

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

EXPECTATIONS AT MORECAMBE

AT the time of going to press, the result of the elections to the Labour Party National Executive are still awaited. Much political play will be made of Mr. Bevan's gains or failures, and the opposite effect for the "leaders". But it has long been apparent that the differences in the Labour Party are largely shadow boxing, if only because, in power, they follow just the same policy as any other government. What such boxing depends on is the various currents of opinion within the rank and file. It is, in fact, simply the technique of demagoguery. Bevan's attacks on re-armament draws on the votes of those members of the Labour Party who remember its pacifism and the ghost of George Lansbury stalking about Morecambe. But Mr. Bevan and his associates are no more pacifists than Attlee or the latter-day Morrison who draw on the Socialist-unity concepts in the party members for their support.

Major issues are not decided by the National Conference or by the rank and file but by the leaders. In the following paragraphs, some of the aspects of party democracy are examined.

On the eve of the Labour Party Conference, a special correspondent of the *Times* contributed an article on "The reality and illusion of popular control" at Party Conferences. The writer shows how Lord Randolph Churchill (Winston Churchill's father) sought "to establish himself as a leader of his own party by winning the support of the rank and file in the constituencies and using it against the leaders of the Parliamentary Party." In this, he was successful, but "the interest and relevance of the story, however, are in the fact that, at this moment of triumph, Lord Randolph Churchill took no step to secure the independence of the National Union"—the body in which the rank and file could express their opinion and through which Lord Randolph secured his own success. "Lord Randolph Churchill, having become one of them (the leaders), did not seek to transfer that power to the rank and file, represented in the national Union."

The same process was going on in the Liberal Party. The leaders securing their own immunity from the organisations of the rank and file.

"The same tendency was noticeable even in the early days of the Labour Party. In February, 1909, the London correspondent of the *Frankfurt Volkstimme* wrote of the ninth conference of the Labour Party:—

"All expectations to the contrary notwithstanding, the two closing days of the conference were peaceful and were marked by no great discussions. This shows . . . the extraordinary adroitness of the party executive, which had arranged the agenda in such a way that it

was possible for the chairman to steer the conference past all the danger points almost without attracting attention. . . . The first preventive measure adopted by the standing orders committee was to rule out of the agenda certain resolutions whose discussion was regarded as needless or undesirable.

The writer goes on to remark:—
"The two main parties to-day, though each of them gives a prominent place to the annual party conference, are so organised that the chances of the views of the rank and file prevailing against those of the Parliamentary leaders are slender. The organisation of the Conservative Party is commonly criticised by its opponents. . . .

"In form, the structure of the Labour Party is more democratic. The party conference can 'decide from time to time what specific proposals of legislative, financial, or administrative reform shall be included in the party programme,' but this is only the long-term programme. The conference may have decided that all hairdressers should be nationalised, but it is for the National Executive Committee and the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Party to decide whether this proposal should be included in the election manifesto. Even then it remains for the Parliamentary Party to decide the character and timing of any Parliamentary action which needs to be taken. Finally, when the party is in power—in a position, in other words, to nationalise the hairdressers—the real power of decision rests with an even smaller body, the minority of the Parliamentary Party who form the Government. Here, again, is the oligarchy.

"The oligarchic character of the Labour Party has, in fact, been acknowledged in one of the party's official publications, which, after explaining the way in which the National Executive and the Labour Government kept in touch, added: 'In this way, at least, Parliament and Government are not unaware of the decisions and deliberations of the party's governing body.' 'Not unaware of' is hardly a democratic conception. Moreover, while the Labour Government were in power the conference pressed three years running for the abolition of the tied cottage. Mr. Bevan, as Minister of Health, opposed the de-

mand, saying that 'While it is the task of the conference to decide policy, it is the onerous task of the Government and the Parliamentary Party to decide how and when to implement it.'

"In both parties, in fact, effective power lies with the Parliamentary leaders."

Even the elections to the Labour Party National Executive allow the constituency organisations every year to elect only a minority of the members, "which limits their powers from the start—and they themselves limit it still further by electing only members of the Parliamentary Party". The article quotes Belfort Bax's book on Socialism of 1905 as saying that as few as three people controlled the policy of the whole party and concludes:

"The party conferences provide an opportunity for examining the mood of the party—and the Parliamentary members will not be insensitive to any clear

expression of that mood. That is the reality. The conferences are not, however instruments of popular control over policy or over leaders. That is the illusion."

