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**BOMBS  
AND  
VOTES**

**WAYLAND YOUNG**

*TWO SHILLINGS*

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May, 1964

# Bombs and Votes

WAYLAND YOUNG

## 1. Defence at the Hustings

At the end of 1958, the Government have achieved a great and successful defence and foreign policy. Nevertheless with that they have brought defence into the political campaign of 1964, which they need not have done. But certainly with that they have done so and they have done so in the "defence" statement" as indicated in the "defence" statement for the purpose of indicating the real issue. And the content with that they have so distorted their original position that the Prime Minister has had to apologise to the Leader of the Opposition.

When he took over, Sir Alec Douglas-Home said he would make defence an election issue. A week or two later he said he would not, and it was reasonable to judge that the last office had covered him up and he had thought better of it. The result of the election showed that the hustings.

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Edited by  
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## I. Defence at the Hustings

At least since 1956, Tory governments have adhered to a trivial and outdated defence and foreign policy. Not content with that, they have brought defence into the election campaign of 1964, which they need not have done. Not content with that, they have chosen to sing songs for the "independent deterrent" so halfbaked as to make it just about impossible for the electorate to understand the real issues. And not content with that, they have so distorted their opponents' position that the Prime Minister has had to apologise to the Leader of the Opposition.

When he took over, Sir Alec Home first said he *would* make defence an election issue. A week or two later he said he would not, and it was reasonable to hope that his high office had sobered him up and he had thought better of kicking the safety of this people around at the hustings. A week or two later wisdom and discretion were once again cast to the winds; it is now clear that he and his team are going to stump every TV set and every corner of the country with the jejune yippeeism of: "We've got it: we keep it. What about you?"

One can see the temptation. The Tories know that Labour is united in rejecting "the national independent deterrent", and the jingoistic, anti-UN, anti-disarmament policy which goes with it. But they also know that it is only three or four years since we had a dispute in the Labour Party between "unilateralism" in disarmament policy and "multilateralism". They know that the general formula by which the dispute was ended in 1961 was that a Labour Government would not do away with weapons it inherited, but would not "strive officiously to keep alive" independent nuclear forces into the indefinite future. But they also know that there are still views in the Labour Party which range from a desire to fly the V-bombers into the Lake of Geneva the day we take office, to a policy which, though it differs sharply from Tory policy on assigning forces to NATO, playing our proper part in the UN, and building up conventional mobility, still would not give rise to any unconditional surrender either of weapons or of ultimate sovereign control over them.

It would have been better for the country if the Tories had not fallen for the temptation. It is not excusable, even at election time, to indulge in low-level partisan in-fighting on defence. Honest and competitive arguments, yes; but not over-simplification and misrepresentation. It is not excusable for two reasons. First, because it may convince non-specialists, a class which includes many influential and loquacious people in the community, that there is really a cut and dried yes or no issue here, which there is not. Such a mistaken conviction lowers the utility of public discussion and may sometimes even make it dangerous.

It is also inexcusable in terms of defence and foreign policy themselves. In the course of his campaign, Sir Alec Home does not hesitate to describe the Labour Party as "unilateralist", and to accuse it of being ready to "deprive Britain of power" in a dangerous world.

This is putting party above country (which even in the eighteenth century was recognised as the lowest form of political skulduggery) because the words of Sir Alec are heard not only in Britain but also in Washington and Bonn and Paris and, above all, in Moscow. If he tells foreign governments and peoples that Labour is shaky in its adherence to NATO, willing to throw away its arms, soft on communism and all the rest of it, some of this will stick and Labour will start its period of office amid the unnecessary distrust of Britain's friends and the unfounded expectations of Britain's adversaries that concessions can be easily obtained. He may think this line makes us less likely to win the election, but he does not seem to understand that, if we do win it, it may make us less capable of conducting Britain's foreign policy in the best interest of its people. It is not so much an anti-Labour line as an anti-British one; Sir Alec has not got the breadth of political vision to see how to knock his adversaries without knocking the nation as a whole. It certainly is a grand way to go about serving your country, to trumpet to the world that your probable successors in office are dangerous and untrustworthy.

But whatever nonsense the Prime Minister talks, we must not be needled into talking nonsense too. The Labour Party has been thirteen years without contact with the official planners in this complicated and largely secret field; it is right that we should refuse to be drawn into detail. Labour supporters, whether Christian or not, would surely endorse the Resolution passed by the British Council of Churches on October 16th, 1963: "The Council, noting that over the whole range of problems posed by nuclear weapons there is a wide measure of agreement between the political parties, urges that, in a matter of such profound importance to the whole nation, differences should not be exaggerated for electoral purposes". But the Tories have chosen so to exaggerate, therefore we must defend ourselves against their attacks, and try to raise the debate to a sensible level.

