

Labour Review

THE WAY TO SOCIALISM IN BRITAIN

By G. Healy

***A Full Analysis of Bevan's
New Book***

6d.

CONTENTS

Vol. 1 No. 2

May/August

	Page
HOW DID THE BRITISH CAPITALISTS ACHIEVE POWER?	3
OLIVER CROMWELL AND ANEURIN BEVAN	5
BEVANISM VERSUS MARXISM	7
SOME MERITS OF HIS CASE	9
BRITISH LIBERALISM, POLITICAL DEMOCRACY AND PARLIAMENTARISM	11
HOW DEMOCRATIC IS PARLIAMENT?	14
HOW DEMOCRATIC IS THE BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM	15
THE WAY TO INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY	18
A DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIALIST FOREIGN POLICY FOR BRITAIN	21
THE COLONIAL QUESTION	25
THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, THE SOVIET UNION AND THE STALINIST BUREAUCRACY	28
A SOCIALIST ANTI-WAR FOREIGN POLICY	30
THE HEALTH SERVICE; SAFEGUARDS AGAINST INFLA- TION; THE DECADENCE OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE ...	31
METHODS OF WORKING CLASS ACTION	34
IS PARLIAMENT THE SOLE ROAD TO SOCIALISM? ...	40
PROSPECTS OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE	41
THE ROAD TO POWER	43

LABOUR REVIEW

Vol. 1 No. 2

May/August, 1952

THE ROAD TO SOCIALISM IN GREAT BRITAIN

Aneurin Bevan's new book *In Place of Fear* has the merit of speeding straight to the basic problem before the working class of Great Britain today. The problem is this. How can the Socialist movement transfer supreme power from the capitalists to the organised working class; replace the bureaucratic state machinery with a democratic workers' government; concentrate ownership and control of all the productive resources in the hands of the producers to be used for the reconstruction of our country along Socialist lines ?

This problem has confronted the British working class for a long while. Without referring to earlier developments, it was posed by the very formation of the Labour Party which set itself the goal of taking over from the capitalist rulers on a socialist programme. Between the two World Wars it was most notably thrust forward on the arena of mass action by the Shop Stewards' movement up to 1919, the Triple Alliance strike of the miners, railroad and transport workers in 1919, and the General Strike of 1926. It was presented on the parliamentary plane by the minority Labour governments of 1924 and 1929. It has been sharply posed by the achievements and even more, by the shortcomings and defaults, of the majority Labour governments of 1945 and 1950.

Today the return of Churchill's government to Westminster, which gravely menaces the welfare of the workers and the peace of the world, makes a radical solution of this problem unpostponable. The failures of the right-wing Labour Party leaders and the insistent demands of the ranks for a definitive conquest and consolidation of workers'

power is lifting Mr. Bevan to the forefront of the Labour Party! All this gives his ideas on the subject exceptional importance.

Mr. Bevan materialistically explains how the problem of power irresistibly arises in the consciousness of thinking workers from the whole historical background of their class and the harsh realities of their lives and jobs. "We were surrounded by the established facts of the Industrial Revolution. We worked in pits, steelworks, foundries, textiles, mills, factories. These were the obvious instruments of power and wealth . . . We were the products of an industrial civilisation and our psychology corresponded to that fact . . . Society presented itself to us as an arena of conflicting social forces . . ." (pp. 1-2).

Mr. Bevan designates the three main social forces as "private property, poverty and democracy". (p. 2). This is far from accurate, because social forces in the scientific sense are classes of people having definite relations to existing types of property and specific functions in the processes of production. From this standpoint the class structure of Britain is constituted by capitalists, wage-workers, and a varied range of groupings which are a buffer between them. Correctly considered, democracy is not a social force, although of course it has important consequences and significance in society. Democracy, like its opposite dictatorship, is a *political* form, an institution of government arising out of and based upon the relations and struggles of the diverse classes within a country.

It is precisely the development of these class relations which presents the problem of power to the working class of this country in its present form. Supremacy in Great Britain still resides with private property in the shape of "wealth, great wealth, concentrated in comparatively few hands." As Mr. Bevan eloquently proves, this economic and political power of the capitalist rulers is pitted against "a working class forming the vast majority of the nation, living under conditions which made it deeply conscious of inequality and preventable poverty." (p. 11). (And, it may be added, dying by millions at least once a generation in

wars to save the Empire of their exploiters from the assaults of capitalist rivals, or the uprisings of oppressed colonial peoples).

The whole art of Conservative politics in the 20th century, says Mr. Bevan, has consisted in the following: "How can wealth persuade poverty to use its political freedom to keep wealth in power?" (p. 3-4). But this art has grown less and less effective as the workers have caught on to the Tory game, repudiated Liberalism, and given allegiance to the Labour Party. But right-wing leaders of the Labour Party, from Mr. MacDonald to certain contemporaries which Mr. Bevan diplomatically refrains from naming, have followed non-Socialist or semi-Socialist policies which ended up with substantially the same results. Wealth has stayed in the saddle while poverty trudges behind. The art of Socialist politics, according to Mr. Bevan, is to put Labour in power so that it can use its political functions to get rid of private property and abolish poverty. That is absolutely correct. That is the genuine Socialist method for eliminating the hopelessly diseased and dying capitalist system and putting Britain on new healthy economic foundations.

Only the organised workers can do this job. But how can they best get on with the task? Here we come to the hub of the matter. For upon the correct answer to this question, in principle and in practice, depends the future of the British Labour movement and a successful outcome to its strivings for a better life.

What does Aneurin Bevan say on this vital matter? What is right and what is wrong with his conclusions? How must the genuine Socialists of the Labour Left approach and answer these burning questions? These are the points we propose to discuss in this review.

HOW DID THE BRITISH CAPITALISTS ACHIEVE POWER?

Mr. Bevan wishes to place the art of working class politics on secure scientific foundations. "Science does not scrap the text books so that each generation can start the

adventure of finding out anew. It piles up a corpus of reasonably exact knowledge within which it can move with a sure touch on the periphery of the uncharted." (p. 36). What, then, could be more scientific than to study the experiences of past class struggles so that the workers may learn from them how to conduct their own? Mr. Bevan draws many lessons from British Labour history. But he does not go back far enough. One of the most instructive chapters in British history is how the capitalist possessors of state power gathered it in their hands.

It is no secret, however much they try to conceal the facts or obscure their meaning, that the 17th century ancestors of the present capitalist rulers took power and held it by revolutionary means. There was a Parliament in Cromwell's time too, which by the ruling class standards of King Charles' day, was considered rather democratic and representative of the nation's interests. Nevertheless in order to defeat the monarchy, nobility, feudal proprietors and Episcopacy, the Puritan merchants, squires and yeomen could not avoid some extremely drastic extra-parliamentary actions. To arrive at power and consolidate it, they not only had to get command of Parliament. They had to behead a king, arm the Puritan masses, conduct a civil war against the counter-revolution, and set up an iron dictatorship for an entire period.

Parliament itself was subjected to many changes during these events. Shaken and shattered by the clash of contending social forces in the country, Parliament was amputated both from the right and from the left, subordinated to Cromwell's government and the Puritan Army, twice dispersed and twice restored until finally it dissolved itself. Out of these severe struggles at the close of the century there emerged the new capitalist society with the sovereignty of Parliament.

Thus the British workers are not only children of the Industrial Revolution; they are equally heirs of the political revolutions of the 17th century which prepared the way for the economic transformations of the Industrial Revolution at the end of the 18th century.

A student of British history may well conclude that the working class will not meet less resistance from the upholders of capitalism than the capitalist revolutionists of the 17th century met from the defenders of feudalism. In any event, they would be wise not to count upon benevolence from their class enemy in the decisive period of revolutionary change. Mr. Bevan, however, believes that no historical parallel may be drawn in this respect between the 17th century revolution and the 20th century revolution of the proletariat.

OLIVER CROMWELL AND ANEURIN BEVAN

Times have changed since Oliver Cromwell. The social and political conditions of the class struggle are fundamentally dissimilar and therefore different methods must be adopted. What, according to Mr. Bevan, are the essential differences between the two epochs which will permit the British workers to win supreme power in a different manner than the British capitalists of three centuries before ?

They are based precisely on the political conquests made by that earlier revolution and extended by the mass struggles of the three centuries since. In Cromwell's time England had no real democracy. It was governed by an extremely restricted Parliament and a thoroughly reactionary autocratic regime. Now Great Britain enjoys complete political democracy and has deep-rooted traditions of effecting social changes through parliamentary channels.

What need, then, can there be for any decisive class action outside of Parliament and apart from it ? The tasks of reconstructing capitalist society can be taken care of through legislative measures enacted by a dynamic Parliament and enforced and administered by an audacious Socialist government. This is the axis of the arguments in Mr. Bevan's book and the mainspring of his political programme and outlook.

