Anarchy 41: THE LAND

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Approaches to the land

HOW ARE WE TO APPROACH THE QUESTION OF THE LAND ? We could attempt to treat the subject globally, and without even trying to define the precise proportion of the world's population which is actually starving or in a conditon of continual under-nourishment, we could emphasise the fact that agricultural production is far from keeping pace with the increase in population, so that the world food situation worsens all the while. Or we could approach the question locally and seek to formulate from our own special point of view, a " policy for British agriculture "—though how it would be implemented and who would support it is difficult to say, (for the special reason given below). Or again we could approach the subject from the point of view of land use; the problem of the competing claims on the limited land of this island, the problem of urban growth and the drift of population to the South-East, and the consequent depopulation of other areas. Or we could seek, from an anarchist point of view, to formulate what we would consider to be the appropriate form of land tenure, and mode of production, in the kind of society we would like to see.

But what *is* an anarchist approach ? Anarchism, viewed historically as a political movement, is that wing of the socialist movement which is at the opposite extreme from both Marxism and the ordinary British variety of state socialism, in that it wants to dispense with the state as an institution, and with centralised authority. It is opposed to the social and economic injustices implicit in capitalism and landlordism, but it is equally mistrustful of the state control which is the standard socialist remedy. But in practice, and regardless of the political complexion of governments, in every developed country the state is deeply enmeshed in the agricultural industry. Peter Self and Herbert Storing open their book *The State and the Farmer* with the words " In Britain, since 1945, the state has asumed an unprecedented degree of responsibility for the functioning and welfare of agriculture. It has done so at the behest of agricultural interests with which it has closely co-operated in devising and administering programmes of support, advice and control." And they show later in their book that " Government support to agriculture in the period since rationing ended has been equivalent to over two-thirds of the total net income received by farmers during this period."

Whatever else we might conclude from this, we can be sure that a call for farmers and farm workers to " break lose from the trammels of the state " would be met with derisive laughter: if taken seriously as a guide to immediate action it would imply a return to a situation of dereliction and poverty on the land, as well as a sharp fall in this country's agricultural output. There is, in fact, no conceivable anarchist

approach to the question of the land within the framework of our economic system. For a market economy, even when its effect is cushioned by subsidies at one end and by welfare benefits at the other, does not deliver the goods to the people in most need of them.

Within this country, as a study published a couple of months ago (*Nutrition in Britain* 1950-1960 by Royston Lambert) demonstrated, the diet of certain groups, for instance, wage-earning families with three or more children, actually deteriorated during the last decade: " The indications are that at least a quarter, and probably a third, of the people of Britain live in households which fail to attain all the desirable levels of dietary intake " by the standards defined by the British Medical Association. In the world as a whole, the proportion of the world's population living on 2,220 or less calories a day was 49 per cent in 1939; in the post-war period it has increased to 66 per cent. The developed countries all have actual or potential food surpluses, some of them have to subsidise farmers *not* to produce food, but if in some sudden growth of a global sense of social responsibility, whether through prudence, military strategy, altruism or long-term interest, these surpluses were diverted on a really effective scale to the under-developed countries, they would produce new and enormous economic problems. Already, when the American government made a token gesture of making a gift of surplus grain to India, Australian producers protested at the potential threat to their markets. And as Lord de la Warr once said, " When the crumbs cease to fall from the rich man's table, the beneficiaries are not only as hungry but as helpless as they were before." Neither a market economy nor charity will solve the world's food problems.

* * *

The one thing that most people know about the 19th century French anarchist Proudhon is that he coined the slogan "Property is Theft " and later in life modified this to " Property is Freedom." This always raises a laugh, but Proudhon was in fact talking about two different kinds of property. The property of the man who draws an income from thousands of acres, or from the ownership of an oilwell or a factory, or from speculation, is obviously different from the property of the peasant cultivator. There is a difference between owning your means of livelihood and owning ICI.

Proudhon's sympathy for the peasant was something rather rare in socialist thought. Indeed, as David Mitrany put it in his book *Marx Against the Peasant*, " 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 philosophical reasons for wishing to see each peasant owner of his farm. But when he speaks of this as the means of " consumating the marriage of man with nature ", his very language reveals how much he was moved by the innate attachment of the country man born and bred to the soil and to those who tilled it."

At this point, of course, in an English context, we have to reject the spurious romanticism that besets English discussion of rural life. Although this is one of the most highly urbanised nations in the world, and although agriculture employs about 4 per cent of the working population and produces about 4 per cent of the national output (smaller figures than those of any other country in the world), our fellowcountrymen are always claiming to be countrymen at heart. As the critics of surburban living claim, one result of this is that we fail to make the most of town life: the town becomes a place to flee from instead of to enjoy—even though the flight consists in picnicking by the roadside near a motorway, scattering litter over the land. Another result is that people assume that there was once a rural golden age of simple bucolic bliss. But when was this golden age? It certainly wasn't the early part of this century, as readers of J. W. Robertson-Scott's *England's Green and Pleasant Land* will realise, nor was it any other century of which we have reliable histories (see for example E. W. Martin's *The Secret People*, Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's *The Village Labourer*, or G. E. Fussell's *The English Rural Labourer*. For the people at the bottom, in other words the majority, life was always hard, and hunger close at hand, and the dream of peasant contentment has probably always been a myth. The only people who deserve a hearing when they disparage modern labour-saving techniques in agriculture or in any occupation, are those who themselves do habitual arduous labour. Let no man praise poverty, said St. Bernard, unless he be poor.

Yet another of the myths we should be suspicious of is that of the traditional farming wisdom handed down through the generations from father to son. In some parts of the world it is true of course; peasant wisdom has kept the land fertile for countless generations while commercial exploitation has ruined virgin land in a few years. But it is doubtful whether a very large proportion of the land in this country for example has been cultivated by generations of the same family, and it is doubtful whether there really has been a continuity of agricultural knowledge. In the wartime plough-up, the Agricultural Executive Committees in some English counties had to import ploughmen from graziers during long years of agricultural decline. In some countries East Anglia to teach their craft to farmers who had become mere again the traditional wisdom has been manifestly unwise, and those who would improve agriculture have had an uphill task trying to win the confidence of farmers in order to persuade them to adopt better cropping systems and methods of hubandry.

All the same, the question of the peasant is at the heart of any consideration of the land and its problems and prospects. In every continent except North America the peasants form the majority of the population: the peasants who have borne the burden of exploitation for centuries. The *idea* of continuity, whether or not it has a foundation in fact, is the key to good husbandry. For from it springs the concern for conservation and improvement of the soil, which is certainly weakened by impermanence of tenure. This is the basis of the " land problem" in many parts of the world. If a man improves his land and only his landlord benefits, why should he bother?

Professor Mitrany remarks:

> "There is a strong element of ideal truth in the old Socialist argument that, being God-given, and needed by all, the land should be no man's private property. Yet the land as such would be of little worth unless its bearing powers are perpetuated. It is the function of the land, not its raw substance, that society must possess for well-being and survival, and in that sense the claim to individual ownership may be logically rooted in the nature of agricultural production itself. With the factory worker, even the artisan, the quality of his product depends on the quality of the material and on his own skill. Whatever tools or machinery he uses are a passive factor, taken over as they stand from the previous user and passed on to the next, but little affected by their temporary use, or easily replaced. All the variable factors of production, materials and skill, are wholly absorbed in each unit, in each object produced, while machines and tools are transient. With farmer or peasant the matter is very different. His chief tool is the soil itself, or rather it is partly tool, partly raw material, a unique combination in the whole scheme of production. It is unique in that it is both a variable factor, affected by each period of use, and at the same time a constant factor, which cannot be replaced. What the farmer can get out of it depends greatly on the state in which the soil was passed on to him by the previous user, and his own way of treating it will affect the results obtained by the next user. Neglect of the soil by one may make it of little use for many. Quite apart from immediate benefits, therefore, the very nature and spirit of "cultivation" seems to require that the man who tills the land should have constant use of the same piece of the same instrument."