## 2. Nuclear Arms

### Both Parties are Unilateralist

THE main burden of these attacks is that Labour is "unilateralist", in the sense of intending the unilateral nuclear disarmament of this country. That is the bluntest form of it, and it's the one the Prime Minister himself is given to. A more sophisticated version is that the Labour Party believes in "graduated unilateralism", or "having a smaller bomb for a shorter time". They base this charge on Labour's distaste for the Nassau agreement under which the US agreed to sell us Polaris missiles to put in British-built submarines. Labour's actual policy has probably been put most precisely by Denis Healey in the House of Commons on 26th February:

"I cannot say yet whether or not we will cancel the Polaris submarine. What I will say is that we will certainly not continue the programme in its capacity as an independent British force and, secondly, if we decided that there was no alliance requirement for a British Polaris component we would not have the slightest difficulty in converting these submarines into hunter-killer submarines, a programme of certain and immediate value to the British Navy and to national defence which has been set back five years by the Polaris programme."

The Conservatives say that if Labour does decide not to buy the missiles (and the Nassau Agreement only permits Britain to buy them; it does not bind us to) then, since the V-bombers will not last for ever, Britain will have no "independent" nuclear deterrent.

The reality is very much more complicated. For one thing, *independent* is a highly relative word. The government assures us, and we have no right to doubt them, that these missiles will be, in the last resort, under unfettered British national control. That is to say, we will not rely on American communications systems to fire them. The Nassau Agreement also uses the words "on a continuing basis", and this presumably covers spares and servicing. But we do not know whether it includes the purchase of successive future generations of Polaris missile. The "fourth generation" Polaris missile is now being designed in the US. This will be a 90 per cent new bird, to use American language, and it will be several inches wider. It will therefore require a complete remodelling of the middle section of the submarines if we get it.

Now let us see what we can learn from government estimates of the cost of the Polaris force. In the Commons Defence Debate of 25th February, Mr. Thorneycroft said:

"We have come firmly to the conclusion that we should have a fleet of five boats and we intend to have such a fleet. This is a formidable deterrent. It would mean even then — even with five boats and taking into account all the nuclear weapons and armouries of all kinds that we need — that the proportion of nuclear to conventional in our defence spending will remain substantially under 10 per cent.

"The best estimates I can make are that in 1964-65 the proportion will be 8.4 per cent; in 1965-66, it will be 7.6 per cent; in the later 1960s, about 8 per cent; and in the 1970s it will sink to less than 5 per cent, because by then the capital expenditure on the submarines will have been completed, as the capital expenditure on our V-bombers has been completed already. We shall simply be reduced to running costs."

Five per cent in the 1970s; this is the costing for the system of which the Prime Minister said in the Commons on March 24th: "The Government of a country has to have a defence policy not for this year or next year but for twenty years ahead".

So what about the fourth generation missiles? And what about the next generation of independent deterrent forces other than submarines? There has never in the history of man been a weapons system that remained valid for ever; since 1945 five years operational service has been tolerable, and ten years good. The nuclear-powered submarine will become vulnerable in time; on precedent, the late 1970s might not be too unrealistic a date for this to happen. When it does, if there is no arms control, America and Russia will go on to the next thing. It might be military space systems, it might be fixed missile emplacements under the sea, it might be an anti-missile umbrella defence system. It might easily be something the layman has never yet heard of. It will certainly not be cheap. Moreover, it takes 10-15 years to design a weapons system, and the Americans are already at work on the possible systems for 1975-1985. Where is the Conservative plan to keep Britain abreast? Where is the Tory defence policy for "twenty years ahead"? Where are the realistic financial forecasts of the price of "independence" in the late 1970s? Nowhere: we shall come down to 5 per cent nuclear spending, and stay there. The Conservatives, then, plan to "phase out the independent deterrent" only a few years after they allege Labour intend to. If Labour believes in "graduated unilateralism", the Conservative Party believes in slightly more graduated unilateralism.

### **Nuclear and Conventional**

The whole Conservative system of nuclear accounting is in fact pretty obscure, and may perhaps be dictated more by the wish to keep down the ostensible proportion of nuclear to conventional than by the duty to give a true picture to the public. In the quotation above Mr. Thorneycroft can be seen proudly getting the proportion lower and lower; from less than ten per cent right down to five per cent. It has long been a Conservative point that "our nuclear arm" costs less than ten per cent of the whole defence budget. Leave aside the question of how the development costs are spread out over the annual "less than ten per cent" running costs, there remains the question: what precisely *is* our nuclear arm? In the Air Estimates Debate in the Commons this year, the Government stated that the costs of TSR2 were not included. If this is so, "our nuclear arm" must simply be the V-bombers and their crews and supporting staff. But these are far from being the only nuclear weapons in the British forces. Besides the new TSR2 which has recently been assigned a nuclear role, there are the old Canberras, the carrier-borne Buccaneers and Sea Vixens, and the American "tactical" nuclear weapons under dual control in the British Army of the Rhine. It has long been the despair of the British Army and of all men of good sense that these weapons would have to be used within a few days of a full scale conventional attack in Germany; our conventional power is so small it would be that or defeat. At long last prodding by the Opposition, by the press, and by the United States has managed to get the Tory government to do something about ordering



new equipment. They have not proved capable of doing anything about manpower. That has been done by West Germany, which is building up a big army with conventional capacity alongside ours. But what German policy gives with one hand it takes away with the other; as their army grows, so do they increasingly insist that defence must take place right forward at the Iron Curtain. There must be no retreat (which is comprehensible enough if you *live* there) and that means resort to nuclear weapons at once. So it is unfortunately still true that if there were a major Russian attack, the whole BAOR would be fighting a "tactical" nuclear war within a day or two; it is trained to, and it has to plan to.

