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## LESSON FOR THE TORIES

ALREADY the statisticians are busily at work analysing the results of the "little general election," and seeking to find in them indications of national trends. Such research, though necessarily speculative, is often illuminating. In a letter, for instance, from Mr. Geoffrey Bing, which we publish on another page, there is much which the Liberal Party can study with profit, if not with enthusiasm. Moreover, comparison between the by-election and municipal figures confirms the conclusion, which we reached in these columns a few weeks ago, that the anti-Socialist victory achieved by Lord Woolton gave no reliable indication of how the same electors would vote in a Parliamentary election.

In Gravesend it must be remembered that only about half the constituency was covered by the municipal elections, and that the areas not included were predominantly Conservative. But with this qualification the figures remain illuminating.

By-election.	Municipal.
Labour 24,692	Labour 11,466
Conservative 23,017	Conservative 22,852

Equally important is the contrast between the Gallup figures, showing how people said they would vote if there were an election, and the actual results in the three by-elections. It is clear that the election campaign itself changed the minds of many voters. Submitted to three weeks of intensive political education, thousands of people seem to have reconsidered their attitude. When the voters began to reflect on their irritation at austerity, and to consider seriously the possibility of a Churchill Government, thousands of them flinched at the prospect. They were prepared to express resentment in municipals; but when brought to the test under the arc lights of world publicity, they still found that they preferred Mr. Attlee to Mr. Churchill.

So much can be stated with confidence about the Gravesend result. But to go on from there and to draw conclusions from one by-election about what would happen in a general election deflects attention from the real importance of Gravesend—its immediate effect on both Government and Opposition.

What mattered at Gravesend was not trends and tendencies, but victory or defeat. British politics, with grave injustice to smaller parties, have always been a contest of heavyweights, and the British people have treated elections, very wisely, not as public opinion polls, to be adjudicated on points, but as contests for power in which the knock-out is the only satisfactory result. At Gravesend the Government knocked the Opposition out of the ring and regained faith in itself. Once again Mr. Churchill, duped by his own magnificent phrases, found that the working class prefers its bread and butter to Tory slogans.

One immediate consequence will be a revival of the dispute between the Churchillians and the Reformers inside the Tory Party. At Gravesend the phrases which won the municipals were repeated by Mr. Taylor, but with dwindling confidence as each day passed. Churchillian rhetoric, so captivating at Westminster, sounds tawdry and even unpatriotic when measured against the achievements of the mineworkers and the steelworkers, the equality of the rationing system and the absence of unemployment.

In the inquest which is now taking place on Lord Woolton's failure, Mr. Butler and Mr. Macmillan will press home their argument that an educated electorate is entitled to something better than hot air. Mr. Churchill is the chief electoral asset of both sides. His personality still wins votes for a party without a policy, but by emphasising the absence of policy it provides the Labour Party with its best talking-point. Gravesend will confirm thoughtful Tories in the view that they can have no hope of office until Sinbad gets rid of the Grand Old Man of the Sea.

### The Struggle in France

Dust still hangs thick over the French political arena; it is difficult as yet to discern whether the strikes will be "settled," or how much will be left of Parliamentary democracy in France when the battle is over. In many respects the conflict conforms to a classical pattern. In conditions of inflation, acute poverty and food shortage, the nice balance of Parliamentary parties becomes

increasingly precarious, a would-be dictator finds wide support among the middle classes, half-disguised support from the Right, and militant opposition from the Left—leaving a middle party of reason and moderation desperately seeking a compromise. Strikes for higher pay are demanded by the workers, and the Communist Party, which is in command of the C.G.T., is anxious to make itself the spokesman of economic demands which increasingly take on a political character. There is no evidence that the Communists had planned or are trying to carry through a revolution. If Moscow has sent directives, we do not know what they are.

It may be Moscow hopes by a revolutionary policy to forestall American influence in Western Europe, but it is surely obvious that the policy of a general strike is likely to hurry Congressional aid for the Right wing in France. This is inconsistent with the clear intention of the Communist Party throughout Europe to wreck the Marshall Plan. A definite political issue was raised openly by the general strike committee only when the Government introduced its draft anti-strike legislation and refused the demand of the C.G.T. that withdrawal of the Bills should be a condition precedent to further negotiations on the wage issue. With the help of troops, tanks and tear-gas, a Right-wing Government is succeeding in maintaining some essential services and keeping some trains running. Empty pockets and empty bellies seem to be leading to some return to work, and may lead to more; but there is little evidence that the solidarity of the strike has been broken, and there is at least a possibility that it may spread to more, non-Communist, unions and also to lead to more serious bloodshed. M. Schuman seems bent on forcibly breaking the strike. His anti-strike legislation, outdoing the Taft-Hartley Act in drastic penalties for opposing the right to work, has shocked both non-Communist elements in the C.G.T. and the Socialist Party, which has been making unsuccessful efforts to persuade the Premier to postpone his legislation and to make a more acceptable offer to the strikers. Indeed, the Socialist Minister of Labour, M. Daniel Mayer, appears

programme *Checkmate*, *Symphonic Variations* and *Mam'selle Angot*, has no parallel in Europe at present. *Checkmate* seems to have grown in significance during its long retreat; or perhaps one has grown up to it. It is, in all its elements, a work of great intelligence and beauty, the most moving, I think, of Ninette de Valois' ballets.