But does this imply that the most desirable kind of farmer is the peasant proprietor? Certainly, as our contributor Tim Meadows points out, every employed farm worker dreams of having a place of his own, even though this would mean longer hours and a smaller income. The agricultural revolution in this country dispossessed, through the enclosure movement, large numbers of yeoman and peasant proprietors. (It was manifestly unjust, and it was also the price of our subsequent standard of living.) In France the agricultural revolution took a different form and resulted in a great increase of peasant proprietors, with a low standard of living. More recent changes in Britain have reduced the powers and responsibilities of landlords and have increased the proportion of farms which are owned by their occupiers from 11 per cent in 1913 to 40 per cent in 1960.

Peasant agriculture in the world today has other characteristics beside those which its admirers stress. Self and Storming remark that "It results in holdings which cannot provide a satisfactory living for their occupants, and on which . . . self-reliant thrift . . . gives way to poverty, backwardness, and excessive dependence upon public charity. The French policy of deliberately nourishing a large peasantry has produced merely a large group of poor and dependent persons. The Jeffersonian theory of the existence of some peculiar connection between farm ownership and political sanity has also fared very badly by practical tests. As A. Whitney Griswold has demonstrated, the several million small farmers who still exist in the United States of America cannot possibly be regarded as the heirs of American political wisdom and democratic virtues. The question, as he rightly concludes, is not whether the family farm will save American democracy, but whether American democracy is prepared to save the family farm."

Are there ways of maintaining the virtues which are attributed to peasant agriculture without its manifest defects? One way is through schemes of community farming. In this country experiments of this kind have usually ended in misreable failure from both an economic and a social point of view. (For some account of them see Professor Armytage's book *Heavens Below*.) In America a few, but especially those based on certain protestant sects like the "Pennsylvania Dutch" have been remarkably successful. In Russia the enforced collectivisation of agriculture resulted in famine, misery and death on a frightful scale and in a decline in productivity which is still one of the regime's problems. Our attitude to the "communes" in China depends entirely on whose propaganda impresses us most. The "kibbutzim" and other forms of agricultural co-operation in Israel are probably the most successful communal farming ventures in the modern world.

The other approach is by way of combining or "integrating" agriculture and industry, persuasively advocated by another anarchist thinker Peter Kropotkin, whose ideas, and their present relevance, are discussed in this issue of ANARCHY.

Anarchism & Agriculture

ALAN ALBON

For the Father of Agriculture
Gave us a hard calling: he first decreed it an art
To work the fields, sent worries to sharpen our mortal wits
And would not allow his realm to grow listless from lethargy.
Before Jove's time no settlers brought the land under subjection;
Not lawful even to divide the plain with land marks and boundaries:
All produce went to a common pool, and earth unprompted
Was free with all her fruits.

—THE GEORGICS OF VIRGIL, trans. C. Day Lewis

IF IT HAS ANY MEANING, anarchism is a concept which is accepted because it is more in line with human aspirations than an authoritarian governmental social structure, that is, a concept that will serve man's future as a part of the ecological structure of organic life on the earth. Man must take a shorter look at what is above his head and a longer and deeper look at what is immediately beneath his feet, and I do not mean the tin of his automobile, or the concrete of his cities. The first essential for a stable civilisation is a stable, non-exploitive agriculture, an agriculture which not only nourishes a community of men, but will continue to do so indefinitely. Unless this is achieved, industrialism and its techniques will merely be illusions which, if they do not achieve the total demise of life on this planet through modern warfare, will

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achieve the same and by starvation.

To the anarchist who is concerned with anarchism as a viable way of life, and not as a mere act of personal rebellion, *Mutual Aid* by Kropotkin and *Soil and Civilisation* by Edward Hyams, make essential reading. These two men are concerned with man as part, not only of a community of men, but also of a community of the soil and plant and animal life. Living in vast cities where the shops are bulging with food, and in Europe where climatic conditions are favourable and where the soil has been stabilised by years of a comparatively workable husbandry which stands a lot of abuse without ill effects being immediately apparent, it is hard to believe that the soil community of which we are members is so precarious. The history of agriculture makes interesting reading, so does its relationship with peace, aggression and the decline and fall of civilisation. The ease with which soil fertility, the only real source of capital, is used up by the manipulation of power and the waste of war, the speed at which even civilisations with far less power than we have at our disposal, dissipated the laborious toil of man and nature, should be a salutary lesson to those who think in terms of what Edward Hyams calls a "high civilisation" without reference to a basically workable agriculture. With modern techniques the Americans produced a dust bowl in half a decade. The Romans with slave manpower took longer. Both have an exploitive attitude to our natural environment and to mankind.

The modern industrial commercial state imposes on the farming community conditions which will cause the decay of much of the land now in production. Of course the blind forces of commodity production may reverse the process, but often what is quickly done is not soonest mended. It seems to me that when considering a social organisation we have primarily to consider it in relation to agriculture. We also have to consider a world population growing more rapidly than ever before, to be fed, at the moment, on diminishing areas of land of diminishing fertility. There has to be a dramatic change in people's attitudes, a change which could deal with both these threats to our continued existence on earth.

The anarchist is opposed to the manipulation and exploitation of man by man, he has a concept of man as belonging to one family. This must be carried further to a concept of man as part of an ecological system. A pragmatic approach, free from religious, political and commercial ideologies and from short-term sectional interests is the only one which will create a series of workable soil-communities on earth. It is as well here to define what a soil is: a soil becomes a soil when it contains sufficient organic residues to support soil micro-organisms and the larger forms of plant and animal life. The type of life it supports is controlled and modified by moisture and temperature, and, in nature, residues both plant and animal, slowly build up this organic content, known as humus. As it builds up this in turn also has an effect on the temperature and humidity.

Man as hunter and food gatherer is an integral part of this community and is also subject to the natural checks that prevent one species from dominating another. Man as a primitive agriculturalist and herdsman soon found that his activities in taking crops exhaust the soil, and moved on, allowing the vigour of the surroundings to replenish the area. In effect, organic growth is composed first of the mineral of the rock, air and water, and the energy of the sun; the larger and more complex organisms requiring a mixture of these plus humus and the enormously complicated soil population that teems beneath the sod. Therefore before man could achieve a settled habitat where he could develop, there had to be an agricultural system that replenished the organic content. Where this system failed, the civilisation became aggressive and decayed, or both. It should be noted that tillage systems exhaust soils more rapidly than pastoral systems which often do not disturb the existing ecological arrangement.

Practically the only area in the world in which the soil is self-renewing other than by a system of rational agriculture is the Nile valleys where for thousands of years the Nile has brought soil from Abysinia and the upper reaches, and annually flooded, refertilising the land with fresh soil. This is the exception; to crop land in all other circumstances impoverishes it, more or less according to climatic conditions. So a workable system of manuring must be created so that the humus content is maintained and if possible increased.

What have been the most successful agricultural systems in the terms we have described? According to Edward Hyams, "The two tried methods of land holding which entail soil conservation and improvement are those of medium freehold combined with high farming, such as the English system of the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries; and the national land ownership with strict laws of soil management, such as the Incarial system of ancient Peru." He goes on, "Probably the soundest farmers in Russia were the monks, and as the monasteries owned up to one third of all the land the damage done by bad soil management was reduced or at least slowed considerably."

Hyams also states that "Agricultural slavery leads inevitably to abuse of soil: the actual labourers on the land have little or on interest in its condition, while its owners look upon it merely as a source of personal not communal wealth." I would go further and say that wage slavery, interest and commerce accelerates abuse of the soil, perpetuates a divided community of privileged and underprivileged, divides a huge insecure industrial proletariat from the source of its life and debases values. Agriculture is too serious a matter to leave in the hands of politicians, industrialists and profiteers, and the soil heritage left from the depredation of militarism, ignorance and greed, is too precious to be squandered by the wastefulness of a consumer society. At the moment the agricultural system that provided the initial surplus value that was the basis of the industrial revolution is being refashioned to commercial needs and on the pattern of modern industrial production. It is, in Hyams' expression, ceasing to be soil-making agriculture and is becoming a soil-consuming agriculture.

It is perhaps significant that ANARCHY will have passed its third birthday before the problem of agriculture is discussed, and yet in any society its needs must be paramount in the organisation of society. The anarchist movement has probably been too much influenced by the

concepts of progress in modern industrial society, and by the Marxian idea of surplus value, most of which is being flushed down the lavatory as paper, faeces and urine.

