

## The British Labour Party Uses Humanitarian Assistance as A Means of International Diplomacy in the Twenty First Century

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### INTRODUCTION

In 1945 the Labour Government, led by Clement Attlee, inherited a huge and complex Empire. It appeared that the British Empire had yet again emerged intact from a fundamental challenge, but in real terms this was not the case. The global war's impact on Britain was a massive debt that was mainly owed to the United States. Additionally, estimates have shown that 10% of Britain's pre-war wealth or no less than one-quarter of disinvestments had been lost. Most importantly, Britain was able to pay for only a fraction of the imports she needed for current survival and for the reconstruction of her economic well-being. "Through lend- lease and her ability to run up enormous debts to members of the sterling area it had been possible during the war to divert a large proportion of her former export industries to war

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production, so that at the end of 1944 her exports stood at only about one-third of their pre-war volume.”<sup>(1)</sup>

As for import needs, they remained the same as in 1938, in addition to the fact that terms of trade had also moved against Britain; “invisible earnings had fallen through the loss of one- Quarter of the merchant- marine, and liquidation of over £ 1 billion in foreign investments. Britain’s external liabilities were nearing £ 3.5 billion by the middle of 1945- a seven – fold increase – yet her reserves totaled less than £ 500 million.”<sup>(2)</sup>

According to calculations, over the next three years, before Britain could pay its way internationally, debts of at least another £ 1.25 billion would be incurred. Furthermore, given the many changes in the country’s economic predicament, “it was expected that in order to achieve long- term solvency the volume of British export would have to be at least 50 per cent higher than before the war. This figure was later revised to 75 per cent. Yet, in June 1945, no less than 45 per cent of the nation’s employable man- power was still directly or indirectly directed to the war effort. Conversion to the needs of peace had barely begun.”<sup>(3)</sup>

As a result “the material fruits of victory were not much in evidence.”

If not among the public, defence, foreign and colonial policy received considerable attention in the Labour Party. This was as a result of the emergence of two new super powers, the United States, with its possession of atomic weapons, and the Soviet Union, which would clearly have such weapons soon. Moreover, the Labour leader, Clement Attlee, had already been, even before the Second World War, speaking of Labour’s commitment to the abandonment of imperialism in the colonies. This was partly because of the Labour’s colonial doctrine, and, therefore, it is essential to bring this to our attention. Although the economic pressures on the Labour Government were a principal cause of its post war decolonisation policies, ideological factors played a leading role in influencing Labour leaders in formulating their policies.

### **THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY'S ANTI- COLONIAL DOCTRINE:**

“The Labour party always considers itself primarily a socialist party and only to a limited extent as Marxist. Its organization and doctrine grew out of the pragmatically oriented British trade- union movement and an old humanitarian Christian reform ideal, which at times entered a phase of social and political radicalism and took over the liberal inheritance. This characteristic tradition of the British working- class movement, which survived in years to come in spite of the adoption of some Marxist theories, also determined the Labour party’s colonial doctrine.”<sup>(5)</sup>

The British Labour party until 1914 did not have an anticolonialist doctrine that could differentiate it from the continental socialist parties. “In 1900, led by Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb, the Fabian Society even openly supported imperialism and rejected the Pro-Boer attitude of leading liberals.”<sup>(6)</sup> But, in the years that followed, Sydney Oliver, C.R.Buxton, Mary Kingsley and E.D. Morei’s influence, who represented the liberal or radical tradition, made itself felt. They were more interested in the actual situation in the colonies than in a theory of imperialism. They demanded more active reform, to improve the lot of the native population, instead of the withdrawal of the colonial power. “Hobson provided the Labour party with a ‘doctrine’, since he interpreted colonial imperialism in economic terms; however, Hobson was not a socialist nor even a Marxist, but a radical reformer who anticipated the concept of trusteeship in his demand for an ‘enlightened’ colonial policy.”<sup>(7)</sup>

During the First World War the Labour party had already adopted the mandate principle of the future league of Nations and also made international control a focal point of its colonial programme. In this there were two aims: “to prevent a new rivalry for colonial acquisitions among the world powers, and to replace capitalist exploitation by a policy of reform which would ‘develop’ backward ‘people’ and prepare them for self government.”<sup>(8)</sup>

In addition to the two above-mentioned goals, not only did the Labour party want “a detailed formation of the mandate principle and a well-defined system of international control; it was even more concerned with

subordinating all the colonies to the League of Nations.”<sup>(9)</sup> In the following years the Labour party demanded to extend the mandate principle to all European colonies. However, the SFIO (French Socialist party), unlike the British Labour party, was interested in assimilation and not self-government, which was the object of the mandate policy, and thus showed no interest in the British Labour party’s initiatives.

