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Bevan's Call to Britain

WHETHER Socialism is the golden mean between totalitarianism of the Right and of the Left is a vital matter for debate among students of politics. Many Socialists have for many years quoted approvingly Tania's remark that Socialism is Communism *plus* electricity to propagate to the work- that Socialism alone can wean the world away from Communism. In Europe today, this theory is at a discount. Not only in Europe, but in Britain, in New Zealand and in Australia also the Socialists have lost ground in recent years. Experience in India tells the same tale. Burma is perhaps the only exception. This is significant. For in Burma alone the Socialist Party has a pronounced Marxist bias.

There are reasons why the Socialists are losing influence in many parts of the world. It is a harsh judgment. But history may well come to the conclusion that M Blum, who embodied in himself the quintessence of European Socialism, heralded the decline of Socialism. His intentions were honest. His aim was to unite all the forces of the Left to fight the growth of Fascism in France, as well as in Europe. His efforts were not successful. Then the second world war intervened. Fascism suffered a military defeat. With the defeat of Nazism, it went out of political vogue.

After the end of the war the time was not inopportune for Socialism to stage a glorious con-back. It would be jejune to argue that the immediate post-war development in Western Europe conspired to roll back the tide of Socialism. But Socialism might possibly have had a different post-war record had it not been confronted with General de Gaulle in France, or with the emergence of Christian Democrats in Italy, in Belgium, in Holland and in Western Germany. With tact, with patience and with perseverance, the European Socialists might have emerged victorious. But they were in a hurry. They were unsure of themselves. So they combined with all who pretended to be their friends to fight the dual battle against Communism and Fascism.

That was an error of tactics as well as of political judgment. Throughout Western Europe, the Socialists combined with what they mistook as their fellow-travellers. Socialism lost its Socialist inspiration in the process. There were dissensions in the Socialist parties in Western Europe. Some influential Socialists came to the conclusion that their main duty was to fight Communism, even if that involved coalition with anti-Socialist groups. The experiment at political coalition has failed miserably. Socialism in Western Europe has lost its basic Socialist foundation. It is a divided house. There are too many parties of the Left. An influential group in Italy, for instance, joined the Communists in preference to staying within watered-down Socialism.

Gradually Socialism lost its influence in Europe. Simultaneously, it suffered an eclipse in New Zealand and in Australia, the homes of Socialism within the Commonwealth. Defeat of the Socialists in New