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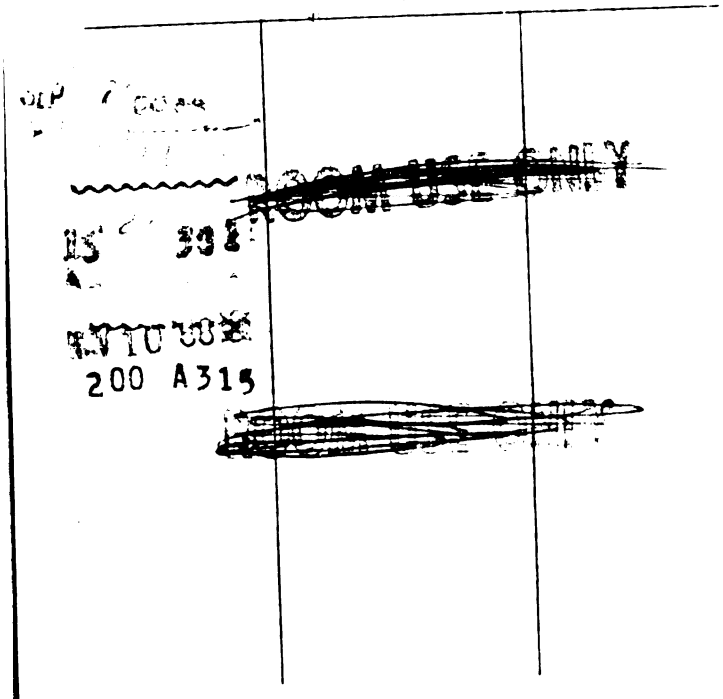

THOSE BLOODY REDS: ERNEST BEVIN'S PUBLIC VIEWS OF COMMUNISM AND BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY 1945-1950

By

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ABSTRACT

THOSE BLOODY REDS: ERNEST BEVIN'S
PUBLIC VIEWS OF
COMMUNISM AND BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY
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Ernest Bevin served as Britain's foreign secretary from 1945 to 1951, years marked by international tension commonly labelled the "Cold War." This thesis examines Bevin's public views of Communism and how those views were reflected in Britain's Cold War foreign policy.

Secondary sources were studied on Bevin's life prior to 1945 and on British Labour, its foreign policy traditions and historical relationship with British and international Communism. The thesis drew primarily from daily issues of the London Times and Daily Herald, House of Commons Debates and Labour Party Conference Reports -- almost all from July 1945 to July 1950.

The sources revealed that Bevin's leadership in protecting the British trade union movement from perceived Communist threats to its unity and strength paralleled his later efforts to protect Britain and the West from the perceived Soviet dangers to Europe's peace and reconstruction -- efforts, moreover, that were supported by almost the whole spectrum of British politics.

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Introduction

The eulogy for Britain's late foreign secretary in the 1951 Labour Party Report of the 50th Annual Conference noted: "It was a bitter disappointment to Ernest Bevin that the years he spent at the Foreign Office were years of discord among nations, when he had hoped to give his genius to the bettering of human life in every part of the world."[1] The years 1945 to 1951, which Bevin spent as secretary of state for foreign affairs, certainly were "years of discord among nations," marked as they were by the emergence of what historians now call the Cold War. Bevin deplored this development in international relations yet felt himself compelled to participate in it, "a stubborn fighter who had learnt in a bitter school the importance of matching strength for strength."[2] His naturally combative personality and battles against British Communists in the trade unions had made him hostile to Communism and suspicious of Soviet foreign policy before he ever set foot in the Foreign Office. As foreign secretary he helped to create and maintain the consensus in British politics which permitted the Labour Government to take a strong stance against the Soviet Union and the spread of Communism. Any understanding of Bevin's policies must begin with a study of the background of the opinions and prejudices he brought with him to the Foreign Office in July 1945. Such an understanding also must reflect a recognition of the extraordinary degree to

which these policies were supported by the trade union Movement, by the Labour Party and by almost the entire spectrum of British political life.

Born into poverty in 1881, working at age eleven and supporting himself at fifteen, Ernest Bevin spent the next thirty years as a worker, a union organizer and a Labour leader. As early as 1908, he campaigned on behalf of Britain's unemployed, led marches, advocated public works, and ran for Bristol's city council under the slogan, "Vote for Bevin -- Down with Poverty and Slums."[3] In 1910 he formed the Carters' Branch of the Dockers' Union, and eventually became the Union's assistant general secretary and first national organizer. In 1922 he organized the union with which his name is most closely associated, the Transport and General Workers' Union, and by 1929 he had helped to build it into Britain's largest union.

Bevin remained the General Secretary of the TGWU until 1940, when he became Minister of Labour in Winston Churchill's wartime Coalition Government. He served in this capacity until the general election of July, 1945, brought Labour to power. Prime Minister Clement Attlee chose Bevin as foreign secretary, the office in which he remained until his resignation in March, 1951, shortly before his death.