Labour’s support for trusteeship and later the policy of ‘gradual grant of self- government’ helped to establish a certain basis of trust between the mother country and the nationalist leaders. Such an attitude did, to some degree, contribute towards creating the Modern Commonwealth- a Multinational Institution.

This examination firmly indicates that the Labour party is overtly ideological. It stresses the need for equality – equality between classes and between races. It insists on equality of opportunity and, even, equality or near – equality of rewards. Social provision is given a very high priority by the Labour party. It advocates an extension of public ownership and/ or control. In foreign affairs the Labour party is “far less expenditures and closing overseas bases than any Conservative government is ever likely to be.”<sup>(10)</sup> It is “parochial and fervently anti- colonial.”<sup>(11)</sup>

### **THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY’S ATTITUDES AND POLICY IDEAS TOWARDS THE USING OF HUMANITARIAN AIDS AS A MEANS OF INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY.**

Relinquishing India can be considered an appropriate start and case study to investigate the attitudes and policy ideas of the British Labour party towards the process of the decolonisation of the British Empire, the establishment of the Modern Commonwealth, and thus the roots of using humanitarian aids as a means of international diplomacy in the twenty first century. This approach is taken for two reasons. Firstly, the British political elite had always regarded India as the ‘jewel’ of the British Empire, it could be said that in fact one of the reasons that the British Empire became so vast in the East was to protect India. It was always believed that if the Empire lost India the

other colonies would follow suit. Such a belief became a reality Once India won independence from Britain, the rest of the colonies in Asia and Africa followed India's path. We could go as far as saying that, in the developing world, India became a model for political independence. The second reason for selecting India as a case study is due to the fact that the Indian question had indeed become a pressing issue for the Labour Government of 1945-1951 and therefore they had the urge to come to grips with it. This was because the situation in India was getting more and more dangerous.

For decades the ultimate transfer of power to India had been foreseen, but not even until 1939 had it been realised how fast the granting of independence to the Indians would be carried out. The antagonism felt by Hindus and Muslims for each other, and the failure of the Congress and other Indian Parties to help guarantee either internal stability or resistance to aggression from outside, appeared convincing evidence that for sometime to come no dramatic development with regard to independence would take place in India. In his letter in 1939 the Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, had expressed the view to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, that the rate of advance was "much more likely to be that of a stage coach rather than an express train."<sup>(12)</sup> In spite of the fact that he had doubted this judgment once the war had broken out, Lord Linlithgow had continued to feel astonishment at the idea that the British would "seriously contemplate evacuation in any measurable period of time."<sup>(13)</sup>

However, the Indian leaders were losing their patience and becoming increasingly active in their demands for self – government. They had to wish to wait indefinitely. The Second World War undoubtedly stimulated the Indians' struggle for separation from the British Empire. "At the beginning of that war the Viceroy made the ludicrously inept mistake of declaring war on India's behalf, as he was entitled to do, without consulting a single Indian."<sup>(14)</sup> The white Raj came to realise in the early 1940s that its years were numbered, as Britain's ability to defend its Asian Empire, with war raging in Europe, was brought into question and increasing reliance had to be placed on Indian support and forces in the face of the Japanese threat Dominion status had accordingly been offered to the Indians, once the war

was over, and detailed propositions had been formulated by Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942; in that year Japanese seizure of the British possessions in the Far East, notably Singapore and Burma, had made Indian help in the face of a threatened invasion of India crucial. However, both the predominantly Hindu Congress party and the Muslim League rejected the propositions put forward by Sir Stafford Cripps. Congress had objected particularly to Cripps' recommendation that provinces might opt out of the projected dominion, while the league rejected the proposal on the entirely opposite ground that the idea of a separate Muslim state was not contemplated. Gandhi, in particular, had contributed to the failure of Cripps' mission with his demands that the British should leave at once, even if this meant leaving India to havoc and the Japanese. The British obviously could not comply with Gandhi's demand, and when widespread disorder had followed the inauguration of a 'Quit India' campaign, by the middle of 1943, 36,000 were imprisoned, including Gandhi.

