

THE DEFENCE DEBATE

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**THE  
PURSUIT OF  
PEACE**

**JOHN STRACHEY, M.P.**

**THREE SHILLINGS**

**SOCIALISM IN THE SIXTIES**



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December, 1960

# I. What the Debate is about

## A NATIONAL DECISION

**I**T is not so much the Labour Party as the nation which has to decide upon its foreign and defence policies in the nuclear age. But this great national debate is being largely conducted within the Labour Movement.

The 1960 Annual Conference of the Labour Party held at Scarborough, between 3rd and 7th October, brought that debate to a critical point for the Labour Party; but it also focused attention upon this supreme issue of our public life as perhaps nothing else could have done. It would be foolish to deny that, in the short run at least, the Labour Movement may be damaged by the fact that this essentially national debate is to so large an extent taking place within our own ranks. But the service to the nation which Labour is rendering by facing these issues, not academically but in the hot passion of debate, so that they are brought home to millions who would never otherwise have grasped them, can hardly be exaggerated.

In any event it is no use for any supporter of the Labour Party to bemoan the existence of the great defence debate. The issue has to be settled. For those few spokesmen of the Party who have chosen to suggest that our division of opinion is not really about defence or unilateralism at all, but about whether Mr. Hugh Gaitskell or another is to lead the Labour Party, do justice neither to themselves nor to the sincerity of those who have challenged, so passionately, the traditional defence and foreign policies of the movement. It is true that Mr. Gaitskell's leadership is at stake. Neither he nor any of us who think like him could continue to be official spokesmen for a party which had, as a whole, and permanently, adopted a defence and foreign policy with which we fundamentally disagreed. To attempt to do so would be odious. Nevertheless, this issue would have arisen, would have agitated and divided us, and would have had to be decided, if Mr. Gaitskell had never existed. One of the two major parties in the state cannot conceivably remain undecided on such primary issues as those involved in this debate.

One only has to begin to state these issues to be convinced of this. For example, is Britain to remain a part of the Western Alliance or is she to abandon nuclear weapons and become a neutral nation? Do we, or do we not, wish the British Government to work for the abandonment by the Western Alliance of nuclear weapons even though Russia retains them? It is merely contemptible to suggest that we need not as a party decide such issues as these.

### *The Two Strands in Unilateralist Thought*

This pamphlet is an attempt to examine carefully the views of those who, from whatever point of view, have opposed the foreign and defence policies of the Labour Party as they have always been, and then to discuss those

policies as expressed in the Executive Statement put before the 1960 Annual Conference of the Labour Party.

The first of these tasks is not an easy one, for one cannot study either the written pronouncements or listen to the speeches of those who oppose the Executive's 1960 Statement without discovering that many related but distinct strands of thought and feeling have gone to make up what can be called, for short, "the unilateralist position". No doubt this diversity in their ranks is a strength rather than a weakness. But it is an obstacle to lucid discussion.

Most "unilateralists" begin their argument with an account of the horrors of nuclear war. It is needless. No one who is not simply careless of the whole matter denies these horrors. It is true that no one knows exactly what the consequences of a full scale nuclear war would be: but even the more ghastly forecasts might prove under, rather than over, estimates.<sup>1</sup> Some of the unilateralist spokesmen are almost inclined to leave the matter there, implying that once these horrors are admitted, their case is made out. They simply assume that the way to prevent catastrophe is the immediate, unilateral, nuclear disarmament either of Britain alone or the Western Alliance as a whole. We shall find on examination, however, that there is no reason to suppose that the unilateral abandonment of nuclear weapons on the part of Britain would ensure her against nuclear devastation in the event of world war. Nor is there any reason to suppose that Britain could secure their abandonment by the West as a whole, if this were considered desirable.

It is at this point in the discussion that things, inevitably, become more complicated. A whole series of questions have to be asked. For example, should our object be to prevent the outbreak of a full scale nuclear war? Or should we strive, primarily at least, to save Britain from devastation in the course of such a war? Those "unilateralists" who are primarily concerned to save Britain from devastation in the course of a nuclear war, which they fear may be inevitable, naturally turn towards policies which may be broadly called "neutralism". They usually propose, that is to say, the unilateral scrapping of Britain's nuclear weapons, and the rupture of our alliances with any nation which retains nuclear weapons, involving,

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<sup>1</sup> The most convincing accounts of the appalling consequences of full scale nuclear war have been given, as a matter of fact, not by pacifist writers, but by those American and Russian defence experts who have carefully studied the matter. On the American side, the most important document is *Report on a Study of Non Military Defense* (The Rand Corporation 1958) in which the effects of three different levels of attack on the United States are estimated. See also Dr. Kahn's forthcoming major work, *On Thermo-Nuclear War* (Princeton University Press). *Strategy in the Nuclear Age* by Professor Brodie (Oxford University Press) and *The Question of National Defense* by Professor Morgenstern (Random House Inc.) should also be consulted. On the Russian side the basic document is Tank Marshal Rotmistrov's article in the January 1955 issue of *Military Thought* and the editorial comment in the following issue. But see also Mr. Khrushchev's "Noah's Ark" speech in Vienna (1960) and Major General Talensky's (Editor of *Military Thought*) estimate in the October 1960 issue of *International Affairs* that at least 500 millions out of 800 millions of the population in the probable area of main hostilities would die.

naturally, a refusal to provide bases for such weapons. Many of those who advocate this type of policy are by no means pacifists. Some of them repudiate the suggestion that their policy would leave the country defenceless or involve its surrender. Others agree that their policy does involve military surrender (see p. 8 below). Many (though not all) of those who think and feel in this way tend to hold political opinions at or near the extreme left of the political spectrum. They tend to dislike and fear America rather than Russia. This is the 'neutralist' strand in the general unilateralist case.

On the other hand if our objective is, primarily, to prevent the outbreak of full scale nuclear war in the world, then we are urged to throw away our nuclear weapons as an example to Russia, America, or any other nuclear powers there may be, to do likewise. Some of the unilateralists who advocate this course recognise (see p. 16 below) that unilateral nuclear disarmament by example involves the surrender of Britain, or of any other nation or alliance which adopts it, to any nation or alliance which retains its nuclear weapons. Some, on the other hand, do not admit this (see p. 7 below). Again some advocates of this kind of unilateralism recognise—and some do not—that for Britain thus to surrender on her own would have little influence even in preventing the outbreak of nuclear war, unless our example did in fact induce either Russia and her allies, or America and her allies, to surrender also. Some, in other words, recognise that the surrender of one or other alliance as wholes, with all its consequences, is the only way in which a policy of unilateral disarmament could remove, or even in all probability significantly reduce, the risk of nuclear war. On the other hand, some unilateralists show no recognition of all this.

This second strand in unilateralist thought may be broadly called the "pacifist" strand. Many "unilateralists" appear to resent the suggestion that they are following in the pacifist tradition which has always existed within the Labour Movement. I do not know why this should be so. The pacifist tradition is an old and honoured one. Many of those who make the pacifist approach to the whole issue are not necessarily particularly "left wing" in their general social outlook.

At this stage in the discussion I am intent merely to distinguish the "neutralist" and "pacifist" strands in the unilateralist case. But it will be best to deal with one question often put by those who make the more pacifist approach at the outset. Would not anything, it is said, including total surrender, be better than national extinction in a nuclear war? The answer is simply that no doubt it would be, but that this is not the question which faces us. We shall find, first, that it is not in the power of Britain to avert the risk of nuclear war by an attempted national surrender; and second that we are not faced with the likelihood, let alone the certainty, of nuclear war if we do not attempt to surrender. On the contrary, a well thought out British foreign and defence policy can contribute powerfully to reducing the, in any case, not necessarily high risk of nuclear war in the years immediately ahead, and can lead towards the ultimate goal of eliminating that risk altogether by means of the establishment of a world authority.

In this pamphlet it is proposed to discuss the two main tendencies in unilateralist thought one by one. For experience shows that confusion only becomes worse confounded if an attempt is made to consider them together. The inevitable disadvantage, however, of taking them separately is that a unilateralist reader who makes, say, the pacifist approach, will feel that his real position is not being dealt with at all while neutralism is being discussed, and vice versa. But this difficulty must be faced and I can only ask such a reader to have patience.

The neutralist approach is considered in the next part, and then the pacifist approach is discussed in Part III. It will be out of, and as a result of, these discussions that an attempt will be made, in Part IV, to state the general outline, at least, of a positive defence and foreign policy.

## 2. Neutralism

### COULD BRITAIN 'CONTRACT OUT'?

**W**HAT is in my opinion much the most important point in the 'neutralist' case was recently put by Mr. A. J. P. Taylor in a letter to *The Observer* (9th October 1960) commenting on an article which I had published in that newspaper. Mr. Taylor wrote:

'Though nuclear weapons are a deterrent, they are still more a provocation. On balance we shall be safer without them — though not much.'

That is a moderate and reasonable statement of what is, essentially, the case for Britain becoming a neutral nation without nuclear weapons, nuclear alliances or American bases. The force of the contention is that by so doing we might escape devastation if a full scale nuclear war between Russia and America broke out. No one but a fool would fail to consider any policy which, it could be claimed, would spare this country from nuclear devastation, even though it was unlikely to do anything to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war. But the question is, could Britain 'contract out' of a nuclear war in this way?