Mr. Bevan says he is not opposed to revolutionary means of action at all times and under all conditions. This separates him from the right-wing leaders and Fabian

theorists of gradualism who deny the right or the necessity of revolution in principle. But Mr. Bevan holds that other peoples and other countries, such as colonial peoples not now in the British Empire, who do not enjoy the blessings of democracy or the traditions of British Parliamentaryism may well be justified in resorting to direct action and armed struggles if no other means of combating tyranny are open to them. Even the British working class in less happy days when democratic institutions were closed to them, found themselves obliged to use forcible means of resistance against oppression, and undertake mass actions outside of Parliament to win rights and reforms.

But this belongs to Britain's past. Here and now our workers would be ill-advised to use such rough and tough tactics because they possess all the instruments of a perfected democracy to achieve their class aims. Stick to the tried and true parliamentary road, travel it to the end. The House can do the job. That is the best way, the British way, the democratic way. Such is the main message of Mr. Bevan's book.

British workers are accustomed to hear this kind of advice from Tories, Liberals and right-wing Labour Party leaders in their tow. But Mr. Bevan states that his conception of Parliamentaryism is the opposite of theirs. They all assign to Parliament a largely negative role, limited to easing and adjusting friction between the classes or repairing this or that malfunction of the constitutional regime and the capitalist economy. Mr. Bevan proposes that Parliament perform the most positive functions. They amount to nothing less than reconstituting the entire governmental system and carrying through the Socialist revolution. For him Parliament can and must become "the decisive instrument of social change." The British Parliament, he writes, "interprets its own authority, and from it there is no appeal. This gives it a revolutionary quality, and enables us to entertain the hope of bringing about social transformation, without the agony and prolonged crises experienced by less fortunate nations." (p. 100).

Thus Mr. Bevan, as a prospective director of the developing socialist struggle in Great Britain, proposes to do what

Oliver Cromwell, with all his power and wisdom, could not. He aims to effect a thorough-going reconstruction of British society from its economic foundations to its political heights exclusively through Parliament and its associated institutions, without relying upon other forms of working class action.

BEVANISM VERSUS MARXISM

Aneurin Bevan pays tribute to what he has learned from the Marxist school of political thought which "put into the hands of the working class movement of the late nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth centuries the most complete blueprint for political action the world has ever seen." (p. 17). In this favourable attitude towards Marxism Mr. Bevan differs from most other leading figures of the Labour Party whose incapacity to learn from their own experiences is matched only by their refusal to learn from the great European revolutionary socialists.

At the same time Mr. Bevan expresses fundamental disagreements with Marx, Engels and Lenin, and counterposes his views to the "classic principles of Marxism," especially on the question of parliamentary democracy. Lenin, following Marx and Engels, taught the workers that the state in capitalist society is not an institution that flies above the classes like a disembodied spirit. The state serves as "the executive committee of the ruling class." This holds true even of the most democratic republics in which the capitalist class retains their property and power, and especially of the imperialist powers. Such a state cannot be neutral or impartial in the conflicts between capital and labour; it does not enforce a code of ideal justice by mere persuasion or peaceful means. It is "an agency of coercion," employing such means of compulsion as armies, police, lawcourts, prisons, etc.

The "classic Marxists" further taught that class antagonisms will flare into raging conflicts so long as the main means of production are controlled by the capitalists and the mass of labourers on the land and in industry are dispossessed. These recurrent conflicts are bound to

culminate in a showdown for power in which fanatical defenders of the old order will fight to the death to preserve their privileged status and wealth. In the course of these struggles, the workers will be compelled to do more than reform the old machinery of the state. They will be called upon by the needs of the struggle itself to demolish and scrap it.* In its place they will have to create new organs of action and institutions of their rule which will enable the workers to overwhelm the resistance of the old ruling classes and clinch supreme power. In this way the false and restricted democracy allowed by the capitalist system will give way to the full and free democracy of the revolutionary working class and its allies.

Mr. Bevan is familiar with these propositions of classic Marxism. But they do not, in his opinion, apply to Great Britain today. Certain exceptional conditions prevail in our country which invalidate these guiding rules of scientific socialism, he believes. What are these extraordinary circumstances?

1. The government of Great Britain and its state machinery have to some extent already been, and can be, completely transformed from a coercive instrument of the imperialists, capitalists and Tories into an instrument of the working class. In fact, such has been the basic trend of political development in the 20th century. Democracy opens the possibility for this capitalist regime to be made over into the chief agency for transferring political and economic power to the working masses.

2. The indispensable instrument for bringing about this "revolution by consent" is Parliament. Parliament "is a

* The Puritans understood that the old autocratic and aristocratic Government of Charles I could not simply be taken over and adapted to the needs of the revolution but had to be broken up and renovated, as Macaulay points out. "That the ancient constitution and the public opinion of England were directly opposed to regicide made regicide seem strangely fascinating to a party bent on effecting a complete political and social revolution. In order to accomplish their purpose, it was necessary that they should first break in pieces every part of the machinery of government; and this necessity was rather agreeable than painful to them."—*History of England*, chap. 1.

weapon and the most formidable weapon of all, in the struggle." (p. 29).

3. Such an orderly transformation of society by easy stages, by peaceful means and democratic techniques is the only alternative to catastrophic conflicts and disorderly upheavals, which will lead either to a Fascist or a Communist dictatorship.

4. This road to socialism is almost exclusively British. Other countries, even including the United States, do not have the special conditions, at least to the same degree, since Parliament does not have an equally eminent place in their political life and national traditions. But it is especially suited to the psychology, habits and desires of the British people and the working class.

This is the gist of Mr. Bevan's case for dynamic Parliamentaryism. He submits this philosophy as the alternative to the Marxist prescriptions for conducting the class struggle to workers' power and socialism.

SOME MERITS OF HIS CASE

Mr. Bevan's arguments are not to be lightly dismissed. They correspond to some peculiar features of British political life which have to be weighed and examined in objective fashion. The very fact that a leader of the Labour Left like Mr. Bevan himself gives so exalted a place to Parliament is additional testimony to the exceptional value attached to it. It is unquestionable that esteem for this institution is greater here than in any other country. In France Parliament has become a laughing stock, but it is still taken with tremendous seriousness by all classes and their representatives in Great Britain. Every political leader of the working class must take this special feature of our political psychology into account.

The overwhelming majority of the workers still share this general respect for Parliament and look toward it for action on their behalf. But that is only one side of the situation. Their confidence in Parliament ebbs and flows in accord with the evolution of their struggles and class understanding. In 1945, when they voted Labour to power the workers

expected much, if not everything, to come from and through action at Westminster. They are not quite so naive and confident about this nowadays, after the experiences of the past seven years. And when the Tories control Parliament or their own party leaders mark time or slide backward, their trust in Parliament can subside very swiftly and considerably.

As a rule, British workers take a realistic and practical attitude towards Parliament. When Labour representatives there appear to be doing the job they have been elected to do, they are willing and even eager to extend credit to Parliament. But, as has happened only too often, when the opposite turns out to be the case, the disillusioned and dissatisfied workers look for other ways and means to make their energy felt and their demands known to the powers-that-be.

The British workers are also profoundly attached to democracy. This is by no means the same, as Mr. Bevan implies, as a veneration for Parliament. It is a much broader and deeper sentiment. In fact, Parliament often outrages the democratic feelings of the British people by its violations of democracy, or its indifference towards the rights of other peoples. This is the case with the colonial wars it sanctions or, to take a fresh example, its treatment of the African Seretse Khama. And how much respect does the ordinary worker have, or should he have, for the present Tory-manipulated Parliament which he feels to be a fraud even from the standpoint of representing the electoral majority.

This ingrained democracy is one reason why British Labour has such contempt for the British Communist Party and pays no heed to its solicitations. Our workers cannot abide any cult of "infallible leaders" whether they are named Pollitt or Stalin.* They want to maintain full right

* "I have listened for two days to what the Chairman called a 'debate' on Pollitt's and Gollan's speeches. But it was like no other debate you hear in Britain. There was no argument; no opposition. Each speaker rapturously agreed with what Pollitt or Gollan had said in every particular. There was no criticism of even the tiniest detail."—DUDLEY BARKER's report of the British Communist Party Congress, *Daily Herald*, April 14, 1952. —This report has not been denied by the *Daily Worker*.

of free and fair discussion in their organisations. This spirit of rank-and-file democracy likewise makes them suspicious of any attempts by right-wing Labour Party or trade union leaders to suppress discussion or criticism on major policy questions. Such devotion to democracy is one of the principal safeguards of the health and progress of our Labour movement.

This much must be conceded to Mr. Bevan's thesis. If the passage of effective power from the magnates of great wealth to the masses of workers could proceed harmoniously, gradually, and without convulsions, that would offer enormous advantages for the next steps in the transition from capitalism to socialism. It would be the most economical, efficient and desirable mode of realising the inevitable changes which are already long overdue and cannot be further postponed if Britain is to move forward. It would involve the least sacrifices for the British nation—and who would want to do such things the hard way if an easier were accessible ?

The question then comes down to this. How realistic are Mr. Bevan's proposals ? Does he take into account all the factors at work in the situation, and can Parliamentarism do the job along the lines he projects ?

