

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

EXPECTATIONS AT MORECAMBE

AT the time of going to press, the result of the elections to the Labour Party National Executive are still awaited. Much political play will be made of Mr. Bevan's gains or failures, and the opposite effect for the "leaders". But it has long been apparent that the differences in the Labour Party are largely shadow boxing, if only because, in power, they follow just the same policy as any other government. What such boxing depends on is the various currents of opinion within the rank and file. It is, in fact, simply the technique of demagoguery. Bevan's attacks on re-armament draws on the votes of those members of the Labour Party who remember its pacifism and the ghost of George Lansbury stalking about Morecambe. But Mr. Bevan and his associates are no more pacifists than Attlee or the latter-day Morrison who draw on the Socialist-unity concepts in the party members for their support.

Major issues are not decided by the National Conference or by the rank and file but by the leaders. In the following paragraphs, some of the aspects of party democracy are examined.

On the eve of the Labour Party Conference, a special correspondent of the *Times* contributed an article on "The reality and illusion of popular control" at Party Conferences. The writer shows how Lord Randolph Churchill (Winston Churchill's father) sought "to establish himself as a leader of his own party by winning the support of the rank and file in the constituencies and using it against the leaders of the Parliamentary Party." (In this, he was successful, but "the interest and relevance of the story, however, are in the fact that, at this moment of triumph, Lord Randolph Churchill took no step to secure the independence of the National Union"—the body in which the rank and file could express their opinion and through which Lord Randolph secured his own success. "Lord Randolph Churchill, having become one of them (the leaders), did not seek to transfer that power to the rank and file, represented in the national Union.")

The same process was going on in the Liberal Party. The leaders securing their own immunity from the organisations of the rank and file.

"The same tendency was noticeable even in the early days of the Labour Party. In February, 1909, the London correspondent of the *Frankfurt Volkstimme* wrote of the ninth conference of the Labour Party:—

"All expectations to the contrary notwithstanding, the two closing days of the conference were peaceful and were marked by no great discussions. This shows . . . the extraordinary adroitness of the party executive, which had arranged the agenda in such a way that it

was possible for the chairman to steer the conference past all the danger points almost without attracting attention. . . . The first preventive measure adopted by the standing orders committee was to rule out of the agenda certain resolutions whose discussion was regarded as needless or unanswerable."

The writer goes on to remark:—

"The two main parties to-day, though each of them gives a prominent place to the annual party conference, are so organised that the chances of the views of the rank and file prevailing against those of the Parliamentary leaders are slender. The organisation of the Conservative Party is commonly criticised by its opponents. . . .

"In form, the structure of the Labour Party is more democratic. The party conference can 'decide from time to time what specific proposals of legislative, financial, or administrative reform shall be included in the party programme,' but this is only the long-term programme. The conference may have decided that all hairdressers should be nationalised, but it is for the National Executive Committee and the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Party to decide whether this proposal should be included in the election manifesto. Even then it remains for the Parliamentary Party to decide the character and timing of any Parliamentary action which needs to be taken. Finally, when the party is in power—in a position, in other words, to nationalise the hairdressers—the real power of decision rests with an even smaller body, the minority of the Parliamentary Party who form the Government. Here, again, is the oligarchy."

"The oligarchic character of the Labour Party has, in fact, been acknowledged in one of the party's official publications, which, after explaining the way in which the National Executive and the Labour Government kept in touch, added: 'In this way, at least, Parliament and Government are not unaware of the decisions and deliberations of the party's governing body.' 'Not unaware of' is hardly a democratic conception. Moreover, while the Labour Government were in power the conference pressed three years running for the abolition of the tied cottage. Mr. Bevan, as Minister of Health, opposed the de-

mand, saying that 'While it is the task of the conference to decide policy, it is the onerous task of the Government and the Parliamentary Party to decide how and when to implement it.'

"In both parties, in fact, effective power lies with the Parliamentary leaders."

Even the elections to the Labour Party National Executive allow the constituency organisations every year to elect only a minority of the members, "which limits their powers from the start—and they themselves limit it still further by electing only members of the Parliamentary Party". The article quotes Belfort Bax's book on Socialism of 1905 as saying that as few as three people controlled the policy of the whole party and concludes:

"The party conferences provide an opportunity for examining the mood of the party—and the Parliamentary members will not be insensitive to any clear

expression of that mood. That is the reality. The conferences are not, however instruments of popular control over policy or over leaders. That is the illusion."

We have quoted thus at length from a non-anarchist source in order to show that our basic criticisms are admitted and are directed not merely against the Labour Party—which has the most democratic structure—but also against the Tories and the Liberal Party in its days of influence. The whole core of the matter is summed-up by a leader writer in the same issue of the *Times* who describes the conference and National Executive election procedures as "just part of the process of transferring power from the many to the few, which is necessary in any large political organisation". (Our italics.)

"I am an individual and a believer in liberty. That is all the politics I have."

—CHARLIE CHAPLIN

Militarism in Czech Schools

THE inculcation of militarism into children was inaugurated by Mussolini and carried on by the Hitler youth. It has also for long been a feature of the Comsomols, the Soviet youth organisations. The same thing is now being carried on in Czechoslovakia, according to *Obrana Lidu*, the soldiers' newspaper published in Prague.

Military instruction is to be given in all schools and criticism of the laxity in this respect in the past is expressed.

"In the Czech lessons, pupils read passages about the defence of the homeland; about the last war; about the struggle of the workers, led by the Communist Party, against the Fascist occupiers; about the Slovak and Prague risings; and about the glorious past of the nation. In the Russian hour, they read about the Soviet Army; about the heroic struggle of the Soviet soldiers against Fascism; and about the tasks facing the Soviet and Czechoslovak armies."

The curriculum lays down that history lessons in the elementary schools must "teach socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism, military morale, loyalty and love towards the Soviet Union and the people's democracies, hatred of all war-mongers and enemies of the people." In geography the opportunity is to be taken to bring out the wealth and beauty of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, "which must be defended." The children must learn to read maps, estimate and measure distances, and find their way by maps. Natural science is to be used to explain to the pupils "the biological methods employed by the enemy, against which it is necessary for the defender to protect his health." In music lessons fighting songs and marches of the Czechoslovak and Russian armies are to be sung. Finally, physical training classes must "improve the physical prowess of the pupils, who will become accustomed to responsibility for the fulfilment of their tasks, to discipline, and to co-operation."

In secondary schools, the curriculum includes "tactics, shooting, Czechoslovak Army regulations, military geography, signals and first-aid," as well as the use of telephones and radio.

FRENCH C.P. PURGE CONTINUED

THE campaign of the French Communist Party against two of its leading members [FREEDOM, 27/9/52] proceeds with ever-increasing virulence, and is clearly aimed at the exclusion of these two members from the direction of the Party.

The latest accusations charge Marty and Tillon with the secret banking of funds which belonged to the Party and the former with clandestine opposition dating back to 1949.

In last week's *La France Nouvelle*, Léon Mauvais, a member of the ten-man Politburo, wrote that M. Marty was guilty of "fractional" or oppositional characteristics three years ago when he planned to issue a bulletin opposing the party line of secretary general Maurice Thorez. According to the *New York Herald Tribune* (Paris edition), many students of the party now think that the Marty-Tillon split with the Communist high command has so weakened the executive that it will be unable to lead any major political action with success during the next two years. In

addition to the failure of the anti-American riots and strikes in the spring, party membership has fallen off, and its press has been losing circulation heavily.

In labelling the two "men of action," M. Mauvais wrote that M. Tillon had confessed to the party executive that he had maintained two bank accounts which should have been placed at the disposal of the party. He also was said to have admitted that the funds "could have been aimed at financing an opposition."