First, it cannot be claimed that a neutral Britain without nuclear weapons would be safe from devastation in a nuclear war. No one can possibly foretell the, probably brief but appalling, course of such a war. No one can tell if the initial exchange of nuclear weapons would finish off one, or both, sides, or whether there would be a secondary struggle for such precious, undevastated resources as a neutral Britain would, in these circumstances, represent. No one can tell whether the fate of a neutral and helpless Britain would be to be occupied by one side and bombed by the other. Again, no one can tell how much Britain would be affected by intense and immediate fall-out from the initial exchange. That would depend upon such factors as (1) the number of megatons used on each side, (2) the geographical distribution of aiming points (whether or not, for example, either side attacked targets in Eastern and Western Europe) and (3) the direction of the wind. Still I think it is fair to say that a neutral Britain without nuclear weapons might be less devastated in such an initial exchange than a Britain which was still part of one or other of the alliances. If one despairs of preventing the outbreak of a nuclear war, and if one's primary consideration is the preservation of British lives, as compared with other lives, this is undeniably a weighty consideration. Indeed neutralist opinion is not to be criticised because it takes this consideration into account: the trouble is that it often appears to take nothing else into account. And this is wrong. It is both morally wrong, and as a matter of fact highly dangerous, to be so panic-stricken at the idea of nuclear attack that we advocate an attempt to 'contract out' at all costs. We must in common prudence, if nothing else, estimate, for instance, whether such an attempt may not so increase the danger of general nuclear war that it much more than counter-balances the slender chance of Britain avoiding

some devastation in the course of such a war. Fear of nuclear devastation is natural and rational. But if we allow ourselves to be exclusively influenced by such fears we shall find that, as usual, they have led us into the most dangerous situation of all.

We must, then, consider the probable effects of a neutralist policy upon the international situation as a whole, and upon Britain's own position. Neutralists habitually claim that for Britain to give up her nuclear weapons, and break her alliances with nuclear powers, refusing them facilities for bases, would, in addition to increasing our safety, actually increase our influence in the world. As a non-nuclear neutral we shall be, it is said, in a much stronger position for influencing America and Russia. This assertion is often made as if it was self-evident and needed no demonstration. And this is strange, for it is flatly contrary to common sense. To put it mildly, there is no presumption that a weak Britain, without weapons or allies, would have more influence in the world than a relatively strong Britain which remained a member of the western alliance.

No doubt it can be argued that a neutral Britain would have more freedom in expressing her views than she may feel she has today (though even this is very doubtful). But then people would take, I am afraid, a good deal less notice of those views. It is not only governments, we should find, that take account of strength. My own experience, at least, is that whenever non-Communists in the uncommitted world come to realise (usually with incredulity) that there are people in Britain who advocate that we shall unilaterally throw away our nuclear weapons and break our alliances, they express the utmost dismay. When asked to explain that dismay they usually say that they would deeply regret the sharp decrease of British influence which they, at any rate, assume would be involved. For they often say that Britain, on the whole, exercises a moderating and wise influence.

Indeed the real question, I am afraid, would be whether a Britain without nuclear weapons or nuclear allies could maintain her own independence, let alone increase her influence in the world. But, it may be objected, what about the existing 'non-nuclear neutrals', such as Sweden, Switzerland, India or Yugoslavia? They find, we are told, no difficulty in maintaining their independence and integrity: why should we? We shall look at the individual positions of some of these neutral nations in a moment (see p. 10 below). But it is often forgotten that all of them maintain their independence today in a situation of a balance of power between the Eastern and Western nuclear alliances.

It is difficult for either Russia or America to put undue pressure on them without rallying the other alliance to their support. There has been a repeated demonstration of the process in the case of Yugoslavia.

If anything caused either of the alliances to disintegrate, the whole situation would be very different. The non-nuclear neutrals would immediately have to obey the surviving alliance. You can only be neutral *between* two powers or alliances of powers. The very concept of neutrality presupposes a balance of power. Therefore what we are being asked to do is to leave our alliance in the expectation that it will nevertheless remain strong enough to maintain the balance and so enable us to enjoy



the economies and, it is suggested, safeties, of neutrality. It is a strictly self-seeking policy. But no doubt it will not be rejected out of hand on that account. National states are highly self-seeking organisms.

But should we, in fact, be justified in a presumption that the Western alliance would remain strong enough to maintain the balance even though Britain abandoned it? Who can tell? America might consider that she could do without allies, or, more probably, that she could replace us as her main ally. Indeed a possible replacement is obvious, namely Western Germany. A Western Germany heavily armed with nuclear weapons might actually be preferred as a main ally, at least by the most right wing American circles. But I hardly think that many unilateralists will suppose that such a substitution would decrease the risk of nuclear war.

On the other hand, the Western alliance might begin to disintegrate if Britain abandoned it. I do not know whether neutralists would welcome this or not. Perhaps some would and some would not. But there can be little doubt that a disintegration of the Western alliance would, if it reached its logical conclusion, lead either to surrender or, more probably, to defeat for the West in nuclear war. For such a development of events, though clearly leading *towards*, first, the isolation of America and then to her surrender, might actually occasion the outbreak of nuclear war during the, probably, long drawn out process. Pressure on the American Government, as it saw its world position disintegrating, and the balance of world power tilting further and further against it, to use the 'Strategic Air Command' (still an almost unimaginably powerful instrument on 'first strike') would unavoidably arise.

### *Consequence for Britain*

We must next consider the probable consequences for Britain herself of adopting a neutralist foreign and defence policy. There are advocates of such a policy who by no means admit that it would leave Britain helpless or defenceless. For example, Mr. A. J. P. Taylor, the Oxford historian, in his C.N.D. pamphlet *The Great Deterrent Myth* writes as follows:—

'Now assume that we abandon the H-bomb and turn the Americans out . . . . The Russians cannot invade this country by bomb. They can only come by air or sea. Our answer should be defensive weapons, not H-bombs. Fighter planes, a strong navy: heavily armed ports and airfields.'

Mr. Taylor, it is evident, is no pacifist and is utterly against surrender. But it is also evident that he has not taken the trouble to think about the nature of the problem for even a minute. He supposes that it would be possible to resist the wishes of a Russia, armed with nuclear weapons, by means of 'fighter planes, a strong navy and heavily armed ports and airfields'. He supposes this because the Russians 'cannot invade this country by bomb'. True, the Russians cannot 'invade by bomb' but they could in these circumstances destroy Britain with impunity any afternoon by bomb. Mr. Taylor writes that he thinks they would hardly do that because if they did they would destroy the British productive potential, which they might wish to harness to their own. But this problem would be an easy one for the Russian General Staff to solve. Instead of an

indiscriminate bombardment they would select one British city—Oxford for instance—and detonate a nuclear weapon of suitable size at a suitable height above it. They would then inform a British Government which had undertaken unilateral nuclear disarmament that they must regretfully destroy one British city a day until the British Government saw its way to comply with whatever the Russian Government were proposing. Where would our 'fighter planes, strong navy and heavily armed ports and air-fields' be then? And where would be Mr. Taylor?

Again, Mr. Frank Cousins, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, the most influential of unilateralists, has made the same point even more clearly. On 10th June 1960, he was reported in *The Times* as having said in Galway, Eire, on 9th June:

'We want nothing to do with nuclear weapons, but that does not mean that we want to leave our country defenceless. We defended ourselves very well in the last war without nuclear weapons.'

So we did. Moreover the English archers did well at Agincourt without machine guns.

Another unilateralist, Commander Sir Stephen King-Hall, in his pamphlet *Common Sense in Defence*, has dealt conclusively with these attempts of his colleagues to pretend that unilateral nuclear disarmament and the rupture of our alliances would not mean military surrender. He writes:

'If we renounce nuclear weapons and other nations (including, for example, the Russians) do not, it is absurd to suppose that conventional forces are of the slightest use against troops with nuclear weapons.'

The Commander's military training has prevented him, both in this pamphlet and in the fuller statement of his views in his book *Defence in the Nuclear Age*, from falling into the absurdity of pretending that a non-nuclear and neutral Britain could make a pretence of asserting any form of military power against any nation which had chosen to retain its nuclear weapons.

#### *Would Military Surrender Matter?*

But in the course of his book Sir Stephen cannot avoid falling into grave contradictions himself. (Nevertheless his book is valuable because it is the only attempt on the part of a unilateralist, of which I know, to trace out conscientiously what the consequences of a British military surrender would be). It is necessary to use the term military surrender, for Sir Stephen is unwilling to admit that unilateral nuclear disarmament would involve *unqualified* surrender on the part of Britain to any nuclear nation which cared to impose its will upon her. On the contrary, Sir Stephen, as a fervent anti-communist, expressly advocates a sustained psychological and propaganda offensive against the communist alliance. He writes:

'By a vigorous and sustained psychological offensive against the enemy he can be thrown on to the defensive and obliged to impose restriction on his people, such as jamming of broadcasts, which may cause his public to have subversive thoughts and ask awkward questions. It is part of our creed or faith that all men are liberty and freedom-loving and that if the people of a great nation, be they Germans or Russians, are supporting ideas and practices which are undemocratic, it must be due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of the truth on their part and it is both our duty and to our self-interest to endeavour to let them know the truth.'