Are the "tactical" nuclear weapons of BAOR included in this "less than 10 per cent"? And the cost of all the soldiers who would *have* to fight nuclear if at all? And the carrier borne forces? And in the forecasts of expenditure coming down to 5 per cent of the total, are the replacements for the present obsolescent "tactical" nuclear weapons with the army and nuclear bombers with the Navy and Air Force included? If they are, the goods must be made of cardboard and the men must be starving. If they are not, the Government is misleading the country. There is no "nuclear arm" in the British forces. The most powerful units of all three forces *are* nuclear, nuclear as well as conventional.

A Labour Government would build up our conventional capacity so that deterrence should operate at the conventional level in the defence of Western Europe, as well as at the nuclear level. The Conservative Party, as we have seen, prefer to go on just a few years longer with the "independent deterrent" and inflammably weak conventional forces and then, presumably, fall out of the game after having spent a lot more money and annoyed everybody a great deal in the meantime.

Now let us look at what good an independent nuclear capacity actually does for us. Outside Europe, it is as much of a millstone as an advantage. Every time major British units (V-bombers, Canberras, especially carriers) turn up in a threatening manner round Asia and Africa, whether the cause is good or bad, a country which feels menaced by them cannot tell whether or not they carry nuclear weapons. Such a country must therefore assume that they do, and may therefore be tempted to call on another nuclear power, Russia now, perhaps China later, to come to its assistance with a nuclear counter threat, whether by declaration (as at the time of Suez) or by actually bringing in planes.

There is reason to believe that the British force which sailed up the Persian Gulf in December 1961 to deter Iraq from attacking our oilfields in Kuwait could not have beaten the Iraqi forces without using nuclear weapons, and there is every reason to believe they may have been prepared to use them. If this was so, then it was a direct nuclear threat. Such a situation is obviously extremely dangerous and should never be allowed to occur.

### **The United Nations is Us**

The recent run of useful and honourable interventions by British troops in the three new East African countries, in Malaysia, and in Cyprus are object lessons in what *can* be done. But to hear the Government electioneer-

ing about them you would think the Uganda mutineers had been rounded up with Polaris missiles fired from the depths of the Indian Ocean and that the communities in Cyprus had been kept apart by large numbers of contour-hugging bombers shaving the treetops twice as fast as sound at dead of night and firing salvoes of multimegaton stellar-inertial guided missiles complete with decoys and electronic penetration aids.

It was lightly armed common sense which saved the day in these places. Cheap, tough, portable weapons; and above all mobility. The first rule in this sort of operation is if you get there at once you don't have to shoot.

But even these interventions, successful and useful as they were, had under a Conservative government to be "national". Labour would work towards a position where British forces would be able to put on blue armbands swiftly and conveniently whenever this was in UN and British interests. It should be a source of pride, not embarrassment, when British troops are able to take part in executing the lawful decisions of the World Authority. A Government spokesman recently said: "There is no magic in calling in the United Nations". The comment is wonderfully unimaginative. The Conservatives always feel the UN as *they*, a sort of unwelcome and untrustworthy rabble unfortunately set in authority over a wise and responsible *us*. But the United Nations *is* us: Britain is as much a member as all the dreaded Asians and Africans. An active UN policy would be based not on the idea of *calling in* the UN, but on that of *working in* it. British forces, joined by some others, have now at last become UN forces in Cyprus. It ought to have been done long ago. And there is magic in it; the magic of custom. The more it is done, the more likely it is to be done and the quicker we shall get to a stage where nations no longer intrude on one another except by the consent and approval of the consultative organ of all mankind, the United Nations. (To send troops at the invitation of the other government is not, of course, "intrusion".) Britain, with her experience, especially in Africa, and with the useful peace-keeping type forces she has already in some measure and could have in greater, can do a lot to bring on this day by showing active willingness.

#### **Arms Control and Top Table**

And this brings us to the central fault of all Conservative defence and foreign policy; it has no long term objective, or none visible to the naked eye. It may be that Conservative ministers devote five minutes thought a year to what the world is to be like when the third millenium of our era begins, just a generation from now, but if so they do not translate their thoughts into policy. All that appears is drift on the important things, like disarmament, détente, and aid to poor nations, and factional cussedness on the unimportant ones like blasting ahead with those bought "independent" Polaris. In the United States, for instance, arms control planning is so far advanced that the Defence Department now allows as overheads in its weapons procurement contracts sums which the arms manufacturer spends on plans for diversifying so as to get away from dependence on arms production. This is just an example of the different climate of planning which prevails in a country where the government has a long term objective and means to get there.