Bevin's career as a trade unionist from 1910 to 1940 affected his subsequent attitudes toward the Soviet Union and Communism in several respects. The struggle he waged against the efforts of British Communists to wrest control of the working class from elected union leaders produced

anti-Communist feelings as early as 1920. The Communists' unceasing criticism of Labour leadership, their disruptive united front from below tactics and their subservience to Moscow earned Bevin's lifelong resentment. His whole life had been devoted to the unions he helped build and unify. The protective spirit with which he defended the Labour Movement against Communist infiltration, and later defended perceived British interests against the Soviet Union, stemmed partly from this personal stake. In 1946 he claimed to have warned I. Maisky, the Soviet Ambassador to London: "You have built the Soviet Union and you have a right to defend it. I have built the Transport Union and if you seek to break it I will fight you."[4] Although influenced by personal resentment, Bevin's anti-Communism reflected a deep belief that Communist goals and tactics threatened the most effective means by which workers' interests could be advanced in Britain: the trade unions and the Labour Party.

Another result of Bevin's trade union experience important for an understanding of his career as foreign secretary was the support he earned from the vast majority of the Labour Movement. He had spent most of his life before 1945 organizing workers, raising money and resources, and stubbornly negotiating with employers and the Government. This kind of dedicated effort to secure more power and better conditions for the working class won him widespread support among most trade union leaders, and, insofar as it can be determined, from the rank and file as well. This

loyalty continued after July, 1945, and was a major factor in winning Labour support for the foreign secretary's Cold War policies.

Bevin did face challenges as foreign secretary. The Labour Movement's left-wing berated his apparent anti-Communism and his policies toward Russia, especially in the years immediately after the Second World War.

As East-West tension mounted, however, these attacks found less and less support. In 1949, two of his loudest opponents actually were expelled from the Labour Party, by a vote of 4,721,000 to 714,000, for their outspoken denunciations of the Government's foreign policy.[5] The votes defeating critical resolutions presented at Labour Party Conferences were typically just as substantial.

The Conservative Party also supported most of Bevin's foreign policy program. After nearly every review given by the foreign secretary in the House of Commons, both Winston Churchill, the former Prime Minister, and Anthony Eden, the former foreign secretary, reiterated their Party's agreement with the Government's general policies. There was a degree of opposition to particular policies, especially those regarding the Middle East, but Conservatives endorsed the Government's actions in terms of the Soviet Union, Communism and the Cold War.

With this support from both major parties, Bevin had a unique opportunity to pursue policies which reflected his personal views on major issues. Given sufficient latitude by Prime Minister Clement Attlee, defended against the small

segment of vocal left-wing critics by the majority of his Party and solid trade union support, and accorded Conservative approval, the foreign secretary was the dominant influence on British Cold War policies from 1945 to 1951. A vital influence on Bevin, in turn, was his experience with Communists during his trade union career before 1940.

II. The Trade Unionist

Ernest Bevin was born near Bristol in 1881. His father was unknown; his mother, hard-working, devoted, but in declining health, died when he was eight. The future foreign secretary was raised primarily by an older sister whose husband earned a modest living as a railwayman. After minimal education he became self-supporting at age eleven, doing farmwork before moving to Bristol and becoming a van-boy for one of the various mineral-water companies in the city. In 1908, he became active in the Right to Work Committee, a group calling for relief and jobs for Bristol's unemployed. This work acquainted him with the dockers, which began a relationship that lasted the rest of his life.

Although Bevin later moved from Bristol to London and from the docks to the House of Commons, his early experiences never left him. The Bristol dockers and activity in the Right to Work Committee convinced him that dangerous working conditions, job insecurity and low wages were endemic to an entire group of workers, and filled him with an angry determination to force the pace of economic and social change. He showed his extraordinary leadership capabilities as a young trade unionist by organizing older workers into a local union, becoming its first chairman, and then associating it with the national Dockers' Union led by Ben Tillett.

In 1911 Tillett appointed Bevin a district investigator,

the first in a series of incrasingly important positions within the national union. By 1914 the younger man had become the Dockers' representative on the Transport Workers' Federation, the International Federation of Transport Workers, and a number of other labor organizations. He also had been drawn into national politics through the trade union affiliation with the Labour Party. Defeat in the 1918 Parliamentary elections convinced Bevin that his own talents lay in industrial rather than political organization, but he had come to consider economic action and political action as two sides of the same coin, both essential in the working class struggle for a better life.

By 1920 the future foreign secretary had become one of the acknowledged leaders of the British Labour Movement. He called for the amalgamation of transport workers into one large union with central leadership, and his single-minded and nearly single-handed efforts resulted in the creation of the Transport and General Workers' Union in 1922. Inevitably, he became its first General Secretary.

