

Communism and the Constitution

'Her Majesty's Government are not going to allow a Communist State to be organised within the British Commonwealth'.

(Oliver Lyttelton, Colonial Secretary, at the Conservative Party Conference at Margate, October 9, 1953.)

'Her Majesty's Government are not prepared to tolerate the setting up of Communist states in the British Commonwealth'.

(Oliver Lyttelton, Colonial Secretary, in the House of Commons, October 22, 1953.)

GUIANA is more than Guiana. It is a test and a barometer for the future of the British Empire, of British politics and of the British labour movement. The above declaration of the Colonial Secretary on behalf of the Tory Government has not yet received the full and careful attention that it deserves. It was not a casual unpremeditated declaration. It was made twice, in speeches delivered in an official capacity, on two important occasions, at the Conservative Party Conference and in the parliamentary debate on

Guiana, in almost identical words. It thus took on the character of an official declaration of constitutional doctrine, not merely for Guiana, not merely for the subject colonial empire, but for the whole 'British Commonwealth' *i.e.*, including Britain.

Bi-Partisan Doctrine

More. This declaration was accepted without challenge and without repudiation by Mr. Attlee and by Mr. Griffiths as the official front bench spokesmen on behalf of Her Majesty's 'Opposition'. It thus took on the character of an official bi-partisan declaration of constitutional doctrine proclaimed and maintained by the two major governing parties which at present under the existing electoral system monopolise parliament to the exclusion of any voicing of the popular opposition in the country. Carsonism (the right of armed force to overthrow the will of electoral majorities) has always been the unofficial doctrine of Toryism. It has now been elevated to the official and public doctrine of the Tories with the endorsement of their allies, the right-wing Labour leaders. The old monarchical principle of divine right used to be proclaimed in the formula '*J'y suis, j'y reste*'—'Here I am, and here I stay'. This formula is now proclaimed anew on behalf of the existing social order against the challenge of any alternative social and political order—irrespective of the wishes of electoral majorities or the majority of the population. This new proclamation of doctrine by the self-styled adherents of 'democracy' carries important conclusions, not only for the colonial peoples and colonial constitutions, but also for all parts of the Empire, for the Dominions and Britain, for the whole question of democracy and dictatorship, for the future of the Empire, for the future of British politics, and, above all, for the future of the labour movement and socialism.

Atlantic 'Defence'

When the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was established in 1949, its sponsors explained that this 'purely defensive' military coalition for 'collective security', however much its legal compatibility with the very strict ban against regional military coalitions by the United Nations Charter might be disputed, was in practice indispensable in order to protect democratic institutions against the menace of an armed attack and overthrow. The menace of such armed attack and overthrow arose, it was explained, from the sinister designs of the Soviet Union and Communism. At any moment such

an armed assault by invading forces might take place somewhere in the vast 'free' territories of the Atlantic Powers to overthrow democratic institutions and elected majorities and replace them by a police state. Therefore it was essential that the extensive armed and re-armed forces of the Atlantic Powers should be in perpetual readiness to come into action at a moment's notice in the event of such armed assault on democratic institutions in any spot of the territories of the Atlantic Powers. The instant such armed assault on democratic institutions was let loose, every sword was to spring from its scabbard, or rather, every atom bomb was to come hurtling from its B36 plane.

And Atlantic Aggression

Such was the theory. And now for the practice. On October 9, 1953, Mr. Lyttelton carried out an armed coup against democratic institutions in Guiana. Mr. Lyttelton and his fellow-conspirators sent warships and armed troops to invade Guiana, overthrow by force the elected majority based on universal suffrage, drive out from office Ministers based on the majority of the electorate, destroy the constitution and replace it by an open police state and dictatorship. Here at last was the long-awaited moment for the Atlantic Treaty to come into operation. In the face of this open armed assault on democratic institutions and elected majorities the innocent might believe that the moment had arrived for every signatory of the Atlantic Alliance to spring into action as one man, and for every volatile advocate of the Treaty to cheer on its forces in their valiant task to repel this armed aggression. But did they? Not on your life. Not a sign, not a ripple from any of these loud-mouthed champions of 'democratic rights' against 'armed aggression'. The British Tory Government carried out the armed aggression. The United States Government proclaimed its applause and satisfaction at such a magnificent violation of the Monroe Doctrine and successful invasion of the American Continent by European armed troops. And right-wing Labour leaders leaped forward to denounce the democratic victims of armed aggression, and to boast that they too, had they been in office, would not have hesitated to send armed invading forces.