Moreover the whole of chapter VIII of his book is devoted to working out practical proposals as to how we are to carry this war of ideas to the enemy. We are to spare no effort to disgust the peoples of Russia and China with communism, and to convert them to our way of life. Thus Sir Stephen's programme can fairly, I think, be summed up by saying that we are first to render ourselves militarily impotent and then to conduct a sustained attempt to subvert the governments of two of the strongest powers on earth. I cannot think this is a prudent course. Sir Stephen is fond of accusing those of us who cannot agree with him of failing to pass through what he calls a 'thought barrier' on the whole subject of defence in the nuclear age. It is to be feared that when he suggests that a militarily all-powerful Russia and China would permit a disarmed and impotent Britain to conduct a campaign of sustained subversion amongst their populations, he is himself suffering from the effects of a severe barrier to rational thinking.

For let us have no doubts about it, subversion is precisely how the Russian and Chinese Governments would regard even the mildest of Sir Stephen's proposals for propagandising their peoples. For that matter subversion is precisely the word which we use when the Russian and Chinese Governments attempt to preach communism to us. The difference is that those governments take the precaution to remain armed to the teeth while they are doing it.

It is true that Sir Stephen does contemplate the possibility that his policy might lead to a Russian occupation of Britain. As we have seen, he sensibly concludes that no violent resistance would be possible. But he supposes that the British people would permanently retain their democratic ideals and might, indeed, in time convert the forces of the occupying power. Unfortunately the more we think of this conception, the less plausible it becomes. It is true that a captive people such as the Poles may for long retain anti-communist ideals, especially if sustained by a dogmatic religion such as Roman Catholicism, which has become part of their national heritage. But the Poles, almost unanimously, and including many of their distinguished communists, 'look west'. What if there were no west to look to? What if communist world hegemony had become undisputed? Or does Sir Stephen envisage an unconquered America towards which a captive British people would look for deliverance? But if so the danger of nuclear war might well have been sharply increased, instead of diminished, by a British surrender.

#### *A Secondary Nuclear Arms Race?*

Helplessness in respect of Russia, America or any other major nuclear power which might have come into existence, would, however, be only part of the price which a neutral Britain without nuclear weapons would have to pay. Any minor nuclear power, such as France has just become, and which several other nations may soon become, would also be able to impose its will on us if it so desired. It can be said, of course, that this is all very unlikely, that France is a most friendly nation and that there would be nothing alarming about her obtaining total military superiority over us.

It is quite true that a nuclear France would today be most unlikely to threaten a neutral and nuclearly-disarmed Britain. (She would be equally unlikely, to judge from President de Gaulle's speeches, to follow our example and throw away her own weapons). But in these matters of ultimate national power, we must take a long view. Can we be perfectly certain that no French government will ever arise before which we should not mind being helpless? It is necessary to be frank in this respect. Are we quite sure that there is no danger of a military or fascist type of government arising in France, say after President de Gaulle's death and out of the Algerian war? Are we quite sure that such a government would never pursue an adventurous foreign policy which might bring it into sharp conflict with this country? Are we quite sure that we should never mind having to do what such a French government told us? And of course France is merely the first of the secondary powers which, unfortunately, are likely to come into possession of nuclear weapons.

We shall be told, perhaps, that this is all very alarmist. We shall be told that existing non-nuclear nations such as Sweden, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, India and the rest get on very well, that no one attempts to coerce or bully them. But their immunity depends not only on the existence of a balance of power between the two alliances such as has been just described; it also depends on the fact that, hitherto, the secondary powers have only just begun to acquire nuclear weapons. The fact is that many of the non-nuclear neutrals are, in fact, reconsidering their position and proposing to acquire nuclear weapons. For example, Sweden, in spite of the fact that she is a nation of only nine million inhabitants, is today (1960) actively debating the question not only of whether to adopt nuclear weapons but also of *which kind* of nuclear weapons she should adopt; even though, for her, the acquisition of such a deterrent force will be very expensive and its deterrent effect necessarily limited. It is becoming clear that she feels that she cannot maintain her traditional neutrality, even on the periphery of Europe, without nuclear weapons. The Swiss also are engaged in the same debate, for there also the question of the acquisition of nuclear weapons has been raised.

Sweden and Switzerland are rich, though small, and highly qualified nations technically. They *could* make and maintain their own nuclear weapons. India, on the other hand, is a vast undeveloped nation which is only at the stage of acquiring the technical skill required effectively to produce nuclear weapons. Moreover the relevant communist 'opposite number' for India is not Russia but China. And China has not yet (1960) exploded a nuclear weapon. I make the forecast that from the moment China does so, India, despite all her pacifist traditions, will set out to acquire her own nuclear capacity as fast as she can.

The argument from the example of the non-nuclear neutrals falls, then, not only because they depend on the balance of power but also because they are, in fact, finding that they must acquire nuclear weapons. They are doing so not so much because they are ranging themselves with either the eastern or western alliance as because, unfortunately, a secondary nuclear arms race between the medium-sized powers is showing signs of breaking out. It is exceedingly important to arrest this secondary nuclear arms

race if we possibly can. That has long been a primary purpose of the Labour Party's foreign and defence policies. Nevertheless until and unless it is arrested, can we really afford to see ourselves put at the mercy of any power, however small, which decides to retain its nuclear weapons?

### *Half-Armed Neutrality*

So far we have been considering what I think it is not unfair to call a policy of half-armed neutrality. It is proposed, that is to say, that Britain should become neutral and should discard her nuclear weapons but, as Mr. Taylor and Mr. Cousins so strongly emphasise, should retain and perhaps even strengthen, her conventional weapons.

I have considered this possibility first and in some detail because it is the one most frequently proposed by the neutralist wing of the unilateralists. And indeed it looks at first sight by far the most plausible and attractive of the various policies that they propose. But when we look at its real consequences, such a policy is seen to be more and more illogical.

### *Unarmed Neutrality*

It would be much more logical to pursue a policy of unarmed neutrality. If Britain withdrew from her alliances and threw away her nuclear weapons, there would be very little real point in keeping any armaments beyond those needed for 'policing' actions. Once again, Commander Sir Stephen King Hall, with his military training, has seen this clearly. He puts this point on page 142 of his book (*op. cit.*) even more forcibly than in his pamphlet:

'Those who advocate the abandonment of the H-bomb may not appreciate that by a kind of chain reaction in reverse, this decision also means a decision not only to abandon the use of nuclear energy in war but *the abandonment of the maintenance of conventional weapons for use in major wars.*'

### *Armed British Neutrality*

There is a third possible course for those who advocate British neutrality. And that is a fully armed neutrality in which Britain becomes neutral as between the two great alliances but retains her nuclear weapons. This policy is also much more logical than that of half armed neutrality. Indeed it can be powerfully argued that the more we disrupt our alliances, the more we shall need powerful armaments in order to be in a position to stand on our own.

And no doubt for those who genuinely *feel* neutral as between the great alliances, being indifferent to either or disliking both of them equally, there is some attraction, from a political point of view, about a policy of fully armed neutrality. Nevertheless, it is easy to see that a policy of fully armed British neutrality, while no doubt possible, would be risky, adventurous and expensive in the extreme. We may perhaps imagine the sort of paper which the Chiefs of Staff would prepare for a Cabinet contemplating such a policy. The Chiefs of Staff would probably ask for defence estimates of at least £2,500 million a year, and for anything up to ten years in which to give the country a more or less credible, because invulnerable, deterrent force of her own (probably consisting of missile

carrying atomic submarines) capable of acting without allies, of giving some pause at least to either of the super powers, and of fully holding our own with anyone else. And then much larger and better equipped conventional forces, with an alternative capacity for using tactical nuclear weapons, would clearly be needed. It would be a formidable burden to shoulder: it would involve a reduction in the British standard of life in the early years, and would absorb all of the annual increase in the Gross National Product for a number of years more, though it would not 'bankrupt the country'. Such a neutral Britain, armed to the teeth, might no doubt maintain herself for some time. But what would be the point of it all? We should not have moved an inch towards the prevention of nuclear war, nor even given ourselves any assurance of Britain escaping nuclear devastation in the event of such a war.

### *The Political Roots of Neutralism*

Once we have realised the, in my view, overwhelming objections to neutralism in any of its three forms, we are led to wonder how anyone can seriously advocate a policy which would expose us to such frightful risks, and which promises such small benefits either for us or for the world.

The main explanation is the delusive hope of being able to save a neutral Britain from nuclear attack. But there are also political roots to neutralism. The truth is that some members of the 'left-wing' *feel* neutral as between the Russian and American alliances. Many of them are by no means temperamentally inclined towards pacifism. What they really object to is the existence of the Anglo-American alliance, N.A.T.O., and the American bases in Britain. However much they may deplore Russian totalitarianism — as Mr. Michael Foot, for example, certainly does — they regard the existence of capitalism and all that goes with it in America and in her principal allies as equally repulsive. We may note again that this specifically left-wing impulse has little to do with the prevention of nuclear war. It is really an issue of foreign policy rather than of defence policy. By its tendency it leads, through a policy of neutrality, not so much to Britain dropping out of the world struggle, as to Britain changing sides in that struggle.

This becomes apparent when we note another quite distinct section of the body of opinion which supports British unilateral nuclear disarmament. For some time the British Communist Party and its sympathisers did not take this view. They of course make no claim to be pacifists. Indeed I think it is probable that what they no doubt considered the soft and sentimental arguments used by the unilateralists, repelled them. During 1960, however, the Communist Party, and accordingly, its sympathisers, changed their 'line' and became ardent advocates of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. But their motives are very different from those of the other supporters of the movement. It is quite easy to see what these motives are. They do not merely want Britain to surrender or to become neutral . . . . What they wish is that she should change sides in the world struggle by ceasing to be an ally of America and becoming an ally of Russia. All Communists naturally work to this end; if a man

believes in communism he will obviously try and switch his country over to the communist side.