Bevin's attitude toward the union he had helped build was paternal and fiercely protective. He was shocked and irritated therefore, when Communists within the union formed the splinter National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement. This organization kept up a steady attack on union officials. Bevin protested that these actions would divide the Labour Movement and undermine the effectiveness with which its elected leaders could represent their members. At this time, he had no hostility toward

the Communist Government in Russia, and in fact had helped to organize British workers against British Government intervention in the Russo-Polish war in 1920. But when British Communists undercut trade union leaders by forming unofficial strike committees, attacked elected union officials as traitors to the working class and called for more militant action, Bevin counterattacked.[6] He described Communist tactics as a deliberate attempt to destroy the effectiveness of democratic trade unionism and urged workers to unite under the leadership of their elected officials. Despite his own differences with the Labour Government of J. Ramsey MacDonald, he continued to argue that trade unionism and the Labour Party were the best methods to achieve working class ends, and that the Communists were harming rather than helping the workers by their divisive tactics.

These views remained firm through the two decades after the formation of the TGWU. Bevin continued to work for a stronger Labour Movement, to maintain his guard against Communist infiltration in Bristol trade unions, and to defend the Soviet Union's right to run its own affairs. He supported Russian admittance into the International Federation of Trade Unions in 1927, yet stipulated as a condition of entry that Russian trade unions should repudiate any interference in the internal affairs of working class movements in other countries.[7] He resented the personal attacks against him by British Communists as well as what he considered efforts to undo his unifying work for their own ends. As continuing General Secretary of Britain's largest

union and during a term as chairman of the Trades Union Congress' General Council, he stood in the forefront of the effort to keep British Labour free from Communist influence.

The international crises of the 1930's also drew Bevin increasingly into national politics, where he became aware of and involved with issues beyond those traditionally regarded as Labour concerns. He led Labour opposition to the spread of fascism in Europe. He helped organize British workers to publicize Adolf Hitler's atrocities and raised funds for persecuted trade unionists in Germany and Austria. He would not consent, however, to Communist Party and left-wing Independent Labour Party calls for a United Front of Socialists and Communists against fascism. A United Front policy in Germany, he warned, had allowed German Communists to engineer a fatal split among the Socialists. The latter had been "eaten out and undermined," ultimately facilitating the rise of Hitler.[8]

By the late 1930's, Bevin saw as much danger in Communism as he did in Fascism. He was convinced that Communists in Europe took orders directly from Moscow through the Communist International, or the Comintern. He warned that the "Comintern philosophy . . . cannot mix with our form of democracy."[9] In 1935 he urged British workers not to "toy with the idea of Dictatorship, Fascist or Communist," or they would "go down to servitude such as they have never suffered."[10]

The onset of World War II and the formation of the

Coalition Government became Bevin's path to a new career in government. Churchill believed that Britain's foremost Labour leader could effectively mobilize workers to support the war effort, and named him Minister of Labour. This provided valuable experience in the House of Commons, in the War cabinet and in administering a government bureaucracy, all of which would help Bevin when he became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

The new foreign secretary had been involved in varying degree in trade union, national and international politics. Out of these experiences Bevin developed abilities and convictions which he brought to the Foreign Office in July, 1945. In the trade unions, the future foreign secretary had sharpened his leadership skills, becoming an effective negotiator, forcefully protecting and forwarding the interests of the working class. Perceiving a direct relationship between Labour unity and Labour power, he called for loyalty to Labour's elected leaders and demanded discipline and adherence to the democratic processes in both the Labour Party and British trade unions. He sought to maintain cohesion between the industrial and political spheres of the Labour Movement, a cohesion he believed essential if worker interests were to be represented adequately in either sphere. He already had identified, through long years of struggle, the Communist movement as the greatest threat to the unity of British Labour.

Bevin thus entered the Foreign Office with a suspicion

of British Communists and, through their ties to Moscow, of international Communism. Over the next few years he would become hostile to Soviet foreign policy as well. He came to perceive Russia as deliberately obstructing European recovery in order to spread Communist influence throughout Europe. The foreign secretary drew his response from long experience, challenging the spread of Communist influence abroad with the directness and vigor that he had shown in resisting Communists in the TGWU. He also sought to build Western unity as he had built the British Labour Movement. He exhibited his characteristic leadership skills in these efforts and in his straightforward and stubborn defense of Britain's position at peace conferences and the United Nations.

III. The Foreign Secretary

Bevin had little time in which to prepare for his duties as foreign secretary. Immediately after assuming office, he flew to Potsdam for the final wartime conference of the Allies. In his subsequent report to the House of Commons he showed concern over Russia's influence in Poland, yet he also expressed a tolerance of the Soviet Union which was maintained in the early years of the Cold War. He hoped Big Three unity could continue, that the common sacrifices and ideals of the wartime Allies would "carry us on now regardless of what Government is in power in any country."[11] Political and economic reconstruction of Europe would be effected through cooperation in the UNO, which would help to resolve international disputes and preserve wartime cooperation. Although steadily drawn toward the conclusion that Soviet foreign policy was a hindrance to Europe's recovery, the foreign secretary maintained publicly until 1947 that the growing East-West division could be overcome.

