Rearmament — How Far?

John Freeman, MP
Denis Healey

Speeches at a Fabian Conference, Summer 1951

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REARMAMENT—HOW FAR?

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PREFACE

The success of the pamphlet on Socialist Foreign Policy issued by the Fabian Society earlier this year has encouraged us to publish this further contribution to the discussion.

The speeches by John Freeman, M.P., and Denis Healey, given at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Saturday, 14 July, 1951, represent rather more divergent views than those expressed by Kenneth Younger, M.P., and R. H. S. Crossman, M.P., in the earlier pamphlet. In reply to John Freeman's criticism of the scale of rearmament, Denis Healey, while admitting agreement with a great deal of what is said by the authors of One Way Only, argues that the present arms programme is fully justified by the international situation.

The Fabian Society does not accept collective responsibility for the views of either speaker. But it believes that this pamphlet will help towards a fuller consideration of these important aspects of socialist policy.

JOHN PARKER,
Chairman, Fabian Society.

September, 1951.
NOTE.—This pamphlet, like all publications of the Fabian Society, represents not the collective view of the Society but only the view of the individuals who prepared it. The responsibility of the Society is limited to approving the publications which it issues as worthy of consideration within the Labour Movement.

September, 1951.
Introductory

The subject of this address is Arms and Foreign Policy. I gather from
the large numbers of the pamphlet, *One Way Only*, which I see people
are holding, that there is some expectation that I shall devote my remarks
largely to its contents. I do not propose to do that. But I should like
to give you a little of the background thinking which has led me, at any
rate, to subscribe broadly to the point of view expressed in it; and to put
before you some consideration of the relation between “hot” and “cold”
war which will, I hope, stimulate thought about a problem which has not
yet received sufficient consideration.

I have tried to follow, as I imagine most of you have, the two con-
ferences which have preceded this one. I have read the published speeches
of Dick Crossman and Kenneth Younger in the pamphlet *Socialist
Foreign Policy* and also the typescript of Harold Wilson’s recent speech to
you. There are certain assumptions arising from them which I want to
state this afternoon. First, however, let me emphasise that I am not going
to offer you a complete or alternative foreign policy. I am going to take
the problem of the role of arms in foreign policy, to strip it so far as I
see it of its inessentials and to examine it in a series of what I hope are
logical propositions which will lead us from certain premises to what I
believe to be a correct conclusion.

Let me now put to you the four assumptions on which I am going
to base my talk.

The first is that, broadly speaking, I agree with the economic criticism
of our arms programme made by Wilson at your previous conference
and in his resignation speech, and I state that now as an assumption
because I do not want to have to argue it this afternoon. But you should
know that my own arguments are based on the acceptance of these general
propositions: that the arms programme of the Western Allies is so large
and is being implemented in such a way as to cause widespread inflation,
coupled with a raw material crisis; that it is being implemented and financed
in this country in such a way as not to give us the quickest possible return
in finished arms for our money, to do serious damage to the economic
strength which we have been successfully rebuilding over the last six years,
to put us in deficit on our overseas payments, to deprive us of our ability
to pursue enlightened economic policies towards the under-developed parts
of the world and finally to strike a severe blow at our own Social Services
and our general policy of redistributing income between the rich and the
poor.

Secondly, I want to refer to the mystical phrase, Socialist Foreign
Policy, and tell you the sort of definition I should prefer to give of it.
It clearly does not consist merely in having relations only with other
Socialist powers in the world. That is the method of the troglodyte, not
of the Socialist. It is a policy designed to strengthen all those factors which
are calculated to lead to the success and strengthening of Socialism in this country and to the propagation of our ideas in the rest of the world. That is to say that it is self-interest in a sense, and I am bold enough to say that I think any foreign policy is bound to be a policy of self-interest. Whether or not it is a policy which can be seen objectively to go further than self-interest depends on how one conceives one's own self-interest at any given time. Now I conceive our own self-interest at the moment as being very definitely not confined to our own immediate needs in this country but to the general strengthening of the people and peoples who are prepared to co-operate with us along the way which we choose to follow. It is our duty, therefore, to do all we possibly can to strengthen our fellow Socialists in other countries and in doing this to work with other non-Socialist countries as far as they will work with us.

The two other basic assumptions which I want to take as read came very clearly out of the discussion between Crossman and Younger. The first is that neutrality as a course for us is not a possible one. It is essentially defeatist and static in a situation where we cannot afford to stand still. For the cold war is real, and we have to take sides, as Crossman expressed very clearly, because the issues are real to us as individuals and as Socialists. Political freedom and our own relatively high standard of living are not things that we can easily discard, nor can we stand on one side while they are attacked by other people. That does not necessarily mean that collaboration between ourselves and others who take the contrary view is impossible, but it means that, during the present phase of Soviet policy, it is likely to be limited collaboration towards limited objectives and it will, in present circumstances, be related to the strategy of cold war.

The other assumption, which comes straight out of Crossman's remarks, is that we can no longer command the policies of the world by virtue of our own physical strength. We are no longer a first-class power by pre-1914 standards. If we are going to be a first-class power—and for the same reasons as we reject neutralism we must seek to—we can only be so if we can achieve our position by our ideas and by resolution in our policy. We must not be afraid to show our Socialist creed to the rest of the world and to invite its acceptance. I think we shall get it in a marked degree.

Those are the four assumptions from which I wish to start. What are the problems which confront us and to which we have to find an answer in any intelligent discussion of arms and foreign policy?

The first is that, if we accept the cold war as a regrettable fact, how can we best live with it for a long time and gradually win it? Secondly, how can we ensure that it does not turn into a hot war? There is a third problem with which I do not propose to deal at the moment, though I will refer to it later: Ought we to be making plans for a hot war? These are the three problems I want to examine.

What is the Cold War?

Let us start by trying to define what a cold war is, because we have lived with it in varying degrees of uneasiness for the last five years and
we have come to accept it, very often, without much consideration of what it really involves. I think it is a struggle for influence and position which stops short of war itself. It arises either when for reasons of self-interest the powers concerned reject the use of war as an instrument of policy; or when they are not yet ready to use it. It may, therefore, be a substitute for war or it may be the precursor of war and it may continue for a very long time.

Its principal battlefield is in the mind and its principal weapons are fear and idealism on the one hand and the expectation of rewards and the specific use of threats on the other. Its objective—and I think this is true, whether as a substitute for war or its precursor—is, first, to win over to one’s side the mass of smaller powers or the powers which are not immediately tied up with the great powers concerned. To put it in the more conventional terms of the battlefield, that is to isolate one’s enemy. Secondly, having done that, to influence a decisive number of individuals from the opposite side to one’s own point of view, which is, again in the figure of speech of the battlefield, having isolated your enemy, to destroy him.

It follows from this that there is some difference of advantage enjoyed between the totalitarian powers and the political democracies, as there is in a hot war. Just as the dictator can plan a real war with considerable secrecy, launch it at any moment he chooses on whatever ground he chooses and achieve a high degree of surprise; so, in a cold war, the dictator, free from the need of any significant political consultation with his subjects, can switch his policy as capriciously and unscrupulously as he needs to meet the changing requirements of the moment. Just as the political democracy do not offer an idea. They offer a regime; and lack of coherence and discipline, so, in the early stages of a cold war, they are far more susceptible to totalitarian weapons than the dictatorships, with their suppression of news and outside contacts, are to the democratic ones. But, as the democracies have in real war reserves of morale and inspiration which usually enable them in the end to outstay those who have no freedom, so I suspect that the same is true in cold war. We can—I do not say that we are yet doing so—fill men’s minds and capture them with an idea, a challenge to their individual sense of responsibility and, if I can use the word in its Greek sense, which has a rather different meaning from colloquial English, not only their responsibility but their inherent virtue. Essentially powers which deny freedom of thought, of speech and association and the general attributes which we associate with an enlightened political democracy do not offer an idea. They offer a regime; and regimes, in the long run, are never proof against ideas.