As the war ended it was clear that independence for India could not be delayed, but there was an obstacle. The unity that the British had bestowed on the country was unlikely to be permanent. Since 1940 Mohammad Ali Jinnah had been contemplating a two – nation theory, and under his leadership the creation of a separate Pakistan had become the unrelenting policy of the Muslim League. The Hindus, However, were unwilling to contemplate partition; Gandhi and Nehru believed that the communal rift was essentially a domestic problem that Indians would resolve once they had obtained self- government. Gandhi predicted that when freedom had been gained "an interim solution will be found to be easy."<sup>(15)</sup> Nehru, an agnostic, whose ideal was a secular state, never envisaged a country divided along religious boundaries. In general, Congress believed that the British, with conscious intention of "divide and rule," were stimulating the conflict.

In March 1946, however, the British Labour Government sent a Cabinet mission to India, consisting of Lord Patrick- Lawrence, the secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, the President of the Board of Trade, and A.V. Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty, to try to get agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League, by suggesting the immediate

establishment of an interim government as a preliminary to independence. The Muslim League rejected this British scheme. The proposal recommended that all positions should be held by the Indians and, as a long-term solution, the creation of a federal government which would have the central authority with control over foreign affairs, defence and communication, and would give other issues to the provincial governments. The significant feature of the federation was to be the organisation of the provinces into three groups, one predominantly Hindu and the other predominantly Muslim. Ironically, this time, the Muslim League said that the United Kingdom was favouring the Hindus. Therefore, the leader of the Muslim League, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, in August 1946, inaugurated Direct Action by the League for securing a separate sovereign state for Muslim. The campaign began with communal riots in Calcutta, which resulted in 4,000 dead and 10,000 injured. In early September rioting broke out in Bombay, in October destruction and disorders in East Bengal led to Hindu evacuations; in October and November there followed a holocaust of Muslims in Bihar.

Early in 1947 Wavell, the Civeroy, concluded that no single Indian central authority could be constituted and he accordingly advised the British government either to retain power for at least a decade or to transfer it, fragmented, to the several provinces.

The United Kingdom Government rejected this advice. The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, was recalled, and replaced in 1947 by Lord Mountbatten of Burma as the last viceroy. Lord Mountbatten brought the prestige of his royal connections and his war record to his new power (he had been the Supreme Allied Commander in South- East Asia): he had, additionally, a well-developed diplomatic sense and capacity for decision- making. He also had a good relation with the Attlee Government with regard to a large number of issues. Concerning Lord Wavell, however, Attlee wrote in his autobiography, “I had a great admiration for Lord Wavell... but I did not think he was likely to find a solution. I did not think that he and the Indians could really understand each other. New men were needed for a new policy.”<sup>(16)</sup>

The appointment of Lord Mountbatten was to end British rule in India. Lord Mountbatten started by re-examining the points of agreement and disagreement among the Indian leaders. This was not a formal investigation, but only an attempt on the part of the Viceroy to enter into the fears and hopes that occupied the Indian leaders' minds. In his exploration Lord Mountbatten was least successful in respect of the League. "I will enter the discussion on one condition only."<sup>(17)</sup> Mohammed Ali Jinnah said to the Viceroy, in the opening conversation of his first meeting. Lord Mountbatten interrupted Jinnah at once and said to the Muslim League leader "Mr. Jinnah, I am not prepared to discuss conditions or, indeed, the present situation until I have had the chance of making your acquaintance and knowing more about yourself."<sup>(18)</sup> Very little was achieved in the meetings between the last Viceroy and Jinnah. This was as a result of Jinnah's uncompromising manner and his lack of experience in handling hard negotiations. However, the Viceroy was significantly successful in dealing with the congress.

Lord Mountbatten, within two weeks of his arrival in India in March 1947, concluded that "the need for a solution was much more pressing than it had appeared to be in London, and that the time limit of June 1948, far from not allowing enough time, was too remote."<sup>(19)</sup> The Viceroy, therefore, advanced the date of withdrawal to August 1947. By taking such action the Viceroy prevented a bloody civil war in the Indian sub-continent. This included proceeding with a partition plan to accommodate the Muslim League's demand, by creating the state of Pakistan.

