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VOICES FROM NOWHERE
UTOPIANISM IN BRITISH
POLITICAL CULTURE
1929-1945

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SUMMARY

This thesis employs an analytical concept of 'utopianism' to examine British political culture between the economic crisis of 1929-31 and the 1945 election. In contrast to the commonplace meanings of 'utopia', utopianism is understood in a positive sense and conceptualised as composed of three dialectically interrelated parts. In summary, the starting point of any utopia is an appreciation of life *as it is*, based on a critical gaze on society specific to the life-world of the onlooker. This gaze is parent to the second part of this concept, the object of desire, the utopia itself. The third aspect of utopianism is the 'praxis of desire', the strategies and tactics by which the good life is sought.

This concept is employed to focus on the rhetorical formations and discursive content of the public utterances of the Labour Party, the Communist Party of Great Britain, the British Union of Fascists, the Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals and the Common Wealth party, known collectively as the 'New Utopians'. The critiques of existing society, ideals of the 'New Man' and blueprints for, and visions of, the 'New Britain' of these parties are drawn out and discussed. As an alternative analytical framework to 'class' models of politics, the concept of utopianism de-familiarises the material, allowing the commonality and promiscuity of political ideas to emerge. Through the notion of the 'praxis of desire', how utopia was sought in a national tradition of democracy, continuity and non-violence is examined, and the dichotomy between 'utopian' and 'practical' politics interrogated. Finally, an alternative narrative of the 'Road to 1945' is constructed. By viewing the aspirations of ordinary people in terms of 'demotic utopianism', the political subject is posited as an active, reflective agent rather than an individual whose 'interests' are prefigured by their 'class'. In this way the diversity and subjectivity of desire is reinserted into the historical narrative.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABCA	Army Bureau of Current Affairs
BIPO	British Institute of Public Opinion
BIS	British Information Services
BLPES	British Library of Political and Economic Science
BUF	British Union of Fascists
COSFPS	Common, Open Spaces and Footpath Preservation Society
CPRE	Council for the Preservation of Rural England
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CW	Common Wealth
FR	File Report
FSPI	Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals
IDRC	International Democratic Reform Club
ICF	Industrial Christian Fellowship
ILP	Independent Labour Party
IRL	Industrial Reorganisation League
LBC	Left Book Club
MO	Mass-Observation
MOA	Mass-Observation Archive
NBM	New Britain Movement
NFYG	Next Five Years Group
NIB	National Investment Board
PEP	Political and Economic Planning
PRO	Public Record Office
SCP	Social Credit Party
SL	Socialist League
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association
TC	Topic Collection
YCL	Young Communist League

Introduction

THE EVERLASTING DREAM

Utopia is the everlasting dream of the Good Life in the heart of man.
Ethel Mannin, *Bread and Roses: An Utopian Survey and Blue Print*, 1944¹

Looking back in 1940 over the years since the Crash and the Slump, Malcolm Muggeridge hazarded the claim that the preceding decade had a distinctive 'mood' traceable to the struggle between 'a Brave New World and a Brave Old World' in the politics and literature of the period. The 'logical end' of this 'romantic materialism', as Muggeridge described it, was 'some form of utopia'.² As Geoffrey Gorer in his novel *Nobody Talks Politics* suggested, in the face of 'the ever-increasing threats of war, and the world slump with its accompanying paradox of distress in the midst of plenty' everyone, it seemed, started talking politics.³ The crises of the 1930s culminated in a conflict which, in many ways, was the struggle which Muggeridge detected by other means. In the fifth year of that war, Ethel Mannin, in her study of the utopian impulse across history, wrote of the 'expression of the old, deep, ineradicable dream' of utopia in a torrent of blue-prints, plans and proposals.⁴ The following year, in an election fought over Labour's vision of a 'New Britain' which Conservatism dismissed as an 'easy, cheap-jack Utopia of airy

¹ (1944), p.9. All works cited are published in London unless otherwise indicated.

² Malcolm Muggeridge, *The Thirties: 1930-1940 in Great Britain* (1940), pp.24-23.

³ Geoffrey Gorer, *Nobody Talks Politics: A Satire with an Appendix on Our Political Intelligentsia* (1935), p.185.

⁴ Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p.8. For Ethel Mannin's political career see Andy Croft, 'Ethel Mannin: The Red Rose of Love and the Red Flower of Liberty', pp.205-225 in Angela Ingram and Daphne Patai (eds.), *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals: British Women Writers, 1889-1939* (Chapel Hill, 1993).

phrases', the struggle between the Brave New World and Brave Old World reached its symbolic climax.⁵

The aim of this thesis is to explore this utopian aspect of the political culture of the years from the world economic crisis of 1929 to the Labour Party's election victory in 1945. Specifically, it will consider the rhetorical formations and discursive content of the public utterances of the Labour Party, the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), the British Union of Fascists (BUF), the Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals (FPSI) and the Common Wealth (CW) party of the war years.⁶

However, the promiscuous life that the term 'utopia' has led since Sir Thomas More coined it, means that it is an especially urgent task to define what utopia signifies in this work. In the first instance, the commonplace use of 'utopia' to signify 'fanciful', 'impossible' and 'impractical' are resolutely placed to one side. Instead, the belief that motivates this work is that the concept of utopianism argued for below is not only a valid and fruitful tool for historical analysis, but that it engages with a tendency of both ancient lineage and present and enduring value in human culture.

A CONCEPT OF UTOPIANISM

Any degree of familiarity with the ongoing debate within utopian studies over the founding concepts of the field will indicate why this is an argument for 'a' rather than 'the' concept of utopia and utopianism. Hence, while drawing on, and relating

⁵ National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, *Notes on Current Politics: Conservative Policy Outlined* (1945), p.3. This was a theme carried into opposition in Richard Law, *Return from Utopia* (1950).

itself to existing scholarship, this work does not claim to lay down any final and universal definition. Instead, what follows is an outline of a concept of utopianism developed to serve specific analytical functions here, and conceivably in historical and political studies more widely. However, as well as providing a lens through which a new view of political culture might be fruitfully sought, the use of this concept is also underwritten by a belief that a narrative of the 1929-45 period constructed around this concept of utopianism is historically valid and not an anachronistic re-reading of texts. Not only can the period be analysed *ex post facto* for its utopian qualities but, returning to the first paragraph of this introduction, such a quality was also recognised at the time, if not always named.

As explained in the most thoroughgoing discussion of this question to date, Ruth Levitas' *The Concept of Utopia*, approaches to the definition of 'utopia' have variously focused on the *content*, the *form* and the *function* of their object of analysis.⁷ In brief summary, the different functions ascribed to utopia include it serving as a goal for a action, as a catalyst of change, as a vehicle for social criticism and for problematising the status quo, as a means for the 'education of desire', and, more passively, as compensation for the ills of the actual world. Regarding the form of utopia, J.C. Davis has provided one of the more thorough discussions, pointing to five types of ideal societies: the 'Cockaigne' dream of unlimited ease and abundance, the 'Arcadia' of a life in harmony with 'nature', 'the perfect moral commonwealth' in which individual morality has been reformed, the 'Millennium' - a hope for a coming period of divinely mediated bliss, and finally, in

⁶ Although the BUF, CPGB and FPSI all altered their names during the period, for the sake of clarity they are referred to only by their original titles here.

⁷ Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Hemel Hempstead, 1990), pp.4-8.

Davis' terms, the 'utopia' proper which articulates a new set of social institutions.⁸ Concerning the content of utopia it has been argued, for example, that socialism equals utopia or that an imagined society must be inclusive to be utopian. Content has also been judged according to epistemological criteria concerning the 'realism' or otherwise of a utopia. Finally, the question of definition has also turned on the specific form in which texts are articulated, with utopia most commonly being understood as a genre of prose fiction, so excluding all other writings projecting alternative social orders, let alone the utopian elements which have been detected—among other places—in religion, architecture, music and the plastic arts.

Levitas' achievement has been in positing an *analytical* concept of utopia that unifies a field which would otherwise be hopelessly fragmented. In this way utopia is found—irrespective of form, content or function—wherever there is an 'expression of the desire for a better way of being'.⁹ The advantages of such a concept of utopia is that it opens up the possibility of asking new and different questions while at the same time in no way diminishing the validity of asking questions concerning the substance, shape and uses of utopia.¹⁰ What follows is an attempt—beneath the aegis of Levitas' unifying concept—to outline a concept of 'utopianism' to use as an analytic lens to bring the threads of utopian desire and rhetoric in the British political culture of the 1930s and 40s into focus.

⁸ J.C. Davis, *Utopia and the ideal society: A study of English utopian writing 1516-1700* (Cambridge, 1981), pp.12-40.

⁹ Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, pp.8, 199.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.198-199.

THE WILL-TO-UTOPIA

The advantage of Levitas' approach is that it highlights a common quality shared by diverse phenomena. I would similarly argue that utopian desire is widespread in human culture and history. Before the word 'utopia' was coined, Plato wrote *The Republic*, and myths of a lost golden age as a point of historical origin and hoped-for return were widespread.¹¹ More coined a name for a protean aspect of culture that predated *Utopia* and has continued to evolve and change ever since. In this regard no catholic approach to utopianism can fail to take inspiration from the extraordinary work of Ernst Bloch. In *The Principle of Hope* and his other writings Bloch uncovers utopian hope and desire across the whole of human culture, from the 'little daydreams' of childhood imagination and the longing gaze of the window shopper, through social, technological, geographical and architectural utopias to the sublime in music and religion.¹²

Although the deep psychological, cultural and historical structures of what might be called the 'will-to-utopia' are outside the remit and capabilities of this work, the argument for utopian desire as a widespread characteristic of human life need not assume any essentialist view of human nature or human needs.¹³ Rather it is more likely that the combination of the ahistorical imperatives of survival—to overcome, or at least coexist with, nature and to reproduce—in combination with the definitely human capacities of consciousness and imagination, when mediated in particular cultural and historical circumstances, frequently produce outcomes

¹¹ Richard Heinberg, *Memories and Visions of Paradise: Exploring the Universal Myth of Lost Golden Age* (Wellingborough, 1990).

¹² Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995; written 1938-47; revised 1953 and 1959).

¹³ See also Lyman Tower Sargent, 'The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited', *Utopian Studies*, 5 1 (1994), pp.1-37; 3.

which can be understood as examples of utopian desire. Created at the intersection of necessity, culture, will, and contingency, the objects of this protean desire vary between and within cultures, and across history.

Cosimo Quarta's argument that *Homo sapiens* might also be named 'Homo utopicus' is not wholly unreasonable.¹⁴ Endowed with the faculty of imagination, *Homo sapiens* is not bound to the spatial and temporal constraints of the here and now but can envision alternative places and different futures. As Lyman Tower Sargent has suggested, utopianism might be viewed as 'the result of the human propensity to dream while both asleep and awake'.¹⁵ *Homo sapiens* is also the animal who can never be finally satisfied but only ever *pursue* happiness. Pleasure, and so satisfaction, is greatest in anticipation and pursuit, it rapidly dissipates when a desired object is attained. The bright prize reveals all its imperfections when finally captured, the eye of longing becomes a critical gaze. Utopia is, therefore, rooted in a critique of life as it is. Humanity is thus both equipped for, and condemned to, a never ending journey. Setting off from one place (*topos*) towards the beckoning light of an imagined good place (*eutopos*) the traveller arrives only to look around and then set sail once more toward the destination which is always ultimately no place (*outopos*).

Edward Glover believed that the first utopia was that of 'a small infant... a world of milk and peppermint water, in which the pangs of hunger or colic are no sooner felt than they are assuaged.'¹⁶ Here the origins of utopianism are shown at

¹⁴ Cosimo Quarta, 'Homo Utopicus: On the Need for Utopia', *Utopian Studies*, 7 2 (1996), pp.153-166.

¹⁵ Sargent, 'The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited', p.4; Jerome L. Singer, *Daydreaming and Fantasy* (Oxford, 1981), chs.3, 5; Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor, *Escape Attempts: The Theory and practice of Resistance to Everyday Life* (1992), ch.4.

¹⁶ Edward Glover, *The Dangers of Being Human* (1936), p.152.

their most elemental, when the misery of hunger prompts the vision of satiety. However, regarding the scope of this utopian propensity Sargent makes a crucial point by defining it as 'social dreaming', as 'the dreams... that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange *their* lives'.¹⁷ Unlike the asocial infant for whom the egotistical pursuit of satisfaction is its entire world, the adult subject is necessarily a social being. Not only can they empathise with other people and modify their own actions in relation to their insight of the self-as-other, but their happiness is conditional on the conduct and existence of others as well. Apart from the co-operation that is essential for even the most individualistic society to achieve anything at all, empathy may make the happiness of others a prerequisite of our mental peace, or our own desire may require that others behave or think in one way rather than another. Even the misanthrope desires that people keep out of their way.

UTOPIA AND HISTORY

In this way utopianism emerges as a social force from a reaction to, and a critique of life as it is, which, by means of imagination, prompts dreams, visions and plans of a better, a different life. The resultant object of desire is no-where, but a nowhere which it is hoped could be somewhere.

Krishan Kumar has argued that utopia draws together desire, harmony, hope and design from, respectively, the earlier traditions of Cockaigne, Golden Age myth, millennium and ideal city.¹⁸ Throughout much of history human imagination and energy were dissipated in the pursuit of objects outside of time,

¹⁷ Sargent, 'The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited', p.3, my emphasis.

¹⁸ Krishan Kumar, *Utopianism* (Buckingham, 1991), pp.18-19.

space and the grasp of human agency. If not absorbed in the hopes for a better life after death, then what A.L. Morton calls the 'Utopia of the folk'—the fantasies typified by the lavish abundance and limitless ease of the 'land of Cockaigne'—provided a compensatory dream for those living an unchangeably hard life.¹⁹ During the ages when desire for a better life was primarily absorbed in religion or millenarian yearnings, there was little more a person could do than wait, pray and obey the laws of the Church. Although utopia, as with Western thought generally, continued to carry with it a considerable residue of the older forms of thinking, when the light of reason shone through cracks in the religious worldview, a good society on earth made by mortal hands became possible as a mental object and human project.²⁰ Modernity provided the cultural premises for utopianism to act on, and in, the world and through technology the means to do so. Social change became something observable within a single lifetime and the notion of progress emerged. Science overcame the constraints of nature which had formerly been the immovable boundary limiting human ambitions.²¹

In this way utopian desire became a social and historical force. As Zygmunt Bauman writes of utopias: 'they constantly cause the reaction of the future with the present, and thereby produce the compound known as human history.'²² Quarta goes so far as to suggest that 'utopia can be defined as the *project of history*'.²³ As a contemporary commentator wrote, 'human imagination has always to be held in

¹⁹ A.L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (1978; first published 1952), pp.16; 11-45.

²⁰ Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Realistic Utopias: The Ideal Imaginary Societies of the Renaissance 1516-1630* (Oxford, 1982), pp.5-6.

²¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Socialism: The Active Utopia* (New York, 1976), pp.19-29; the emergence of modern utopianism is effectively summarised in Krishan Kumar, *Utopia & Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford, 1987), ch.1.

²² Bauman, *Socialism.*, p.12.

²³ Quarta, 'Homo Utopicus', p.160.

thrall by some vision, for otherwise there could be no will to progress'.²⁴ While the impossibility of final satisfaction made this striving towards utopia an unending process, the strength of the drive to utopia is related to the specific historical circumstances of the moment. Moments of historical flux, like the period in question, will have the greatest need for utopia.²⁵

THE PRAXIS OF DESIRE

Hence, utopianism—alienation, critique, desire and vision—must also be centrally implicated in political struggle and the culture which is its medium and expression. However, this says little about *how* utopian desire functions in the polity. Unlike the more or less free space into which the writer of the utopian novel projects his or her imagination, the political party is not offered a blank page but one already densely written, a field not only heavily garrisoned but also under assault by other competing forces. Although Karl Mannheim portrays history as a dialectic whereby a challenging 'utopia' overcomes a ruling 'ideology' and so on, he says nothing about the specific ways in which utopianism seeks its desired end through politics.²⁶

There is a common assumption that utopianism must necessarily be 'radical', revolutionary and uncompromising in the way it seeks to realise its vision. Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor write that the:

curious divergence between our real and ideal societies... arises partly from the fact that our quotidian politics is, in theory, about finding ways to utopia and in practice,

²⁴ Roger Lloyd, *Revolutionary Religion: Christianity Fascism and Communism* (1938), p.23.

²⁵ Quarta, 'Homo Utopicus', p.163

²⁶ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia. An introduction to the sociology of knowledge* (New York, undated; first published in English 1936). The closest that Mannheim gets to discussing praxis is in his interpretation of the role of the intellectual as the herald of a utopia emerging teleologically from social structure and historical 'process' (*ibid.*, pp.153-185, 206-207, 258-263).

about compromise between entrenched interests. Both these processes, concerning ends and means are the subject of hot debate, whereas the goals of a utopia are predetermined by the utopian according to what he perceives as truths about human life, and the means are then 'deduced' from these goals.²⁷

However, if the title of Goodwin and Taylor's book *The Politics of Utopia* is not to be an oxymoron, there can be no such rigidity in the relationship between ends and means. What Michael Gardiner has described in the context of an analogous question as 'the fraught connection between utopia and praxis' needs to be confronted.²⁸ I would argue that in becoming an active force, utopian desire either consciously or unconsciously constructs strategies and tactics through which it seeks to realise itself, which I call the 'praxis of desire'. In departing from the free realm of imagination, desire confronts both the constraints of nature and the fact that we are not alone, but social beings. Paralleling the relationship of the Freudian pleasure principle to internal and external constraints, the will-to-utopia also exists within the limitations and opportunities of the world, and must respect the 'reality principle' too if it is ever to be at all effective. Of course, all other social visions except for one's own 'practical' proposal are 'utopian', so this is not a single absolute, 'objective' reality. Rather, as assumed in rational choice theory, this is the reality of the system of meaning and values within which a given utopian exists.²⁹ The praxis of desire is thus 'subjective' in that it reflects the specific way in which the world is seen, and the means which are thus understood as practical and possible.

²⁷ Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia: A Study in Theory and Practice* (1982), p.35.

²⁸ Michael Gardiner, 'Utopia and Everyday Life in French Social Thought', *Utopian Studies*, 6 2 (1995), pp.90-123; 117.

²⁹ Michael Laver, *Private Desires, Political Action: An Invitation to the Politics of Rational Choice* (1997), p.2.

In any case, although utopian literature—broadly conceived—may press on the imaginative limits of the possible, and even consciously employ impossible elements as textual devices, the use of the word ‘utopian’ to denote the unrealistic and/or impossible is one of the greater libels against utopianism. In actuality, utopia is often much closer to what Alvin Toffler has called ‘practopia’—a new society which is thought to be ‘realistically attainable’—than is generally believed.³⁰ Miriam Eliav-Feldon, discussing the utopian novels of the Renaissance, stresses that their authors had ‘practical and realistic intentions’ and that their visions were ‘existing or possible in the present’.³¹ As Sargent shows, the societies portrayed in *Utopia* and other examples of the genre by no means assumed or expressed an anodyne faith in a ‘benevolent human nature’.³² We should also note that the utopias of James Harrington and the Levellers during the English Civil War were intended as realistic proposals, while Robert Owen perceived his ideas as ‘rational, empirical, scientific and firmly grounded in reality’ and they were only labelled ‘utopian’ in the negative sense by opponents and later detractors.³³ Besides, the twentieth century is not without examples of ‘utopians’ obtaining power and then putting their ideas into practice; albeit without always achieving what they claimed or intended. As Bauman states, ‘the ‘realism’ or ‘practicability’ of a utopia may be discovered... only in the course of action.’³⁴

³⁰ Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (1981), pp.367-368.

³¹ Eliav-Feldon, *Realistic Utopia*, pp.2, 6.

³² Lyman Tower Sargent, ‘A Note on the Other Side of Human Nature in the Utopian Novel’, *Political Theory*, 3 1 (February 1975), pp.88-97; Lucy Sargisson, *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* (1996), pp.15-28, 36-38.

³³ See Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, ch.2; Vincent Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism* (1987), ch.1; Keith Taylor, *The Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists* (1982); Barbara Goodwin, *Social Science and Utopia: Nineteenth-Century Models of Social Harmony* (Sussex, 1978), p.9.

³⁴ Bauman, *Socialism*, p.17.



Therefore, in summary, the analytical concept employed in this work understands utopianism as composed of three parts, which as William DeMaria suggests, have a dialectical rather than linear relationship, such that 'all parts are inter-dependent and interact with each other within the same time frame'. Thus, the starting point of any utopia is an appreciation of life as *it is*, based on a critical gaze on society constituted by the values and beliefs specific to the life-world of the onlooker. This gaze on life is parent to the second part of this concept, the object of desire, the utopia itself. The third aspect of utopianism is the praxis of desire, the strategies and tactics by which the good life is sought.³⁵

UTOPIANISM AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Utopianism as understood here is centrally implicated in the political relations entailed in the constitution and evolution of social institutions. At this level of analysis the desires of a social group—be it based around race, gender, class, nationality or any other mode of identity—and its political actions can, following on from Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, be conceptualised and analysed as a 'utopia'.³⁶ To employ such a heuristic device is to have travelled a long way from utopia as a work of fiction by a single author. Nonetheless, this conceptualisation of a utopia as something wider than an individual person is fitting, for while the drives behind desire may be deep in the individual person, the specific objects of an

³⁵ William DeMaria, 'The Dreaming and the Doing: Utopian Foundations of Social Action', *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 9 2 (June 1982), pp.186-202; 188. Although I came to this tripartite definition of utopianism more or less independently, I have since learnt that it is anticipated by DeMaria who stresses the 'utopian foundations of social action' and posits that 'social action' as 'comprised of (i) utopian sensibility, (ii) critical consciousness, and (iii) strategies' (*ibid.*).

individual's desire reflect their social embeddedness. The notion of a utopia as primarily 'the product of one person's imagination' suggests the outmoded notion of the sovereign author.³⁷ In this sense a 'utopia' can—in an approach also advocated by Peter Beilharz—be read from a whole range of associated sources.³⁸ These will include material which corresponds to that which Kumar sets apart from the fictional utopia proper as 'utopian social theory'³⁹ and that which Sargent includes in the concept of utopianism as 'social dreaming'.⁴⁰ A group may of course produce comprehensive blueprints for its desired social order or 'word pictures' of such a society through prose fiction. Such individual texts illustrate the function of individuals as 'ideological entrepreneurs', and the structural⁴¹ relationship whereby individuals reflect on their present and act on the future within the constraints and opportunities of the societal structures of the time.

However, should all alternative futures be understood as being equally 'utopian'? Efforts to define utopia in terms of its content have been made; Goodwin, for example, suggests that 'utopia should aim to benefit everyone, albeit to differing degrees'.⁴² Whilst a commendable sentiment, historical analysis, unlike political action, needs to allow that the 'goodness' or otherwise of a social vision is in the eye of the beholder. Furthermore, the unfulfilled 'needs' that utopias arise to satisfy are no less culturally mediated than the solutions offered for them.⁴³ History's answer to George Kateb's confident rhetorical question: 'is there not... one

³⁶ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*.

³⁷ Goodwin and Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, p.76.

³⁸ Peter Beilharz, *Labour's Utopias: Bolshevism, Fabianism, Social Democracy* (1993), p.x.

³⁹ Kumar, *Utopianism*, p.29.

⁴⁰ Sargent, 'The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited', p.3.

⁴¹ Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (1979).

⁴² Goodwin and Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, p.18.

fundamental notion of social perfection?' is an emphatic 'no'.⁴⁴ As Marie Berneri notes of the founding texts of the utopian tradition, the 'dream often had its dark places.'⁴⁵ If a social vision appears good to an onlooker, it is utopian, if it appears bad, it is dystopian. In this way the utopias of B.F. Skinner and Edward Bellamy are authoritarian dystopias for many readers, while Huxley's dystopia may be utopia for the hedonist. All one can say is that utopia is necessarily *eu-topia*, a vision of a better life for someone. As this necessarily means discussing political movements like fascism as 'utopian' it is perhaps a disturbing road to take, but a necessary one if the subjectivity of historical actors is to be taken into account.⁴⁶

Another aspect of this question of content is the distinction between 'scientific' and 'utopian' socialism which has become so deeply ingrained in Marxist thinking. Bloch is rather more amenable to utopianism but even his distinction between 'concrete' and 'abstract' utopias is ultimately based on the same assumption.⁴⁷ As Goodwin notes, this is ultimately a dichotomy that can only be supported in terms of Marxism's own criteria.⁴⁸ I would suggest that the teleological and deterministic assumptions beneath such a distinction are themselves objects for deconstruction. History does not know where it is going. Instead, to undertake an analysis through the lens of the concept of utopianism is to reveal a historical moment as 'a set of competing projects' of which the 'future' is the outcome, and pace Bauman, one in which class is one of several, often overlapping modes of

⁴³ Ruth Levitas, 'Need, Nature and Nowhere', pp.19-30 in P. Alexander and R. Gill (eds.), *Utopias* (1984).

⁴⁴ George Kateb, *Utopia and Its Enemies* (1963), p.8.

⁴⁵ Marie Louise Berneri, *Journey through Utopia* (1982), p.2.

⁴⁶ Peter Fitting, 'Utopias Beyond Our Ideals: The Dilemma of the Right-Wing Utopia', *Utopian Studies*, 2 1 (1991), pp.95-105.

⁴⁷ Vincent Geoghegan, *Ernst Bloch* (1996), pp.1-8, 144-152.

⁴⁸ Goodwin and Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, p.76.

identity.⁴⁹ The claim that ‘the modern utopia is the socialist utopia’ cannot be allowed to pass unquestioned.⁵⁰ Not only does ‘socialism’ itself cover many diverse and competing visions but such a claim ignores the utopias of other social movements and ideological groups—racial minorities, women, nationalists, ‘greens’—whose interests may have, on occasion, overlapped with ‘socialism’ but cannot be reduced to it.

All of these competing projects, inasmuch as they are objects of desire, might be analysed for their utopian dimension. Any political movements which seek to act on society can be looked at through the lens of utopianism, both ruling parties and small intellectual coteries can have utopias which are ‘not-yet-become’ at the core of their ideology. But, as H.G. Wells suggested, there were (and are) ‘people in positions of privilege and advantage, brought up to believe that their world is the best of all possible worlds’, people who ‘have never desired nor been stimulated to imagine any other’.⁵¹ As W.J. Blyton wrote, ‘feudal times were Utopia for the predatory baron’ and the ‘nineteenth century in industrial England was Utopia for the factory-owner’.⁵² If the history of ideas is to be conceptually linked to the course of political struggle some means of relating the content of a utopia to the power relations and hierarchies implicit in these statements is necessary.

In 1943 G.D.H. Cole made the distinction between those who merely hoped ‘to live *better*’ and those who wished ‘to live very *differently*’ and hoped for

⁴⁹ Bauman, *Socialism*, p.15.

⁵⁰ Kumar, *Utopianism*, p.94; Bauman, *Socialism*, *passim*.

⁵¹ H.G. Wells, *Guide to the New World: A Handbook of Constructive World Revolution* (1941), p.102.

⁵² W.J. Blyton, *Arrows of Desire* (undated; c.1938), p.217.

life to 'take on an essentially new quality'.⁵³ Linking this point to Mannheim's distinction between 'ideology' and 'utopia', the desire to live *better* approximates to the aim of perfecting social institutions already established—'towards a complete harmony with the stage of reality already reached'.⁵⁴ The transformative aim of Mannheim's 'utopia' would instead 'tend to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time'.⁵⁵ While Mannheim's approach offers a tempting solution, although meant as a heuristic abstraction rather than a true-to-life representation, such binary oppositions echo rhetorical distinctions between, for example, 'the old order' and the 'new'.⁵⁶ Power, while held unequally is, nonetheless, seldom only on one side. Ideas are rarely monogamous but frequently have a promiscuous existence. Relationships between ideologies, parties, status groups and social classes are never entirely fixed.

However, this can lead to a collapse into fruitless relativism. Meaningful generalisations should also be made about—in crude but accurate terms—who won and who lost. However, it remains the case that the line between utopia and ideology can probably never be free of arbitrariness. There is no neutral place for the commentator to stand outside of the culture that they are examining. Similarly, the distinction between 'different' and 'better' is no more neutral. How much 'better' does something need to be before it becomes 'different'? How much change 'shatters' the order of things? The ideal of a stable and harmonious liberal or conservative society in place of the brutalities and miseries of the real world of

⁵³ G.D.H. Cole, 'Plan for Living', in G.D.H. Cole, et al., *Plan for Britain: A Collection of Essays prepared for the Fabian Society* (1943), pp.2-3.

⁵⁴ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, p.245.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.192.

⁵⁶ Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science fiction and the utopian imagination* (New York, 1986), pp.18-19.

1929-45 had no less right to claim to be qualitatively 'different' than the most thoroughgoing socialist blueprint, and only became defensive 'reformism' or 'patching' from a competing political viewpoint. Nonetheless, while these points are admitted, in the context of this piece of work, I wish primarily to use the terms 'utopia' and 'utopianism' to relate to the social vision and activity of those political forces predominantly *challenging* for political power.

In the contest between the challenging utopia and the extant social order, 'politics', to whatever end they are purposed, might be seen as constituted by the conscious, unconscious or habitual human effort to realise desire. At any historical moment social 'institutions'—that is the norms of value, belief and action reproduced in social life and variously enforced by legal and informal sanctions—are the precipitate of this effort. Although often presenting themselves as permanent and even universal and ahistorical, the ruling institutions of the status-quo are the nexus of contending forces, rarely unchallenged and even liable to radical shifts. Institutions survive not only through the coercive power of the state, but through the continual education of popular desire, and continual adaptation to new challenges. The triumph of a new utopia and the replacement of one social order by another is the consequence of the successful education of desire.

Therefore, when approaching political discourse, attention must be directed to the substantive content of the blueprints and visions that parties present as possible futures to potential supporters as means for fulfilling their own ends. At the same time, examining the process of political persuasion also involves looking at the rhetorical themes and devices that work more on the heart than the head which find their happy hunting ground amid the cultural forms given the name of

'myth' by Roland Barthes.⁵⁷ Rhetoric, for example, fruitfully draws on the whole mass of emotion, identity and belief surrounding the myth of what Benedict Anderson has called the 'imagined community' of the nation.⁵⁸ It can also seize on the endless complexity of life and the *longue durée* of history and dramatically reconstruct them as immanent with the possibility of new beginnings and new historical eras, as moments for rebirth. In this way the future can be presented as a moment of promise, political programmes as vessels of hope and desire.

UTOPIA IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF BRITISH POLITICS; HISTORY IN THE STUDY OF UTOPIA

The value of this piece of work rises or falls on the validity and utility of the application of the concept of utopianism outlined above to subjects which, by and large, have received significant scholarly attention. Although the FPSI and figures like its founder C.E.M. Joad⁵⁹ have been relatively neglected by historians, and Angus Calder's (1968)⁶⁰ substantial unpublished study of CW seems to have satisfied historical interest in that subject, the CPGB and the BUF have an extensive and growing literature and there is a whole library of titles about the Labour Party and movement. In addition, there are numerous studies which, like this work, attempt to seize on the period or parts of it as a whole. On the other side of the

⁵⁷ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (St. Albans, 1973); Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken For Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms* (1988), pp.1-9; Walter Nash, *Rhetoric: The Wit of Persuasion* (Oxford, 1989), pp.9-52.

⁵⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991).

⁵⁹ Despite being a significant public figure of the 1930s and 40s, interest in C.E.M. Joad has apparently only prompted a modest pamphlet: Geoffrey Thomas, *Cyril Joad* (1992). The FPSI appear to have evoked little more interest, generating a single article of very limited scope: R.A. Wilford, 'The Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11 1 (1976), pp.49-82.

⁶⁰ Angus Calder, 'The Common Wealth Party 1942-1945' (unpublished Sussex University Ph.D thesis, 1968); see also D.L. Prynne, 'Common Wealth-A British 'Third Party' of the 1940s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 7 1-2 (1972), pp.169-179.

disciplinary fence there is the growing field of utopian studies. To come to terms with this universe of books my intention is to examine briefly how, if at all, historical works deal with the subject of utopia and, conversely, how utopian studies has approached political history. I will also touch on how other treatments of British politics compare with my use of the concept of utopianism here.

Although increasingly theoretically sophisticated, the tendency of utopian studies still seems, as Levitas wrote in 1990, 'to prefer the study of the small and friendly, rather than the large, unwieldy and ambiguous'.⁶¹ British utopian and dystopian writing of the 1930s and 40s,⁶² which had long remained unexamined beyond H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell, has been explored by David Smith (1978), Lyman Tower Sargent (1985), Nan Bowman Albinski (1988) and Andy Croft (1984; 1990).⁶³ W.H.G. Armytage's (1961) brief treatment of British utopian communities between the wars is soon to be joined by Dennis Hardy's study of such experiments in England between 1900-1945.⁶⁴ The related area of prophecy and speculation about the future has also been surveyed by I.F. Clarke (1966; 1992; 1979).⁶⁵ However, apart from my own (1998) work on the BUF there have been no systematic applications of a concept of utopianism to the

⁶¹ Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, p.158.

⁶² The definitive treatment of Wells, Huxley and Orwell from a utopian studies perspective is in Kumar, *Utopia & Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*, chs.6-8.

⁶³ David Smith, *Socialist Propaganda in the Twentieth-Century British Novel* (1978); Lyman Tower Sargent, 'The War Year: British Utopianism 1915 - 1950', pp.161-184 in Luk De Vos (ed.), *Just The Other Day: essays on the suture of the future* (Antwerpen, 1985); Nan Bowman Albinski, *Women's Utopias in British and American Fiction* (1988); Andy Croft, 'Worlds Without End Foisted Upon The Future - Some Antecedents Of Nineteen Eighty-Four', pp.183-216 in Christopher Norris (ed.), *Inside the Myth: Orwell - Views From the Left* (1984); *idem.*, *Red Letter Days: British Fiction in the 1930s* (1990).

⁶⁴ W.H.G. Armytage, *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960* (1961); Dennis Hardy, *Utopian England* (London: E & FN Spon; forthcoming 2000). I am grateful to Dennis Hardy for allowing me to see part of this work in typescript.

⁶⁵ I.F. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars 1763-3749* (Oxford, 1992; first published 1966); *idem.*, *The Pattern of Expectation, 1644-2001* (1979).

parties examined here.⁶⁶ In historical accounts the terms 'utopia', 'utopian' and so forth do occasionally crop up but are seldom defined and are generally used to simply signify the ideal goal of a party or activist or in a pejorative sense. In studies of wartime politics, historians have done little more than gesture in the direction of utopia. William Harrington and Peter Young (1978) devote a chapter to 'A New Heaven And a New Earth'⁶⁷ and for Correlli Barnett (1986) 'The Dream of the New Jerusalem' was only too real and a matter of considerable regret.⁶⁸ Goodwin and Taylor's comment in 1982 on the dearth of 'investigations by English scholars into the relationship between utopianism and politics' still broadly holds true.⁶⁹

To find examples of the systematic use of concepts of utopia in studies of political ideas the net needs to be opened much wider. There is perhaps a degree of poetic justice in the studies that have brought out the utopianism within Marxism by Bertell Ollman (1977), R.N. Berki (1983) and Vincent Geoghegan (1987).⁷⁰ Keith Taylor (1982), in his study of 'the political ideas of the utopian socialists', Robert Owen, Henri Saint-Simon and others, is in safer territory in that these thinkers have been conventionally known as such. However, Taylor challenges the usual connotations of 'utopian' noting that 'these thinkers were certainly utopian in the sense that they sought to describe the structure of an ideal future society... but whether they were utopian in the sense of being completely fanciful and unrealistic

⁶⁶ Philip Coupland, 'The Blackshirted Utopians', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 33 2 (April 1998), pp.255-272.

⁶⁷ William Harrington and Peter Young, *The 1945 Revolution* (1978), pp.94-104.

⁶⁸ Correlli Barnett, *The Audit of War: The Illusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Nation* (1986).

⁶⁹ Goodwin and Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, p.10.

⁷⁰ Bertell Ollman, 'Marx's Vision of Communism: A Reconstruction', *Critique*, 8 (Summer 1977), pp.4-41; R.N. Berki, *Insight and Vision: The problems of Communism in Marx's Thought* (1983), Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*.

is a much more complex issue to unravel.⁷¹ Also of note is Chris Waters' (1990) study of the cultural politics of British socialists before the Great War, which in a chapter entitled 'Utopia and the education of desire' examines uses of the utopian novel and attempts to create a socialist alternative to the commercial mass culture of the day.⁷²

Moving into the twentieth century Jost Hermand (1988) brings into focus not only the considerable, but forgotten, utopian and science fiction literature of German fascism but also touches on the junction between utopia and the fascist state in the efforts of Himmler and Hitler to usher in their own "'utopia'".⁷³ Hermand's double quotation marks indicate his own unease at so describing the 'New Order' sought by the Nazis, but unquestionably the vision of Weimar Germany remoulded into a 'racially pure' *Volksgemeinschaft* was one of considerable appeal to members of the Nazi movement, as P.H. Merkl (1975) has demonstrated.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the use of the term by Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wipperman (1991) and Detlev Peukert (1982) is appropriate to describe the goal of one of the most through-going and radical state utopianisms of the modern age.⁷⁵ A more benign, but equally intentional project is explored by Helmut Gruber (1991) who looks at the efforts of the municipal government of Vienna to 'provide a foretaste of the Socialist Utopia in the present' and create 'neue

⁷¹ Taylor, *The Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists*, p.viii.

⁷² Chris Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture 1884-1914* (Manchester, 1990), ch.2.

⁷³ Jost Hermand, *Old Dreams of a New Reich: Volkish Utopias and National Socialism* (Bloomington, 1992; first published 1988), pp.264-287 and *passim*.

⁷⁴ P.H. Merkl, *Political Violence Under the Swastika* (Princeton, 1975), p.32.

⁷⁵ Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wipperman, *The Racial State Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.3, 123-43; Detlev J.K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth, 1989), pp.247-248.

Menschen' during the interwar period.⁷⁶ In Richard Stites' (1989) brilliant study utopianism holds centre stage, as the 'key to the emotional force of the Russian Revolution'. Stites mines deeply the seam of utopianism in modern Russian history with respect to both ideas and action, uncovering the utopias of peasants, intellectuals and the state and utopianism not only in novels, blueprints and community experiments but also as 'revolutionary utopian behaviour'. 'Utopianism', Stites comments, 'occur[s] in the midst of all major social revolutions of modern times.'⁷⁷ Although the 'British Revolution' and the utopianism which accompanied it grew from a different cultural soil and in different times, this is a belief which this work shares.

In terms of the application of a concept of utopianism in the study of political ideas, Beilharz's (1992) work is exceptional. Arguing that 'the idea of utopia... offers an extremely fruitful device through which to discuss the question of the good society', Beilharz uses utopia as an analytical concept to construct and discuss the utopia of 'Fabianism' from the prose fiction and social theory of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, H.G. Wells, G.B. Shaw and G.D.H. Cole.⁷⁸ Another approach to political movements and ideology whose conceptual framework shows some similarity to the one employed here, is that of Roger Griffin (1991; 1993).⁷⁹ At the centre of his influential bid to outline a new theory of generic fascism, Griffin employs a concept of utopianism—although mainly expressed in different terms—to

⁷⁶ Helmut Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working Class Culture 1919-1934* (New York, 1991), p.185.

⁷⁷ Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1991), pp.3-7.

⁷⁸ Beilharz, *Labour's Utopias*, p.xi; ch.3. Whether Cole should, despite his Guild Socialism and links to William Morris, be included in this analysis on the strength of his membership of the Fabian Society is perhaps questionable. Beilharz himself points out the radical ideological 'divide' between the Webbs and Cole (*ibid*, p.125).

describe the ideological core, political project and motivational force of fascism. Rejecting the reductive approaches which treat fascist ideology as being, at most, of secondary importance to the role of socio-economic structures, Griffin reasserts the importance of ideas, 'myths' and utopias in fascist politics. However, while admitting a debt of inspiration to Griffin's work, his definition of the fascist ideological 'minimum' as centred on national 'palingenesis' or 'rebirth' isolates fascism from wider politics in a way which is ultimately unhelpful. An overarching concept of utopianism can locate fascism within the wider debate about, and struggle over, the future of society. In the British case, while the BUF may be validly seen as a 'pathological' growth in the body politic, it emerged from the same culture, confronted the same questions, and recruited the same sort of people as the other parties.

Moving on to the wider literature dealing with political ideas, the question is whether there is something that a concept of utopianism can illuminate that is absent from the existing literature. By and large, writing on British twentieth century political history has ploughed its own furrow, largely free from the concerns about 'theory' which have loomed so large elsewhere, and can probably be loosely divided between historians of a 'liberal' empiricist approach and those whose assumptions veer more towards a Marxian or 'labour' history perspective. Irrespective of whether explicitly theorised or not, the latter approach is generally informed by an assumption that society, consciousness and political identity are structured primarily by social class. While this study does not abandon or ignore class, it views that paradigm as fundamentally flawed at its base. For example,

⁷⁹ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (1993; first published 1991).

analyses of fascism which have concentrated on its relationship to the capitalist economy have tended to neglect the utopian qualities of that form of politics.⁸⁰ In contrast, Mabel Berezin (1997) by admitting the importance of 'superstructure', or what I am calling 'culture', brings into focus the central utopian project of Italian Fascism 'to create new men and women, a new ethos, a new culture'.⁸¹

Friedrich Engels swiftly dismissed all epistemological uncertainty, writing that 'human action had solved the difficulty long before human ingenuity invented it. The proof of the pudding is in the eating'.⁸² However, as is now commonplace to note, the assumption that social being begets consciousness and, hence, men and women's worldviews and their 'interests', is fundamentally flawed.⁸³ Rather it is the case that culture—society's structure of meanings and values borne in language—precedes experience to construct its meaning. Furthermore, knowledge is only in small part constituted in the direct, experiential, way that Engels memorably alluded to. Much, probably most, of what we know is instead received vicariously, while myths are the unquestioned and often robust points of reference for so much human behaviour. This is not to assert that the pain and pleasure of lived experience does not itself feed back through human will and action as a dynamic factor to change culture. Neither is this an argument for a 'post-modernism' in which, epistemologically, 'anything goes'; merely an assertion that the relationship between culture and lived experience is not a simple, or unidirectional one.

Employed within this epistemological perspective I believe that the concept of utopianism outlined above will provide an alternative analytical framework

⁸⁰ Goodwin and Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, pp.235-237.

⁸¹ Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self* (Ithaca, 1997), p.3.

⁸² Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (Moscow, 1970), p.15.

though which to examine, and then locate, political rhetoric and ideas. Rather than approaching via the traditional categories which straight away prefigure and organise the field, the concept of utopianism may to some extent de-familiarise the material under discussion by, in the first instance, bringing 'left' and 'right' together as contending species of utopianism. This neutral basis does not require that ideas, desires and identities linked to social class be ignored, but it provides at least the possibility that the operation of other modes of identity might be seen, and that elements of commonality and promiscuity in political ideas may emerge.

In contrast to the manifest or latent structural assumptions of much of political history, Walter Greenleaf's (1983) monumental *The British Political Tradition* seeks to go beyond the 'usual misleading polarities of sundered right and left' by examining this 'tradition' as 'constituted by a dialectic between two opposing tendencies' of 'libertarianism' and 'collectivism'.⁸⁴ Similarly Rodney Barker (1978) uses attitudes to the state as the organising axis of his work.⁸⁵ However, while such alternative hermeneutics provide a suitable framework for a pure history of ideas they may be less able to link ideas to political struggle. Conceivably, the concept of utopianism may be able to function at a higher level of analysis to allow such insights to be located within a scheme incorporating a range of contending utopian projects rather than the single track of 'left' and 'right'.

Patrick Joyce's (1991) work on the culture of working people of the period before the Great War may indicate both the promise of what has been called the

⁸³ Barry Hindess, 'Interests' in political analysis', pp.112-131 in John Law (ed.), *Power, Action and Belief* (1986).

⁸⁴ Walter H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition* (1983), vol.1, pp.xii; 1, 13-14; vol.2, pp.2, 541.

⁸⁵ Rodney Barker, *Political Ideas in Modern Britain* (1978).

'new cultural history'⁸⁶ and of a focus on utopianism. Refreshingly, he writes that 'existing accounts of popular culture have had too much to say about labour and ideology, too little to say about poverty, and hardly anything to say about utopia.'⁸⁷ Although not explicitly theorising 'utopia' as a concept, Joyce employs it to imply a collective rather than individual vision, and uses it in the positive sense as a motivating goal and an object of active longing. Joyce describes his work as underwritten by a conclusion that 'class' as a category has 'become a dead weight' and a 'fixation', a source of 'teleological assumptions' driving out alternative narratives.⁸⁸ In looking at the constitution of identities and desires through culture Joyce demonstrates both the significance of identities other than class and the powerful thread of utopian desire in the culture of working people. In this way class is not discarded but an opportunity created for a richer and more complex reading of history. James Vernon's (1993) argument from a similar historiographical perspective for 'popular constitutionalism' as the 'master narrative of English politics' during the Nineteenth century, also points to the importance of 'a utopian future' which promised the restoration of the constitution of a mythic 'golden age' in this narrative.⁸⁹

Given that concepts of utopia have been so little used in historical studies the dichotomy between 'utopian' and 'practical' politics that this work seeks to question via the notion of the 'praxis of desire' is rarely interrogated. Generally, any politics described as 'utopian' have been portrayed as fantastic and impractical,

⁸⁶ See Lynn Hunt, *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1989).

⁸⁷ Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the question of class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p.341.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁸⁹ James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A study in English political culture, c.1815-1867* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.296-297, 319.

whilst, conversely, 'practical' politics have often been dismissed as 'reformism' or understood as narrowly pragmatic. Brian Harrison's (1987) study of inter-war feminists suggests the difficulty in separating utopian and practical politics. Dealing with Sylvia Pankhurst and Henry Harben as 'Two Utopians', Harrison defines 'Utopianism' as the quality of 'the impossibilist reformer.' However, the conflict between positive and negative understandings of utopianism is suggested when Harrison asks whether the 'utopian reformer' was any 'more idealistic than the realist reformer' and he comments that some people would 'detect more idealism in the successful pursuit of a modest reform than in the impossibilist crusade for the larger'.⁹⁰

In fact it turns out that for Harrison 'utopianism' is solely about praxis rather than ideals or visions. Pankhurst's 'utopianism' apparently resides in her lack of faith in parliamentary institutions rather than the unfeasibility of her 'dreams', which Harrison describes as modest. Likewise Harben's 'utopianism' seems to relate to his ego-centrism rather than his ideas, of which we learn relatively little. Furthermore, if utopianism is understood as being in the first instance related to ends, and only secondly concerned with means towards those ends, it is apparent that his 'prudent revolutionaries' were utopian themselves. Harrison writes of them as people who 'envisaged a new society very different from the old', whose 'prudence' was in the way in which they pursued this end.⁹¹ In a similar fashion, José Harris (1977; 1997) in her biography of William Beveridge uses 'Utopianism' in the negative sense while at the same time providing a powerfully insightful demonstration of the relationship

⁹⁰ Brian Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries: Portraits of British Feminists between the Wars* (Oxford, 1987), pp.209-241.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.221, 322.

between an ideal of the good society and its pursuit through the business of 'practical' politics.⁹²

Turning from a liberal to a socialist, a similar relationship between a utopian goal and praxis is brought to light but left equally unresolved in A.W. Wright's (1979) study of G.D.H. Cole. Towards the end of his life Cole explained that it was reading William Morris' *News From Nowhere* that made him a 'Utopian Socialist' and that he had remained so throughout his life. Wright comments:

It was Morris's insistence on socialism as fellowship which was to make Cole a permanent 'utopian', even when his immediate concerns were severely practical. This gave a certain dualism to his work, a sense of operating at two levels, reflected in a considerable flexibility coupled with a deep rigidity. As we shall see, often Cole wanted to make clear at which level he was operating, thus drawing a line between the negotiable and the non-negotiable. The lineage from Morris imposed this necessity.

Wright's use of the pejorative sense of 'utopianism' limits his ability to get the fullest grasp of Cole's thinking. For this reason he sees as a 'paradoxical formulation' Cole's pursuit of a 'scientific utopianism' and finds it of note that he could be 'practical and utopian'.⁹³ The case was rather that Cole was someone whose utopianism obeyed the reality principle, and despite the highest degree of flexibility in the area of praxis, his ultimate goal remained in sight.

These examples suggest both the need for a framework which can incorporate the motivating, catalysing force of utopias in historical analysis, while at the same time relating such ideal goals to political praxis. For a demonstration of

⁹² José Harris, *William Beveridge: a Biography* (Oxford, 1997; first published 1977), p.498.

the relationship of a visionary ideal to political praxis in the British context Dennis Hardy's (1991) study of the Garden City Association is exemplary.⁹⁴ While not theorising a conceptual framework, Hardy shows in detail the historical relationship between Ebenezer Howard's original utopia in *Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform* (1898)⁹⁵ and the struggle of the Association to actualise it in the years up to the New Towns Act in 1946. Paralleling the relationship between the utopian goal, the praxis of desire and the reality principle as theorised here, Hardy points to the Association's pragmatism, compromise and adaptation and notes that in the end it was 'not a garden city utopia that was to be enshrined in legislation'. But for all that, it was still the case that the history of the Association showed the 'motive force of high ideals'.⁹⁶ Elizabeth Durbin (1985) provides a similarly subtle account of the role that visions of 'a 'New Jerusalem', a society which was to be both more efficient and just' had in the development of Labour socialist economic thinking, debate and policy in the 1930s for thinkers generally spoken of as 'reformists'.⁹⁷

Moving in the direction of the often anonymous grass-roots activist, Gerhard Ditz's (1966) short article is notable in its stress on the role and utility of 'utopian symbols' in the Labour Party and trade unions, commenting that 'among the masses of working people they evoked a collective fervour even older than unionism'.⁹⁸ Perhaps surprisingly for an author writing of a political culture in which

⁹³ A.W. Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy* (Oxford, 1979), pp.14, 264-265, 268.

⁹⁴ Dennis Hardy, *From Garden Cities to New Towns: Campaigning for town and country planning, 1899-1946* (1991). The Garden City Association became the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association in 1909 and The Town and Country Planning Association in 1941.

⁹⁵ Ebenezer Howard, *Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform* (1898); revised as *Garden cities of tomorrow: being the second edition of "Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform"* (1902).

⁹⁶ Hardy, *From Garden Cities to New Towns*, pp.314, 294.

⁹⁷ Elizabeth Durbin, *New Jerusalems: The Labour Party and the Economics of Democratic Socialism* (1985), pp.5, 6, 279, 283.

⁹⁸ Gerhard W. Ditz, 'Utopian symbols in the history of the British Labour Party', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 17 (1966), pp.145-150.

'utopianism' was a particularly severe heresy, Nina Fishman (1995) has also recognised the role that 'utopian idealism' played as a 'beacon' guiding the 'unremitting daily mass work' of communists and how the combination of the 'two extremes of practicality and Utopian faith' was 'functional' for the CPGB.⁹⁹ David Baker's (1996) study of the fascist intellectual A.K. Chesterton makes a use of Griffin's theory of fascism and finds Chesterton imbued both with—in the phrase of J.P. Stern—'cultural despair' and with 'utopian optimism'.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, in the most significant engagement with the rank and file membership of the BUF to date, Thomas Linehan (1996) finds a 'quasi-religious and utopian dimension' among the elements explaining fascist activism.¹⁰¹

These honourable exceptions aside, the historiography of political activism is in many ways a picture without a centre: we know what people did, their attitudes to the state and so on but as to what motivated them, what were they aiming at, this is either ignored or assumed. An approach to history and politics premised on this concept of utopianism conceives of a different political subject. Instead of the figure primarily interpellated by social structures, whose 'interests' and political choices are prefigured by their 'class', this study posits the subject as an active, reflective, agent of their desire. In this way, this concept of utopianism allows the diversity and subjectivity of desire to be reinserted into the historical narrative.

⁹⁹ Nina Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions 1933-45* (Aldershot, 1995), pp.8, 336.

¹⁰⁰ David Baker, *Ideology of Obsession: A.K. Chesterton and British Fascism* (1996), p.9; Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (Los Angeles, 1974).

¹⁰¹ Thomas P. Linehan, *East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-West Essex 1933-40* (1996), pp.298, 304.

AN OVERVIEW

The principal focus of this study is on the content and rhetorical forms of the public utterances of the Labour Party, CPGB, FPSI, BUF and CW party. Although there were considerable differences between the ideas of these parties, at the same time they all commonly espoused and engaged with the discourses central to the shift of society from what Peter Wagner calls 'restricted liberal modernity' to 'organised modernity'.¹⁰² In view of this common core of ideas, and for the sake of convenience, the subjects of this thesis are referred to here collectively as the 'New Utopians'.

The public expressions of the New Utopianism are of interest as the face presented to the world to persuade, and thereby act on society and history. Although it is valid and useful to deconstruct a public speech or document, in order to trace the negotiations, assumptions, intentions and interests behind its content and rhetoric, this study takes as its point of reference the public face of the text rather than the circumstances of its emergence. Hence, in the chapters below appears what is substantially a portrait of utopia in political language isolated from the attempts to put them into practice, separate from the actions by party or state which—albeit seldom completely or finally—test the honesty of rhetoric and the practicality of ideas.¹⁰³

In Chapter 1, 'The Desire that Dare Not Speak Its Name' the significance of uses of the word 'utopia' in the political language of the period and the ways in which utopian desire found expression is examined. The role of utopia in the

¹⁰² Peter Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline* (1994).

¹⁰³ An insightful examination of the relationship between rhetoric and reality appears in John Strachey's *The Menace of Fascism* (1933).

mobilisation of activists is also briefly discussed. The body of this study (chapters 3-7) is predominantly thematic in nature and the chronological sequence of events is placed in the background. As a basis for this approach Chapter 2, 'The New Utopianism', provides a brief overview of the career of the parties and groups studied here within a chronological structure. The specific subjects of this study existed within a wider world of political activism and thought, and some of the myriad individuals, groups and parties—the minor prophets and projects of utopianism—are also briefly touched on to illustrate the wider nature of this utopian moment.

In Chapter 3, 'The Critical Gaze', the first and foundational aspect of the New Utopianism is discussed in terms of the how activists saw the world of Slump, tyranny and war. Chapters 4-6 then deal with different aspects of the New Utopia to come. Chapter 4, 'From the Blueprint', outlines the structures proposed as the basis of new economic and political institutions to replace those of inter-war Britain. Chapter 5, 'The New Man', considers the extent to which the functioning of the structures of the New Utopian blueprint were premised on the emergence of new types of human behaviour and personality, and examines how the citizen to embody these was to be made, especially in connection with the key institutional relationship between the individual and the state, and with regard to gender relations. In Chapter 6, 'Visions of the New Britain', glimpses are shown of the New Utopian plans for the urban and rural landscapes of the new society and the lives of their inhabitants: their work, their consumption, their recreation, leisure and 'cultural' existence.

Chapter 7, 'The Praxis of Desire', examines the way in which this utopia was to be sought in the context of a parliamentary democracy and a national tradition of continuity and non-violence. In Chapter 8, 'Demotic Utopianism and the British Revolution', the reality of seeking utopia in a mass democracy is examined and the New Utopianism is linked to political change in the war years. An alternative narrative of the 'Road to 1945' is constructed by viewing popular opinion during the war years through an optic based on a concept of 'demotic utopianism', whose validity rests on the belief—as expressed most intricately by Ernst Bloch—that utopian desire is widespread and also includes the 'little daydreams' and 'private utopias' of everyday life. In this way the relationship between the New Utopianism, the Beveridge Report and popular aspiration in the years leading to 1945 is re-examined.

Finally, in the Conclusion, 'Looking Backwards, Looking Forwards', the New Utopianism of the 1930s and 40s is placed in wider historical context.

Chapter 1

THE DESIRE THAT DARE NOT SPEAK ITS NAME¹

Meet the Utopians!
Daily Worker, 19 January 1935

C.B. Purdom declared that 'Utopia has to be established to save us from destruction'.² However, while those whom I am calling the New Utopians shared this conviction of the pressing need for a new social order, their utopianism was seldom so open, free and unembarrassed. Utopia was more often the desire that dare not speak its name.

The repression of utopia reflected its history as a term in political language. 'Utopia' was born in the act of criticising the status quo and could only exist as an alternative posited in relation, and reaction to, an existing social order. Those whose interests lay in maintaining the belief that life could be no different, naturally condemned all alternatives which challenged it as fanciful, impossible or at least impractical, in short 'utopian'. This was, as Lucian Hölscher has shown, a meaning which became embedded in the language by its currency in polemics at moments of social and political upheaval.³ During the inter-war period Harold Laski could write ironically 'no effort is more suspect in our time than the criticism of the existing rights of property. It is wrong because it is subversive. It is futile because it is

¹ This section contains material published as: Philip Coupland, 'Utopia' in British Political Culture - The Desire that Dare Not Speak Its Name', *Socialist History*, 15 (1999), pp.17-33.

² C.B. Purdom, *The New Order* (1941), p.5.

³ Lucian Hölscher, 'Utopie', *Utopian Studies*, 7 9 (1996), pp.1-65; pp.5,18-20, 27-30; *The Oxford English Dictionary*, XI (Oxford, 1933), p.486; *The Oxford English Dictionary* (second edition), XIX (Oxford, 1989), pp.370-1.

Utopian. It is erroneous because it runs counter to the eternal laws of human nature.⁴

The inverse of [e]utopia—the good society—is of course *dystopia*, a term whose first recorded use was in the eighteenth century.⁵ However, because utopia already signified the ‘good’ society which, since it ran against the laws of nature, was inevitably bad in practice, *dystopia* was a superfluous, and seldom used term, as its place in the chain of signification was already taken. The quotation of Nicolas Berdyaev’s words that ‘Les utopies sont réalisables’ by Aldous Huxley as the epigraph for his *Brave New World* operated within this discourse of utopia as *dystopia*.⁶ Similarly, anti-socialist polemics of the period by W. H. Chamberlain, Eugene Lyons—both appropriately enough choices of the Right Book Club—and F.A. Hayek ironically cast socialism, the Soviet Union and state planning, as ‘utopian’, so dismissing them and utopianism generally as *anything but* roads to the good society.⁷

The intention behind the debasement of utopia into a political insult was to deny the possibility of change and freeze the institutions of society in a perpetual

⁴ Harold J. Laski, *A Grammar of Politics* (1967; (first published 1925), pp.215-216.

⁵ ‘Dystopia’ was used in English in the modern sense in 1782 and the first use recorded of the related term ‘dystopians’ is by J.S. Mill in 1868. However, ‘Dystopia’ was not included in the 1933 edition of the *OED* and first emerged in the *Supplement* of 1972 (Patricia Köster, ‘Dystopia: An Eighteenth Century Appearance’, *Notes and Queries*, 30 (new series) 1 (February 1983), pp.65-6; *OED* (second edition), V (Oxford, 1989), p.13. ‘Cacotopia’—used by Jeremy Bentham in 1818 to communicate the same meaning—also failed to catch on (*OED* (second edition), II (Oxford, 1989), p.756).

⁶ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World: A Novel* (Harmondsworth, 1955; first published 1932), p.5. Ironically, the synonym for *dystopia* introduced into the language by Aldous Huxley was, on occasion, preferred as the name of the object of desire. Two years after the publication of *Brave New World* the editor of *The New Clarion* could write, without irony, of himself and his colleagues as ‘the strange people who are to make the brave new world’ and Leah L’Estranege Malone, writing in wartime under the heading ‘Forward to a Brave New World’ declared that ‘when victory is won we must build our brave new world.’ (*The New Clarion*, 3 April 1934; Leah L’Estranege Malone, ‘Forward to a Brave New World’, *Labour Woman*, 31 1 (January 1943), p.5).

present. As Stafford Cripps pointed out, the 'argument' that socialism was 'Utopian' was 'the stock in trade of those who resist change and who fear its consequences to themselves. Every advance that has been made by civilisation has been announced as ridiculous and Utopian at some time in our history. The idea of flight was ridiculed until men flew.'⁸ It was as if by breaking the link between the signifier and the signified that the *concept* of an alternative future, and so its *function*, could be eliminated from political culture. Without utopia imagination, desire and social critique would have no space into which they might be projected. Without the vision of an alternative future, there would be no point of reference or motivating goal for political praxis.

The legitimacy of utopia suffered another blow by fulfilling a similar function in exchanges between competing challengers to the established order. Each party claimed the sole title to truth and hence that only its prescription could create a better world. Fascist rhetoric asserted that 'International socialism' 'promises the nation a Socialist Utopia, but serves only the interests of international finance' whereas 'National Socialism' 'promises the nation no Utopia, but the progressive rising of living standards'.⁹ *The Daily Worker* declared that *Britain Without Capitalists* would make clear that the 'solutions' of "The Next Five Years," of the Labour Party with its "public corporations," are Utopian... while the Communists' depiction 'of a new and glorious Britain and... the creation of an entirely new type of man' was declared elsewhere to be 'not a Utopian enquiry but

⁷ William Henry Chamberlin, *A False Utopia: Collectivism in Theory and Practice* (1937); Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (1938); F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944). See also Fred E. Beal, *Word From Nowhere: the Story of a Fugitive from Two Worlds* (1938).

⁸ Stafford Cripps, *The Struggle for Peace* (1936), p.78.

⁹ BUF, *British Union and the Transport Workers* (no place, undated; c.1936), p.1.

a practical survey'.¹⁰ Laski admitted, with Oscar Wilde, that 'it is a poor map on which one's eye does not see Utopia'.¹¹ But at the same time Labour always sought to locate itself in a tradition of socialism which was definitively British; one centred on practice rather than guided by theory, empirical not abstract, orientated towards 'practical' immediate goals rather than 'pie in the sky' in the future. Hugh Dalton distanced himself from utopianism with faint praise, commenting that while 'an elaborate theoretical study of an ideal society' was 'stimulating', it was a 'different kind of exercise' from 'practical politics'. It was 'better to decide the direction of advance than to debate the details of Utopia.'¹²

Among communists, 'utopian meaning something idealistic and unrealisable', was a favourite term of abuse.¹³ Utopianism was prohibited despite, as Berki has explained, the future communist society being the only thing that made Marxist thought logical and Communist praxis comprehensible. Furthermore, this prohibition ignored the fact that Marx's 'vision' of communist society preceded his historical and sociological 'insight' as the point of reference for his critique of capitalism. The claim of Marxism to an epistemological status akin to the natural sciences precluded imaginative speculation about that which was not yet: communism. So, communism, while 'the innermost essence or hub of Marx's thought', at the same time 'either had no content' or a content "beyond words".¹⁴

¹⁰ A Group of Economists, Scientists & Technicians, *Britain Without Capitalists: A Study of What Industry in a Soviet Britain Could Achieve* (1936); *The Daily Worker*, 25 September 1936; *Left Review*, 2 12 (September 1936).

¹¹ Oscar Wilde, *Plays, Prose Writings and Poems* (1930), p.270; Harold J. Laski, 'Choosing the Planners', pp.101-127 in G.D.H. Cole et al., *Plan for Britain: A Collection of Essays prepared for the Fabian Society* (1943), p.125.

¹² Hugh Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain* (1935), p.27.

¹³ *Challenge*, February 1937.

¹⁴ Berki, *Insight and Vision*, pp.16-22. On Marxism and utopianism see also Ollman, 'Marx's Vision of Communism'; Hölscher, 'Utopie', pp.27-30; Steven Lukes, 'Marxism and Utopianism',

The consequence of this prohibition on imagining the future was the deeply entrenched antinomy between 'Science (good)' and 'Utopianism (bad)' established by Marx and Engels which, as E.P. Thompson suggests, meant that 'at any point after 1850 Scientific Socialism had no more need for Utopias (and doctrinal authority for suspecting them). Speculation as to the society of the future was repressed, and displaced by attention to strategy.'¹⁵

However, if visions of a better society are central to politics, and if utopia is an archetypal vehicle of desire in Western culture then we should expect that utopianism, like the Freudian Eros, would seek a path through repression to find expression.

The will-to-utopia never rested in its attempts to subvert this repression in language and find expression in thought and practice. The circumstances of the time made the need for utopia pressing. Symbolic of this, *The New Statesman and Nation* recorded in late 1931 that 'the old comparatively stable world seems suddenly to have collapsed' and that measures which could 'no longer be treated as the fantasies of Utopia-mongers' were 'demanded by common sense.'¹⁶ Concluding his wartime blueprint, Aneurin Bevan admitted that it might appear to be 'one of those Utopias which we can sit down and easily draft'. But the demands of the time legitimated utopia: 'the framework of the past had been broken, and a new frame had to be'.¹⁷ The often heard admission that a proposal 'sounded

pp.153-167 in Peter Alexander and Roger Gill (eds.), *Utopias* (1984); Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism*; Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, ch.2.

¹⁵ E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1977), pp.787-788.

¹⁶ 'What is really Happening?' *The New Statesman and Nation*, 2 (3 October 1931), p.396.

¹⁷ Aneurin Bevan, 'Plan for Work', pp.34-52 in Cole, G.D.H. et al, *Plan for Britain: A Collection of Essays prepared for the Fabian Society* (1943), pp.46-47.

extremely Utopian' but was nevertheless 'the only real hope for the world' was the expression of the will-to-utopia rejecting its repression.¹⁸

Utopia was functional not only in moments of crisis but central to human striving to transcend the limitations of the present, and to expand continually the envelope of the possible. Barbara Wootton criticised socialists whose 'change-the-system attitude' rejected partial reform as 'an example ... of the dangerous variety of utopianism' and 'pure fantasy'. However, Wootton then went on to make clear that the 'label "utopian"' was 'not necessarily pejorative'. She continued:

There are in fact two forms of utopianism. ... The admirable and useful form is the utopianism of those who advocate policies which appear to the promoters to be themselves desirable, but unattainable so long as other people do not share their opinion. ... But the fact that other people do not already agree with an opinion is the silliest reason for keeping quiet about it. If your view is right, how can others accept it, if they are not to hear of it? If it is wrong, how can you see what is wrong with it, if they never have a chance to tell you ... it is the plain lesson of experience that desirable reforms begin as paradoxes and end as common places. ... If the charge of utopianism is used to inhibit the expression of opinions that are still at the ridiculous stage, they will all, sensible and silly alike, remain permanently at that stage.¹⁹

In like vein Leonard Woolf believed that 'the term utopia is commonly used in two different ways'. The first usage being when 'we speak of a dream or a policy being utopian in the sense that it contains a purpose or is based on a hope or ideal which is incapable of fulfilment'; the second usage was 'in the sense of "unreal" as

¹⁸ Julian Huxley, *Democracy Marches* (1941), p.125.

opposed to “reality” because it aimed at an unattained ideal or objective. Woolf recognised that ‘all policies, even of the most realist statesmen aim at unattained ideals or objectives’.²⁰

The unexplored implications of Wootton and Woolf’s distinction between the two forms of utopianism was that the difference between the ‘admirable’, ‘useful’ and ‘real’ utopianism and the ‘unreal’, ‘dangerous’ and ‘fantas[ti]c’ utopianism was inherently subjective. Seldom, if ever, did political utopianism propose things which were beyond the belief of all but the insane. There could be no meaningful absolute distinction of the type suggested by Wootton and Woolf, utopia could only exist as a space of democratic and equal access. Utopianism, while being no closer to holding a legitimate place in the political lexicon was, as Wootton and Woolf’s words made clear, functionally essential, whatever name it might be given.

Political language evinced the ambivalence contingent in the coexistence of both the debased concept of utopianism and the fact that without the true substance of utopia as a transcendent goal, the whole existence of parties was pointless. G.D.H. Cole suggested that the Labour Movement was ‘Utopian, in that it has made its appeal by presenting a vision of the superior merits of a socialist society.’²¹ Later he stressed the need for socialists planning post-war ‘reconstruction’ ‘to imagine an ideal of the new life we are to build up’.²² A reading of Paul Bloomfield’s history of utopian writing prompted another socialist to comment that ‘the making of Utopia is man’s attempt to recreate his present life to suit his own

¹⁹ Barbara Wootton, ‘A plague on all your isms’, *The Political Quarterly*, 13 (1942), pp.44-56.

²⁰ Leonard Woolf, ‘Utopia and Reality’, *The Political Quarterly*, 11 (1940), pp.167-182.

²¹ G.D.H. Cole, *The Intelligent Man’s Guide Through World Chaos* (1933), p.608.

²² *Idem.*, *Great Britain in the Post-War World* (1942), p.9.

human purpose. Utopia is a vision of his work accomplished' and that 'every Socialist has his pet Utopia'.²³ Discussing the apparent dichotomy between 'utopian' and 'practical' politics Fred Henderson suggested that the latter implied having 'no ideal beyond grubbing along in the midst of the muddle'. Henderson asserted that 'until we become idealists and Utopians we cannot be effective or practical people', 'where there is no vision the people perish.'²⁴ Common Wealth was urgent in its denials of 'utopianism' and listed among the 'pitfalls for the unwary': 'Utopianism. Whatever the angle of approach we should never infer that it is possible to make the world perfect overnight. We should never allow people to suppose that CW is some sort of clever trick which is going to produce for them an easy Paradise dropping automatically into their laps.' However, it was clear that CW was deeply utopian, proposing a radical alternative to contemporary capitalism, as laid out in Richard Acland's *What It Will Be Like In the New Britain*. Acland's warning not to 'expect Utopia in 1950, or even 1975' with its sub-text of the possibility of the good society, is an eloquent expression of the coexistence of the will to utopia and the tactical imperatives of anti-utopia.²⁵

Ethel Mannin despaired that in wartime Britain it seemed that 'Utopia is to be translated into terms of the Beveridge Report and Mr. Churchill's uninspired programme' and offered instead *Bread and Roses: An Utopian Survey and Blue Print*.²⁶ Although this was the only significant text to call itself utopian, there was no lack of what were utopian blueprints and 'word pictures' by any other name. In

²³ Paul Bloomfield, *Imaginary Worlds or the Evolution of Utopia* (1932); 'Nightmares and Utopias', *The New Clarion*, 18 March 1933.

²⁴ Fred Henderson, *The Case For Socialism* (undated; c.1933; first published 1911), p.151.

²⁵ CW, *Common Wealth and the New Year* (1944) p.79; Richard Acland, *What It Will Be Like in the New Britain* (1942); *idem.*, *Questions and Answers from Common Wealth Meetings* (1944), p.79.

addition to Acland's vision of the 'New Britain', Emanuel Shinwell described what he would like to see in the post-war period. Some years earlier George Lansbury had evoked the vision of the England he desired, Gilbert Mitchison imagined the conduct of a future worker's government and ILP leader James Maxton wrote of the 'new world' which he would create if he were made dictator.²⁷ Councillor James Bugby of Northampton described 'Utopia' for Primrose Hill Men's Fireside: 'No rents, rates or taxes', 'No unemployment', 'No more war', 'A three hour working day', 'Great national medical services', 'Wider streets, 'Electric buses', 'No need for money'.²⁸ In a particularly vivid example, Mercer claimed that 'the creation of a Co-operative Commonwealth is no longer a utopian dream' and could see 'the sunlit towers and minarets of the Co-operative Commonwealth of Great Britain... clearly visible on the horizon of Time.'²⁹

More prosaically, Clement Attlee, while making clear that he was 'not going to try to picture a Utopia', in sketching the 'Co-operative Commonwealth' inevitably had to imagine elements of a society which did not yet exist and whose 'practicality' rested on arguments and assumptions which were necessarily subjective and contestable. Sketching out Labour's plans for new homes, Attlee commented that 'all this may sound utopian, but if we realise that there are men ... out of work, and being paid by the State for doing nothing, it begins to sound more reasonable.'³⁰ Even the most mundane pamphlet, inasmuch as it was orientated towards objects which were not yet in existence, employed the function of utopia. As

²⁶ Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p.8.

²⁷ Emanuel Shinwell, *The Britain I Want* (1943), see also *idem.*, *When The Men Come Home* (1944); George Lansbury, *My England* (1934); James Maxton, *If I Were Dictator* (1935).

²⁸ *Northampton Chronicle and Echo*, 29 March 1934.

²⁹ T.W. Mercer, *Towards the Co-operative Commonwealth* (Manchester, 1936), pp.201, 206-207.

³⁰ C.R. Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective* (1937), pp.137, 163-164

Labour contended in relation to its proposals for the Empire: 'there may be those who think that such a policy and programme is unwise or Utopian. The Labour Party believes it to be wise and practicable.'³¹

While excised in name from Communist discourse, at the same time the practices of utopianism suffused the culture of the party. An invitation in the *Daily Worker* to 'meet the utopians!' at a dance at St. George's Town Hall, Cable Street was more revelatory than ironic.³² Utopia however much it was needed and desired could not be spoken of directly. One path through repression was via word games. The reviewer of John Langdon-Davies' *A Short History of the Future* signalled his entry into a controversial area, commenting that the book's 'prophecies concerning the future Communist Society, *although belonging to the realm of speculation, will prove most popular*'. Elsewhere the same volume was exonerated from 'utopianism' as 'prophecy inspired not by vain wish dreams but by direct contact with the stage of action.'³³ The reviewer of J.D. Bernal's *The Social Function of Science*, noted that its author wrote of 'what might be' and, perhaps sensing that he was straying into forbidden territory, wrote that Bernal 'while repudiating Utopian speculation, indicates some of the ways in which science could already be employed to transform the life of man and the satisfaction of his needs.'³⁴ Could 'Utopian' and 'scientific' speculation be so divided and, if so, how? Bernal considered his 'forecast' to be 'in no sense Utopian' because it 'does not suggest any changes which we cannot see a way to realize'. But utopians like Wells, let alone everyone

³¹ Labour Party, *The Colonial Empire* (1933), p.5.

³² *Daily Worker*, 19 January 1935.

³³ John Langdon-Davies, *A Short History of the Future* (1936); 'Things to Come', *Challenge* January 1937 (my emphasis); *Left Review*, 2 15 (December 1936), p.840.

³⁴ Allen Hutt, 'Science and Society', *The Labour Monthly*, 21 5 (May 1939), pp.319-320.

that the CPGB labelled as utopian, seldom consciously introduced the impossible into their blueprints for the future.³⁵

Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, Social-Democratic Sweden and Labour New Zealand served for fascists and democratic socialists as exemplars and sites for the visions of the utopian imagination to be projected upon.³⁶ Undoubtedly the major path through repression for communist utopianism was via the projection of desire onto a space which, unlike the nowhere of utopian imagination was in the concrete terrestrial present and so a legitimate repository of desire.³⁷ John Strachey wrote of the circumstances of this innovation:

Marx derived the basic principles of socialism... from his critique of capitalism. But he would have forfeited his right to be called a scientist, and become a mere spinner of fancies, if he had claimed to be able to describe the society of the future in any greater detail than this. And if we are now able to fill in a certain amount of that detail, that is only because a socialist society... is now arising in the Soviet Union.

In 1917, 'four centuries and one year after the publication of Thomas More's book' Strachey wrote, the dream and the circumstances for its realisation came together when the 'germ' of socialism 'in More's *Utopia*' came 'to its full maturity in the theory and practice of Lenin'. Strachey noted the 'remarkable passages in the *Utopia*' which anticipated 'practices which are actually developing in the Soviet

³⁵ J.D. Bernal, *The Social Function of Science* (1939), p.346; Christopher Caudwell, 'H.G. Wells: A Study in Utopianism', in *Studies in a Dying Culture* (1938), pp.73-72.

³⁶ A.J. Williams, *Labour and Russia: the attitude of the Labour Party to the USSR, 1924-1934* (Manchester, 1989).

³⁷ On 'Western Traditions of Utopia-Seeking' see Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba 1928-1978* (New York, 1981).

Union to-day'.³⁸ The visions of 'Sir Thomas More in his *Golden Book*, Campanella in his *City of the Sun*, and many a one after that [who] had so dreamed of the future' were being realised.³⁹ All those who had dismissed socialism as 'a Utopian dream' and declared capitalism to be an 'irreplaceable "natural order"' were confronted by the 'fact' of the Soviet Union. This was 'by far the most important fact of our epoch.'⁴⁰

By this circuitous path the utopian imagination could escape from its suppression to embody its longing in words. After 1917 the central narrative of Communist utopianism was, as the *Daily Worker* put it, that the 'Soviet Union Shows the Way to a Worker's Britain'.⁴¹ Seemingly constructed from real matter, photos, statistics, government reports and so on, imagination constructed a communist utopia called the USSR which could then be spoken of without being doctrinally 'utopian'. For those able and willing to believe, the Soviet Union could be 'a dream come true'.⁴² Apart from visions forged on the spot of a 'new life so happy and splendid', Britain had its own body of writing constructing the USSR as utopia—the 'new civilisation' of the Webbs, Pat Sloan's Russia where 'democracy' was made 'ever more real', Hewlett Johnson's vision of the 'Socialist Sixth of the World': 'not a Utopian world' but nonetheless one imbued with the possibility of 'a nobler and more enduring goodness and beauty'.⁴³ The USSR was the 'Land Where

³⁸ John Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism* (1936), pp.370,275-8; see also Hymie Lee, 'Our Propaganda', *Discussion*, 2 7 (December 1937), pp.5-6; Christopher Caudwell, *Illusion and Reality: A Study of the Sources of Poetry* (1973; first published 1937), p.90.

³⁹ Page-Amot, R. 'Twenty Years of Soviet Power', *Labour Monthly*, 19 11 (November 1937) pp.665-669.

⁴⁰ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.60.

⁴¹ *Daily Worker*, 22 October 1931.

⁴² *Our Country* (Moscow, 1937), p.7.

⁴³ Pat Sloan, *Soviet Democracy* (1937), p.288; Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* (1935); Hewlett Johnson, *The Socialist Sixth of the World* (1941; first published 1939), p.384.

Dreams Come True' and the CPGB's programme for much of the period declared its aim as being 'For Soviet Britain'.⁴⁴

CPGB leader Harry Pollitt, having described his utopia of 'fraternity and love', wrote of its inspirational power:

This is the dream and the aim which all pioneers of our Labour movement have struggled to make real. This is the "gleam" which they have tirelessly followed, which has inspired them to go to the street corners and market-places to speak to a mere handful, has given them eloquence and burning fire to talk to their mates in the workshops and homes, and the certainty which has enabled them to endure crushing poverty and victimisation and made persecution easier to bear...

For Pollitt, self-transcendence in pursuit of 'the "gleam"' of utopia coexisted with a faith in its final achievement: 'It may all seem a dream to-day when the toiling millions are being driven to make war for profit... but to-morrow will come, and this dream will be translated into a living reality and Britain will in truth become a green and pleasant land for its people to live in.'⁴⁵

We should not infer from their general silence that the motivations of rank and file activists were necessarily more mundane. Every weekend between 1933 and 1940 Jeffrey Gent cycled five miles from his home to the nearest town to tout his party's papers to a public whose indifference never wavered.⁴⁶ Although Gent was a blackshirt he differed only in his allegiance from other activists who doggedly

⁴⁴ *Challenge*, August 1936; CPGB, *For Soviet Britain: The Programme of the Communist Party adopted at the XIII Congress February 2nd 1935* (1935).

⁴⁵ Harry Pollitt, *Serving My Time: An Apprenticeship to Politics* (1940), pp.291-292.

⁴⁶ Philip M. Coupland, 'The Blackshirts of Wellingborough', *Northamptonshire Local History News*, 4 8 (Autumn 1999), pp.9-13.

carried on the business of party politics and appeared to receive little which outsiders would recognise as a 'reward' for their efforts. The argument of utopianism as an analytic approach is that the desire for a new and better life, born of alienation, may have a role in explaining this dedication. May Worley, explaining why she joined the Labour Party, wrote that she was 'never happier than when doing my little bit to bring about the realisation of our dreams'.⁴⁷ M. Purves stressed the place that the goal of the party had taken in her life: 'when I joined the Labour Party I ceased to be a bit of driftwood, for I found that I had something to work for and something to live for.'⁴⁸ Similarly, a former East End fascist recalled the 'feeling that you could help to build a 'Greater Britain'... That you could achieve it. You just had a vision...'⁴⁹ Dorset farmer, Robert Saunders, when asked what he was 'really doing this for' referred his correspondent to a passage of Mosley's *The Alternative*. Before him lay the 'duty... to build a world worthy of the new genius of man's mind', 'to evoke from the womb of the future a race of men fit to live in that new age', to 'deliberately accelerate evolution'.⁵⁰

Although religious faith, being directed to objects outside time and space, might be a significantly anti-utopian force, it also demands that the believer be reborn and seek the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. Cripps stressed that 'we are not primarily concerned... for an ideal world to come hereafter. We are concerned with the creation, out of the present drab unhappiness, of a new and joyous life for the

⁴⁷ May Worley 'Why I joined the Labour Party', *Labour Woman*, 24 8 (August 1936), p.120.

⁴⁸ M. Purves 'Why I joined the Labour Party', *Labour Woman*, 24 8 (August 1936), p.120.

