

THE ANTI-AMERICAN FEELING
IN BRITAIN
1945 - 1951

By
Artin Hagop Arslanian

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ABSTRACT

In almost every discussion of Anglo-American relations since World War II, it is generally assumed that if these two countries do not always "think alike" at least they always agree. The mutual understanding, cooperation and unity that exist between the two countries have become so legendary as to no longer be questioned; even the possibility of opposition and ill-feeling has been largely ignored. But there exist in Great Britain important segments of informed public opinion that are anti-American. Some segments are constant and violent in their anti-Americanism, others express this feeling on particular issues as their individual interests and beliefs are affected.

Although this anti-American feeling has been overshadowed by the cooperation of the two countries, especially in the field of foreign policy after the turn of the twentieth century, it still remains a historical

fact. The expression of this feeling in the years 1945-1951 and its underlying causes form the subject of this thesis. It is hoped that this attempt will place recent Anglo-American history in a more balanced perspective.

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

The immediate post World War II years are regarded, by most historians of Anglo-American relations and by informed public opinion at large, as years of close Anglo-American cooperation and mutual understanding. This was especially obvious in international relations where both countries found themselves faced, in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, with an aggressive and expansionist Russian foreign policy. Thus, it is not surprising to observe that the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Aid Program and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—highlights of Anglo-American cooperation in the late forties, carry with them a strong anti-Russian tincture. Because of the tremendous impact of this cooperation on the international political situation, there is a persistent tendency, in many historians, of stressing and even overestimating this aspect of Anglo-American relations at the expense of a less inspiring

and congenial one: that of mutual suspicion, misunderstanding, resentment and even hatred.

This tendency to emphasize the "closeness" and the cooperative nature of Anglo-American relations is based on other factors and assumptions as well as on post-World War II political developments. Most historians of Anglo-American relations appropriately point to the unique nature of this relationship. In his classic work in this field, H.C. Allen states: "Connected as they [United States and Britain] are by the Great North Atlantic waterway and by the agency of the ever-present British North America, and bound together by a common origin and history, they have affinities altogether unusual among nations."¹ It cannot be ignored that their common origin and language, their interacting historical experiences and the similar nature of most of their institutions bind the

¹H.C. Allen, Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952), London, 1954), p. 26. See also the introductory essay by Sumner Welles in Crane Brinton, The United States and Britain, (Cambridge, Mass., 1947).

two nations with stronger ties than either of them with a third one.² But H.C. Allen and like-minded historians leave the realm of history for that of speculation, and reveal their partisanship, when they claim that the uniqueness of this relationship will necessarily foster closer integration between the two nations, and bring about eventual Anglo-American unity.³ The Suez crisis of 1956 gave a hard blow to these noble, but doctrinaire, hopes. Moreover, Bruce M. Russett, in his systematic and painstaking study of Anglo-American relations in the twentieth century, finds "substantial evidence that in many important respects Britain and America have become less responsive to each other's needs than they were several decades ago."⁴ This study actually destroys the optimism of H. C. Allen on the future of Anglo-American relations. Instead of growing stronger, the ties binding the two nations seem to be gradually weakening.

² Even these factors are denied having any effect on the mass opinion of the two countries in Sir Arthur Willert, The Road to Safety: A Study in Anglo-American Relations (London, 1952), p. 11.

³ H.C. Allen, op. cit., p. 983.

⁴ Bruce M. Russett, Community and Contention: Britain and America in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 209.

H.C. Allen's intense belief in the necessity of closer Anglo-American relations hinders his attempt to approach the emotional, unscholarly and vehemently anti-American works of C.H. Bretherton⁵ and C.E.M. Joad⁶ with historical disinterestedness and objectivity. To him, they make a "nightmare world to make us wonder that Anglo-American friendship was ever able to survive such obfuscation and malignity at all. . ."⁷ These authors do not represent a substantial section of the British public opinion. Their works overflow with undeserved contempt and scorn toward the American way of life, culture and habits. Moreover, they often sacrifice facts for sprightliness. Nevertheless, however insignificant in the whole context of British public opinion and however ill-founded it may be, this attitude toward the United States is a historical reality. It forms a part of British opinion about the United States, and deserves objective examination as such. Its outright dismissal as "nightmarish" and

⁵C.H. Bretherton, Midas or the United States and the Future (London, 1926).

⁶C.E.M. Joad, The Rabbitt Warren (London, 1926).

⁷H.C. Allen, op. cit., p. 26.

"obfuscationist" does no credit to any historian. Placing facts, after checking their validity and truth, in the proper historical perspective and giving, within the limit of the possible, an overall but accurate and meaningful picture of the past is the task of historians par excellence. Condemnation and approbation of individuals and of their attitude toward other realities fall within the purview of moralists.

This attempt, which assesses anti-American feeling in Britain between the years 1945-1951, aims at pointing to the actual place and importance of this feeling in British public opinion during these years. A close study of this period reveals an undercurrent of mutual suspicion, antagonism and hatred in certain significant sections of public opinion in the United States and England. As stated before, the impact of the Anglo-American political cooperation was so tremendous on international politics during this period, that this undercurrent has neither attracted serious attention nor been treated with scholarly objectivity. Nevertheless, this attempt will not be a detailed study of Anglo-American relations of this period. It will

consist of a number of studies of particular economic and political developments of this period, directly or indirectly involving the two countries. Although some attention will be given to the background of these particular developments, there will be no attempt to go into their technicalities since this study is mainly concerned with the attitude of the British public opinion toward the United States, on these issues.

In this study, there will be no discussion of the impact of anti-Americanism on the policy-making-process of the British Government. It is impossible to measure with certainty the weight public opinion carries in this process. But it must be noted that in the twentieth century, the century of "total diplomacy",⁸ governmental

⁸This term as used by professor D.C. Watt means "the state of relations between states which occurs when popular participation in the processes of international relations is continuous, and those processes themselves impinge on most sectors of domestic political activity. (See D.C. Watt, Personalities and Policies: Studies in the Formation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century, London, 1965, p. 53). Mr. Watt has taken this concept from William T.R. Fox and Annette Baker Fox, Britain and America in the Era of Total Diplomacy (Princeton, 1952).

dependency on popular goodwill and support is unparalleled in the long history of Western Civilization-- although the Athenian Democracy might be considered an exception. In foreign relations, the policy of a government⁹ has come to be seen "as the product of two sets of pressures: those of other governments and those of its domestic public opinion." Moreover, "the concept of 'total diplomacy' implies interaction not only between government and government, and government and domestic public opinion, but also between public opinion and public opinion."¹⁰ Unfortunately, it is as yet impossible to measure with accuracy the extent to which a sector of public opinion influences the policy-making-process of a government. In this field, we can only advance hypotheses based upon estimates. On the other hand, the assertion that the present democracies are in reality nothing but the tyranny of the fifty-one per cent, is merely cynical.

⁹This refers only to those governments which have been elected by, and depend on, the consent of the people governed by them.

¹⁰D.C. Watt, op. cit., p. 54.

CHAPTER I

THE AMERICAN LOAN TO BRITAIN

"Beggars cannot be choosers. But they can, by long tradition, put a curse on the ambitions of the rich."

The Economist, Dec. 5, 1945

Britain emerged from the second World War victorious but with an economy in grave disrepair. With the unexpected ending of Lend-Lease by President Truman, Britain could expect no immediate help from the United States for her difficult task of economic reconstruction.

The Coalition Government had thrown all the available resources of the nation into checking the Nazi threat of conquest. The Government's gold and dollar reserve had fallen from \$4.2 billion in 1938 to \$12 million in April 1941. In the first year of the war British overseas investments, to the value of \$830 million, were liquidated or re-

patriated. Compared with 1938, the volume of British exports had declined by 60 per cent in 1944. Due to the heavy losses, the merchant shipping capacity had fallen by 75 per cent. Moreover, because of expenditures by British overseas forces during the war, the British overseas debt had increased from \$ 1.9 billion in 1939 to \$ 13.5 billion in June, 1945.¹ World War II cost Britain £33,000 million of which £16,000 million was borrowed.² Thus, because of her war effort, Britain turned from a creditor into a debtor country; at the same time she lost most of her economic assets which were essential for the reconstruction of the country as well as for the restoration of her damaged economy.

It was in this difficult economic and financial situation that the Labor Government came to power. Unlike any other country in the world, Britain was and still is condemned by its geographic situation to export or die. But with all her industry still on war footing, she could

¹Judd Polk and Gardner Patterson, "The British Loan", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 24, April 1946, pp. 430-431.

²E.E. Reynolds and N.H. Brasher, Britain in the Twentieth Century, 1900-1964, (Cambridge, 1966), p. 223.

hardly provide for the needs of her population, and could export nothing substantial. The Labor Government had to find an immediate means of financing the country's import balance, without further reducing the already low standard of living of the population.³ This could be done only by securing a loan from another country and only the United States could afford such a loan. Unlike all the other belligerent countries which had suffered terrible economic losses, America had largely expanded its productive capacity and wealth during the War.⁴

At Washington, the British delegation led by Lord Keynes, reflecting British public opinion, expected to receive American financial aid in the form of a direct grant as deferred Lend-Lease for the period when Britain fought alone and kept the common enemy at bay. These expectations were quickly disappointed as the British delegation quickly learned that emphasis on past services and sacrifices would

³William Hardy McNeill, America, Britain, and Russia: Their Co-operation and Conflict, 1941-1946 (London, 1953), p. 661.

⁴Russia herself was asking Lend-Lease "pipelines" from the United States, and France was not too "great" at this time to refuse American goodwill and dollars as well.

not influence American opinion. Lord Keynes was to declare later on that the Americans "were not interested in our [Britain's] wounds, though incurred in the common cause, but in our convalescence."⁵ But even this American interest in economic convalescence was not based upon purely altruistic motives. The British delegation was quick to grasp that the average American citizen would feel as uncomfortable in the role of "Santa Claus" as he felt resentful in that of "Uncle Shylock."⁶

This American interest in Britain's convalescence had economic and political causes. The Americans were strongly advocating the liberalization of international trade and the lowering of trade barriers between countries since this policy was deemed advantageous to the expanding American industry. But for the implementation of such an international system a balanced British economy was essential. Only then could Britain afford to import quantity of raw and manufactured materials she required, without

⁵From the speech of Lord Keynes in the House of Lords, as quoted in Vital Speeches of the Day, Vol. 12, May 15, 1946, p. 453.

⁶The Times, December 10, 1945, p. 4.

maintaining high tariff barriers.⁷ The loan presented an excellent opportunity for the Americans to force the British Government to adhere to the principle of multilateral trade⁸ policy. Hence the Americans insisted that the acceptance of the loan by Britain should entail the acceptance of the Bretton Woods Agreement as well. But they did not consider their advocacy of liberal trade on an international level to be due to selfish motives. They sincerely believed that "free exchange of goods and services was the only sound basis for international peace."⁹ This was another reason for their determination to stick to their terms.

⁷This American preoccupation with the safeguarding and furthering of American agricultural and industrial interests is clearly reflected in the speeches of Senators Robert A. Taft and Arthur H. Vandenberg during the loan debate in the Congress. For those speeches see Vital Speeches of the Day, Vol. 12, April 24, 1946, pp. 500-8 and May 1, 1946, pp. 422-426.

⁸In a system of multilateral trade, no exclusive trading agreements can be reached between two nations which can damage the interests of others. The establishment of such a system was one of the major aims of the Bretton Woods Agreement.

⁹William Hardy McNeill, op. cit., p. 662.

Because of the desperate situation at home, the British delegation had no reasonable choice but to accept the American terms for the loan. Nevertheless, they stubbornly tried to obtain the most advantageous terms possible. The final terms of the loan, subject to the ratification of both Governments concerned, was made public on December 6, 1945. According to these terms, Britain was given a loan of \$3,750 million, drawable until December 31, 1951, with an interest rate of 2 per cent. This sum was to be paid back to the United States in fifty annual installments, beginning from December, 1951. Because repayment was to begin five years later, no interest was to be paid for the loan during this period of moratorium. This clause actually brought down the interest rate to 1.6 per cent. On the other hand, Britain was to be excused from paying interest on the loan in any year when the total volume of her exports did not exceed that of pre-World War II years by 60 per cent. By accepting the Bretton Woods Agreement, Britain agreed to make sterling convertible in one year's time; and promised to consider the elimination of Imperial preference as part of an international agreement in order

to liberalize international trade.¹⁰ In their totality, the terms of the loan were not harsh and were very far from being a "diktat". The rate of interest was not heavy. The removal of exchange controls could be easily balanced by substituting in their place the policy of licensing imports. Britain was left free to bargain on the issue of tariff and preference reduction, and the "scarce-currency" clause of the Bretton Woods Agreement protected her industry from foreign competition.¹¹

But in Britain, where people kept thinking in terms of their war effort, the terms of the American loan were received with "words of resentment poured out by millions in Parliament, in the pubs and clubs and streets and homes."¹² This resentment towards the terms of the loan, coupled with a feeling of injured national dignity, was reflected by the British press, on the eve of the debate on the loan in the House of Commons. The Times,

¹⁰ Judd Polk and Gardnes Patterson, op. cit., p. 433, and William Hardy McNeill, op. cit., pp. 683-684.