To supervise partition, both the Congress and the Muslim League joined in a temporary administration. In the beginning of June the partition plan for the two new states of India and Pakistan was formally made public. In July 1947, the India Independence Act was rushed through the Parliament in the United Kingdom. On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 India and Pakistan gained their independence. Pakistan was formed out of East Bengal, the western Punjab, Sind and Baluchistan. About 80,000,000 people eventually found themselves in Pakistan and 320,000,000 in India. There was a massive migration of Hindus from territory designated to Pakistan, and of Muslims

from Indian territory. Maharajas, Rajas and Nizams joined the most appropriate of the new states.

In Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah became the Governor – General. Lord Mountbatten served briefly as the Governor – General of India where Nehru became the Prime Minister. Gandhi, who had mobilized the masses behind Congress and had campaigned to the last to avoid communal violence, was assassinated by a Hindu extremist five months after independence. Jinnah died towards the end of 1949.

The Progress towards the independence of India, opened the way to all the colonies first in Asia, then in Africa, and finally in the other parts, for advancing towards independence. There were subsequent movements towards independence in Burma and Ceylon in Asia. As for Burma, it had never allowed the British fully to reinstate themselves after the defeat of the Japanese. It could be said that the abrupt defeat of the British at Singapore in 1942 became an encouragement for all the colonies to struggle for their independence. Professor Carrington has put it this way: “The capture of Singapore by the Japanese in February, 1942 was a far greater disaster to the Empire as a whole and, accordingly to the British as an imperial power, than the evacuation of Dunkirk.”<sup>(20)</sup> Burma became a republic in January 1948. Quite a few of the colonies in Asia were experienced politically, such as Ceylon and Malaya. Therefore, Britain had no objection to their movement to independence. For example, Ceylon’s progress towards independence was not dramatic.

Similar patterns of granting independence to India took place in other Asian colonies. However, the process of attaining political independence for the colonies in other parts of the British Empire, such as East Africa and elsewhere, was not as smooth as the way the Asian colonies gained their full nationhood. This was mainly because the policy-makers in London were reluctant to recognise the legitimacy of the local nationalist leaders.

By 1951 when the Labour Government was defeated at the General Election, a gigantic transformation had already taken place in the empire. The Labour Government had effectively transferred power to about 500 million people.

However, as Professor Partha Gupta has said, “an oversimplified or sentimental view of the Labour’s colonial policy should not be taken.”<sup>(21)</sup> He continued by pointing out that “considerations of national and imperial self-interest, especially in relation to defence and to the needs of the British economy, helped to determine Labour’s policy in Malaya, Ceylon, East Africa, the proposed Central African Federation, and elsewhere, between 1945 and 1951.”<sup>(22)</sup>

When the Labour Government came to office, in 1945, Britain was still involved in vast areas of the world- the Far East, the Middle East, Europe, and elsewhere, but she was facing mounting economic pressures. Therefore, having had a substantial programme of domestic reforms ahead of it, the incoming Labour Government struggled to decide on Britain’s future role. As Bernard Porter has put it, Labour’s plan for the decolonisation of the Empire was “the letting go of what, after a war, just could not be held.”<sup>(23)</sup>

The Labour Government’s ‘giving up of the Empire’ did not mean the end of British influence in the former colonies. It has to be put into the context of a development approach to the colonies, “which would put real flesh on the old bones of trusteeship.”<sup>(24)</sup> The idea of colonial development was essentially based upon shrewd economic considerations, being aimed at retaining Britain’s trading and financial role in the former colonies and, as a result, maintaining Britain’s economic and political position as a world power. It happened essentially because after the War Britain was no longer able to defend the colonial rule. This had been foreseen a long time before the end of World War Two, by both the Conservatives and the Labour politicians – especially by the progressive Conservatives such as Oliver Stanly, the wartime Colonial Secretary, and Andrew Cohen, later to be the Governor of Uganda. In fact, the Labour Government’s policies of colonial development were laid down by the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 and its successor in 1945. Both of these were products of the war-time coalition. Therefore, the idea of colonial development, later to be developed into the Modern Commonwealth continued the imperial connection. It is reinforced and valued among the newly independent countries by the economic development incentive brought about by the

Colonial Development Act. The member countries of this 'club', as a result, are responsible for their own defence. Hence Britain's economic interests in the former colonies were protected, whilst she reduced the cost of defence. Moreover, Britain, being an important capitalist country, by winning support from the colonial countries moving towards independence, deterred the influence of Communism and prevented other western countries moving in. It could be said that since the Second World War, up to now that, is the beginning of the twenty first century, giving of aid has become part of international diplomacy.

