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# LABOUR REVIEW

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January/March 1952

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**LABOUR AND ITS FUTURE**

**THE GERMAN LABOUR MOVEMENT  
AND REARMAMENT**

**AMERICAN LABOUR FACES 1952**

**BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND HER  
AFRICAN COLONIES**

**VIEW-POINT**

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# LABOUR REVIEW

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Vol. 1 No. 1

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## LABOUR AND ITS FUTURE

This Review, published by active members and supporters of the Labour Party, is launched at a fateful juncture for the people of Britain and especially for its working class. The Tory electoral victory amidst the continued collapse of the British Empire not only guarantees higher prices and more scarcities, but also brings closer the prospect of atomic war. Never was there greater need for plain and fearless speaking on behalf of Labour and the struggle for socialism.

The most immediate danger to the British people does not come from Washington, and certainly not from Moscow, as the red baiters and warmongers assert. It has just been installed at Westminster. This is the Tory Government of Winston Churchill.

Despite efforts to conceal the reactionary body of his policy by draping it in reassuring phrases and revealing it piecemeal, Churchill's first acts and declarations upon returning to power have exposed his real aims. Toryism in power means the destruction of the gains made by Labour through its own party and its own struggles; worsened living conditions for the masses, repressions against the unions and fierce resistance to their demands; on the other hand it means high holiday for the profiteers, black-marketeers and armament merchants of death. In foreign affairs Toryism means more assaults on the colonial peoples fighting for their freedom, along with the auctioning of England to the American billionaires and stricter subordination to their schemes for world conquest. Toryism means ever swifter strides toward the Third World War now being prepared against the Soviet Union

and the anti-imperialist countries.

These are the evil fruits of the capitalist regime which the Tories are determined to uphold to the last drop of British blood and the last ounce of British energy. These are inescapable consequences of the policies they must impose to preserve the remnants of colonial rule. And that is why the Conservative Government must fall, if British Labour is to rise again.

Fourteen million votes in the October elections proved that the Labour Party commands the loyalty and holds the hopes of the British workers. The same cannot be said for its present leaders. There prevails in the ranks of our party an undeniable and often outspoken feeling that the policies of the right wing brought about Labour's defeat, and that a more aggressively socialist course and a genuine opposition to the capitalist class would have kept Labour in office and enabled it to make new advances even under difficult conditions. But Attlee and Transport House lacked confidence in the capacities of our party to lead the nation forward. They sought to appease the rich, retreated and even slid back, while maintaining the alliance with U.S. imperialism in all its fatal consequences. Consequently the middle classes turned away from Labour in the hope of finding something better in the promises of the Conservatives.

The right-wing leaders have been "tried and found wanting". The National Executive elections at Scarborough indicated that; the election results confirmed it. To-day British Labour wants a different type of leadership; it is seeking a broader outlook and a genuinely socialist programme.

What kind of policy can give Labour a clear guide in the coming period and re-animate our ranks? The first point should be: "Bring the Tories Down! No Coalition with Churchill's Conservatives! Send Labour Back to Power!"

Next in order is this rallying cry: "Stick to the Socialist Road . . . No Return to the Bad Old Days!" Protect and

extend the nationalisations and democratise industrial life by establishing control by workers' committees over their operations. Scrap the rearmament plan which is bleeding Britain and use the millions now allotted to death for housing and feeding our people.

In the field of foreign policy it is imperative to break the chains binding England to the chariot of American imperialism. We should follow instead a policy of friendship with the colonial movements of liberation in Asia, Africa, the Middle and Near East, and create closer co-operation with all those nations from Yugoslavia, through Russia, to China which have cast off the imperialist yoke.

We maintain that the cause of democracy and socialism is one and the same throughout the world and in England. In order to find and formulate the right policies, the atmosphere of free discussion and fraternal criticism is indispensable within the Labour Party. Although we are severe critics of Attlee and his associates, that does not mean, as malicious tongues may insinuate, for want of other arguments, that we serve any interests other than those of the British Labour movement. We believe that the present masters of the Soviet Union have as little concern for the welfare of the British workers as they have for the peoples under their direct domination and for the Communist workers whose aspirations for socialism they so cynically misuse. It is possible to have trust in American labour without submitting to the big business policies of the Truman government; and it is possible to support the anti-imperialist forces in the world without serving as a stooge for the manoeuvres of the Kremlin.

If British Labour strikes out boldly and independently on the road to socialism, it can play a tremendous role in the world to-day. The Tories can do nothing but make enemies for us among other peoples and drag England down to disaster. But a reinvigorated Labour Party can rescue England from capitalist reaction and war, and under the banner of socialism open a new road for the working people of Britain and the entire world.

Any alternative Labour Party leadership, whether it comes from Aneurin Bevan or elsewhere, will have to take up a stand on all the life and death questions confronting us. Are you for continuing the fatal alliance with U.S. imperialism—or for an independent and socialist policy in foreign affairs? Are you with the colonial peoples clamouring for their freedom—or on the side of their capitalist enemies? What do you propose to do now? Mark time and leave Churchill in power for the minimum three years he has demanded—or are you ready to organise *without delay* the movement for Labour's return to power? These are the great questions of the hour—and the "Labour Review" proposes to contribute its share towards their clarification and solution.