An anarchist society would, I hope, start by asking the right questions: does it feed? Will it continue to feed? Will it sustain a vigorous and healthy society? The question: "Does it pay?" except from the ecological point of view, would be dropped from the vocabulary. Exploitation and parasitism would have to cease in relation to the soil, as with man and man. Techniques of farming would have to suit climate and situations and machines devised to help with the conservation of soils. Countries where the soil is seriously eroded would be assisted with reafforestation and irrigation and supplied with other sources of heat and power so that dung is not burnt and hillsides denuded of their cover.

In fact an anarchist programme would be to push out the frontier of viable agriculture. As I see it the type of agriculture to do all that is needed of it, would be one based on relatively small groups, where consumers and producers are closely connected and where all members of the community whether artisans or agriculturalists take a lively and vital interest in the soil that gives them life. Significantly Kropotkin puts the Fields first in his pamphlet on *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. The vast exchange of foodstuffs cannot continue without some sort of parisitism, basicly the community of a soil must be maintained by an exchange of organic matter between consumers and soil.

The soil must be regarded as a community asset that no individual has the right to destroy. The pressure on the food sources of any part of the world must be recognised as a threat to the stability of the world population, and a non-commercial food policy would enable technical and physical assistance before the irrevocable steps towards total soil destruction are taken.

If history teaches us nothing else, it teaches us that progress is not an inevitable march forward: it is a history of civilisations buried in the dust of destroyed soils. Kropotkin in *Mutual Aid* proposes the theory of a partnership, whereas other political and social ideas think in terms of power and exploitation. The first concept is the only one with a future. There must be a partnership of artisans and peasants in groups small enough to control both their social and biological relationships so that there is a reality of values, the peasant to conserve what is necessary to conserve, the artisan to create what is necessary to create to prevent stagnation.

* * *

As in all forms of capitalist production, price and profit are the main motivation for agricultural production. There is however a recognition that such blind forces cannot be altogether the deciding factor in this important field of human activity, hence nearly every country uses some sort of support system. There are many small farmers whose hourly rate of pay probably comes to less than an employed agricultural worker's rate, but who still prefer this life to any other; they are steadily declining in numbers. Quality, unless it has an immediate and decisive effect on profit, takes second place to quantity. Food is subject to processes which are concerned with it as a commodity and not as a means of nutrition. A life assurance firm would testify that quantity has little to do with quality.

While most of the official purveyors of agricultural knowledge are concerned with reducing costs and streamlining production, the tendency is to forget that food is primarily an essential necessity for living things. The only organisation in Britain which starts from this position is the Soil Association. Their contention that the organic content of the soil is necessary for high fertility is not now disputed. A leaflet published by the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service (No. 328) states that owing to 20 per cent to 50 per cent loss of organic matter, land is now harder to farm. In Britain, with a long tradition of mixed farming and rotation crops, it has taken longer for the effects of such large-scale operations to have an effect. Even here in some of our best land the loss of humus in the fens has been terrific and now farmers are finding that disease and difficulties in cultivation are making crop yields decline.

In the *Farmer and Stockbreeder* (27.8.1963) a correspondent asks: "Just how far can we go with this continuous corn-growing lark? Make no mistake, the writing is on the wall this year, and the answer which it gives to most people is: Not very far." Addressing the zoology section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science last year, Dr. F. Fraser Darling said, "The immense buffer and reservoir of the wilderness has shrunk in area and influence. Quite suddenly in these past twenty-five years and particularly since the last war, there has been a shaking of confidence. The all-conquering technological man whose mind has the same characteristics as the bulldozers employed to grow groundnuts on a prodigious scale in Tanganyika, is already out of date, although the breed is highly inventive and has in no way accepted defeat."

As in other fields it is the minorities and so-called cranks who see the dangers produced by the scrabble for money and power. To some extent in recent years the dangers of certain agricultural practices have been brought to the notice of the general public. The danger is that a lot of harm can be done in circumstances where our knowledge is limited, and the pressure to adopt methods that reduce costs and increase profit without the proper investigation of the long-term effects is overwhelming. The organic school contend, and their experiments tend to indicate, that artificials used, even in conjunction with farmyard manure (and only 8 per cent of our crops receive an application of it) produce certain changes in the crops.

For a long time a very careful experiment has been carried out at Haughley, Suffolk, details of which can be obtained from the Soil Association, from which it can be seen that infinite pains have been taken with limited resources to rule out other variables. Here a herd of cows has consistently yielded more and in some respects better milk on less food, on an organic run part of the farm, than a similar herd of the same genetic background on the part of the farm run with the use of chemical fertilisers. The Association contends that artificials,

which can be defined as a selection of highly-soluble chemicals, Nitrogen, Phosphate, Potash, that are known to have a stimulating effect on plant growth, do two things. They tend by the nature of their solubility to saturate the soil solution and exclude necessary trace elements so that the plant food is unbalanced. They accelerate the rate at which the humus in the soil is used particularly where this is the only means of fertilisation. It is also believed that they discourage soil organisms which break down organic matter and provide plant food. Eve Balfour in *The Living Soil* writes, "It is believed that the health of man, beast, plant and soil is one indivisible whole; that the health of the soil depends on maintaining its biological balance, and that starting with a truly fertile soil, the crops grown on it, the livestock fed on those crops, and the humans fed on both have a standard of health and a power of ressting disease and infection, from whatever cause, greatly in advance of anything ordinarily found in this country; such health as we have almost forgotten should be our natural state, so used have we become to subnormal physical fitness."

Whether or not artificial fertilisers can be used without ill effects must be a subject of much more investigation; it is certain that the manufacturers will not institute an investigation in the absence of positive proof: that might put them out of business. When large vested interests scoff at the idea that their products may have a harmful effect the need for independent research is paramount. One only gets the right answers if one asks the right questions. (What has been an immense source of profit for the tobacco companies, has been a loss to the community.) What is certain is that there is a lot of disease associated with mineral disturbances in cattle and a tremendous wastage through infertility, and now we find that animals are beginning to get nitrate poisoning. Andre Vosin, who is a farmer and a biochemist, advocates the judicious use of basic fertilisers and a system of rational grazing, and reckons that productivity of grassland can be raised well above arable levels by an ecological approach. In a recent work called *Soil, Grass and Cancer* he contends that the health of animals and men is linked to the mineral balance of the soil.

The criteria for a successful agriculture must be the production of a balanced diet for every human being, a healthy and vigorous humanity, and soil that is maintained and improved in fertility by the farming practice. Food must be removed from the category of a commodity. With great technological advances we tend to forget the basis of our life and the precariousness of that basis. As Sir George Stapleton said in *The Land, Now and Tomorrow*: "I am sure that if man looked at himself biologically, he would realise that, evolve as he may, he can never hope to be in a perfect state of equilibrium with his environment unless that environment satisfies his organism as a whole, and unless man lives in a state of equilibrium with his environment, then man himself cannot be whole, inevitably he will be unbalanced. We have evolved, not from a chemical retort, not from a laboratory or technical process and not under the atmospheric and psychological influences of great cities, nor has homo sapiens been weaned on a diet of processed foods."

Why I work on the land

TIM MEADOWS

And he gave it for his opinion that whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground, where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together.

SWIFT

THERE ARE SO MANY APPARENT ANSWERS to the question "Why do you work on the land?" that it took some time for the full implication to sink in. It is really a question of what I want out of life.

My parents were Londoners, but from a very early age I have lived in the country. As I grew older I found myself less and less attracted by the "rat-race". I determined to do a job I enjoyed for its own sake and not for the money involved. No-one works on the land because of its financial attractions—you don't get rich on £9 10s. for a 45 hour week.

My grammar school education destined me for a white collar job of some sort—probably teaching. I won a County Major Scholarship but have not yet made use of it. When I was 20 I spent a few months in London, and this finally decided me against that sort of life. I wasn't made to work from 9 to 5 every day with only a small patch of sky and a few trees to remind me of the countryside. How anyone can work their whole life in a city of dirt and smell, dreaming of retiring to a cottage or smallholding in the country, is past my understanding. The time to live in the country is when you're young enough to enjoy it. Anyhow my mind was soon made up to abandon a collar-and-tie job for ever so that I could live in the real meaning of the word. For a long time I was a bitter disappointment to my parents. According to everyone I had "wasted my education and thrown away all my chances of ever getting anywhere." From a materialistic point of view they were probably right. But I was never one to worry about what other people might or might not think.