It was in the Sinhalese capital of Colombo that Ernest Bevin, the British Labour Government's Foreign Secretary, had his final achievement as Foreign Secretary. It was in this, the first ever meeting of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers, that the Colonial Development Act of 1940 became officially the Commonwealth Development Corporation and the British equivalent, for the Commonwealth of the Marshall Plan the Colombo Plan- was established. The Meeting in Colombo had taken place in 1950, and, in the following year, Bevin stepped down as Foreign Secretary.

The British Labour Government thus managed to maintain British political and financial interests and prevented the Empire from a total disintegration, by establishing the Modern Commonwealth.

### **THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY'S ATTITUDES AND POLICY IDEAS TOWARDS THE USING OF HUMANITARIAN AIDS AS A MEANS OF INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY:**

Having examined the roots of the British Labour Party's attitudes and policy ideas towards the using of humanitarian aids as a means of international diplomacy, we shall now proceed with the British Labour Party's attitudes and policy ideas regarding the use of humanitarian aids as a means of international diplomacy in the twenty first century.

The two world wars each had a different impact on the British Empire. The First World War accelerated the ever growing rise of the British Empire, as the defeated mandated territories of the enemies became entrusted to

Britain's care and also the relationship between Britain and her Empire stood its greatest test. This was demonstrated by the massive contribution that the empire nations made to Britain's war effort. The white Dominions alone sent two and a half million soldiers to add to the five million British soldiers and fought the War alongside each other. Other Empire countries such as India, and the Colonies in Asia and Africa also made a striking contribution by sending many troops to fight the War alongside the rest of the Empire. Consequently, the 'British' imperial power was not just the United Kingdom's power; it was also due to the co-operation of the Dominions and all the contributions that the various Empire nations had made to win the First World War. In fact, the Cabinet Committee on defence co-operation was called the Committee of Imperial Defence.' After the First World War, over quarter of the world's land surface and a quarter of the world's population had been covered by the British Empire as opposed to the period from the turn of the century up to the 1914-18 war, when the British Empire had covered one-fifth.

The impact of the Second World War, however, was a turning point in the history of the British Empire. Britain survived the War of 1939-45, together with her Empire, but at a heavy cost. The post-World War Two period was a new and changing world of demands and pressures placed on Britain from various directions. Although Britain's Empire grew larger after the First World War and she emerged on the winning side against Germany, she had lost a sixth of her wealth in that war. The United States, on the other hand not only turned out as a creditor rather than a debtor but also as a nation producing half the world's manufacturing goods. This was due to her population, size and resources that she had acquired after her independence, which also, eventually guaranteed her supremacy. Additionally, although the Empire nations demonstrated a firm co-operation with Britain during the First World War, for some time, in fact since the late nineteenth century, there had been a growing movement towards economic and political independence among them, in particular Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa. This was as a result of their own economic development which at last led to Britain granting them legislative control over their

internal affairs, such as fiscal and trading policies as the nineteenth century came to an end. Having obtained control over their internal affairs, the white Dominions, as they became in the twentieth century, began to call for political control over their external affairs. Also, as early as the late nineteenth century, India too had been asking for more self rule, first internally and then over her foreign affairs, though not to the extent that Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and South Africa had been asking. India's demand was that she should be treated equally to that treatment the white colonies received from Britain, and not to be left behind. The First World War, however, strengthened the nationalism of the white Dominions and India. The intensification of nationalism in the white Dominions following the 1914-18 War led eventually to the Statute of Westminster. As a result of the Statute of Westminster in 1931, the full nationhood was set up, as they decided to maintain their ties with Britain. As India observed the white Dominions being given full nationhood, she too followed their path at a speed that no British political elite had contemplated.