So I conclude from this that it is within our capacity to live with a cold war and to win it; because success in a cold war means above all organising our own lives and the lives of those for whom we are responsible in such a way as to give the fullest expression as a community to the best which is in us as individuals. But we must play our hand right if we are going to do this; and I am not sure that we have been doing so in the last few months.

Having sought to make the point, perhaps somewhat academically, that
ideas are the most potent armament in a cold war, I must add that we
cannot for that reason afford to ignore guns and aeroplanes. We shall
derive the greatest advantage if we depend principally on what we can
teach the world. But the other side will use against us fear and blackmail
and we must be prepared to defend ourselves against these and to offer
a sufficient deterrent of force to discourage an aggressor from ill-considered
recourse to hot war in the hope of quick and decisive victory.

The Red Army has, since 1945, been an instrument, perhaps the
principal instrument, of the cold war. I suggest that it has never been
intended during these last few years to be used for hot war. It has been
the basic instrument of cold war designed to exploit what I have already
defined as the political weapons of fear, blackmail and threat. The Atlantic
Pact on our side is, I suspect, becoming very much the same.

Now, in saying that our ideas are strong enough and good enough
to withstand the stresses of cold war, I do not mean that they are wholly
good. Where we deny freedom and progress or falter in waging the really
Socialist war against poverty, we weaken ourselves as well as our impact
on others. Racial discrimination, for instance, or the exploitation of men
and women for gain are as hateful here or in the United States as anywhere
else; and I think that the United States, which, by comparison with our-
selves and some other European powers, is politically primitive, is the
weaker partner in the war of ideas just as it is the stronger partner in
arms. That is why I suggest to you that we should make every possible
effort to take the lead politically in the battle for men's minds and why
I am not unduly perturbed if, in doing so, we occasionally have sharp
differences of opinion with the United States—we certainly shall with their
right wing if we follow the ideas that I am going to put to you.

I have already explained, or announced, that I accept Crossman's
argument that, during the present phase of extreme Soviet hostility to the
West, we are inevitably forced on to the same side as the United States.
I do not think that it is open to us, maintaining anything like the
objectives of policy which we have at present, either to be on the other
side, or to stand aside. I want to remind you, although it should not
be necessary to give this reminder to Fabians, that there are great pro-
gressive forces in the United States which have not yet achieved effective
political expression. In cold war, you seek to conquer your allies as well
as your enemy; and we, if we are faithful to our principles now, can do
much to liberate our real friends in the United States. We are not aligned
with the United States in order to make a world safe for Mr. Taft and
General MacArthur; we are clearing a way along which we hope, and may
reasonably expect, in the not very far distant future millions of
American trade unionists and Liberals will be able to follow us towards
democratic Socialism.

How to avoid a Hot War

I want now to try to answer the second question. Can we ensure that
a cold war does not turn into a hot war? I do not believe for a moment
that the Soviet Union has rejected the use of war in principle. Indeed,
I regret to say that I do not believe that the Western Allies, or even our own Government, have done that. I do believe that each side is, for the moment, too wary of the consequences of total war to be willing to risk it.

Let us just examine for a moment what the most important power stress in the world really is. On the one hand we have the Red Army, presumably the most powerful single military force in the world and certainly, if joined with the armies of the satellites, a land force which the Western allies cannot hope to challenge in the near future. Our own Government holds it to consist of about 200 divisions plus another 50 satellite divisions, together with a very large striking force of aircraft and submarines. I suspect that the effective combatant force available at short notice is considerably less than this; but that does not matter. Let us admit that it is an extraordinarily powerful force which, under present circumstances, we dare not take the risk of challenging. We must also take account of China, which American policy has driven for the present into the Soviet camp. She is not to be regarded as an "obedient ally" and is probably not considered by the Soviet Union as an integral part of their war machine. Against these are arrayed the forces of the United States and the United Kingdom, together with much of our allies—not very many—who have the stomach to make any significant contribution. It is a far weaker force; and, if the quick, tactical battle were all that the Russians had to worry about, they could go ahead. I do not believe that at any time since 1946 we could have stopped the Red Army from marching as far in any direction as its legs could carry it. I use that last phrase because I do not want to be side-tracked into considerations of transport, shipping logistics and the rest; but, at least on the continent of Europe, I do not believe we could have stopped them going as far in any direction as they wanted. But they have not done so. Why not? If their intentions are aggressive, and if I am right in suggesting that it has been open to them at any time to do what they wanted, why haven't they done so?

I think Stalin knew better perhaps than anyone else during the last war how truly formidable is Anglo-American war potential, once it is mobilised. Surely the deterrent during the post-war years has been the Russian fear that we should jointly react to any serious threat to peace, a fear which has certainly been increased by American monopoly of atomic bombs. You will remember how, at intervals, during the last half dozen years, the Russians have, as it were, made sorties from their fortress to test the opposition. Greece, Persia, Trieste, Berlin are all examples of this. In each case they found that we were not prepared to withdraw and in each case, after a period of tension, they withdrew themselves. This is not dissimilar, as historians would agree, to the classic pattern of Imperial Russian foreign policy. Moreover, it is perfectly in keeping with the reasonable assumption that it is a primary Soviet interest at the moment to avoid a major war. Of course, the Russians will fight like lions if their frontiers are attacked. They always have done and, since I believe that a Russian citizen has more to lose today than he ever had in the past, I should not under-estimate their unsurpassed capacity for defence. That apart, they have, no doubt, external objectives.

I am sure it is true, for instance, that the traditional Russian desire
for access to the Western and Southern oceans is still with them. Certainly
they have felt the need, rightly or wrongly—and at least I think we all
understand it, even if we feel that they are wrong—for a protective belt of
satellites along their Western frontier. The evidence of how they expect
to achieve whatever objectives they have outside their own frontiers is, of
course, not conclusive. But every scrap of it, such as it is, indicates that
they are prepared to exploit oppression and hunger, wherever there is a
reasonable chance of the Red Army being welcomed by the proletariat as
a liberator; that they are ready to take quick advantage of, even to
engineer, an internal coup d' état designed to pop another satellite into the
bag; but that they are not prepared to risk a total war.

Now in all the Soviet sorties before Korea the situation chosen was one
of major interest to both East and West. In every case, had the sortie
been successful, the Soviet Union would have made a substantial gain and
the Western powers a substantial loss. The West, therefore, acted promptly
in its own urgent self-interest. But is it, I think, pretty clear that the
Kremlin was very doubtful how far the British and the Americans were
committed to standing together. Hence the repeated attempts.

Later on, with the signing of the Atlantic Pact, their uncertainty must
have increased, both because of their understandable anxiety that it might
be aggressive in intention and because of their genuine doubt whether it
really represented a final solidarity between England and America to resist
any further Soviet attempts to expand by force. Then came Korea.

Now there are two points of, I think, great significance about Korea
which take their place properly at this stage in the argument and which I
do not think have been given anything like enough emphasis hitherto.

The first is the fact that Korea, of all places, should have been chosen
as the locale of this most recent sortie from the fortress. The important
thing about that surely was that nobody was much interested in Korea; it
was not vital either to the Soviet Union or to the Western Powers.

Some years ago I was in Japan discussing certain matters concerning
British Far Eastern policy with General MacArthur. I want to quote one
thing MacArthur said which I do not think has ever been quoted before.
It so happened that I was with him at the moment when the Americans
were planning their original withdrawal from South Korea. I wondered
what MacArthur himself thought about this withdrawal and I asked him.
I will not vouch for the exact terminology, but the gist of his reply is
clearly in my mind. He said: “I have not the smallest desire to remain in
Korea. It is of no strategic interest to the United States. The only thing
I insist on” — and this was an ironical remark in view of what has happened
since — “is that, once I have evacuated it, Washington does not order me
to go back.”