The party communiqué then suggested that M. Tillon opposed the present line of a united workers' front, or co-operation with non-Communist forces. The leader of the Communist resistance army, it was made clear, had won M. Marty's support for direct action like strikes and manifestations with the old resistance movement playing a leading rôle.

The inference was that the two veterans of the French naval mutiny in 1919 had engaged in a plot for control of the party.

REFUGEES FROM CHINA

THERE are in the world to-day, one and a half to two million refugees who come under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. FREEDOM has frequently pointed to the columns of men and women trudging wearily with a few belongings from disaster in the present towards an uncertain future. They have become a permanent phenomenon in twentieth century life and they are a symbol of the failure of the world's social and economic organisation.

A small proportion of refugees are fleeing from natural disaster: floods or famine. But the overwhelming majority are seeking to escape from tyranny or war or both, usually they are peasant populations and very poor, their miserable belongings representing their most important property. The access to power of the Chinese Communists, like that of the Russian bolsheviks thirty-odd years ago, has cast up a mass of refugees of whom a substantial proportion are business men. They consist mainly of the European representatives of foreign business concerns in China, and there are known to be ten thousand of them at present either in Shanghai or in Hong Kong. The problems presented by this group of refugees is soberly described in a *Times* leading article of 15/1/52.

"The Chinese, beyond putting them out of business, have not molested these unfortunate people; indeed, they seem to be as anxious as the refugees themselves for their early departure. The main difficulty lies in obtaining visas to enable the refugees to enter another country and begin a new life. Few countries have consular representatives in Shanghai, and there is none in the interior of the country. It is expecting a great deal to hope that countries will promise entry to a number of immigrants without knowing anything about them. Yet the only place where the necessary enquiries could easily be made is Hong Kong, and there the Colonial Government, inundated with refugees, has understandably refused to allow people to enter without visas for the country of intended destination.

"At the moment all the refugees in China can do is to arrange with relatives or friends in the Commonwealth, the United States, or Latin America to try to provide a promise that their case will be examined when they arrive in Hong Kong. It is not surprising that only 400 refugees have been moved from China in the first half of this year. Nor, unfortunately, is the visa the only difficulty. Those 400 cost nearly £900,000 to move. The available funds consist largely of sums left over at the demise of the International Refugee Organisation an emergency fund raised subsequently, to which the United Kingdom contributed £100,000, but these funds are not going to be anything like enough to pay the passages of the seven or eight thousand people left. At the moment, only about 2,000 of the refugees are dependent upon financial help from the High Commissioner for Refugees; but as the delays lengthen and savings run out more will turn to this very far from inexhaustible source of international assistance. What gives the situation a special urgency is the possibility

that the Chinese, if they cannot get rid of their unwanted foreigners in any other way, may resort to forced repatriation. This prospect for the White Russians, Poles, and Czechs who go to make up the greater number of the refugees would be desperate indeed."

Now, these people are Europeans and educated. The problems of absorbing them into other communities offers no serious difficulties compared with those of absorbing the masses of illiterate peasants who so often make up the refugee populations. That because these obvious problems of adaptation are absent in the case of the European refugees from China, the administrative and financial difficulties are thrown into high relief.

REFUGEES EXECUTED ON RETURN TO SINKIANG

All of the 207 refugees in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and India who have returned to Sinkiang during the past two years have been executed or sentenced to life imprisonment. These Turkistanis, who fled southwards when the Communists took over, were forced to return for lack of money; being unconnected with politics they thought they would be left free on their return. The Indian Government assisted them with money and food, but it is learnt that when they reached the border post of Shahid Ullah they were arrested and sent to the garrison town of Guma, in the Khotan district, for prolonged interrogation. They were not heard of again until Urumchi radio announced that they had been sentenced for treason.

Times report, 23/9/52.

BRITISH RULE IN MALAYA

The following revealing letter appeared in the correspondence columns of the *Manchester Guardian* last week:

Sir,—Your correspondent who signs himself "A Malay Security Officer" reports, with surprise, that to "the lower classes of almost all the Asian races in Malaya," he was "automatically a sort of public enemy No. 1—for no other reason than that he was a policeman!"

For a period of about twelve months, in 1946, whilst on service with the Royal Marines, I had to carry out "police" duties in Hongkong and the New Territories. These duties involved in their execution the maltreatment of old men and women, the beating up of petty law-breakers, prostitutes, and the like, the arbitrary administration of "justice", depriving many of the means of livelihood, the searching of hundreds of civilians with the aid of clubs, rifle butts, and bayonets, the acceptance and solicitation of bribes and protection money, the clearance of homeless refugees from the only shelter available—the covered pavements and a bed of newspaper—and neglect of the dying. The list could be continued indefinitely if I were to unfold a stock of stories experienced and retold in the barrack-room, sometimes with relish, sometimes with laughter,

sometimes inconsequentially, but never with regret or sympathy.

I do not pretend that the security officer was ever concerned with such occurrences as I have listed. But I do consider that my experiences will perhaps throw some light on the reasons why he, as a policeman, is regarded as a sort of public enemy No. 1.

To many democrats of the West, the "Chink", the "Wog", the "Gook", are, as their nicknames imply, less than human, but necessary to maintain the Western standard of living. To the Eastern peoples the police force represent an alien culture, an alien people, subjection to foreign power, the epitome of imperialism. If these two points of view come into conflict and if we also consider that amongst the "lower classes" in this country he, as a policeman, would also probably be regarded as a sort of public enemy No. 1, we can see that a Colonial police officer personifies, for the Colonial "lower classes", property and foreign power. The white man's burden grows heavy but his debt remains heavier.

If the security officer does not wish to avail himself of my mirror, or can see therein only black and white (or blue and yellow), I would suggest that there lies one of the causes of the present insecurity in the East. Perhaps the villagers of Permettang Tinggi liked their village the way it was!

REVOLUTION AND HAPPINESS--2

(Continued)

IN practice, the young child soon learns just what the attitude to sex is, not only of those adults closely connected with it but also of the larger adult world. According to the degree of the severity of taboo existing in its environment, it learns to repress its own sexuality. If the taboo is very severe, the child may even become quite unconscious of the nature of its own impulses, and adopt all the disgust, embarrassment and lack of comprehension in sexual matters which its parents showed. The result of all this is that many children do really appear to be quite a-sexual beings right up to the early teens, when it is almost impossible to overlook the sexual nature of children. Also, many people have no clear memory of what sex meant to them when they were children; their strongest memories may indeed be of feelings of repugnance from sexual matters.

It is now the fashion to give children books of so-called sex instruction just before they reach puberty, and to give classes in sex instruction in schools. Now I am all in favour of teaching the biological facts of sex to children both in school and out of it, but having read a number of these so-called sex instruction manuals myself, I am fully aware of their main purpose. That is, to misrepresent reproduction as being the same thing as sex, and to attempt to sidetrack the children's natural interest in sex with a great deal of irrelevant detail about how babies grow. It is a familiar technique, so dear to politicians, of obscuring the main issue by giving a mass of irrelevant detail. I have come across books which tell exactly how many spermatozoa there are in a drop of semen, that explain the physiology of ovulation in technical terms, that even go into questions of Mendelian inheritance—but these books omit to mention just what happens in the sexual act and if people like it—the very thing about which children want enlightenment!

