

# Freedom

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The people never give up their liberties but under some delusion

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## THE WAR IN INDO-CHINA

# FALL OF FRANCE IN ASIA

THE Viet-Minh ("Communist") forces in Indo-China have suddenly switched to an offensive against Laos. Grave anxiety exists in Paris H.Q. as to whether the French Army can hold Laos. The French garrisons are confined to a few strongpoints whereas the Viet-Minh are spread over impregnable country and are advancing upon the "holy city" of Luang Prabang. This would be an immense advantage to them. While it is not the capital of Laos (as erroneously stated in some British papers) and having no real strategic value, it is the "town of a hundred pagodas"—an attractive prize to the Viet-Minh, whose "communism" consists largely of adherence to Mao Tse-Tung and the Chinese war-lords but which is far from any "old-fashioned" Marxist beliefs in religion being "the opium of the people".

The constant attempt by the Viet-Minh to control the destinies of Buddhism, and enrol the thousands of bonzes (Buddhist priests) as their adherents by the same means as Stalin enrolled the popes of the Orthodox Church, is an explanation of their life-no-object advance upon unimportant Luang Prabang. The reason for their successes is that Laos depended largely upon Annamese and Tonkinese as working-men. The constant emigration from Tongking and Annam (now Viet-Nam) was halted only by the war. Tongking is the stronghold of the Viet-Minh because it was the province most exploited by French Imperialism and consequently the centre of disaffection, which the "Communists" eagerly exploited. Amongst the town workers of Laos, large numbers fled to Siam but others remained outside the cities, and the approach of their fellow-countrymen is a species of liberation for them. The Laotian peasant himself is largely indifferent as to which of the two foreign forces rules him, and in many cases the change of government can hardly be known to him.

The Laotian Government, moreover, has long been torn by dissensions between the ruling-classes over questions of royal accession, as well as the Parliamentary intrigue, and amongst the only section likely to be pro-French there is no chance whatever of unity. Hence the

### Sacrifices Unlimited

MILITARY men are not renowned for their intellectual ability and capacity for logical thought. The hearty Field-Marshal Montgomery is no exception.

In Montreal last week he declared that Atlantic Pact nations must be prepared to sacrifice for even 100 years in their effort to bring about peace. He went on to say:—

"Nations must be organised to spring into action quickly. The trouble in the world to-day is that from time to time evil men arise and seize power and try to exert their power by force. The world's major problem is how to deal with such threats without interfering with people's ordinary lives, the prosperity of each nation, or economic realities.

"This can be done quite easily if the people of each nation are prepared to make sacrifices for the safety of their nations."

In other words, sacrificing for 100 years is not to be regarded as interfering with people's ordinary lives! If we are all prepared to sacrifice for the whole of our lives in order to maintain the crippling armaments programmes and preserve the safety of our nations from the evil men, this will not interfere with prosperity, or economic reality!

But will life be worth living?

fall of Luang-Prabang may be expected, and even Ventiane, the capital of Laos, on which French hopes depend, may collapse. And with Laos gone, Cambodia, Tongking, Annam may all be lost to France. The only chance otherwise is of large scale American intervention which depends on the outcome in Korea. If peace is settled there, both the Chinese and Americans will turn their attention to Indo-China. Of such is the value of the heralded peace negotiations at Panmunjon!

Ventiane is on the very border of Siam, which is heavily occupied in outlying districts with uniformed Viet-Minh troops, despite the attitude of the Government. During the war Marshal Phibul collaborated with the Japanese, but underwent a remarkable transformation afterwards and emerged as a democratic hero of America. It should likewise be remembered that the "Communists" throughout Asia were in effect pro-Japanese throughout the years of occupation—in Japan itself (despite their proscription) as well as in the whole of Asia, except in China where Mao Tse-Tung continued to collaborate with Chiang Kai-Shek against the Japanese. This attitude was due to the position of Japan vis-à-vis Russia. Whereas the Stalinist line changed elsewhere on the invasion of Russia by Germany in 1941, Russia did not declare war on Japan until 1945, and the party line was simply to preserve its existence without resistance.

