

COMMUNISM MEANS WAR (Unilateralism is one-sided)

When you see the Labour Party in crisis, as its ideas fall apart, you are bound to wonder why it ever attracted so much support in the first place, from otherwise reasonable well-meaning people. There is no one single answer. If people are a mixture of motives, so are parties. But one motive in particular which brought many people to Socialism, and left its mark on socialism, was pacificism, combined with the belief that capitalism somehow causes wars, while socialism will prevent them.

It takes an effort of imagination to realise how powerful a hold this view took of people after the slaughter of the first world war. People wanted a simple answer; the socialists gave them one. Like most simple answers it was easy to understand, attractive - and wrong.

The socialist answer was that capitalism caused the war, that struggle for markets and raw materials caused the war. It was only one step on to say that capitalism causes all wars and therefore that socialism will obviate war. In fact, the first world war owed much more to the old-fashioned dynasties, the Hapsburgs, who wanted to teach the Serbs a lesson, the Czar, who wanted Constantinople, the German Emperor, who wanted glory. These were countries in which capitalists had much less to say than in Britain, Belgium, France.

But, to the simple mind, the socialist mind, the Courts, the Generals, the big-businessmen all seemed one large family, the powers-that-be, and if only they were dispossessed, wars would be outlawed.

Labour promised a panacea, we Tories did not, so Labour made a handsome political profit. But what about today? Sixty years after the end of the first world war, many wars after the end of the first world war, how can socialists honestly say the same thing? Boasting of being a very well-travelled man in a well-travelled party leadership - as guests of all sorts of régimes - Labour's general secretary Mr Hayward repeated the myth at Blackpool last week. He claimed that he had "never met a working man who wanted to knock another working man's block off". He and his fellow debaters remained convinced, that capitalism causes wars, and alone causes wars. Well, he could not have heard his own conferences debate on Northern Ireland for a start.

But, what about the rest of the world? Does his frequent ritual denunciation of the capitalist press and "media"

mean that he never reads newspapers, never sees television? Has he not heard about a war still going on between Communist Vietnam and Communist Campuchea? Did he not hear about a recent war between Communist China and Communist Vietnam? Does he not know that in Communist Moscow and Communist Peking the threat of war breaking out between them is spoken of with greater seriousness? Or does he include the Peking "Peoples Daily" as part of the capitalist media? Has Mr Hayward never heard about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan? Or does he share the view of some of his Labour Party comrades that it was no invasion, that the Russians were invited in? And how do socialists explain the Iran-Iraq war. Both regimes are anti-capitalist. So were the Tanzanian and Ugandan governments which fought a war recently.

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I was recently in Yugoslavia. Does Yugoslavia fear an invasion from capitalist countries? Is that what their General Staff are worried about?

Communism - or, as its adherents prefer to call it, Socialism - can very easily cause war.

I am not suggesting that Communist invented war, any more than they invented dictatorship, censorship, torture, corruption, privilege. But they carry all these evils very far, for several reasons. First, total organisation of the state means total power to use war as an instrument of policy. Second dictatorship silences opposing voices.

For war is as old as humanity. The very earliest records of mankind are full of it. That does not mean that we should be fatalistic about it. We need to understand that war is the outcome of conflict between nations (or inside nations)

which becomes too compelling to be contained. The way to prevent wars is to ensure that the cost of victory is higher than the gain from victory. This is easier in democratic countries, though we must remember that the mass of people in Britain, France, Russia and Germany were all in favour of war in 1914, even most of their socialist were too. Public opinion is now generally anti-war. But this places democracies at a disadvantage vis á vis dictatorships. When Soviet troops marched into Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan, there were no demonstrations to speak of in Red Square. When the Chinese troop marched into Vietnam, there were no demonstrations by the new wall of democracy. Nor did we read of demonstrations in Hanoi when their armies marched into Campuchea. I know that Cubans are worried about their dead in African wars, particularly since it is mainly coloured Cubans who are sent, but they demonstrate against war only "with their feet", by trying to emigrate.

Communism could cause the third world war. We do not want one. We not believe that the Soviet leadery want an all-out war, they prefer what they call "salami tactics", one slice at a time. We must patiently build our strength while seeking agreement with the Soviet bloc and other groups where these are in our interest. We must keep down the temperature when incidents arise, often incidents quite out of the control of any main groupings, from the Sarjevo assassination in 1914, which not even the Serbian Government, let alone it allies, anticipated, but which led to the first world war, to the Irano-Iraqi war, which neither the West, the Soviet bloc nor the Arab League not the Islamic congress or any other body had any hand in instigating as far is known or even suspected. We are trying to contain that war!

Throughout history, idealistic, but short sighted critics of the balance of power write it off as a cynical and inadequate way of keeping the peace and limiting wars. The critics are right, except for one particular. No one has yet found a better way. Imbalance of power creates worse effects. That is why we reject Labour's unilateralism, and call on Mr Callaghan and Mr Healey to do the same openly, honestly and boldly and to explain why - or why not.