A Toast Against Aggression

A month later, on the occasion of the thirty-sixth anniversary of the foundation of the Soviet state, an auspicious informal meeting took place of the diplomatic representatives of the five Great Powers

at the reception held by the Soviet Foreign Minister in Moscow. The British, French, American and Chinese Ambassadors participated with the Soviet Foreign Minister in an atmosphere which was described by the press as friendly and cordial. This gathering, however informal, had its manifest significance for the cause of world peace; for it blew sky-high the elaborately constructed card-castle of ill-intentioned propaganda endeavouring to create the myth that it would be impossible for the representatives of the five leading World Powers to meet in an informal and friendly fashion in order to discuss existing differences and problems and endeavour to reduce international tension. Inspired by the spirit of the occasion, the United States Ambassador, Mr. Bohlen, raised his glass to give a toast 'against aggression' and offered what he felt might be a 'simple formula for peace'. He said, according to the reports in the press:

There is a simple formula for peace. The country which first crosses the border of another country with armed forces is the guilty country.

Mr. Bohlen Forgot Guiana

The suggested definition of aggression is not without interest, even though the occasion was unsuitable to pursue it. The toast was duly drunk. The United States Ambassador drank the toast, and certainly did not intend to refer to the strategic offensive bases and one and a half million armed men of the American forces extended over far-flung continents thousands of miles from the shores of the United States. The French Ambassador drank the toast, and closed his eyes to the dispatch of armed forces thousands of miles over the seas to bring death and destruction to the people of Vietnam. The British Ambassador drank the toast, and closed his eyes to the dispatch of armed forces thousands of miles across the seas to bring death and destruction to the peoples of Malaya and Kenya. Nobody said 'Guiana'. Mr. Bohlen himself and the British Ambassador probably never even remembered it. And their hosts were certainly too polite to remind them. But the suggested definition of aggression by the United States Ambassador remains worth keeping on the record as a measuring rod to test theory with practice. For it applies with embarrassing accuracy to the case of Guiana.

Caught Red-Handed

The experience of Guiana has a classic clarity in the long record of imperialist aggression against democracy and popular freedom. Therefore it has aroused such a universal response from popular

opinion and the mass of the rank and file of the labour movement, as powerfully expressed in the enthusiastic demonstrations, under the widest auspices of local trade union and constituency labour organisations, which have acclaimed the representatives of the Guianese people in all the major cities of Britain. In the actually far graver case of the savage war against the Malayan people, now continuing in its sixth year, the atrocity could be partially hidden behind a smokescreen of myths about 'bandits' and 'terrorists' (terms taken over directly from the Japanese fascists to describe the same Malayan patriots) in order to conceal from the British people the true character of the Malayan Liberation Movement which was the honoured ally of the British people in the war against fascism. The unexampled barbarity of the war of extermination against the people of Kenya has been partially hidden behind the smokescreen of propaganda about 'Mau Mau terror' in order to conceal the real imperialist terror. But in the case of Guiana the aggression was open and visible to all. The customary smokescreen of propaganda had not been prepared before the armed coup took place. All the clumsy subsequent efforts of compilation of the White Paper have not been able to repair the gap.

Whose Violence?

Not a single act of violence or disorder or even of a constitutional breach or crisis could be quoted to justify the armed aggression. Not a single murder or violent crime could be played up, in accordance with the customary imperialist technique on these occasions, to present beforehand a picture of 'grave disorder' requiring the dispatch of troops. Every correspondent of every newspaper testified to the complete calm and quiet in Guiana before the troops arrived. 'Unruffled Calm in Georgetown', reported the *Manchester Guardian* on October 7. And next day:

There appears to be no disturbance in the country at the moment, apart from a strike in the sugar industry affecting three out of fourteen large sugar estates.

Even Mr. Hopkinson, the Minister of State for the Colonies, who was sent to Georgetown after the event in order to search for some justifying evidence after the crime, had to report to the press on his return on October 25: 'The situation is calm'. Then, recalling the purpose of his mission, he hastened to add: 'I think it is fraught with potential dangers'. '*Fraught*'. '*Potential*'. Most remarkable factual concreteness of evidence.