BRITISH LIBERALISM, POLITICAL DEMOCRACY, AND PARLIAMENTARISM

Political democracy has had a long and hard pull in Great Britain, writes Mr. Bevan. But since the General Elections of 1929, which were the first on the basis of complete adult suffrage, we have had a matured democracy. Mr. Bevan credits Liberalism with this achievement. "Its intention was to win power for the new forms of property thrown up by the Industrial Revolution. Its achievement was to win political power for the people irrespective of property." (p. 8). If we may believe Mr. Bevan, Liberalism, against its will, accomplished the political revolution of achieving "the sovereignty of the people in Parliament."

He is much too generous with Liberalism and misrepresents its historical role. Liberalism took over the

task of holding the fort for capitalism against the advancing hosts of Labour. It was able to do this for many decades, but it had to pay a certain price to hold the upper ranks of the working class in line with the capitalist regime. This was the prime reason for whatever concessions and reforms the Liberals accorded to the workers. But these were primarily obtained through demands and pressures exerted by the Labour movement, not from the generosity or goodwill of the Liberal governments. And even these reforms were doled out in miserly fashion. Mr. Bevan himself recalls how the Liberal leaders long opposed giving the vote to women.

Once Liberalism could no longer fulfil its functions of forestalling and frustrating the forward movement of the masses, its political mission was exhausted. The capitalist class had no further use for this political instrument of deception, while the workers shifted their support to the Labour Party. That is why the Liberal Party is ready for the undertaker.

Mr. Bevan's idealisation of bourgeois Liberalism is linked with his habit of idealising bourgeois democracy. From 1929 on, he says, "there was fully developed political liberty, expressing itself through constitutional forms which had matured for many centuries, and had as their central point an elected assembly commanding the respect of the community." (p. 11).

To say the least, this is highly exaggerated; to tell the truth, it is downright misleading about the present system of parliamentary democracy under capitalist rule in Great Britain today. Mr. Bevan himself points out not a few imperfections in this "fully developed political liberty." Although he, too, believes in the religion of parliamentary democracy, he belongs among the left-wing Dissenters. He is not an orthodox worshipper at the shrine.

His book makes some illuminating observations on Parliament. He describes how "the atmosphere of Parliament, its physical arrangements, its procedure, its semi-ecclesiastical ritual" (p. 5) are designed to overawe the representatives of Labour and bring them to their knees in

prostration before the past and the powers-that-be. This helps explain the behaviour of many Labour M.P.s who speak far more strongly against entrenched wealth in their constituencies than they act in the House of Commons.

This accords with the historic function of Parliament which is quite different from Mr. Bevan's conception. "The function of parliamentary democracy, under universal franchise, historically considered, is to expose wealth-privilege to the attack of the people. It is a sword pointed at the heart of property-power. The arena where the issues are joined is Parliament", he writes. (p. 5).

This is so one-sided as to be completely misleading. Parliament was created by capitalism as a form of its own rule to promote its class interests. It has been maintained to safeguard wealth-privilege against the attacks of the people by obstructing their demands and taming their representatives. This "sword pointed at the heart of property-power" has turned out to be blunted at the edge. After 300 years of Parliament, and even six years of a majority Labour Government, the heart of that property-power still survives.

We will discuss later whether Parliament actually is, as Mr. Bevan says, "the arena where the issues joined." But even he recognises the role of the House of Commons in distorting the will of the people and protecting the power of property, when he writes:

"In one sense the House of Commons is the most unrepresentative of representative assemblies. It is an elaborate conspiracy to prevent the real clash of opinion which exists outside from finding an appropriate echo within its walls. It is a social shock-absorber placed between privilege and the pressure of popular discontent." (p. 7).

This is well said and deserves to be held clearly in view whenever Parliament is under consideration. Mr. Bevan rightly complains that the House of Commons does not provide adequate facilities for M.P.s of moderate means. An even more fundamental defect is that the House does not provide adequate facilities for representing the people. Its own foundations are far from perfect democracy.

HOW DEMOCRATIC IS PARLIAMENT?

Parliament, for example, conscripts youth at 18 years for military purposes, and yet it does not permit them to vote. They are old enough to fight, die, and thereby decide the destiny of England. But they do not have the right to cast a ballot until they reach 21.

During the life of Parliament, which can last five years and in exceptional cases a decade, the electorate has no way of controlling its representatives by recall. Thus a Labour M.P., voted into office on a given programme and definite promises, can flout that programme and still retain his mandate. This is not very democratic. Moreover, too many seats in the House of Commons, including Labour seats, go to those who have advantages of birth, money, and education, while workers in the shops lack parliamentary delegates from their own ranks close to their interests and feelings.

The tenure of Parliament is far too long in these times of rapidly changing conditions. Parliament should be re-elected by statute more often than every five years. It will be recalled that the People's Charter over one hundred years ago called for annual elections. The war-time Parliament lasted ten years without going once to the people during that time. Its unrepresentative character was demonstrated by the fact that the voters got rid of Churchill's "Long Parliament" the moment they were given the chance in 1945.

We have also recently seen that Parliament is unable to exercise control over its own executives in the government. M.P.s themselves are kept ignorant in matters of life-and-death importance. Labour expects the Tories to connive behind the people's backs. But what is to be thought of those heads of a Labour government, who entered into secret agreements with Washington on China and Korea which could involve us in war, without informing the House, let alone the nation?

Finally, even if Parliament can be considered the ideal democratic representative of the United Kingdom, it is

certainly not the freely chosen representative of the colonial peoples. They are held against their wills within the Empire. By what standards of democracy does the British Parliament, elected exclusively by voters within Great Britain, arrogate to itself the privilege of legislation for tens of millions of people in Asia, Africa and elsewhere? Before the British Parliament can approach genuine political democracy, it would first have to forfeit every one of the arbitrary powers it imperially exercises over the colonies.

HOW DEMOCRATIC IS THE BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM ?

Parliament may be "the central point", as Mr. Bevan writes, but it is only one of the stones in the government structure. The rest of the institutions making up our political system—the House of Lords, the Monarchy, the State Church, the swollen bureaucracy, the police, M.I.5, the judicial system, the Army, and the Big Business press—have incomparably less claim to democratic functions.

The House of Lords—that non-elected chamber composed in the vast majority of landlords and industrial magnates—survives in our government like a vermiform appendix bequeathed from feudalism. As Mr. Bevan knows, "political discussions in the House of Lords are concentrated expressions of group prejudice" (p. 101). He warns against new dangers which may emanate from this obsolete Upper House as the result of the nationalisations. "It has become the practice to make the chairman of the Boards of nationalised industries peers. Thus you have a gradual concentration of economic power in the House of Lords". (p. 99). Labour certainly did not intend to disperse the power of the monopolists in order to substitute "a gradual concentration of economic power" among titled bureaucrats.

Mr. Bevan reveals that "if a member of the House of Commons wishes to question any part of the administration of a nationalised industry, he must write to one of their lordships, and if he is not satisfied, he cannot raise the issue in the House of Commons." (p. 99). Thus we learn from him that neither the workers nor their political

representatives are masters of the nationalised industries. They must petition like humble tenants for an administrative accounting—which their Lordships are not required to give!

The Tories want to “strengthen the Second Chamber under the respectable guise of ‘reforming’ it,” (p. 100) says Mr. Bevan. As a first step they propose to restore the University Seats. Mr. Bevan is rightly opposed to this “retreat from democracy” and insists that well enough be let alone. “Our present political institutions are adequate for all our purposes.” (p. 102). But a thoroughgoing democracy would quickly do away with this useless and potentially dangerous assembly of landlords and industrial magnates, in favour of a single House with unrestricted legislative powers.

Above the House of Lords rises the Throne. This hereditary and expensive relic of mediaevalism can equally well be pensioned off and dispensed with, despite Churchill’s creed that an ideal democracy must wear a crown on its head. In times of stress the monarchy, too, can become a rallying point for reactionary forces, as our revolutionary forebears found out. We hold with them that, to be really democratic, a people’s government must be a republic.

In other republics the Church is separated from the State; the two are not joined together as in England. The fusion of Church and State today characterises the most reactionary of regimes, such as the undisguised dictatorships of Franco in Spain and Salazar in Portugal. Of course, the official church in Britain does not play the same sinister role in England as in those Catholic countries, but the state support it enjoys cannot be justified on any democratic grounds.

Cabinets and governments may come and go, but the high civil servants remain from one administration to the next. These bureaucrats constantly increase in numbers and in powers as the state intervenes in more and more spheres and expands its functions. This conservatised section of the government machinery, full of prejudices against Labour, will surely have to be renovated from top to bottom

and subjected to constant check and control by the working class before it can be considered halfway democratic.

The State is more than Parliament, the House of Lords, the Monarchy and the civil servants; it also includes the lawcourts, the police and the prisons. These form part of the organised apparatus of compulsion at the disposal of the ruling class. The courts and the police are not only used against striking workers, as the dockers can testify. They also help to enforce all the sacred rights of capitalist property such as the right to extract wealth from the labour of the working class and spend it without regard for the welfare of society.