The young company known as Metropolitan Ballet has an artistic standard which is still some way beyond its present powers of realisation. But it is a great thing to have a standard. Expressively, Celia Franca is easily its best dancer. Sonia Arova and Paul Gnatt are also valuable members, and the fifteen-year-old Lithuanian ballerina Beresova and the young Danish dancer Eric Bruhn show great promise. Their most ambitious ballet, *The Lovers' Gallery*, invented and designed by George Kirsta, the artistic director, with choreography by Frank Staff, is a most ingenious and amusing spectacle, but not yet a good ballet. It was exasperating that Lennox Berkeley's music, which is interesting and beautiful, did not receive a better performance. In fact, the musical accompaniment of these ballets is the worst I have ever heard. They deserve much better.

I can only draw attention in this notice to Ram Gopal's dances at the Prince's Theatre, which so fortunately and significantly coincide with the Exhibition of Indian Art at Burlington House. It is there that he should be invited to perform. It would be an enlightening experience. BERYL DE ZOEFE

### THE MOVIES

"Shoe-Shine," at the Rialto

"It Always Rains on Sunday," at the Odeon

"Abroad"—how the flavour of that word has altered! It means the forbidden lands, or for an insistent traveller Eire, Gibraltar, Malta, the Bahamas. New books from abroad? Precious few. Paintings? Even fewer. So far as films are concerned we have yet to feel the stoppage. When it comes we shall discover how fat, with the worst of Hollywood, we are depriving ourselves of the best from Europe.

Meanwhile Mr. Sam Goldwyn's *The Bishop's Wife*, after its royal showing, has been packed away in cold storage—where it might just as well stay—and there is a new film from Italy showing at the Rialto. Like the other Italian films London has seen, this one dates from the war. Date, however, in the fashionable sense, it does not at all. Again, the slice of life and the sense of tragedy confront us irresistibly. Do you remember the children in *Open City* who, after blowing up a train or a munitions

dump, run home to their families to have their ears warmed? Move on a year or so. Rome is in the sway of the Americans; the war still rages in Normandy, in the Pacific; those same children or others have adventured further in lawlessness. They have, many of them, no home; they shine the shoes of sloping American Joes; wads of inflated currency pass from hand to hand; a hungry look stamps all faces; dilapidation rules; and the enemy now is the Black Market—black as ever the blackshirts were. Two such children, who with their earnings have bought a horse, are caught trying to sell black blankets, arrested, imprisoned. It is called a reform school, but it is a boys' prison. Separated at once they occupy different cells (five to a cell), and the heart-breaking gang life sets one against the other. Their fight against corruption ends in a mutual struggle. They endure frightful miseries, and when at last they manage to escape, the elder of the two kills the younger. An accident. A series of such accidents has taken us atrociously far from the film's opening, in which the two boys on horseback race wildly along a shade-dappled track outside Rome.

This film, unsparring in its harshness, would be grim indeed to endure if its conviction were not matched by its magnificent pity. The realism of *Shoe-Shine* is of a kind to make one weep. All the children (a hundred or more of them) are supremely natural, and script and direction have the forceful beauty we have come to expect from these resurgent films. Italy suffered more than some countries, but less than others, from the war. Perhaps only so much, or comparatively so little, suffering as theirs can prove fertile to the work of art. Certainly here, in *Shoe-Shine* as in *Open City* and *Live in Peace*, the genius seems to reside in the material, the situation. All the names in the programme of *Shoe-Shine* are new to me. Those of the two boys are Rinaldo Smordoni and Franco Interlenghi. The director is Vittorio De Sica.

*It Always Rains on Sunday* is a good English thriller with plenty of local colour. Curious that, in films, our most lyrical glimpses of London should nearly all be associated with crime: curious but not, I think, so deplorable. The chase wonderfully sharpens attention, and provides the excuse—like taking out a gun and a dog in the country—for this particular walk through Bethnal Green. A little low street where on Sunday (apparently) it can't help raining; sawn-off steeple in the distance; trains passing roof-high; Petticoat Lane; dance-band leader with a gramophone shop and a lure for girls; the Hyde Park marchers, with banner, setting off; boozier and coffee-stall, dance-hall and youth club; a seedy trio of thieves; escaped convict; Dad's game of darts; the

Salvation Army across the way chanting "Temptation, oh Temptation" under a lamp-post; a girl and a boy in mackintoshes, who have squabbled, making it up; murder of a "fence"; final chase along dark, wet streets and in and out among the sidings. A damp, fresh little lyric about a neighbourhood that may have seemed remote to those living at the other end of the bus route. If the crime and passion are spurious, they throw everyday surroundings into more vivid relief than would, probably, that district visitor, the documentary. Good inconspicuous acting from a large cast; director, Robert Hamer, who has used his camera and his wits with appreciation.