Contrast this with Sir Alec Home on the "Top Table". His point has so often been answered that we need not delay long over it here. He says if we don't have national control over the Polaris missiles we shall not "sit at the top table". The expression seems to come from a world of footling arrogance where nitwit potentates receive the "respect" of ordinary people, who then turn away and wink. It can only be an invitation to other countries to acquire their own nuclear weapons which, as the Prime Minister has presumably forgotten, both Russia and America are trying to prevent. There's room enough at the top table; the spread of nuclear technology sees to that, and the satisfied prattle of Sir Alec Home attracts other countries to take the empty chairs.

There are many top tables in the world, if that is the way one is going to think: top tables of science, of the arts, of decent domestic government, of economic and technical help to poorer countries, even, come to that, of peaceful and constructive policies in general. It is more interesting and satisfying to "sit at" any of those top tables, and a thousand times more useful for everyone else if one does, than to think only of the overladen and rickety "top table" of military power.

The Prime Minister is fond of saying we were at the Test Ban negotiations, and signed the treaty first along with America and Russia, because we had nuclear weapons. This is true. But two points remain to be made. First: to test and then sign a treaty stopping testing is only one way to contribute to stopping testing. The other way is never to have tested. Second: when we *were* there, it was not our having tested that helped to clarify the issues and thus to make possible the signing of the partial ban; it was our highly developed seismology, and we could have had that without testing. Most of the good was in any case done at Geneva, where we were one of eighteen, not of three, before the private negotiations began.

### "Skilled Teams"

Again, while the American government pays people to think about how to stop making arms, the British Government makes election politics with industry out of the alleged need to keep right on making them. On March 3rd, 1963, Mr. Thorneycroft said that if Britain were beaten out of having her independent deterrent, it would be for all time, because skilled workers, once dispersed, could never be brought together again. When the Tories talk about our being "beaten out of the independent deterrent" or "laying down our nuclear arms" they must mean Labour's misgivings about buying the Polaris missiles. Labour would probably continue to build the submarines. The skilled teams required for that, including those for the nuclear propulsion unit, would not be dispersed at least until the end of the construction programme. (What would happen to them then, under the Conservatives, on 5 per cent of the defence budget, we are not told.) The skilled teams who used to work on missile circuitry, and this is the field of military technology which is advancing most rapidly at the moment, were of course disbanded or turned over to civil work by the Conservatives some time since; for the "independent deterrent" we are relying on the American teams which build the circuitry we have to buy from them. The skilled teams who might

have been called together to work on the boats' inertial navigation system will not have to be disbanded under anybody's policy, since the Conservatives have chosen to buy the American system. The production of weapons grade fissile material has already ceased in this country according to this year's Defence White Paper, so that is another skilled team dispersed by the Conservatives. The only skilled job which would not be done in Britain if the Polaris missiles are not bought would be the actual screwing of the British made warheads onto the American made rockets. One can hardly imagine that British teams will start on that problem from scratch, without any help from America, and it is not in any case a big job.

The fact is that Britain is not *in* the present technological arms race. This is not because we can't be, either economically or technologically, it is because the Conservatives have decided it's not worth it. It's cheaper and easier to talk about 8 per cent falling to 5 per cent, to buy the next generation of weapons from America, and hope something will turn up before that becomes vulnerable in its turn. We could go back into the technological arms race now if we decided we could afford to. France is still in it. Or we could go back into it later on. There is no skill or technique which will be "lost for ever" if we don't buy the Polaris missiles, and saying there is, is trumpeting about nothing in order to panic the electorate.

### 3. Defence and Disarmament

**I**T is in the relation between defence policy and disarmament policy that the frivolity and shortsightedness of the Conservative Government are most clearly revealed.

The purpose of all defence policies is the same; it is to keep the people alive and free. We used to be able to do this by building armies, navies, and finally air forces, which could repel aggressors. Everything from the Battle of Hastings to the Battle of Britain was defence in this proper sense. That is no longer possible. Every country in the world can now be instantly and utterly annihilated at any moment by either the United States or the Soviet Union or both, without any possibility of defence whatever. This includes the United States and the Soviet Union themselves. The armed forces of the major powers are thus mainly directed to deterrence, which means using weapons to prevent their use. This situation, it is gradually dawning on mankind, is absurd, and that is why some — one is even tempted to say all — of the best minds in the world are taking part in the search for a better way to keep the people alive and free. Disarmament is a necessary part of any such alternative system, and most people think it will be the heart of it.

Just about all the interesting and necessary developments one can think of depend on disarmament, or at least on "far-reaching measures of arms control", to use the jargon. If we want to stop the economic gap between rich and poor from widening, and begin to close it, disarmament is positively the most convenient way to do it. If we want to end the division of Germany, there will have to be disarmament at the same time. If we want to construct a wider European political unity, not the hectic rump suggested by the Six, we need some disarmament first. If we want the vast international research programmes which can best open up the next fields in science (such as microbiology) and in economic development (such as mariculture and making the deserts bloom), we need disarmament first.