We shall appear quarterly. We warmly welcome collaboration—and invite criticism—from all Labour Party members and supporters who see the urgency for a new course and want to work for it. Together let us find out what ways and means can put Labour back in power where it belongs so that our class can resume its march toward Britain's socialist future.

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The next issue of "Labour Review" will deal extensively with the problems of British Labour and the socialist way out.

## THE GERMAN LABOUR MOVEMENT AND REARMAMENT

by W. Sprenger

German rearmament has passed from the realm of controversy into the realm of facts. While international discussion on this subject is as hectic as ever, barracks are being built, airports prepared, former professional soldiers and N.C.O.s quietly registered and assembled, and the nucleus of the future General Staff organised around Herr Blank's offices at Bonn. Very soon young boys born in 1931 and 1932 will be called up in the Army. They are scheduled to serve 18 months, and to be replaced progressively by recruits born in 1933 and 1934. A dozen German divisions, completely motorised and with a heavy percentage of armour, will be set up this year and in 1953 to serve under the supreme command of whoever is to succeed General Eisenhower at the head of SHAPE.

All these facts are generally well known in Germany and throughout Europe. All political parties base their policies on the assumption that German rearmament is going to become a fact in the course of this year; but there is much ground for speculation in another fact, as real and undeniable as the fresh uniforms being turned out by some big textile plants—the overwhelming majority of the German people is strongly opposed to rearmament. Bro. Henri Rolin, former President of the Belgian Senate and leader of the Socialist Party's senate fraction, declared flatly during the latest foreign policy debate in Parliament last November: "Seventy-five per cent of the Germans are against rearmament." If anything, this is an understatement of the facts.

Certainly the present rulers of Western Germany, both Allied and Germans, have to take into account this widespread, though politically unclear and instinctive opposition of the German people to the remilitarisation of their country. This is one of the main reasons why there is no talk about a general mobilisation, or about calling up the

veterans of the last war. Officials are convinced that all those who consciously witnessed the horrors of the last war are unwilling to fight again. Boys born in the early thirties, on the other hand, have only a dim recollection of the last war, no recollection at all of the pre-Nazi period, and the only "normal" conditions they know are those existing since 1948, with many permanently unemployed among them. They are therefore thought likely to consider the Army either as a step towards the solution of their personal problems or as a necessary means to defend the first and only tolerable "way of life" they know.

The widespread opposition to rearmament has not yet found a common political denominator. We must recognise, in fact, that it is inspired by many, and often conflicting, motives. Extreme right-wing groups, like the pro-fascist *Socialist Reichsparty* (led by General Runche, who led the crushing of the July 20 anti-Nazi revolt in 1944) are opposed to rearmament because they refuse to collaborate in any way with occupation powers, which continue for them to be "the enemy". Religious organisations like the Evangelical Church (Niemöller and Heine-mann are its foremost political spokesmen) and the small Roman Catholic Centre party (remnant of a once-powerful organisation, today led by a woman M.P., Mrs. Helen Wessel) have arrived at a position of principled pacifism, declaring that they prefer to lose freedom rather than to see their people lose its life in the coming total war. The Communist Party is of course opposed to rearmament because it defends Russia. However, it cannot succeed in mobilising much popular support because it is identified in the eyes of the people with the Russian occupation powers, which the German masses oppose almost to a man.

It is the Social-Democratic Party of Germany which has up to now canalised the main opposition current to rearmament. Its many victories in regional and parliamentary by-elections — the latest of them scored at Nuremberg, where the S.P.D. gained over 51 per cent of the votes — these victories are due to the fact that to the masses social-democracy symbolises opposition to rearma-

ment. The present political line of the S.P.D. even makes it possible to score on both sides. It combines nationalist and pacifist arguments against a German participation in America's European Army. It stands for complete equality for Germany, and at the same time against the former Officers' Korps and for peace. But it becomes the centre of the opposition to rearmament above all because the German working class, which is the natural stronghold of any struggle against rearmament, considers it as its own party.

Nevertheless, the canalisation by the S.P.D. of popular opposition to rearmament is based on a clearly established confusion. Although the Social Democratic Party, for the masses, appears as the symbol of opposition to remilitarisation, its acknowledged leaders have made it clear that they are not opposed to rearmament on principle, under the present conditions, but only to Herr Adenauer's form of rearmament. Bro. Erich Ollenhauer, Vice-President of the Social Democratic Party, declared in Parliament that his Party stands firmly in favour of "a German contribution to the common defence of the West". He repeated the same statement at the Socialist International's latest General Council meeting. At the same time he made it clear that the German youth would never serve as hired soldiers for a foreign army. "Complete equality of rights" is the S.P.D.'s battle cry in the dispute about rearmament. This battle cry strongly resembles a war cry, for, pushing the idea to its logical conclusion, Bro. Schumacher, President of the S.P.D., has been agitating for the establishment of the western defence lines on the Elbe, i.e. for an "offensive defence strategy". It is too clear what such slogans mean if picked up by Generals and politicians interested in an anti-communist crusade.

