

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"History is written by those who survive, philosophy by the well-to-do; those who go under have the experience."
—W. R. LETHABY.

GOMULKA ON THE KNIFE EDGE

IN Poland, as we have pointed out before, the anti-Soviet feeling among the people was prevented from reaching Hungarian proportions only because the Communist authorities were able to produce Gomulka in time and pop him in the saddle.

This on its own however is not sufficient for the Poles, and they are very carefully watching Mr. Gomulka to see that he does in fact produce what they want. So far he has managed to tread the uneasy path between independence from and friendship with his mighty Soviet neighbours.

Gomulka has concluded trade and military agreements with the Soviets, which have increased his prestige with the Polish people. Whereas before the unrest of last autumn millions of tons of Polish coal went eastwards every year, paid for at prices well under the market level, now Russia is to pay world prices for all goods she gets from Poland. While Gomulka recently signed an agreement with Zhukov and Shepilov controlling the movement of Soviet forces in Poland; that, although those forces must remain for their common defence, they shall be moved about the country only with Polish permission.

We know—and the Poles have good reason to know also—the flimsy nature of Soviet promises, and although Gomulka is to-day, because of his past persecution by the Stalinists, and his recent 'standing up to the Russians', something of a national hero, still those sections of the population who concern themselves with such matters are watching him very closely.

As a delegate from Cracow said at the Congress of Revolutionary Youth held in Warsaw last month: "We ought to support Comrade Gomulka, but only so long as the party continues on the way towards genuine socialist democracy. If they stop we shall fight against them."

Now Gomulka is awaiting uneasily the results of this week's elections. For the first time a Communist government faces voters who have a choice—although it is a choice carefully limited, for all the candidates have to be nominated by the official 'National Front', and local co-ordinating commissions of the 'Front' throughout the country have been urged to make use of their legal right to strike from the list before January 17 all candidates

What will the Elections Bring?

who show "weakness of character and irresponsible behaviour".

Last Saturday, Gomulka, and the heads of the other two parties joined with the Communists in the 'Front', condemned in a published declaration the 'disloyal tricks' used by some candidates against their competitors from allied parties on the same official list. "Reactionary diversions" and campaign oratory are cited as dangerous to national unity, defined as such diversions and oratory is too outspoken criticism of the former Stalinist régime!

Communists everywhere want the criticism of Stalin to be carefully

controlled—by themselves! And Gomulka is worried lest too strong attacks upon Stalinism should develop into attacks upon the existing régime.

In order to do his best to ensure that the Polish people vote the right way this weekend, Gomulka's declaration told them how to vote. It called upon the electorate in each constituency to choose their allotted deputies "from the top of the list"—e.g., if six seats have to be filled from a list of 10, to strike out the last four names. Alternatively, they can achieve the same effect by dropping their ballots into the box un-

marked, as Mr. Gomulka advised a public meeting last Wednesday, for under the law such unmarked ballots count for the top candidates.

The reason given for this recommendation is that the parties have taken great care to place the ablest candidates at the top. An inspection of the lists has shown, however, that these "able" people are invariably prominent figures of the central leadership, and predominantly Communists!

Gomulka's task is an unenviable one. Somehow he has to serve the Kremlin and keep the Polish people quiet too. Throughout every level of Polish society discussion and enquiry ferments as never before. Gomulka is between the Devil of Soviet power and the Deep Blue Sea of the people's power.

The elections will solve nothing—but they might tell Gomulka which he has to fear most at the present.