Russian demands at the September-October 1945 Conference of Foreign Ministers made Bevin suspicious. Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov insisted on substantial reparations and various former colonies from Italy. The British argued that much had already been conceded to the Russians. Bevin denounced the demand for former Italian colonies on the Mediterranean and Red Seas as attempts to cut across "the throat of the British Commonwealth, which

has done no harm to anybody but fought this war."[12]

Soviet denunciations of British policy in Greece at the January, 1946 sessions of the UN Security Council increased Bevin's anger. When Russian delegates urged the Council to consider the British troops in Greece as potential threats to peace and security, he indignantly replied that the real danger to peace was the "incessant propaganda" and accusations coming from Moscow.[13]

Bevin denied that the Soviet Union and Britain were drifting toward war. "The Soviet Union has a territorial right from the Kuriles into the Satellite States . . . I cannot see about what we have to fight."[14] When Churchill described an "Iron Curtain" descending between the East and West in Fulton, Missouri March 5, 1946, Bevin stated publicly that the former Prime Minister's views were his own, given without Governmental authority. Even after the acrimonious Council of Foreign Ministers Conference in April and May, 1946 ended without reaching settlements on Germany, Italy or Austria, the foreign secretary assured the House of Commons that "it will not be impossible for us at our next meeting to arrive at agreed conclusions. There is no really insuperable division . . . "[15]

Subsequent CFM Conferences, however, only highlighted the East-West tension. Bevin grew increasingly frustrated with Russia's demands and accusations. He remained patient in public, nevertheless, expressing optimism as late as December, 1946 and faith that "greater understanding" was possible.[16] Events proved otherwise. In 1947 and 1948 the

the Cold War "heated up," and the British Government's public statements became increasingly critical of Soviet policies.

Bevin noted later that 1947 marked a turning point in his attitude and policies toward Russia. He had tried until that time "to be friends with Russia."[17] He still claimed to believe that within Soviet borders and even those of its Satellites, Russia should run its own affairs. By 1948, however, he appeared fully convinced that Russian intransigence, aggression and revitalization of Comintern activities threatened European peace and reconstruction. Moreover, his skillful presentation of Cold War events marshalled political and public support for the policies he favored to combat Russian actions.

The March-April, 1947 CFM Conference in Moscow ended after seven weeks in disappointing failure, producing little more than dissent over the German and Austrian peace settlements. Neither Britain nor the United States would accept Russian demands for German reparations out of current industrial production. The diplomatic correspondent for Britain's Labour organ, the Daily Herald, concluded that when the Soviet delegation could not get satisfaction over reparations, its members "made up their minds that there should be no agreement on any other major issues."[18] The conference ended in failure and frustration.

The Western response was to negotiate the fusion of American and British zones in Germany. Declaring that "obviously we cannot go on like this," Bevin explained that failure to reach agreement at the Moscow Conference made it

necessary to treat the British and American zones as one economic unit, functioning efficiently and reducing taxpayers' burdens.[19] Only the "refusal of other Powers" to agree on German economic unity necessitated this unfortunate but temporary solution.[20]

Concurrent with the CFM Conference in March, 1947, President Harry S. Truman announced his proposal for credits of $400 million to Greece and Turkey. Bevin welcomed this "Truman Doctrine," warning the House of Commons that Russia was carrying on a "war of nerves" against Turkey and declaring that "the Soviet spider wants Greece within its web."[21] He was even more enthusiastic when Secretary of State George Marshall announced what was to become the European Recovery Program. The United States offered aid to those countries which would make a cooperative effort to draw up an economic program for Europe. The British Government invited 22 nations, including Russia, to prepare for the "Marshall Plan."[22] When Molotov began questioning whether Britain was motivated more by a desire to dominate Europe than to help it recover, Bevin called the accusation a "travesty of facts" and again urged Russia to cooperate in drafting a recovery proposal. After the Soviet delegates walked out, he told the House of Commons that the objective of the Comintern, now called the Cominform, was to "prevent the European Recovery Program from succeeding."[23] He claimed that Molotov had explicitly warned French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault and himself to expect "trouble" if they carried out their plans for distribution of U.S.

aid.[24]

The final CFM Conference in 1947 only added to the volatile atmosphere surrounding East-West relations that year. It met to resolve the outstanding problems of Germany and Austria, but "achieved precisely nothing" except to highlight Bevin's impressions that Russia's "insults, insinuations and accusations" were "purely political," making "our relations very difficult indeed."[25] By the end of 1947, suspicion had given way to hostility as the dominant theme in Anglo-Soviet relations.