So I say the significant thing about the choice of Korea is that it
was a country that no one cared about until the war came. Moreover, an
attack by North Korean Communists on South Korea, ruled by the un-
speakable Syngman Rhee, could easily have been represented as merely
an extension of the Chinese civil war. It was, in fact, what we may call
a marginal aggression and calculated carefully as such to be the severest
possible test of Anglo-American powers of resistance and will to resist.
We did resist, as I think rightly; and in doing so I believe we have made it plain to the Kremlin that we are irrevocably committed to resist these sorties. But—and this is the further point I want to emphasise—we took an enormous risk in doing so.

The UN and Police Action

Mr. Attlee, who is characteristically the clearest and most logical Government spokesman on these matters, has repeatedly expressed the view that the United Nations’ action in Korea is strictly comparable with the action which the Labour Party advocated under the influence of himself and Dalton in the thirties, and which that Government failed to take, against the pre-war aggressions of Japan, Hitlerite Germany and Fascist Italy. But I have never thought that Mr. Attlee is entirely right about this. If collective security had been backed by Britain in the thirties it is pretty safe to say that China, Russia, France, Britain and, probably, the United States would have stood together—an overwhelming concentration of force which would have made the idea of police action a practical reality. But the United Nations, which was intended to be an up-to-date expression of this idea, had to incorporate, if it was going to be successful, the power of veto for the great powers. It is, therefore, completely frustrated while two of the great powers, Russia and China, for one reason or another (this is an objective statement, and I don’t want to argue the merits of it), are unable to stand together with the majority.

Police action against a minor aggression in which none of the great powers is vitally interested is still possible. Police action where the vital interest of a great power, or the great power itself, is involved may be counted unto righteousness in the next world; but it is liable to lead to the end of this one. It is liable to lead to the total war which we are all seeking to avoid. That was the folly of MacArthur’s threat to Chinese territorial security. And that is why the crisis last November and December, when our own Prime Minister flew to Washington and had, as we all know, a decisive influence on the course of events, was one of such momentous magnitude. I think that the fate of the world then hung in the balance and, although subsequently I had occasion to separate myself from my colleagues, I was very proud to be a member of the British Government at that moment.

I think the Russians may have realised the nature of this crisis even more clearly than we did. If they did, their action in co-operating in the limitation of the war, their non-intervention and, finally, their armistice initiative, are fully explained. It is exactly the conclusion to which we came in the earlier stage in the argument. They are prepared to risk a good deal, but they are not prepared to take the risk of total war. It follows, I think, that Mr. Attlee’s expressed view of the functions of the United Nations, attractive though it sounds in its simplicity, is dangerously naive.

The existence of the cold war, which we must accept as a fact, and the argument which Crossman and I have tried to put to you, that we cannot stand aside from it, refutes this simplistic view of the United Nations—at least in any of the power stresses vitally involving the major
powers. The judgments which have to be made on these important issues will inevitably, I am afraid, be based rather on the needs of the cold war than on the Charter of the United Nations. I regret that and I think it is wrong; but I believe it to be sober fact. It gives a greatly added sense of urgency to our efforts to devise some kind of accommodation under which both Russia and China can play a full and constructive part in the United Nations. Only then can the law be made to apply to the big fellows as to the little ones.

Seeking a Deterrent

I conclude from this brief analysis that the answer to our question, "How can we stop the cold war from becoming a hot one?" is that we must, at the same time, maintain an effective deterrent and offer no unreasonable provocation. I believe there are plenty of signs that the Russians, looking at the same cold war from the other side, have arrived at very much the same conclusions. If so, I think that is a reasonable explanation of their recent action over Korea and it may also be the explanation of their very welcome inaction over Persia. Surely, it is significant that they have not, at least so far, intervened in a situation where one might have expected some violent action.

If, then, we are to reduce this problem to the question of looking for a deterrent, what is that deterrent to be?

First, let us admit that, whatever it is, it has been adequate so far. Since I am not aware of any very significant increase in the Russian rate of rearming, I should expect to find the deterrent somewhere on the road we have been travelling hitherto. Nevertheless, I think it is fair to admit that our power of deterrent in the past has been rather a chancy business; that the strength of the Red Army is alarmingly great and that the Soviet conquest of the atom bomb—of which I should guess (and I must emphasise that it is only a guess) they possess certainly not more than fifty, and perhaps considerably fewer—has to some extent left us in a position of rather unsatisfactory military weakness. I think that a degree of rearmament by the Western powers is necessary as part of our cold war strategy. But I emphasise—and this is really the crux of the argument in determining what our rearmament should be—that the real deterrent is not in the level of arms of any particular country which belongs to the Atlantic Pact, not even primarily the totality of military strength possessed by the whole group; but the very existence of the Atlantic Pact itself—and the implicit understanding that a similar grouping of power exists in the Middle East and the Far East.

It is the knowledge that the Western powers will regard an act of Soviet aggression as an act of total war which balances in cold war strategy the threat of the Red Army. If this is the case, our rearmament ought to be directed to the minimum necessary increase inside the margins within which we can continue to follow our existing policies, and it should certainly not seek to widen greatly the scope of our commitment. Still less should it aim, as I understood Denis Healey to suggest in his recent tourney in *The New Statesman and Nation*, at anything like a water-tight peripheral
containment of the Red Army. To try that would, in the first place, involve us in highly provocative actions such as the rearming of Western Germany, which I need not discuss because I hope there is unanimity in this audience about the undesirability of that; secondly, and more important, we should crush ourselves under the burden.

One further point: if the deterrent has been effective hitherto, and I think there is every possible reason for supposing that it has, and if you then start dramatically to upset the balance which has been achieved in cold war strategy, what are you doing? You may, possibly, be making yourselves theoretically better fitted to fight a hot war; but, on the other hand, you are certainly providing every incentive to the Soviet Union, if it ever contemplates risking a total war, to go in quickly and get it over. If you have a certain equilibrium and then proceed to disturb it, the reaction of your enemy if he resents this change, may be to attack you quickly and exploit his advantage before you succeed in fundamentally disturbing the balance.

The UK Arms Programme

I cannot say, without the detailed statistical information which nobody outside the Government can have, what, in figures, should be the level of our own rearmament. But I can suggest the principle on which I think it ought to be calculated.

We fight, remember, a cold war. It is the whole object of our policy to survive that and to win it without allowing it to become a hot war. We must then, if we are going to win it, fight it from strength; but strength for cold war is basically different from strength for hot war, as I have argued. We win the cold war, in the end, by ideas, backed by necessary deterrent force. We propagate those ideas by acts of political and economic policy, both at home and overseas; and, if we would be strong in cold war, we must allow ourselves room to manoeuvre in carrying out those policies. It is not necessary, in front of a Socialist audience, to argue this at length. Our policies are two-fold: in the political field, to foster the liberation of people and peoples, wherever our influence can be brought to bear. We have, so far, got a good record in this. For example, our achievements in India and the Gold Coast, apart from being intrinsically good, are essentially valuable in our cold war strategy. In the economic field, our great industrial strength must be used to raise standards of living, to fight poverty and to bring to people the necessities of decent life both at home and where our policy can be brought to bear overseas. A power station in India, a ton of tinplate in Denmark, a railway in West Africa, or a health centre in Hongkong are almost certainly worth far more, in terms of cold war strategy, than the equivalent industrial effort expressed in armed men.

To calculate our own level of rearmament we must balance the needs of the deterrent force, the needs of our own people and the needs of those who depend on us and whom we seek to influence overseas. With the present rearmament programme the balance is, in my view, incorrectly
struck. We are reducing our standards of living at home; we are reducing our already woefully inadequate efforts overseas; and we are doing these things in order to achieve a level of arms expenditure which is not, I believe, related to the cold war deterrent that I have been talking about; which has never, so far as I know, been calculated on any reasonable basis by reference either to our military needs or to our main objectives of policy; which will give the Soviet Union a motive for attacking us quickly if at all; and which will not even give us what might be justified—the most rapid possible expansion of our strength between now and mid-1952. Harold Wilson was right in arguing on purely industrial grounds that, whatever may be the effect in the distant future, in the immediate future the programme would have been achieved more quickly if it had been less ambitious and less wide-spread. I am not going to argue that point in any detail because I accept that analysis.