Alfred Sherman

FRAGMENT B      LABOUR PARTY IN CRISIS

You will have read about and seen on TV the deep conflict which is riving the Labour Party. I do not gloat over this. On the contrary, I regard it with regret and concern.

I should be far happier were there a strong, democratic, patriotic Labour Party as our partner in the business of constitutional democracy. The two-party system grew up in this country. It seems to have reflected our national genius. It has served us well. What else should we envisage?

I know that there are many people of all classes and age-groups who joined or supported the Labour Party from the best motives, the desire to help bring about a fairer, more prosperous, more caring Britain, the self-same reasons which brought us into the Conservative Party.

Of course, it is quite fair to reproach them, many of them at least, for not having seen sooner what was happening under their noses, as the forces of intolerance, national self-destruction, class hatred, infiltrated into position after position, till they now threaten the very citadel itself. Leading party figures described as moderates, who should have been concerned, were complacent. When their own members warned them, they accused them of scare-mongering and witch-hunting. When we warned them in good faith, they wrote it off indignantly as making party capital; they did not understand us well enough to realise that for us Conservatives, party never comes first.

I must say here that whereas we have not always succeeded in understanding the Labour Party - no easy matter, even for its supporters - they, on their side, have made not the slightest attempt to understand us. They see us in nineteenth-century caricature, in top hats and money-bags. They have no idea of what our evolving conservative philosophy is endeavouring to do, that caring the most is not the same as shouting the loudest, that wishing will not always make it so. They not only failed to make the effort to understand us, but often broke the conventions of behaviour between parties when it suited them to do so, though we have always stuck by the rules, because without them, democratic politics is always in danger of breaking down. Their attachment to democracy too often lacked the element of respect for convention, without which the best sets of rules do not grip.

But by now, the situation against which we warned has come about. The very soul of the Labour party is in pawn. The Left, which rejects democracy and patriotism as we know them, would disarm unilaterally, take sweeping powers over people and property, and impose restrictions unknown this side of the iron curtain, in striking distance of taking over the Party's machinery completely. It already dominates the National Executive Committee and much of Party Headquarters. It appears to control a majority of constituency associations. It has a large contingent of Labour MP's, perhaps a third, and controls many Labour-held local authorities.

The Left's proposals for mandatory re-selection are designed to intimidate most MP's, and replace by fellow Marxists as many as possible of those who could not be intimidated.

Its proposals for an electoral college to choose the party leader - whatever the details finally agreed - would also give left-wing constituency associations and Trade Unions, many under powerful communist influence, an increased say in the choice of leader and shadow-cabinet decisions. The abolition of cabinet government, as we know it, is one of their aims, relocating the centre of political power outside of parliament, in party and union headquarters. No effort of imagination is needed to comprehend this. It already exists both in the communist world and in the third-world countries most admired by socialists. They also have plans for curbing press freedoms.

Those who until recently accused us of being scare-mongers or worse, now admit that there is a possibility, and that the new leader of the Labour Party, could be either Mr Wedgwood Benn, or a compromise candidate acceptable to him. So what comes next?

It is not for me to tell the Labour Party as a whole how to solve its problems, nor individual members or supporters how to make their personal choice. They must work out their own salvation.

Some may consider whether they could not find a spiritual home here. We are not what they thought us. We are a party of change, because, as Burke said, change is necessary for preservation. But accommodating change is different from seeking novelty. We are a party which can always find room both for idealists and practical people. We are aware that throughout our lifetime and the lifetimes of our children and grandchildren, much will remain to be done, to justify calling ourselves a truly Christian nation under God. It will be a test of our own breadth and adaptability to find a place in our ranks for people who leave the Labour Party because they can no longer feel at home there, to harness their energies, to learn from them

as they learn our ways. We are not too proud to learn,  
too hidebound to teach.

Other disillusioned Labour members seem to be seeking third parties. I, as a Tory, do not favour monopoly, or duopoly - as economists would call it. But I remain to be convinced that there is a place for a third party, a so-called "Centre Party", least of all if one of the two poles from which it measures its centre turns out to be a Marxist-dominated anti-democratic, anti-patriotic party. I believe that a party should be based on traditions, ideals and - why be coy? - interests; not on geometry. But that is up to them, and to the voting public.

Above all, we shall be watching with sympathy the efforts of the democratic, patriotic, open-society wing of the Labour Party to re-establish its eroded control. They have much to live down.

If Mr Callaghan had not done his deals with the Left, particularly the Left in the unions, in order to rise to the very top of his own party, beginning with the deal which condemned his own government's effort to bring about a better balance of power between the unions and public, his party would be in a better heart today.

If Mrs Shirley Williams had not tried to appease the Labour left, both as politician and Minister of Education, if she had not lent respectability to the effort to impose a closed-shop on unwilling workers at Grunwick, appearing on the picket-lines long after a mass-picket had already been planned, and this was known to her colleagues, had she not denied, during the election campaign; the extent to which party's institutions were being taken over by the Left, she would be in a stronger position today. But insofar as she and her colleagues stand up and fight, even at this late hour, their credibility will be re-established. There is no point in expecting infallibility from politicians, only honest recognition of mistakes.