Bevin responded to this increased tension in January, 1948 by proposing a "Western Union" of Britain, France and the Benelux countries of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. He explained to the House of Commons that he had delayed implementation of these plans in the expectation that peace settlements for Germany and Austria "would close the breach between east and west and thus avoid the necessity of crystallizing Europe into separate blocs."[26] The inability to reach agreement on the peace settlements, Russia's evident intention to sabotage the European Recovery Program, and the formation of a Soviet-dominated bloc in East Europe had combined, however, to leave "the kindred souls of the West" little choice but to organize themselves as the Communists "have organized the kindred souls in the East."[27] The Western Union treaty established a basis for collaboration between the signatories in economic, social and cultural matters. In addition, it provided for collective defense if one of the member nations came under armed

attack in Europe. As Bevin later explained, "we had to consider practical means of defending ourselves."[28]

East-West antagonism increased with the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia early in 1948. Hungary had similarly been "absorbed" into the Communist sphere in 1947, and Bevin considered the Czech coup another illustration of Russian aggression. He assured Labour Party delegates at the 1948 Annual Conference that he would not pursue a policy designed to undermine either Communism in Russia or the growing Soviet domination in East Europe. Nevertheless, he warned of the menacing situation created by the "Communist process" now being carried out "over a weakened, distracted and disunited Europe."[29]

The British Government was particularly concerned at this time by Russian activity in Berlin. Beginning early in 1948, Soviet authorities tightened restrictions on communication between the Soviet and Western sectors in Germany. The crisis took on acute form in June, when the Russians stopped all road, rail and canal traffic between Berlin and the Western zones.[30] While U.S. and British planes began a massive airlift of supplies to Berlin, Bevin declared that the blockade of the city was another of Russia's attempts to "promote expansion at a very cheap cost -- that is, without war."[31] He portrayed the blockade as a politically motivated effort to "make trouble" for the West and denounced the "ruthless starvation of 2,500,000 people."[32]

Throughout the crisis, Bevin was firm, asserting Britain's right to stay in Berlin yet patiently reiterating

that he did not seek to interfere in the internal affairs of Russia or its satellites. He now believed, however, that Soviet expansion and political tactics necessitated a stronger defensive arrangement by the West. As he explained to the UN General Assembly, Marxist theory and statements by both V.I. Lenin and Josef Stalin indicated that conflict between the "Soviet Republics and the bourgeois States will be inevitable." Given this challenge, "a situation is created in which we can only look to our own defense."[33] The Western Union nations, Canada and the U.S. already had begun to discuss how Western defenses could be strengthened.

The culmination of these discussions was the North Atlantic Pact signed in April, 1949. It added the United States and six other nations to the Western Union Powers and established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a system of "collective defense for the preservation of peace and security."[34] Bevin characteristically believed this display of Western solidarity, backed by the power of the U.S, was responsible for the lifting of the Berlin blockade in May, 1949.

Bevin also believed that collective action was necessary to counter Soviet activity in Korea, where the focus of the Cold War had shifted by 1950. Early in the year he had led the major powers in recognizing the newly-established Peoples' Republic of China, accepting the Communists' victory in the Civil War and their right to govern. He was less tolerant, however, of what he considered to be Communist interference in Korea, particularly when it appeared to be

engineered by the Soviet Union. In June, North Korean forces, reportedly supported by Soviet Communists, attacked the UN-sponsored South Korean Republic. Prime Minister Attlee denounced this "naked act of aggression" and declared that British naval forces would aid the U.S. in giving help to South Korea.[35] The Government also approved the UN Security Council's decision to authorize members to give "such aid and assistance as may be necessary to repel the armed attack" by North Korean forces.[36] Russian policy appeared to Bevin to be based upon "laying your enemy low with aggression at a moment's notice," and he regarded the North Koreans as victims of Soviet "machinations" to extend the boundaries of the iron curtain and undermine the West's position in Korea, southeast Asia and the entire Pacific region.[37] The only proper response to this type of Communist activity, he argued, was collective resistance through the UN. The analogy was inescapable: whether Communists sought to undermine a single trade union or the entire West, they could be stopped by strong leadership and unified action.

IV. British Support

Bevin's efforts to unify the West against Soviet actions paralleled his efforts to secure unified political support in Britain. A stubborn man with strong opinions, he was not one to compromise his beliefs for political expediency. He instead helped to create a consensus in Britain by forcefully presenting the facts as he saw them, by effectively defending his actions and by demanding loyalty from the nation which had elected him and his colleagues to represent it.

The result was general agreement in British politics over the Government's policies relating to the Soviet Union and international Communism. Despite a degree of opposition from the left in both the trade unions and the Labour Party, trade union publications and Reports of the Annual Conferences of the Labour Party indicate that the Labour Movement as a whole remained overwhelmingly loyal to Bevin.[38] The Conservative Party, including former Prime Minister Churchill and former foreign secretary Eden, and the London Times repeatedly endorsed the Government's Cold War policies.

Bevin faced enough criticism, however, especially from within his own Party, to remind him that not everyone in Britain was part of this consensus. At Trades Union Congresses, Labour Party Conferences and in the House of Commons, a small contingent on the extreme left opposed Britain's ties to the U.S. and called for policies more closely in line with those of the Soviet Union. A larger

group of left-wing intellectuals, primarily in the Parliamentary Labour Party, advocated a "Third Force" of other socialist states in Western Europe, led by Britain and pursuing an alternative course between Soviet Communism and American capitalism. This group began meeting in 1946 and was known as the Keep Left Movement after its leaders printed a pamphlet entitled "Keep Left" in 1947.[39] The significance of these critics should not be overestimated. They were consistently overruled by substantial majorities in the Trades Union Congresses and Labour Party Conferences. Several of the more extreme dissidents were eventually expelled or in other ways disciplined by the Labour Party for their criticism of the Government's foreign policy. They represented an embarrassment to Attlee and his colleagues, they often initiated raucus debates within Labour's own ranks, but there is no evidence that they ever forced the Government to modify its Cold War policies.