The following picture is carefully built up for the acceptance of children. You are quite sex-less until about the age of thirteen, then you feel vague physical and emotional stirrings and notice certain changes in your body. These changes are so that in about ten years' time you can become a father or mother. Indulgence in any activity which nature inclines you to is morally, socially, ethically, economically, medically, supernaturally, and probably politically wrong, and liable to lead to troubles which you are too young to understand. If you succeed in repressing all sexuality, in regarding all members of the opposite sex as your brother or sister, then in the rather distant future you will fall in love with someone whom you will marry and live with for the rest of your life. After this marriage, all the years of waiting and sexual repression will be rewarded by the birth of your own little children.

Now the ideas behind this picture, and the concepts implicit in it are, to my mind absolutely pernicious, but what I want to comment on is the fact that the picture just isn't true. All adults know that it is a mere fabrication; life just isn't like that. To impose it on children is to be party to a gross deception. Adolescent children find out the truth sooner or later, but they suffer a great deal of misery in the process if they have been successfully deceived. They find out that it is impossible to repress sexuality completely; they go in for some kind of heterosexual, homosexual or masturbation practices, but they feel guilty and unhappy about it. Much later on they find out that this is the normal state of affairs, and to be expected of everyone. They find out, too, that the object of sexual intercourse has got very little to do with the procreation of children. Later on, and perhaps too late, they find out that the idea of living in harmony and content for the rest of one's life with the person with whom one first fell in love, is utterly ridiculous.

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However satisfying a love affair with one's first love may be, inside or outside marriage, it gives place to other interests, other loves; for we are always growing and hence changing in our lives, and if we are exclusively tied by legal or conventional bonds, our thwarted desires turn to irritation, boredom and even hatred.

We foist upon children this idea of monogamous lifetime marriage of two virgins, as though it were the normal for the whole human species. They have no means of knowing that other social systems have had quite other patterns of sexual behaviour—men having several wives, wives having several husbands, group marriage, patriarchy and homosexual love, matriarchy and promiscuity—in fact, every sort of sexual pattern that we can possibly think of has existed somewhere at some time in response to the wide diversities of human culture, and may develop again.

All that we can say about the institution of monogamy, is that it arose as the result of certain historical trends in Europe, just as capitalism arose as the result of an historic process. The trouble is that once social and economic trends have developed, they outlive their usefulness and often form a very real bar to the health and happiness of the community. Capitalism, in its early stages, was a progressive and liberating force which helped to lift society out of the sterile rut of feudalism, but nowadays the economics of capitalism are strangling the community. We tend to retain outworn and useless systems out of sheer conservatism, because we were brought up to believe in them, and because we are scared to admit that they are humbug.

What we are observing to-day is the shell of Christian morality; practice no longer conforms to theory. I would remind you that one-third of first-born children are now conceived out of wedlock, a slight indication of what contemporary sexual practice is. I would remind you that there is now no real economic need for adolescent children to be chaste; previously they had to be so because they were incapable of supporting any offspring which they might produce. Now the boot is on the other leg—young people are denied access to contraceptive material in order that they will have to be chaste!

Now I am not going to lay down any hard and fast blueprint of sexual behaviour for the future, for the simple reason that I do not know what the future will be. We rely on the spread of libertarian ideas in industry to have some effect on people reorganising their work relationships, but beyond the enunciation of anarcho-sindicalist principles, we cannot go further and prophesy. The same goes for the struggle for sexual emancipation. I am pretty sure that our present-day social pattern will crack up completely, and with it our conventional idea of sexual morality. As an anarchist I am concerned that the propagation of libertarian ideas will influence the formation of new patterns of behaviour.

I have already paid tribute to the work of Wilhelm Reich; later I will point out where I think the standpoint of the anarchist differs from his. But here I would refer to his analysis of the typical character make-up of the anti-revolutionary individual. We may call such an individual "Fascist", "Conservative" or

"Communist" with equal justice according to his environment; the political label matters little, his essential characteristic is that he is devoted to ideals of authority and is emotionally anti-libertarian. Reich pointed out that such people are sexually stunted; that is, they have never grown up to sexual maturity in an emotional sense, but remain permanently attached to love ideals of an infantile character. They are the product of the kind of upbringing I have been talking about. The sexually stunted individual may of course form apparently adult sex relationships. He may marry and fulfil the ordinary rôle of husband and father. But sexual stunting is not the same as sexual abstinence, and I want to be definite about this. Those people who are sexually abstinent are not necessarily stunted in their make-up, and vice-versa. Sexual stunting means that love relationships cannot be carried on on an adult plane. The sexually stunted man regards his wife as an infant boy regards his mother; he is demanding, jealous, unreasonable, and feels insecure if she treats him as an adult being should expect to be treated. The sexually stunted woman regards her husband in a complimentary manner. She regards him as she regards her father, and never aspires to true equality with him. She expects to be dominated by him, to be given an inferior status, and she has no time for those people who advocate feminine emancipation.

Such people as these are doomed to a lifelong frustration of happiness, and they are the enemies of libertarian ideas. They will fight tooth and nail against trends which bring emancipation to them. I have spoken of reactionary individuals, but society is made up of individuals, and

the reactionary nature of social morality reflects this stunting of the sexual nature of the average individual. It is this morality, moreover, which tends to warp and stunt the sexuality of each succeeding generation of children.

Where do we come in on this vicious circle? Do we seek to break in on it from the outside with our liberating message of the ideas of social revolution? That would be blind indeed, for when all's said and done, we are not on the outside viewing the poor benighted sufferers on the inside. We ourselves are very much part of the pattern of stunting and warping. Our own natures have suffered to a greater or lesser degree from the impositions put upon us by growing up in this environment in childhood. If we are concerned with happiness it is our own individual happiness with which we are concerned, and if we recognise the sexual no less than the economic roots of happiness, we are doubly sure that we cannot be happy all by ourselves in an ivory tower. In sex and in work we are dependent on other people "to consume life like a candle", as Max Stirner expresses it.

Here I would criticise Wilhelm Reich, and distinguish between his position and that of the anarchist. Reich would rescue mankind by a messianic message from without, delivered from almost Olympic heights of wisdom. The anarchist movement on the other hand, is very much part of society with all its frustrations and stresses and strains, and will influence social trends by virtue of this very fact. We are a product of our age, a rather curious product perhaps, but nevertheless we know in our own lives just what the problems of 20th century man are.

I have said that all of us are to some degree warped and stunted by the treatment we have received as children at the hands of society. I say this as a matter of fact, and not in any humility or self-deprecation. I would say, with Popeye, "I yam what I yam," and in the consciousness of this, pursue my ends of self-enjoyment. I am fully aware that many individuals, being constituted as they are, when they seek their ends of self-enjoyment will in no way be contributing to a common purpose of social revolution. I have known a number of revolutionaries, fully as consciously egoistic as myself, who deprecate the public admission of these truths. They would like people to struggle for social revolution with self-abnegation and idealism as their motive force. To my mind, such will never further truly revolutionary ends, the revolution in human happiness. Again, I say that it is my happiness that is my touchstone, and your happiness is your touchstone—not in the distant future, but here and now, and only on that basis can we consider any common issue of social revolution.

TONY GIBSON.

BOOK REVIEW

A New Novel by Alex Comfort

A GIANT'S STRENGTH, by Alex Comfort. (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 10s. 6d.)

IT is fortunate that we possess a clear exposition of Alex Comfort's ideas behind the writing of his novels. Otherwise one might find such a strictness of purpose irritating in its relentlessness. Even so, however, a clear exposition of aims, a too-clear knowledge of what one wishes a novel to achieve, can provide a limitation which the writer's eye, fixed to his disciplined path, fails to see. For it is an advantage for novels to interest the indifferent as well as satisfying the initiated.