#### "Not me, Sir!"

The Conservatives have in recent weeks, perhaps in the heat of electioneering, perhaps in mere indifference, turned from passive approval of American arms control plans, which are sometimes good and sometimes not very realistic, to actively sabotaging one particular American plan which was definitely realistic. In January 1964, President Johnson proposed a verified freeze of the numbers and types of strategic nuclear delivery systems. This would mean that countries should not build any more nuclear rockets and bombers, and should not introduce new types of them, even in substitution for obsolete ones. This is obviously an extremely good plan. It would save money, and prevent the deployment of new and perhaps destabilising systems. One might expect the Russians to have reservations about it; indeed they voiced preliminary reservations at once. It would tend to freeze them in an inferior position. But it is possible that with some understanding, even a vague one, on what was to be done next,

such reservations might have been dissolved. What one need not have expected, though, was that a British government, even a Conservative one, should torpedo this plan. Mr. Butler, indeed, went to Geneva and commended it. But what of Britain's Polaris submarines? Frivolity reasserted itself almost immediately. A few days later in the House of Commons, on 26th February, the following exchange took place.

Mr. Healey:

"Will Mr. Thorneycroft be prepared to forgo a fleet, which will not come into existence for another four years, according to his own account, if in the meantime the Soviet Union and the United States agree to freeze the number and type of strategic delivery systems?"

Mr. Thorneycroft:

"There is no question and no proposals whatsoever that the United Kingdom should in any circumstances forgo the five Polaris submarines."

This was clear enough. In no event would Britain refrain from getting a new type of delivery system. The chances of anyone else agreeing to forgo new types are thus reduced to just about zero. Later in the debate, Mr. Thorneycroft told the House that the Government had extracted an assurance from the Americans that they would still sell Britain the Polaris missiles in spite of their freeze proposal. The picture of a British government running to the United States, whining: "Not me sir! Don't let it apply to me, sir!" and thereby killing the whole proposal, would be ridiculous if it was not a question touching the future of civilisation itself.

The whole shape of Conservative defence and foreign policy is inappropriate to the 20th Century. You cannot, if you wish to play a constructive part in the world, go barging around tacitly threatening Arabs with nuclear weapons and upsetting the laboriously nurtured disarmament plans of your senior ally. If you do, you only succeed in arousing fear when you are present and derision when you are absent. Those whose business leads them further into foreign societies than the plate-glass and cocktail quarters of the capital cities know that this is exactly what is happening.

### **The Plateau**

Nor can you, without advancing most careful justifications, boldly increase your defence budget, as the British Government did this year, while the super-powers are reducing theirs. This new restraint on the part of the super-powers does not reflect virtuous intention alone; it also reflects a fundamental change in the structure of the world. They are now on a plateau in the arms race, and they are trying hard to exploit the consequent relaxation so as to begin going downhill again. Meanwhile Conservative Britain keeps right on up.

What is the nature of this plateau? Mr. Macnamara, in his speech to the Economic Club of New York last November, and in his presentation of the American Defence Budget to Congress in January, told the world in no uncertain terms that the military situation had changed during the last year in two basic aspects. One was the establishment of invulnerable deterrent capacity in both America and Russia; this has come about since the Russians brought submarine missiles into service which, though not as good as Polaris, are still invulnerable city-busters. He was quite clear

that neither side could now attack the other without being virtually wiped out in retaliation. "A full first strike capacity," he said, "is, on the basis of our estimate of Soviet nuclear strike forces . . . simply unattainable". And the same is true, *a fortiori*, of the weaker Soviet forces, if one considers the possibility of their attacking the US. We will return to this in more detail shortly.

The other great change is the arrival of conventional parity in Europe. Even since the end of the last world war, the Soviet Union's "conventional hordes" have been assumed to hold Western Europe hostage against a possible American nuclear strike. It was to redress this imbalance and redeem the hostage that NATO was built up. And this has now been achieved. As long ago as March 1963 Mr. Paul Nitze, one of Macnamara's Assistant Secretaries of Defence said:

" . . . there has grown up in the West a myth of overwhelming Soviet non-nuclear superiority over the West. The spectre of Russian hordes pouring into Western Europe can lead us to paralysis.

"From the USSR, however, it may look as if it is NATO, which has the hordes. Why? Because NATO has more men under arms and greater overall strength than the Russians, both world wide and in Europe."

By last November, the American Administration were ready to commit themselves even more firmly to the new realities. In his Economic Club speech, Mr. Macnamara said:

"It is time for the maps to change by which policy is charted and justified. The old ones, which assumed a US nuclear monopoly, both strategic and tactical, and a Communist monopoly of ground combat strength, are too far removed from reality to serve as even rough guides . . . .

"The announced total of Soviet armed forces for 1955 was indeed a formidable 5.75 million men. Today that figure has been cut to about 3.3 million; the Warsaw Pact total including the Soviets is only about 4.5 million. Against that, it is today the members of NATO whose active armed forces number over five million.

"The ground forces of NATO nations total 3.2 million, of which 2.2 million men are in Europe, as against the Soviet ground combat forces total of about 2 million men, and a Warsaw Pact total of about 3 million . . . .

"In Central Europe, NATO has more men, and more combat troops, on the ground than does the bloc. It has more men on the ground in West Germany than the bloc does in East Germany. It has more and better tactical aircraft, and these planes on the average can carry twice the payload twice as far as their Soviet counterparts."