It did however strike me as queer that, had I had the money, no-one would have queried my buying a farm and living on the land as the farmer and not the farm worker!

Don't get the idea from this that I am not ambitious. On the contrary I would love to have my own farm, but with land at £250-£300 per acre, the day is pretty far distant. Being unable to buy my own

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TIM MEADOWS is a farm worker in Essex.

farm has its advantages, however, in that I can learn from the way my boss manages his farm and I hope not to repeat his mistakes.

Most farm workers profess to have the same ambition. " A place of my own " is their dream, but very few actually reach their goal. The trouble is that there are no short cuts, and for men in their position the only way to get a smallholding is by sheer hard work. Son often follows father on the land. The number of men who choose to work on the farm when they have a chance to do something that is usually described as " better " is very low. Outsiders seldom stick the job long. At times the work is highly technical and demands great skill, like driving a combine harvester or operating corn drying and cleaning machinery in the barn. At other times a man must be able to stand long hours of cold wet drudgery like ditching. Looking after animals properly means that a stockman must develop a feeling which tells him intuitively what his animals need, or if there is something wrong. None of these attributes is quickly or easily acquired. Most farming jobs look easy to the layman, but to do them properly takes years of experience. It is no wonder that outsiders usually drift back to the town little wiser after a few brief months.

As singlehanded cowman to a herd of 50 British Friesians, I have found the job most suited to me. Though rigidly tied to milking my charges at six in the morning and four in the afternoon. I can arrange the rest of my day's work to suit myself, which gives me a feeling of independence unknown to other farm workers. I work hard for £15 for a 60-hour week but find it both satisfying and challenging. Satisfying to produce plenty of milk from grass and grassland products as economically as possible, and challenging to keep the cows fit and healthy and producing a calf every autumn.

This is an important point to me, for the growing pressure on agricultural land, makes it increasingly necessary for every available acre to produce as much food as possible. Far too much land is wasted. If we produced more food to make our more self-supporting, more food would be available to feed the growing population of Asia, Africa and South America.

Although my fingers are not particularly green I have always done a bit of gardening as a hobby. It has now become a paying sideline which gives my wife an outside interest too. Instead of letting our half-acre garden become a wilderness like our neighbours, we are developing it into a small nursery, selling vegetables, flowers and plants at the roadside. Now people consider me rather old-fashioned when I say a mother's place is at home, but when a mother goes out to work she cannot give her children the attention they need. My wife can combine her housework with looking after our greenhouses and the garden and selling the produce at the door. She still has time to give our children the love and care they need, and to earn a little pin money into the bargain. Not everybody's cup of tea I agree, but she enjoys it. A friend one said " Isn't it quiet, living here in the country?" Quiet is the last thing my wife calls it when there is a steady stream of callers at the door, and two young children demanding her attention.

Living on a farm also enables the children to learn about birth death quite naturally, without any awkwardness or embarrassment. My boy, who is five, watched us help a cow which was having a bad time with a difficult calf, and was surprised where it came out. He thought it would come out of the belly near the udder. He knows why a bull is different from the cows and why we run him with the herd. This sort of thing makes it easy for us to give honest answers to his questions and for him to understand our replies. A small piece of garden gives a child a lot of pleasure as well as first-hand experience of how seeds grow into plants, and flower and die. It is easy to explain why the seasons change and why the sun does not always shine. They appreciate why we must have rain and a winter with frost and snow. In this way they grow up more aware of the basic things of life than some town children.

There are so many reasons why I live and work where I do that I could never list them all. Many of the little things I should miss terribly if I lived in a town again, like the smell of roses and sweet peas, hay and earth and gunsmoke in the autumn, the taste of rabbit and partridge, field mushrooms and D'Arcy Spice apples, the subtle shades of green in the woods in spring, and of course the birdsong in the evening and early morning.

Although each season, each crop and even each animal is superficially the same, close watch reveals many slight differences which make farming so infinitely fascinating. Far from struggling against nature, the successful farmer works with it as much as possible to provide the best conditions for crops and animals to thrive. Each year brings its problems, and what was right one year could be disastrously wrong another. For the discerning eye there is something new each day, which cannot be said about most jobs; and therein lies the challennge and the appeal of the land.

Correction to ANARCHY 40: The Unions and Workers' control

Two errors occurred in the report of the Nottingham Study Group on Industrial Democracy on p. 178. It is implied in the references to Tony Topham's remarks on the increase in strikes over " non-economic " issues that he was referring to the engineering industry alone, but in fact he was speaking of all industries. Similarly in his account of Professor Turner's figures it is said that these refer to the mining industry, whereas in fact the sentence in Topham's article reads " Professor Turner has shown that, *disregarding* the mining industry's figures, the annual number of stoppages of work recorded by the Ministry of Labour has doubled . . .".

Fields, Factories and Workshops tomorrow

JOHN ELLERBY

SOCIALISTS AND ANARCHISTS IN THE MAIN, remarked Bertrand Russell, " are products of industrial life, and few among them have any practical knowledge on the subject of food production. But Kropotkin is an exception. His two books *The Conquest of Bread* and *Fields, Factories and Workshops,* are very full of detailed information, and, even making great allowances for an optimistic bias, I do not think it can be denied that they demonstrate possibilities in which few of us would otherwise have believed." This of course was Kropotkin's intention. He found that his conclusions about industry and agriculture were so much at variance with those of contemporary economic thinking, that a painstaking compilation of all the facts supporting them, presented in a non-sectarian way to the reading public in general, was the best way open to him to influence opinion on these subjects. *Fields, Factories and Workshops* was first published in 1898 and was reprinted several times in cheap editions in the next decade, appearing again in a revised and enlarged edition just before the first world war, and was last reprinted in England in 1919. The reviewer of *The Times* dealing with the first edition, remarked that the author " has the genuine scientific temper, and nobody can say that he does not extend his observations widely enough, for he seems to have been everywhere and to have read everything," and crtainly the statistical material that the book contains is most comprehensive, though now completely out of date. But the *ideas* which emerge have been seen to have a striking contemporary relevance by every new generation of Kropotkin's readers. Thus when Herbert Read compiled his volume of selections from Peter Kropotkin's books in 1942, he found that " its deductions and proposals remain as valid as on the day when they were written " and when Paul Goodman wrote in 1948 on the fiftieth anniversary of its first publication he remarked that " The ways that Kropotkin suggested, how men can at once begin to live better, are still the ways; the evils he attacked are mostly still the evils; the popular misconceptions of the relations of machinery and social planning. Recently studying the modern facts and the modern authors, I wrote a little book (*Communitas*) on a related subject; there is not one important proposition in my book that is not in *Fields, Factories and Workshops,* often in the same words."

Kropotkin's first two chapters are on " The Decentralisation of Industries," and in them he discusses the trend which he was able to discern, even in the days when Britain was still " the workshop of the world," for industrial activity to spread into areas and countries which were formerly merely consumers of the products from the traditional industrial areas. " The monopoly of the first comers on the industrial field has ceased to exist. And it will exist no more, whatever may be the spasmodic efforts made to return to a state of things already belonging in the domain of history." Progress, he remarks, " must be looked for in another direction. *It is in producing for home use.* The customers for the Lancashire cottons and the Sheffield cutlery, the Lyons silks and the Hungarian flour-mills, are not in India, nor in Africa. The true consumers of the produce of our factories must be our own populations. And they can be that, once we organise our economical life so that they might issue from their present destitution." For he emphasises the paradox that while the owners of an industry are seeking markets farther and farther afield, the actual producers are often lacking the very products they are employed to make. Anticipating that in the future each region will become its own producer and its own consumer of manufactured goods, he notes that this implies at the same time that it will be its own producer of agricultural products. And for this reason he devotes his next three chapters to the possibilities of agriculture.

" The character of the new conditions are plain," he says, " and their consequences are easy to understand. As the manufacturing nations of West Europe are meeting with steadily growing difficulties in selling their manufactured goods abroad and getting food in exchange, they will be compelled to grow their food at home; they will be bound to rely on home customers for their manufactures, and on home producers for their food. And the sooner they do so the better."