Electoral Verdict

Had the elected Ministers been guilty of some breach of the constitution or some violent challenge to the constitution such as to provoke the dispatch of troops? Limited and hamstrung as that typical colonial ‘constitution’ was, the Ministers had never so much as attempted to pass outside its framework. They had been elected on a programme so moderate that it would make the programme of the Labour Party appear revolutionary by comparison. Here were no proposals for nationalisation of the foreign-owned monopolies. The programme comprised the most elementary first steps of reform: civil rights, trade union rights; social insurance; workmen’s compensation; security of tenure and loans for farmers; educational reform; low rental housing schemes; reduction of the burden of indirect taxation and increase of direct taxation. They were returned with an overwhelming majority, obtaining three-quarters of the elected seats, on a basis of universal suffrage, in ‘free elections’ with regard to which not even Mr. Attlee could find a point to criticise. The People’s Progressive Party obtained fifteen times the vote of the next alternative party (now presented by the imperialists as their blue-eyed boy), and an absolute majority of all the voters. This is a contrast to the present Tory Government in this country, which was elected on a minority vote, and on this basis claims a ‘mandate’ to turn out Ministers elected by a majority vote.

Constitutional Zealots

After their election they proceeded—and this was certainly a contrast to the usual Bustamante type operating these colonial ‘constitutions’—faithfully to carry out their electoral promises and serve the people within the cramping limits of this colonial constitution. During their short six months of office they had carried through or were engaged in carrying through a programme of reforms, of which, however moderate, within those conditions any Ministry could be proud. There was no constitutional crisis. Even the petty temporary deadlock with the Speaker over the timetable of the Labour Relations Bill had been settled peacefully before there was any question of the troops arriving. The very moderate proposals of their party for constitutional reform (extension of the principle of election to all seats in the legislative assembly; abolition of the non-elected Upper House; ending of the Governor’s veto; and election of the Speaker by the Assembly) were presented in the law-abiding and constitutional form of a national petition—‘Patriotic

Appeal for Amendments to the Constitution'. In short, in contrast with Mr. Attlee, whose dictum of 1933 may be usefully recalled:

The important thing is not to do things with the most scrupulous regard to theories of democracy or exact constitutional propriety, but to get on with the job.

(C. R. Attlee in *Problems of a Socialist Government*, 1933.)

Dr. Jagan and Mr. Burnham were the most impeccable zealots of constitutional propriety. And then the blow fell.

Comic Opera 'Red Plot'

Under the circumstances it is not surprising that the original Government statement of October 7, to justify the dispatch of warships and troops, could find nothing better to offer than imaginary pictures of a non-existent future event. The apprehensive Tory spinster could not even display a burglar under the bed. She could only argue that there might be a future burglar under the bed next week or next month or next year, and that the man passing by in the street might turn out to be that potential burglar, and that therefore it would be desirable to bash him on the head now to make sure. There had been, the statement declared, 'intrigues' (magnificent vague word) 'of Communists and their associates, some in Ministerial posts'. From this the conclusion was drawn (italics added):

If these processes were to continue unchecked an attempt *might* be made, by methods which are familiar in some other parts of the world, to set up a Communist-dominated State. This *would* lead to bloodshed.

A truly hypothetical 'Red plot'.

Hypothetical Revolution

On the model of this new offence of 'hypothetical revolution' it would be tempting to draw up the future indictment of the Labour Party when the Tory Party deems the time has come to suppress it. The explanatory White Paper will no doubt declare:

The Labour Party pretends that it is not a Communist Party, although it accepts money from unions led by Communists, many of its leaders are closely associated with Communists in the industrial field, most of its leaders and its official organ can be quoted as having at one time or another praised Communists and the Communist Party, and most of its leaders are known to have paid visits, often of an official character and on official delegations, including an official delegation of the Labour Party, to Iron Curtain countries (see Appendix A for list of contacts of leaders of the Labour Party with Iron Curtain countries).

It has further been established that resolutions which the leadership publicly admitted to be 'Communist-inspired' received supporting votes of two to three and a half millions at the most recent annual gatherings of the Trades Union Congress (whose leadership is suspiciously interlocked with that of the Labour Party) and of the Labour Party (see Appendix B for list of such resolutions).

If these processes were to continue unchecked, it is obvious that in the not distant future such open Communist policy might become the official policy of the Labour Party, and that this could lead, on the basis of the warning example of other countries, to an attempt to establish a totalitarian state, which would inevitably lead to bloodshed.

In the interests of law and order, and to prevent bloodshed, it has therefore been found necessary to arrest Mr. Attlee and Mr. Morrison, and to declare the Labour Party a proscribed organisation.