⁴⁹ Taped interview with 'KM' Limehouse BUF member, in Linehan, *East London For Mosley*, p.488.

⁵⁰ Letter from Robert Saunders to Rafe Cotton, 1 Jan. 1948 in Robert Saunders, *A Tiller of Several Soils* (unpublished typescript 1987), unpaginated document; Oswald Mosley, *The Alternative* (Ramsbury, 1947), pp.309-314.

people in "our green and pleasant land"; 'the kingdom of Heaven here on earth'.⁵¹ This was a view shared by many others. For example, Brian Donovan of the BUF believed that the fascist 'ten point leaflet' contained 'all that is necessary to create an ideal society,' a 'religious and Christian conception of the state.'⁵² Orwell explored the function of faith in one of his novels, writing that even when the grounds for belief had gone there was still 'some inner part of the soul that does not change. Faith vanishes, but the need for faith remains the same as before'. Orwell's clergyman's daughter could neither find satisfaction in 'visions of glittering Utopias' nor recover her faith and instead lost herself in activity.⁵³ Nonetheless, the imperatives which sustain religious belief despite modernity could just as readily find other outcomes. As Annie Kriegel writes: 'a world distracted by the death of God... can quickly reconstitute other opiates' such that the 'religious spirit dons the cast-off clothing of the rationalist'.⁵⁴

Raphael Samuel recalled that 1940s Communism had 'affinities' to 'a crusading order,' 'waging temporal warfare for the sake of a spiritual end'. Communism was "the way the truth and the life', in place of fear and doubt... it offered glowing certainty... It was a cause to which people dedicated their lives, 'a faith' which 'gave strength to defy... tormentors.' 'Joining the Party was experienced as a momentous event, equivalent in its intensity... to taking a decision for Christ, ... new recruits... were those who had 'seen the light.'⁵⁵ The young blackshirt Olive Hawks also believed that 'the first spiritual instinct of self sacrifice' satisfied in the

⁵¹ Stafford Cripps, *Towards Christian Democracy* (1945.), pp.11,16.

⁵² *Blackshirt*, July, August 1938.

⁵³ George Orwell, *A Clergyman's Daughter* (Harmondsworth, 1964; first published 1935), pp.258-63.

⁵⁴ Annie Kriegel, *The French Communists: Profile of a People* (Chicago, 1972), p.139.

'illusion of full life and worthy death' in wartime, was experienced in peace time by 'members of Fascist, Communist and Social Credit and other minority organisations who saw their "causes" as crusades.'⁵⁶ The religious imperative could be satisfied by secular objects. 'Christopher Caudwell'—Christopher St. John-Sprigg—was afflicted with a sense of the ultimate meaninglessness of life and disgust at the world around him. Assailed by the 'so-frequent wish to let go all' Caudwell recognised that in a Godless and silent cosmos, human life ended in the 'long silence of the Arctic dark'. However, the age of reason, while erasing one meta-narrative, and casting down its transcendent signifier, did not leave the idol's plinth empty: 'And that the world of science brings/ Its final end about:/ And that mankind are their own kings;/ And call that Where-? The God I seek' Caudwell wrote. Humanity could be god and progress towards utopia, life's purpose and meaning.⁵⁷

Through their actions, however mundane, activists could symbolically engage with utopia. Utopia did not merely justify the round of meetings, canvassing and paper selling but, as Kriegel has written, served to 'sanctify' 'the most prosaic acts'.⁵⁸ Fishman, in her study of communism and trades unionism finds that it was the 'Utopian faith' that 'Life Itself' was somehow leading dialectically towards the good society which led to 'the conviction that mundane, practical and compromising activity would ultimately lead to a socialist revolution'.⁵⁹ Utopia offered a new path to tread, a new orientation and purpose for existence. Being on the road to utopia meant that the activist had begun to resist alienation. The

⁵⁵ Raphael Samuel, 'The Lost World of British Communism', *New Left Review*, 154 (November-December 1985) pp.3-53; 36-7, 43.

⁵⁶ Olive Hawks, *Time is My Debtor* (undated; post-war), pp.110-111.

⁵⁷ Caudwell, *Scenes and Actions*, pp.7-8, 16, 18, 21, 40-41.

⁵⁸ Kriegel, *The French Communists*, p.138.

⁵⁹ Nina Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions 1933-45*, p.336.

functional importance of the *form* of utopia was underlined by the extent to which it could act as an 'empty' but still powerful signifier. A reviewer of a socialist utopia commented that 'the trouble is that no one really knows what is going to follow the Social Revolution' which begged the question of why men and women would give so much for the unknown.⁶⁰ While many activists no doubt projected their own personal utopia into this blank space, utopia may also have been, in the fashion of its archetypal symbol, the rising sun, or like the face of God, something too bright for mortal eyes; too marvellous for human imagining; something unknowable, but still good and worthy of effort.



Utopia was thus a vital, critical, motivational and rhetorical resource in the politics of the time. Whilst being repressed in name by political expediency, it was simultaneously impelled by alienation and desire to seek expression. At certain moments in history, utopianism can be seen clearly in the centre of the political terrain with the naked eye; on other occasions and in different circumstances, a more specialised lens may be required to reveal it. In the case of the politics of the period, the closer to the margins the eye tracks, the more obvious are the signs but the analytical concept employed here also brings to light the presence of utopianism at the centre.

⁶⁰ *Tribune*, 12 March 1937.

Chapter 2

THE NEW UTOPIANISM

Even the stolid and wooden headed are beginning to show interest in what they once dismissed as the dreams of idealists, the Utopian nonsense of an impossible Millennium. It is perhaps a case of "the devil when he is ill."

'Effendi', *The World To-Morrow: Being the Vision of a Common Man*¹

The glad new world may take different shape in different minds, but all the Parties offer it—the biggest carrot ever grown, but if it gets the donkey to do a certain thing the victors can take care of the future: and themselves.

'What Sort of an Election?', *The Labour Organiser*, March 1944.²

Utopia must necessarily be distanced from the present by either space or time, rhetorically located at a journey's end or in the sunrise of a new day.³ Inasmuch as human desire has pursued terrestrial and temporal objects of desire, the narrative which organises and orientates meaning and praxis in culture has been directed towards a vision of a possible future. However, while the direction of the journey has remained the same, the specific quality of the good place and the means by which it is to be reached reflect the beliefs, desires and hopes of a specific historical moment. When the thread of utopianism is drawn out from a range of contemporary documents, the problems and possibilities, hopes and desires of a time are revealed. The history of the peoples of the British Isles during the modern period might be read as a succession of utopias, each eloquent of the assumptions and aspirations of the time.

Concerning the later part of this rich history, that is the utopianism of the nineteenth century and the period before the Great War, Vernon, building on the

¹ (Trowbridge, undated; c.1934), p.5.

² 24, pp.9-10.

work of Christopher Hill and others, has argued that the 'master narrative of English politics' in the Nineteenth century was centred on the myth of a 'lost... golden age' when all Englishmen were citizens under a just constitution and the 'brilliant utopian future' when their lost rights would be restored.⁴ With regard to the quality of this utopianism Joyce has shown the centrality of the ideal of an inclusive, harmonious organic society and the recovery of the lost rights of the 'freeborn Englishman' in the political language of not only radicals and liberals but also of the Social Democratic Federation and the ILP.⁵

In contrast to the New Utopianism, this was a utopianism which was predominately moral in its critique and was powerfully opposed to the interventionist state.⁶ Of course, this utopia was not dominant to the exclusion of all else. Whilst the English utopian tradition which boasted William Morris and Robert Blatchford as its prophets and took its inspiration from an idealised vision of 'Merrie England' had its flowering, the closing years of the old Century also brought forth Fabians and New Liberals.⁷ In his *A Modern Utopia* (1905) H.G. Wells placed himself in the line of Plato and Bacon rather than that of Rousseau or Morris and anticipated the shape of things to come with his preference for a technocratic elite over democracy, state planning over laissez faire, and his faith in science rather than in nature.⁸

³ See Appendix 1.

⁴ Vernon, *Politics and the People*, pp.318-319, 328; Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: studies in interpretation of the English revolution* (1958), pp.50-122.

⁵ Joyce, *Visions of the People*, chs.2-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Beilharz, *Labour's Utopias*, ch.3; Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, *The First Fabians* (1979), ch.21; Michael Bentley, *The climax of Liberal Politics: British Liberalism in Theory and Practice 1868-1918* (1987), ch.5.

⁸ H.G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* (undated; first published 1905).

The effect of the years of the Great War and the inglorious peacetime period which followed, was to engender an increasingly searching examination of the assumptions and institutions which Wells had earlier criticised. The world economic crisis of the early 1930s, and the poverty, tyranny and war that followed it added weight to this critique which finally reached its critical mass in the war years. At the same time the increasingly common belief was that, for the first time in human history, the scientific and productive resources of society had advanced such that, if they were managed by the state, the economics of scarcity need no longer apply. Suggestively, Gerald Abrahams saw 'the world' equipped with 'a large part of the technical equipment that is required in order to run a Utopia'.⁹ From the conjuncture of necessity and possibility came the core rhetoric that society suffered poverty, and so dictatorship and war, while a life of peace and plenty was immanent in the decaying body of the old order.

With democracy no longer the untarnished ideal it had once appeared, the natural question of the age seemed to be to ask, as the publishers Methuen did, what politicians and thinkers would do if they 'were Dictator'.¹⁰ The politics of desire changed in quality; communitarian experiments and utopian novels gave place to planning and the state; dreaming gave way to the age of the blueprint.¹¹ While

⁹ Gerald Abrahams, *The World Turns Left* (undated; c.1943), p.8.

¹⁰ Vernon O. Bartlett, *If I Were Dictator* (1935); St. John G. Ervine, *If I Were Dictator* (1934); J.S. Huxley, *If I Were Dictator* (1934); C.E.M. Joad, *The Dictator Resigns* (1936); James Maxton, *If I Were Dictator* (1935); E.J.M.D. Plunkett, *If I Were Dictator: The pronouncements of the Grand Macaroni* (1934); Lord Raglan, *If I Were Dictator* (1935); Hugh Richard L. Sheppard, *If I Were Dictator* (1935). See also Leatham, J. *If I Were Dictator: Ten Commandments of Social Reconstruction* (Turriff, 1930); Elsie Kay Gresswell, *When Yvonne Was Dictator* (1935).

¹¹ As Dennis Hardy has noted, the communitarian and literary traditions of utopianism became marginal in the early decades of the Twentieth century with the rise of Labour as a mass movement and its engagement with parliamentary politics (Hardy, *Utopian England*). Rare examples of work in the communitarian tradition include S.S. Dyson's proposals for farm colonies as a solution for the depression (*The Melting Pot* (Dover, 1932) and J.W. Scott's proposals for 'Homecrofting groups' as the basis for a new society (*Self-Subsistence for the Unemployed* (1935).

older objects of utopian desire were not altogether displaced, a utopianism closer to that of Wells than of Morris came to prominence in the 1930s and, in wartime, dominance, in the national political culture.

1931-39

The first phase of the 1929-45 period presents a rare case of a historical 'period' with a clear beginning and end; opening with the most serious economic depression of the century, closing in world war.¹² The inability of the Labour administration elected in 1929 to respond effectively to the first of these crises caused its collapse and an election in November 1931 which almost wiped out Labour as a parliamentary force and inaugurated a period of Conservative hegemony which lasted until the 1945 election.

THE NEW UTOPIANS

The early 1930s saw an extraordinary proliferation of blueprints from all quarters. *The New Statesman and Nation* commented 'we have counted a hundred...

Echoes of the communitarian tradition can also be found in the discourse of the New Utopians. One socialist, taking inspiration from Zionist experiments in Palestine hoped for 'experimental Socialist communities' in Britain to thereby 'prove by the success of our efforts that Socialism is practical' (N. Whine, 'Models for Socialism', *New Clarion*, 30 December 1933). Similarly, exclusive activities—in particular the camps of socialists and fascists—were not infrequently seized upon as anticipations of the society to come. The BUF's summer camps were 'on a small scale one side of National Socialism in being' since they were 'in miniature the fulfilment of our ultimate desires, having all the social characteristics of the Greater Britain....' and the Young Communist League similarly managed to 'give even under capitalism a glimpse of what Socialism can be.' (Lang, T. 'Blackshirt Bognor Holiday Camp - Great Gathering Lays Foundation for Fascists' Future,' *Blackshirt*, 1 Aug. 1936 'Birmingham's glimpse of the future.', *Challenge*, 22 July 1937).

¹² In his survey of studies of utopianism Widdicombe writes that in the aftermath of the Great War 'utopian studies could not remain as they had before the War' (p.16). With the works of Mumford (1922) and Hertzler (1923) it was 'as if utopianism has come of age, has become a subject worthy for its own sake of more objective analysis'. Moving on to the 1930s he finds another upsurge of interest with six significant accounts published in the 1930s. (Richard T. Widdicombe, 'Early Histories of Utopian Thought (to 1950)', *Utopian Studies* 3 1 (1992), pp.1-38; 16, 17, 22)

“Open Sesames” within the last twelve months’.¹³ Among the first and most determined proponents of an alternative to *laissez-faire* capitalism was Oswald Mosley who resigned from the Labour Government over the cabinet’s rejection of his proposals to alleviate unemployment and then left Labour altogether to establish the New Party and put forward a ‘national plan’.¹⁴ Successively Conservative, independent and Labour MP and finally fascist leader after 1932, Mosley, perhaps more than any other, symbolises the ambiguities of the New Utopian challenge that class models of politics tend to obscure.¹⁵ Furthermore Mosley also stands at the centre of the emergence of the New Utopian challenge. As Daniel Ritschel notes, he was ‘first to introduce the concept of ‘economic planning’ into the vocabulary of British politics in the 1930s’ and ‘his rebellion was thus the gateway to the rest of the planning debate of the decade’.¹⁶ In the roll-call of individuals associated with Mosley before his adoption of fascism the collective challenge of the New Utopians

¹³ *The New Statesman and Nation*, 5 May 1934. Examples of this literature include: Anon, *The Plan: An Economic Thesis for a New Social Order* (1932); Norman Angell and Harold Wright, *Can Governments Cure Unemployment?* (1931); J.R. Bellerby, *A Contributive Society* (undated; c.1931); Sir Basil Blackett, *Planned Money* (1932); Henry Noel Brailsford, *Property or Peace* (1934); Marshall Brown, *Prosperity: The New Socialism* (1933); Delisle Burns, *The Challenge to Democracy* (1935); Emile Burns, *The Crisis: The Only Way Out* (1932); ‘Effendi’, *The World Tomorrow*; Robert Eistles, *Stable Money* (1932); Louis Anderson Fenn, *The Project of a Planned World* (1933); Fred Henderson, *The Economic Consequences of Power Production* (1932); *Idem.*, *Foundations for the World’s New Age of Plenty* (1933); J.A. Hobson, *The Recording Angel* (1932); Claud P.G. Jacob, *Economic Salvation* (1933); Stephen Leacock, *Back To Prosperity: The Great Opportunity of the Empire Conference* (1932); Lord Melchett, *Why the Crisis?* (1931); Lord Melchett, *Modern Money* (1932); A.J. Penty, *Ends and Means* (1932); Lord Eustace Percy, *Democracy on Trial* (1931); Pethick-Lawrence, *This Gold Crisis* (1931); *Idem.*, *The Money Muddle and the Way Out* (1933); Hubert Phillips, *Whither Britain? A Radical Answer* (1932); Alderton Pink, *A Realist Looks at Democracy* (1931); Noel M.P. Reilly, *The Key to Prosperity* (1931); A.L. Rowse., *Politics and the Younger Generation* (1931); Wickham Steed, *A Way to Social Peace* (1934); A. P. Young, *Forward From Chaos* (1933).

¹⁴ Allen Young *et al.*, *A National Policy: An account of the emergency programme advanced by Sir Oswald Mosley M.P.* (undated; 1931); M.F. Mandle, ‘The New Party’, *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand*, 12 (1966), pp.343-355.

¹⁵ Nicholas Mosley, *Rules of the Game* (1982); *idem.*, *Beyond the Pale* (1983); Oswald Mosley, *My Life* (1968); Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (1990); Dan S. White, *Lost Comrades: Socialists of the Front Generation 1918-1945* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

¹⁶ Daniel Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1997), p.50

might be seen—in the manner of some rare and unstable element created in the laboratory—as a unified whole.

John Strachey's partnership with Mosley in the ILP survived until the proto-fascism of the New Party set him on the path to accept Marxism-Leninism, work for the CPGB, and write some of the most influential and original British Marxist texts of the time.¹⁷ Strachey's work reflected the shifts in the 'party line' during the period and, although the CPGB was not simply a tool of Soviet policy, this was the major determinant of its approach. After the shrill sectarianism and severe purity of the party during the 'class-against-class' years of the early 1930s was first relaxed following the triumph of fascism in Germany, and then abandoned with the beginning of the 'Popular Front' period after 1936, the Party's membership and influence increased.¹⁸

The new line demanded the creation of an anti-fascist bloc including all 'progressive' forces and so widened the party's potential sphere of influence. At the same time, the increasing threat of war and the apparent polarisation between fascism and socialism suggested by the civil war in Spain drew people to the party. The support of Strachey and other leading intellectuals and artists including Stephen Spender and the scientists J.D. Bernal and J.B.S Haldane allowed the CPGB, under party secretary Harry Pollitt and its leading ideologue Rajani Palme Dutt, an

¹⁷ John Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power* (1932); *idem.*, *The Menace of Fascism; The Nature of Capitalist Crisis* (1935); *idem.*, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*; *idem.*, *What Are We To Do?* (1938); Michael Newman, *John Strachey* (Manchester, 1989); Hugh Thomas, *John Strachey* (1973); N. Thompson, *John Strachey: An Intellectual Biography* (1993).

¹⁸ Andy Croft (ed.), *A Weapon in the Struggle: The Cultural History of the Communist Party in Britain* (1998); Geoff Andrews, Nina Fishman, and Kevin Morgan (eds.), *Opening the Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of British Communism* (1995); Stuart Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain 1917-1933* (Cambridge, 1980); Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics 1935-41* (Manchester, 1989); *idem.*, *Harry Pollitt* (Manchester, 1994).

influence beyond what the numbers of its membership would suggest.¹⁹ The most visible indicator of the increased influence of the party was undoubtedly the Left Book Club founded by Victor Gollancz, whose membership of 50,000 received a succession of Communist and Communist-influenced texts.²⁰

Although anti-fascism explained a good deal of the appeal of the CPGB during the 1930s the party's significance also lay in its advocacy of the Marxist view of history and in its role as the local representative of the single greatest challenge to bourgeois society: the Soviet Union, or rather the USSR envisioned as a socialist utopia of planning, science, plenty and progress. The CPGB's blueprint for a 'Soviet Britain', a 'Britain without capitalists' thus formed an important part of the party's propaganda as well.²¹

In organisational and electoral terms the centre of gravity of opposition to the National Government was the Labour Party. With the departure of party leader Ramsay Macdonald and other leading figures to the 'National Labour' bloc of the National government and the disastrous 1931 election the party needed to be virtually reborn over the years that followed.

While Labour generally swung to the 'left' it did not go so far that it could retain the alliance of the Independent Labour Party which disaffiliated itself in 1932 to become, despite the high profile of its leading members James Maxton and Fenner Brockway, a declining force.²² Among those who stayed in the party was Aneurin Bevan, who had appeared among the signatories of Mosley's *National Policy*, and who was of that section of Labour's leading figures who were influenced

¹⁹ Bernal, *The Social Function of Science*; Stephen Spender, *Forward From Liberalism* (1937).

²⁰ John Lewis, *The Left Book Club: An Historical Record* (1970).

²¹ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain; Britain Without Capitalists*.

²² Robert Keith Middlemas, *The Clydesiders: A Left Wing Struggle for Parliamentary Power* (1965).

by Marxism and the Soviet example.²³ With the secession of the ILP the 'left' of the party found an organisational form in the Socialist League (SL) in 1932 which included Stafford Cripps, whose thinking brought together Anglicanism and an unsophisticated Marxism.²⁴ Prominent intellectuals outside of the Parliamentary Party included Harold Laski at the London School of Economics and G.D.H. Cole²⁵ who was prominent in the New Fabian Research Bureau founded in 1932 to fulfil a similar function to the original—and now elderly—Fabian society as an intellectual forum.²⁶ In retirement, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the leading lights of the original Fabian society, moved away from the intellectual heart of the party but their *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* provided the period with one of the key texts constructing the Soviet Union as a utopia.²⁷

'Labour' as a movement was more than the parliamentary and constituency parties and after 1931 the party was materially dependent on the Trades Unions. At the same time the intellectual relationship between Unions and Party was a little more complicated. The Unions tended to leave policy formulation to the Party except in cases where it was perceived to threaten the interests of organised labour. While most unions formally espoused socialism as an ultimate goal, in their daily dealings the body of conventions usually termed as 'labourism' was most to the fore. Rather than seeking to transcend liberal capitalism the inclination of labourism was more towards a corporatism in which the organised

²³ John Campbell, *Nye Bevan - and the Mirage of British Socialism* (1987), pp.38-45.

²⁴ Chris Bryant, *Possible Dreams: A Personal History of British Christian Socialists* (1996), pp.207-211, 215-216, 221-222; Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977).

²⁵ L.P. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge, 1973); Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy*.

²⁶ Durbin, *New Jerusalem*s.

²⁷ Webb and Webb, *Soviet Communism*; Lianne Radice, *Beatrice and Sidney Webb: Fabian Socialists* (1984).

power of labour would counterbalance that of capital.²⁸ Although such a structure was formally laid down by W. Milne-Baily this was a model predominantly created and sustained by everyday practice.²⁹

The third major part of the Labour movement, the Co-operative movement had a membership of millions. Although the CWS asserted that 'if you designed an ideal world' it would include things 'already happening in the Co-operative movement', and co-operators were proud of the contribution of the 'Utopian socialist' Robert Owen to co-operative thought, apart from a blueprint for a 'Co-operative Commonwealth' by Stanley Jevons the movement's distinctive vision of co-operation between the consumers generally took second place to commercial activity.³⁰ The Co-operative Party, whose manifesto promised a 'Britain reborn', maintained a close relationship with the Labour Party.³¹

Although the whole intellectual axis of the Labour Party had been shifted 'left' in the early 1930s the ideological 'spread' of the party remained wide with its mainstream based on a native tradition of democratic socialism as articulated in the party's manifestos *For Socialism and Peace* and *Labour's Immediate Programme*.³² Over the course of the 1930s the discourses of state economic planning and Keynesian economics came to dominate Labour's socialism. At the same time, ethical socialism remained strong in the party, in the Christian socialism of R.H.

²⁸ Geoffrey Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History* (1986); Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991).

²⁹ W. Milne-Baily, *Trades Unions and the State* (1934).

³⁰ *New Clarion*, 8 April 1933, p.360; Mercer, *Towards the Co-operative Commonwealth*; Stanley H. Jevons, *Economic Equality in the Co-operative Commonwealth* (1933).

³¹ Co-operative Party, *Britain Reborn: Work and Wealth for All* (Manchester, undated; c.1935).

³² The Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace: The Labour Party's Programme of Action* (1934); *idem.*, *Labour's Immediate Programme* (1937).

Tawney and party leaders George Lansbury (1931-35) and Clement Attlee (1935-55).³³

Looking more generally, Christian ethics and metaphysics were a not insignificant admixture to the modernism of the new utopianism. The BUF and the CPGB numbered churchmen among their adherents, most famously the 'Red Dean' of Canterbury, Hewlett Johnson.³⁴ Outside of the parties, a number of churchmen including Roger Lloyd—a signatory of *The Next Five Years*—and B.C. Plowright explored the relationship between the good society on earth and the mission and eschatology of the Church.³⁵ Peter Howard, once a member of the New Party, came to throw his lot in with another more minor prophet of the period, Frank Buchman and his organisation Moral Rearmament.³⁶ Similarly, the prominent 'progressives' C.E.M. Joad, John Middleton Murry and John Macmurray retained a space for the divine within their worldview and vision for the future.³⁷

In the early 1930s Macmurray had been the president of the New Britain Movement (NBM) initiated by the mystic Dimitrije Mitrinovic which saw 'Regionalism, Social Credit, National Guilds' as the basis of its 'Constructive Revolution'.³⁸ The sister movement of the NBM, the New Europe Group, headed by

³³ N. Dennis, and A.H. Halsey, *English Ethical Socialism: Thomas More to R.H. Tawney* (Oxford, 1988); Bryant, *Possible Dreams*, pp.185-192, 205-207.

³⁴ Hewlett Johnson, *Searching for Light: an autobiography* (1968), Bryant, *Possible Dreams*, pp.211-213.

³⁵ B.C. Plowright, *Rebel Religion: Christ, Community and Church* (1936); Roger Lloyd, *Revolutionary Religion: Christianity, Fascism and Communism* (1938). See also Percy Dearmer, (ed.), *Christianity and the Crisis* (1933); V.A. Demant, *Christian Polity* (1936); John Lewis, Karl Polanyi and Donald K. Kitchen (eds.), *Christianity and the Social Revolution* (1935); Herbert G. Wood, *Communism, Christian and Marxist* (1935).

³⁶ Peter Howard, *Innocent Men* (1941), p.15; Tom Driberg, *The Mystery of Moral Re-armament: A Study of Frank Buchman and His Movement* (1964).

³⁷ John Macmurray, *The Philosophy of Communism* (1933); *idem.*, *Creative Society: A Study of the Relation of Christianity to Communism* (1935); John Middleton Murry, *The Defence of Democracy* (1939); Chris Bryant, *Possible Dreams.*, pp.213-215.

³⁸ *New Britain: For British Revolution and the Social State*, new series (Autumn 1934), p.1.

J.V. Delahaye, showed the wider ambitions of this movement.³⁹ Those drawn to the NBM included the ex-communist J.T. Murphy, George Catlin, formerly of the New Party, and Major General J.F.C. Fuller who would later join the BUF.⁴⁰ G. Scott Williamson, Director of the Pioneer Health Centre at Peckham, which Margaret Cole later described as a 'biologists' Utopia', was also involved.⁴¹ The nature of the NBM was most eloquently expressed in an unsigned article which concluded that 'there will be New Britons—and a New British movement: there... will be Utopia, in the truest sense of that venerable word.'⁴² Although the short life of the NBM was over by 1934, Samuel Hobson, theorist of Guild Socialism, who penned a blueprint for a new society built on the 'functional principle' continued its work through the House of Industry League.⁴³

Allen Young, formerly Mosley's Labour Party agent, left the New Party at the same time as Strachey but rather than follow him into Communism wrote on economic planning for the *Manifesto* of the Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals.⁴⁴ The FPSI was the initiative of the philosopher Cyril Joad, who after a brief but active stay in the New Party, sought to bring together 'progressive' forces.⁴⁵

³⁹ *New Britain*, 1 7 (5 July 1933), p.224; see also I.V. Delahaye, *Principles and Plans for a New Britain* (c.1933). For the history of the New Britain Movement and New Europe Group see Andrew Rigby, *Initiation and Initiative: An Exploration of the Life and Ideas of Dimitrije Mitrović* (Boulder, 1984).

⁴⁰ *New Britain*, 1 6 (28 June 1933); *New Britain: For British Revolution and the Social State*, new series (Autumn 1934), supplement, report of NBM conference at Glastonbury, 4-12 August 1934; George E.G. Catlin, *A Preface to Action* (1934).

⁴¹ G. Scott Williamson, 'The Scientist's Outlook', *New Britain*, 1 2 (January-March 1933); Innes H. Pearse and G. Scott Williamson, *The Case for Action* (1932); I.H. Pearse, and L.H. Crocker, *The Peckham Experiment: A Study in the Living Structure of Society* (1943); Margaret Cole, 'Book Reviews', *Political Quarterly*, 15 (1944), pp.172-173.

⁴² 'Utopian?', *New Britain*, 2 31 (20 December 1933), p.134.

⁴³ S.G. Hobson, *The House of Industry: A New Estate of the Realm* (1931); *idem.*, *Functional Socialism* (1936), pp.63-64; Mike Tyldersley, 'The House of Industry League: Guild Socialism in the 1930s and 1940s', *Labour History Review*, 61 3 (Winter 1996), pp.309-321.

⁴⁴ Allen Young, 'The economics of planning', pp.64-87 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934).

⁴⁵ C.E.M. Joad, 'Prolegomena to Fascism', *The Political Quarterly*, 1 (1931), pp.82-99; C.E.M. Joad and John Strachey, 'Parliamentary Reform: The New Party's Proposals', *The Political*

Although H.G. Wells had called for a 'liberal fascist' in 1932, he had also rejected Mosley and instead it was the FPSI's 'Basis' which showed the Wellsian imprimatur.⁴⁶ Despite this J.B. Coates, a later Chairman of the FPSI, recalled that 'the original acceptance of the Wellsian basis was half-hearted'.⁴⁷ Although it was not until 1943 that Wells finally fell out with the FPSI he lost interest much earlier, instead devoting himself to propagandising for the 'Cosmopolis' through his writings and the film *Things to Come*.⁴⁸ Cosmopolis was also the name of a group formed originally in early 1934 as the 'H.G. Wells Society', which became 'The Open Conspiracy' before merging with FPSI.⁴⁹

Instead of working for the world-state the FPSI acted as a haven for those 'progressives' whom Orwell famously mocked.⁵⁰ Like the earlier Promethean Society which arose out of the circle of *The Twentieth Century* in 1931 and later merged into the FPSI, the liberalisation of personal and, especially, sexual conduct were areas of more interest to FPSI members.⁵¹ The Federation called for the 'release of personal conduct from all taboos and restrictions except those imposed in the interest of the weak and the young' and Alec Craig of the organisation also

Quarterly, 1 (1931), pp.319-336; C.E.M. Joad, *The Case for the New Party* (no place, undated; c.1931).

⁴⁶ H.G. Wells, *After Democracy: Addresses and Papers on the Present World Situation* (1932); *idem.*, 'Introduction: there should be a common creed for left parties throughout the world', pp.12-20 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934).

⁴⁷ Jack Coates, 'Is the Progressive League Redundant?', *Plan*, 12 5 (May 1945), pp.2-4; 2.

⁴⁸ H.G. Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1934; first published 1931); *idem.*, *The Shape of Things to Come* (1936; first published 1933); *idem.*, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866)* (1934); *idem.*, *The Stalin-Wells Talk* (1934); *idem.*, *Things to Come: A Film Story Based on the Material Contained in His History of the Future 'The Shape of Things to Come'* (1935); *idem.*, *The Anatomy of Frustration: A Modern Synthesis* (1936); *idem.*, *The Idea of a World Encyclopaedia* (1936); *idem.*, *The Camford Visitation* (1937); *idem.*, *The Croquet Player* (Nottingham, 1998; first published 1937); *idem.*, *Star Begotten* (1975; first published 1937); *idem.*, *The World Brain* (1938).; *idem.*, *The Brothers: A Story* (1938); *idem.*, *The Holy Terror* (1939); *idem.*, *Travels of a Republican Radical in Search of Hot Water* (Harmondsworth, 1939).

⁴⁹ W. Warren Wagar, *H.G. Wells and the World State* (New Haven, 1961), p.198.

⁵⁰ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), p.206

outlined 'a modernist programme' of 'sexual reform'.⁵² The FPSI also included the Freudian J.C. Flugel who wrote on the role of psychoanalysis in creating a psyche for the new era.⁵³ Elsewhere sex, psychology and utopia were the concern of J.D. Unwin who provided a detailed blueprint of the 'sexual and economic foundations of a new society' in *Hopousia* and Edward Glover, the Director of Research at the London Institute of Psycho-Analysis, who broadcast a series of talks which culminated in a vision of 'a Psycho-analyst's Utopia'.⁵⁴ Strachey and Evan Durbin of Labour were also significantly influenced by psychoanalysis.⁵⁵

Returning to the interests of the FPSI, these included those of educational reformers including W.B. Curry, A.S. Neil and J.B. Coates,⁵⁶ and constitutional reform as advocated by Frank Hardie and Ivor Jennings.⁵⁷ Pacifism—a preoccupation of many Labour Party members and bodies including the Peace Pledge Union and National Peace Council—was also a concern of the FPSI which had among its original vice-presidents Beverley Nichols, author of a widely read anti-war text.⁵⁸ The FPSI also represented the 'progressive' wing of a body of

⁵¹ 'The Promethean Society', *The Twentieth Century*, 1 6 (August 1931), p.28.

⁵² 'The Basis of the Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals', pp.21-27 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934), p.24; Alec Craig, *Sex and Revolution* (1934), pp.104-110. See also Janet Chance, 'Reform of the Sex Laws', pp.166-183 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934); Norman Haire, *Birth-Control Methods-Contraception, Abortion, Sterilisation* (1936); Irene Celphane, *Towards Sex Freedom* (1936).

⁵³ J.C. Flugel, 'A Psychology for Progressives', pp.292-314 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934).

⁵⁴ J.D. Unwin, *Hopousia, or the Sexual and Economic Foundations of a New Society* (1940). Edward Glover, *The Listener*, 20 November 1935, pp.913-914; the complete talks appeared in *idem.*, *The Dangers of Being Human*.

⁵⁵ John Strachey, "'Freud and Marx'", *Left News*, January 1937, pp.206-208 and *idem.*, "'The Psychology of Reaction'", *Left News*, February 1938, pp.692-695 (reviews of R. Osborn, *Freud and Marx* (1937) and *idem.*, *The Psychology of Reaction* (1937); E.F.M. Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism: An Essay on Social Policy* (1940).

⁵⁶ W.B. Curry, *The School and a Changing Civilisation* (1934); A.S. Neil, *That Dreadful School* (1937); *idem.*, *Hearts Not Heads in the School* (1944).

⁵⁷ Frank Hardie 'Constitutional reform', *Plan*, 2 6 (June 1935), pp.3-5; W. Ivor Jennings 'Socialism and the Constitution', *Plan*, 2 8 (August 1935), pp.3-5.

⁵⁸ Beverley Nichols, *Cry Havoc!* (1933). By the end of the 1930s Nichols found Mosley to be 'that Hero for whom this country has waited so long, and waited in vain' (*idem.*, *News of England; or, a*

opinion centred on the Eugenics Society, one of whom—Wicksteed Armstrong—wrote one of the more obscure utopian novels of the period.⁵⁹ Perhaps more benignly, the FPSI also hosted belief in the transformative power of sun bathing.⁶⁰

'MIDDLE OPINION' AND UTOPIAS OF THE 'THIRD WAY'

If we turn back to the beginning of the decade it was not only figures who were later prominent 'on the left' who were drawn to Mosley's banner. Although W.E.D. Allen was the only Conservative MP to join Mosley, Harold Macmillan and other radical 'young Tories' including Robert Boothby and Oliver Stanley had contacts with him at this time.⁶¹ Sympathetic to the corporatist element in Mosley's thinking, they were less enthusiastic about state interference with private enterprise. Macmillan offered a blueprint for capitalist planning in response to the slump and two years later was a central figure in the drafting of *The Next Five Years* in 1935, a year which also saw a memorandum from David Lloyd George of similar intent.⁶² Prominent in the genesis of *The Next Five Years* were the National Labour figures Lord Allen of Hurtwood and Arthur Salter, themselves authors of solutions for the capitalist crisis.⁶³ Proposals also came from Political and Economic Planning (PEP) whose origins were in the circle of *The Week-end Review*, the 'champion of national

Country without a hero (1938). A comprehensive pacifist blueprint for the reconstruction of Britain and the World on Quaker and Keynesian lines was Maurice L. Rowntree's *Mankind Set Free* (1939).

⁵⁹ Wicksteed C. Armstrong, *Paradise Found—Where the Sex Problem has been Solved* (1936). See also *Between Two Men* (Boriswood, 1935), a fantasy by another eugenicist, F. Le Gros Clark. See also R.A Piddington, *The Next British Empire. A Population Policy for Home Amenity and Empire Defence* (1938); F.C.S. Schiller, *Social Decay and Eugenic Reform* (1932).

⁶⁰ A.A.B., 'Why not try Sun Bathing?', *Plan*, 4 8 (August 1937), pp.16-19.

⁶¹ Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning*, pp.75-78

⁶² Harold Macmillan, *Reconstruction: A Plea for a National Policy* (1933); [NFYG], *The Next Five Years: An Essay in Political Agreement* (1935); David Lloyd George, *Organising Prosperity: Being the Memorandum on Unemployment and Reconstruction Submitted to the Government by Mr. Lloyd George* (1935). See also: Some Members of Parliament [fourteen supporters of the National Government including Harold Macmillan], *Planning for Employment* (1935).

regeneration'.⁶⁴ The Review, which published Max Nicholson's *A National Plan for Great Britain* in 1931, had originally seen its hopes embodied in Mosley.⁶⁵

In regard to the relationship between ideas and political power touched on in the introduction, it is in this body of 'middle' opinion that the line between those defending social institutions and those seeking to transcend them can most surely be drawn.⁶⁶

The Next Five Years Group (NFYG) emerged from the 'progressive' side of the National Government bloc as a bid to avert the danger of the country turning to fascism or communism.⁶⁷ Surveying the political culture of the time the NFYG saw it as cleft between those who would "'muddle through'" and those who believed that 'the community can and must deliberately plan, direct, and control.'⁶⁸ However, this was a division based on *means* rather than *ends* and the NFYG programme was intended to be a compromise, bringing together Conservatives like Macmillan with unrepentant utopians like Wells. There was, *The Next Five Years* declared, 'no reason why travellers whose ultimate destinations are diverse should not travel together so long as their direction is the same'.⁶⁹ For some the NFYG's programme represented the summit of their desires by protecting the status quo but for others like Wells it could only be a step in the right direction.

⁶³ Clifford Allen, *Britain's Political Future* (1934); Alfred Salter, *Recovery* (1933; first published 1932); *idem.*, *The Framework of an Ordered Society* (Cambridge, 1933).

⁶⁴ Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning*, p.146; John Pinder (ed.), *Fifty Years of P.E.P.: Looking Forward 1931-1981* (1981).

⁶⁵ Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning*, pp.145-150; Max Nicholson, 'Prologue The Proposal for a National Plan', pp.5-8 in Pinder, *Fifty Years of P.E.P.*

⁶⁶ Arthur Marwick, 'Middle Opinion and the Thirties: Planning, Progress and Political Agreement', *English Historical Review*, 79 (1964), pp.285-298.

⁶⁷ Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning*, p.232.

⁶⁸ [NFYG], *The Next Five Years*, p.7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.4.

The history of PEP is also instructive in this regard. Founded in 1931 to act as a basis for a future 'planning party' and to draw up a blueprint for a planned society in Britain, PEP was at the same time strongly, and unshakeably, allied to free enterprise and private ownership. The PEP committee dealing with the technique of planning, 'Tec Plan', solved the problem of how to plan without the state, somewhat in the manner of Saint Simon or technocracy, with a technocratic elite of professional planners who would balance private interests against the collective good of the nation. As Ritschel notes, there was an 'air of Wellsian utopianism about the proposals', and the utopian nature of Tec Plan's work was evident in the fact that it also sought to transform the 'philosophic and non-economic sphere' as well. However, by contemplating the right to dissolve the boards of recalcitrant industries and even expropriate them, Tec Plan infringed the fundamental bourgeois institutions which PEP had emerged to protect. The result was that the committee was dissolved and its report rejected. PEP instead set out to gain what influence it could with the National Government to protect the interests of industry.⁷⁰

S.G. Hobson placed these proposals accurately, writing that they come 'from a younger school of Toryism, having a reputation for intelligent sympathy with Labour. In reality, what they want is the continuance of the existing financial... system. They know they cannot secure this unless they can keep labour in bondage with less irksome chains. They are, in fact, *en garde*.'⁷¹ At the same time these 'new liberals', 'radical Tories' and 'neo-capitalists' were not shy of appropriating the utopian rhetorical form. Although Salter used the term the 'middle way', his proposals were not a 'mere compromise... taking a middle line between extremes'

⁷⁰ Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning*, pp.145-146, 164-165, 179-182.

but an ideal synthesis, 'creative and selective, uniting the best that other systems have to offer and avoiding their worst dangers and defects.' It was a 'real alternative' not only to socialism, communism and fascism but also to 'an unregulated *laissez-faire*, which we cannot recover if we would.' Salter spoke in terms of 'fundamental' change and of acting in response to grand historical imperatives as pursuing 'the distinctive task of our age'.⁷² A utopia perhaps, but one which left bourgeois economic institutions fundamentally untouched. In this vision of the best of all possible worlds, industry would organise and regulate its own activities with the state as a passive watchdog in the background.

The industrialist Sir William Morris had encouraged Mosley to found the New Party as the 'nucleus of an 'industrial party'' and the proposals for industrial self-government put forward by the Industrial Reorganisation League (IRL) are also of note in this regard.⁷³ Set up in 1933, the League, under Macmillan as chairman and vice-chairman Lord Melchett, put forward what was described by one commentator as 'Guild Capitalism'. The IRL was determined to prevent outside interference in the affairs of industry by the state and thus argued for monopoly capitalism to become a self-regulating corporate system with coercive power over labour.⁷⁴

The IRL's proposed bill for industrial self-government was seen by the *Daily Herald* as 'industrial Fascism'.⁷⁵ However, in contrast to these proposals from big business the major British fascist movement of the period should, within the terms of this study, be included within the New Utopianism. It is true that Mosley's *The*

⁷¹ Hobson, *The House of Industry*, pp.63-64.

⁷² Salter, *The Framework of an Ordered Society*, p.56.

⁷³ Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley (1990)*, p.241.

⁷⁴ in Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning*, p.183; *ibid.*, pp.193, 209-211

Greater Britain, his later work *Tomorrow We Live* and the blueprints for the corporate state of Alexander Raven Thomson left private ownership and production for profit intact.⁷⁶ However, in addition to Mosley's version of the economics of plenty, the replacement of existing economic and political institutions with a corporate structure and an occupational franchise, fascism was to bring a behavioural and attitudinal revolution to create the spirituality of the new fascist man as an alternative means to transcend the fractured and decaying bourgeois society to the fascist utopia.

The BUF was not the only fascist movement of the period. The ultra-conservative British Fascists and the fanatically anti-Semitic Imperial Fascist League preceded it, and later, disenchanted blackshirts were involved in the British People's Party and the National Socialist League. Nor was black the only shirt colour on Britain's streets as the 'Greenshirts' of the Social Credit Party (SCP) of John Hargrave appeared in the early thirties. The SCP, a very much smaller body than the BUF, brought together Hargrave's mystic woodcraft movement—the Kibbo Kift Kindred—and the 'social credit' theories of Major Douglas.⁷⁷ As with the fascists, the social crediters also retained private ownership, with greenshirts instead proposing a 'National Dividend' to end 'under consumption' to realise thereby the

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.203

⁷⁶ Oswald Mosley, *The Greater Britain* (1932 and 1934); *idem.*, *Tomorrow We Live* (1938); Alexander Raven Thomson, *The Corporate State* (undated; c.1934); *idem.*, *The Coming Corporate State* (undated; c.1937).

⁷⁷ C.H. Douglas, *Social Credit* (1933; first published 1924); *idem.*, *The Monopoly of Credit* (1931); Mark Drakeford, *Social Movements and Their Supporters: The Green Shirts in England* (1997); Frances Hutchinson and Brian Burkitt, *The Political Economy of Social Credit and Guild Socialism* (1997); Josef Craven, 'Carry On Camping: The World of John Hargrave, The Kibbo Kift and the Open-Air Movement', unpublished paper given at 'Nowhere: A Place of Our Own - Exploring the Uses of Utopia', University of Warwick, 8 May 1999.

age of plenty.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, as with fascism, social credit can be seen as a utopian project to find a notional third way between socialism and capitalism which, while drawing aspects of both, would be distinct in itself.

USES OF KEYNESIANISM

Ultimately the proposals of PEP, NFYG, IRL and others did not seek to take society on to a new place but to preserve the existing social order. One major aim of capitalist 'planning' was to maintain markets and the rate of profit by preventing 'over-production' by 'rationalisation' to remove excess capacity. This was to solve the paradox of 'poverty in the midst of plenty' by opting for poverty. In contrast, the economic blueprints of the New Utopians all shared the aim of increasing the ability of the public to consume and thereby assure plenty, full-employment and economic stability and growth, as the basis for a new Britain.

John Maynard Keynes implied in his *General Theory* that his thesis seized on principles which had previously existed 'in the underworlds of Karl Marx, Silvio Gessell or Major Douglas.'⁷⁹ Keynes had earlier commented favourably on Mosley's pre-fascist proposals but it was the liberal economist's *General Theory* that emerged as the means to secure full-employment and economic stability and growth without changes to the fundamental institutions of bourgeois society. For this reason Keynesianism was rapidly taken up among the circle of the NFYG and became the economic basis for a new 'middle way'—as laid out by Macmillan.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ For social credit proposals see also: W. Allen Young; *Ordeal by Banking* (1931); Percy Dearmer (ed.), *Christianity and the Crisis* (1933); V.A. Demant, *Christian Polity* (1936); C.V. Orage, *Political and Economic Writings* (1937);

⁷⁹ John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1960; first published 1936), p.32.

⁸⁰ Harold Macmillan, *The Middle Way: A Study of the Problem of Economic and Social Progress in a Free and Democratic Society* (1938).

This was a 'middle way' between the collectivist extremes of socialism and fascism which would protect the status quo by mitigating its most serious dysfunctions.

The new economics also arrived as an expedient basis for an alliance between socialists and liberal 'progressives' in the Popular Front as advocated by Cole and Macmillan.⁸¹ Although the Popular Front failed, Keynesianism came to play a central role in the thinking of Labour from the end of the 1930s onwards. The new theory came increasingly to be adopted by the Labour Party's leading theorists as the economics of democratic socialism. 'Planning' had been influentially argued for by Barbara Wootton and Labour had enthusiastically embraced the rhetoric of state planning as a means to 'efficiency.'⁸² However, at the same time the Party had rejected the Soviet and other 'totalitarian' models of planning, leaving a gap between the rhetoric and substance of planning. Thus, Labour 'planning' came to resolve itself around, on one hand, social ownership of major industries based on the public corporation outlined by Herbert Morrison, and, on the other, macro-economic management based on Keynesian principles argued for by Douglas Jay which would become party orthodoxy over the war years in the thinking of Dalton, Durbin and others centred on the New Fabian Research Bureau.⁸³

However, this did not signal 'consensus' but was, as Ritschel has stressed, an 'uneasy and rarely acknowledged convergence' in which 'motives' were

⁸¹ Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning*, pp.283-292, 300, 303.

⁸² Barbara Wootton, *Plan or No Plan* (1934).

⁸³ Douglas Jay, *The Socialist Case* (1937); Herbert Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport* (1933). See also A.L. Rowse, *Mr. Keynes and the Labour Movement* (1936); Durbin, *New Jerusalem*; Jim Tomlinson, 'Planning: Debate and Policy in the 1940s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 3 2 (1992), pp.154-174.

'radically different'. For radical Tories, Keynesianism promised stability while for socialists it was a viable intermediate step towards socialism.⁸⁴

1939-45

With the coming together of 'planning' and the Keynesian version of the new economics of plenty, Labour had the means to move the Britain of the depressed areas in the direction of the socialist commonwealth. However, although the 1935 election had improved the Parliamentary strength of the Party and, with the near extinction of the Liberal party, established it as the undisputed opposition force, the Conservative-dominated National Government bloc under Stanley Baldwin (1935-37) and Neville Chamberlain (1937-40) retained a dominant strength in Parliament and the country. The outbreak of war meant that no election was called in 1939 or 1940 but the available evidence suggests that such a contest would not have changed things.⁸⁵

THE PEACE AIMS MOVEMENT

Indicating the continuity between the 1930s and politics of the war years, one authority noted:

The outbreak of war resulted in a corresponding outbreak of plans for reconstruction. All the pent-up fermentation of the thirties burst forth as the planners saw their golden opportunity to build a new England. Almost before the Prime Minister had finished speaking at 11 o'clock on that fateful third of September the

⁸⁴ Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning*, pp.303, 322, 314-322.

⁸⁵ Geoffrey K. Fry, 'A Reconsideration of the British General Election of 1935 and the Electoral Revolution of 1945', *History*, 76 (February 1991), pp.43-55.

plans began to formulate and roll from the printing presses. Many of them were the same old peacetime plans refurbished and re-titled "after the war".⁸⁶

From the outset the conflict was interpreted as further evidence of the bankruptcy of the pre-war system and what might be called the 'peace aims' or 'war aims' movement demanded that the national purpose should not only be to defeat Germany but to eradicate the systemic causes of war as well.⁸⁷

Wells continued to propagandise for the world state but equally vocal were proponents of schemes which saw the future, at least initially, in times of federation.⁸⁸ The American Clarence Streit's proposals for the 'nucleus of a World-Commonwealth' based on the western democracies gained a wide readership.⁸⁹ Federal Union, founded at the time of the Munich crisis gained greater prominence. W.B. Curry, president of the FPSI and a Federal Union member, wrote in his Penguin Special *Federal Union Now* that a 'creative life of peace and happiness and plenty' was within humanity's 'grasp', the money spent by nation states on armies and warfare could turn the 'whole planet' into 'a garden.'⁹⁰ R.W.G. Mackay, who was later prominent in CW and joined Labour in 1945 and

⁸⁶ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-43, 2/A, typescript entitled 'Inquest on Planners', by R.S.R. Fitter.

⁸⁷ John Kendle, *Federal Britain: A History* (1997), ch.6.

⁸⁸ H.G. Wells, et al., *Peace and war aims: a correspondence from The Times* (1939); H. G. Wells, et al., *The New World Order* (1940); H. G. Wells, *The New World Order, Whether It is Obtainable, How it Can Be Attained, and What Sort of World a World at Peace Will Have To Be* (1940); idem., *The Fate of Homo Sapiens: An Unemotional Statement of the Things that are Happening to Him Now And of the Immediate Possibilities Confronting Him* (1940); idem., *The Common Sense of War and Peace: World Revolution or War Unending* (Harmondsworth, 1940); idem., *The Rights of Man* (Harmondsworth, 1940); idem., *Babes in the Darkling Wood* (1940); idem., *Guide to the New World*; idem., *You Can't Be Too Careful. A Sample of Life* (1941); idem., *All Aboard for Ararat* (1942); idem., *Science and the World Mind* (1942); idem., *The Outlook for Homo Sapiens: An Amalgamation and Modernization of Two Books: 'The Fate of Homo Sapiens' and 'The New World Order'* (1942); idem., *Phoenix: A Summary of the Inescapable Conditions of World Reorganisation* (1942); idem., *'42 to '44: A Contemporary Memoir upon Human Behaviour during the Crisis of the World Revolution* (1944).

⁸⁹ Clarence K. Streit, *Union Now* (1939).

Lord Davies, chairman of the New Commonwealth Society, offered two more blueprints for a new Europe.⁹¹ George Catlin's outline of an 'Anglo-American Union' as a 'basis for world federation', could no longer, he believed, be dismissed 'as Utopian nonsense'.⁹²

During the 'phoney war', 'peace aims' predominantly related to international relations, as a symposium of Labour and Conservative M.P.s and others published at the time of the fall of France demonstrated.⁹³ Writing in 1940 Strachey saw 'making plans for the world' as 'the new national industry', 'Liberal newspaper owners fill whole pages with blue prints for the future' and even Chamberlain had made a 'speech about "a Utopian Europe"'. However, if politicians' 'sole object was to build a Utopia for the peoples of Europe' while leaving Britain itself unchanged, such proposals would be rejected, Strachey believed.⁹⁴ A blueprint for a new economic system stressed the same point, arguing that 'the growing literature on War Aims' was guilty of 'tinkering with the

⁹⁰ W.B. Curry, *The Case for Federal Union* (Harmondsworth, 1939).

⁹¹ R.W.G. Mackay, *Peace Aims and the New Order* (1941), p.130; Lord Davies, *A Federated Europe* (1940). On international relations see also Norman Angell, *For What Do We Fight?* (1939); M. Channing-Pearce (ed.), *Federal Union* (1940); W.I. Jennings, *A Federation for Western Europe* (Cambridge, 1940); J.E. Meade, *The Economic Basis of a Durable Peace* (1940); Wickham Steed, *Our War Aims* (1939); Duncan and Elizabeth Wilson, *Federation and World Order* (1939); Leonard Woolf, *The War for Peace* (1940); Later works on this subject include: P.E.P., *Building Peace out of War—Studies in International Planning* (1944); Balbus, *Reconstruction and Peace* (1941); A.C.F. Beales, *The Catholic Church and International Order* (Harmondsworth, 1941); Vernon Bartlett, *Tomorrow Always Comes* (1943); William Brown, *War and the Psychological Conditions of Peace* (1942); E.H. Carr, *The Future of Nations* (1941); *idem.*, *Nationalism and After* (1945); Ely Culbertson, *World Federation Plan* (1944); Emery Reves, *A Democratic Manifesto* (1943).

⁹² George Catlin, *One Anglo-American Nation: The Foundation of Anglo Saxony as Basis of World Federation: A British Response to Streit* (undated; c.1941), p.22. See also Lord Davies, 'The Hope of Federation' in Phillip Gibbs (ed.), *Bridging the Atlantic: Anglo-American Fellowship as the Way to World Peace* (1945; first published 1943).

⁹³ William Teeling (ed.), *After The War: A Symposium of Peace Aims* (1940); see also W. Arnold-Foster, 'Peace Aims', *Fabian Quarterly*, 22 (Summer 1936), pp.21-27.

⁹⁴ John Strachey, *The Banks for the People* (1940), p.7; see also: *idem.*, *Federalism or Socialism?* (1940).

superstructure.⁹⁵ Durbin, writing at this time, contended that while 'every generation' was 'in part united, and in part inspired, by some conception of a better and a more just society', it was the case that 'the deeper the distress of the world in which they live, the more Utopian is likely to be the hope by which men sustain themselves.' Looking around the contemporary scene he found 'despite the fear of aerial bombardment... predominately an age of quietness and comfort.'

This was all to change, and although not—as Durbin feared—'moving men to violent solutions', or to reject 'modest dreams and practicable aspirations' this easy complacency about the status quo was no longer possible.⁹⁶ Military disaster in the West, rather than subduing the peace aims movement, instead made its critique of the society which had brought the nation to this pass more searching, and their proposals for a fundamentally 'new Britain' appear all the more necessary. From the Summer of 1940 onwards the peace aims discourse became a powerful and pervasive presence in the national mass media and in the language of politics. The preface of one planning text commented that:

from the moment of the mobilisation of the nation for another world war it was certain that far-reaching changes in the social and economic life of the nation would be entailed... it was clear that much of the old order would be destroyed; that alongside the planning of war strategy must go the replanning of civil life, if the fruits of victory were not to prove bitter...⁹⁷

⁹⁵ W.H. Williams (secretary, Labour Research Department) in Frank Verulam, *Production for the People* (1940), p.13.

⁹⁶ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.333

⁹⁷ Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *Country Planning: A Study of Rural Problems* (1944), p.v.

Additional urgency was added to the call for peace aims by the Nazis' own promise of a 'New European Order'.⁹⁸ Tawney implored: 'We must create a New Order' in opposition to the 'Hitlerian kind of New Order.'⁹⁹ 'Cassandra' of *The Daily Mirror*, wrote bitterly that 'the German Fuehrer, taking advantage of our silence, bawls his promises of the coming El Dorado.'¹⁰⁰ Purdom's belief was that 'the expression 'the new order' is on every lip. Our leaders use it, our enemies declare they are fighting on its behalf' .¹⁰¹

Amidst the worsening military situation Churchill took over from Chamberlain as Prime Minister and Attlee, Morrison and Bevin from Labour joined the cabinet. As British forces retreated from Dunkirk, the BUF, which like the Communists, had been campaigning against the war, was proscribed and many blackshirts interned. Since September 1939 the BUF and the CPGB had been the only parties contesting by-elections on their anti-war platforms, the other parties having agreed to an electoral truce. In one sense this suspension of politics was now carried further when Labour ministers joined the government. However, in parliament and in government, politics was by no means suspended as Labour pressed forward its aims, albeit never at the pace and with the force that many activists demanded.¹⁰²

In the mass media even *The Times* took on the tone and language of the peace aims movement in the writing of E.H. Carr. This change was what *Tribune*

⁹⁸ *The Times*, 29 June 1940; On the Nazi 'New European Order' see Robert Edwin Herzstein, *When Nazi Dreams Come True* (1982).

⁹⁹ R.H. Tawney, *Why Britain Fights* (1941), p.2.

¹⁰⁰ 'Cassandra', *The English at War* (1941), p.117.

¹⁰¹ Purdom, *The New Order*, p.vii. See also Cecil Northcott, *Towards a new order* (1941); J.P. Smyth, *Our present discontent: the essentials of a new order* (1941); R.W.G. MacKay revised and re-titled his *Federal Europe as Peace Aims and the New Order*.

¹⁰² Stephen Brooke, *Labour's War: The Labour Party during the Second World War* (Oxford, 1992).

called the “Fleet Street Revolution” which took in ‘Frank Owen and Michael Foot on the *Evening Standard* ... Hugh Cudlipp, editor of the *Sunday Pictorial*, and Cassandra of the *Daily Mirror*, Hannan Swaffer in the *Herald* ... the new *Tribune* ...under Postgate’s editorship, and *Picture Post* in the hands of Tom Hopkinson. And there was Donald Tyerman editing the *Economist*.’ ‘Nor was that all’, *Tribune* continued, ‘the Penguin Specials broke into a new book-reading market. Acland’s *Unser Kampf* sold 200,000 copies; Wells enjoyed a lively revival .. *Guilty Men* became the most sensational expression of the new political line...’ Although Junius II found it difficult to know whether this was a ‘revolution’ from above or below, he noted that ‘millions of people... who had never been touched by Socialist propaganda... found themselves guided daily to the Left by their reading’.¹⁰³ Despite the shortage of paper a huge literature devoted to post-war reconstruction emerged. Ethel Mannin commented that ‘...we have a kind of blueprint for an English Utopia in Sir Richard Acland’s book, *How it Could be Done* ... and a tremendous spate of White papers on post-war reconstruction, and booklets and pamphlets issued in series under such titles as *Target for Tomorrow*, *Oxford Pamphlets on Home Affairs*, *Re-building Britain Series*, *Fabian Research Series*, *Reconstruction Digests*, *Changing Britain*, *Common Wealth Bulletins*, *Tomorrow Booklets*—to mention only a few.’¹⁰⁴

The ‘Plan for Britain’ episode of the popular weekly *Picture Post* is eloquent of this period, representing, as has been suggested, ‘a virtual glossary of

¹⁰³ *Tribune*, 4 May 1945.

¹⁰⁴ Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p.8.

progressive views current in the Britain of the 1930s',¹⁰⁵ but also the novel centrality of these views in the public mass media. This special number came out in January 1941 and sought a 'fairer, pleasanter, happier, more beautiful Britain than our own' as 'an essential part of our war aims'. The miner and author B.L. Coombs evoked the quintessence of the 'problem' of inter-war Britain with his view of life in the Welsh valleys. On that basis, a series of articles proposed measures to build the 'New Britain': 'Work for All' by Thomas Balogh of Labour; 'Social Security' by Owen of PEP; housing, industry, utilities and amenities planned by architect and town planner Maxwell Fry; the home planned for the housewife by Elizabeth Denby; agriculture revived by L.F. Easterbrook; a plan for education by A.D. Lindsey; 'Health For All' by the leading scientist and one-time vice president of the FPSI, Julian Huxley; 'A Real Medical Service' by Maurice Newfield; leisure examined by J.B. Priestley; and reformed democratic institutions by Ivor Jennings and W.A. Robson. The public response was a 'flood' of over 2,000 letters.¹⁰⁶

At the same time, new political forces emerged. In 1940 Acland published *Unser Kampf* out of which emerged a group called 'Our Struggle'.¹⁰⁷ Acland had become a Liberal MP in 1937, but while remaining in that party, he became a convinced socialist and a campaigner for the Popular Front. A committed Anglican, his thinking was dominated by the inter-linked goals of an ethical and spiritual revolution in British life combined with social ownership of all significant property. 'Our Struggle' became 'Forward March' and Acland became involved in another organisation, the '1941 Committee'. This group emerged from the circle which met

¹⁰⁵ *Picture Post*, 4 January 1941; John Stevenson, 'Planners' moon? The Second World War and the planning movement', pp.58-77 in Harold L. Smith (ed.), *War and social change: British society in the Second World War* (Manchester, 1986), p.58.

¹⁰⁶ *Picture Post*, 15 March 1941.

over the winter of 1940-41 at the home of Edward Hulton, editor of *Picture Post*, and was a roll call of leading progressive intellectuals including Victor Gollancz, Stanley Unwin, Phyllis Bottome, Storm Jameson, Priestley, A.D. Lindsay, Joad, Macmurray, Mary Stocks, Augustus John, David Low, Kingsley Martin, Francis Williams, Ritchie Calder, Douglas Jay, Wells and Lancelot Hogben.¹⁰⁸ Acland sought to turn this intellectual circle towards active politics and to merge it with Forward March and during the Summer of 1942 the two groups merged to create Common Wealth as a new political party.¹⁰⁹

Although Priestley continued to co-operate with Acland, almost all of the luminaries of the 1941 Committee—while not necessarily stopping writing on reconstruction topics—did not join CW. Other prominent CW supporters included Ronald Mackay, Barbara Wootton, Tom and Kitty Winteringham, Tom Sargent and Olaf Stapledon.¹¹⁰ The last named was best known as a science fiction writer, whose *First and Last Men* imagined the development of the human species into the distant future, and had earlier belonged to the Wellsian Cosmopolis and the FPSI.¹¹¹ Apart from advocating Acland's vision of the 'New Britain', CW provided a socialist alternative at by-elections during the electoral truce and successes in these contests saw a handful of CW MPs join Acland in Parliament.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Acland, *Unser Kampf: Our Struggle* (Harmondsworth, 1940).

¹⁰⁸ Angus, L.R. Calder, 'The Common Wealth Party 1942 -1945' (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sussex, 1968), vol.1, pp.1-62.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.105.

¹¹⁰ John Macmurray, *Challenge to the Churches: Religion and Democracy* (1941); *idem.*, *Constructive Democracy* (1943); J.B. Priestley, *Postscripts* (1940); *idem.*, *Out of the People* (1941); *idem.*, *Here Are Your Answers* (1944); *idem.*, *They Came to a City* (1944); Tom Sargent, *These Things Shall Be* (1941); Kitty Wintringham, *A Five Year Post War Plan and Nine Projects* (1944); Barbara Wootton, *Reconstruction and Peace* (1941).

¹¹¹ Olaf Stapledon, *First and Last Men* (Harmondsworth, 1963; first published 1930); *idem.*, 'Education and World Citizenship', pp.142-165 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934); *idem.*, *Waking World* (1934); *idem.*, *New Hope for Britain* (1939); *idem.*, *Saints and Revolutionaries*

While CW was the only new political party of any significance, the peace aims movement included a myriad of bodies old and new which sought to ensure that the new Britain would be fashioned according to *their* desire. British Information Services admitted that its pamphlet summarising 'unofficial post-war planning 1939-1944' was 'not exhaustive', nonetheless it listed, from the Associated Countrywomen of the World to Zionist Organisation and Jewish Agency for Palestine, 152 non-governmental organisations so occupied.¹¹²

Many of these bodies represented the specific economic concerns of industries and professions such as the British Dental Association and the British Rayon Federation. The Federation of British Industry was also mentioned which had produced its own proposals for reconstruction.¹¹³ The same year *A National Policy for Industry*, a blueprint signed by 120 prominent industrialists appeared citing its aim as being to 'find a reasonable middle way' and proposed welfare reforms and made reference to another major touchstone of reformers: Roosevelt's 'Four

(1939); *idem.*, *Beyond the "Isms"* (1942); *idem.*, *Darkness and the Light* (1942); *idem.*, *Old Man in New World* (1944); *idem.*, *The Seven Pillars of Peace* (1944).

¹¹² British Information Services, *Post-War Planning in Britain: Unofficial Post-War Planning 1939-1944* (New York, 1944), pp.2, 73-88. Other blueprints for national and/or world 'reconstruction' by individuals and small groups include: Independent Labour Party, *A Socialist Plan for Britain* (1943); J.R. Bellerby, *Economic Reconstruction* (1943); James A. Bowie, *The Basis of Reconstruction* (Edinburgh, 1942); Alfred Cobban, *The Crisis of Civilisation* (1941); Nicholas E.H. Davenport, *Vested Interests or Common Pool* (1942); Harold Grenville, *After the War: Some Suggestions for Winning the Peace and Consolidating the Future* (first published 1941; revised 1942); R.G. Hawtrey, *Economic Destiny* (1944); Hans Heymann, *Plan for Permanent Peace* (1941); Edward Hulton, *The New Age* (1943); *The Liberal Plan For Peace* (1944); Magnus Irvine, *The Britain of To-Morrow* (1944); Austin Knight, *Britain's New Order* (1942); E.C. Lewis, *The People: Their Industry and Happiness* (Harrow, 1944); 'George Orwell', *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (1941); M. Alderton Pink, *Social Reconstruction* (1943); L.B. Powell (ed.), *Democracy's Other War* (1942); Michael Roberts, *The Recovery of the West* (1941); Herbert Tracey, *Trade Unions Fight—for What?* (1940); *idem.*, *Towards Economic Democracy* (1942); E.T. Williams, *Lasting Peace and a Better World* (Parkstone, 1941); Francis Williams, *War by Revolution* (undated; c.1940); *idem.*, *Democracy's Last Battle* (1941); *idem.*, *What Are We Waiting For?* (1941); *idem.*, *Ten Angels Swearing...; or, Tomorrow's Politics* (1941).

¹¹³ Federation of British Industries, *Reconstruction: A Policy* (no place, 1942).

Freedoms' speech.¹¹⁴ As with the 'middle way' of the 1930s, *A National Policy for Industry* represented a programme of reforms to meet the central criticisms of industry 'without embarking on changes in the social system such as might seriously and detrimentally dislocate the working basis of the national economy.'¹¹⁵ Individual businessmen also put forward their blueprint for the post-war period. Aside from major industrialists of the standing of Samuel Courtauld these included Anthony Vickers of Fluidrive's plan for *A Better Britain* with its social credit emphasis and the complex diagrams drawn up by George Dickson, Managing Director of Winget Limited, for the national and world organisation of industry on Christian and democratic principles.¹¹⁶ The Quaker Ernest Bader sought to transform his Northamptonshire chemical manufacturers into a microcosm of the new order as a 'commonwealth'.¹¹⁷

Also represented were bodies whose interest in building the new Britain related to specific techniques to be applied, such as eugenics in the case of the British Social Hygiene Council. The British Medical Association was concerned with the effects of any reorganisation of health services on its members' interests, whereas Medical Planning Research laid out a blueprint for a state planned health service within the overall context of a planned society.¹¹⁸ Linking together the areas of health, agriculture and war aims were the proposals of the influential nutritionist

¹¹⁴ 120 Industrialists, *A National Policy for Industry* (1942), p.18.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹¹⁶ Samuel Courtauld, *Ideals and Industry: Wartime Papers* (Cambridge, 1949); George Dickson, *Evolution in Management*, pp.96-109 in J.R.M. Brumwell (ed.), *This Changing World: A Series of contributions by some of our leading thinkers, to cast light upon the pattern of the modern world* (1944); *idem.*, *The Local Democrat 1925-1945* (Rochester, undated; c.1945); Anthony Vickers, *A Better Britain* (Isleworth, 1943); see also Charles Madge, *Industry After the War: Who is going to run it?* (1943), pp.30-64.

¹¹⁷ Susanna Hoe, *The Man Who Gave His Company Away* (1979).

Sir John Orr.¹¹⁹ More idiosyncratically Erwin Pulay discussed biological and psychological factors in relation to a world reconstructed according to the principles of the Atlantic Charter.¹²⁰

The name of the 1940 Council well illustrated the origins of the reconstruction debate. Under the Chairmanship of Lord Balfour of Burleigh the Council produced a set of maps showing 'Britain as an organic whole' as a basis for a 'National Plan'.¹²¹ This attempt to provide the basis for 'planning the social environment' was then incorporated into a detailed exposition of the 'principles of planning on a national scale' by E.A. Gutkind.¹²² In another volume in the same series, Professor W.H. Hutt of the University of Cape Town, offered a comprehensive blueprint for a planned capitalist system including draft bills.¹²³ These blueprints appeared in the International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction edited by the émigré Karl Mannheim of the LSE, himself an influential writer on social reconstruction and utopianism, and whose ideas were influential among the conservative utopian thinkers grouped around Geoffrey Faber.¹²⁴

Educational reform was also a major topic of the reconstruction movement with bodies including the Association of Directors and Secretaries for Education, the

¹¹⁸ BIS, *Post-War Planning in Britain*, pp.63-63. See also: Aleck Bourne, *Health of the Future* (Harmondsworth, 1942); Arnold Sorsby, *Medicine and Mankind* (1941); D. Stark Murray, *The Future of Medicine* (Harmondsworth, 1942), pp.108-113.

¹¹⁹ John Orr, *Fighting For What?* (1942); *idem.*, *Food and the People* (1943).

¹²⁰ Edwin Pulay, *Destiny of To-morrow* (1945).

¹²¹ 1940 Council, *Ground Plan for Britain* (1942), p.2; 'The 1940 Council', *Town and Country Planning*, 9 34 (Summer 1941), p.69.

¹²² E.A. Gutkind *Creative Demobilisation. Volume 1: Principles of National Planning* (1943), p.x.

¹²³ W.H. Hutt, *Plan for Reconstruction: A Project for Victory in War and Peace* (1943).

¹²⁴ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*; *idem.*, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction: Studies in modern social structure* (1940); *idem.*, *Diagnosis of our Time: Wartime essays of a sociologist* (1943); Jose Harris, 'Political ideas and the debate on State welfare, 1940-45', pp.234-263 in

Association for Education in Citizenship, the Headmasters' Conference and the National Union of Teachers putting forward blueprints for the future of education.¹²⁵ Variations on this theme included the use of education to create a 'new form of aristocracy, capable of taking a religio-scientific attitude' for the planned democratic society to come, put forward by F.C. Happold, a member of the HMC.¹²⁶ H.C. Dent made clear that he was 'not... concerned to picture some remote or nebulous Utopia' but laid out 'a new order' for English education to satisfy the need for 'social revolution' and to begin a 'new era'.¹²⁷

The British Association for the Advancement of Science also pressed for changes in education and, along with the Association of Scientific Workers, it was prominent in the reconstruction debate.¹²⁸ The advocacy of 'Science' was among the key constituting discourses of the New Utopianism. Even the BUF, contrary to what might be assumed of a 'reactionary' ideology, drew deeply on the rhetoric of science. However, it was the parties of the 'left' who received the support of politically active scientists.¹²⁹ Hyman Levy—a Left Book Club author—recognised that '[s]cience... could banish human misery and inaugurate a reign of material and cultural prosperity unprecedented in history.'¹³⁰ Levy, like Haldane and Bernal, who had both earlier written books on the future of science unstinting in their

Harold L. Smith (ed.), *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester, 1986), pp.240-246.

¹²⁵ BIS, *Post-War Planning in Britain*, pp.54-61.

¹²⁶ F.C. Happold, *Towards a New Aristocracy: A Contribution to Educational Planning* (1943).

¹²⁷ H.C. Dent, *A New Order in English Education* (Bickley, 1942), pp.5, 12. See also H.L. Beales, *Privilege Must Go: A Policy for Education* (1941); Herbert Phillipson, *Education: A Search for New Principles* (1942); Ernest Green, *Education for a New Society* (1942); Herbert Read, *Education of Free Men* (1944).

¹²⁸ BIS, *Post-War Planning in Britain*, pp.66-67

¹²⁹ Gary Werskey, *The Visible College; A Collective Biography of British Scientists and Socialists of the 1930s* (1988).

¹³⁰ Hyman Levy, *A Philosophy for a Modern Man* (1938); *idem.*, *The Universe of Science* (1932), p.v.

enthusiasm, fused their world view as scientists with communist politics.¹³¹ Bernal looked forward to a utopia where science would 'cease to be the special discipline of a selected few and become the common heritage of mankind.' 'In its endeavour science is communism' he believed.¹³²

On the democratic left Lancelot Hogben had sought to popularise science through his 'primers for the age of plenty'. As an alternative to the 'beehive community of free trade', Hogben wrote, 'scientific knowledge offers us the possibility of a new plan of social living more akin to the Utopia of a William Morris or an Edward Carpenter.'¹³³ In wartime, Hogben wrote 'Interglossa', one of a number of proposals for a universal language for the world of the future.¹³⁴ C.H. Waddington believed that the capitalist world had 'been in the chrysalis of the Great Depression, breaking down its caterpillar economics and culture and preparing to emerge as a quite different butterfly.' He sought to propagate the 'scientific attitude' necessary to the technocratic age to come.¹³⁵ Another propagandist for science, the biologist Julian Huxley, who had worked with Wells and been involved with both PEP and the FPSI, believed that the world was in the midst of a revolution entailing the shift from a society of economic individualism to 'an organic society'.¹³⁶ At its most ecstatic, popular scientific literature held that 'it is

¹³¹ J.B.S. Haldane, *Daedalus or Science and the Future* (1924); J.D. Bernal, *The World, The Flesh and the Devil* (1929).

¹³² Bernal, *The Social Function of Science*, p.415.

¹³³ Lancelot Hogben, *Science for the Citizen: A Self-Educator based on the Social Background of Scientific Discovery* (1940; first published 1938), p.1086.

¹³⁴ *Idem.*, *Interglossa: A draft of an auxiliary for a democratic world order, being based on an attempt to apply semantic principles to Language Design* (Harmondsworth 1943); see also I.A. Richards, *Basic English and Its Uses* (1943); J.F. Brimble and F.J. May, *Social Studies in World Citizenship* (1943).

¹³⁵ C.H. Waddington, *The Scientific Attitude* (West Drayton, 1948; first published 1941), p.172.

¹³⁶ H.G. Wells, Julian Huxley, and G.P. Wells, *The Science of Life* (1938; first published 1930); Julian Huxley, *Democracy Marches* (1941), p.115; see also *On Living in a Revolution* (1944). See

a sober truth to say that it lies within our powers to create a race of super beings, living in Utopia, and to do so in an amazingly short period.¹³⁷

The use of the term 'planning' went back to the turn of the century when the Town Planning Movement pursued a purpose which was 'frankly Eutopian.'¹³⁸ The BIS survey took in groups concerned with the future of Britain's urban areas and countryside, including the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), whose origins were in the Garden City movement of the celebrated English utopian Ebenezer Howard. During the 1930s the cause of town planning was advocated by, among others, Thomas Sharp and F.J. Osborn; the latter became an under-secretary in the Ministry of Works in wartime.¹³⁹ Apart from overdue slum clearance, the cessation of building in wartime and enemy action produced a huge demand for new homes and amenities. One might even detect a hint of gratitude towards the Luftwaffe for the opportunity not merely to re-construct, but to build without the utilitarian and aesthetic failings of earlier times. The topics of town and country planning, architecture, housing and their interrelations produced a vast literature.¹⁴⁰

also J.G. Crowther, O.J.R. Howarth, D.P. Riley, *Science and World Order* (Harmondsworth, 1942); Association of Scientific Workers, *Science and the Nation* (Harmondsworth, 1947).

¹³⁷ Bruce Bliven, *Men Who Make The Future* (1944) cited in *Common Wealth Review*, March 1945, p.10.

¹³⁸ P. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution: An Introduction to the Town Planning Movement and to the Study of Civics* (1968; first published 1915), p.xxxvi.

¹³⁹ Thomas Sharp, *Town and Countryside* (1932); *idem.*, *Town Planning* (Harmondsworth, 1940); F.J. Osborn, *Overture To Planning* (1941); *idem.*, *The Land and Planning* (1942); *idem.*, *New Towns after the War* (1942; revised edition, first published 1918).

¹⁴⁰ Bournville Village Trust, *When We Build Again* (1941); Electrical Association for Women, *E.A.W. Point of View on Post-War Reconstruction* (1941); Institution of Municipal and County Engineers, *Post-War Planning and Reconstruction* (1942); Social and Industrial Commission of the Church Assembly, *The Church and the Planning of Britain* (1944); Patrick Abercrombie, *Town and Country Planning* (1943; first published 1933); S.D. Adshead, *A New England: Planning for the Future* (1942); Marget Bondfield (ed.), *Our Towns, A Close-Up* (Oxford, 1943); G.M. Boumphrey, *Town and Country Tomorrow* (1941); 'Britannicus', *The Future of Industry and Architecture* (1941); Ritchie Calder, *Start Planning Britain Now* (1941); H.P. Cart de Lafontaine, *National Planning and Redevelopment* (1942); W.R. Davidge, *Plan for the New Architecture* (1942); M.J. Elsas, *Housing*

While the TCPA spanned town and country, the Common, Open Spaces and Footpath Preservation Society (COSFPS) and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) spoke up for the interests of the countryside and, in the case of the COSFPS the opinion of the 'hikers' and 'weekend trippers' whose activities illustrated the growing importance of leisure in British life. During the 1930s Cyril Joad had championed the hiker in the struggle for access to the land and during the war he continued to write on the use of the countryside.¹⁴¹ Probably the most influential sample of this body of opinion and its interrelation with the planning movement was in the 1938 publication *Britain and the Beast* edited by the architect Clough Williams-Ellis.¹⁴² Apart from Williams-Ellis, who wrote for the TCPA on 'the architect's part' in post-war reconstruction,¹⁴³ among the contributors to *Britain and the Beast* was Patrick Abercrombie of the CPRE and TCPA who was commissioned by John Reith at the Ministry of Works to draw up plans for blitzed

Before the War—And After (1942); Montague Fordham, *The Land and Life* (1942); Eris S. de Fraré, *Britain Rebuilt* (1942); H.V. Lanchester, *Post-War Homes* (1942); Gilbert and Elizabeth McAllister, *Town and Country Planning* (1941); Jean Mann (ed.), *Replanning Scotland* (Glasgow, undated; c.1942); Ethel Mannin, *Castles in the Street* (undated; c.1942); John Mansbridge, *Here Comes Tomorrow* (undated; c.1942); Lewis Mumford, *The Social Foundations of Post-War Building* (1943); C.S. Orwin, *The Land and the Nation* (1942); Frank Pick, *Britain Must Rebuild* (1941), Howard Robertson et al., *The Post-War Home: A Series of Lectures on its Interior and Equipment* (undated; c.1942); William A. Robson, *The War and the Planning Outlook* (1942); Ernest Simon, *Rebuilding Britain—a Twenty Year Plan* (1945); F.E. Towndrow (ed.), *Replanning Britain: being a summarised report of the Oxford Conference of the Town and County Planning Association, Spring 1941* (1941); Ralph Tubbs, *Living in Cities* (Harmondsworth, 1942); William White, *Scotland's Housing and Planning Problems* (1942); Arnold Whittick, *Civic Design and the Home* (1943); Lawrence Wolfe, *The Reilly Plan: A New Way of Life* (1945); George Woodcock, *Homes orhovels* (1944).

¹⁴¹ Joad, C. E. M., *Culture and the Community. Diogenes, or the future of leisure* (1928); *idem.*, *The Horrors of the Countryside* (1931); *idem.*, *A Charter for Ramblers; or, the Future of the Countryside* (1934); *idem.*, 'The People's Claim', pp.64-85 in Williams-Ellis, C. (ed.), *Britain and the Beast* (1938); *idem.*, *An Old Countryside for New People* (1942); *idem.*, *The Adventures of the Young Soldier in search of The Better World* (1943); *idem.*, 'Culture and Community', in Herbert Morrison et al., *Can Planning be Democratic?: A Collection of Essays prepared for the Fabian Society* (1944); *idem.*, *The Untutored Townsman's Invasion of the Country* (1945).

¹⁴² Clough Williams-Ellis (ed.), *Britain and the Beast* (1938).

¹⁴³ *Idem.*, *Plan for Living: The Architects Part* (1941).

London. These plans, it has been suggested, grew from a soil 'continually enriched by contact with utopia.'¹⁴⁴

Prominent in the garden city and town planning movement since the turn of the century, C.B. Purdom's *Britain's Cities Tomorrow* (1942) appeared in the series published by the periodical *Tomorrow*, the mouth piece of The International Democratic Reform Club (IDRC), of which Purdom was vice-president.¹⁴⁵ Purdom, who had earlier edited *New Britain* for the NBM, offered a blueprint in 1941 for the reconstruction of the world on the 'functional principle' of Ramiro de Maeztu which the NBM's manifesto had been based on.¹⁴⁶ The IDRC's book list included not only titles blueprinting art, economics, religion, agriculture and education for 'tomorrow', the writings of Acland, Drucker, and Macmurry but, as with the NBM, also included the 'esoteric' mysticism of Dr Rudolf Steiner and works by the social credit authority Arthur Kitson.¹⁴⁷

The IDRC was omitted from the BIS's list but apart from the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, the Catholic organisation The Sword of the Spirit, The Industrial Christian Fellowship (ICF) and the Society of Friends were among the religious bodies mentioned. During the war years Acland's campaign attracted a number of progressive churchmen and his circle included the Christian intellectuals

¹⁴⁴ Roger Gill, 'In England's Green and Pleasant Land', pp.109-117 in P. Alexander, and R. Gill (eds.), *Utopias* (1984), p.109.