Now this criticism is not at all the same as saying that I oppose any rearmament programme. Yet that is just the allegation which has been made against us. I have been very puzzled by some of the criticisms of One Way Only. The critics all assumed that the programme of £4,700 millions is sacrosanct and that to challenge that programme is to oppose the defence of the country. That is plainly untrue and malicious.

I criticise the programme because I believe it to have been nothing more than a guess, hastily made to square the Americans. I am not able—I admit it—to say what the figure ought to be. Even the earlier figure—suggested, you remember, last summer—of £3,600 millions was arrived at without any proper statistical background of programming and costing. I believed at that time, I admit more by intuition than judgment, that it was perhaps about right. At least the ground on which it was defended, “that it was the most we could do without serious interference with our domestic affairs,” comes, it seems to me, near to the right standard of judgment. The reason—I put this to the critics—why I think it is unreasonable to ask us, because we criticised one programme, to substitute with confidence an exact alternative, is simply because I don’t believe that the information exists outside the Government—if indeed it exists inside it—which enables one to determine precisely what the figure should be. First, in any case, we must agree on the principle on which it ought to be calculated.

I should say very briefly at this point—it may anticipate someone else’s saying it for me—that, if my views are as I have just expressed them, it is perhaps curious that I did not resign from the Government until the date I did. I accept that criticism. It is perfectly true that I might well have resigned on this issue as long ago as last December or January. One is tempted to hang on on these occasions, partly out of loyalty, partly in the hope of influencing one’s colleagues, until the moment when the disagreement becomes intolerable. That moment for me was the Budget. I make this personal explanation today solely in order to impress on you the criticism which I am now making of Government policy—that I have never believed that the arms programme of £4,700 millions is one which ought to have been approved or which bears any particular relation to our needs. We have, of course, been under heavy American pressure to increase
our military effort and I am sure it was that, rather than any essential change in the situation, which led us to leap to this unreal figure.

Disagreement with America?

I have said that I regard the Anglo-American alliance as an essential of the cold war. If that is so, dare we risk disagreement with the Americans on an issue of this magnitude? I think we dare. Indeed, I think we must, if they will not see reason in matters either where our own vital interests are concerned or where we have a deep conviction that we are right and they are wrong. What is the argument against disagreeing? It is, after all, possible in family, political or any other kind of life to have close associations with someone else and, at the same time, differ sharply on specific matters. Why should we not disagree with America? What are the sanctions we are afraid America may bring against us? I suppose that we are really afraid of American isolationism; the possibility that the United States would wash its hands of all responsibility for the affairs of Europe. I believe that to be an unreal fear. I think that isolationism in the United States is already dead; not because of any particular affection on the part of the Americans for Mr. Attlee, or even for Mr. Churchill or M. Schuman, but simply because the resistance of Western Europe to Soviet imperialism has become an absolutely vital American interest. We are still more important to America than any other of her allies; we are the only country in Europe on whose resistance to genuine aggression she can really count. We provide her with her only secure bases on this side of the Atlantic and the only fairly secure industrial potential. Moreover, we have the influence in much of the world—Africa and Asia, for instance—which, through the crassness of MacArthurism, has largely eluded her. America needs us as much as we need her. And, provided we make it plain that we are fighting the cold war resolutely in the interests of our own standard of values and are determined to resist any Soviet aggression, she will not dare to leave us. We are strong enough to fight on our own, where at times our strategy or objectives differ from those of America; and we must tell her bluntly that, in the last analysis, we intend to do so.

The Constructive Approach

Earlier, I left aside one point which must be dealt with before I conclude. That point was the third question I asked: ought we, perhaps, really to be thinking about how to win a hot war instead of thinking about how successfully to conduct a cold one? The answer is that we should only be thinking about that, or any rate thinking much about it at this stage, if we believe such a war to be inevitable. I don't. The Government says it doesn't. Unfortunately, the difficulty is that different methods are needed in hot and cold war. If we prepare now for a hot war, the effect will probably be to lose us the cold war. If we lose the cold war, we shall probably incur the hot war on the weakest possible ground. If, on the other hand, we win the cold war, the chances are that we shall
avoid the hot war. If we did get it all the same, at least we should be in the position of fighting it with the maximum number of allies. If you believe that a hot war is imminent and unavoidable, then you must obviously advocate preparing for it with all speed and resolution. That means a heavier defence programme than at present—a complete switch over to a war economy.

My whole argument leads me to the conclusion that the cold war is at this time the important one. If that is so, clearly we should not worry about the possibility of a hot war to the detriment of our ability to conduct the cold one. You have to accept the risk, which we cannot avoid in any case, that if total war should come, the democracies are bound to be at a disadvantage in its early stages. If that is the case; and if, as I believe, there has inevitably to be an element of gamble, I would gamble on the side which seems to offer the better risk and the richer prize. We cannot, in my view, sustain total war in this island or in Western Europe. I should not be surprised, indeed, if the nations prove to have virtually ruled out recourse to total war, unconsciously, simply by being afraid to start it. Wars of the future may be what we now call cold wars, designed to achieve security by winning a decisive proportion of the world to your side through victory in the battle of ideas. That is why One Way Only devoted so much attention to Mutual Aid and assistance to undeveloped areas. We sought to impress the Labour movement with the vital importance of this line of policy and the need for considerable sacrifice to make it real. It is not the only thing that needs to be done. We never said it was. But it is most important to impress it on Socialist thought at this moment, because it is the great constructive act of Socialist policy in the world which we could initiate with good prospects of collaboration from America and some prospect, even, of collaboration from the Soviet Union.

This, indeed, is perhaps the foundation of a genuinely Socialist foreign policy, the main objective of which must be not a sterile and negative hostility to everything, good or bad, which comes out of the Soviet Union, but a positive attack on the universal enemies of good citizenship everywhere, poverty and disease, ignorance and slavery. It is, incidentally, sound strategy in the cold war; but, far more important, by offering some chance of eventual co-operation between ourselves and the Soviet Union, it offers the best chance of relieving the tensions of that war and enabling us to reach the limited agreements on limited objectives, which are the best we can hope for in the immediate future. For we must always remember that, though we have as realists to look the cold war in the face and admit that it exists, our only worth-while objective in the longer term is to build on these limited agreements until we have reached a world of wider agreement in which the best of Socialist ideas, from whichever side of the Iron Curtain they come, can triumph and men can enjoy the fruits of their labour in peace and brotherhood, free from the fear of either kind of war.
DENIS HEALEY

JOHN FREEMAN says that the question now dividing us is whether we should base our policy on the need to win a cold war or the need to win a hot war. I disagree completely. The question at issue in the British Labour Movement is this: what measures are necessary to prevent the cold war from becoming a hot war?

Any realistic estimate of the measures required to prevent the cold war from becoming hot must spring from a sober analysis of the way in which the cold war has been developing over the last few years. Let us take 1948 as a starting point.

The Cold War in 1948

In 1948, three years ago, it was already clear that the world was divided into two camps, one of which was waging a cold war against the other. We knew at that time, as One Way Only admits, that Soviet policy towards the non-Stalinist world was one of unremitting and indiscriminate hostility. So far as it recognised any distinction between non-Stalinists, it put Socialists, and particularly left-wing Socialists, first on the list for destruction. We knew that was Soviet theory. We had a barrage of quotations from the Stalinist bibles to prove it. And we had seen the theory working in practice, not only in the events since the war, but also in the thirty years since the Bolshevik Revolution.