Such a change of alliance would not necessarily be physically impossible for Britain, though it would be hazardous in the extreme. For the actual process of the attempted switch might very well bring on a general nuclear war. On the other hand, it is true to say that if the switch could be safely accomplished then the subtraction of Britain from one side of the existing balance of power and its addition to the other would increase or diminish the stability of that balance according to its state at the time of the switch. We see at once however that communist, or pro-communist, unilateralism has nothing to do with either the prevention of nuclear war or the preservation of Britain from devastation in the course of such a war. What Communists wish to do is simply to subtract British strength from the western side and, if possible, add her strength to the Russian side.

It is important to be clear about these communist motives for supporting unilateralism. For it is apparent that Communists will, henceforward, take an increasing part in organising and directing the unilateralist campaign. I must say that I sympathise with the other unilateralists over the difficulties which this fact will create for them. It is true that, in the short run, the communist power of organisation, energy and articulateness will greatly increase the strength of the unilateralist campaign. Communist influence in the trades union branches played a large part in securing the unilateralist vote of several trade unions at Scarborough. There is little room for doubt on the point since Mr. John Gollan, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, published his pamphlet entitled *Gaitskell or Socialism?* Gollan writes:

‘. . . who can deny the vital and indispensable role of the Communist Party and its years of struggle in bringing about this situation?’ (*i.e.* the situation created by the vote at the Scarborough conference. J.S.)

Nevertheless, all experience shows that once the communists and pro-communists come to participate actively in any wider movement, they in the end destroy it. They have a unique capacity for setting everyone else against them. The dislike which they arouse then spreads, quite unfairly in many cases, to the non-communist participants in the movement and therefore cripples it.

Mr. Gaitskell caused great resentment amongst unilateralists when, in his Scarborough speech, he said that Labour Members of Parliament could not be expected to change overnight into unilateralists, neutralists, pacifists and fellow travellers. The meaning of the words is clear. They do not mean that all unilateralists are fellow travellers: they may be perfectly genuine pacifists or neutralists. But some are fellow travellers—or indeed avowed communists. And this *is* a fact; and it is one which neither they nor their opponents in the Labour Movement can possibly overlook any longer.

### 3. Pacifism

WE have now seen that the real force of the neutralists' case lies in the contention that if Britain became neutral and scrapped her nuclear weapons, she might escape devastation. It is that, not the contention that she could avert the outbreak of nuclear war altogether, which above all motivates many neutralists.

On the other hand, the motivation of those who make what may be called the pacifist approach to unilateralism is different. Believing that nuclear weapons — like all weapons, only more so — are inherently and morally wrong, they urge that Britain should scrap her nuclear weapons, not so much in order that she alone should escape devastation in a nuclear war, as in order that, by her example, she should cause all other nations to lay down their nuclear arms and so prevent a nuclear war from breaking out at all. Of course the neutralist and the pacifist strands in unilateralism are not wholly distinct. Most neutralists believe — quite illogically as it seems to me — that British neutrality would also help, in some undefined way, at least to diminish the risk of the outbreak of nuclear war; and, no doubt, nearly all pacifists, though they put their main emphasis on preventing nuclear war, also hope that their policy might enable Britain to escape devastation, even though such a war broke out. The emphasis, however, is different in the two schools of thought.

Thus while by no means all neutralists, as we have seen, are pacifists, all pacifists, if they think their position out, are bound to be neutralists. For pacifists, who are against our having nuclear weapons *in principle*, must be against our remaining within an alliance which depends upon American nuclear weapons. Otherwise they would find themselves guilty of what Mr. Gaitskell recently called 'the basest hypocrisy'. For while refusing to touch nuclear weapons of their own, they would be willing to shelter behind other people's. Such an attitude would immediately destroy any force there might be in the example of throwing away our own nuclear weapons. It is only multilateralists, who accept the necessity of retaining nuclear weapons in the West, so long as the Russians retain theirs, who can consider on its merits whether it is better for America or Britain to provide these weapons. To do it justice, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has now faced this logic and adopted the neutralist standpoint. The issue is of some importance for those people who have simply been filled with well merited horror at the idea of nuclear weapons, and have not seen that their unilateral renunciation as a matter of principle inevitably involves neutralism. This issue lay behind the involved arguments over the meaning of the Transport and General Workers' resolution at the Scarborough Conference.

For my part, I have the stronger sympathy for the at first sight more extreme pacifist position than for the neutralist. An attempt to preserve Britain from nuclear devastation in the course of a nuclear war would be, if it were practicable, highly desirable to say the least of it; nevertheless,



it cannot, surely, be the sole consideration to weigh with us. On the contrary I believe that it is far more important, both for humanity as a whole and for the British people themselves, to try and prevent the outbreak of nuclear war than to make a forlorn attempt to preserve Britain from its consequences. It is natural to think first of our own lives and those of our fellow countrymen and women. But in this, the gravest situation which has ever faced the human race, we must all surely strive at least to think in terms of the whole living generation of mankind and of their descendants as well as of ourselves.

After all humanity already numbers nearly 3,000 million souls. The fate of the 55 million inhabitants of the British Isles may be in one sense, all-important to us; but we cannot expect the rest of the human race so to regard it. And, as a matter of fact, how much comfort even for us would there be in the partial escape of the British Isles from nuclear devastation if most of the rest of the nearly 3,000 million inhabitants of the world were destroyed and their lands devastated! Moreover it is not only, as unilateralists very rightly emphasise, the living generation of mankind which is at hazard; what is at stake is also the fate of the descendants of any survivors. For the consequences of a full-scale nuclear war are thought likely to endure for ten thousand years. Ten thousand years, that is to say, is the estimated period during which a full-scale nuclear war would render man's earthly home while not, probably, uninhabitable, yet much more hostile than heretofore to living organisms in general, and to man in particular.<sup>1</sup>

For these reasons I agree with the pacifists, at any rate in this, that what really matters is to prevent the outbreak of full-scale nuclear war wherever and whenever such a war might take place and whatever relationship Britain might have to it. The more seriously we think about the matter, the less hope there seems to be of trying to save Britain from the consequences of the catastrophe. What has to be done, if life in Britain or anywhere else is to continue tolerably, is to prevent the catastrophe from happening at all.

#### *The Surrender of One of the Alliances*

I think, therefore, that it is fair to judge the pacifist, as distinct from the neutralist, aspects of unilateralism by the straightforward test of whether or not the policy suggested could prevent, or at least help to prevent, the outbreak of a nuclear war. Now there is just one form of unilateral nuclear disarmament which, in the extremely remote contingency that it could be effected, could, in theory at least, prevent the outbreak of nuclear war. That is the unilateral nuclear disarmament and consequent surrender, not of Britain, but of one or other of the Western or Eastern alliances, as wholes. This distinction must be emphasised and re-emphasised. For many even of those supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, who (like Commander Sir Stephen King Hall, for instance) have realised that what

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Herman Kahn's work *On Thermo-Nuclear War* for an attempt to estimate these long-term consequences.

they are demanding involves national surrender on the part of Britain, appear to suffer from the illusion that a British surrender would put an end to the danger of nuclear war. As we have seen nothing could be further from the truth. For the only way in which, in practice, either of the alliances could surrender to the other would be if one or other of their 'centre-pieces', *i.e.* Russia or America, unilaterally threw away her nuclear weapons. The withdrawal of either of these super states from their respective alliances would cause that alliance to fall to pieces and would thus leave the other alliance in undisputed world supremacy.

At first sight, therefore, the only form of unilateralism which could in fact prevent the outbreak of nuclear war has little to do with any action which Britain can take on her own. However, British unilateralists often suggest that Britain could attempt to persuade either Russia or America to surrender *by her example*. Let us then consider carefully both the chances that our example would in fact effect this purpose, and then what would be the consequences of the surrender of one or other of the two super powers and, consequentially, of their respective alliances.

#### *A Russian Surrender*

Perhaps it will throw some light on the subject if we consider first the possibility of a Russian surrender to America. I do not recollect ever seeing the matter posed in that way in the writings of the unilateralists. So this approach may at any rate be fresh.

Few people in the west will see any objection to a Russian unilateral surrender. Fewer still, perhaps, will suppose that the example of Britain throwing away her nuclear weapons would cause Russia to do likewise. Nevertheless let us try to envisage what would happen if Russia did unilaterally disarm. At first sight we may not think that it would entail any grievous consequences to the Russian people. For that matter it is remarkably difficult to imagine what America, or the Western Alliance as a whole, *would* do if Russia one day announced that she had unilaterally scrapped all her nuclear arms and freely admitted inspectors to verify the fact. Perhaps the West would, at first at any rate, simply do nothing.

But it would I think be an illusion to suppose that America, and the West generally, would, or even could, continue to do nothing to a Russia which had unilaterally given up her nuclear weapons. For example what would happen if and when Russia got involved in another incident such as the suppression of the Hungarian rebellion? Should we not feel that we could not possibly abstain from telling the Russians, who if they had lain down their nuclear weapons on their own would have to obey us in this, as in everything else, that they must desist from shooting down the workers in Budapest or somewhere else? But if we felt that we must do at least that, what would be our excuse for not going further? Should we not have to insist, for example, on free elections in all Eastern Europe?