Moreover, apart from the economic and technological development that had taken place in the nineteenth and the twentieth century in the white Dominions, which were already posing economic and political challenges from within the Empire to Britain, there were almost at the same period, increasing competition both economically and politically from Germany, Japan, Russia, and the United States. However, the crucial challenge was made by the United States. As the United States' industry continued to expand faster and faster in the inter-war period, and therefore she sought markets beyond her shores, America inevitably came into conflict with the Empire's economy, which was, under threat from inside already.

Consequently, as a result of the pre-World War Two pressures, the growth of foreign political and economic challenges, especially the USA, the developments that had already taken place in the Empire nations such as the granting of full nationhood to the white Dominions, due to their own economic and political advancements, and with India, already pressing for independence, Britain was in a less advantageous position to fight another World War. After 1939-45 War, in spite of the defeat of the enemy once

more, the United Kingdom had lost a quarter of what had remained of her wealth after the First World War; moreover, heavy destruction had been inflicted on Britain, thus a massive programme of War reconstruction was urgently needed. Additionally, as after 1941 the United States and the Soviet Union bore an increasing share of the War efforts, they emerged as two new super-powers, with the US possessing the atomic weapon. Although Britain had the technology to develop such a weapon, given all her economic pressures the cost of competing with nuclear weapons to the degree that the new super-powers had the resources for, was not something that she could afford. The British political elite were faced with a number of factors: first and foremost the Americans did not approve of colonialism; they believed that they had fought a war for democracy and liberty and saw no reason for continuation of colonialism which they too had been victims of and rejected two hundred years or so earlier. There was also the socialist inspired propaganda coming from the Soviet Union pointing at the exploitation and repression of the colonial system. Thus the British political elite had to seek solutions to safeguard British interests. Not being able to provide an effective defence for the Empire in the face of the world that emerged after 1945, British interests could easily become subordinated to the Soviet Union and/ or the United States. To safeguard and protect the huge and well-established prestige, way of life, culture, strategic basis, trade investments, and diplomatic influence on which Britain's world role had mainly rested, the British political elite adopted an approach based on a diffused system of control.

The imperial decision makers in London after the Second World War, proceeded with an accelerating and disciplined process of granting full political independence to all the Empire nations starting with India in 1947 and virtually completing the programme of decolonisation by 1963. However, the ex-colonies were encouraged to retain the old connections against such a dangerous and rapidly changing world. The persuasion of the British political elite led to the acceptance by most of the ex-colonies of the retention of the historical ties with the United Kingdom. The decision to maintain close links with Britain was embodied principally in practice by

their incorporation in the British Commonwealth whose members up till then comprised only the white Dominions. The incorporating of the newly independent nations and states (ex- colonies) in Africa and Asia post- 1945, into the British Commonwealth led to this new multi-racial- institution becoming known as the Modern Commonwealth or just the Commonwealth.

The retaining of the historical ties by the former colonies with Britain was one of the triumphs of the British Labour Government of 1945-51 and more to the point Ernest Bevin, the British Labour Foreign Secretary. In 1950 during the first meeting of the Commonwealth Foreign Secretaries in the Sinhalese capital of Colombo, Ernest Bevin, one of the greatest supporters of British imperial power managed to harmonise Labour socialist and anti- colonisation with British nationalism and the sense of Empire through the concept and reality of the Commonwealth, Having always believed that the Empire would bring prosperity to the Colonies too, Bevin in 1950 in Colombo, converted his conviction into practice with the successful establishment of the Colombo Plan. Improving the economic and social conditions through Britain's aid programme in the former Colonies the Empire was what made the maintaining of imperial ties by the ex- colonies through the Modern Commonwealth of Mutual material benefit. This plan was attractive and seductive for the ex- colonies, due to the fact that its effect was to sanction what was expedient now, while at the same time seeming to endorse most of what had been done in the past.

Forty years on, in the beginning of the twenty first century, British aid to the ex- colonies amounts to nearly £1 billion, with the largest sum going to communication, education and agricultural development. A wide range of tasks was assisted, such as road building, land settlement, airport construction, and so forth. This represents an investment in political and economic goodwill, but of course is applied in a context where more significant ties will operate (than by were economic calculation) due to the way in which the political elite had managed the ending of empire in the decolonisation process. There is, amongst all the Commonwealth members one strong, continuing cultural bond centering on Britain- the use of the English language. In the 1990s about six hundred million people spoke

English as their primary language while about a billion could use and understand it to some degree. English has become a universal language, in commerce, diplomacy, science, aviation, sport, and scholarship. Also because of the United States' rise as a major power too, there has been an even greater spread of the English language through the press, media, and the cinema.