" Two great objections stand, however, in the way against the general acceptance of such conclusions. We have been taught, both by economists and politicians that the territories of the West European States are so overcrowded with inhabitants that they cannot grow all the food and raw produce which are necessary for the maintenance of their steadily increasing populations. Therefore the necessity of exporting manufactured goods and of importing food. And we are told moreover, that even if it were possible to grow in Western Europe all the food necessary for its inhabitants, there would be no advantage in doing so as long as the same food can be got cheaper from abroad. Such are the present teachings and the ideas which are current in society at large." He sets out to prove that these ideas are erroneous. Studying British agriculture he shows that in the period after 1870 agriculture did not in fact " change its direction " but simply went down in all directions. The agricultural depression which began in the " seventies " and " eighties " of the nineteenth century had, he declares, " causes much more deeply seated that the fall in the prices of wheat in consquence of American competition." He seeks to show, from the experience of developments in, for instance, France, Belgium and Denmark, that intensive cultivation using all the mechanical and scientific ingenuity that

can be mustered, will produce staple foods as well as luxury ones at costs which make local food production economical.

In refuting the usual Malthusian conclusions on the relation of population to food supply, he shows that " It is precisely in the most densely populated parts of the world that agriculture has lately made such strides . . . A dense population, a high development of industry, and a high development of agriculture and horticulture, go hand in hand; they are inseparable."

He turns in subsequent chapters to industry in order to refute the notion that industrial development necessarily implies concentration into larger and larger factories, and he shows how every large industrial concentration brings in its train a vast number of small specialised workshops. Profits, he notes, are centralised, not production.

> The moral and physical advantages which man would derive from dividing his work between the field and the workshop are self-evident. But the difficulty is, we are told, in the necessary centralisation of the modern industries. In industry, as well as in politics, centralisation has so many admirers! But in both spheres the ideal of the centralisers badly needs revision. In fact, if we analyse the modern industries, we soon discover that for some of them the co-operation of hundreds, or even thousands, of workers gathered at the same spot is really necessary. The great iron works and mining enterprises decidedly belong to that category: ocean steamers cannot be built in village factories. But very many of our big factories are nothing else but agglomorations under a common management, of several distinct industries; while others are mere agglomorations of hundreds of copies of the very same machine; such are most of our gigantic spinning and weaving establishments.

His chapter on brain work combined with manual work discusses the defects of the educational ideas current in his day, and from the examples he had observed in various parts of the world, he recommends an education which combines manual and intellectual training. He shows how many of the key inventions of modern industry and countless improvements and adaptations of them have been made by practical hand-workers rather than by academic scientists. He wants an *integral* education, just as he wants an integral economy, and some of his most interesting pages develop these ideas.

> Political economy has hitherto insisted chiefly upon *division*. We proclaim *integration*, and we maintain that the ideal of society—that is, the state towards which society is already marching—is a society of combined, integrated labour. A society where each individual is a producer of manual and intellectual work; where each able-bodied human being is a worker, and where each worker works both in the field and in the industrial workshop; where each aggregation of individuals, large enough to dispose of a certain variety of natural resources—it may be a nation, or rather a region—produces and itself consumes most of its own agricultural and manufactured produce. . .
>
> A reorganised society will have to abandon the fallacy of nations specialised for the production of either agricultural or manufactured produce. It will have to rely on itself for the production of food and many, if not most, of the raw materials; it must find the best means of combining agriculture with manufacture—the work in the field with the decentralised industry; and it will have to provide for " integrated education," which

> education alone, by teaching both science and handicraft from earliest childhood, can give to society the men and women it really needs. . .
>
> The scattering of industries over the country—so as to bring the factory amidst the fields, to make agriculture derive all those profits which it always finds in being combined with industry and to provide a combination of industrial with agricultural work—is surely the next step to be taken, so soon as a reorganisation of present conditions is possible. This steps is imposed by the very necessity of *producing for the producers themselves*; it is imposed by the necessity for each healthy man and woman to spend a part of their lives in manual work in the free air; and it will be rendered the more necessary when the great social movements, which have now become unavoidable, come to disturb the present international trade, and compel each nation to revert to her own resources for her own maintenance.

To what extent has subsequent history shown Kropotkin's views to be correct, and in what way can they be considered a pointer to the future?

The first thing we realise when re-reading his thoughts on education is how little progress we have made. He was writing, certainly, at a time when very large numbers of children left school at twelve or thirteen after being exposed to a basic instruction in the three Rs and little else. He envisaged an education for all boys and girls up to the age of eighteen or twenty, but today we are still far from the implementation of the intention of the 1944 Act to raise the minimum leaving age to 16. Our whole system in this country is geared producing an academically specialised elite, leaving a vast underprivileged and barely literate stratum at the bottom. The Crowther and Newsom reports indicate how far we have to ge before we get anywhere near Kropotkin's ideal of an integral education.

Nowadays we recognise that industry may be dispersed in the way he envisaged, through the coming of new and decentralised sources of motive power and the wider distribution of industrial skills. We recognise too that in fact small factories and workshops provide the greater part of the total industrial output, and that even giant industries like the motor industry depend on thousands of outside subcontractors. But have we put this knowledge, which was not apparent to the economists of Kropotkin's day, to creative us? The drift of the industrial population from the geographically static and declining basic industries to the new light and secondary industries of the West Midlands and the South-East, is in its way a dramatic confirmation of his views, though it is very far from what he would regard as a healthy regional dispersal of industry. In a way, too, Kropotkin's opinions were at the beginning of that stream of thought which through Ebenezer Howard's " garden city " idea reached its final apotheosis in the New Town policy pursued by the British government after the war. Howard's views however have been watered down to the reality of universal suburbia, which is very far from Kropotkin's concept. Another stream can be seen in the regionalism of Kropotkin's friend Patrick Geddes, which through persuasive advocates like Lewis Mumford has had a wide influence but all too little practical effect.

The decline in the importance of the basic exporting industries is, of course, a confirmation of the views expressed in Krotpotkin's earlier chapters. Countries which used to be markets for these exports are now producing, and sometimes exporting for themselves. India, to take one example, which was in Kropotkin's day an exporter of raw cotton, is now an importer, and an exporter of finished cotton products. She is also an importer and no longer an exporter of food.

In the sphere of food production—at the heart of Kropotkin's book, how have his ideas fared? The kind of agricultural development which he envisaged has happened to a greater extent in the Western European countries from which he drew his data on intensive development than in Britain, whose deficiencies he discussed. The countries which now form the Common Market are together virtually self-supporting in foodstuffs. Denmark is a net exporter by 79 per cent, and Holland with the greatest population density in Europe manages to produce in value about 25 per cent above her own food requirements. Gavin McCrone in his book*The Economics of Subsidising Agriculture* (1962) remarking on the importance of spending liberally on research and new equipment declares that

> There seems little doubt that it is this sort of approach which has enabled countries such as Denmark and Holland, with their limited area and intensive methods, to compete with the extensive producers of Australia and the New World, and yet to be able to attain a high standard of living. Had Denmark been part of Great Britain, and had she been subject to British policy, it is most doubtful if her costs of production would be as low as they are.

In Britain however, the decline which Kropotkin observed, continued with scarcely a break right up to 1939. Since the war production has been kept at a higher level as a matter of government policy, by means of subsidies. We still produce a lower proportion of our own food than any country in Europe. The effects of the prolonged and severe depression of British agriculture are still being felt. McCrone remarks that it was frequently the more enterprising farmers who left the industry:

> Many of the less efficient ones found that rather than leave their farms, they could supplement an inadequate living by running down their capital equipment. Buildings and fences were not repaired, gates remained broken, drains became blocked and fieldes became overgrown with rushes and bracken. The idea of forcing the inefficient producers out of production sounds plausible in theory; but in agriculture they often stay until they have ruined the other factors of production and until the job of repair and reclamation is too expensive to be worth undertaking. A look at the state of some farm buildings and fields in Britain today, even after the war and post-war boom, makes it seem likely that such a process has taken place in this country; and, if this is so, it is much less surprising that British agriculture remains unable to compete. . . This is not to say that all Britain's farms are backward and inefficient; that is very far from being the case. But it seems to be true that there are a large number of farms which have been starved of important capital investment for many years and others which are producing below their optimum output.