We also knew in 1948 that the Soviet Union had larger armed forces than all the rest of the world put together—excluding China, which, at that time, was still locked in civil war. In 1945 Russia had seven million men under arms and she never demobilised below a level of four million. America had demobilised from eleven million to one and a half million and Britain from five million to three quarters of a million. There were, in 1948, no other armed forces of consequence anywhere in the world, except in China.

So we knew that Soviet policy was relentlessly hostile to the non-Stalinist world and that the Soviet Union had got very much larger armed forces than the non-Stalinist world.

We knew a third thing, namely, that the Soviet Union was prepared to use the threat of force and the fear inspired by its armed forces to extend its power. We saw, in Czechoslovakia, that the decisive factor in preventing the non-Communist Czechs from offering resistance to the Communist coup was the fact that the Communists had behind them the whole apparatus of Soviet armed power. Indeed, at the height of the crisis, the Soviet Consul General in Bratislava broadcast a statement that the Soviet people, 200 million strong, stood ready to support the struggle of their Czech brothers.

The fact that the Soviet Union was prepared to use the threat of this enormous preponderance of force to extend its power meant that in the countries immediately adjacent to its frontiers people were living in an
atmosphere of constant strain, almost of nightmare. If you went to any of these countries, to Austria, to Berlin or to Finland, you found people living on their nerves. It was only a question of time how soon their nerves would snap.

One final point about the cold war in 1948. Even at that date we had seen the Soviet Union supporting armed risings against the legal governments of various countries—all sorts of countries and all sorts of governments; some governments extremely reactionary like those of Greece and Indo-China and some governments extremely Socialist like those of Burma and Indonesia.

Three years ago, then, we knew that Soviet Russia was fundamentally hostile to the non-Stalinist world, that she had much larger armed forces than the non-Stalinist world, that she deliberately used the fear inspired by those forces to expand her empire, and that she was prepared to support, and probably to organise, armed risings outside her territories.

But, granted all this, there was then no evidence that she would risk any actions which might involve her in a general war. Indeed, as John Freeman has pointed out, in 1946 she withdrew her troops from Northern Persia after a purely diplomatic démarche by Britain and the United Nations. She never used the force at her disposal to occupy Finland, though at that time it was clear the West would not have intervened with force against her.

Now the first question we have to decide is: why is it that at that time, when Soviet military preponderance was unchallenged, the Soviet Union was not prepared to use its military preponderance in any way which might lead to war?

I think there are a number of reasons. John Freeman believes that the only real reason was America's possession of the atom bomb and the possibility that if the Soviet Union used its forces aggressively beyond its frontiers it would encounter a combination of powers vastly superior in economic potential.

But that would not have been sufficient deterrent in Persia or at any time before 1947, because it was not until 1947 that the United States showed any serious interest in what was happening on the far side of the Pacific or the Atlantic. There must have been other reasons. What were they?

The first reason, I think, was that, at that time, the Soviet Union was still suffering from the tremendous shock of the Second World War and it needed a long time to get its house in order and to restore the damage which had been done, materially and ideologically, to its population during the Second World War.

The second reason was that Yalta and Potsdam had given Russia the opportunity to include the whole of Eastern Europe in her empire. But she needed time to swallow and digest the meal.

Thirdly, the Soviet Union has rarely used armed force if other methods were available. At that time the Soviet Union thought it would be possible to expand without the use of arms and, therefore, there was no need to take the risk their use involves. Western Europe seemed to be on the verge of economic collapse. Although Marshall Aid was beginning to get under
weigh, it was by no means certain that it would be sufficient. When the
Marshall Plan was launched in 1947 there were few people who thought
that the amount of aid projected would be sufficient to produce stability in
Europe within a four-year period.

Fourthly, and this is only true since February, 1947, from the moment
that the United States, through the Truman doctrine, showed an interest in
Greece and Turkey, her sole possession of the atom bomb was a formidable
deterrent.

Finally, of course, there is the point which *One Way Only* emphasises,
that the non-Stalinist world was vastly superior to the Soviet
Empire in latent strength, even if that strength was not actual.

**Russia Grows More Reckless**

Such was the situation at the end of 1948, three years after the defeat of
Germany and Japan. Since then the whole situation has changed very
rapidly on both sides of the Iron Curtain. On the side of peace we have
had, through the Atlantic Pact in 1949, the first serious attempt to face the
military problems involved in defence against possible aggression. But, on
the other side, many of the earlier deterrents to Soviet aggression have been
disappearing.

By the end of 1948 the worst of the damage caused by war inside the
Soviet Union had been repaired, so that her internal strains and stresses
were no longer the same deterrent as they had been in the previous years.

Secondly, in the last three years the Soviet Union has been consoli-
dating and organising all the power she won in Eastern Europe since the
Second World War. It was not until the beginning of 1948 that the Com-
munist Parties achieved sole power in the Eastern European countries.
Since then, the Communist parties themselves have been purged of national
deviations. All patriotic Communists have been replaced by Muscovites,
or Russians like Rokossovsky have been installed to control them. At the
same time heavy industry in Eastern Europe has been developed and co-
ordinated with Soviet production. Most important of all, the Soviet Union
has organised satellite armies in Eastern Europe, amounting, according to
various estimates, to something between one million and a million-and-
a-half men.

The third big factor in reducing the deterrent is the fact that the Soviet
Union has got the atom bomb. Now that is a very serious thing. I agree
it is unlikely that the Soviet Union has nearly as many atom bombs as the
United States. But, once the Soviet Union has got something like one
hundred atom bombs and the means to deliver them—say a thousand trans-
atlantic aeroplanes—from that moment the atom bomb is probably can-
celled out as a deterrent factor. The Americans are unlikely to use the
atom bomb if Russia is able to use it against them in return. European
enthusiasm for the atomic weapon will diminish much faster than American
—for obvious reasons.

The other change in the situation which reduced the deterrent on the
Soviet Union is the fact that their hopes of capturing Western Europe with-
out direct intervention are fading away. The Marshall Plan was successful
beyond anybody's dreams and the whole of Europe is growing stronger and more united with the help of America and the Atlantic Pact.

The result of all this is that the Russians have taken more risks since 1948 than before. In summer, 1948, they cut road and rail links between Berlin and the West. This definitely involved a risk of war. Many politicians in the West, including, I believe, some people who are now supporting One Way Only, were prepared to consider the use of force to break the Berlin blockade. The Berlin blockade was the first enterprise by the Soviet Union after 1945 which really involved serious risk of world war. That it did not end in war was due entirely to the patience of governments on this side of the Iron Curtain.

The Berlin blockade was lifted in summer, 1949. A year later, in June, 1950, we had direct military action for the first time since 1945, when the North Koreans invaded South Korea. This was a tremendous step forward in the cold war—a long step towards making the cold war hot. I am amazed that Freeman and the authors of One Way Only can dismiss it so casually. Surely the most striking thing about Soviet policy since the war is that in 1946 Russia could be forced out of Persia by a diplomatic bluff, whereas in 1951 it has cost two million casualties to halt Communist aggression in Korea. Soviet adventures have grown steadily more reckless and the cost of stopping them has grown steadily higher.

I want now to analyse very carefully the lessons which we must draw from the Korean war.

The Lessons of Korea

I agree with John Freeman that the Soviet Union chose Korea as the spot in which to try out her new technique of satellite aggression because she thought Western intervention was less probable there than at any other spot around her frontiers. The American Chiefs of Staff had let it be known at the beginning of 1950 that they did not consider Korea to be in the sphere of America's strategic interest. Few people in this country realise that America's decision to intervene in Korea was not taken by "the war-mongering brass-hats in the Pentagon" but by civilians like Truman and Acheson against the advice of the Pentagon which, like MacArthur, did not want to fight in Korea. They knew that it was an extremely difficult place to fight in, and comparatively unimportant to American strategy.