This hypothetical White Paper on the Labour Party could certainly contain a good deal more concrete evidence than the actual Government White Paper on Guiana.

Reichstag Fire Without the Reichstag Fire

Conscious of the glaring inadequacy and failure of the earlier statements to convince anyone, the Government endeavoured to put a little flesh on the naked skeleton in their cupboard with the aid of the White Paper published a few days later. Evidently someone had told them that a hypothetical revolution was a bit too thin and metaphysical to take a trick. Something more picturesque and fiery was needed to startle a public jaded with 'Red plots'. If there were no murders or bloodshed to which to refer, what about a fire? A fire will always make good copy. Ever anxious to oblige, the Government proceeded in the new version to offer, not indeed an actual fire, but a hypothetical fire. The White Paper sought to embellish the previous lame and unconvincing exercise in imagination by adding a fantastic fairy tale, not of an allegation of arson, but of an allegation of a supposed intention to commit arson in the future. The only 'proof' offered for this imaginary intention was the unconfirmed assertions of 'police agents' (perhaps the direct descendants of those who prepared the forged *Pravda* or maintained the most lurid dossier about Ramsey MacDonald), and the fact that petrol sales had gone up. Even Goering first burned the Reichstag before screaming about a 'Red plot'. But Mr. Lyttelton and his fellow conspirators have been so economical in their stage properties that they did not trouble to take the elementary normal precaution of burning the tiniest government building or producing a Van der Lubbe.

'Serious Blunders'

No wonder every responsible press organ—until the whip was cracked—poured scorn on the entire concoction.

Thoughtful observers feel that unless the show of force is justified by the subsequent revelation of an imminent plot, it may well alienate public opinion (*The Times*, October 8).

'Serious mistakes' and 'serious blunders' was the verdict of the *Observer* of October 11 on the Government's action in Guiana. *The Times* editorial of October 21, after the White Paper, found the 'weakest' part of it the pretence of a 'Communist plot':

The 'Communist plot' . . . is not exposed in the White Paper with the clarity and completeness that many in this country expected.

Even the ferociously partisan *Economist* of October 24, always gullible to the wildest imagination of sinister Communist designs, had to admit:

The White Paper has not cleared up many people's doubts.

The *Manchester Guardian* editorial of October 21, after studying the White Paper, roundly asserted:

The charge of Communism, so much bandied about in the early days of the crisis in Guiana, now seems rather a red herring.

How Myths Are Made

But this of course did not prevent the million-sale 'popular' press screaming in front-page headlines about the 'Red plot' scotched in Guiana. The Government's action, proclaimed the *Daily Express* of October 5, in announcing the dispatch of troops, represented

the first dramatic step to forestall a Communist plot to seize power in the colony of British Guiana and turn it into a Red Republic.

'Forestall' is good. It was Hitler's favourite word in announcing any aggression. And the lickspittle *Daily Herald* followed up on October 14 with a reference to

the People's Progressive Party or Communist Party which snatched power at the last election.

'Snatched power'—what a beautiful democratic description of a 51 per cent. majority in an election based on universal suffrage. Let the Labour Party beware of the menace of endeavouring to 'snatch power' by an electoral majority. As we proceed from the contemptuous scepticism of the more responsible press to the wild assertions broadcast in flaming headlines to the millions by the multi-millionaire 'popular' propaganda sheets, we are able to see in the very act how myths are made. No doubt it is hoped that, after all the detail facts are forgotten, the myth of the 'Red plot'

scotched just in time by firm action in Guiana, will be as unalterably established in the permanent arsenal of anti-Communist propaganda, and instilled into the minds of all young people who grow up later without any memory or knowledge of the facts, as the similar fairy tale of the 'Red plot' in Czechoslovakia in 1948.

British McCarthyism

Thus the Government's invention of a non-existent 'Red plot' in Guiana, in order to justify its use of armed force against democratically elected Ministers pursuing a programme of most moderate democratic reforms, within the tiny limits of a 'constitution' bristling with 'safeguards' and 'reserve powers', has to be buttressed by the false allegation that the People's Progressive Party is a Communist Party; and this patently false allegation has in turn to be buttressed by the familiar McCarthy technique of 'guilt by association'. This is the essence of the White Paper. If an individual has ever visited a country of people's democracy, or participated in a conference in which both Communists and non-Communists are present, this 'proves' by association that he must be a 'notorious Red'. This technique has been made sufficiently familiar by McCarthy in the United States. It has now been sedulously copied by the British Tory Government in the White Paper—and of course dutifully echoed by their allies and partners, the Attlees, Griffiths, Tewsons and Phillips. Indeed the rabid anti-British and anti-Communist *Chicago Tribune* on October 11 triumphantly boasted:

The British press has said a lot about McCarthyism in this country to the effect that it is wicked of our Congress to try to find out how far the Communists have penetrated our Government. . . .