For the masses, however, these distinctions are too subtle to be taken into account. They hate rearmament and are irritated against the occupation powers. Schumacher attacks rearmament and criticises the occupation powers. Therefore they will swing their support more and more towards Schumacher. This is a powerful potential strength—these millions ready to fight rearmament. The

S.P.D. itself is somewhat embarrassed about its own strength, for its leadership is not at all ready to take any practical step towards a real fight against rearmament. It places its hopes exclusively in attempts to convince the occupying powers that its own brand of rearmament could be more easily swallowed by the German people than Herr Adenauer's brand. And the occupation powers themselves, conscious of the dangers of letting the social-democracy become, against its own wish, a crystallising point of the opposition to rearmament, seem more and more prepared to go out of their way to bring the S.P.D. into the rearmament line. Of late, leading conservative newspapers have been noting that the Allies seem to accept the S.P.D.'s point of view, at least that the Americans do. (See the French paper *Le Monde*, January 4, and the Swiss paper *Gazette de Lausanne*, January 11, 1952). The Americans are all the more eager to enlist the S.P.D.'s support for their German rearmament plans as they recognise Herr Adenauer's shrinking popularity; and they have great hesitation in supporting the right wing alternatives, which are felt to be most uncontrollable.

Herr Adenauer, on the other hand, has a strategy of his own to "neutralise" working class opposition to rearmament. For more than a year he has been following a line of driving a wedge between the S.P.D. leadership and the leaders of the trade unions. The concessions he granted the trade union leadership in its struggle for "co-determination" in the coal and steel industry have not failed to bring him results. He succeeded in luring the trade union leaders into taking part in bipartite advisory councils, where the "social partners" (this is the new German expression for workers and employers!) discuss economics, prices and wages, instead of fighting it out "at the expense of the national economy . . ." Consequently, the trade union leaders have been embarking more and more on an extreme right wing course of class collaboration. Bro. Fette, President of the German T.U.C., has pronounced himself in public in favour of the Schuman Plan and of remilitarisation, as opposed to the public statements of Bro. Schumacher. At a recent meeting of the trade union

leaders, all presidents of industrial unions agreed to favour the "German contribution to the common defence of the West", with the single exception of Bro. Kuhnert, President of the Transport and Public Services Workers, who voiced some reserves.

The occupying powers, as well as Herr Adenauer's government, are, however, up against a big difficulty. Herr Adenauer has whipped the trade union leaders into line; the occupying powers try to whip the social-democratic leaders into line. But neither the rank and file of the trade unions nor of the social democracy are going to be whipped into line. And the lower and middle functionaries of both these mass organisations are likely to express the reactions of the rank and file. Strong regional organisations, both in the unions and the S.P.D., have already voiced their opposition to any collaboration of their leaders in the rearmament plans of the German bourgeoisie. This has happened in Hesse, it has happened in Bavaria, and it is due to happen elsewhere. From the moment Schumacher ceases to oppose rearmament in the eyes of the workers, the workers will begin to oppose Schumacher's policy in the S.P.D. At the same time, discontent is growing in the unions with the conciliationist and passive attitude of the union leadership towards the continual price rises. Rearmament will spur inflation, will further threaten the real wages and thereby add an economic stimulus to an already politically explosive situation. Growing readiness to struggle in the ranks of the working class, and reflection of this readiness inside the unions and the S.P.D. in a growing opposition to any form of class collaboration: that is the perspective for the coming months. The task of the left wing is to give conscious expression to this instinctive and incipient opposition.

Some social democratic comrades, while criticising any attempt of their leadership to compromise with rearmament, oppose the following reasoning to a concrete plan of action mobilising the working class against remilitarisation: "Rearmament is already a fact. It has been decided over our heads by the occupation powers and the German

bourgeoisie. Nothing can be done to make them reconsider their decision. If the socialist movement takes an entirely negative attitude to rearmament, it will be the reactionaries, the Generals, the Junkers chased away from Eastern Germany, who will inevitably lead the new German Army. They will transform it into an anti-working class army, which will eventually crush the German labour movement like the Nazis did in 1933. The only way to prevent this is to penetrate the army ourselves and to make sure that only good democrats will have the key positions."

A faint echo of these arguments is even to be heard in statements made by responsible leaders of the German labour movement. Jahn, President of the Railway Workers' Union, threatened reaction with a general strike, "Whenever they would try to do away with our democratic liberties". And even Schumacher wrote in the Socialist International's weekly news bulletin (*Socialist International Information*) that, while the German workers do not consider that there is socialism in Eastern Germany, they are resolutely opposed to the reconstitution of private property where it has been abolished. All statements of that kind only express in a veiled manner hesitations, misgivings and doubts which exist in the broadest circles of the German labour movement about any form of integration into the "Atlantic war community".

To answer these arguments is very simple. Isn't it a rather strange idea that American imperialism could give weapons and Herr Adenauer assemble a general staff with any other goal than to crush the labour movement and re-establish private property in the East? The Western German State is a bourgeois state, its army is going to be a bourgeois army, the leading layers of the army are going to be a faithful reflection of the leading layers of society. Social democracy in Germany tried once already, between 1919 and 1933, to "democratise" a bourgeois army. The result was 1933.

On the other hand, if one wants to be able to make a general strike against a reactionary threat in two years' time, it is none too early to start preparing that fight today.

There have been no big political struggles in Germany, mobilising the masses, since 1933. It will be necessary to organise a series of extra parliamentary struggles, of street demonstrations and partial political strikes, before the masses will be prepared to go further. To talk about a general strike today, without *organising* one street demonstration against rearmament today, is to prepare another bitter disappointment for German Socialists tomorrow.