It is these two great new facts, stable mutual nuclear deterrence, and conventional parity in Europe, which combine to make the plateau. Now let us first see how that could be exploited in the interests of disarmament and détente, and then whether the Conservatives are doing anything about it.

### Minimum Transitional Deterrent

At Geneva, the super-powers tend to be deadlocked. Britain is extremely well placed to try to break the deadlock; we are technically and industrially advanced, we are pig in the middle geographically, and though we speak English like the Americans and the Commonwealth, we are also Europeans like the Russians and the Germans and the French. At present, the Americans are proposing certain disarmament measures which are wise and just and others which are manifestly impossible for the Russians to

accept. The Russians are proposing certain measures which are wise and just, and some which are manifestly impossible for us in the West to accept. The Conservative Government has vacuously limited itself to applauding the American proposals regardless of their wisdom or justice. If Britain takes a real initiative in this field, saying with equal candour to all the other parties negotiating (for we are all sovereign states): "This proposal is good because . . . and that one is bad because . . ." it could make the achievement of some real disarmament a great deal more likely. There seems no reason, indeed, why Britain should not come forth with her own disarmament plan, especially with the help of the great increase in the political, technical and academic resources which Labour is committed to allot to our disarmament negotiators.

On January 13th the Labour Party released a document which had been handed by Patrick Gordon Walker to Mr. Butler, and which contained a detailed account of Labour's disarmament policy. It read in part:

"On means of delivery of nuclear weapons, the USSR proposed 100 per cent reduction in the first stage. This was quite unrealistic for it would have meant the withdrawal of all American bomber and missile bases in Europe leaving Western Europe at the mercy of Russian conventional weapons. The USA on the other hand proposed a 30 per cent reduction in the first stage and 35 per cent in the second stage. But so great is the American preponderance of delivery vehicles that the accepted principle of maintaining a balance in strength during the process of disarmament would have been breached, for it would have taken the Russians below the level of "minimum deterrence" long before the Americans. Now that the Soviet Union has accepted the view that both sides should, until the end of the third stage, retain a "minimum deterrent" the aim should be to reach this minimum deterrent level as quickly as possible. This acceptance of the principle of a minimum deterrent is, in our view, the most significant change in Soviet policy since the Commission began its work."

The "minimum deterrent level" in nuclear strategy is the number of missiles and bombers which, given a certain accuracy, invulnerability, reliability, etc., can inflict unacceptable retaliation on an attacker, *no matter how many missiles and bombers the attacker used in the first place*. It is not necessary to suspect that America would actually contemplate a first strike to see that Russia will obviously never agree to giving her a chance.

The present Russian plan is that the nuclear delivery vehicles should be reduced at an early stage to an agreed, equal, low number, under international inspection, and that this number should be held steady for a few years until inspection and peace-keeping machinery are good enough to allow their final abolition.

Western acceptance of this Soviet proposal "in principle", as India urges, and the fleshing of it out with sound detailed applications which would enhance the security of both East and West, is not only likely to bring about some real disarmament; it will also, if it is successful, have profound and good effects on the nature of world politics in general. If the forces on both sides are reduced to the agreed minimum deterrent level, it will provide a controlled and orderly environment into which to merge the national control of nuclear weapons now exercised by Britain and France as well as America and Russia. It will also provide the reduction, and promise the elimination, which alone can persuade China to give up her



aim of developing nuclear weapons. The only thing which persuades China today, and will if nothing is done persuade India, Egypt, Israel, Germany tomorrow, and so on down the line, is whether or not other countries—any other countries—have the colossally threatening and inflexible superiority of military power which nuclear weapons confer. It is vain for Russia and America to invite nations out of the kindness of their hearts to forgo nuclear weapons and trust the big boys to look after them. Why should they? The big boys are simply nation states like the little boys. The only way is for Russia and America to come down and the safest way to do that is via the balanced minimum deterrent. The drunken pastor cannot preach abstinence.

The reaction of the Conservative Government to these new realities and possibilities has been inertly and piously to say amen to the old American proposal on eliminating means of delivery, which is manifestly unjust and therefore manifestly impossible, and cheerfully to torpedo the new one on freezing them, which is manifestly hopeful.

Besides an initiative on the agreed minimum deterrent, Labour's disarmament policy calls for the inclusion of China in the disarmament talks, and for a zone of controlled armaments in Central Europe.

## China

It is clear that if China is not going to take part in the agreed process of disarmament, neither of the super-powers will get very far with it either; China is the enemy of both. It is equally clear that a country is more likely to abide by an international arrangement in the reaching of which her own advice has been allowed to bear than by one where it has not. Now it is true that the Conservatives have not positively withdrawn the recognition of the Chinese Government which Labour extended in 1950, soon after the success of the Chinese Revolution. But that is about all one can say. Far from doing anything to get China to the disarmament table, the Government is sedulously repeating the anti-Chinese propaganda put out by Moscow.