In Britain there are 13,000 holdings with more than 300 acres, 64,000 with 100 to 300 acres, and over 200,000 with 5 to 100 acres "The

small farms cover under a third of the agricultural area, but they account for a considerably higher proportion of total output. Shortage of space compels the small farmer to work his limited area more intensively to earn a livelihood. Larger farms tend to become progressively more extensive, as interest shifts from output per acre to output per worker." (Self and Storing.) The paradox in this country is that the industry has a higher output per worker than most European countries, but its outpu per acre is among the lowest. Self and Storing explain that " The high output per man is largely the result of substituting machinery for the labour which left the industry in the years of depression and the low output per acre is an inheritance from the time when conditions were not favourable for intensive production."

A country which illustrates some of Kropotkin's contentions very well is Japan, the most densely populated country in the Far East, and the most densely populated in the world in terms of the ratio of population to agricultural land. He *agricultural* area is only about a third of that of the United Kingdom and her population (90 million) is about 80 per cent higher. Gavin McCrone, after enumerating the difficulties of a country in Japan's situation observes that " it will be clear that even in Japan, where conditions might be imagined to be as difficult as anywhere, it has been possible to increase the output of food considerably faster than population. There is every reason to suppose that the methods employed by the Japanese to obtain this increase would be applicable in other countries. Increased agricultural output can be obtained either from improvements in yields or by reclaiming more land; but with their very limited area the Japanese concentrated on the former." He shows how Japanese yields per acre are at least double those for almost all the other Far Eastern countries, even though they are still low compared with those of several countries in Europe.

Mr. McCrone notes that " if it is assumed that the Far East, though obliged to rely mainly on its own food supplies at present, will ultimately become industrialised, a situation might develop which could be of much more consequence to the food supplies of the rest of the world." Japan, he says, has more or less reached this stage now:

> Although she is able to provide most of her own food from her limited agricultural resources, she finds that the productivity of her labour is much higher in industry. . . So long as Japan has to supply most of her own food, she will find that, at the conditions of price and exchange which make her agriculture competitive, her industry will be able to undercut the prices of other nations. Conversely, if the prices of her industrial products were to rise to the levels which would be comparable to other countries, her agriculture could not exist without heavy support.
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> Because the cost in terms of real resources used is so high in Japanese agriculture, it would obviously be worth while to expand the industrial sector and to import a larger part of the food supply. This argument applies to Japan with even more force than it ever did to the United Kingdom. Most probably she will gradually try to do this, but she is limited by the willingness of other countries to buy her goods. . .

He doesn't in fact believe that the consequent growth of Japan (or of the next countries to reach Japan's level of industrial development, as a food importer), will cause greater competition for the exports

of the primary producing countries, because " if present trends continue, Europe may be importing less and Australia, New Zealand and the Argentine may have been joined as major primary exporters by other South American countries and by parts of Africa."

But he has stated with great clarity the standard economist's argument against the views of Kropotkin. He doesn't mention that it was precisely this need to find markets which Britain solved by imperialist adventures and economic imperialism in the nineteenth century, just as Japan did in the first half of the twentieth.

Isn't it likelier in fact, that Britain will find herself in direct competition for the products of the primary exporters, with their own populations—as is the case at the moment over Argentine beef, and with those countries whose population is half-starved but who have not the earning capacity to pay for imports?

There is obviously no point in making a fetish of self-sufficiency. The poor countries *have* to be self-sufficient apart from what they can get in grants, loans and charity because they have nothing to sell that the rich countries care to buy. There is no point in this country becoming self-sufficient *for its own sake*, since obviously some crops are produced with less expenditure of energy in other climates. As it is a sudden increase in home production of sugar beet would ruin the economies of several Carribean countries. But there *is* some point, as Kropotkin would put it, in evolving an economic system which, unlike all previous economic systems, does not depend on the exploitation of others.

A footnotes in Self and Storing's *The State and the Farmer* remarks that " As a spare-time activity, it should be repeated, the importance of small-scale farming, in conjunction with employment in decentralised industries, may well grow." But is this all that Kropotkin's vision of industry combined with agriculture has shrunk to? It immediately leads us to the question of what is *spare* time, and to wonder whether the real relevance of his ideas might not be in the future. Kropotkin was criticised for his optimistic opinion that " provided that the production of food-stuffs should not be the work of the isolated individual, but the planned-out and combined action of human groups " a few hours work a day would feed a family. In the era of automation this does not seem so absurd. Writers on automation (for instance Langdon Goodman in his Penguin *Man and Automation* frequently pictures the situation where " Automation being a large employer of plant and a relatively small employer of labour, allows plants to be taken away from the large centres of population and built in relatively small centres of population " so that " rural factories, clean, small concentrated units will be dotted about the countryside," and they also remind us that automation will make the production line worker obsolete. " Large numbers of people will need to change their jobs " the *Economist* told us last month. What to? To a combination of industrial and agricultural production, would be Kropotkin's answer. And would this answer be foolish or wise?

Direct action and the urban environment

ROBERT SWANN

SINCE THE CUBAN CRISIS the international tensions, which in the past few years, made every demonstration of the Committee of 100 or CNVA, of immediate urgency to try to prevent a nuclear holocaust, have to a considerable degree relaxed. In the international game of " chicken " with the chips down, neither side was willing to push the button. As a political consequence, it is probable that we are seeting a major change in Europe, possibly including (according to Joseph Harsh in the *Christian Science Monitor*) disengagement, denuclearisation, and eventual unification of Germany, an easing of controls in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, as well as continuation of the process of destalinisation in Russia itself. As Harsh puts it, " as a result of England's exclusion from the common market, we may see an end to the iron curtain in Europe, and this is all to the good." Basically, however, the danger of war remains, even though it doesn't appear so threatening. But in the coming period it may not be as easy to enlist people in demonstrations partly because there will not seem to be an immediate threat of impending crisis. Partly, however, it will because there has been a tendency in the C of 100 and CNVA demonstrations towards repetition or " ritualism " as *Peace News* puts it. These factors are causing a reappraisal of peace force strategy on both sides of the Atlantic. Also, as a result of the decisive defeat of most " peace candidates " there is a growing realisation of the enormous task which faces us in order to lay the groundwork for any real political changes in the U.S. if not England and elsewhere. It is true that we have made a beginning in the World Peace Brigade to forge an instrument to help break down international barriers and create in embryo the alternative to armed international conflict. But we have a long, long road before us, and none of our efforts will be successful until we have found the keys with which to unite the needs and problems of the " ordinary citizen " at the local level to the national and international problems of peace. It is in the hope of trying to find some of these " keys " that I am making these suggestions for a strategy of action. We must, even-

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tually, begin to face more forthrightly the social and economic problems that surround us and find ways of utilising our knowledge of non-violence to apply directly to these problems. Our preoccupation with crisis-oriented projects will only lead to our defeat in the long run if not in the short run.

A few years ago (1958) Aldous Huxley wrote in *Brave New World Revisited* about what he considers, aside from war itself (but directly related to it), to be the central problem of our time. " We know that for most people life in a large modern city is anonymous, atomic, less than fully human. Nevertheless, the huge cities grow huger and the pattern of urban-industrial living remains unchanged. We know that in a very large and complex society, democracy is almost meaningless except in relation to autonomous groups of manageable size; nevertheless more and more of every nation's affairs are managed by the bureaucrats of Big Government and Big Business. It is only to evident that, in practice the problem of over-organisation is almost as hard to solve as the problem of over-population. In both cases we know what ought to be done, but in neither cases have we been able, as yet, to act effectively upon our knowledge."

Big cities, big governments, centralisation, over-organisation, over population, alienation, mass paranoia, mass schizophrenia, dictatorship based on mass psychology run like a refrain through Huxley, Fromm, Mumford, and many another critic describing modern man and his diseases, of which war may be said to be only the final result; lacking ability to solve his problems in any other way, man tries to end it all in an orgy of self-extermination.