The Soviet Union, when it launched the Korean war, undoubtedly thought that the West would not intervene and that, if the West did intervene, it could not do so successfully. It was absolutely wrong on both points. Incidentally, this is only one of a long series of political blunders which the Soviet Union has been making ever since 1917. Russia's capacity for blundering is one of the most dangerous factors in the cold war.

America led the United Nations in deciding to intervene in Korea, and, by a unique coincidence, it so happened that Korea was the one spot on the earth's surface where intervention by the United Nations in 1950 had some chance of being successful. For Korea was the only place on the whole periphery of the Soviet Empire which lay close to a major American land base.
The fact that the United Nations were able to halt aggression in Korea was due entirely to the fact that about half of America’s fighting forces happened to be stationed little more than 100 miles away—in Japan. The Americans immediately stripped Japan of all their troops there. Indeed, at one time the Americans had almost all their fighting troops outside Europe committed in Korea.

Aggression has been halted in Korea, but do not let anyone imagine it has been defeated. What is now happening in Korea? The whole of the United Nations, on British and American initiative, committed themselves last year to the unity of all Korea as the objective of their intervention. Yet they are now negotiating with the aggressors to stop the fighting roughly where it started. If the cease-fire negotiations are successful, aggression will have been halted in Korea, but it certainly will not have been defeated.

But let us look at some of the lessons of the war in Korea. First of all, do not let us ignore the fact that in Korea hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions of people have died during the last twelve months purely as a result of Soviet policy. It is easy for people to sit comfortably debating in England and say that there is no danger of war. But over a million people have died in the last year in Korea in a war deliberately planned by the Soviet rulers. We could not afford to have this sort of thing happening once a year, even if it did not involve the danger of general war.

But, in fact, Korea did very nearly bring about a general war. The only reason it did not is that it was possible, against all expectations, to hold the Communists in Korea because of the geographical configuration of the country, the local availability of American troops, and good American generalship. Do not forget that in Korea nine-tenths of the burden has been borne by the United States. There is no other part of the world where that distribution of the sacrifice is likely to be repeated if there is a new Korea. If all these three conditions had not existed, we would have faced the choice between two intolerable alternatives. We could have got out of Korea and seen a decisive defeat for the whole principle of collective security with incalculably disastrous results; or we could have struck directly at the bases of aggression and risked a general world war, as MacArthur wished. In fact, it was just possible to halt the Communist forces without bombing their bases in China and without resorting to unconventional weapons like the atom bomb. It might well not have been the case. And if Korea is repeated anywhere else in the world before the West is rearmed, we know for certain that it will not be possible to stop aggression without resorting to methods which would involve us in a third world war.

Only Local Strength can Deter Aggression

To what extent will all that has happened in Korea affect the Soviet Union’s readiness to organise a similar aggression elsewhere? Perhaps the real disagreement between John Freeman and myself rests essentially on our different answers to this question. Freeman says that Korea is a great victory for the United Nations: the Soviet Union has seen its experiment
in satellite aggression fail and is not likely to repeat it. He may be right. No one can know what lessons the Russians may draw from Korea. But I am not prepared to gamble my life, the lives of my children, and perhaps the future of civilisation, on a psychic intuition about thought processes in the Kremlin. For the Russians may well draw quite different lessons from Korea. On the one hand they can see that the conditions enabling the United Nations to achieve a limited success in Korea do not obtain anywhere else in the world at present. And on the other hand they saw that when the fate of United Nations' intervention was in doubt, the bulk of Western opinion seemed to favour the total abandonment of Korea rather than direct action against the bases of aggression, since that might have involved the West in a war, to use General Bradley's phrase, "in the wrong place, at the wrong time and with the wrong enemy."

Personally I fully share General Bradley's opinion. But what is its implication? It is that the Western world is not now prepared to react directly as a whole against any local Soviet aggression by bringing the whole weight of its existing military strength to bear against the sources of Soviet power. The general deterrent on which John Freeman bases his case was liquidated with the dismissal of General MacArthur.

If you base your policy on the deterrent effect of the potential strength of the Western world, you are committed to MacArthurism in a crisis. If the atom bomb and the industrial superiority of the Western world are to be the only factors deterring the Soviet Union from local aggression, the Western World must be prepared to use the atom bomb and the whole of its industrial strength against any local aggression by the Soviet Union or her satellites. Once the West has failed to do this, as it has failed in Korea, the general deterrent is no longer effective and it must be replaced by actual military forces adequate to cope with local aggression at the spot where it occurs. If the Western World is not prepared to risk a Third World War in defeating a local aggression—and it was not in Korea—it must be able to deter a local aggression by adequate strength on the spot. Unless and until we produce adequate deterrent forces at the danger spots, we are inviting the Russians to face us again with the dilemma we nearly faced in Korea last spring.

What is the relevance of all this to the other parts of the world which are close to Soviet armed forces? The fact is that, at every point around the periphery of Soviet power, Soviet armed forces vastly outnumber the armed forces which could be mobilised against them—particularly in Western Europe. And Western Europe, from the strategic point of view, is the most vital part of the world for Britain and the United States because, if the Soviet Union could get control of the industrial resources of Western Europe, the balance of economic power would no longer be against her and any deterrent that imposes would disappear.

At the present time, Russia has something like four million men in her armed forces, of whom nearly three million are in the Red Army. She has about 34,000 tanks and 19,000 aircraft. She has about 215 divisions under arms—we have ten. Altogether about 100 of the Soviet divisions are in Eastern Europe and, backing them, there are something like one million trained, armed troops from the satellite countries—say, another sixty
Rearmament—How Far?

divisions. In addition to that, the Soviet Union has immense strategical advantages because she has internal lines of communication on the whole of the Eurasian continent. Apart from the advantage the aggressor always possesses through choosing the time and place of aggression, Russia is always present at the spot where aggression might begin, whereas her only serious military rivals—Britain and America—are separated in Europe from the potential fighting line by something like 1,000 miles and separated in other parts of the world by three, five or ten thousand miles.

This means that the countries on our side of the Soviet frontier in any part of the world are extremely frightened. We can talk in a light-hearted way about the deterrent of American industrial potential and the atom bomb. But, if anything goes wrong, that deterrent is not much comfort to the French or the Italians or the people of the Middle East. They want to be defended. They are not interested in liberation. They have had one occupation already and another one, particularly by the Red Army, would mean the end of everything—especially if it is followed by a campaign of liberation using all the modern weapons of mass destruction. The campaigns in Korea reinforce this feeling. The result is that the morale of the countries on this side of the Iron Curtain is very weak indeed. And their weakness of morale is a major obstacle to their political and economic and social recovery.

Now there is no doubt that there is still a danger—nobody knows how great—that the Soviet Union will take steps involving a risk of war somewhere else in the world, particularly in Western Europe, as she did in Korea last year. It is only a few months since a leading Communist was writing in the Daily Worker that the Western Powers had better look out because there would be a new Korea in Yugoslavia some time later this year. That may be part of the nerve war—we do not know—but the Yugoslavs are certainly not taking any risks about it. They are devoting to defence four times more of their national income than we in Britain and they have more divisions under arms than the whole of the rest of Western Europe put together. And we may assume they know the mentality of the Soviet rulers as well as any people outside the Kremlin.

The great danger at the moment, which is revealed by Korea and by the situation as it has developed since 1948, is that the Soviet Union may risk a further local aggression which would inevitably lead to a third world war. A country which can blunder as grossly as the Soviet Union has blundered repeatedly since 1917 in its estimates of revolutionary situations could even very easily blunder again as it blundered over Korea.