On 29th November last year the Prime Minister said that "China, when they learned the facts of nuclear destruction, would recognise that the nuclear exchange could not be allowed to start". The theme, a familiar one in Conservative speeches, is that now the Russians are beginning to see sense and to agree with us about disarmament and ending the cold war, what a pity it is we still can't actually do anything about it, because the Chinese are still slaving and slavering away to get their bomb and start a hot one. The supposed Chinese bellicosity is used to justify British inertia.

Just nine days before the Prime Minister spoke, there had been a major pronouncement in China about nuclear war. It called the repeated Russian statement that China wanted to start a nuclear war "a curious lie". It even went so far as to say: "A socialist country absolutely must not be the first to use nuclear weapons". It is sad that a British Prime Minister and former Foreign Secretary whose Government has failed to give his own country the conventional strength it must have before it can make a "not-first declaration" should speak thus ignorantly and contemptuously of

a government which has made such a declaration even before getting nuclear weapons.

As to why the Chinese are developing nuclear weapons at all, there is little mystery. As they put it in the same statement: "We consistently hold that in the hands of a socialist country nuclear weapons must always be defensive weapons for resisting imperialist nuclear threats". The insulting jargon should not cause us to forget the facts; the United States has for more than a decade kept a nuclear fleet sailing up and down the Straits of Formosa, has kept nuclear missiles and bombers on Okinawa, and has kept artillery capable of firing nuclear shells on the Offshore Islands of Quemoy and Matsu.

In all these circumstances it can only be a slavishly inert and unimaginative British party which does not seize all possible means to *help* the United States into a more practical China policy for the UN and for disarmament. Labour could seek to strengthen the hand of the realists in Washington by a carefully considered move to bring China into the world of international institutions.

### Central Europe

The possibility of zonal arms control in Central Europe is already much discussed in the Labour Party. The Tory Government, under the impression presumably that any such arrangement must represent a "sacrifice" on the part of West Germany, gave up thinking about it in return for West German support over our entry into the Common Market, and has not started again since we failed to get in. A Labour Government should seize with both hands any opportunity to bring on a freeze of nuclear weapons levels in Central Europe, which might in time lead to a reduction, whether of nuclear weapons only, or of conventional weapons and force levels as well. We are well aware of the difficulties, which are both technical and political. The technical difficulty is that Germany contains the biggest concentration in the world of short range nuclear weapons. Though they are extremely powerful, and ought therefore to be controlled or reduced, they are also extremely small, so it will be difficult to verify the arrangement. The political difficulty is that West Germany is desperately suspicious of any move which might appear to limit her freedom of choice in military defence, or might seem to discriminate against her alone of the NATO powers.

This is understandable and we should make every allowance for it; they live on the front line and we don't. But still, nothing will ever happen if Britain leaves it to West Germany or the United States to make the running on this. The opening for British initiatives is wide. They need not be against the interests of any country concerned, whether friend or foe, and with care they would certainly be *in* the interests of all countries concerned. The Conservatives have done nothing for five or six years, and the present new ferment of ideas and proposals in Poland make this a good time.

All such measures — zonal freeze, non-nuclear zones, exchange of observation posts, extension of test ban underground, and so on — are intended not as substitutes for disarmament itself but as preliminaries to it.

### Assignment to NATO

When disarmament itself is achieved, we may find we are living in a world of disarmed nation states, or in something which looks and feels like a world state. But this is not a question which will interest the British elector in 1964. He knows very well that whichever way things go in the far future, we live now neither in a world state nor in a world of disarmed nation states, but in a world of armed nation states. He will therefore be alarmed by any suggestion that the Labour Party plans to place any part of our armed forces under the control of any other nation state, and of course the Conservatives can be relied upon to tell him that this is exactly what the Labour Party plans to do.

Speaking at a press conference in the United States on 3rd March (after a news agency had reported he planned to "turn over" the Royal Navy to the United Nations) Harold Wilson said: "Under any government, Conservative, or Labour, the control of the armed forces will be a hundred per cent within the sovereign control of the UK". This, of course, is normal. The US forces, even those assigned to NATO, are a hundred per cent within the sovereign control of the US. The British V-bombers at present assigned to NATO subject to the right of withdrawal "in the supreme national interest" are under the sovereign control of Britain. Britain confers *operational* control on SACEUR; that is to say, the sovereign British Government has decided that these planes shall be controlled from day to day by SACEUR, and not by the British Defence Staff.

The Labour Party objects to the way the Conservative Government has insisted on retaining an explicit right to withdraw those nuclear bombers at will from SACEUR's operational control, and has announced that it will cancel the proviso and assign them (in their nuclear role) absolutely to SACEUR for the rest of their natural lives. This is not because it intends to allow them to pass out of British sovereign control; such a thing would not be possible. NATO has no sovereign control into which they could be passed. (The United States has, and of course it would be absurd to pass bombers from the sovereign control of the country which built and mans them to the sovereign control of another country.) The unqualified assignment of bombers, or in the future missiles, to the operational control of a NATO general who happens to be an American no more means that those bombers are under the sovereign control of any other state than does the unqualified assignment of a British army to the operational control of a NATO general who happens to be a German mean that that army is under the sovereign control of West Germany.

