

GOVERNMENTS AND "PUBLIC OPINION"

THE "Lord's revolt" over commercial television—the extent of which was not known when these lines were written—and the measures taken by the government to ensure that its Bill goes through, serve as yet another illustration of the farce that masquerades under the name of "democratic government".

When it was announced that prominent supporters of the Government would be among those to lead the attack on the Commercial T.V. Bill it was suggested that the Government's reply to this revolt would be to mobilise the "backwoods Peers", who normally never attend debates, simply in order to ensure a voting majority in the event that the Lords divided. Though such a proposal was in fact not carried out, (there may have been something in the suggestion that "backwoods Peers" are so conservative that they might have opposed all Television as one of those new-fangled past-times!)—that it should have been mooted is itself an indication that governments are interested not in doing what is right or best in the general interest but in securing majorities for themselves. And this attitude is made clearer by official statements regarding the forthcoming debate in the House of Commons on Commercial T.V. in which a free vote will not be agreed to by the Government on the grounds that the Labour Party is opposed in principle to Commercial T.V. and the debate in the Bill will therefore be a "Party issue". So involved are these politicians in playing at party politics that they completely forget the really "interested party"—the T.V. public! What their views are on the question is an unknown quantity, since they have not been consulted. We shall be told that to hold a referendum on such questions would be from the point of view of administration quite impractical, even assuming that the public were competent to express view on subjects about which they lacked all the facts on which to base their opinions. It is the old argument used against anarchists when they say that in the anarchist society decisions will be taken by the people.

But in fact such "objections" to a real working democracy are now an anachronism. The development of communications and of electronic devices in this half century have made democratic expression on an international, as well as on a national, scale, more than a possibility. It could be a reality but for the fact that governments are not interested in public opinion. After all it is their job, with the help of their friends of the National Press, to form, and not to inform, "public opinion"!

MILLIONS of forms have been distributed recently throughout the country in connection with keeping the electoral register up to date. When a general election takes place more than 20 million votes are cast and counted and the results known throughout the world in less than 24 hours. Every week private enterprise sends out, and receives back, some five million football pool coupons covered with mysterious noughts and crosses and accompanied by millions of money orders. Within forty-eight hours private enterprise has worked out all the dividends, the names of the winning entries, and has probably even arranged with the local cinema for the £75,000 cheque to be presented to

More Light on Communist Conditioning

A FEW years ago a Polish lawyer named Stypulkowski described in some detail the preliminary treatment to which he was subjected by the Soviet police as preparation for a propaganda trial. He was one of 16 members of the London Polish Government in exile who, after the war were invited to Moscow, and then disappeared. They reappeared after several weeks and, all but Stypulkowski, pleaded guilty to the usual charges. Stypulkowski pleaded not guilty and received a sentence of eighteen months imprisonment. He was released at the conclusion of this, and succeeded in making his way back to the West. None of the others did and their fate is unknown.

Further new light has been shed on Communist police methods by Alistair Cooke in a broadcast recently. He was describing the film put out by the Chinese government which purported to show American Air Force men confessing to taking part in germ warfare, before an international commission on which sat an eminent Cambridge biologist, Professor Joseph Needham. Needham wrote several letters to the *Times* about the truth of this evidence a year or more ago.

Alistair Cooke interviewed one of the men who "confessed" after his release from prisoner-of-war camps and return to the United States. It is his evidence which is so interesting and important. It appears that as many as one hundred U.S. Air Force men were chosen and groomed to give evidence. Only thirty of these were satisfactorily broken down and appeared before the international commission. It is clear that the whole object of the Communist authorities was directed to this final proceeding, which was filmed—the carefully selected commission itself, consisting of eminent fellow travellers, especially men like Needham from Western countries; and the men who gave "evidence" of germ warfare. These latter were chosen for various points: good appearance and good health, so as to make a good impression in the film; and no doubt also certain factors in their individual life situations which gave a handle to their Communist interlocutors. Thus the man whom Cooke interviewed was sent to Korea just after his wife had had a serious illness and he was naturally

Mr. X by the Mayor in full regalia! But when it comes to sending out questionnaires about matters affecting the very lives of the people, we are told such a method of finding out what the people want is cumbersome and slow and unworkable! A moment's reflection, in fact, shows that these are not the real objections at all. It is one thing to give the people the opportunity to express with an X who shall be their rulers. Quite another that they should have the responsibility of expressing their views on matters affecting their daily lives, for not only would this threaten the executive powers of governments, but would also seriously threaten the privileged position of those minority sections in society for which governments are the vocal expression and only on the perpetuation of which, can they hope to maintain their privileges.