¹⁴⁵ C.B. Purdom, *Britain's Cities Tomorrow: Notes for Everyman on a Great Theme* (1942).

¹⁴⁶ Purdom, *The New Order*, pp.10-11; see also *idem.*, *A Plan of Life: An Essay in the Technique of Living* (1939; first published 1932).

¹⁴⁷ 'Recommended Books', *Tomorrow*, 3 4 (August 1942), p.94. Other pamphlets named as being in the IDRC's 'Tomorrow series' were: Owen Barfield, *Tomorrow's Economics*; N.V. Dagg, *Art in Britain Tomorrow*; Oliver L. Mathews, *Religion Tomorrow*; E. Maurice Wood, *Agriculture Tomorrow*; David J. Davies, *Education Tomorrow*. No copies of these have been located so they may not have been issued.

John Macmurry and Kenneth Ingram.¹⁴⁸ Acland and Ingram were also involved in the Anglican conference on reconstruction organised at Malvern in 1941 by the ICF, as was T.S. Eliot, who had published his idea of a 'Christian Society' just after the outbreak of war.¹⁴⁹ Reflecting the spirit of the moment, the 'conclusions' of the conference questioned the social good of private ownership. The next year William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, went far beyond this in his widely read contribution to the reconstruction debate, *Christianity and the Social Order*.¹⁵⁰ The contributions of Acland and Temple were only the more prominent examples of a wider examination and advocacy of a new social order on earth which at the same time entailed a new spiritual age.¹⁵¹ J.B. Coates of the FPSI—which had changed its name to the Progressive League—saw that organisation as one possible basis for seeking a new world order based around federalism, socialism, planning and, first and foremost, 'a change of heart'.¹⁵² Christianity as a source of ethics and means-to-utopia also provided a refuge for Strachey after his break with the CPGB.¹⁵³

Returning from this maze of special interest groups and esoteric societies to the political parties, it was after the invasion of the USSR by Germany in 1941 that the CPGB was able to speak once more in uncompromising anti-fascist tones. Priority number one for the party from then on was to press for the prosecution of the war

¹⁴⁸ Kenneth Ingram, *Sex Morality To-morrow* (1940); *idem.*, *Religion and the New Society* (1944); *idem.*, *The Premier Tells the Truth* (1945); *idem.*, *Guide to the New Age: For a Young Man and Woman Returning From the War* (1945).

¹⁴⁹ T.S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939).

¹⁵⁰ William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (Harmondsworth, 1942).

¹⁵¹ For example see: Sidney Dark, *The Church, Impotent or Triumphant* (1941); The Bishop of Chichester (G.K.A. Bell), *Christianity and World Order* (Harmondsworth, 1940); A.E. Baker *et al.*, *A Christian Basis for the Post-war World: A Commentary on the Ten Peace Points* (1942); L.E. Elliott-Binns, *Reconstruction: The Church's Part* (1942); John Middleton Murry, *Adam and Eve: An Essay towards a New and Better Society* (1944).

¹⁵² J.B. Coates, *A Common Faith or Synthesis* (1942), pp.123-125.

with the utmost vigour, the maximum production of war materials, the opening of a second front in Europe and resist any political action which might distract the coalition from the war effort. The Party also gained significant influence via its union activists at shop floor level and their participation in the Joint Production Committees which brought together workers and management. Towards the end of the war the CPGB's blueprint for the future changed from *For Soviet Britain* to *Britain For The People* in which the party adopted a programme which Cole described as essentially 'at one with the programme of the Labour Party'.¹⁵⁴ Linked to this shift was the CPGB's call for the 'Unity' of left-wing parties and its attempts to affiliate to the Labour Party.

Although there was some appetite for such a union among Labour activists and intellectuals, the leadership was determined to have nothing to do with the CPGB. Labour, having entered the coalition in 1940 was, for the first time for a decade, able to seek its goals through government. While both the relative parliamentary and cabinet strength of Labour and the demands of the war effort limited the ability of Labour ministers to press forward reconstruction issues, their co-operation was necessarily purchased by Churchill's grudging acceptance of the need to develop policies for the post war period and thus to join the reconstruction debate. In the Summer of 1940 a cabinet War Aims Committee was established to discuss both the international and the domestic order after the war. However, this body failed to agree on a declaration of war aims and Churchill appointed Labour's Arthur Greenwood as a minister with special responsibility for

¹⁵³ John Strachey, *A Faith to Fight For* (1941).

¹⁵⁴ CPGB, *Britain For the People* (1944); G.D.H. Cole, "'Britain For the People'", *Labour Monthly*, 26 9 (September 1944), pp.268-269.

reconstruction. The appointment of this fading figure without power to compel action was probably indicative of the lack of enthusiasm for the topic among many in Whitehall. However, at the same time, the Atlantic Charter in August 1941 restated the place of peace aims in wartime politics and included a commitment to Social security, and, in May that year, a committee was set up under Sir William Beveridge to discuss 'social security and allied services'.¹⁵⁵

OTHER VISIONS

Conservatism—with both large and small 'c'—had its own utopias. Before the war Stanley Baldwin's speeches frequently took as a point of reference the aesthetics and healthy organic corporatism of an England of tradition, old stones and green fields, of individual lives worked out within the commodious freedoms of the constitution.¹⁵⁶ This was predominantly a pastoral utopia of an older England and in the work of the popular writer G.L. Gee a symbolic journey ended with this immanent utopia revealed. After a storm, 'the sky cleared, and the sun burst through the clouds again' and the narrator 'walked into the radiance of the sparkling countryside... and saw the town, its western windows ablaze with crimson, its towers and spires rising up in majesty above the dazzling roofs.' The reader finds that this vision of England as the New Jerusalem cannot be approached through 'progress' but only by retracing one's steps to 'home', along a 'road... afire with golden splendour ... a shining highway'.¹⁵⁷ It was this 'other Eden, demi-

¹⁵⁵ Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (1994), pp.122-123, 167-169.

¹⁵⁶ Stanley Baldwin, *On England And Other Addresses* (1926); *idem.*, *This Torch of Freedom* (1937); *idem.*, *Service of Our Lives* (1938).

¹⁵⁷ H.L. Gee, *The Shining Highway: An Account of a Plain Man's Pilgrimage* (1935), pp.220-221; original emphasis.

paradise... This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England' which an illustrated book of the war years portrayed the nation as fighting for.¹⁵⁸

This was also an England of 'security, stability and certainty', qualities absent in the years after the Great War.¹⁵⁹ For H.J. Massingham, contemporary decadence was more deeply rooted in the very opening of the age of reason and industrialism and he proposed an 'alternative to modernism' and the 'rebirth of England' through a 'synthesis' of 'religion, nature, craft, husbandry'.¹⁶⁰ Such a reactionary utopia, with eugenic controls was portrayed by the ultra conservative cleric W.R. Inge.¹⁶¹ W.J. Blyton, while sharing similar values to Massingham, imagined a future in which 'a shining people's Epilogue to the world war' carried these values into an alternative modernity.¹⁶² The Conservative H.W.J. Edwards, who desired to reinstate the forms and culture of the 'old corporatism', condemned contemporary capitalism and socialists, with their stress on a 'dynamic economy, with its concomitant, the leisure state and the servile state', as being more or less the same.¹⁶³ Also of note among 'right wing' thinkers was Viscount Lymington, advocate of a 'sound agriculture' and scourge of 'false urban values'.¹⁶⁴

This was thinking in the tradition of Arthur Penty and Chesterton's Distributist League which had more in common with Guild Socialism than the concerns of big

¹⁵⁸ Val Doonee, *This Other Eden* (1943), pp.124-141.

¹⁵⁹ Baldwin, *The Service of Our Lives*, p.42.

¹⁶⁰ H.J. Massingham, *The Tree of Life* (1943), pp.203, 208, 210. See also *idem.*, *Home* (1942).

¹⁶¹ W.R. Inge, *The Future of the Human Race* (1931).

¹⁶² W.J. Blyton, *Cakes, Ale and Virtue (A Modern's Testament)* (undated; c.1944).

¹⁶³ H.W.J., Edwards, *Young England* (undated; c.1938), pp.210, 219. See also *idem.*, *The Good Patch: A Study of the Rhondda Valley* (undated; c.1936), p.235.

¹⁶⁴ Viscount Lymington, *Famine in England* (1938), pp.183-209. See also Rolf Gardiner, *England Herself: Ventures in Rural Restoration* (1943). For writing on agriculture more practical than metaphysical see A. Daniel Hall, *Reconstruction and the Land: an Approach to Farming in the National Interest* (1941); Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *Country Planning*; George Stapledon, *Make Fruitful the Land: A Policy for Agriculture* (1941).

business capitalism.¹⁶⁵ However, given that the wealth of Britain's ruling classes came not only, or even predominately from the land, such radical anti-modernism was relatively eccentric. As Edwards pointed out, conservatism drew from both Tory and Whig roots, and was thus capable of producing diverse and incompatible utopias.¹⁶⁶ For Baldwin the tension between his longing for the mythic old England and the capitalist goose which laid the golden egg was resolved through the hope of 'evolutionary', rather than 'revolutionary progress' and the National Government of the 1930s put into effect what has been described as a 'formidable catalogue of reorganisation and nationalisation'.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, figures like Macmillan and others had no fear of planning, state welfarism and modern industry. During wartime this body of opinion—which Quintin Hogg called 'the New Conservatism'—found expression in the Tory Reform Committee and also in Robert Boothby's call for 'a New Order, based on... revolutionary conceptions of social and economic organization.'¹⁶⁸

Liberals—in and out of the party—also wrote utopias, although the utopian novel of Viscount Samuel would scarcely have been recognisable to any reader of the 'Liberal Utopia' outlined by W.T. Layton 1928 on the basis of the party's Industrial Report. This latter document proposed what became known as a mixed economy and showed the clear influence of Keynes who, as things tuned out,

¹⁶⁵ Hilaire Belloc, *An Essay on the Restoration of Property* (1936); C. Duvall Bishop, *Land Settlement Colonisation* (undated; c.1936); J. Desmond Gleeson, *What Distributism Means* (1935); A.J. Penty, *Ends and Means* (1932); *idem.*, *Communism and the Alternative* (1933); *idem.*, *Distributism: a Manifesto* (1937); *idem.*, *Tradition and Modernism in Politics* (1937); John Waugh Scott, *Barter* (undated; c.1938); William Purcell Witcutt, *The Dying Lands. A fifty years' plan for the distressed areas* (undated; c.1937).

¹⁶⁶ Edwards, *Young England*, pp.13-27.

¹⁶⁷ Baldwin, *Service of Our Lives*, p.57; Stevenson, 'Planners' moon?', p.63.

¹⁶⁸ Quintin Hogg, *One Year's Work* (undated; c.1944); pp.40-50, 119-121, 126-128; see also *idem.*, 'Whither Britain?-VII', *The Listener*, 21 February 1934, pp.312-314; Robert Boothby, *The New Economy* (1943), p.46.

became one of the two most influential thinkers of the period.¹⁶⁹ Beveridge, although in some ways more a Fabian than a liberal, provided a comprehensive blueprint for a new national and international order, and was, by virtue of his proposals for social security, the second such figure.¹⁷⁰ Indicating the direction that liberal thought was taking, E.H. Carr also put forward proposals for a 'mixed economy' to supersede 'nineteenth century liberalism' and Lord Elton of National Labour resisted attempts 'to "capture" the war ... for a materialist's New Social Order' with a mixed-economy infused with the morality of a 'Christian Democracy'.¹⁷¹ Elton had been among the NFYG circle, as was the liberal Stephen King-Hall who also put forward proposals for a 'New Britain'.¹⁷²

Churchill himself was no stranger to the rhetoric of utopianism and in 1940 at the climax of one of his most important speeches, spoke of the country fighting not only for 'our British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our empire', but also so that 'the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands'.¹⁷³ However, in contrast to the Keynesians, planners and corporatists of the time, the thinking of Churchill and many on the 'right' was probably closer to the approach of 'The Individualists' headed by Sir Ernest Benn, the country's noisiest propagandist for individual 'free enterprise' and F.A. Hayek, arch opponent of 'The

¹⁶⁹ Viscount Samuel, *An Unknown Land* (1942); W.T. Layton, 'The Liberal Utopia', pp.383-417 in H.L. Nathan (ed.), *Liberalism and Some Problems of To-Day* (1929), p.395.

¹⁷⁰ William H. Beveridge, 'My Utopia', pp.130-142 in *Planning under Socialism and Other Addresses* (1936); *idem.*, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, Cmd. 6404 (1942); *idem.*, *Full Employment in a Free Society* (1944); *idem.*, *The Pillars of Security and Other War-Time Essays and Addresses* (1943); *idem.*, *The Price of Peace* (1945).

¹⁷¹ E.H. Carr, *Conditions of Peace* (1942), pp.xx, 145; Lord Elton, *St. George or the Dragon: Towards a Christian Democracy* (1942), pp.253-254.

¹⁷² Stephen King-Hall, *Britain's Third Chance: a book about post-war problems and the individual* (1943).

¹⁷³ Winston S. Churchill, 'The Finest Hour', 18 June 1940, pp.198-207 in C. Eade (ed.), *The War Speeches of The Rt. Hon. Winston S. Churchill* (1951), pp.201, 206.

Great Utopia' of 'the Socialists of all Parties'.¹⁷⁴ Such thinking was inclined to the opinion that social institutions should not be tampered with. Evocative of this position was P.N. Walker-Taylor who, having set out on a quest to 'look for the best form of government for a human community', after his odyssey through the universe of utopianism came 'round in almost a complete circle' to conclude that 'no part, not one, could be safely dispensed with' from 'our good and tested system.'¹⁷⁵ Offered the choice between a 'new Britain' and the return to the 'world of 1939', the Conservative party would no doubt have opted for the latter, albeit without the disruptive influence of European fascism.

BEVERIDGE AND AFTER

Churchill depreciated Beveridge's work and reconstruction generally as 'false hopes and airy visions of Utopia and Eldorado'.¹⁷⁶ However, the Beveridge 'plan' with its proposals for 'social security' for all and its mention of a free health service generated a public and press enthusiasm in December 1942 which other reconstruction reports had not evoked. The widespread disappointment at the lukewarm reaction of Conservative ministers and MPs to the proposals in the Commons debate of February 1943 showed that 'reconstruction' and a 'new Britain' could not be safely shelved. Thus, Churchill sought to seize the initiative with his own 'Four Year Plan' in Autumn 1943.¹⁷⁷

The remaining years of the coalition saw a succession of Government initiatives. White papers detailed a national health service and social security along

¹⁷⁴ Ernest J.P. Benn, *This Soft Age, With the Optimistic Theory of the 30/50 Man* (1933); 'The Individualists', *Labour Research*, 31 9 (October 1942), p.140; Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*.

¹⁷⁵ P.N. Walker-Taylor, *Charter For Britain* (1943), pp.8, 281.

¹⁷⁶ Cited in Harris, *William Beveridge*, p.422.

¹⁷⁷ Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front 1900-1955* (1993), pp.365-385.

similar lines to those proposed by Beveridge, while the white paper on employment of 1944 indicated the permeation of Keynes' ideas to the centre of policy making. Committees under the chairmanship of Lord Justice Scott and Mr Justice Uthwatt had discussed land utilisation in rural areas and urban reconstruction and in 1944, having traversed the choppy seas of the Conservative party's dogged defence of private property, the Town and Country Planning Act came into law. Conservative R. A. Butler, as President of the Board of Education, followed a similar trajectory to the Education act. Addison writes of these legislative measures, as being 'escorted... by a volunteer army of post-war planners' whom we have already met above.¹⁷⁸

Public opinion polling after the 1943 Beveridge debate showed that while Churchill retained almost unanimous approval as the country's war leader, in an election Labour would win. In this way Labour, by virtue of the plan of a Liberal, came to be central to the political outcome of the peace aims debate. The New Utopians broadly welcomed the report but, as was the case with Keynes ideas, they appropriated 'Beveridge' not as an end itself but a 'step in the right direction'. While in the coalition Labour had also worked on its own blueprint for the new Britain. The discussion document *The Old World and the New Society* (1942) which emerged from the Party's Central Committee of Problems of Post-war Reconstruction set up in 1941 under Laski and Shinwell combined rhetoric acceptable to the left with proposals amenable to the vision and praxis of the leadership.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Addison, *The Road to 1945*, pp.164-189; 181.

¹⁷⁹ The Labour Party, *The Old World and the New Society* (1942).

1945

Churchill had hoped to keep the coalition together into peace time but with the end of the war in sight, Labour made clear that it would seek its future independently. With victory in Europe the coalition broke up and the date for the first general election for ten years was set for the beginning of July.

Cripps at Labour's 1945 conference stressed that the party 'should not... lead people to believe it was some easy Utopia into which they were invited to stay' but that year also wrote of the possibility of realising 'the Utopia which, in one form or another, has been so often pictured for us as the ideal at which we aim.'¹⁸⁰ In 1945 Labour's utopia was called 'a better Britain...'; 'a better' or 'a happier future'; 'better and happier days'; a 'better world'; 'a Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain'; 'a New Britain', 'a NEW BRITAIN where unemployment and poverty shall be abolished'; a 'New and Better Britain'; 'a new age of peace and abundance'; a brighter "New World"; 'a brighter and better world'; a 'new world of Hope, Promise and Achievement'; 'a New Social Order'; 'a new world'; 'a new order of society, giving to our people a fuller and better life'; a "'Golden age'" and even, in Weston-Super-Mare, 'a new way of life'.¹⁸¹

Labour's campaign was, within the dominant understanding of the word and the Party's own rhetoric, 'unashamedly socialist'.¹⁸² Labour's election manifesto—*Let Us Face the Future*—brought together discourses of state planning and control, scientific and technocratic power, age of plenty economics and welfarism within the context of a populist social imaginary and the particularities of

¹⁸⁰ *Daily Herald*, 23 May 1945; Stafford Cripps, *Towards Christian Democracy*, p.18.

¹⁸¹ British Library of Political and Economic Science (BLPES), Miscellaneous Collection 723, Labour candidates' electoral addresses.

national tradition. Churchill did not miss the opportunity to tag Labour's plan as 'utopian' but in this instance it appeared that such a programme was what many voters desired. Labour candidate John Haire's election address indicated the place of the New Utopian narrative in the election and what was at stake. Haire wrote that the election 'asks you to decide the shape of things to come—whether you want a *genuine* "Brave New World" or "1939 and All That".¹⁸³

¹⁸² Stephen Brooke, 'The Labour Party and the 1945 General Election', *Contemporary Record*, 9 1 (1995), pp. 1-21; 1.

¹⁸³ BLPES, Miscellaneous Collection 723, Labour candidates' electoral addresses.

Chapter 3

THE CRITICAL GAZE

We shake our heads sagely at the "dreamers." As long as possible we will go on living the close, ignoble lives of thieves, bullies and drudges to which we are accustomed, that dear old slummy, needy, down-at-heel human life, so pathetic and touching and all that. We will snuffle our satisfaction that we are not in any "fantastic Utopia." And when presently the rifles are put in our hands again, we shall kill.

H.G. Wells, *After Democracy*, 1932¹

A Britain growing daily more closely packed with shabby architecture, foolish little laws, drab restrictions... racing track roads fringed with nasty huts for standardised humans, silly little girls with sham Hollywood ideals, undigested education and indigestible food is not a peace time Utopia.

The Daily Mail, March 1939²

The years 1929-1945 can be represented in many different, but valid ways: as a social or economic history, or an account of government or opposition, or perhaps written 'from below'. What is sought here is a cultural history of the ways in which the New Utopians represented their times. This is a Britain seen by the eye of disenchantment; a land and life spoken by the voice of rhetoric as an oppositional discourse against the status quo. In the New Utopian meta-narrative this was also a society which was poised at a moment of decision on the road to possible futures, only one of which was the New Utopia.

THE END OF AN AGE

In this way past causation was linked to present effect and current actions to the future of history. The New Utopian meta-narrative assumed that the succession of events was not chaotic or contingent but indicative of some internal logic of

¹ p.224.

² quoted in *Northampton Chronicle and Echo*, 4 March 1939.

historical development. From within such a view of history Laski looked backwards and saw a period, whose 'achievements were so large, its miracles so obvious, that its gospel of laissez-faire triumphed easily over all competing faiths'.³ Relating the development of the means of production to history, the cleric and communist sympathiser Hewlett Johnson saw this period as one when 'science and capitalistic industry walked hand in hand' in a 'happy and fruitful partnership'.⁴ These were views which, by juxtaposing a harmonious past to an unstable present, indicated that 'History' was on the move. An alternative narrative took as its starting point a golden age of 'the Drakes, the Raleighs and the Clives' in a national history whose spirit had been lost.⁵

AFTER THE DELUGE

Certain events were central to the New Utopian account of the loss of this harmonious past. The first major indicator that the heavy wheel of history was turning was the war which became, in Leonard Woolf's term, 'the Deluge',⁶ the cataclysm which cut Britons off from what Stanley Baldwin's generation recalled as a lost age of harmony and prosperity.

The war made problematic once easy assumptions of the certainty of 'progress' or the necessary beneficence of 'science' and industrialism, or indeed that 'reason' was sovereign in the human subject.⁷ 'The war... made us look bitterly

³ Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, p.31.

⁴ Johnson, *The Socialist Sixth of the World*, p.55.

⁵ Oswald Mosley, audio recording of 1934 speech at the Albert Hall, on "Comrades in Struggle": *The Voice of Oswald Mosley 1934-1939* (1988).

⁶ Leonard Woolf, *After the Deluge* (Harmondsworth, 1937; first published 1931).

⁷ Clarke, *The Pattern of Expectation 1644-200*, pp.227, 231, 237-238; Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York and London, 1975), ch.1.

upon Victorian optimism' the editorial of *Plan* commented.⁸ At the same time some theories of history saw the conflict as evidence of the inherent contradictions of bourgeois society, a signal of its movement towards terminal crisis and the 'beginning of world revolution'.⁹ Among socialists this was an interpretation which followed initially from the work of J.A. Hobson, reinforced in the inter-war period by the growing influence of Marxism-Leninism.¹⁰ According to this view of history the only future bourgeois imperialism could offer was, sooner or later, crisis leading to another conflagration.¹¹ 'Capitalist peace' was 'by its nature, a breathing space between wars'.¹² A similar, albeit somewhat more conspiratorial and moral critique, pointed to the arms trade as driving society in the same direction.¹³ Either way, society had either to be transformed or, alternatively, as in 1917, revolution would come from war.

Although for socialists the war could represent a struggle against the greater evil of Prussian militarism or even, in Wells' term, 'a war to end war', it was most often interpreted as the work of capital under the mask of patriotism. An alternative reading of the Great War concurred that 'the old world and the old ways came to an end in 1914' but packed a different but no less powerful charge.¹⁴ Fascism presented itself as the 'expression of the mind of a war-hardened disillusioned generation' emerging 'out of the wreckage of the world of the last

⁸ 'Editorial: Is Progress Inevitable?', *Plan*, 2 1 (January 1935), pp.1-2; 1.

⁹ R.P. Dutt, *World Politics 1918-1936* (1936), pp.39, 35-40; Lansbury, *My England*, pp.176-192.

¹⁰ J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism—a Study* (1902); V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism—The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1933); Michael Bentley, *The climax of Liberal Politics: British Liberalism in Theory and Practice 1868-1918* (1987), pp.84-85, 93-94.

¹¹ Brailsford, *Property or Peace*.

¹² Harold J. Laski, 'The Economic Foundations of Peace', pp.499-548 in Leonard Woolf (ed.), *The Intelligent Man's Way to Prevent War* (1933), p.544.

¹³ Fenner Brockway, *The Bloody Traffic* (1933); Fenner Brockway and Frederic Mullally, *Death Pays a Dividend* (1944).

century'.¹⁵ This view of the conflict saw it not as an epiphenomenon of capitalism, but more in terms of betrayed sacrifice and mismanaged national destiny. The radical potential of this view came from the retrospective construction of the front line soldier as one promised a utopian 'land fit for heroes' but whose loyalty, fortitude and heroism were betrayed in the Britain still ruled by the 'old gang', the land of 'decadence', economic malaise and national decline.¹⁶

For those like Mosley who entered politics in the post-war period whom White has called the 'front generation', as well as those who turned to Christian pacifism or otherwise interpreted the conflict as a 'bosses' war', the memory of the experience and outcome of the Great War remained at the head of the charge sheet against 'the old order'.¹⁷ Younger people who missed the fighting nonetheless came to adulthood in a milieu which was fundamentally separated from the pre-1914 world.

SLUMP

World depression was another significant crisis in the New Utopian meta-narrative, another moment of socio-political rupture. For historical materialists, here was another sign that one 'epoch' or 'order' of society was ending. In 1933 Laski found it 'difficult not to conclude that the period whose character was defined by the French revolution is now drawing to a close'.¹⁸ Wells felt himself to be 'watching a dark curtain fall steadily fold after fold across the bright spectacle of hope with

¹⁴ Anon. [W.E.D. Allen], *The Letters of Lucifer and leading articles from the Blackshirt* (undated; c.1933), p.89.

¹⁵ W.E.D. Allen, 'The Fascist Idea In Britain', *The Quarterly Review*, 261 (October 1933), pp.223-238; 224.

¹⁶ Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, p.27.

¹⁷ Dan S. White, *Lost Comrades: Socialists of the Front Generation 1914-1918* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1992).

which the century dawned.¹⁹ While not viewing history in deterministic terms, Mosley wrote that Britain had first 'failed to recover from the war period', to then, in 1932, face either the chaos of revolution or the prospect of 'sink[ing]', almost in her sleep, to the position of a Spain—alive, in a sense, but dead to all sense of greatness and to her mission in the world'.²⁰ Ten years later Acland pointed to 'the great depression' as being when 'the great masses of the peoples began to... understand... that the system could not succeed'.²¹

THE BROKEN MACHINE

Despite their differences the New Utopians shared a diagnosis that the central cause of the crisis lay in a disjuncture between the capitalist economy and the development of the productive resources of society. Bourgeois economics had long been criticised as morally deficient, the Slump indicated their *functional* bankruptcy. Christian socialist R.H. Tawney reflected that previously, whether 'admired or detested', the capitalist economy had worked, but in 1931 this was no longer so. To 'prize' such a system was 'not realism, but romance, it is to wear as a talisman a millstone round one's neck' he wrote.²² Wells used a common mechanistic analogy to argue that society's 'monetary and financial machinery' was 'out of gear'.²³ The machine', Geoffrey Trease wrote in late 1931, 'cannot be restarted. It must be scrapped ruthlessly as obsolete, wasteful plant'.²⁴

¹⁸ Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, p.30.

¹⁹ Wells, *After Democracy*, p.219.

²⁰ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, pp.11, 158.

²¹ Richard Acland, *The Forward March* (1941), p.14.

²² R.H. Tawney, *Equality* (1964; first published 1931), pp.27-28, 209-210.

²³ Wells, *After Democracy*, p.190.

²⁴ Geoffrey Trease, 'Prelude to the English Revolution', *The Twentieth Century*, 2 9 (November 1931), pp.21-23; 21.

The bare bones of the economic heart of the crisis were an acute global cyclical depression combined with a major chronic local decline. Agriculture had been sacrificed long ago for the benefits of free trade for industry. The industries of the first industrial revolution which had once enriched the Victorian ruling classes—textiles, ship building, coal, iron and steel—were increasingly uncompetitive. The markets which had once bought their manufactures had industrialised and now not only produced what they once imported, but exported those goods to Britain. The cyclical depression of the world economy—linked crises of consumer credit, of returns on capital and general confidence—drove these struggling sectors into still deeper crisis while the fortunes of rising manufacturing industries and services also fell in the general slump. A vicious circle of price competition, reduced returns on capital, wage cuts and cyclical unemployment and declining ability to consume led to further radicalised competition. ‘The nation’, Mosley suggested, was reduced ‘to the absurd and impotent position of a dog chasing its own tail in whirling circles of accelerating futility and disaster’.²⁵

The ‘free enterprise’ economy, the Labour Keynesian Jay contended, had once claimed that it would ‘somehow bring prosperity for all’. However, it was clear that ‘the blind inhuman calculus of *laissez-faire*’ could not even approach a ‘reasonably distributed satisfaction of human needs.’²⁶ It was, Morrison concurred, ‘a matter of accident whether the well-being of the community is served or not’.²⁷ Capitalism, Durbin believed, was ‘a system that can only be justified by a spectacular rate of expansion’. This was no longer the case, and private property in

²⁵ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, pp.84-85.

²⁶ Jay, *The Socialist Case*, p.xii.

²⁷ Herbert Morrison, *An Easy Outline* (undated; c.1938), p.8.

the means of production no longer made 'any substantial contribution to social welfare.'²⁸ Bourgeois society had placed its faith in the invisible hand of *laissez faire* as its god, but it had failed.

POVERTY IN THE AGE OF PLENTY

Aside from the consequences of the cyclical nature of capitalism, much of the New Utopians' criticism of *laissez-faire* economic institutions related to their failure to function even within their own terms. Mismanagement and corruption, the wasteful duplication of effort and unnecessary complication, and, in particular, the operation of finance capital with complete indifference to anything other than its own narrow interests, were all common points of criticism. However, the core argument of the New Utopian economic critique and so its challenge generally, was of elegant, and apparently unassailable, simplicity. On the one hand, there existed unfulfilled human needs for the essentials of life, on the other, there were under-utilised labour power, raw materials and machinery. That the latter could not be deployed to satisfy the former constituted the 'paradox' of 'poverty in an age of plenty'.

This paradox was a constitutional quality of capitalism, caused by the disequilibrium between purchasing power and production attendant on the extraction of surplus value, but at times of crisis this quality was brought to striking prominence. Then, Wells wrote, 'plenty... under our system of private profit and private employment, starves the world'.²⁹ In fact the maintenance of profit demanded the actual destruction of the means of life. Citing examples repeated so

²⁸ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.325.

²⁹ Wells, *After Democracy*, p.227.

many times that they became hackneyed, Acland wrote: 'they close "redundant" shipyards, dismantle textile machinery, "rationalise" rubber, burn coffee and pay men not to produce pigs'.³⁰ Morrison concurred: 'the tailor is in rags because there are too many clothes! The family of the agricultural worker... hungry because there is too much food!'³¹ Acland recognised why these examples were so rhetorically effective: 'hungry men' hearing of 'wheat and coffee burned and fish thrown back in the sea' could not fail to be moved by 'such a spectacular piece of Alice in Wonderland'.³²

This powerful argument was given an additional charge when it was linked to the narrative of history. The Labour manifesto *For Socialism and Peace* explained that:

These conditions prevail at a time when scientific discovery has made our power to produce greater than at any period in the history of the world. Literally, as has been so often insisted by Labour, and is now widely recognised, we starve in the midst of a potential plenty.³³

Mosley noted that whereas within living memory society had confronted 'the problem of poverty' it was now 'faced with the problem of plenty'.³⁴ Irrespective of their other differences, this was a point upon which all could agree, he argued.³⁵ In all previous ages aggregate productive potential had lagged behind need and so the industrial age, despite its terrible crimes, had led to an increasing average

³⁰ Acland, *What It Will Be Like*, p.19.

³¹ Morrison, *An Easy Outline*, p.8.

³² Acland, *The Forward March*, p.14.

³³ The Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace: The Labour Party's Programme of Action* (1934), p.14.

³⁴ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.88.

standard of living. But, Cole charged, 'twentieth-century capitalism has not even this defence'.³⁶ No longer was the good life something that could necessarily only be bought for the few at the cost of the privations of the toiling multitude. The co-operator Frank Leeman believed that 'what Athens accomplished on a city scale can now be achieved on a world wide scale. Man has solved the economic riddle of history'. It was this which made 'Utopian dreams into scientific fact'.³⁷

However, this 'fact' coexisted with a Britain of hunger marchers, and the grey-skinned denizens of the depressed areas surviving on a diet of bread and margarine. 'The technician', Mosley wrote, 'carries in his hands for the people this priceless gift of liberty, for the first time in history' only for this gift to be 'struck from his hands, and dashed from the lips of the people, by the age of chaos'.³⁸

CAPITALISM AS FRANKENSTEIN

The discourse of poverty in the age of plenty was most associated with capitalism as a free-market system which, the more unregulated it was, the more striking the disparities between wealth and poverty it would produce. While the New Utopian critique was in the first instance directed at the free market, as the period went on, the structure of capitalism was increasingly seen to be changing. While private property and production for profit remained unchanged aspects of the economy, capitalism had seemingly entered a 'monopoly' stage in which the competition between enterprises which had been a motor of technical, and so social progress, had come to an end. This was the 'era of the giant corporation'; 'state organized

³⁵ Oswald Mosley, speech to the English Speaking Union of March 1933, cited in *idem.*, *My Life* (1968), p.325.

³⁶ G.D.H. Cole, 'A Socialist Civilisation', pp.147-187 in *Programme for Victory: A Collection of Essays prepared for the Fabian Society* (1941), p.152.

³⁷ Frank Leeman, *The New World Order* (Nottingham, undated; c.1945), p.9.

private monopoly capitalism'; 'the mighty Frankenstein monster of capitalist organisation'.³⁹

In this new world a socially divisive form of control would maintain profitability by 'restrictive practices—whether by way of Combines, Trusts, cartels, rings, price arrangements, or the gentleman's agreement of the trade association' which Jay saw as 'practically universal in modern industry'.⁴⁰ The state might introduce structures to restore competition but Laski saw that 'the ingenuity of lawyers' quickly found 'ways around those devices'.⁴¹ In this situation capitalist planning would be a 'mechanism for the exploitation of the consumer'.⁴² The fruitful anarchy of competition would be replaced by restrictions causing industries to become 'conservative, ossified and routine bound', interested only in milking a captive market by the 'swelling parasitic apparatus' of modern advertising technique, while solving the problem of 'over-production' by 'rationalising' 'excess' capacity out of existence.⁴³

This 'revolution' in scale could have been interpreted as evidence of the gradual but imperceptible progress towards the Fabian utopia. However, monopoly capitalism could equally suggest a tendency towards oligarchy, corporatism and fascism. In the socialist understanding of the aims and class origins of fascism, these were 'polite preparations for the "corporate state"', for 'industrial feudalism'.⁴⁴ Fascists instead resolved the contradiction between their support for private property

³⁸ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.6.

³⁹ Harold J. Laski, *Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time* (1943), p.307; Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.325; George Lansbury, 'Close up the Ranks', *The New Clarion*, 18 February 1933.

⁴⁰ Jay, *The Socialist Case*, p.xiii.

⁴¹ Laski, *Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*, p.325.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.326.

⁴³ *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.12-14.

and their advocacy of the interests of the small owner by pointing to the putative 'Jewish' nature of monopoly capital.⁴⁵

THE FRUSTRATION OF SCIENCE

Laski believed that a 'society geared to the profit making motive... necessarily results in the frustration of science'.⁴⁶ Only an economic system in decay could find 'it profitable to hamper the introduction of new inventions which may destroy the value of existing capital, and to throttle... innovation and research'.⁴⁷ The last thing industries embarrassed by the productivity of their existing means of production needed were even more efficient machines or superior alternatives to the goods which they already produced. Capitalism, Strachey wrote, faced with the 'ever new and more fabulous powers' which science pressed on it found itself 'in the embarrassing position of the sorcerer's apprentice'.⁴⁸

One possible implication of this was what Palme Dutt named 'the new "capitalist Luddism"'.⁴⁹ Strachey explained: 'either the system of society must be changed... or... modern science must be destroyed or at any rate artificially put back to, and kept at, a point where it will again be compatible with capitalist society'. He noted from the pages of *Nature* that 'what is wanted is to go back to pre-industrial methods of production. Scrap your huge-scale factories; prohibit mass production by law: and return to "small-scale cottage industries, or handicrafts," with a little gardening thrown in.' Despite having written about a

⁴⁴ Lansbury, *My England*, p.11-10; Acland, *What It Will Be Like*, p.18.

⁴⁵ Peter Heyward, *Menace of the Chain Stores: British Union Policy for the Distributive Trades* (undated; 193?).

⁴⁶ Harold Laski, 'Post-War Machinery of Government- II—Research, Intelligence and Administration', *The Political Quarterly*, 15 (1944), pp.10-21; 19.

⁴⁷ *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.22.

⁴⁸ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, pp.175-176.

similar solution in *Erewhon*, not even Samuel Butler could have foreseen such occurrences within thirty years of his death.⁵⁰

Similarly, in relation to both historical-materialist teleology and also to more general notions of 'progress', the New Utopians understood monopoly capitalism as tending towards a stagnant society. The apparent future of monopoly capitalism was one in which, at least for a while, the switch-back ride of the economic cycle would be calmed but, at the same time, the competitive drive to build a better mouse-trap would no longer operate. In Britain's 'age of decadence' Leeman saw science as the 'slave of financial interests'.⁵¹ To capitalism's 'moral outrage' was added 'scientific outrage' and science, 'once the welcomed handmaid' of bourgeois society, was being 'driven into the wilderness'.⁵²

To the frustration of science at home was added the bitter irony that the only area in which science and production were allowed to show their power was in preparation for war. 'Great technical forces' were, Cole recognised, 'directed not to making things that will render men happier and wealthier and healthier but to the arts of destruction'.⁵³ Tawney, surveying this depressing vista, found that it was possible 'for a society to be heir to the knowledge of all the ages, and to use it with the recklessness of a madman and the ferocity of a savage. It may succeed in discovering the secret of abundance, only to bar the doors which it has laboured to unlock. It may master the means to harness nature to its chariot, and then employ them to drive with greater speed to the precipice'.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.22.

⁵⁰ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, pp.178-180.

⁵¹ Leeman, *The New World Order*, pp.10-11.

⁵² Johnson, *The Socialist Sixth of the World*, p.51.

⁵³ G.D.H. Cole, 'A Socialist Civilisation', p.149.

⁵⁴ Tawney, *Equality*, p.189.

BRITAIN AS DYSTOPIA

In the New Utopian meta-narrative the Great War and the Slump were moments in the breakdown of the existing social order. Bourgeois society, having, as Strachey suggested, once promised the 'proximate millennium' by 1932 bore 'no resemblance to the promised land of Rousseau and his disciples'.⁵⁵ Durbin, using the signifier for dystopia that Huxley brought into the language in the same, significant year, later saw the 'story of the collapse of the 'European order'' as beginning 'with the 'Great Depression' of 1929', the moment when a "brave new world" was 'brought to birth through the travail of economic depression!'⁵⁶

The New Utopians, while differing in their understanding of the relationship between economic 'base' and cultural 'superstructure', appended to their economic critique a representation of the national life as a vista of wholesale social, political, aesthetic and moral decay.

THE RELIGION OF INEQUALITY

Tawney effectively linked economic institutions to an ethical critique when he named bourgeois Britain 'the acquisitive society' in 1921. This was a society whose 'whole tendency and interest and preoccupation' was the 'acquisition of wealth', an 'obsession' which he described as a 'poison which inflames every wound and turns each trivial scratch into a malignant cancer'.⁵⁷ A decade later Tawney returned to the immorality of British society, which was analogous to a man who 'lets his wife die of neglect and keeps his children on short rations in the coal-hole, while doing

⁵⁵ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, pp.33, 48.

⁵⁶ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.24.

⁵⁷ R.H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* (1921), pp.32, 241.

himself well in wine and cigars'.⁵⁸ The Christian philosopher and CW supporter Kenneth Ingram described the 'motives on which capitalism depends' as 'inherently vicious because they are selfish', and as leading to a 'poisonous atmosphere'.⁵⁹ The belief that a 'prosperous and harmonious society' would come though each citizen seeking their 'own self-interest' was, Acland wrote, the exact opposite of the principle of 'love thy neighbour as thyself' and promised that civilisation would either 'perish' or that Britain would be left in an 'uninspiring backwater'.⁶⁰

These were views which stressed that the profit motive inevitably tended towards evil and was, as Cripps wrote, 'unchristian'.⁶¹ Whilst instead placing its emphasis on the structural origins of bourgeois ethics, the communist critique was little different in quality. In bourgeois Britain the ruling principle was, the communists' *Britain without Capitalists* claimed, 'better the ruin of a generation than 1 per cent off the rate of profit'.⁶² Fascists, whilst stressing ruling class decadence more than any necessary relationship between economics and morality, saw a nation where 'children count less than the gold bars in the scales of the Bank of England'.⁶³

This was the world cast as 'a gigantic casino' where 'one group of players wins, another loses. But the men, women, and children whose unalleviated toil has produced this mountain of wealth are not even admitted to the tables'.⁶⁴ Whereas social harmony through equality was among the foremost qualities sought for utopia, British society was split with major systemic differences of opportunity and

⁵⁸ Tawney, *Equality*, p.152.

⁵⁹ Kenneth Ingram, 'Not God and Mammon', *Common Wealth Review*, 2 8 (July 1945), p.5.

⁶⁰ Acland, *Questions and Answers from Common Wealth Meetings*, pp.19-21.

⁶¹ Cripps, *Towards Christian Democracy*, pp.53-54.

⁶² *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.17.

⁶³ Robert Gordon-Canning, *The Inward Strength of a National Socialist* (undated; c.1938), p.7.

life experience in all areas. Tawney particularly singled out the education system as both product, and sustainer of, an unequal society which 'cripp[ed]' the performance of working class children and 'poison[ed]' their souls with the 'blight of social inferiority'.⁶⁵ Naturally, the 'religion of inequality' necessarily meant that the law too would 'vary in its application from class to class'.⁶⁶ Despite wartime talk of 'equality of sacrifice', the CPGB claimed that 'while the rich enjoy safety in air raids, the working people are denied bomb proof shelters; while the rich enjoy luxury meals, the working people go short of food'.⁶⁷

Durbin argued that 'respect should be for persons and not for classes' but instead there was 'snobbishness... respect for a class—for the empty signs of wealth and breeding'.⁶⁸ Turning to another blight of inequality Jay stressed that it engendered a 'false scale of values: a false servility on one side, and a false complacency on the other' which together destroyed 'freedom, independence, self-respect and integrity'.⁶⁹ Utopians might seek fraternity, the acquisitive principle made no other relationship possible than that which Cripps named as one 'of master and servant'.⁷⁰ Looking at another aspect of this divisive system, Laski argued that it degraded the 'masses' but at the same time separated the 'successful men from its unsuccessful by the abyss of fear', leaving only 'charity' as 'a nauseating safeguard of property against revolution'.⁷¹ Accompanying these major

⁶⁴ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.105.

⁶⁵ Tawney, *Equality*, p.142.

⁶⁶ Laski, *Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*, p.317.

⁶⁷ London District Committee of the CPGB, *London's Way Forward* (undated; c.1941), p.4.

⁶⁸ E.F.M. Durbin, *What We Have to Defend: a Brief Critical Examination of the British Social Tradition* (1942), pp.24-25.

⁶⁹ Jay, *The Socialist Case*, p.3.

⁷⁰ Cripps, *Towards Christian Democracy*, pp.53-54.

⁷¹ Laski, *Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*, p.327.

structural inequalities was a pervasive, tainting, fog of petty snobbery—what Tawney called ‘class-saturated thinking’.⁷²

DISTRESSED AREAS, THE C3 CITIZEN AND MODERN TIMES

One product of the acquisitive principle was the unwanted and discarded England of the nineteenth century which Priestley found among the ‘three Englands’ of his *English Journey*.⁷³ There people lived ‘a shambling dull-eyed poor imitation of life’ in the England of Ellen Wilkinson’s *Jarrow—The Town that was Murdered*, of Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier*, the land of Greenwood’s *Love on the Dole*.⁷⁴

It was this England that the communist Hutt referred to as the ‘grisly problem of the derelict areas’—otherwise commonly known as the ‘distressed areas’—which were a ‘brand on the visage of capitalist society’.⁷⁵ George Hicks wrote in *Labour’s New Clarion* of ‘the grey, squalid, lives of the millions... in the slums of our towns’ and the fascist eye saw ‘slums and semi-slums everywhere’, ‘malnutrition on a gigantic scale’.⁷⁶ In this latter respect the finding by Sir John Orr that at least 20 per cent of the population was forced to exist on insufficient food was influential.⁷⁷ Typically, Olive Hawks wrote that ‘in mean slum streets every kind of disease finds a foothold. Under-nourishment saps the strength from every

⁷² Tawney, *Equality*, p.36.

⁷³ J.B. Priestley, *English Journey* (1934), pp.411, 398.

⁷⁴ Ellen Wilkinson, *The Town that was Murdered* (1939); Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*; Walter Greenwood, *Love on the Dole* (1935; first published 1933). See also Philip Gibbs, *England Speaks* (1937); *idem*, *Ordeal in England (England Speaks Again)* (1937); Wal Hannington, *The Problem of the Distressed Areas* (1937); other significant works somewhat more sociological than rhetorical include: The Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work: A Report made to the Pilgrim Trust* (Cambridge, 1938); Mark Abrams, *The Condition of the British People 1911-1945: A Study prepared for the Fabian Society* (1945); G.D.H. and M.I. Cole, *The Condition of Britain* (1937); Robert Sinclair, *Metropolitan Man: The future of the English* (London; first published 1937).

⁷⁵ Allen Hutt, *This Final Crisis* (1935), p.272.

⁷⁶ *The New Clarion*, 29 April 1933; Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, p.113.

⁷⁷ John Boyd Orr, *Food, Health and Income: Report on a survey of adequacy of diet in relation to income* (1936).

generation.' The result was 'a C3 nation'.⁷⁸ Robert Gordon-Canning wrote evocatively of people who were 'undernourished at birth, die still undernourished and go to their graves not even succulent to the maggots'.⁷⁹ James Hemming of CW found 'tepid semi-health' to be the norm. Forcing people to live 'on bread, margarine, fish and chips, and tea' was 'like trying to run a Spitfire on dirty paraffin'.⁸⁰ The gross inequalities in the distribution of national wealth, Tawney reasoned, meant that for the majority of the population the 'human energies which are the source of all wealth' were 'systematically undeveloped from birth to maturity'.⁸¹

Even for those in work, economic 'anarchy' left life 'haunted by a feeling of insecurity'.⁸² Unemployment might come through 'rationalisation', 'dilution', or through 'machine replacing man' and throwing the now worthless 'hand' onto the 'scrapheap'. Even for those whom it remained profitable to employ, wages were, Morrison claimed, frequently only sufficient as a bare minimum to "'keep body and soul together'", leaving even the 'moderate luxuries of life' out of reach.⁸³ As to work itself, workers were frequently 'slaves of monotonous machine processes'.⁸⁴ The drive to decrease the labour time per unit of production led to: 'Speed-up, stop-watch men. Faster moving belts. Quicker driving', reducing workers to the 'level of machines', as Lansbury put it.⁸⁵ Mosley described the typical life as lived 'under the shadow of unemployment' with 'low wages, long hours of exhausting

⁷⁸ Olive Hawks, *Women Fight for Britain and Britain Alone* (undated; c.1938), p.4.

⁷⁹ Robert Gordon-Canning, *The Spirit of Fascism* (1937), p.2.

⁸⁰ James Hemming, 'We CAN All Be Fit', *Common Wealth Review*, 18 (October 1944), pp.17-18; 18.

⁸¹ Tawney, *Equality*, pp.27-28.

⁸² Morrison, *An Easy Outline*, p.4.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Cole, 'A Socialist Civilisation', p.150.

labour, bad houses, shrinking social amenities, the uncertainty of industrial collapse and universal confusion'.⁸⁶

In a grossly unequal society there were some who already seemed to be living in a utopia among whose pleasures was "'conspicuous consumption'".⁸⁷ Nonetheless, Morrison recognised that even many of the middle classes were 'haunted' by the fear of their firm amalgamating or deciding to "'rationalise'". Managers and technocrats might be well paid but had the 'dissatisfaction' that their brains were 'exploited' for the benefit of 'rich people'.⁸⁸ In 'a world of little work, of rivalry, struggle, and competition for the little that there is' Joad spoke of 'stories going around the schools and universities to-day of expensively educated young women subsiding into jobs behind the counters of big London shops'.⁸⁹ Lansbury wrote that 'there is now no security for any of us. Even the millionaire never can tell what a day or hour may bring them'.⁹⁰

BRITAIN AND THE BEAST

The fabric of the towns and villages of Britain provided little reason for encouragement either. W.E.D. Allen, a supporter of Mosley, compared 'the stale and weary streets' of the town with 'the emptying blighted fields' of the country.⁹¹ Combining anti-Semitism with criticism of working class housing another blackshirt contrasted the 'desert of slums,' 'dark and gloomy tenements and squalid garrets'

⁸⁵ CPGB, *Friday Night Till Monday Morning* (1937), p.6; George Lansbury, *The New Clarion*, 18 February 1933, p.203.

⁸⁶ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.23.

⁸⁷ Laski, *Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*, p.341.

⁸⁸ Morrison, *An Easy Outline*, p.3-5.

⁸⁹ C.E.M. Joad, *Philosophy for Our Times* (1940), p.17.

⁹⁰ Lansbury, 'Close up the Ranks', p.203.

⁹¹ Allen, 'The Fascist Idea In Britain', p.237.

with 'an oasis of Wellsian flats dropped from the skies for wealthy Jews'.⁹² CW pointed to ill-health as the consequence of 'lack of sleep, sun and air, proper food, exercise, cleanliness and sanitary arrangements—all the direct result of bad housing'. In the countryside too, housing was in an 'appalling condition'.⁹³ 'Overcrowded and insanitary cottages, which too often are damp and rat infested'.⁹⁴ Even the suburbs were not necessarily the idylls they appeared. Dalton made the often heard point that among their consequences were 'hours... subtracted from leisure, and heavy costs incurred in money and in physical and nervous strain, merely in travelling to and fro'.⁹⁵ In this way even the advantage of the shorter working day was negated.

Once again all this was a consequence of a society in which individualism and acquisitiveness acted against the common good. In the Britain *with* capitalists, the 'profit-motive' and 'private initiative' had brought 'disease-ridden slums, fog-bound inflated cities and ribbon-development;... insanitary hovels of mining valleys and rural villages and the soul-killing ugliness of the dreary slate-roofed streets of... industrial towns.' Such were these conditions that 'a Hogarth and a Grosz in union' would struggle to caricature them.⁹⁶ Dalton's view of the British urban and rural scene was that the nation had 'inherited a squalid anarchy'.⁹⁷ CW found that 'private enterprise' had provided 'the most horrible towns the world has ever seen'. Unplanned 'ribbon development' of housing along major roads not only replaced

⁹² *Blackshirt*, 18 June 1936.

⁹³ CW, *Housing and Planning* (1944), pp.3, 17.

⁹⁴ CPGB, *A Policy for the Land and the People* (undated; c.1938), p.4.

⁹⁵ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.270.

⁹⁶ Anon., *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.140.

⁹⁷ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.267.

the beauty of the countryside with urban sprawl but denied 'community life' and access to amenities while offering children 'a deadly playground'.⁹⁸

This critique of the predations of 'the Beast' was aesthetic as well as functional.⁹⁹ Durbin despaired of the 'architectural savagery' of 'incongruous palaces of cement and steel' destroying the 'harmony' of London's squares and streets.¹⁰⁰ In contrast, Dalton exhibited the modernist's dislike of the 'interminable miles of... "respectable" streets' of the previous century, the "'Gaspie Gothic" style' of the Victorians; and 'under King George V "Ye Olde Tudor"' and the 'snobbish, fussy, meaningless ornamentation of the jerry builder'.¹⁰¹

Despite the modernism central to the New Utopianism, the pastoral continued to be important. The communist Ted Bramley complained that for Londoners 'a day's journey' was 'necessary to get a glimpse of the green fields'.¹⁰² In the *British Union Quarterly* Louis Borrill condemned the 'ultra-voracious growth of big cities' which was 'turning the garden of England as "sodden and unkind" as the Northern industrial areas'.¹⁰³ Mannin wrote of the countryside that 'an Odeon cinema appears (where once perhaps was a bluebell wood), followed by a cheap "perm" hair-dresser's and the pseudo-Tudor cake shop'.¹⁰⁴ Although Durbin could praise bourgeois society for a prosperity which once would have 'appeared Utopian' he showed a special animus towards 'the speculative builder and the

⁹⁸ CW, *Housing and Planning*, p.1,13.

⁹⁹ Williams-Ellis, *Britain and the Beast*.

¹⁰⁰ Durbin, *What We Have to Defend*, pp.26-28.

¹⁰¹ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.269-70.

¹⁰² Ted Bramley, *New London* (undated; c.1937), p.7.

¹⁰³ Louis Borrill, 'The Thin Green Line', *British Union Quarterly*, 3 1 (1939), pp.30-37.

¹⁰⁴ Mannin, *Castles in the Street*, p.9.

profiteering landlord', guilty of 'promiscuous rape over the lovely body of our ancient agricultural civilization'.¹⁰⁵

Despite this concern for the effects of bourgeois modernity on the British landscape, a critical appreciation of the wider consequences of a social order centred on an ever expanding industrialism and consumption, was rather rarer. Wells was unusual in his appreciation of the need for the 'protection of natural resources now being wasted, and... of many species of animal and plants threatened with speedy extinction.' The myopic exploitation of 'forests', 'whale and sea fisheries and the penguin massacre' achieved an 'immediate profit' while 'creating shortages in the future.' He also showed himself to be a true—and unheeded—prophet, speculating that, 'in less than a hundred years, while the statesmen and diplomats wrangle, most of the forests of the world may be destroyed'.¹⁰⁶ Nationalism and capitalism meant that modernity merely brought a 'stupendous enhancement of the power of waste in the world'.¹⁰⁷

THE BRAVE NEW WORLD

In *Brave New World*, with its religion of hedonism and consumption, could be found, Strachey believed, a portrait of the 'loathsome sort of world' which bourgeois society produced.¹⁰⁸ Turning to the third of the 'Englands' of his *English Journey* Priestley saw a 'new' England which was born in America and which was 'essentially democratic', 'a large-scale, mass-production job', the land of suburbs, the 'super-cinema' and the 'modern factory, all glass and white tiles and chromium plate'. This was, Priestley admitted, a 'cleaner, tidier, healthier, saner world' but

¹⁰⁵ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.332.

¹⁰⁶ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, pp.673, 694.

also one 'lacking in character, in zest, gusto, flavour and bite, drive, originality'.¹⁰⁹ In this way, Priestley expressed an ambivalence which was not uncommon among the New Utopians who, whilst embracing modernity, at the same time were not completely at ease with the direction in which Fordism was taking the world.

Through the eyes of E.D. Randall of the BUF the 'bourgeois crowd' of the new suburban nation appeared to be 'exactly like sheep, with grey faces unturned'. The members of this 'comfortable' 'suburban bourgeoisie', had 'hidden themselves away in a dim little world of self-absorption'. The summit of their ambitions was 'security and a small car' in the world of 'rows of artificial villas, with narrow gardens growing synthetic shrubs'. Capable of no more than 'a slow stupor of resentment', Randall saw 'Liberal England' as settling into 'a sleep which grows into death as the days go by'.¹¹⁰ Cole too could find little to celebrate in a Britain which had settled on 'life in formless urban agglomerations, bridge, golf and the "flicks" as the appointed gifts of the twentieth century'.¹¹¹ Against the claim that socialism would engender a devitalising uniformity Attlee noted that it was monopoly capitalism which brought 'chain stores, cinemas, and banks, and masses of houses of uniform type' while, through the popular press and cinema, 'filling people's minds with the same narrow range of ideas'.¹¹²

Louis Borill found that the cities took 'nearly everything vital from the people' during their day's work 'only to spew them out as devitalised bodies'.¹¹³ D.S. Savage of the FPSI also criticised 'life under metropolitan conditions' as

¹⁰⁷ Wells, *Phoenix*, p.14.

¹⁰⁸ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, p.215.

¹⁰⁹ Priestley, *English Journey*, pp.402-405.

¹¹⁰ *Blackshirt*, 1 June 1934.

¹¹¹ G.D.H. Cole, 'Plan for Living', p.5.

¹¹² Attlee, *The Labour Party In Perspective*, p.154.

leading to 'an internal impoverishment', a 'divorce from the fullness of natural things', which left the senses 'starved and the soul... impoverished'. The 'inner communal bond' had been exchanged for the 'mass life of the city', and the 'satisfyingly complex experience of pastoral labour' was replaced by factory production. 'A wall of steel' had been slid 'between man and nature' by the machine. The concrete life of the past gave place to one of 'sensationalism, ceaseless hurry and meaningless activity', time itself had become 'a thin unreal stream'. In 'the modern Metropolis' people were not 'happy'.¹¹⁴

S.H.V. Argent, writing in the journal of the FPSI, located one cause of this malaise, which was that while creativity had been lost in modern production, the growing opportunities for leisure had not provided a substitute. Instead 'leisure' time was filled by 'excessive consumption'. 'We consume, consume, consume, and still the machine is ahead, awaiting our slower pace' Argent declared.¹¹⁵ In 1940 Joad described his times as 'an age governed by the stomach-and-pocket view of life'.¹¹⁶ A.K. Chesterton also saw humanity debased into 'a buying animal'.¹¹⁷ In this new age, as in Huxley's nightmare, the citizen with a 'modest taste in petrol and celluloid' was no longer an exemplar of thrift and sobriety but a 'traitor to the unemployed and to the too productive machine'. At the same time, advertising in pursuit of 'mass' consumption 'foster[ed] the herd instinct', and, in so doing,

¹¹³ Borill, 'The Thin Green Line', p.33.

¹¹⁴ D.S. Savage, 'Creativeness and Social Change', *Plan*, 6 5 (May 1939), pp.1-8; 8.

¹¹⁵ S.H.V. Argent. 'Education and Mass Production', *Plan*, 3 4 (April 1936), pp.12-13.

¹¹⁶ Joad, *Philosophy for Our Times*, p.9.

¹¹⁷ A.K. Chesterton, *Creed of a Fascist Revolutionary* (Marietta, undated; first published 1936), p.20.

exchanged thoughtfulness and creativity for instinctive emotion, sentimentality and conservatism.¹¹⁸

Joad also expressed disgust at the uses to which the new powers were being put. 'Science', he wrote:

has won for us the powers of the gods, yet we bring to their use the mentality of schoolboys or savages. We can talk across continents and oceans, install television in the home, hear Big Ben striking in North Borneo;... distance melts, and the aeroplane girds the earth. In a word, the power that machines have given us has transformed human life; yet so little are we able to make a proper use of this power that instead of using our machines as a means to the good life, we delegate to them the very functions of living. We live a press-the-button existence; we no longer walk; we go out in the car. We no longer climb; we go up in the lift. We no longer converse we turn on the radio. We no longer sing or make music; we put on a record.

And what of the time and energy thereby saved? Joad continued: 'We have driven at seventy miles an hour... To spend another five minutes in the lounge of our hotel, to tell another story, drink another cocktail, or to desultorily turn over the pages of a picture paper exhibiting persons of no distinction performing activities of no importance'.¹¹⁹

For a society which had been content to leave so many of its citizens physically undernourished there was little surprise that Laski could find that 'spiritual and artistic beauty, delight in letters, the enjoyment of art and music, that yearning to understand the universe which gives scientific discovery its power to excite

¹¹⁸ Argent. 'Education and Mass Production', pp.12-13.

respect' was 'largely a reward of successful acquisition' and leisure 'significant only for the wealthy'.¹²⁰ However, just as Huxley's 'epsilons' enjoyed the 'feelies' so the Briton consumed mass produced 'entertainment'. G.A. Smith, whilst selling *The Blackshirt* 'outside the local "super" cinema' took in 'a group of cigarette-sucking young men' wearing 'plum coloured "pork-pie" hats, long tight fitting coats, patent shoes and silk mufflers'. Each one was 'pale and undersized' and, paralleling this external corruption, Smith saw that these 'typical product[s]' of a 'decadent democracy', had had their 'latent animal instincts exploited and brought to the surface by cheap alien films'.¹²¹ In 'the commercial civilisation *de luxe*', the 'ether' was 'full of bad jazz and the heart throbs of a-sexual crooners'; profits accumulated while 'redundant souls' decayed.¹²²

Acland was hardly more enthusiastic about popular pleasures, writing disdainfully of the pursuit of 'second-hand sensation from cinemas and dog tracks' rather than activities which could 'develop, expand and *re-create*' peoples' personalities. 'For millions of citizens the filling up of football coupons was the highest form of activity'.¹²³ Capitalism, a communist stressed, 'has made people into the consumers of culture, instead of partners in its production'.¹²⁴ Thomson also found it an 'ominous sign' that 'instead of playing football our young men go to see others play'.¹²⁵ Laski saw the dominant characteristic of the interwar period as the 'organised externalisation of pleasures, in sport, in dancing, in the cinema'.¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ Joad, *Philosophy for Our Times*, pp.10-11.

¹²⁰ Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, pp.264-265.

¹²¹ *Blackshirt*, 23 November 1934.

¹²² Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, p.114.; *idem.*, *Creed of a Fascist Revolutionary*, p.21.

¹²³ Acland, *Questions and Answers*, pp.10-11.

¹²⁴ E. Rickword, *War and Culture* (undated; c.1938), p.1.

¹²⁵ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.40.

¹²⁶ Harold J. Laski, *Faith, Reason and Civilisation: An Essay in Historical Analysis* (1944), p.41.

Bourgeois society had separated the 'masses' from the 'achievements of the creative imagination' which he saw as 'the real fulfilment of humanity'.¹²⁷ A leisure industry entailed the 'merger of the individual with the recreative mass'. Austen or Dickens were known only as 'writers whose books Hollywood thought fit to film'.¹²⁸ Joad believed that society had entered the 'age of debunking' in which the great literature and music of the past were being forgotten. Once again, the first cause of this was because the 'cultivated man' was a poor consumer—and so 'a bad citizen'—and 'culture' was in 'decline' because there was no money in it.¹²⁹ Even the creativity of the hobbyist was passing: 'the man who, not so long ago, would have produced some vase or picture frame at his own work bench... now walks down to Woolworth's...' Thomson of the BUF wrote.¹³⁰

This vista of decay was bad enough in itself, but could be interpreted as a precursor of worse. H.M. Tomlinson, writing in *Labour's New Clarion* feared a materially abundant but ultimately barren 'mass' society. In his view, the problem was that 'the man in the street' as long as he had 'regular food, a bit of leisure, his picture palace and football match... would not worry if he heard that the National Gallery and the British Museum had been destroyed'. In this future, 'common humanity' would be a stampeding flock of sheep who would smash the 'Grecian Urn... to shards under their honest but indiscriminating hooves'. But, Tomlinson bitterly concluded, 'what matter if the ration of turnips is regular?'¹³¹ The danger here was that the Britain of suburbia, Woolworths and cinema *de luxe* were

¹²⁷ Laski, *Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*, p.314.

¹²⁸ Laski, *Faith, Reason and Civilisation*, p.42.

¹²⁹ C.E.M. Joad, 'Culture and the Community', pp.54-74 in Herbert Morrison, *et al.*, *Can Planning Be Democratic: A Collection of Essays Prepared for the Fabian Society* (1944), p.64.

¹³⁰ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.43.

¹³¹ *The New Clarion*, 4 February 1933.

creating what Priestley believed would be the 'perfect subjects for an iron autocracy' or the 'well fed and contented... rabbits ruled by stoats' of the fascist world which Orwell feared.¹³² Looking at the same prospect from the other side of the divide, fascists saw the future which threatened as one of 'Abby's dream' where the statue of Karl Marx had taken the place of the Cenotaph, Jewry live like 'a race of Gods' and native 'tradition' was 'stamped out' and its 'history' 'burnt'.¹³³

THE WASTE LAND

The FPSI's Arts Group saw the debasement of mass taste under contemporary capitalism as also having negative consequences at the peak of artistic expression. Progress in the material sphere had left senses rusting from 'disuse' and people fearful of the 'introspection which art induces'. The artist was forced to 'pander to the uncultivated tastes of a sufficiently large group'.¹³⁴ Stephen Spender's contention was that bourgeois society had 'perfected the means of dragging men of exceptional ability... down to the very lowest abysses'. Anyone who wished to preserve their 'integrity... should deliberately sabotage his own career.' Contemporary culture was destined only to 'produce standards of unprecedented ugliness and vulgarity' and the "'mob rule" of tastelessness'.¹³⁵ For Laski, the artist was merely 'the plaything of leisure'¹³⁶ and Thomson agreed: 'in an age of lucre', the artist was 'bound to the most sordid standard of popular taste'.¹³⁷ Consequently, the arts either denied the influence of 'the great achievements of the past' or, like

¹³² Priestley, *English Journey*, pp.404-405; Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p.248.

¹³³ *Action*, 3 September 1936.

¹³⁴ 'The Artist in Society', *Plan*, 4 5 (May 1937), pp.16-21.

¹³⁵ Spender, *Forward From Liberalism*, pp.265, 137.

¹³⁶ Laski, *Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*, p.314.

¹³⁷ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.42.

T.S. Elliot, took refuge in a medievalism which denied progress.¹³⁸ Cecil Day-Lewis saw archaism in poetry as a symptom of a culture 'dying at the roots'.¹³⁹ In the fascist eye, the arts had become a 'vehicle of sickness and decay'.¹⁴⁰ The 'intellectuals of Bloomsbury, their hearts and souls placed long ago in the refrigerator' were to Gordon-Canning 'like a petrified forest, which neither rain nor sun can fructify'.¹⁴¹

No aspect of the sublime was left untouched. Religion had once provided an 'interpretation of man's place in the universe' but Strachey perceived that modern thought in general, and Freud in particular, implied that 'the possibility of religious belief is leaving Western man'. At the same time, science, whilst it had torn off the 'protective cloak of religious illusion', in bourgeois society could offer no answer to the question: 'but where is the millennium? Humanity was 'almost... as miserable and terrified as ever'. Strachey concluded that it was 'no wonder that a profound sense of disappointment and discouragement pervades the Western World'.¹⁴² Similarly, there was little hope in Laski's mind that 'the recovery of a system of values' would be through 'a revival of faith in the supernatural'.¹⁴³

These were judgements from men who, at least ostensibly, might have been expected to welcome the eclipse of pre-modern systems of thought. Similar observations can be found among those for whom religion remained a vital part of life. Acland wrote of a society with 'a complete lack of any sense of inspiration, ...vision, ...common purpose', and 'no sense of real values,' wherein religion was

¹³⁸ Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, p.16.

¹³⁹ C. Day Lewis, 'Poetry To-day', *Left Review*, 2 16 (January 1937), pp.899-901.

¹⁴⁰ Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, pp.114-115.

¹⁴¹ Gordon-Canning, *The Spirit of Fascism*, p.7.

¹⁴² Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, pp.164-166.

¹⁴³ Laski, *Faith, Reason and Civilisation*, p.36.

exercising 'a steadily waning influence'.¹⁴⁴ Gordon-Canning was also concerned that 'the materialistic aspect of life' outweighed its 'spiritual significance'.¹⁴⁵ Joad looked out on a society which had entered 'an age without religion', where 'life has no point and the universe no purpose'. With a future prospect of neither eternal bliss nor hellfire but either sudden death or 'going to work dully at dull jobs all the rest of our lives' the consequence was an age of hedonism: "'Oh, Hell!" say the young... "Everything is frightful. Let's go and have a drink somewhere and then dance'.¹⁴⁶

Joad's belief was that such attitudes occurred 'in every civilization which feels the breath of decay as it declines to its close'.¹⁴⁷ Decay indicated the closure of an age. Strachey found that the rot rising from the economic foundations of society was such that 'the odour of decay' was to be found even at 'the highest pinnacles of thought... the philosophical, religious, aesthetic and scientific concepts which crown the whole building'. *The Waste Land* was, Strachey claimed, a reaction 'to the decay of the whole system of society' and 'the epitaph of the culture of the old world'.¹⁴⁸

THE OLD GANG

However, faced with a situation in which, to the New Utopians, action was a pressing necessity, not only was the National Government inert but the fate of the 1929-31 Labour government raised the question of whether the democratic system was capable of the necessary action in any case.

¹⁴⁴ Acland, *Questions and Answers*, pp.10-11.

¹⁴⁵ Gordon-Canning, *The Inward Strength of a National Socialist*, p.3.

¹⁴⁶ Joad, *Philosophy for Our Times*, pp.12-13, 17-18.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.17-18.

¹⁴⁸ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, pp.157, 218.

To Wells, even the Soviet system was corrupted by an ‘ineradicable democratic taint’¹⁴⁹ and he attacked democracy on principle as the system which vested sovereignty in ‘the Common Fool’, the ‘oafish crowd’, the ‘cringing brawl of gawky, under-nourished riff-raff’.¹⁵⁰ The BUF directed a stream of casuistic invective at a ‘Government too weary, too cowardly, and too incompetent to govern’, characterised ‘by indecision, compromise and blether’; a government of “united mutttons” and a Parliament filled with the sound of the ‘bleating of ineffective sheep’.¹⁵¹ However, unlike Wells, the BUF—and the CPGB—while often adopting such disparaging tones, tended to criticise specific aspects of the functioning of British democracy rather than the principles of universal political representation and participation. The position of the parties of democratic socialism, Labour and CW, was different once again, tending to combine a criticism of the Parliamentary system with a fundamental respect for it.

Firstly, there was a problem of inefficiency. Wells believed democratic practices compared very poorly with ‘Mr. Ford making a motor-car’ and were ‘inferior in efficiency to the aeroplane, the telephone exchange or the power station’.¹⁵² Mosley, too, condemned the system as ‘a century out of date’. In a complex, industrialised society, the ‘technician’ was ‘ever more enchained by the passion, the prejudice and the folly of uninstructed politics’. In an age which called for more legislation delivered faster, government was ‘incapable of rapid and effective action’.¹⁵³ Cripps made the same point through the analogy of the attempt

¹⁴⁹ Wells, *The Shape of Things To Come*, p.109.

¹⁵⁰ *Idem.*, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.830; *idem.*, *Star Begotten*, pp.104-105, 119.

¹⁵¹ Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, p.113; Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, pp.19, 37, 99, 148.

¹⁵² Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, pp.601, 620.

¹⁵³ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.34; *idem.*, *Mosley, Tomorrow We Live*, p.3.

to 'run... express trains with Stephenson's old Rocket locomotive'.¹⁵⁴ Cole traced the defects of the British political system to 'the outrunning by technical development of the forces of planned social control'.¹⁵⁵

Jennings believed that parliament was 'grossly inefficient', 'Cabinet... far too unwieldy and slow'.¹⁵⁶ As to the specific reason for this Hardie, a commentator on constitutional matters addressing the FPSI, believed that the truth behind the frequently heard statement that democracy had 'broken down', was that parliament was 'being forced to do work for which it was not originally intended', 'it was designed to prevent things being done, not to get them done'. Having long operated as a system for administering a stable system, it had perfected the art of criticism but was 'bad at legislation'.¹⁵⁷ Fascism attacked the principle of having an opposition party at all. Mosley saw 'absurdity' in 'creating, at the same time, a Government to do the nation's work and an Opposition to frustrate it'.¹⁵⁸

'The essence of good government', Mosley contended, was that 'the will of the people shall prevail'. However, instead, the British system was a 'financial democracy' because government had no control over 'private and vested interests' which meant that 'the things that really matter to people', their means to existence and life, were always at the mercy of the 'money power'. The first reason for this, as Hardie had also suggested, was that the political system had been created primarily as a negative body to regulate an existing status quo rather than as a means to 'meet the facts of an age' revolutionised by science.¹⁵⁹ In a similar fashion,

¹⁵⁴ Stafford Cripps, *The Ultimate Aims of the Labour Party* (undated; c.1935), p.8.

¹⁵⁵ Cole, 'Plan for Living', p.24.

¹⁵⁶ Jennings, 'Socialism and the Constitution', pp.3-5.

¹⁵⁷ Hardie, 'Constitutional Reform', pp.3-5.

¹⁵⁸ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.6.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

Macmurry noted that parliament could only be spoken of as a 'negative democracy' as it lacked 'the power to use the economic resources of the community for the benefit of the community'.¹⁶⁰ As long as political freedom was unmatched by 'freedom in economic life', the Labour socialist Williams explained that the nation's gift was 'the freedom to rot in unemployment and poverty or to know no security... from one year's end to another'.¹⁶¹

In addition to being functionally outmoded, the system was also indicted in relation to the character and conduct of its personnel. Wells condemned the directors of human affairs as 'narrow-minded, self-centred, mentally indolent, pompous, and pretentious creatures of the past'.¹⁶² In the only slightly more brutal language of fascism Chesterton described the typical member of the 'old Parties' as having 'more talk than action to contribute, more egotism than service, more pomposity than guts'.¹⁶³ Another personal explanation of the political side of the crisis was one put forward by Sir Charles Trevelyan who argued that the loss of the 1914-1918 generation meant that pre-war minds still led, minds, he averred, where the 'force to make a new world' was absent.¹⁶⁴ At the end of the war and looking forward to the conclusion of the 'long parliament' of 1935-45, Mackay of CW pointed to 'spineless' Tory MPs who abstained in the Norway Debate and supported Chamberlain after 'nine months of hesitation, inactivity and indecision'.¹⁶⁵ In wartime Britain these were the 'Guilty Men', to quote the title of the most popular

¹⁶⁰ Macmurry, *Constructive Democracy*, pp.14-15.

¹⁶¹ Williams, *Ten Angels Swearing*, p.135.

¹⁶² Wells, *After Democracy*, p.223.

¹⁶³ Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, p.108.

¹⁶⁴ *The New Clarion*, 26 November 1932.

¹⁶⁵ R.W.G. Mackay, *Coupon or Free?* (1943), p.10.

of many such critiques.¹⁶⁶ The House of Commons was 'too old', composed mainly of "'yes men"' .¹⁶⁷

Not only were the politicians of the "Old Gang" parties impotent in the face of the rule of the 'financial gangster' but they were themselves 'controlled by the money power'.¹⁶⁸ From the fascist point of view the old parties did not seek the good of the whole nation but only sections of it: organised labour or big business and financial capital. Priestley, writing in a CW pamphlet, similarly saw the Tories as 'rows of members who are there to represent big business interests'.¹⁶⁹ These MPs, as Mackay put it, 'think of Britain as represented by the investments of the city... the sacred rights of property'.¹⁷⁰ However, the fascist critique of the polity also included the vague but pervasive claim that, whatever party was in power, statesmen were the 'servants of Jewish finance'.¹⁷¹

A better founded sociological argument from socialists nonetheless traded on the same assumption that nothing short of radical transformation could correct an inherently biased system. Hopes of a genuinely democratic polity, where 'the interest of any individual in the operation of the state is approximately equal to that of any other', were futile, Laski maintained.¹⁷² 'In a capitalist society... sovereignty belonged to the owners of capital'. From this point of view the 'gradualism' and 'evolution' of the admired 'British Way' instead represented the 'genius for compromise' which had allowed the British ruling classes to surrender the 'outworks

¹⁶⁶ 'Cato' [Frank Owen, Michael Foot and Peter Howard], *Guilty Men* (1940).

¹⁶⁷ Mackay, *Coupon or Free?*, pp.13,15.

¹⁶⁸ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.7,9.

¹⁶⁹ Priestley, *Here Are Your Answers*, p.13.

¹⁷⁰ Mackay, *Coupon or Free?*, p.11; see also: Simon Haxley, *Tory MP* (1939) and 'Gracchus' [Tom Wintringham], *Your M.P.* (1945).

¹⁷¹ Oswald Mosley, *Britain First* (1939), p.9.

¹⁷² Harold J. Laski, *Democracy at the Cross Roads* (undated; c.1933), p.11.

of the capitalist system' while the 'inner citadel' remained outside democratic control.¹⁷³ The CPGB's manifesto at the 1931 election pursued the same point, describing the National Government 'as rushing one law after another through Parliament, drawn up in the headquarters of the banking and industrial magnates'.¹⁷⁴ During the early thirties the communists even held that Labour would bring "Social Fascism" if it should be elected.¹⁷⁵ Despite the greater moderation of the popular front period of the later 1930s, the CPGB still regarded parliament as the vehicle of 'the boss class'. 'How can a leopard change its spots'? the party asked.¹⁷⁶

WITHER BRITAIN?; WITHER MANKIND?

The New Utopians' critique was not a static one—stasis was not an option. In their master narrative, society was poised at a historic junction: 'Wither Britain?' and 'Wither Mankind?' were the questions of the moment.¹⁷⁷ However, rather than simply being 'the age of dystopia' as it has been styled, one road led toward the sunrise of the New Utopia, the other to catastrophe.¹⁷⁸

The New Utopians' belief was that the moment was pregnant with the possibility of a new and better society. Laski declared: 'Once more we can see

¹⁷³ Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, pp.50-51.

¹⁷⁴ 'General Election Manifesto, 1931', *Communist Review*, 3 11-12 (November-December 1931), pp.441-448; 441.

¹⁷⁵ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, pp.337-338.

¹⁷⁶ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, pp.23-24.

¹⁷⁷ See Hubert Phillips, *Whither Britain? A Radical Answer* (1932) and Hugh Sellon, *Whither, England? The letters of a Conservative* (1932). 'Wither Britain?' was also the title of a chapter of Allen Hutt's *This Final Crisis* (1936; first published 1935) and the title of a series of talks given on the BBC in 1934 by Wells, Winston Churchill, the Very Rev. W.R. Matthews, Ernest Bevin, Bernard Shaw, Israel Stieff, Quintin Hogg, Michael Roberts and Viscountess Rhondda (*The Listener*, 10 January - 7 March 1934). Reflecting the usual scope of his concern Wells chose 'Wither Mankind?' as a working title of his treatment for the film which became *Things to Come* (pp.121-179 in Leon Stover, *The Prophetic Soul: A Reading of H.G. Wells's 'Things to Come...* (Jefferson, 1987)

before us the beginning of a new order' and he pointed to a parallel between the 1930s and 'two similar epochs in modern history', the Reformation and the French Revolution, both of which saw the 'transvaluation of all social values' and 'violent conflict between the old and the new'.¹⁷⁹ Strachey's belief was also that the capitalist system was 'dying and cannot be revived'.¹⁸⁰ Society had reached what the communist Allen Hutt in his book *This Final Crisis* described as 'the most decisive of all parting of the ways'.¹⁸¹ Joad pointed to 'a general sense of new beginnings such as... must have been felt at the time of the Renaissance'. This was reflected in 'the constant stream of books and pamphlets on every possible aspect of the future'.¹⁸²

Although Dalton discounted 'all panic talk, whether from Right or Left, of an "inevitable Crisis," and all theatrical nightmares' of violent head-on collisions, wrecking the train of democracy' it was also recognised that the pattern of the future might not be a choice between utopia or the mere 'decline and eclipse' which Durbin saw as a possibility.¹⁸³ One participant in the debate considered that:

This age is at once marvellous and terrible. It may be we are destined to see the long-awaited dawn of the age of leisure - a golden time when poverty, slavery, disease and misery, all brutal evils which have troubled men from the beginning fade from the world like a bad dream that is ended... Or it may be that we are fated to be blown to pieces in some hideous new war, tortured and maimed and

¹⁷⁸ Albinski, *Women's Utopias in British and American Fiction*, p.76.

¹⁷⁹ Harold J. Laski, *The State in Theory and Practice* (1935), pp.330-331.

¹⁸⁰ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, p.156.

¹⁸¹ Hutt, *This Final Crisis*, p.7.

¹⁸² C.E.M. Joad, *Guide to Modern Thought* (1942; first published 1933), pp.23-24.

¹⁸³ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.15; Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.279.

maddened with fearful scientific things, products of some white-walled shining clean laboratory.¹⁸⁴

The future offered utopia or dystopia; socialism or fascism; the corporate state or a soviet Britain. Looking at the 'prospect' for the future in 1937 Attlee wrote that 'immense forces for good and evil have been released' and that the 'future of civilisation hangs in the balance'.¹⁸⁵

This sense of society being at a moment of historical transformation nurtured a rhetoric of polarisation, black and white choices, confrontation and urgency. In the watershed year of 1931 Laski believed that for the first time since the 'Puritan rebellion', 'parties confronted one another with respective ways of life which looked to wholly antithetical ends.' Every future change of government would imply 'a constitutional revolution'.¹⁸⁶ Labour's manifesto *For Socialism and Peace* saw the future as a choice between 'a vain attempt to patch up the superstructure of a capitalist society in decay at its very foundations, or a rapid advance to a Socialist reconstruction of the national life'. There was 'no half-way house' between socialism and capitalism.¹⁸⁷ For Labour's Fred Henderson the choice was socialism or 'a world-wide catastrophe'.¹⁸⁸ Wells demanded action, predicting that otherwise an already 'tottering civilization' would 'stagger down past redemption to chaotic violence and decadence'.¹⁸⁹ It was a choice between disaster or the corporate state. Mosley claimed: 'the old world and the new world are divided and they cannot mingle. Either the new world and the old world will collide in disaster or the new

¹⁸⁴ *Action*, 21 February 1936.