In my opinion, the only way by which we can remove this danger of war is by producing sufficient strength at the danger spots to deter local aggression. We can only do this through a collective effort by all the countries in the Atlantic Pact, for United States co-operation in this policy is an absolute condition of its success. And we must do it as fast as possible. There are innumerable dangers in prolonging the tension caused by our inferiority longer than is absolutely necessary. Besides the danger of local aggression there is also the danger that the nerve of some of the countries on this side may crack under the knowledge that there are such immense forces lined up against them to be used at any moment.
The British Arms Programme

What exactly does the Government’s rearmament programme involve? As soon as the Korean war was begun the Government started to consider a new programme to be completed in a three year period. John Freeman rests his case on the Government's first estimate of the programme's cost, as announced in August last year. But that estimate was formed on purely financial considerations, without any reference to the defence departments and without any calculation of what forces would be needed to deter aggression. It was a very rough estimate of what the country could spare for defence without seriously inconveniencing its other activities. In fact, the first estimate was the real "psychic bid."

In the six months between August and January this year, when the new estimate was launched, there was serious discussion of what forces would be required as a deterrent. This discussion took place not only in Britain in our own defence departments but also in the Atlantic Pact organisation. Thus when the new estimate was presented to Parliament at the end of January, 1951, together with the Defence White Paper, it had become a concrete figure representing what it would cost to produce a given force in a given time. What it meant in practice was that by 1953 we would have an army of 22 divisions, 10 regular and 12 Territorial. Half of the money would be spent on manpower and the other half on the production of munitions—tanks, jet engines, etc. A great deal was going to home defence, to Fighter and Coastal command and to A.R.P. arrangements. Unlike the estimate of August, 1950, the £4,700 millions estimate was directly related to the forces required. It included our contribution towards the fifty or sixty divisions which the planners considered would be necessary to deter Soviet aggression in Europe.

Now one or two points about this enormous programme, for, of course, it is enormous. It means that, in the next three years, the Western countries will be spending a much larger quantity of money on armaments than the Soviet. There are several reasons for that.

First of all, the cost of putting a single fighting man in the front line is infinitely greater for an Atlantic democracy than it is for an Asiatic dictatorship. There are some people who seem to think that we should produce a fighting force at the same cost as the Soviet Union. I would like to see them recommend that our forces should have the same standards of welfare, clothing and pay as the Soviet forces.

Secondly, we and the Americans have to envisage sending our forces thousands of miles from their home bases over long and difficult journeys by sea and air, which is very expensive. We have to envisage maintaining them largely with produce sent from their home bases. The Soviet forces, on the other hand, live almost entirely off the land.

Thirdly, the whole strategy of the Western democracies is based on the idea of fighting a war with the minimum expenditure of human life on our side. That means that defensive elements take a much larger proportion of money in Western military budgets. In the last war the Russians cleared minefields by pushing infantry across them. We use expensive electronic machines instead.
Finally, compared with the Soviet Union, we are starting from scratch. The cost of mounting a new programme is always greater than that of maintaining an old one. The result is that, although we in the democracies spend more money than the Soviet Union, we will not in fact have nearly so many front line troops to show for it. But we shall have enough to offer a deterrent against local aggression.

Now some other points about the programme. First, when the whole thing is carried out it will still fall short of an offensive force. It is not a programme designed for fighting the whole of the Red Army and advancing victoriously into the heart of the Soviet Union. It is essentially a defensive deterrent force.

I was engaged recently in a newspaper correspondence with an expert economist not unknown to Fabians. He said that if we tried to hold the Soviets in any “Maginot Line” we should provoke them to attack us. Does anyone seriously think that the Maginot Line provoked Hitler to attack France? A purely defensive force has grave disadvantages, but at least it is not a provocation.

The aim of this rearmament programme is not to defeat the Soviet Union in a world war. We would need a programme at least four times as big to do that. The aim is to deter the Soviet Union from taking steps which might lead to war and to remove the nightmare of possible Soviet attack from Western Europe. It is not to win a hot war or to win a cold war. Its single purpose is to prevent the cold war from becoming hot.

A lot of people think that by doing this we are inevitably starting an arms race. The very fact that the combined resources of the Western Powers are so much superior to those of the Soviet Union is, in my view, a guarantee that there will not be an arms race. Because if there is an arms race the West is certain to win it.

When Russia Changes Her Line

I believe that, as soon as the programme is carried out and maybe before it is completed, we can expect a dramatic change in Soviet policy. Military aggression is not the traditional method used by the Soviet government since 1917. It is only used when that government is pretty confident of immediate and cheap success. We need to rearm because the Soviet is always calculating wrongly what will be an immediate and cheap success. In 1940 they thought they could conquer Finland in a week with a few brass bands. They had to reorganise their military dispositions completely before they could launch a successful offensive. The Soviet Union is always making mistakes. This time we must make sure in advance that she is not tempted to miscalculate. Sooner or later the Russians will revert to their traditional line of attack by infiltration and the exploitation of discontents. They will drop the policy of military terrorism and military aggression. We must watch the whole time, vigilantly, for any sign that the Soviet Union is genuinely changing its policy in this way.

Indeed, we have just been watching for it, day in and day out for the last three months in Paris. But there was no sign that the Soviet Union
was seriously interested in negotiating a settlement. She was only interested in getting us to drop our arms programme without corresponding concessions on her side. When we stood firm she tried for a time to get a propaganda conference and, when that failed, she dropped the whole business. At the present time the Soviet is not prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to get a general settlement. When we get a settlement the Soviet Union will have to make concessions. We may have to make some, but the big concessions will have to come from her.

When the Soviet does change its policy and drops its military threat, I do not think there is much chance it will join with us in building the sort of world society which we want. Stalinists are never prepared, even in principle, to operate democracy with non-Stalinists. The closest Russia will move towards real co-operation is co-existence. That is the furthest concession towards a world society which the Stalinists have ever been prepared to conceive in theory. They will consider co-existing with the non-Stalinist world so long as it is stronger than they are. Co-existence means that the free world will have to carry out any great co-operative economic or social programmes without Soviet help. The Soviet world would simply exist outside the free world as an unpleasant anomaly but not a military danger, rather like Franco Spain in Western Europe. It may be that, if Russia accepted co-existence over a long period, the Stalinist regime might change for the better. I hope so. But we do not know.

But as soon as the Soviet has clearly dropped its use of military force then the priorities in the free world will switch away from arms to those constructive social and economic policies we have been trying to pursue ever since 1945—including the World Plan for Mutual Aid.

But even before we change the priorities, we must continue our constructive policies. Giving first priority to arms does not mean excluding everything else. It simply means that you meet the need for arms first and then distribute what you have left to other things. Too many people argue now as if putting arms first means not having anything but arms. But even at the height of our new programme we shall be spending ninety per cent. of our income on constructive aims. In my view, Socialists should use the very burdens imposed on the country by the large arms programme to enforce a greater equality of sacrifice and more social justice—as we did in the last war.

"One Way Only"

I must now conclude with a few words on the pamphlet *One Way Only*—a title with appropriate overtones of Sidney Carton, Madame Blavatsky and the Pharisees.

I agree with a great deal of what is said in the pamphlet—at least as enthusiastically as its sponsors. I fully agree with John Freeman that the real difference between the sponsors of *One Way Only* and the rest of the party boils down to a question of numbers—simply the size of the arms programme. It does not raise any questions whatever of Socialist principle and I hope that no one will pretend that it does. It is a small difference in
theory. But in practice it is a vital difference in the most literal sense—because on that difference hang matters of life and death. Now, of course, the money cost of a three years arms programme is open to argument. I agree that the Government cannot know at the beginning of 1951 whether by the end of 1953 it will have spent exactly the amount of money it envisages spending at the present time. You can argue about the money cost.

Indeed there is only one group of people who have any moral obligation to regard the £4,700 million as sacrosanct. They are the Labour M.P.s who voted unanimously on February 15th this year against a Conservative amendment which expressed doubt about the Labour Government’s ability to carry the programme through. And, above all, the Minister who wound up a brilliant speech for the Government with the words:—“We shall carry it out. We shall fulfil our obligations to our friends and allies.”