Many German socialists, while they are fully aware of the reactionary implications of their new army, sit aside and sigh: "There is nothing to be done. We are caught this way or another. If we are not crushed by the new *Wehrmacht*, the Russians will come and crush us." Of course, the German workers are right to distrust the Kremlin which has committed terrible crimes against the German people. But the anti-imperialist forces in the world today can by no means be identified with the rulers of the Kremlin. A socialist Germany, together with a socialist Britain, would immediately attract the Eastern European and colonial peoples, who are desperately in need of economic help without political strings. Such a socialist Germany would be able to mobilise every worker for its defence against any foreign threat. And if pushed to its ultimate conclusion, the mobilisation of the German workers against rearmament could place the perspective of a socialist Germany concretely on the agenda. This is a great chance, which the German labour movement has to seize at all costs.

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## AMERICAN LABOUR FACES 1952

by our American Correspondent

The American people, unlike the English, do not live under an austerity regime but in a land "flowing with milk and television sets". Thanks to the Korean War and the rearmament boom, production is going full blast, there is full employment except in the reconversion of the auto industry and a few other spots, and wage levels top the world.

Nineteen fifty-one marks the 11th year of an almost uninterrupted prosperity in the U.S. and all this has considerably affected the psychology and outlook of the American worker. The bureaucracy at the head of the unions has been able to consolidate itself while the better paid sections of the working class have become somewhat soft and smug.

During this period significant shifts have taken place in the relative positions of various sections of the labour movement. By a series of mighty battles against the government and the coal barons under the able leadership of John L. Lewis and aided by the insatiable domestic demand and foreign markets for coal, the miners who were formerly at the bottom of the heap, have climbed towards the top in their wage scales. On the other hand, the railroad workers, once the toplofty aristocrats of American labour, have tumbled from first to 26th place in wages, and have not yet gained even the 40-hour week. Consequently the railroad workers, strait-jacketed by government regulations, split into 21 different craft unions and under the most conservative leaders, remain in a constant state of ferment. By and large, however, because of the spread of union organisation, wages and working conditions have tended to become more and more equalised throughout American industry over the past fifteen years.

The contrast in the material conditions of the workers in the U.S. and England springs from the difference in the positions of their respective imperialisms. The rich and

powerful American colossus can still afford to give a small share of its super-profits to the upper layers of its working class, while impoverished and besieged British imperialism must insist on more and more belt tightening.

### Grievances of the American Workers

Although the material conditions of the average American worker surpass those in Britain or the rest of the world to-day, life is far from being "all beer and skittles". American labour has many growing grievances against the capitalist rulers, and especially against the economic consequences of their system.

The workers are most of all angered at the high cost of living. While production and employment are at their height, the cost of living keeps going up. In October it reached the highest peak in U.S. history. Prices will go still higher in the coming months because Price Stabilisation Director Di Salle recently told a House-Senate Committee he will issue an order "to allow all manufacturers and processors to pass along to consumers cost increases since the start of the Korean conflict". Actually, most of these increases have already been unloaded upon the consumers and are reflected not only in soaring prices but in the enormous profits recorded by the corporations and speculators.

This inflation is bound to continue because of the vast expenditures for the rearmament programme. The Office of Defense Mobilisation calculates that expenditures for military goods, which stood at \$500,000,000 a month at the outbreak of the Korean war, are now proceeding at the rate of \$1,500,000,000. By early spring 1952, they are scheduled to reach \$2,500,000,000 monthly, and by 1953 about \$4,000,000,000 a month.

Higher taxes and rents are the next big grievances of the workers. Each week the worker finds that 20 per cent is deducted from his pay envelope, apart from other federal, state and local taxes. The recent loosening of rent controls confront many workers with heavier monthly

rent payments.

While the profiteers and rent hogs are in clover, the government has clamped a vise on workers' wages through its Wage Stabilisation Board under the pretext that prices, profits and wages would be stabilised together. Actually, prices and profits are permitted to run wild, while the administration's efforts to curb inflation are concentrated on holding the line on the wage freeze. As the November 19 *CIO News* writes: "The stabilization program is a farce and a fraud . . . there are plenty of rules and regulations over wages, and swatting increases in taxes on the average guy—but on price controls or real rent controls, nothing".

The National CIO Convention in early November denounced the wage freeze, rejected any suggestions of shelving the strike weapon, and urged its organisations to try and get the biggest wage increases they can in negotiations with the employers, and then fight the issue out with the Wage Stabilization Board. Labour's fight against the government wage freeze is being spearheaded by the CIO United Steelworkers of America, which is conducting contract negotiations with the U.S. Steel Corporation, "Big Steel".

The eyes of the labour movement are centred on these negotiations which will test the wage freeze. The steelworkers' demands, totalling 20 to 25 cents an hour more, go much beyond the limits prescribed by the Wage Stabilization Board formula. United Steelworkers' President Murray is under heavy pressure not only from the 1,100,000 members of his own union but also from the rest of organised labour. Workers in many places have already conducted work-stoppages to put steam behind the drive to smash the wage freeze.

The widening gap between rising prices and frozen wages has sharply slashed their living standards. The United Nations' Department of Economic Affairs estimates that "real hourly wages after taxes will fall by about eight per cent in 1951". That is part of the price American labour is already paying for the rearmament programme!