The Commonwealth Development Corporation and the British equivalent for the Commonwealth of the Marshall Plan, the Colombo Plan, was mainly based upon shrewd economic considerations being targeted at retaining Britain's trading and financial role in the ex-colonies, (and as time has progressed in the undeveloped nations of the world as a whole) and consequently safeguarding British economic and political positions, as a world power.

The Colombo Plan, which, as has been said was based upon shrewd economic considerations, and the gradual conversion of the Empire into the Commonwealth was the Labour Government of 1945-51's major political adjustment and achievement which has carried itself on, well into the twenty first century. This is, now, in the twenty first century, called humanitarian aid. This was due to the fact that, although being a socialist and anti-colonial party, nevertheless the Labour Government strongly believed that Britain's position as a world power must be maintained, and therefore they also managed to harmonise their socialism with the Conservatives who were traditionally and conspicuously the strong supporter of the British Empire and its expansion. This was because Labour's approach to maintaining and protecting of British interests in the period of being in office, 1945-51, had been shared by those Conservatives who were well liked and respected by their own party and who were also close to Churchill. Before the end of World War Two, Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, a close friend of Churchill who had even been spoken of as a future Chancellor, and Andrew Cohen, the Governor of Uganda, had been speaking positively of the policy that Labour eventually adopted during 1945-51 to protect British interests, which was virtually completed by Macmillan when he left office in 1963.

Consequently the imperial sentiments of the Conservatives had become integrated with Labour's colonial doctrine of trusteeship. The Labour Government and in particular Bevin in 1946 expressed the view strongly that the ending of the British Empire could lead to a rapid falling of the standard of life in Britain and her colonies, and thus he said he was not ready to let the British Empire simply disappear. As a result of the way that the decolonisation process was handled and channeled into the establishment of the Modern Commonwealth, in which the Colombo Plan was a major element, Britain won the support from the ex-colonies. Thus the influence of Communism was blunted and the other Western countries were deterred from marching in order to take an economic stake in the ex-colonies. Since World War Two, until now, that is the beginning of the twenty first century, it could be said that giving of aid has become part of international diplomacy, an approach begun by the British Labour Party, as has been discussed in this article. Giving of aid policy of the British Labour Party is uncontroversial, as it contains assistance to the developing countries and at the same time the economic interests of Britain is defended. Giving of aid policy of the British Labour Party maintains Britain's world role and influence in the beginning of the twenty first century. This is traced back to the strategy launched in practice in the Colombo Plan of 1950, which we saw in this article. In the twenty first century this represents the major political achievement of the British Labour political elite, which helped guarantee its own position.

We shall briefly examine the Iraqi crisis of 2003-2005, respecting the British Labour Party and the use of humanitarian aids as a means of international diplomacy in the twenty first century.

As a result of size, population, but essentially her richness in natural resources, the United States, due to Britain's economic crisis after the Second World War, emerged stronger than Britain. In fact power fell into America's hands rather than having to be wrested from Britain. Moreover, given its own history it had little sympathy for Britain's imperial position and role. For their part, the British political elite, who had worked together

in the War Cabinet during the War, had very little disagreement about the need to maintain British power and interests in the post – war world.

To that end, both Labour and Conservatives, Attlee, Bevin and Churchill took the view that an alliance with the United States was essential. This was prompted in particular by their fear of the threat posed by the communist expansionist policy of the Soviet Union to British interests, not least in the Commonwealth. Having decided to proceed with the decolonisation process both the Labour government of 1945-51 and the Conservative governments of 1951-55, 1955-57, and 1957-63, pursued the policy of involving the Americans in the defence of Western Europe and Britain against the Soviet threat. Taking into account too, after the Second World War, the concept of a ‘common language and heritage’ or ‘special relationship’, which was first spoken by Churchill in a speech in Fulton Missouri, when he visited the USA in March 1946 on a private visit. The phrase ‘special relationship’ was a tool of diplomacy for harnessing a rising inexperienced giant, America, to the achievement of British needs. Though the Americans, both in mode of thought and origins are substantially foreign, it could be said that their rulers are often Anglo-Saxon and share the political ideas of Britain and, therefore, persuading them successfully to accept British point of view would mean the dominance of British views in all international matters. Bevin, the British Labour Foreign Secretary, was actively in favour of American involvement in the defence against any foreign aggression.