¹¹ See Mr. Hugh Gaitskell's letter to The Spectator, June 18, 1946, pp. 60-61.

¹² Alzada Comstock, "The Loan: British Opinion," Current History, Vol.10, February 1946, p. 140.

always sober and cautious in its attitude, stated that the Loan Bill would be accepted since it was felt that no practical alternative existed. But it added that the terms of the loan were hard and prospects of default and breakdown had to be faced.¹³ The Economist was openly critical about the terms of the loan. It regarded them, together with the terms of the Bretton Woods Agreement, as a bitter pill forced down the throat of Britain by the United States. It took a firm anti-American stand by declaring that the whole bargain was an American victory over her best friend; since it was not just for Britain to pay \$ 140 million a year until the end of the century just because she had fought the common enemy longest, hardest and earliest.¹⁴ The Economist was more outspoken in its anti-Americanism after the debate in the House of Commons. Its bitter comment on Britain's helpless economic position was: "Beggars cannot be choosers. But they can, by long tradition, put a curse on the ambitions of the rich."¹⁵ Although the Beaverbrook papers criticized the

¹³ The Times, December 12, 1945, p. 5.

¹⁴ The Economist, December 8, 1945, p. 821.

¹⁵ Ibid., December 15, 1945, p. 850.

Labor Government for the terms of the loan, the most candid and caustic criticism against the loan and the Government came from the New Statesman and Nation. This organ of the Labor left wing¹⁶ considered the acceptance of the loan as a "devastating appeasement of American capitalism"¹⁷ since the terms attached to it aimed at curtailing Britain's economic freedom. It also accused the American Government of stabbing Britain at her weakest moment and of aiming to control the world economically.

Obviously, this resentment against the terms of the loan as well as against the American "egotistic" attitude towards Britain's economic difficulties was not confined to a single party during the debates in both Houses of Parliament. The attitude of the Press indicated that it was to be a phenomenon cutting across the party lines. That was also seen in the amendments on the Loan Bill, before the beginning of the debate. Several M.P.s from both Parties had tabled amendments criticizing the loan in very strong terms. Another motion, tabled by two

¹⁶ For a full discussion of the Labor left wing see the succeeding chapter.

¹⁷ As quoted in Alzada Comstock, op. cit., p. 143.

Conservative M.P.s, rejected the Bretton Woods Bill.¹⁸ It was clear that the Government would face strong criticism from its own benches as well as from those opposite. A number of Labor M.P.s had already made public their categorical opposition to the terms of the loan and to the Bretton Woods Agreement. Indeed, Mr. Attlee, the Prime Minister, was forced to admit that there was "a small group" in the ranks of the Labor Party which opposed the Bills with "almost religious fervour."¹⁹

In the House of Commons, the Labor Government found itself in the paradoxical position of defending a loan the terms of which did not satisfy its expectations.

¹⁸The Laborite amendment was tabled by R. Stokes, Lord Corvedale, Norman Smith and Michael Foot. Two independents, M.J. Brown and Mr. Kendall added their names to this amendment. The Conservative amendment was tabled by Robert Boothby and Christopher Hollis. Sir Patrick Hannon, Sir Thomas Moore, Lieut.-Commander Braithwaite and E.P. Smith added their names. The Conservative motion rejecting the Bretton Woods Bill was tabled by Robert Boothby and Christopher Hollis. For the texts of these amendments see The Times, December 11, 1945, p.4.

¹⁹Ibid., December 13, 1945, p.4.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Hugh Dalton, after moving the Loan Bill, admitted that its terms and those of the Bretton Woods Agreement's, although agreed upon after months^h of hard bargaining— which almost reached the breaking point on several occasions, were short of what the British Government desired or expected to receive. He concluded by asking the House to pass the Loan Bill on the grounds that no reasonable alternatives existed.²⁰ This was^s a poor defence for a Bill; a public admission of the desperate financial and economic position of the country and of her economic dependence on the good-will of the United States.

For the left wing of the Labor Party, Britain's economic dependence on a country which was to them the living symbol of "capitalism" was irksome if not infuriating. In the House of Commons, they vehemently attacked the Loan Bill and the Bretton Woods Agreement, without trying to conceal their dogmatic anti-American attitude. They contended that Britain was being treated as a defeated nation by the United States, since the Bretton Woods Agreement and the proposed multilateral trading system closely

²⁰ House of Commons Debates, December 12, 1945, cols. 427 - 440.

resembled the economic and financial conditions forced on Germany under the Dawes and Young loans. They regarded the proposed International Fund as an irresponsible and non-elective body to which the British Government was to abdicate control of the country's internal finances.²¹ The "non-discriminatory" clauses of the Bretton Woods Agreement were declared to be American interference in Britain's relationship with the Dominions. Underlying these criticisms was the left wing assumption that the United States was out to dominate the world economically. The American loan to Britain was seen as the first step toward this goal, since its terms allowed American encroachment on Britain's national sovereignty.²² Basing his position on these assumptions, Norman Smith declared that by voting against the Bill, he and other members of the Labor Party were starting the "British war of independence against the domination of American capitalism during the postwar period."²³

²¹ According to the terms of the Bretton Woods Agreement, the International Fund was to examine the yearly British export volume when she declared that it did not exceed the pre-World War II volume by 60 per cent.

²² See the speech of Norman Smith in the House of Commons Debates, December 12, 1945, cols. 470-479.

²³ Ibid., col. 479.

This fear of American domination was more profound among members of Labor left wing than is generally assumed. They pictured the common American as a narrow-minded profiteer lacking any appreciation of culture and higher values. Making fun of the Anglo-American "equality of sacrifice" during the war, Jenny Lee accused the "American capitalists" of making "a fat profit of the war."²⁴ This anti-American recital was carried to its apogee by Mr. Stokes, Labor M.P. for Ipswich, who said: "I know that they [the Americans] are tough and I know that the majority of them are extremely ignorant, they are in the adolescent stage. They are immature anyway, and they do not understand the international trade problem."²⁵ And to such an "adolescent", naive and "immature" nation Britain was going to be subservient, since he was sure that the loan was hitching "us [Britain] to the American bandwagon, and may eventually land us in the position of being America's Heligoland off the coast of Europe."²⁶ It is obvious that a number of Labor M.P.'s sincerely believed that Britain was on the way to becoming the 49th state of the culturally inferior United States, where the only yardstick for measuring values

²⁴ Ibid., December 13, 1945, col. 719.

²⁵ Ibid., cols. 708 - 709.

²⁶ Ibid., cols. 712 - 713.

was money,

This antagonism to the United States and the resentment against the terms of the loan was not confined to the twenty-three Labor M.P.s who voted against the Loan Bill. Many Labor M.P.s voted for the Bill because they did not see a reasonable alternative. Others did not want to oppose a Bill moved by a Labor Cabinet. Still others feared expulsion from Party ranks. But these factors did not keep them from criticizing the terms of the loan and the United States for dictating them.²⁷ A typical example was that of Alfred Edwards who, after stating that he intended to vote for the Loan Bill, added: "This Agreement is pediculous. That is all I have to say to the Americans on this particular Agreement. They are hitting people when they are down."²⁸ It was with a considerable amount of mis-giving, wounded national pride and indignation that many Labor M.P.s voted for the Bill. But this semblance of party unity was completely non-existent in the case of the Conservative Opposition.

²⁷ See the speeches of Rhys Davies and Frank McLeavy, Ibid., December 12, 1945, cols. 520 and 513.

²⁸ Ibid., December 13, 1945, cols. 701-2. It must be noted that not even a single M.P. addressing the House regarded the terms of the loan with sympathy. They were labeled "harsh", "onerous", "hard", or at best "disappointing".

On the eve of the debate, Winston Churchill, as the leader of His Majesty's Opposition, asked the Conservative M.P.s to abstain from voting. This policy of sitting on the fence was partly adopted because of the strong feeling, among the members of the Opposition, against the terms of the loan and the Bretton Woods Agreement.²⁹ But Churchill could not allow his followers outright opposition to the Bill because his wartime Coalition Government was to a certain extent responsible for the preceding discussions of the Bretton Woods Agreement.³⁰ Churchill's choice was quite skillful, since only by adopting the policy of abstention could he keep a semblance of Conservative unity and unanimity in the House of Commons. But the course of the debate and the result of the division were to prove him completely mistaken in his calculations.

Most of the Conservative M.P.s feared that the implementation of a liberal laissez faire policy might

²⁹ The Times, December 13, 1945, p. 4c.

³⁰ The Economist, December 22, 1945, p. 904. It is noteworthy to observe that the team of liberal economists sent to Bretton Woods by the Coalition Government was kept substantially intact by the Labor Government.

result in the virtual elimination of the Imperial preference system.³¹ This system, besides being regarded by many Conservatives as a bulwark against the spread of a future world slump to Britain, was to High Tories one of the manifestations of Britain's all but-extinct economic greatness.³² It was this preoccupation with the safeguarding of what remained of this greatness which prompted Mr. Boothby to oppose making gold the common denominator of different currencies. By agreeing to do so Britain was "handing over world economic power, outside the Soviet Union, finally and decisively to the United States", because out of \$ 28 billion of monetary gold in the world \$ 23 billion was found "in the vaults of Fort Knox."³³ An alternative to the loan, suggested

³¹ See the speeches of Sir John Anderson and Robert Boothby in the House of Commons Debates, Dec. 12, 1945, cols. 444, 452-3, 455.

³² While free trade is the creed of economic internationalism and aims at knitting the world in a single economy by division of labor, ignoring political barriers, "Imperial Preference, the economic doctrine of Imperialism, urges, on the other hand, that trade be used to cement political relationships already close and that a balanced economy shall be built where there is already a degree of political unity." (See Aubry Jones, "Conservatives in Conference", The Nineteenth Century and After, vol. 142, November 1947, p. 222.)

³³ House of Commons Debates, December 12, 1945, col. 461.

by Mr. Kendall, an independent M.P., and backed by Squadron-Leader Hollis and other High Tories, reveals their unpragmatic attitude towards the United States. They suggested that the Government bide her time and thus force the United States to offer a loan on British terms; because the United States Government needed to provide a loan as badly as the British Government needed it.³⁴ This "alternative" was based on the assumption that overproduction would cause unemployment, and eventually a slump in the United States in the very near future. At that time, the United States would literally beg Britain and other countries to accept free loans, in order to curb unemployment at home by exporting in greater quantities.³⁵

The indignation of British High Conservatism against the "ungratefulness" of the United States, and their feeling of injured national pride was reflected in a speech of Lieut.-Colonel Sir Thomas Moore, who asserted

³⁴ Ibid. cols. 514-9, 529. Beverley Baxter, another Conservative M.P., declared to the House six months later that Americans should pay 10 per cent interest on the loan to Britain, since the loan would put an end to unemployment in the United States. (See Ibid., July 19, 1946, col.1639).

³⁵ In the years 1945-47, these assumptions were preached by the Labor left wing circles as well as by Russian spokesmen, all of whom firmly believed in their validity.

that a majority of the population would prefer to continue living in hardship, to which it was accustomed, and stand up for Britain rather than "trail after the Americans and their spam."³⁶ By forcing such harsh terms on Britain, the United States was wounding the British national dignity:

. . . memories are short across the Atlantic. They can well remember the bombardment of the Capitol 170 years ago, but they are somewhat reluctant to remember that, for the last century and a half, the British Navy have been the bulwark of their defence. . . . We must show them that we are not crawling to get this loan, that we still have certain feelings of dignity and of justice, though apparently they have for the moment, anyhow, overlooked it.³⁷

He continued by stating that he preferred to leave public life rather than see Britain tied, till the end of the century, to the whims of the United States, since "Britain has not fought and won, has not suffered and survived two world wars to become the poor relative of even the most kindly, the most benevolent but most autocratic of kinsmen." He did not spare the Labor Government which was rebuked for allowing the International Monetary Fund

³⁶ House of Commons Debates, December 13, 1945, col. 642.

³⁷ Ibid., cols. 644-5.

to examine the yearly export volume of Britain, in cases where she claimed that it did not exceed her pre-war exports by 60 per cent. Many Conservatives regarded this clause of the Loan Bill as an American means test for Britain, accepted by the same Party which had fought "tooth and nail" against the application of the means test in Britain.³⁸

Mr. Churchill, in his well-tailored speech, was careful not to hurt the feelings of Americans; he rather blamed the Labor Government for its inability to obtain better terms, hinting that a Conservative Government could have done so.³⁹ But all his urgings to his followers to abstain from voting and thus refuse to accept any responsibility for the loan and its consequences⁴⁰ were in vain.

³⁸ Ibid., col. 646.

³⁹ Only a day later, at a luncheon of the American Chamber of Commerce in London, Sir John Anderson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the Coalition Government in the years 1943-45, declared that he did not think any Conservative Government would have obtained better terms from the United States. According to him, any strained relations arising from the loan negotiation were due to economic and not to political considerations. (The Times, December 14, 1945, p. 2.)