Speed-up in the plants is especially agitating the auto workers, another leading union in the CIO. Production workers on the assembly line in the great auto centres of Detroit and Flint are being pushed to exhaustion by the greed of the corporations to squeeze the maximum from them before new restrictions are placed upon civilian auto production. Many wildcat strikes against the speed-up have broken out and not a few stewards and strike leaders have been victimised by the managements as a consequence. The Reuther leadership has done little or nothing either to combat the speed-up or restore these victimised union militants to work.

Resentment against these conditions has expressed itself in the rise of a strong new opposition movement inside the United Automobile Workers' Union against the present Reuther leadership. This opposition is headed by Ford Local 600, the world's largest union local with 60,000 members, and the four UAW locals in Flint, Michigan, which is the heart of the General Motors Empire. Its two chief rallying cries are: "Fight Against the Speed-up" and "Preserve Democracy in the Unions".

The issue of democracy inside the unions is closely connected with the struggle for the defence of democracy in the country as a whole. The "cold war" has strengthened reaction throughout the U.S., and one of the first casualties in the imperialist struggle "for democracy" has been the restriction of the democratic rights of the American people themselves. Any outspoken criticism of Washington's foreign policy from the left is automatically given a red label, and a widespread witch-hunt has been raging in the U.S. without let-up since 1947.

Under prodding from the State Department, this witch-hunt has penetrated deeply into the unions. The CIO leadership have purged all their unions formerly controlled by stooges of the Communist Party, and in certain industries such as maritime it permits the F.B.I. to exclude workers from the job and even expels them from the unions solely because of their radical political opinions or affiliations. The AFL and CIO bureaucrats have co-

operated with the government in carrying through this purge because it has helped them get rid of troublesome opposition elements in their own organisations.

But this witch-hunt is now beginning to boomerang upon the unions themselves and is causing a certain amount of alarm in their leading circles. This could be seen at the recent CIO National Convention. Of course the Convention solidly supported Washington's foreign policy and its resolutions were interlarded with the customary condemnations of "Communism". However, the Convention felt obliged to condemn the Smith Gag Act and the wholesale indictments of the Communist Party leaders under it, as well as the McCarran Law and other instruments of the witch-hunt. It was reported that the administration's loyalty programme, hitherto directed against radical workers, is being extended to workers on strike and on the picket line. This was predicted by the more far-sighted militants in the unions, but now even the bureaucrats are becoming aware that the extension of the witch-hunt can be a serious threat to the very existence of the unions and gives the bosses and reactionaries extremely powerful weapons.

Although in practice the CIO leaders have not given much more than lip-service in the resistance to the witch-hunt, they are opening their eyes a little bit wider to its effects upon their own organisations.

### **American Labour and the War**

By and large, the American workers share the opposition of the British people towards the Korean War. Truman's "police action" is undoubtedly the most unpopular war in American history. There have already been over 100,000 U.S. battle casualties and both the troops and their folks back home are anxious to see the hostilities concluded without further delay. They are extremely impatient with the six months' stalling over armistice negotiations and suspicious of the administration and its generals. As one sergeant in Korea remarked: "If they're going to stop the shooting, they should do it

right now, while I'm still alive".

While all the polls show that the American people are against the Korean War and the workers resent its economic consequences, it must be acknowledged that they do not have quite the same attitude towards the war. U.S. imperialism is preparing against the USSR. Certainly they do not manifest the hostility to that war and the deep distrust of its capitalist instigators that English labour does. The official propagandists have succeeded to a considerable extent in selling many Americans the notion of the necessity and inevitability of their war against the "Communist menace".

It should be remembered that war does not mean the same for the average American as for the European. The two world wars have been times of prosperity, crowned by victory for the U.S. and followed by a big boom. This attitude is reflected in the results of a recent Gallup Poll. The American people "have the illusion", wrote Gallup, "That we can win the Third World War, return quickly home, and live happily ever after. Thus, numerous Americans have told our inquirers: 'War with Russia is inevitable . . . then let's start it and get it over with, and end all our worries.'" This anticipation of an easy and victorious "push-button" war, Gallup concludes, does not take into account that even the victor in the next war will suffer more than the victims of past wars.

This is one reason why the union officials are able to keep the ranks from expressing opposition to the government's foreign policy and to hold them in line with the Truman administration. 1952 is the time of the quadrennial national elections in the U.S. and a new president and part of a new Congress will be chosen in November.

Both the AFL and CIO heads have so far refused to endorse any Presidential candidate, but everyone knows this is merely to improve their bargaining power. But if precedent and inclination are good guides, most of them will end up as before by supporting the Democratic Party. The CIO Communication Workers, fifth largest CIO

union with one of the most conservative leaderships, has already come out for Truman.

The American workers may have autos and television sets, but they lack one of the most important of all instruments of class progress—a mass party of their own. In this respect the British workers are far ahead of their American brothers. The AFL and CIO leaders oppose the formation of an independent Labour Party and continue collaboration with one or another of the big business parties, in return for certain concessions and a lot of promises which are regularly forgotten after election.

Many American workers are disgusted with this two-party merry-go-round, and would welcome a clear call for a national Labour Party based on their powerful trade unions. But although now and then this or that union leader threatens to take the English road, this is meant more as a blackmail device against the Democratic Party chiefs and a warning to modify their course, than as serious preparation for a new political movement.