In *The Novel and our Time*, Comfort has said clearly, "This is our problem: to present in terms of an existing and semi-traditional form the interpretation of the world as it is, and the nature and limitations of human character and human social activity. Working in a framework of form and in a period of history which directs our art to a fragmentary audience of individuals, we have the unique opportunity of addressing them as individuals and of making our interpretations explicit. . . . Whether we are able to influence human conduct will depend very largely upon the number of people in a given asocial society who react by rational aggression towards that society rather by irrational aggression towards their fellow individuals. The social rôle of the novel will depend very largely, in coming years, upon the persistence of sufficient rationally disobedient individuals to make novel-writing of the kind I have described possible."

A novel, in Comfort's eyes, is clearly measured by its ability to influence human conduct, and the number of people "who react by rational aggression . . ." etc. Without spending time on that eternal question of the degree to which novels influence people or suggesting that the living example is more forceful than the written word, one comes to the latest of Alex Comfort's novels, *A Giant's Strength*.

With some ingenuity the novel is set in a remote part of the Soviet Union, the desert area north of the Persian and Afghan frontiers. Over this area a mathematician, Hedler, is flying. He is a person of importance in his own sphere, a German who, because of the confusion of the war, now finds himself serving the Russians. Having had

enough of obeying one state authority or another, and wanting to find a country where he would be of no importance, he shoots the pilot of the aeroplane and manages to land it safely in the desert. At his university his disappearance causes some consternation and soon there is a visitor from Moscow, Major Serkin, to conduct inquiries. From the university an expedition, including some of Hedler's colleagues, has set out to study and explore the desert.

The novel is concerned with Hedler's attempt to survive and reach the frontier, the adventures of the expedition and the ideological differences of Anosov and Shemrin, two of its members, and the affairs of the university. It is not difficult to see that Hedler and the expedition must meet and that one of its loyal leaders must have a crisis of conscience in deciding whether or not the mathematician should be helped to cross the frontier.

At all stages it is an interesting work, provocative, artistic and imaginative. At the same time one is conscious of it as the novel of a poet, a scientist and a humanist propagandist. Where the novelist takes over, the narrative becomes raw and contrived, as when Hedler is carried off by raiding nomads or when he saves the life of Shemrin. This would seem to be one of the penalties of using drama and movement mainly to sweeten the opportunity "of addressing them as individuals and of making our interpretations explicit". This sense of a failure to integrate the two levels of his narrative may be the result of having the conflict of ideas, which are invariably conducted as discussion or argument, played out against the severe and life-challenging reality of the desert background. In such surroundings, and at such times, must men justify their lives and their actions with a detailed statement of purpose? Only if the reader is ready for it and the writer successfully leads up to that point. If one overlooks this fact, however, and takes the incidents separately, then one must admit that such discussions are brilliantly created. It is not easy to have opposing characters speak with equal forcefulness, sincerity and justification.

One cannot help feeling that Comfort must soon make an important decision about his future as a novelist. "Certainly it is propa-

ganda . . ." he writes about this latest novel, a work which stems from the poet, the scientist and the humanist. Certainly it is a pity it never quite became a good novel. To control and apply suitably such diverse talents as he possesses to the writing of novels must also mean freeing himself from the distraction and discipline of certain specialised interests and obligations. Characters who are usually very profound professors (why could we not have been introduced to one of the nomads?) images like "a saw-tooth wave on an oscilloscope trace", the poet's intrusion to overdo the imagery in such instances as the description of a cloud, and to clog the narrative, the absence of a coherent form, all suggest that this latest novel is an accumulation of the by-products of other interests.

It is perhaps its special reply that, despite these criticisms, it remains a significant and disturbing example of the contemporary novel.

CHARLES HUMANA.

PROUDHON, MARX AND THE PEASANT

BUT while many reformers had shown an interest in the land and some in agriculture, none had taken an interest in the peasant as such—with one exception, Proudhon. His sympathy for the peasant was something unique in the history of socialism, but it is an exception which strikingly proves the rule.

Proudhon, who in general suspected the constricting effects of large economic units, had economic and philosophic reasons for wishing to see each peasant owner of his farm. But when he speaks of this as the means of "consummating the marriage of man with nature", his very language reveals how much he was moved by the innate attachment of the countryman born and bred to the soil and to those who till it. His agrarian socialism was indeed a socialism for the peasants. Marx also in his early writings showed occasional startling traces of utopian influence in idealising freedom in the choice of occupation; as when, for instance, he contrasted the capitalist system of production, in which every man was kept chained to a rigid sphere of activity, with the ideal of a regulated Communist society, in which each man would be able "to do this to-day and that to-morrow, to hunt in the morning, to fish in the afternoon, to carry on cattle-breeding in the evening," and so on.

But while Marx and his disciples were greatly in Proudhon's debt as critics of existing society, and eagerly used his arguments against the principle of property, they turned them also against the small rural property which Proudhon had idealised. They paid attention to the peasants only because they looked

upon them with a dislike in which the townsman's contempt for all things rural and the economist's disapproval of small-scale production mingled with the bitterness of the revolutionary collectivist against the stubbornly individualistic tiller of the soil.

When, in 1846, Marx invited Proudhon to participate in an organised correspondence between Communists in various countries, Proudhon answered that he was willing, but that he must make some reservations, because of certain passages in Marx's missive. He said, "Let us by all means collaborate in trying to discover the laws of society, the way in which these laws work out, the best method to go about investigating them; but for God's sake, after we have demolished all the dogmatisms *a priori*, let us not of all things attempt in our own turn to instil another kind of dogma into the people. . . ." In every instance, in fact, the Marxist agrarian idea has had to be applied by force and to rely on force for its survival; while the socialists who wanted to remain democrats have in every instance had to abandon it. What remains then, in this field, of Marxian scientific analysis and foresight? All that the student is left with is the old and oft-repeated story of all social dogmatism: an uncompromising doctrine, born of assumptions and prejudice, continually twisted at the call of expediency, and harshly driven forward only with every turn of political expediency.

—DAVID MITRANY: *Marx Against The Peasant* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 25/-).

What is Democracy?

IN the "peoples democracies"—that elegant term used by the Communists to describe the Eastern European dictatorships—everyone has to vote. On many occasions the western democracies have shown similar concern that the right to vote shall in fact be exercised. Penalties are visited in Italy on non-voters, and in other countries it has been often suggested that failure or refusal to vote should be a criminal offence. The argument always is that it is irresponsible to omit to exercise the right of choice. The idea that refusal may signify a rejection of the choice offered is not considered.

Recently the question of democracy has been discussed on the B.B.C. by an independent M.P., Christopher Hollis, and a socialist ex-Minister, John Strachey, and some interesting arguments emerged. Christopher Hollis attacked the idea that the two main political parties represented "different ways of life" and offered therefore a choice to the electorate. "It does seem to me," he said, "in all essential matters the policies of the two parties are the same. Mr. Butler's financial policies are the same as those of Sir Stafford Cripps; Mr. Eden's foreign policy is a continuation of Ernest Bevin's; Sir Thomas Dugdale has inherited from Mr. Tom Williams the agricultural policy which Mr. Williams inherited from Lord Hudson. The Socialist front bench wants to do as little more nationalising as its supporters will allow, and the Conservative front bench wants to do as little denationalising as its supporters will allow. They differ, of course, in detail. And Socialists attack these policies when the Conservatives are in power, just as Conservatives attacked them when the Socialists were in power. But the policies remain the same policies. As time goes on, the parties quarrel more and more about less and less."

Mr. Hollis also quotes Churchill as saying that four-fifths of the members of all parties are agreed upon four-fifths of the things that have to be done. If all this is true, and of course FREEDOM has been pointing it out for years, the electors' "choice" becomes illusory.