⁴⁰ House of Commons Debates, December 13, 1945, cols. 713-6, 727.

The fierce opposition of many Conservative M.P.s to the loan and their disillusionment over the American attitude made them deaf to the advice of their leader. Seventy-one Conservatives voted against the Bill, while eight others voted with the Government and only fifty obtained.⁴¹ It was a disheartening sight for the supporters of the Conservative Party.

In the House of Lords, where the Conservative peers held the overwhelming majority, Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Woolton led the opposition to the Loan Bill and the Bretton Woods Agreement. Lord Beaverbrook asked the House to reject both of them on the grounds that they meant a return to the gold standard, the abolition of the sterling area and the destruction of Imperial preference.⁴² Lord Woolton described them as a "dollar dictation" which degraded and disillusioned the British people. He stated that Britain was not requesting a loan but the dollars she had paid to the United States while fighting alone, in the

⁴¹The Bill passed the House of Commons with 345 "Ayes" and 98 "Noes". It is interesting to note that the two Communist M.P.s voted for the Bill. For the result of the division see the House of Commons Debates, December 13, 1945, cols. 735-40.

⁴²The Times, December 15, 1945, p.4.

years 1940-41. He concluded his speech by declaring: "So long as this loan lasted it would carry with us and our children the memory that in the days of our need America seemed to forget the sacrifices we had made and her own obligations."⁴³ In spite of these strong criticisms and their dislike for the terms of the loan, the Conservative peers abstained. Their opposition would have produced a constitutional crisis, since the Speaker had ruled that the Bretton Woods Agreement was not a money Bill.⁴⁴ Both Bills passed the House of Lords with only eight Conservative peers opposing them and more than fifty abstaining. Twenty Conservatives voted, as did all Liberal peers, with the Government.

Although the divisions in both Houses of Parliament gave the Government an overwhelming majority, the Bills were voted with reservation, reluctance and disillusionment. The most important factor determining the results of the divisions was the absence of reasonable alternatives to the proposed Bills. The terms of the loan provoked an anti-American feeling in important sections of

⁴³ Ibid., December 22, 1945. pp. 4, 8.

⁴⁴ The Economist, December 22, 1945, p. 904.

British public opinion. This feeling crossed party lines. It was more pronounced in the right wing of the Conservative Party, but most violent in the Labor left wing. The left wing, because of international political developments, was to grow increasingly more anti-American and increasingly more critical of the Labor Government's foreign policy throughout the eighteen months to come.⁴⁵

⁴⁵D.C. Watt, op. cit., p. 66.

CHAPTER II

THE BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

AND THE LEFT WING OPPOSITION: 1945 - 1947

"Whether we like it or not, we and the other nations of Western Europe are still dependent on America. [...] Shall we become the financial dependencies and strategic outposts of the New World, or regain our independence so that we can deal with the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. as equals and as friends?"

Keep Left

This essay is a study of British foreign policy and of left wing opposition to it in the years 1945-1947. An examination of the immediate post-World War II relationship of three great powers, the United States, Russia and Britain is necessary to understand the factors influencing the formulation of British foreign policy and of the left wing opposition to it. Domestic economic difficulties and the Welfare State program of the Labor Government were as important in the shaping of the Government's foreign policy as the international political situation. As will be seen subsequently, the left wing's anti-Americanism was one of the most important reasons for its opposition to the Govern-

ment's foreign policy. A definition of the term "British left wing" as used in this essay must be attempted before we begin a discussion of these factors.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to fit the British left wing into a definitive compartment.¹ It is not an exclusive organization but a part of the British Labor movement. In the years under discussion, the majority of its members belonged to the British Labor Party and stood mostly to the left of party leadership. Membership in the left wing precluded membership in the British Communist Party, but some of its members held extreme Marxian views and even claimed that the Communist Party was to their right. In its essence, the British left wing then, as now, was an aggregation of several small groups of intellectuals, all of them claiming to be "genuine" socialists but emphasizing different aspects of that ideology. Some were outspoken pacifists, others fervent disciples of the class struggle, still others "fellow-travelers"-- staunch admirers

¹I am indebted for the following treatment of the British left wing to Eugene J. Meehan, The British Left Wing and Foreign Policy: A Study of the Influence of Ideology (New Jersey, 1960), pp. 21-51.

and supporters of the Russian Communist experiment. But all these groups draw to some extent upon the British radical tradition. In the years following World War II, these groups formed a common front against the policies of the Labor Government on certain issues, but the front was loose because each group was motivated by different aims. The membership of the British left is not constant but ever-shifting, since any member can find his views diverging from that of the left wing majority on certain issues. Nevertheless, there are some attributes which can be roughly applied to most members of the British left: they take a more dogmatic stand on the historical developments of capitalism; put a stronger emphasis on the class struggle; and are possessed by a stronger feeling of anti-clericalism than the rest of the Labor Party membership. It will be more appropriate to name the left wing the "Doctrinaire Wing" of the British Labor movement, for unlike the more pragmatic majority, it is based on certain premises of International Socialism. Although the membership of the left wing consists mainly of intellectuals, they have not cut themselves off from the masses and rightly claim to have a considerable section of British public opinion

behind them.²

The left wing expresses its opinion through its members in the House of Commons; through its non-Parliamentary members, and through its press. These channels provide it with efficient and effective means of propagating its opinions to the masses to the extent that, on certain issues, people are driven to overestimate the mass support these opinions carry. But trade union support of the left wing has been insignificant; most of the big unions have supported the Labor party leadership. It is not surprising that most left wing members regard the trade union leadership as "reactionary".

The number of left wing M.P.s in the 1945 Parliament was large, and every opinion group had its representatives. The most prominent and vociferous pacifists were Emrys Hughes, Rhys Davies, Rev. Campbell Stephen and James Maxton -- whose pacifist views were reinforced by his experience in Spain during the civil war.³ They were the representatives of the pacifist tradition of the British Labor movement and opposed conscription and rearmament

² Sir Arthur Willert, op. cit., p. 12.

³ See George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia (London, 1959), p. 187.

without fear of the Labor party's disciplinary actions. The "fellow travelers" were represented by KonniZilliacus, John Platts-Mills, D.N. Pritt, William Warbey and Sydney Silverman. The most vehement and consistent criticism of the Labor Government's foreign policy came from this group; they caused so much annoyance that, by the end of 1945 Parliament, some of them were expelled from the ranks of the Labor Party.⁴ But the leadership of the left wing in the House of Commons was provided by Richard Crossman, Michael Foot and Ian Mikardo, who held much milder views than the "fellow travelers". Also belonging to this left wing center were Geoffrey Bing, S.O. Davies, Tom Driberg and J.P.W. Mallalieu. There were others in the 1945 Parliament who defy classification into groups: Seymour Cocks was a consistent critic of the foreign policies of all governments; Richard Stokes was a businessman who claimed to apply, successfully, socialist principles to the management of his business. In this essay, the views of all left wing M.P.s who held Government posts in these years will not be considered; because Constitutional principles limited their freedom to express their individual

⁴D.N. Pritt had already been expelled in 1940; John Platts-Mills was expelled in 1948 and KonniZilliacus in 1949. Zilliacus was readmitted later on.

views on the policies of the Government.⁵ This category includes Aneurin Bevan, Stafford Cripps, Emmanuel Shinwell, George R. Strauss, John Strachey and Ellis Smith.

Professors Harold Laski and G.D.H. Cole, publisher Victor Gollancz, and writers Fenner Brockway, Leonard Woolf and Dr. Bailey formed the vanguard of the non-Parliamentary left wing membership. These people held tremendous authority and were looked upon, by certain groups of Labor supporters, as the high priests of Labor party ideology. Harold Laski was the Chairman of the Labor party in 1945; from this position he could influence the making of party decisions to a considerable extent. Moreover, Laski, Victor Gollancz and John Strachey were members of the selection committee of the Left Book Club, which published books in order to propagate Socialism and to promote discussion groups all around the country. The Left Book Club leadership included the more Marxian group of British Socialism

⁵I also believe that "A Jacobin in power is no longer a Jacobin." Aneurin Bevan offers a characteristic example of this case. Until his resignation from the Labor Cabinet in 1951, he refrained from expressing his personal views on the Government's foreign and defence policies. After his resignation, he became one of the leaders of the left wing opposition to these policies.

and its membership, in late 1930's, was about fifty thousand.

The left wing press included the New Statesman and Nation with Kingsley Martin, the professed pacifist, as its editor and Richard Crossman as his assistant editor. It offered searching analyses of international political developments to its readers which, in the years under discussion, numbered about eighty-three thousand. Another channel for propagating left wing views was the Tribune, having Aneurin Bevan, Stafford Cripps, William Mellor and George R. Strauss as its key figures. After 1945, its policies were decided by Jenny Lee [Mrs. Aneurin Bevan], Mrs. Pat Steuss, Michael Foot, Ian Mikardo and J. Kimche, who was its editor until 1947. Its circulation in the years 1945-1948 was about forty thousand. It reflected the views of the Parliamentary left wing. The Forward, having Emrys Hughes as its editor and a lesser circulation than the Tribune, kept itself in the tradition of British Socialism and campaigned constantly to attain "social justice." The Raynolds News, published by the British Co-operative movement, was a Sunday paper with a fixed circulation of 720,000. It took no interest in international

affairs and its editorials had a non-political character. It was read partly because of the sensational nature of its leading articles. These channels were an excellent means for increasing the masses' awareness of left wing criticism of the newly elected Labor Government's foreign policy.

The existence of a discrepancy between the respective stands of the Labor Party's official leadership and that of the left wing on foreign affairs was quite evident before the elections of 1945. The Labor Party's electioneering pamphlet, Let Us Face the Future, gave little space to the Party's opinion of the foreign policy to be pursued by a Labor Government.⁶ The Labor Party promised to consolidate the wartime association of the British Commonwealth with Russia and the United States rather than to isolate Britain from the rest of the world. Only the maintenance of a feeling of "true comradeship" and an effective system of collective security, it was urged, could safeguard international peace and make reduction of armaments possible. The pamphlet also stated that, by having a Labor Government at

⁶The election was mainly fought on domestic issues.

its helm, Britain would be in a position to play a leading role in international relations because of its standing with the working people of all countries.⁷ Ernest Bevin's speech at the Blackpool Conference, on May 23, 1945, followed the line of the Let Us Face the Future. He pledged, in the name of his Party, never to play off the Eastern European countries against the Soviet Union and guaranteed that a Labor Government would do its best to dissipate such fears. He expressed his satisfaction at the fact that France was going Left, since Left could understand Left. But he was careful to make clear that his Party was anxious to see free and democratic elections taking place in the countries of Eastern Europe.⁸

The left wing was not satisfied with these statements on foreign policy and asked for more radical and drastic actions. On May 22, 1945, Lester Hutchinson made public the left wing hopes that a Labor Government would expel the émigré Governments from London, because these "reactionary"

⁷ A Labor Party Publication, Let Us Face the Future: A Declaration of Labour Policy for the Consideration of the Nation (London, 1945), p. 11.

⁸ The Times, May 24, 1945, p. 2.

governments were publishing "foul libels on an ally"⁹ [Russia]. When the Labor party won the elections, Harold Laski wrote in La Tribune Economique, that the Labor Government would drive France from Spain; and Kingsley Martin "predicted" a change toward the Left in the Greek Government.¹⁰ In the House of Commons, just after the elections, the left wing M.P.s urged the Government to adopt a distinctly Socialist foreign policy and to discontinue that of the wartime coalition Government's.¹¹ A distinctly Socialist foreign policy meant, for the Left Wing, giving direct help to the Socialist movements of Spain and Greece to enable them to overthrow their respective governments, and a very close cooperation with Communist Russia. But even before the elections, Bevin had publicly accepted the need of a combined effort that would rise above party politics in matters of "defence, foreign policy and relations with other countries",¹² and had publicly repudiated Harold Laski's declarations to

⁹Ibid., May 23, 1945, p. 2.

¹⁰Eugene J. Meehan, op. cit., p. 68.

¹¹House of Commons Debates, August 20, 1945, cols 336-40, 358.

¹²The Times, May 30, 1945, p. 5.

La Tribune Economique.¹³ These declarations meant that the Labor Government did not intend to interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries, even if their governments were despotic or reactionary. As the main lines of Bevin's foreign policy became clear in the years 1945-1946 the disillusionment as well as the criticism of the left wing increased tremendously.

Bevin's early experiences as Foreign Secretary proved that his hopes for the possibility of maintaining friendly relations with Russia were ill-founded. On his way to Potsdam, he was convinced that it would be possible for him to dissipate the Russian fear of a British aggressive imperialistic policy and thereby come to a frank understanding with Stalin on European political and economic problems. He still believed that Left could better understand Left.¹⁴ But at Potsdam he concluded that Stalin was not ready to "understand" the Left unless he was given whatever he wanted. Stalin expected large-scale reparations

¹³ Elaine Windrich, British Labor's Foreign Policy (Stanford, 1952), p. 174.