It is not enough to just fight the left.

Labour democrats have to re-think right through the whole question of their constitutional relations with the Trade Unions. There is much about it which gives us cause for concern. How much is really known about the internal workings of many unions, by Labour politicians or union members? How many members does the TGWU really have? How many are actually still in this country? How many actually paid the political levy voluntarily? How often do any of them have any say in how the political fund is spent, in how the union's block-vote is used at the Labour Party, in how leaders and policies are chosen and determined at all? Let me ask the same question of the GMTU. Yes, I know that there are unions which do consult, at least some way down the line. But the massive general unions and other massive card-voters - all with their top men in for life, like so many Latin American or African presidents - consult no one but their friends.

The question of union leaders speaking for union members on party-political matters is one which Labour decision-makers have yet to tackle. Can it co-exist with a true parliamentary system? Above all, they must tackle it at a time when the union block-vote is back on their side. Any fool and protest about the system's unfairness when it is working against them. If Atlee and Morrison and Gaitskell had asked these questions while they were riding high, when the big union batallions marched for them at conference, their spiritual successors might not be in their present quandary.

For there is a constitutional issue. If, as the Labour conference has decided, the choice of party leader shall not be left to MP's alone, and if, as it seems likely, trade union hierarchies will share that choice, will this not give them added influence over the parliamentary Labour Party? Which minister who hopes to rise higher will dare to contradict them lightly?

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The unions already enjoy considerable influence over the PLP, through their place on the National Executive Committee, their block vote at conferences, their system of sponsoring MP's financially, their voice in constituency parties. How far does this square with the principle of one man one vote?

I know all about the historical origins and traditions, and I respect them. What else would a Tory do? But we also believe in change. This is 1980, not 1890, when unions were weak and parliament alien. When will democratic labour leaders have the courage to say that the special relation with the trade unions has outlived its justification, doing harm to unions, the Labour Party and British democracy. The time has come to work out alternative systems, for unions to seek representation of legitimate concerns at government level.

Unions should also be reconsidering their role in society; recognising that their immense obstructive power is now working against the interests of trade unionists as a whole, of the twelve million members and their families.

When there were a million and a half trade union members, as there were in 1914, or four million in 1939, they could advance their members interests at the short-term expense of the rest of the economy, though often at the longer-term interests of their own industry, because the world is not forced to buy British.

But with twelve million members, still growing, who is to pay for over-manning, higher wages than are earned, bad workmanship, strikes, go-slows, blacking, and the rest? If employers are forced to pay, investment goes down and finally firms close. If the government comes in and subsidises them, who pays for the subsidies? Taxes go up and up till they make us a high-cost economy, losing our share of world markets and our living standards.

Trade unions were originally founded to help their members keep abreast of economic change. They now frustrate economic change. They are strong enough to do so in Britain; but the rest of the world moves on. Hence de-capitalisation and de-industrialisation at home. That is not their intention, I know. But people are responsible for the foreseeable effects of their actions. And resistance to change - need I list examples - is making us all poorer, is reducing employment opportunities. Who suffers?

Has power gone to their heads to a point where they believe that they are above the laws of economics as well as the law of the land? Unions should be thinking about these wider issues. Not just talking about the need to think about them, but actually thinking. And if unions are slow to undertake fresh thinking, let me try, humbly, to offer the agenda.

Unions began as friendly societies. For many years they actually provided benefits for their members. This side of their activity shrank as the welfare state took over. They pressed for it. But are they really sure that they are better off as a result? Are they getting value for their money? For it is their money; they pay taxes like everyone else. Labour and union leaders talk about the "social wage". But do they ever draw up a balance sheet? How much do workers pay? What do they get in return?

Was there not much of value in the "panel system" which now, pre-war health insurance might have been expanded instead of being replaced by a state-bureaucratic system, which by the admission of its own partisans, fails the poorest and most in need? Could the unions not become involved in education, at present run by the state on a take-it-or-leave it basis? Is there not much in the way of social

work, public order, dealing with delinquency, broken families, adult education, care for the aged, which the trade union might not seek to contribute to? Might they not help members who wish to set up in business, whether on their own or cooperatively?

Socialists talk about abolishing privilege in education, health, eventually - who knows - in transport, housing, culture. But who gains? In our lifetime, higher standards have filtered down from the top downwards. Destroy the top, particularly at a time of falling standards in education and health, and you leave no standards of excellence, nothing to prevent further fall in the take-it-or leave-it society. Of course, you will not end privilege. Your ministers, your trade union top men, your nationalised industry chairman, the new class will enjoy privilege as they do in communist countries.

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It is the masses who will be worst off. In the socialist countries standards do not filter down. Life is grim, desperate, for the masses.

These are problems to which Labour Party and union members should be addressing themselves before, during and after their sepcial conference, not just the constitutional arrangements and who gets what job. We shall be only too glad to join in their dialogue. We have much ne thinking to do. And if any disillusioned socialists wish to join us in thinking, they are always welcome.