Mr. Strachey did deny the essential identity of the parties, but he brought no convincing arguments to back his denial. Indeed, his whole address was so patronising and simplified that he might have been speaking in the Children's Hour or Listen With Mother.

Furthermore, Mr. Strachey further weakened the choice of the electors, by being at pains to deny that the electors are wiser than the expert: their business was to indicate "what they can take and what they cannot take." After all this his plea that democracy consisted of the right to choose—"it is the right which we must never, never take for granted. For democracy has taken a lot of winning, and it may yet take at lot of defending"—fell a little flat. An article on power within the party in this issue shows how choice is limited in yet other directions.

Hollis' conclusion was much more convincingly put: "If democracy is in peril, it is idle to lay the blame on the politicians. It is the public themselves who are to blame."

A more practical alternative is offered by anarchists. Both Hollis and Strachey see the electorate as more or less active spectators at the game of administration. A more realistic choice would be to ask them to participate in administration to the exclusion of government. Instead of watching politicians organising your lives, step in and organise your own lives. That such a step would call for a radically different organisation of social life is true enough. Such an organisation is long overdue.

The Predatory White Man

"With the 90 million dollars, the Indian Bureau will build dams on our reservation that will not hold water, and roads for tourists to make it easier for them to come into our homes without being invited. Then the cost of these foolish and troublesome things will be charged against our people and our land. That is what the government has done in past years."

WHILE it may seem harsh to describe a people as predatory who would give 90 million dollars as a token of their generosity, the wise old Hopi will tell you that more strings are attached to the offer than is apparent on the surface. He strenuously objects to their being pictured as starving, helpless savages and being used by the Indian Bureau as bait to attract larger appropriations for the benefit of the Bureau.

The traditional Hopi Chieftains condemned the underhand methods used by the Indian Bureau to engineer the 90 million dollar "Navajo-Hopi rehabilitation" Bill, passed by Congress without their consent. In selecting two subservient Hopi as official tribal delegates to the hearings on the appropriation, the Indian Bureau revealed its colonial strategy: the Indian Bureau will recognise only those Indians who are subservient. Testifying against the Bill on behalf of the traditional Hopi Chieftains, Katchongva asked the Senate appropriations committee to exempt the Hopi from the 90 million dollar fraud. He said they had no objections to federal appropriations going to the Navajo.

"Our people [he said] are a proud people. We have taken good care of ourselves and our land for thousands of years. We do not need any instruction from the Indian Bureau either in government or farming. If they want any instruction from us, we will give it to them without charge."

A reading of the *Congressional Record* makes it apparent that the real purpose behind the 20 million dollar appropriation for a highway through Hopiland is not for the benefit of the Hopi but to attract tourists to further undermine the Hopi. Despite their strenuous objections, the "Navajo-Hopi" Bill was enacted. Once more, the traditional Hopi Chieftains expressed their opposition in a letter to the Indian Bureau, March 2nd, 1950:

"No, we are not going to sell our birthright for a few pieces of silver such as the 90 million dollars. This 'Navajo-Hopi' Bill is being passed by the Senate and House of Representatives without our approval and against our will. Therefore whatever happens in the future the Hopi must not be to blame but the Government of the United States."

Nothing could be more misleading than the conjunction of the words *Navajo* and *Hopi* for no two people are further apart in language, cultural tradition and moral values. The nomadic Navajo migrated from the northern plains shortly before the arrival of the White Man. Now numbering about 70,000 and increasing at the rate of over a thousand a year, the Navajo have been steadily encroaching on the ancient homeland of the peaceful sedentary Hopi, causing the latter great sorrow and distress. Collaboration of the Navajo—who signed a peace treaty with the United States in 1868—and the Indian Bureau is not a mere accident, the Hopi believes. The Navajo has made a nice adjustment to the White Man's standards—and the Oil Companies have been after leases on the Hopi jurisdiction. The traditional Hopi Chiefs have stated that they will not:

"Lease any part of our land for oil development at this time. This land is not for leasing or for sale. This is our sacred soil. Any prospecting, drilling and leasing that is being done now is without our knowledge and consent. We will not be held responsible for it."

The Indian Claims Commission Act was enacted August 13th, 1946, to "provide an opportunity for the Hopi and other Indian tribes to tell the court their story as to what lands they may have occupied and used which were taken from them without their consent and without payment." And, according to the Indian Commissioner, "unless the Hopis present their story they may never again have the opportunity of securing a remedy for any harm that has been done to them."

Six out of eleven villages rejected a government-sponsored contract to retain a former government attorney to press claims of the Hopi tribe against the United States as authorised by the Claims Act. The attorney explained that any judgment the courts might award to the Hopi would not be in land; it would be in money. But the land is sacred to the Hopi. He does not want money. Opposition to the Claims Act came from traditional tribal leaders:

"We, as hereditary Chieftains of the Hopi tribe, cannot and will not file any claims according to the provisions set up by the Land Claims Commission because we have never been consulted in regard to setting up these provisions. We will not ask a White Man, who came to us recently, for a piece of land that is already ours. We think that White People should be thinking about asking us for a permit to build their homes upon our land."

After 425 years of support for the principle of Indian self-government, there is little Indian self-government, observes

Felix Cohen, author of the *Handbook of Federal Indian Law*. The federal government cannot give self-government to any Indian tribe, all it can do is get out of the way, he asserts. That the complex of White superiority is a major delusion of our time is apparent in Laura Thompson's *Culture in Crisis*, a study of the Hopi Indians, in which she writes:

"For despite all these efforts on the part of government officials, it is generally admitted that the attempt to achieve a genuine, tribe-wide political unity among the Hopis has thus far made little headway. . . . However, at least a beginning has been made toward Hopi tribal self-government."

Apparently, Laura Thompson is blithely unaware that Hopi tribal self-government was in existence long before the coming of the White Man. As the oldest surviving traditional and religious form of government in this country, it is a true democracy with no written laws, no police, prisons, paid politicians or taxation. Because this traditional tribal authority is not subservient to the Indian Bureau does not make it less self-government. Being a part of the culture of White Supremacy, she does not question the imposition of the White Man's rule.

If there is a criteria, a civilisation may be gauged by its values—sincerity, courage, poise, self-respect and integrity—not by the number or intricacy of its gadgets and bureaucracies. The traditional Hopi Way, affirmed and defended pre-eminently by the "rebel" Hotevillans—Thomson disparages Hotevilla because their traditional tribal Chiefs have firmly resisted White aggression—is stable, while predatory White civilisation, where these values are in their twilight, is crumbling. Whose culture is "superior"?

Here are a people with roots that go down deep to their very origin as a tribe, a people of great simplicity and humbleness, which, however exploited, is their wisdom and greatness. Here are a people who do not live by the White Man's rule of money. That they "do not fight droughts and famines with money but with our humble prayers for more rain and forgiveness for our wrongdoings," expresses their total religious integration. "Our land will bloom again if our hearts and souls are right and clean," their traditional tribal Chiefs have stated. Writing to the President of the United States, they explained:

"We want a right to live as we please, as human beings. We want to have a right to worship as we please and to have our own land. We don't want to have someone plan our lives for us, issue us rations, social security or other dole. Our plan of life has all been laid out for us long ago by our Great Spirit, Massau'u. . . . Now we

cannot understand why since its establishment the government of the United States has taken over everything we owned either by force, bribery or trickery, and sometimes by reckless killing, making himself very rich, and after all these years of neglect of the American Indians, have the courage to-day in announcing to the world a plan which will convert the country's 400,000 Indians into "full tax-paying citizens under state jurisdiction." Are you ever going to be satisfied with all the wealth you have now because of us, the Indians? There is something terribly wrong with your system of government because after all these years, we the Indians are still looking on the bones and crumbs that fall to us from your tables. Have you forgotten the meaning of Thanksgiving Day?"