¹⁴ Francis Williams, Ernest Bevin: Portrait of a Great Englishman (London, 1952), p. 242.

from Germany, wanted to consolidate his grip on the Eastern European countries, and sought to reshape the "soft" Russian boundaries in Turkey and Iran.¹⁵ Bevin was quick to grasp that only a dynamic and firm Anglo-American stand could frustrate this formidable Russian expansionist policy. He vigorously opposed any change of boundaries of Germany and Poland in favour of Russia.¹⁶ Under these circumstances, the increasing coolness in the attitudes of Molotov and Stalin toward Bevin and Attlee and their dislike of British Socialism is not surprising.¹⁷ The Russian Government launched an appalling propaganda attack against the British Labor Government and its "imperialist aims". It was a disillusioned Bevin who announced to the House of Commons, on his return from Potsdam, that the Nazi totalitarianism was in the process of being replaced by Communist totalitarianism in Bulgaria, Rumania

¹⁵ Russia had already asked the Turkish Government to grant her military bases on the Dardanelles and Bosphorus and give up the Turkish provinces of Kars and Ardahan. At the same time she was applying a tremendous pressure on Northern Iran and material by helping the local Communists to create an autonomous People's Government there. (See William Hardy McNeill, op. cit., pp. 607-8).

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 613.

¹⁷ What was surprising, was Truman's and Byrnes' annoyance concerning Bevin's firm stand. The Americans

and Hungary.¹⁸ He had already reached the premises upon which Churchill was to base his famous Fulton Speech.

Bevin was aware that Russia would not alter its expansionist policy for the sake of establishing friendly relations with Britain and the United States. Only the threat of forceful opposition could alter this Russian policy. At the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, the British and American Foreign Secretaries failed to compel the Russians to stop their subversive activities in Northern Iran. Stalin refused to remove the Russian army units from Azerbaijan, where they had been sent to frustrate the establishment of order by the Persian army. On this issue Molotov and Bevin were at loggerheads.¹⁹ Moreover, Bevin clearly perceived that this aggressive policy was based on the disintegration of the British political influence in Europe and the Middle East.²⁰ The

were still suspicious of British imperialism. (See Francis Williams, op. cit., pp. 241-2, and Clement R. Attlee, "Britain and America: Common Aims, Different Opinions", Foreign Affairs, vol.32, January 1954, p.195).

¹⁸ House of Commons Debates, August 20, 1945, col.291.

¹⁹ William Hardy McNeill, op. cit., pp. 711-2.

²⁰ Francis Williams, op. cit., pp. 254-5.

only way left to Britain, short of submission to Russian aims, was determined opposition to Russian expansionism. But, Bevin was well aware that the British economy was in a shattered condition and unable to back such a vigorous foreign policy.

As discussed in the previous chapter, World War II had a disastrous effect on the British economy. On the other hand, Britain was the only country other than the United States, which was incurring external expenditures by actively helping the reconstruction of the post-war international economy. If left alone, Britain could only hope to balance its budget in 1949.²¹ It was through the American loan that the Government hoped to reconstruct the country's economy. Only the United States, with her huge economic power, could effectively check the Russian threat in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. But public opinion in the United States was reluctant to accept a leading role in international affairs, although America would soon be compelled to do so.

American conservatives were anxious to end American involvement in European and Far Eastern political

²¹ Hugh Dalton, High Tide and After: Memoirs, 1945-1960 (London, 1962), p. 71.

problems, but at the same time they were suspicious of Russian Communism. The liberals and leftists wanted to see a continuous American involvement abroad, but they kept on urging the Administration to be patient and understanding toward Soviet Russia. But the negative and intransigent Russian attitude on the German issue, and propaganda attacks on the United States increased the tension in Russo-American relations and played a major role in changing American public opinion. Contrary to Stalin's wartime promises, the Russian Government refused to treat Germany as an economic unity. The United States Government decided to stop deliveries of German surplus capital equipment from the American zone to Russia. The Russians retaliated by exposing the United States to a violent press attack. At the Second Council of Foreign Ministers in Paris, the target of Molotov's attacks shifted from Britain to the United States. He accused the American Government of conducting a policy of "money imperialism" in Europe, which was deemed an easy prey to such capitalistic schemes because of her weak economy. These developments, coupled with Russian pressure on Turkey and Iran, subversive activities in Greece and actual expansion in Eastern

Europe, intensified among American conservatives their fear of Communism which now began to outweigh their dislike of foreign entanglements. Gradually, they started to support an active foreign policy, having the "containment" of Communism as their aim. On the other hand, the aggressive Russian attitude in the Peace Conferences and the United Nations Security Council was disillusioning the American liberals and leftists on the subject of coming to an understanding with Russia.²²

It must be noted that this change in the American public opinion was very gradual. It was very difficult for a nation which had regarded Russia as an honest and brave wartime ally to change its attitude overnight. This explains why American official circles did not comment on Churchill's Fulton Speech of March 5, 1946. Nevertheless, there was an important change in the attitude of the American Government, if not in public opinion, toward Russia. The Government was willing to help the countries of Western Europe by loans in order to enable them recover their economic stability, and bolster their anti-Communism. The political motive in the American loans to Western European

²²William Hardy McNeill, op. cit., pp. 653-6, 719.

countries became apparent in the later stages of Congressional debates on the loan to Britain. Britain was seen as a bulwark against Russian expansionism in Europe, and some support for the loan was given to enable her to continue in this role. Further emphasis was given to this motivation after May 1946, when the United States decided to help only those countries which had not been taken over by Communist régimes, and cancelled the loan which had already been granted to Poland.²³ Yet this American involvement in European affairs was primarily economic, and indirect. It was the British Labor Government which forced the United States into direct involvement in international affairs.

In the winter of 1947, the British Government felt unable to carry on with her overseas commitments because of the country's precarious economic situation,²⁴ British forces in Greece, Palestine and India and economic aid given to these countries and Turkey had produced serious strains on the country's economy. But the Government was conscious that the withdrawal of British commit-

²³ Ibid., pp. 662-3.

²⁴ A detailed examination of the British economic situation will be given in the succeeding chapter.

ments from Greece and Turkey would create a political vacuum in these areas, which was likely to be exploited and filled by Russia. The only way of forestalling this was to gain American acceptance of British commitments in these countries.²⁵ On February 24, 1947, a note, delivered by the British Ambassador in Washington to the State Department, proposed this takeover. After stating that the British Treasury was not in a position to carry out her responsibilities for further economic aid to Greece and Turkey after March 31, 1947, the note stated that the Greek economy was on the verge of collapse and the Turkish army needed equipment. It ended in a gloomy note, pointing that should either of these countries fall to Communist aggression the result "for the West would be catastrophic."²⁶ It was this British message which "triggered off the Truman doctrine."²⁷

²⁵ Francis Williams, op. cit., p. 263.

²⁶ D. C. Watt, "Withdrawal from Greece: The End of Balance-of-Power Diplomacy: The Beginning of Cold War", in Michael Sissons and Philip French (ed.), Age of Austerity (London, 1963), p. 103. Hereafter cited as Sissons and French, Age of Austerity.

²⁷ D. C. Watt, op. cit., p. 75.

On March 12, 1947, President Truman asked the Congress to authorize a grant of \$400 million for Greece to help her "become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy." After adding that Turkey was in the same position, he stressed that the peaceful development of nations "free from coercion" had become impossible unless Americans were "willing to help free peoples maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes."²⁸ There was no need to explain that these "aggressive movements" were directed from the Kremlin. The Truman Doctrine, as the President's speech was to be called, explicitly pledged to resist Soviet expansionism through American financial aid to European free nations. The United States thus became committed to lead the free world.

The Truman Doctrine received a bad press in the United States. In general, public opinion was that the Administration had declared war on Russia and expected actual fighting to begin between the two nations. The isolationists, the liberals and those who still cherished the wartime alliance with Russia joined hands in condemning

²⁸ Margaret Carlyle (ed.), Documents on International Affairs, 1947-1948 (London, 1952), pp. 4-5.

this new American involvement in European and Middle Eastern affairs.²⁹ In Britain, public opinion varied between approval and condemnation of the Truman Doctrine and of the British Government's initiative in bringing it about.

In the years 1945-1947, the foreign policy of the Labor Government received the continuous support of His Majesty's Conservative Opposition in the House of Commons, but it was constantly criticized by the Labor left wing. The left wing, which had disagreed with the Party's leadership even before the elections of 1945, criticized and opposed the Government's foreign policy to the extent of infuriating Bevin by critical resolutions and argumentative papers urging him to adopt a more radical foreign policy.³⁰ He was also criticized for not turning out those key officials in the Foreign Office and in diplomatic missions abroad who were "Lovers of the old fashioned kind of British imperialism": these men prepared the reports on which vital decisions were taken.³¹ At the

²⁹ Sissons and French, Age of Austerity, p. 106.

³⁰ Hugh Dalton, op. cit., p. 23.

³¹ Raymond Blackburn, "Bevin and His Critics", Foreign Affairs, vol. 25, January 1947, p. 247.

Labor Party Conference, in 1946, the left wing leadership failed to convince the majority of the need for a change in the Government's foreign policy.³² Its resolutions failed mainly because of the support given to the Government by the big trade unions.³³ On October 29, 1946, twenty-one left wing M.P.s³⁴ sent a critical letter to Prime Minister Attlee, emphasizing the need to redraft British foreign policy on independent lines. Instead of responding to the power politics of others in the same manner, the Government should adopt a distinctly socialist policy because British Socialism had "a historic role to play in proving to the world by her leadership and example that democratic socialism is the only final basis for world government."³⁵ The letter was based on the

³² Eugene J. Meehan, op. cit., p. 93.

³³ These resolutions especially criticized the Government's Spanish and Greek policies.

³⁴ The signatories were: E. Ayrton-Gould, A. Brumell, D. Bruce, W.G. Cox, R.H.S. Crossman, E. Davies, J. Gallagher, J. Lee, M. Hewitson, W. Griffiths, B.W. Levy, R.W.G. Mackay, H.G. McGhee, J.P. Mallalieu, M. Foot, C. Shawcross, F. Messer, S. Silverman, J. Reeves, L. Wilkes and W. Wyatt.

³⁵ As quoted in F.A. Voigt, "Twenty One 'Rebels' and a Letter, The Nineteenth Century and After, vol. 141, January 1947, pp. 3-4.

assumption that Russia and the United States were destined to go to war³⁶, and only a British Socialist foreign policy could avoid this end. The attitude of the signatories was deeply hostile to the United States. They asked the Government "to aid those large forces in the United States, whether Socialist or non-Socialist, whose hostility to the Imperialist policy of the United States Administration is as great as our [the signatories'] own."³⁷ This letter and the previous left wing criticisms changed nothing in the Government's foreign policy.

Frustrated and ignored, on November 28, 1946, the left wing M.P.s publicly manifested their dissatisfaction with the Government's foreign policy by tabling an Amendment to the Reply to the Throne. The Amendment asked the Government to adopt a constructive Socialist alternative between American Capitalism and Russian Communism by collaborating with nations striving to achieve Socialism in their

³⁶ R.H.S. Crossman declared: "freedom cannot survive in a world of American free enterprise or Russian Communism." (As quoted in Sir Norman Angell, "Leftists at Sea", The Spectator, April 25, 1947, p. 456.)

³⁷ As quoted in The Economist, November 23, 1946, p. 818.

countries.³⁸ The substance of left wing criticism was reflected in the speech of Richard Crossman when he moved the Amendment. Although the Government was pursuing the Socialist domestic policy pledged during the elections of 1945, her foreign policy followed the precedents set by the Conservatives. This was indicated by her failure to disown Churchill's Fulton Speech. She was not seeking genuine cooperation with the Soviet Government; rather she was siding with American Capitalism instead of trying to bridge the widening gap between the Communist and Capitalist blocs. Communism was against democracy and freedom but Capitalism was also a danger to democracy and Socialism. The British Government was to fight a double battle against both of these contending ideologies by providing the free nations of the world with a better alternative. To be able to do so, she had to remain independent and free instead of siding with the American bloc and criticizing the expansionist activities of Russia without criticizing American expansionist policies in China and Japan. The left wing alternative asked the

³⁸ House of Commons Debates, November 18, 1946, col. 526.

Government to adopt an independent foreign policy which would permit her to cooperate fully with Russia and the United States, without committing herself to either. This would enable Britain to take the leadership of a Socialist and pacific "third force" which would be able to counter successfully the Russian and American Blocs and thus save the world from another total war.³⁹

Although all "rebel" speakers supported Crossman's main theme, they stressed its different points, showing the various tendencies of the groups within the Left Wing. The "fellow travelers" adopted an uncritical attitude toward Russia. Sydney Silverman, an important "fellow traveler", tried to justify the subversive and expansionist Russian activities in Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria by declaring that these countries were not yet ready for free elections.⁴⁰ Jenny Lee feared that the Government's foreign commitments could wreck her domestic Socialist experiment and turn England into "a second or third-rate Power."⁴¹ Joseph Reeves, the seconder of

³⁹ For Crossman's speech see Ibid., cols. 526-39.

⁴⁰ Ibid., col. 575.