Reflections on a Government Crisis

'Democracy' and Freedom

MR. MACMILLAN'S announcement of the composition of his Cabinet—a mere reshuffling of Eden's pack of knaves and jokers, with an industrial king thrown in (to help tip the "scales" a little more to the right?) as Minister of Power (and perhaps also of the real Power in the country, the F.B.I.)—clearly indicates that there has been no change of heart among the Tories. It even makes one believe that perhaps poor Sir Anthony was not after all levered out by his enemies in the Party and that he gave up simply because he had not stomach for the political and economic problems ahead. He may derive some consolation from the unusual privilege of reading his own obituary notices, though on the other hand he may find it odd that those very politicians and organs of the Press which were loudest in their condemnation of his conduct of affairs are now falling over one another in their praise of his selfless devotion to Queen and country. This we may be told is an example of British "fair play": of not hitting a man when he's down. This code of behaviour (which gives the British their false sense of superiority* over other nations who, in their turn, use such "codes" to justify their references to "perfidious Albion" and British "hypocrisy") contributes to the political impotence of the British public. Politics is a game—like cricket—with rules and two teams (government and Opposition), a paying public that

watches, heckles and disagrees with decisions but which recognises the supreme authority of the umpire (the Speaker). They are made to believe that they have selected the teams, have made the rules and have selected the umpires. They are under the delusion that this is democracy! Let us examine a few aspects of this "democracy" as revealed by the events of the past ten days.

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THE Eden government's policy in Egypt was put into effect without prior consultation of the United States, which fact has deeply shocked the liberal organs of opinion in this country. What shocked them much less was that neither Parliament nor the country were previously informed of the intended action, but only of the accomplished fact! What is not sufficiently realised in the country is that the government is the Executive with powers to make policy, and not the mouth-piece either of Parliament or of public opinion. The power of public opinion exists only to the extent to which the public is prepared to disobey, or refuses to be the instrument of, the government's policy. But it can only exert such power where government policy requires the direct participation of the public for its implementation. But in foreign policy, for instance, where the public is only at the receiving end of government decisions, treaties or deals, there is no way, short of direct

action, in which public disapproval can be more than vocal. (*The Suez venture was too short lived for the principals of democracy to be put to the test. It cannot, nevertheless, be denied that the government disregarded the very considerable body of opposition to its policies in the country as a whole in so far as that resistance was vocal and did not extend to a refusal by the reservists to answer the call-up or by widespread strikes among dockers and other transport workers. On the other hand it paid very serious attention to Russia's threats of "volunteers", and America's threat of economic and other reprisals.*) Furthermore the government has at its disposal a whole apparatus of servants of the State who owe allegiance to the government, and on whom they also depend for their wages at the end of the week, to implement its policies administratively, as well as to see that they are carried out in the country and overseas.

It is argued by parliamentarians that without money a government can do nothing and that the government cannot spend money without the authority of Parliament. Apart from the myth of the power of parliament in a democracy, with which we shall deal later, the importance of this safeguard is surely exposed by the fact that the bill, which the people of this country will have to foot, as a result of, for instance, the Eden government's abortive invasion of Egypt, has still to be drawn up. It was certainly not sanctioned either by parliament or by the people since they were not even told of this extra-ordinary expenditure until it had already been incurred. But what is equally important: there is no way for the people of this

*Like so many sayings which are served up with out mother's milk, we are expected to assimilate them without question. Yet what could be more superficial than to hold the view that you don't hit a man when he's down? Surely what is more important is not to knock him down, for what is the point of hitting him when he is down? Ah! but if you don't knock him down he will knock you down. Assuming this to be true then once you have knocked him down you must prevent him from getting up or he may knock you down. How do you keep him down if not by "hitting" him every time he tries to get up? There may be a subtle distinction here between hitting a man when he's down and only hitting him when he tries to get up, but to our minds the fundamental problem is the same; that no man should be up because other men are down; that no man should have power over other men. There are two aspects of this power: one is material—that one section of the community is in a position to grant or withhold, or deny to the individual, his right to the necessities of life. The other is spiritual and material—that of disposing of the very lives of the people as well as of seeking

to control their thought processes, that is of imposing the will of a political élite—Tory or Socialist makes no difference—through a monopoly of the channels of communication and control over the forces of repression made respectable by the "moral" force of Law.