In Mumford's most recent book on the city (*The City in History*) he develops the thesis that war as an institution, essentially war as we know it, is a product of city culture, and was not known to man before city culture in Mesopotamia, approximately 3,000 years ago (in the perspective of evolution this is very recently). Mumford tries to show that the ritualistic " war ", or hunting of neolithic man and primitive tribes, bears little or no relationship to war as developed in city culture. City culture, especially in its decadent phases was closely related to a priesthood or " authority " with its accompanying magical power and divine rights (" They know better than we do ") which alone possessed the power and the control over its citizens to make mass participation in war and slaughter possible. This has remained down to this day. Mumford's main point seems to be that until we can understand and control the city, to make it liveable, vital, and free from the fears which create insecurity and paranoia, we cannot expect to free ourselves from the institution of war, and the control it has over us.

Centralisation of power, and the accompanying loss (if he ever had it) of decision-making power of the " ordinary citizen ", is undoubtedly at the root of much of man's social and psychological ills. We may, however, question some of the " answers " made by men like Huxley about such things as big cities, or over-population. (L. Mumford points out that a rise in the birth rate may be only a direct, if irrational, biological response of the species to the threat of biological extermination itself.

Almost all species react this way under a similar threat. " The answers ", which Huxley refers to in his last chapter under " What Can Be Done ", may be generally summarised as " de-centralisation " meaning, in large part, physical decentralisation of large cities. While most critics of modern civilisation would agree in general with this diagnosis, they might disagree as to degress (extreme decentralists like Borsdoi and F. L. Wright on the one hand, or " regional city " decentralists like Mumford and Catherine Bauer on the other). But it has remained for Jane Jacobs (in *Death and Life of Great American Cities*) to dispel some of the myths and attack some of the assumptions which have associated freedom, and individual decision making power (democracy) with physical decentralisation on the one hand and dictatorship, arbitrary power, mass control with centralisation in big cities on the other hand. Some of this drive, of course, to decentralisation has resulted in the expansion of the suburbs—the pseudo-life of the city—and is the result of over-sentimentalism of nature in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. (" Even Thomas Jefferson's intellectual rejection of cities of free artisans and merchants and his dream of an ideal republic of self-reliant yeomen—a pathetic dream for a good and great man whose land was tilled by slaves.") " City air makes free " was the medieval saying when city air literally made free the runaway serf, and, says Mrs. Jacobs, " City air still makes free the runaway from the country towns, from plantations, from factory farms, from subsistance farms, from migrant picker routes, from mining villages, from *one class suburbs*."

But it is on the central assumptions most de-centralists make where Mrs. Jacobs makes her heaviest attack. It is, she argues, not over concentration which causes the ills of the city, but rather under-concentration and under-diversification. Where cities are functioning best (as in Greenwich Village in NYC and in the Northend of Boston) we find not only heavy concentration of population (as high as 900 per acre—most de-centralists recommend maximum around 80-100 per acre), but also a maximum of diversification of small business and industry, and a lively population participating in local government. It is, in fact, where cities are not working properly (where " erosion " sets in early) as in the dull, grey and monotonous suburbs, or pseudo-city, that the major malfunctioning diseases—high crime rate, paranoia, alienation, decay, etc.—develop. It is, then, not cities in themselves which are causing our problems, but what is wrong with cities and what we are trying to do about it that should concern us. Perhaps especially if we are concerned about the threat to ourselves, our children and the cities in particular which the bomb poses. It is illogical to fight against war itself and not against the crimes perpetrated against the peoples in cities.

" The will to order ", says Huxley, " can make tyrants out of those who merely aspire to clean up a mess. The beauty of tidiness is used as a justification for despotism." In discussing city planning and rebuildiing, Mrs. Jacobs says, " There is a wistful myth that if only we had enough money to spend—the figure is usually put at a hundred

billion dollars—we would wipe out all our slums in ten years, reverse decay in the great, dull, grey belts that were yesterday's and the day before yesterday's suburbs; anchor the wandering middle class and its wandering tax money, and perhaps even solve the tax problem.

" But look what we have built with the first billions: Low-income projects that become worse centres of delinquency, vandalism and general social hopelessness worse than the slums they were supposed to replace. Middle-income housing projects which are truly marvels of dullness and regimentation, sealed against any buoyancy or vitality of city life, luxury housing projects that mitigate their insanity, or try to, with a rapid vulgarity. Cultural centres that are unable to support a good looking bookstore. Civic centres that are avoided by everyone but bums, who have fewer choices of a loitering place than others. Commercial centres that are lack luster imitations of standardised suburban chain store shopping. Promenades that go from no place to nowhere and have no promenades. Expressways that eviscerate great cities. This is not the rebuilding of cities. This is the sacking of cities."

What is most significant about Mrs. Jacobs' book is that through her insights, her diagnosis of what is wrong with cities, she clears the way for a practical attack on the problem in which every citizen has a role to play if he wants to. This is especially true when we see the possibilities of applying the techniques and understandings of nonviolence to this task. Moreover, it is probable that only if the ordinary citizen does play a vital role can the necessary changes take place. In fact, a citizens " ordinary citizens . . . have the advantages over planners " in understanding what needs to be done, because " planners have been trained and disciplined in deductive thinking " while what is needed is " inductive thinking ", based on every day observations which is what most citizens are accustomed to doing. This is why, as Mrs. Jacobs points out, often at board of estimate sessions in New York (and other cities) ordinary citizens " very plain people, including the poor, including the discriminated against, including the uneducated, reveal themselves momentarily as people with grains of greatness in them, and I do not speak sardonically. They tell with wisdom and often eloquence about things they know first hand from life. They speak with passion about concerns that are local but far from narrow." The planners, officials, traffic commissioners " . . . know all about such protesters (who often come to meeting with signs and petitions): well meaning people, but in the nature of things, ' untrained ' in these problems, concerned with ' parochial interests ', unable to see the ' big picture '." But it is these people who by their " very ernestness and directness of their reasoning about concrete and specific local effects is the key, I think, to rescuing cities from destruction by traffic " (as well as many other problems which plague cities).

For it is often these very people who are also the helpless victims of planned paternalism (whether in democratic U.S.A. or communist Russia) who are pushed aside and made to pay involuntary subsidies for " slum clearance " or " urban renewal ", etc. or forced to live in one of those monolithic slabs of homogeneous planning, where life

becomes increasingly endangered as the crime rate increases, or to move to another slum, which in turn becomes increasingly worse with each depredation and added human increment. " Meantime, all the art and science of city planning are helpless to stem decay—and the spiritlessness which precedes decay—in ever more massive swatches of cities."

We can no longer ignore the fact that even if we are successful in preventing the bomb from blowing up the cities, our own policies will surely destroy the cities themselves. But what is more likely, if this process continues, is that the cities, like Samson, will pull down all of Western (if not Eastern) civilisation with them in a final orgy of extermination. Yet there is a way out if we can, as L. Mumford said recently, " Put the needs of human beings ahead of General Motors ", or the sterile dreams of planners (Russian, American or other).

It is disappointing that neither Huxley, Mumford, nor Mrs. Jacobs takes into account the potential of nonviolent action to effect the changes, and transformations they all speak of as being so crucially important. It is, however, perhaps understandable that intellectuals who see and analyse the problems most acutely do not always see the means needed to bring the transformation. It is most disappointing in the case of Huxley whose emphasis on the means and ends relationship should make him the most aware. For while all the methods and ideas mentioned by Huxley (in his chapter on " What Can be Done ", in *Brave New World Revisited*) are undoubtedly inadequate to cope with the extent of the problems he poses, by leaving out nonviolence—the Gandhian techniques and spirit—he leaves out the one idea capable of challenging and organising, all the latent forces needed to cope with these problems. Yet it is Mrs. Jacobs' insights which have given us the tools, the concepts whereby we may apply the practical means of nonviolence.

It is obvious by this time that I am proposing that the peace movement in general and nonviolent action in particular should include in their agenda, in fact, make it a first priority, a constructive programme for *revitilsation of cities*. As I have tried to show it will not come about except through action by concerned citizens (planners and officials may be helpful but more often be opponents). And who is better equipped by the way of organisation, motivation, and understanding than members of the peace movement for the task of catalysing such a programme? If we will not, or cannot, who will? We have been search for the vital links, the keys, where we can join our insights and understandings to the needs and problems of the ordinary man, at the point where he feels threatened in an immediate way, since the threat of nuclear holocaust seems remote, abstract, hard for most men to understand. Is this not such a place, here in the city, where the threat cuts across class and race boundaries, but where the new danger is to produce new forms of solidified class, and race segregation, whether in the suburb (as a by-product) or in the " slum clearance " and " renewal " projects?