⁴¹ Ibid., col. 561.

the Amendment, directed his attacks to the "mischievous idea implicit" in Churchill's Fulton Speech.⁴² But underlying these differences in emphasis on certain issues, there was a feeling common to most "rebels" regarding the United States.

They were anti-American in their feelings or, at least, suspicious of American capitalism. To them, the United States represented the stronghold of capitalism. And capitalism was easily and promptly equated with imperialism in left wing circles. They also believed that imperialists could achieve their end even without actual annexation of foreign territories through peaceful means such as trade. This explains why Crossman accused the United States of pursuing an expansionist policy in the Far East when she signed trade agreements with China and Japan. This anti-American attitude was so obvious that the New York Times commented: "In quarters close to 10 Downing Street, it was indicated that Mr. Attlee and at least some of his Cabinet considered that the growing number of malcontents on the Left were not pro-Russian but anti-American capitalist, according to their comments

⁴² Ibid., col. 540.

in yesterday's debates."⁴³

In his reply to the "rebels", Prime Minister Attlee stated that the Government was acting on behalf of the whole nation and not of an ideological abstraction. According to him, it was impossible for the Government to pursue Party ideology in dealing with other nations. The Government had to compromise since compromise was the basis of a peaceful civilization. Britain was not "ganging-up" with the United States, but receiving financial aid from her because no other nation could provide that help. The Government did not lack sympathy for Russia, and, if she was voting against her in the Security Council, she was acting according to the merits of the issues debated. He concluded by asking his friends to withdraw their Amendment since their views, although held sincerely, did not correspond to the facts and were based upon "profound misapprehension of the inevitable conditions under which foreign affairs are conducted."⁴⁴ As they had already declared, the "rebels" did not intend to force a

⁴³ New York Times, Nov. 20, 1946, p.13.

⁴⁴ For Attlee's speech see the House of Commons Debates, November 18, 1946, cols. 579-89.

division. Richard Crossman rose to withdraw the Amendment, but McGovern (I.L.P.) and Campbell Stephen forced a division.⁴⁵

The division result, 353 against the Amendment to nil, was "a decisive enough verdict but not quite the resounding defeat of the rebellious critics that the Government desired."⁴⁶ About a third of the Labor M.P.s abstained, showing their dissatisfaction with the Government's foreign policy. Thus, in spite of the three-line whip sent by the Government to her Labor supporters, about 50 of them joined the 58 signatories of the Amendment.⁴⁷ The Conservative Opposition, which was rather amused by this public strife within the Labor Party, gave its firm support to the Government against those who believed that "British foreign policy should not be based on clear British interests, but on ideological aspirations."⁴⁸ About 120 Conservative

⁴⁵ The Spectator, November 22, 1946, p. 535.

⁴⁶ The Times, November 19, 1946, p. 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁸ House of Commons Debates, November 18, 1946, col. 548.

M.P.s voted with the Government. This was, for the Labor Government, a reliance "to a greater extent than was comfortable on the votes of the Opposition and other groups."⁴⁹ Moreover, the defeat of the Amendment "did not convince either the House or the public that their [left wing's] action was unimportant or that it had been the last of its kind."⁵⁰ It was obvious that there was a widespread dissatisfaction in the Labor Party with the Government's foreign policy. According to the New York Times the "rebels" were likely to become a troublesome problem for the Government in the future.⁵¹ The left wing's reaction to the Truman Doctrine was to prove the validity of this statement.

The left wing attacked and denounced unsparingly the Truman Doctrine, which was seen as a threat to world peace. According to Harold Laski it was "a threat to peace greater than any since the rise of Hitler."⁵² The left

⁴⁹The Times, November 20, 1946, p.4.

⁵⁰F.A.Voigt, op. cit., p.1.

⁵¹New York Times, November 19, 1946, p. 1.

⁵²Sissons and French, op. cit., pp. 107-8.

wing made its position public in a pamphlet entitled Keep Left.⁵³ It challenged the basic argument underlying the President's Speech by stating that Russia was contemplating neither aggression nor infiltration in neighbouring countries. Stalin was no Hitler, but a man who wanted peace to reorganize his devastated country. He had no desire to start World War III unless foreign powers forced him to take action. The joint Anglo-American policy of "containment", which aimed at propping-up anti-Communist régimes around Russian frontiers, was provoking Russia. And the Truman Doctrine, which was in line with this joint Anglo-American policy, was making another world war inevitable by dividing the world into two contending Blocs. Britain, by adopting a genuine Socialist foreign policy, could avoid such a bitter outcome. By refusing alliances with any foreign power and adopting a policy of

⁵³ A Group of Members of Parliament, Keep Left (London, 1947). Most probably the pamphlet was written by M. Foot, R. Crossman and I. Mikardo. The other signatories were: G. Bing, D. Bruce, H. Davies, L. Lee, B.W. Levy, R.W.G. Mackay, J.P.W. Mallalieu, E.R. Millington, S. Swingler, G. Wigg and W. Wyatt.

cooperation with all, she could bridge the gap existing between Russia and the United States and save the small nations from their ideological warfare. Since Western European countries were going Left and the same economic disaster had befallen all of them, there was a possibility of bringing about an European economic unity. This "Third World Power", with Britain at its lead, could become the keystone of world peace. It could balance the American and Russian blocks and make the United Nations an effective organization, able to regulate international relations. Thus, concluded the pamphlet, "a United Europe, strong enough to deter an aggressor, but voluntarily renouncing the most deadly offensive weapon of modern warfare [the Atom Bomb], would be the best guarantee of world peace."

On examining this Left Wing attitude toward Russia and the international political situation, one cannot help detecting a doctrinaire and naive approach to political realities. It was Russia, not Britain or the United States, which was pursuing an expansionist policy, if not for ideological at least for security

reasons.⁵⁴ The Truman doctrine was a forceful reaction to this Russian policy toward Eastern Europe, Turkey and Iran. It was Stalin indeed who refused Bevin's proposal to renew the wartime Anglo-Russian alliance for fifty years. On the other hand, the "Third World Power" alternative —the left wing panacea for the preservation of world peace, was completely lacking in pragmatism. It would have been impossible to bring about an European economic unity during these years without American economic and financial assistance— Europe was even unable to feed itself. But this assistance could not be given divorced from political considerations. The American loans to Britain and other countries made this quite clear. Therefore, under these circumstances, the formation of a neutral European economic unity was an impossibility. But, obstinately confining itself to its ivory tower, the left wing, while asserting that Europe could produce the Atom bomb without outside help, believed in an altruistic renunciation of this project as the "best guarantee of world peace." Thus, in an age of power politics, a militarily weak Europe was consi-

⁵⁴ Even Stalin himself would have been amazed by his saintly portrait in the Keep Left.

dered to be the best means of safeguarding world peace. At their best, these propositions were intellectual chimeras.⁵⁵

The left wing attack on the Truman Doctrine was colored by anti-Americanism. Actually, within the left wing, there was a "gradual increase in hostility to the center of Capitalism, the United States."⁵⁶ The bulk of this anti-American feeling was due to left wing fear of capitalism. Capitalism would surely develop into imperialism, which would threaten even Britain. The left wing was certain that the United States would "explode in aggressive action sooner or later" unless she adopted a Socialist economy.⁵⁷ But, according to Keep Left, since the Fulton policy had become the official policy of the United States, and since the American people were reluctant to fight, American strategists were trying "to secure a system of

⁵⁵The publication of Cards on the Table by the Labor Party, which forcefully answered the questions and suggestions raised by Keep Left, shows that the Keep Left group had a considerable number of supporters in the Labor Party membership.

⁵⁶Eugene J. Meehan, op. cit., p. 112.

⁵⁷See Dr. Stephen Taylor's speech in the House of Commons Debates, March 15, 1947, col. 1766.

forward defences against Russia, manned by non-American forces." In the Far East Japan was becoming such an outpost. In Europe, Britain seemed destined to become a pensioner of America "earning its living by fighting America's wars overseas."⁵⁸ In the House of Commons, Tom Driberg interpreted Truman's speech as an invasion of South Eastern Europe by dollar imperialism.⁵⁹ Unless Britain curtailed its overseas economic and political commitments said Michael Foot, she would become a dependent of the United States not only for the conduct of her foreign policy but also for the conduct of her domestic affairs.⁶⁰

There were many factors which transformed the eighteenth century pro-American attitude of the British left (or Radicalism --as the left was called at the time) into that of twentieth century anti-Americanism. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, America was to the British left the cradle of genuine democracy;

⁵⁸ Keep Left, pp. 32-3.

⁵⁹ House of Commons Debates, March 17, 1947, col.18.

⁶⁰ Ibid., March 15, 1947, cols. 1801-2.

the land of freedom of thought and faith and of social equality.⁶¹ This change in attitude was partly due to changes within the United States, which shook the basis of left's optimism towards her future. Thus, the unparalleled growth of industrialization after the Civil War "put an end to the Jeffersonian ideal of a commonwealth based on rural simplicity." The increasing entanglement of the United States in world affairs deprived her statesmen of their reputation for disinterestedness, which they had gained during the period of American political isolationism. The restrictions placed upon immigration increasingly barred the British workers from enjoying the fruits of the "paradise of high wages and social equality." Other factors influential in changing the British left's attitude towards the former colony had nothing to do with the United States. The increasing influence of Socialism in Radical circles and in the working class "gave rise to suspicions of any country whose economy was founded on economic laissez-faire,

⁶¹ Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America, the first volume of which was published in 1835, was quite influential in the shaping of the British left's attitude towards the United States.

however democratic its constitutional arrangements."⁶² Underlying all these factors was the continuous American ascendancy over Britain which was reducing the latter "more and more to the status of a second rate power in both economic and political respects."⁶³ The over-growing realization of this fact aroused British antagonism and, naturally, jealousy towards the United States. This feeling was also shared by Tories.

Although the majority of Conservatives greeted Truman's speech as the beginning of a new era of firm Anglo-American cooperation,⁶⁴ most Tories were as worried as the left wing about Britain's decline as a world power. They believed that handing over British overseas commitments to the United States would result in a greater British subservience to America. Such a position was degrading to Britain. Quintin Hogg, reminiscent of Victorian

⁶² Henry Pelling, America and the British Left: From Bright to Bevan (London, 1956), pp. 1-5.

⁶³ E. Varga, "Anglo-American Rivalry and Partnership", Foreign Affairs, vol.25, July 1947, p. 583.

⁶⁴ Referring to the Truman Doctrine, Churchill said: "... no step taken lately had more increased the chances of maintaining world peace and freedom." (See The Times, March 15, 1947, p. 4).

England, declared to the House of Commons:

. . . We have trodden the way that leads to greatness, and back along that path there is no return. We have bitter sufferings to undergo. [...] but about this let us be quite clear, that only by Great Britain remaining great and a great Power in the world, in the true and historic sense of the term, can there be peace for the nations of the earth, and prosperity for the people of this country.⁶⁵

Thus, to most Tories, the Pax Britannia was the only safeguard for peace. Even The Spectator, which advocated active American intervention in European affairs, questioned the American ability to cope with the international political situation. With a measure of English self-satisfaction it commented: "It is true that the Americans have a lot to learn in this field. [World affairs]"⁶⁶ The left wing and the extreme Tories were on the same ground in their mutual fear of American imperialism and their belief in British superiority in culture and political maturity. From this point to anti-Americanism was a very short step. It is not surprising that, following the left wing "revolt" in Parliament, public opinion pollsters "reported an up-swing of senti-

⁶⁵House of Commons Debates, May 15, 1947, col.1827.

⁶⁶The Spectator, May 16, 1947, p. 546.

ment favourable to Russia and an 'alarming increase in anti-Americanism', two out of five interviewed being predominantly unfavorable [to the United States] the remainder apathetic."⁶⁷ Public opinion pollsters reported a continuous increase in this anti-American feeling which was to reach its apogee in the summer of 1947.

⁶⁷D.C. Watt, op. cit., p. 66.

CHAPTER III
THE CONVERTIBILITY CRISIS

"In this matter [the suspension of convertibility] our right attitude to the Americans is not one of apology but one of protest. We have both made the mistake, but Britain alone takes the consequences."

The Spectator, August 20, 1947.

"I ought to withdraw part of the statement. At least they [the Americans] are not shabby. They are the only people in the world who can afford to wear good English broadcloth."

Sydney Silverman to the House of Commons.

After World War II, British governments were confronted, as they still are, by the problem of "dollar shortage." In the Summer of 1947, this shortage developed into a crisis when the Labor Government, as she had pledged under the Bretton Woods Agreement, made sterling convertible. British public opinion reacted to the crisis with

caustic and angry attacks on the United States and on the Bretton Woods Agreement.¹ Although the establishment of convertibility caused this sudden drain on Britain's dollar reserves, there were other factors, less conspicuous, which had already undermined the country's dollar balance.