This kind of force, to be sure, is considered lawful under the present system. But is it just? And is it used justly? And what relation has it to democracy?

"A free press is an essential condition for the functioning of a democracy," (p. 165) writes Mr. Bevan. He then goes on to demonstrate with facts and figures how unfree the press is today. He points out that the capitalist United States "with one-fifteenth of the world's population, consumed in 1950 well over two-thirds of the world newsprint supplies. It had increased its average pre-war consumption per head by 50 per cent, while the United Kingdom suffered a decrease of more than 50 per cent . . . Over the past year the price of paper has gone up 100 per cent . . . the consequences of all this for Britain are further aggravated by the concentration of newspaper ownership in fewer hands and by the huge circulation of the national dailies and weeklies." (pp. 164-5).

He concludes that "these figures bear no other interpretation than that democracy is being strangled more effectively by the normal operations of the capitalist system than by the military threat of Soviet Communism." (p. 165). This is a harsh, but true, verdict. Our avenues of information are choked and poisoned by the monopolies exercised over the press by the American billionaires and the British publishing magnates. Consequently, says Mr. Bevan, "the British people have never been less informed about what

is happening in the rest of the world.” (p. 166).

One of the matters on which they are most uninformed—or misinformed—is the overseas activities of Britain’s armed forces and the real attitude of the colonial peoples toward their intervention. This professional army conscripted by Act of Parliament is now engaged in slaughtering the inhabitants of Korea, Malaya, Egypt and Africa, who want for themselves a few of the freedoms so eloquently lauded in Britain. As the British High Commissioner, General Templer, has just called to our attention in Malaya, this “democratic” army is being used as the most brutal instrument for colonial subjugation and as an international police force for imperialism.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this brief survey of British democracy as it actually exists. *First*, this democracy retains some extremely antiquated features and undemocratic institutions. *Second*, even in the purely political sphere it is very remote from perfection. Many more moves will have to be taken to purify its nature and a wide gulf will have to be crossed before this restricted democracy, in which the capitalists and imperialists exercise their dictatorship behind the scenes, cedes before a genuine democracy of the working class.

THE WAY TO INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

Mr. Bevan is far less satisfied with the course of democracy in industry than with parliamentary democracy. In this field, he believes that not much progress has been recorded and very much remains to be done. Most workers will heartily second this judgment.

After the nationalisations of the two Labour governments, the workers encounter two main types of autocratic rule in industry. The first comes from the monopolies, trusts, and private interests which still own and manage—or rather mismanage—key segments of industry. Their driving concern remains the extraction of maximum profit from their operations regardless of the cost to the working people

and the effects upon the national economy.*

The Conservatives are trying to pass back nationalised industries to these private owners. The right-wing Labour leaders called a halt to nationalisations. Mr. Bevan now urges that nationalisations go speedily forward so that all the key sections of the economy can be brought under public control.

“Judged from any angle, the relations between public and private enterprise have not yet reached a condition where they can be stabilised. That is why it is so foolish for certain Labour men to preach ‘consolidation’ at this stage. Before we can dream of consolidation the power relations of public and private property must be drastically altered. The solution of the problems I have been discussing cannot be approached until it becomes possible to create a purposive and intelligible design for society. That cannot be done until effective social and economic power passes from one order of society to another.

“At the moment we are between two worlds. We have lost the propulsions of one and we have not yet gained the forward thrust of the other. This is no place in which to halt.” (p. 118).

Bevan presents ample evidence that unless and until far more private property of the capitalists becomes public property it will be impossible to reorganise industry and operate it effectively. “To steer a wholly private enterprise economy in a given direction for any considerable length of time is practically impossible. It is alien to the laws of its being.” (p. 117).

In the society of the future, private property must yield and public property predominate.

Mr. Bevan remains the advocate of “a mixed economy” where private enterprise competes with nationalised industry

* See, for instance, the following taken from the *London Times*, April 21, 1952. “Come what may, you may rest assured that we shall do everything in our power to increase our profits—the only sanction we know.”—Sir CYRIL F. ENTWHISTLE, Q.C., M.C., Chairman, in his report to the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Decca Record Company.

to keep both on its toes for the benefit of the nation. Now he urges the definitive subordination of private enterprise to public ownership. The mixture remains as before, but the proportions have been shifted toward the socialist side. For the time being he is clearly orienting socialist economic policy in the right direction.

Experience has already shown that nationalised industries raise new problems. The most important pertain to the management and control of nationalised industry. Among the new state managers the workers are often seeing the revival of old methods of boss dictatorship.

Mr. Bevan devotes an interesting section of his book to this danger. "The boards of our nationalised industries, in their present form, are a new and potentially dangerous problem, both constitutionally and socially. We have still to ensure that they are taking us towards democratic socialism, not towards the Managerial Society . . . The conversion of an industry to public ownership is only the first step towards Socialism . . . The advance from State ownership to full Socialism is in direct proportion to the extent that the workers in the nationalised sector are made aware of a changed relationship between themselves and the management . . . The individual citizen will still feel that society is on top of him until he is enfranchised in the workshop as well as at the ballot box." (p. 102-3).

How can "the discipline of fear" enforced by the overseer's whip be eliminated from industry, and the full energy of workers in the shop be released for efficient and harmonious production? This cannot be done so long as the workers feel that uncontrollable appointees from above arbitrarily decide their terms and conditions of work. As Mr. Bevan says, the workers want to become free, instead of industrial helots. The workers can attain this freedom only to the degree that they acquire effective control over the operations of their own shops and factories through their own industrial organisations along with control over the whole country through their own political organisations. The first step in this direction would be to institute trade union control over the nationalised industries in place of the present bureaucratic management boards.

Mr. Bevan aptly writes that "industrial democracy is the counterpart of political freedom. Liberty and responsibility march together. They must be joined together in the workshop as in the legislative Assembly." (p. 105). The next step in adding "responsibility" to "liberty" must be to vest direct responsibility for management of industry among the workers themselves.

A DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIALIST FOREIGN POLICY FOR BRITAIN

Britain has long been noted both for its far-flung Empire and for the insular outlook of its inhabitants. These are now changing, though in opposite directions. As the British Empire contracts and is breaking up, the interest of the British workers in what happens abroad is expanding. They are giving greater attention to the positions of their representatives on major issues of foreign policy because they see more clearly how international events immediately affect their own welfare. This is apparent in the current debates over rearmament which are shaking the Labour Party from top to bottom.

The international atmosphere is today overcast by the war preparations of the capitalist powers in the West and by the stormy outbursts of colonial revolt in the East. The value of the Socialist convictions of working-class leaders can be judged by their attitude towards these developments. Anyone who claims to be working for peace and yet upholds the alliance with U.S. imperialism which is waging war against the Korean people and girding for global war is no Socialist. Anyone who claims to stand for equality and freedom of oppressed peoples and then refuses to support the just struggles of the colonial nations against their enslavers is no Socialist. What are Mr. Bevan's views on these matters?

Mr. Bevan has come forward as the chief critic of the rearmament programme among the Labour Party leaders. He resigned over this issue and owes much of his popularity to his defence of the social services threatened by the huge arms budget. He has become the hope of the anti-war

forces in England; throughout Western Europe socialist workers are looking toward him for leadership in the campaign against the damaging consequences of the Atlantic Alliance and the arms programme. It has required some courage and conviction to withstand the pressures and propaganda coming from Conservatives, Labour Party right-wingers and similar helpers of national and international capitalism who insist that everyone line up 100 per cent in the anti-Soviet camp which is driving toward a Third World War.

"I believe the guidance given to the world by the United States Administration is wrong," (p. 124) he writes. This is all to the good. But the trouble is that he does not give a correct and rounded explanation for the aggressive, warlike course of this Administration. "They have mistaken the nature of the menace, and so they not only prescribe the wrong remedy but their remedy itself feeds the danger," (pp. 124-5) he says.

If we may believe Mr. Bevan, the present policies of the United States flow from some error in understanding the realities of the world situation and the true needs of society. The misunderstanding on this point is rather on Mr. Bevan's side. The American monopolists and militarists well understand what the real situation is from their capitalist standpoint and what they propose to do about it. A Socialist spokesman should be equally realistic.

Mr. Bevan himself provides facts enough in this book to refute his own conclusion. He quotes the American banker-commentator, Mr. James Warburg, who put his finger on the economic compulsions and financial pressures behind the speed and scope of rearmament. There is too much surplus capital in the American system, six to seven billion dollars of "hot money"—"money which must be got rid of in one way or another if our economy is not to go into a tail-spin. At present we are getting rid of our 'hot money' through rearmament." (p. 145).

Of course, in a rational socialist economy this surplus would be used to lift the productive level and living

standards of the country. But the United States is the last stronghold of monopoly capitalism, and these billions are private funds which must be invested for profits. If the arms programme did not provide an artificial outlet for private capital, American economy would risk the collapse which threatened it in 1949 before the outbreak of the Korean War. These economic pressures are responsible for the large-scale arms programme and they are propelling Washington toward the launching of a third World War. For, as Mr. Bevan points out, "so much wealth is tied up in the war machine, that fears of universal deflation and consequent bankruptcies and unemployment, will thrust us either into military action or the continuation of arms production on a self-defeating scale." (p. 145).