THE responsible member of society is the one who thinks for himself and acts accordingly. Unfortunately the majority of our fellows have been conditioned not to think for themselves. They look upon thinking as some rare faculty with which only politicians and journalists have been endowed, and they leave it to them, lapping up their regurgitations and repeating them in parrot-like fashion as their own opinions.

No wonder governments have such open contempt for the governed!

Which newspaper thinks for you?

F.B.I. Chief Backs Truman.—"News Chronicle" headline, November 18.

No. 1 G-Man Joins Attack on Truman.—"Daily Express" headline, November 18.

anxious about her. The Communists used the bait of news from his wife as one means of breaking him down.

The Methods Used

What were these means? No physical violence was used, but the utmost refinements of psychological pressure. Cooke points out that the essence of the treatment was an application of Pavlov's method of inducing conditioned reflexes. In rats, for example, a certain pattern of conduct can be achieved by rewarding it whenever it follows the desired course, and applying an unpleasant stimulus (mild electric shocks were usually employed) whenever it deviated from it. So these men were treated unpleasantly when they refused to co-operate, rewarded by slight remissions in the rigour of their conditions if they came even a small way to meet their captors requirements.

To achieve their purpose the Communist authorities were exceedingly watchful for things a man disliked. The case described by Cooke, mentioned that he disliked rice. His diet which formerly consisted of rice and fish heads, was promptly reduced to rice alone. They noticed that he recoiled when they spat near his feet: after that they were careful to spit in his bedding.

Cooke did not enlarge on the analogy with Pavlov. But another factor besides the method of inducing conditioned reflexes was utilized. An overflowing of the river Neva, flooded the laboratories where Pavlov's animals were kept, and many of his dogs were subjected thereby to the utmost terror and fatigue. They were then found to have lost their previous "conditioning" and to be in a peculiarly malleable state for condition-

MR. GRYLL.—While we are on the subject of misnomers, what say you to the wisdom of Parliament?

THE REVEREND DOCTOR OPIMIAN.—Why, sir, I do not call that a misnomer. The wisdom of Parliament is a wisdom sui generis. It is not like any other wisdom. It is not the wisdom of Socrates, nor the wisdom of Solomon. It is the wisdom of Parliament. It is not easily analysed or defined; but it is very easily understood. It has achieved wonderful things by itself, and still more when Science has come to its aid. Between them, they have poisoned the Thames and killed the fish in the river. A little further development of the same wisdom and science will complete the poisoning of the air and kill the dwellers on the banks.

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK,
Gryll Grange, (1860)

ing of other types. An article in one of the leading medical journals pointed out a year or so ago that such "de-conditioning" was used in many cases of religious conversion by semi-hysterical evangelist methods, and also in Communist propaganda trials.

In Korea, the Americans were given poor and insufficient food; if recalcitrant they would be made to spend the freezing night in open pits. Many were told they were to be shot and in some cases were placed in front of a firing squad, whose rifles clicked on empty magazines at the order to fire. They were given foul water to drink out of rusty tin cans, and the dysentery they thereby contracted was treated or not according to their amenability regarding confession. Whenever they showed themselves willing to come across, they were rewarded with warmth, slight improvements in food or comfort, slight remission of the mental tension. Even so only thirty of the original hundred were finally broken down though some died under the treatment.

The Confessions

Cooke's informant was finally broken down to the point where he declared his willingness to sign a confession. But he was then told that he must himself write the confession. When he did to, he had to add more details of dates names of officers who "briefed" him and so on. In doing this he managed to incorporate certain inconsistencies, and certain statements which U.S.A.F. records would be able to prove false.

When his confession was complete, he was required to write it out over a hundred times in order to memorize it. He was told exactly how to conduct himself before the Commission, and advised that if he retracted any detail he would be taken out instantly and shot. This happened in one case, and the threat was carried out. One would like to know what members like Needham thought about such a retraction?

The Fellow Travellers

What of these people who lend themselves to the Communist game? There seems little doubt that men like Joseph Needham are "sincere", in that they believe in what they are doing. But Soviet methods, police system, justice, concentration camps and so on are as well known over the past twenty years as the atrocities of the Nazis. What is one to think of men who allow their own eminence to provide a gloss for Communist propaganda? (Needham, though a biologist and geneticist, incidentally played his part even after the Lysenko affair had proved too much for *Daily Worker*

editorial board member, J. B. S. Haldane).

A few years ago the present writer attacked this soft-headedness in such men as Lord Boyd Orr on the occasion of his visit to Moscow on an unofficial East-West trade mission. Several readers of *FREEDOM*, some of whom should have known better, expressed great indignation at this attack. Do they now support Needham and his letters to the *Times*?