Bevin, because of his position at the foreign office, inevitably became the center of much of this criticism and the chief spokesman for his policies. At the 1946 Labour Party Conference in Bournemouth, several resolutions called for friendlier relations with the Soviet Union and a policy more independent of the U.S., thereby making an implicit criticism of Government policy. The foreign secretary responded that the resolutions would be regarded by the world as a vote of censure, which would surely weaken his credibility at the upcoming CFM Conference in Paris. He went on to avow his sympathy for Russia, both in the past and in the

present, and refused to be blamed for Anglo-Soviet tension.[40] The Conference ultimately passed a resolution expressing confidence in the foreign secretary and approval of his policies while the critical resolutions were either withdrawn or defeated.

Bevin's critics also were active a few months later at the Trades Union Congress in Brighton, where the Communist-dominated Electrical Trades Union moved a resolution opposing the main lines of Labour's foreign policy. It referred to British activity in Spain, Greece and Germany, to "Anglo-American domination," to the "isolation of the Soviet Union" and "the tying of the economy of Britain with that of capitalist America."[41] Attlee responded vigorously, and the resolution lost by a majority of 1,113,000. The Times noted, however, that a "surprisingly" large minority had voted against the Party leadership.[42]

Less than a month later, nearly sixty left-wing Members of Parliament (MP's) tabled an amendment to the Address in reply to the King's Speech in Parliament which called on the Government to "recast its conduct of international affairs" and to collaborate with all countries working for Socialist planning.[43] Although R.H.S. Crossman, who moved the amendment, expressed approval of Bevin's "independent and critical attitude" toward certain Russian activities, he called for similar attitude toward the U.S.[44] He never intended for the matter to become a vote of censure, but, according to the Times, several more extreme MP's associated with the left-wing Independent Labour Party forced a

division. The House defeated the Crossman motion 353 to nil, but an embarrassing number of Labour MP's abstained.[45]

During and after 1947, the year Bevin considered the turning point in his own attitudes toward Russia, Labour appeared more unified in support of the Government's foreign policy. On the eve of the 1947 Party Conference at Margate, the Labour Party published a pamphlet entitled "Cards on the Table." It defended the first two years of the Government's foreign policy and provided what the Times characterized as a "firm though friendly answer to the Labour critics of Mr. Bevin."[46]

The Conference itself, soon after the break up of the Moscow CFM session, was a "personal triumph" for the foreign secretary (according to the Daily Herald).[47] Bevin described his "remarkable patience" with Russia, defended the fusion of the British and U.S. zones in Germany, and again called for Labour loyalty to strengthen his hand at future peace conferences.[48] The speech, the Times asserted, "overwhelmed what opposition there was" and after the Conference the Keep Left revolt was virtually ended.[49]

Government foreign policy continued to win support after acceptance of Secretary of State Marshall's offer of aid to Europe. Most MP's on both sides of the House welcomed this initiative and the offer to include Russia and East Europe. Eden spoke approvingly in the House of Commons of Bevin's role in this "second chance" for a "new era" in Europe.[50] From the other side of the House, Labour MP Michael Foot, a leader of the Keep Left Movement and normally

an outspoken critic, stated that Britain had certainly done its part in assuring that the Marshall Plan was for all European countries. Now, he declared, the choice between chaos and recovery lay in Stalin's hands.[51]

Soviet rejection of the Marshall Plan dashed left-wing hopes of healing the growing division of Europe and helped Bevin to consolidate the majority behind his Cold War policies. In a sweeping review of events in January, 1948, he denounced Soviet obstruction in the December CFM Conference and aggression in "Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and . . . Rumania."[52] He asserted that "the free nations of Western Europe must now draw closely together."[53] Eden welcomed this on behalf of the Conservatives, while Attlee and Churchill reaffirmed their Parties' approval the next day.

Bevin continued to have his critics, though they seemed to have even less support. When Konni Zilliacus, a perennial left-wing gadfly and MP from Gateshead, introduced a resolution denouncing the Government's "Churchillian" foreign policy during the 1948 Scarborough Party Conference, it was defeated by a vote of 4,097,000 to 244,000. The Times argued that this result demonstrated how Bevin's left-wing "opponents were finding less support each year."[54]

The Party Conference decision in 1949 to expel Zilliacus and L.J. Solley confirmed his position of strenth in his own Party. Churchill's speech in the last Parliamentary session in 1949 criticized the Government's policies in other areas, but concluded with praise for the foreign secretary's "manly resistance to Communism, his preservation

of good relations with the U.S., the Brussels agreement about Western Europe Western Union treaty , the Atlantic Pact, the airlift in Berlin" and more.[55] The Government continued to win approval in the House of Commons and Labour Party Conferences when it supported UN action against North Korea in 1950. With strong approval from the right and declining opposition from the left, Bevin was able to count on the same support from the Labour Party, the Parliament and the nation that he had enjoyed earlier from the TGWU.