Now let us have a look at Churchillism. There was an election recently in British Guiana in which a party led by a man called Cheddi Jagan came out on top. . . . The Governor informed London that Jagan is some kind of a Communist, and Mr. Churchill promptly dispatched the 8,000-ton cruiser *Superb* and two frigates from Jamaica bearing the Fusiliers. . . . The Constitution was suspended and the Ministers were sent packing.

Mr. Churchill may well be right. It is quite possible that Mr. and Mrs. Jagan are Communists, though there is a good deal less certainty about it than our Congressional committees require before they make any pronouncements. The Jagans have been given no opportunity to testify in their own defence. Soldiers from abroad have moved in on the mere presumption that Jagan may be a Communist.

When Senator McCarthy stops asking questions and starts sending the Army around to padlock state capitals, we shall have something in this country resembling Churchillism.

When the Yahoos of the American witch-hunt can boast of their superior tolerance in contrast to the British models we can measure the depth to which Mr. Lyttelton and Mr. Attlee have dragged the name of Britain.

United States' Finger

But indeed there is reason to surmise that the United States' finger in the events in Guiana may have been considerably more direct than merely to have provided some models of propaganda technique. The *Daily Mail* Georgetown correspondent stated on October 9:

It is reported here reliably that the anxieties of the U.S. Government played a not inconsiderable part in Britain's decision to send troops to British Guiana. For the Americans have installations built during the war at the Atkinson Airfield near here.

The *New York Herald Tribune* under the heading 'U.S. Interest in British Guiana' reported on October 9:

The British Guiana affair is of vital importance to the United States, not because of internal events within that colony, but because of its strategic juxtaposition. Venezuela is a synonym for two very important items to the United States' economy—oil and iron ore.

And the *Church Times* reported on October 16:

Iron ore deposits covering 75 square miles have been discovered in Venezuela near the British Guiana border. On the British Guiana side of the frontier iron ore deposits have also been discovered which may well be a continuation of those in Venezuela. They are claimed to be the biggest in the world.

The frontier between British Guiana and Venezuela, moreover, in the region where the new iron ore deposits have been discovered, is in dispute. This is one reason for the American interest in the deterioration of the situation.

'Forestalling' Or Sell-Out

The rôle of Anglo-American relations in the Guiana situation has still to be more fully clarified by further information. Lyttelton's emphatic denial in parliament of any direct rôle of the U.S. Government ('no representations of any kind were received from the U.S. Government before Her Majesty's Government made their decision') was almost too self-consciously emphatic—especially as it covered only the U.S. Government and not the World Bank or other American interests. It is always possible that the precipitate British dispatch of warships and troops was taken to 'forestall', not a fictitious 'Red plot', but a real threat of American action in the form of reinforcing its already existing base. It is alternatively possible that the drastic action was the outcome of a deal with American

interests represented by the World Bank. The only coherent statement in the tissue of fairy tales of the Government's declaration of October 9 was the specific announcement:

The Governor will hasten to carry out the recommendations of the International Bank Report which has been available in the territory for some time and which is to be published shortly. The Bank's recommendation to set up a British Guiana Credit Corporation . . . will be carried out as soon as possible.

The Report of the U.S.-dominated World Bank had been 'available . . . for some time' before the coup (actually since July). If any subsequent negotiations between July and October had contemplated a World Bank credit to Guiana, it is well known, as laid down in Congress resolutions, that no dollar advances are permitted to any country where there are Ministers suspected of Communist sympathies. A condition of any such credit would be an undertaking by the British Government that the Ministers would be removed.

