

'No United Europe while Britain stays Socialist' from the Daily Mail (3 September 1948)

Caption: On 3 September 1948, quoting the American journalist, Walter Lippmann, the British daily newspaper Daily Mail comments on the attitude of the Labour Government towards European unity. It notes that Marshall Aid and Western Union will remain ineffective if the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, and his Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, do not alter the course of British domestic and foreign policy.

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No United Europe while Britain stays Socialist

says WALTER LIPPMANN, *one of the most influential voices in the United States, who is sometimes called America's Unofficial Foreign Secretary. His writings not only guide much of American public opinion, but also carry considerable weight in the State Department itself.*

In the not distant future the attitude of the British Labour Government toward European unity is likely to come in for serious discussion on both sides of the Atlantic.

For without the active leadership of the British Government the economic co-operation envisaged in the Marshall Plan cannot develop.

It will remain little more than a plan to have the United States underwrite the separate dollar deficits of various countries.

The Western Union, which was formed at Brussels, will remain an impotent military alliance, unable to evolve into a political system which would restore the power and influence of the European community.

First essential

American dollars and American guarantees of military support are essential to the security and revival of Europe. But unless Europe is united little can be accomplished.

Not even Western Europe can, or will, begin to unite unless Britain, the strongest of the European nations, is affirmatively and actively the leader in the movement toward European unity.

But Mr. Attlee and Mr. Bevin and Sir Stafford Cripps are making it very plain that the Labour Government will not now take the leadership, that it is participating reluctantly, without faith or conviction, and only as much as it finds it necessary or expedient in order to placate Mr. Churchill and France and the United States.

Yet Mr. Attlee has said that Europe must federate or perish.

Why, then, is the Attlee Government now so unwilling to lead, so reluctant to follow the movement toward European unity ?

Why is the Socialist Government in the United Kingdom, allegedly the most progressive in the world, the most inclined to drag its feet when it is asked to promote that most progressive of all international ideals, the unity of Europe?

Why is it that in the present crisis of Western civilisation this British Socialist Government is so much more jealously concerned with the exclusive sovereignty of the United Kingdom than is that tremendous patriot Mr. Winston Churchill, the proven defender of British institutions and of the British Commonwealth and Empire?

System-bound

The reason, I think, is that the Socialist experiment in the United Kingdom has become such a complicated structure of Government plans and Government controls that it cannot be maintained and managed except by an ever-increasing exercise of the sovereign power of the Central Government.

Having assumed vast and intricate powers over exports, imports, investments, management, expenditure, consumption, work, and the currency, the Socialist Government shrinks from any proposal which would require it to relinquish, or even to share, any of its sovereign power.

For in a wider union the planned direction of the United Kingdom's economy could no longer be exclusive,

and the whole artificial structure, now held together by Government controls and the American subsidy, would be in jeopardy.

When in power

Defence of Socialism in Great Britain is making, indeed has made, the Labour Government more and more nationalist in its foreign policy.

The original idealism of the Western democratic Socialists was always "internationalist." But when Socialists come into power, and if they continue to be Socialists, then Socialism becomes inexorably a nationalist Socialism.

They cannot help it. When a Government undertakes to plan and direct the economic life of a nation it is drawing very heavily on the sovereign power of the national State.

Inevitably it will cling jealously to that sovereign power; since it cannot let private interests at home, it certainly cannot let foreign Governments abroad interfere with its planning and its direction of the national economy.

These considerations will help to explain why a non-Socialist like Mr. Churchill, why non-Socialist Governments in France and Italy, why the non-Socialist United States, why the very non-Socialist Mr. Dewey, Mr. Dulles, Mr. Vandenberg, Mr. Lodge, Mr. Hoffman are now more strongly in favour of European political union than are Mr. Attlee, Mr. Bevin, and Sir Stafford Cripps.

Not so afraid

The non-Socialists, in so far as they are economic Liberals and not private collectivists and monopolists, are interested in reducing the exercise of sovereign power at home.

Since they do not believe in expanding the power of the sovereign State, they are less jealously afraid of political agreements which call for a diminution of national sovereignty.

There is, I think, no escape from the conclusion that the political union of the free European nations is incompatible with State Socialism of the British type.

It is often said in the British Socialist Press that only when all of Europe is Socialist can Europe be federated.

Therefore, it is said, the British Labour Government cannot now unite with France and Italy since they are moving away from Socialism.

But after the war, when all of Europe was Socialist, no progress was made toward union, each Socialist Government made its separate national plan.

As a matter of fact, if today France and Italy were as firmly committed as is the United Kingdom to an elaborate national plan of detailed control, what likelihood would there be that all these national plans could be merged into some kind of larger supra-national plan?

Back numbers?

Little, I should think, if the merging is to be done by the consent of freely elected Governments.

For if there were to be a planned Socialist direction of the whole of Western Europe, there would have to be created a Western European Government so powerful that the House of Commons and the French National Assembly would be little more than provincial councils with limited autonomy.

I cannot think, therefore, that Mr. Attlee and Mr. Bevin will ever be the sponsors of a federation of Socialist States.

They will continue to work for a Socialist Britain which is not united or entangled with other countries.

This would mean that the grand objective of the European Recovery Programme, which was to unite the free countries of Europe for their own rehabilitation and security, may be unattainable during the ascendancy of the Labour Government in Great Britain.

Next winter, when Congress will have to review the recovery programme, this problem may become sharply defined.