Again it is a mistake to suppose that Russia herself is a homogeneous whole. After all she is the 'successor state' of the Russian *empire*, in which the Great Russians arbitrarily ruled over a dozen subject peoples. What are the true attitudes of the Ukrainians, the Armenians, the Georgians, the

Usbeks, the Lithuanians, the Estonians, and many other nationalities to the Soviet Union? No one knows. But if a Soviet Union which, by means of unilateral nuclear disarmament, had put itself into the power of the West, were faced with rebellious and secessionist movements amongst the non-Great Russian peoples, what would the West do? Should we endorse by our passivity any degree of repression, even when, after Russia had thrown away her nuclear weapons, we could intervene at no risk of provoking a nuclear war? I merely pose these questions in order to show that the Soviet Government is by no means merely perverse, from its own point of view, in fearing a western hegemony, and refusing to contemplate it.

The mind can run at will amongst such imaginings. For it may confidently be asserted that the western governments have never given the matter a thought. And for a simple reason. They regard a Russian surrender by means of Russian unilateral nuclear disarmament as a contingency far too improbable to consider. And no doubt they are right. No one in his senses supposes that the Russian government will one day announce the unilateral scrapping of its nuclear weapons and consequent surrender to the will of the West. On the contrary, in his speech of 14th and 15th January 1960, to the Supreme Soviet, Mr. Khrushchev made very clear what was his attitude to nuclear weapons. Quite simply he glories in their possession by Russia. It is true that his speech was entitled: *Disarmament*. But this is what Mr. Khrushchev means by disarmament. He said:

'Soviet scientists, engineers and workers have made it possible to equip our army with armaments never known to man — atomic, hydrogen, rocket and other modern weapons — the Party, the Government, the entire Soviet people warmly thank the scientists, engineers, technicians and workers, whose knowledge and labour have brought about great successes in developing atomic and hydrogen weapons, rocketry and all the other things that have made it possible to raise the defence potential of our country to such a high level . . . . The Soviet Union has stockpiled the necessary quantities of atomic and hydrogen weapons — our state possesses powerful rocketry. With the present development of military techniques, military aviation and the navy have lost their former importance. These arms are not reduced but replaced. Military aviation is almost entirely being replaced by rockets. Now we have sharply cut down and will, it seems, reduce still further or even entirely the production of bombers and other obsolete equipment. In the navy the submarine fleet gains in importance whereas surface ships can no longer play the role they played in the past. Our armed forces have been to a considerable degree regeared to rocket and nuclear weapons . . . . The Soviet Army today possesses such military techniques and such firepower as no army has ever had before.'

It would be foolish and vulgar for us in the West to abuse Mr. Khrushchev for pursuing such a policy as this. He has every right to do so. It is the same policy which we are pursuing ourselves. He and we are caught fast in the terrible treadmill of the arms race. What his speech does make clear is that Mr. Khrushchev is by no means a supporter of unilateral nuclear disarmament for Russia. (Though, naturally enough, he thinks that it is a highly commendable idea for others).

But why, we must ask, is it inconceivable that Russia will adopt a policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament? After all the unilateralists'

arguments apply to Russia just as strongly as they do to us. Would it not be better for the Russians to preserve their lives even if it meant surrender to the 'western way of life'? Is not anything better than to be destroyed in a nuclear war? Would not communism, if it is indeed the truth, ultimately triumph in any case? Would not passive resistance to a western occupation be their most effective form of resistance, etc.?

Somehow or other no one seems to think that it is worth while addressing these arguments to the Russians. And perhaps it is not. We all, unilateralists and the rest of us, take it for granted that whoever else is to surrender it will not be the Russians. And this may perhaps help to explain why it is in fact equally unlikely that America in particular, or the West in general, will surrender either. For however sincerely *we* may believe that we should do no harm to the Russians if we had them in our power, we may be sure that this is not at all how they see the matter.

We may suppose that the very most that we would do to them is to give them the opportunity to 'liberate' themselves from an arbitrary government. We forget that the arbitrary government is nevertheless *their* government. Some of them may dislike it, but it is, I would guess, as much a myth that the majority, at any rate of the Great Russians, would welcome 'liberation' at foreign hands from their government, as it is that the wage earners of the West would welcome 'liberation' from I.C.I., General Motors, or U.S. Steel at the hands of the Russians.

In a word the Russians may well entertain just as gruesome imaginings of the consequences of surrender to the Americans, as the Americans entertain of surrender to the Russians. And we shall see immediately that American fears in this respect could hardly be more extreme. All in all we must, I fear, dismiss the possibility of the prevention of nuclear war by means of the attractive solution of Russian unilateral nuclear disarmament, and consequent surrender.

#### *An American Surrender?*

Now, let us look at the opposite solution of America, inspired by a British example, unilaterally discarding her nuclear weapons and consequently surrendering to the Russians.

It would not be true to say that no one in America has considered this possibility. On the contrary the American defence experts are so well aware of the overwhelming horror of nuclear war, and of the possibility of its occurrence, that they have tried to look at the alternative of surrender. Professor Morgenstern, a defence expert working mainly for the U.S. Navy Department, in his recent book *The Question of National Defense*, for example, tries to conjure up a vision of what would happen to America if she surrendered. I must say that I consider his vision to be an expression of the fears and suspicions of the Americans rather than an account of anything likely to happen. But that is just the point. What determines the question of whether or not an American surrender is even a possibility is not what I, or the reader of this pamphlet, think would happen, but what *the Americans* think would happen. If they, reasonably or unreasonably, are panic-stricken at the very thought of what their fate

might be in Russian or Chinese hands then there is no chance at all of persuading them to surrender, even if we wished to do so (which I do not). Professor Morgenstern, for that matter, is by no means a panic-monger, an ignoramus, nor a warmonger. On the contrary, he is a formidably intelligent mathematical economist. If, then, this is his conception of what might happen if his country surrendered to the Russians, what must be the imaginings of his more simple-minded compatriots? He writes:

'No one can say reliably what the enemy would impose upon this country if it were to surrender without fighting. But some lines of this dismal picture can be drawn and dismal it would be, indeed . . . . The government would go over into the hands of Communist trustees . . . . Perhaps 100 million or 200 million Chinese would be moved to this country, taking over the houses we inhabit now. According to their standards, even when crammed together with us, they would be better off than they are now. Our factories would produce "reparations" for the rest of the world while we would be put on a subsistence level, just good enough to secure the continuing services of the docile new slaves (easily kept docile by the administration of proper amounts of tranquilizers). Or perhaps the new masters would find it better to dismantle the factories and have them shipped to the under-developed countries of Asia and Africa in order to speed up their growth, while the remaining population in this country could be organised according to some new "Morgenthau plan" for food production only, the food to be shipped to the hungry billion of people in Asia.'

I repeat that there is little reason to suppose that this or any other imaginings give us any idea of what would really happen if world hegemony were peacefully handed over to the Russians. For there is no historical experience whatever of such an event. Nuclear war itself would be an event the consequences of which we can do no more than guess at. Still, there have been wars to extermination — the Third Punic War for instance — which give us some faint idea of such an eventuality. But the voluntary surrender of one super-power (and its allies) to the other would be an event to which we should seek in vain for any parallel.

On the other hand, we cannot unfortunately say that such things as Professor Morgenstern imagines simply cannot happen in the twentieth century. In a later passage in his book he makes an extremely powerful point when he reminds us that, less than twenty years ago, Hitler was engaged in just this kind of activity in the heart of Europe. He writes:

'We cannot shrug this off as implausible, fantastic or insane. Who would have believed, say in 1930, that the things would ever be done which Hitler did only ten or twelve years later — the systematic annihilation of millions of innocent men, women and children in factory-type establishments?'

Nor was it only Hitler who deported whole populations. Stalin did so, both to the Kulaks in the nineteen thirties, and to the Volga Germans and some of the Crimean nationalities during the war. However, we need consider no further the degree of reality in what may well be no more than American nightmares. The point is that the Americans, rightly or wrongly, *have* such nightmares. They are not very likely then to follow a British example of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Let us now envisage the very least which an all-powerful Russia might

in fact be expected to do by way of imposing its wishes upon a unilaterally disarmed west. At first, at any rate, the Soviet Government might content itself with indicating what policies were welcome and what unwelcome to it. But here we have some evidence to guide us. We know the course which events are apt to take in a country which becomes dependent on Russia. Usually (though not invariably—Finland is the exception) the Russians find that in order to get their general wishes carried out they need to see to it that a communist, or at least pro-communist, government is installed in power and kept there. This may not be too difficult or painful a process in countries in which a strong communist party exists, or where at any rate a considerable section of the wage earners support such a party. What it would be like in America or Britain is hard to imagine.

Moreover, in this case Russian communist dogmatism might prove disastrous. It is one of the most inflexible of communist dogmas that the wage earners are everywhere longing to throw off the rule of the capitalists and are only prevented from doing so by force and fraud. Therefore every good communist believes sincerely that he is liberating the wage earners when he imposes a communist government on them. If he has to shoot a good many of them in the process that is regrettable but he is convinced that it is *entirely* the fault of 'bourgeois remnants' who are misleading them. It is an axiom which can in no circumstances be questioned that the interests of the wage earners and 'their' communist party are identical. In countries where the great majority of the population is for any reason deeply hostile to the communists this dogma is apt to lead to tragic results, as it did in Hungary. (I have myself observed a less tragic version of the process at first hand in Poland in October 1956).