Eden is not "down" in the same sense that the people are down. In the struggle for power either his health could not stand up to the pace of present day affairs or his backers have withdrawn their support with the result that the limelight has been turned onto another of his ilk. That we should shed crocodile tears because he no longer has the power to run our lives is sheer masochism! But one can well understand what lies behind the eulogies of press and politicians. It is a kind of loyalty to their profession. To strip a politician down to his birthday suit is to expose the frailty of the whole political machine. The public must not despise the politician, even if he is only a "has been" such as Eden, for after all they will still have to be "sold" a Macmillan or even a Gaitskell or Bevan!

IN THE DEEP SOUTH

NEGROES' SELF-DISCIPLINE

ONLY time will show whether the passive resistance of the Southern Negro is proof against the continual violence of the Whites, but their astonishing self-discipline is already much in evidence and their dignity increases as the moral position of the white racist diminishes. The Negroes had a long time to learn the art of self-control, and so far they have generally avoided being drawn into violent resistance against the abuses of the whites.

The Supreme Court edict ordering the desegregation of all bus transport which followed the ruling on schools brought an end to the successful Negro boycott of buses carried on for almost a year. Early reports from some of the Southern States suggested that Negroes were occupying seats usually reserved for white passengers with little reaction from the white travellers. Perhaps this would have continued with the white population reluctantly accepting the inevitable if the rabble-rousing leaders of the anti-Negro organisations had been silenced. But how can they be silenced except by legal means, an unlikely eventuality in the South? And even assuming this were possible what legal steps can be taken to persuade a man how wrong he is if he is already firmly convinced emotionally that the Negro is a menace to the white race and someone to be feared. So the process of accepting the Negro on a basis of equality will take longer.

Encouraged by the convictions of the Rev. Martin Luther King: "If cursed, do not curse back. If pushed, do not push back. If struck do not strike back but show love and goodwill at all times"—the Negroes are finding that their enemies are even more infuriated by this passive approach. Fresh outbursts of violence against Negro churches and homes have taken place and six Negro ministers in Atlanta have been arrested for defying Georgia's segregation laws, which are in fact,

invalidated under the new Federal Law.

Last week a blow was directed at the methods adopted by the State of Virginia to keep the schools segregated when Judge Walter Hoffman in Norfolk, Virginia, condemned the tactic whereby bright pupils would be assigned to one sort of school and backward pupils to another. Since the quality of education for Negro children is below that of white children it is obvious that certain schools will be kept practically white if this method continues. It was after this statement by Judge Hoffman that the local laws were invoked leading to the arrest of the six Negro ministers.

In the meantime Luther King has put Eisenhower in a spot by publicly asking him to use "the weight of your office and point out to the people of the South the moral nature of the problem". It has also been suggested that Vice-President Nixon tour the South on behalf of the President "as he had done on behalf of the Hungarian rebels".

Moral necessity is likely to carry less weight with Eisenhower and his administration than political expediency. It is easy to make a few vague references to civil liberties in the Senate, but few politicians (if any) would be willing to run the risk of losing the support of the white South by rashly carrying moral arguments into the heart of the South.

There will be plenty of support from reactionary sources for Hungary because the Hungarian people are fighting against these "Goddam Reds" whom the Southerners are convinced would grant equal rights to the Negro race.

Neither President Eisenhower nor Vice-President Nixon will be touring the South for a long time in order to gain support for the elementary rights of United States citizens—because they happen to have dark faces.

PROGRESS OF A DEFICIT! WEEK 2

Deficit on Freedom	£40
Contributions received	£18
DEFICIT	£22

January 4 to January 10

Shepton Mallet: E.H.S. 5/6; Sheffield: G.P.* 5/-; Detroit: J.C. 14/-; Warrington: J.H. £1; Oxford: Anon.* 5/-; Sheffield: H.W. 2/-; London: Comrades of F.A.S. £5; London: J.S.* 3/-; London: A.S. 1/9; London: Anon. 2/9; Copenhagen: Anon. 10/4; London: Social: Malatesta Club £4.

Total	12 9 4
Previously acknowledged	5 12 4

1957 TOTAL TO DATE	£18 1 8
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