Victims of Power Politics

Such a situation would certainly account for the precipitate suddenness of the British Government's action (the hasty journey of Lyttelton to Balmoral on October 2, and the solemnly 'secret' dispatch of warships under sealed orders), which could most indisputably not be accounted for by anything happening at the moment in the internal situation in Guiana. All the conditions of the P.P.P. election programme and the character of the Ministers had been known for six months without any crisis arising. The Governor had given no hint of warning to the Ministers that any such crisis might arise unless they did or ceased to do this, that or the other. The most arbitrary business firm would not dismiss even an office boy in such a fashion without some preliminary warning. In other words, the decisive impelling force to create the crisis arose from events outside, not inside Guiana. This would also account for the obviously clumsy unpreparedness of the Colonial Office propaganda technique in this case, in contrast to its usual slick methods, since they were caught on the wrong foot and had to concoct the best propaganda explanations they could rake up after the event, instead of preparing the ground beforehand. The warships and troops were sent, not because there was a crisis in Guiana, but because it was feared that the sudden decision, taken for external reasons, and coming like a bolt from the blue to the inhabitants of Guiana, to remove the Ministers, might precipitate a crisis in Guiana. The

armed forces were sent, not because the P.P.P. Ministers were provoking disorder, but because it was anticipated that the British Government's action might provoke disorder. The leaders of the P.P.P. were not the cause of the crisis, but its object. They were the victims of very much larger considerations of power politics, and especially of Anglo-American politics. Guiana is more than Guiana.

A Lesson in Colonial Constitutions

The wider aspects of the Guiana crisis extend very far. In the first place, this experience provides a classic textbook lesson in the practical operation of the widely publicised colonial 'constitutions'. Especially since the war these fig-leaf 'constitutions' devised to cover the reality of colonial dictatorship have been presented with every device of showmanship as the triumphant expression of a new principle and the beginning of 'self-government'. Tame 'Prime Ministers' and 'Ministers' with dusky skins have been paraded like prize cattle. But the moment that genuine popular representatives have seriously endeavoured to utilise even the meagre possibilities of these 'constitutions' in order to carry through reforms and serve the people, instead of serving as a fig-leaf for imperialism, the axe falls. The constitution is revoked. Imperialism calls off its comedy and reveals its real basis in armed force. The lesson will be duly noted by every colonial freedom movement. The colonial 'constitutions'—which invariably leave final power in the hands of the Governor and the Colonial Office, backed by armed power—are at the best a temporary measure of the relation of forces in the political field, and of the pressure of the national liberation movement. But they are no substitute for freedom.

'My friend Dr. Nkrumah'

Mr. Lyttelton in the parliamentary debate indignantly sought to repudiate the interpretation of his constitutional doctrine as set out by Mr. Bevan in a public meeting preceding the debate:

You are free to have whatever Government you like as long as it is the kind of Government we like.

He denied that he had any political partisanship between right and left in this matter, and in proof of this he triumphantly claimed how well he was able to get on with Dr. Nkrumah as 'Prime Minister' of the Gold Coast. Unfortunately for his argument, the very next day

Dr. Nkrumah announced that he was suspending two leading members of his party for the crime of alleged 'Communist' sympathies (actually, support of the World Federation of Trade Unions). It is evident that the broad-mindedness of Mr. Lyttelton is ready to tolerate any political opinion from 'right' to 'left'—provided it is anti-Communist. Or, as *The Times* editorial of October 23 laid down with greater precision, unconsciously paraphrasing Mr. Bevan into terms of constitutional propriety:

The British Guiana Constitution, like other similar constitutions, presupposes a broad measure of agreement between the representatives of the Crown and the elected representatives of the colony. When such agreement is lacking, the Constitution cannot function.

In other words, the Vichy Ministers have perfect freedom to operate, provided their wishes agree with those of the foreign ruling military power.

Who Rules the British Commonwealth?

But the implications of the Lyttelton Doctrine go further than the colonial empire. The Doctrine was expressly proclaimed to apply to the entire 'British Commonwealth', *i.e.*, equally to the Dominions, whether the older Dominions or the new Asiatic Dominions, and to Britain. By what right did the British Government take upon itself to lay down the law with regard to what may or may not be permitted in the internal politics of every supposedly self-governing Dominion? Were the Governments of the other Dominions consulted, and their agreement obtained, before this new official Doctrine, replacing the Statute of Westminster, was promulgated? The pertinacious Mr. Bevan endeavoured to raise this query, but the Speaker intervened to save Mr. Lyttelton from answering. It may be surmised that Mr. Lyttelton would have triumphantly proclaimed the consultation and agreement of the other Dominion Governments if this had taken place. It is certainly improbable that the Government of India, where the universal enthusiasm for the deposed Guianese Ministers has been most strongly proclaimed, would have consented to endorse the new formula. If this is correct, the conclusion would follow that by the new Lyttelton Doctrine the British Government has publicly taken upon itself the rôle of the ultimate ruler and arbiter of the entire Empire, and of the internal politics of every part of the Empire, including the Dominions previously regarded as self-governing.