Organised labour, even without its own party, exercises tremendous political weight in the U.S., and its vote can decide the presidential election, as was demonstrated by Truman's unexpected return to office thanks to his labour support in 1948. How much greater that power and influence will be once it is set free from the capitalist parties and finds expression in the launching of a nationwide independent party of labour! That is bound to come . . . but 1952 does not seem to be the date assigned for it.

*December, 1951.*

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# BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND HER AFRICAN COLONIES

by Paul Dixon

One of the features of the decline of British imperialism over the past few decades has been the growth of centrifugal tendencies which have been wrecking the formerly solid structure of that Empire upon which the sun is reputed "never to set". A significant factor in the development of such tendencies has been, of course, the weakening of the economic (and military) strength of British imperialism as the result of two world wars, and its eclipse by the rise of United States imperialism. But the decisive factor has been the growth of movements for national independence within the countries so long oppressed and exploited by the British ruling class. The decline in the strength of British imperialism has merely facilitated the development and the success of these movements which arise inevitably from the character of imperialist rule itself.

## The Early Lack of National Opposition

From the very beginning the conquest and exploitation of the economically backward and "undeveloped" parts of the world by capitalist Britain met with the resistance of the native populations. But the backwardness, economic and hence social, of these countries, meant that no effective resistance could be offered. The most advanced of them, India, had not advanced beyond a form of feudalism when the British occupation began, and thus was unable to withstand the military technique of even 18th century capitalism. Throughout the greater part of Africa only societies with an even more primitive, tribal form of organisation were met by the forces of British imperialism during its "colonising" expeditions of the 19th century. Naturally the spears of these "savages" were of scant avail against the rifles and Maxim-Nordenfeldt guns.

The impossibility of effective resistance on the part of such societies did not result, however, merely from military factors, significant though these were in the final result. The very character of their social institutions were such

that a developed national consciousness was absent. Europe needed centuries of slow capitalist development to weld its countries into national economic units and hence into political units with a developed national consciousness. Even so, neither Germany nor Italy reached the final stage of this development until the second half of the 19th century. But whereas the unit of capitalist society is the nation with its national market and national industry, the unit of feudal society is really the economically self-sufficient village, and "national" consciousness does not extend beyond its boundaries. Hence the ease with which feudal states are built up out of heterogeneous national units and the rapidity with which they collapse or change rulers. Hence also, therefore, the absence in the early stages of any national opposition to English rule in India. Even the so-called "Mutiny" of the middle of the 19th century was basically only the expression of the discontent of certain feudal elements rather than a mass national movement, and was hence foredoomed to failure.

In Africa a purely tribal consciousness on the part of the inhabitants meant that all that was necessary to establish British domination was military victory, after which the small, scattered and diverse tribal units lacked all possibility for continued resistance.

### **Imperialism Develops National Consciousness**

Though such was the state of affairs in the early days of "Empire building," the very nature of imperialism ensures that it cannot be permanent. The capitalists of the imperialist metropolis needed the undeveloped colonial lands as markets, as source of raw materials and as fields for capital investment. British rule signified the introduction of capitalism and capitalist relationships into what had previously been feudal or tribal societies. The apologists for imperialism have thus been able to indicate with pride the economic progress which has taken place in the colonies. They omit to mention, naturally, that such economic progress has taken place only as a necessary part of the exploitation of the colonies and their inhabitants by British capital. Nor do they state the limited and distorted character of the economic development brought

about by imperialism in its colonies.

The introduction of capitalism causes the emergence within the colonial lands of the classes of capitalist society. It is true that these classes, like the whole economy, tend to be hampered in their development by the fact that capitalist development takes place by, and for the benefit of, foreign imperialism. Thus the emergence of a native capitalist class is checked by the fact that it is foreign capital which has taken possession of the natural resources of the country and which owns the factories, mines, etc., necessary for their commercial exploitation. Likewise, and this particularly applies in Africa, while an unskilled proletariat from among the local population is a necessity, the emergence of a skilled native labour force tends to be hampered by the importation of white labour to fill posts requiring special skill. Nevertheless a native capitalist class and a native proletariat do arise as a result of imperialist exploitation.

At the same time, to the extent of capitalist development of the colony and of the development of the classes of capitalist society amongst the native population, there begins to emerge a developed national consciousness. Almost the only class not affected by this development is that of the former native rulers. One method by which British imperialism consolidated its hold over its colonial territories was through agreements with these former rulers—tribal chiefs in the case of Africa. The British colonial authorities in most cases left them as nominal rulers over their tribes and utilised them as part of the machinery of administration, as tax collectors, etc. Thus closely linked with British imperialism, and at the same time with their social basis completely undermined by economic development, the chiefs tend to become the only wholly anti-national class of the population, thus playing the same role, and for similar reasons, as the princes in British India.

Of course there exist inside the native capitalist society the inevitable class contradictions of capitalism. These may at first be disguised to some extent by the fact that most of the native proletariat is exploited by foreign rather than native capital, but from the beginning the peasants,

having become producers for the local and often the world market, find themselves in the toils of money-lenders from among the native capitalist class. Faced with a serious threat from their "own" proletariat and peasantry the native capitalist class naturally tends to prefer the foreign imperialists as the lesser evil and to unite with these latter against its own toiling people, thus becoming, in its turn, an anti-national class. In any case it is always ready to compromise, upon the basis of relative strengths, with foreign imperialism, rather than risk unleashing the revolutionary action of the masses which it might find impossible to keep within due limits. However, this does not prevent it, before such compromises are reached, from appearing as the leader of the whole native population in the anti-imperialist struggle.