Although the members of the Commonwealth became responsible for their own defence, they still remained exposed to Communism’s influence, particularly in the face of the split between Russia and the West after the war. Moreover, Britain’s economic weakness gave her a handicap in keeping up with military, and especially atomic, weapon technology. Thus Britain had to come into alliance with the Americans both for economic and defensive reasons. As Clement Attlee, the British Labour Prime Minister has put it in his book ‘As it Happened’: “While this friction with Russia increased we naturally grew closer to the United States. This was helped by a change in the attitude of the Administration as they realised what the assumption of responsibility in world affairs entailed. Many Americans shed

their old isolation and with it some of their long-seated prejudice against Britain as a predatory imperialist power. They were also disillusioned with Soviet Russia. The two English-speaking countries began to realise that their close co-operation was essential to world peace.”<sup>(25)</sup> Thus, the decline of empire pointed to, and assisted in, a move to a closer relationship with the U.S.A., as never before seen in peace time, moreover, a movement led by a socialist government on the grounds of protecting Britain’s national interest, Britain thus managed to maintain her political and financial interests and prevented the Empire from a total disintegration.

The other half of British Labour government was establishing the Modern Commonwealth. It was in the Sinhalese capital of Colombo that Ernest Bevin, the British Labour Foreign Secretary had his final achievement. It was in this, the first ever meeting of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers, that the Development Act of 1940 became officially the Development Corporation and the British equivalent, of the Marshall Plan- the Colombo Plan – was established. The meeting in Colombo took place in 1950. Therefore the British Labour government managed to establish the Modern Commonwealth.

Since World War Two, until now that, is the beginning of the twenty first century, it could be said that giving of aid has become part of international diplomacy, an approach begun by the British Labour government the beginning of the twenty first century, uses humanitarian aids as a means of international diplomacy, as in the case of the Iraqi crisis of 2003-2005. The idea of giving of aid or humanitarian aids has essentially been based upon shrewd economic considerations, being aimed at retaining Britain’s trading and financial role in the Third world, and, as a result, maintaining Britain’s economic and political position as a world power.

Giving of aid or humanitarian aids, in the twenty first century, by the British Labour government to, for example, Iraq, after the 2003 war in that country, is essentially and technically a continuation of the old pattern which we saw in this article. Thus, it could be seen, as a mean of international diplomacy. “The U.K. has been at forefront of the humanitarian aid and situation for the people of Iraq”<sup>(26)</sup>, announced the NEC statement, after the

2003 war. (NEC is the National Executive Committee of the British Labour party. Later on in an announcement, the British Labour Minister for International Development, Clare Short, said, to the British MPs: “it was crucial, once the hostilities cease, to reinstate aids, and oil for food programme in Iraq.”<sup>(27)</sup> On power conflict Iraq, Tony Blair, the British Labour Prime Minister, said, “not only humanitarian aid should be offered to Iraq, but also a political reconstruction should take place there.”<sup>(28)</sup>

Thus it could be said there is a gap between political ideology and political practice. As, was pointed out earlier in this article, according to Professor P.Gopta, an oversimplified or sentimental view of the Labour’s ‘humanitarian aids’ policy should not be taken. Consideration of national self-interest in relation to the needs of British economy helps to determine Labour’s policy.<sup>(29)</sup> The Labour’s policies are based on shrewd economic considerations being aimed at retaining Britain’s trading and financial role, as has been discussed in this article.

The determination to maintain Britain’s world role, therefore, it could be said, has been positively Churchillian, among the British political elite.

The British Conservative party leaders have very little disagreement with the British Labour party leaders in regard to safeguarding British interests in the new realities of the world. Among both the imperialists and anti-imperialists the humanitarian aids is uncontroversial, as they contain assistance to the developing countries and at the same time the economic interests of Britain are defended. ❖

## NOTES:

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6. *Ibid.*
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8. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
9. *Ibid.*
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11. *Ibid.*
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13. *Ibid.*
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