May I indicate to our film-makers a region just to the north-west of Bethnal Green that, with another century's look and a life of its own, should prove even more photogenic? Under a wide sky sit the trim roads and squares, a canal-side, gardens, factories, trees, an occasional extravagance in Gothic. The unlikely name of this neighbourhood is De Beauvoir Town. WILLIAM WHITEBART

### RADIO NOTES

New arts demand new words, and in its short day the radio has given us many, not always beautiful. Seeking during the last few weeks to compound a necessary word that should be at once inoffensive in sound, clear in meaning and traditional in formation, I have met with a philological difficulty. The transitive Latin verb *auscultare*, to listen to, hearken to, give ear to, produces in English the two verbs "to auscult" (*vaɪ*) and "to auscultate," the latter being familiar in medicine. Normally I would not wish to have truck with such words; the wireless I would either listen to, or switch off. It was some such word as *inausculatable* or *inausculatible* that I wanted. After careful consideration of the rival claims of medicine and radio, I venture to suggest that *inausculatable* be reserved for those organs inaudible even to the stethoscope, and that *inausculatible* be dedicated to such radio-programmes as *Paradise Lost*, which has now been going on for seven weeks, and has been more or less unlistenable-to from the very start.

Week after week we have had that superlatively vacuous musical introduction; to it the tones of the organ have recently been added. Week after week we have had the voice of Mr. Dylan Thomas coming up like thunder on the road to Mandalay; rarely can such gusty intakes of breath have passed across the ether. Week after week a number of distinguished actors have been persuaded to damage their reputations by crazy semi-dramatisations of the characters in the poem. Week after week Mr. Abraham Sofaer

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has striven to maintain over whole quarters of an hour tones of an intensity neither desirable nor supportable. I do not wonder that toward the end of some sessions he has given the impression of having lost the thread of the argument and of emphasising quite arbitrary words to keep up his own interest. But for once I do not feel much blame attaches to the actors, and on occasion—Miss Martita Hunt's Sin, for example, and Mr. Robert Harris's Adam—they have been very moving; it is the whole thing that seems to be wrong. It leads one to wonder exactly how much trial-and-error work, if any, is done at the mike before the Third commits us and itself to these curious large-scale ventures. The broadcasts of *The Prelude* are much better devised; we are given adequately long selections from the poem; and these are interspersed with excellent talks about various problems which it raises. So far we have heard Mr. Herbert Read, Miss Helen Darbishire, Mr. Geoffrey Grigson and Mr. Stephen Potter. It was particularly sensible to include Mr. Grigson, not only for his valuable knowledge of the scenery of the poem, but for his sensitive querying of certain of our traditional easy-going acceptances of much in Wordsworth that he finds dubious. With Milton still the subject of acrimonious debate, there was admirable opportunity for similar treatment. At the risk of being thought the literary equivalent of a Fascist beast, I will suggest that *Paradise Lost* itself suffers greatly from monotony and from a deficiency of interesting and varied action, which one puts up with more readily off the air than on. The promoters have at last realised that substantial cutting will do no harm. So what do they cut? All those exquisite, absurd descriptions of the details of the Creation, the vegetation, the fishes and so on, which fall on the ear with such enchanting relief among so much that is unendingly vague and unvisited.

Not that Milton's natural history is any dottier than the real thing; for immediately after last week's reduced ration of Milton, we had Professor Haldane talking irresistibly about "Nature and Nurture," which are his terms for heredity and environment. I can always listen with extreme pleasure as he chats on and on about the behaviour of rats, wheat, humans, carnations, flies, etc. He is a model broadcaster, individual but without affectation or mannerism. I was again reminded of Milton in the adaptation of Mr. Somerset Maugham's "Narrow Corner" the other night. Can anyone since Milton have been so suspicious of Woman as Mr. Maugham? Miltonic or not, the low, sordid intrigue came very well over the air, and there was a performance by Mr. Arthur Sinclair of astonishing dimensions. The whole broadcast was eminently auscultable. HENRY REED

## Correspondence

### THE GREAT DEBATE

SIR,—Next to the spectacle of the Liberal Party's unremitting efforts to stage the miracle of the resurrection by the methods of Coué, I think the saddest sight in politics is that presented by my friends Leonard Woolf and Dick Crossman in trying to make the ghost of the Western Bloc walk again, long after the body of that doctrine has been taken over by Messrs. Marshall, Bevin and Co. My friends see as clearly as I do that the world is being divided up into two blocs and that that will ultimately lead to a third world war. But their remedy is to try to create a third bloc independent of both the other two! The logic of their position is that the third world war is well nigh inevitable and we must concentrate on staying neutral when it breaks out. I believe on the contrary that we can prevent the next world war, but cannot stay out if we fail.