What the result would be in such countries as Britain and America and after a world-wide surrender to communism, is difficult to imagine. No doubt there would be much resignation on the part of the populations of the west. But no doubt also such resignation would be far from universal. Therefore the Russians would be likely to be led on, probably against their will, to physical occupation and to more and more severe measures. In the long run, at least some of the extremities which Professor Morgenstern envisages cannot be excluded. Once again we must remind ourselves that the mechanised mass murders in, as he puts it, 'factory-like establishments' of many millions of men and women by Hitler, would have seemed at least as fantastic in 1930 as his present imaginings may seem to some of his readers in the nineteen sixties.

At any rate, I repeat, whatever *we* may think would be the real consequences of an American surrender, we all know that the overwhelming majority of the American people entertain, consciously or unconsciously, forebodings quite sufficiently dire of what would happen to them in Russian or Chinese hands, to make an American surrender every whit as impossible as a Russian surrender. Therefore, whether we like it or not, both of the two surrenders which could possibly prevent a nuclear war are so unlikely to happen that it is difficult to consider them seriously.

Therefore British unilateral nuclear disarmament, the scrapping of our alliances and a consequent British surrender, whatever its consequences for Britain might prove to be, could do little or nothing even by way of example to prevent the outbreak of nuclear war. They would leave Russia and America still facing each other in 'the balance of terror'. In certain circumstances — if, for example, America were ahead at the time — the elimination of Britain from the balance might, it is true, tend to stabilise it. If, on the other hand, Russia were ahead at the time, the elimination of Britain would tend to de-stabilise the balance and might actually cause the outbreak of nuclear war. Nor would there be any guarantee that a disarmed Britain would be spared in such a war. She might well simply be fought over instead of fighting, occupied by one side and devastated by the other.

## 4. The Pursuit of Peace

### LABOUR'S POLICY ON DEFENCE

**T**HE Labour Party has had, in Government the duty to conduct, and in Opposition the duty to propose, foreign and defence policies for Britain. As events have developed these policies have, of course, needed re-statement from time to time. But the basic approach has not changed. The most recent statement of its aims was made by the Executive Committee of the Labour Party in the summer of 1960, endorsed by the Parliamentary Labour Party and the T.U.C., but narrowly defeated at the 1960 Annual Conference of the Party. Contrary to some impressions this statement marked no drastic change in policy. This indeed was why unilateralists at Scarborough would not accept it. But it did contain one new departure.

Let us first try to define the basic approach and then the new departure. Perhaps a personal reminiscence will help to do so. During the period of the Labour Government of 1945-1951, the Prime Minister (Lord Attlee as he is now) sent round a Minute to all Ministers defining the basic foreign and defence policies which he desired his Government to promote. They were, first, undeviating support of the United Nations and, second, a sustained effort to pursue the goals of international disarmament and peace. It was characteristic of Lord Attlee that he saw no contradiction between such a policy and the steady rebuilding of the power of Britain, both by means of participation in such alliances as N.A.T.O. and by the creation of British nuclear weapons. Nor do I.

Nevertheless it must be acknowledged that many people both on the 'right' and on the 'left' do see and feel such a contradiction. It appears to be psychologically impossible for them both to seek peace and, in the meanwhile, to maintain the strength of their nation and their alliance. Yet this is the sole rational policy for a nation such as Britain to pursue in the nuclear age. Moreover all governments which have the remotest chance of obtaining a mandate from the British people will in fact pursue some such policy as this.

In the main the 1960 Executive Statement re-affirms this policy. Its main innovation is to express a conviction that Britain can no longer sustain a fully independent nuclear deterrent force. This departure was caused by the Government's abandonment in the spring of 1960 of the attempt to develop and then manufacture 'Blue Streak', a British rocket designed to deliver a nuclear war head. The Labour Party Executive came to the conclusion, in my opinion correctly, that this meant that Britain could no longer hope to keep up with Russia and America in their intense efforts to develop more and more effective means of delivery for nuclear missiles. In future nuclear weapon systems would be produced by America. They could no longer be described, therefore, as an independent British deterrent. This



was undoubtedly a considerable change of view. But it is important to notice what it did *not* involve.

### *The Nature of Deterrence*

In the first place it left unchallenged the necessity of the Western Alliance possessing a nuclear deterrent, whoever was to provide it. The idea of deterrence is such a simple one that it is almost embarrassing to have to explain it. It is this: if one is capable of hitting back one is less likely to be hit. I ask any reader who is doubtful of this proposition to recall his, or her, experience of life. Is he able to say sincerely that an ability to retaliate in kind, either verbally, financially, physically or in some other way has played no part in averting conduct in others unwelcome to himself? If he is, I can only envy him: his life has been more sheltered than mine. But I should still think his experience so atypical of the lives of most individuals or nations, in this rough world, that no conclusion should be based on it.

### *The Importance of being Invulnerable*

In the second place, the new defence policy not only leaves untouched, but exemplifies, the consideration that what really matters is not so much who provides the deterrent as what is its character. For it follows from the first proposition above that a nuclear force that could not survive 'the first strike' as it is called, of its opponent would have little or no deterrent power. If, that is to say, a potential attacker knew for certain that he could wipe out his opponent's nuclear force by means of a surprise first strike, its existence would produce no fear of retaliation. Indeed I go further and agree with Mr. A. J. P. Taylor (see p. 5) that a *vulnerable* nuclear force is a provocation rather than a deterrent. For 'though it has little or no capacity to retaliate, a vulnerable force nevertheless represents a deadly menace to all other countries with nuclear weapons; for it could still destroy them if used first. Therefore any country which is so foolish as to provide itself with a highly *vulnerable* nuclear force gets the worst of both worlds. It has little capacity for retaliation, yet it presents an intense menace, and so provocation, to other nuclear nations. It is for this reason that the Labour Party has always opposed the establishment of the 'Thor' missile bases in Britain. For these missiles are in fixed, well known and unprotected sites. They are slow firing and could easily be destroyed, before they could be used, by an opponent's first strike. On the other hand they represent a dreadful destructive power if *they* are fired first. They are highly provocative. Strategic bombers, whether British or American, based on Britain are not so vulnerable as this, for they can be dispersed and frequently moved; moreover they can get off the ground relatively quickly. But still they are uncomfortably vulnerable to a first strike. Polaris-carrying submarines, based on Britain, are far less vulnerable to a Russian first strike, and have therefore much greater deterrent effect. Again the fact that the Russians can have little or no hope of destroying a high proportion of them, renders them much less provocative, since the Russians know that the West is under no pressure to fire them

first. They are essentially retaliatory 'second strike' weapons. A whole literature, relatively unknown in Britain, exists in both Russia and America on this problem.<sup>1</sup>

This literature discusses the fatal theory of 'the pre-emptive strike', which has been well defined as the doctrine that 'I must hit you first in case you hit me first'. In my opinion, it can be undeniably established that both sides will be forced to adopt this catastrophic view *unless* they render their deterrent forces mutually invulnerable. Fortunately they both now appear to be concentrating their efforts on this problem of vulnerability. On the American side the development of the Polaris-bearing nuclear submarine is undoubtedly an important step forward, although we must beware of supposing that it is a panacea. For its present relatively high degree of invulnerability will, no doubt, not last for ever. The Russians appear to rely rather on the number and remoteness of their fixed missile launching bases, combined with their unique capacity for enforcing security measures designed to keep their exact siting secret. It seems probable that all these efforts will succeed in giving both sides a fairly high degree of invulnerability for their deterrent forces during the nineteen sixties. Neither side is at all likely, that is to say, to feel confident that it can wipe out its opponent's capacity to strike back. Therefore an extremely strong deterrent to striking first will persist. If that were not so, the outlook would indeed be bleak.

#### *Not Details but Principles*

This brings us to the question of how much attention a political party should or can pay to the quasi-military and highly technical issues inevitably raised by the existence of nuclear weapons. It is very true that these questions are complex, ever changing and controversial. For these reasons it is both impossible and unnecessary for a political party to adopt a policy in regard to them, though it is useful to be aware that, for example, this question of the *vulnerability* of the deterrent is a hundred times more important for the avoidance of nuclear war than is the question of *which* of the western (or eastern) allies provides the deterrent or even of which ally possesses it.

These technical military issues are not, then, the sort of thing about which the Labour Party has to make up its mind. Some well meaning persons are urging us to stop quarrelling 'about the details of defence policy'. There is little danger that we shall quarrel about that. As anyone who has had the job of speaking for the Labour Party on such matters

<sup>1</sup> See for example the already cited article by Tank Marshal Rotmistrov in *Military Thought* for January 1955 and editorial comment in the following number of *Military Thought*. But see also Mr. Khrushchev's speech of 14th January to the supreme Soviet, published as Soviet Booklet No. 64, page 30, in which he claims that the Soviet deterrent force is invulnerable and that consequently Russia has no need to 'pre-empt'. On the American side see especially A. Wohlstetter's *The Delicate Balance of Terror*, Foreign Affairs January 1959, and Professor T. Shelling's *The Strategy of Conflict*, also, *On Thermo-Nuclear War* by Dr. Kahn and *The Question of National Defense* by Professor Morgenstern.

knows well, the Party as a whole is largely indifferent to military questions. No, what has divided us is, as we have seen, such questions of principle as should or should not the western alliance throw away its nuclear weapons while Russia retains hers? Or again, if the western alliance decides to retain nuclear weapons, should Britain come out of the alliance and become a non-nuclear neutral? These are not *details* of foreign and defence policy but the basic *principles* on which any adult political party must make up its mind. If we try to pretend to the electorate that they are mere military details we shall be laughed out of court.