Some of these factors were beyond the control of the Government. By the twentieth century, the United States had become the world's chief source of surplus capital and the producer of the cheapest manufactured goods. Thus, a fundamental imbalance of productivity came to exist between the United States and the rest of the world. Unlike Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, she did not need to buy primary materials from abroad, nor could foreign manufactured goods compete with her domestic production because of her high tariff barriers. Therefore, countries which badly needed American products could not buy them because they could not earn dollars by selling their products to the dollar

¹D.C. Watt, op. cit., p. 69.

area; neither could they earn currencies convertible into dollars. This lack of equilibrium could be masked as long as the United States Government made dollar loans to foreign countries, with which they would finance their purchases. In a world which badly needed dollars, free convertibility would inevitably drain whatever remained of the American loan to Britain.² On the other hand, international terms of trade were unfavorable to nations depending on large quantities of imports, because prices had risen by thirty per cent in the United States since the end of World War II. This reduced the American loan to Britain by one-third of its purchasing capacity.³

Even nature seemed to have no pity on Britain's economic plight. In the winter of 1946-47 she saw the

² Barbara Ward, "Britain in the Shadow", Harper, vol. 195, November 1947, pp. 394-5. See also C. Hartley Grattan, "Britain's Next Big Crisis", Ibid., vol. 195, July 1947, pp. 19-20, and the speech of Sir Stafford Cripps in the House of Commons Debates, October 23, 1947, col. 271.

³ Guenther Stein, "America and the Crisis", The Spectator, September 5, 1947, p. 297. See also the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech in the House of Commons Debates, October 24, 1947, col. 409.

worst winter conditions since 1880. As Hector McNeill, the Minister of State, stated, the Labor Government faced "disasters which no government on earth could have prevented."⁴ Two million sheep and lambs were lost and thirty thousand cattle perished by floods and freezing. Floods also destroyed 270,000 acres of winter wheat and eighty thousand tons of potatoes. The fuel supply was inadequate and many factories closed down because of an electricity shortage.⁵ Britain became the land of "shortages" where even bread was rationed. The Government was obliged to devote half of her current overseas spending to food in order to provide for the basic needs of the nation.⁶

There were other factors undermining the country's dollar earning and saving capacity, which could have been controlled by the Labor and previous governments. Coal

⁴ As quoted in Fulton Oursler, "England in Sun and Shadow; Excerpt from a Travel Diary", The Reader's Digest, vol. 51, August 1947, p. 140.

⁵ Idem and E.E. Reynolds and N.H. Brasher, op. cit., p. 228.

⁶ Alzada Comstock, "Britain's Winter Prospects", Current History, vol. 13, September 1947, p. 140.

and textile industries, which along with steel constituted Britain's major export and dollar earning industries, were neglected in the inter-war period. These industries were operated by old-fashioned methods; rationalization and modernization had hardly touched them.⁷ Exports were in continuous decline due to decreasing output and increasing prices.

The cost of the Labor Government's foreign commitments and domestic program greatly exceeded the national income, which in 1947 was 110 per cent of 1938.⁸ In 1947 Britain maintained twice as many armed forces as in 1938. In 1946, she spent £ 40 million in Germany for food and administration, one-third of which was paid in dollars. In the same year, the expenditure for British overseas forces and military assistance to Greece and Turkey reached £ 374 million. She also spent £ 40 million for relief work and £ 30 million for diplomatic and other expenses. In return, she received £ 164 million from

⁷ Barbara Ward, op. cit., p. 400. Although the coal industry was nationalized by the Labor Government, its effects on output would not be significant for several years.

⁸ Idem.

sales of war surplus goods, which reduced her total overseas expenditure, in the year 1946, to £ 363 million. The year 1947 saw increasing overseas expenditure.⁹ In spite of the Anglo-American agreement for Bizonia in Germany on December 2, 1946, it became obvious that British expenditure in Germany would rise to £ 80 million in 1947.¹⁰ Moreover, the Labor Government began the implementation of the Welfare State program as soon as she came to power. This included rehousing, Health and Education services, the social security scheme and the re-equipment of old industries. This was a program to which the Labor Party had committed itself for many years. Now that the program could be realized, there could be no turning away. However, the Government started its implementation without having the necessary funds, and the result was inflation.¹¹

⁹The inability of the British Government to meet these rising expenses was one of the main, if not the main, causes for her withdrawal from Greece, Turkey, India and Palestine in 1947 - 1948.

¹⁰Peter Calvocoreasi and Sheila Harden, op. cit., p. 64. See also William Hardy McNeill, op. cit., p. 729.

¹¹Barbara Ward, op. cit., p. 400.

Thus, rising prices in the United States, the bad winter of 1946-1947, and the inefficiency of British industry coupled with the Labor Government's overseas commitments and the Welfare State Program left the Budget in deficit. This deficit which was \$ 1.5 billion in 1946, jumped to \$ 2.7 billion in 1947 in spite of the curtailment of Britain's overseas commitments.¹² The adverse balance of trade increased from £ 295 million in 1946 to £ 442 million in 1947.¹³ Meanwhile, two-thirds of the American loan to Britain was spent by July 17, 1947.¹⁴

It was obvious that the implementation of the convertibility clause of the Bretton Woods Agreement, starting on July 15, 1947, would put Britain in a very difficult position. Her dollar balance was already meager, and from now on she would be obliged to meet her own dollar needs

¹² Thomas Balogh, "The Outlook for Britain", Foreign Affairs, vol. 26, July 1948, p. 666.

¹³ E.E. Reynolds and N.H. Brasher, op. cit., p.224.

¹⁴ The loan funds were supposed to last until December, 1951, but they were withdrawn so quickly that the loan was depleted almost three years earlier than expected. (See D.C. Watt, op. cit., p. 75).

and the dollar demand created by the convertibility of sterling.¹⁵ Since Britain was unable to meet the resulting high dollar demand, she suspended convertibility on August 20, 1947. While in the second quarter of 1947 the drain on Britain's dollar balance was \$75 million a week, after the introduction of convertibility, it increased to \$115 million a week in July, 1947, and to \$150 million a week in August. In the last full week before the suspension of convertibility, the drain reached \$237 million.¹⁶ This heavy demand on Britain's dollars can be explained by the desperate need of the world, outside the United States, for dollars to buy American goods. On the other hand, these countries feared that convertibility might be suspended at any time. They were aware of Britain's difficult financial position and converted their currently earned sterling balances into dollars with great haste.¹⁷ Although the Government sus-

¹⁵C. Hartley Grattan, op. cit., p. 22. Convertibility was to apply mainly to sterling earned from Britain after July 15, 1947.

¹⁶See the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton, in the House of Commons Debates, October 24, 1947, col. 399.

¹⁷Ibid., cols. 409-410.

pendent convertibility the harm had already been done; the country's dollar and gold reserves were almost exhausted.¹⁸

The British public opinion reacted to the convertibility crisis "with angry and bitter attacks" on the United States and on the Bretton Woods Agreement.¹⁹ In the House of Commons the attack was led by the left wing. Even the Minister of Economic Affairs, Sir Stafford Cripps, attributed the entire cause of the British dollar crisis to high American tariff barriers. According to him, the cause of Britain's dollar deficit was not her inability to produce for export but the impossibility of selling these goods to the dollar area because of high tariff barriers.²⁰ The left wing was unrestrained and caustic in its abuse of the United States. The Americans were once more reminded that they had built their ammunition factories and shipping with Britain's dollars during the cash-and-carry period. But this time the left wing came off with

¹⁸ After the suspension of convertibility Britain was left with \$ 600 million gold reserve. (See the speech of Sir Thomas Moore in the House of Commons Debates, October 29, 1947, col. 960.).

¹⁹ D.C. Watt, op. cit., p. 69.

²⁰ House of Commons Debates, October 23, 1947, col. 270.

a more original indictment against the United States: it claimed that the United States Government had not fulfilled her wartime commitments to Britain. Since Lend-Lease was to last for the whole duration of the war, the left wing stated that Truman had no right to end it seven days after V.J. day; because according to American Constitution a war officially comes to an end when the President declares so to the nation. It was only in January, 1946, that Truman had done so, therefore, Lend-Lease should have lasted until that date. According to the British Constitution, a war only comes to an end with the signing of peace agreements; and such an agreement was still not signed with Germany.²¹ The left wing believed that if the United States had kept Lend-Lease going till January, 1946, Britain could have redressed her economy and coped successfully with the bad winter of 1946-1947 and the dollar crisis.

This attack on the United States was mainly due to the left wing's increasing suspicion of the motives

²¹ See the speeches of Alfred Edwards and Sydney Silverman Ibid., October 28, 1947, col. 794 and October 29, 1947, col. 941.

of American financial aid to Britain. It was this suspicion which promoted Alfred Edwards to declare to the House of Commons that Lend-Lease had been established to defend America's shores in Europe, without shedding American blood.²² This feeling was reenforced by the fact that, while Britain had come out of the war with a devastated economy, the United States had actually increased her wealth and strengthened her economy. The left wing felt "somehow that America has plenty because she stole it from us, [from Britain during the war]"²³ Thus, the United States was no longer considered to be the disinterested defender of democracy. She had rather taken advantage of the difficult situation of her allies, during the war, to further her economic interests. This feeling was not confined only to the left wing. A British public opinion pollster reported that the end of Lend-Lease had given rise "to the expression of an always latent feeling that America was really only out for herself, generous to others for her own sake..." The pollster concluded that the American loan to Britain and the

²² Ibid., October 28, 1947, col. 794.

²³ D.W. Brogan, "The Wicked Uncle", The Spectator, October 31, 1947, p. 550.

news of Marshall plan had increased this feeling.²⁴

Once the honesty of the United States was doubted, her wealth and increasing prosperity became the bête noire of the left wing.²⁵ The convertibility crisis provided ample opportunity for the left wing to express this particular grievance. Sydney Silverman stated to the House of Commons that the American "shabby moneylenders" were the cause of Britain's dollar crisis. On his return from a short visit to the United States, he declared in a sarcastic tone: "I ought to withdraw part of the statement. At least they [the Americans] are not shabby. They are the only people in the world who can afford to wear good English broadcloth."²⁶ The fact that Americans were able to afford and enjoy luxury became in itself a source of left wing contempt towards them.

It is also possible that there was a psycholo-

²⁴H. D. Willcock, "Public Opinion: Attitudes Towards America and Russia", Political Quarterly, vol. 19, no. 1, January-March 1948, pp. 63-64.

²⁵Months before the convertibility crisis, Sir Norman Angel stated: "Even American prosperity has become, particularly in Leftist quarters in Britain, a cause of profound grievance," (See Sir Norman Angel, "Leftists at Sea", The Spectator, April 25, 1947, p. 456).

²⁶House of Commons Debates, October 29, 1947, col. 939.

gical cause for this left wing "undignified peevishness" towards the United States. During the war, left wing economists and publicists had predicted an energetic post-war Britain under a Labor Government with a flourishing economy, prosperity, a successful program of nationalization and socialization, and a fruitful friendship with Russia. Although Labor won the elections, these left wing prophesies and hopes did not come true. In 1947, the British economy was far from flourishing; the Welfare State program was meeting unforeseen difficulties and suffering from administrative incapability. Moreover, international developments proved the left wing hopes for a firm and fruitful Anglo-Russian friendships to be only intellectual reveries. Basing itself on the well-known assumption that "Tendencies repressed by reality show themselves in apparently irrelevant symptoms of a hysterical nature" The Economist concluded: "The main result of left-wing frustration is Americophobia."²⁷

²⁷ The Economist, October 18, 1947, p. 628. See also D.W. Brogan, op. cit., p. 550.

During the convertibility crisis Conservative M.P.s were careful not to abuse the United States.²⁸ They concentrated their attacks on the Government's domestic policy and on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's inflationary policy, seeing in them the cause of the dollar crisis.²⁹ Churchill bitterly criticized state planning and the Government's administrative incompetence. He was equally strong in defending the Americans against the accusations of the left wing. They were not "shabby money-lenders" and the British Government was alone responsible for the economic and financial crisis.³⁰ The Conservative M.P.s argued that nationalization and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's inflationary policy had decreased production and harmed the prestige of sterling. The confidence of other governments in the Labor Government, and sub-

²⁸ Professor D.C. Watt states that in the Parliament the attack against the United States was led "by the combination of radical left and imperialist Right." (*op. cit.*, p. 69) My research did not reveal such an attitude in the speeches of Conservative M.P.s in the House of Commons. The House of Lords Debates were not available to this writer.

²⁹ See the speeches of Walter Fletcher, Lieut.-Commander Braithwaite and Lennox-Boyd in the House of Commons Debates, October 23, 1947, cols. 344-6, 361-2, 366.

³⁰ Ibid., October 28, 1947, col. 704.

sequently in sterling, was lost. Due to this lack of confidence they converted their sterling balances into dollars and caused dollar scarcity in Britain.³¹

The Conservatives did not criticize the United States in the House of Commons; the left wing minority led the attack, but "the width of press comment made it clear that they [the left wing] spoke for large segments of opinion in Britain."³² As it might be expected, the New Statesman and Nation expressed fury towards the United States and was especially biting on the convertibility clause of the Bretton Woods Agreement. It felt that the American loan to Britain was a mere charity and the convertibility clause one of the many strings attached to it. It would be preferable for the British nation to go hungry and find other markets outside the dollar area rather than line up for such charities.³³

³¹ See the speech of Christopher Hollis, Ibid., cols. 737-740.