V. Conclusion

Bevin's policies and accomplishments mark him as an influential actor in the Cold War. Upon his death, the Times commented that he had accepted instinctively "the Russian challenge" in the postwar years.[56] It is important to clarify, however, how he perceived and why he accepted that "challenge." Bevin was not blindly anti-Communist. He had defended the existence of Bolshevik Russia in 1918 and resisted what he considered British attempts to undermine the workers' regime there. Although he came to deplore Soviet expansion after 1945 in countries like Hungary and Czechoslovakia, he believed the Soviet Union had won certain territorial rights in the war and accepted Soviet influence in much of Eastern Europe. He repeatedly claimed that Britain would not interfere in Russia's internal affairs or in those of its satellite states. In 1949 he acted almost immediately to recognize the right of Communists to govern China after their victory over the American-supported Nationalists.

Bevin would have "accepted instinctively," however, any challenge to the things to which he was committed and to the people whom he represented. He resisted Communism because he became convinced that its expansionism presented such a challenge to both British Labour and, later, to the entire West. As a Labour leader, he was devoted to democratic trade unionism, and he felt responsible for keeping the Labour Movement unified and invulnerable to the destructive tactics used by British Communists. The scope if his

responsibility broadened when he became foreign secretary, and Bevin saw his duty as the protection of the British nation, and even the West as a whole, against Soviet threats to Europe's peace and reconstruction. His anti-Communism as a trade unionist and his status as a "cold warrior" should be seen in light of the protective zeal with which he led the people who had elected him.

Bevin's loyalty and forceful leadership made him an effective General Secretary of the TGWU who affected not only the members of his union but the entire Labour Movement and British working class. His widespread influence stemmed partly from the fact that he headed Britain's largest trade union, which he expected would play a primary role in working class affairs. He displayed his characteristic leadership qualities after 1945, yet in a substantially altered set of circumstances. He was now the spokesman of a country with waning power and resources, obliged to recognize the United States as the dominant influence in world affairs. Bevin succeeded, nevertheless, not only in shaping Britain's role in the Cold War, but in helping to direct the whole course of East-West relations in the immediate postwar years.

FOOTNOTES

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[1]Labour Party, Report of the 50th Annual Conference, 1951 (Referred to hereinafter as the LPCR - Labour Party Conference Report), (London: Transport House, 1951), p. 38.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Alan Bullock, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, Vol. I, The Trade Union Leader 1881-1940 (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1960), p. 30.

[4]LPCR, 1946, p. 167.

[5]Trade union support partly accounted for Bevin's popularity in the Labour Party. Trade unionists constituted a majority of Labour Party membership throughout the latter's history, including the years 1945-1951. For example, in 1947, out of a total membership of 5,040,299, trade union members numbered 4,386,434 in the Labour Party (LPCR, 1948, p. 32.) It should also be noted that at Labour Party Conferences, trade union delegates voted their membership totals, reflecting strong trade union support. The same was true at Trades Union Congresses.

[6]Communists were particularly active at some of Labour's crucial moments: after the defeat of Black Friday in 1921, during the formation of the Transport and General Workers' Union, and after the failure of the General Strike in 1926.

[7]Bullock, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, Vol. I, pp. 384, 385.

[8]Ibid., p. 553.

[9]Ibid., p. 559.

[10]Ibid., p. 527.

[11]Text of Bevin's speech in the House of Commons, quoted in The (London) Times, August 21, 1945, p. 4.

[12]Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 5th ser., vol. 415 (November 7, 1945), col. 1342 (Referred to hereinafter as H.C. Debates).

[13]Text of Bevin's speech in the United Nations Security Council, quoted in the Daily Herald, February 2, 1946, p. 1.

[14]H.C.Debates, 5th ser., vol. 419 (February 21, 1946), col. 1356.

[15]Text of Bevin's speech in the House of Commons, quoted in the Daily Herald, June 5, 1946, p. 2.

[16]"Molotov is in London Today," Daily Herald, December 20, 1946, p. 1.

[17]LPCR, 1949, p. 146.

[18]Charles Ewer, "Why Moscow Failed," Daily Herald, April 25, 1947, p. 2.

[19]LPCR, 1947, p. 180.

[20]Ibid., p. 181.

[21]Alfred F. Havighurst, Britain in Transition: the Twentieth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 408 and Text of Bevin's speech in the UN General Assembly, quoted in the Daily Herald, September 28, 1947, p. 2.