¹⁸⁵ Attlee, *The Labour Party In Perspective*, pp.273-274.

¹⁸⁶ Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, p.40.

¹⁸⁷ Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.8.

¹⁸⁸ Fred Henderson, *The Socialist Goal* (1932), p.20.

world will emerge as the final system of the modern age'.¹⁹⁰ 'In the hour of crisis' fascism was 'the only alternative to a destructive Communism.'¹⁹¹ 'History', Emile Burns wrote, 'only offers capitalism or communism, fascism or revolution'.¹⁹²

This belief in, and rhetorical assertion of, coming catastrophe survived the upturn in the economy after the early 1930s—the apparently inexorable drift to war guaranteed it. Paralleling the economic side of the New Utopian analysis, Day Lewis perceived 'a spectacle as extraordinary as that of poverty in the midst of plenty—the spectacle of the great mass of the European peoples unanimous in their hatred of war, yet widely and fatalistically believing that war is inevitable'.¹⁹³ The Co-operative party in 1935 saw the world on a 'downward slide to economic and financial chaos, dictatorship and war, bringing us nearer to the possibility of world suicide'.¹⁹⁴ For the Socialist League, capitalism was moving 'inexorably towards an ever-deepening crisis'. Even if this process might 'seem for a moment to be checked' the 'disease' was 'incurable'.¹⁹⁵ Attlee agreed: A 'temporary recovery' might give capitalism 'a short lease of life, but the next depression is deeper than its predecessor'.¹⁹⁶ The BUF asserted the same thing: 'every boom... grows shorter and lesser; every depression grows deeper and longer'.¹⁹⁷ Society was approaching the 'final breakdown of capitalism'.¹⁹⁸ The communist Palme Dutt stressed that in the

¹⁸⁹ Wells, *After Democracy*, p.17.

¹⁹⁰ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.75.

¹⁹¹ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.154.

¹⁹² Emile Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition* (1933), p.172.

¹⁹³ C. Day Lewis, 'Labour & Fascism: The Writer's Task', *Left Review*, 2 (14 November 1936), pp.731-733.

¹⁹⁴ Co-operative Party, *Britain Reborn*, p.9.

¹⁹⁵ SL, *Forward to Socialism* (1934), p.4.

¹⁹⁶ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.284.

¹⁹⁷ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.26.

¹⁹⁸ Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, p.113.

'new world situation' of 1936, in every sphere, economic and political, antagonisms and conflicts' were 'advancing to bursting point'.¹⁹⁹

This rhetoric of catastrophe rested on both empirical evidence that was impossible to ignore and a well established theoretical argument: the teleology of the dominant theories of capitalism pointed towards economic competition being radicalised into warfare, and democracy being replaced by authoritarian tyranny. On the way to this dénouement the old order of unfettered individualism and the minimal state had been discarded, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer becoming 'an unwilling Robin Hood' in order to preserve social peace.²⁰⁰ However, at the very point in the economic cycle when the state most needed to intervene, to tax and spend, it found the system least ready and able to acquiesce. At that point the gradualism and concessions of liberalism's fighting retreat would no longer suffice. Strachey predicted that then 'the democratic forms, Liberal ideas, and subtle methods of rule of the capitalist class' would have to be scrapped. In their place would come 'direct, open terror against the workers' and 'violent aggression' against rival powers. Strachey wrote that 'a name for such a policy has been found: it is fascism'.²⁰¹ Laski agreed: 'the reformers are pushed aside, and the stern reactionaries take their place'.²⁰²

The notion of a tendency towards fascism at home was linked through the theory of imperialism to the assumption that at the same time the struggle between national imperialisms would approach flash point. Then competition would no longer be between 'petty producers, but between mighty antagonists each of which

¹⁹⁹ Dutt, *World Politics*, p.5.

²⁰⁰ Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, p.23.

²⁰¹ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, p.245.

²⁰² Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, p.25.

can enlist the power of whole states'. And the prize in this struggle was 'nothing less than the... partition of the world'.²⁰³ Then, as *Britain Without Capitalists* explained, 'monopoly-capitalism begets a very Frankenstein-monster destined... to destroy the very productive-powers which capitalism has built and to desolate the world. The ferocious grin of this misshapen monster has become familiar enough to us today: namely modern imperialism... and its logical outcome, War'.²⁰⁴

The old order had produced a wealth of proposals from Keynes and others for saving itself but the real choice was socialism or a world monopoly capitalism promising not utopia but 'the re-enslavement of man and the ruin of his cultural heritage' ; 'a desert peace, established by some victor empire after the last supreme war of the world'.²⁰⁵ Even among those who were by no means Marxists, the possibility of war was seen as very great. Mosley also saw the 'dog-fight for foreign markets' as the 'road to world-suicide', and that the 'laws' of 'Marxian theory' would operate if human will did not intervene.²⁰⁶ Attlee pointed to the 'state of unstable equilibrium in a Europe' where with 'any amount of inflammable material scattered about... the chances of ignition are very great'.²⁰⁷

As to the nature of the coming conflict Strachey expected 'a war, the horror of which we know nothing, except that it will almost certainly exceed our wildest imaginings'.²⁰⁸ The memory of the colossal slaughter of the Great War coupled with the expectation of the obliteration of metropolitan populations by the bomber, which, as Baldwin had made clear, would 'always get through', led to expectations

²⁰³ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, p.245.

²⁰⁴ *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.5.

²⁰⁵ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, pp.87, 259-260.

²⁰⁶ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.66.

²⁰⁷ Attlee, *The Labour Party In Perspective*, p.223.

²⁰⁸ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, p.393.

only paralleled by later fears of nuclear annihilation.²⁰⁹ 'Another Great War', the Labour intellectual Dalton maintained, would mean 'death for countless millions... in the flames of burning cities, or by poison gas, or by plague germs dropped from the air, or in the literal anarchy of a dissolving civilisation'.²¹⁰ This was a future that Wells imagined in 1933 and presented to cinema audiences in 1936.²¹¹

When war had actually broke out, and for very many people turned out to be as terrible as prophesied, if not more so, the system which had engendered warfare was indicted all the more. The apocalyptic tones of the early 1930s returned with renewed force. John Katz of the FPSI wrote that 'after a run of a thousand years the experiment of Western civilisation is hurrying to a catastrophic close'.²¹² CW shared this millenarian tone, in the first lines of its manifesto proclaiming: 'AN AGE IS ENDING. A whole way of living is breaking down and reaching its end' while 'the future struggles to be born'.²¹³ At the same time merely defeating fascism was not enough, a historic choice still needed to be made. Acland's declaration was 'we must establish a new society or perish' and Stapledon warned that unless the foundations of a permanent peace were laid, then the world was 'doomed' to expect 'another period of latent war and another gigantic conflict, perhaps with Russia and the United States of America as the two main opponents'.²¹⁴ 'Unless we change our economic system', Strachey wrote, 'we shall

²⁰⁹ Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War*, ch.5.

²¹⁰ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.348.

²¹¹ Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*; [film] *Things to Come* (1936).

²¹² John Katz, 'Salvaging Civilisation', *Plan Bulletin*, 2 1 (October-November 1942), pp.1-2; 1.

²¹³ CW, *Manifesto* (1943), summary.

²¹⁴ Acland, *The Forward March*, p.52; Stapledon, *Seven Pillars of Peace*, p.3.

have to fight desperate and horrible world wars every twenty years or so.²¹⁵ Wells stressed that unless his words were heeded, humanity would 'perish as a species'.²¹⁶

Surveying this world of war and dictatorship Tawney's comment was that 'Mr Wells's vision of a world controlled by Samurai and airmen is the only utopia which has approached realisation. It is still uncertain whether mankind can survive it'.²¹⁷ However, accompanying this apparently irresistible march of the world to disaster, the leitmotiv of the possibility of, and opportunity for, utopia was never completely silenced. Indeed the collapse of one social order was in many ways the perquisite of, opportunity for, or sign of, the emergence of a new one.

A.L. Rowse wrote in 1940 that 'what is certain is that an epoch of unparalleled ignominy in our history is ended, even though it has to be atoned for in blood'.²¹⁸ The Fabian Society believed that there had 'been no such holocaust of established institutions since the advent of the Dark Ages'.²¹⁹ The war was, D.N. Pritt suggested, 'a dark hour of history, but an hour pregnant with the possibility—indeed the certainty—of emergence from the horrible death struggles of an outworn system into a world of tranquillity, security, happiness and beauty. There was perhaps never more horror, but surely never more hope'.²²⁰ Even in the darkness of 1940 Laski could see 'the highroad to that way of living where all men stand, unafraid, in the glad light of freedom'.²²¹ The rhetoric of inevitable revolution was also present. CW proclaimed the war to be 'part of the change from the old social

²¹⁵ John Strachey, *Why You Should Be A Socialist* (1944), p.54.

²¹⁶ Wells, *Science and the World Mind*, p.6.

²¹⁷ Tawney, *Equality*, p.189.

²¹⁸ A.L. Rowse, 'The End of an Epoch', *The Political Quarterly*, 11 (1940), pp.248-260.

²¹⁹ The Fabian Society, *A Word on the Future to British Socialists* (1942), p.3.

²²⁰ D.N. Pritt, *Choose Your Future* (1941), p.191.

order to the new'.²²² Priestley asserted that: 'A revolution is on its way. You can welcome it tomorrow, the easy way, or let it overtake you the day after tomorrow, the hard way'.²²³ Williams' certainty was that 'Revolution comes next. It is not within our will to prevent it'. The only choice was between 'the dark answer of totalitarianism or the bright and hopeful answer of a new democracy'.²²⁴

In April 1945 the FPSI's belief was that to recover the '*status quo ante bellum*' was an 'impossible ambition'.²²⁵ Evoking the hope of that moment at its brightest, Leeman of the Co-operative Party quoted Wells, proclaiming that:

The stage is set, let us begin for "This is the day; this is the hour of sunrise for united manhood. The martyrdom of man is at an end. From pole to pole there remains no single human being without a fair prospect of self-fulfilment, of health, of interest, and freedom. There are no slaves any longer; no poor; none doomed by birth to an inferior status; none afflicted in mind and body who are not being helped with all the powers of science. The world is all before us to do with as we will, within the measures of our powers and our imaginations. The struggle for existence is over. It has been won. The need for repressions and disciplines has passed. No one need now live less nor be less than his utmost."²²⁶

James Hemming of CW agreed: 'The peoples have a world to win such as men for thousands of years have dreamed of and longed for. But it is no longer just a hope; it is there waiting for us, a reality wholly attainable'.²²⁷

²²¹ Harold J. Laski, *Where Do We Go from Here?* (New York, 1940), p.192.

²²² CW, *Manifesto*, pp.2-3.

²²³ Priestley, *Here Are Your Answers*, p.14.

²²⁴ Williams, *War by Revolution*, p.2.

²²⁵ A.T.L., 'Editorial', *Plan*, 12 4 (April 1945), pp.1-2; 1.

²²⁶ Leeman, *The New World Order*, p.13, quoting Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, p.293.

²²⁷ James Hemming, 'World Abundance', *Common Wealth Review*, 1 6 (August 1944), pp.6-7; 7.



In the New Utopians' rhetorical portrait of Britain the 'distressed areas' symbolically dominated all else, whilst the tentacles of the 'octopus' of suburbia everywhere invaded the countryside and, in the age of 'poverty in an age of plenty', fish were all the time being thrown back into the sea and crops ploughed under. This was the land of the 'C3' Briton, whose existence revolved around production line monotony, Woolworths and a ticket to the Odeon. This was a country whose future was, at best, slow decline but, most often, catastrophe.

As commented on at the time and since, these were all partial pictures, but their function was to signify Britain as dystopia, and to act as a major point of reference and starting point for the new Britain to come. These projections of the critical gaze sought the inverse of the education of desire, to inculcate disgust, to introduce a spirit of rejection and, therefore, a will to transformation.

Chapter 4

FROM THE BLUEPRINT

All the world is clay
Pliant to your finger.
Try on it your skill,
Shape it to your will.
The future lies in you,
Why then do you linger
To make life new?
G.D.H Cole, 'The Invocation', 1933.¹

For the New Utopians the nation, like Christian on his journey from the City of Destruction, was confronted by a choice between the steep path towards utopian sunshine and the old, well trodden way leading downwards into dystopian darkness. However, unlike the unspecified glories of the Celestial City, the new Britain of the dry scriptures of the age was a future sketched by mortal imagination for human hands to realise.

The New Utopians' blueprints would solve the puzzle of the age, exchange war and poverty for peace and plenty. In the first instance the good society would be achieved by new formal national and international institutions for politics and administration, production and exchange. These new structures could not by themselves create the New Utopia, the beliefs and habits of men and women had to change too, but they were one half of the indivisible dialectical unity which would bring about the new life.

¹ *The Crooked World* (1933), pp.9-10.

POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION

The object of the praxis of desire in capturing the state, even for those who retained their faith in the British Way,² was not merely to drive it in a new direction but to transform it into a vehicle for 'action' and a means to different ends.

The New Utopians sought a government which could act with the speed demanded by the modern world. Labour promised the 'reconstruction' of the cabinet and socialist plans proposed to streamline the executive, with a smaller cabinet around the Prime Minister working at the level of 'general direction', and the ministries reorganised according to function.³ Mitchison's 'first workers' government' had a cabinet of eight ministers, six of whom would be members of the 'Economic Committee of the Cabinet'.⁴ The BUF similarly looked to a small 'inner cabinet' although, unlike in Labour's plans, a fascist government would be neither be selected from, nor be accountable to, parliament. 'Action' would also be achieved by the application of the 'leadership principle': '(1) give a man a job to do; (2) give him the power to do it; (3) hold him responsible for doing it; (4) sack him if he does not do it'.⁵ From 'the Leader' downwards personal initiative and responsibility would replace 'committee' government. 'Democracy' would be ensured by a popular plebiscite every five years to reject or accept the government's work. If such a vote was negative the monarch would 'interpret the people's verdict

² See pp.290-298 below.

³ Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, pp.31-32; Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.174; Lansbury, *My England*, p.138; G.D.H.Cole, *Plan For Democratic Britain* (1939), p.238.

⁴ G.R. Mitchison, *The First Worker's Government; or, New Times for Henry Dubb* (1934), pp.70-78.

⁵ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.12.

and find new ministers', perhaps with assistance from the 'Fascist 'Grand Council' which would replace the Privy Council.⁶

Also for reasons of efficiency fascists promised that parliament would become 'a work shop instead of a talk shop'⁷ and although still called the 'House of Commons' in the Greater Britain there would be little else to connect the two bodies. In contrast, Labour's demand was for Parliament to be 'modernised and rationalised' through measures to curb time wasting and obsolete practices, thereby to 'work a practical revolution in parliamentary procedure.'⁸ Among Cole's suggestions was the delegation of the detailed work of legislation to 'more specialised democratic assemblies'.⁹ Cripps put forward a detailed prescription for parliamentary reform, placing particular stress on 'the committee system of the house. In conformity with the British Way he sought to combine 'the efficiency of totalitarian control and planning... with the cultural and political freedom that democracy alone can provide.'¹⁰ CW and those members of the FPSI interested in such matters broadly concurred with Labour, the only significant difference being CW's proposals for assemblies for Wales and Scotland.¹¹ Unlike the Crown, which Labour and the BUF retained variously for patriotism and electoral pragmatism, all parties agreed that the House of Lords was, in Mosley's words, an 'unworkable

⁶ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, pp.37-40; Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.18.

⁷ *Action*, 7 November 1936.

⁸ Labour Party, 'Appendix VIII: Parliamentary Problems and Procedure', pp.261-263 in *Report of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Conference of the Labour Party, Southport, 1934* (undated; 1934); Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.45-50; Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.31; Shinwell, *The Britain I Want*, pp.298-312.

⁹ Cole, *Plan For Democratic Britain*, pp.236-237.

¹⁰ Stafford Cripps, *Democracy Up-To-Date: Some Practical Suggestions for the Reorganization of the Political and Parliamentary System* (1939), pp.99, 108.

¹¹ CW, *Manifesto*, p.6; Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.169-172; Hardie, 'Constitutional Reform', *Plan*, pp.3-5; Jennings, 'Socialism and the Constitution', pp.3-6.

anachronism'. It would either be abolished or replaced with a 'House of Notables', 'Committee of Revision' or 'Senate', or a 'Council for minor matters'.¹²

However, the desire for more 'efficient' government was also shared by those conservatives and liberals hoping for a 'middle way'. What distinguished the New Utopian blueprint was its tendency to replace pluralist politics with administration.

Wells sought to exchange political pluralism for an authoritarian 'Modern State Movement' which, having reformed the world with a 'pitiless benevolence' would retire, leaving a quasi-anarchist utopia where 'liberty increases daily'.¹³ In this respect, politics would end because in the harmonious new society there would be no need for the old institutional channels of conflict. In any society the sphere of legitimate action is never absolute but of limited rights enforced by informal and legal sanctions. A blueprint for utopia proposes to alter the scope of the sphere of freedom, permitting what was once forbidden and forbidding what was once legitimate. Wells intended to exclude politics from the realm of freedom. To maintain the limits of freedom is the business of the state and in this case it would only seem to disappear, leaving its function institutionalised to ensure that, like a perpetual clock, *Cosmopolis* could function unsupervised. The 'faculties of health, education, and behaviour' would 'sustain the good conduct of the race' and citizens would be free only so long as they obeyed the rule of 'no tampering with

¹² Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.31; Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.71-80; Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, pp.35-36; CW, *Manifesto*, p.5; Laski, 'Choosing the Planners', p.107; Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.170; SL, *Forward to Socialism*, pp.12-13; Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.31; Labour Party, *Let Us Face The Future* (1945), p.3; Cole, *A Plan For Britain* (1933), pp.37-40; Shinwell, *The Britain I Want*, pp.194-198.

¹³ See also pp.289-290 below.

the monetary-property system that holds us all together', any threat to which, utopia's 'police [were] incessantly alert'.¹⁴

At first glance Wells' abolition of politics sets him apart, but the New Utopians all confronted this question of accommodating popular political 'freedom' with creating and then sustaining a new social order and often came surprisingly close to Wellsian prescriptions.

Justified by an assumed identity of working class 'interests' and 'historical' duty, the communist 'dictatorship of the proletariat' would initially impose the conditions of harmony. Then, as with Wells' dictatorship, when the residue of the old ways had disappeared so would the coercive state 'atrophy—just as parts of the human organism which have become functionless' become vestigial and finally disappear altogether.¹⁵ There would then 'be no political machinery at all', without class conflict there could be 'the "administration of things" instead of the rule over persons.'¹⁶ Blackshirts sought the same exchange of politics for administration. Fascism would 'end the party game', not only because of its inefficiency but because class identities would be subsumed within the organic unity of the nation.¹⁷ 'The barriers of class shall be destroyed and the energies of every citizen devoted to the service of the British nation' the 'Code' of the British Union of Fascists' declared.¹⁸ On the basis of this postulated unity of identity and purpose Thomson could argue that 'A Fascist leader does not "dictate" to his people against their will, he "leads" them in the direction they desire to go.' The Leader was he who

¹⁴ Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, pp.292-293, 312.

¹⁵ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, pp.193.

¹⁶ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, pp.135-136.

¹⁷ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.17.

¹⁸ *Action*, 6 March 1936.

'represents the spirit of the social organisation most closely'.¹⁹ Communists, by reifying the analytic category of 'class' as a historical actor similarly syncretised authoritarian leadership with the ideal of mass democracy. 'In Communism', Bernal explained, 'individuals are important, but only in so far as they crystallise in definite actions the determination of the party and class.'²⁰

In these blueprints homogeneous social harmony would be buttressed by the removal of the institutional space for the old conflicts. *For Soviet Britain* rejected 'a central talking-shop'. Instead 'the power of the new order' would be 'found... in the mass organisations of the workers in every town'. The workers' state would rest on a popular basis of 'Workers Councils' 'made up of delegates elected democratically from every factory, workshop and mine', by all 'men and women... who have to work for their living.' Every Worker's Council would send their 'best members as delegates to the National Workers' Council, which will carry on the Government of the country as a whole'.²¹ As the self-proclaimed personification of 'the working class' the communist party would 'permeate' these political structures as it would Soviet Britain generally.²² This system promised to 'the workers' 'for the first time in their lives... a real democracy of their own'.²³ In the Greater Britain too 'the only dictatorship' would be 'the dictatorship of the people themselves.'²⁴ The 'evil system of political parties' in parliament would be replaced by 'a true cross-section as a functional community.' Political participation would be based not on

¹⁹ *Action*, 9 November 1937; Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.12-3; Alexander McKee, 'Psychology of Collective Caesarism', *British Union Quarterly*, 2 2 (1938), pp.67-70.

²⁰ J.D. Bernal, 'Psycho-Analysis and Marxism', *The Labour Monthly*, 19 7 (July 1937), pp.433-437.

²¹ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, pp.24-25.

²² Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.159.

²³ R.W. Robson, *What is the Communist Party* (undated; c.1935), p.10.

²⁴ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.10,12.

contending class 'interests' represented by parties, but according to an individual's role in the new organic nation. In place of the geographical franchise would come an occupational one—'a farmer will vote for a farmer, a miner for a miner and so forth'—with the seats of each occupational group divided between workers and owners/management. Rather than individual voices being stifled, parliament would become 'a true sounding board of public opinion'.²⁵

Although CW advocated proportional representation, democratic socialists generally proposed that the existing electoral system would continue with reforms such as the abolition of plural voting.²⁶ Neither would they abolish the party system. Nonetheless, the question remained of whether socialists would be prepared to see their work undone by a lost election.

Wootton, posing the question 'is the abolition of party politics necessary for economic planning?', concluded that 'if the existence of political parties does mean the right to change our minds about everything every six months, then I am afraid it is incompatible with long term planning.' On the basis of a consensus 'throughout the community' it would have to be established that although 'there will still be room for opposition parties, criticising, improving, and altering the plan... that opposition must accept, for the duration of the plan, the fundamentals which the plan is seeking to achieve.'²⁷ Wootton also saw 'economic administration' as 'a job for experts'. Politicians would set the overall aims—'the kind of results which it

²⁵ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, pp.28-34; Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.15-16.

²⁶ Mackay, *Coupon or Free*; Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.169; CW, *Manifesto*, p.5; Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.37-41; Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.31. The CPGB came to adopt similar proposals for electoral reform, including a demand for proportional representation, in its wartime programme (CPGB, *Britain For The People*, pp.20-21).

²⁷ Barbara Wootton, 'Freedom Under Planning', pp.37-54 in Herbert Morrison *et al.*, *Can Planning Be Democratic?: A Collection of Essays prepared for the Fabian Society* (1944), pp.49-50.

would like those plans to achieve’—and the planners would ‘have the last word’.²⁸ Mosley had earlier explained that ‘future organisation’ would be ‘a matter for technicians, with the ring kept free for the operation of science and organisation by the... modern movement.’²⁹

Others instead relied on hope. Mitchison, for example, wrote that with ‘the beginning of new times’, ‘organised political opposition’ would lapse ‘into the temporary silence of bewilderment’ before, as in the Greater Britain, becoming ‘of a more constructive character’. Politics would be ended in effect but symbolically preserved in an ‘opposition... more interesting as a survival of the past than as an effective factor in current politics.’³⁰ Acland proposed that the opposition would even have ‘representatives inside the great departments of State’, but at the same time the ideal was ‘diversity within... unity’. ‘Organised criticism’ was vital, but the hope was also for a diminution of ‘party-mindedness among our citizens’. As to the most important political issue of all—the ownership of property—Acland was forced by his democratic principles to hope simply that it would not ‘remain a political issue for any length of time.’³¹

Laski foresaw a more concrete solution. Working from the principle that ‘the right of opposition in any society is only effective so long as it respects the fundamental principles of the society’, Laski allowed that ‘a Conservative Party’ was ‘conceivable in a socialist democracy’ but would ‘operate... very much as the ideas of the Communist Party operate in a capitalist democracy. They will be tolerated so long as they are not regarded as a danger; they will be persecuted immediately

²⁸ *Idem.*, *Plan Or No Plan*, pp.311-313.

²⁹ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.100.

³⁰ Mitchison, *The First Workers’ Government*, pp.156-158.

³¹ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.167-168, 171; *CW, Manifesto*, p.2.

they seem to threaten its foundations.’ In Laski’s socialist society there would no longer be any reason for the ‘twofold struggle’; the politics of ‘positive freedom’ would eschew sectional advantage, aiming instead to ‘harmonise the individual purpose and social purpose.’ Rather than clashing over fundamentals, political parties would, Laski wrote: ‘differ from one another in the respective views they hold of the best way to develop the public estate from the angle of the values they accept’.³²

PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE

The accompaniment to life that the new state would create would be the hum of busy machines. The mantra of the New Utopians was planning-efficiency-science-productivity; the ‘anarchy’ of the market would give place to the controlled logic of the plan; the powers of production would be loosed and the frustrated genius of science liberated. The prerequisite of this abundant age was that the core economic institutions of the old order be fundamentally transformed.

PROPERTY

Wootton believed that ‘socialism’ was based around three key ideas: ‘(1) social equality; (2) the full utilisation of resources under a system of “production for use and not for profit;” and (3) public ownership or socialisation of industry.’³³ Clearly the third idea was the necessary premise of the first two and so the unavoidable requirement of both democratic and authoritarian socialist plans. With characteristic economy Attlee wrote of the malaise of bourgeois society: ‘the cause

³² Laski, *Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, pp.356-358.

³³ Wootton, ‘A plague on all your isms’, p.49.

is the private ownership of the means of life; the remedy is public ownership.³⁴ Acland was similarly blunt: 'Common Ownership', he wrote, 'gives us the opportunity of creating a harmonious and prosperous society, while private ownership... does not.'³⁵ Social ownership was, Labour contended, the only way to overcome the 'vested interests and chaotic conditions' of capitalism and plan for the commonweal.³⁶ Public ownership would strike at the roots of the poisonous class culture and allow 'democracy' to expand from its narrow political sense by establishing the 'primacy of public and general over private and particular interests' in economic life.³⁷

However, reflecting both pragmatic and ideological imperatives, the anticipated extent and pace of socialisation varied among socialists. At one extreme, in the imagined Soviet Britain of the 1930s even the 'small shopkeeper' would eventually disappear.³⁸ Neither could there be 'individual property in anything but personal belongings and money' in the Cosmopolis.³⁹ Acland admitted that the combination of state supervision and private ownership appeared 'to give... the best of both worlds', combining 'regard for the common interest' with 'dash and enterprise'. However, his contention, memorably put, was that the achievement of:

'the real spirit of equal co-operation between the representatives of the big interests and the representatives of the people will prove as difficult as the theoretically possible task of admitting just so much water into the crack in a child's celluloid

³⁴ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.15.

³⁵ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.10.

³⁶ Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.15.

³⁷ Tawney, *Why Britain Fights*, p.39.

duck as will cause it to float half-way between the surface and bottom of the bath.

An inevitable dynamic pulls it in one direction or the other.⁴⁰

Hence, CW proposed common ownership of all significant enterprises.

Even so, in CW's new Britain there would be 'thousands and thousands of small-scale enterprises, one-man and family businesses' which would remain privately owned.⁴¹ At the other extreme, Labour's expectations of the pace of change which the British Way⁴² would permit limited the scope of socialisation in its 'immediate' programme. The 'foundation step', was to socialise the 'essential instruments' of the economy such as the coal industry and railways.⁴³ In the longer term, Attlee anticipated that 'all the major industries will be owned and controlled by the community, but there may well exist for a long time many smaller enterprises which are left to be carried on individually.'⁴⁴ Stressing a practical rather than doctrinaire approach, Durbin explained that 'property as a source of social inequality' would 'wither slowly away'.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, Labour's 'ultimate aim' was 'a Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain'.⁴⁶ One means whereby this might be achieved, apart from direct acquisition of private property, was through the so-called "'Rigano" scheme' of taxation. This proposed that a person's capital beyond a certain minimum would 'pass unencumbered into the hands of the State' when they died. This would allow private property to 'wither slowly and painlessly away'

³⁸ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, pp.186-190; *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.137-139.

³⁹ Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, p.224.

⁴⁰ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.51-52.

⁴¹ CW, *Notes on Common Ownership* (1942), p.3.

⁴² See pp.290-298 below.

⁴³ Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.15; *idem.*, *Socialism and the Condition of the People* (1934); Cole, *Plan For Britain*, p.31.

⁴⁴ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.153.

⁴⁵ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, pp.333-334.

while—because wealth could accrue only through merit and hard work—leaving the initiative and imagination of the entrepreneur to benefit society.⁴⁷

The approach of democratic socialists to socialisation was not shaped simply by pragmatism but also by an awareness that state ownership was not axiomatically good. Bourgeois individualism granted space for initiative, the struggle for economic survival had driven progress by weeding out the inefficient and unimaginative. And what of the future of the diverse and personal under socialism? Would 'the cheery tobacconist' be replaced by 'a sort of Post-Office-tobacconist' and all the pubs in the new Britain serve only a 'National Mark beer'?⁴⁸ Although not immune from the modernist's love for the gigantic and uniform, the New Utopianism was marked by a continual exploratory dialogue between individualism and collectivism, uniformity and difference, discipline and freedom.

Aware of the fears of the 'ordinary man', Labour made it clear that it did not seek the nationalisation of 'every taxi-driver, every bookmaker, every hawker, every village shop, or every garage'. This was impractical, and would 'contribute nothing to the redistribution of the national income', while raising 'formidable and probably insuperable problems of organization.' Scope for 'imagination and initiative' was good in itself, and Jay saw the necessity of a 'speculative sector' so that society would benefit from any future 'Lord Nuffield'. Only when such new industries had proved their worth would they would pass 'in the ordinary way into the hands of the

⁴⁶ Labour Party, *Let Us Face The Future*, p.6.

⁴⁷ Cole, *Plan For Democratic Britain*, pp.222-224; Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.295; Jay, *The Socialist Case*, pp.231-236.

⁴⁸ D.H. Barber, *A Soldier's New World* (no place, undated; c.1941), p.3.

State.’ Similarly, Acland saw private enterprise as ‘one of the channels through which new ideas will emerge and develop into the great industries of the future.’⁴⁹

Acland did not intend to ‘turn the local plumber into a salaried civil servant’.⁵⁰ In fact he, and other socialists including Cole, argued that it was under socialism rather than ‘free enterprise’ that the future was brightest for small scale enterprises.⁵¹ It was capitalism which was ‘rapidly gobbling up and driving out of business’ the “small men”. The ‘rule of all unlimited competitions’ was that ‘somebody wins’ and ‘Woolworths is just such a small trader who has won’ Acland wrote. In bourgeois society the sole guiding question was “Does it show a profit?”; in CW’s new Britain the pattern of things would reflect ‘real values, other than economic values’. Acland continued: ‘a society in which service to the community is the dominant motive can make rules under which the co-op., the communally owned multiple store and the small individual shop can make room for each other.’ This also reflected CW’s goal of ‘vital democracy’, by granting ‘the greatest possible number of men... the widest possible power, and therefore the highest possible duty to make up their own minds.’⁵²

Fascism’s boast was that, unlike both socialism and monopoly capitalism, its corporate state permitted the ‘widest possible diffusion of capital’ to allow ‘as many people as possible to have a stake in the nation’. In part, this would be achieved by breaking up the ‘great chain and multiple stores’. Once again, a general critique of modern capitalism was distorted by representing such enterprises

⁴⁹ Jay, *The Socialist Case*, p.264; Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.27.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.37.

⁵¹ Cole, *Plan for Democratic Britain*, p.38.

⁵² Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.130-136.

as specifically Jewish.⁵³ In the Greater Britain the independent trader would be able to compete with the co-op because the Distributive Corporation would organise bulk buying, thus combining economy of scale with the 'energy and individuality' of the small business. Generally, the BUF hoped for 'as many owner occupier farmers, as many individual industrialists and as many small shopkeepers as possible' so that under fascism 'the people use capital for their own purpose.' Therefore, apart from a vague threat to expropriate 'parasites' who did not justify their inherited wealth by service, the BUF rejected social ownership.⁵⁴ Despite this, blackshirts argued that they were National Socialists.⁵⁵ In the Greater Britain the material consequences of bourgeois society would disappear through the fascist version of the 'economics of plenty', while class conflict would end through the wider diffusion of the blackshirt's spirit of selfless service to the nation.

THE NEW ECONOMY

Social ownership and, in the case of the BUF, the corporate state and the spiritual revolution of fascism, were means to control and thereby plan. Reflecting this, the universal assumption of the New Utopians was, as expressed by Cole, 'not whether the State is to control. But how and to what end.'⁵⁶ A Labour government would seek 'complete mastery by the nation of its economic resources'.⁵⁷ 'Socialist Britain would enable the economy of the country to be PLANNED' the communist R.W.

⁵³ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.55; BUF, *Britain and Jewry* (undated; c.1939); John Beckett and Alexander Raven Thomson, *Private Trader and Co-operator* (undated; c.1932); F.D. Hill, *Gainst Trust & Monopoly!* (undated; c.1932).

⁵⁴ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.55; Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, pp.128-129.

⁵⁵ 'If you love our Country you are National. If you love our People you are Socialist.'

⁵⁶ Cole, *Great Britain in the Post-War World*, p.11.

⁵⁷ Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport*, p.280.

Robson emphasised.⁵⁸ Fascism pledged itself 'to plan, to regulate and to direct the whole national economy'.⁵⁹

The replacement of production for profit by production for human needs envisaged by communists implied that factories would never have to be closed when their products could not be sold profitably because profit was no longer the motive for making and distributing goods. If the storehouses of the Soviet Britain began to fill with an unwanted surplus the planners would direct the workers to make something else or labour time could be reduced.⁶⁰

In the Greater Britain plenty and stability would be instead achieved by raising living standards 'to the point at which the increased purchasing power of the home market can absorb the increased production of modern machinery.' 'Industrial efficiency' required 'low prices to the consumer and good wages to the worker' while a reduced cost per unit of production and a hugely expanded market would maintain the rate of return on capital.⁶¹ Any gap between production and consumption would be closed by the manipulation of wages and the supply of credit.⁶² It was also assumed that mass consumption could be increased without any systematic redistribution of national wealth via taxation.⁶³ Noting that Fordism's "philosophy of high wages" could not survive the challenge of competitors using 'sweated labour', Mosley specified autarchy and an end to 'wage-cutting

⁵⁸ R.W. Robson, *Essentials of Communist Theory* (1944), p.12.

⁵⁹ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, pp.97-98.

⁶⁰ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, pp.91-100.

⁶¹ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, pp.83, 91.

⁶² *Idem.*, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.41-43, 52-53.

⁶³ *Idem.*, *Taxation and the People* (undated; c.193?).

competitors at home' enforced by the corporate state.⁶⁴ In this way, the interests of property owner, worker and consumer would be 'harmonised' and 'national equilibrium' achieved.⁶⁵

Whether the will of fascism would have been sufficient against the inflationary tendencies suggested by this approach was perhaps questionable. Nonetheless, the BUF's policies showed affinities to the 'underconsumption' theory of J.A. Hobson, the ILP's 'living wage' policy and to Keynesian economics which came increasingly to dominate Labour thinking.⁶⁶

Labour aimed at the same target as all the New Utopians: Cole wrote of his *Plan For Democratic Britain*: 'this book is about the means to plenty—that, and nothing else.'⁶⁷ Labour would 'cure for ever the tragic and chronic disease of poverty in the midst of plenty'.⁶⁸ The profits of socialised industries would go to the state, and so to the benefit of society as a whole. At the same time, cyclical and technological unemployment could be avoided because a temporary loss in one industrial sector would be compensated for elsewhere. Production at the 'highest level' would be partnered by 'a high and constant purchasing power' assured by 'good wages, social services and insurance and taxation which bears less heavily on the lower income groups.'⁶⁹ Public works projects and the manipulation of the availability of credit would support demand during troughs in the economic cycle.⁷⁰ The Labour Keynesian Jay regarded 'an increase in consumption' as 'the most

⁶⁴ *Idem.*, *The Greater Britain*, p.92.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.97, 102.

⁶⁶ Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning*, pp.57-ff.

⁶⁷ Cole, *Plan For Democratic Britain*, p.25.

⁶⁸ Douglas Jay, *The Nation's Wealth At The Nation's Service* (1938), p.1.

⁶⁹ Labour Party, *Let Us Face The Future*, p.5.

⁷⁰ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.196-198, 222.

effective and safest method of achieving a durable equilibrium'.⁷¹ CW also anticipated a 'Financial Authority' to ensure that 'no great masses of produce will remain unsold and no vast sums of money will remain unspendable.'⁷²

THE PLANNING MECHANISM

All versions of the economics of plenty departed from laissez faire principles in that employment, remuneration, production and consumption would no longer be determined by the market but be overseen by planners. This asked questions concerning the allocation of labour and capital in production, of what goods and in what quantities should be produced and where, of the larger question of the division of the aggregate resources of society between goods for consumption and those for production and other collective goals, and all within the dynamic processes of technological change and the world economy. These were the 'four main lines of direction' which Attlee pointed to.⁷³

The home of planning writ large was undoubtedly the Soviet Union and in a Soviet Britain 'all production, trade and transport' would be similarly 'organised on a definite plan, in preparing which the workers and their organisations will take part.' Under the plan there would be 'no waste, and... each year a steady and permanent advance will be made, from which the whole population will benefit.'⁷⁴ Producers of raw materials and production goods would be in single organisations, with smaller units and the producers and distributors of consumer goods variously unified on a national or local basis. At the head of the structure would be a

⁷¹ Jay, *The Case for Socialism*, pp.205, 207, 238.

⁷² Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.88.

⁷³ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.176-178.

⁷⁴ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, pp.31-32; 41.

'Supreme Economic Council'.⁷⁵ Another communist envisaged a 'Central Planning Authority' which would determine what goods were required and ensure their supply, working in conjunction with the production and trading trusts and co-operatives so involving every citizen as worker and consumer.⁷⁶

The planning authority would gather 'comprehensive statistics of the entire economic system'. The plan would not arise by the 'arbitrary fiat of the planning authority' but be based on consultations between the authority and the producers who would scrutinise a provisional plan 'in minute detail'. Finally, the plan would be submitted 'to the whole body of workers of hand and brain' in conference before being returned to the planning authority for amendment and resubmission to conference.⁷⁷ The definitive plan would then be submitted to the representative assembly and government for adoption on their decision. In this way, worker's democracy would combine with state planning because the flow of information and decision was not one way.

In comparison with the USSR, Strachey expected 'a greater degree of centralization' and so 'more accurate and rapid planning'.⁷⁸ Burns explained that such would be the omniscience of the planning machinery that no 'arbitrary decisions' would need to be made by its compilers, its statistics would 'gradually be made more perfect'. The plan would not 'depend on the likes or dislikes... of its framers' but on the 'actual wants of society' as recorded by 'the statistical

⁷⁵ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, pp.185-190.

⁷⁶ *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.128-132.

⁷⁷ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.52

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.60.

organisation which will automatically and immediately reflect the national will from month to month, and... , as the machinery grows more perfect, even in advance.⁷⁹

At the beginning of the period Cole had looked to a 'supreme co-ordinating body' similar to "Gosplan" but the general run of things was away from the Soviet model in search of a less bureaucratic solution.⁸⁰ In Joan Robinson's words, 'centralised planning' did not necessitate 'red-tape bureaucratic control over industry'. The ideal structure would incorporate 'a large element of individual responsibility and initiative in matters of detail within the general framework of the plan.'⁸¹ As a solution to the danger of 'over-centralisation' Attlee hoped for a balance between the national plan and 'local application'.⁸² Against the argument that socialism implied 'overrunning the country with 'a hoard of officials' the reply was that there would be 'far less of them under socialism than at present.' Socialism 'brings order into, and thus immensely simplifies, industrial and economic organisation'.⁸³ Reflecting these concerns BUF, Labour and CW blueprints all paired a central body responsible for the interrelation of industrial sectors and overall economic management with the autonomous planning of each industry within the scope of the overall plan.

At industry level Labour employed Herbert Morrison's outline of the national corporation. In essence, this argued for the replacement of the conventional board of directors by state appointees who would operate an industry in the national interest, seeking 'good, and rising standards of service to consumers and users',

⁷⁹ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, pp.112-113, 135.

⁸⁰ Cole, *The Intelligent Man's Guide*, p.592.

⁸¹ Joan Robinson, 'Planning', *Fabian Quarterly*, 36 (January 1943), pp.4-8; 5.

⁸² Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.152-154.

⁸³ Strachey, *The Case For Socialism*, p.67.

combined 'with good, and rising conditions of employment'.⁸⁴ Durbin believed that Labour's proposals would yield the ideal synthesis: the 'virtues of capitalism - rationalism and mobility... combined with democratic needs - security and equality'.⁸⁵ In the Greater Britain property, although privately owned, would be under corporate control. Workers and employers would each elect representatives who, together with nominees selected by the state to represent consumers, would deal with questions of pay, conditions of work, co-ordination of production, maintenance of standards, implementation of new technologies, expansion and reduction of capacity, and the rate of return on capital for each industry. Instead of the morality of "eat, or be eaten" in the fierce struggle of modern commercial competition' would come economic justice; 'we now turn from the laws of the jungle to the laws of man' Thomson believed.⁸⁶ CW also anticipated that 'within the framework of the general plan each industry will be almost wholly self-administrative, as will also each factory within the general plan for each industry'.⁸⁷ Wilfred Brown, a businessman and leading supporter of CW, specified 'Regional Boards', with below them 'District Boards'. Alongside this geographical structure 'Trade Boards', as in the fascist corporation, would plan each industrial sector. The interests of consumers would be represented through Parliament which, no longer being dominated by the interests of labour and capital, 'would become a body of consumers' representatives' which would 'delegate the consumers' authority' to the planners.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.98.

⁸⁵ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.148.

⁸⁶ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, pp.12, 15-16.

⁸⁷ CW, *Trade Unions and Common Ownership* (1943), p.13.

⁸⁸ Wilfred Brown, *Control of Industry Under Socialism* (1944), pp.1-5.

To oversee the whole economy Acland anticipated an 'Economic General Staff' who would have relative freedom of action because parliament would be called on only to approve or reject the plan as a whole.⁸⁹ This body would superintend the location of industry, manage production and the distribution of materials and labour, and control consumption by 'price-changes' to affect demand. In the Greater Britain a 'National Planning Council' or 'National Corporation' would 'function ... to plan, to regulate and to direct the whole national economy', operating 'in the interests of the national welfare'.⁹⁰ This body, constituted by representatives from every corporation, would, in turn, report to the fascist government and, ultimately, the Leader. Describing the functioning of the corporate state in the case of a glut of soft fruit Annie Brock Griggs wrote of how 'co-operation between the individual, the producer, the consumer and the State' would see farmers, retailers, transport workers and housewives work together.⁹¹ Employing the same example, Acland showed how instead of leaving a bumper crop to rot on the branch, the EGS would redirect labour from other projects to pick the fruit, 'release or import' more sugar and 'conduct a vigorous campaign in favour of bottling and jam making'.⁹²

Although Labour's manifestos spoke of a 'planned national economy' they tended not to go beyond the corporation and a mechanism for controlling investment.⁹³ However, Dalton had envisaged a 'Supreme Economic Authority' based around a 'small permanent nucleus of Ministers' which would set the general

⁸⁹ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.25, 61.

⁹⁰ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, pp.97-98, Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, pp.7-8.

⁹¹ *Action*, 3 Sept 1936.

⁹² Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.70-71.

⁹³ Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.8.

parameters for a 'National Planning Board'.⁹⁴ Morrison looked to a 'modernised, alert and well organised board of Trade—possibly styled the Ministry of Public Economy' which would be advised by an 'Economic Council' drawn from the corporations, finance, local government, the Co-operative movement and the TUC.⁹⁵ In Cole's blueprints a separate 'Ministry of Economic Planning' would collect statistics and draw up advanced plans. The administration and co-ordination of the boards and commissions of the planned economy would be grouped according to function under the Board of Trade, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Agriculture and so on, controlled overall by an 'Economic Committee of the Cabinet'.⁹⁶ At the other end of the period Bevan called for a 'Supreme Economic Council' over which Parliament which would wield 'supreme control' over its 'general plans and designs'. A 'Planning Commission' would monitor the activities of this council and 'submit further plans to Parliament for the next readjustment of the economic process.'⁹⁷

FINANCIAL CONTROL

Looking into the far future, Burns envisioned a time when the vast superstructure of bourgeois finance—its self-important buildings, arcane rituals of exchange, and even money itself—would disappear. In a communist society 'because nothing will be bought or sold', there would 'be no financial machinery whatever'. 'There will once again be a community in which men and women produce for themselves and share the product without buying and selling for money: a community in which, as

⁹⁴ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.312-314.

⁹⁵ Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport*, pp.290-294.

⁹⁶ Cole, *Plan For Democratic Britain*, pp.32-34, 180-182; *idem.*, *The Machinery of Socialist Planning* (1938), pp.50-69.

⁹⁷ Bevan, 'Plan for Work', pp.39-41.

Marx put it, "Society will inscribe on its banner: from each according to his capacity, to each according to his need."⁹⁸ However, even before this point, socialism, and the New Utopianism generally, would fundamentally change the nature of finance, ending its ascendancy and making it subordinate to the planners' will.

With the abolition of production for profit a formerly complex problem would become 'one of the easiest tasks of the planning authority', which would 'arrange for the issue of just exactly the right amount of money to buy, at the prices fixed, all goods and services which the community can produce in any given year.'⁹⁹ In Soviet Britain finance would no longer be 'a deadly parasite' restricting production for the sake of profit. The banks would be unified as a single 'State banking system' as 'the machinery of the Central Treasury and accounting system of the Soviet Power'.¹⁰⁰ CW also promised to 'end the kind of world in which we do our thinking in the unintelligible language of finance, balance sheets and private profit', and to make 'money... the servant, not the master of economic and industrial policy.' The state would control finance in the common interest with a 'Financial Authority' making and receiving payments for exports and imports, acting to 'fix the absolute level of wages and salaries and an absolute level of prices, such as will secure a balance between income and expenditure.'¹⁰¹ Wells saw the possibility of 'a perfectly safe, perfectly calculated social and economic system' where 'consumption would equal production'. Money would simply become 'a check, giving purchasing power against a claim established or services rendered',

⁹⁸ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, p.134; *idem.*, *Money* (1937), p.94.

⁹⁹ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.48.

¹⁰⁰ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.32.

with 'stock and share and all such interest-bearing quasi-money' disappearing. This was 'nothing fantastic', 'nothing Utopian'. Wells believed: 'such an exact and unencumbered economic life is possible' ¹⁰²

Although the BUF would not abolish private property and Labour—at least for the time being—would leave wide areas of private enterprise in existence, they too claimed to be able to put finance in its place. 'Money', the fascist Thomson explained, 'has only one function, and that is to facilitate the exchange of goods and services and thus to distribute production.' The fascist spiritual revolution and the coercive force of the 'modern movement' would together act against anyone who behaved as if 'banking existed only for its own sake'.¹⁰³ 'High finance,' Mosley contended, 'like every other interest within the State must be subordinated to the policy of the State, and must serve the welfare of the nation as a whole.' 'Ruthless power' would be used if necessary.¹⁰⁴ Financial institutions would not be socialised but be placed under the 'supervision of a financial corporation'. Financiers would place 'service to the national interest before personal or sectional interests' and act 'to encourage consumption as well as production'.¹⁰⁵ Although it was claimed that fascism's 'attack on the citadel of finance' would not 'be partial but universal', once again, the usual message of BUF propaganda was that answering the 'Jewish question' would solve the problem of finance as well.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ CW, *To Those Who Work the Land* (undated; 1943?), p.1; *idem.*, *Manifesto*, p.8; Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.27-28.

¹⁰² Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.395.

¹⁰³ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.20.

¹⁰⁴ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.118; *idem.*, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.51.

¹⁰⁵ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.21; Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, pp.123-124.

¹⁰⁶ *Idem.*, *The Greater Britain*, p.115; *idem.*, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.51-52; Alexander Raven Thomson, *Our Financial Masters* (undated; 1938).

As already noted, Mosley expected a combination of high wages and the adjustment of the supply of credit to balance production and consumption and so bring stability, albeit a stability depending on the hope that it was possible to rob capital to pay labour and vice versa with impunity. As with the BUF, Labour's goals included the infusion of 'social purpose' to financiers' conduct.¹⁰⁷ Labour also placed a stress on increased mass consumption and the manipulation of credit to manage the cycle of the mixed economy, although they also understood that it would not be possible to leave the plutocratic hoard untouched and improve the general standard of living. Once again, Labour's intention was to reduce money to 'its proper function of facilitating the exchange of real things.'¹⁰⁸ Labour would control the overall money supply through a socialised Bank of England and, either immediately or eventually, the issue of short term credit, by merging the joint stock banks into a single banking corporation.¹⁰⁹ The boards of these bodies would be selected by the state and would co-operate with the 'experts' of the NIB. The NIB would have overall control over the raising and investment of capital by both public and private sectors as well as issuing capital itself.¹¹⁰ Its aim would be to maintain full employment and maximum production while seeking the common good rather than mere profit. 'Housing schemes' would 'come before dog-racing tracks or cinemas' and the NIB's powers to control the location of industry would eradicate

¹⁰⁷ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.185.

¹⁰⁸ Cole, *Plan For Democratic Britain*, p.202.

¹⁰⁹ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.204-207, pp.232-234; Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, pp.16-17; *idem.*, *Socialism and the Condition of the People*, pp.9-16; 'A Bank Manager', *Why the Banks Should Be Nationalised* (1936).

¹¹⁰ Cole, *The Machinery of Socialist Planning*, pp.30-36; Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.214.

the distressed areas.¹¹¹ In Labour's final manifesto, the NIB remained the party's major means of 'planning'.¹¹²

CONTROL OF LABOUR

The New Utopians' planning machinery also needed to deliver labour power to each part of the economy, and to be able to control what portion of social wealth was distributed as wages. In a market economy, a person's 'freedom' to work where s/he will, although often negligible in practice, does on occasion grant to the worker the power to impose their own desires on the system and the planners of the new economy had to confront this issue.

Wartime conscription offered one solution, in which the nature, location, duration and remuneration of work was decided and imposed from above. However, apart from suggestions for compulsory labour as a form of national service for the young, there was a uniform reluctance to infringe a liberty fundamental to the British Way. Acland repudiated the 'terrifying conception of one super-authority ordering each man to do such and such a definite job whether he likes it or not'. In CW's new Britain the 'Ministry of Man-Power' would rely on 'publicity' to urge 'the importance from the point of view of the community's total endeavours' of an occupation needing workers. 'Except as a last resort', it would be 'extremely undesirable to make unpopular jobs more attractive by sudden increases in pay'.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Cole, *Plan For Democratic Britain*, p.214; Jay, *The Nation's Wealth At The Nation's Service*; Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.221.

¹¹² Labour Party, *Let Us Face The Future*, p.5; *idem.*, *Full Employment and Financial Policy: Report by the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party to be presented to the Annual Conference to be held in London from May 29th to June 2nd, 1944* (1944).

¹¹³ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.93-96.

This last point hinted at the possibility that if people's social conscience was not sufficiently developed for them to undertake altruistically unattractive tasks, then the market principle would still rule. Wootton realised that free collective bargaining backed up with the right to strike could 'wreck any plan', 'Sectional bargaining and successful planning' were 'incompatible'. Wootton hoped that the unions would change from the defensive, negative role forced on them in bourgeois Britain to fulfil a different, positive role in the 'planned society... to improve the output and efficiency of industry, to keep down the price level quite as much as to keep up the level of money wages.'¹¹⁴ Dalton hoped for the unions to become 'Professional Associations, concerned with maintaining a high level of qualifications and efficient public service.'¹¹⁵

Cole thought that eventually a 'General Industrial Welfare Board' might become responsible for the 'final determination of wages and conditions of work throughout the economic system.'¹¹⁶ As part of a new post-war economy the Labour economist Thomas Balogh stressed that the 'inflationary spiral, resulting from the policy of full employment' made 'a national wage policy and compulsory arbitration' essential.¹¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, socialists were unwilling to predict a time when the hard-won rights of organised labour would be formally abolished. Nonetheless, Morrison anticipated that 'the direct weapon of the strike will go out of use.' Not because it would be unlawful but because the causes which

¹¹⁴ Wootton, 'Freedom Under Planning', pp.47-49.

¹¹⁵ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.165.

¹¹⁶ Cole, *The Machinery of Socialist Planning*, p.41.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Balogh, 'Outline of a Plan', pp.130-147 in J.R.M. Brumwell (ed.), *This Changing World: A series of contributions by some of our leading thinkers, to cast light upon the pattern of the modern world* (1944), pp.140-141.

necessitated it would disappear.¹¹⁸ CW also expected that strikes would be 'extremely rare'. The unions would instead 'co-operate in maximising production'.¹¹⁹ But until absolute plenty arrived, and while social altruism was partial, a residual potential for tension between the planners and labour would remain. Fascists went further and replaced workers' 'strike action' with 'power action' available through the corporate state.¹²⁰ Each corporation, being equally divided between unions, employers' associations and consumers would provide a harmonious balance of interests. The right to strike would be superfluous as employer and employed would 'co-operate to their mutual benefit'.¹²¹ Thomson admitted that the workers, faced with this vision of a time when 'economic lambs will lie down with economic lions' might 'retort, "Yes, with us inside" but a 'Charter of Labour' would pull the lion's teeth.¹²²

Concerning the control of industry more widely, the CPGB anticipated a much greater say for the workers. 'Socialism', one communist wrote, 'will give full control and consultation to the workers in all sections of every industry.'¹²³ In the Soviet Britain:

The workers would participate, through their organisations, at every possible point in the control and administration of industry. Not only would bodies such as works committees exercise important functions over working conditions inside the factory; but the administrative boards of the various industries, both in districts and

¹¹⁸ Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport*, pp.238-240.

¹¹⁹ CW, *Trade Unions*, pp.15, 19.

¹²⁰ Wilfred Risdon, *Strike Action Or Power Action* (undated; c.1938).

¹²¹ *Blackshirt*, 3 August 1934.

¹²² Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.22.

¹²³ Robson, *Essentials of Communist Theory*, p.13.

nationally, would include (probably would predominantly consist of) trade union nominees; while factory committees, trade unions, planning committees of rank-and-file workers would doubtless participate in criticising and amending the economic plan so far as it applied to their own sphere of work.¹²⁴

Through such structures workers would be able to protect their interests in the face of 'over-enthusiastic "planners"'.¹²⁵ Although, during the war, the CPGB's interim program came much closer to Labour's, it continued to argue for 'adequate representation of the workers in management and control'.¹²⁶

Acland too stressed that orders from the 'Council of Industry'—which would include representatives of 'the managers, the technicians and all the different grades of workers in the industry'—would be 'discussed by all the workers, skilled and unskilled, technicians and managers, within the factory.' In case his reader might think he was speaking figuratively, Acland declared: 'I do mean, quite literally, that every single man in the factory must be given his chance of expressing his view.'¹²⁷ Brown of CW predicted that the management of a factory would be 'criticised, promoted or sacked by democratic decision' if things did not go satisfactorily.¹²⁸ Business would be conducted through a 'round table conference between the heads of all the departments of Management, representatives of the different technicians and representatives of the workers from all substantial departments of the factory concerned.'¹²⁹

¹²⁴ *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.49.

¹²⁵ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.141.

¹²⁶ CPGB, *Britain For the People*, pp.10-12.

¹²⁷ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.72, 76.

¹²⁸ Brown, *Control of Industry Under Socialism*, p.12.

¹²⁹ CW, *Trade Unions*, p.16.

Workers in the Greater Britain would also be in a 'partnership... in the planning of industry'.¹³⁰ Charles Wegg-Prosser wrote that the BUF could 'proudly claim to be a Revolutionary Worker's Movement, seeking to set up the only genuine Workers' State, which is the Corporate State'.¹³¹ In this respect the BUF had—via the example of Fascism in Italy—drawn on the European syndicalist tradition. However, British socialism had its own tradition stressing the control of industry by workers, and former ILP member Wilfred Risdon pointed to 'a vast amount of ground work prepared... for the modern version of Socialism which we call National Socialism or Fascism' in guild socialism.¹³²

G.D.H. Cole, the principal intellectual of guild socialism, had by 1932 embraced state socialism, but nonetheless still desired to synthesise the 'fullest degree of technical efficiency' with 'a big development of workers' control and self-government' to combine productive efficiency with a wider democracy. Cole hoped thereby to foster, 'a really Socialist spirit', a fraternal and harmonious relationship between workers and bosses. As means to these ends he suggested that the planners should include 'men drawn from the ranks of the manual workers and trusted by them' and proposed a 'representative council drawn from the entire personnel of the industry.'¹³³ Writing at the same time, Harold Clay argued for half of the boards of public corporations to be trade union representatives and for

¹³⁰ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.11.

¹³¹ C.F. Wegg-Prosser, 'The Worker and the State', *Fascist Quarterly*, 2 2 (April 1936), pp.255-266; 255.

¹³² W. Risdon, 'The Old Socialism and the New', *British Union Quarterly*, 2 1 (January-March 1938), pp.59-63.

¹³³ Cole, *The Intelligent Man's Guide*, pp.590-591; *idem.*, *What Is This Socialism?* (1933), pp.20-21.

similar provision at the level of 'works, garage or shop'.¹³⁴ Labour's 1934 manifesto declared 'that the employees in a socialised industry have a right, which should be acknowledged by law, to an effective share in the control and direction of industry'.¹³⁵

Years later Balogh noted that a post-war mixed economy based on security and full employment could only succeed if the old relations between labour and capital no longer applied. There had to be 'economic disarmament' of the customary weapons of these old adversaries, with them coming to 'rely on *political* rather than economic safeguards to obtain economic security.' This could only happen if the workers became 'full partners in a system of conscious planning and direct control'.¹³⁶ In contrast, Clay believed that 'partnership' could only occur in socialised industry, for only then would organised labour be able to work in the interests of the whole community.¹³⁷

Instead of the 'spiritual' revolution bringing organic harmony to the Greater Britain, the abolition of private property would create harmony through an identity of economic 'interest'. With the removal of the economic basis of inequality, it was hoped that its cultural superstructure would dissolve too. 'Bosses' men', the 'supervisory, technical and administrative workers', would then only differ from manual workers according to their function. In this new situation trades unions could adopt a positive role as the functional organisers of labour, managing entry into and transference of workers within industry and 'general questions of the

¹³⁴ Harold Clay, 'Workers' Control', in Stafford Cripps, et al , *Problems of a Socialist Government* (1933), pp.216, 218.

¹³⁵ Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.15.

¹³⁶ Thomas Balogh, 'Outline of a Plan', pp.138-139.

¹³⁷ Clay, 'Workers' Control', p.219.

utilisation of labour'.¹³⁸ During the war years the Fabian, T.W. Agar, stressed that higher 'functional' democracy could only come through industrial democracy which required 'control of industry by the workers engaged in it' and that this would only be possible when socialisation ended the confusion of ownership with control. Then managers would be incorporated into organised labour and develop 'a social consciousness and a sense of loyalty to the State.' Agar then imagined the planning of industry carried out through a 'Parliament of Industry' to replace the Lords.¹³⁹

However, the extent of workers' participation in socialised industry remained a source of conflict. While hoping to expand democracy the New Utopians also demanded efficiency. CW made clear that it did not mean management by "'public meetings'". Rather 'democratic control' implied a free flow of comment and information between workers and managers, while the 'ultimate control... must rest... in the hands of quite a small team... of technically qualified men and women.'¹⁴⁰ Morrison noted with approval that in Russia 'the rights of industrial labour' were limited to 'consultation rather than direct executive power', an approach which came to dominate Labour's thinking.¹⁴¹ As is discussed below,¹⁴² there was a hope of the eventual evolution of 'a new and better type of industrial worker' so that in time 'workers by hand and by brain' would work together 'for the good of the industry' with which all were concerned.¹⁴³ Until that day arrived, Labour was unwilling to go beyond the possibility of 'consultation' in the selection of

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.216, 218, 224.

¹³⁹ T.W. Agar, 'Towards Industrial Democracy', pp.24-36 in Herbert Morrison *et al.*, *Can Planning Be Democratic: A Collection of Essays prepared for the Fabian Society* (1944).

¹⁴⁰ CW, *Notes on Common Ownership*, p.6.

¹⁴¹ Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport*, p.227.

¹⁴² See ch.5 below.

corporate boards and devolving 'appropriate functions to smaller local units' so that the worker could 'make a contribution, in addition to that of his labour, to the efficiency and smooth running of the industry.'¹⁴⁴ Aside from the issue of technical competence, this treatment perhaps also pointed to the degree to which Labour's new Britain would continue to be marked by social divisions. Durbin commented that the demand for "Workers' Control", should be reduced 'to 'Workers' Representation'. Industries should be 'operated in the interests of the community; and not by and for the minority of workers employed in it.'¹⁴⁵ As one critic wrote, 'a stratified industrial system' would remain.¹⁴⁶

THE ECONOMIC FUTURE

The promise of the New Utopian blueprint was to make work the right, indeed duty, of every fit adult Briton.¹⁴⁷ The shared expectation was that the 'problem of unemployment will be finally and permanently solved'.¹⁴⁸ Not only would cyclical unemployment come to an end but the ambitions of the New Utopians meant that a labour shortage was more likely than bourgeois society's reserve army of labour. One authority reasoned that 'in a socialist economy, where expansion of production was the dominant aim, actual shortage of labour, particularly of skilled labour, would probably constitute the principal limit of expansion.'¹⁴⁹ Technical progress would still cause unemployment but the economy's voracious appetite for

¹⁴³ Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport*, pp.233-235.

¹⁴⁴ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.163-164.

¹⁴⁵ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.315.

¹⁴⁶ A. Creech Jones, 'Managing the Managements', *The New Clarion*, 4 February 1933.

¹⁴⁷ See also pp.261-262 below.

¹⁴⁸ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.9.

¹⁴⁹ *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.30.

labour would leave no one idle for long. 'Machine replacing man' could never be a problem as ultimately the common working day would simply be reduced.

The planners' total grasp of the economy would allow them to balance out changes in different industrial sectors so that the conditions of individual workers would no longer need to be directly related to the price at which goods they made were sold. If the value of one commodity declined, instead of wages being cut or workers made redundant Strachey saw that 'the loss would be made up out of the surpluses of other socialised industries... or out of general taxation.' Fluctuations in the price of goods would be 'borne evenly by the whole community.'¹⁵⁰ While some reference should be made to the 'cost index' to ensure 'that value for money is secured', 'essentially', Jay argued, 'the objective should be to decide policy on the grounds of common-sense perception of human needs, and leave the financial account to be settled accordingly.'¹⁵¹ CW anticipated that in the new Britain: 'when a factory is operating "at a loss," the community will bear the loss. But it will not necessarily close the factory.'¹⁵² Such local losses would be more than balanced out by the increased efficiency of the economy as a whole. Unlike the view of the planned economy currently dominant, in the 1930s and 1940s state planning was synonymous with the rhetoric of 'efficiency'.¹⁵³ Socialism was not only 'ethically and morally right', Morrison wrote, but also 'sound business from the point of view of the community.'¹⁵⁴

'Efficiency' need not have implied the ever faster transformation of the fabric of the planet into manufactured goods, but productivist values were to the fore in

¹⁵⁰ Strachey, *The Case For Socialism*, p.86.

¹⁵¹ Jay, *The Socialist Case*, pp.270, 271.

¹⁵² CW, *Notes on Common Ownership*, p.4.

¹⁵³ A claim that Labour made at least eight times in *Let Us Face the Future*.

the New Utopianism as much as they were under capitalism. Sustained consumption was the prerequisite of economic stability and, hence, social peace. As Wells wrote, 'disharmony' between production and consumption required that 'the community... consume—by replanning, rebuilding, cleansing, and glorifying the world.'¹⁵⁵ Mosley paired 'modern industry... working at full pressure' with 'maximum consumption'.¹⁵⁶ Production for use would be no different when socialists looked towards a time when 'every desirable good is produced in such quantity that it is free as the air, and the slogan, "to each according to his need," can be fully applied'.¹⁵⁷

Through solving the 'problem' of abundance the powers of science would be freed from frustration. 'Under Socialism' there would 'be no need to suppress inventions, because every device for increasing wealth or easing labour will result in the raising of the general standard of life and comfort'.¹⁵⁸ Scientific progress would be the drive behind the 'standard of life' under fascist government.¹⁵⁹ Acland anticipated 'deliberately organised research' increasing by 'between 1,000% and 10,000% within the first few years of Common Ownership'.¹⁶⁰ 'Socialism is a Society', *For Soviet Britain* pronounced, 'organised as a whole on a scientific plan, which therefore cannot but stimulate scientific development in every part of that whole.'¹⁶¹ Morton of the CPGB looked forward to 'the progressive conquest of nature, and the spread of scientific knowledge, enormously accelerated by the

¹⁵⁴ Morrison, *An Easy Outline*, p.3.

¹⁵⁵ Wells, *After Democracy*, p.231.

¹⁵⁶ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, pp.90-92.

¹⁵⁷ *The New Clarion*, 4 February 1933.

¹⁵⁸ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.156.

¹⁵⁹ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.43.

¹⁶⁰ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.120.

¹⁶¹ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.31.

overthrow of capitalism.¹⁶² The virtuosity of science which had 'produced radio-location, jet propulsion, penicillin, and the Mulberry harbour' would have 'full rein in peacetime too.'¹⁶³ A general age of a beneficial science beckoned:

New inventions, already within reach, could remove the drudgery from labour; harness new sources of power; shorten hours for all workers with increased output and increased pay packets; provide well-equipped labour-saving homes for all, of a standard now regarded as only available for the rich; and open up new horizons of leisure, travel and culture.¹⁶⁴

'Science can work miracles' Robson wrote in a CPGB pamphlet.¹⁶⁵ In the new Britain the *least* thing that science would be able to do would be to make more, made better. Morrison wrote of a world where the 'dream of the alchemist seems very near realisation', the Red Dean saw humanity merely being 'on the fringe of possibility'.¹⁶⁶ Hemming of CW believed that science could make the 'desert blossom', the 'conquest of disease' was at hand and even 'cancer' would 'be overcome by medical science quite soon'. 'Great things can be done in five years, wonders in ten, and in twenty years the whole world can be transformed'; there was, Hemming concluded, 'just no limit to what man can achieve.'¹⁶⁷

Most important of all was that the New Utopian blueprint promised not only a better material existence but to humanise a hitherto alienating mode of existence. Tawney saw that whereas the life produced by bourgeois economics was an

¹⁶² Morton, A.L., 'Communism and Morality' pp.329-355 in J. Lewis (ed.), *Christianity and the Social Revolution* (1935), p.352.

¹⁶³ Labour Party, *Let Us Face The Future*, p.6.

¹⁶⁴ CPGB, *Britain For The People*, p.6.

¹⁶⁵ Robson, *Essentials of Communist Theory*, p.13.

¹⁶⁶ Herbert Morrison, *Science and Administration in Modern Government* (1944), p.5; Johnson, *The Socialist Sixth of the World*, pp.51-55.

'incidental by-product', under an economy devoted to 'the service of man' the aims of society would be 'conscious and explicit'.¹⁶⁸ 'Human values, and human needs, rationally recognized and weighed' would 'be the supreme criterion of a civilised community's economic policy, and the first charge on economic life'.¹⁶⁹ Acland declared: 'we will decide what we want to do, and will do it'.¹⁷⁰ Strachey expressed this belief very clearly. Whereas, under capitalism 'things, not men are in the saddle', 'under a planned economic system... men... tackle the job of consciously controlling, to suit themselves, their own productive system. The successful achievement of this control will be a decisive step forward in human history' he believed.¹⁷¹

A NEW WORLD ORDER

The New Utopian blueprint would thus replace the boom-slump cycle with a stable, expanding, economy. The world of strikes and lockouts, unemployment and poverty, expensive and shoddy goods, national decline and the frustration of science would be transcended to bring the El Dorado of abundant quality goods at low prices, high wages and shorter hours, industrial harmony and the fullest growth that technology would permit. However, all these plans were potentially so much empty talk for the simple reason that any economic—and thus political—solution could not be purely national.

There was the 'new revolution in human affairs' with its "abolition of distance" that Wells pointed to. 'Ways of doing business, dealing with property,

¹⁶⁷ Hemming, 'World Abundance', p.7.

¹⁶⁸ Tawney, *Why Britain Fights*, pp.35-37.

¹⁶⁹ Jay, *The Socialist Case*, p.279.

¹⁷⁰ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.21.

employing other people, and working' had 'undergone all sorts of deformation because of this change of scale in human affairs'. Anticipating the effects that communications technology would have, Wells foresaw the time when 'everyone' in a 'concentrated and intensified world will be living, so to speak in the next room from everyone else... the whole world will be a meeting place.' New possibilities for the free movement of goods, information and people conflicted with the existing 'seventy-odd petty sovereign divisions' of world politics.¹⁷²

Wells enthusiastically embraced the emerging global society but none of the New Utopians could ignore it. Dalton stated the realities of Britain's place in the world, noting that 'we are all members one of another, not only in warm moralising, but in stone cold fact. This densely populated little island in the North Sea can never hope to live unto itself alone. We can find no oasis, either of prosperity in a world impoverished, or of peace in a world at war.' Isolation was 'impractical' and 'both foolish and wrong'.¹⁷³ Neither people nor machines could be fed without imports, a reality which no one could ignore. As Labour noted, 'planning and control in international life both postulate and follow from national planning and socialised control of our national life'.¹⁷⁴ The good life at home was similarly conditional on peace abroad.

NATIONALIST, INTERNATIONALIST AND COSMOPOLITAN SOLUTIONS

The New Utopian blueprint for the world economy and polity might usefully be seen to range between three different visions, from an exclusive fascist nationalism, through socialist internationalism, to a Wellsian cosmopolitan abolition of the

¹⁷¹ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.65.

¹⁷² Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.2, 138, 153.

nation. At the heart of the fascist approach to this question, as with all else, was the principle of "Britain First". The conquest, exploitation and extirpation of other peoples was not 'Britain's business'.¹⁷⁵ In contrast, Attlee dismissed "National Socialism" as 'a contradiction in terms', as 'a true Socialist cannot allow his sympathies to be bounded by anything as narrow as a nation, for nationalism is only egotism writ large.' At least in theory, a nation could only determine its own fate 'provided that in so doing it does not conflict with the general interest of the human race.'¹⁷⁶ The Cosmopolis would dissolve the question of the relationship between the nation and the wider world altogether and the aim of the FPSI was 'world government and the world citizen'.¹⁷⁷

Wells also taught the FPSI that peace, and the opportunity for scientific progress to 'provide an ampler, richer life for mankind', required that the 'competing national sovereignties which divide and distract the modern world' be 'superseded by a collective world government.' Such a government would 'initially take the form of an international consultative control' and would 'later supersede the functions of the various national governments.'¹⁷⁸ Allen Young looked to the 'rational division of labour in the world' achieved by the planning of the world economy.¹⁷⁹ The World State would 'clear away' the 'traditions of nationality',

¹⁷³ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.367.

¹⁷⁴ Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.9.

¹⁷⁵ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.13; *idem.*, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.67-72.

¹⁷⁶ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.156-158.

¹⁷⁷ C.E.M. Joad, 'The F.P.S.I.: What it is; what it wants; and how it hopes to obtain it', pp.30-63 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934), p.60.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.61.

¹⁷⁹ Allen Young, 'The economics of planning', pp.64-87 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934), p.78.

impose a world language and create a world encyclopaedia to serve as the 'ideology of mankind', 'the world organ of our correlated activities.'¹⁸⁰

Without the economic and political rivalries of the old world, peace would break out. Stapledon hoped for 'a world-society so unified in sentiment and in structure that war will be, if not strictly inconceivable, at least as improbable as in our day war would be between, say Wessex and Mercia.'¹⁸¹ Likewise, in the 'World Communism' sought by the CPGB as its ultimate aim there would be 'no rivalry for markets or cheaper sources of raw materials or spheres of influence, and therefore no basis for international war' and so 'no... need of armies and navies and air fleets... and all the other paraphernalia of war.' Communism would bring a 'world without backward or subject peoples', dissolve the 'barriers between men' and inaugurate 'the unity of mankind'.¹⁸² Strachey foresaw that 'the inconvenient idiosyncrasies of locality' would ultimately disappear in a 'world synthesis'.¹⁸³

Before the final transcendence of national difference, the CPGB, as with socialists generally, expected 'the beginning of an ordered peace and plenty for all the inhabitants of the earth, the beginning of a World Socialist Society'.¹⁸⁴ Labour's Dalton also understood the road away from 'the sheer edge of the cliff' was 'towards world government, and a world-wide plan, for justice and plenty and

¹⁸⁰ E.E. Blandon, 'Basic as the World Language', *Plan*, 10 11 (November 1943), pp.2-4; *idem.*, 'Basic as the World Language (2)', *Plan*, 11 1 (January 1944), pp.2-4; *idem.*, 'Basic and Interglossa', *Plan*, 11 3 (March 1944), pp.2-4; Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, pp.790, 802; *idem.*, *The Shape of Things To Come*, p.297; *idem.*, *The World Brain*; *idem.*, *Science and the World Mind*, pp.20ff.

¹⁸¹ Stapledon, *Seven Pillars of Peace*, p.2.

¹⁸² CPGB, *Draft Programme of the Communist Party of Great Britain* (1939), pp.15, 34; Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, pp.132-133.

¹⁸³ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, p.389, note 1.

¹⁸⁴ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.45.

peace.' 'Socialism by national compartments' was 'not enough'.¹⁸⁵ Just as Labour's ultimate domestic aim was 'the Co-operative Commonwealth', it also sought to join 'with other nations to create a world Commonwealth'. Labour would 'press for international planning in economic and financial questions'.¹⁸⁶ Dalton could foresee the possibility of 'an international police force and international control of civil aviation' entailing an 'International Air Force and the World Air Service'. He imagined the latter provided with 'lighted air routes, fully equipped with air bases, hotels, repair stations, radio-beam and meteorological services'.¹⁸⁷ In a similar vein, CW maintained that the world could not return to the pre-war order of 'competing sovereign states'. World economic co-operation demanded that 'continents be treated... as single economic units' and for trade to be 'planned for the common well-being of mankind'. Economic planning required 'political security' and therefore, that the 'United Nations' should collaborate in a manner 'unselfish and free from the domination of economic or political power-cliques.' A 'World Council' would be established to 'supervise the 'World Economic Council' and other supra national bodies. Through such a body, CW hoped for vigorous progress 'toward a world government based on the economic and political democracy and unity of the human race'.¹⁸⁸ In contrast, Labour preferred 'a world economic commonwealth of nations co-operating together but retaining their own

¹⁸⁵ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.385-386; see also Laski, 'The Economic Foundations of Peace', pp.532-547.

¹⁸⁶ Cripps, *The Ultimate Aims of the Labour Party*, pp.6-8; Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.137, 286-287; Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, pp.9-11.

¹⁸⁷ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.375-376; Dalton refers his reader to: C.R. Attlee, *An International Police Force (The New Commonwealth)*; *idem.*, 'No More War if Planes Police the World', *The Daily Herald*, 16 October 1934; H.R.G. Graves, 'An international Police Board', *New Commonwealth*, (September 1934); W. Arnold-Foster, *World Airways. Why Not? A Practical Scheme for the Safeguarding of Peace* (undated; c.193?).

¹⁸⁸ CW, *Manifesto*, pp.13-15.

distinctive policies and abstaining from interfering with each others' internal affairs.'¹⁸⁹

As to how to achieve this end in a period of rampant nationalism and warlike imperialism, during the 1930s Labour promised to press for 'collective defence', a 'stronger and truly world-wide' League of Nations and then 'all-round disarmament', and to seek 'regional agreements with such states as accepted the establishment of a World Commonwealth as our common objective'.¹⁹⁰ One possible step in this direction might be a 'sterling area' including the dominions, the Scandinavian countries and parts of South America.¹⁹¹ Alternatively, Attlee suggested beginning with an economic bloc based around a Socialist Britain, France and the USSR.¹⁹² Cripps imagined such an 'economic co-operative group' expanding to include all nations with a common currency and its economy planned by an 'economic advisory general staff'.¹⁹³ Another possibility was the creation of a 'planned system of inter-Dominion trade', not as the autarchy sought by the BUF, but 'to show the way of advance to the world'.¹⁹⁴ More ambitiously Lansbury, echoing the 'Empire Socialists' of the 1920s, named socialists as the 'real Big Englanders' and hoped for the empire not to be broken up but to be 'one big step forward' to 'the United States of the World'.¹⁹⁵ In 1945 Labour hoped for 'Anglo-American-Russian co-operation' as the 'nucleus of a World Organisation' and that international political and economic structures would, in 'the more distant future',

¹⁸⁹ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.225

¹⁹⁰ Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.10; Arthur Henderson, *Labour's Peace Policy: Arbitration Security Disarmament* (undated; c.1934).

¹⁹¹ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.199.

¹⁹² Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.225.

¹⁹³ Cripps, *The Struggle for Peace*, p.132.

¹⁹⁴ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.234

lead to a 'Socialist civilisation' and the world of peace and plenty where 'men and women everywhere have the chance of realising the inherent dignity of human nature.'¹⁹⁶ The stream of thought imagining some form of European union also reached its zenith during the war years. Joad saw 'Federal Union' as 'the supreme political need of our times.' 'Defence, trade, currency, population and colonies' should all in future become the responsibility of a 'common government'.¹⁹⁷ Tawney also believed that federalism, while not a universal panacea, was the most hopeful possibility for the future.¹⁹⁸ For CW the first step toward 'world unity' was 'a democratic federation of Europe'.¹⁹⁹

One of the central dilemmas which all socialists faced was that their ability to create the New Utopia at home was to a considerable extent constrained by the nature of the wider world. One 'deadly objection' to socialism in one country was, as Wells noted, that the advance of 'progress' was related to 'a limit set... by Indian, Egyptian and Chinese workers.'²⁰⁰ Mosley, in planning the Greater Britain also recognised that any attempt at fascist planning would be futile if producers had to compete against 'cheap coolie labour'. However, rather than wait for world socialism, fascism would create an autarchy based on Britain's empire. Premised on the 'natural balance' between Britain as a manufacturing country and the empire as primary producers, this would be an 'insulated system', 'immune' from economic

¹⁹⁵ Lansbury, *My England*, pp.151-167; Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the Empire 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993), p.50.

¹⁹⁶ Labour Party, *The International Post-War Settlement* (1944); *idem.*, *Let Us Face The Future*, p.11. The CPGB adopted a broadly similar stance (CPGB, *Britain For The People*, pp.19-20).

¹⁹⁷ C.E.M. Joad, 'War Aims', *Plan Bulletin*, 1 1 (October 1939), pp.3-4; 4.

¹⁹⁸ Tawney, *Why Britain Fights*, p.31.

¹⁹⁹ CW, *Manifesto*, p.15.

²⁰⁰ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.524.

crisis elsewhere.²⁰¹ Naturally, while all socialists and communists promised the eventual or immediate self-determination of the colonised peoples, the dissolution of the empire was not among fascist proposals, the development of parallel corporate states in the dominions, India and the colonies being preferred.²⁰²

Although for blackshirts a cosmopolitan future was the worst of all possible worlds this did not preclude a fascist internationalism. Mosley argued that a 'union of the great Powers of Europe in Universal Fascism' was the only way to peace.²⁰³ Within this bloc the economic activity of Britain, France, Germany and Italy would each be safely curbed within its own autarchic sphere, peace being assured because all possessed the 'means of free and prosperous existence'.²⁰⁴ This bloc would be the 'first step toward the world commonwealth.'²⁰⁵ 'PEACE IS THE AIM' was fascism's claim, but this would be a pacific world won by the sword after the fascist states had expanded into Russia, Africa and elsewhere.²⁰⁶ Despite this, fascism claimed to provide 'the highest ideal of a national and world citizenship' 'yet [to] animate... the soul of man' which would 'guarantee not only the peace of Europe but the peace of the world'.²⁰⁷

²⁰¹ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.133.

²⁰² Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.9; Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.158, 242; Durbin, *What We Have to Defend*, pp.66-71; Labour Party, *The Colonial Empire*, pp.4-5; CW, *Manifesto*, p.12; *idem.*, *India* (1943); CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.44; *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.43, Harry Pollitt, *How To Win The Peace* (1944), pp.64-70; Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.135; *idem.*, *Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered* (undated; c.1936), questions 81-85.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, question 92.

²⁰⁴ Oswald Mosley, 'The World Alternative', *Fascist Quarterly*, 2 3 (1936), pp.377-395; *idem.*, *The Greater Britain*, pp.140-141.

²⁰⁵ Robert Gordon-Canning, *Mind Britain's Business* (undated; c.1938), p.7.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3.

²⁰⁷ Mosley, 'The World Alternative', p.395.