Within the past two years, the Hopi traditional Chiefs have sent five letters to the President of the United States protesting the drafting of their sons into the Armed Forces. A recent letter from the mothers and fathers of Hopi youth who have been conscripted into the Army stated that since they would not eat their sons or daughters, neither would they "accept money from the government should one of them be killed on foreign soil". The latter stated:

"Our tradition and religious training forbid us to harm, kill and molest anyone. We, therefore, object to our boys being forced to be trained for war to become murderers and destroyers. What nation who has taken up arms ever brought peace and happiness to his people?"

To the Mind of the West, the Red Man is conceived as an exotic stereotype, characterised and conditioned by the popular media of radio, music and comics. In our blithe assumption to superiority, an understanding of his rich philosophical and religious heritage eludes us. Our comprehension of the Mind of the East is also shrouded in happy ignorance. "We are not boys" and "our traditional and religious teachings are not legends but truths and facts", their hereditary Chieftains reminded Congressman Harold Patten, whose attitude of smug superiority and condescension is characteristic of the Western Mind, tolerable but offensive.

If we seek to understand the Mind of the East, as Robert Payne says we must in a recent issue of *Frontier*, there were no better place to start than with our Original Americans, of whom the Hopi represent one of the unconquered remnants. He will tell you that it is no legend that the people of Asia migrated from North America. The traditional Hopi has preserved his religious traditions in its purity and he aims to guard it from subversive influences, such as the missionaries and the Indian Bureau. His struggle to maintain his Way of Life is part of the Great Resistance of Man against the World. GEORGE YAMADA.

The Agricultural Collectives

A CRITICAL study of the achievements of the revolutionary workers in the social and economic fields is a more rewarding task than that of following the political developments and intrigues among the political leaders and between the parties and organisations. It is more rewarding because we are face to face with the strivings of a people to convert what might easily have become a purely political struggle into a social revolution, an overturning of the whole economic and social structure of a country which had for so long been dominated by wealthy landowners, and industrialists, the Church and foreign capital. It is more interesting than any other social experiment of its kind (including that of Russia) because it was a spontaneous, improvised movement of the people, in which the politicians played no part, save that of attempting later to destroy, control or contain it, for such a movement threatened the whole machinery of state, of government, of capitalism, and the exploitation of man by man.

This has generally been ignored by sociologists; it has been grossly distorted by Communists in their propaganda; and soft-pedalled—for obvious reasons—by Spanish politicians. But it is to be specially regretted that so far no serious attempt has been made by the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist movements to collect together the vast amount of material that exists on the subject of the industrial and agricultural collectives in Spain and to draw from these experiments lessons which to-morrow will be of utmost importance not only in Spain but for revolutionary movements throughout the world.

The collected material at present available in the Spanish language is contained, to our knowledge, in three volumes. There are two small books published, in Barcelona in 1937, which give first-hand accounts of collectives visited by the authors, and there are the last hundred pages of the first volume of J. Peirats' history of the C.N.T. in the Spanish Revolution which comprise descriptions of the constitution and working of a number of collective enterprises.* But, in pointing out that to deal with the subject would require an entire volume, Peirats makes no attempt to relate the various experiments, or to give us a general picture as to their extent, or even to differentiate between the various approaches to collectivisation adopted by different regions and industries. The only study of the Spanish collectives which makes any attempt to do this is that by Gaston Leval, recently published in an Italian translation.† The author spent many years in Spain, and has always been particularly interested in the problems of the reorganisation of that country's economy under workers' control. During the Revolution he was able to study at first-hand a large number of collectives in Catalonia, the Levante, Aragon and Castille. This has permitted him to draw conclusions which are valuable in that they give one an insight into the practical problems that have to be faced by all socialist and anarchists who advocate the

reorganisation of our economic system along more equitable lines.

But what Peirats has not attempted to do in 100 pages, and Gaston Leval only partially in more than 300, we cannot hope to do in the course of one or two articles! All we can do, therefore, is to attempt to give the reader an idea of what the Spanish collectivist movement represented, its extent and importance, and deal with some of its problems. Finally, we must give some idea of the opposition met with from the political elements, and describe the methods used by the Spanish Government and the Communist Party to destroy these practical achievements of the people. By so doing we shall, we think, be drawing attention to the great creative potentialities of the common people, the peasants and workers of Spain (potentialities shared, we believe, with the working people of all the world once they are in a position to organise their own lives) and at the same time once more underline the bitter truths revealed by the political developments, that there is no common ground for unity between the revolutionary working masses and the political parties which aspire to government and power.

As all writers on Spain point out, the major economic problem is that of the land. Of Spain's 25 million inhabitants, 68% live in the rural areas, whilst 70% of its total industry is concentrated in the small province of Catalonia. The solution to Spain's problems is not in converting it into an industrial country since, apart from other considerations, she lacks the raw materials necessary for large-scale industry. The major obstacle has been that the bulk of the land has always been held by a small number of landowners, who were uninterested in developing their estates, in some cases even that they should be cultivated at all. 67% of the land was in the hands of 2.0% of the total number of landowners, 19.69% owned 21%, whilst 76.54% owned 13.16%. Of the latter, one half owned an acre or less per head, which in most areas of Spain is insufficient to feed a peasant and his family. In the three provinces of Extremadura, Andalusia and La Mancha alone, 7,000 proprietors, the greater part of them absentees, possess more than 15 million acres. But the problem of the land could neither be solved simply by parcelling it out among the landless peasants. The soil is poor, and there are large areas with hardly any rainfall, so that only by irrigation, the extensive use of fertilizers and/or the use of modern machinery could the peasants feed themselves and have a surplus to satisfy their other needs. Since they have no means to carry out such improvements, distribution *per se* of the land among individual peasants is doomed to failure. As Gerald Brenan points out in *The Spanish Labyrinth* (in the chapter on Agrarian Reform to which every interested reader is earnestly referred), "The only reasonable solution through wide tracts of Spain is a collective one . . .

in many districts the peasants are themselves averse to it, but the anarchist ideology in Andalusia has made it a favourite solution there and this is a factor which any sensible government would take advantage of. For the advantages of communal ownership of the land are enormous. Under present conditions one has agricultural labourers dying of hunger on estates where large tracts of corn-growing land lie fallow because it does not pay to cultivate them."

The over-running of most of Andalusia by Franco's forces early in the struggle made it impossible for collective experiments to be tried out there, but we have had examples in other parts of Spain where the large estates were taken over by the peasants and worked collectively, and where during the time the experiment was able to continue, showed that amazing results could be obtained by these methods. Perhaps the most extensive agricultural collectivisations occurred in that part of Aragon not under Franco's rule, where more than 400 collectives were formed, comprising half a million people. But in the Levante, too, there were by 1938 more than 500 collectives. Even in Castille, a socialist stronghold in 1936, the Regional Federation of Peasants, which was affiliated to the C.N.T., had nearly 100,000 members and 230 collectives by 1937. Gaston Leval has estimated that about three million peasants, men, women and children, succeeded in putting into practice "this system of living with immediate results, without the lowering of production which these groupings of new régimes usually produce".

"The mechanism of the formation of the Aragonese collectives—writes Gaston Leval—has been generally the same. After having overcome the local authorities when they were fascist, or after having replaced them by Anti-fascist or Revolutionary committees when they were not, an assembly was summoned for all the inhabitants of the locality to decide on their line of action.