### *The Need for Conventional Forces*

There is however one more quasi-military issue upon which it is at any rate desirable that we should make up our minds. And in fact the 1960 Executive Statement takes a firm stand upon the matter. This is the question of the inadequacy of the 'conventional', or non-nuclear, forces of the western alliance, or N.A.T.O., disposed in Europe, and the necessity of strengthening them. The importance of this is that unless N.A.T.O. provides itself with much superior conventional forces (superior in quality and equipment even more than in quantity) than it possesses at present, the West might easily be faced with the terrible dilemma of either surrendering to a limited act of Russian aggression, carried out with conventional forces, or of starting a nuclear war. Or, again, a conflict might arise which did not at the outset directly involve one of the nuclear powers, but which threatened to produce, or actually did produce, a 'limited war', as in the case of Korea. After all we have already experienced armed uprisings in East Germany and in Hungary, and, on the other hand, the Algerian rising against France is now in its seventh year. It is very rash for the West to allow itself to become so weak in conventional forces that it may at any time be faced with the terrible dilemma of accepting a Russian *fait accompli* or of risking the destruction of the world. However, this emphasis on the importance of conventional forces in the 1960 statement marks no change in Labour defence policy. The importance of conventional forces has been pressed year in and year out by Mr. George Brown, by myself and by other Labour spokesmen in the House of Commons.

### *The Necessity of Disarmament*

It remains true, however, that these defence issues ought always to be kept subsidiary to the supreme issues of foreign policy, for however good our defence policy may be it can never, in itself, bring us permanent peace. It is highly important, for example, to make our alliance's nuclear force invulnerable to the greatest extent which we possibly can, in order that it really should be a deterrent and not a provocation. But even if we succeed in doing this to a very high degree, and even if we also provide adequate conventional forces which can keep war limited (as was actually done in Korea), we shall have done no more than to render the existing balance of power between the eastern and western alliances more stable. It is, literally, a matter of life and death to do that; but the object of doing so is simply in order to give us time to pursue the foreign policies which can alone produce permanent peace.

Our positive policies for peace ought to be broadly of two kinds. First there is the struggle for disarmament. For it is immensely important that the armaments of the great alliances (and of the other, uncommitted states for that matter) should not only be made as mutually invulnerable, and as equal, as possible, but should also be reduced, to the maximum practicable extent. For it is true that the existence of an all out arms race is itself one of the contributory causes of international tension. Any step of disarmament, with mutual inspection and control, even if it goes no further, at first, than the prohibition of further nuclear tests, would be an immense gain. Indeed I would go so far as to say that if only we could get the process of mutual disarmament started, the whole international climate of opinion would begin to alter. The frightful fear and suspicion which States and alliances engaged in an uncontrolled nuclear arms race necessarily feel towards each other, would begin to ease. That very easing of fear and suspicion would in turn make possible a further degree of mutual disarmament. A virtuous instead of a vicious spiral of cause and effect would be set up. It is not too much to say that first control over, and then a reversal of, the nuclear arms race by means of the successful achievement of one or more disarmament conventions, is an indispensable condition of peace over, say, the remainder of this century. As the greatest living authority on disarmament, Philip Noel Baker, M.P., pleads so passionately, it would be a tragic betrayal of the efforts of the British Labour Party over its whole existence, if at this moment it abandoned the struggle for mutually controlled multilateral disarmament, in favour of the will-o-the-wisp of unilateral disarmament as an example.

#### *The Limitations of Disarmament Policy*

Nevertheless disarmament is not enough. The arms race will eventually destroy us unless it is stopped. But the opposite proposition, that a disarmament agreement will, in itself, ensure peace is, unfortunately, not correct. Much more is needed. The causes of the wars which have beset humanity since the dawn of recorded history are far deeper. Armaments are the *means* by which these wars have been carried out. Their cause, put in the most general terms, has been the rivalries of the absolutely sovereign states and empires into which the world has always been divided. In the pre-nuclear age, the ever recurrent wars which were the natural consequence of this 'international anarchy' were, just, compatible with the maintenance and development of human civilisation. In the nuclear age they are not. We must either end large scale, unlimited war, or suffer, at the best, a new dark age of social regression, at the worst extinction.

#### *A World Society*

These undeniable facts have everywhere set men's minds to considering, as never before, the question of the unification of the world under one authority. For how can anyone seriously consider the predicament of man in the nuclear age without seeing that in some such centralisation of physical power lies the sole practicable means of securing a permanent world peace?

This pamphlet is obviously no place at all to discuss this immense theme. Nevertheless this is the theme which will henceforward, I believe, increasingly dominate public life, first perhaps in Britain but then in every nation. Hence it is imperative for the Labour Party to turn its attention towards it. It may be worthwhile, therefore, to offer, even here, one or two preliminary remarks on the subject.

The main trouble about any advocacy of a world authority, or world government, is that the very idea seems, both to the man in the street, and to the man in authority, wholly utopian. The concept seems to have little connection with anything which is actually going on in the real world about us. It is a commonplace that the world is split three ways. There are the communist and the non-communist alliances, arming intensively, in distrust and fear of each other; and there are the uncommitted and, largely, underdeveloped nations uneasily pulled and pushed between the two camps. Moreover the creation of these new nations has divided up whole vast continents into, precisely, a whole series of new, absolutely sovereign nation-states. Where vast, sprawling empires stretched across Asia and Africa only a few decades ago — empires which, arbitrary and oppressive as they were, were yet partial centralisations of power — there are now dozens of new and absolutely sovereign states. In the last fifteen years the 'international anarchy' has thus become world wide for the first time in history. How in such historical circumstances can 'practical men' talk of world government?

#### *The Holders of Ultimate Power*

In fact of course it is easy enough both to *talk* and to write about a world authority and its necessity if we are not all to be vaporised. It is easy enough, that is to say, to draw up an admirable constitution for such an authority, which, it can be shown, could be set up by such and such amendments to the Charter of the United Nations. In fact several industrious American professors have done so. (The most ambitious and intelligent attempt is *World Peace Through World Law*, by Grenville Clark and Louis B. Sohn, Harvard University Press 1958). Again there is nothing wrong with all this — except that it makes no contact with, and so no impact upon, the real development of events. If we want the concept of a world authority to have an impact upon events we must address our minds, not to the comparatively simple task of writing the provisions of a constitution which would be acceptable if all nations were already agreed to live in amity, but to the incomparably more difficult issue of how, conceivably, the existing holders of ultimate nuclear power might be induced to pool that power in order to create and maintain a peaceful world. Those holders of ultimate nuclear power are, in 1960 (but not necessarily for an indefinite period), Russia and America.

In the autumn of 1960 the very idea of there being any possibility of America and Russia, with or without their allies, combining for any purpose whatever, may seem hardly worth considering. The 1960 Assembly of the United Nations conveyed the impression of renewed and intensified world conflict. Mr. Khrushchev's rampagings, the spinsterish attempts of the United States Government to quarantine him on Manhattan Island,

the refusal of both sides to resume negotiations, the glaring anomaly of the continued exclusion of China by the West, the deadlock over disarmament, the preaching of their respective ideologies of communism and private enterprise by the Soviet and American Governments, as the sole possible remedies for the world's ills—all this made practical men of affairs more inclined than ever to react to the very idea of a world authority with a weary smile.

*The New Role of U.N.O.*

And yet behind, and actually by means of, all the noise, the confusion and the harshness of the proceedings in the 1960 Assembly, something has emerged which *may* prove to be the first tiny shoots of a world authority. After all, each time now that a world emergency occurs, be it the Anglo-French attack upon Egypt, or the breakdown of organised society in the Congo, the United Nations does in fact intervene. Nor are its interventions by any means ineffectual. The proof of that may be found in the vastly increased importance that the statesmen of the world have been compelled to attach to the meetings of both the Security Council and the General Assembly. It is just *because* the United Nations is now really doing something that its meetings have become so much more contentious and undignified—in a word, alive. If U.N.O. were still doing no more than pass pious resolutions to which nobody paid any attention, Mr. Khrushchev would not think it worthwhile to go on the rampage at its debates or to try to sack the Secretary-General. And, on the other hand, the United States would not appear more determined than ever to exclude the most populous country on earth from membership, nor would General de Gaulle reiterate that it must never interfere in one or other of its members' colonies. It is precisely *because* the United Nations' interventions in this or that emergency have been surprisingly effective, that, for the first time, the world's conflicts are beginning to focus in its proceedings. For if the United Nations is beginning actually to decide what does and what does not happen in this or that part of the world, to send armed forces which no one, as yet at any rate, has quite liked to challenge, to settle this or that emergency in this or that way, then not only each side in the main world line-up, but also the neutrals, will inevitably seek to ensure that it intervenes *in the way they respectively want*. Thus we should actually draw encouragement from the increasingly contentious character of the United Nations proceedings. When they become calm, dignified, ceremonious and innocuous, we shall know that the institution is dying. For there is not the faintest possibility of the world's conflicts being magiced out of existence. The most that we can hope for, as yet, is that they will be *expressed* within the framework of this one major world institution. The United Nations in itself cannot yet be more than such a framework. But if its members bring their real conflicts for expression, and even occasional resolution, to it, that is much. For the United Nations actually to become that decisive 'something more', which we can only express by some such term as 'a world authority', a profound change in the attitudes of its member states, and above all of its two leading member states, is indispensable.