Thus they have emerged as a strong party, and can in fact only be paralleled by others who also collaborated with the Japanese. French Imperialism was unable to do so, much as it would have liked to do in the Vichy years. However, since the war it has steadily lost

ground. First of all it temporised with Communists such as Ho Chi Minh (leader of the Viet Minh) in the hopes of an alliance. Then it re-imposed the old discredited royal families throughout Indo-China, who rule again in the name of the French Republic—"Vive le roi" has long been an illegal cry in France but has become compulsory in countries like Cambodia! The continued existence of French Imperialism prejudiced nationalist feeling, while the poverty in the midst of incredible plenty is in itself a cause for rebellion. The only sure card the French Government had to play was the tyranny and oppression of the Viet-Minh. But it could not counter this with any progressive aspirations itself. The truth is that both sides are equally retrogressive, and no movement has arisen which is able to oppose both.

There are those who tell us that a "Third Camp" is impracticable, but the "practical" solutions look equally dismal, and moreover neither is really a solution, since whichever one supports can give no guarantee whatever that the tragic jungle war will not drag on with the other side. The nostalgia for a "Third Camp" is, however, seen by the enormous popularity given everywhere to representatives of India, since (whether this is in fact so or not) the majority of people in Indo-China with any ideas on the current situation believe that Nehru stands for a third way. Bitter experience, unfortunately, will teach them that diplomacy is not enough, and a movement for independence means more than neutrality. The prospects for such a movement depend upon the growth of revolutionary feeling, which is not an immediate solution but the only one.

INTERNATIONALIST.

## AMERICAN LETTER

# 1984 Is Breathing Down Our Necks

AROUND the campus of an American University you will find several discussion groups which meet once a week or so to give the scholar, student or faculty member, a chance to flex his grey matter in public debate. As long as the topic is fairly innocuous, such as birth control, the world food shortage, or a religious issue, only the familiar races are to be seen—the innocent lovers of polemic; the naive addicts of verbal cut and thrust. Yet attend a talk on academic freedom, or any other issue that might be tainted by the leprous odour of Communism—be it ever so faint—and a new face appears upon the scene. A new face and a new expression. The thin-lipped, unsmiling mask of the professional heresy hunter. The gentleman from the Thought Police is with us.

He sits near the door, trying to make his muscular frame as inconspicuous as possible, and scribbles in a detached way upon his little pad, as if the hand that is so furiously busy collecting evidence does not really belong to him. He contributes nothing to the debate. Nobody knows him—or wants to. He is there solely to listen and to note everything that might conceivably be construed as unorthodoxy. He is the Hound of State on the scent of what George Orwell labelled "crimethink". He is marking down the aberrant individual who still has the temerity to try thinking for himself.

When the projected Great Purge of the education system gets under way these deviates will find themselves out of a job, and all doors to other academic appointments will be closed to them because their faces do not fit under the New Order. If their views are too eccentric the blowtorch will turn their way and

more than just this insidious economic pressure will be brought to bear on them. They will find themselves behind bars with ample time to contemplate their folly in having thought they were citizens of a democracy that guarantees freedom of speech. Perhaps they will conclude that democracy is a mixed blessing when the common people become victims of mass hysteria induced by reactionary propaganda which uses an imperialistic war to fan the fires of blind hatred.