³² D.C. Watt, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

³³ These are the main lines of the passage quoted by Harold Roberts in the House of Commons Debates, October 22, 1947, cols. 197-198.

The Conservative press was also full of protests against the United States. The Spectator asked the Government to suspend convertibility and reject those interpretations given to the term "non-discrimination" that were unfair towards Britain.³⁴ After the suspension of convertibility it stated that some of the responsibility for the dollar shortage rested on American shoulders because Britain was required to provide dollars "to all comers". Britain was not to apologize to the Americans for the suspension of convertibility but to protest since "we have both made the mistake, but Britain alone takes the consequences."³⁵ The Economist attacked the non-discriminatory articles of the Bretton Woods Agreement as "the villains" which caused the disappearance of Britain's dollar reserves. It also accused the Americans of wording "their documents in such a way that all their own favourite methods of discrimination are to be retained, while the discriminations that favour the British are to go."³⁶

³⁴The Spectator, August 8, 1947, p. 164.

³⁵Ibid., August 22, 1947, p. 227.

³⁶The Economist, August 9, 1947, pp. 228-229.

Once more the left wing and extreme Conservatives found themselves united in their suspicions of the motives of American financial aid to Britain, and they accused the United States Government of seeking to further American interests without considering Britain's economic plight. The Economist went further than this. It stated that the terms of American aid to Britain were calculated to force the Labor Government to ask for more aid "with still more self-abasement and on still more crippling terms."³⁷ This could not go on. Although Americans could make the British Government "jump through any hoop they choose", the future could be less pleasant for them since:

. . . this dependence will not last for ever. A time will come when, by a combination of external events and internal efforts, Britain will be able to do without dollars at a cost that will be bearable. Do the Americans, when that time comes, want the British to regard the cutting loose from America, the erection of barriers against America, as a boon so great that the highest bearable price will be cheerfully paid for it in the earliest possible moment?³⁸

It was evident that the convertibility crisis had badly injured British, and especially Conservative, pride.

³⁷ Ibid., August 23, 1947, p. 306.

³⁸ Idem.

The convertibility crisis lifted anti-American feeling in left wing and certain Conservative circles to its apogee. This anti-Americanism was not confined to the British political elite; it could also be traced in public opinion. A public opinion pollster reported in Autumn of 1947, some months after the convertibility crisis, that unfavorable comment about America far outweighed favorable opinion.³⁹

³⁹H.D. Willcock, op. cit., p. 64.

CHAPTER IV

BRITAIN AND THE KOREAN WAR

(1950-1951)

"I plead with the Government not merely to be the tin can tied to the American dog."

Emrys Hughes to the House of Commons, October 31, 1950

"It [Mr. Gaitskell's Budget] united the City, satisfied the Opposition and disunited the Labour Party — all this because we allowed ourselves to be dragged too far behind the wheels of American diplomacy."

Aneurin Bevan to the House of Commons, April 23, 1951.

The anti-American feeling aroused by the convertibility crisis in Britain was gradually allayed as Marshall Aid for Europe started to give results. Anglo-American relations were smooth and quite cordial during the three years following the convertibility crisis, although some

issues -- such as the devaluation of sterling in 1949¹ and the British recognition of Communist China in 1950, tended to arouse mutual suspicion and antagonism in the public opinion of both countries. The Korean War brought a dramatic change in certain sections of British public opinion towards the United States. This change of attitude was more pronounced in the left wing of the British Labor Party,

Secretary of State Marshall's proposals for a European Economic Recovery Program were at first received with suspicion by the left wing² since the evil effects of the convertibility crisis were still fresh in their memory. But their awareness that Britain could not achieve balance in her economy without outside help and the actual material benefit received from Marshall Aid³ were instrumental in

¹ See Alzada Comstock, "Homefront Confusion in Britain" Current History, vol.17, November 1949, p. 257.

² The Tribune dubbed Marshall's proposals as "the Washington Trap". (As quoted in D.C. Watt, op. cit., p.76, n.1).

³ Out of \$6 billion of Marshall aid given to Europe by the end of 1949 Britain received \$1,822 million. (See H.C. Allen, op. cit., p. 943).

bringing a favorable change in left wing attitude towards the United States.⁴ The appearance of conservative governments in Italy and France, Russian intransigence in international relations and her attempt to sabotage the European Economic Recovery Program also had their role in changing the left wing attitude. Marshall's offer to Europe forced even the Keep Left group to admit that their own proposals were obsolete.⁵

The left wing quickly attempted to show that its change of attitude towards the United States coincided with its ideology. The European Economic Recovery Program was seen as an international extension of New Dealism instead of a capitalistic measure aiming to curb the spread of Communism by normalizing the economy of Western Europe. President Truman's re-election in 1948 on a "Fair Deal"

⁴Roy Harrod, "Hands and Fists Across the Sea", Foreign Affairs, vol. 30, October 1951, p. 66.

⁵A Group of Members of Parliament, Keeping Left (London, 1950), p. 18.

program and the launching of the Point Four program led the left wing to exaggerate the strength of progressive forces in the United States. They readily identified these progressive forces with British Socialism and believed that the American Administration was heading towards the Welfare State. To the left wing the Truman Government became "different only in degree from Attlee's."⁶ This explains why the left wing did not oppose or try to hamper the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty.⁷

Beneath this enthusiastic attitude towards Truman's Administration the left wing still maintained its characteristic suspicion and reserve towards America's Far Eastern policy. Some of these reservations were shared by Conservatives as well. They were uneasy about America's

⁶ Leon D. Epstein, "The British Labour Left and U.S. Foreign Policy", The American Political Science Review, vol. 25, December 1951, pp. 985-7. See also Henry Pelling op. cit., p. 151.

⁷ Only the two Communist M.P.s: W. Gallacher and P. Piratin, and four "fellow-travelers": T. Braddock, J. Platts-Mills, D.N. Pritt and K. Zilliacus, opposed British participation in the N.A.T.O. (See the House of Commons Debates, May 12, 1949, cols. 2133-6).

took it for granted that the Atlantic Pact did not commit Britain to large-scale rearmament. In case it became essential, the left wing believed that the United States would pay the costs of rearmament.¹⁰ The outbreak of the Korean War brought these reservations to the surface.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces crossed the 38th Parallel. The United Nations Commission in Korea reported this to be "... an act of aggression initiated without warning and without provocation in execution of a carefully prepared plan."¹¹ The same day, on the request of the United States, the Security Council met and by nine votes to nil, in the absence of Soviet Russia,¹² called for the withdrawal of North Korean forces to the 38th Parallel. Meanwhile, the United States Government

¹⁰ Leon Epstein, op. cit., p. 992.

¹¹ As quoted in Guy Wint, What Happened in Korea? A Study of Collective Security (London, 1950), p. 14.

¹² Six months before the outbreak of hostilities in Korea the Russian representative had walked out of the Security Council in sign of protest; otherwise, he could have vetoed both Security Council resolutions about Korea.

control over Japan and feared her encouragement of Japan's textile industry. This low-wage Japanese industry could easily undersell British textiles and damage the interests of both Britain's working class and her industrial magnates. On the other hand, American support of Nationalist China appeared politically dangerous because it might easily set the Far East afire.⁸ The British were quite conscious of their island's vulnerable strategic position in case of a Russian attack from Europe. The United States was far off, and Britain would bear the brunt of such an attack. This Communist threat from Europe was so alarming to them that they had grown indifferent to the condition of the world outside Europe. This is why they were "anxious to restrain American policy from acts which might bring about a third world war on any issue except a direct Russian aggression in Europe."⁹ Moreover, the left wing

⁸ Leon Epstein, op. cit., pp. 989-90.

⁹ G.F. Hudson, "The Privileged Sanctuary", The Twentieth Century, vol. 149, January 1951, p. 8. This attitude was typically expressed by Brigadier Anthony Head, a Conservative M.P., when he stated to the House "... we should not commit the fatal error of becoming heavily embroiled in the Far East, an area which is of secondary importance to Europe." (The House of Commons Debates, November 29, 1950, col. 1210).

authorized General MacArthur, the U.S. Supreme Commander in Japan, to supply arms and other kinds of aid to the South Korean Republic. On June 27, after the North Koreans had ignored the resolution of the Security Council, the United States promised naval and aviation assistance to South Korea. The same afternoon, by a vote of seven to one with two abstentions and with Soviet Russia still absent, the Security Council recommended that member nations "furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area."¹³ The United States was the main force which propelled the United Nations to action. She promised to supply infantry forces to the Republic of South Korea; blockade the Korean coast, and defend Formosa from Communist attacks during the whole duration of the Korean War. She acted as the "chief agent of the United Nations, and so far as effort was concerned the war was really America's."¹⁴ The

¹³As quoted in Guy Wint, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 34. It must be noted that the British regiments fought with incredible heroism.

post of the Commander-in-Chief of the United Nation army in Korea was given to General MacArthur.

The British Government and British public opinion at large responded favorable to the United Nations' action in Korea. Both were impressed by this first real effort of the "collective security" policy to resist aggression although it was understood that its failure would ruin the United Nations. The House of Commons approved, without forcing a division, the Government's decision to adhere to the Security Council's resolution to resist the North Korean aggression by force. The Economist reported unanimous Dominion support for the British decision to help the United States in Korea.¹⁵

In the House of Commons, the only objection to British participation in the Korean War came from two pacifist Labor M.P.s, belonging to the left wing, who tabled an Amendment to this effect. S.O. Davies, the mover of the Amendment, expressed his shock at British cooperation with the United States in waging a war.

¹⁵The Economist, July 1, 1950, p. 8.

As a pacifist, he found any kind of war abhorrent; and he had never expected to see a Socialist British Government "plunged headlong in support of the reckless irresponsibility of the United States."¹⁶ He did not try to hide his anti-American feelings from the House; on the contrary, he was quite willing to share them with all.

The Government know about the hysteria which exists among American leaders, the deliberate, grotesque persecution of outstanding Americans, their fantastic doings, the guise of uprooting un-American activities and the terribly dangerous megalomania of such people in whose possession are the most terribly destructive weapons which have ever cursed this world of ours.¹⁷

Other Labor backbenchers, though not opposed to British participation in the Korean War, were worried over the consequences of the conflict. They asked assurances from the Government that the United Nations armed forces in South Korea would not cross the 38th Parallel, and that she would seek every means — negotiation, arbitration and mediation, to bring the war to an end at the earliest possible moment. They did not believe that

¹⁶ House of Commons Debates, July 5, 1950, col. 550. The seconder of the Amendment was Emrys Hughes.

¹⁷ Idem.

war would successfully curb the spread of Communism; only social and economic reforms could be effective.¹⁸

Outside Parliament, only the British Communist Party denounced the Security Council's decision to intervene in Korea. The membership of the Party did justice to its ideological affinities with the North Korean "People's Republic". It claimed that the South Korean forces had provoked the conflict by crossing the 38th Parallel into North Korea and that the United Nations Commission's report was inaccurate. The Party's organ, the Daily Worker, sent a special correspondent to the North Korean side who expounded the Communist view. Charges of atrocities were levelled against the United Nations army in South Korea, and the United States Air Force was accused of conducting germ warfare.¹⁹ The Party leadership tried to capitalize on the latent anti-Americanism of

¹⁸ See the speech of Tom Driberg in the House of Commons Debates, July 5, 1950, cols. 370-3 and also Elaine Windrich, op. cit., p. 216.

¹⁹ Henry Pelling, The British Communist Party; A Historical Profile (London, 1958), p. 161.

certain sections of public opinion. George Matthews, the Party's assistant general secretary, on instructions from the Cominform, ordered the Party membership: "Relate every question affecting masses to the issue of national independence. Troops to Korea — it is MacArthur's orders. Two years' military service — it is an American demand. Rearmament — it is American orders. Attack on standards — it is U.S. which insists."²⁰ This strategy did not produce the expected effects on British public opinion, partly because the Korean War had begun to have favorable effects on the British economy.

The initial stages of the Korean War were highly favorable to Britain's economy. The United States greatly expanded the volume of imports in order to meet the demands of her war efforts, and the exports of Britain and Western Europe flourished. In 1950, for the first time since World War II, there was a surplus of about £250 million in Britain's balance of payments — without considering the

²⁰ As quoted in Ibid., p. 161.

help she received from Marshall Aid in that year.²¹ Consequently, her dollar reserves improved dramatically. Because of her seemingly healthy economic condition, Marshall Aid to Britain was suspended in December 1950 -- two years earlier than contemplated.

As the war progressed in Korea Britain and Western European countries once more found themselves confronted with economic difficulties. Forced in their turn to import raw materials in order to replenish their stocks and keep up their production they found that prices had increased greatly above their pre-war levels. Between June 1950 and the end of 1951 wholesale prices rose by 28 per cent in Britain and by 47 per cent in France.²² Britain had to pay £300 million more in 1951 than she had in 1950, for the same volume of goods.²³ Consequently,

²¹ See John H. Williams "End of Marshall Plan", Foreign Affairs, vol. 30, July 1952, p. 600; Anthony Eden, "Britain in World Strategy", Ibid., vol. 29, April 1951, p. 347 and Alzada Comstock, "Great Britain: Functionalism Preferred" Current History, vol. 20, January 1951, p. 10.

