

Communist Parties and the local Soviets in certain districts were held responsible for many of the deficiencies in agricultural production.

#### SCANDINAVIA

##### Norway

In the complete absence of any Soviet reaction to the Norwegian note conveying the *Storting's* resolution on Spitsbergen (see *Summary* No. 333) the most important repercussions so far have taken place at home. Considerations of foreign policy forbade the proceedings in the *Storting* on the 15th of February from being made public until more than two weeks later, when it was disclosed that the Government's resolution had been adopted by 101 votes to 11. The Communist members were found to have been the only dissenters, favouring a draft resolution drawn up by the Party's representative in the Foreign Affairs Committee, M. Strand-Johansen. This motion, as might have been expected, urged the Government to continue the bilateral discussions with the Soviet Union regarding the joint defence of the Islands. The action of the Communists, so clearly demonstrative of where their true allegiance lies, has evoked bitter criticism throughout the country, and the chief Government organ, *Arbeiderbladet*, has not hesitated fairly and squarely to condemn them as fifth-columnists prepared to subordinate the interests of Norway to those of the Soviet Union. Whatever the outcome of the whole affair may be, and there is no reason to suppose that the *Storting* will feel inclined even to reconsider the matter, it may already be said that the Communist Party has suffered a serious, though as yet inestimable, loss of popularity.

An important debate on reconstruction was resumed on the 4th of March. Concerned mainly with the work in the war-ravaged provinces of Finnmark and North Troms, the debate formed the occasion for a determined and concerted attack upon the Government. Members of the Opposition, one after another, alleged gross incompetence on the part of the administration, and M. Utheim of the Liberal Party, went as far as to call upon the Minister of Supply, M. Torp, to resign. The same speaker also urged the appointment of a special committee to investigate the malpractices revealed, most of which concerned the evasion of regulations, particularly by timber contractors. Freights paid to ship-owners were also far in excess of the maximum rates stipulated, and the Opposition

brought the charge that the Ministry of Supply had, though perhaps unwittingly, encouraged black market transactions which it was the avowed intention of the Government to stamp out. Government speakers ridiculed the contention of the Opposition that the debate was non-political, and asserted that the speeches in which the Government had been criticised revealed a gleeful desire to make political capital out of the difficulties in the North. Answering the charges, M. Torp admitted that a certain amount of unlicensed building had taken place, and timber had been obtained by persons evading the regulations. This, however, showed a lack of social conscience on the part of individuals and firms who were supporters of the doctrine of private enterprise, for which the Government could hardly be held responsible since this policy was advocated by the Opposition itself. Excess freights, the Minister agreed, had been paid in a number of cases but these had been recovered; the Department was continuing its investigations into other cases, and proceedings would be instigated against offenders. M. Utheim's proposal for the appointment of a special investigation committee was a challenge and he, M. Torp, considered the question to be one of confidence. M. Utheim's motion was rejected with 82 votes to 54, and the investigations left in the hands of the Ministry of Supply. The Communist members voted with the Government.

##### Denmark

Denmark is at present in the throes of the forthcoming elections to the Upper House, the *Landting*. The elections to this body are rather complicated and far less democratic than those to the Lower House, which is one of the reasons why the abolition of the *Landting* has been repeatedly mooted and forms one of the planks of the Communist platform. Of the 76 members of the *Landting* nineteen are elected by an electoral college composed of members of the retiring *Landting*, while the remainder are elected in the seven Upper House constituencies, each division electing an electoral college. In practice, however, the electoral colleges carry out the decisions of the party organisations, since the parties hold meetings immediately prior to the official deliberations of the electoral colleges and impose on their members the duty to vote for candidates selected by the party. Thus it would seem as though it were possible to work out accurately the number of Upper House members which

each party will gain, but there exist certain means of "eking out the votes" and parties know how to exploit these possibilities. If, for instance, two parties jointly can secure a mandate, they may do so in association on previously agreed conditions. While it is possible that an agreement may this time be made between the middle class parties it seems hardly likely that the Conservatives and Radicals will be able to come to an arrangement, and M. Hedtoft, the leader of the Social-Democratic Party, has rejected a Communist proposal for a joint list, although he tempered his refusal by explaining that his Party did not wish to form a list with *any* party. It is rather difficult to forecast the result of the elections, as the strike in the printing trade is severely handicapping any expression of opinion, but there seems little likelihood that the Government Party will lose any votes—they may even show a slight gain.

The outgoing *Landting* consists of 34 Social-Democrats, 19 members of Venstre, 14 Conservatives, 8 Radicals and one Member for the Faeroes.

On the 25th of March, M. Rasmussen, the Danish Foreign Minister, announced the Government's intention of terminating the United States-Danish Greenland treaty. This decision may well be one of the most popular that the present Danish Government has taken, as rumours emanating from the United States that it was intended to purchase Greenland were very much resented all over the country and had been described by the Foreign Minister himself, as absurd and contrary to Danish tradition.

The expression of Danish opinion on President Truman's message to Congress was also handicapped by the printers' strike. On the whole, however, those papers which have appeared seem to have confined themselves to reporting the speech without comment, which is probably partly due to the usual Danish lack of interest in foreign affairs and mainly to the intense Danish desire to avoid being forced to take sides in any dispute between East and West. Nevertheless, one may wonder whether the sudden firmness displayed by the Danes in their demand for payment under their agreement with Soviet Russia—and a very recent approach to the American Ambassador in Copenhagen about inter-Scandinavian defence—is by any chance connected with Mr. Truman's declaration.

33403

##### Sweden

In Sweden, on the other hand, the latent dislike and fear of Russia has led to a widespread welcome in the Liberal and Conservative press for Mr. Truman's declaration of defiance. The Government papers, however, and the Communist *Ny Dag*, deplored Mr. Truman's speech as signifying a challenge to Moscow which might conceivably lessen the chances of the peace settlement between the Great Powers.

##### Iceland

An Icelandic Trade Delegation has arrived in Moscow, but its coming has not yet been announced in the Russian press. It will be interesting to see whether, taking their cue from the Danes, the Icelanders will use these parallel negotiations for trying to exert pressure on His Majesty's Government during the trade conferences at present taking place in this country.

##### Finland

Signs that the fortunes of the Social Democratic Party may be reviving can be detected in the resolution adopted at a recent congress of the Party's Swedish branch, which for a considerable period has been opposed to the central leadership, and at times carried on a vigorous flirtation with the Folk Democrats. The meeting at which the Swedish-speaking workers considered the future affiliation of their organisation, decided by 90 votes to 31 to remain within the Social Democratic Party, and, at the same time, reached the conclusion that their paper, *Arbetsbladet*, must in the future follow a line more in conformity with the remainder of the Party press, and not lend itself to attacks upon the Social Democratic Movement. The Editor, M. Atos Virtanen, who, it will be remembered, last autumn, together with Mme. Kilpi, resigned from the Party, was consequently replaced by M. Gunnar Henriksson. The Congress further expressed the hope of speedily reaching a better understanding with the majority of the Party, thus ensuring that the minority will receive a satisfactory representation in the Party leadership. In view of the fact that a very real danger at one time existed of the Swedish branch detaching itself and perhaps joining the Folk Democratic camp, the decision of the Congress must be regarded as an important step towards the unity of the Movement, and should greatly strengthen it during the critical months ahead.