Another fascist subverted socialist rhetoric to claim this as the path to 'true internationalism based on the Brotherhood of Man.'²⁰⁸ The organic model of social organisation led Alexander McKee to imagine 'national union' as 'the first step', towards 'universal union'. However, just as in the communist treatment of the 'national question', this 'union' was to be 'without the abolition of national characteristics, just as national unity was achieved without the disappearance of the individual's distinctive talents.'²⁰⁹ Labour promised a dual identity for the people as 'world citizens as well as national citizens' and Acland too stressed that socialism did not mean Britons losing the 'essential characteristics' of their 'race'.²¹⁰ Durbin believed that 'no other loyalty, of family, or religion, or class, has been strong enough to overcome the call of the national flag and national cause'. Socialism needed to channel patriotism, 'to control it and turn it to useful ends' as an expression of the 'constructive love, a oneness with our friends, a confession of human brotherhood'. Durbin looked forward to the 'greater Englishman of the future'.²¹¹ Stapledon, while espousing an internationalism which took 'the *universe*' as its scope, also argued for a 'true patriotism', based on the 'distinctively English spirit'.²¹²



Here then was the New Utopian blueprint for a life peaceful and abundant. All that remained was to seize the state and to bring these plans into existence through legislation. However, as Barbara Wootton wrote of such proposals: 'it is human

²⁰⁸ Hart, E.D. 'Book Reviews British Union Publications', *British Union Quarterly*, 1 2 (April - July 1937), pp.103-108; 104.

²⁰⁹ McKee, 'Psychology of Collective Caesarism', pp.67-70.

²¹⁰ Labour Party, *For Socialism and Peace*, p.13; Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.13.

²¹¹ Durbin, *What We Have To Defend*, pp.7-10, 90-1.

will, more often than natural or technical difficulty, which presents the obstacle to their fulfilment.²¹³ The institutions of a new society could be set down on paper and, given the opportunity, be translated into law. But for the new society to be created, the institutions of the blueprint had to become the normal pattern of people's thought and actions. For the blueprint to be realised it would have to create new people whose changed character was also the premise of the political and economic structures of the new life.

²¹² Stapledon, *New Hope For Britain*, pp.15, 120-127.

²¹³ Wootton, *Plan Or No Plan*, p.352.

Chapter 5

THE NEW MAN

We differ among ourselves—in so far as we are Anarchists, Socialists, Communists or Radicals about the best means of attaining this end, but as Lenin said our ideal is the New Man.

Amber Blanco White, *The New Propaganda*, 1939¹

We want men who are men and women who are women.

Oswald Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, 1932²

...I should say that other and more serious pretenders to the post of Leader in the Planned State have at least this in common with Sir Oswald - that they share his views on the suitable position of women in that Utopia.

Lady Rhondda, *Notes on the Way*, 1937³

In the 1930s and 40s the inscription over the gateway into utopia was essentially the same as it had always been: You must be born again. This could be read as the plea of the utopia builder, but it was most certainly a statement of fact: unless people turned to a new way of living, the blueprint would not be realised. The men and women of the future would be 'better' people inasmuch that their physical form and faculties would express the pursuit of practical perfection, but this would merely generalise existing qualities; bourgeois society produced its brilliant and beautiful people. The future citizen would be reborn, and transformed, to the extent that their values and conduct embodied a different collective relationship, a new way of living together.

¹ p.297.

² p.41.

³ p.111.

MAKING CITIZENS FOR THE NEW BRITAIN

The New Utopians were united in their desire to transcend the age of the C3 Briton and create people who were all they could be. Greenwood of Labour cited 'the full development of the physical, material and spiritual qualities of the people' as the 'very foundations of true national greatness.' Before Labour was 'the task of rearing a worthy race of citizens.'⁴ In a Soviet Britain 'the creation of a new type of man' was to be of 'outstanding importance to human history.'⁵ Communism would 'raise men and women to the full dignity and stature of human beings'.⁶ J.C. Fuller looked to a fascist 'people... fit in body, mind and soul'⁷ and in CW's new Britain every citizen would 'develop his body, his mind, his personality and his character to the full, to be the best man he is capable of being'.⁸ If the species was not degenerate Wells saw that *Homo sapiens* had to become 'a progressive super-*Homo*'.⁹

As to the general way in which this would be achieved, the ontological and theoretical assumptions of the New Utopians led them to place different stresses on willed self-transformation versus the influence of social 'environment' in moulding people. Discussing these two positions Acland noted that, on one hand, the minister of religion would say to the politician: "It is no use you passing laws until I have made these people good", whilst the latter would respond, "it is no use making these people good until I have given them an economic system which they can be good in." In contrast, CW sought:

⁴ Arthur Greenwood, *Immediate Steps Towards the New Order* (1933), pp.5-6.

⁵ *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.47.

⁶ W. Wainright, *Why You Should Be A Communist* (1942), pp.14-15.

⁷ J.C. Fuller, *March To Sanity: What the British Union has to offer Britain* (undated; c.1937), p.13.

⁸ Harry Roff, *Individuals and Minorities* (1944), p.1.

a synthesis between these two statements. It can be put in these words: "We must and we can live our individual lives for more generous motives towards our fellow men and our community, and in token of our ability to do that, we bind ourselves together in the struggle for the kind of community in which it will be possible to live in that more generous way."¹⁰

'Laws' and 'institutions' could not work unless individuals were 'prepared to act upon these principles in their individual lives. CW argued that 'the moral quality of the individual citizen, and the economic and political structure of society, act and react upon each other at every stage.'¹¹

As a Christian, Acland stressed free will as the ultimate determining factor, the 'new machinery' of the blueprint gave only an opportunity to find the necessary 'new spirit.' It could not guarantee that it would be found.¹² Although the BUF, in common with all the New Utopians placed considerable stress on environment, pointing to 'the system that compels people to act in an unsocial and harmful manner',¹³ they particularly emphasised willed self-abnegation. Chesterton spoke of the surrender of the ego.¹⁴ Looking from the other direction, Burns instead believed that the transformation of human nature was only 'an impossible utopia' if it was forgotten that change would come as a 'necessary consequence of... economic

⁹ Wells, *Science and the World Mind*, p.6.

¹⁰ Acland, *Questions and Answers*, p.61.

¹¹ CW, *Manifesto*, p.2.

¹² Acland, *What It Will Be Like*, p.56.

¹³ *Blackshirt*, 9 January 1937.

¹⁴ A.K. Chesterton, *The Creed of the Fascist Revolutionary* (Marietta, undated; c.1995; first published c.1936), pp.18-19.

changes in society.¹⁵ Laski too stressed that 'a revolution in the spirit of man' could only come after a revolutionary transformation of the 'material world'.¹⁶

FROM AD 1932 TO AF 632?

In utopias from Plato onwards, eugenics was a favoured means of creating better people which entailed the manipulation of both environment and the individual.¹⁷ Reflecting the contemporary promise of that technique, one commentator saw it as offering 'any kind of population we might choose'. Notwithstanding its dystopian intent, in the eye of the eugenicist 'A.F. 632' with its 'human hatcheries' in *Brave New World* seemed 'uncommonly like a logical development of A.D. 1932'.¹⁸

Mosley prescribed that in the Greater Britain, 'the unfit will be offered the alternatives of segregation sufficient to prevent the production of the unfit or sterilisation', although unlike in Germany, he hoped that 'the new social sense of Fascism' would be sufficient to that end.¹⁹ However, eugenics and pseudo-scientific racism played no significant role in BUF propaganda. Hence whilst the Blackshirts promised a 'final solution' for the 'Jewish problem' it was to be through expulsion, and BUF anti-Semitism was generally premised by xenophobia, economic fears and cynical calculation rather than Nazi racial 'science'.²⁰

Eugenics was not exclusively a 'right-wing' enthusiasm and the *Eugenics Review* commended the FPSI's proposals to avoid 'dysgenic tendencies' and

¹⁵ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, p.139.

¹⁶ Laski, *Where Do We Go from Here?*, pp.188-189.

¹⁷ Patrick Parrinder, 'Eugenics and Utopia: Sexual Selection from Galton to Morris', *Utopian Studies*, 8 2 (1997), pp.1-12; 10.

¹⁸ R. Austin Freeman, 'Human Hatcheries', *The Eugenics Review*, 24 3 (1932), pp.225-227.

¹⁹ Mosley, *Fascism*, question 76.

²⁰ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.63-66.

promote 'eugenic means for the improvement of the human stock'.²¹ Wells also argued that the reproduction of those with 'inherently feeble bodies and minds' should, by 'humane sterilization... be brought to an end', a procedure also prescribed for 'mental defectives', and 'criminals convicted of brutish violence'.²² Taking one further step, Wells allowed for 'the painless destruction of the... more dreadful and pitiful sorts of defective'.²³ Turning to positive eugenics, he was pessimistic and concluded that 'the deliberate improvement of man's inherent quality is at present unattainable'.²⁴ Stapledon, who had imagined the transformation of the human species in *Last and First Men*, gloomily wondered whether 'man is doomed to remain for ever the half-formed thing he now is' and 'never succeed in taking charge of his own evolution and remodelling his nature by eugenical technique'.²⁵ Looking forward, Wells hoped for 'an advancing science of genetics' to make humanity 'innately better'.²⁶ Human hands would then be able to 'interfere more and more surely with the balance of life.' He prophesied that, 'generation by generation', humanity would become: 'a new species, differing more widely from that weedy, tragic, pathetic, cruel, fantastic, absurd and sometimes sheerly horrible being... *Homo Sapiens*'.²⁷

²¹ 'Notes and Memoranda', *The Eugenics Review*, 28 4 (1937), p.296. This commitment remained unchanged when the FPSI revised its 'Basis' in 1941 ('Basis', in *Progressive League* (undated; c.1942); see also 'The Basis of the Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals', p.24.

²² Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, pp.521, 702.

²³ *Idem.*, *The Shape of Things to Come*, pp.306-307. An indication of the currency of such ideas is also suggested by the comment in 1930 of Dr R.J.A. Berry, the medical director of the Stoke Park Colony, who suggested concerning the 'aments' under his care the employment of 'a lethal chamber, under state control for the painless extermination of these people' ('Notes of the Quarter', *The Eugenics Review*, 22 1 (1930), p.6.

²⁴ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.705.

²⁵ Stapledon, *New Hope For Britain*, p.34.

²⁶ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.838.

²⁷ Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, pp.307, 330.

Although less important, eugenics was not excluded from socialist discourse. In 1930 James Kerr argued in *The Labour Magazine* that 'promoting racial improvement by cutting out bad stock' was 'a duty of the state' and he prescribed sterilisation against the 'threat of 300,000 useless, and occasionally harmful lives'.²⁸ The following year, A.G. Church, a Labour MP and member of the Eugenics Society, introduced a bill into the Commons proposing the voluntary sterilisation of 'defectives'.²⁹ The bill was unsuccessful but in 1935 Dr. Stella Churchill was proud of her work to 'draw up a health certificate before people can marry and breed' and the National Conference of Labour Women the following year carried a resolution in favour of the voluntary sterilisation of the mentally 'defective' or 'disordered' by 600 votes to 11.³⁰ In *The New Statesman and Nation* an apparently serious conclusion drawn from the intelligence quotient statistics was that 'at least one-quarter of the population might usefully be dispensed with, but that if it is impossible to obliterate them, it should at any rate be advisable to prevent their multiplying themselves *ad infinitum*.'³¹

Herbert Brewer agreed that 'the socialist and the eugenic outlook' were 'far from incompatible'. Eugenics would provide 'a higher level of intellectual and moral capacity' and so 'tend to improve the chances of a socialist community working successfully.' Brewer's vision was of a 'classless society where economic advantages are substantially equalised', to which eugenics would contribute 'good

²⁸ James Kerr, 'The Control of the Unfit', *The Labour Magazine*, 8 10 and 11 (February and March 1930), pp.449-451, 499-501.

²⁹ 'Sterilisation Act', *The Eugenics Review*, 23 1 (1931), pp.153-154. The act was 'to enable mental defectives to undergo sterilisation upon application by themselves, their spouses, parents or guardians' (*ibid.*, p.153).

³⁰ 'Eugenics, Socialism and Capitalism - Debate at Members' Meeting', *The Eugenics Review*, 27 2 (1935), pp.109-119; 111; 'Notes and Memoranda', *The Eugenics Review*, 28 2 (1936), p.124.

heredity'.³² To encourage reproduction of the 'well born' 'euteleogenesis' provided the 'short road to superman'.³³ Artificial insemination thus employed would mean that it was 'physiologically practicable for a few hundred men to fertilise every woman in the globe, and in doing so to grade up humanity.' 'Euteleogenesis was essentially biological socialism' and would 'liberate a tremendous sense of human liberty and solidarity' in that 'thousands of men might literally be brothers.'³⁴ The progressive Julian Huxley endorsed this procedure as 'not entirely Utopian'. Not only health, fitness and intelligence could be fostered but traits including 'altruism, readiness to co-operate, sensitiveness, [and] sympathetic enthusiasm'.³⁵ F.J. Allaun reported that his 'communist friends' also 'strongly support[ed] sexual and eugenic reform' and he asserted that socialism, internationalism and eugenics were the 'three roads' which 'converge in Utopia'.³⁶ A means to that end similar to Brewer's euteleogenesis appeared in H.J. Muller's *Out of the Night*, a Left Book Club choice. The reviewer of Muller's text in the communist *Labour Monthly* noted that although it was only after the revolution that 'a real attack' could be made on the 'problem of breeding a finer humanity', this technique promised that 'in a few generations the whole race might be raised to the level of the best', a prospect which was not a 'Wellsian fantasy' but 'entirely practical.'³⁷

³¹ E.S.P. Haynes reviewing *The Case for Sterilisation* by Leon F. Whitney, *The New Statesman and Nation*, 8 June 1935.

³² Herbert Brewer, 'Eugenics and Socialism - Their Common Ground and How it Should be Sought', *The Eugenics Review*, 24 1 (1932), pp.19-21.

³³ Herbert Brewer, 'Euteleogenesis', *The Eugenics Review*, 27 2 (1935), pp.121-125; 125.

³⁴ Herbert Brewer, 'Eugenics in the World State', *Plan*, 3 4 (April 1936), pp.10-11; a less ambitious programme was suggested in E.A. Seeley, 'Quality and Equality', *Plan*, 4 11 (November 1937), pp.4-9.

³⁵ Julian Huxley, 'Marxist Eugenics', *The Eugenics Review*, 28 1 (1936), pp.66-68; 68; *idem.*, 'Eugenics and Society', *The Eugenics Review*, 28 1 (1936), pp.11-31; 29-30.

³⁶ 'Correspondence', *The Eugenics Review*, 24 1 (1932), p.73.

³⁷ J. Kemp, 'A Real "Fantasy"', *The Labour Monthly*, 17 10 (October 1936), pp.644-646.

FROM C3 TO A1

However, the New Utopians' approach to eugenics is perhaps of more significance as an illustration of the diversity of support for that technique than for the role it played in their blueprint for the future. Not only were eugenics increasingly associated with Nazism and a technique which sat uneasily with British notions of the private and personal, but, as Michael Freeden has shown, socialist and progressive, unlike conservative eugenicists, tended to concentrate on the dysgenic effects of bourgeois society.³⁸ Hence, the transformation of the social 'environment' was at the core of the New Utopians' efforts to forge a new people. The new Britain would provide the means to create healthy and athletic bodies and to nurture intelligence and talent. The state would become the ultimate guarantor of, in Abraham Maslow's terms, the prerequisites for 'self-actualisation'.³⁹ As Greenwood of Labour explained, the state, by ensuring 'the essentials of civilised life', would 'produce a healthy, alert, self-respecting, clear-sighted body of citizens.'⁴⁰

Regarding the vital building blocks of life, Arthur Woods in Labour's *Tribune* wrote that the principle for 'the planners of any future Utopia' was that "'food comes first."⁴¹ Reflecting the widespread influence of Sir John Boyd Orr's study of the national diet, Brock Griggs, writing under the title 'Subman and Superman', claimed the remedy of *Food, Health and Income* as 'Fascist in all but name'.⁴²

³⁸ Including, among others, Beveridge, Keynes, Harold Laski, Julian Huxley, Elenor Rathbone, Bertrand Russell, E.D. Simon, R.M. Titmuss, the Webbs and Wells (See Michael Freeden, 'Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity', *The Historical Journal*, 22 3 (1979), pp.645-671. See also Greta Jones, 'Eugenics and Social Policy Between the Wars', *The Historical Journal*, 25 3 (1982), pp.717-728; Michael Freeden, 'Eugenics and Ideology', *The Historical Journal*, 26 4 (1983), pp.959-962; G.R. Searle, 'Eugenics and Politics in Britain in the 1930s', *Annals of Science*, 36 (1979), pp.159-169.

³⁹ Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1968).

⁴⁰ Greenwood, *Immediate Steps*, p.6.

⁴¹ *Tribune*, 17 May 1940.

⁴² *Action*, 19 May 1936.

Labour too took inspiration from this source in seeking its 'vision of healthy, happy homes... homes in which people will enjoy the fuller life'.⁴³ Hemming of CW anticipated 'milk, butter, eggs, fruit and fresh vegetables' 'available to all in abundant supply'. In CW's new Britain people would be 'taller, straighter, more supple—and more intelligent.' Enjoying 'the self confidence of health', Britons would have 'more adventurousness, more gay hearts', and all be 'really fit for life.'⁴⁴ Alongside a transformed diet, new opportunities for 'physical culture and sport' would transform 'Youth' into 'an army of splendid men and women, fit to be builders of the future Communist Society'; through 'the provision of sports grounds, swimming pools, gymnasia...' workers would be able to 'keep fit'.⁴⁵ The BUF's 'ecstatic vision' was 'of a people radiant in health and fitness'⁴⁶ and 'Sam Hibbs', transported to the Greater Britain, saw 'a thousand or more young factory workers doing physical jerks in their grounds...', they were 'a credit to any race.' In both fascist and socialist visions the new man (sic) appeared as tall, straight, broad, spare and muscular, square jawed and resolute, suggesting not only a particular aesthetic of the body but also inward qualities of discipline, commitment and courage.

Accompanying the state's guarantee of the means to health and fitness was its pledge that medical facilities would be freely available to all. 'In the interests of the nation's health, vigour and happiness', Labour promised 'a Medical Service

⁴³ John Orr, *The Nation's Food* (1943).

⁴⁴ James Hemming, 'We CAN All Be Fit', *Common Wealth Review*, 1 8 (October 1944), pp.17-18; 18.

⁴⁵ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, pp.39-40.

⁴⁶ Gordon-Canning, *The Spirit of Fascism*, p.6; *Action*, 3 September 1936.

which is open to all, comprehensive, preventative as well as curative.⁴⁷ Fascism would seek the same ends through organising the 'different healing professions' in a medical corporation within the corporate state.⁴⁸ The experimental Pioneer health centre at Peckham provided an influential example for planners of the future. It was there, Harry Roff of CW believed, that men and women would 'gradually grow into real human beings'.⁴⁹ The Greater Britain would also have its 'network of health centres' and 'the most modern treatment... made available to everyone through an extended system of social insurance.'⁵⁰ Stressing the importance of mental health, Durbin hoped that socialism would 'free the strong and merciful hand of science to cure physical and mental ill-health' and he envisaged the psychoanalyst 'struggling... for the supreme goal of common happiness.'⁵¹ Among the FPSI Flugel similarly pointed to psychoanalysis as a means of enhancing positive personality traits and diminishing chauvinism and acquisitiveness in the economic and political spheres.⁵² Looking to the future, Durbin wrote that it was 'a reasonable, a modest expectation' that '...a new society, beyond our present hopes, will surely come; and in one generation... we shall add inches to our physical height, extend our expectation of life...; cleanse our minds from a great weight of neurotic guilt and fear; becoming healthier, happier, richer, stronger, freer men and women—slowly attaining the certain dignity of our noble promise.'⁵³

⁴⁷ The Labour Party, *National Service For Health* (1943), pp.7, 24; see also CPGB, *Memorandum on A National Medical Service* (1943).

⁴⁸ BUF, *Medical Policy* (undated; c.193?).

⁴⁹ Roff, *Individuals and Minorities*, p.10.

⁵⁰ Hawks, *Women Fight For Britain*, p.5.

⁵¹ Durbin, *What We Have To Defend*, p.78; *idem.*, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.331.

⁵² J.C. Flugel, 'A Psychology for Progressives, pp.292-314 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934), p.312.

⁵³ Durbin, *What We Have To Defend*, p.83.

STATE SOCIALISATION

Besides ensuring them fitness in mind and body, the state would seek to mould its people into *citizens* from infancy. Charting this process Hawks wrote of how, after the fascist revolution:

...the nation's children will grow up in the new atmosphere of the modern State. The burden of poverty will be ended. The means of recreation and enjoyment will be provided. After general education, domestic and practical instruction will be given. From the youth organisations, young people will pass to the "after-work" section of Corporate life.⁵⁴

The aspirant to fascist citizenship's first educative experience of 'life in a community' would be 'gained in an open-air nursery school'.⁵⁵ Labour's promise to 'the little ones of our nation' was also the 'healthy nurture, training and joys of the open-air nursery school'. Glasier pointed to the socialising role of such facilities, asking 'how many of our prisons, as well as hospitals and mental asylums, would [then] close their doors'.⁵⁶ 'The Community Centre, with its sunny Day Nursery, and delightful Nursery School' would bring forth 'the new, freedom-loving, socially minded citizens' needed for Labour's 'New Social Order'.⁵⁷ The nursery school would build 'children with plenty of mental and physical vigour' but also 'children who are individuals yet accustomed to group membership and the obligations it brings'.⁵⁸ Stapledon too saw nursery schools as a venue for 'early training in community' and

⁵⁴ Hawks, *Women Fight For Britain*, p.5.

⁵⁵ Ann Brock Griggs, *Women and Fascism: 10 Important Points* (undated; c.1936), p.6.

⁵⁶ K.B. Glasier, "'Victory for Socialism" - The First Twelve Months', *The Labour Woman*, 23 5 (May 1935), pp.72-74; 73.

⁵⁷ *Idem.*, 'The Nursery School in Reconstruction', *The Labour Woman*, 29 4 (November, 1940), pp.39, 41; 39.

it was there that CW believed that children would learn how to 'mix and share'.⁵⁹ Indicating a stress on the primacy of environment in socialisation, the communist John Brown believed that children raised by 'trained attendants in airy nurseries' would disprove the 'universality of the Oedipus complex'.⁶⁰ Coates of the FPSI, mindful that expert knowledge would be 'so manifestly superior to that of the average parent' expected that 'the State may compel parents to hand over children for a number of hours each day to the day nursery'.⁶¹ In an even more extreme example, Stapledon stipulated that to prevent children from being 'warped by early home influences' that 'no one would be allowed to become a father or mother without a licence for parenthood'—presumably for eugenic reasons—whilst 'an additional licence would be required to enable parents to bring up their own children.'⁶²

For older children in the 'New London', communists would provide 'a free, rational education' which would develop 'to the full the potentialities of every child', and enable them 'to become capable, thinking citizens.'⁶³ Higher education would be 'available to those who are best fitted to take advantage of it, irrespective of income.'⁶⁴ Education in the Greater Britain would 'make citizens worthy of Fascist civilisation' and Mosley looked towards an ideal of the 'virility of the Elizabethan combined with the intellect and method of the modern technician'. Fascism pledged, 'whether a man starts in a castle or a cottage', that if they had the talent

⁵⁸ Herbert Morrison, 'A Charter for Mother and Child', *The Labour Woman*, 31 6-7 (June and July 1943), pp.61, 71-72; 71.

⁵⁹ Stapledon, *Seven Pillars of Peace*, p.15; St John Read and Dorothy Sargent, *Democratic Education* (1944), p.9.

⁶⁰ John Brown, 'Freud and Marx', *Discussion*, 15 (May 1937), pp.29-31.

⁶¹ J.B. Coates, 'Education Needs a Plan', *Plan*, 4 1 (January 1937), pp.4-7; 6.

⁶² Stapledon, 'Education and World Citizenship', p.153.

⁶³ Bramley, *New London*, p.26; see also CPGB, *Britain's Schools* (undated; c.1942).

they would have 'a straight road from cradle to university'.⁶⁵ Labour emphasised that it did not 'merely aim at offering somewhat better opportunities to the workers' children', but stood 'for complete educational equality'. Schools would provide 'an atmosphere of comradeship, equality and mutual help.'⁶⁶ The abstemious Lansbury believed that in the 'Socialist England' children would learn to 'despise every form of self-imposed evil whether drunkenness or gluttony or any other evil, but never to despise their fellow men.'⁶⁷

Once again education would not only impart knowledge but teach citizenship. In the Greater Britain parents would need 'to co-operate with the State in the training of their children for future citizenship.'⁶⁸ *The Tribune* stressed that 'what Socialist education sets out to do is the creation of a new human type. Nothing less. This type is basically different in character and consciousness from capitalist man.'⁶⁹ Acland believed it was impossible to 'exaggerate the importance of education', it would provide 'a training for world citizenship', teach children 'to be ready to undertake their duties to others rather than seize their opportunities for themselves.'⁷⁰ From the school gates would eventually step 'a proper citizen for a democracy... an individual who is at one and the same time completely and abundantly developed as a personality, trained to contribute a full share to the health, wealth, happiness, or culture of mankind, and also alive to the responsibilities of democratic citizenship and ready to play an active part in public

⁶⁴ CPGB, *Britain For The People*, p.5.

⁶⁵ William Joyce, *Fascist Educational Policy* (1933); Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.60-61, 79-80.

⁶⁶ Labour Party, *Labour and Education* (1934), p.1, 13.

⁶⁷ Lansbury, *My England*, p.238.

⁶⁸ Brock Griggs, *Women and Fascism*, p.6.

⁶⁹ *Tribune*, 17 September 1937.

⁷⁰ Acland, *What It Will Be Like*, pp.105-107.

affairs.⁷¹ Stressing the central New Utopian motif of control, Meredith of the FPSI wrote that in 'shaping' the future society, education would perform the 'manufacture of minds' suitable for the 'purged and re-vitalised democracy' to come.⁷² Seeking to create a person who combined individual development with a social consciousness, Stapledon stressed the 'fundamental aim of education' as being 'to develop individuals as persons, and as persons for community'.⁷³ The 'complete solidarity of mankind' required for the Wellsian world state demanded 'the re-education of the whole world.'⁷⁴ The 'scientific devoted persona' would be the 'guiding object of modern education' and, as with all these blueprints, 'the motive of service' would 'replace the motives of profit and privilege'.⁷⁵

Rejecting 'liberal' thinking, Cole envisaged 'education primarily as a process of preparation for social service, and not as a means of developing the private aptitudes of the individual in a social void.'⁷⁶ Although endorsing the work of A.S. Neill in promoting the 'voluntary principle', Coates rejected radical individualism, instead stressing that education also needed to foster 'fruitful relations between the individual and the community'. Schools would train 'citizens to be knowledgeable about the world and public spirited' and engender a 'spirit of liberty and voluntary co-operation' and 'an effective sense of world citizenship'.⁷⁷ St. John Reade and Dorothy Sargent of CW, whilst espousing the humanist notion that

⁷¹ St. John Reade and Dorothy Sargent, *Democratic Education* (1944), p.9.

⁷² G.P. Meredith, 'The Manufacture of Minds', *Plan Bulletin*, 2 5 (April 1941), pp.1-2.

⁷³ Stapledon, *Seven Pillars of Peace*, p.13.

⁷⁴ Wells, *Phoenix*, p.75.

⁷⁵ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, pp.396, 744.

⁷⁶ Cole, 'Plan for Living', p.10.

⁷⁷ J.B. Coates, 'Education Needs a Plan - II The aim of Education', *Plan*, 4 1 (January 1937), pp.4-7; 6; *idem.*, 'Education for World Citizenship in Secondary Schools', *Plan*, 5 6 (June 1938), pp.3-8; *idem.*, 'Education Needs a Plan - IV Replanning the Secondary School', *Plan*, 4 5 (May 1937), pp.7-12; 12; see also W.W. Johnson, 'Education for World Citizenship', *Plan*, 6 2 (February 1939), pp.3-6.

a person was more than a purely social product, nonetheless sought the same objective. Although there was a 'core of personality which makes man primarily himself and not a servant of the State' they aimed to educate 'the citizen... through the core, which is the man, not the man through the citizen'.⁷⁸

THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

After formal schooling education in a wider sense would nonetheless continue. Neither work, leisure nor the material environment itself were without a role to play in the development of the new Briton. Typically, as in Wells' *Cosmopolis*, 'the community' would be 'in itself educational'.⁷⁹

The new institutions of the Soviet Britain would foster 'social behaviour, of which a class system could never dream.' The worker, knowing that 'industry belonged to him and was working for him', would no longer be antagonistic against the system but work with it, having 'an added sense of responsibility to the collectivity of which he was a part'.⁸⁰ Cole hoped that socialism would foster the 'ideal of service' and direct people 'to regard their capacities as powers to be developed to the fullest extent in order that they may pull their weight in the society of which they are members'.⁸¹ Under socialism, Jay reasoned, greed would disappear, not only because private profit would no longer be possible, but also because attitudinal changes would dissolve the selfish motivations behind the quest for 'private wages' by labour.⁸² The same assumptions entered into the thinking of that most 'business-like' of socialists, Morrison, who noted that under socialism

⁷⁸ Reade and Sargent, *Democratic Education*, pp.13-14.

⁷⁹ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.788.

⁸⁰ *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.49.

⁸¹ Cole, *The Intelligent Man's Guide*, pp.581-582.

⁸² Jay, *The Socialist Case*, p.278.

'capitalism's direct encouragement of the individual from birth upwards to be selfish... will have gone'. Instead, 'a developing general public spirit' would encourage Britons to serve 'the commonweal instead of making personal advantage the object of life.'⁸³ Equality, Tawney thought, by bringing with it powerful 'psychological reactions' would cause 'the sense of inferiority' which had 'paralysed' many people to dissipate.⁸⁴ Lansbury charted the emergence of the new morality. A 'higher standard of responsibility will be developed; and day by day we shall learn that peace and happiness come by our own co-operative effort, and the more we unite to help in the common task, the brighter and happier our days will be.' Ultimately, people's knowledge that they were 'working each for all and all for each' would become their 'ultimate satisfaction.'⁸⁵ As to how long it would be before such changes occurred, the Fabians suggested that the growth of a 'spirit of public service' might take 'at least a generation which has grown up under the new order, and that has been educated in its spirit.'⁸⁶

THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE

As these examples show, the New Utopians' intention was not to create a nation of robust and canny egotists but a society of *citizens* who, although fully developed as individuals, would also live to the collective good. The transformation of the bourgeois individualist into the New Utopian citizen was partly to be achieved by the state guaranteeing to everyone the means for a fully human life. This expanded

⁸³ Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport*, p.297.

⁸⁴ Tawney, *Equality*, p.150.

⁸⁵ Lansbury, *My England*, pp.46, 57.

⁸⁶ The Fabian Society, *A Word on the Future to British Socialists*, p.3.

the rights of citizenship but at the same time the functioning of the blueprint required a reciprocal change to the duties and conduct of its citizens.

INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM, FREEDOM AND DISCIPLINE

Among the central dilemmas faced by the utopian imagination is to harmonise individual freedom with the common good. In order to reconstruct citizenship the New Utopians necessarily had to alter society's sphere of freedom, that is, its scope for legitimate speech and action. To embark on the politics of utopia is to propose to forbid the once permitted and permit the formerly forbidden, to pair new rights with new duties. In the New Utopians' case, this entailed transferring certain individual liberties to the state, which, in return, would act for the collective good. The crucial realignment of individual liberties would be in the economic sphere, but the life of the people generally would increasingly be influenced by the state. Recognising the interdependence of individual action and collective goals Lansbury wrote that 'freedom, the right to go to hell in one's own way' was 'all very well for the individual, but none of us live alone. We all influence in one way or another the lives of others.'⁸⁷ As Tawney expressed it: 'freedom for the pike is death to the minnows'. Liberty, he wrote, 'could exist only in so far as it is limited by rules, which secure that freedom for some is not slavery for others'.⁸⁸ The fascist Gordon-Canning agreed: the 'freedom of the individual can only be attained by the acceptance of certain rules'.⁸⁹

However, being aware of representations of this future as, in W.H. Chamberlain's words, 'a false utopia' and as Hayek's 'road to serfdom', the New

⁸⁷ Lansbury, *My England*, p.34.

⁸⁸ Tawney, *Equality*, p.164.

Utopians sought to achieve a synthesis of state control and individual freedom. Stapledon called this question 'the problem of our age'. 'The liberties without which personality-in-community cannot properly develop' needed to be reconciled with 'control for the economic well-being of the common man.' Stapledon accepted that it was necessarily the case that 'planning inevitably interferes with the liberty of the individual to follow his own individualistic whim'.⁹⁰ The 'democratic problem', Argent of the FPSI contended, was 'how to harmonise communal recovery with the freedom of the common man.'⁹¹ Cole named the preservation of tolerance and diversity alongside 'centralised planning and control' as the 'great question that confronts us in building our Socialist civilization for tomorrow.'⁹² Society reconstructed on the pattern of 'the beehive or the ants' nest' was rejected by Labour, which had no wish that 'men and women should be drilled and regimented physically and mentally so that they should be all of one pattern.' 'Variety, not... uniformity' was the wealth of society. Attlee repudiated the 'tyranny of the reformer who wishes to make all men in his own image.'⁹³ 'The State was made for man, and not man for the State'.⁹⁴

Conscious that the deification of the state and the concomitant effacement of individuality were among the perils of the age, the New Utopians sought to tread the narrow path between the countervailing imperatives of liberty and discipline: 'to subdue these giants to our will without making them at the same time the masters of our spirit'; to achieve 'harmony between individual freedom and co-operative

⁸⁹ Gordon-Canning, *The Spirit of Fascism*, p.5.

⁹⁰ Olaf Stapledon, 'Freedom', *Common Wealth Review*, 2 7 (June 1945), pp.8,11.

⁹¹ S.H.V. Argent, 'The Recovery of Community', *Plan*, 5 9 (September 1938), pp.9-12.

⁹² Cole, 'A Socialist Civilisation', p.171.

⁹³ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.139-140.

⁹⁴ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, pp.329-330.

effort'; to forge a 'new balance between order and freedom'.⁹⁵ Bevan saw socialism's task as being to combine 'the advantages of economic planning in society, and at the same time to retain the benefits of individual liberty and representative democracy.' He explained that 'any system which is agreeable to a Socialist must satisfy those two conditions'.⁹⁶ *Labour Women* contrasted the 'geometrically planned Servile State' with the image of 'a well-ordered garden where all our little human life plants shall be given the chance to grow into healthy, glad and creative citizenship.'⁹⁷ 'The robot slave state', the society with the 'mechanical characteristics of the machine' was not inevitable. 'Order... without suppression', 'harmony through diversity', 'ordered development... from free collaboration', 'co-operation without compulsion' were all possible.⁹⁸

'POSITIVE' FREEDOM

The positive side of the argument for this new relationship between the citizen and the state was that for the majority of people, collective action to 'discipline' selfish individualism would actually be a source of liberation. The state, instead of functioning in the interests of a section of society, would become a vehicle for the commonweal; 'a common possession, which is managed on behalf of all.'⁹⁹ Out of collective discipline would come individual freedom. The progressive Coates believed that 'certain compulsions increase freedom'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Cole, 'A Socialist Civilisation', p.186; Williams, *War by Revolution*, p.3; Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, p.61.

⁹⁶ Bevan, 'Plan for Work', p.35.

⁹⁷ Glasier, 'The Nursery School in Reconstruction', p.41.

⁹⁸ Co-operative Party, *Britain Reborn*, pp.27,30.

⁹⁹ Tawney, *Why Britain Fights*, p.35.

¹⁰⁰ Coates, 'Education Needs a Plan - II The aim of Education', p.6.

A key rhetoric which resolved the tension between state control and individual liberty exchanged the 'negative' freedom of bourgeois Britain for 'positive freedom'. This was, Laski reasoned, a 'distinction... of the first importance', 'a revolution in our way of thought as vital in its sphere as the revolution made in cosmology by Kepler and Copernicus, by Galileo and Newton'. 'Positive freedom' meant not 'the absence of interference from the State-power' but 'the creation of opportunities'. 'Absence of interference', he continued, 'means freedom for the few; creation of opportunities means freedom for the many.'¹⁰¹ Similarly, Tawney saw this as 'the extension of liberty from the political to the economic sphere.'¹⁰² Under communist rule 'freedom' in the form of 'the absence of restraints' would be exchanged for 'positive liberties'.¹⁰³ Morrison made very clear what had changed: 'people used to talk as though control was a cramping, limiting thing. It isn't. Wise social control is a stimulating, enlarging thing.'¹⁰⁴ Planning and freedom went together in 'indissoluble wedlock' for Wootton who recorded that 'since freedom depends on security, and security depends on planning, it follows that where there is no planning, there can be no freedom'.¹⁰⁵ Rather than socialism meaning 'a greater regimentation of our lives', Acland proclaimed it 'a vast liberation, a vast increase in the liberty of each man'.¹⁰⁶ Although, Wells admitted, the tendency of the world appeared, 'at first glance', to be abolishing freedom, that impression was due to the 'common confusion between independence and freedom.' Independence was not freedom, it was the collective institutions of the new order

¹⁰¹ Laski, 'Choosing the Planners', pp.112-116.

¹⁰² Tawney, *Equality*, p.167, my emphasis.

¹⁰³ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.200.

¹⁰⁴ Herbert Morrison, *Spearhead of Humanity* (1943), p.18.

¹⁰⁵ Wootton, 'Freedom Under Planning', pp.39-40.

¹⁰⁶ Acland, *What It Will Be Like*, pp.10,12.

which would release 'human beings to self-respect and initiative at every point in their organisation'.¹⁰⁷

Taking their argument further, the New Utopians explained that it was only through such control that the fruits of freedom—social diversity and individual self-actualisation—could be realised. Through their collective existence a person would reach their highest *individual* potential. Roff of CW wrote that a person, through 'working as a member of a community... rises to a height beyond his dreams as an isolated individual'.¹⁰⁸ Stapledon similarly saw that 'the development of "personality-in-community" would empower the individual because such a relationship 'multiplies each by the other, or all by all, and raises each to a higher power of awareness than is possible without it.' The ideal was one of 'mutual awareness, mutual respect for differences, mutual enrichment through differences, full mutual responsibility.' This meant 'comradely co-operation of individuals *different* in capacity and temperament, but united in the recognition that they are none the less members of one of another.'¹⁰⁹

The state was to open the way to self-actualisation rather than frustrate it. Just as with liberalism, Laski described socialism as 'seeking the means for the affirmation of individual personality.' 'But', he continued, 'its way of attaining its ends is wholly different from that which marked the previous path.'¹¹⁰ 'The purpose of a social order' Laski saw, was 'to widen the area within which the values of civilisation, truth and beauty and love and experiment with one's self, are capable

¹⁰⁷ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.341.

¹⁰⁸ Roff, *Individuals and Minorities*, p.1.

¹⁰⁹ Stapledon, *Seven Pillars of Peace*, pp.4-5; *idem.*, 'Freedom', *Common Wealth Review*, 2 7 (June 1945), pp.8, 11.

¹¹⁰ Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, p.61.

of realisation in individual men and women.¹¹¹ 'Socialism', Hemming of CW wrote, 'may standardise materials, equipment, spare parts and even locomotives... but gives men a chance to blossom out into personal diversity within social unity'. This was 'creative control' analogous to the 'violinist's control over his bow', 'true control' produced 'harmony, not discord', it was not a crude compromise but 'an integration of diverse elements into a purposeful unity'; it did not 'constrict: it set... free'. The ideal was the 'balancing of forces' in 'a system that takes into consideration all the parts of the whole.'¹¹² Synthesising equality and diversity, individuality and community, I.O. Evans imagined that in the co-operative commonwealth to come 'each one of our activities is devoted to personal freedom and happiness of the individual. And each of our individuals is equally the aim of our collective activities'.¹¹³ Laski anticipated a time when individuals, even though involved in a 'social purpose' transcending their 'private purpose', could nonetheless contribute something of their own to its definition, each person counting 'as end, as well as instrument'.¹¹⁴

Such a synthesis echoed Marx's belief that communism would ensure that 'the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all'. The abolition of private property and so of class would introduce an identity between the individual and wider society. Strachey expected that a society built around a 'genuine identity of interest between all citizens' would 'be able to afford to tolerate far more idiosyncrasy, salty variety, and even plain eccentricity, in its citizens'.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ *Idem.*, *Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*, p.365.

¹¹² James Hemming, 'This Freedom', *Common Wealth Review*, 2 4 (March 1945), pp.3-4; *idem.*, 'Control', *Common Wealth Review*, 2 7 (June 1945), p.9.

¹¹³ *The New Clarion*, 6 January 1934.

¹¹⁴ Laski, *Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time*, p.343.

¹¹⁵ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.206.

Responding to the allegation that socialism could only improve the common good at a cost to the individual of 'some of his freedom, some of his individuality', Jardine stressed that each person would be 'free to develop all his powers for the further development of the whole community. The more each individual develops his powers, the richer the society becomes.' Rather than communism being 'incompatible with the full and free development of the individual', it was only in that society that the fullest self-actualisation was possible. Then, as Marx had predicted, 'the individual' would 'for the first time, be able to emerge from the prehistoric gloom as something more than just another animal.'¹¹⁶ Marxists, Morton asserted, could only conceive of 'freedom... in terms of classes'. A class was 'free to the extent to which it is able to pursue its proper class interests', a society was free inasmuch that it obeyed 'the laws of historical development.' Therefore, even before the inauguration of communism, the proletariat, by 'following its interests as a class' would also serve the 'ends of each individual member of that class', ensuring that 'the quantity of individual freedom enjoyed by the majority is far greater than under any form of bourgeois State'.¹¹⁷

This reconfiguration of the relationship between the individual and the state was demanded not only by modern planning but as a means to the much older ideal of an equal, and so harmonious society. In place of the society in which the most important determinant of the relationship between persons was 'class', the new Britain would eradicate this wasteful and divisive fracturing of the social body. This did not signal a belief that all persons were born equal in Rousseau's sense, or that

¹¹⁶ R. Jardine, 'Communism and Individual Liberty', *Discussion*, 2 6 (November 1937), pp.4-6.

'equality' demanded identical treatment irrespective of individual differences. Rather systemic inequalities would be obliterated and the new Britain recreated as a meritocracy where effort and ability alone would determine rewards.

Cole saw that 'the essence of Socialism is to be found, not in a particular way of organising the conduct of industry, but in a particular relationship between men', the socialisation of property was 'a means and not an end - a means towards the realisation of the ideal of human equality... at the basis of the Socialist movement.'¹¹⁸ Equality and social harmony would come through the 'abolition of classes' which Attlee stressed as 'fundamental to the Socialist conception of society'.¹¹⁹ In place of 'a society suffused with class-prejudice' would come 'a classless society'.¹²⁰ 'Differences of remuneration between different individuals might remain', Tawney saw, but the 'contrast between the civilisation of different classes would vanish'. Instead would come 'a common culture' brought by 'equality of environment, of access to education and the means of civilisation, of security and independence, and the social consideration which equality in these matters usually carries with it.' Each person would be 'equally entitled as human beings to consideration and respect' and, 'whether their powers be great or small', all would 'be equally enabled to make the best of such powers as they possess'.¹²¹ While still differing 'profoundly as individuals in capacity and character', Strachey expected that the Soviet Britain would introduce 'equality of opportunity' and eradicate 'the more subtle social inequalities'. This would usher in 'a classless, homogeneous, and so voluntary civilisation' where everyone would be able to 'live free and

¹¹⁷ Morton, 'Communism and Morality', pp.350-351.

¹¹⁸ Cole, *The Intelligent Man's Guide*, pp.580-581.

¹¹⁹ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.145.

¹²⁰ Laski, 'Choosing the Planners', p.115.

civilised lives'.¹²² Ultimately, in the 'fully developed Communist society', there would be 'clear and transparent relationships' between people, who would 'approach each other as individuals with none of the artificial barriers which now divide them'.¹²³

Socialism, by removing bourgeois society's economic base, would dissolve its culture of inequality. As Frederic Jameson has argued, a vision of harmonious unity also explains the 'immense Utopian appeal of nationalism'¹²⁴ and the collectivity of the nation provided—at least at a rhetorical level—an alternative basis for transcending bourgeois class relations. Mosley pledged that in the Greater Britain: 'every Briton shall have equal opportunity in the land of his birth and, therefore, equal possession and love of that land. ...our land will look the same to all, for it will afford to all the same opportunity and so will belong to all.' 'In the classless state which accords "opportunity to all but privilege to none"' reward could only come through service.¹²⁵ Equality would come not through the abolition of the structural basis of class but by providing the basis for a meritocracy through state provision, but most importantly, by unifying all parts of society in the higher collective identity of the nation. All differences, or rather all *conflict* based on difference, would be resolved in 'a nation organised as the human body', a 'super-organism'.¹²⁶ Mosley explained that in the corporate state 'every organ plays a part in relation to the whole and in harmony with the whole. The warfare of sections and

¹²¹ Tawney, *Equality*, pp.43, 150.

¹²² Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, pp.101-103.

¹²³ Morton, 'Communism and Morality', p.355.

¹²⁴ Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981), p.298.

¹²⁵ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.59-61.

¹²⁶ *Idem.*, *The Greater Britain*, p.26; *The Fascist Week*, 2 March - 8 March 1934, p.4.

interests gives way to a co-operative synthesis.¹²⁷ Chesterton anticipated a society 'without class barriers, in which every individual instinctively harmonises his own interests within the confines of the general community interests.'¹²⁸

This seemed to promise the effacement of individuality that critics charged fascism with. Thomson argued that society as the 'new superbeing' would express the same 'communal 'spirit' that directs the actions and reactions of the insect communities' which would be achieved by each person 'abandoning his freedom of action to the higher aims of the communal spirit.'¹²⁹ Similarly, McKee saw that the corporate state implied that 'the nation is greater than ALL the individuals who make it up PUT TOGETHER', 'every individual forms a tiny cell of a social-organism, as he himself is made up of billions of minute cells'.¹³⁰ The ideal was a 'community, [which] like a healthy organism, reacts decisively and like one man.'¹³¹ Wells too concluded his history of the future with 'the body of mankind' as 'one single organism of nearly two thousand five hundred million persons' who, like the Church, were 'all members of one body'. 'Individual differences' remained but only in the fashion of 'an exploring tentacle thrust out to test and learn.' This was the 'sublimation of individuality.'¹³²

These views of the relationship of the individual to the state were only a development of the belief of socialists that human qualities and capabilities were only 'individual' in the abstract, being in reality the creation of past and present

¹²⁷ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.54.

¹²⁸ Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, pp.156-157.

¹²⁹ Alexander Raven [Thomson], *Civilisation as Divine Superman: A Superorganic Philosophy of History* (1932), pp.33, 40.

¹³⁰ McKee, 'Psychology of Collective Caesarism', pp.67-70.

¹³¹ Arthur Reade, 'William Morris, National Socialist', *British Union Quarterly*, 2 2 (1938), pp.61-68.

¹³² Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, pp.331-332.

social action. As Joad noted, the good life was 'impossible of pursuit except in the State' which was 'to establish the conditions in which the citizens can pursue the good life'.¹³³ Similarly Thomson wrote that it was 'only through Him [society as superman] that we can attain the highest expression of our possibilities'.¹³⁴ Stressing the same point, Mosley contended that while 'the interests of the nation transcends the interest of every faction' it was only 'in recognising the overriding interest of the community, [that] the individual... secures his own ultimate advantage.' Fascism promised the citizen 'a greater freedom than he has ever known before' through the corporate state and 'as the reward of service and fellowship to his fellow men.'¹³⁵ Indeed the corporate state would see the highest expression of individual potential. Through service to 'a being much greater and far more imperishable than his puny self' the citizen would give 'his every act an almost divine meaning. The greater his sacrifice; the greater his unselfishness then the greater the significance of his acts, and in the final analysis, himself.'¹³⁶ Of course, if the state was only superficially the representative of the collective We, being in reality the servant of a class or party, this would not happen. The BUF's claim was that even the apparently exulted figure of 'the Leader' would be 'the greatest servant in the land', in whom 'the unselfish motive of service' reached its zenith.¹³⁷

In dystopian terms these visions were akin to Yevgeny Zamyatin's 'one, powerful, million-celled organism', the 'million-footed leviathan of the 'totalitarian' state'.¹³⁸

¹³³ Joad, *Philosophy For Our Times*, p.34.

¹³⁴ Raven [Thomson], *Civilisation as Divine Superman*, p.227.

¹³⁵ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.40, 56.

¹³⁶ McKee, *The Psychology of Collective Caesarism*, p.68.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (Harmondsworth, 1993; first published in English 1924), pp.85, 132.

Part of the terror of the fictional society of *We* and the actual fascist utopia of Nazism was not that a repressed majority lived under the iron heel of tyranny—both had popular support—but rather that the state invaded all aspects of human existence. The achievement of liberalism was that it had permitted limited spaces outside the disciplinary grasp of the state and the potential tyranny of the majority.

Claim and counter-claim about ‘freedom’ in the abstract were not so important as the specific point at which the state would limit its ambitions for intervention. Labour would preserve all the liberal freedoms of expression and indeed enlarge them, but would not tolerate: ‘freedom to exploit other people; freedom to pay poor wages and push up prices for selfish profit; freedom to deprive the people of the means of living full, happy, healthy lives.’¹³⁹ Stapledon drew a distinction between ‘essential liberties’ and ‘bad liberties’. The former included freedoms of expression and from arbitrary arrest, but also ‘economic freedom’ from unemployment and poverty. The ‘bad liberties’ included bourgeois economic individualism.¹⁴⁰ Jay stressed that the ‘one absolute limit’ for ‘planning in normal times’ was that it should not infringe ‘personal freedom... the right of the individual to do what he likes with himself, to work for whom, for what, when and where he chooses.’ ‘Economic freedom—the freedom to buy or sell, to employ or refrain from employing other people, to manufacture or not manufacture’ counted as ‘a secondary freedom’.¹⁴¹

In many ways the FPSI represented the combination of statism and libertarianism at its contemporary extreme. Whilst seeking to abrogate economic

¹³⁹ Labour Party, *Let Us Face the Future*, p.3.

¹⁴⁰ Stapledon, ‘Freedom’, pp.8,11.

¹⁴¹ Jay, *The Socialist Case*, pp.273-274.

individualism, it promised the 'release of personal conduct from all taboos and restrictions except those imposed in the interest of the weak and the young', and it included divorce reform, legal abortion, and the 'abolition of laws penalizing [sexual] abnormality' in its programme.¹⁴² 'Sexual life' should be 'guided by taste and temperament' alone.¹⁴³ The BUF also promised that it 'would leave the individual person free to lead his life in accordance with his own tastes, where his conduct neither injures the state nor interferes with the freedom and enjoyment of others.'¹⁴⁴ The citizen's conduct was to be 'a matter between himself and his own conscience'.¹⁴⁵ However, the author of *We Fight for Freedom* looked dimly on the 'male degenerate and his feminine counterpart' and on 'exotic depravity'. This was the 'decadence' that the fascist revolution would eradicate. As far as the pleasures of the 'normal Englishman' were concerned, things were seemingly more relaxed, men would be free to drink and bet without being 'ruled by old women in trousers'.¹⁴⁶ However, fascist 'freedom' was not a licence for hedonism, the ideal was 'a morality of the Spartan pattern... tempered with the Elizabethan atmosphere of Merrie England.'¹⁴⁷

Thus, Britain would be 'much freer' when 'served by young men in black shirts'.¹⁴⁸ This seems to suggest a similar drawing of the line between state action and personal freedom, albeit at a different point to that of the FPSI. However, would the BUF's promise of private freedom survive the tendency that Berezin notes

¹⁴² 'The Basis of the Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals', p.24.

¹⁴³ Janet Chance, 'Reform of the Sex Laws', pp.166-183 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934), p.167.

¹⁴⁴ 'A. Freeman' (pseud.), *We Fight for Freedom* (1936), p.54.

¹⁴⁵ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.38.

¹⁴⁶ Freeman, *We Fight for Freedom*, p.61.

¹⁴⁷ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.38. Also on 'two very proper old ladies—Victoria and Dora' see Joad, 'The Need for Co-operation', *The Twentieth Century*, 4 24 (February 1933), pp.26-27.

for fascism to dissolve the division between public and private?¹⁴⁹ If citizens preferred Merrie England to Sparta would the young men in black shirts leave them be? As long as there exists a private sphere providing an enclave for activity dissonant to the utopian's ideal that autonomous space will always be potentially threatened. Curry, of the FPSI noted that 'where liberty is destroyed, it is always in the interests of what is called "true liberty"'.¹⁵⁰ In building the Cosmopolis 'a stern and thorough cleansing of human life' would usher in an age in which the FPSI would have been at home, where people would be free to do 'practically anything' they desired including to 'go naked' and 'love' as they liked.¹⁵¹

A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

The positive and negative aspects of the relationship between the citizen and the state together constitute a 'social contract'. The New Utopians' project implied transforming a society in which a person's incorporation within the social contract was unequal inasmuch as the freedoms permitted them and disciplines constraining them varied according to their social class. However, as Carole Pateman has shown, this 'contractual' relationship cannot be discussed solely in terms of class identity.¹⁵² The underlying assumption of the original contract was that the citizen was not a universal figure but male. Neither was this exclusion an oversight that could be remedied with 'inclusive language', it was fundamental to the society built around the contract.

¹⁴⁸ Freeman, *We Fight for Freedom*, p.61.

¹⁴⁹ Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self*, p.6-7.

¹⁵⁰ W.B. Curry, 'Liberty in the School and in the State', *Plan*, 4 2 (February 1937) pp.10-12; 10.

¹⁵¹ Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, pp.311-312.

¹⁵² Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (1989).

Under the bourgeois social contract, property and political power were male possessions as were, therefore, rights in the public sphere constituted by society's political and economic institutions. Women, being excluded from the enjoyment of property or power, were thus excluded from the public sphere and, hence, from citizenship. The political franchise had originally depended upon the possession of property, which had also excluded those whose only possession was their labour power. Although all adult men *and* women had finally received the vote by this period it remained the case that while working class men possessed a socially recognised—albeit limited and inferior—form of 'property' in their labour power, women remained the *de facto* property of men. The institution determining women's position in this respect was the sexual division of labour whose central pillars were the patriarchal forms of marriage and the nuclear family. In this way male domination of the public sphere relied on the exploitation of women's unpaid domestic labour 'caring' for children and men. As long as a woman's social role was to be wife and mother, her biology determined her destiny. Furthermore, even within the narrow confines of her 'natural' role as wife/mother, the woman was not a full citizen, because whilst a man's social contract was with the state, a woman's contract was in the first instance with her husband. Just as the working man existed in a subordinate relationship to the bourgeois state, so did the woman to the man.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Pateman has noted what she calls 'Wollstonecraft's dilemma'. This points to tension between the project of seeking women's incorporation into society as full citizens in a 'gender neutral world' and the demand for full citizenship as *women*, receiving equal esteem equal and reward, but at the same time being possessed of 'specific capacities, talents, needs and concerns, so that the expression of their citizenship will be differentiated from that of men.' (Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women* (1991), p.197).

A NEW WOMAN?

As to treatment of the sexual division of labour in the New Utopian critique, in May 1945, Labour's Dorothy Thurtle found 'that women are still not regarded as human beings with equal rights and duties. And the reason for this seems... to be found in the doctrine that the prime function of woman is to bring forth children and perpetuate the race.' Obviously only women could give birth, but experience had 'proved conclusively... that this is not necessarily a full time occupation, and in most cases should not be.' Thurtle argued that 'so long as women are in this position of dependence, either in marriage, or in any other circumstances, they will remain a potentially oppressed class' and she argued that 'the position of women, particularly married women, is analogous to that of the slave in pre-emancipation days'. She concluded: 'by and large, women are an oppressed class.'¹⁵⁴ For Marthe Levy it was a 'prejudice... that domestic work can only be done by women' and she questioned her audience of British Labour women on whether 'after the war... the thousands of... young working women with sound professional training, who have become technicians' were to return the kitchen 'in order to cook for one man?'¹⁵⁵

As Barbara Taylor has shown, British utopian thought was not without a critical heritage in respect to the sexual division of labour.¹⁵⁶ Owenite socialism during the first half of the nineteenth century had pointed to marriage and the nuclear family as the root of women's subordination and argued for their abolition and for domestic labour to become a collective task. In contrast, the New Utopians

¹⁵⁴ Dorothy Thurtle, 'Women—An Oppressed Class?', *The Labour Woman*, 35 5 (May 1945) pp.115, 129

¹⁵⁵ Marthe Louis Levy, 'Rationalisation of Housework', *The Labour Woman*, 31 5 (May 1943), pp.50-51.

¹⁵⁶ Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (1983).

were much closer to the mainstream of utopian thought up to that time in not questioning the dominant ideology of gender.¹⁵⁷ Although often quoted as evidence of fascist misogyny, Mosley's desire for 'men who are men and women who are women'¹⁵⁸ was one which was typical across the New Utopianism. In common with the New Utopians generally, the BUF's promised 'Charter of Labour' would include 'equal pay for men and women doing similar work and no dismissal upon marriage'.¹⁵⁹ However, the common assumption was that 'the home' was the 'best place for women', that housework and child-rearing were the 'natural' female roles and 'the normal woman' was the housewife/mother.¹⁶⁰

The essentialist view of the 'natural' differences between men and women was scarcely disturbed by the New Utopianism at all. Wells' expectation was that the 'human drama may... always be played, by two series of non-interchangeable actors.' He expected women to play 'a steadying, harmonizing and sustaining role'.¹⁶¹ *Labour Woman* explained that 'men and women have different roles in the family. Husband and wife, father and mother are complementary. The biological function of women and the dependence of the child on its mother before and after birth determine this.'¹⁶² Herbert Morrison, speaking on Labour's 'Charter of

¹⁵⁷ Filio Diamanti, 'The Treatment of the 'Woman Question' in Radical Utopian Political Thought', unpublished paper delivered at 'A Millennium of Utopias', University of East Anglia, 23-26 June 1999; Patricia Huckle, 'Women in Utopias', pp.115-136 in E.D.S. Sullivan (ed.), *The Utopian Vision: Seven Essays on the Quincentennial of Sir Thomas More* (San Diego, 1983); Angelika Bammer, *Partial Visions: Feminism and Utopianism in the 1970s* (1991), ch.1.

¹⁵⁸ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.41.

¹⁵⁹ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.22.

¹⁶⁰ Freeman, *We Fight for Freedom*, p.32; Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.42. For the BUF's approach to women and womens' part in the BUF see Martin Durham, *Women and Fascism* (1998).

¹⁶¹ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, pp.548, 585; see Bonnie Kime Scott, 'Uncle Wells on Women: A Revisionary Reading of the Social Romances', pp.108-120 in Patrick Parrinder and Christopher Rolfe (eds.), *H.G. Wells under Revision: Proceedings of the International H.G. Wells Symposium London July 1986* (London and Toronto, 1990).

¹⁶² 'The Work of Housewife and Mother', *The Labour Woman*, 32 2 (February 1944), pp.17, 24;

Motherhood and Childhood', argued that 'a decent life' for a woman was 'in a country where all the men are busy. The woman herself must never again be forced by sheer need to go to work outside her home while there are young children in it'. Girls would be guaranteed 'opportunity for training and advice in household management and mothercraft' so that they could 'make the best of themselves, their homes and their children.'¹⁶³ Even collective means of domestic labour could be rejected. Labour believed them 'not... generally desirable. The child needs the care and security of a normal home which an institution cannot provide.' 'The care of a home and children' was 'likely to continue to be the work of the great majority of women for a great part of their lives'.¹⁶⁴ As Winifred Horrabin wrote: 'theirs is the job of raising and caring for the next generation.'¹⁶⁵

The normal expectation and socially legitimate female career was to be a housewife and mother. Although alternatives were not quite absolutely 'unthinkable' this was a view probably shared by most women.¹⁶⁶ Naomi Mitchison knew of 'more than one Labour woman... who... won't let her husband work [in the home] because it isn't man's work. She won't, above all, hear of any scheme of co-

¹⁶³ Morrison, 'A Charter for Mother and Child', p.61.

¹⁶⁴ 'The Work of Housewife and Mother', p.17.

¹⁶⁵ Winifred Horrabin, *Is Woman's Place the Home?* (undated; c.1933), p.8.

¹⁶⁶ Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960: Gender, class, ethnicity* (1994), ch.3; Rosemary Crook, 'Tidy Women: Women in the Rhondda between the Wars', *Oral History*, 10 2 (1982), pp.40-46; Judy Giles, 'Playing Hard to Get: working-class women, sexuality and respectability on Britain', *Women's History Review*, 1 2 (1992), pp.239-255; Pamela M. Graves, *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics 1918-1939* (Cambridge, 1994); Catherine Hall, 'Married Women at Home in Birmingham in the 1920s and 1930s', *Oral History* 5 2 (1977), pp.62-83; Susan Kingsley Kent, 'Gender Reconstruction After the First World War', pp.66-83 in Harold L. Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 1990); Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998); Martin Pugh, 'Domesticity and the Decline of Feminism, 1930-1950', pp.144-164 in Harold L. Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 1990); Penny Summerfield, 'Women, War and Social Change: Women in Britain in World War II', pp.95-118 in Arthur Marwick (ed.), *Total War and Social Change* (Basingstoke, 1988); Pat Thane, 'The Women of the British Labour Party and Feminism', pp.124-141 in Harold L. Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 1990).

operation with the neighbours over cooking or looking after young children.' Daughters, Mitchison concluded, were 'being brought up and conditioned by their home lives to aim at the same little house in which they fuss round as their mothers have fussed until they have daughters to bring up in the same way. The furniture and wall-paper will be different but the mental outlook will be the same, it is a vicious circle'.¹⁶⁷ Reflecting such a socialisation, Mrs. Gleadhill pointed to 'the opportunities which lie at the feet of the married woman in her home' and argued that 'she can do much greater work as a useful citizen with her husband and young children than she could do if in outside employment'. She continued: 'the fact that she is the one person that matters to her husband and family makes the work in the home fifty times more worthwhile than any paid employment could possibly be.'¹⁶⁸ As Lucy Noakes has demonstrated, this was an ideology of gender which managed to survive the wartime test of battledress and boilersuit.¹⁶⁹ Even Ethel Mannin's wartime utopia declared that 'psychologically as well as physiologically men and women are different' and that 'in Utopia woman is still predominant in the home and in everything touching children'.¹⁷⁰

In contrast, communists seemed to articulate a radical feminism. Under communism, W. Wainright predicted, 'the last trace of inequality between the sexes will go. Men and women will share as partners and comrades in the happy labour of creating the new civilisation.'¹⁷¹ The revolution would destroy 'the parasitic

¹⁶⁷ *The New Clarion*, 7 October 1933.

¹⁶⁸ 'Should Married Women Take Paid Employment?', *The Labour Woman*, 22 4 (April 1934), pp.56-57.

¹⁶⁹ Lucy Noakes, *War and the British: Gender, Memory and National Identity* (1998), pp.1-22, 48-102.

¹⁷⁰ Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, pp.152-154.

¹⁷¹ Wainright, *Why You Should Be A Communist*, p.14.

dependence of one sex on another.¹⁷² But this was a statement premised on a view of society which underplayed gender just as it did all other forms of identity. For this reason, for Rose Smith, it was an article of faith that 'by the proletarian revolution the emancipation of women is assured, because the emancipation of women is inseparable from the emancipation of the proletariat.' However, she admitted that 'old customs do not easily make way for new laws' and that even after the revolution 'many prejudices had to be broken down amongst women and men.' 'Woman had been a source of profit to her man in the home.'¹⁷³ Elsie Weston admitted that 'in a theoretical discussion no Party member will ever deny the social equality of women' but in practice Stan Forsley noted that when a 'women comrade volunteers for what is known as "a man's job," she is discouraged from doing it by the men.'¹⁷⁴ Gladys Driver recognised that women's war experience led them to repudiate the 'Victorian conception of women's role' of 'passivity, suffering and struggle left to the men.' She also knew that 'thousands of women today are dreaming of the home they hope to build' and looked to Labour for the 'happy home life' where 'children can be reared in a happy atmosphere.'¹⁷⁵

The furthest that the New Utopianism went towards feminism was to articulate the possibility of a woman's relationship to the state being changed such that she was different but equal. CW promised that the status of woman's work might be raised, with her being recognised as 'a worker' with 'a job to do in the

¹⁷² Morton, 'Communism and Morality', p.344.

¹⁷³ Rose Smith, 'The Proletarian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women', *Communist Review*, 2 2 (November 1930), pp.11-15.

¹⁷⁴ Elsie Weston, 'No Mass Movement Without Women', *Discussion*, 11 (January 1937), pp.12-13; Stan Forsey, 'Why Couldn't the Missus be Home?', *Discussion*, 11 (January 1937), p.14.

¹⁷⁵ Gladys Driver, 'Women and the Elections', *The Labour Monthly*, 27 7 (July 1945), pp.208-210.

community like other workers'.¹⁷⁶ The 'family in the home' was 'the normal unit of society' and CW promised to recognise domestic labour as 'a social service, to be remunerated as such by the community'.¹⁷⁷ According to one Labour writer a woman could become an active citizen within the conventional feminine sphere, perhaps becoming 'a member of a council or a committee, say of housing, health, education, or other subjects which appeal to women'.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, under fascism, women were promised a voice on 'questions of housing, health and education', the areas where women were 'experts and vitally concerned'.¹⁷⁹ It was pledged that women in the corporate state 'whether in home or industry' would 'hold a high and honoured place', and would have equal political rights except in cases such as the 'Domestic Corporation' where women would be represented by women.¹⁸⁰

PUBLIC DUTY; PRIVATE FREEDOM

The implication of the revised social contract was that the New Utopian's 'new man' was not a universal genderless figure but male. At the same time, instead of being the determining force in public life as the bourgeois party politician, owner, or boss, the new man would increasingly cede these masculine roles to the state which, in return, would become the universal provider. Typically, Acland predicted that in the new age people would no longer 'be burdened with the cares of providing, from their own resources, their own particular means of living'.¹⁸¹ In a sense, this

¹⁷⁶ Mary Sutherland, 'A Children's Charter', *Labour Woman*, 25 7 (July 1937), pp.104-105.

¹⁷⁷ CW, *Women in the New Age* (undated; c.1943), p.3.

¹⁷⁸ 'Should Married Women Take Paid Employment?', p.57.

¹⁷⁹ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.42; 'Freeman', *We Fight for Freedom*, p.33

¹⁸⁰ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.17; Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.28.

¹⁸¹ Acland, *Forward March*, p.142.

feminised all men by making them 'dependants'.¹⁸² The contract of the bourgeois marriage whereby a woman accepted a subordinate position in return for protection and material security would become the relationship between the citizen and the state.

However, in exchange, men were promised the means to be the patriarch in the private sphere. As Mosley expressed it, in return for 'public obligation' to the state, the citizen was promised 'private freedom' to enjoy 'the things which really matter to people': 'good wages, good houses, short hours of labour, opportunity for culture, recreation, and self-development.'¹⁸³ In sum, a bourgeois home was promised to all men, a pledge underwritten by women's destiny to be, as in the past, housewife and mother. For women, the typical promise was for their working conditions to be ameliorated as far as that was possible without impinging on male roles and influence. To—as *The Labour Woman* put it—relieve 'the drudgery of household toil' and enable a woman 'to be a good citizen as well as a good wife and mother'¹⁸⁴ solutions offered were either technological by way of labour saving 'gadgets' or through arrangements whereby domestic tasks were shared among women.¹⁸⁵ *For Soviet Britain* promised that women 'if working... will have crèches,

¹⁸² This emphasis on the enhanced private life suggests a link to, and accommodation with, the 'feminine' Englishness of the interwar period that Light has explored. This is the 'conservative modernity' of the home in the garden suburb and of a quiet satisfaction in a private and domestic existence. Light suggests that this vision of home life could itself act as a pattern for life more generally. She writes that its:

emotional pull was by no means confined to Tory voters and found expression in a recasting of the British as a commonsensical, level-headed but reticent - 'retiring' - people, for whom the pleasures of domestic life were not merely a complementary alternative to those of the public sphere but infinitely superior: home, indoors, could provide proper values and behaviours which were not simply meant as an antidote to the pressures of life but which could become a model for a better public life. (Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (1991), p.106)

¹⁸³ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.5, 56.

¹⁸⁴ [Leah] Malone, 'We Must Plan to Conquer Want', *The Labour Woman*, 31 6 (June 1943), pp.62-63,65; 63.

¹⁸⁵ See also pp.252-257 below.

kindergartens and clinics for *their* children, with the best nursing staff, under supervision of working class mothers. ... For *housewives*, the new houses to be built will contain all the latest appliances'.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, these 'new houses' were most often patterned on what Robert Fishman has described as the 'bourgeois utopia', the individual suburban units which spatially reinforced the separation of the private domestic sphere from the male public world.¹⁸⁷

In this way, the beneficent state was very much a patriarchal state. Indeed in an age of full employment, good wages and social security the pressures which had forced women into the public sphere would increasingly cease to apply, allowing them to return to their appointed place in the order of things. As it turned out, where women did continue to work before or after marriage and children it would significantly be in those areas where the state had taken on formerly domestic roles.¹⁸⁸ Summing it all up, Wells prophesied for women a 'matrix function... rather than the star parts of the future'. They would 'continue to mother, nurse, assist, protect, comfort, reward and hold mankind together.'¹⁸⁹ There would be 'Man the Maker and Woman the Protector and Sustainer.'¹⁹⁰

A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

For both men and women the culmination of the process of creating the new Briton was to create individuals who not only expressed the practical pursuit of perfection in their physique and abilities but had internalised the norms and values of the new

¹⁸⁶ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.41; my emphasis.

¹⁸⁷ Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York, 1987), pp.3-4

¹⁸⁸ Pateman, *The Disorder of Women*, pp.180-194.

¹⁸⁹ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, pp.585-586.

¹⁹⁰ H.G. Wells, *The King Who Was a King: The Book of a Film* (1929), p.243.

life in their whole way of thinking and living. At that moment the blueprint would be realised.

All versions of the New Utopian blueprint required, as Wootton wrote, that 'somehow people must do the things which the planners have planned that they shall do.'¹⁹¹ People could be forced to obey. The BUF promised that in the Greater Britain there would be 'no room... for those who do not accept the principle "All for the State and the State for all.'¹⁹² Groups like the Jews who were accused of having 'constituted themselves a state within the nation' would be excluded from it.¹⁹³ If people continued to be 'bemused' by bourgeois ideology a 'temporary curtailment of liberty of some sections of the population' might be necessary in the Soviet Britain.¹⁹⁴ In dealing with 'The Recalcitrant', Wells admitted that 'sometimes' 'education involves disciplines of some severity', 'pains and penalties' were an inevitable part of this wider 'education'.¹⁹⁵ In contrast, Cripps knew that whereas under a totalitarian state 'every living soul has to be crushed into conformity', democratic socialism required 'voluntary discipline'. People would need to 'willingly submit... to various forms of control'.¹⁹⁶ There was a need for 'discipline as well as freedom', Stapledon recognised, but it must 'be self-imposed' otherwise the new society would be 'identical with Fascism'.¹⁹⁷ However, all of the New Utopians nonetheless shared the desire for a people who were not merely self-interested, grudgingly obedient or cowed, but who shared their values and eagerly pursued their aims. A harmonious and dynamic society could come no other way. Even

¹⁹¹ Wootton, 'Freedom Under Planning', p.43.

¹⁹² Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, pp.123-124.

¹⁹³ *Idem.*, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.64.

¹⁹⁴ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.210.

¹⁹⁵ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.810.

¹⁹⁶ Cripps, *Towards Christian Democracy*, p.36.

under a fascist or communist regime the citizens who had internalised its aims and values would experience their life in positive terms, perhaps even seeing themselves as free. Ultimately, although the integrity of the state is in all cases preserved by force in the last instance, social stability could only come through the norms and values desired for the new society becoming the unquestioned stuff of everyday life.

Burns made clear that in a communist society 'human nature itself, has to be transformed' and the CPGB's wartime manifesto stressed that socialism was not built through 'the Statute Book, but in the life of the people', the 'spirit of democracy must inspire every aspect of the country's political, economic, social and cultural life.'¹⁹⁸ For CW's 'Vital Democracy' to be created, individual democratic participation needed to expand from mere voting to take in a person's 'whole life'.¹⁹⁹ Roff stipulated 'a permanent sense of citizenship in many millions more people'.²⁰⁰ Cole, addressing the Fabians on the requirements for 'a new way of life' similarly believed that what was required was 'no mere change of administrative mechanism... but a change of outlook.'²⁰¹ For Morrison the 'efficient organisation of industry' was necessary 'but... not enough.' He argued for the principle of 'love our neighbour as ourselves, not merely in the sanctuary of the home or the circle of friends, but in the practical workaday world of business'.²⁰² Even the ever practical socialist Jay recognised that as the motivations of 'greed and fear' were removed 'motives... of public spirit, pride of work, and conscious service to the community'

¹⁹⁷ Stapledon, *New Hope For Britain*, p.15

¹⁹⁸ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, p.136; *Britain For the People*, p.20.

¹⁹⁹ Acland, *Questions and Answers*, p.16.

²⁰⁰ Roff, *Individuals and Minorities*, p.10.

²⁰¹ Cole, 'Plan for Living', p.8.

²⁰² Morrison, *Spearhead of Humanity*, p.20.

would need to replace them.²⁰³ This had to be a deep change rather than a mere public mask. Wootton believed that 'an approximation of at least the best public to the best private standards' was 'an essential condition for successful socialism.'²⁰⁴ Fascism claimed to proclaim a 'new morality'.²⁰⁵ Writing of 'citizenship' Hawks made clear the central and determinant place of this side of fascism, that 'the triumph of British Union depends upon a spiritual revival in our people.'²⁰⁶ The 'political and economic implications of Fascism' were 'not so significant as the sequence of moral and spiritual reactions which derive inevitably from the fascist faith.'²⁰⁷ 'Class prejudice' would be overcome by the 'propagation and triumph of the Fascist spirit', not by 'codes and laws'.²⁰⁸

On the terrain of imagination the citizen who would live the new way of life was seen by the eye of desire. The traveller in the imagined Greater Britain found 'a new atmosphere. The streets... crowded with happy people', a 'people... considerate' yet without any 'hint at ostentatious charity or pity in their concern.' 'Everyone looked fit and healthy; none had worried lines creasing their foreheads or souring their lips'.²⁰⁹ Under 'vital democracy' in CW's new Britain would come 'a better and happier citizenship', each worker would feel 'a democratic responsibility' for their work, everyone would be 'raised out of the grubby backyard of self-interest

²⁰³ Jay, *The Socialist Case*, p.278.

²⁰⁴ Barbara Wootton, 'On Public and Private Honesty', pp.28-36 in Vera G. Seal and Philip Bean (eds.), *Barbara Wootton Selected Writings. Volume 2: Crime and the Penal System II: Social Welfare* (Basingstoke, 1992; first published 1945), p.36.

²⁰⁵ Oswald Mosley, *Blackshirt Policy: a brief statement of the policy of the British Union of Fascists* (undated; c.1934), p.7.

²⁰⁶ Hawks, *Women Fight For Britain*, p.5.

²⁰⁷ Allen, 'The Fascist Idea in Britain', pp.223-238; 237.

²⁰⁸ Joyce, *Fascist Educational Policy*, p.10.

²⁰⁹ *Blackshirt*, 26 December 1936.

into the sunlight and space of creative citizenship'.²¹⁰ Louis de Brouchère saw socialism inaugurating:

a really free world where workers will be happy at their work, where they will be proud of their labour freely executed, where men and women will be conscious of their individuality, of their rights and of their duties. Along this trail we will go towards a really civilized world, one in which William Morris would have been happy to live.²¹¹

Dalton predicted 'a great change in social atmosphere', workers would no longer be 'mere "hands", but honourable partners in a true social activity.' The 'new skilled manual worker' would 'take his place in the new society, side by side with doctors and dentists, architects and accountants, scientists, teachers and lawyers, as a public servant and a professional man.'²¹² In 1934 Wootton's vision was relatively modest: she hoped for an 'average man' who 'can probably be relied on to do his job decently and regularly from a very seemly desire to avoid being a burden on his neighbours'.²¹³ Ten years later she was a little more ambitious, hoping that the 'average person' would be 'alert, intelligent, informed and bursting with initiative'.²¹⁴ Durbin was careful to admit that his blueprint would 'not produce heaven within a family or a race of perfect adults in a generation'. He looked to 'a generation of men and women who will defend their rights and yet willingly concede equal rights to others; who accept the judgement of third parties in disputes; who neither bully

²¹⁰ Acland, *Questions and Answers*, p.17; CW, *Manifesto*, p.6; Hemming, 'Control', p.9.

²¹¹ Louis de Brouchère, 'Democracy After The War', *Fabian Quarterly*, 31 (Autumn 1941), pp.4-10; 10.

²¹² Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.100-101, 165.

²¹³ Wootton, *Plan Or No Plan*, p.335.

²¹⁴ *Idem.*, 'Freedom Under Planning', p.54.

nor eat humble pie; who will fight, but only in defence of the law; who are willing and friendly members of a positive and just society.²¹⁵

Socialism and educational reform promised to Stapledon 'in a few years... a world such as has never before existed save in the dreams of philosophers.' Its citizens would have 'full bodily health', 'delight in skilled muscular activity' and be 'trained in precise and zestful self-perception' and the 'appreciation of human character and behaviour'.²¹⁶ Wells looked ahead to a 'modern brain' which would also be 'far more neatly packed and better arranged, cleaner and better lubricated.' 'Leonardo da Vinci with his immense breadth of vision, his creative fervour, his curiosity, his power of intensive work' was 'the precursor of the ordinary man' of the future. Even his physiognomy would be transformed. The revolution, Wells wrote, 'closed the mouth, opened the brow, altered the poise of the head'.²¹⁷

Although seeking socialism in the short and medium term, communists could also imagine the new consciousness which would only fully emerge with communism. Burns wrote that: 'men and women will lose all remnants of the grasping, individualist outlook... When this stage is reached, people will look on work for society, not as something imposed by force or hunger, but as the natural exercise of their own will, because they understand the mutual responsibility involved in social life.'²¹⁸ Strachey looked forward to a time when 'the idea of refusing to play their part, to the best of their ability, in the social and productive life of the community will no more occur to... citizens of the future than the idea of refusing to dig, to hunt or to come to the general assembly of the tribe occurred to

²¹⁵ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, pp.68-69.

²¹⁶ Stapledon, 'Education and World Citizenship', pp.154-160.

²¹⁷ Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, pp.323, 329, 279-280.

²¹⁸ Burns, *Money*, pp.93-94.

an Iroquois or a pre-Homeric Achaean gentile.' People would labour 'without regard to, and without hope of, personal, individual reward.'²¹⁹ Ultimately this change of consciousness would usher in the final end of the dialectic between the individual and the state, liberty and discipline. 'In a free Communist world', the CPGB explained, 'the State and, with it, all measures of coercion will disappear. For life in society organised on a Communist basis will have become part of the habits of men and women'.²²⁰ Then, Burns anticipated, 'in the sphere of capitalist anarchy, production, there will be complete order and plan; in the sphere of capitalist "order," political government, there will be complete anarchy.'²²¹



Through the coming together of the dialectical unity of the New Man and the environment engendered by the institutions of the blueprint would be created the life and landscape envisioned in the utopian imagination. Whatever the name—The Greater Britain, the Soviet Britain, the Socialist Commonwealth—these were all visions which shared the modernising and radical spirit articulated by the 'New' Britain which rhetorically framed many proposals of the war years.

²¹⁹ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.133.

²²⁰ CPGB, *Draft Programme*, p.34.

²²¹ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, p.138.

VOICES FROM NOWHERE
UTOPIANISM IN BRITISH
POLITICAL CULTURE
1929-1945

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Chapter 6

VISIONS OF THE NEW BRITAIN

These are dark hints, maybe; but who, groping about in the greyness,
can picture plainly the glory of the rising sun?
G.D.H. Cole, *Great Britain in the Post-War World*, 1942.¹

The rising sun is perhaps utopia's most eloquent symbol.² Heralding new times and exchanging darkness for light, the sunrise appears at the extremity of human vision on a horizon which can be journeyed towards but never finally attained.³ From the grey streets of the 1930s and the Stygian gloom of the blackout, the New Utopians' grand narrative pointed to a new Britain where the citizens of the future lived, worked and played amidst sunlit homes, streets and country scenes of the new times of peace and plenty.

To create this happy land the New Utopians aspired to grasp the life and fabric of the nation in its entirety. To this end the rhetoric, technology and mental attitude of 'planning' were applied not only to the economy or in the context of 'town planning', but were comprehensive in their scope. Indicative of this central characteristic of the utopianism of the time was Laski's explanation that planning sought 'that cosmos where men and women can find the life of beauty in a rational system of economic and political principles. It is a profound transvaluation of all values.'⁴ To build the Soviet Britain required nothing less than 'to reconstruct the entire living conditions of the whole population', 'the whole of the apparatus of

¹ p.13.

² See Appendix 1.

³ Louis Marin, 'The Frontiers of Utopia', pp.7-16 in Krishan Kumar, and Stephen Bann (eds.), *Utopias and the Millennium* (1993).