Another factor making for acute tension in international relations, says Mr. Bevan, is the "fear of Soviet Communism" by the American Administration. What are the reasons for this phobia? It is not only that the social-economic systems of the two powers are different; they are inherently antagonistic, and their peaceful co-existence is becoming increasingly impossible. The destruction of capitalist property by the Russian Revolution and the extension of this same process into Eastern Europe and China after the Second World War has undermined the stability of world capitalism, and is one of the fundamental factors creating constant crisis in the capitalist countries. American Big Business, its diplomats and its generals, aim to rescue these areas for capitalist enterprise, they hope to restore vitality to their sick system by destroying the centre and source of anti-capitalist infection before it spreads farther.

This is the class method and meaning behind the apparent mad rush of America's imperialists down the road to war.

Why, as Mr. Bevan remarks, are so many U.S. statesmen "almost as strongly opposed to British Socialism as to Russian Communism?" (p. 126). For the same basic class reasons. These anti-Socialist Americans are resolved to defend private property against working-class movements in any country which aspire to end, or even curb, capitalist exploitation and oppression. That is why they back Chiang

Kai-Shek in China, Franco in Spain, the monarchy in Greece, the restoration of Nazi generals and industrialists in Germany—and Churchill in England. Their policies and their arms are designed, not to stop “Russian aggression” as they pretend, but to strangle anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist forces wherever they arise. Their projected war against the U.S.S.R. fits into this strategic framework.

Mr. Bevan does not propose either to break completely with the American Alliance or to scrap the arms programme. He makes more modest proposals. He wants to slow down the rate of rearmament and reduce its proportions to what England can bear. He seeks to restrain the atom-maniacs across the Atlantic and through his arguments help them see the light of reason.

He expresses the hope that the U.S. is “arming for peace,” and not piling up atom bombs for war. The government of the American capitalists is not putting 65 billion dollars annually—50 per cent of its budget—into arms expenditure without expecting to cash in on this investment. That would not be Big Business-like. America’s monopolists are seriously and systematically preparing their whole area of influence for all-out war at the propitious moment—and that may come in the not too distant future. Through a Third World War they hope to complete the domination of the globe they have come close to capturing through the First and Second World Wars. A realistic socialist who has studied Lenin’s writings on imperialism and observes the behaviour of the American imperialists should have no illusions on this score.

Can this plunge toward war be reversed? Mr. Bevan would like to substitute for the arms programme a grandiose plan “for the peaceful development of backward parts of the world.” (p. 147). How much chance is there that American statesmen can be persuaded to divert their budget from building machines for destruction to machines for peaceful production in backward lands? First of all, any sizeable cut, or even hint, of slicing the arms programme can well precipitate a rout in the American economy itself. Washington has already shelved its own Point 4 Pro-

gramme which Truman launched with such blasts of trumpets; it is hardly likely to adopt that of the "terrible Socialist," Aneurin Bevan. If the United States cannot guarantee aid enough to sustain England on its mediocre economic level for an extended period, or even lift up its depressed areas at home, how can it be expected to elevate the colonies?

THE COLONIAL QUESTION

In the colonial world nowadays the questions of war and revolution are inseparably interlocked. It would be lovely if the United States—or the United Nations—dedicated its forces and resources to eliminate poverty, ignorance, hunger and disease in the backward regions. But what we actually see is quite the opposite. The United States, for example, is sending its armed forces under the banner of the United Nations to invade and destroy Korea where the people rose in revolt against the rotten regime of Syngman Rhee and the imperialist occupation.

Mr. Bevan himself acknowledges that the American Administration is primarily interested in military alliances with the forces of reaction. "The underfed masses yearn for material aid; we send them guns," (p. 138-9) he writes. And the guns dispatched to Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai-Shek, Bao Dai and other puppet-dictators in the Far East are used not to protect these countries, but to help foreign invaders and domestic reactionaries put down the peoples themselves!

Mr. Bevan is keenly aware of the progressive significance of the revolutions in the Orient and the irrepressible uprisings of the colonial peoples. He does not attribute these movements to the machinations of Soviet demons or the artificial instigations of Communist Parties. "It is a profound mistake to look upon our relations with backward peoples as simply one aspect of the struggle with the Soviet Union. If the Soviet system did not exist, the problem would still be there." These national revolutions have been provoked, like all such movements, out of appalling social conditions and political tyranny. They embody the aspira-

tions of downtrodden masses for a better mode of life made possible by modern civilisation. The Asians, Africans and Latin-Americans rebel because "they see wealth taken from their countries to add to the wealth of people already enjoying standards of living spectacularly higher than their own." (p. 137).

These revolutions are logical sequels and inevitable extensions of the Russian Revolution of 1917, which in turn was a product of the Industrial Revolution in the West. "The philosophy applied to Russia after the 1914-18 war was a product of the Industrial Revolution. It was born in London, Berlin, Paris and New York; not in Rostov, Kiev and Leningrad." (p. 133). Mr. Bevan emphasises that these historically necessary national revolutions cannot be either crushed or starved into submission. They must be accommodated "within a general pattern of world co-operation."

Why, then, do we see more conflict than co-operation between Great Britain and these colonial fighters for freedom? Mr. Bevan explains this as an inescapable consequence of military alliances with American imperialists. "Once these pacts are made, military needs require order and stability in the countries forming them. The social and political ambitions of the masses in these circumstances, are seen as opposed to our military necessities, and *before we know where we are* (!) our armed forces are enlisted on the side of the oppressors in these countries." (p. 138).

This, comments Mr. Bevan, is "an ugly and lamentable situation." But by now "we know (or ought to know) where we are," so far as Korea is concerned. The British soldiers there are in the wrong place and on the wrong side; they ought to be taken out forthwith. And the government itself should get out of entangling alliances with imperialism that hurls our country against the progressive forces in the colonies.

In Malaya the British government is waging an imperialist war on its own account; it does not have any excuse that it acts in fulfilment of a pact with other powers or the

United Nations. Here, at least, Britain could immediately co-operate with the independence movement by withdrawing Templer's troops from Malaya.

Mr. Bevan, however, favours gradual grants of freedom to the British colonies. "Stability can be maintained when political liberty is enlarged and economic conditions can be improved at a pace which is acceptable to the masses. This is the case in many of the British colonies." (p. 22).

But who is to decide the pace of progress and the date of emancipation? The master or the slave? Liberal reformers of the capitalist regime likewise advise the workers not to be hasty in their demands but to await gradual improvement and eventual liberation from above. Then the dates of payment are invariably postponed. The insurgent colonial peoples do not want this kind of treatment. They want independence now, and they have full right to it.

Mr. Bevan is reluctant to let go of the Crown Colonies, although he is somewhat more generous with those controlled by other powers. For example, he says that the United States must hand over Formosa to the Chinese People's Republic, but that Britain was right to hang on to Hong Kong and reinforce its garrison there. This will not do. British imperialism's record in the colonies is just as bad as those of the French, the Dutch and the Americans. Mr. Bevan points with pride to the freedom given India. But Britain got out of India, as it did out of Iran, because, like the Dutch in Indonesia, it lacked the forces to hold the old positions any longer.

Almost every year at Annual Conference, Labour Party leaders accept resolutions in support of freedom and self-determination for colonial peoples. Between times, so far as possible, British Governors and troops remain in the colonies, and the colonies in the Empire. What a difference it would make if an incoming Labour government would voluntarily withdraw its armed forces and appointed officials from all the colonies so that they could proceed at once to organise their own independent governments. This would

not only save the British people countless lives and pounds. It would be the basis for establishing entirely different types of relations with the inhabitants of Asia, Africa, and other areas, and the beginning of a new era of fraternal political and economic collaboration with them.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION, THE SOVIET UNION, AND THE STALINIST BUREAUCRACY

Mr. Bevan makes many shrewd observations on the Soviet Union and the policies of its present rulers, which are well worth noticing. It is, first of all, refreshing in the prevailing atmosphere of frenzied anti-Sovietism in the West to hear some sense about the Russian Revolution and its achievements. "When the Soviet worker of today compares his lot with that of his parents, he is aware of enlargement, and not of constriction. He is now literate. They could neither read nor write. Many occupations are open to him where they were confined to the narrow frontiers of the village, and the repetitious cycle of a primitive agriculture. For him the barriers are down. He can become a mechanic, a teacher, a doctor, an artist, a professor, or a foreman or manager in a large industrial undertaking. It is completely unhistorical to expect him to take any other view than that Soviet society has lifted him to higher levels of opportunity and culture . . . His support of the Soviet regime . . . rests on his own knowledge that all around him the framework of a modern industrial community is being built, that he is helping to build it, and that in the meantime his life is substantially, if slowly, improving." (p. 139).