We have quoted thus at length from a non-anarchist source in order to show that our basic criticisms are admitted and are directed not merely against the Labour Party—which has the most democratic structure—but also against the Tories and the Liberal Party in its days of influence. The whole core of the matter is summed-up by a leader writer in the same issue of the *Times* who describes the conference and National Executive election procedures as "just part of the process of transferring power from the many to the few, which is necessary in any large political organisation". (Our italics.)

FRENCH C.P. PURGE CONTINUED

THE campaign of the French Communist Party against two of its leading members [FREEDOM, 27/9/52] proceeds with ever-increasing virulence, and is clearly aimed at the exclusion of these two members from the direction of the Party.

The latest accusations charge Marty and Tillon with the secret banking of funds which belonged to the Party and the former with clandestine opposition dating back to 1949.

In last week's *La France Nouvelle*, Léon Mauvais, a member of the ten-man Politburo, wrote that M. Marty was guilty of "fractional" or oppositional characteristics three years ago when he planned to issue a bulletin opposing the party line of secretary general Maurice Thorez. According to the *New York Herald Tribune* (Paris edition), many students of the party now think that the Marty-Tillon split with the Communist high command has so weakened the executive that it will be unable to lead any major political action with success during the next two years. In

addition to the failure of the anti-American riots and strikes in the spring, party membership has fallen off, and its press has been losing circulation heavily.

In belabouring the two "men of action," M. Mauvais wrote that M. Tillon had confessed to the party executive that he had maintained two bank accounts which should have been placed at the disposal of the party. He also was said to have admitted that the funds "could have been aimed at financing an opposition".

The party communique then suggested that M. Tillon opposed the present line of a united workers' front, or co-operation with non-Communist forces. The leader of the Communist resistance army, it was made clear, had won M. Marty's support for direct action like strikes and manifestations with the old resistance movement playing a leading rôle.

The inference was that the two veterans of the French naval mutiny in 1919 had engaged in a plot for control of the party.

REFUGEES FROM CHINA

THERE are in the world to-day, one and a half to two million refugees who come under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. FREEDOM has frequently pointed to the columns of men and women trudging wearily with a few belongings from disaster in the present towards an uncertain future. They have become a permanent phenomenon in twentieth century life and they are a symbol of the failure of the world's social and economic organisation.

A small proportion of refugees are fleeing from natural disaster: floods or famine. But the overwhelming majority are seeking to escape from tyranny or war or both, usually they are peasant populations and very poor, their miserable belongings representing their most important property. The access to power of the Chinese Communists, like that of the Russian bolsheviks thirty-odd years ago, has cast up a mass of refugees of whom a substantial proportion are business men. They consist mainly of the European representatives of foreign business concerns in China, and there are known to be ten thousand of them at present either in Shanghai or in Hong Kong. The problems presented by this group of refugees is soberly described in a *Times* leading article of 15/1/52.

"The Chinese, beyond putting them out of business, have not molested these unfortunate people; indeed, they seem to be as anxious as the refugees themselves for their early departure. The main difficulty lies in obtaining visas to enable the refugees to enter another country and begin a new life. Few countries have consular representatives in Shanghai, and there is none in the interior of the country. It is expecting a great deal to hope that countries will promise entry to a number of immigrants without knowing anything about them. Yet the only place where the necessary enquiries could easily be made is Hong Kong, and there the Colonial Government, inundated with refugees, has understandably refused to allow people to enter without visas for the country of intended destination.

"At the moment all the refugees in China can do is to arrange with relatives or friends in the Commonwealth, the United States, or Latin America to try to provide a promise that their case will be examined when they arrive in Hong Kong. It is not surprising that only 400 refugees have been moved from China in the first half of this year. Nor, unfortunately, is the visa the only difficulty. Those 400 cost nearly £900,000 to move. The available funds consist largely of sums left over at the demise of the International Refugee Organisation an emergency fund raised subsequently, to which the United Kingdom contributed £100,000, but these funds are not going to be anything like enough to pay the passages of the seven or eight thousand people left. At the moment, only about 2,000 of the refugees are dependent upon financial help from the High Commissioner for Refugees; but as the delays lengthen and savings run out more will turn to this very far from inexhaustible source of international assistance. What gives the situation a special urgency is the possibility

"I am an individual and a believer in liberty. That is all the politics I have."
—CHARLIE CHAPLIN

Militarism in Czech Schools

THE inculcation of militarism into children was inaugurated by Mussolini and carried on by the Hitler youth. It has also for long been a feature of the Comsomols, the Soviet youth organisations. The same thing is now being carried on in Czechoslovakia, according to *Obrana Lidu*, the soldiers' newspaper published in Prague.