⁴ Laski, 'Choosing the Planners', p.126.

living, food, houses, clothes, exercise' would be encompassed by the new capacity for control.⁵ Writing on post-war reconstruction Elizabeth McAllister stressed that Labour 'must plan for people, ... must plan for leisure, ... must plan for community'.⁶ Planning would apply to everything: 'your kitchen, your house or flat, your street, your town or village'. There would be 'a plan for each' and these 'minor plans' would be 'joined up, in a master plan for the whole nation' by a 'central planning authority' with 'the whole map of Britain' in front of it.⁷

TOWN AND COUNTRY

Just as the decadence of bourgeois society was expressed in the enervated body of the C3 Briton, so was the disorder of laissez faire and the corruption of acquisitiveness visible on the face of town and countryside. The common vision of the New Utopianism was to transform urban and rural Britain. The CPGB manifesto of 1945 proclaimed that 'entire cities, towns and villages need to be rebuilt' and that 'national planning' would be the mechanism for that task.⁸ The 'might of the nation' would be mobilised by the BUF 'to obliterate the disgrace of the slums, to place electric power at the disposal of all, to build vast roads, to reclaim land from the sea, to do the hundreds of jobs that cry aloud to be done.'⁹ In Lansbury's imagination Britain appeared reformed 'as a carefully planned pattern of garden land, farm land, well-defined, and sharply limited industrial areas, and... huge tracts in the Highlands and Lake District and elsewhere set apart for pleasure'.¹⁰

⁵ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.30; *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.467.

⁶ Elizabeth McAllister, 'Women after the War', *The Labour Woman*, 30 4 (April 1942), pp.41,44; 41.

⁷ The Labour Party, *Your Home Planned by Labour* (1943), pp.8,9.

⁸ CPGB, *Britain For The People*, p.10.

⁹ Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, p.148.

¹⁰ Lansbury, *My England*, p.59.

Likewise the Wellsian Stapledon looked forward to 'a chequer of open cities, suburban townships insulated in green and well-tilled agricultural districts, with here and there a treasured holiday region.'¹¹ In 1942, when the need for a new Britain was even greater, Acland wrote that: 'even when they have not been destroyed by enemy action, we shall want to rebuild far more than half of all our towns' and he looked to 'new schools, new hospitals, new parks, new community centres, swimming-baths, libraries, theatres, holiday camps'. The 'list of requirements' was 'almost endless.'¹²

The reflections of Harry Asbrook, following a visit to an exhibition organised by the Royal Institute of British Architects, brought out the juxtaposition of life as it is and life as it could be which is integral to utopianism. He saw 'two worlds side by side', 'a world of dark, unwholesome streets' next to 'blue-prints of twentieth century wonder cities of concrete and vita-glass, of spacious gardens, wide boulevards, and magnificent sports centres'.¹³ The quintessential arena of modern life and a long-established repository of utopian desire, the city is an appropriate starting point for exploring the new Britain.¹⁴ Within the utopian tradition the city was frequently not just *in* utopia but utopia itself, being in Ebenezer Howard's phrase the 'master key' opening the way to the good life.¹⁵ While not believing in 'salvation by bricks alone' or in Le Corbusier's dictum 'Architecture or Revolution' the shape of the city to

¹¹ Stapledon, *New Hope for Britain*, p.175.

¹² Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.63.

¹³ *Challenge*, 20 August 1938, p.11.

¹⁴ Bauman, *Socialism*, p.29; Ernst Bloch; *The Principle of Hope: Volume Two* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995), pp.699-745; Franco Borsi, *Architecture and Utopia* (Paris, 1997); R. Fishman, 'Utopia in Three Dimensions: the Ideal City and the Origins of Modern Design', pp.95-107 in P. Alexander and R. Gill (eds.), *Utopias* (1984); Helen Rosenau, *The Ideal City: Its*

come was not ignored by the New Utopians.¹⁶ McAllister, a Labour activist and member of the TCPA, aimed for 'a town that satisfies human needs and human dignity, that provides the physical environment for the abundant life we seek.'¹⁷ The party's official policy for housing and town and country planning saw itself as playing a part 'towards the building of a New Britain which will bring health, comfort, convenience, beauty and happiness, in many cases for the first time, into the lives of our people.'¹⁸ During wartime Cole wrote that he and his colleagues were 'making plans for the physical creation of a new country and for new towns which will be fit homes... for men and women living as we should wish them to live.'¹⁹

The city to come was eloquent of the beliefs and aspirations of the New Utopians. Indicating the salience of 'clearing away' in the building of the world state, Wells anticipated that 'only a few lovely, memorable or typical buildings' would be 'spared' and in *Things To Come* the transformed 'Everytown' was white, modern and massive.²⁰ By the 1930s modernism had become a noticeable, if somewhat hesitant presence in the British scene and, for Dalton, Le Corbusier's *The City of To-morrow* opened out 'a wonderful imaginative vision of what a great modern city might be...' With 'effective smoke abatement' residents might even use their roofs for 'rest and recreation' just as in 'Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*'.²¹ Inviting

Architectural Evolution (1974); Lynda H. Schneekloth, 'Unredeemably Utopian: Architecture and Making/Unmaking the World', *Utopian Studies*, 9 1 (1998), pp.1-25.

¹⁵ Fishman, 'Utopia in Three Dimensions', p.95.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Le Corbusier, *Towards A New Architecture* (1946; first published in English 1927), p.269.

¹⁷ McAllister, 'Women after the War', p.41.

¹⁸ The Labour Party, *Housing and Planning After The War* (undated; 1945), p.11.

¹⁹ Cole, 'Plan for Living', p.16.

²⁰ Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, p.318; *idem.*, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, pp.210-211.

²¹ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.269, 272; Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning* (1929).

his reader to 'frankly "Utopianise"', Evans led them out into the clear air of the new London and, standing amid 'green turf and... stately trees', he showed them 'the huge skyscrapers ("Corbusiers" we call them)', each 'walled... with unbreakable glass', at night they would shine 'throughout their height with a pleasant glow'.²² For the architect and progressive Boumphrey, the 'thatched roofs, half-timbered work, and similar anachronisms' of the 'ridiculously ugly' garden city style had to go. This 'irrational love of the past' fostered by Morris, with its idealisation of the 'sentimental and static' 'country life' would give way to the 'dynamic and inspiring' life of modernity. Geoffrey Boumphrey imagined cities where 'modern man could live to the full the modern life'. In the 'town' or 'city of to-morrow' there would be 'acres of green, broken here and there by sheets of water or playing fields,... great trees rising to their full country height, and here and there among them a lovely building in white and crystal, shining in the clear air.'²³

A future proletarian modernism was suggested in a communist embrace of 'the Bauhaus School at Dessau' and in the notion that 'the wildest flights of fancy of a Corbusier could become realities in so far as they correspond to the needs and desires of the people.' Demonstrating the modernist emphasis on function, 'Classic and bastard Georgian masquerading as beauty' would be replaced by 'buildings designed for the people to use them'.²⁴ Under communist leadership 'new, sunny homes, broad streets, sturdy and intelligent children, and a fuller and happier life' would come about in 'a new, healthy, happy London, the future capital of a free, merrie, Socialist England.' In central London Bramley imagined 'far higher

²² *The New Clarion*, 6 January 1934.

²³ Geoffrey M. Boumphrey, 'The principles of town and country planning', pp.250-271 in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *Manifesto* (1934), pp.261-266.

²⁴ *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.180-181.

buildings... but set further apart' to permit spaciousness without reducing population density. Office workers would live in 'blocks of flats... with more sunshine, air and greenery.' There would 'be more lawns, trees, flowers, children's playgrounds, swimming pools and playing fields from one end of London to the other' and on the South Bank 'perhaps open air cafés for the workers in the summer.' Even in the centre of the Capital 'citizens ought to be able to live with trees and grass' and Bramley proposed the transformation of the banks of the Thames in that way.²⁵

Traces of a muscular modernism are detectable here. Bramley anticipated 'blocks of flats... planned on a grand scale, 10,000 flats at a time.'²⁶ Evans imagined: 'away in the distance... what looks like a huge wall surrounding the city. This—another scheme of the French architect, Le Corbusier—is a line of flats three stories high.' Wells saw that 'steel framework and ferro-concrete' would allow structures to 'soar up to heights unthought of before'.²⁷ This was, as J.P. Telotte has commented, a world in which the 'human practically vanishes', and signified not only a joy in the power of modernity but also, implicitly, the future relationship of the individual to the state.²⁸ Admitting this tendency towards alienating massiveness and inhuman efficiency, Wells wrote of how the Air Dictatorship brought 'white bare streets, ... bleakly cheerful public buildings with their metallic furniture', 'buildings too solid and too big'.²⁹

²⁵ Bramley, *New London*, pp.8-9, 58; *idem.*, *The Battle For Homes* (no place, undated; c.1945), p.56.

²⁶ *Idem.*, *New London*, p.14.

²⁷ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, pp.208, 203.

²⁸ J.P. Telotte, "'So Big": The Monumental Technology of *Things to Come*', *Science Fiction Studies*, 24 (1997), pp.77-86.

²⁹ Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, pp.282; 307

Eventually this 'clumsy rationality' and 'dread of aestheticism' would pass with the 'once clumsy and monstrous' becoming 'as graceful as a panther.'³⁰ However, returning down to earth and back from the future, Dalton admitted that 'M. Le Corbusier's conception—of skyscrapers sixty floors high' was probably 'too revolutionary for twentieth century minds'.³¹ Although a member of a self-styled 'modern movement' Cornforth found 'much modern architecture' infected with "Bloomsburyitis" and an illustration accompanying a fascist dystopia suggested that modernism was the style of a Jewish Britain.³² Henry Gibbs desired a London without either the 'terrifying plate-glass and steel confectionery invented by Mr Wells' or the 'gables', 'beams' and faux-gothic architecture of the Victorians and the age of Baldwin. Imagining the fascist Britain he found that 'the buildings were cleaner, more personal and better planned... The drab buildings had gone. In their place were fine white blocks of shops and offices'.³³

However, in contrast to Gibbs' vision and dreams of the *ville radieuse* in England's green and pleasant land, 'gables and beams' dominated British domestic architecture at the time. In this respect the 'garden suburb' indicated the adoption of at least the style of Ebenezer Howard's cure for 'Manchesterism'.³⁴ The 'garden city' expressed notions of identity and tradition, and beliefs about the desirable relationship between town and country, nature and science. Although towns built according to the 12 houses per acre standard were perhaps unsuitable for a cramped island, and despite urban sprawl being part of 'the beast' consuming the

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.307.

³¹ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.273.

³² *Blackshirt*, 2 November 1934; *Action* 3 September 1936.

³³ *Blackshirt*, 26 December 1936.

³⁴ Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*.

countryside, the 'tudoristic' semi' in the garden suburb was the popular choice.³⁵ Evans admitted that 'most of our people prefer their own houses, and for them we have suburbs well out of the town, garden cities and the pleasantest bungalows and cottages away in the country'³⁶ and Lansbury also preferred 'prettily laid-out garden cities'.³⁷ Dr T. W. Hill, who—inspired by Wren's plans—also saw the Blitz as providing 'a golden opportunity to re-plan London on more beautiful lines', specified a hundred new towns in garden city style.³⁸

Although the new city might be associated with the machine aesthetic, these examples show the degree to which the new designs would bring trees and green spaces, light and clean air into the city. The new city and planning could also serve the interests of the lover of the rural scene and the natural world. As Bauman has commented, the 'line dividing prospective' from 'retrospective utopias, enthusiasm for progress from a conservative nostalgia' is a tenuous one.³⁹ Love for the countryside did not necessarily indicate a yearning to return to a lost, pre-industrial, 'merrie England', but could also be compatible with the desire to create a modern, planned society.⁴⁰

Spender argued that 'towns that are planned as towns, in a country of electric power and air transport' could provide a solution to the rash of bungalows

³⁵ Williams-Ellis (ed.), *Britain and the Beast*.

³⁶ *The New Clarion*, 6 January 1934.

³⁷ Lansbury, *My England*, p.61.

³⁸ *Tribune*, 21 November 1941.

³⁹ Bauman, *Socialism*, pp.30-31.

⁴⁰ Martin Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1950* (Cambridge, 1981); David Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane: An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation* (Basingstoke, 1991); Peter Mandler, 'Against Englishness: English Culture and the Limits to Rural Nostalgia, 1850-1940', *Transactions of The Royal Historical Society*, VII (sixth series) (1997), pp.155-175.

blighting the countryside.⁴¹ By 'making the towns fit to live in' one could 'save the country' which could be 'nursed back to something like its old beauty and brought within reach of all.'⁴² The ultra-modern Bernal imagined 'the totally enclosed spacious air-conditioned town' in which 'city air' would become 'indistinguishable from that of the country' and human control of 'temperature, humidity, and air movement' would bring 'the most stimulating, enjoyable, and varied climates'. He hoped that this would 'leave far more space to wild nature'.⁴³ Town and country planning would permit a 'green belt' to be thrown around sprawling towns and cities.⁴⁴ The BUF, in common with all the parties, pledged that the tentacles of "'Ribbon" development' would no longer 'disfigure' the countryside.⁴⁵ Regarding the damage already done, Lansbury anticipated 'work which will employ thousands' which would turn 'barren wastes into parks, forestry and agricultural land.'⁴⁶ Apart from the threat of urban sprawl, the utopian imagination also confronted problems entailed in managing the demands of the day trippers, hikers and caravaners who increasingly used the countryside. Putting its case to a hypothetical 'country lover' of reactionary opinion in 1945, Labour was robust in its response. The clock could not be turned back, the countryside could not be preserved in archaic isolation, the townspeople would be spending their leisure hours there. But planning could replace the anarchy and philistinism of laissez-faire by providing a 'mechanism

⁴¹ Spender, *Forward From Liberalism*, p.190.

⁴² Boumphrey, 'The principles of town and country planning', p.251.

⁴³ Bernal, *The Social Function of Science*, p.352.

⁴⁴ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.278, Brock Griggs, *Women and Fascism*, p.5.

⁴⁵ Mosley, *Fascism*, question 66.

⁴⁶ Lansbury, *My England*, p.28.

whereby the people can live or play in the country without turning it into a rural slum.' Planning would, therefore, be 'the charter of the country-lover.'⁴⁷

If the violation of the countryside was one side of the problem, the stagnant rural economy was the other and the New Utopians promised to revive agriculture. Burns suggested that without the numerous peasant farmers of Russia, in Britain it would be straightforward to socialise the land and organise its working by 'farm or village councils', under a 'county and national plan'.⁴⁸ Amalgamation would create state farms of thousands of acres suitable for mechanized cultivation, a development which would increase efficiency and reduce the hours of the farm worker.⁴⁹ To raise the level of production it would be agriculture rather than industry which would be 'the "shock" area for the British revolution'. 'The scientific improvement of the land, the use of fertilisers, selection and care of stock, the more careful use of products and by-products' would all become possible under production for use.⁵⁰ Naturally on occasion the communist focus took in the wider world as well and Bernal wrote of a 'new agriculture' in which the deserts would be covered over 'turning them into vast green houses.'⁵¹ Like the CPGB, Labour committed itself to taking agricultural land into social ownership and mentioned the possibility of 'large-scale State farms'.⁵² Agriculture would be planned on a national

⁴⁷ 'Licinius', *Vote Labour? Why?* (1945), p.70.

⁴⁸ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, pp.190-191.

⁴⁹ *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.273-274.

⁵⁰ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, pp.211-212; see also CPGB, *A Policy for the Land and the People*; *idem.*, *Farm & Food: The Communist Party's Plan for Agriculture and Victory in 1943* (1943).

⁵¹ Bernal, *The Social Function of Science*, p.348.

⁵² Labour Party, *Labour and the Land* (1935), p.7; *idem.*, *Our Land: The Future of Britain's Agriculture* (1943). However, this policy was dropped in the Party's 1945 manifesto.

scale and scientific research would be expanded.⁵³ Labour, Cripps wrote, would 'plan for abundance'.⁵⁴

The modernising imperatives of the New Utopianism promised dramatic effects on the rural scene. The socialist administration imagined by Mitchison set about 'draining wet land, irrigating dry land, utilising land then waste, and increasing the yield of land already under cultivation'; 'thousands of acres of moorland' went under the plough.⁵⁵ Picturing the countryside of 1951 Wells found 'the fields... larger than in the old days of horse agriculture' with 'few hedges because of the throwing together of fields'.⁵⁶ The communist eye saw 'tradition' as a 'weight': 'wasteful hedging could be grubbed up' and 'the fork and the horse-drawn plough... give place to the tractor'.⁵⁷ Even the BUF, despite drawing on the mysticism of 'blood and soil', could argue that 'fascism must be ahead of, not behind the times' and note with approval that on a modern farm 'the milking of cows is done by machinery; the pig stys are white tiled, with chromium plated sluices; the horse is being replaced by the tractor; all in the cause of efficiency'.⁵⁸

Living conditions in the countryside would be modernised as well. Cripps demanded 'a "Merrie England" and a "New Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land' and promised 'a full and happy life' and 'real joy and happiness'.⁵⁹ 'Mr Countryman' would receive 'a better home, as good as his brother's in the town', 'a richer life in an unspoilt countryside' without 'that "buried-in-the

⁵³ Labour Party, *Our Land*, pp.5-8, 10-11.

⁵⁴ Stafford Cripps, *The Economic Planning of Agriculture* (1934), p.3.

⁵⁵ Mitchison, *The First Workers' Government*, p.396.

⁵⁶ Wells, *Guide to the New World*, p.92.

⁵⁷ *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.277-278.

⁵⁸ *Blackshirt*, 17 August 1934.

⁵⁹ *Tribune*, 15 January 1937.

countryside" feeling.⁶⁰ 'Villages and country towns' would be 'alert, prosperous, full of industry and happy life.'⁶¹ The traveller in the fascist utopia found that 'thousands have gone back to the land... Farming districts all have their own big schools and nurseries, cinemas and theatres. Their slums have gone - just like the industrial parts'.⁶² The traveller's eye took in 'fields now whitening for the harvest' and 'farm buildings... very clean, very modern in line.'⁶³ In a synthesis of tradition and modernisation Wells described a village where 'the Church spire, the inn sign and country house' would be joined by 'a big, highly equipped schoolhouse, with public library, museum, theatre and social club'.⁶⁴ One communist author was clear that the countryside, rather than being imbued with unique virtues which it might pass on to the city, would instead receive the good life through urban modernity effacing the particularity of country life. The countryside 'would be rebuilt not on the basis of any romantic separation of the village and its life and customs from the town, but on the basis of closer unity with the town and a removal of the dark backwardness of rural areas.' There would be 'no more occasion to refer to the "idiocy of rural life."⁶⁵

Nonetheless, views of the countryside as the source of some special essence of its own could be found. A persistent love of the pastoral as a source of physical and spiritual health and as a symbol of national identity continued despite, or often alongside, a modern, scientific and industrial Britain. The Greater Britain would see both the modernisation of agriculture and the repopulation of the countryside. Fascism declared itself 'entirely in favour of the Back to the Land

⁶⁰ The Labour Party, *Your Home*, p.7; see also Labour Party, *Labour and the Land*.

⁶¹ Lord Addison, *Labour's Policy for Our Countryside* (undated; c.1937), p.12.

⁶² *Blackshirt*, 24 December 1937.

⁶³ *Action*, 17 October 1936.

⁶⁴ Wells, *Guide to the New World*, p.92.

⁶⁵ *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.181-182, 285.

movement' and 'not only from an economic standpoint'.⁶⁶ What was sought was a modern Britain which was at the same time infused with the values of William Morris' 'dream of an England renewed and reawakened' in *News From Nowhere* which, 'allowing for differences in the technique of production', was an anticipation of the fascist utopia.⁶⁷ Joan Bond in a poem entailed 'Our Ageless Spirit' wrote of 'sons who tilled the soil and ploughed the seas/Each one imbued with that green primal spirit.'⁶⁸ 'A healthy and mighty race' needed 'roots deep in the soil of its native land.'⁶⁹ However, whether it was possible to 'repeople the land' by encouraging the 'yeoman, or small working farmer' while at the same time making 'every method of modern science... available to British agriculture' was perhaps doubtful.⁷⁰

Although not drawn on so freely, hints of such mysticism could be found elsewhere. Lord Addison, former Labour Minister of Agriculture, posed the rhetorical question: 'where in the world shall we find a place in which life might be so pleasant and full as in this British countryside?'⁷¹ 'The new world' of a member of the FPSI would break down the 'barrier which shuts the town dweller out from the vital happenings of the countryside and hems his vision with concrete and machinery, cinema and amusement arcades.'⁷² The belief that 'Country-bred people refresh the virility of the race' was also shared by the Co-operative Party.⁷³ The land, Acland contended, was 'our national heritage in a deeper sense than the

⁶⁶ *Action*, 26 December 1936; BUF, *Fascism and Agriculture* (no place, undated; c.1934), unpaginated.

⁶⁷ Arthur Reade, 'William Morris, National Socialist', *British Union Quarterly*, 2 (1938), pp.61-68.

⁶⁸ Joan Bond, 'Our Ageless spirit', *British Union Quarterly*, 4 1 (Spring 1940), p.63.

⁶⁹ *The Fascist Week*, 19-25 January.

⁷⁰ Jorian Jenks, *The Land and the People* (undated; c.1938).

⁷¹ Lord Addison, *A Policy For British Agriculture* (1939), p.21.

⁷² 'The Rebirth', *Plan*, 9 6 (June 1942), p.1.

factories... created by our own hands'. A year's compulsory 'Communal Service' out of town would provide young people with 'that subtle education which comes only from contact with the countryside'. Agriculture, 'unlike every other industry', could never be reduced to 'a set of rules'.⁷⁴ Even among communists there was not the radical separation of the 'perfect machine world' from the 'irrational ugly world of trees, birds and animals' symbolised by the 'Green Wall' of Zamyatin's *We*.⁷⁵ Although a farm was 'a factory for carrying on the cultivation of the soil' a British Soviet government 'would be particularly concerned to preserve the beauty of the countryside.'⁷⁶ Even a future Wellsian Britain would 'still preserve the outward pattern of "Old England"' in the countryside.⁷⁷

The countryside was also a space through which goods and people had to pass and E.M. Forster despaired of it being 'gashed... to pieces with arterial roads'.⁷⁸ In this area the blackshirts' cult of action, power and heroic masculinity apparently overruled their ruralism. Traffic would no longer be tied 'into the straight waistcoat of an obsolete medieval road system'. That 'triumph of British technical skill, the modern car,' would no more be 'compelled to crawl along dangerous roads'.⁷⁹ Bringing together antisemitism and a latent misogyny, Mosley excoriated Belisha, the Minister of Transport, as 'a little Jewish matriarch... holding up a restrictive hand'. The BUF would replace the 'psychology of the old woman' with 'the spirit of

⁷³ The Co-operative Party, *Britain Reborn*, p.75.

⁷⁴ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.127-128; the BUF also planned for a year 'on the land' 'for boys and girls' after their formal education (Hawks, *Women Fight for Britain*, p.6).

⁷⁵ Zamyatin, *We*, p.91.

⁷⁶ *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.258, 279.

⁷⁷ Wells, *Guide to the New World*, p.94, my emphasis.

⁷⁸ E.M. Forster, 'Havoc', pp.44-47 in Williams-Ellis (ed.), *Britain and the Beast*, p.44.

⁷⁹ Alexander Raven Thomson, *Motor-Ways for Britain* (undated; c.1938), p.2.

manhood and determination' and promised a future of 'high powered cars' for the Briton to 'enjoy... on roads which are fit for their use without danger to his fellow citizens.'⁸⁰ The author of *Motor-Ways for Britain* painted what he believed would 'seem a utopian dream' to 'many motorists', of 'Nine Motor-Ways' to 'connect all the main centres of population' and 'special tracks... for cyclists, ... to enable them to... traverse the more beautiful stretches of countryside.'⁸¹

Under socialism, the CPGB pledged that transport facilities would be 'enormously developed' because 'a prosperous population' implied 'an immense increase in passenger traffic by rail, road, ships and air.'⁸² Socialisation and national planning would permit the co-ordination of the whole transport system and permit such innovations as freight containers 'interchangeable between road and rail' and the "'staggering" [of] office hours' to avoid congestion.⁸³ In the *New Clarion*, Evans, looking from the viewpoint of the cyclist, hoped that "speed merchants" would be confined to roads converted from the obsolete permanent way, thereby leaving 'the lesser ways and by-roads for horsemen, cyclists, hikers'.⁸⁴ Hill imagined the towns of a socialist commonwealth connected 'by a number of straight roads, forming a kind of lattice work' whilst within towns routes would be 'wide and spacious, convenient for traffic and display many picturesque vistas'.⁸⁵ The Co-operative Party's ambitious vision was of 'combined centres for road, rail and air traffic' and it believed road planning could avoid 'the tragedy... destroying the beauties of England'. One way to such an end, instead of 'by-pass or outer-

⁸⁰ *Action*, 18 June 1936.

⁸¹ Thomson, *Motor-Ways for Britain*, pp.3-5.

⁸² CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.34.

⁸³ *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.69-71.

⁸⁴ *The New Clarion*, 6 January 1934.

⁸⁵ *Tribune*, 21 November 1941.

circle roads' for London, was to arrange for 'through traffic to pass the centre underground'.⁸⁶ Wells also anticipated the 'comprehensive replanning of the entire transport system'. 'The great roads of the future' which would 'run lit and silent, luminous white bands across the night landscape'. Technology would permit an advance on individualism with 'collective lighting instead of personal lighting'.⁸⁷

Socialism also evinced its cosmopolitan ambitions. 'Kuklos' of the *New Clarion* looked forward to the day when the 'cyclists of Europe will ride from Calais to Dover' and when, via 'a Spanish Socialist road tunnel from Tarifa to Morocco', the Clarionettes would 'cycle to Cape Town'.⁸⁸ With the abolition of 'the contractions of the capitalists' system' a channel tunnel, John Douglas believed, 'would be nothing to the great bridge linking Alaska... to the Siberian Coast of the Soviet Union.' The future promised 'quicker travel, less time spent staring out of train windows' and 'holidays in the Arctic', which would be the 'world health spot No.1'.⁸⁹ The brightest vision of transport in the new age came from Bernal. The danger and waste entailed in individualistic motoring could be solved by devising 'an electro-magnetic control for all cars... ensuring they keep an adequate distance apart'. 'Urban traffic problems' could be solved through 'the increasing use of escalators and conveyers in the more congested central areas, and... non-stop trains with accelerating and decelerating platforms for the outer districts.' In the more distant future 'rocket propulsion' was one possibility, but if a way of using

⁸⁶ The Co-operative Party, *Britain Reborn*, p.72.

⁸⁷ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, pp.215, 526.

⁸⁸ *The New Clarion*, 29 October 1932.

⁸⁹ *Challenge*, 18 November 1937.

'alternating electro-magnetic fields' could be found and 'ground friction... eliminated' then air transportation would have 'a serious rival'.⁹⁰

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE NEW BRITAIN

The desire of the New Utopians was not merely to build new towns and revive and restore the countryside but to create a better and different material, physical, cultural and spiritual life. The 'new Britain' was not required 'just as a basis for wealth production' but so men and women could 'live happily and finely' as part of 'a healthy, happy, cultured human race.'⁹¹

THE IDEAL HOME

Among the prerequisites of such an life was a house that could become a home. The major wave of building during the inter-war period had only partially fulfilled existing housing needs and the effects of enemy action and the wartime freeze on construction ensured that housing was prominent in the New Utopian blueprint. But more than that, what was promised were houses which could become *homes*. Writing in *Labour Woman* McAllister understood that 'women want not just "somewhere to live" but a home', 'a place where they can build up an atmosphere at once permanent and secure', as a 'background against which the pattern of family life may take shape and develop.'⁹² Lansbury promised 'a home as now we only dream of'.⁹³

⁹⁰ Bernal, *The Social Function of Science*, pp.374-375.

⁹¹ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.156, 165; A. Rose, 'Working for Happiness', *Labour Woman*, 26 10 (October 1938), pp.154-155.

⁹² McAllister, 'Women after the War', p.41.

⁹³ Lansbury, *My England*, pp.66-67.

The reviewer of *Your Home—Planned by Labour* indicated the sweep of the utopian imagination from critique to vision, noting that: ‘Striking photographs of modern, sunlit houses, with labour-saving kitchens and convenient interior arrangements, contrast vividly with a dreadful picture of the ugly huddles of brick and mortar in which so many decent people have to spend their lives.’ And, it was declared, ‘these bright houses and attractive kitchens’ were ‘not just a projection of the Utopian ideas of some theoretician.’⁹⁴ Every family would have a ‘self-contained house’ constructed not according to some bare utilitarian minimum but as ‘accommodation for living in, in which families will grow up.’ In anticipation of the coming age of plenty these houses would be suitable ‘for generations to come’ and for when living standards would be ‘much higher.’⁹⁵ Every house would have ‘a garden, both at the front and the back’ so that in good weather the family could ‘sprawl in deck-chairs’ while ‘father has a nap.’⁹⁶ The liberation of science would grant to ‘every family in the country... a house with electric light, and power for cooking, central heating, refrigerator, and plenty of floor space, one... that is well furnished with everything that a modern housewife needs. All this may sound utopian’, Attlee admitted, but socialism would make it happen.⁹⁷ Under socialism, architects would show what ‘fine architecture means for the toiling masses’, and homes would be filled with ‘useful, beautiful furniture’.⁹⁸ ‘Repressing uniformity’ would be avoided with houses of ‘cheerful appearance’.⁹⁹ A similar emphasis on

⁹⁴ CM, ‘The Food and Homes That Women Want’, *Labour Woman*, 32 2 (February 1944), p.21. Labour found out what women wanted via a questionnaire circulated among affiliated organisations of the Standing Joint Committee of Working Women’s Organisations.

⁹⁵ Labour Party, *Up with the Houses! Down with the Slums!* (1934), p.2.

⁹⁶ *Tribune*, 21 November 1941.

⁹⁷ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.163-164.

⁹⁸ Lansbury, *My England*, pp.66-67.

⁹⁹ Labour Party, *Up with the Houses!*, pp.2-7.

quality was detectable in Brock Griggs' pledge that fascists would ensure 'that every flat or house has its share of sunshine, that they are easily run and pleasant to the eye.'¹⁰⁰ Likewise in the CPGB's 'Socialist Britain' there would be 'houses that millions today dare not dream of'; 'houses, spacious and beautiful', which would meet 'human needs of sun and air'.¹⁰¹

Labour understood the widespread desire for privacy and independence, for each family to have a 'front path' and 'a gate'; 'one family—one house' was the ideal, with each house standing 'in a decent street.'¹⁰² In contrast, Isabel Riddel was unconvinced that the demand for houses was universal and prescribed 'blocks of flats set in spacious gardens for those who prefer them'.¹⁰³ Flats did not need to look or feel like 'barracks', each dwelling would have its own balcony and be 'as nearly soundproof as possible'.¹⁰⁴ Another advocate of flats, Gertrude Bray, encouraged the reader to share her vision: 'Before us it lies, ten stories high with large windows catching every possible ray of sunshine. It faces east and west, and to every alternate floor on both sides are balconies wide enough to sit out upon.' In place of slums is 'a wide stretch of green interspersed here and there by flowering trees' and each block would have space set aside for the children and for allotments. This vision was 'not Utopian' Bray declared.¹⁰⁵ Obviously there were flats and flats, and Bramley chose Berthold Lubetkin's luxuriously appointed High Point to illustrate what such accommodation *could* be like in a Soviet Britain.¹⁰⁶ 'The

¹⁰⁰ *Action*, 21 February 1936; Brock Griggs, *Women and Fascism*, p.6.

¹⁰¹ *Challenge*, 11 November 1937; *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.181-182, 467.

¹⁰² The Labour Party, *Your Home*, p.4.

¹⁰³ Isabel Riddel, 'Women after the War', *The Labour Woman*, 30 5 (May 1942), pp.53,57; 53.

¹⁰⁴ The Labour Party, *Your Home*, p.3.

¹⁰⁵ Bray, 'Houses versus Flats', *The Labour Woman*, 33 4 (April 1945), pp.86-87, 81; 86.

¹⁰⁶ Bramley, *The Battle For Homes*, pp.46-49.

coming National Socialist State' would also offer 'workers' flats containing all the luxury devices of modern science'.¹⁰⁷

One pressing argument for flats was the need to achieve a high population density in certain areas. In the Greater Britain, while the ideal was 'an individual cottage and garden', Brock Griggs allowed that 'in congested metropolitan areas flats may be necessary to ensure sufficient open space for gardens and play-grounds'.¹⁰⁸ However, the workers' flats of 'Red Vienna' were a favourite socialist icon and flats seemed to offer a suitable basis for a more communal form of life to replace the isolation and individualism of the old order. Similarly, Lansbury, although 'dead against skyscrapers',¹⁰⁹ expected amenities and utilities to be predominately communal. 'I see', he wrote, 'baths and washhouses—there would be no washing clothes at home'. In contrast to the notorious LCC Becontree housing estate the 'neighbourhood unit' proposed by Bramley would include everything necessary to foster a 'definite community atmosphere'.¹¹⁰ The 'national estates' which Mitchison sketched would seek 'the fuller development of the possibilities of living as a community' in which 'medical centres, libraries, halls and other communal buildings' would play a part.¹¹¹ Labour promised a life 'in a bright, clean community surrounded by woods and fields, close to your work, and with fun and games, culture and a pleasant communal life'.¹¹² The 'full communal life of the future' was also crucial to CW's vision of an active and co-operative citizenry and it specified, amongst other measures, 'communal centres with libraries, meeting halls

¹⁰⁷ *Action*, 18 September 1937.

¹⁰⁸ Brock Griggs, *Women and Fascism*, p.5.

¹⁰⁹ Lansbury, *My England*, p.68.

¹¹⁰ Bramley, *The Battle For Homes*, pp.51-54. On Becontree see Andrzej Olechnowicz, *Working-Class Housing in England between the Wars: The Becontree Estate* (Oxford, 1997).

¹¹¹ Mitchison, *The First Workers' Government*, p.377.

and recreation facilities'.¹¹³ The towns in the modernist style envisioned by Boumphrey also offered the possibility of 'the revival of English corporate life' and the 'regrowth' of the 'spirit of citizenship' of the past.¹¹⁴

When speaking on housing and making pledges to ameliorate the conditions of domestic labour the sexual division of labour required that it was women who were most often addressed by the parties.¹¹⁵ Lansbury promised that housework would be 'reduced to the barest minimum' by collective facilities including 'central restaurants and laundries'.¹¹⁶ Moving one stage further the communist Rose Smith expected that the 'individual upbringing of children and household drudgery' would be superseded since those tasks would become a 'function of society'.¹¹⁷ However, technology was the preferred panacea as it would not threaten the independence of the private sphere. *Labour Monthly* believed that 'labour saving homes' would break 'the fetters of capitalist "homes" which are really prisons'.¹¹⁸ In the Soviet Britain 'houses properly constructed and fitted with labour saving devices' would make cleaning 'a simple business'.¹¹⁹ Particularly promising was the new technology of electricity. 'The twentieth century wizard' would open up 'a prospect of freeing the working-class housewife from much of the drudgery of domestic labour.' Thereby, the Co-operative Party asserted, enabling a 'richer home life' as 'the source of domestic happiness' for women.¹²⁰ At the same time Fordism would, CW believed, bring the refrigerators and washing machines

¹¹² The Labour Party, *Your Home*, p.9.

¹¹³ CW, *Manifesto*, p.11.

¹¹⁴ Boumphrey, 'The principles of town and country planning', pp.268-269.

¹¹⁵ See also pp.220-227 above.

¹¹⁶ Lansbury, *My England*, pp.66-67.

¹¹⁷ Rose Smith, 'The Proletarian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women', *Communist Review*, 2 2 (November 1930), pp.11-15; 14.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

which had hitherto been luxuries into 'every working class home'.¹²¹ The title of an article by Nancy Adams suggested that the 'modern housewife' could 'switch to utopia'.¹²²

CONSUMPTION

These specifications for the ideal home do not evoke the austerity of Attlee's Britain or the shortages of a creaking command economy, but a coming age of plenty. Consumption would become a democratic pleasure and, in Marius de Geus' terms, the new Britain would be a 'utopia of abundance' not an ecological 'utopia of sufficiency'.¹²³

Henderson believed that science promised 'an age of abounding plenty for all', 'lavish abundance in the lives and homes of the whole people'.¹²⁴ Strachey selected the standard of living of 'the professional classes in prosperous times' as standard for all.¹²⁵ More moderate language from Attlee nonetheless pointed in the same direction; socialists did not 'propose to level down, but to level up' and create 'a reasonably high standard of life' for all.¹²⁶ Contrary to the old libel that social ownership meant that people could not 'call anything their own—not even a wireless set or a tooth-brush' Strachey explained that 'what socialism really means is giving nine-tenths of us a chance to get at least ten times as much individual, private, property—ten times as much clothing, houses, gardens, motor-cars,

¹¹⁹ *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.465.

¹²⁰ The Co-operative Party, *Britain Reborn*, p.40.

¹²¹ CW, *Housing and Planning* (1944), p.11.

¹²² Nancy Adams, 'Switch to Utopia: How Electricity Helps the Modern Housewife', *Labour*, 2 4 (December 1934), p.81.

¹²³ Marius de Geus, *Ecological Utopias: Envisioning the Sustainable Society* (Utrecht, 1999), pp.20-21.

¹²⁴ Henderson, *The Socialist Goal*, pp.13-12.

¹²⁵ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.37.

¹²⁶ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.147.

supplies of food, furniture and the like as we ever get today.” In fact by ‘abolishing the first sort of private property’, capital, socialism sought ‘to increase vastly the second sort of private property.’¹²⁷ Under socialism it could be envisaged that ‘the basic needs of life might... be distributed free... Free bread, milk, light, heat, and transport.’¹²⁸ Ultimately goods and services would be distributed according to need, and work would be performed according to ability. Then, as Burns wrote, ‘every individual is entitled to take whatever he needs from the local stores; there is no question of payment—money is not required...’¹²⁹ Posing the rhetorical question ‘do we mean... that... everyone is to be allowed to have as much of everything as he likes, and... that nobody is to be compelled to do more work than he wants to?’ Strachey answered: ‘Yes, this is just what is meant.’¹³⁰

Unlike Russia, Britain was already industrialised, so it would be possible to ‘devote a high proportion of... productive resources... to the urgent task of satisfying at once the miserably unsatisfied need for consumers’ goods.’¹³¹ *Britain Without Capitalists* anticipated that, if desired, shops could ‘remain open all the time’. ‘Shopping centres’ would be ‘planned to meet workers’ requirements’, each providing ‘a wide range of goods and facilities for shopping in comfort.’ Every town would have ‘its “Harrods” with numerous more specialized shops grouped together’.¹³² Fascism held that ‘the success of a planned state’ was ‘in the degree to which it can distribute the products of industry to the people’.¹³³ One vision of the

¹²⁷ The Labour Party, *Socialism for the Villages* (1939), p.6; Strachey, *Why You Should Be A Socialist*, pp.64-65.

¹²⁸ *Tribune*, 3 October 1941.

¹²⁹ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, p.117.

¹³⁰ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.112.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p.44.

¹³² *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.131.

¹³³ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.9.

Greater Britain portrayed 'men and women laden with parcels... going in and out of the shops... Shop windows... crammed full with clothes, toys, mysterious parcels, turkeys, sweetmeats - all very tempting in coloured paper and ribbons.' 'Everyone was buying. It seemed incredible people could buy so much'.¹³⁴ The fulfilment of one set of 'needs' would not satiate desire but only raise it to a new level. Strachey wrote that planners would 'constantly have to allocate productive resources to new purposes in order to fulfil some new need' such as 'the widespread ownership of private aeroplanes'. Although consumption in the millionaire class was unlikely because owning 'ten motors' or 'two steam yachts' would be impractical in a world without servants, even so consumption would still expand as machinery became increasingly 'self-maintaining, and easily replaceable'.¹³⁵

In the new Britain the pressure to save would decrease. As the means of production could not be privately owned under socialism the accumulation of capital would become 'sterile hoarding'. It would become 'natural for the individual to spend his income on consumption of goods and services'.¹³⁶ Further, in a 'community which guarantees full employment', 'saving "for a rainy day"' would, Acland wrote, 'substantially disappear'. The need to save against the possibility of ill-health and for old age would also be unnecessary.¹³⁷ There is even a hint that, as in *Brave New World*, consumption would become almost a duty, and thrift, immoral. Bevan explained that 'a Socialist society must always consider how to create mass consumption for the mass production of the modern machine' and Brock Griggs stressed the need to 'raise the standard of living of the people so that

¹³⁴ *Blackshirt*, 26 December 1936.

¹³⁵ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, pp.38, 115.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.98.

¹³⁷ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.46.

their wages are high enough to absorb the products of industry.¹³⁸ 'Want more, live more fully' would be 'the command of the new civilization; enjoy that others may also serve and enjoy'.¹³⁹ Wells anticipated 'a community of easy spenders'.¹⁴⁰

Consumption is no more a value-neutral activity than any other. Robert Peers of the Co-operative movement recognised it as 'a means to something else—to life in the fullest sense. ... a means to enjoyment, to the realisation of individuality, and to the fulfilment of corporate activities.' However, could consumption be purely a personal matter in a planned society? Whereas bourgeois advertising induced consumption which did not enhance the 'effectiveness of life' a co-operative system would seek to educate 'the quality as well as quantity of consumption'.¹⁴¹ Jay was more blunt, believing that 'ignorance distorts the working of consumers' choice' and that 'the State' would be a 'better judge than the spender of the family's income'. 'House wives' could not 'be trusted to buy all the right things' and 'in the case of nutrition and health', Jay contended, 'the gentleman in Whitehall really does know better what is good for the people.' But, over and above 'primary necessities', he allowed that free choice would continue. Happiness came from consuming what one liked and, he concluded, 'the value of free consumers' choice' was 'almost impossible to over estimate. To a large extent, ... it is freedom and it is happiness'.¹⁴²

Consumption would also be limited by what the planned economy produced. Wootton saw that one way to control the relationship between

¹³⁸ Bevan, 'Plan for Work', p.44; *Action*, 21 February 1936.

¹³⁹ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.715.

¹⁴⁰ *Idem.*, *Phoenix*, p.129.

¹⁴¹ P. Peers, 'Towards the Co-operative State', pp.267-271 in *The People's Year Book* (Manchester, 1932), p.270.

¹⁴² Jay, *The Socialist Case*, pp.240-241, 257-258.

consumption and production was to permit 'no choice as to what we were allowed to consume'. However, this was not 'necessary', there was no reason why everyone should 'wear a standard uniform in the planned economy', 'variety' and 'choice' were compatible with planning. Even if demand was no longer the final arbiter of supply, Wootton anticipated that consumers would have money in their pocket and be able to make their choice.¹⁴³ The consumer was to be the third party in the corporate state and CW looked to develop 'bodies through which consumers... can express their desires for "more of this or less of that"' to the planners.¹⁴⁴ In a planned economy Joan Robinson believed that 'planning would be primarily for consumption, and the needs and tastes of consumers could be made the dominant influence in framing the plan.'¹⁴⁵ Communists also suggested the use of market research to ascertain the 'wishes of consumers' but also wrote of the state 'taking the initiative in educating the taste for certain things'. In place of the 'anarchy of the market' with its 'absurd' multiplication of similar goods might come 'one or two standardised types'. Did this then mean 'that all men have to wear the same pattern tie and women the same hat'? Readers of *Britain Without Capitalists* were assured not.¹⁴⁶

WORK

The 'prosperous population' of a Soviet Britain would demand 'constantly increasing supplies' not only of essential goods but, among other things, 'wireless sets, sports requisites, cycles, motor-cycles and cars, musical instruments and books'. One implication of this bonanza was that the problem would no longer

¹⁴³ Wootton, 'Freedom Under Planning', pp.44-46.

¹⁴⁴ CW, *Notes on Common Ownership*, p.5.

'be... to find employment for workers, but to find enough workers for the output required.'¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Morrison noted that it would 'be the case of the more workers the merrier, for the more society produces the more it will be able to consume.'¹⁴⁸

Work would be a certainty of life in the coming age. The economics of plenty would ensure full employment, and the creation of the new Britain would mean that there was much to do. Acland envisaged a country 'teeming with activity', where unemployment would be limited to 'a week or so' between one job and another. There would be no occasion when society would not be able to offer work to its citizens - in the last instance 'the municipal tennis lawn' could be weeded.¹⁴⁹ The ideal of equality made universal work ideologically good as well. Specifying the 'essential qualities' of the 'new City' of socialism Cole made clear that 'there must be no room in it for idleness or for parasites; for the City cannot be strong unless it can find scope for all its citizens to labour in the common service.'¹⁵⁰ In a Soviet Britain 'social work' would be 'the duty of all citizens' and neither the BUF nor CW would admit the 'wealthy drone'.¹⁵¹

Work would be a right and a duty but its physical and mental consequences would be transformed. Faith in the possibility of unalienating labour appeared at its brightest in the CPGB vision of a time when:

Productive labour becomes the means of emancipation by giving to each individual the opportunity to develop and exercise all his faculties, physical and mental in all

¹⁴⁵ Robinson, 'Planning', p.5.

¹⁴⁶ *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.35.

¹⁴⁷ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.35.

¹⁴⁸ Morrison, *An Easy Outline*, p.17.

¹⁴⁹ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.87, 185.

¹⁵⁰ Cole, 'A Socialist Civilisation', p.180.

¹⁵¹ Morton, 'Communism and Morality', p.343; Roff, *Individuals and Minorities*, p.6; Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.38.

directions. Instead of growing up to be a cog in the machine, in the monotony created by the old division of labour, young people are trained for the utmost possible all-round technical functions. Instead of stunted faculties, man recovers his all round aptitudes and herewith the freedom for full individual development. The distinction between mental and manual labour is abolished. Productive labour, from a mere means of life, has become a vital necessity for every human being. Freed from want and anxiety, the energies of the individual are liberated: and work instead of a burden, has become a pleasure.¹⁵²

Strachey believed that the day would come when 'work could become the main delight of life—a delight which men would not dream of foregoing.' No longer would the workplace be somewhere to be shunned at the earliest opportunity, 'every factory, or mine', would be 'not merely a place where production is carried on, but... also through its clubs, its educational institutions, its crèches, its restaurants... a many sided centre enabling... its "members"... to live the good life.'¹⁵³

Bernal promised a 'complete change in working conditions'. Under socialism 'the worker not profit' would be the 'prime consideration'. Even if workers were no longer 'treated as part of the machinery' productivity need not decline because, he predicted, 'any loss in efficiency... would be more than covered by the corresponding increase in absolute labour-saving machinery'. Industrial psychology, in contrast to its application under capitalism, could create the possibility of 'work as pleasure' and eventually remove all traces of 'compulsion

¹⁵² CPGB, *Draft Programme*, pp.33-34.

¹⁵³ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, pp.116, 141.

and unpleasantness'.¹⁵⁴ Stapledon believed that in a properly organised world men and women would only be employed in occupations calling for 'intelligence and devoted interest'. Low-grade work would be done 'only by free-choice, for self discipline'.¹⁵⁵ *Britain Without Capitalists* predicted that initially there would be people who preferred routine work so that those who did not, could be spared it. As time went on and the new Britain became psychologically unfitted for mundane and repetitive tasks 'the semi-automatic or automatic factory' would take over.¹⁵⁶ And who would do the dirty work? Morrison replied 'to a large extent the answer is, Nobody! Machinery and electric power will do most of it!' Any unpleasant tasks that remained would be done by volunteers or 'be compulsory for limited periods'.¹⁵⁷

The meaning of work would change and hence workers' attitudes to it. For the first time productivity would be justly rewarded. The more workers in the Soviet Britain produced, the more they would 'have—physically, culturally, and in leisure through the shortening of the working day'.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, because labour would no longer be for the benefit of the few, workers would 'naturally produce far better and more willingly under their own management'.¹⁵⁹ Toil, looked at refracted through the prism of the social revolution, would 'no longer' be 'something to be avoided'. 'The time-setter, the man who raises the standard of the work' instead of being 'a menace to his class' would become 'an asset to the workers' State'.¹⁶⁰ In the new Britain 'the doors of the local branches of the Ministry of Man-Power'

¹⁵⁴ Bernal, *The Social Function of Science*, pp.356-358.

¹⁵⁵ Stapledon, 'Education and World Citizenship', p.143.

¹⁵⁶ *Britain Without Capitalists*, p.460.

¹⁵⁷ Morrison, *An Easy Outline*, p.22.

¹⁵⁸ Emile Burns, 'Production and Socialist Exchange after the Revolution', *Communist Review*, 4 7 (July 1932); pp.332-335; 335.

¹⁵⁹ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.30.

¹⁶⁰ Morton, 'Communism and Morality', p.343.

would open to what Acland saw as a 'place in the most exciting adventure in our history'; "'the demand for labour'" would become "opportunities for service".¹⁶¹ This would amount to 'a different life', 'eight hours a day' would have 'a meaning and purpose... instead of being merely a distasteful means of earning a living.' The 'sense of individual responsibility' and self-determination lost with industrialisation would be recovered.¹⁶² Stapledon wove a particularly intriguing path between alienating labour and social duty writing that in the new society the citizen would 'come to feel in his bones that the proper occupation of a free man is not "work," dictated by a superior authority, but spontaneous self-expression. But he may also discover that self-expression is most satisfying when it takes a line serviceable to the community.'¹⁶³ Durbin expected that occupations previously stigmatised as 'lower class' would 'take on their full dignity' and be 'the equal in social honour of any useful service to the economy of a free society.'¹⁶⁴ Similarly, 'in a Fascist community', Joyce wrote, 'no social stigma' could possibly be 'attached to the lowest worker in the lowest hierarchy of functional organisation'.¹⁶⁵

However, the negotiation between this vision of a better way of working and the Fordist mode of production was not altogether simple. A separate question raised by mechanisation was that it changed the quality of life, eroding cherished traditions, making venerated skills obsolete. Turning to the foremost critic of industrialism in the English utopian tradition, blackshirts claimed of Morris that 'his ideal... allowing for differences in the technique of production... approximates to

¹⁶¹ Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, pp.94, 178.

¹⁶² Roff, *Individuals and Minorities*, p.8.

¹⁶³ Stapledon, 'Education and World Citizenship', p.157.

¹⁶⁴ Durbin, *What We Have To Defend*, p.77.

¹⁶⁵ Joyce, *Fascist Educational Policy*, p.3.

the Fascist system'.¹⁶⁶ Orwell was sceptical about the 'citizen of Utopia' returning from the factory to 'revert to a more primitive way of life and solacing his creative instincts with a bit of fretwork, pottery glazing or handloom weaving.'¹⁶⁷ Nonetheless, Thomson hoped that a worker 'tending the automatic machine that turns out hundreds of shoes an hour may yet return to his own last and turn out a handmade pair of shoes as good as made by mediaeval craftsmen.' In the Greater Britain mantel-pieces would no longer 'be adorned with Birmingham-produced "presents from Margate," but with the products of the skill of members of the family and their neighbours'.¹⁶⁸ Although it was in fascist thinking that modernist goals were most clearly at war with the sentiment of tradition, this was a question tackled elsewhere too. In Mitchison's future, those with 'some taste for handicraft were able in their spare time to revive the tradition, if not the designs of William Morris'.¹⁶⁹ Argent of the FPSI believed that 'spare time craftsmanship' would 'restore the self-respect killed by machine industry'.¹⁷⁰

Perhaps the most significant change to work was that, individually, there would be less of it. Lansbury, referring to the myth of the origin of alienating labour, believed that machinery could 'bring mankind release from the curse of Cain'. Social ownership was the key, machinery could never be 'an evil' if it was 'owned and controlled in the interests of all.'¹⁷¹ After the revolution labour power would be carefully husbanded, the 'production of every article... carried out at the point

¹⁶⁶ *The Fascist Week*, 30 March-5 April 1934.

¹⁶⁷ Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, p.231.

¹⁶⁸ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, pp.43, 46.

¹⁶⁹ Mitchison, *The First Workers' Government*, pp.384-385.

¹⁷⁰ S.H.V. Argent, 'Education and Mass Production', *Plan*, 3 4 (April 1936), pp.12-13; 13.

¹⁷¹ *The New Clarion*, 18 February 1933.

which involves least labour.¹⁷² The 'Time and Progress Schedule' instead of being 'one of the most hated methods of capitalist rationalisation' would be employed not to 'grind out extra profits' but to seek production 'with the minimum wear and tear and the maximum efficiency.' The not unreasonable goal was 'the most wealth with the minimum toil'.¹⁷³ The purpose of planning, under a socialist government, was 'not to increase work, but to decrease it—to secure a lower output for less human effort'.¹⁷⁴ Continual scientific progress in the new society would reduce the hours of socially necessary labour. Morrison saw that:

the use of machinery will not mean throwing men out of work. Rather will they enable us to reduce the working day, to increase the income of the people, or to use the surplus for the extension of our public pleasures (for example, parks and theatres), to improve the quality of education, to develop social services, and so on.¹⁷⁵

'Machine replacing man' would no longer bring despair but permit time for leisure and personal development.

With this possibility in mind, communists looked to a time when with 'so short a portion of each day devoted to material production' 'colossal energies' would be 'released for science, art and culture'.¹⁷⁶ Strachey expected that 'a very moderate amount of pleasant work will suffice to provide plenty of everything for everybody'.¹⁷⁷ Ultimately, under communism, 'perhaps no more than three or four

¹⁷² Burns, 'Production and Socialist Exchange after the Revolution', p.333.

¹⁷³ *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.164, 172, 351.

¹⁷⁴ Lansbury, *My England*, p.58.

¹⁷⁵ Morrison, *An Easy Outline*, p.12.

¹⁷⁶ CPGB, *Draft Programme*, pp.34-35; Pollitt, *How To Win The Peace*, pp.93-96.

¹⁷⁷ Strachey, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, p.115.

hours' of work per day might become the norm¹⁷⁸ and Joad anticipated that, the new Briton, after 'four or five hour's machine minding a day', would be left with 'enormous tracts of time' for leisure.¹⁷⁹ Fascists similarly expected that 'a superfluity of labour, as the machine replaces man' would lead to 'shortened hours, lengthened education and earlier retirement.'¹⁸⁰ Looking forward fifty years Wells imagined that after 'a fair and definite share' of necessary labour had been performed, a person's life would 'be released to accomplish whatever possibilities it has of innovation, happiness, and interesting living.'¹⁸¹ Even at a time preoccupied by the great work of reconstruction ahead, Acland recognised that eventually it would be possible to 'reduce the hours of labour and enjoy an immense development of the cultural sides of our lives.'¹⁸² Hemming expected 'a six hour day and an annual holiday with pay of a month or so for everyone.'¹⁸³

LEISURE

Already during the Thirties and Forties reduced working hours, the emergence of the 'week-end' and the rise in real wages meant that many people were increasingly consumers of 'leisure'. The New Utopia would take these trends further. Leah Malone believed that instead of a 'leisured class', socialists needed to 'think of leisured masses'.¹⁸⁴ Crucially, apart from having more spare time, people would also have more money to spend in it. Wells believed that the age of plenty would make everyone a potential patron of the arts, purchasers not of 'mass

¹⁷⁸ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, p.137.

¹⁷⁹ C.E.M. Joad, 'Leisure in a Socialist State', *Controversy*, 2 14 (November 1937), pp.36-40.

¹⁸⁰ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.43.

¹⁸¹ Wells, *After Democracy*, p.224.

¹⁸² Acland, *What it Will Be Like*, p.22.

¹⁸³ Hemming, 'World Abundance', p.7.

produced... stereotyped things' but 'unique pieces of work made by men proud of their skill.'¹⁸⁵ Pollitt anticipated that 'the conception of Blackpool, Southend and Brighton as the last word in holidays would be laughed at. The workers would be able to see the places they have dreamt about and so far only seen at the cinema'.¹⁸⁶ Not only would greater prosperity transform British leisure but the permanent scientific revolution of the New Utopia would change its quality. Bernal predicted a 'new leisure' in the Soviet Britain in which 'domestic or trivial occupations—fretwork or rabbit breeding' would disappear. Science would enhance people's 'capacities for enjoyment', 'make recreation... more intense, more individual, and more varied'. 'Cinema, wireless, and television...' would open up 'new spheres of experience through the exploration of unknown regions of nature.' With society freed from 'commercialised entertainment and the snobbish imitation of obsolete aristocratic traditions' the tendencies already detectable in 'spontaneous interest in motors, aeroplanes, and wireless' would grow into 'popular enthusiasm and interest in the building up of a new and more extended culture.'¹⁸⁷

As to the relative importance of leisure in the new Britain, Attlee argued that Labour saw 'economic activities only as the foundation for a full life of the spirit'. It was leisure which was 'the essential thing for living a civilised life' and socialism would provide the 'two keys', 'time and money', which opened the door to a full life.¹⁸⁸ Acland, discussing 'the things that really make life worth living'

¹⁸⁴ Leah Malone, 'We Must Plan to Conquer Want', *The Labour Woman*, 31 6 (June 1943), pp.62-63,65; 63; Fred Henderson, *Capitalism and the Consumer* (1936), p.64.

¹⁸⁵ Wells, *Phoenix*, p.129.

¹⁸⁶ Pollitt, *How To Win The Peace*, pp.93-96.

¹⁸⁷ Bernal, *The Social Function of Science*, pp.358-359.

¹⁸⁸ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.156, 142.

recognised that beyond the minimum necessities of existence were needed 'playing fields and nice places to walk in' and 'time off each day' to go out or 'to stay home and do whatever we choose', time 'to make friends, to make love, to enjoy our family life, or, if it pleases us better, to be alone with our thoughts, or to sit, like Ferdinand, under the trees and just smell the flowers.'¹⁸⁹ The time and material plenty which science and the new economics brought were, as Joad wrote, 'not an end in itself' but 'the means to an end beyond itself' which was the 'enrichment of the quality of lives of individuals.'¹⁹⁰ Fuller of the BUF went so far as to describe 'the development of leisure as a creative joy-bringing force' as the 'ultimate goal' of fascist philosophy.¹⁹¹

Leisure could also play important compensatory functions. Inevitably there would be some who could not find 'life' in their work, but would find it instead in 'dance halls, carnivals, sports, books, holidays, friends, love, spare time'.¹⁹² Even that most optimistic of socialists, Lansbury, believed that 'playing fields' could help 'the young to overcome the monotony of machine work and factory life'.¹⁹³ Those whose instinct to 'struggle' was frustrated as disciplined members of the factory 'rank-and-file', could instead express themselves in the 'side of life' which made 'life really worth living'.¹⁹⁴ In a more extreme version of the same argument, also put forward by Strachey, Wells asserted that 'the world of sport' might be developed as 'the most hopeful organ for excreting the most violent and adventurous ingredients

¹⁸⁹ Acland, *The Forward March*, pp.87-88.

¹⁹⁰ Joad, 'Leisure in a Socialist State'.

¹⁹¹ Fuller, *March To Sanity*, p.13.

¹⁹² Acland, *The Forward March*, pp.88-89.

¹⁹³ Lansbury, *My England*, p.235.

¹⁹⁴ Acland, *The Forward March*, p.94.

in the surplus energy of mankind'.¹⁹⁵ In an increasingly collectivised society, leisure could also be a site for expressing individuality. After everyone had done 'his or her share of work' and 'the day's communal debt' had been paid Priestley believed that they should make 'the most of the remaining hours in the most individual fashion'. In this way 'individualism' would be 'in the right place where it does good and not harm.'¹⁹⁶

In a modern and scientific age leisure also offered a means to create fit and healthy bodies. Just as Orwell recognised that the tendency of modern society was to make people 'soft', blackshirts saw that as 'the necessity of manual labour' was in decline, athletics was vital to 'prevent physical degeneration'.¹⁹⁷ 'In Fascist Britain' sport would be available to all 'irrespective of their financial position'. 'The individual who wanted to spend his hours of leisure at play would receive tuition, equipment and opportunity to do so.'¹⁹⁸ Every town would have 'centres of athletic and cultural recreation'.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, in Labour's city of the future the zone 'most important of all' was that of 'open spaces, public gardens and playing fields' where children and adults could 'play games or sports of various kinds, and other exercises' to 'make the muscles supple, and the cheeks fresh and flushed with excitement, and make life really worth living'.²⁰⁰ The 'sports grounds, swimming pools, gymnasia' of the Soviet Britain would allow the workers 'to keep fit and enjoy their increasing leisure.'²⁰¹

¹⁹⁵ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.728.

¹⁹⁶ Priestley, *Here Are Your Answers*, pp.16-17.

¹⁹⁷ *Blackshirt*, 17 August 1934.

¹⁹⁸ *Action*, 20 August 1936.

¹⁹⁹ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.41.

²⁰⁰ *Tribune*, 21 November 1941.

²⁰¹ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.39.

Ashbrook instead preferred the 'joys of the open country, the health and comradeship to be found on our mountains'. Imagining the countryside as it could be, in his mind's eye he saw 'everywhere... camping-grounds, sport-palaces, and camp-sites, and hikers and other lovers of the open... allowed everywhere except where they would be a nuisance.'²⁰² Joad, who was particularly associated with the campaign during the 1930s for access to the countryside, desired that the 'disinherited of the towns should visit the country and should come to know it; that the way should be made easy for them'.²⁰³ Similarly engaging with the contemporary demand for 'a right to roam' Mosley promised the Sheffield blackshirts that under fascism 'ramblers would have access to mountains and every facility for outdoor life.'²⁰⁴ Attlee anticipated that in the new Britain there would be:

large areas of land... set aside as national parks, in which people will be free to enjoy themselves without being prosecuted for trespassing on private property. In these parks there will be rest-houses, where it will be possible for people to come and stay during their holiday, and camps where they can send their children to get all the benefits of fresh air and sunshine.²⁰⁵

Cripps imagined 'guest houses for urban workers to spend their holidays dotted about the rural districts' which would also 'keep the town and country in touch with one another'.²⁰⁶ In the socialist society 'great forests with restful spaces, still lakes and silent fields' would be 'open to all' and the reservation of 'innumerable acres' for 'Her Ladyship or His Grace' a thing of the past. 'Castles and baronial halls'

²⁰² *The New Clarion*, 6 January 1934.

²⁰³ C.E.M. Joad, *The Untutored Townsman's Invasion of the Country* (1945), p.24.

²⁰⁴ *Challenge*, July 1935.

²⁰⁵ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.163.

²⁰⁶ *Tribune*, 15 January 1937.

would become 'resting places' for hikers but this democratic access did not imply that 'Epping Forest and Delamare Forest' would be 'turned into noisy places full of Great Wheels and coconut shies.'²⁰⁷

Acland saw that there was a place for such 'amusement parks' and 'cinemas and theatres and dance halls, and places to play billiards, and cards and skittles and darts'.²⁰⁸ However, as their critical stance on mass leisure suggests,²⁰⁹ a future dominated by the Hollywood dream, dance music, or the football crowd was not necessarily what the New Utopians desired for the citizenry. Typically, Mitchison hoped that 'Citizen Dubb' would not seek 'for more and more comfort' but would travel, read, and 'live fully'.²¹⁰ It would be 'the first task of Fascism in the cultural plane to elevate the public taste'.²¹¹ The corporate state would 'maintain a much closer contact between artist and people', the latter being encouraged to 'visit concerts and opera, theatres and exhibitions'.²¹² 'Fascist art' would 'express the British racial spirit' and, consonant with the Tudor period being the Blackshirts' lost golden age, revive 'jaded modern Englishmen' with 'the thrill that Drake and Raleigh, and the great Elizabethans knew'.²¹³ Communism, when past its 'proletcult' stage, was equally enthusiastic about high culture, believing that 'a highly cultured life means a fuller life'. 'The glorious heritage of British literature and drama' would be 'freely available to everyone'.²¹⁴ Stephen Spender believed that socialism would 'carry forward into the new world the cultural achievements of the old' and establish

²⁰⁷ Lansbury, *My England*, pp.60, 231, 234.

²⁰⁸ Acland, *The Forward March*, pp.87-88.

²⁰⁹ See also pp.307-309 below.

²¹⁰ Mitchison, *The First Workers' Government*, pp.479-481.

²¹¹ *The Fascist Week*, 6 -12 April 1934.

²¹² Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.42.

²¹³ *Blackshirt*, 2 November 1934.

²¹⁴ Robson, *Essentials of Communist Theory*, p.13.

'them in the lives, not of a small minority but the great majority of the people.'²¹⁵ This desire to universalise high culture was not restricted to fascists and communists. Acland, for example, was optimistic that a 'new and wider culture' could include, alongside 'a good deal of dirt-track riding', 'within a very few years... an immense popular extension of the Ballet and classical orchestral music.'²¹⁶ The task of socialists, as Attlee saw it, was to lead the people along a path on which 'every step forward means a wider vision' in their appreciation of beauty.²¹⁷

When the life of the 'ordinary citizen' had been made 'secure and happy', Stapledon believed that 'the cultural task' would be 'the first concern of the state'.²¹⁸ Coates similarly hoped for the state to 'provide facilities for the cultural development of the people from birth to death.'²¹⁹ The task of diffusing 'culture' by means of the state necessarily opened up the question of compulsion and individual liberty. Wootton hoped that planners would 'walk warily when it comes to... the planning of leisure' and believed 'that the only problem of anyone's leisure' was to 'prevent other people from using it.'²²⁰ Joad summed up the dilemma for the socialist in this area, making clear that it was not the duty of the state 'to prescribe the nature of the good life which its members should live'. The solution was not compulsion but 'education for leisure' which would entail 'education in the right employment of one's faculties and the proper development of one's tastes.' As to how this didactic aim would have sat with the 'will of the majority' which Joad indicated would determine the specific 'benefits and pleasures' dispensed by

²¹⁵ Spender, *Forward From Liberalism*, p.106.

²¹⁶ Acland, *The Forward March*, p.39.

²¹⁷ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.157.

²¹⁸ Stapledon, *New Hope for Britain*, p.167.

²¹⁹ Coates, 'Education Needs a Plan - II The aim of Education', p.6.

²²⁰ Wootton, 'Freedom Under Planning', p.46.

socialism, is open to question.²²¹ More straightforwardly Chesterton contended that fascists would 'cut away' the 'deplorable decadence' of Britain's artistic life and mass leisure.²²²

In contrast to these statist approaches the voluntarism central to CW's 'Vital Democracy' premised a desire that 'culture' would not be 'spoon-fed... from some Council of Culture' but 'arise naturally and spontaneously from the people.'²²³ Ideally even in the high arts 'every town... would have its theatre run by the town, making their own art' and everywhere 'wireless, theatre, cinema and university' would 'be the product of their local environment'.²²⁴ Likewise Mitchison anticipated "'movie clubs," replacing the commercial cinemas and giving 'the workers the chance to choose, and often to produce, their own films'²²⁵ and Herbert Reed wished that 'the people who live... in towns and villages should be artists in their own right, and not merely passive receivers... of a metropolitan culture'.²²⁶

As with everything else, in the new Britain the arts would flourish and reach new levels of achievement. Spender predicted the emergence of a society in which the barriers to imagination presented by the strictures of 'reality' would break down, allowing the unconscious mind to be expressed in 'an art and literature of jokes, free association, [and] dream imagery' bringing people 'face to face with realities beyond the artificial barriers' that surrounded them. Everyone would be 'able to take pleasure, and even express himself, in such an art'.²²⁷ Charles Madge expected

²²¹ Joad, 'Leisure in a Socialist State'.

²²² Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley*, p.115.

²²³ Acland, *Questions and Answers from Common Wealth Meetings*, p.17.

²²⁴ Roff, *Individuals and Minorities*, pp.11-12.

²²⁵ Mitchison, *The First Workers' Government*, p.473.

²²⁶ Herbert Reed, 'Decentralisation of Art', *Town and Country Planning*, 13 (Spring 1945), pp.5-8;

6.

²²⁷ Spender, *Forward From Liberalism*, pp.194-195.

that art would be purged of the last of its "magical" content' and that 'art and science' would be united. At the same time art would become social rather than individual, the work of the 'scientist-artist' would 'apply not only to himself but to every member of society.'²²⁸ In contrast, the Greater Britain would see an 'age of art and artistry, in which artists and people will recover their lost harmony'; a recovery of the 'Tudor atmosphere that gave us Shakespeare'.²²⁹ Wells writing in 1934, believed in the possibility of 'an age of mighty art'. The 'masterpieces, the supreme attainments' of the present were, he believed, only an 'intimation of what the surplus energy of mankind may presently achieve'.²³⁰

THE FUTURE OF THE NEW BRITAIN

Among the New Utopians the scope of Wells' ambitions put him on the periphery of a movement whose critical mass centred on the programme of the Labour Party. In comparison with the imaginative heights scaled by utopian thinkers before and since, that vision of the new Britain was perhaps a modest aim, although a society so arranged that, as Durbin wrote, 'men and women may sing at their work and children laugh as they play',²³¹ was a scarcely imaginable quantum leap forward from the common life of the world of the time. And one might say in passing that, pace the exquisite ruminations of some 'postmodern' writers on utopia, in this respect little has changed outside of the narrow pale of Western affluence. Nonetheless, while concentrating on the prosaic aim of a world of peace and plenty where people could live fully human lives, the discourse of the New Utopians was not without indications of the human story being carried yet further into the future

²²⁸ Charles Madge, 'Magic & Materialism', *Left Review*, 3 1 (February 1937), pp.31-35; 32-33.

²²⁹ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, p.43.

and to glories that could only be guessed at. Even Attlee, who exemplified Labour's emphasis on 'practical' measures and 'immediate aims', stressed that the 'goal' which the party was then striving for was 'only... the starting point'. He predicted that 'further developments which we cannot contemplate to-day will inevitably follow'.²³² In contrast to the common criticism of utopia as a static and thus stagnant society, the new Britain was not the end of history, but the beginning of a new journey towards the horizon of utopia.

As has already been touched on in this work, utopianism shares many of the origins and imperatives of religion and, despite its modernism, the New Utopianism was by no means fully de-coupled from the teleology of the Christian tradition. In Lansbury's writing, socialism and Christian aims, language and imagery were richly combined. Following in the footsteps of Moses out of Egypt, he wrote of people making their 'way to the promised land'. 'A New England' would 'be a truly Christian England'.²³³ In the language of CW, religious aims and values were also central. Whereas the old society was 'prevented from advancing nearer towards the Kingdom of God on earth', the new Britain, would be 'a "religious" community; ... a "live-for-the-things-worth-living" community; ... a "forget-your-economic-position-and-serve-humanity-in-peace" community'. For the first time, 'the whole of the teaching of the Church' would 'march in precise harmony with the rules of secular society'.²³⁴ Illustrating the congruence of utopian and religious objectives, Stafford Cripps' hope was for 'the kingdom of God upon Earth' to be achieved through the 'divine power of love'. *If*—and it was 'a very big if'—this occurred he

²³⁰ Wells, *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*, p.737.

²³¹ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.330.

²³² Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.138.

²³³ Lansbury, *My England*, p.43.

saw that: 'we should indeed win the Utopia which... has been so often pictured for us as the ideal at which we aim'.²³⁵

These visions were dynamic inasmuch as they anticipated a people growing ever more Christ-like in their individual and collective existence. Although other thinkers sought for ways to employ religion as the basis for a common morality and to harness the dedication and selflessness of the true believer to new projects, their ends tended to be predominantly secular.²³⁶ Although a secularised version of the religious teleology could be detected within the New Utopian narrative, it envisioned the future, in the first instance, in terms of social progress towards the ever more complete realisation of the ideals embodied in the new man. Secondly, and also based on an extrapolation from present and past experience, writers understood science, and so human capabilities for control, as an expanding and progressive force. Whilst the future destinations to which human reason would take the species could not be seen with any precision, possible trajectories could be imagined.

The words of the fascist Thomson well illustrated one side of the mingling of new and old in fascist thinking. Expressing himself 'heartily sick of the rationalist materialists, who like Mr. H.G. Wells, know exactly where they are going', he stated the purpose of the corporate state was to be a vehicle for a mysterious 'national destiny'. The most that could be said was that in 'recovering the "age of faith" of Christendom and the vital age of Tudor England' Britain might seek its 'great

²³⁴ Acland, *The Forward March*, pp.98-99, 108.

²³⁵ Cripps, *Towards Christian Democracy*, p.18.

²³⁶ See, for example: Joad, *Philosophy for Our Times*; Stapledon, *Saints and Revolutionaries*; Kenneth Ingram, *Religion and the New Society*; John Katz, 'The Need for a New Foundation of Belief', *Plan Bulletin*, 1 8 (May 1940), pp.1-2; Laski, *Faith, Reason and Civilisation*; Wells, *Guide to the New World*, p.103.

future'.²³⁷ However, in Mosley's thinking 'science' would be the means to create 'a civilisation that shall be the sum and glory of the travail of the ages' and thereby refute Spengler's prophecy of decline. Whilst infused with the spirit of a mythic golden age of Tudor England, modernity brought godlike powers to humanity. 'Man', Mosley wrote, 'for the first time in human history carries to the crisis of his fate weapons with which he may conquer even destiny'.²³⁸ Likewise only an implicit belief that the path of reason led towards omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience could allow a communist writer to look towards a future of the species as 'master of the earth, reaching out towards the skies and pushing back and finally defeating the spectre of death'.²³⁹ Strachey asked whether there was 'any scientific necessity to suppose that in the end death could not be indefinitely postponed'.²⁴⁰ Without doubt the most majestic communist vision of humanity as god was that of Bernal who believed that the species was moving towards a 'unified and co-ordinated and, above all, conscious control of the whole of social life'. 'Henceforth', Bernal wrote, 'society is subject only to the limitations it imposes on itself'.²⁴¹ The CPGB's *Draft Programme* of 1939 articulated similar beliefs, anticipating an 'all-embracing and all-conquering scientific knowledge' and 'humanity's leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom'.²⁴² Bernal anticipated a time when it would 'no longer be a question of adapting man to the world but the world to man'.²⁴³ Similarly, in the distant future Wells imagined

²³⁷ Thomson, *The Coming Corporate State*, pp.44-45.

²³⁸ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.79-80.

²³⁹ *Britain Without Capitalists*, pp.467-468.

²⁴⁰ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, p.358.

²⁴¹ J.D. Bernal, 'The Social Function of Science', *The Modern Quarterly*, 1 1 (January 1938), pp.15-22; 16.

²⁴² CPGB, *Draft Programme*, pp.34-35.

²⁴³ Bernal, *The Social Function of Science*, pp.379.

'geogonic planning' which would mould 'a fire-sprouting, quivering planet closer to the expanding needs of man'.²⁴⁴

Stressing the linkage of science to the dynamic or 'kinetic' utopia Bernal wrote that: 'the new world is not something imposed on humanity from without, it will be made by men... the freedom and achievement which comes from action based on understanding is always growing though never complete. A Utopia is not a happy ecstatic state but the basis for further struggles and further conquests'.²⁴⁵ Wells too pointed out for those who feared utopia to be a 'uniform and stagnating world' a future of yet unimaginable glories:

[...]what the released and implemented creative imagination of thousands of millions of free and active individuals might achieve, is beyond any anticipating. At utmost we can produce words, like vacant frames and empty-show-cases, to indicate that undelivered wealth. We can talk of unhampered and unhurrying swiftness of realisation, of universal variety, of abundance and balanced beauty. We are forced to take refuge, as St. Paul did [...] in "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive"...²⁴⁶

However, for all the apparent openness of this future, Wells' thinking showed the limitations of human imagination in not allowing for a parallel transformation of social relations beyond those laid down in his blueprint. Tellingly, *Things to Come* ended with resistance to the status quo crushed and humanity diverted onto the infinite but ultimately sterile path of conquering the universe, planet by planet.

²⁴⁴ Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, pp.308-309.

²⁴⁵ Bernal, *The Social Function of Science*, p.382.

²⁴⁶ Wells, *The Outlook For Homo Sapiens*, p.166.



However, some recognised that ultimately there was no certainty of a future in which a new Britain or new world emerged. While society was, Laski wrote in 1944, 'approaching the dawn of the age of science', he reminded his reader that it was 'important for us to remember that we cannot predict as yet the kind of day the sun will bring when it rises'.²⁴⁷ However, even to set out on the journey towards utopia was by no means easy or straightforward. To surmount the many obstacles on the road without losing one's way, or arriving at a different destination altogether, required the strategy and tactics of the third aspect of utopianism, the praxis of desire which made utopianism an active political force.

²⁴⁷ Laski, *Faith, Reason and Civilisation*, p.201.

Chapter 7

THE PRAXIS OF DESIRE

The future will come; reaction will pass; but the future we have planned will only come if we care enough to create it.

Gerald Heard, 'The Technique of Persuasion', 1935¹

Let us say grace before and after every good book which helps us to escape into a brighter and a kinder world than this. In the long run, impatient of the world we know, we shall build a world after the pattern of the books.

E.L.J., 'Escapism', 1939²

...Jerusalem is what we are building, even when we patch and mend. Those tinkering and proppings, those odd little bits of legislation—all those intensely human and therefore fallible pieces of human striving towards perfection, are all going to the building of that fair city...

H.W.J. Edwards, *Young England*, c.1938³

Because we cannot step straight into Utopia is no ground for despising the limited step, the partial reform, the measure which makes things not perfect, but better than they were before.

Barbara Wootton, *Plan or No Plan*, 1934⁴

In the simplest terms, the purpose of politics is either to defend one social order or to realise a vision of a new one, and the function of the corpus of tactics which I have called the New Utopians' 'praxis of desire', was to build a bridge to the new society. However, whereas at this abstract level the linkage between desire and action may seem straightforward, in reality the journey from an originating vision to an outcome in policy or legislation often takes in so many mediating factors as to make the relationship between the two problematic. The object of this chapter is to discuss how some of the obstacles confronting utopian politics in the British context were negotiated, and to suggest how the light of utopian desire may have continued to burn through it all. Conceivably, examination of the relationship

¹ *Plan*, 2 2 (February 1935), pp.3-5; 5.

² *National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives Monthly Report*, (June 1939), pp.309-310; 310.

between praxis and utopian desire may show the compromises and contortions of politics in a different light and take us some way beyond such dichotomies as 'reformist' and 'revolutionary' modes of politics.

THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

All politics, if sincerely pursued, are to some degree an expression of Lord Butler's 'art of the possible' in the pursuance and use of power. As the FPSI recognised: 'abstract plans, blue prints for a world state, theories of progress, all these are necessary and useful exercises of intellect only in so far as they spring from a sense of the correlation of forces in the world'.⁵ The New Utopians' praxis of desire was the outcome of a dialectic between the drive of utopian desire and the possibilities offered by the political terrain. G.D.H. Cole explained that 'idealists... if they are to achieve anything at all will need to recognise that their ideals must be remade in the lights of the new facts of the post-war world, for the ideal society that matters is not the Utopia of our dreams, but the best sort of society we can hope to build out of the materials that lie ready to our hands'.⁶ Progress demanded pragmatism. As Strachey explained in answering the question 'What Are We To Do?': 'be ready to change your direction of advance, your methods, your tactics, your whole battle order, again and again, and at a moment's notice.' Although Strachey presented 'neat blue-prints for Utopia' as the antithesis of these tactics, the difference was more rhetorical than real: communists did not have a monopoly of 'revolutionary pragmatism'.⁷ Cripps noted: 'a great satisfaction can often be derived from...

³ pp.211-212.

⁴ pp.302-303.

⁵ Editorial, 'Is Progress Inevitable?', *Plan*, 2 1 (January 1935), pp.1-2 , 2.

⁶ G.D.H. Cole, *The Next Ten Years in British Social and Economic Policy* (1929), p.21.

⁷ Strachey, *What Are We To Do?*, p.116.

picturing some utopia in glowing words'. However, he stressed: 'Principles and policies must... be altered with changing times... but the more humdrum task of keeping our democracy in a fit state to function is of first importance if ever we are to be able to achieve through democracy, new policies, or reach, by that road, the utopia of our visions'.⁸

Hence, utopian desire, if it is to become an active political force, must live under the rule of the 'reality principle'.⁹ In this way, an individual's or party's way of pursuing their desire is the precipitate of the formal or informal theories which construct their understanding of the nature of politics, society and individual people. Theories of praxis are similarly informed by a party's representation of itself—its powers and resources—and its understanding of its relative position in the political world. As with utopian desire generally, the praxis of desire is also necessarily dynamic, evolving in the light of experience and changing conditions. A utopia itself may also be an expression of this dialectic between what is desired and that which is seen as possible.¹⁰ Just as a dream of an ideal city has to contend with the laws of physics if it is to be actualised, so a utopian blueprint may not express what someone would *ideally* like, but what they judge to be obtainable. Individual and collective utopias mutate as compromises and modifications are made in pursuit of the ideal combination of the closest approximation to the original vision and the means to realise it.

In these ways a utopia was not 'perfect', merely as good as it could be, which is probably the only meaningful 'perfection' for all that.

⁸ Cripps, *Democracy Up-To-Date*, p107.

⁹ See pp.14-16 above.

¹⁰ DeMaria, 'The Dreaming and the Doing', p.188.

ENDS AND MEANS

The construction of the praxis of desire does not take place in an ethical vacuum either, it also expresses a negotiation around, and assumptions about, the relationship between means and ends.