Mr. Bevan does not, like the leaders of the British Communist Party, completely close his eyes—or try to shut the eyes of others—to the repulsive features of the Soviet system under Stalin. "The existence of huge forced labour camps, the ruthless punishment meted out to political offenders, the disappearance without trace of people who offend against the ruling clique, the appalling doctrine of 'associative crime'; all these are deeply offensive," (p. 139) he writes.

This Police State of Stalin is not simply a product of Russia's economic and cultural backwardness and its enforced isolation after the Revolution. Mr. Bevan points out that Western "democratic" capitalism itself cannot avoid a certain responsibility for the Police State there. "Russia was surrounded by a wall of hostility, trade was hampered and sometimes cut off entirely. It should not be forgotten that the Conservatives won the 1924 General Election by attacking the proposal of the then Labour Government to advance a loan to Russia—a loan which would have been spent in Britain and would have provided work for the unemployed of Britain as well as capital equipment for Russia." (p. 41).

He warns that today's imperialists are trying to repeat this starvation policy towards the new China. "You cannot starve a national revolution into submission. You can starve it into a repressive dictatorship; you can starve it to the point where the hellish logic of the Police State takes charge." (p. 42). Consequently the Russian Revolution of the days of Lenin and Trotsky became perverted into the totalitarian dictatorship of the present Soviet rulers. "The principle of authority has replaced the authority of principle, which inspired the Revolution in the first instance." (p. 142). But Mr. Bevan believes that the Stalinist regime is not so stable and enduring as it seems to superficial observers. The very industrialisation of the country will tend to bring the workers and peasants into collision with the Police State. "Industrialisation is lifting increasing numbers of Russians to technical and economic importance in the Soviet economy. Their economic enfranchisement is proceeding. Political enfranchisement must follow. Economic importance combined with political nullity cannot last. They never have yet, and there is no reason to suppose the Soviet system will be any different. The desperate attempts made by the Soviet rulers to insulate themselves from the rest of the world is proof of this." (p. 140). He foresees the development of an inevitable clash between the Soviet workers and technicians and the Stalinist bureaucrats.

The expansion of the Kremlin's powers into Eastern

Europe is in his opinion a source of weakness, rather than of permanent strength, for the Soviet government. "The complicated industrial system of the satellite states and the commerce attending upon it impose local responsibilities which have to be undertaken by individuals who stand or fall by the decisions they take. The independence of mind resulting from that situation provokes countless points of resistance, and each point is a focus of dissatisfaction." (p. 141). The repeated purges of the highest Communist Party officials in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, gives evidence of these strains and stresses.

But the most dramatic demonstration to date of the underlying conflict between the nationalist-minded Stalinist rulers and the expanding international revolution has been Yugoslavia's break with Moscow. "The passionate desire for national freedom, which is the centuries old tradition of the peoples of Yugoslavia, merged during the war with the revolutionary aims of the Yugoslav Communists. There was therefore a clear understanding between the two, for the urban workers, Socialism, for the peasants, land, and for both national independence." (p. 16). But the Soviet leaders after the war tried to deprive Yugoslavia of independence and delay its march toward socialism by maintaining Yugoslavia in an economically backward condition. The Yugoslav leaders resisted this subject status and became the first Communist country to rebel successfully against the bondage of the Kremlin. Mr. Bevan predicts that "China will be next." (p. 16).

A SOCIALIST ANTI-WAR FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. Bevan speaks of "Socialists afraid of their Socialism". These are almost as familiar a species in the field of foreign affairs as "democrats afraid of their democracy". The foreign policy of the Labour Party and its government ought to be guided by democratic measures and Socialist principles in dealings with the rest of the world.

The first condition for a Socialist anti-war policy is a clear understanding that the American imperialists, no less than the Tories, are class enemies of the British workers.

Alliances with the bosses of the United States cannot avoid leading to the same deadly consequences on the international arena as collaboration with the capitalists would at home. We are already witnessing British workers in uniform called upon to act as strikebreakers against liberation movements in other countries. Our foreign policy must be reoriented away from collaboration with world imperialism which is headed by Wall Street, the armed spearhead of capitalist counter-revolution. It should be aligned with the camp of international labour and the anti-imperialist countries.

This will be an essential part of the process for mobilising British labour to take supreme power in its hands and getting on with the job of transforming Britain from an imperialist to a Socialist country. The most effective answer British Labour can make to the growing threat of a Third World War would be its rapid progress and success in the struggle for Socialism. A new Labour government which vigorously and consistently applied Socialist principles on the foreign field could not only weaken the grip of world capitalism and check the war plans of the Wall Street imperialists. It would be a beacon of hope for workers and colonial peoples everywhere who now feel themselves squeezed between Washington and Moscow. It would enable them to combat the aggressions of Wall Street without having to submit to the dictates of the Kremlin and the twists and turns of its parties.

THE HEALTH SERVICE; SAFEGUARDS AGAINST INFLATION; THE DECADENCE OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

Mr. Bevan is identified with the National Free Health Service, which was undoubtedly among the outstanding achievements of the postwar Labour government. His informative chapter on the Health Service is an able answer to its critics and detractors; it can be endorsed with both hands. He concludes with a ringing challenge to the Tories. "No Government that attempts to destroy the Health Service can hope to command the support of the

British people. The great argument about priorities is joined, and from it a Free Health Service is bound to emerge triumphant."

Every working class family will back his defence of the Health Service against the Tory termites. This alone is reason enough for them to bring the Conservatives down.

While the Tories are nibbling away at the Health Service, they are also whittling down living standards through higher prices. Aneurin Bevan presents excellent suggestions to protect the real wages of the workers and the incomes of the poor against the worst effects of this capitalist-inspired inflation. He proposes that wages be increased automatically as the cost of living index goes up. "It should not be beyond our collective good sense to apply the reformed cost of living index to the whole field of wages and salaries." (p. 112).

He urges the extension of this same principle to recipients of social benefits like old-age pensioners, ex-service men, widows and the like, as well as small owners of national savings certificates. "There seems no reason why the cost of living index when brought up-to-date, should not be used for the purpose of adjusting the scales of benefits, say at six-monthly intervals. I am not here discussing improvements in their standards. What is first required is that the existing standards be defended, and this by a method which would work automatically without necessitating a series of parliamentary crises . . .

"If the reply is made that the principle should work both ways, and that the scale of benefits should be adjusted downwards with a fall in prices, there are two answers. There is little or no prospect of a general fall in the prices of the goods that go to the making of the cost of living index. As far as we can see we are in for a steady upward trend in prices. We shall be lucky if it is steady. If, however, a fall does take place the increased purchasing power resulting to the beneficiaries of the social services, would be a useful means of defence against deflation and consequent unemployment." (p. 115).

To get at the wealthy tax evaders and reduce inequalities in income, Mr. Bevan urges the institution of "a far-reaching capital levy." (p. 115).

In his chapter on "Modern Man and Modern Society", Mr. Bevan makes incisive exposures of "the folklore of British capitalism". He explodes the contentions of those apologists who extol the efficiency, progressiveness, free competition and similar virtues of the profit system.

"In Britain it was failing before the 1939 war even to mobilise the forces of production efficiently. Instead of material plenty, it was conspiring to create scarcity as the condition for making profits. Today it attempts to enlarge its profits by price associations, cartels, trusts, resale price maintenance, and a score of other expedients, all designed to cheat the God by which it swears in its credo—Competition. In short, it is attempting to enthrone industrial and commercial authoritarianism in place of the arbitrament of the market place.

"The economic decadence of pre-war Britain was strikingly revealed when we faced the task of post-war reconstruction. Most of the basic industries had been geared to the acceptance of a comparatively low standard of consumption, accompanied by a permanent army of unemployed numbering about two million. The coal industry had been rescued from complete collapse by a series of Statutes all designed to eliminate, not increase, competition among the various coal companies, and to enable them to fix the price of coal at a level which would ensure continued production in high-cost pits. This was also true of steel. In the case of tinplate a rigid cartel served the same purpose. Outworn techniques prevailed in the textile industry, and our electricity supplies, as we soon discovered, were utterly unable to support an all-out production programme." (p. 45-6).

However, the British workers do not need further proofs of the hopeless decadence of capitalism. They see and feel that almost every day in the workshops and in the home. What they need to know most of all is how they can hasten the replacement of this rotting system with their own Socialist way of life.

METHODS OF WORKING CLASS ACTION

We British workers, as Aneurin Bevan recalls, have "a long tradition of class action behind us stretching back to the Chartists." (p. 2). These class actions have taken various forms, even in the fight for democracy. The right to vote once or twice every five years for an M.P. is important, but casting a ballot in a box is not the only way the people make their voices heard and their power heeded. Since the days of the Chartists, the working people have been accustomed to sign and present petitions, hold mass meetings and vast demonstrations in public places, picket, and strike. All these modes of popular protest have been used to good effect when the need or occasion arose.