General Issues

The point here is that Communist propaganda defeats itself because the evidence is so well prepared that it ceases to have any validity as evidence. They have so plainly showed that when they desire evidence they will prepare the witnesses to supply it. It is an important matter, because one rejects these "commissions" not from faith that the U.S. government would not use germ warfare (Nagasaki and Hiroshima are still too fresh memories even after 8½ years), but from lack of evidence that they did, and from the very care with which the Soviet authorities provided such evidence—i.e. created when it did not exist.

And this process draws attention to the finally more important matter: the use of individuals by various methods of mental torture, to provide political gains. Though far behind the Russians the West are not morally free from this crime, as the Rosenberg's case showed.

Perhaps the most significant feature, in the end, are the seventy men who refused to give evidence—for out of one hundred only thirty were satisfactorily processed. At the end of his life, and in 1948, George Orwell came to believe that the Communists could do anything with men: break them down utterly. That it was not possible (despite, for example, Petkov) to withstand psychological methods ruthlessly applied. We believe that this Korean confession business, shows such pessimism to be unjustified. Anarchists have always founded their politics and their social beliefs in faith in the individual man. Socialists (and in this Orwell was acting typically as a socialist) think in terms of masses of men, of classes, and found their estimate of human conduct on the behaviour of groups, usually so very much less ethical than that of individuals. The Americans who held out on this germ warfare were presumably not especially strong characters but may reasonably be assumed to have been mostly average individuals. Yet they refused to be conditioned. There is much in the world to condemn human beings: but these men, at least, testify to the superiority of men to rats and dogs.

J.H.

Telephone Tapping Again

IN all the party flurry and electioneering scandal-mongering of the Truman-Dexter White controversy one fact has emerged quite clearly—the use of telephone tapping as a means of obtaining information by the secret police. This admission is even more important than the assumption that White was a Communist spy although the evidence against him failed later to convince a grand jury.

"Was White really a Communist spy?" asks Robert Stephens in the *Observer*. "This can never be properly answered because White is dead and was never legally tried. Much of the evidence on which the F.B.I. (Federal Bureau of Investigation) based its allegation against him was obtained from tapping telephone wires and is legally inadmissible in a United States Federal Court."

Proposed Amendment of Law

But so far from being in any way reticent about the use of police wire tapping to obtain information, the U.S. Attorney-General, Mr. Brownell, only deplores that such information cannot at present be used as evidence. He has asserted that Congress will be asked in January to consider a new law which would allow the government to use wire-tap evidence to prove espionage cases. It is a measure of the distance we have travelled down the totalitarian path that the *Times*' correspondent in Washington should (on 19/11/53) describe this proposal

as "certainly seeming a reasonable law".

No national newspaper reporting this affair has raised the smallest protest about this matter. White is now dead and therefore can never be brought to trial. But because on the admissible evidence a grand jury has already failed to denounce him as a Communist, the Attorney-General—the highest law officer in America wants to change the laws of evidence and admit telephone tapping.

It is almost certain that before the war no government or police force in the English speaking world would ever have admitted that they tapped telephones. And any such practice would have been most vigorously denounced by liberal opinion. "Evidence" obtained in this way places an individual completely at the mercy of the police. And, of course, the knowledge that one's phone may be tapped creates a state of apprehension on the part of the ordinary citizen which is not far from the state of fear in a frank police state.

Does it Happen Here?

Are such happenings confined to America? We have seen that the *Times*' correspondent far from recoiling at the fact of wire-tapping, calmly thinks it "reasonable" to make such information legally admissible as evidence. Only a few weeks ago *FREEDOM* drew attention to evidence that the police in this country opened letters in cases of

suspicion. During the war, when Herbert Morrison was Home Secretary, he admitted that telephone tapping was used, but refused "in the national interest" to say how much it was used.

The State has therefore moved a long way down the path to the open admission of total control over the citizen. In the past opposition to such methods used to come mainly from the socialists and liberals, though many conservatives also, to their credit, were absolutely opposed to them. Much of the dislike which reasonable people feel for such police devices has undoubtedly been undermined because the Communists do employ an extensive spying system. Most people to-day think it rather extravagant to defend civil liberties and individual freedom if the agents of a foreign power are going to use that freedom and immunity to disrupt such a system. The argument is familiar and is unacceptable to most anarchists. But the point that should be made now is that the adoption of a particular cause ("socialism") by the Russian government, and the particularly unscrupulous methods openly advocated by Lenin, have immeasurably damaged the political left, and must be held partly responsible for permitting reactionary measures to pass through virtually unopposed.

When all this has been said, telephone tapping and all the other invasions of individual rights ought to be absolutely denounced.