[22]Historians have commented on Bevin's primary role in the Marshall Plan. Alfred Havighurst notes in Britain in Transition: the Twentieth Century (p. 408) that Marshall's offer of aid was made "almost casually," and that Bevin was "one of the first to grasp its significance." Carl F. Brand, in The British Labour Party, a Short History (pp. 241 and 259) states that although the Marshall Plan took its name from the suggestion by General Marshall, it "owed much to Bevin for seeing its possibilities and actually bringing it into existence." Marshall's suggestion, "thanks to Bevin," became a plan that "was of immense benefit to the rest of Europe."

[23]H.C. Debates, 5th ser., vol. 446 (January 22, 1948), col. 393.

[24]LPCR, 1947, p. 188.

[25]"Big Four Talks End in Failure," Daily Herald, December 16, 1947, p. 1.

[26]H.C. Debates, 5th ser., vol. 446 (January 22, 1948), col. 390.

[27]Text of Bevin's speech in the House of Commons, quoted in the Daily Herald, January 23, 1948, p. 2.

[28]LPCR, 1949, p. 188.

[29]LPCR, 1948, p. 195.

[30]"A Plain Man's Guide to the Crisis," Daily Herald, July 21, 1948, p. 2.

[31]"East, West Must Live Together," Daily Herald, September 23, 1948, p. 2.

[32]"We May Face a Grave Crisis," Daily Herald, July 1, 1948, p. 1.

[33]Text of Bevin's speech in the United Nations General Assembly, quoted in the Daily Herald, September 28, 1948, p. 2.

[34]Text of the North Atlantic Pact, quoted in the Daily Herald, April 5, 1949, p. 1.

[35]"Korea," London Times, June 29, 1950, p. 7.

[36]Ibid.

[37]LPCR, 1950, p. 148.

[38]Bevin often came under attack by left-wing trade unionists and Members of Parliament. However, the resolutions forwarded by Communist-led of leftist trade unions at Trades Union Congresses and by critics at Labour Party Conferences were routinely overwhelmingly defeated. Bevin's critics were vocal and highly visible, especially before 1947, but too weak to alter the positions of millions of trade unionists and other Party members who supported him. Even within left-leaning unions, Communists sometimes had difficulty gaining support for their views. When Communist members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, for example, tried to blame Bevin for the deterioration of international relations in 1947, the Executive amended the motion into a vote of confidence (Martin Harrison, Trade Unions and the Labour Party Since 1945, p. 144). Critical attitudes changed perceptibly after Soviet rejection of the Marshall Plan, the Czech coup, and the Berlin crisis. Moreover, in 1948, Communists and "fellow travellers" faced anti-Communist campaigns by the Labour Movement. Union executives like Arthur Deakin of the TGWU warned of "drastic purges" unless Communists ceased to foster dissent and unofficial strikes (George Thomas, "Communists Get Purge Warning," Daily Herald, September 7, 1948, p. 1). The Trades Union Congress withdrew from the World Federation of Trades Unions and joined Western trade union movements in creating an international organization "not dominated by Communists" (Arthur Webb, "Americans Backing Britain on WFTU," Daily Herald, November 24, 1948, p. 1). Prime Minister Attlee barred civil servants belonging to or sympathizing with the Communist Party from positions vital to State security ("The Communist Menace," Daily Herald, March 16, 1948, p. 1). Despite rebellious critics, the Labour Movement was massively loyal to Bevin's Cold War policies, particularly after 1947.

[39]Carl F. Brand, The British Labour Party: A Short History (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1974), p. 262.

[40]LPCR, 1946, pp. 163 and 167.

[41]"TUC Support for Foreign Policy," London Times, October 26, 1946, p. 4.

[42]Ibid.

[43]"Rebel M.P.'s Defiant," London Times, Novemeber 14, 1946, p. 4.

[44]Ibid.

[45]"A Confused Debate," London Times, November 19, 1946, p. 5.

[46]"Labour Foreign Policy," London Times, May 22, 1947, p. 1.

[47]Ernest Jay, "Bevin is Given Full Backing," Daily Herald, May 30, 1947, p. 1.

[48]LPCR, 1947, p. 182.

[49]"Mr. Bevin at Margate," London Times, May 30, 1947, p. 5. and Henry Pelling, A Short History of the Labour Party (London: Macmillan, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1961), p. 100.

[50]H.C.Debates, 5th ser., vol. 438 (June 19, 1947), col. 2240.

[51]Michael Foot, "Stalin's Choice . . . Chaos or Recovery," Daily Herald, June 20, 1947, p. 2.

[52]H.C. Debates, 5th ser., vol. 446 (January 22, 1948), col. 384.

[53]Ibid., col. 395.

[54]LPCR, 1948, p. 200, and "Foreign Policy Approved by Labour Party," London Times, May 21, 1948, p. 4.

[55]Robert Rhodes James, ed., Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897-1963, Vol. VII, 1943-1949 (London: Chelsea House Publishers in association with R.R. Bowker Co., New York and London, 1974), p. 7899.

[56]"Ernest Bevin," London Times, April 16, 1951, p. 4.

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