The means-to-utopia adopted may reflect a pragmatic calculation, perhaps based on an estimate of the extent to which existing cultural norms might be pressed on without a backward step in political terms. Means may also, and quite possibly at the same time, reflect a negotiation in relation to core values: for example, the dilemma was not only whether a desired end *could* be achieved through violence but also whether it *should* be so sought. Was it possible to build a new society if the qualities which made it a *good* society were put aside to achieve it? Could a democratic, peaceful and free society come through dictatorship, violence and coercion?

UTOPIA AND THE PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY

The praxis of desire took as its object a mass politics. To capture the state, or overturn it and replace it with a new mechanism, a party needed to achieve sufficient support or—less ideally—passive indifference among the populace for the balance of power to be in its favour. Two main tactical modes can be delineated in this respect, which, in turn, are overlaid by two forms of mass politics and two models of the state: coercion or the ‘education of desire’; electoral or ‘revolutionary’ paths to power; democratic or authoritarian states.

In the British context, these two paths to utopia might be divided by what the liberal J.A. Spender called the ‘parliamentary boundary’. This ‘boundary’ would be transgressed by any programme which sought ‘fundamental changes in the

social order', for, irrespective of pledges of 'an eternal attachment to democracy', to desire 'fundamental' change was to have to accept un-democratic methods. Anyone 'who wishes the end must be presumed to wish the means' Spender wrote. In answering the question of 'whether we should gain by the exchange of new lamps for old—whether we find the acceptable new light in Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, whether it may come to us from the America of Roosevelt or from some Utopia imagined by theorists and economists of the modern school', Spender preferred the 'not impossible world' of liberalism.¹¹

According to this view, anyone who believed that they could 'know the pattern to which the future will or ought to conform' were 'enemies of progress'.¹² Reacting to an age demanding programmes leading 'straight to the millennium' Ramsey Muir suggested that the scope of action that this liberal way permitted was to be found in:

the contrast between the work of the gardener and that of the architect. The architect can condemn a building as inconvenient and out-of-date; he can have it demolished; he can rebuild it according to plans worked out in his own brain, using as his materials dead and uniform bricks... But the gardener knows that he is dealing with living things, which must grow according to the laws of their own nature; he knows that he is dependent upon the seasons and the soil; he can ensure to his plants light and air, water and manure, so they may thrive according to their natures; he may even modify the conditions in which they are bred, so as gradually to improve them. More than that he cannot do...¹³

¹¹ J.A. Spender, *These Times* (1934), pp.1-7, 152-159.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.164.

¹³ Ramsay Muir, *The Faith of a Liberal* (1933), pp.8-9.

In reality, it is difficult to suggest any absolute distinction between these two approaches. Utopians did not ignore the 'laws' governing the 'nature' of things and liberals used their 'own brains' on occasion too. Rather, the argument here was—and the gardener/architect juxtaposition reflects this—that the extant order of things was an expression of some unchanging essence and so outside the scope of human action and imagination.¹⁴

It is not insignificant that these arguments for the liberal way took as their point of reference 'the millennium' and 'Utopia': the New Utopians' language was rich with calls for 'fundamental' and 'revolutionary' changes to the 'foundations' of society. Typically, CW's *Manifesto* stressed: 'IT IS NO USE TINKERING WITH THE PAST. IT IS NO USE COMPROMISING BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE. WE MUST REJECT THE PAST AND BEGIN NOW TO BUILD A NEW SOCIAL ORDER'.¹⁵ At the same time, the gradualism and continuity which the defenders of the parliamentary boundary praised, was the affirmative mirror image of the New Utopians' negative critique of a system viewed as decadent and inefficient, if not constitutionally resistant to change.¹⁶ Consequently the contradiction between the aims of the New Utopians and the existing political system posed a major problem to the utopian imagination.

OVER THE BORDER

October 1917 offered one possible solution to this impasse. *For Soviet Britain's* answer to the question of 'how the workers can win power' was 'that a workers revolution can do it'.

¹⁴ Other influential arguments for the British constitution of the time included: R. Bassett, *Essentials of Parliamentary Democracy* (1964; first published 1935); Frank Birch, *This Freedom of Ours* (Cambridge, 1937), chs.6 and 11.

¹⁵ CW, *Manifesto*, inside front cover, original emphasis.

¹⁶ See pp.130-135 above.

However, lest the unenlightened imagined that this 'revolution' would be achieved by throwing up a few barricades, Robin Page Arnot explained '...that revolution is not a single spontaneous act... It is a continuous process'.¹⁷ At the same time this was not the parliamentary road to socialism. The 'State... built up by the previous ruling class', Burns asserted, would never work in the interests of the working class.¹⁸ For this reason, the CPGB, while being prepared to contest parliamentary elections, was unequivocal in the early 1930s in stating that 'it is not possible to end capitalism and establish socialism in Britain by the election of a majority in the House of Commons. ... Without breaking the power of capitalists it is impossible to get rid of capitalism or build socialism. It is a question not of votes but of power'.¹⁹ 'Power' in this sense denoted the relative strength and radicalism of the whole working class movement. Rather than socialism coming through existing political institutions, the party imagined the growth of the workers' movement until, under Communist Party leadership, it would establish a new workers' state. Beginning in economic struggle 'the workers step by step' would 'develop unity, power and organisation' with, in time, 'the workers in uniform' joining this movement.²⁰

As to the nature of the struggle John Cornford explained that 'capitalist rule eliminates the possibility of the peaceful conquest of power by the working class. If the working class ever wishes to take power, it must prepare for civil war'.²¹ The CPGB's official programme stressed: 'Civil War is forced upon the working

¹⁷ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.21.

¹⁸ Burns, *Capitalism, Communism and the Transition*, p.150.

¹⁹ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, pp.19-20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.21-23; R.W. Robson, *What Is The Communist Party?* (undated; c.1935), pp.9-10.

²¹ John Cornford, 'What Communism Stands For', pp.237-261 in John Lewis, Karl Polanyi and Donald K. Kitchin (eds.), *Christianity and the Social Revolution* (1935), p.256.

class'.²² However, violence would 'open the way to a new epoch of human progress better than anything the world has yet experienced.'²³ Within the manichaeian communist theory the only alternative was even worse violence and suffering. 'If', Strachey wrote, 'men... draw back because no new order of society can be born without violent conflict, they will not achieve an epoch of peaceful stability.' Instead 'a new dark age of perpetual conflict' would dawn.²⁴

In this way the end would justify the means. The communist position was explained by K.S. Shelvankar in his critique of Huxley's *Ends and Means*. The 'central fallacy' of Huxley's 'blue prints of Utopia' was that 'good ends cannot be attained by evil means'. The reality, from the communist position, was that 'ends' could 'not be conceived as being external to means'. 'If you want to clear a field of weeds', Shelvankar wrote, 'there are only one or two ways of doing it'. The existing social order was 'based on subjection and exploitation' and so violence was essential for its overthrow, there was 'no middle way'.²⁵ One stage beyond this was to locate the morality of the whole ends/means question in relation to historical materialism. An action was 'moral' if it served 'the needs of the historically progressive class in any epoch'. 'Terrorism, like war' was 'just or unjust according to whether its objects are historically progressive or historically reactionary'.²⁶

Although a vociferous critic of communism, Wells nonetheless found much to admire in the Leninist vanguard party.²⁷ Central to the Wellsian way to utopia was a 'competent receiver', 'a responsible organisation, able to guide and rule the new

²² R.W. Robson, *How's It All Going To End?: Three Letters on the Present Crisis* (1933); pp.13-16.

²³ CPGB, *For Soviet Britain*, p.22.

²⁴ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle For Power*, pp.395.

²⁵ K.S. Shelvankar, *Ends are Means: A Critique of Social Values* (1938), pp.136-140.

²⁶ Morton, 'Communism and Morality', pp.256, 354.

scale human community'. The 'competent receiver', Wells carefully explained, was 'flatly opposed' to 'parliamentary democracy', being composed of a 'special class of people' anticipated in 'the Guardians of Plato's Republic'. This elite would 'replace the dilatory indecisiveness of parliamentary politics'.²⁸ Speaking through his character 'De Windt' Wells explained: 'it's no good asking people what they want... That is the error of democracy. You have first to think out what they ought to want if society is going to be saved. Then you have to tell them what they want and see that they get it'. As with communists, this elitism also rested on the epistemological conceit that "about most affairs there can be no two respectable and antagonistic opinions," ... "There is one right way and there are endless wrong ways of doing things..."²⁹ There would also be, if necessary, 'battlefields, prisons, shootings and gallows for armed opponents'.³⁰ In terms of the end-means question, 'fascist'—that is authoritarian and violent—means would, it was hoped, yield 'liberal' ends, an aim which John Hargrave considered to be akin to 'an attempt for tepid boiling hot water' or 'harmless poison gas'.³¹

'THE BRITISH WAY' TO UTOPIA

In their preparedness to contravene the 'parliamentary boundary', the praxis of desire of authoritarian socialists unambiguously rejected what might be called 'the British Way': this term is borrowed from the text issued to the Army Bureau of Current Affairs (ABCA), *The British Way and Purpose*, which as an attempt to

²⁷ Wellsian praxis is discussed in detail in: Philip M. Coupland, 'H.G. Wells's 'Liberal Fascism': A Study in the Praxis of Desire', *Journal of Contemporary History*, (forthcoming: October 2000).

²⁸ Wells, *After Democracy*, pp.9-11, 25; original emphasis.

²⁹ Wells, *The Shape of Things To Come*, pp.202-203.

³⁰ *Idem.*, *The Anatomy of Frustration*, p.175.

³¹ John Hargrave "'A Liberal Fascist'", *The New Age*, 25 August 1932, p.200.

channel safely wartime demands for a 'new Britain', was definitely within the 'parliamentary boundary'.³²

Reflecting the overlay of a mode of political action, national identity and anti-utopianism, Macmillan distanced himself from 'the dreamer of Utopias' 'foreign to the practical mind of the ordinary adult British citizen'.³³ However, 'the British Way' enjoyed a much wider adherence. Attlee employed the same rhetorical opposition and juxtaposed a 'British movement' characterised by its 'practicality' to those 'so absorbed in Utopian dreams that they were unwilling to deal with the actualities of everyday life'.³⁴ The desire to seek utopia within the British Way was particularly strong with Labour, but while Dalton contended that 'neither a Saklatvala nor a Mosley seems to find his spiritual home in British public life' because 'both speak like strangers in a foreign land', things were not quite as simple as that.³⁵

Adherence to the British Way reflected the degree to which the New Utopianism carried forward notions of a specific national identity and history. Beveridge demonstrated this when he noted of the peace aims movement that: 'Most people want something new after the war. Very few of us want something utterly unlike the Britain we have known and loved. Some put the emphasis on New Britain. Others.... put the emphasis on New Britain.'³⁶ Attlee, when describing the 'Moscow road' and the 'Berlin road', found both to be guilty of offending two of

³² See Directorate of Army Education, *The British Way and Purpose: Consolidated edition of BWP booklets 1-18* (1944); J.A. Crang, 'Politics on Parade: Army Education and the 1945 General Election', *History*, 81 (1996), pp.215-227.

³³ Macmillan, *Reconstruction*, p.125.

³⁴ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.30. On the importance of 'constitutionalism' as a 'shared code' in British politics see also Vernon, *Politics and the People*.

³⁵ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.5.

the principal constituent themes of 'Englishness': the countryside and tradition. These alien 'roads' were:

...straight, narrow and artificial. They drive through the landscape of humanity with little apparent reference to its contours or the graces of the countryside which have been derived from the past. Those who journey along them attain a very high rate of speed, and they scorn old-fashioned meandering paths. There are many casualties on that account. A high rate of speed may give great pleasure to those who control the machines, but it may mean a vast amount of discomfort to the driven.³⁷

A favourite example held to typify the British Way which related to another constituting characteristic of 'Englishness' was the famous football match between strikers and police during the General Strike. Dalton wrote: 'we prefer throwing cricket balls to throwing bombs and kicking footballs to kicking political opponents lying helpless on the ground. ... it is significant that one of our unwritten rules ... is that rival candidates shake hands after the declaration of the poll, as after a sporting contest'.³⁸

This discourse of a specific native political tradition took as its point of reference a representation of continental politics as undemocratic and bloody. Morrison noted that by 1939 most of the new states equipped with written constitutions after the war were 'governed by dictatorships of one sort or another'. 'Meantime, the British constitution continues to function and to adapt itself to

³⁶ William H. Beveridge, 'New Britain', pp.80-97 in *The Pillars of Security - And other War-Time Essays and Addresses* (1943), p.80.

³⁷ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.274.

³⁸ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.4-5.

changing conditions'.³⁹ For Durbin, too, 'what the Utopian "democrats" would call "mere political democracy"' was what had made Britain an 'island of social peace... surrounded by the fierce sea of European hatred and fear'.⁴⁰ Dalton stressed that "'England is different," a curiously remote island, cut off from Europe', its politics 'difficult' for 'foreigners... to understand'.⁴¹ Linking this national particularism to history, Durbin described the British as a people who, on account of 'a thousand years of... history', 'bicker and remain friends because we do not wish to see barricades raised in our streets, twisted bodies in our gutters, bleeding backs in concentration camps, children crying for bread'.⁴² Even Stapledon, a cosmopolitan of the Wellsian stamp, wrote affirmatively of the 'past generations of Englishmen who created what... I dare to call the English spirit', as the basis of an 'intuitive democratic method'.⁴³

This adherence to the British Way also reflected a revulsion towards political violence and an ends-means calculation that violence could only beget more violence. Durbin was particularly vociferous in this regard. There had always been, he suggested, 'strong and violent men' who 'believed that they could build a new heaven and a new earth, if only they were allowed to override and destroy those who disagreed with them'. But once the methods of the 'sword' and the 'machine gun' were adopted there could be 'no end to the suffering, the river of blood flows on'.⁴⁴ The command 'Thou shalt believe in democracy', was also crucial in this respect, for, as Cole explained, 'if thou prevailed on mankind to

³⁹ Herbert Morrison, 'Social Change—Peaceful or Violent?', *The Political Quarterly*, 10 (1939), pp.1-9; 3.

⁴⁰ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, pp.236, 279.

⁴¹ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.3.

⁴² Durbin, *What Have We To Defend?*, p.39.

⁴³ Stapledon, *New Hope For Britain*, pp.13-14.

accept thy will unconvinced, thy triumph will turn into ashes and thy Utopia become a city of grumbling slaves who will presently throw off thy yoke'.⁴⁵

Thus, while seeking a new order based on 'fundamental changes' and a 'break' with the past, the New Utopians—variously substantially and rhetorically—sought to locate their programmes within the British Way. 'It is an easy exercise to make neat and tidy paper schemes', Dalton wrote, 'but this is not how things are done in the country. We live empirically and suffer inconsistencies gladly'.⁴⁶ On the 'left' of Labour, Laski agreed that 'a social revolution in England is likely to disappoint the specialists in doctrine by its insistently empiric character'.⁴⁷ Attlee wrote of Labour as the successor to a history that went 'back to Magna Charta and Habeas Corpus', and as 'the inheritor of the achievements of those who fought for liberty in the past'.⁴⁸ Labour was the party of 'British common sense', 'a characteristic example of British methods' and the 'outcome of British political instincts', 'typically British'.⁴⁹

At the other 'extreme' of the conventional political taxonomy, fascists also combined the rhetoric of revolution with that of the British Way. Fascism would not 'destroy for the sake of destroying, or uproot existing institutions merely because they now exist'. Valued traditions would be carried forward into 'a new synthesis'.⁵⁰ Just as Labour claimed to represent a specifically native socialism, blackshirts distinguished themselves from European fascism, arguing that 'from the hearts and

⁴⁴ Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, pp.218.

⁴⁵ Cole, *Great Britain in the Post-War World*, pp.166-167.

⁴⁶ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, pp.155-156.

⁴⁷ Laski, *Democracy in Crisis*, p.261

⁴⁸ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.20,22; see also, for example, Balogh, 'Outline of a Plan', p.144; The Fabian Society, *A Word on the Future to British Socialists*, p.16.

⁴⁹ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.17, my emphasis; Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.11, 277, my emphasis.

minds of a people that loves peace and justice nothing but peace and justice will come'.⁵¹ Similarly, during the Popular Front period and the war years communists also sought the mantle of the native political tradition. By 1936 the CPGB was happy to describe itself as 'march[ing] with the very essence and spirit of the English tradition' and carrying forward the 'English democratic tradition'.⁵² This entailed the construction of an alternative national identity and history which, in Jack Lindsay's case, amounted to a 'solidly persisting communist tradition' and the assertion that 'Communism is English'.⁵³ Pollitt nationalised the communist utopia by seeing in its achievement the creation of 'Merrie England' and 'England's Green and Pleasant Land'.⁵⁴

In seeking utopia while respecting the British Way, the New Utopians seemingly returned to the starting point of the argument, gazing at the promised land from the wrong side of the border.

The uneasy relationship between ends and means entailed in respecting an institution which was also to be transformed, was illustrated when Mosley wrote of how it was 'necessary for a modern movement which does not believe in Parliament, as at present constituted, to seek to capture Parliament'.⁵⁵ 'Power' would be gained 'by constitutional means' with 'revolutionary change afterwards'.⁵⁶ 'Fascism', could 'only come to power by the people's mandate at a General

⁵⁰ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.40.

⁵¹ M.E., 'The Churches and British Union', *British Union Quarterly*, 3 1 (1939), pp.19-29; 22.

⁵² CPGB, London District Committee, *The March of English History: A Message to You from the Communist Party* (1936), p.12.

⁵³ Jack Lindsay, *England My England* (undated; c.194?); p.64; see also T.A. Jackson, *Socialism: What, Why, How?* (1945), pp.8-9.

⁵⁴ Pollitt, *Serving My Time*, pp.291-292.

⁵⁵ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.157.

Election'.⁵⁷ Stressing the populist basis that the BUF sought, Mosley promised that 'the rebirth of a nation comes from the people in a clear and ordered sequence. The people, their Movement, their Government, their Power.'⁵⁸ Unlike Wells' unabashed rejection of democracy, his disciple Stapledon sought to keep a grasp on the *sine qua non* of 'progressive' thought by describing his 'classless' meritocratic elite as 'aristocratic democracy'.⁵⁹

Naturally Labour pledged itself to 'constitutional action and... rejected the tactics of revolution'. The party would 'afford to the world an example of how society can adapt itself on a new principle without breach of continuity and without violence and intolerance'.⁶⁰ CW, despite advocating by far the most radical programme of the war years, when posed the question 'Does Common Wealth think we can get this democratically?' answered 'Definitely Yes.'⁶¹ Communists too adopted a conditional embrace of constitutional politics. Pollitt allowed that 'democracy, even under capitalist economy, offers the best field for the development of the class struggle.'⁶² Strachey contributed to a symposium entitled 'We are all 'Reformists' now' and sought to 'confine... the struggle to the purely political and constitutional field'.⁶³ Although Pollitt anticipated parliamentary action being accompanied by the agitation of a wider mass movement the language of

⁵⁶ 'Lex', *Transition After Victory, Fascist Quarterly*, 1 3 (1935), pp.365-374; 367.

⁵⁷ *Northampton Chronicle and Echo*, 18 July 1935.

⁵⁸ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, p.11.

⁵⁹ Stapledon, *New Hope For Britain*, p.62.

⁶⁰ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.113, 275-276.

⁶¹ CW, *We Answer Your Questions* (undated; c.1943), p.3.

⁶² CPGB, *For Peace and Plenty: Report of the Fifteenth Congress of the C.P.G.B.* (undated; c.1938), p.60.

⁶³ John Strachey, 'We Are All 'Reformists' Now: An Old Issue Reconsidered', *New Fabian Research Bureau*, 18 (Summer 1938), pp.14-19; *idem.*, *What Are We To Do?*, p.361.

civil war was absent.⁶⁴ There was the 'possibility of a peaceful transition to Socialism'.⁶⁵

But ambivalence between ends and the means remained. As one socialist wrote: 'in view of our experiences of the last few years we have shed any Victorian illusions we had about Parliament and recognise it as a probably necessary, but certainly unsatisfactory, instrument of the rapid change we desire'.⁶⁶ Cripps saw the dilemma. If Labour put forward a radical programme its opponents would scare the electorate with talk of 'dictatorship' and the party would be deprived of power; if it moderated its programme, the Party would be in the same position as in 1930-1. The choices were either to 'find a resting place on the second horn of the dilemma', dissimulate for 'tactical reasons' or, as Cripps suggested, to press on the limits of what could be accommodated within the 'native political' tradition.⁶⁷

At the beginning of the thirties Cole was also forced to admit the possibility of a 'considerable modification of traditional parliamentary practices in favour of more dictatorial methods'. If returned to office, Labour's approach would 'have to approximate more closely than they at present imagine to those of Fascism and even Communism'.⁶⁸ Raymond Postgate argued for 'an organization of storm troopers or ironsides', and George Catlin proposed 'a voluntary aristocracy of asceticism' as the 'Ironsides headquarters general staff to the Labour Party' to play a vanguard role analogous to the blackshirts, communists, and Wells' 'airmen'.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Pollitt, *How to Win the Peace*, p.92.

⁶⁵ *Idem.*, *Answers to Questions* (1945), pp.38-42.

⁶⁶ Lionel Elvin, 'Is Gradualness Inevitable?', *The New Clarion*, 18 March 1933.

⁶⁷ Stafford Cripps, 'Democracy and Dictatorship', *The Political Quarterly*, 4 (1935), pp.467-481.

⁶⁸ Cole, *The Intelligent Man's Guide*, pp.602, 612-613; *idem.*, *A Plan For Britain*; pp.37-40; *idem.*, *What is this Socialism? - Letters To A Young Admirer* (1933), pp.23-27.

⁶⁹ G.E.G. Catlin, 'Expert State versus Free State', *The Political Quarterly*, 3 (1932), pp.539-551; Raymond Postgate, *How to Make a Revolution* (1934), p.194.

Mosley planned to use orders in council as a means to fascist 'Action' but Dalton too found that 'large powers of swift action' were 'not undemocratic'; 'slow and lumbering Parliamentary procedure' was not the 'essence of democracy'.⁷⁰ There was no place for the 'subordination of Socialist idealism to the Mother of Parliaments'.⁷¹ Suggesting how far Labour might be prepared to go, Durbin posited the 'essential limit' on 'the pace of change' as the likelihood of 'armed resistance' and 'civil war'.⁷² In contrast, Cole—at least in 1933—wrote 'peaceably if we may'.⁷³ The delicacy of this path was clear from the words Michison put in the mouth of his future historian, who wrote that 'it was no doubt a close thing whether this revolution—for it was in effect no less—could be carried through upon the strength of the political tradition and without actual fighting'.⁷⁴

THE INEXORABLE REVOLUTION

All theories of praxis are necessarily posited in relation to the structural constraints and opportunities of the moment. At the moment of his turn to fascism, Mosley understood that it was only at the time of crisis that 'great nations turn to new forces and to new men'.⁷⁵ Such assumptions reflected a belief that, as the Marxist Leeman wrote, 'men make their own history within limits'.⁷⁶

In contrast to this view of utopia as something achieved by willed action within the realm of necessity and contingency others assumed, or at least asserted, that the good society was somehow predestined in the future course of history. In

⁷⁰ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.32.

⁷¹ Elvin, 'Is Gradualness Inevitable?', p.288.

⁷² Durbin, *The Politics of Democratic Socialism*, p.284, original emphasis.

⁷³ Cole, *What is this Socialism?*, p.25.

⁷⁴ Michison, *The First Workers' Government*, p.159.

⁷⁵ Mosley, *The Greater Britain*, p.149.

⁷⁶ Leeman, *New World Order*, p.10.

this way a structure of belief similar to the Church's teleological systems of providence and predestination overlapped into secular political thought. Communists were particularly vocal in this respect: the future socialist and, finally, communist society was 'not the invention of dreamers (Utopians), but the inevitable outcome of modern capitalist society'.⁷⁷ This was a reading of history which suggested that 'scientific socialism' was so in tune with events as to be heir to the future.

Teleological assumptions were also present in the Fabian tradition of Labour socialism.⁷⁸ Henderson allowed that 'when anyone begins to talk to you about the goal of a movement you have a natural suspicion... that he is about to recite his dreams to you; visions of Utopia unrelated to the real facts and the limitations of life'. In contrast, Henderson pledged that he would provide 'an interpretation of the movement of history; of the discernible purpose towards which the forces now visibly operating in the world's life are carrying our civilisation'. At the same time while it was 'the existing and known facts that preach our Socialist gospel', the 'new social order' would also be 'the fulfilment of dreams and of the heart's desires of men', albeit 'dreams and desires... of things discerned as possible and on offer in the world of facts'.⁷⁹ All other versions of the good society presumably being based on things discerned as impossible and on the world of fiction. At the other end of the period the leading 'progressive' Julian Huxley also wrote of an 'inescapable' 'historical transformation' and of the 'danger' of 'imagining that it is easy to see the goal of the revolution through which we are

⁷⁷ CPGB, *Draft Programme*, p.15.

⁷⁸ Beilharz, *Labour's Utopias*, pp.51-58.

⁷⁹ Henderson, *The Socialist Goal*, pp.3, 7.

living', of mistaking 'idealism for reality and... hopes for practical possibilities.' Huxley preferred to 'think in terms of direction and rate of change instead of goals or blue-prints...'⁸⁰

Reflecting the origins of this teleological view of history, Acland wrote that 'Christians believe that "the good society" must prevail because there is a force transcending man which... cannot be resisted. Humanists have the same belief because they see that every bad society must contain within itself the seeds of its own destruction'.⁸¹ In yet another variation of such thinking, Durbin in the unhappy year of 1942 nonetheless saw the 'great tide of social progress that sweeps slowly but inevitably through the affairs of free peoples' bringing 'so deviously, a richer life'. In this supra-human teleology people would build the 'new society' without knowing they 'are doing so'.⁸²

If taken at face value these assertions might suggest that the future was just as much outside human agency for these thinkers as it was for liberals and conservatives. However, I would argue that these notions of the future good society as immanent in the body of present crossed the line between futurology and utopianism as readings of history in which desire guided interpretation. The argument that society was poised at a moment of historical transformation, facing either fascism or socialism, socialism or fascism, dystopia or utopia reflected each party's claim to hold the patent on the good society. Neither are such teleological narratives without rhetorical effect with their claims of historical authority and future

⁸⁰ Huxley, *On Living in a Revolution*, pp.xi, xii, 1.

⁸¹ Acland, *Questions and Answers*, p.93.

⁸² Durbin, *What Have We To Defend?*, p.80-81.

destiny. Desire, mingled with hope, produced a rhetoric which stated a desired end as a coming fact in the hope that it would thereby become so.

Bauman suggests that utopianism is distinguished from quietism according to the latter's 'eagerness to help reason or society in hammering home the message of the ideal pattern, as opposed to the passive expectation of the millennium of reason descending upon the earth anyway'.⁸³ For all their apparent teleological faith, the New Utopians were not slow to stress that human agency was, nonetheless, still necessary. Acland pressed for action because 'for those who have to live in these islands in the next fifty years, the long course of history offers a poor consolation for immediate spiritual death'.⁸⁴ Huxley warned against 'those who accept the revolution passively and imagine that its blind forces will do all the work for them'. 'Man' must become the 'conscious evolutionary' and embrace the 'privilege of helping history'.⁸⁵ Henderson was equally reluctant to leave socialism 'to make its own way into being by the play of economic forces'. This would 'invite disaster', the economic forces behind a change in social order could not 'fulfil themselves except through human will'.⁸⁶ An even more pessimistic socialist admitted that there was 'no cosmic reason why workers must win', that 'history' was 'not a set piece'.⁸⁷ Mosley stressed the ability of the 'human spirit' to 'soar beyond the restraint of time and circumstance' and so 'conquer destiny'. However, the future was not closed and predestined: 'man' could either 'know the dust' or 'at last grasp the stars'.⁸⁸

⁸³ Bauman, *Socialism*, p.22.

⁸⁴ Acland, *Questions and Answers*, p.94.

⁸⁵ Huxley, *On Living in a Revolution*, pp,x, xii, 1.

⁸⁶ Henderson, *The Socialist Goal*, pp,3-4.

⁸⁷ *Tribune*, 10 July 1937.

⁸⁸ Mosley, *Tomorrow We Live*, pp.79-80.

THE EDUCATION OF DESIRE

The New Utopians thus positioned themselves as the beneficent mediators of the structural changes closing the old world made in the nineteenth century. At the same time they recognised that the opening of political space would most likely coincide with the periodic crises which occurred within the larger scheme of social change. In this way the assumption was that the masses would be driven under the lash of hunger, tyranny and war towards the New Utopia. Cole pointed out that:

The trouble is that these ordinary, decent people who claim for the most part nothing better than to be let alone, cannot be let alone until the world has settled its fate anew. The bombs will fall upon them, the giant machine will bind them to the will of its masters, the megaphones will blare propaganda at them, and they will live unquiet lives, until they themselves realise that, for very peace and quietness, they must do for themselves what no political sect can do without them—claim their right to be free, not by turning their back on the juggernauts that ride over them, but by facing manfully the task of bringing these monsters under collective, democratic Socialist control.⁸⁹

However, alongside this assumption was the recognition that positive popular approval for the coming new order was vital and desirable as well. To adopt a term used to describe a function of the utopian novel, the New Utopians' aim was to 'educate' the desire of Britons. Labour would need to 'persuade the British people to accept proposals for peaceful change'; Laski stressed a 'revolution by consent';

⁸⁹ Cole, 'A Socialist Civilization', pp.147-187 in *Programme for Victory: A Collection of Essays prepared for the Fabian Society* (1941), p.187.

the party needed to demonstrate that it stood 'for a better civilization'.⁹⁰ Even Wells needed to convince an elite to impose the new order on everyone else: there could be no progress until 'a comprehensive faith in the modernized World-State' took 'hold of the human imagination'.⁹¹

At the same time, in the darkness of the period this side of propaganda could be neglected. Writing in 1937, Joad commented that:

'since the war the attention of socialist thought has mainly been centred on the question of means. By what methods, Socialists have asked themselves is Capitalism to be overthrown and Socialism introduced? Little attention has been paid to the question of ends. What will, or what should life under socialism be like, when Socialism is introduced, is a question rarely asked and never answered.'⁹²

After the experience of two failed Labour governments and the disappointment of 1935, how to overturn the hegemony of the National Government and then successfully govern, became major preoccupations among opposition forces. One socialist regretted that 'far too many well-meaning rank and file members of the Labour Movement see in the mere defeat of the National Government a ready-made Utopia which will automatically implement a rhetorical election programme'.⁹³

Reflecting both this preoccupation and reactions against it, John Huddleston made clear the need to remember that 'Socialism' was 'something desirable in itself—a new civilisation'. Although positive propaganda was harder

⁹⁰ Dalton, *Practical Socialism For Britain*, p.7; Laski, *Where Do We Go from Here?*, p.166; Tawney, *Equality*, pp.207-208.

⁹¹ Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*, p.333.

⁹² Joad, 'Leisure in a Socialist State', pp.36-40.

⁹³ *Tribune*, 30 July 1937.

than 'putting over a violent tirade against the evils of our present system', socialists needed to be conscious of their 'objective'.⁹⁴ In a similar vein, Morrison felt that there had 'been a little too much of the "anti"' in Labour propaganda. He continued: 'The people of the depressed areas know all about despair and misery. It is good for them... to have painted the vision of that better world of Socialism, Peace and Democracy'.⁹⁵ People in the countryside also knew the negative side of things 'only too well from experience'. Regarding socialism, Labour needed to 'picture what it might be' and so generate and harness 'hope' as the 'basis of determined political action'.⁹⁶ At the launch of Labour's *Immediate Programme* Harold Croft explained that the party had 'one duty which transcends all other obligations. Whatever the terrible conditions international or social which confront it, its supreme and first duty is to proclaim a new civilisation'. As to how this might be done, socialists were reminded of the 'early prophets' of the movement who had 'projected their imaginations to an intense conception of a Socialist city' and so 'communicated their passionate view to others' and 'created a new human destiny'.⁹⁷ Simultaneously extolling and disavowing the utopian propensity, Durbin stressed that the British people: 'must therefore see visions and dream dreams—not the deceptive illusions of Utopia but the next steps of the path in which we may safely walk'. Durbin wrote that 'we need only look upwards, peer more sharply through the forward mists of time, to walk into the light of a sunnier day'.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ John Huddleston, 'My View of Socialism', *Advance*, 3 5 (December 1938), p.7; see also B.J. Green, 'How I Would Win Youth For Socialism', *Tribune*, 14 January 1938.

⁹⁵ Herbert Morrison, 'Less of this "Anti" Business - Lift Up the Banner of Socialist Idealism', *Labour Woman*, 25 1 (January 1937), pp.9-10.

⁹⁶ *Tribune*, 15 January 1937.

⁹⁷ Harold Croft, *New Socialist Millions* (1937), p.6.

⁹⁸ Durbin, *What Have We To Defend?*, p.34.

THE AGE OF THE BLUEPRINT

J.O. Evans was clear on the educative potential of utopian prose fiction, writing that “Utopianisations”... may be of service, for... before we are ready to make our minds up to work for anything we must first convince ourselves that it is worth having when we have reached it’.⁹⁹ Despite this, in comparison to earlier periods, the utopian novels of the thirties and forties passed largely unnoticed.¹⁰⁰

However, Kumar’s assertion that ‘it is undeniable that in our century it is the anti-utopian current that has been strongest’, while perhaps correct in relation to utopian fiction, does not hold for utopianism in the wider sense.¹⁰¹ Rather the archetypal vehicle for the utopianism of the ‘thirties and ‘forties were the millions of words offering ‘blueprints’ for a new society. In this respect, it is significant that the authors of the two most significant dystopias of the period offered the public not only *Brave New World* and *Nineteen-Eighty Four* but works of utopian intent in *Ends and Means* and *The Lion and the Unicorn*.¹⁰² Furthermore, although Goodwin interprets the decline of the utopian novel as indicating a rejection of utopianism for ‘parliamentary reformism’ such an assertion ignores the possibility that without

⁹⁹ J.O. Evans, ‘London—What might be’, *The New Clarion*, 6 January 1934.

¹⁰⁰ See Lyman Tower Sargent, *British and American Utopian Literature 1516-1985: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York, 1988); *idem.*, ‘The War Years: British Utopianism 1915 - 1950’.

¹⁰¹ Kumar, *Utopianism*, p.99; on the dystopian literature of the period see: Andy Croft, ‘Worlds Without End Foisted Upon The Future’; *idem.*, *Red Letter Days*, ch.7; Sargent, ‘The War Year: British Utopianism 1915 - 1950’, pp.161-167, 179.

¹⁰² ‘George Orwell’, *The Lion and the Unicorn*; *idem.*, *Nineteen-Eighty Four: A Novel* (Harmondsworth, 1954; first published 1949); Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World: A Novel* (Harmondsworth, 1974; first published 1932); *idem.*, *Ends and Means: An Enquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods employed for their Realization* (1937). On the political careers of Huxley and Orwell see David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Hidden Huxley* (1995), pp.vii-xxiii, 31-43; Gregory Claeys, ‘The Lion and the Unicorn, Patriotism, and Orwell’s Politics’, *The Review of Politics*, 47 2 (April 1985), pp.186-211; Stephen Ingle, *George Orwell: A Political Life* (Manchester, 1993), chs.3-5.

utopian desire passing through the prism of the reality principle there could be no 'politics of utopia' in an age of mass democratic politics.¹⁰³

In the first instance, the dominance of the workmanlike 'blueprint' as a medium, with its modernistic and technocratic overtones, reflected the dominance of the utopia of science over aesthetic utopianism in the tradition of Morris. Despite this—as Wells and Bellamy had shown—there was no inherent reason why a technocratic utopia should not be expressed through fiction. The reason that the utopian imagination chose the blueprint rather than the novel is more probably related to the circumstances of the time. Whereas the New Utopianism was a bluntly political force the novel was not a culturally acceptable vehicle in such an environment, blueprints, although invariably richly rhetorical, sought the sober form of the 'practical' proposal. The vestigial fictional framing of Mitchison's 'future history', *The First Workers' Government*, reflected this imperative. The 'businesslike' aspect of these texts was also indicative of their intentions as programmes for immediate action rather than as vehicles for the gradual transformation of sentiment. Cripps wrote in his introduction to Mitchison's book that whilst in the past socialists had 'delighted' in 'Utopias of all kinds', 'in the last two years we have awakened to the fact that this is not something that we may have to do in the far future, but something for which the opportunity may occur very soon'.¹⁰⁴

At the same time these blueprints sought the same goal as the Utopian novel. Acland's *What It Will Be Like In the New Britain* hoped 'to describe the new society as it may be' and to correct the 'mental picture' 'which most people have in

¹⁰³ Goodwin and Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia*, p.47.

¹⁰⁴ Stafford Cripps, 'Introduction', in Mitchison, *The First Workers' Government*, p.5.

their minds when they talk of "Socialism".¹⁰⁵ *Britain Without Capitalists* hoped to fill the 'great need of a perspective for the masses of Britain, a perspective which would not only show the revolutionary way out of the crisis but would give... a picture of what Soviet Britain would mean for the working class and for the people as a whole'.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the taking of a form appropriate to 'practical' programmes did not imply that these blueprints were modest in their aims: the world state, socialism or the corporate state were hardly 'reformist' projects.

THE PROBLEM OF HENRY DUBB

However, the education of desire apparently faced a barrier as formidable as Tawney's 'lion in the path' on the democratic road to socialism, in the person of 'Henry Dubb'. In a short story by R.B. Suthers 'Dubb', or 'Daff' as his neighbours called him, was shown by his dream guide 'a Garden Suburb, where working folk like ourselves live', in homes with 'baths and hot water' and with 'gardens full of beautiful flowers'; children who attended a school 'like a palace'; 'splendid hospitals' where it was 'like going to heaven to be sick or injured'; 'enormous parks... with lakes and boats and swings and sand-pits for the kiddies'; a land where 'people' had 'plenty of play time' and 'theatres and music-halls' to spend it in. And all achieved by people's use of their 'talisman' - their vote.¹⁰⁷ However, Dubb was as easily gulled by the ruling classes as he was impervious to knowledge of the good society. Dubb stood for the apolitical masses who preferred the cinema, dog track or football match to the political meeting and who voted 'National', if they bothered at all.

¹⁰⁵ Acland, *What It Will Be Like*, pp.8,12.

Attlee—expressing a common activist’s opinion—believed that the party was confronted by a nation of Dubbs. Noting ‘the lack of imagination of the majority of people’, he described them as people who did not ‘know that in Socialism they have the key which will unlock the treasure house of a better world’. It was these people who were unable to ‘look beyond the narrow bounds of their everyday existence’ that Labour had somehow to inspire and educate.¹⁰⁸ To Durbin the ‘English people’ typically had ‘little time for visions, they have no leisure time in which to dream. Their feet are planted firmly upon the ground and they are content to overcome the difficulties of to-day’.¹⁰⁹

Neither was educating Dubb’s desire easy in an age of mass media with its ‘streams of perfumed dope’.¹¹⁰ Attlee saw that ‘the citizen is subjected from morning to night to a heavy barrage of propaganda... The wireless, the cinema, and the newspaper above all’. ‘Instruments of great potency’ and ‘to a very great extent... on the side of those who support the present order of society.’¹¹¹ Furthermore, as Amber Blanco White realised, socialist propoganda was competing against

...a vast flood of counter-suggestion from the capitalist press, cinemas and theatres, and the continual stressing by them of largely non-existent opportunities. “Be loyal and work hard now and we will make you a captain of industry” or “wash your hair with X’s shampoo and avoid body-odour and you shall marry the boss’s handsome son”.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ P.A., ‘Britain Without Capitalists’, *The Communist International*, 12 11 (November 1936) pp.1527-1528.

¹⁰⁷ R.B. Suthers, ‘M.Y.O.B.—What’s that to you?’, *The New Clarion*, 28 October 1933.

¹⁰⁸ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.281.

¹⁰⁹ Durbin, *What Have We To Defend?*, p.32.

¹¹⁰ ‘Vanoc II’, ‘Education For Socialism’, *Tribune*, 17 September 1937.

¹¹¹ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, pp.281-282.

¹¹² Amber Blanco White, *The New Propaganda* (1939), p.361.

In allied vein, Argent saw the advertiser and producer as 'indirectly re-actionary', providing a pacifying simulacrum to the masses via an 'earthly paradise for an hour' at the cinema.¹¹³ Fascists also condemned the press as a drip feed of 'slop and slush' and for making the 'nation... stampede this way or that' at election time.¹¹⁴

THE POLITICS OF DAYDREAMING

At the same time suggestions of a belief in a mass of inarticulate desires could be found. Croft of Labour believed that while 'ordinary men and women may not be able to talk or argue deeply about political... affairs' beneath this passive surface there was 'an... inner or subconscious mind... potent for social action' in which were 'hidden... elusive revolts against conditions of life, and aspirations for better things'.¹¹⁵ In like vein, Moss Murray of CW, quoting Priestley's *Three Men in New Suits*, explained of the soldier contemplating 'Civy Street', that while 'not many of them can express clearly what it is they want. ... in the quiet corners of their minds they feel that somehow there have got to be important and vital changes'.¹¹⁶ However, this human capacity to dream was not a resource exclusively open to the New Utopians. Cole argued that 'men and women, save in their daydreams, are not usually very imaginative' and as Ernst Bloch has explored, bourgeois society itself offered considerable resources for daydreams of desire.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ S.H.V. Argent, 'Education and Mass Production', *Plan*, 3 4 (April 1936), pp.12-13.

¹¹⁴ A.K. Chesterton, *Fascism and the Press* (undated; c.1932), p.14.

¹¹⁵ Croft, *New Socialist Millions*, p.3.

¹¹⁶ Moss Murray, 'It's Time We Grew Up', *Common Wealth Review*, 2 8 (June 1945) pp.6-7; 6; J.B. Priestley, *Three Men in New Suits* (1945).

¹¹⁷ Cole, 'Plan for Living', p.3.

For the man 'thinking in terms of a nice car, a regular roll of notes in his wallet, and the smartest clothes for his wife and not just a better house in the same street, but a house in an entirely different part of town' there were dreams of impressing his boss, of the clever invention or successful small business, that 'one day *something* will happen.' Under capitalism, Acland saw that there was at least 'a chance of doing what they do in the film, the books, and the papers'.¹¹⁸ Blanco White observed that many people, while "objectively" working or lower middle class, 'in the world of their imagination' felt "'different" and superior'. For these people the device of the 'impossible coincidence', the 'swift change in private fortune', simulated a way to materialise this 'superior' existence. Such devices, disseminated and reinforced by Hollywood and popular literature, as Bloch suggests, safely absorbed the radical potential of desire.¹¹⁹ For the shop assistant dreaming of 'being adopted by one of her rich elderly customers', 'to destroy the rich would force them to make their dreams even more illogical' and so 'must be prevented at all costs'.¹²⁰

Alison Light has provided an insight into this world of aspiration outside politics—or at least New Utopian politics—as it was articulated in the novels of Agatha Christie and Jan Struther. In Struther's writings the 'ideal good life' could be 'a middling sort of life' and in Christie's work Light detects the rejection of both reactionary 'idealisation of the past' and the 'planning of utopias'. Christie's 'dream is not of a grander, nobler existence but of a quiet life' Light concludes. However, this life of 'domestic pleasures' was for many people no less an unattained object of

¹¹⁸ Acland, *Forward March*, p.28.

¹¹⁹ Bloch, *The Principle of Hope - Volume Two*, pp.350-352.

¹²⁰ White, *The New Propaganda*, p.333.

desire than any political utopia.¹²¹ J.B. Priestley, who has been described as representative of the 'common culture of the decade', explored the life-world of 'ordinary', apolitical Britons in *Angel Pavement*.¹²²

In his dreams 'Turgis', a clerk:

Vaguely... saw himself trim and sleek, with evening clothes, a huge overcoat, white trousers for summer, money in his pocket, money in the bank, an office of his own perhaps, a flat with shaded lights and big chairs and a gramophone and a wireless set, even a car, and by his side worshipping him, the loveliest and kindest of girls.

Although Turgis exclaims in frustration that the reality of life is 'enough to make a any chap turn Bolshie' he ignores the approaches of 'Park, the Bolshie'. On Speakers' Corner, where the communists and socialists were 'actually longing for him' as a 'recruit'; Turgis instead 'wanted... Love, Romance, a Wonderful Girl of His Own.' Typically, Park sees Turgis as in thrall to 'dope... from America'.¹²³

Just as Bloch writes of the dreams of childhood and youth, Priestley's 'Stanley' lives between his duties as an office boy and fantasies of adventure as 'the Great Detective, S. Poole' nourished by the *Boy's Companion*.¹²⁴ The desires of the typist, 'Miss Matfield'—an impecunious, but superior daughter of the middle classes—approximate to Light's 'conservative modernism'. She had 'the idea of a man that warmed her secret heart... the strong, adventurous roving male with a background of alien scenes, of little ships and fantastic drinking haunts. If she

¹²¹ Light, *Forever England*, pp.80, 105-106, 130.

¹²² D.L. LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars* (Oxford, 1988), p.318; J.B. Priestley, *Angel Pavement* (1930).

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp.182, 184, 195-196, 327.

¹²⁴ Bloch, *The Principle of Hope - Volume One*, pp.21-29; Priestley, *Angel Pavement*, pp.9, 294.

married him, she might want to domesticate him in that beautiful old country house in which she had spent so many imaginary Christmases'.¹²⁵

Different once again, the ideal world of Smeeth, an ageing black coated worker, expressed the aspirations of millions of ordinary people. He:

had never envied the rich their luxurious pleasures; he was a simple chap, and their way of life seemed to him ridiculous; he did not want a great deal for himself; but what he did want—and for this he was prepared to envy anybody—was security, to know that decency and self-respect were his to the end of his days. To be safe in his job while he was fit for it, and after that to have a little place of his own, with a garden (he had never done any real gardening, but always found it easy to imagine himself doing it very well and enjoying it) a bit of music whenever he wanted it—that was not asking much, and yet, for all the firm's increased turnover and its rises, he could not help thinking it was really like asking for the moon.¹²⁶

In *Love on the Dole* Walter Greenwood took this exploration of private dreaming into the 'distressed areas'. Through a lucky bet 'Helen' and 'Harry' briefly enjoy the good life for a week at the seaside, as 'children lost in fairy-land', in a 'lovely place'. Returning to the miseries of normality, it is only their plans to marry and the hope of 'a home of our own' that blunt their pain. While window shopping, their 'imaginations were fired by the show cards' sketches depicting... furniture in spacious, oak-panelled rooms whose open French windows looked on to a sunny garden...' but with no money for Harry 'fine dreams were his only portion'. Replicating the 'impossible coincidence', the 'swift change in private fortune' typical of fairy-tales old and new, Harry declares 'we will get what we want

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.406-407.

if Ah win newspaper competition. An' somebody's got to win them'; 'if his present circumstances were to be a subject of a movie play this would be the opportunity for him to rescue... the only child of a wealthy man who rewarded his heroism with money and a good job'.¹²⁷ The young couple finally escape poverty through personal influence; politics and private desire remain unconnected.

FIRST A UTOPIA FOR HENRY DUBB...

However, just as 'immediate steps' leading to 'ultimate aims' could be the road to utopia by parliamentary means, there was a parallel notion that by first satisfying the material and security wants of the Smeeths and Harry and Helen Hardcastles of Britain that they could then be led toward the full glories of the New Utopia.

Reflecting this relationship between demotic desire and political aims, Mitchison, under the title 'The Utopia of Citizen Dubb', wrote that what 'Henry Dubb had unconsciously sought more than any other' was 'wages, hours, security of employment, a decent standard of life'. However, Mitchison's hope was that, while:

at first Henry Dubb's demand was for better conditions and more leisure, ... it did not continue wholly or mainly on those lines. The demand in the new times, once the first requirements had been satisfied, was not for more and more comfort and leisure, but for other things, to which in the past Henry Dubb had had little access.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.307.

¹²⁷ Greenwood, *Love on the Dole*, pp.127-129, 175; Bloch, *The Principle of Hope - Volume Two*, pp.350-352.

The satisfaction of immediate desires would lead on to 'a classless society',¹²⁸ Dubb would no longer be 'Daff' but would come to see the world anew, to desire differently and live a new life.

Turning from fictional to actual politics, Labour's efforts to create a platform to satisfy both constituencies of desire led to its *Immediate Programme* which, in terms of its form and content, anticipated the 1945 manifesto *Let Us Face the Future*.¹²⁹ Attlee explained that the 1937 programme had to provide for immediate positive action, to 'deliver the goods at once', but at the same time he stressed that 'no Socialist Government can neglect fundamental change for immediate patch-work reform'.¹³⁰ In tune with the *Immediate Programme's* aims, Mary Sutherland stressed that the only real solution was socialism, but the 'majority of ordinary folk who are not politically conscious' could only be reached by 'speaking to them about the price of bread and their children's health'.¹³¹ Strachey, writing in the communist cause, concurred: 'Socialism' should never be put forward 'as an abstraction', rather the Labour movement had to 'voice... the simple, and extremely definite demands of the workers for reform and improvement in their way of life'. 'A thousand men will support a Government which is giving them better wages, shorter hours, and decent houses for one which is talking about Socialism', Strachey believed. But in time, socialism would emerge in the public mind as the 'inevitable and indispensable means' to such benefits. The program that Strachey

¹²⁸ Mitchison, *The First Workers' Government*, pp.479-482.

¹²⁹ The Labour Party, *Labour's Immediate Programme*; *idem.*, *Let Us Face the Future*.

¹³⁰ The Labour Party, 'Labour's Immediate Programme', *Report of 37th Annual Conference held in the Pavilion Bournemouth October 4 - October *, 1937 (1937)*, pp.181-183.

¹³¹ Mary Sutherland, 'Socialism and Our Daily Bread', *The Labour Woman*, 26 6 (June 1938).

proposed would not, he confessed, 'take us all the way to our goal... But it is the door to the future'.¹³²

The New Utopians' reaction to the 'Beveridge report'—undoubtedly the most politically significant proposal of the whole period—suggests a similar linking of demotic desire and political utopianism. Wootton saw that whereas people were 'apathetic about post-war reconstruction plans' because 'the gap between the plans themselves and the lives of ordinary people' was 'too wide', Beveridge stood out because it dealt with matters which were 'within the experience of everyone'.¹³³ Margaret Cole, Secretary of the Fabians, mapping the relationship between mass and party desires at the heart of the Russian revolution onto the contemporary situation, wrote that 'Social Security is to the British worker what the land was to the Russian peasant in 1918'.¹³⁴

The report was acceptable to those seeking what their New Utopian critics would have called a 'patch' to keep the old society afloat.¹³⁵ At the same time 'Beveridge' was also an intermediate step for those whose journey, while to a different destination, began on the same road. As the *Daily Herald* commented, although 'the broad principles of the plan' were 'in full accord with every Labour pronouncement on the social services... this will not mean any abandonment of the more fundamental purposes of the socialist movement'.¹³⁶ For communists it was

¹³² Strachey, *What Are We To Do?*, pp.8, 331, 354-355, 366-7.

¹³³ Barbara Wootton, *Social Security and the Beveridge Plan* (undated; c.1944), p.1.

¹³⁴ Margaret Cole in 'Symposium on the Beveridge Report', *Left News*, 79 (January 1943), pp.2340-2356, 2348-2349.

¹³⁵ See, for example, Maurice Edelman in 'Symposium on the Beveridge Report', pp.2340-2356, 2353-2355.

¹³⁶ *Daily Herald*, 14 December 1942; see also *ibid.*, 4 December 1942; *ibid.*, 7 December 1942; *ibid.*, 10 December 1942.

'not... the "British Revolution"' but 'an immediate step forward'.¹³⁷ Summing up this relationship, Wootton commented that while 'Beveridge, of course is not Utopia', 'let us remember that if you do not begin somewhere, you will never begin at all'.¹³⁸

UTOPIAN DESIRE, POLITICAL PRAXIS AND THE REALITY PRINCIPLE

Given all the tactical compromises demanded by the reality principle, the question arises as to whether utopian desire was not more or less smothered in what H.G. Wells called 'everydayism': a preoccupation with the immediate present blind to the utopian horizon. Political routine *could* kill the will to utopia: 'The problems of this new post war world' Williams suggested, would not be solved by those who were fixated on 'details' and 'criticism of their opponents', or who 'worse still', had 'forgotten how to think in terms of ultimate purposes'.¹³⁹ However, despite entering the political labyrinth the light of utopia could continue to shine as the goal towards which the messy business of politics was guided.

The concluding line of Jay's *Socialist Case* with its reference to Kyyam suggests the subtle but distinct tincture of utopian desire in its call to 'use our freedom to rebuild society a little less far away from the human heart's desire'.¹⁴⁰ In this regard, Herbert Morrison described the relationship between the stuff of utopia—ideals and visions—and the realm of praxis—the immediate and necessary of practical politics. The 'Socialist Minister of the future' needed both 'a sound business head' and 'the visions, the ideals and the whole comprehensive policy of

¹³⁷ Mick Bennett, 'A Beveridge But not a Cure-All', *Challenge*, 12 December 1942; see also CPGB, *Memorandum of the Beveridge Report* (1943), pp.6-7.

¹³⁸ Wootton, *Social Security and the Beveridge Plan*, p.14; see also CW, *Common Wealth and the Beveridge Report* (1943).

¹³⁹ Williams, *Ten Angels Swearing*, p.203.

¹⁴⁰ Jay, *The Socialist Case*, p.279.

Socialism, for otherwise he might get lost in a mass of practical business details'.¹⁴¹ Fred Henderson clearly understood the relationship between utopianism and 'everyday' politics. Political reality required 'a steady devotion to the work lying immediately to our hand, the conquest of political power and the steady constructive work of legislation'. The vital point distinguishing this approach from everydayism was the destination in mind. Henderson stressed that 'we... must know where we are going, and always, in taking the next step, however small it may be, make sure that it is in the direction of our destination. It is the purpose beyond the detail of the moment which alone makes the detail of the moment intelligent and effective'.¹⁴²

Despite being refracted through the lens of the reality principle in these different ways, in a sense utopia thus came closer, because it was being worked towards but, in another sense, it also became more distant. Indeed the closer a party got to capturing the means-to-utopia of a parliamentary majority, the more hazy and indistinct was the ultimate utopian horizon. In this way, Labour's ultimate utopia shrank to a single sentence in its election-winning manifesto.¹⁴³

For this reason there were always parties like the ILP who, 'rejoicing in irresponsibility', were 'always able to outbid the Labour Party, because it is not bound to realities'.¹⁴⁴ Obviously, the business of compromise might be interpreted as a lack of 'courage', 'everydayism', or even the debasement of a party's purpose into a cynical pursuit of power for its own sake. However, radical 'purity' in respect

¹⁴¹ Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport*, p.281; see also *idem.*, 'The State and Industry', pp.1-23 in Herbert Morrison *et al.*, *Can Planning Be Democratic? A Collection of Essays prepared for the Fabian Society* (1944), p.1.

¹⁴² Henderson, *The Case For Socialism*, pp.153-154.

¹⁴³ The Labour Party, *Let Us Face the Future*, p.6.

¹⁴⁴ Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective*, p.128.

to praxis has no necessary relation to the sincerity with which a utopia is sought. Indeed communists combined fanatical devotion to their ideal society with an extreme flexibility in the area of praxis. When the CPGB was at its strongest it was also at its most pragmatic; alliances and tactics which earlier would have been heresy became the rule. Pollitt spoke of 'steps to Socialism'; 'a better Britain today and a Socialist Britain tomorrow'. Nonetheless it was with a vision of socialism that Pollitt concluded his *How To Win The Peace*.¹⁴⁵ As another communist wrote, 'these moves are not ends in themselves, but must form part of the whole strategic plan. The skilful commander is one who understands how to relate such tactical manoeuvres to the ultimate goal'.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps it is those who are prepared to bob, weave and double back who are more genuine in their desire than the pure saints of the far political fringe.



However, strategic sagacity and tactical cunning on their own were not enough during the 1930s. 'National', not the New Utopia, was the popular desideratum. Progress required nothing less than the radicalising force of war to break old allegiances and create new opportunities for the programme and praxis of the New Utopians to intersect with the desires of ordinary people.

¹⁴⁵ Pollitt, *How To Win The Peace*, pp.90, 93-96.

¹⁴⁶ Wainright, *Why You Should Be A Communist*, p.17.

Chapter 8

DEMOTIC UTOPIANISM AND THE BRITISH REVOLUTION¹

We want a new and better world, we want it badly. That desire is the culmination of all the old slogans and by-words—"A war to end war," "A land fit for heroes to live in," "Poverty in the midst of plenty," "Never again!" We want that world very badly.

'Democrat', *Be Your Own Brain's Trust*, c.1943²

Our New World will be built round our own firesides. God send us sane men to build it, solid and decent and honest and quietly beautiful. God save us from the cranks.

Sapper D.H. Barber, *A Soldier's New World*, c.1942³

I have many hopes and ideas for post-war conditions and visualise in my mind rosy prospects of a modern Utopia being realised, - a future wherein everyone lives happily existing under ideal conditions. I realise though, that such a happy state of affairs cannot be brought about so easily. Much thought and careful planning needs to be applied to the all-important question of post-war reconstruction, and in many aspects this has already been done by drawing up a plan, already famous as the "Beveridge Plan".

Leading Aircraftwoman O.M. Gallington, 1944⁴

It was one thing to envision a new Britain, a bright and ordered place where citizens lived the good life, but without popular support and a parliamentary majority it would remain a dream. The election of 1935 scarcely shook Conservative hegemony and, whilst the Chamberlain government's record was hardly a cause for celebration, an election in 1939-1940 would almost certainly have left the status

¹ Papers based on this chapter were given in 1999 to the Socialist History Society, to the University of Birmingham Research Seminar and at 'Nowhere: A Place of Our Own - Exploring the Uses of Utopia', University of Warwick, 8 May 1999.

² (undated; c.1943), p.7.

³ p.16.

⁴ MOA TC40 Post War Hopes 1944, 1/B, entry for the British Legion competition to write an essay entitled 'My ideas and hopes for post-war conditions: How the British Legion can help me to realise them'.

quo intact.⁵ Then, five years later, was elected what we can now confidently call the most radical reforming government of the century. The war years, as Ross McKibbin has suggested, 'threw British History... off course' and led to a 'political transformation'.⁶

On the face of it, 1945 indicated the success of the New Utopians in educating the desire of 'Henry and Mary Dubb'⁷ and, in Labour's historical narrative, their triumph was 'the manifestation... of a genuine and cumulative increase... of support for Socialist policies'.⁸ More recent studies may have doubted the socialist credentials of the Labour Party but in Angus Calder's *The Peoples' War* and Ralph Miliband's *Parliamentary Socialism* 'the people' were pictured as striding boldly forward in their radicalism towards 1945.⁹ However, in recent years has arisen what James Hinton has called the 'apathy school'¹⁰—constituted in particular by the work of Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson and Nick Tiratsoo—who have suggested that the clarion call of 'England arise!' was largely ignored.¹¹ In essence, the revisionist argument is that popular opinion was not generally transformed during the war and that a vote for Labour did not necessarily indicate an embrace of the party's vision of a new Britain.

⁵ D.E. Butler, 'Trends in By-Elections', *Journal of Politics*, ix (1949), pp.397-407; Fry, 'A Reconsideration of the British General Election of 1935 and the Electoral Revolution of 1945', pp.43-55.

⁶ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp.531, 536.

⁷ Mitchison, *The First Workers' Government*, p.476.

⁸ Francis Williams, *Fifty Years' March: The Rise of the Labour Party* (undated; c.1950), pp.358-359.

⁹ Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-45* (1969); Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: a study in the politics of labour* (1973).

¹⁰ James Hinton, '1945 and the Apathy School', *History Workshop*, 43 (Spring 1997), pp.266-271.

¹¹ Steven Fielding, Peter Thompson and Nick Tiratsoo, *England Arise!: the Labour Party and Popular Politics in 1940s Britain* (Manchester, 1995).

Although not wearing the colours of the post-structuralist historiographical revolution, the appearance of the apathy school is perhaps indicative of the effects of the interrogation and rejection of the reductionistic and teleological assumptions attached to the concept of 'class' and its relationship to consciousness and hence political action. However, although the apathy school has rendered a service in questioning long-held assumptions, their thesis has been almost exclusively negative in its effect. Not finding a popular 'proto-socialist' consciousness, Tiratsoo *et al.* turned to the age-old rationalisation of the activist, demolishing the proud edifice of Labour's new Jerusalem but raising only the flimsy shanty of mass 'apathy' and 'cynicism' in the space vacated by the discredited certainties of the politics of 'class'. In 1938 G.W. Stonier, in reviewing Harry Ross' *Utopias Old and New*, noted its author's neglect of the 'Private Utopias' which might have 'offset the civic vision' and corresponded 'to recognisable human desires'.¹² Although these desires no doubt included modern descendants of the ancient dream of Cockaigne such as the 'Cockney's dream of a land where "they gorges themselves all day and lies on sofas"' which Stonier mentioned, they encompassed more than hedonism. Regrettably such private utopias have remained beneath the dignity of political analysis. To fill this lacuna the political subject must be reconstructed as *Homo Utopicus* and their desires incorporated into historical understanding.

In order to access this hidden lode of 'demotic' utopianism—that is the desires of ordinary people outside the worldview of the activist—the culture which preceded the individual actor as the field in which objects of desire were constituted must be

¹² *The New Statesman and Nation*, 2 July 1938; Harry Ross, *Utopias Old and New* (1938).

uncovered, and people's views of life as it was and their ideals of how it could be, must be excavated. As *Homo Utopicus* the political subject also actively reflected on his or her circumstances and possessed the will to change them. Hence, the dynamic relationship between demotic desire, the informal theories of praxis whereby desire sought realisation, and party politics in the years leading to Labour's victory must also be brought to light.

However, access to this universe of desire is not straightforward: as Barber comments, the people in question never wrote to the papers and have left comparatively little trace in the archive.¹³ Working-class autobiography offers one possible source and whilst scarcely of 'the general run of people', authors such as Richard Hoggart or Jeremy Seabrook are uniquely placed to mediate the beliefs and desires of the communities from which they emerged.¹⁴ Carolyn Steedman's work in recovering the 'unfulfilled desire' at the centre of her mother's life that 'conventional political understanding' would ignore as trivial, is especially instructive.¹⁵ Another possible, although even more problematic, means to reconstruct demotic desire is via inferences drawn from patterns of popular consumption. Just as Joyce reads demotic utopianism from nineteenth century songs and literature, so the popular writing and cinema of the 1930s and 1940s might similarly be analysed.¹⁶

¹³ Barber, *A Soldier's New World*, p.1.

¹⁴ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (Harmondsworth, 1958; first published 1957), pp.19, 22; Jeremy Seabrook, *The Unprivileged* (Harmondsworth, 1973); John Burnett, David Vincent, and David Mayall (eds.), *The Autobiography of the Working Class: An Annotated, Critical Bibliography - Vol.2: 1900-1945* (Brighton, 1987); *idem.*, *The Autobiography of the Working Class: An Annotated, Critical Bibliography - Vol.3: Supplement 1790-1945* (Brighton; 1989).

¹⁵ Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1986).

¹⁶ Joyce, *Visions of the People*.

These two approaches offer means to create broad generalisations on the nature of demotic utopianism at a given period and point in directions that a fuller study would explore more deeply. However, to capture the quality and changes in popular thinking over a relatively short time with any degree of certainty, the findings of the fledgling discipline of public opinion research provide the most hopeful possibility. Consequently this chapter is based predominantly on data collected by the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO), Mass-Observation (MO) and on the intelligence reports of the Ministry of Information which utilised these and other information sources. Although BIPO employed the most methodologically rigorous approach at the time, the baldness of this type of polling leaves considerable space for interpretation. In contrast, MO material is much more detailed and draws on two main sources, a self-selected group who volunteered to answer questions issued each month ('directive replies') and randomly sampled street surveys. Although the first of these is a source of incomparable richness it would be a mistake to assume that MO volunteers spoke for Britain as a whole. The organisation itself regarded the panel as representative of 'the more thoughtful section of the community'.¹⁷ The second source is more promising, consisting of informal interviews, overheard remarks and street surveys which, while methodologically crude, are more representative of society as a whole.

THE PEOPLE AND PEACE AIMS

Public attitudes to what might be called the 'peace aims' or 'reconstruction' movement were a major interest of MO and Home Intelligence. From the earliest days of the war the New Utopians sought to appropriate the war effort, demanding

¹⁷ MO, 'Social Security and Parliament', *The Political Quarterly*, 14 (1943), pp.245-255; 246.

that a new social and international order be among those things which the nation was fighting for as 'peace aims'.

With the military disasters of 1940-42 and a period of national introspection not seen since the 'national efficiency' debate at the turn of the century, the peace aims question was promoted to the centre of political debate. The resultant 'Fleet street revolution' undoubtedly achieved a significant widening of the constituency of the New Utopianism and sent an incredible spate of pamphlets and plans into the public arena.¹⁸ However, the assumption that this was the shift in public opinion behind Labour's victory in 1945 is more questionable. Although Home Intelligence included 'Speculation about the future (including Peace Aims)' within its rubric, and found—particularly from postal censorship—evidence of a distinct body of support for, and interest in, peace aims, it is doubtful that a mass-movement had emerged. In October 1940 it was recorded that 'although most people seem to be thinking little about peace aims, interest in this subject among the educated minority is once more increasing' and, the following week, that 'interest in peace aims is still relatively slight except among the intellectual classes'.¹⁹ Indicating the distance between the chattering classes and the wider populace, another report commented that despite 'many press mentions of peace aims' the public had 'shown little interest in the matter'.²⁰ On occasions there were

¹⁸ The focus on demotic utopianism in this chapter is not intended to downplay the significance of this body of reforming and radical opinion during the war years. The 5-20 percent of the 'thinking minority' of the population that Mason and Thompson put forward as evidence of the lack of public radicalism might better be read as evidence for it. Rather than requiring the conversion of the 'majority of ordinary citizens' 'revolutions', electoral or otherwise, are almost always the work of a minority (Tony Mason and Peter Thompson, 'Reflections on a revolution'? The political mood in wartime Britain', pp.54-70 in Nick Tiratsoo (ed), *The Attlee Years* (1993), pp.56-57).

¹⁹ PRO INF1/292, Weekly Report by Home Intelligence, 1, 30 September - 9 October 1940; *ibid.*, 4, 21-28 October 1940; *ibid.*, 5, 28 October - 4 November 1940. See also: *ibid.*, 9, 25 November - 4 December 1940; *ibid.*, 10, 4-11 December 1940.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3, 14 - 21 October 1940.

suggestions of change. For example, in December 1940 it was noted that 'the increasing press interest in peace aims is associated with an increasing public interest. This is by no means confined only to the more intelligent people. The working classes are concerned, particularly with the problems of unemployment and social reconstruction'.²¹ However, reviewing a year's intelligence gathering in July 1941, the Ministry confidently closed the question, recording that 'the public is unimaginative. It is unable and has, apparently, no great wish to picture the details of the post-war world. It speculates relatively little about the end of the war.'²²

Whilst these reports drew on an unrivalled range of sources they nonetheless were impressionistic and are amenable to alternative interpretations. We should add that two of the sources used, intercepted private letters and telephone conversations, were likely to be biased towards the better-off and the articulate. However, a MO report of May 1941 also pointed to 'an appreciable decrease in public demand for war aims which has never been a strong mass interest'.²³ Surveying its research, MO noted that 'a large proportion of the population do not know what peace aims are or mean'.²⁴ The modest penetration of the peace aims discourse was illustrated by the meagre public recognition of its key terms. Testing in September 1941 for one of the most publicised examples of peace aims rhetoric MO found that 71 percent of the public had not heard of Roosevelt's 'Four Freedoms' and few, if any, could name them. When asked what they understood by 'reconstruction', approximately half of Londoners questioned interpreted it as meaning rebuilding with only a quarter giving it any social,

²¹ *Ibid.*, 11, 11 - 18 December 1940.

²² *Ibid.*, 41, 9 - 16 July 1941, Appendix 'Home Morale and Public Opinion'.

²³ MOA FR688, 'Report of the end of the war', 5 May 1941, p.1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.20.

economic, political or international connotation.²⁵ Typical of replies were suggestions that it meant 'rebuilding bombed buildings' or 'building what has been destroyed and planning it a bit better'. A woman suggested the cultural distance between the peace aims movement and the wider population, replying 'I haven't heard anyone use the word - I've read about it in the papers'.²⁶ Out of 160 people asked, only one knew that Arthur Greenwood and John Reith were the ministers responsible for reconstruction.²⁷ A year later little had improved, with another street survey indicating that the core New Utopian ideas of political and economic planning had 'not yet penetrated to any considerable extent'.²⁸

DEMOTIC UTOPIANISM

As a socialist G.D.H. Cole had reason to seize on any sign that the tide of popular opinion was going Labour's way, and through the Nuffield survey he was well equipped to detect such a shift. Instead his assessment was that the 'ordinary man' was 'not looking forward with hopeful aspiration to a bravely different new world' but 'hankering after the sort of world they used to live in.' The blueprints of the peace aims movement were 'the dreams of but a small minority of the people' and activists had fallen 'a long way short of having got their message across to the ordinary people'.²⁹

However, whilst the aims of the peace aims movement were vaguely apprehended this did not mean that people in the early war years wanted to return to the life they had led previously. MO street surveys suggested a significant body of

²⁵ MOA FR913, 'Notes on some reconstruction problems', 14 October 1941, p.1.

²⁶ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-42, 1/A, 1941: Attitudes to Reconstruction, September 1941.

²⁷ MOA FR913, 'Notes on some reconstruction problems', 14 October 1941, p.1.

²⁸ MOA FR1452, 'Report on reconstruction', 16 October 1942, p.14.

²⁹ Cole, 'Plan for Living', pp.17-19.

popular desire.³⁰ In answer to the question 'What changes would you like there to be after the war?', only six per cent of Londoners wanted 'no change' and just under a half of all respondents named changes they desired.³¹ The possibility that both activists like Cole and the apathy school ignore, is that the working class people who voted Labour did not share the socialist vision, not because they were 'apathetic', but because they saw the world through the lens of different values and beliefs and cherished different objects of desire. As José Harris has noted, amid the 'minuscule roots of idiosyncratic private culture' neglected by historians can be found 'a tacit expression of popular war aims.'³²

So-called ordinary people differed from activists in their whole way of apprehending society. Whereas the activist's eye takes in society from above, and sees it as an object for design and manipulation, demotic utopianism emerges from a life-world based first around the family, and then the neighbourhood and the workplace, with the demotic gaze seeing the state as a remote and foreign object. This worldview was partly the precipitate of a formal education which stressed the concrete rather than the abstract, but more significantly emerged from the experience of a life which was not invested with dynamic qualities and in which patterns of employment, sociability and family life were all more-or-less predictable. This was a life whose parameters, as Hoggart writes, seemed to be 'natural laws, the given and the raw,

³⁰ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-43, 3/C and 3/E, 'Reconstruction 1942: Post-War Questionnaire', interviews in Bolton, Chester, Somerset and Cardiff, September 1942.

³¹ MOA FR1397, 'Post War QQ', 11 August 1942, p.2; 'don't know's' accounted for 39.5 per cent of responses.

³² José Harris, 'War and Social History: Britain and the Home Front during the Second World War', *Contemporary European History*, 1 1 (1992), pp.17-35; 34.

the almost implacable material from which a living has to be carved.³³ Consequently, instead of the good life being sought through the remodelling of society by the state, demotic utopianism, seeing life in terms of the personal and the concrete, focused on the family and its immediate space as its first object and repository of desire. Hence, the suburban 'semi or redbrick terrace house which the planner hoped to corral within their grand scheme were also spaces to be transformed towards the good life embodied in the ideal that I will call 'Home'.³⁴

HOME

Demotic utopianism focused on the rare space where some degree of self-determination was possible, where 'you can shut the front door, 'live yer own life'.³⁵ As Hoggart writes, whereas 'almost everything else is ruled from outside, is chancy and likely to knock you down..., the home is yours and real'.³⁶ The currency of the phrases 'Home, sweet Home', and 'There's no place like Home', signify the importance of Home in demotic culture.

As a 'refuge' from the disharmonious public world Home was distinctly separate from it. When re-entering its space the 'impedimenta of work' were rapidly shed; the coarse language of the workplace, talk of politics or religion were not permitted to cross the threshold.³⁷ In passing from public to private the strictly disciplined time of the industrial division of labour was left for the temporality of

³³ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, p.92.

³⁴ The first letter of 'Home' is capitalised here to indicate its specific meaning in this work.

³⁵ Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward's study of the homes built on the 'plotlands' during the interwar period is eloquent about the tenacity and ingenuity of ordinary people in creating a space for themselves (*Arcadia For All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (1984).

³⁶ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, p.34.

³⁷ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp.166-167.

Home where time lost some of its alienating qualities.³⁸ Home defended its privacy behind lace curtains, and was jealously defended not only from officialdom but also anyone else who was not specifically admitted into the family circle from what McKibbin describes as the 'wary mutuality' of the local community.³⁹ When translated from terraced streets to the new estates, working class people could become as home-centred as the suburban middle classes.⁴⁰

Home provided a limited but genuine opportunity for people to create the environment they desired, and live the life they wanted to live. Home could be a canvas for material displays of status and identity or perhaps a theatre for a life which in contrast to that outside, was 'full and rich' of 'gregariousness, warmth, and plenty of good food' which Hoggart recalls as the ideal.⁴¹ A domestic interior might articulate a particular aesthetic, perhaps 'a sprawling, highly ornamental, rococo extravagance', signifying the love of 'the cornucopia', 'splendour and wealth', 'sheer abundance and lavishness of colour'.⁴² Whereas the outside world demanded vigilance and guardedness, public masks could be placed to one side at Home for a greater measure of transparency between persons. If anywhere, it was Home where people could 'be themselves'.

Home was also a nexus of interpersonal relations, meaning different things to men and to women. For him it was a refuge from the public world, and after the necessary evil of alienating waged labour possibly the setting for leisure or the creative and satisfying endeavour of the hobbyist. 'The suburban council house and

³⁸ Gary Cross, *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture* (1993); p.174; McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p.166.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.181.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.197-198.

⁴¹ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, p.35.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.143.

the small semi-detached' were also, as Judy Giles comments, 'icons around which women's dreams for a better life circulated' and 'a focus for the articulation and assertion of aspirations'.⁴³ Home was her workplace, but also the basis of her status and identity and of a limited but genuine power. Within the asymmetrical gendered system of roles domestic harmony was shared as an ideal.⁴⁴

Although many people during the war years were vague about the activists' agenda there was considerable evidence of a desire for, as D.H. Barber wrote, 'a New England... based on the family, on the home'.⁴⁵ M.J., in contrast to her fiancé who imagined 'fancy pictures of a new world', had a 'simple dream... the ordinary life of a working man's wife, a little home to tend, children running happily about'.⁴⁶ The attractiveness of this vision was apparent to many advertisers. In *Woman and Home* the manufacturers of Milk of Magnesia wrote: 'Your "after-the-war" dream... is centred round the home. You look eagerly forward to the family reunion... war duties ended ... Days finished with night-shifts... a much travelled lad back home for good.'⁴⁷ A MO street survey found the hopes of 32 percent of respondents to be 'material'.⁴⁸ This included the robust materialism of a young woman who simply wanted 'more money' (F18C) but more common was a desire for the essential and minimum resources from which Home was forged: a living and a space to call

⁴³ Judy Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-50* (Basingstoke, 1995), p.66.

⁴⁴ Naturally, I am outlining a private utopia, reality was frequently quite different. For both ideal and reality see: Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain*, ch.3; Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain*, pp.1-30, ch.2; Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: an Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford, 1984), chs.3-4; David Vincent, *Poor Citizens: The State and the Poor in Twentieth Century Britain* (Harlow, 1991).

⁴⁵ Barber, *A Soldier's New World*, p.15.

⁴⁶ *Tit-Bits*, 26 February 1943.

⁴⁷ *Woman and Home*, May 1945; see Appendix 1, Figure 10, p.380.

⁴⁸ MOA FR1452, 'Report on reconstruction', 16 October 1942, p.13.

one's own.⁴⁹ A man in Kilburn summarised these needs as 'proper houses for the working class, a respectable cost of living, and a decent wage' (M30D). This was a common theme with hopes expressed for 'everybody at work and some nice flats... for the working class,' (F25D); 'better housing for the poorer people' (F30C) and 'jobs for everybody' (F30C).⁵⁰

On occasions there were hints of the grand visions of the town planners; one woman imagined London 'replanned' with 'all luxury flats and the spaces there are now made into tennis courts' (F40C).⁵¹ A middle class woman of 'strong Left Wing opinions' preferred 'a block of service flats, with arrangements for the children' (F30B).⁵² Among those whom planning sought to corral, aspirations were generally quite different. The war had forced people to live communally: sleeping en masse in air-raid shelters and in barracks, eating together in canteens and British Restaurants, queuing and travelling in rude community. Frequently the response to such 'war socialism' was the vision of the paradise of 'civvy street' attributed to the average soldier:

First and foremost, the returning soldier expects a home. He has been looking forward all through the war to coming home for good to his family and to comfortable surroundings. He will treasure particularly such things as a real night in bed and between sheets, meals at his own table without queuing, an armchair by the fire, a lie-in on a Sunday morning. He will want to have a home of his very own,

⁴⁹ MO explained the code used in their research as follows: '...income levels ("class") are indicated by a simple code, thus: A—Rich people, the "upper few". B—"The Middle Classes". C—Artisan and skilled workers. D—Unskilled workers and the least economically or educationally trained third of our people. M means Male, F Female. M60D means Man of D class age 60. F30A would be an "upper" Female age 30.' MO, *The Journey Home* (1944), p.6.

⁵⁰ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-1943, 3/C, Reconstruction 1942: Post-War Questionnaire, August 1942.

where he has privacy and is not overcrowded. Some soldiers may want a continuation of thrills and adventure, but most soldiers will have become surfeited with adventure and will want just these simple and homely things more than anything else in the world.⁵³

Mannin pronounced this the 'most common of all English dreams' and believed that 'in any post war housing scheme calculated to stir English imagination the deep English need for a private and individualistic home life will have to be considered.'⁵⁴ Planning might be accepted as a good thing but only insofar that it made possible the individualistic and privatised goals of Home. One working class respondent commented: 'Replanning is a great idea if they plan the cities better than they were before and get rid of the slums, but I have a strong objection to the tenement system and communal life' (M60D). Flats were 'great barracks' where 'you couldn't make yourself at home' (F40C).⁵⁵

The evidence of ABCA sessions was that 'nobody wanted to live in a flat. They want semi-detached houses'⁵⁶ and polling showed the public preference for houses to be overwhelming.⁵⁷ Summarising its research on housing, MO presented the composite "'dream home" of the majority':

⁵¹ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-1942, 1/B, 1941: Attitudes to Reconstruction, 'indirects', September 1941.

⁵² MOA TC1 Housing 1938-1948, 2/E, Housing 1941: Homeless (Bombed Out).

⁵³ 'Captain "X"', *A Soldier Looks Ahead* (1944), p.167; for the aspirations of service-men and women also see the essays in MOA TC40 Post War Hopes 1944.

⁵⁴ Mannin, *Castles in the Street*, pp.13-14.

⁵⁵ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-42, 1/B, 1941: Attitudes to Reconstruction, 'indirects', September 1941.

⁵⁶ James Lansdale Hodson, *Home Front: Being some account of journeys, meetings and what was said to me in and about England during 1942-1943* (1944), p.190.

⁵⁷ BIPO poll of November 1941 on the question 'If you were free to choose, would you rather live in a house or a flat?' House: 71%; Flat: 19%; Don't Know: 10% (George H. Gallup, *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: Great Britain 1937-1975* (New York, 1976), p.49).

...the small modern suburban home, preferably possessing all modern conveniences, such as a labour-saving kitchen... a bathroom... electric points in most rooms—these and a hundred other things would be appreciated. This "dream home" should have a garden, and be situated both near the open country and near the town, so that while good shopping and recreational facilities are available and the wage-earner's workplace is near at hand, fresh air and open country are within easy reach of the home.⁵⁸

With the addition of some vestigial 'half-timbering' this was the best of all possible worlds: the 'electrified pseudo-Tudor semi-detached' of the suburbs.⁵⁹ The eye of desire envisioned 'rows of new small independent houses, each with its own small garden'; 'a little cottage in the country - just a few rooms, all my own' (F50D); 'a nice little modern house, nice and clean, with the electric' (F25D); 'a suntrap house with a lovely meadow at the back and French windows' (F40C). These were visions of spaces which were 'a little place of my own' (F35D); where you could 'make as much noise as you like (F45C); 'go in and out of my front door, and [be] of no concern of nobody' (F45D).⁶⁰

While noting the special importance of Home to demotic utopianism it seems that communal life was something prescribed for others rather than embraced oneself. When polled on the question 'what does home mean to you' MO volunteers demonstrated a similar desire for a space of their own. The tension between the collectivism of the New Utopianism and the individuality of Home was

⁵⁸ MO, *An Enquiry into People's Homes: A Report Prepared by Mass-Observation for the Advertising Service Guild* (1943), p.226.