All these things work moderately smoothly under the arrangements the Conservative Government has adopted for the assignment of our conventional forces (BAOR) to NATO, and there is no reason why they should not work at least as smoothly with our nuclear forces. Indeed it is interesting that from time to time the realistic and far-sighted view of these matters breaks out even within the Tory Government. On March 17th Lord Jellicoe, then First Lord of the Admiralty, said in the House of Lords:

"I want to put our case for the retention of this ultimate independent nuclear option as moderately and objectively as I can. I do not wish now to claim that it would necessarily be right for this country to wish to retain this

option for all time. There might—it is not inconceivable, in my view—come a time when the organic structure of the Western alliance was sufficiently strong for us to be able with entire confidence to place our nuclear armoury irrevocably in the common pool.”

This is a sensible statement, and is close to the Labour position. It makes it clear that the real division between responsible people in the two major parties is far from being the great *yes or no* with which the Prime Minister likes to blast off, but a modest and practical *when*. All the same, Lord Jellicoe's statement produced a tizzy at the Conservative Central Office, and was at once recognised to have embarrassed the Government. Commonsense and the long view often do embarrass, when you have chosen to fight on an unreal issue.

Nor can the Tories claim that they have actually done anything to achieve or advance, in the Alliance, the state of affairs Lord Jellicoe looks forward to. They have confined themselves in this field to a quite magisterial pusillanimity about the Multilateral Force (MLF). They are against it, but dare not say so, and so tag along with various preliminary exercises. The MLF project is the fruit of an unaccustomed ambiguity or indecisiveness within the American Administration; it is rather parallel to the ambiguity and indecisiveness displayed by Lord Jellicoe about the Government's bought independent deterrent. Only one sector in Washington supports it; another and equally influential sector would prefer that European allies should, as Patrick Gordon Walker proposes, have a much increased share in the planning and targeting of the entire Western nuclear armoury, including the American. The MLF is an inadequate solution to the real problem of command and control of nuclear weapons within an alliance where more and more countries are becoming capable of making them. Both MLF and independent deterrent policies make it very much harder to achieve either the immediate improvement offered by the Gordon Walker proposals, or the more far-reaching solution of balanced minimum deterrents in East and West, leading in time to disarmament.

### **Holy Loch**

The Conservatives sometimes suggest we are committed to closing down the American Polaris base at Holy Loch; they point to a Conference resolution of 1961 which opposes this base, and has not been superseded. If the United States is to deter attacks on this country, they say, we might at least allow her a base or two to do it with.

In 1961, the American military-industrial complex against which President Eisenhower warned his countrymen had not yet been brought under control, and there seemed little hope of stopping the seemingly endless and pointless dissemination of American nuclear weapons all over the world. In the changed circumstances of Kennedy's and Johnson's America the Conference resolution would hardly apply. Moreover, the Parliamentary Labour Party has always been free to make its own decisions and Harold Wilson said about the base in a TV interview on January 16th: “We would like it to become a NATO base as soon as possible, and we would take all these decisions in accordance with our obligations to the Alliance”.

At present, as far as the public knows, Holy Loch can be used by American submarines which are under purely national command, or by

those which are under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT, an American NATO admiral) and by those which are under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR, an American NATO general). SACLANT is not, as SACEUR is, at the apex of a great international staff of planners; the voices of European governments reach him far less clearly and in a far less developed manner than they reach SACEUR. For this reason, it is probably in British interests that as many American Polaris submarines as possible should be placed under the command of SACEUR rather than that of SACLANT, let alone under a purely national American command. This is precisely the sort of "sharing" in the command and planning of nuclear weapons systems which the Labour Party favours, and it seems quite logical that a country which is providing a base for an ally should urge its ally to put the forces which use that base under allied command.

## 4. Conclusion

**T**HE Conservative Government has to answer to the electorate not only for having chosen to kick defence around the hustings, oversimplifying what is complex and endangering the country's reputation, but also for a whole string of particular actions. The most recent and most characteristic of these is perhaps that they have torpedoed President Johnson's proposals for a nuclear freeze by insisting on going ahead with their "national" Polaris programme. These actions taken together make up a picture of dangerous naiveté; something rather like the character of the Prime Minister himself. Nobody could deny him charm, courage, or diligence. Conservative defence policy has been eccentric without charm, obdurate without courage, and busy without diligence. They have, as we noted above, adopted a policy of graduated unilateralism; graduated in such a way as to achieve the greatest interference with President Johnson's new multilateral proposals. And hanging over all they have done there is a blind vulgarity of spirit which we tolerate only because we are used to it.

Mr. Thorneycroft said on 2nd March: "If we were to abandon our weapons we would abandon the best hope we have of playing a major part in the new, hopeful world we would strive for in the future". It is far from clear what "abandon" means, but "our weapons" must mean thermonuclear bombs. To hold that a nation's ability to destroy an entire society (because the RAF has that ability at the moment) is its best hope of playing a major part in a new and hopeful world is worse than spiritually vulgar; it is brutish. Hope, in better value-systems, lies not in the threat of death and destruction, but in the work for health, knowledge and pleasure.

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