"One of the first steps was to gather in the crop not only in the fields of the small landowners who still remained, but, what was even more important, also on the estates of the large landowners all of whom were conservatives and rural 'caciques' or chiefs. Groups were organised to reap and thresh the wheat which belonged to these large landowners. Collective work began spontaneously. Then as this wheat could not be given to anyone in particular without being unfair to all it was put under the control of a local committee, for the use of all the inhabitants, either for consumption or for the purpose of exchange for manufactured goods, such as clothes, boots, etc., for those who were most in need.

"It was necessary, afterwards, to work the lands of the large landowners. They were generally the most extensive and fertile in the region. The question was

Assassination and Coercion

CONCERNING Tony Gibson's comments on Fontenis' essay "Assassination and Coercion" (FREEDOM, 6/9/52), you will perhaps allow me a few brief comments. First, I wish to assure him that the translation was excellent (I did it myself) and that the word *assassination* is—curiously enough—translated adequately by "assassination".

Whether controversy is fruitful or not depends, of course, entirely on the intentions of the protagonists. If the discussion is entered upon in a spirit of dreary and self-conscious rectitude, in the style of Tony Gibson's letter, then I will agree with him that the value of controversy is more than doubtful, in fact, nil.

So I will suggest that his opinions would carry more weight if he had bothered to read beforehand with some small care the statements which he leaps to attack with all the ferociously sanctimonious energy of an old-time evangelist confronted with the evidence of sin.

Now, Fontenis defines quite carefully his use of the word *assassination*, and states explicitly that the killing of an individual, in a moment of revolutionary exigency, can be justified *only* when the element of coercion is absent: i.e., when there is no question of vengeance, punishment, or deliberate political policy. Or, as "R.M." does indicate very timidly in his letter, when violence is used entirely in defence, then it can be considered preferable to a pseudo-humanistic philanthropy which may endanger the whole revolutionary situation by a sentimental refusal to sanction the elimination ("killing") to you, Mr. Gibson) of an actively hostile force.

I would, finally, ask your indulgence for a slight digression into social psychology: an apparent paradox which has always fascinated me, and of which Tony Gibson's letter appears to be a typical case-study, is the essentially aggressive character of pacifism—the threatening language, the tendentious interpretations of others' arguments, the use of stereotyped epithets of opprobrium such as "moralistic phrasemongering" (what a literary abortion!) accusations of "sophistry", "philosophising" and so on. At the end of such an harangue I confess to feeling rather like poor William Smith O'Brian must have felt when, with his fellow exponents of "physical force" against the English, he suffered such an ignominious defeat at Limerick at the hands—and fists—of the rival group of pacifistic advocates of "moral force".

But despite Tony Gibson's severe manhandling of those of us who are such shameless moralists as to attempt to

justify the use of force under certain circumstances, I will still suggest that his pious statement that "killing is—killing" is roughly on a level with Gertrude Stein's "a rose is a rose is a rose"—impressive, but inadequate as an intelligent hypothesis. We die—as we kill—for a multitude of reasons, mostly bad; perhaps the social revolution is one objective worthy of our efforts and energies, and if it can be achieved without bloodshed then I (who am the most unaggressive of anti-pacifists) will be delighted. If not, I say with Sorel (and no doubt Fontenis would agree with me): "I have a horror of any measure which strikes the vanquished under a judicial disguise. War, carried on in broad daylight, without hypocritical attenuation, for the purpose of ruining an irreconcilable enemy, excludes all the abominations which dishonoured the middle-class revolution of the eighteenth century. The apology for violence in this case is particularly easy."

I am persuaded that the death of a few—or a few thousand—political gangsters and their henchmen is not necessarily too high a price to pay for the eventual liberty of the human race. And personally I rather regret the fact, mentioned by Fontenis, that the masses "far from being blood-thirsty have always erred on the side of softness towards their butchers."

SIMON WATSON TAYLOR.

London, Sept. 21st.

Anarchists & Local Government

TWO distinct questions are raised by the letter from Brand in FREEDOM, 6/9/52.

(1) Have anarchists participated in elections in Sweden?

(2) Can such participation be justified?

(1) I am aware that the Swedish anarchist movement as a whole has not taken part in elections. To the best of my knowledge, however, some anarchists have voted in recent local elections, and this the letter does not specifically deny.

(2) I do not seek to justify parliamentary action or voting in national elections, so Brand's remarks on that subject are irrelevant.

This was the situation as I understood it. In certain small communities in the north of Sweden, some local laws existed which local syndicalists and anarchists objected to. As they were in a majority in these districts, they elected representatives to the local councils who forthwith abolished these laws. In the special circumstances, such action does not conflict with anarchist principles.

Without any contradiction, I may add that (a) a dangerous and critical situation might thereby arise, (b) direct action might have been better, (c) no fundamental changes in the structure of society can be effected in this way.

Perhaps the actual situation in

northern Sweden is not as I have described it; perhaps further information would change my attitude; but such considerations are not relevant to the main issue. In general terms, I deny that the delegation of power is necessarily opposed to anarchist principles, unless the authority to use coercion is granted.

The difficulties and dangers involved in the delegation of power can be avoided by opposing such delegation on principle; similarly, one can avoid eating poisonous berries by not eating berries at all. Neither solution is quite satisfactory.

The characteristically impulsive editorial remarks need no special comment apart from the above explanation.

Leicester, Sept. 21.

P. L. LEWIS.

[*Is Comrade Lewis suggesting that local councils have no authority or that once anarchists dominate the councils that they become some kind of co-ordinating committee without powers? The fact that when the syndicalists and anarchists he refers to were not on the council the laws could not be abolished, but that when they were elected they were forthwith, surely indicates that the councils possess certain legal powers which the anarchist syndicalist majority apparently did not possess before they were elected. By abolishing the laws which did not please them they were nevertheless imposing their wishes on a minority which supported them. That is called government even in the north of Sweden! You cannot have government without the backing of force. To believe as did some of the members of the C.N.T. who joined the Spanish Government that they were in the Cabinet as representatives of their organisation was either sheer naivete or conscience salving. As an example, we would refer our comrade to an incident in one of the C.N.T. collectives where the government sent troops to oblige the workers to comply with a decree law passed by the syndicalist (C.N.T.) Minister of Commerce! The last thing we should have expected Comrade Lewis to call us, in view of the ideas he expresses, is "characteristically impulsive". Why, not even the "special circumstances" in N. Sweden make us budge from our opposition to all governments—local, regional or national, of good or bad men, Popular Front, Labour, or what have you! He should have called us old-fashioned, or sectarian or even unrealistic, but not impulsive.—EDITORS.]*

The Chaplin Controversy

AS an indication that the American Justice Department in its statement about the possible refusal of re-admission of Charlie Chaplin to the United States was not expressing the feelings of American public opinion, we reproduce this editorial from the American edition of the *N.Y. Herald Tribune*.

The welcome given to Charlie Chaplin in London attests to the international standing of the great comedian.

The little man with the big shoes and the baggy pants has gone into the hearts of people everywhere. It seems all the more grimly ironical that his creator—his real self—should now be uncertain as to whether he will be permitted to re-enter this country at the end of his

present trip. One's first instinct might be to ask whether the Department of Justice might not be having its own joke at the expense of the greatest joker of them all. On second thought, one might ask whether the Department is not trying deliberately to discredit the McCarran immigration act by pushing it to extreme limits. Yet it is the essence of a democracy that the law should apply equally to all—to the greatest as to the least of men, to the genius as to the humblest mortal.