Military instruction is to be given in all schools and criticism of the laxity in this respect in the past is expressed.

"In the Czech lessons, pupils read passages about the defence of the homeland; about the last war; about the struggle of the workers, led by the Communist Party, against the Fascist occupiers; about the Slovak and Prague risings; and about the glorious past of the nation. In the Russian hour, they read about the Soviet Army; about the heroic struggle of the Soviet soldiers against Fascism; and about the tasks facing the Soviet and Czechoslovak armies."

The curriculum lays down that history lessons in the elementary schools must "teach socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism, military morale, loyalty and love towards the Soviet Union and the people's democracies, hatred of all war-mongers and enemies of the people." In geography the opportunity is to be taken to bring out the wealth and beauty of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, "which must be defended." The children must learn to read maps, estimate and measure distances, and find their way by maps. Natural science is to be used to explain to the pupils "the biological methods employed by the enemy, against which it is necessary for the defender to protect his health." In music lessons fighting songs and marches of the Czechoslovak and Russian armies are to be sung. Finally, physical training classes must "improve the physical prowess of the pupils, who will become accustomed to responsibility for the fulfilment of their tasks, to discipline, and to co-operation."

In secondary schools, the curriculum includes "tactics, shooting, Czechoslovak Army regulations, military geography, signals and first-aid," as well as the use of telephones and radio.

BRITISH RULE IN MALAYA

The following revealing letter appeared in the correspondence columns of the *Manchester Guardian* last week:

Sir,—Your correspondent who signs himself "A Malay Security Officer" reports, with surprise, that to "the lower classes of almost all the Asian races in Malaya," he was "automatically a sort of public enemy No. 1—for no other reason than that he was a policeman!"

For a period of about twelve months, in 1946, whilst on service with the Royal Marines, I had to carry out "police" duties in Hongkong and the New Territories. These duties involved in their execution the maltreatment of old men and women, the beating up of petty law-breakers, prostitutes, and the like, the arbitrary administration of "justice", depriving many of the means of livelihood, the searching of hundreds of civilians with the aid of clubs, rifle butts, and bayonets, the acceptance and solicitation of bribes and protection money, the clearance of homeless refugees from the only shelter available—the covered pavements and a bed of newspaper—and neglect of the dying. The list could be continued indefinitely if I were to unfold a stock of stories experienced and retold in the barrack-room, sometimes with relish, sometimes with laughter,

sometimes inconsequentially, but never with regret or sympathy.

I do not pretend that the security officer was ever concerned with such occurrences as I have listed. But I do consider that my experiences will perhaps throw some light on the reasons why he, as a policeman, is regarded as a sort of public enemy No. 1.

To many democrats of the West, the "Chink", the "Wog", the "Gook", are, as their nicknames imply, less than human, but necessary to maintain the Western standard of living. To the Eastern peoples the police force represent an alien culture, an alien people, subjection to foreign power, the epitome of imperialism. If these two points of view come into conflict and if we also consider that amongst the "lower classes" in this country he, as a policeman, would also probably be regarded as a sort of public enemy No. 1, we can see that a Colonial police officer personifies, for the Colonial "lower classes", property and foreign power. The white man's burden grows heavy but his debt remains heavier.

If the security officer does not wish to avail himself of my mirror, or can see therein only black and white (or blue and yellow), I would suggest that there lies one of the causes of the present insecurity in the East. Perhaps the villagers of Permettang Tinggi liked their village the way it was!

REFUGEES EXECUTED ON RETURN TO SINKIANG

All of the 207 refugees in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and India who have returned to Sinkiang during the past two years have been executed or sentenced to life imprisonment. These Turkistanis, who fled southwards when the Communists took over, were forced to return for lack of money; being unconnected with politics they thought they would be left free on their return. The Indian Government assisted them with money and food, but it is learnt that when they reached the border post of Shahid Ullah they were arrested and sent to the garrison town of Guma, in the Khotan district, for prolonged interrogation. They were not heard of again until Urumchi radio announced that they had been sentenced for treason.

Times report, 23/9/52.