⁵⁹ Cross, *Time and Money*, p.171.

⁶⁰ MOA TC1 Housing 1938-1948, 6/1, Housing 1942: Dream Home, and 2/E, Housing 1941: Homeless (Bombed Out); TC2 Reconstruction 1941-42, 1/B, 1941: Attitudes to Reconstruction, 'indirects', September 1941.

clear in the response of a Leicester man who explained: 'Progressive and modern, as I like to think of my ideas and ideals, I should dread the changes in 'the brave new world' to come if it meant flats and communal meals and organised social life. I have simple tastes and like privacy, family life and the cultivation of my own garden.' For a teacher, Home was 'where I can be completely at peace' and demanded loyalty before job, country, Empire, and 'anything else at all.' For another observer, Home was 'everything. All that I should be fighting for if I was able' and 'everything which makes life worth living'. Unlike the alienating outer world, Home imbued a 'sense of belonging', was 'a refuge', the 'place where I am utterly happy and free', 'somewhere you can get away from the outside world', 'the place where I am MYSELF and... am understood'. Home was 'the best place on earth' and 'the reason for working at things I don't much like'.⁶¹

HOME-MADE SOCIALISM

However, demotic utopianism was not restricted to these domestic pleasures; reality seldom permitted the luxury of isolation. Mannin regretted that 'Utopia' was 'to be translated into terms of the Beveridge Report and Mr. Churchill's uninspiring programme of 'houses, jobs, security'—as though all that human beings needed for happiness was the roof overhead, employment, freedom from want'.⁶² However, whilst 'houses, jobs, security' might not be *sufficient* for happiness they were *necessary* and in the 'world of 1939' the dependence of the life of Home on its social context had been forced on many Britons. As was commented at the time: 'The centre of any good world is our own home and our own family. The test of any

⁶¹ MOA DR, October 1942.

⁶² Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p.8.

political system, of any monetary system, of any religious philosophy, is its effect upon the homes of the people, and its effect upon family life.'⁶³

While the activist looks down from the vantage point of the state upon the individual and the family, demotic utopianism inverts this view but nonetheless covers the same social universe, albeit guided by different values and theories of society. From the little world of Home were transposed onto the wider world an asymmetrical distribution of power and function and also the ideals of a parity of esteem, respect and fairness. The axioms of demotic speech spoke a primitive 'socialism': 'Y've got to share and share alike'; 'y've got to 'elp one another out'; 'it's sink or swim together', 'doing unto others as y'would be done unto'.⁶⁴

Just as the man was 'master' of the household while the woman was the 'pivot' of Home life, in a mirror image of this domestic order, workers could see themselves as a group of their own within the social body but without otherness implying inferiority. Indeed, as Ferdynand Zweig suggests, the self-image of the worker could be as 'the backbone of the country, the most hard-working and the most useful class.'⁶⁵ Just as happy married life was a matter of give and take, the ideal relationship between workers and elites in wider society was similarly visualised. For the average worker 'socialism and trade unionism' were 'one and the same thing' with socialism meaning 'higher wages, shorter hours and better conditions', in other words, the means to build a life beyond the world of alienating waged labour. However, this 'socialism', while not formally conceptualised or founded on a theory of society, should not be dismissed as narrowly materialistic. A

⁶³ Barber, *A Soldier's New World*, p.2.

⁶⁴ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, pp.82, 117-118.

⁶⁵ Ferdynand Zweig, *The British Worker* (Harmondsworth, 1952), p.207.

worker's understanding of 'socialism' was strongly imbued with ethical and religious elements. Many men saw 'socialism' as meaning 'fairness and justice for everyone'.⁶⁶

Zwieg, answering the question 'what does the worker mean by his socialism' argued that the worker 'believes in gradualism; he does not want to overthrow the existing social structure. As a matter of fact he does not feel very strongly or think very often about it.'⁶⁷ The demand of this grassroots ideology was for a just and equitable share of the fruits of the worker's labour according to the notion of 'fair shares'.⁶⁸ It sought not the elimination of classes but their harmonious inter-relation. However, as Joyce has pointed out, this ideal should not be seen as leading to 'a mere acceptance of the status quo.' Whilst not sharing the institutional gaze of the activist, demotic utopianism, seeing the world in concrete and personal terms, understood social harmony as the precipitate of right thinking and behaviour and sought a 'far-reaching spiritual change of heart' among those who offended against these ideals of fairness and mutual respect.⁶⁹ If things were as they ought to be, society, while composed of different classes, would be characterised by mutual respect and an equitable distribution of resources so that all could live 'decent', 'respectable' and independent lives.

Thus, wartime hopes for the future were not limited to a desire for a better Home life. MO believed that 'people want something more than less-to-worry-about, more than food, homes and work. They want to know that they're going some

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.189.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ McKibben, *Classes and Cultures*, pp.202-203.

⁶⁹ Joyce, *Visions of the People*, p.300.

place. They want to be able to hope and to build as well as to sit and eat and rest.' The hope was for 'a change... which will really make things *different*'.⁷⁰ One indication of this was the Ministry of Information's finding of July 1942 that among 'Long term trends':

More and more people of all classes are said to be taking to "a kind of home-made socialism, which does not owe allegiance to any particular political party, but which expresses a resentment of the system which has given so much power to so few people". These feelings are said to be by no means confined to the factory workers and the industrial middle class, though it finds its strongest expression in this section of the community. ...

... There is said to be a "desire among the working-classes for some sort of post-war New Order, aimed at contracting the gulf between the 'haves and the 'have-nots'".⁷¹

This finding was deemed to be of sufficient significance to warrant a separate report which found 'Home-made Socialism' to include "'a general agreement that "things are going to be different after the war". The report mentioned 'revulsion against "vested interests", "privilege" and what is referred to as "the old gang"' and stated that the 'bias in popular political thought' was said to be 'turning from liberty to equality'.⁷² MO similarly perceived a 'non attached, leaderless socialism'.⁷³

Evidence of this home-made socialism was present in the interviews which MO carried out a few months later. Demands for 'less inequality', 'income-levelling' and even 'socialism' were present in an appreciable number of

⁷⁰ MO, *The Journey Home*, p.13.

⁷¹ PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 72, 9-16 February 1942.

⁷² PRO INF1/292, *ibid.*, 77, 16-25 March 1942, Appendix "Home-made Socialism".

responses.⁷⁴ We might also note more tentatively hopes centred on 'education', 'state control', 'social services', and 'jobs for all'.⁷⁵ Collective ownership and state intervention were central to a more egalitarian, 'socialist' future and levels of approval were high for such measures throughout the war.⁷⁶ Among changes called for were 'extra wages, and better living conditions and more equality' (M55D); 'a little more equality' (M40C); 'things more equally distributed, more of a standard rate of wages, and better old age pensions' (M35D); 'better living conditions for everybody - more equality' (M55D); 'a world where the spectre of unemployment and malnutrition is lifted and where there will be equal opportunity for all' (M25C); for 'class distinction [to be] abolished and [an] equal chance of education irrespective of wages' (M35D). One man commented: 'There'll have to be a f-----g lot, mate. More democracy. Everything's f-----g one-sided now' (M30C ['smells of beer']); perhaps speaking ironically, another answered 'we'd like to see paradise after the war' (M40D). A woman in her sixties had plenty to say: 'Oh you'll want a whole pencil - all the public services to come under the Government - coal mines under the government - people should have pensions at 55...' (F60C). Others declared: 'I'd like to see communism here (laughs)' (F30C) or hoped for 'a socialist government after the war'; 'everything Government run like they have it in Russia. That's the right way. Yes, jobs and all. Only way' (M45C).⁷⁷

All this suggests the degree to which ideals of equality of opportunity, economic reward and social status became objects of public debate and aspiration.

⁷³ MOA FR1346, 'Report on Reconstruction Part A: Horizons', 30 July 1942, p.4.

⁷⁴ MOA FR1452, 'Report on Reconstruction', 16 Oct 1942; 11,4,5 percent respectively.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9,4,10,11,3 percent respectively.

⁷⁶ See Appendix 2, Tables 1, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17.

⁷⁷ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-43, 3/C, Reconstruction 1942: Post-War Questionnaire and 3/F, Reconstruction 1942: London Interviews, August 1942.

In contrast to these desires rooted in class relations, the gendering of the status quo was much less a subject of concern. Demotic utopianism no more sought the reconstruction of relations between the sexes than the New Utopianism.⁷⁸ Whilst equal pay for women in work received majority support,⁷⁹ the prevailing sexual division of labour and 'sexual contract' remained largely unquestioned. Demands for 'something which gives women a bigger say than in the past' (F47C) or that 'women should be given more chances to do things' (F35C) were unusual.⁸⁰ Even among MO volunteers such sentiments were rare. A housewife hoped for 'more equality and opportunity for women' and a female civil servant called for the 'complete emancipation of women, and a real removal of all sex disqualification in practice as well as on paper'. More common were objectives which would assist the woman as housewife and/or mother, or to enable her to combine paid work with those roles: 'Less drudgery for the housewife'; 'better houses and labour saving devices and so on for women'; 'domestic help available for every house'.⁸¹ MO believed that Britons were fighting 'not merely to create for themselves a better society and... a better world' but 'for a steady job, a good home, sound health and a happy family' and that 'the voice of the people is never more clearly heard than when it is the voice of the creator of home, the mother of the children, the housewife, the woman in the kitchen.'⁸²

⁷⁸ See pp.220-227 above.

⁷⁹ Gallup, *The Gallup Poll*, p.68.

⁸⁰ MOA TC2 Reconstruction, 1941-42, 1/A, [Reconstruction questionnaire], September 1941.

⁸¹ MOA DR August 1943, Question: 'Social changes; Hopes and expectations for change brought about by war'.

⁸² MO, *An Enquiry into People's Homes*, p.iii.

THE POLITICS OF APATHY

Without some system of praxis seeking to realise them, Home and home-made socialism would be empty hopes. However, commonplaces such as 'politics never did anybody any good' and "there's nowt to choose between 'em"⁸³ expressed the view of people who, whilst by no means apolitical, had little faith in the Labour Party, or in political action generally. Whilst people could subside into fatalism, more common was the belief that 'you've got to go on and 'mek yer own life' through 'self-help' at the level of family, community and workplace.⁸⁴

Reflecting this view of politics, Home Intelligence stressed that home-made socialism was 'mainly non-political', with a 'contempt for politics'.⁸⁵ For many people the concept of the state as constitutionally capable of acting effectively in this context was also absent. MO commented that 'economists are clear about the possibilities of a post-war world without slump. But the pronouncements of specialists... do not penetrate the mass of the people.' 'Without a reasonable hope of economic security, speculation and planning for better houses, better education, better social services...' had 'little meaning'.⁸⁶ For these reasons desire and expectation were radically separated in the Summer of 1942. MO believed that 'at present most peoples' private blueprint for Utopia is a paper plan which they feel may be pigeon-holed for a long time to come. The postwar world as they visualise it

⁸³ Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, p.103.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.92-93. The rarely discussed question of the 'connection between utopianism and praxis' and the 'complex relationship between "utopia" and "everyday life"' is considered by Gardiner, 'Utopia and Everyday Life in French Social Thought', pp.90, 117.

⁸⁵ PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 77, 16-25 March 1942, Appendix "Home-made Socialism", pp.1,3.

⁸⁶ MOA FR1364A, 'The Future', 30 July 1942, p.14.

is a very different place, compounded largely of 1939 values and the economics of the 1920s'.⁸⁷

One Londoner replied that what he would like was 'a different thing' from what he expected to get (M40C). A teenage girl answered: 'it'll go on the same. I think' (F17-18C). Another person derided visions of 'ideal homes which apparently we're not going to get' (M50C; original emphasis). In terms of what people *did* expect in the positive sense, BIPO later found that only 30 percent believed there would be jobs for all in peacetime with pessimism highest among manual workers.⁸⁸ One optimist believed that in peacetime there would 'be a different atmosphere altogether from the last war' (F20D) but she was unusual in that respect. The years after the Great War were undoubtedly the major reference point for expectations that everything would be 'like the last war' (F45C).⁸⁹ It was not only the old who cited the period after the Great War as reason for pessimism. One man in his twenties commented: 'the schemes sound very good, but from what I have been told they were replanning after the last war' (M20C).⁹⁰ The memory of the end of the Great War and the unfulfilled pledge of 'a land fit for heroes' also nourished belief in the mendacity of politicians whose cynical promises would be quickly forgotten.

'A BRITISH REVOLUTION'

A year before the publication of the Beveridge Report in December 1942, MO wrote that most people's hopes 'involved little more drastic than a levelling of...

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.1; FR1397, 'Post War QQ', 11 August 1942, pp.7-15.

⁸⁸ See Appendix 2, Table 10.

⁸⁹ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-43, 3/C, Reconstruction 1942: Post-War Questionnaire, August 1942.

⁹⁰ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-42, 1/A, [Reconstruction questionnaire], September 1941.

inequalities, injustices and insecurities'. 'Social security', described by one young man as 'this war's equivalent of the last's "Land fit for Heroes to live in"' was 'the keystone of this post-war world'.⁹¹ Popular hopes for peacetime centred on retaining the means to build and sustain Home life and it was here that the Beveridge Report opened a window of hope and created a vital conjuncture between demotic utopianism and Labour. A clerk exclaimed: 'talk about publishing war-aims! This report will knock 'em cold. There's no doubt Beveridge has done a wonderful job' (M50C).⁹²

When the Report was issued the HMSO at Kingsway sold its entire stock of 70,000 'Blueprints of New Britain' in three hours⁹³ and MO found that 99 percent of Londoners had heard of it immediately after its publication and eight approved of it for every one who criticised it.⁹⁴ This unprecedented response was partly attributable to Beveridge's skill in building up anticipation in the press⁹⁵ — one MO volunteer mentioned an 'inspired press campaign'.⁹⁶ Given that people's receptiveness to reconstruction issues declined when either the exigencies of war on the home front preoccupied them or when bad news from overseas made peace and hence 'reconstruction' a distant prospect, the Report also arrived at a propitious moment. Germany's major reverse in North Africa had raised public

⁹¹ MOA FR1019, Rough draft for Strand article on 'What the people want', 27 December 1941, p.6.

⁹² MOA TC53, Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/E, Beveridge Indirects December 1942, Birmingham.

⁹³ *Evening Standard*, 2 December 1942.

⁹⁴ MO, 'Social Security and Parliament', p.249.

⁹⁵ Harris, *William Beveridge*, pp.416-417.

⁹⁶ MOA DR December 1942, Question: 'a) What are your own feelings and opinions on the Beveridge Report? b) Give an account of the way your friends and acquaintances received it'.

spirits and created a widespread expectation that the war would be over 'by Christmas, 1942, or at least by Christmas, 1943'.⁹⁷

Another reason for the press' reception was the rhetoric which located the Report within the peace aims discourse. As Harris shows, Beveridge's long term companion Jesse Mair encouraged him to introduce 'the millennialist tone, the sense of cataclysmic social change, and the emphasis upon an ethic of disinterested public service' which distinguished the report.⁹⁸ Beveridge located his proposals in a moment of radical transformation: 'A revolutionary moment in the world's history' which was 'a time for revolutions, not for patching' and during a war fought so that people could 'live in a better world than the old world'. The Report put itself forward as part of a total vision of social reform, 'as one part only of an attack upon five giant evils' and was directed towards no less than the 'happiness of the common man'.⁹⁹ In a clever synthesis of the British Way¹⁰⁰ and utopian transformation, social security was presented as being 'in some ways a revolution, but in more important ways... a natural development from the past.' It was 'a British revolution'.¹⁰¹

Whilst a phenomenal best seller, the vast majority of people learnt of the Report via the wireless, press or word of mouth. One person noted that although most people had 'received the report favourably... only about ½ doz. have to my knowledge read it'.¹⁰² *The Manchester Guardian* picked up on Beveridge's rhetoric in its choice of subtitle for its outline of the proposals: "'A British Revolution": No

⁹⁷ PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 113, 24 November - 1 December 1942.

⁹⁸ Harris, *William Beveridge*, pp.36-38.

⁹⁹ Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, pp.6, 170-171.

¹⁰⁰ See pp.290-298 above.

¹⁰¹ Beveridge, *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, p.17.

¹⁰² MOA DR, December 1942.

Case for patching'.¹⁰³ Among the papers preferred by those who would later win the election for Labour, the *Daily Mirror's* front page headline was 'Beveridge tells how to BANISH WANT' and it noted that Beveridge 'calls his Plan for Social Security a revolution' and included his claim that 'A revolutionary moment in the world's history is a time for revolution, not patching'.¹⁰⁴ The next day the paper's cartoonist showed Beveridge and a soldier raising a signpost inscribed 'the way to a better world'.¹⁰⁵ The *News Chronicle* also picked up on Beveridge's claim that the Report amounted to 'a British Revolution' and that 'the purpose of victory is to live in a better world than the old world'.¹⁰⁶ Under the title 'The "Better-Age" Report' the editorial of the forces paper *Reveille* wrote that 'Sir William Beveridge has apparently supplied the noose to break that old order's neck, for if his recommendations are adopted... returning servicemen will be unanimous in their thanks to him for defining the "New Order" at last.'¹⁰⁷

A possible consequence of this mediated route was to enhance the effectiveness of the rhetoric which was not only accompanied by much dry detail in the actual document but for some critics also claimed more than it actually delivered.¹⁰⁸ Comments recorded by MO suggest this. One woman was overheard to say 'it's a step in the right direction, but it isn't the millennium. ... The papers are very unfair the way they present the report.' A housewife noted that whilst a careful reading of the *News Chronicle* indicated that it was 'nothing really new or startling' its headline was 'Beveridge Report plans Social Revolution'. An observer thought it

¹⁰³ *The Manchester Guardian*, 2 December 1942.

¹⁰⁴ *Daily Mirror*, 2 December 1942.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 3 December 1942.

¹⁰⁶ *News Chronicle*, 2 December 1942.

¹⁰⁷ *Reveille* 7 December 1942.

not 'really as revolutionary as the great amount of blurb might suggest'; another that whilst 'very few people had read any of the details with attention... many were the fantastic ideas aired in all seriousness. But at any rate, it did get people interested'. Someone else noted 'I have met none who has read the report only just glanced at the headlines in the papers and decided that it was a good or a bad thing according to their political inclinations.' One of the few working class observers recorded that 'most of my friends have received the plan with loud proclamation. I gather that only the headlines about what we shall get have been studied.'¹⁰⁹

Although everything was in its favour at its publication, peace aims had come and gone in the past and would do so again without evoking the sustained interest enjoyed by the Beveridge plan. No matter if received via word of mouth, overheard conversation, newspaper headlines or the street vendor's cry, there was also sufficient in the substance of the Report to engage with public aspirations, to make it more than a spectacular but short-lived rhetorical firework. Wootton understood why an apparently 'apathetic' people were so stirred, noting that:

...ordinary people are concerned about what is going to happen to them after the war. Of course they are. If many are apathetic about post-war reconstruction plans and promises, the reason is that the gap between the plans themselves and the lives of ordinary people is too wide. ... Good political principles must spell real changes in the lives of real people: Otherwise they are dust and ashes.

¹⁰⁸ In his talk on the BBC Beveridge included instructions on how to read the report to mitigate this (William Beveridge, 'Security for All', *The Listener*, 10 December 1942).

¹⁰⁹ MOA TC53 Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/F, Beveridge - Diary Extracts, December 1942; DR December 1942.

Beveridge stood out from the 'fair spate of general statements and... pictures by our leading statesmen' because of its 'concreteness', and because it related to matters 'within the experience of everyone'. This was 'why the public at large suddenly showed so much excitement'.¹¹⁰

After hearing Beveridge on the wireless an observer confided to her diary: 'Never since I've listened to a speaker on the air did I feel as interested as I did tonight to Sir W. Beveridge - I'll feel a bit more hopeful about the 'brave new world' now and begin to feel real effort will be made to grasp the so different angles of the many problems.'¹¹¹ Beveridge's talk on the BBC opened and concluded with references to the aims of the Atlantic Charter thus linking the Report's realisation to the war effort, and locating it within the peace aims discourse.¹¹² The broadcast also provided to a wide public an accessible and concise statement of its benefits, often in terms of £ s d. The application of the scheme to 'every kind of everybody' and to all parts of their life, was stressed and the promise of a sure grasp on 'essential needs', including 'comprehensive medical treatment' and, among other things, old age and disability pensions took in a whole sweep of threats to Home. At the same time, rather than reeking of statism, the demotic values of 'self-help', 'independence' and 'respectability' were engaged with by Beveridge's point that 'the plan for Britain is based on the contributory principle of giving, not free allowances for all from the state, but benefits as of right in virtue of contributions made by the insured person themselves'. Crucially, Beveridge also explained how the report could be financed, and in tune with the 'levelling' tendency of home-

¹¹⁰ Wootton, *Social Security and the Beveridge Plan*, p.1.

¹¹¹ MOA TC53 Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/F, Beveridge - Diary Extracts, December 1942.

¹¹² Beveridge, 'Security for All', pp.742-743.

made socialism, explained that the 'Plan is only a means of redistributing national income, so as to put first things first, so as to ensure abolition of want before the enjoyment of comforts'.

The press also brought out the Report's significance for the lives of ordinary Britons. The *Mirror* listed its benefits on its front page, went into more detail inside and finally, in a graphic form showed "'How to be born, bred and buried by Beveridge'".¹¹³ The *Daily Herald*, *Reynolds News* and the *News Chronicle* all gave the report a 'hearty' welcome and made it accessible to readers, stressing its potential to cast out the 'spectre' of 'insecurity' which had been 'haunting entire communities and classes of the British people' and bring 'freedom from want'.¹¹⁴ The *Herald* also presented its readers with an imaginative glimpse of the 'Life in Beveridge Britain' of 'Bill' and 'Mary Johnson' from 1944 until, years later, 'Mary', surrounded by her grandchildren, looked back to when "'there wasn't any Social Security plan'". This was a life where unemployment or ill health were 'no worry' and children were 'fine big kids—_inches taller than the average in the 1930s', which ended in a retirement when 'John... kept bees and read the books he always wanted to read'.¹¹⁵

In this way Beveridge spoke to existing desires. Polling carried out two weeks before its publication showed support in the range of 64-73 percent across categories of sex, age and class for the Report's basic principles.¹¹⁶ In working class life 'making ends meet' was a central problem of existence at the best of times. The

¹¹³ *Daily Mirror*, 2 December 1942.

¹¹⁴ *News Chronicle*, 2 December 1942; *Daily Herald*, 2 December 1942.

¹¹⁵ *Daily Herald*, 3 December 1942; in a similar vein the 'story of John Smith and Jennie Brown' appeared in Ronald C. Davison, *Insurance for all and Everything: A Plain Account and a Discussion of the Beveridge Plan* (1943), pp.16-21.

¹¹⁶ See Appendix 2, Table 5.

majority of working men had been unemployed at some time between the wars and, as McKibben records, the 'sickening anxiety' of the threat of unemployment with its alienating rituals of dole office and the threat of the hated means test had 'deeply marked the working class'.¹¹⁷ The response of one MO diarist was probably representative of those who saw the relationship between politics and the private sphere in predominantly concrete terms:

What are my own reactions to the Beveridge Report? I am all for it. It does away with 'future insecurity' while not hindering individual effort. I have never been a member of any political party - never felt, for long, any urge that way at all. At election times, I have read political party manifestos ad. lib. - but never yet found a concrete proposal there. The Beveridge Report states plainly what it means. In that I wanted 'change' in our social life I may be called left in the political sphere. But the only 'change' I have ever been interested in is the abolishment of poverty. I have never given a damn who owned the railway stations, the bank of England or the amount of the Earl of Harwood's income. I have lived among the poor and known poverty myself. It is the greatest destroyer of the good that is in all people.¹¹⁸

Social security could signify not the advantages of collectivism but a foundation on which the privatised life of Home could be better built, 'a super-Beveridge world in which no one starves, but in which there is scope for personal initiative'.¹¹⁹ As a book to encourage popular discussion on 'reconstruction' issues explained, 'social

¹¹⁷ McKibben, *Classes and Cultures*, pp.50, 153-161, 176.

¹¹⁸ MOA TC53 Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/F, Beveridge - Diary Extracts, December 1942.

¹¹⁹ MOA FR1620, 'After the War' [informal report on feelings in the WAAF], p.16.

security only guards our backs and leaves us with both hands free for the bigger tasks of life.'¹²⁰

A woman in Camden Town commented: 'I like the independence of it—the not being dependent. The insurance schemes for old age and that' (F30C). 'Beveridge' 'would wipe out the dreaded nightmare of unemployment and want in old age' (M40C). A middle aged man responded: 'I have read it and think it champion and will take a lot off the minds of many people' (M50C); others believed it would 'make our paths easier by banishing fear of want' (F35D) and 'remove a great amount of worry from the minds of ordinary people' (F40D). Beveridge's rhetoric was not without effect; one man described the Report as 'a bloodless revolution' (M50D), elsewhere it was 'the working man's Magna Carta'.¹²¹ The principal reasons for public approval were indicated in a Special Postal Censorship report of December 1942. Of the 947 letters examined, 473 approved of the Report because:

- (i) "Unemployment, illness and old age are the three things that the working man fears, and now can look forward to hope and security":
- (ii) It will give the boys who are fighting something to look forward to when they come home":
- and (iii) "It seems to be a complete social revolution, which ought to give complete democracy without bloodshed".¹²²

The Report might also be seen as an education in the ability of the state to provide security and of the possibility of such provision in the near future. As MO explained up until 1942, people increasingly knew *what* they wanted but had no

¹²⁰ 'Democrat', *Be Your Own Brain's Trust*, p.120.

¹²¹ MOA TC53 Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/B, Reactions to Beveridge Report, 1942; 1/D, Beveridge Indirects December 1942; 1/F, Beveridge - Diary Extracts, December 1942.

clear idea of *how* to get it.¹²³ The Atlantic Charter had outlined desirable aims but made no comment on how they could be realised and so was easily dismissed as 'talk'. In contrast, Beveridge was 'not a generalised aspiration for better things, but a carefully mapped blueprint for their achievement.'¹²⁴ A housewife commented: 'the average man in the street wants to get things improved but doesn't know how to go about it and any lead such as this is doubly welcome' (F30?).¹²⁵ Tom Harrison's assessment was that 'the turning point was the Beveridge Report on Social Security, for security is the cornerstone which has been missing from people's lives since 1938 and longer.'¹²⁶

THE PEOPLE CHOOSE

During the Summer before 'Beveridge', one radical included among his hopes for the future 'at least 100 of the present MPs strung up on lampposts down Whitehall' (M25B).¹²⁷ Whilst few went quite so far, kind words for politicians were rare. Another man believed that 'poor John Citizen just keeps on listening to fancy phrases and descriptions of Utopia but the speed at which he approaches that Utopia - just round the corner - after victory - when my party is in power - is very slow - two steps forward and two back.'¹²⁸ In contrast, after the Beveridge Report's publication there was a dramatic upsurge in public optimism. Home Intelligence

¹²² PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 118, 29 December 1942 - 5 January 1943

¹²³ MO, 'Social Security and Parliament', p.245. This seems to have also been the finding of the Nuffield Reconstruction Survey (José Harris, 'Did British workers want the welfare state? G.D.H. Cole's Survey of 1942', pp.200-214 in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Working Class in Modern British History: Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.213-214.

¹²⁴ MO, 'Social Security and Parliament', p.254.

¹²⁵ MOA TC53 Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/D, Beveridge Indirects December 1942.

¹²⁶ MOA FR2067, Tom Harrison, 'The mood of Britain - 1938 and 1944', p.4.

¹²⁷ MOA TC2 Reconstruction, 1941-43, 3/C, Reconstruction 1942: Post-War Questionnaire, August 1942.

¹²⁸ MOA TC53 Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 2/H, Reconstruction 1942: Extracts from Diaries.

reported it to be the 'most discussed topic of the week - or "of recent times"'¹²⁹ and high levels of interest continued into the new year.¹³⁰ When asked 'Do you feel that the government will try to improve the standard of life... after the war?' just under 70 percent of respondents answered in the affirmative with waged workers, whilst slightly more cautious, nonetheless predominately optimistic (65-61 percent).¹³¹ A better basis for Home had apparently emerged at the centre of the councils of state as a practicable peace aim and all this within native traditions of social reform. Home Intelligence mentioned that a 'typical comment', recorded in all regions, was "Wouldn't the Beveridge Plan be Utopia, if ever it comes to pass?"¹³²

Even so this was often brittle optimism. One observer reported of his workplace: 'The men are enthusiastic about the Beveridge plan fulfilling a real need in our lives. At the same time there is a good deal of scepticism about its fruition. It's one of those things that are too good to be true.'¹³³ Members of the ATS 'thought it would be marvellous, if it came off. They all stressed the "if" very definitely'.¹³⁴ Apart from the general distrust of politicians the end of the previous war was also recalled. One letter opened by the censors commented 'this new plan for social security makes me laugh, I don't forget the Land Fit for Heroes of the last war'.¹³⁵ A Stockport woman agreed with these sentiments, commenting 'I think it's marvellous - if it comes off. But I've heard of Utopias before' (F50B).¹³⁶

¹²⁹ PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 114, 1-8 December 1942.

¹³⁰ See *ibid.*, 115, 8-15 December 1942 to 124, 10-18 February 1943.

¹³¹ See Appendix 2, Table 4.

¹³² PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 115, 8-15 December 1942.

¹³³ MOA TC53 Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/F, Beveridge - Diary Extracts, December 1942.

¹³⁴ MOA TC53 Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/D, Beveridge Indirects, December 1942.

¹³⁵ PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 115, 8-15 December 1942.

¹³⁶ MOA TC53 Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/D, Beveridge Indirects, December 1942.

Heightened public aspirations and a popular focus on the polity combined with residual scepticism about politicians, charged the moment with danger and opportunity for the parties. One exclamation summed up the new situation: 'Boy, we've got to see that the buggers don't play the "Homes for Heroes" game on us again. The country can afford to give us security, Beveridge shows how to start' (M45C). A Streatham man 'would not give much for the future chance of any party that opposed it', and believed that 'any Government that did not support this Bill to the uttermost would be doomed. It would sweep the country as an Election cry' (M45C). A MO diarist pointed to what was at stake and, more tantalisingly the possibility of a different outcome had the Conservatives embraced the Report: 'what an opportunity for the Labour Party. Here is something that it can use (*if conservative opinion won't accept it*) to revivify its flagging fortunes". On a day when 'Beveridge' was 'public topic No.1' comments overheard included: 'I think it's a splendid idea - we shall have to thank Churchill for more than just winning the war for us... - my husband says that Churchill is the finest leader we have ever had and that he is a friend of the working class' (F44?). Symbolic of the potential for a radical shift were the comments 'overheard in a small newsagent' the day after the report came out: 'if they don't vote for it we'll throw the M.P.s out - it's come to stay - I'm not a Bolshie, I've been a Tory all my life but it's up to people to see they get it' (F45D).¹³⁷

On the eve of the Parliamentary debate on 'Beveridge' in February 1943 Home Intelligence recorded increased interest in the Report and commented: 'people are "impatient" to know the Government's intentions. It is thought that the

¹³⁷ MOA TC53 Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/B, Reactions to Beveridge Report, 1942; 1/D,

debate "will show if the Government really intends to give us a better world", and will be "a test of its sincerity with regard to reconstruction generally".¹³⁸

In response to the lukewarm reception given the report by leading Conservatives, public opinion made a shift crucial to the 'electoral revolution' of 1945. A typical impression of the public's reaction was: 'the majority, chiefly working class people, "look on the Report as the 'People's Charter'" and condemn the government attitude, which is said to have "broken any confidence there might have been in a new and better Britain"'.¹³⁹ A BIPO poll the next month recorded dissatisfaction with the government's attitude to the Report as the most common response, with working people most dissatisfied.¹⁴⁰ Among those who chose to comment, feelings of being 'let down' and of disgust, that the Government had 'dodged' the issue or shelved the report were the most common.¹⁴¹ At the same time, aspirations for change remained high. Asked in April 1943 'Would you like to see any great changes in your way of life after the... war?' over 56 percent of respondents replied in the affirmative with this desire strongest in those sections of the population which would swing the 1945 election for Labour.¹⁴² Significantly, and in contrast to the norm, uncertainty was very low with only eight percent not answering one way or the other.

Beveridge Indirects, December 1942; 1/F, Beveridge - Diary Extracts, December 1942.

¹³⁸ PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 124, 11-18 February 1943.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 128, 9-16 March 1943.

¹⁴⁰ See Appendix 2, Table 5.

¹⁴¹ 'Let down' 5.6, 'disgusted' 3.5, that the Government had 'dodged' the issue 4.4, 'shelved the report' 5.9 (J. Hinton, customised version of BIPO data in ESRC Data Archive, University of Essex).

¹⁴² See Appendix 2, Table 8.

MO detected a combination of 'increasing political awareness' and 'intensified cynico-apathy about the future'.¹⁴³ The words of one man illustrate how cynicism could combine not only with apathy but also with determination:

It's only what I expected. I said all along that the Government would hold it up. They won't dare to hold it up altogether - they'll give out little bits as a sop to keep the country fighting. When I first heard of the B. Report, I said "Oh' - If it's good for the likes of you and me, they won't pass it." (Inv. - who's "THEY"?)

Why the Capitalist classes of course—it's a hackneyed phrase I know, but it exists and it's against our class—the people who work for every penny they get.

But they won't be able stop it—we'll see it gets through (M35C).¹⁴⁴

That popular optimism had been raised only to be rudely dashed also counted against the 'Capitalist classes'. Those largely innocent of the legislative process tended to assume that proposals emerged with such fanfare were already as good as passed into law.¹⁴⁵ Mass-observers and their interviewees remarked on this tendency, one believing that 'many of the more uneducated seem to accept it as a law rather than a report', another noted that 'it's only a report after all - people seem to think it's already passed' (F35C).¹⁴⁶

After March 1943 there was no repetition of the optimism generated by the appearance of the Beveridge Report. Instead, irrespective of the progress of the war, anxiety about the post-war period preoccupied the public mind.¹⁴⁷ 'Scepticism

¹⁴³ MO, 'Social Security and Parliament', p.253.

¹⁴⁴ MOA TC53, Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/D, Beveridge Indirects, December 1942.

¹⁴⁵ MO, 'Social Security and Parliament', p.250.

¹⁴⁶ MOA DR, December 1942; TC53, Beveridge Report Surveys, 1942-7, 1/D, Beveridge Indirects, December 1942.

¹⁴⁷ See PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 126, 23 February - 2 March 1943 — 218, 28 November - 5 December 1944 [last report].

about "the brave new world" continues' Home Intelligence reported at the end of 1943.¹⁴⁸ Ironically, in 1944 when those who were 'certain that the war will be over by Christmas' were 'counted among the cautious', the same report noted: 'The approaching end of the war brings increased anxiety about post-war conditions - many fear unemployment as soon as hostilities cease.'¹⁴⁹ A serviceman wrote: 'The housing schemes, the new education schemes, the schemes for ending unemployment Peace, prosperity, and plenty promised everywhere. Dreams, just dreams. ... We shall go on just as before.'¹⁵⁰

People's concerns centred on employment and housing which 59 and 23 percent of people respectively named as 'the most urgent problem on the home front after the war'.¹⁵¹ The central objects of demotic utopianism were the means and space to build Home and Beveridge offered some assurance of these, irrespective of the vicissitudes of fortune. As one report recorded: 'some feel they could face other difficulties if they had the measure of security the Beveridge plan would afford'.¹⁵² For this reason the Report continued to be a prominent topic for discussion. In July 1944 Home Intelligence reported 'confidence and optimism... among a very small minority only. Otherwise disquiet, anxiety and "ever-growing" scepticism prevail - "it will be just like the last time; they promised us the moon and we got the depression". It was reported that 'discussion of the Beveridge plan persists and, although it is no longer thought that it will be implemented, the plan is

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 169, 21-29 December 1943.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 203, 15-22 August 1944.

¹⁵⁰ *Tit-Bits*, 24 September 1943.

¹⁵¹ See Appendix 2, Table 15.

¹⁵² PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 174, 25 January - 1 February 1944.

wanted as much as ever'.¹⁵³ It was 'thought of, by many, as "among the dreams that won't come true"¹⁵⁴

Anxiety about the future and a lack of faith in the government became unshakeable and BIPO found that dissatisfaction with official preparation for post-war reconstruction increased over 1944.¹⁵⁵ Measures which might have countered this were ineffective. The employment white paper was 'a matter of little interest and some scepticism'.¹⁵⁶ The White Paper on Social Insurance shed a momentary ray of hope. Home Intelligence reported: 'The plan has had a widespread and very warm welcome... Many are surprised and pleased that the plan contains so much of Beveridge'. However, scepticism prevailed: 'At the same time while approving of the plan, a considerable number (seven regions), among whom workers and left-wing people are specified, are convinced it will never be implemented, or will be whittled away with excuses'.¹⁵⁷ Then, with the end of the war and an election in prospect, was added the belief that it was "only election bluff".¹⁵⁸ There was no opportunity to disabuse the sceptics who concluded, after the King's speech opening Parliament, that there was "little hope of early progress in social legislation, particularly national insurance"¹⁵⁹

1945

Although the victory of 1945 came as a surprise to 'most political observers', after June 1943 the polls showed Labour as the clear beneficiary of the rejection of

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 198, 11-18 July 1944.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 190, 16-23 May 1944.

¹⁵⁵ See Appendix 2, Table 12.

¹⁵⁶ PRO INF1/292, Home Intelligence Weekly Report, 202, 9-15 August 1944.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 209, 26 September - 3 October 1944; 210, 3-10 October 1944.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 211, 10-17 October 1944.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 218, 28 November - 5 December 1944.

Conservatism.¹⁶⁰ However, to interpret this as a positive rather than pragmatic and conditional embrace would be to misunderstand the demotic view of Labour current during these years.

In addition to being included in the universal condemnation of politicians, Labour had still not fully emerged from the shadow of its inter-war failures and its leadership aroused little public confidence. Questioned in June 1941 on the 'best man to replace Churchill as P.M.' Bevin, the most popular Labour figure, was only the choice of slightly more than seven percent of people whilst Attlee and Morrison were named by less than two percent.¹⁶¹ In Spring 1942 MO's analysis of verbal comments on the parties found that Conservatives drew only five percent more negative comments than Labour. Significantly, the Conservatives were criticised most for their policy and Labour for their 'personnel and party machinery'.¹⁶² Even in March 1943 when the leadership might have expected to benefit from its stance on 'Beveridge', things were little improved, with Attlee the choice to replace Churchill of slightly less than 3.5 percent of the working classes.¹⁶³ Not surprisingly the desire for 'a proper Labour Government. Not like them in now' (M25C) was not that unusual.¹⁶⁴ MO's assessment was that 'little of the leftward change is party-ward'.¹⁶⁵ Labour's George Shepherd noted: 'the position seems to be that although there is undoubtedly a body of Leftist opinion, thinking largely in our terms, it is not

¹⁶⁰ David Butler and Jennie Freeman, *British Political Facts 1900-1960* (1963), p.133; Tom Harrison, 'Who'll Win?', *The Political Quarterly*, 15 (1944), pp.21-32; see also Peter G. Richards, 'The Political Temper', *The Political Quarterly*, 16 (1945), pp.57-66.

¹⁶¹ See Appendix 2, Table 2.

¹⁶² Harrison, 'Who'll Win?', p.27.

¹⁶³ See Appendix 2, Table 7.

¹⁶⁴ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-43, 3/F, Reconstruction 1942: London Interviews, August 1942.

¹⁶⁵ MO, *The Journey Home*, p.106.

at the same time thinking about *us*, the Party seems in fact to be contemptuously disregarded.¹⁶⁶

One expression of these attitudes was the 'movement away from party' which has been discussed in some detail by Fielding who suggests that 'in 1945 Labour... was a surrogate for something deemed more desirable but impossible to achieve'.¹⁶⁷ The possibility alluded to but not explored in Fielding's work¹⁶⁸ was that the wartime rejection of party related not simply to the special conditions of wartime but to the utopia of demotic culture. A desire for 'A national government - everybody, all classes, no party' (F45C); and 'Class co-operation from every class of the community' (F25C)¹⁶⁹. The rejection of party politics was a critique of the existing polity but also expressed the desire for some form of populist government.

However, demotic utopianism just as much as that of the activist operates under the influence of the reality principle and so whilst desires for an end of party strife might find expression in by-elections, at the same time the intention was to vote for Labour in the case of a general election. As Fielding writes 'many electors were trapped between what they thought desirable, but impossible, and that which they saw as disagreeable, but inevitable.'¹⁷⁰ With other socialist parties, principally the CPGB and CW as non-runners in a two party system, Labour was the beneficiary of popular support, but was hardly enthusiastically embraced. Nonetheless, although confidence in Labour was relatively meagre, it was pro-

¹⁶⁶ Cited in Stephen Brooke, 'The Labour Party and the 1945 General Election', *Contemporary Record*, 9 1 (Summer 1995), pp.1-21; 9.

¹⁶⁷ Steven Fielding, 'The Second World War and Popular Radicalism: The Significance of the "Movement away from Party"', *History*, 80 (1995), pp.38-58; 57.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.57-58.

¹⁶⁹ MOA TC2 Reconstruction 1941-1942, 1/B, 1941: Attitudes to Reconstruction, September 1941.

¹⁷⁰ Fielding, 'The Second World War and Popular Radicalism', p.54.

Beveridge, and included in its programme stresses on elements such as social ownership, egalitarianism, housing and full employment which were compatible with the demotic objects of desire of home-made socialism and Home.



Labour's electoral propaganda had not been shy in declaring its intention to build a 'new Britain' and in the month of the Party's victory, Britons made clear that they did not believe that the election signified business as usual. When asked 'Do you think that the election results mean that the British people... want the Labour Party to govern along existing lines only more... efficiently, or to introduce sweeping changes such as nationalisation?' a majority agreed that the election signified a public desire for 'sweeping changes' with the working classes most emphatic on this point.¹⁷¹

In this way the education of desire effected by 'Beveridge' built a bridge between the New Utopianism and the aspirations of ordinary men and women. One might add that the view of '1945' as the moment when the radicalised populace and effective, welfare-state-building Labour Party strode confidently together toward the new Britain was a version of events which emerged in the years *after* the election, when the Party's achievements allowed popular memory to forget its earlier scepticism. Tom Harrisson wrote that 'for many here, giving Labour another chance is a last hope' and on that occasion, hope was not entirely disappointed.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ See Appendix 2, Table 18.

¹⁷² Tom Harrisson, 'Who'll Win?', p.32.

Conclusion

LOOKING BACKWARDS; LOOKING FORWARDS

Until we become idealists and Utopians we cannot be effective and practical people.

Fred Henderson, *The Case for Socialism*, 1911¹

If it is true, as we are warned, that the time is coming when the realisation of Utopia will prove a source of anguish, that will merely prove that we have built Utopia badly. Even then the free and less "perfect" world we shall thus be led to seek will be another Utopia.

Havelock Ellis, 'Utopia Here and Now', 1934²

The disappearance of utopia brings about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing. ... with the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it.

Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 1936³

To place the New Utopianism in context, it is perhaps most economical to see it in relation to two distinct streams of utopian desire within English political culture. The first of these found its clearest expression in William Morris' *News From Nowhere*, (1890) the second in H.G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905). Both visions promised equality—within their own terms—harmony, abundance and personal fulfilment but otherwise differed radically. From Morris' pen came the vision of a future steeped in the essence of a mythic English golden age, of the beauty of nature and the fruitful countryside, the fulfilment of work as art and of harmonious communities on a human scale. Wells' utopia was much closer to Edward Bellamy's idea of the good society in *Looking Backward* (1888) which Morris had reacted against. This was a utopia of the world rather than of England, a Fabian future of state planning and the card index, of the machine and the city, of largeness and, above all, total

¹ p.151.

² in *My Confessional: Questions of Our Day* (1934), p.71.

³ pp.262-263.

control. It would be a mistake to think of these two utopian traditions as being separate. Rather throughout the first half of the century they flowed together, interacting and reacting one on another, in theory and in practice. In one of the possible Englands of the 1940s, the good citizen, his (sic) allotted labour in the white tiled, chimneyless factory-in-a-garden diligently completed, would return to his wife and the mother of his children in their half-timbered, electric, garden suburb cottage home. Although this vignette of a life modern and arcadian by turns would have pleased neither Wells nor Morris, it drew from both of the traditions in which they stood.

Despite being concerned with green belts, national parks and garden suburbs as well as state planning and bureaucracy, productivist values and welfarism, the New Utopianism with its blueprinting mentality, was possibly unappealing in its utilitarianism and puritanism. Perhaps it lacked imagination and humour, or was careless of questions of aesthetics, diversity and freedom. But even so, this was utopianism taking off its jacket and rolling up its sleeves, acting where action was urgently required. In the memory of one party worker, 1945 'was a dream come true. *England Arise, the long, long night is over.* We were going to come out of our slums and we were going to have all the wonderful decent things that everybody should have, education – and, of course, when the National Health Service started it just seemed as if the millennium had been reached.'⁴ Seen from the perspective of the dystopian distressed areas of the 1930s, it was unmistakably the case that the New Utopianism, in the form of the Labour government, set about building a new Britain. For once, rhetoric was justified by action. The anarchist

Marie Louise Berneri, writing at the time of the Attlee government, considered 'utopians' to have been 'contaminated by the "realist" spirit of our time'.⁵ Whilst the irregular and uneven path whereby desire travels from critique and utopian vision, through contingency and opportunity, may have produced less than was hoped for, or results different from those intended, it was only through the praxis of desire, with its necessary realism, that the dream of utopia could be in any way effective.

Apart from being the story of Wells and Morris standing on the shoulders of More and Bacon, Marx and Owen, the English utopian tradition also had the land of Cockaigne at its roots. This dream of a life of plenty and ease expressed a critique of life as it was and held a potential charge that its playful fantasy sometimes obscured. Rarely written down or even spoken, the desires of ordinary people are always a force seeking expression and fulfilment. In this respect, 1945 represented the intersection between the formal politics of utopia and the striving of diffuse demotic aspirations for the resources to build a better life for the family, in the home. However, demotic desire was not sovereign but one force contending among many and the state, as Stephen Yeo has pointed out, imperialistically took over and displaced organic working class institutions. The advantages of the 'positive liberty' of the New Utopianism was bought at the price of the erosion of communal, familial and personal spaces for self-determination, whilst the new, active citizen required by the blueprint failed to emerge from the 'areas of private, crabbed, deformed autonomy' left by the state octopus.⁶

⁴ Labour activist Patricia Meitlis of London cited in Daniel Weinbren, *Generating Socialism: Recollections of Life in the Labour Party* (Stroud, 1997), p.205.

⁵ Berneri, *Journey through Utopia*, p.2.

⁶ Stephen Yeo, 'Working-class association, private capital, welfare and the state in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries', pp.48-71 in N. Parry, M. Rustin and C. Satvamurti (eds.) *Social Work, Welfare and the State* (1979), pp.68-69; Eileen and Stephen Yeo, 'On the uses of

Utopia being what it is, not everyone could be happy with the new order. Berneri, concluding her *Journey through Utopia* from Plato to Attlee's Britain of 1948, surveyed the contemporary scene in the context of Berdyaev's warning from the beginning of the period,⁷ and wrote that:

Politicians and statesmen bring us every day nearer to the realisation of utopias by supervising more and more thoroughly the life of the individual. In this country the Government has not gone as far as issuing a list of the foods the nation should eat and those it should avoid, as in Icaria, but through rationing and the control of imports it determines to a great extent what we should eat; during the war it restricted women's fashions more on utilitarian than on aesthetic grounds, and even altered men's clothes; through the control of paper it has a considerable say on what should be printed, and industrial conscription, though presenting more loopholes than were allowed in Utopia, establishes the duty of every citizen to work. National Insurance is another application of the principle dear to most utopias, that the community is responsible for the sick, the old, the unemployed and children—reduced, of course, to the niggardly scale of the Beveridge plan. In the industrial and scientific field utopian inventions have been equalled and very often surpassed. But as the world becomes more and more "utopian" Berdyaev's prediction is coming true: intellectuals are dreaming of avoiding the realisation of utopias and of returning to a less "perfect" but more free society.⁸

As ever, utopia could also be dystopia.

'Community': From Owenism to the Present', pp.229-258 in Stephen Yeo (ed.), *New Views of Co-operation* (1988).

⁷ See p.40 above

⁸ Berneri, *Journey through Utopia*, pp.312-313.

Beneri could have taken heart from Havelock Ellis' rather more affirmative reaction to Berdyaev's anti-utopian pessimism quoted at the head of this conclusion. The utopian imagination did not disappear or retire after 1945. New social movements emerged to address issues and to speak for constituencies that the utopians of the 1930s and 40s ignored or did not anticipate. Movements espousing the causes of groups who, on account of their ethnicity, gender or sexuality, were excluded from, or only partially incorporated into the New Britain have come forth. Questions unasked by the New Utopians are now articulated by those working in the cause of world ecology and animal rights. Unlike the utopias of Wells and Morris and the New Britain, which did not disturb gender relations, later decades of the twentieth century saw feminism rise as a social movement, and feminist utopian fiction by Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, Marge Piercy and Margaret Atwood among others interrogating the gender relations in society.⁹

In contrast to their treatment of gender, the concerns of later 'green' or environmental movements were anticipated—at least in their aesthetic dimensions—by Morris and many of the utopians of the 1930s and 40s in their concerns about the effects of industrialism, mass consumption and laissez-faire on the English landscape. However, the happy assumptions of the New Utopians about a future of beneficent science, limitless growth and material abundance have been exchanged for widespread apprehension over the consequences of these forces. Instead of the mere despoliation of the English countryside, the world itself, which once dwarfed human actions, now seems to be being rapidly and inexorably

⁹ Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (1974), Joanna Russ, *The Female Man* (1975), Marge Piercy, *Woman on The Edge of Time* (1976) and Margaret Atwood, *The Hand Maid's Tale* (1986). See also Angelika Bammer, *Partial Visions* and Sargisson, *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism*.

destroyed by misuse. Reflecting these new concerns, Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* has given a name to a whole genre of utopian writing.¹⁰ Concern at the future of the natural environment is also a prominent feature in the literature of sections of what Boris Frankel has described as the 'post-industrial utopians'. These writers, among them Rudolf Bahro and André Gorz, have also examined the implications for diversity and freedom of the interventionist, control hungry modern state in their critique.¹¹

Although Berneri might have approved of these tendencies in radical thought, the most successful of all contending utopianisms has come not from the 'left' but the 'right.' Robert Nozick's work signalled the defence of the principle of the minimum state while at the same time reclaiming the utopian vision for liberalism.¹² Drawing on the resurgence of classical liberal economic theory and drawing it together with illiberal values in the areas of personal and civil liberties and the rhetoric of nationalism, the New Right, having set its sights on what it understood as 'socialism', has decisively rolled back many of the formal institutions of the post-1945 settlement. In this way, von Hayek, the opponent of the 'Socialists of all parties' in 1944 seems to have had the last laugh. 'Freedom'—in the form of 'free market' economics paired with the citizen's autonomy as a 'consumer'—has increasingly replaced the 'constraints' of the welfare state and mixed economy of the post-war years. In some ways more significant is the diffuse cultural transformation which has accompanied these formal legislative changes. The ethos of disinterested public service, which, whatever its deficiencies, was the ideal of

¹⁰ See Marius de Geus, *Ecological Utopias*.

¹¹ Boris Frankel, *The Post-industrial Utopians* (Cambridge, 1987).

¹² Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford, 1974); John Gray, *Liberalism* (Milton Keynes, 1986), pp.41-42.

many of those whom Corelli Barnett derides as the 'new Jerusalemers', has been replaced by self-interested accumulation and individualism as legitimate core values guiding personal conduct and social policy.¹³ Such is the victory of the New Right in this respect that, in Mannheim's terms, ideology presently rules within the formal polity almost completely unchallenged by utopia.

The triumph of the New Right together with the collapse of the state socialist systems of the Soviet Union and its satellites has led to claims of the 'death' of utopia and a consequent 'end of history'.¹⁴ Such assertions should perhaps be placed in perspective as only the latest attempts of a long running effort to undermine both utopianism in general, and socialism in particular, by associating them with the 'communism' of the Eastern bloc. The linkage of utopia = socialism = totalitarianism = dystopia, although a powerful rhetoric in the mass media should, one hopes, find little space in the academy and in thoughtful discourse generally.

In contrast, the ideas associated with the discourse of 'post-modernism' may be rather more injurious to the health of utopia.¹⁵ This ill-defined but pervasive cultural movement has brought with it powerful tendencies towards an absolute relativism of meaning and value. At the same time, reflecting J-F Lyotard's diagnosis of the post-modern condition as founded on an 'incredulity towards meta-

¹³ *The Audit of War*.

¹⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992); for an assertion of the continued necessity of utopia see Daniel Singer, 'In Defence of Utopia', pp.249-256 in Ralph Miliband and Leo Panitch (eds.), *Socialist Register 1993* (1993).

¹⁵ For a discussion of Fukuyama and post-modernism and other views of society as post-utopian see Cohen and Taylor, *Escape Attempts*, pp.17-20; Krishan Kumar, 'The End of Socialism? The End of Utopia? The End of History?', pp.63-80 in Krishan Kumar, and Stephen Bann (eds.), *Utopias and the Millennium* (1993); *idem.*, 'Apocalypse, Millennium and Utopia Today' in Bull, M. (ed.), *Apocalypse theory and the Ends of the World* (Oxford, 1995); Ruth Levitas, 'For Utopia', unpublished paper given at 'Nowhere: A Place of Our Own - Exploring the Uses of Utopia', University of Warwick, 8 May 1999.

narratives', epistemological relativism has combined with a disintegration of earlier liberal and Marxist modernist teleologies of 'progress' and their attendant assumptions of the instrumental power of science and technology. The consequences of this are, at their worst, an air of melancholy, hopelessness and absence of purpose which accompany the feeling that history has come to an unsatisfactory, and stagnant, end. Perhaps more common is a feeling that familiar and used-up things can only be wearily reshuffled, while irony and black-humour become the most that post-modernity can aspire to. Seemingly the maps for the human journey have been torn up at the same time as the bases for collective action have been fragmented, leaving society, present and future, as an arena for the supra-national mega-corporations of late-capitalism to compete to satisfy the 'life-style choices' of the citizen-consumer. Apparently the hedonism of Huxley's dystopia has become the utopia of the twenty-first century, 'the utopia of the hamburger' as Beilharz puts it.¹⁶

However, against this gloomy prospect we might take note that the 'post-modern' critique of reason is in reality something that has been, as Nietzsche shows us, immanent in the body of modernism since the beginning. At the time of the New Utopians, Aldous Huxley, in his suggestively titled *Do What You Will* of October 1929 believed that although Fordism was seemingly about to deliver the age of plenty yearned for since the Fall, the world would not become the new Eden. 'The problems of life' could no more be solved by a 'merely economic arrangement' than by the 'universal installation of sanitary plumbing or the distribution of Ford cars to every member of the human species'. Plenty would fatally undermine

¹⁶ Beilharz, *Labour's Utopias*, p.129; John O'Neill, 'McTopia: Eating Time', pp.129-137 in Krishan

socialism because 'those who inhabit paradise do not dream of yet remoter heavens.' At the same time, 'the complete practical realization of the democratic ideal' implied 'the apotheosis of the lowest human values and the rule, spiritual and material, of the worst men.' 'Life' would be made 'fundamentally unliveable for all', the spread of 'ready-made, creation saving amusements' would only bring 'an even intenser boredom'. 'Existence', in this proto-postmodern dystopia, Huxley concluded, would be 'pointless and intolerable' but even this would not bring a revolution because 'nobody will believe in the betterment of humanity or in anything else whatever'. All that would be possible would be 'a nihilist revolution. Destruction for destruction's sake'.¹⁷ Huxley, Strachey argued, described a society 'in its closing period' where, 'go where you like, "do what you will", you never will escape from the smell of ordure and decay.' Someone trapped in this stagnant impasse could 'either commit suicide, become a communist or inure himself within the Catholic church.' Rejecting the first option, and religion having been fatally undermined by Darwin and Freud, Strachey believed that he had found a means of escape in the New Utopianism in the form of the CPGB.¹⁸

This time communism is an unlikely candidate to release society from its present malaise. However, the post-modern death of 'progress' may suggest not the end of utopianism but rather the opening up of the future as a space which only human imagination, desire and will can work in. Tobin Siebers has, for example, suggested that 'utopia has emerged as the high concept of postmodernism'.¹⁹ If the current sense of 'post-modernity' is not to become a fixed 'end of history' offering

Kumar, and Stephen Bann (eds.), *Utopias and the Millennium* (1993).

¹⁷ Aldous Huxley, *Do What You Will* (1929), pp.213-226.

¹⁸ Strachey, *The Coming Struggle for Power*, pp.212, 223, 227.

¹⁹ Cited in Levitas, 'For Utopia', p.4.

the prospect of a homogenous world culture of 24 hour e-commerce, multi-media entertainment and burger cuisine then we must hope that the utopian imagination will take the problems and potential of the present and envision new dreams, and create its own meta-narrative and telos. However, if David Morris is correct and 'utopia in the post modern era has largely fixed its new location in the solitary, private individual body' then for us in the West, let alone the majority of the world who have not yet entered modern, let alone post-modern, times the prospect is not encouraging.²⁰

The voices from nowhere of the 1930s and 40s, although they spoke to another time and for different visions, remind us that the achievement of the good society requires both desire and political will. They also spoke of, and for, the poor. The form of utopia is for us to imagine and agree upon, it is not written and will not write itself. Utopia can come only through our actions, it will not come by itself. Utopia or dystopia, we will get the future we deserve.

²⁰ Cited in *bid.*, p.5; Fredric Jameson's 'Utopianism After the End of Utopia' gives no more cause for optimism in this regard (*Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), ch.6.

APPENDIX 1

UTOPIAN SYMBOLS



Building a Greater Britain

● The Labour Party has now set out in clear and practical terms its proposals for securing peace and prosperity. Along ten broad paths of achievement in a five-year plan of action, a Labour Government will lay the foundation of a just society, undertake urgent tasks of social amelioration, and build a stable peace system. Labour thus takes the initiative in the crusade to build a Greater Britain—to give the nation's citizens security and well-being.

Labour's ally in the task of causing public opinion with this challenging programme is the *Daily Herald*—the greatest of all national newspapers.

The Daily Herald welcomes Labour's plan. Its far-reaching influence will be used to win approval for its aims.

It serves men and women of goodwill to assist by persuading their friends and neighbours to read the *Daily Herald*—thus ensuring the entrance of Labour's message into per many homes. By so doing you will be helping to win power for Labour's great plan.

Daily Herald

THE PAPER FOR THOSE WHO WANT SOMETHING BETTER

Published by THE LABOUR PARTY, Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1, and
printed by THE LANCETER CO-OPERATIVE PRINTING SOCIETY LTD., 99 Church Lane, Leicester

Figure 1 A new society on the horizon? A mid-1930s advertisement for *The Daily Herald* commends Labour's programme to build 'a Greater Britain'.



Figure 2 The Greater Britain: The front cover of the BUF's most detailed blueprint for the corporate state (c.1936).



Figure 3 Idealised, sunlit figures on the cover of a CPGB pamphlet (c.1937).

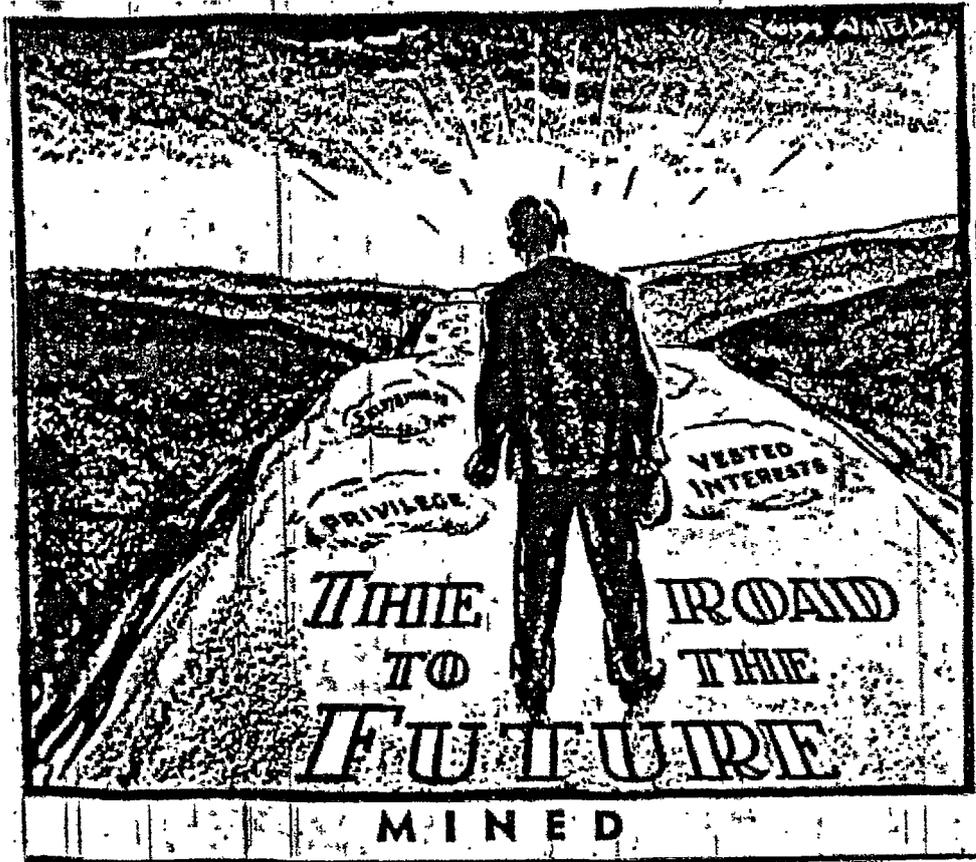


Figure 4 Two utopian symbols—the sunrise and the journey—come together in this cartoon appearing shortly after the issue of the Beveridge Report (*Daily Herald*, 18 December 1942).

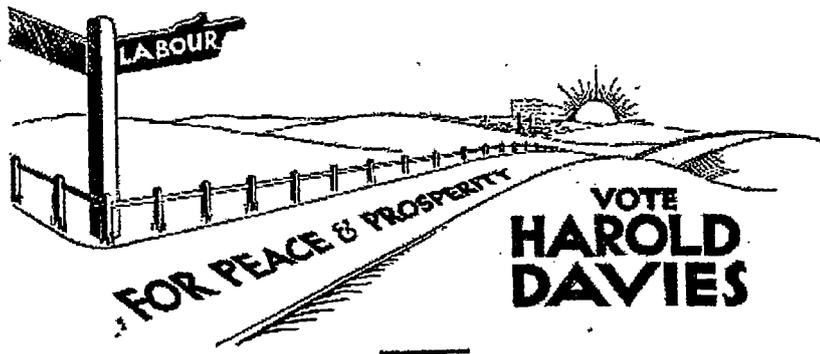


Figure 5 Labour publicity material points out the way to the New Britain in 1945 (BLPES, Miscellaneous Collection 723, Labour candidates' electoral addresses).



Figure 6 Similar imagery employed in the masthead of a election broadsheet (BLPES, Miscellaneous Collection 723, Labour candidates' electoral addresses).

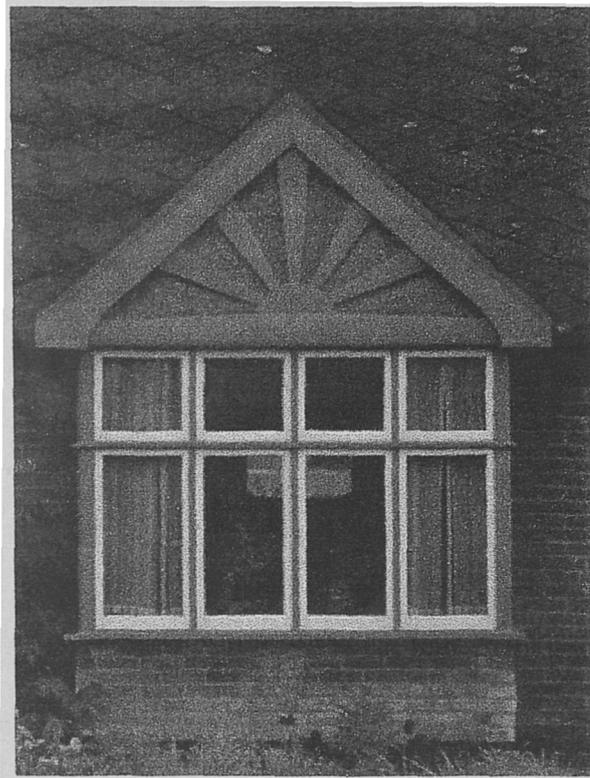


Figure 7 The home as utopia? A motif reproduced on countless facades, gates and decorative stained glass windows (Brian Rice and Tony Evans, *The English Sunrise* (1986), p.13).

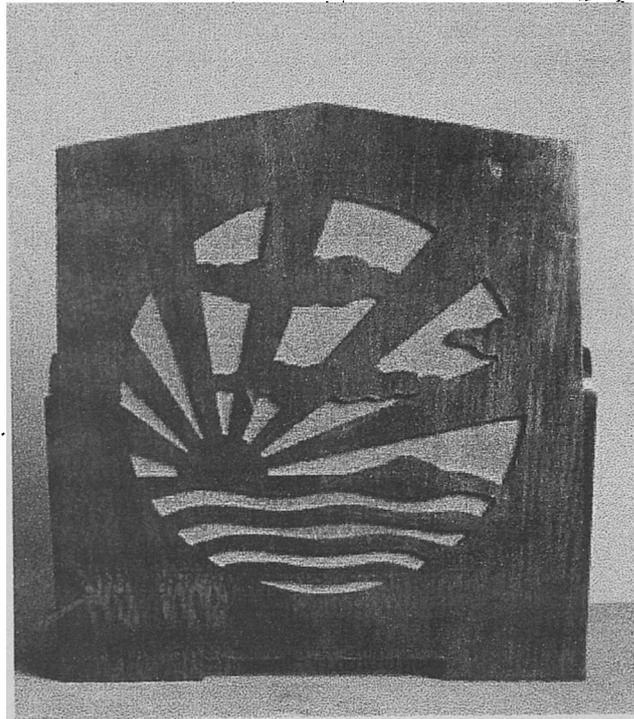
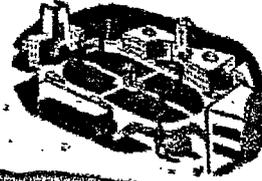


Figure 8 The sunrise in demotic material culture - a much copied wireless and speaker motif (*ibid*, p.22).

THE TOWN OF THE FUTURE



There can be no doubt that our future towns will be as different from those we knew before the war as a radiogram is different from our first crystal set. And just as our admiration for the elegance and the greater efficiency of the modern does not in any way impair our affection for the old-fashioned, so we need have no regrets when we come to live in the town of the future.

Towns and cities damaged by the war are already considering their rebuilding plans. Residential districts, we are told, will be designed on the garden city principle of villas or semi-detached houses each with its own garden; or ten-storey blocks of flats surrounded by communal lawns, flower walks and rose arbours. It is gratifying to note that experts are planning for a 'green and pleasant land' with plenty of

space, light and fresh air. In the past, towns and cities have struggled and sprawled, capturing parts of the countryside with the same inevitable disappointment as the caging of a wild bird. The town of the future will be erect and compact, with the trees, the grass and the flowers of the countryside brought to its front doors. Schools and playgrounds for the children will be included as an integral part of the communal plan. These will be so positioned that children will not have to cross main roads on their way to school. The Shopping Centre, in view of its supreme importance to housewives, will

receive very special attention. Architects, remembering the British climate, will develop the arcade principle for greater all-the-year-round convenience, specially appreciated on wet shopping days.

Ancient buildings will be restored and records and relics of a glorious past preserved. The town of the future will retain its cherished character, its unique individuality and its historical associations, yet it will sparkle and shine in its new pride.

New buildings, new services, new homes, rising up from the ruins of the old, will make for happier family life in Britain after the war. The better environment will invite us to make the most of our longer leisure and will encourage us to seek new interests within the pleasant, comfortable and healthy precincts of our new homes.

Pears

RENOWNED AS THE LEADING TOILET SOAP SINCE 1789

REGISTERED

Mac H of a series of advertisements issued by A. & P. Pease, Ltd., Liverpool, Philadelphia.

Figure 9 Utopian symbolism, the peace aims discourse, and the British Way appropriated to sell soap (*The Listener*, 2 October 1941).

**Your
"after-the-war"
dream . . .**



. . . is centred round the home. You look eagerly forward to the family reunion . . . war duties ended . . . Dad finished with night-shifts . . . a much travelled lad back home for good.

Yours will be the responsibility of looking after the family's health. Wartime experience has shown you the value of 'Milk of Magnesia', so you won't forget to keep this always in the medicine cabinet as a standby against minor upsets of the system.

'MILK OF MAGNESIA'

'Milk of Magnesia' is the trade mark of Phillips' preparation of magnesia

Figure 10 "After the War" represented as a repository of feminine demotic desire (*Woman and Home*, May 1945).



**POST-WAR PROSPERITY—
THE TRUE FOUNDATION**

In the background of the war effort men and women are quietly facing up to peacetime problems. Planning the future will be a task demanding foresight and imagination.

One factor gives encouragement in the stern work of post-war planning—the sound state of health of the community.

'Milk of Magnesia' by correcting ailments has benefited the nation by thousands of working hours.

In the years ahead, when construction replaces destruction, 'Milk of Magnesia' will help in maintaining health—the foundation of after-war prosperity.

'MILK OF MAGNESIA'

'Milk of Magnesia' is the trade mark of Phillips' preparation of magnesia.

Figure 11 "After the War" represented as a site of civic duty (*Woman and Home*, March 1943).

APPENDIX 2

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All figures are percentages.

TABLE 1. HEALTH, APRIL 1941

<i>Question: 'Which would you prefer of the following: all doctors and hospitals under State control with their services free as education is now; an extension of the panel system to included everybody; having a private doctor whom you pay for his visits and medicine?'</i>	
April 1941	
All doctors and hospitals under State control	55
An extension of the panel system to included everybody	30
Having a private doctor	15

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, pp.43-44.

TABLE 2. PRIME MINISTER, JUNE 1941

Question: 'If anything should happen to Mr. Churchill, who do you think would be the best man to take his place as prime minister?'				
June 1941				
By Income				
	Overall	Above average	Average	Below Average
Eden	35.2	23.7	33.8	36.4
Bevin	7.3	7.2	6.4	7.6
Attlee	1.6	1.0	2.0	1.6
Beaverbrook	7.1	10.3	10.1	6.1
H.-Belisha	3.7	5.2	1.8	4.3
Morrison	1.7	1.0	1.3	2.0
Halifax	2.3	5.2	4.0	1.6
L. George	3.0	2.1	3.1	3.1
Sinclair	0.9	0.0	2.0	0.6
Cooper	1.2	3.1	1.1	1.0
Others	7.3	7.2	7.9	7.1
No Opinion	17.0	22.7	15.4	17.2
None could Replace him	9.7	8.2	9.2	9.7

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.45; J. Hinton, customised version of BIPO data in ESRC Data Archive, University of Essex.

TABLE 3. SOCIAL SECURITY, NOVEMBER 1942

Question: 'Even if it would mean you paying more insurance than you pay now, would you favour a Government Insurance Scheme which would give every unmarried adult, or every married couple, £2 a week or its equal in food, clothes and housing, when they are sick or unemployed.'							
November 1942							
	Overall				By Sex		
	yes	no	d/k		yes	no	d/k
	70	16	14	Men	71	19	10
				Women	68	13	19
	By Age				By Social Class		
	yes	no	d/k		yes	no	d/k
21-29	73	13	14	Higher	64	21	15
50-49	71	16	13	Middle	67	19	14
50+	66	17	17	Lower	70	16	14

PRO INF1/292, Appendix, Ministry of Information Home Intelligence Division Weekly Report 113, 24 November - 1 December 1942.

TABLE 4. STANDARD OF LIFE, DECEMBER 1942

Question: 'Do you feel that the government will try to improve the standard of life after the war?'									
December 1942									
By Occupation									
	Overall	Sal. Prof.	Sal. Clerical	Shop Prop.	Waged Indust.	Waged Agric.	Waged others	House-wives	Unoccupied
Yes	68	82.5	81	70	64.8	61.1	62.6	69	63.7
No	12	5.6	8.5	11.8	12	11.1	18.8	11.1	11.5
No Opinion	20	11.9	9.8	17.3	23	27.8	18.6	19.5	24.8
By Income									
	Overall	Above average		Average		Below Average			
Yes	68	80.4		77.2		64.4			
No	12	5.4		9.4		13.7			
No Opinion	20	14.1		13.2		21.6			

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.68; Hinton, customised version of BIPO data.

TABLE 5. SOCIAL SECURITY, MARCH 1943

Question: 'On the Beveridge report, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the government's attitude as explained by the government ministers in Parliament?'									
March 1943									
By Occupation									
	Overall	Sal. Prof.	Sal. Clerical	Shop Prop.	Waged Indust.	Waged Agric.	Waged others	House-wives	Unoccupied
Satisfied	29	46.8	29.7	42.9	23.7	39.7	24.3	25.5	27.8
Dissatisfied	47	36.9	47.1	38.7	55.8	37.2	48.8	38.2	43.5
No Opinion	24	15.6	22.5	16.8	17.8	21.8	23.7	34.7	24.3
By Income									
	Overall	Above average		Average		Below Average			
Satisfied	29	52.5		34.9		24.1			
Dissatisfied	47	32.0		43.6		47.2			
No Opinion	24	15.6		21.3		25.5			

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.72; Hinton, customised version of BIPO data.

TABLE 6. WORKING CONDITIONS - REGULATION, MARCH 1943

Question: 'The bill [to regulate wages and working conditions in cafes, hotels, and restaurants] gives the government the right to check the efficiency of individual catering firms. Do you approve or disapprove of the government having such powers?'	
March 1943	
Approve	66
Disapprove	17
No Opinion	17

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.73.

TABLE 7. PRIME MINISTER, MARCH 1943

Question: 'If anything should happen to Mr. Churchill, who do you think would be the best man to take his place as prime minister?'				
March 1943				
By Income				
	Overall	Above average	Average	Below Average
Eden	48.5	55.2	51.0	47.2
Cripps	16.0	17.1	16.8	15.8
Attlee	3.4	3.8	2.4	3.7
Bevin	6.8	1.9	4.3	7.9
Beverbrook	1.9	1.9	1.2	2.0
H belisha	.5	.5	.2	.3
Morrison	2.4	1.0	2.9	2.3
K. Wood	.3	1.0	.2	.2
Sinclair	.9	1.0	1.4	.8
L-George	0	0	.4	.3
Halifax	.4	1.0	.5	.4
Woolton	.2	1.0	0	.1
Alexander	.1	0	.2	.1
Lyttleton	.1	0	.2	.1
Acland	.3	0	.7	.2
Maxton	.1	0	.2	.1
Shinwell	.9	0	.2	1.1
Cooper	.1	0	0	.1
Pritt	.2	1.0	.2	.1
Greenwood	.6	1.9	1.0	.3
Others	2.5	3.8	2.7	2.5
No Opinion	14.0	8.6	13.2	14.6

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.45; Hinton, customised version of BIPO data.

TABLE 8. POST-WAR CHANGES, APRIL 1943

Question: 'Would you like to see any great changes in your way of life after the war?'									
April 1943									
By Occupation									
	Overall	Sal. Prof	Sal. Clerical	Shop Prop.	Waged Indust.	Waged Agric.	Waged others	House-wives	Unoccu- pied
Yes	57	48.9	48.9	39.8	69.4	47.0	60.5	51.6	38.1
No	34	45.8	41.5	50.0	19.9	45.8	29.8	36.8	49.5
No Opinion	9	3.1	7.4	9.1	9.2	6.0	8.4	10.1	11.3
By Income									
	Overall	Above average		Average		Below Average			
Yes	57	39.0		44.2		60.8			
No	34	55.2		46.2		28.6			
No Opinion	9	3.8		8.9		8.8			
By Age									
	Overall	21-29		30-49		50+			
Yes	57	61.2		60.1		50.1			
No	34	28.1		30.1		39.5			
No Opinion	9	9.9		7.8		9.1			

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.75; Hinton, customised version of BIPO data.

TABLE 9. MEDICAL SERVICES, JUNE 1943

Question: 'Do you think a state-run medical service would or would not be beneficial to the nation as a whole?'	
June 1943	
Would	70
Would not	17
No opinion	13

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.77.

TABLE 10. POST-WAR EMPLOYMENT, JULY 1943

Question: 'Do you think that after the war there will be jobs for all who want to work?'									
July 1943									
By Occupation									
	Overall	Sal. Prof.	Sal. Clerical	Shop Prop.	Waged Indust.	Waged Agric.	Waged others	House-wives	Unoccu- pied
Yes	31	33.7	24.6	46.1	29.2	38.6	31.8	25.7	30.6
No	48	52.6	50.7	34.8	53	34.3	44.8	48.9	47.6
No Opinion	21	13.7	23.9	19.1	17.4	27.1	22.7	24.9	21.5
By Income									
	Overall	Above average		Average		Below Average			
Yes	31	42.7		36.2		27.5			
No	48	41.6		47.9		48.3			
No Opinion	21	18.2		15.7		23.7			

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.68; Hinton, customised version of BIPO data.

TABLE 11. COAL MINES, NOVEMBER 1943

Question: 'If the mines were now put permanently under public ownership and control, do you think that the output of coal would increase, decrease, or remain the same?'	
November 1943	
Increase	48
Decrease	15
Same	30
No opinion	17

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.83.

TABLE 12. POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION, APRIL AND SEPTEMBER 1944

<i>Question: 'The government is taking steps to deal with reconstruction in Britain after the war. On the whole, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the progress made?'</i>		
	April 1944	September 1944
Satisfied	43	31
Dissatisfied	35	48
No opinion	22	21

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, pp.90, 98.

TABLE 13. POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION, JUNE 1944

<i>Question: 'During the changeover from war to peace, should the change be done mainly under government control, or should it be left mainly to private business?'</i>	
June 1944	
Government control	68
Private control	14
No opinion	18

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, pp.91-92.

TABLE 14. MEDICAL SERVICES, JULY 1944

<i>Question: 'One the whole, would you like the idea of a publicly run National Health Service, or would you prefer hospitals and doctors to be left as they are?'</i>	
July 1944	
National Health Service	55
As they are	32
Don't Know	13

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.92.

TABLE 15. MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM, SEPTEMBER 1944

Question: 'What do you think is the most urgent problem the government must solve during the next few months?'	
September 1944	
Housing	54
Employment	13
Cost of living	1
Social security; pensions	2
Coal crisis	4
Preparation for return of forces	4
Switch-over to peace production	3
Switch-over to peace production	1
Other problems	12
No opinion	7

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.97.

TABLE 16. NATIONALISATION OF LAND, APRIL 1945

Question: 'Do you approve or disapprove of the nationalisation of land?'	
April 1945	
Approve	51
Disapprove	30
No opinion	19

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.108.

Table 17. Employment, June 1945

Question: 'Some people say that the best way to provide jobs is by private enterprise and removing all government controls. Do you agree or disagree?'	
June 1945	
Agree	35
Disagree	48
No opinion	17

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.111.

TABLE 18. ELECTION RESULTS, JULY 1945

Question: 'Do you think that the election results mean that the British people want the Labour party to govern along existing lines only more efficiently, or to introduce sweeping changes such as nationalization?'									
July 1945									
By Occupation									
	Overall	Sal. Prof	Sal. Clerical	Shop Prop.	Waged Indust.	Waged Agric.	Waged others	House-wives	Unoccu pied
Existing Lines	30	27.7	27.5	38.3	21.2	26.1	28.9	27.5	29.7
Changes	56	50.4	51.9	42.0	59.8	58.7	50.9	50.0	44.0
No Opinion	14	13.4	12.2	11.1	14.4	8.7	13.6	12.9	19.8
By Income									
	Overall	Above average		Average		Below Average			
Existing Lines	30	34.2		31.5		25.2			
Changes	56	41.7		46.5		55.3			
No Opinion	14	15.8		12.7		13.2			
By Age									
	Overall	21-29		30-49		50+			
Existing Lines	30	21.4		29.7		27.1			
Changes	56	55.7		52.9		49.3			
No Opinion	14	16.7		10.5		15.2			
By Sex									
	Overall	Male			Female				
Existing Lines	30	26.1			28.9				
Changes	56	54.3			49.2				
No Opinion	14	12.2			14.6				

The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls, p.112; Hinton, customised version of BIPO data.

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