### **Africa Grows in Importance for Imperialism**

With the dramatic decline in the strength of British imperialism over the past few decades, the more developed native bourgeoisies within the British Empire have been able to wrest from it, almost without struggle, compromises most favourable to their interests. Thus the Indian bourgeoisie has been able to secure the complete political withdrawal of Britain from India. Such withdrawal, whatever economic privileges may yet be retained for a time, represents a heavy blow for British imperialism and yet further accelerates its decline. In general, despite the precarious hold still kept upon Malaya, British imperialism can be said to have lost its Asiatic empire.

But in the immediate post-war years, it seemed as though some "imperial" resources might yet remain to it for a considerable time. For the huge territories of Britain's African empire, though rich in natural resources, had in the past not proved particularly attractive to the capitalist investor. Moreover, to start with, these territories had been at a far lower level of economic and social development than the lands of Asia. The nationalist movement in Africa, consequently, was quite undeveloped and appeared to offer no serious obstacle to continued imperialist exploitation.



It seemed to British imperialism and its labour lackeys that some of its losses in Asia could be recouped in Africa. It was, of course, apparent from the start that if this was to be done the resources of the capitalist state would have to be used to prepare the way for the profitable exploitation of the national and human resources of Africa. For its general backwardness of development and, in particular, its almost complete lack of a transport system rendered it an unprofitable field for the private investor. But the capitalist state could, it was hoped, overcome this obstacle by lavish investment of "public" money.

### **Economic Developments in Africa**

With this end, a government corporation was furnished with the necessary funds and the necessary "plans" drawn up. Even the Fabians, with their customary servility to the interests of capitalism, hastened to bring forward their "Plan for Africa", which was to render the whole process more palatable to the British workers by promising that the intensive capitalist exploitation of Africa would be to the advantage of the African natives! Up to date the net result on the economic side has been a demonstration of the futility and wastefulness not, needless to say, of socialist, but of bureaucratic capitalist state planning. The squandering of over £30,000,000 on the unsuccessful ground nut scheme in East Africa and the loss incurred as a result of the Gambia poultry scheme provide eloquent testimony for this.

The Gold Coast is economically and socially one of the most developed African colonies. In the main this has been due to the rapid expansion of the cocoa industry. For years huge quantities of this crop has been produced for the world market. Since the climate of West Africa is not favourable to Europeans—there are only about 3,000 out of a total population of about 4,000,000 in the Gold Coast—cocoa has been produced by African small farmers with the resulting transformation of the original primitive type of agriculture. The consequence has been that the Gold Coast farmer is not only tied to the world market and its fluctuations but that he, in the majority of cases, is forced to pledge his crop or even his farm to

moneylenders, who thus reap the major part of the profit from his crop. These advances on the security of the cocoa crop are often made by large European firms—the cocoa buyers—and a lender expects to obtain a gross profit of 100 per cent on his loan after from two to nine months!

It is typical of the one-sided, distorted economic development brought about by capitalism in its colonies that the cocoa crop has not only virtually eliminated all other export crops, but that the country has even ceased to be self-sufficient so far as food crops are concerned. Thus a serious decline in the demand for cocoa on the world market would signify the complete ruin of Gold Coast agriculture. Even as things are, the position is described by the Fabian Rita Hinden ("Plan for Africa") as follows:

"Compared with other Africans, the Gold Coast peasants are wealthy. Yet they are so much poorer than they might have been. The industry is sunk in debt and bad management; disease is spreading; yields are falling; the future is viewed with disquiet by all intelligent observers. There is an element of tragedy in the situation."

Imperialism has also developed the mineral resources of the country—gold, diamonds and manganese. But mining, though carried on by native labour, is under direct European control and ownership. Amazing profits have been made by the big mining companies over a period of many years. The writer just quoted estimates that in the years 1936-38 the value of mineral exports averaged £5,377,000 annually. Of this sum about £2,500,000 represented the profits of the companies and was, of course, taken out of the country for distribution to their shareholders. On the other hand, the average annual wages paid by the companies during those same years came to £993,000 and were distributed amongst some 37,500 native workers, which means that the average wage of these latter was one shilling and fivepence per day! Apart perhaps from the few hundred pounds annually paid in local taxes by the companies, such has been the share of the local population in the intensive capitalist exploitation of their mineral resources.

Since no economic development other than cocoa production and mining has offered suitable prospects of profit to the imperialist exploiters, none has been undertaken. Cocoa production and mining alone, however, has been sufficient to transform the whole primitive social structure of the country and to create a class of debt-burdened small farmers and a mining proletariat.

### **Political Developments**

From the point of view of British imperialism, the recent economic failures of the government corporation have not been the most disturbing feature of the situation. After all, further investments could be made from the resources of the capitalist state and might eventually be expected to lead to some results being attained. It has been the political developments in Britain's African colonies, limited though they have as yet been in their scope, which have given the most ominous auguries for the future of Britain's African Empire. In recent months the political developments in the small West African colony of the Gold Coast have clearly foreshadowed the future of the whole of Britain's "possessions" in Africa.