'Commonwealth' or Anti-Communist Coalition

Previously the 'Commonwealth' was presented, at any rate in respect of the 'self-governing Dominions', as a free and untrammeled association of equal partners, with no binding obligations or restrictions on the political evolution of any part. Premier Jawaharlal Nehru, in defending against critics the continued participation of India in the Commonwealth, has repeatedly argued that such participation carries no 'strings', commitments or limitations of any kind whatsoever. The Lyttelton Doctrine now proclaims a reversal of this constitutional theory, in the view of the British Government. If the majority of the population and of the electorate of any part of the Empire should desire to develop in a Communist direction, or in what British Toryism may choose to regard as a Communist direction, 'Her Majesty's Government in Britain' will not 'allow' or 'tolerate' any such development. The previous loudly proclaimed 'voluntary association' becomes a compulsory anti-Communist coalition. Any part of the Commonwealth desiring to travel in a left direction which British Toryism may choose to regard as 'Communist' is faced with undefined sanctions, and is in effect thereby required either to submit to the wishes of the British Government or to secede from the Commonwealth. Once again, as Stalin pointed out nearly 30 years ago, the British Tories are revealed as the grand destroyers of the Empire.

A Threat to Every Dominion

However limited may be the effective powers of enforcement of this new George III doctrine of Mr. Lyttelton and his Tory colleagues, the implicit threat to every Dominion is manifest. In India, for example, the Communist Party emerged at the last general election as the second party in the country and the main alternative to the Congress. Since then the series of State by-elections have revealed the further advance of the Communist Party and its allies of the Democratic Front. During the 18 months since the general election, according to an analysis prepared by the ruling Congress Party, in 114 State by-elections the Communist vote has increased from 7.4 per cent. to 13.2 per cent. In the recent local elections in the United Provinces the Congress obtained 39 municipal presidencies and 430,000 votes; the Democratic Front of the Communist Party and its allies won 26 presidencies and 225,000 votes, and the third party, the Praja-Socialist Party, won 12 presidencies and 97,000 votes. In Travancore in September the united front of the Communist Party and its allies, together with other groups, defeated

the Congress Government on a vote of confidence by 56 to 51 votes. Supposing a Democratic Government of the Communist Party and its allies were to be formed in Travancore or over the whole of India. What then? The British Government, according to the Lyttelton Doctrine now officially proclaimed, will not 'allow' such a Government to be formed. In other words, British imperialism will regard itself as entitled to use all means within its power, whether of economic pressure or of armed force, against such a Democratic Government representing the will of the people.

A Threat to Britain

The practical possibilities of enforcement in relation to a major Dominion may be in fact limited. It is easier to play the hero, browbeat and bully, invade and shoot down a small and practically unarmed colonial people, the six millions of Malaya, or the five millions of Kenya, or the half million of Guiana, than to attempt to coerce the three hundred and sixty millions of India. But the practical significance of the Tory doctrine proclaimed by Mr. Lyttelton in relation to Britain is more serious and worthy of consideration. Mr. Lyttelton does not limit his doctrine by any consideration of the will of the people or the verdict of the electorate. Electoral majorities mean nothing to him—any more than they do to Mr. Attlee who contemptuously referred in the debate to the Guiana People's Progressive Party as having obtained 'only 51 per cent.' of the votes. If the most overwhelming electoral majority were to vote for a united left government which Mr. Lyttelton and his Tory friends chose to regard as 'Communist' (and the example of Guiana has shown that their definition of 'Communist' is very wide), then Mr. Lyttelton and his Tory friends will not 'allow' or 'tolerate' such a government to come to power, and will regard themselves as entitled to use all means, including armed force, to prevent such a government coming to power or to overthrow it, and, if necessary, to destroy the constitution for this purpose. Loyalty to democracy and electoral verdicts only continues so long as the results conform to the requirements of finance-capital. According to the Lyttelton Doctrine, if 99 per cent. of the electorate were to desire to carry forward the development of Britain in a Communist direction, then the 1 per cent. would be justified in using all means in their power, including armed force, to prevent this. This is Carsonism naked and unashamed, promoted to official Tory doctrine, and not even challenged by the right-wing Labour leadership.

