

I am writing after the Prime Minister and the government have announced the cuts in public spending. The economic strategy is simple and clear: to cut down our commitments to the measure of our means, and to assure our means by diverting more of our products from home consumption to exports and to import savings. But these economic measures are the sign and consequence of a re-appraisal of our position in the world, and that is a moral matter.

The government's measures have therefore something of the moral dignity of a man's acceptance of a true estimate of himself. To have acknowledged that Britain is no longer a super power and to have shed a few more illusions of grandeur is an advance. Nor is it necessarily inglorious that we should have waited to be forced by events before facing the facts. What is depressing is that we should still take so pragmatic, so defensive and so narrow a view of our world position. I do not refer primarily to the remaining make-belief, not to say immorality, of the so-called independent nuclear deterrent; I refer to our position as a still immensely rich nation among so many wretchedly poor ones.

Here the government has missed its chance again. Only once in the debate on the cuts did a senior minister, Mr George Brown, refer to this aspect of our re-appraisal, and then in a single paragraph of blanket approval of efforts already started. It is true that the government has not actually cut back aid to developing countries. This is to its credit, and compares favourably with the U.S. Congress's action in reducing its internal poverty programme because of the crippling cost of the Viet-Nam war. Our stand is, however, more apparent than real. Even if we ignore the cut of £20 million at the end of 1966, the amounts that come back to us from repurchases and the servicing of loans, and the net fall in the value of aid as a result of devaluation, we should realize that because the sums we give or lend in aid remain more or less constant, so they are declining proportionately since our own economy is growing all the time.

Some countries, Canada, Sweden and Denmark, have significantly increased their help to the poorer nations just at the time when reasons of military and economic self-interest have dwindled. At government level, we have failed to take this opportunity. The initiative therefore falls back on lesser groups and individuals, even though the aim of such initiatives must be a change of national

awareness, and then its expression by the government. Here much can be done, and something is already being done. We have as yet no review in English comparable to the six-year-old French-language monthly *Croissance des Jeunes Nations*, but the fact that 1968 is World Poverty Year is not entirely without response in this country. Thus, for instance, the Catholic Institute for International Relations which, in association with kindred groups, has been running its own organization for volunteers in developing countries for a number of years, is currently organizing a series of weekly lectures at its London headquarters. It has also sponsored for discussion groups a cheap and popular translation of the Pope's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, under the title *This is Progress*. Mr Jonathan Power is writing for the British Council of Churches a series of excellent and readily intelligible pamphlets on help to developing countries. Mr Michael de la Bedoyere's *Search* has advertised a movement called 'The New Abolitionists', inspired by some words of the economist Barbara Ward. *Ad Lucem* groups are spreading with the same purpose of focussing thought and energies on the problems of world maldistribution.

The heart of these movements is characteristically revealed in a passage from the latest issue of Dorothy Day's *The Catholic Worker*. She is writing about her recent visit to Danilo Dolci's Sicily: 'He wants man to be "master of his own conscience, yet at one with his neighbour, shaping his life in groups, within groups, which will spread in all the most varied forms of community, sometimes overlapping, sometimes separate, from districts to regions, to nations and continents, to every corner of the earth". . . . To me, this is the significance of Dolci. . . . It is not just the things envisioned and already accomplished, but the fact that Dolci carries to all he meets on his extensive trips, these ideas of love and brotherhood, this "little way" of non-violence.'

The heart, however, needs its reasons; thought and actions need their models, their imaginative schemes of alternatives, however provisional they may be, in order to face further experience. This is one great appeal of the Marxist schema of experience. And it is in this spirit that we propose shortly to start publishing in *New Blackfriars* a periodical chronicle of the developing dialogue between two great religions of our world, the Christian and the Marxist, in association with *Neves Forum* edited from Vienna.

All the time it is becoming clearer that we all have to live in one world or none. And unless we are prepared to forgo cherished modes of thought and behaviour in the effort to find shared modes, however diverse their raw material and origin, we cannot survive together.

P.L.