²² John Williams, op. cit., p. 600.

²³ Anthony Eden, op. cit., p. 347.

there was a trade deficit and the British gold reserves started to fall.²⁴ More than rising prices, the scarcity of raw materials made the British anxious. The world-wide shortage of a number of basic raw materials threatened to cripple British industry. This led to the reasonable assumption that the Americans were buying all available materials in order to replenish their stocks.²⁵ People started to blame the United States as the cause of this increasing shortage of raw materials.

The advance of MacArthur's forces into North Korea in October 1950, and the subsequent intervention of Communist China in the war on the North Korean side forced a change in British public opinion. The left wing reservations towards American Far Eastern policy, which had been pushed into the background for the last three

²⁴ In the period extending from early June to the end of August 1951 British gold reserves fell by \$600 million. (The Economist, November 24, 1951, p. 1252).

²⁵ Roy Harrod, op. cit., p. 66. See also the speech of Woodrow Wyatt in the House of Commons Debates, November 30, 1950, col. 1350. Wilfred King, in an article entitled "Fair Shares on Teeth and Tanks", (Foreign Affairs, July 1951, p. 621) claims that the world-wide shortage of raw materials already existed before the outbreak of the Korean War.

years, emerged stronger than ever. The United States was criticized for spreading the war in the Far East. MacArthur, some of them commented, had no right to cross the 38th Parallel because the United Nations had already fulfilled its goal by clearing the aggressor from South Korea and thus asserting its own moral and military prestige. The United Nations had no right to attempt the political unification of Korea by force. North Korea was a separate political entity; otherwise, the Korean war should have been regarded a civil war in which case the United Nations' intervention was unjustified.²⁶ The left wing felt that the United Nations was following the lead of the United States where the Truman Administration could no longer resist the pressure of "big business" and the military "Establishment". These groups were alleged to pursue an expansionist Far Eastern policy because they were trying to have the United Nations declare China an aggressor. They were deliberately seeking to extend the hostilities

²⁶ See the speeches of Frederick Jones and Richard Crossman in the House of Commons Debates, November 29, 1950, cols. 1241-4, 1281-2.

in the Far East in order to put an end to the Communist threat with a clear-cut victory.²⁷ The New Statesman and Nation voiced these left wing anxieties and fears about American Far Eastern policy when it stated that the United Nations resistance to aggression against South Korea had "ended as an insane American gamble in the diplomacy of power politics."²⁸ Once again, the sinister image of the United States as the center of reactionary, militant and expansionist Capitalism -- an image symbolized by MacArthur, began to reemerge in British left wing circles.²⁹

The left wing membership was anxious and bitter at the growing prospect that the United States would set off another world war by using atomic weapons against North Korea and China. Although this feeling existed at the outbreak of the war, it increased as the war progressed. When Truman spoke at a Press conference, in late

²⁷ See The Economist, January 27, 1951, p. 171 and the speech of Frederick Jones in the House of Commons Debates, November 29, 1950, col. 1242.

²⁸ As quoted in Leon Epstein, op. cit., p. 990.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 990.

November 1950, about the possibility of using the atom bomb in Korea, although he was careful to note that this possibility was very slight, panic broke out in the House of Commons. According to The Spectator "Not in the darkest day of the [Korean] war was the House so disturbed as it was over Mr. Truman's statement to his Press conference on the atomic bomb."³⁰ There was a widespread feeling in public opinion that Britain had no longer any say in deciding her own fate and destiny³¹ since she had no control over the atomic bomb, which her own scientists had helped bring into existence. Pacifists, "fellow-travelers" and other left wing groups were appalled at the prospect of atomic warfare in Korea. About one hundred Labor M.P.s, the Chairman of the Party Miss Alice Bacon, and one or two members of the national executive sent a letter to the Prime Minister. The letter urged the Government to adopt the following policies: to dissociate

³⁰The Spectator, December 8, 1950, p. 639. See also the speeches of Tom Driberg, Julius Silverman and N.H. Lever in the House of Commons Debates, November 30, 1950, cols. 1390, 1422, 1431.

³¹See the speeches of Ian Mikardo and R.A. Butler in the House of Commons Debates, November 19, 1950, cols. 1265-6 and November 30, 1950, col. 1438.

Britain from any plan which called for the use of the atom bomb; to stress that Britain's war commitments would be determined solely by United Nations decisions; to state clearly that any unilateral action in Korea by the United States "would be followed by the withdrawal of British forces from Korea."³² This letter helped to advance Attlee's departure for Washington, on a trip which he had been planning for some time.³³

In Washington President Truman assured Attlee that he had no immediate intention of using the atom bomb in Korea and that he hoped circumstances would never oblige him to change his decision. He promised to inform the Prime Minister of any future change in this policy. However, he refused to guarantee that he "would be guided by British reactions if he ever felt that he ought to use it [the atom bomb]."³⁴ Britain's inability to obtain a certain measure of control over the atom bomb, her increasing economic difficulties which were ascribed to America's stockpiling, and America's Far Eastern policy

³² Elaine Windrich, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

³³ The Spectator, December 8, 1950, p. 639.

³⁴ The Economist, December 16, 1950, p. 1062.

explain, in large part, the growing anti-American feeling in British public opinion. Even The Economist, which boasted that "the United States has no warmer admirer in the world than this journal", admitted "that irritation with America is very widespread indeed in this country [Britain], and that it affects circles that are normally staunchly pro-American."³⁵ This feeling was more pronounced in left wing circles.³⁶

The left wing discontent with the United States in general, and her Far Eastern policy in particular, found an energetic and fiery leader in the person of Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health, who resigned from the Cabinet on April 22, 1951, on the issue of British rearmament. A cleavage already existed in the Cabinet, at the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, between those

³⁵Ibid., January 27, 1951, pp. 176-7.

³⁶In the winter of 1951, G.D.H. Cole went so far as to state: "If Great Britain gets dragged into a war with China by the Americans, I shall be on the side of China." (As quoted in Leon Epstein, op. cit., p. 991).

who supported rearmament even at the expense of social services, and those who would maintain the social services at all costs. This cleavage came to a head and became public after December 1950, when, at Washington's insistence, the Cabinet decided to speed up the process of rearmament.³⁷ Bevan supported continued free social services as a matter of principle³⁸ -- which also helped him increase his popularity with the working class. He opposed this increasing rearmament, not rearmament in itself, and Hugh Gaitskell's Budget on purely financial considerations. He argued that the £ 4,700 million rearmament program proposed by the Budget could not be achieved because of the lack of essential raw materials. Moreover, he contended that even if Britain and West European countries managed to rearm on the scale insisted upon by the United States, this would cause inflation of prices, disturb the economy of the Western World and cause more damage than caused by "the behaviour of the nation the arms

³⁷ Alzada Comstock, "Socialism in a War Economy", Current History, vol. 21, October 1951, p. 193.

³⁸ T.E.M. Mckitaterick, "Arms, the Budget and the Labour Party", The Twentieth Century, vol. 149, June 1951, p. 476.

are intended to restrain."³⁹

In his resignation speech in the House of Commons, Bevan vehemently and bitterly attacked Mr. Gaitskell and his Budget and criticized at length the policy of self-interest pursued by the United States. He denounced American stockpiling for denying to Britain the materials necessary to carry on her civil production and for undermining as well the economy of the Western World. He begged the Government not to follow behind the "anarchy of American competitive capitalism" which could not restrain itself. Britain still had a distinct message to the world:

There is only one hope for mankind, and that hope still remains in this little island. It is from here that we tell the world where to go and how to go there...

³⁹For Bevan's resignation speech see the House of Commons Debates, April 23, 1951, cols. 36-9. It's noteworthy to mention that Bevan was anticipating the attitude of the future Conservative Government on the issue of rearmament by one year. When in opposition, the conservatives urged the Government to start a program of full-scale rearmament. Once in power they introduced considerable cuts in arms expenditure. (H.C. Allen, op. cit., p. 950).

Bevan's resignation from the Government caused a split within the Labor Party, which H.C. Allen considered "the most serious split ... since 1931".⁴⁰ He was followed in his resignation by Harold Wilson, the President of the Board of Trade, and John Freeman, the Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Trade, on the grounds that rearmament would damage the British economy and lower the standard of living. Soon Bevan found himself leading the majority of the left wing and a "substantial and vocal minority" inside the constituency parties and in many trade union branches. These groups lacked a coherent policy of opposition to the Government since each group had its specific grievance. Some were opposed to rearmament; others were "fellow-travelers"; some were "habitual dissenters from everything"; most opposed the war in Korea and "nearly all are [were] bitterly anti-American."⁴¹ Bevan also won the adherence of the Keep Left group, which seems to have helped in the

⁴⁰H.C. Allen, op. cit., p. 950.

⁴¹T.E.M. Mckitterick, op. cit., p. 481. See also The Spectator, June 22, 1952, p. 803.

writing of the Bevanite pamphlet, "One Way Only".⁴²

This anonymous pamphlet had an introduction signed by the three former ministers who agreed with its arguments on the rearmament program and with "the animosity displayed against the United States from the first page to the last."⁴³ It claimed that there was a new temper of "a wild anti-Communist crusade" in the United States to which the Truman Administration appeared to have given way despite MacArthur's dismissal. It also expressed its anxieties about America's increasing support of Nationalist China, her interest in Franco's Spain, and the proposed rearmament of Germany. Finally, the pamphlet urged the British Government to remain in the N.A.T.O. in order to restrain the aggressiveness of the United States.⁴⁴

It is quite difficult to assess the popular support enjoyed by the Bevanites. Although H.C. Allen states that they remained no more than "a splinter group"⁴⁵ avail-

⁴² The Economist, June 23, 1951, p. 1493.

⁴³ The Spectator, July 13, 1951, p. 48.

⁴⁴ Leon Epstein, op. cit., p. 993 and The Economist, July 14, 1951, pp. 65-6.

⁴⁵ H.C. Allen, op. cit., p. 550.

lable evidence appears to prove that this is a typical case of British understatement. At the Labor Conference in October 1951, the Bevanites won four out of seven places filled by the local constituencies in the Executive Committee of the Party, but they were unable to win over the support of the Trade Unions which controlled twelve seats out of twenty-seven.⁴⁶ In the General Election in the same month, which brought the Conservative Party to power, about nine elected M.P.s identified themselves with Bevan's revolt. Some of them were elected in marginal constituencies "where to be returned in 1951 as a Labour M.P. was something of an accomplishment." During their electioneering campaign these candidates took a "semi-pacifist, anti-capitalist line associated with the Labour Left's distrust of the United States."⁴⁷ Although the role of this campaign issue in their success cannot be measured, Leon Epstein has found "enough evidence to

⁴⁶The Spectator, October 5, 1951, p. 416 and Leon Epstein, op. cit., p. 994.

⁴⁷Leon Epstein, op. cit., p. 995.

suggest the possibility that the virus of anti-Americanism, associated with the Labour Left's criticism of U.S. foreign policy, has been injected into a substantial part of the British body politic."⁴⁸

As the Korean War progressed, and with it the anti-Communist "witch-hunt" unleashed by Senator McCarthy, this left wing anti-Americanism spread to cover a major section of the Labor Party.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Idem.

⁴⁹ See Clement R. Attlee, "Britain and America: Common Aims, Different opinions", Foreign Affairs, vol. 52, January 1954, pp. 201-2.

C O N C L U S I O N

The feeling of anti-Americanism in Britain in the years 1945-1951 was a significant, if not a major, factor in Anglo-American relations. Left wing anti-Americanism was mainly due to the ideological heritage of this group, although its intensity was directly affected by current events. Favorable changes in American domestic and foreign policies, as in the years following the Convertibility crisis to the outbreak of the Korean War, pushed left wing anti-Americanism to the background. On the other hand, the anti-Americanism of High Conservatives was mainly connected with the economic and international standing of their country. They wanted Britain to regain the economic and political grandeur of the Victorian times, but the United States, with her ever-increasing wealth and political prestige, was seen as a detriment to the realization of their hopes.

This feeling of anti-Americanism was not confined to these exclusive political groupings. It was

present, although in a dormant state, in a major section of British public opinion. It came into the open when there occurred frictions between the United States and Britain usually over economic, and sometimes political, issues. This was the case with the issues of the American loan to Britain and the convertibility of sterling.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

The following is a list of primary and secondary sources drawn upon in the writing of this thesis. They are all published sources but are not exhaustive. The fifty years law was not a serious detriment to this attempt since it is essentially a public opinion survey. But the unavailability of a number of newspapers which reflect the opinions of distinct political groupings, such as the Daily Worker, the New Statesman and Nation, the Daily Herald and the Daily Express, was a serious handicap. However, this difficulty was partly surmounted by tracing, when possible, the opinions expressed by these newspapers from available journals, newspapers and books.

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