In fact, the Chartist movement used many forms of working class struggle from petitions to Parliament to independent National Conventions of Labour. Ideas of armed insurrection were popular amongst the workers at the time. Not a few milk-and-water Labour leaders of the present day would condemn the Chartist methods as incorrect or outworn, but this is not so. It is not that they are obsolete but rather that they came too early, before capitalism matured and the workers were powerfully enough organised to win their just and basic demands.

The example of the Chartists should remind us, however, that there can be far more direct expressions of working class organisation and action than Parliament or any other official institution provides. The Labour movement existed, functioned and made its power felt long before it secured representation in the House of Commons. Even after the Labour Party entered there the most important struggles of Labour were initiated and carried through outside Parliament by the trade unions.

As Mr. Bevan himself points out, the Labour Party was brought into the world not by Act of Parliament, but by the unionised workers. "Toward the end of the nineteenth century the trade unions of Britain began to gather new strength, and in the first decade of the twentieth century

they burst into an angry roar of strikes and lockouts. The miners in particular gave the first few heaves of that prolonged protest, which hastened the birth of the Labour Party and gave it many of its leaders." (p. 94).

And this same movement that gave birth to the Labour Party sounded the death knell of British Liberalism. "The death of British Liberalism began when the Liberal administration of Mr. Asquith came into collision with the dockers, the miners, and the railwaymen." (p. 94).

The trade unions are the oldest and most important working class organisations, and they constitute the solid base of the Labour Party itself. Although they have different functions and independent organisation, neither the industrial nor the political arm can be detached from the body of the working class.

The tasks of the trade unions under capitalism are to improve the conditions of the workers and to defend and increase their share of the national income. This not only involves conflicts with the employers. At certain critical junctures it brings the unions into direct conflict with the capitalist government, which acts as a force behind the employers. To win its demands the unions can be obliged to undertake a general strike which challenges and shakes the state power of the entire capitalist regime. In this way a strike which originates in economic demands can acquire a highly political and revolutionary character which acutely poses the problem of power to the working class.

Mr. Bevan is opposed to this line of class action, which he contrasts unfavourably to parliamentary action. He cites as proof of the inefficacy of general strikes the failures of the Triple Alliance in 1919 and the General Strike of 1926. His account is worth quoting in full not only for its own significance but because it is a hitherto unknown aspect of contemporary Labour history.

"I remember vividly Robert Smillie describing to me an interview the leaders of the Triple Alliance had with David Lloyd George in 1919. The strategy of the leaders was clear. The miners under Robert Smillie, the transport

workers under Robert Williams, and the National Union of Railwaymen under Thomas, formed the most formidable combination of industrial workers in the history of Great Britain. They had agreed on the demands which were to be made on the employers, knowing well that the Government would be bound to be involved at an early stage. And so it happened. A great deal of industry was still under Government war-time control and so the State power was immediately implicated.

“Lloyd George sent for the Labour leaders, and they went, so Robert told me, ‘truculently determined they would not be talked over by the seductive and eloquent Welshman’. At this Bob’s eyes twinkled in his grave, strong face. ‘He was quite frank with us from the outset,’ Bob went on. ‘He said to us: Gentlemen, you have fashioned in the Triple Alliance of the unions represented by you, a most powerful instrument. I feel bound to tell you that in our opinion we are at your mercy. The Army is disaffected and cannot be relied upon. Trouble has occurred already in a number of camps. We have just emerged from a great war and the people are eager for the reward of their sacrifices, and we are in no position to satisfy them. In these circumstances, if you carry out your threat and strike, then you will defeat us.

“‘But if you do so,’ went on Mr. Lloyd George, ‘have you weighed the consequences? The strike will be in defiance of the Government of the country and by its very success will precipitate a constitutional crisis of the first importance. For, if a force arises in the State which is stronger than the State itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the State, or withdraw and accept the authority of the State. Gentlemen, asked the Prime Minister quietly, have you considered, and if you have, are you ready?’ From that moment on, said Robert Smillie, we were beaten, and we knew we were.

“After this the General Strike of 1926 was really an anti-climax. The essential argument had been deployed in 1919. But the leaders in 1926 were in no better theoretical position to face it. They had never worked out the

revolutionary implications of direct action on such a scale. Nor were they anxious to do so." (p. 20-1).

In this story Mr. Bevan reveals more than he says. He gives a vivid exposure and startling confirmation of the helplessness of the British bourgeoisie; the colossal might of the workers in action; the impotence and cowardice of their union leaders. Mr. Bevan tries to shift part of the responsibility for the refusal to "accept the authority of the state" upon the workers. "The workers and their leaders paused even when their coercive power was greater than that of the State." (p. 21).

That is not quite accurate. It was the leaders who drew back, not the ranks. No one told the workers what the real state of affairs was, or sought their opinion on what to do next. Frightened by the cunning Lloyd George, the labour leaders threw in the sponge without consulting or informing the ranks. Indeed, not until the Aneurin Bevan disclosures in these pages has the labour public known this inside story of the Triple Alliance's debacle.

If the workers had then gone forward to take over the government, England might have been spared the defeat of the General Strike in 1926, years of hard times on the dole, Chamberlainism and Churchillism, the Second World War and its aftermath. It would not be necessary to do now what should have been done then.

Why wasn't it done? According to Mr. Bevan, both the leaders and the workers were theoretically and practically unprepared. But the art of labour leadership consists in educating and organising the working class to take power when the time is ripe.

After all the experiences of the past three decades, no political or union leader can any longer have the excuse that the workers are unready to take the power. British labour has manifested eagerness to do so time and again. And if another 1919 or 1926 should recur, a genuine labour leader "must be ready to take on the functions of the state"—and keep them. Would that violate British

tradition? That depends on which tradition is taken as a guide: the revolutionary traditions of Cromwell's men and the Chartists—or the opposite traditions set by Smillie, Williams and Thomas.

The elements of a serious conflict between the capitalist government and the unions are even now in the making. All the big unions are pressing wage claims. The employers and the Tories appear as determined to reject these just demands as to continue raising the costs of living which have provoked them. Suppose the Conservatives refuse any concessions and stay in office. Will not the unions be compelled to take up the strike weapon—and is this not likely to produce a situation similar to 1919 and 1926?

What should Labour and its leaders do if such a showdown ensues? Surrender and submit to defeat and demoralization, as before? Or should they learn the lesson of the past and make certain next time that the power of the country is placed securely and speedily in the hands of the masses who create its wealth, and not the parasites who monopolize and abuse it?

Methods of action in the class struggle are like tools. They can be properly used or mishandled. This is as true of Parliamentary action as the General Strike. It is essential to understand the conditions and the aims of a General Strike before entering into it. Mr. Bevan correctly points out that the trade union leaders "had forged a revolutionary weapon without having a revolutionary intention." This does not condemn the weapon, but its misusers. They should have been aware of the revolutionary consequences of their strike action and ready to carry it through to its logical conclusion.

The same holds true of parliamentary action. Parliament can be a mighty lever for propelling Labour's cause forward. But it is not the only one, and under certain conditions not the decisive means for class action. What should be the right relations between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary actions? Mr. Bevan criticises those

who looked upon parliamentary action "as an auxiliary of direct action by the industrial organisations of the workers." (p. 19). But it would be equally one-sided, as he does, to make industrial action always auxiliary and subordinate to parliamentary action.

Both forms of action are indispensable for conducting the class struggle. They have to be properly combined to give maximum force to that struggle. Just as the Labour constituency Parties and the trade union branches are joined together, and should even more closely co-ordinate their activities, so the methods of industrial mass action and labour political action must mutually support each other.

The class struggle goes on in all departments of social life; economic, political, and intellectual. This or that branch of the struggle may predominate over the others at a particular time. The centre of the movement can shift rapidly. Blocked in one direction, the energy of the masses invariably tends to assert itself in another. If their action in industry is paralysed by economic conditions, weak leadership or reverses, they will look to political methods and parliamentary measures for relief, and vice versa. But whichever may be foremost at a given moment, the movement must be so organised, educated, and directed that it can wage a unified offensive on all fronts of the class struggle. The best working class leaders, such as Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, were distinguished by their ability to grasp all the varied aspects of the labour movement, and to direct them in a unified manner toward the acquisition of power.

All the necessary weapons can be employed in this struggle depending on the circumstances. A politician who exalts one special method of working class action to the detriment of others resembles those military strategists who single out some single arm of the military service as the sole instrument for defeating the enemy. Wars are won by the proper co-ordination of all military branches and weapons—and wars can easily be lost by exclusive concentration on a single weapon. It can be the same in the class war for socialism.

IS PARLIAMENT THE SOLE ROAD TO SOCIALISM ?

These observations are not brought forward to derogate electoral activities or diminish the role of Parliament, but only to see them in the proper historical setting and rightful place in the development of Labour's struggles. It is not excluded that the movement for socialism can be carried far through the gates of Parliament and be "legalised" to a considerable degree thereby. Such is Mr. Bevan's hope for his dynamic Parliamentarism.