Warning to Labour

All sections of the Labour Party and of the trade union and co-operative movement will do well to take note of this warning of Tory intentions implicit in the Lyttelton Doctrine. What was done in Greece or Guiana may yet be attempted nearer home in Britain. That is one of the reasons why it is so important to fight the issue of Guiana, as of Greece or Spain, Malaya and Kenya, not only in the name of solidarity with the peoples of those countries, but because what is done there is a direct menace to the British working-class movement. And the most serious warning in the whole situation is the open support given by the right-wing Labour leadership, the Attlees, Morrisons, Griffiths, Tewsons and Phillips, to the assault on democracy. How many lectures have not these worthies delivered to Communists and the left on the great issue of 'democracy versus dictatorship' and the 'menace of the police state'. Guiana has brought the practical test. In the practical test they have revealed themselves against democracy and the verdict of electoral majorities, and on the side of open dictatorship, armed violence to overthrow elected Ministers, and the police state. And if we ask why they have taken this stand, the answer is crystal-clear in their own declarations. It is in the sacred name of 'Anti-Communism'. Because they suspect—merely suspect—some left socialist leaders of Communist sympathies, all considerations of democracy are flung overboard. The sacred cause of 'Anti-Communism' overrides democracy.*

Menace of 'Anti-Communism'

The lesson for every section of the labour movement is plain and inescapable. 'Anti-Communism' is the weapon of the class enemy, of reaction and privilege, against the working-class movement and democracy. Surrender to 'Anti-Communism' is surrender to reaction. It is not only a question of the Communist section of the working-class movement. The attack that begins against the Communists, with purges and bans, if allowed to go through, extends against the whole left (expulsion of Labour Party members for the crime of attending a peace conference, discipline threats against the Bevanites), extends eventually against the whole working-class

*The crudest definition of 'democracy' as Anti-Communism was given by Mr. C. P. Mayhew, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in an address on the United Nations delivered to the young people of the Conference of Education for World Citizenship on December 30, 1948.

'He was asked: "Do you include among the democracies South American dictatorships, South Africa and countries which outlaw any political party or any country which discriminates against their members?"'

'Mr. Mayhew: "When I say a country is a democracy I mean that it is not a Communist country."', (*News Chronicle* report, December 31, 1948.)
Alice's Humpty-Dumpty is here surpassed.

movement and all supporters of democracy. Messrs. Attlee and Phillips are sharpening the knife for their own throats. When Mr. Attlee so easily accepted all the Tory myths of 'totalitarian' bogies and 'Red spectres' against the People's Progressive Party of Guiana, was his memory so short that he had really forgotten the Tory 'Gestapo' scare against the Labour Party, Mr. Laski and Mr. Attlee, in 1945? In the name of 'Anti-Communism' Hitler launched his offensive. Through their blind hatred of the Communists, German Social Democracy refused the united working-class front which could have defeated Hitler. The right-wing trade union leaders and social democrats imagined they could remain safe while the Communists were massacred. But the attack which began with the Communists, soon engulfed also German social democracy and trade unionism and all democratic organisations, and the flames spread over Europe—until the Soviet Union turned the tide. Let the Labour Party beware of treading the path of German social democracy.

Unity for Victory

The indispensable need is the unity of all sections of the working-class movement, Communist and non-Communist alike, in the common struggle against Toryism, for higher standards, for national independence and for peace. The German Communist Party also made tactical errors in the period before Hitler came to power—errors which have been frankly recognised and brought into the fullest light of day. But the Communists have learned the lesson, and strive in the forefront for unity. It is for all sections of the Labour Party, and especially for all on the left who are genuinely striving for a progressive policy, equally to learn the lesson, and to recognise that co-operation of all sections is indispensable for the victory of a progressive policy. The successes won by the co-operation of the Italian Communist Party and Socialist Party in the last election, with the resulting increased votes of both parties and downfall of De Gasperi, have demonstrated the path of co-operation in practice. We are faced with a Tory offensive which extends, not only against the colonial peoples, the peoples of Guiana, Kenya or Malaya, but equally against the British people, the living standards of every household, the wage demands of the workers, and the rents of every tenant. But the battlefield of the working people is forming, as the mighty demonstrations of the engineers and the calls for action have shown, the wage demands of the miners, railwaymen

and other sections, the mass petition of the co-operative housewives, the resistance of the tenants, and the response to the popular leaders of Guiana. Those demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of engineers in the great industrial centres, without parallel for over a quarter of a century, are the practical expression of unity in action. Great battles are opening out before us. The path of unity is the path of victory.

November 18, 1953.

R.P.D.