six months (our italics). Reduce the distribution costs of certain goods and apply a general "price freeze" to all other goods. Railway fares should be reduced by the payment of subsidies, and the price of food, certain articles of clothing, children's clothes and blankets should be "frozen" at their present level and subsidised.

Simultaneously the Government should carry out Labour Party policy as contained in the document *Let us Win Through Together*. It is said that there are those who would like to forget that this is Labour Party policy. As we wish readers of this journal to remember what the Labour Party proposes for Britain we re-print in full this section of "One Way Only."

Let us Win Through Together "lays down a large number of proposals for dealing with Britain's economy which are as valid now as when they were written. The control of 'financial forces'; a Development Council for ship-building and ship-repairing; the rate for the job; the abolition of price rings and rigged markets; more industrial democracy; more efficiency and social responsibility in the nationalised industries; the creation, by compulsion if need be, of Development Councils; the provision of buildings and equipment to approved manufacturers; public competition in privately-owned industries; the nationalisation of some monopoly concerns; the public ownership of sugar, cement and possibly some chemicals; the full use of statutory powers against inefficient farmers; nationalisation of food-producing land which is not fully used; the reform of fruit and vegetable marketing; the public ownership of some mineral workings; the 'mutualisation' of industrial assurance; reconsideration of the problem of the tied cottage; public responsibility for all water supplies; the reduction of excessive prices; publicly-owned markets; the rationalisation of cold stores; public ownership of meat wholesaling; Government bulk-buying of consumer goods and the establishment of a Consumer Advice Centre."

The programme is an incredible hotch-potch of piecemeal legislation. Each restrictive measure is a piece in the Socialist jig-saw puzzle which, if ever completed, will nationalise all the means of production and exchange. The remaining oases of liberty and prosperity are to be dried up one by one until all Britain is transformed into the barren desert of the totalitarian state. That is the Plan. "One Way Only" has been written to hasten its fulfilment.

P. R. S.

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