But where will the dynamism for such a Big Push by Parliament come from? It would have to come from outside Parliament, from the readiness of the working people to support Parliament's measures and defend them by all means against the inevitable opposition and obstructions of the capitalists and their agents. Thus the real force of a dynamic Parliament would not be drawn from itself, that is, from the several hundred M.P.s composing it, nor from any traditions, but from the active vigilance of the mobilised masses. Indeed, this is the best means of ensuring a rapid and peaceful transfer of power because the stronger and better prepared the working class is to defend its revolution, the more likely are the forces of reaction to retreat and the more easily can they be defeated.

The difference between Mr. Bevan and the classic Marxists is not that the latter misunderstood or minimised the functions of Parliament in general or in British politics in particular. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky all recognised that democratic traditions and parliamentary institutions can under certain conditions play a considerable role and would be liable to do so especially in Great Britain. But unlike Mr. Bevan, they did not put Parliament on a pedestal as the height of political achievement, or view it as the be-all and end-all of the ways and means for the conquest of power and the passage to Socialism. They did not make an idol of Parliament. They approached it as one of the key political institutions created and maintained under capitalist democracy which must be utilised

by the working class for the protection of its welfare and the promotion of its aims. But it was no more than one of the tools for this purpose, and other tasks arising in the class struggle would in their opinion require the use and the devising of different tools for their execution.

Mr. Bevan has a less realistic and more worshipful attitude toward Parliament. He proclaims that it has become the only door through which the Socialist revolution in Britain must pass. Certainly the experience of the past does not warrant so categorical an assertion. The contest between capital and labour has often revolved around Parliament. But on other no less crucial occasions it has unfolded outside of Parliament and without its aid or even attention. Parliament convenes only at stated intervals; the contention of the classes continues the year round. Not one of the social forces in the country waits for Parliament to convene to ask its permission before entering the field of action.

Even in session, Parliament has the habit of neglecting the most vital issues and pressing demands, particularly if they emanate from the working class. Must the workers then wait patiently until Parliament deigns to notice their needs? They never have, and we venture to predict, they never will. Especially where Parliament becomes weak, unstable and uncertain, the classes, anxious to find a solution for their pressing problems, incline to resort to other modes of action. They know that Parliament revolves around the class struggle and is amenable to social pressures, rather than that the class struggle revolves around Parliament, as Mr. Bevan implies.

PROSPECTS OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE

In a sense it is somewhat idle to debate whether or not Parliament will be the only road to Socialism, because that question will not be decided either by Aneurin Bevan or by Parliament itself. It is destined to be determined in the course of the struggles ahead by the social forces involved. Mr. Bevan says "Parliament interprets its own authority, and from it there is no appeal." (p. 100). This

approaches the matter only on the constitutional level. But within the country and beyond the constitution, there are classes in motion and in conflict. The representatives of these classes appeal from the verdicts of Parliament not only at election times but constantly in many ways.

We have already alluded to the various means of extra-parliamentary action employed and open to Labour. It is equally important to understand the broad range of extra-parliamentary influences exerted by their class enemy. Behind-the-scenes obstruction, bribery by posts and privileges, intimidation, misinformation are among the more familiar and "normal" forms of extra-parliamentary pressures exerted by the capitalists upon Parliament itself. These pressures are most clearly manifested in war-time when Parliament is completely subordinated to the imperialist military machine while the workers are gagged and bound.

Mr. Bevan tells us that, to predict the future, politicians must study "the behaviour of social forces." (p. 36). Workers need above all to understand the mainsprings of the conduct of the capitalist class. Even if the democratic British workers are inclined to take the parliamentary road to the end of the revolution, is there any guarantee that the capitalists will be willing to do the same? The British rulers have never been known as democrats abroad. Will they act any better when their entire wealth is at stake and the final battle is engaged? Will those "who, by possession of wealth, have a dominating influence on the policy of the nation" surrender it to labour peacefully and quietly? When or where have they ever done this? And even if the British capitalists submit quietly, what about the American imperialists? If they could not permit national independence to the Koreans and blockade the New China, will they allow British Labour to eliminate capitalism without forceful intervention?

Brought face to face with the revolutionary offensive of labour, capitalist rulers have invariably had recourse to black dictatorships and Fascism in their open class war

upon the Socialist forces. Mr. Bevan knows and says this: "either poverty will use democracy to win the struggle against property, or property, in fear of poverty, will destroy democracy." (p. 3).

Now suppose property sets out to destroy democracy before the workers clinch their power, or that a Tory government under imperialist dictation drags England into atomic world war without consulting the people or against its manifest will? Under such circumstances, in order to defend democracy and preserve peace and combat the dictatorial threat of a British Hitler, Mussolini or Franco, the British workers will be compelled to fight to the end by all means at their disposal. Such a struggle, if triumphant, could end only in the full conquest of power by the workers and the total elimination of capitalism.

With the prospect of such developments, is it not a kind of national arrogance, or at least short-sightedness, to believe with Mr. Bevan that Britain will necessarily be so privileged as to make its way to Socialism without going through the arduous battles of the workers in other lands? Is it really guaranteed that others are predestined to the mournful lot of a stormy passage while the British will sail over calm waters to the Socialist shore? There are undeniable oddities in British political institutions, but their significance should not be exaggerated. They are the products of certain historic conditions and social relations which can change very rapidly under revolutionary developments. It is quite possible that in the course of coming struggles, Parliament may suffer as many vicissitudes as it did in Cromwell's period.

THE ROAD TO POWER

The problem of power is not merely a theoretical one for Labour in Britain today. It has burning actuality. Its urgency is largely responsible for the appearance of the programme outlined in Aneurin Bevan's book. "Boldness in words must be matched by boldness in deeds. . . . Audacity is the mood that should prevail among Socialists,

as they apply the full armament of democratic values to the problems of the times," (p. 133) declares Mr. Bevan. This clarion call will elicit enthusiastic response from the Labour movement, which is eager to see the full armament of Socialist as well as democratic values applied.

Up to now the Labour Party leadership's performance has fallen far short of the expectations and hopes of the ranks. In 1945 they were given an overwhelming mandate to reorganise Britain along socialist lines. After a promising start, the Labour Party leaders faltered and drew back. This helped the Tories come back to Westminster. But it did not take more than a few months for the middle class elements who turned toward the Conservatives to become disillusioned. Now, as the County Council elections indicate, the people are again looking for leadership from the Labour Party.

The Labour Party ranks are looking toward individuals like Aneurin Bevan to provide that leadership. If the majority should so signify, as it now appears they do, we of the Labour Left are willing to back Mr. Bevan's bid for directing the Labour Party forces. Only by enabling Mr. Bevan, his programme and his ideas to pass through the test of experience in office, can the whole Labour movement properly appraise their value. Mr. Bevan and his associates should be given the chance to lead the Labour Party and its next cabinet so they can carry through as far and as fast as they can his experiment in dynamic Parliamentarism. We believe that Labour would support this next step in its political development, while reserving full right to criticise any failures, errors, or shortcomings of his administration.

The British workers are accustomed to judge parties and individuals, not by their fair words, but by what they do. They will appraise the results of a Bevan regime in the same way, and confidence can be placed in the outcome of their judgment.

An exceptionally favourable historical opportunity is opening up for British labour. After a few months in office, the Conservatives are obviously demoralised and at their

wits' end; they have forfeited the confidence of many of their own supporters; division and confusion prevails in the ranks of the lordly. They are isolated from the people. Their empire is collapsing, and their foreign policy is mistrusted. At the same time, the middle classes are revolting against the consequences of Tory policy and willing to back Labour.

Most important of all, the working class has never been so strong and united. It wields a compact majority and is the sole social force capable of saving Britain and guaranteeing its future.

Great Britain can never regain its position of world leadership under capitalist auspices. This has irrevocably passed to the United States. Britain, however, can rise to a new and higher level of world leadership, provided the Labour movement resolutely carries its struggle for Socialism to victory here in the coming period.

What are the chief conditions for success in this endeavour?

1. Complete reliance on the organised power of the working class.
2. No confidence in Britain's capitalists or America's imperialists.
3. Finish without delay the job of nationalising, democratising, and reorganising industry along Socialist lines.
4. Put into effect a Socialist and democratic foreign policy.

This is the only road to workers' power and Socialism in Great Britain.

**IF YOU LIKE THIS ISSUE
THEN SUBSCRIBE FOR THE REST**

Subscription Rates:—

4 issues - - 2/6 post free

Post this coupon today to :-

**J. PAWSEY,
61, SMEDLEY ROAD,
MANCHESTER, 8.**

I enclose P.O. for £ / /
for.....issues, commencing with
the.....number.

Name.....

Address.....
.....
.....

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Fortnightly 3d.

THE PAPER OF LABOUR'S LEFT WING

IT FIGHTS

- **AGAINST WAR
PREPARATIONS**
 - **FOR IMMEDIATE COLONIAL
FREEDOM.**
 - **FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE
TORY GOVERNMENT.**
-

Order from 177, Bermondsey Street, London, S.E.1.

9/- for 25 issues — Post Free

Printed by John Stafford Thomas Ltd., 177 Bermondsey Street, S.E.1.

- FGBR