For at present it is undeniable that the prime purpose of the two leading member states, Russia and America, with their allies, is to thwart and frustrate each other in every possible way. It is a miracle that the United Nations has, nevertheless, achieved enough common will to intervene rather effectively in recent world emergencies. Can the explanation be that behind the still apparently single-minded determination of Russia and America to oppose each other in every possible way, there exists some unavowed, perhaps half-conscious, realisation that the beginnings of a world centre of authority, with power to act, may be becoming indispensable to their own survival?

### *The Discovery of a Common Purpose*

Be that as it may, one thing is certain. Unless there does dawn upon the Russian and American Governments, and their allies (who are often even more intransigent than they are themselves) that, through, and in spite of, and beyond, all their searing conflicts (which will not be appeased for many years yet) some sort of ultimate common purpose exists between them, there is no hope for the world. For the quasi-miracle of the relative effectiveness of the United Nations in recent emergencies can hardly continue, and certainly cannot develop, if its two decisive members are *solely* concerned with opposing each other.

It is no more than an oversimplification to say that the United Nations *is*, as yet, Russia and America, and their respective allies, plus an audience of uncommitted nations; true, this is an audience which the two principals find it increasingly important to conciliate, to influence and to win over if they possibly can; but still, to a high degree, it is an audience. For such an institution as this to develop into anything even approximating to an authority capable of keeping order in the world, it is indispensable that the principals should discover a common purpose upon which they may sometimes act in unison.

What could such a common purpose be? As a matter of fact it is not difficult to answer that question. At this stage in the world's development the Soviet and American Governments can have one, and only one, common purpose; namely to stay alive. It is a simple but not an unimportant purpose. For no serious student of world affairs can doubt that unless they do discover that they have this one basic interest in common, they will both sooner or later perish in nuclear war. But if they do gradually discover the common purpose of survival they may yet unite their wills just sufficiently to enable the United Nations to keep some sort of order in the world.

### *The Chances of Survival*

What are the chances that the instinct for survival will, in time, assert itself in those who control the destinies of Russia, America, and secondarily, but quite importantly, in their major allies? It would be foolish to ignore the obstacles that stand in the way of survival. There is first of all the ideological obstacle. Russia, overtly, and America only less overtly, have, as societies, much more clear cut, definite and precise ideologies than the older nations of Western Europe. And they preach their respective

credos with some passion to the rest of us. The Russian Government tells us daily that the world *must* and will be organised upon the basis of communism; the American Government that it *must* and will be organised upon the basis of free enterprise. Moreover they inform us that diametrically opposed political, social, aesthetic and philosophic superstructures must be raised upon these different economic foundations. How can any element of world unity be achieved, the more ardent protagonists on each side declare, until the whole character of human society has been decided — if necessary by violence? Well, all that the rest of us can reply is that it may prove that this is indeed the case: but if so it is not likely to be either a communist or a free enterprise, but merely a tribal, form of human society which will in fact be achieved.

Is this ideological barrier to the possibility of the emergence of a world authority, and so to the possibility of peace, insurmountable? Will it prove as insurmountable in the second half of the century as it has in the first? There are some signs of hope that it may not. Already it may not be quite so formidable as it was. Who can have failed to notice one curious fact about the preaching and counter-preaching, the crusading and counter-crusading, to which the world is still being subjected by the great protagonists? The volume, and even the vehemence, of their exhortations do not diminish: but their interest does. Slowly but surely both of their gospels are becoming a bore. The sap of life is draining out of them. Nor is the reason far to seek. When we compare either the communist gospel with the actuality of Soviet society, or the gospel of free enterprise with the actuality of American society, we find a profound discrepancy between promise and performance. It is not that either Russian or American society is unsuccessful. On the contrary, as human institutions go, they are both successful above the average. It is rather that they are beginning to exhibit (quite unaccountably if we take either of their ideologies at face value) one tell-tale characteristic: namely similarity.

#### *The Two Great Conservative Powers*

Naturally the differences between them are still great. But the significant fact is that they are beginning to diminish. Apparently, huge, industrial, vigorous, highly organised, communities such as these come to bear certain resemblances to each other, however you organise their productive and social life. It is a sobering and in some respects depressing conclusion. But it does carry within it one supreme gleam of hope. If the gospels being preached to us from the two great power-centres no longer ring in our ears with their old conviction, is there not a chance that such simple, humble considerations as the need to stay alive may yet get a hearing? May not the Russian and American Governments come to realise that they actually could co-operate, through and in the United Nations, for this one purpose of survival, even while they practised, and preached, their respective credos? Is there not a possibility that they may recognise, in time, the necessity of suppressing, by their joint action, the grosser disturbances which threaten the peace of the world? If once they can begin to do so their own disputes will, surely, fall into place. After all what vital interest of the United States does Russia in fact need to menace? Or where



do American purposes and aspirations in fact threaten the wellbeing, let alone the existence, of Russia? True there are plenty of causes of dispute, from Berlin, to Cuba, to Formosa. But they are mostly in fact secondary, peripheral and therefore *capable*, at least, of settlement. They are capable of settlement if once the Russian and American Governments come to realise that they both have a vested interest in settlements as such. For like all dominant powers, they are in essence *conservative* powers. This may be a hard saying for governments representing, respectively, the oldest and the newest revolutionary traditions in the world. But it is a fact.

We must not suppose that a world kept in order by the joint will of Russia and America, acting no doubt in the name of the United Nations, would be any Utopia. On the contrary, the rest of us might suffer many things which we should consider injustices. But there would be, in the United Nations, at least a forum of complaint, and a world public opinion — it is visibly and audibly coming into existence already — to which appeal could be made. At all events what other possible hope for survival is there than some such gradual accommodation of the wills of the two great conservative super-powers, so that the United Nations may develop into an instrument of authority for the pacification of the world?

It is true that Russia and America are not likely to remain indefinitely in a class by themselves as world powers. China, India, Brazil are all nation-states which are capable of entering the super-class — and so might a united Western Europe. But such developments are probably rather more distant than is often supposed. Even if several more nations acquire nuclear weapons in the fairly near future, it will be exceedingly difficult for them to overtake either Russia or America in the nuclear arms race. That race is being run by means of competition in the means of delivery of the weapons rather than in the weapons themselves. And, as Britain has found, in this field it is necessary to attempt to develop several new weapons systems simultaneously in the hope of backing one winner: this is, probably, beyond the resources of even a medium sized power. Therefore the present period of the relative polarisation of world power — for good or ill — is likely to endure, not indeed indefinitely, but for some time. During this period, the opportunity arises of the emergence of an embryonic world authority, based on the discovery of a common purpose in survival by the American and Russian Governments.

### *Britain's Mission*

Britain can serve the cause of peace above all by promoting the emergence of such a world authority. This is, in the long run, an even more important mission — because a more positive mission — than disarmament. A degree of mutual tolerance between the Russian and American Governments sufficient to enable the United Nations to work: the first steps in mutual disarmament: the creation of a tradition of effective United Nations intervention when world emergencies arise: and then also the promotion of a sceptical, cool, not to say quizzical, attitude to the claims and passions of the ideologists of either camp — these are the ways in which the ground can be prepared for that permanent world peace which can alone save us.

Britain is so placed that she has a special opportunity, and so a special responsibility, to pursue this mission of peace. The things which she can do immediately may sound limited or even humdrum. But a British foreign policy genuinely directed towards the emergence of a world authority, and sustained over the years, would in fact constitute an almost revolutionary break with any foreign policy which Britain, or for that matter any other nation, has ever pursued. British foreign policy, like every other nation's foreign policy, has always hitherto been directed to the simple purpose of the protection and promotion of national interests. That is not an unworthy purpose. But in the nuclear age it is not enough. It cannot lead to survival. If one nation, now of the second magnitude, but still of great importance in the world, did really change its whole attitude and approach to world affairs, and directed its policy to the evolution, over the years, of the United Nations into a world authority, based upon the necessary degree of accommodation of the wills of the American and Russian Governments, the world might in time be transformed. For such a new foreign policy to be taken seriously it would have to be pursued even when it conflicted, as from time to time it certainly would conflict, with the immediate national interest of Britain. No government has ever done that. 'Practical men' will scoff at the very idea. We need not suppose, therefore, that its adoption by a future Labour Government would fail to mark a drastic change from the policies of its predecessors. This is the real road forward. All the idealism of Britain must be led along it. For the Labour movement to retreat from this immense task would be tragic. And yet this is precisely what the adoption of a unilateralist or neutralist policy would mean. To advocate a nuclearly disarmed and neutral Britain is a kind of isolationism: it is a turning away, in fear and in despair, from the real world with all its difficulties and dangers. It would amount to resignation from the mission of peace which Britain is better placed to undertake than any other country. For such a mission will certainly require every ounce of the strength, political, economic and military alike, which Britain can command. A weak, neutralised Britain, aspiring to no more than to be left alone, could not even attempt it. It will be by shouldering the burden of our mission in the nuclear age, and not by indulging in the impossible dream of a one-sided laying down of arms, either on the part of Britain, or on the part of the Western Alliance as a whole, that we may seek peace and ensue it.

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