There are plenty of F.B.I. agents on campus, of course, but not so many that they can be everywhere at once. Such refinement of thought-control can be expected only with time. No doubt, with its lust for efficiency, America will one day develop a system that will surpass even the Russian régime for ruthless precision. With 31 years to go we look like being well on schedule. Until that happy day the Inquisitors have to be satisfied to place their Hounds in only the most strategic places. They enrol as students in the social study courses; economics is a favourite. They attend the lectures with religious regularity, taking their precious notes without needing to draw attention to themselves. They eavesdrop in the drug stores where radicals are known to foregather for their conspiratorial cup of coffee. They will

### LEAGUE AGAINST CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Public Meeting, ST. PANCRAS TOWN HALL, WEDNESDAY, 13th MAY, 7.15. Speakers: Canon Carpenter, Victor Yates, M.P., F. A. Ridley, A Norwegian speaker, Jean Henderson, Philip Sansom, Robert Copping. Questions and Discussion. All welcome!

## Bury Corporation to Victimise C.O.'s

ALL employees of Bury (Lancs.) Corporation have been questioned in an inquiry to seek out and dismiss all declared conscientious objectors. A resolution was made in 1940—the first of the worst years of the war—and the Corporation have decided to adhere to it again.

Teachers and local government officers, as well as transport and street cleaning workers, have all been questioned, and already the unions concerned are protesting.

An official of the Bury Branch of the National Union of Teachers said last night:

"This is a witch hunt and contrary to all our principles. We do not support or oppose conscientious objectors but we do believe that people should not be victimised because of their religious be-

liefs. Many of us fought in the war for freedom of thought and speech."

The Bury (Passenger Section) branch of the Transport and General Workers' Union, which has a membership of 340, described the inquiry as "an unwarranted interference with the liberties of individuals," and an official of the union said: "We shall give the strongest backing to any union which decides to fight this resolution."

Members of the Bury Headmasters' Association, who have been asked to check all their school staffs, are angry at the inquiry and it is understood that teachers at several schools have signed petitions of protest which will be sent to the council.

According to the Manchester Guardian of 25th April.

"The Town Clerk of Bury refused to comment, but a senior member of the council said: 'The decision to adhere to this resolution was reached almost unanimously.'"

On the 30th April, however, the following letter appeared in the same paper:

"Sir.—The news item published recently by the national press on the decision of the Bury Town Council to reaffirm its ban of 1940 on declared conscientious objectors needs a significant correction.

"A 'senior member of the council' is said to have stated that this decision was 'almost unanimous'.

"In fact, the voting figures were 16-14, all Labour members present voting against.—Yours &c.,

J. COOKSON (Council)

This letter casts rather a different light on the matter. If Mr. Cookson's figures for the voting are correct (and he would hardly commit himself, in print, being a councillor, if they were not) it hardly looks like an "almost unanimous" decision, since it had only needed one of the "Ayes" to vote "No" to have made the vote 15-15.

Such voting figures show the weakness of voting as a means of arriving at decisions, anyway, but far more important is the fact that such a controversial measure can be pushed through on such a slender majority.

The fact that the voting was so close however, should give encouragement to all those opposed to the resolution. A little pressure from outside, among the Corporation's employees should be enough to get it rescinded. If the transport workers and teachers, street sweepers and Council clerks, will join forces, they can fight their employers and win.

When, a few years ago, Southend Corporation tried the same thing, public opinion was strong enough to defeat it. The same thing must be done for Bury.

From their own legal viewpoint the Corporation's action is bad. The State recognises conscientious objectors. They are a definite legal category (providing they satisfy a Tribunal, which isn't easy!) and for a local government organisation to set out to victimise this section of society is intolerable.

From the point of view of civil liberties it is even more deplorable. There will be even less point that there is now in pointing the finger of scorn at the totalitarian States, or Senator Joe McCarthy, if measures like Bury Corporation's are allowed to creep in here.

perjury. We always knew that ignorance of the law was no excuse, but now to be ignorant of your neighbour's thoughts is a crime. Guilt by association is in effect an established process of law.

So can you be surprised that ordinary people "hide" behind the Fifth Amendment when hauled before a Congressional Committee for "crimethink", when by merely opening your mouth you may incriminate yourself? If you claim that you cannot remember how many red berries there were on a sprig of holly you bought for a pre-war Xmas, you may well be indicted for perjury on the

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