But if you are going to argue about the cost of the arms programme you can do so rationally only in relation to the size and nature of the armed forces needed as a deterrent. My complaint about the pamphlet is that it does not argue the case from that point of view at all.

If Nye Bevan is right and the language of priorities is the religion of Socialism, then he himself is its first great Apostle. One Way Only makes no serious attempt to get the priorities right in relation to the present situation. It admits that the first aim of our policy must be to prevent a world war. It admits that Soviet aggression may lead to world war. It admits that more rearmament is needed to deter Soviet aggression. But it simply refuses to discuss seriously how much rearmament is needed for this specific purpose. It is as reluctant to approach this central problem as a young man approaching an old bride—sluggish and apprehensive, but, alas, so little fascinated that he keeps his eyes shut. But the question of the amount of rearmament needed to deter aggression is, after all, the only real point at issue. One Way Only buries it in a blizzard of Aneurisms. An Aneurism, according to the dictionary, is an abnormal and pathological distension in an argument or artery—and is a very dangerous condition.

One Way Only does not try to assess the nature and extent of the military danger although it is the nature of the military danger which must decide the level of our rearmament. Instead it says we should first decide how much to spend on welfare at home and abroad; then we should allot whatever is left to defence. In fact, it puts the priority of dogma above the dogma of priorities.

All the welfare in the world is worthless if we have another war. False teeth and spectacles are small comfort to a corpse. If there is a danger of war, then peace must come before plenty. One Way Only will not face the consequence of this priority. It treats the peace budget as a fund to be raided whenever any other need arises. In fact it is a dream book for escapists. If you add it all up, it implies that you can have an effective deterrent force, and the World Plan for Mutual Aid, and increased social services, and more houses. It is not a policy for guns and magazine, or guns and butter, or even guns and the whole cow, but a policy for guns and a herd of cows.

Its treatment of the World Plan for Mutual Aid as a cure for Com-
munism and war is disingenuous in the extreme. Of course the Soviet Union will try to exploit any signs of weakness in the non-communist world. But it is simply untrue to say that the poorest countries are always the best breeding grounds for Communism. Eastern Europe before the war was an under-developed area. The country which was least under-developed was Czechoslovakia—and Czechoslovakia was the only country with a large Communist Party. Very few wars in the last century have been caused by the sort of contrast of wealth and poverty between the peoples which the World Plan for Mutual Aid aims to reduce. There are overwhelming arguments for pressing on with the World Plan as fast as possible—though the ability of the poor countries to use aid will limit progress quite as much as the ability of the rich countries to provide aid. But One Way Only is quite wrong in presenting the Plan as the first line of defence against Communism and war.

The Yugoslav Communists do not make that mistake. Yugoslavia is an under-developed area. She desperately needs capital equipment and consumer goods. But she has put all these things second to arms because she knows that if she is in danger of being attacked by Russia or the satellite countries, she can remove the danger, not by a higher standard of living, but by producing more troops.

The pamphlet talks of the danger of war which will hang like a cloud over the October conference of the Labour Party. But it makes no attempt to see where the danger of war arises. Look at the various crises since 1945 which involved war or the risk of war—at Greece, Berlin, Czechoslovakia, Malaya, Burma, Indonesia, Yugoslavia. In some cases, you find poverty among the factors in the situation. In others, you find that poverty is absent or irrelevant. The only constant factor in every crisis is Soviet policy.

One Way Only refuses all serious discussion of Soviet policy. It seems to assume that the men in the Politbureau are fundamentally reasonable men whose attitude to the outside world has been distorted by harsh treatment, but who can be cured of this by a little generosity on our part—a share in the Panama Canal for example. In fact the Soviet Union has increased its resources and manpower by 50 per cent. between 1945 and 1948 through the capture of Eastern Europe. But that has not made it less aggressive towards the outside world. It was not half the danger to world peace before the war that it is now.

Then there is a lot of nonsense talked about steel capacity. I do not think the Soviet Union wants a world war at this moment. But the reason for this has little to do with steel capacity. The Soviet Union is now producing 27 million tons of steel a year, which is very little compared with the Western World. But it is more than Hitler produced in 1939. How much steel was Japan producing when she attacked the United States and Britain in 1941—five million tons! And, in spite of that, she conquered the whole of South-East Asia and half the Pacific.

The Problem of America

The section on America is a compound of daydreams and nightmares.
It rightly emphasises the importance of the progressive forces in America, and particularly the Trades Unions. But it completely ignores the fact that it is just these progressive forces which are the real backbone of the present defence and foreign policy of the United States. The C.I.O. and the A.F. of L. solidly support the American arms programme. They have even this week published statements that the cease-fire negotiations in Korea should not lead the American people to imagine that the danger is over and to think that the defence programme should be reduced. If Britain adopted the policy of One Way Only she would completely isolate herself from her best friends in the U.S.A.

The pamphlet says that the real deterrent to Soviet attack is the American guarantee through the Atlantic Pact. But it imagines that the American guarantee is effective even without adequate arms. Surely no one still believes that after the German attack on Poland in 1939. If you have a powerful armed aggressor he will not be deterred because his prospective victim has a guarantee from a country far away which is not in a position to give immediate and effective help. While Poland was being partitioned between Germany and Russia all we could do was to sit tight in the West until Germany attacked us. Political guarantees, without arms, are worse than useless. That is why the Atlantic Pact is a new sort of pact. It is not only a political guarantee, but also a framework within which countries can co-operate to build up their strength in peace-time to deter aggression.

How will America react if we default on the Atlantic Pact? The pamphlet stresses the dangers of MacArthurism. Yet it suddenly denies the relevance of MacArthurism when it discusses what would happen if we adopted Bevanism. It says that America, whatever happens, will not go isolationist. But that is not the point. If ever we provoke America into parting company with Britain, she can choose between a wide range of alternatives. Besides Asialationism and a “go it alone” policy, a disgruntled and Right Wing American Government might stake its future on Germany and Japan rather than its traditional allies. The approach to Franco Spain is perhaps the first fruit of Bevanism in this direction.

We are going to need American help everywhere if we are going to carry through the constructive policies we want in the free world. There can be no World Plan for Mutual Aid without backing from the United States. If we default on our obligations under the Atlantic Pact we shall destroy any chance of help from the United States for constructive policies.

So long as we have to act together with the United States or any other country we must be prepared to compromise. Compromise is often disagreeable for both sides. While One Way Only is attacking the British Government for subservience to the U.S.A., the American Government has almost been brought down by accusations that it is the tool of British diplomacy. It is very difficult to agree on the correct balance between the concessions we and the Americans should make to each other. But on every really vital issue, such as MacArthurism in Korea, Britain’s policy was both tough and effective, and I am certain that in any other issue of equal importance it will be equally tough and effective.

The whole of One Way Only is vitiated by a schizophrenic conflict between wish and reality. Every now and then the feet of the authors
touch bottom and then a billow of emotional prejudice sweeps over them and they are floating happily upside down again.

There are two ways of gambling on these issues of peace and war. Both ways are criminally irresponsible. Peace is the one issue that you cannot afford to gamble with. The whole of our future, and the lives of our children, depend on doing what is necessary after a sober analysis of the facts.

*One Way Only* gambles on a few frivolous generalisations about Soviet strength and Soviet policy to justify giving rearmament the lowest priority. The Conservative Party, on the other hand, is showing a dangerous tendency to a different sort of gamble. Many of its supporters want to use blustering threats of force as the solution to every problem—even when this would involve the risk of war without support from our allies. In the United States MacArthurism has turned out weaker than many feared. But Persia and Egypt have shown that it is very strong in the Conservative Party. If they are prepared now to rattle an empty scabbard, what will they do when the sabre is there?

The real danger in *One Way Only* is that, by dividing the Labour Party, it might hand the country over to those who prefer the second form of gambling. That is why it is the duty of everyone in this Party, and in the Government, to see that its fallacies are ruthlessly exposed and rejected.
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