Assuming the Justice Department to be acting in this matter as the letter of the law decrees, it may well be asked whether this particular provision of the McCarran act has not been too broadly or loosely drawn. Unless facts are brought out beyond those now known, Charlie Chaplin scarcely seems a figure whose exclusion will benefit the country.

Lessons of the Spanish Revolution - I2

Continued from p. 3

again raised before the village assembly. It was then that the 'collectivity' if not already definitely constituted—often this had been done at the first meeting—was definitely established.

"A delegate for agriculture and stock breeding was nominated (or one for each of these activities when breeding was extensively carried on), one delegate each for local distribution, exchanges, public works, hygiene and education and revolutionary defence. Sometimes there were more, on other occasions less.

"Workers' groups were then formed. These groups generally were divided into the number of zones into which the municipal territory had been divided, so as more easily to include all kinds of work. Each group of workers names its delegate. The delegates meet every two days or every week with the councillor of agriculture and stock breeding, so as to co-ordinate all the different activities.

"In this new organisation, small property has almost completely disappeared. In Aragon 75 per cent. of small proprietors have voluntarily adhered to the new order of things. Those who refused have been respected. It is untrue to say that those who took part in the collectives were forced to do so. One cannot stress this point too strongly in face of the calumnies which have been directed against the collectives on this point. It is so far from the truth that the agrarian collectivity has brought into force, everywhere, a special current account for small proprietors and has printed consumers tickets specially for them, so as to assure for them the industrial products they require, in the same way as they do for the 'collectivists'.

"In this transformation of property, one must put special stress on the practical sense and psychological finesse of the organisers who in almost all the villages have conceded or given to each family a bit of ground on which each peasant cultivates, for his own use, the vegetables which he prefers in the way he prefers. Their individual initiative can thereby be developed and satisfied.

"Collective work has made it possible to achieve in agriculture as well as in industry, a rationalisation which was impossible under the régime of small land ownership and even under that of big landed properties.

"On the other hand, better quality seeds are used. This was rendered possible by being able to buy up large stocks, which the small peasant could not afford to do in the past. Potato seeds come from Ireland and selected wheat seeds only are used. Chemical fertilizers have also been used. As modern machinery properly used—tractors and modern ploughs were obtained by exchange or bought directly from abroad—permits the soil to be more deeply worked, these seeds have produced a yield per acre far superior to that which would have been obtained under the conditions which existed during previous years. These new methods have also made it possible to increase the acreage sown. In Aragon my research on the spot permits me to affirm that generally speaking the increase in wheat crop has reached an average of 30 per cent. An increase in yield,

though in a smaller proportion has been obtained for other cereals, potatoes, sugar beet, lucerne, etc.

"In these agricultural regions the economic condition of the peasants has generally improved. It has only suffered a setback in those localities which had specialised in production for export, and which were consequently unable to place their products and obtain foodstuffs in exchange. This happened in certain regions in Levante whose produce consisted almost entirely of oranges. But this state of affairs lasted only a few months.

"This latter fact is of utmost importance. It is the first time in modern society that the anarchist principle 'to each according to his needs,' has been practiced. It has been applied in two ways; without money in many villages in Aragon and by a local money in others, and in the greater part of collectives established in other regions. The family wage is paid with this money and it varies according to the number of members in each family. A household in which the man and his wife both work because they have no children receives, for the sake of argument, say 5 pesetas a day. Another household in which only the man works, as his wife has to care for two, three or four children, receives six, seven or eight pesetas respectively. It is the 'needs' and not only the 'production' taken in the strictly economic sense which controls the wage scale or that of the distribution of products where wages do not exist.

"This principle of justice is continually extended. It does away with charity and begging and the special budgets for the indigent. There are no more destitutes. Those who work do so for others in the same way as others will work to help them and their children later on.

"But this mutual aid extends beyond the village. Before the Fascist invaders destroyed the Aragon collectives, the cantonal federations did all in their power to counteract the injustices of nature by obtaining for the less favoured villages the machinery, mules, seed, etc., which were to help them increase the yield of their land. These implements were obtained through the intermediary of the Federation which undertook the delivery of the produce of twenty, thirty, forty or even fifty localities and asked in their name, from the industrial and stock-breeding centres, for the products which they required."

The leadership of the U.G.T. (the socialist dominated trades-unions) opposed collectivisation, advocating instead nationalisation of the means of production. But what is important to note is the widespread influence the experiments in collectivisation had on the peasants of the U.G.T. and one reads of many collectives organised jointly by the C.N.T. and U.G.T. In Castille, Levant points out, the collectivist movement of the C.N.T. received considerable support from the Federation of Land Workers (U.G.T.). "At bottom the workers of the U.G.T. often had similar aspirations to those of the C.N.T. They wanted the expropriation of the large landed estates and the affirmation of social justice. In practice there was in many places an official agreement between the two peasant organisations, from which the collectives always benefited." Interesting also to note is the help given by one region to another in organising

agricultural collectives. The success of collectivisation in Castille was not only due to the efforts of the local libertarian militants and socialists. In July 1937 no less than 1,000 members of collectives in the Levante had come to live in Castille for the purpose of helping and advising their comrades with the experience gained from their own experiments in collectivisation. And how wise were these peasants who applied the rule to all delegates that "in a well-organised collective no one must cease to be a peasant"—in other words, that delegates must continue to work in the fields with the rest.

The agricultural collectives were not rigid structures, faithful model taken from some faded blue-prints. In the first place they were the spontaneous manifestations of simple people, ground down by indescribable poverty but who retained a spirit of revolt, and a sense of justice which stood them in good stead when the time was ripe to take matters into their own hands. One of the secrets of the success of the social revolution on the land was the desire of the peasants, on the whole, to work co-operatively rather than to own and work a piece of land individually. "One has to recognise—writes Gerald Brenan in *The Spanish Labyrinth*—that the Spanish working-classes show a spontaneous talent for co-operation that exceeds anything that can be found to-day in other European countries." And they also showed a willingness to learn of, and to apply, new methods to the cultivation of the land. There was no longer the fear that mechanisation would mean unemployment. And one could cite many cases to show how with the passage of time and by the experience gained from the first experiments of collective working, the collectives adapted themselves so as to ensure more efficient production and a more effective realisation of their fundamental ideas of social justice and mutual aid.

In the descriptions of the collective enterprises one is continually struck by the concern shown by their members that those unwilling to participate should be persuaded to join eventually by example, by showing that their way is the better way. It is sometimes said of the Spanish peasants that their outlook was purely local. This is true of the past, seems to have been radically changed after 1936. In June 1937, for instance, a National Plenum of Regional Federations of Peasants was held in Valencia to discuss the formation of a National Federation of Peasants for the co-ordination and extension of the collectivist movement and also to ensure an equitable distribution of the produce of the land, not only between the collectives but for the whole country. Again, in Castille in October 1937, a merging of the 100,000 members of the Regional Federation of Peasants and the 13,000 members in the food distributive trades took place. It represented a logical step in ensuring better co-ordination, and was accepted for the whole of Spain at the National Congress of Collectives held in Valencia in November 1937. V.R.

(To be continued)

* A Sonchey: *Entre los campesinos de Aragón*. A. Sauchy and P. Folguere: *Colectivización de la Obra Constructiva de la Revolución Española*. J. Peirats: *La C.N.T. en la Revolución Española*, Vol. 1, pp. 297-386.
† Gaston Léval: *Nô Français ne Stalins*. *Le collectivisme anarchique envisagé dans la lutte contre Franco et la réaction stalinienne* (Milan, 1952, 320 pp.)
‡ Gaston Léval: *Social Revolution in Spain* (London, 1938).

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