The inevitable political consequences of the resistance to imperialism have become very apparent in recent months. The spectacular rise of the Convention People's Party shows that the most advanced colony of British Africa is travelling the same road as India. The C.P.P. is not, of course, a proletarian party any more than is the Indian Congress Party. It is a bourgeois nationalist party. But its leaders have known how to mobilise mass support for their nationalist programme among the whole population. They are able to do this at present without much fear that the movement should get out of hand so far as they are concerned, since no revolutionary party with a socialist labour programme, which could become a menace to them, at present exists in the Gold Coast.

The new Gold Coast constitution was designed to sidetrack the growing nationalist movement. As a writer in the *Daily Telegraph* of February 19, 1951, put it, the framers of this constitution "arranged that less than half the new Parliament should be popularly elected and even

then mostly indirectly, and they provided every opportunity through a parallel system of election by responsible tribal authorities for the representation . . . of a great variety of African interests economic as well as political". But alas, the writer goes on, "the constitution makers have miscalculated the strength in Africa, of the crudest kind of appeal to a newly awakened and ignorant nationalism" (!) and "the party ready to make that appeal has won all the popular seats but two and has brought an irresistible influence to bear upon the privileged electors also. It can almost certainly command an absolute majority in the new House and it boasts a moral ascendancy which no African dare at this moment openly challenge. Thus," he goes on, "the internal checks and balances of the constitution have become inoperative and African and European are left facing each other across the newly made political arena."

Of course, this new constitution is a mockery, in so far as real power continues to remain in the hands of the British Governor. Moreover, the nationalist leaders themselves, after their electoral victory, hasten to make "moderate" speeches. They are no doubt willing for some sort of temporary compromise with British imperialism. But at the same time they have been forced at this stage under popular pressure to make demonstrations that they are not going to sell out to British imperialism. As the same number of the *Daily Telegraph* reports: "He (Nkruma) also announced that C.P.P. Ministers would refuse to live in 'palatial official bungalows' . . . C.P.P. Members of Parliament and Ministers would surrender their salaries to the party and draw an agreed sum from party funds. . . A minister's salary under the new constitution is £2,500 a year and many observers held that this alone would lead to a rapid change in the outlook of the C.P.P. leadership once the sweets of office were obtained."

Whatever may be the immediate outcome of events in the Gold Coast, there can be no doubt that the plans of British imperialism for an intensified exploitation of its African colonies are doomed to failure. The rise of the C.P.P. in the Gold Coast foreshadows the spread of active Negro nationalism over the whole continent.

## VIEWPOINT

### After Washington

Churchill's visit to Washington coincided with top level military talks on Far Eastern affairs. In addition to leading U.S. "big brass", representatives from the British and French chiefs of staff participated. The conclusions quickly materialised. General Templar, a notoriously cruel and reactionary military man, was despatched to Malaya to speed the murder of poor workers and peasants. Picked troops from Chiang Kai Shek's army under American officers violated Burmese territory to lay the basis for military aggression against China. On the diplomatic field, pressure from Washington forced Japan to recognise the bandit government of Chiang Kai Shek, whilst Churchill implies sympathy with this line in his speech to Congress.

These events lead only to one conclusion: Yankee imperialism plans an early extension of the Korean battlefields to new fronts in Asia.

### Will They Succeed ?

Wall Street's latest attacks against the colonial people are acts of desperation. The great movement for national liberation gathers scope day by day. Korea, Malaya and Persia, and now Egypt. The Muslim world seethes with revolt.

It is reported in the Press that American Congressmen roared with laughter when Churchill requested that U.S. troops be sent to the Suez—but that old reactionary is not such a fool as the political hill-billies imagine. What confronts Yankee imperialism today is not a rival or group of rival imperialist powers, but a great colonial revolution which will presently set the whole world alight with the flames of revolt. As the oldest and shrewdest representatives of his class, Churchill knows that U.S. imperialism must intervene everywhere the banner of freedom is raised. In spite of all its "push-button" war preparations, the life blood of young American soldiers must eventually colour the waters of the Nile as it has the River Han. There is

no other way for imperialism.

To be for peace today is to exert our last ounce of strength to defeat the enslavement policies of the Truman-Churchill axis. This means giving the fullest possible support to the movement for colonial freedom which is sweeping Asia and the Middle East. If the working people in the countries of imperialism join hands in struggle with their colonial brothers, the imperialists will never succeed.

### **What We Must Do**

There is a powerful feeling to friendship for the Chinese people within the British Labour movement, but that by itself is not enough. To help China it is necessary not only to support the fight for colonial freedom everywhere, but to fight actively against the war preparations right here in Britain.

It is treachery and hypocrisy to deplore the Tory policy towards China and at the same time support the rearmament programme and the industrial switch to war production. Yet there are people in the Labour Party and trade unions who do precisely this. The National Council of Labour express verbal opposition at Churchill's references to China in his speech to Congress, but at the same time they readily agree to the Tory plans for a job switch to rearmament—that same rearmament drive whose purpose it is to produce the guns, tanks and planes eventually to attack the Chinese mainland.

Fortunately the anti-war feeling of the rank and file is growing all the time. People are beginning to understand that the purpose of rearmament is to wage war, and are pledging themselves to oppose it with all their might.

The task before British Labour is to intensify the struggle against all war preparations. The keynote of this policy must be centred in the demand "Force the Tories to Resign"—"For a new Labour Government pledged to utilise the country's resources to improve living standards and not for war preparations". Only those who fight along these lines can claim to show real sympathy with the colonial peoples.

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