The psychological basis of their position seems to be a phobia about the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties of Europe (who by this time are most of the effective trade unions and political leadership of most of Europe, either alone or in conjunction with Socialists; as for instance, in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Rumania) almost as strong as that of Truman, Churchill and Bevin but inhibited, as is not the case with them, by a lingering belief in the international aims on which the Labour Party won the General Election.

I believe the Left and the Right are both more realistic about the facts of public life than my wishful-thinking friends in the middle. Thus I agree with much of Mr. W. N. Ewer's case demolishing Mr. Leonard Woolf's pamphlet, and I think Mr. Christopher Buckley in your last issue has shown up the utter unreality of Mr. Crossman's pathetic faith in a West European Bloc that would be anything else than what Mr. Marshall and Mr. Bevin are making it at present, namely a bridgehead for the American holy war against the European working class, trying to make Europe safe for Wall Street in the guise of rescuing it from Communism. At one time the Woolf-Crossman-Cole school were eloquent about this West European Bloc being run by Social Democrats. With the French Socialists all too obviously treading the same road as their inglorious pre-war German forebears and clinging to that French combination of von Papen and Dr. Schacht, M. Robert Schuman, where they are not directly allied with de Gaulle's bravos, my friends have at least ceased to importune us with talk about the West European

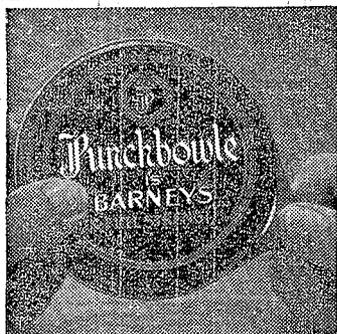
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Social Democrats as a "Third Force." But they seem quite prepared to do on an international scale what the French Socialists have already done at home, namely to accept a Marshall Plan West Europe run by General de Gaulle and his political equivalents in Italy as the independent West European Social Democratic Bloc of their dreams.

So far as I am concerned this letter is my declaration of war against this whole phoney Left school in foreign policy. I have forbore from attacking them for a long time, hoping that the march of events would reveal their errors to them. But the time has come to say clearly that those who take the present Woolf-Crossman-Cole line offer no true alternative to the Government's policy of subservience to the United States, which means ultimately capitulation to American capitalism and support of near-Fascism in Western Europe as we are already doing in Greece. The only policy that is in accordance with the Labour Party's election pledges and that will put an end to the division of the world into two blocs is the one summed up in the following propositions:

(1) No unification of Europe without the Soviet Union. That means implementing the Labour Party's pledge to make the Anglo-Soviet Alliance the basis for co-operation between our two countries after the war. In practice that means revising and strengthening the Alliance and making it and the Anglo-French and the Franco-Soviet Alliances the basis for an all-European regional agreement within the United Nations. This agreement might well include a West European sub-division going most of the way toward federation. But the latter could be formed only as part and parcel of an all-European agreement with the Soviet Union.

The first step in that agreement might well be the conclusion of a commercial treaty with the U.S.S.R. as well as with Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. We should be prepared to go all the way to the co-ordination of our national planning with the countries of Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R., matching their production targets and export programmes with ours, and we should put as much energy and goodwill into seeking such agreements as we have hitherto put into exclusive co-operation with the United States.

(2) No democracy in Europe without Socialism. We should act on the Labour Party's declared official view that Socialism is essential to the attainment of our international aims and notably to successful economic reconstruction, to removing Fascism and all forms of political tyranny and to promoting the spread of democracy and political freedom. If we act on that view as well as on Mr. Attlee's statement in the House on November 18 of last year, that



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Sir Ernest H. Murrant, K.C.M.G., M.B.E., the chairman, in the course of his speech said: "In view of the unavoidable delay in the presentation of the accounts your directors adopted the unusual course of declaring the dividend on the Ordinary Stock at the time that stockholders would normally look for it. Accordingly a dividend of 8 per cent per annum, less tax, was paid on September 17th. After making full provision for taxation in the United Kingdom and abroad, there is a total credit balance of £1,053,996. Your directors make the following recommendations—That £142,056 be provided for the inauguration of a pension fund for employees in the U.S.A.; that £100,000 be transferred to deferred repairs account; that £250,000 be set aside for depreciation and that £53,968 be transferred to Fleet Replacement account.

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