In our search for peace, we must begin, as Abbe Pierre said last

summer in London, " a la bas ", with the poor, the helpless, the unprotected, not as social workers though they may be very helpful—but as peacemakers determined to right the wrongs, to redress the balance which gives Big Government, Big Business, Big Money, all the advantage over the individual, especially here in the city " slums " and blighted areas, where the automobile (" General Motors must come first "), and ignorance or callousness of official policy wreaks havoc, almost as destructive (though more insidious because it is less immediately apparent) as the bomb, itself.

What, then, are the specific tasks that need to be accomplished, and what is the strategy of action, which may be undertaken to accomplish these tasks?

First, then, a brief outline of the tasks and objectives which we should be seeking (I am indebted to Mrs. Jacobs for most of these). On the political and planning level: (1) *Re-districting of cities* into viable political and social units and (2) *Analysis of districts and neighbourhoods*, for needs, in terms of diversity, traffic, money, etc.

On the level where direct action techniques may most fruitfully be applied: (1) *Defence Against Automobiles*, or attrition of Autos, as Mrs. Jacobs puts it. (2) *Defence of so-called " Slum Dwellers "* in danger of eviction for " slum Clearance ". (3) *Fighting the Blacklist of Banks*. (4) *Defence Against Proposed Expressways*, which may threaten vital community tissue and create new erosion.

Each city would, of course, have to work out its own strategy in terms of its needs, size, problems, and available personnel, but a co-ordinated effort on a regional level would make maximum use of available resources of people and money, and would permit maximum flexibility for strategy as well as co-ordination of information and ideas. At the political and planning level it would seem natural and appropriate to develop committees through the structures of Turn Toward Peace and political peace groups such as PAX. Special interest groups, some with professional skills might undertake the tasks of re-districting cities along the lines suggested by Mrs. Jacobs. In this task they might very well enlist the aid of official planners and planning commissions. Such districts, would not likely coincide with present districts, and would remain unofficial (although the long range of objective might be to encourage them in political re-organisation on horizontal lines). A kind of local " parallel government ", however, could be developed; community councils, and ad hoc committees to carry out specific functions. One such specific committee would work on *Analysis of Neighbourhoods* within the district, depending on local citizens for information and ideas to formulate proposals and underline needs. Such committees could be co-ordinated through local peace centres (Greenwich Village Peace Centre for instance, is an obvious and ideal location for this purpose, and undoubtedly is already performing this function to some degree). In large cities each district might eventually get its own peace centre. Such districts would, or should begin to have real political significance. The best illustration of this kind of development is the *Back-of-the yards* districts in Chicago, where essentially three men were responsible for developing a viable political unit out of the

most depressed and hopeless district in Chicago. (See Saul Alinsky's *Revielle for Radicals*.) In Mrs. Jacobs' words " the district's power to get from city hall the municipal services, facilities, regulations, and exceptions to regulations it needs is regarded with considerable awe throughout Chicago. In short, the *Back-of-the yards* is no portion of the body politic to take on lightly or unthinkingly in a fight ". Let no one think that such a district is not a potential factor of great political significance.

But it is on the level of the possibilities of direct action which I wish to pay special attention. While, hopefully, such action would be co-ordinated through a peace centre and directly related to the suggestions or recommendations of unofficial planning committees, it would not depend on such prior developments, and might very well precede over-all organising, helping to catalise such organisation as a result of action, itself, just as sit-ins in the South preceded the over-all organisation of the *Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee*.

Let us examine, then, specific areas of action: Under *Defence Against Automobiles*, there is abundant opportunity for action. Here, as Mrs. Jacobs puts it, " The conflict is real. There is no need to invent tactics artifically ". Pedestrian and car are in constant struggle. The general strategy is simple: reverse the present policy in most cities of improving traffic conditions (speed-up, one way streets, expressways, etc.). This policy is only creating a worse problem of erosion, more decay, etc. as more and more cars are dumped into the city.

In her chapter on this problem, Mrs. Jacobs argues persuasively for this reversal of present policies. She shows how it is, in fact, the continued increased invasion of the automobile which constantly worsens the cities' problems. As every new expressway, every new widened street, every " improved " one way street system, and speeded up traffic light control system, is put into play our problem intensifies, becomes worse. What actually happens is that a cycle is set in motion which creates new problems as rapidly as the old ones are solved. For instance, each " improvement " encourages more cars to enter the city, and as this happens simultaneously other things happen. More cars require more parking space, which creates demands to tear down more old buildings to make room for them. Tearing down old buildings in turn usurps space for either businesses, people, residences, or small parks, all of which are needed by the city if it is to function properly. Cars do not contribute to the city, but usurp space needed for other purposes which cities need for diversification and intensity. Secondly, as more cars are used public transportation systems are not used, and this in turn discourages and reduces the use of these systems. Thus, the systems become worse in competition with the motor car, schedules are reduced, and as a result more people are encouraged to use the motor car because of the poor service. Thus the cycle goes on, the traffic gets worse again, new measures are required to " improve " traffic conditions, etc. One other point should be noted here. As the centre city becomes more and more usurped by the automobile, the resulting congestion and noise discourages local residence and more

and more people " flee ' to the suburb to avoid the confusion. They in turn, however, become commuters adopting the motor car and adding their part to the problem. The best illustration of the extreme result of this cycle is Los Angeles, where the process has reached the point of such congestion that the traffic commission is considering the use of helicopters to remove stalled cars from the expressways during rush hours, in order to relieve the hopeless tieups created. Los Angeles with the best system of expressways in the country, and the highest percentage of transport by car (95 per cent) has the worst traffic problem in the country, not to mention the worst smog problem, a byproduct of the automobile exhaust.

What, then, is the policy and programme to reverse this process: On the political and planning level a campaign to " defend the city against erosion by automobiles ' could be instituted. Such a campaign could utilise all the conventional techniques and methods of education through mass media and advertising. By enlisting groups with strong vested interests in preserving and vitalising the centre city, money and support could be raised. Such a campaign would advocate use of public transportation (working to improve it at the same time), walking instead of riding, within the city (possibly even tieing in with President Kennedy's physical fitness programme), and work to educate through discussion and public debate the reasons for such a programme. Co-ordinated with such a programme, but not necessarily dependent on it would be a programme group as those most vitally effected by traffic conditions. At first such action might be primarily symbolic, a dramatise and advertise the problem itself. This might take the form of sit-downs to prevent traffic from entering a certain district or street. (It is interesting to note how in C of 100's demonstrations and Ross Flanagan's action in Berkeley, where by sitting down in the street and stopping traffic this action was used to publicise opposition to nuclear war. Is it possible that we could combine the immediate pratical needs of cities with publicising the dangers of nuclear war by instituting such action projects?) Later the campaign, after unsuccessful negotiation with the city officials would begin prolonged direct action Satyagraha to effect changes where a reduction in traffic and greater freedom for pedestrians was vitally needed. A deliberate programme of blocking traffic would begin at strategic points with organised citizen groups setting up a self-appointed traffic corps. Mothers would be most likely for this job, especially where new children crossings are needed. We have already seen how often spontaneous demonstrations have developed, where due to speed of cars and other factors, mothers, often with baby carriages, have deliberately blocked traffic in order to get official traffic changes. This could be on a continuous organised basis. For instance, had the campaign to block Washington Square to traffic been unsuccessful at an official level, the community itself could have taken direct action to set up barricades manned by local people on a round the clock basis. Some might have been arrested, of course. (It is possible that in a campaign of this kind some of the young teenage people, including some of the " gangs " might be enlisted to protect

their " turf " from the automobile, rather than the opposing gangs from the other " turfs.")

Mrs. Jacobs suggests that where too wide streets exists (and too narrow sidewalks) that the sidewalks should be enlarged and the street narrowed. Again, if the street were blocked off for pedestrian use, it would be virtually the same result, even if the city were slow or unwilling to widen the sidewalks (local neighbourhoods might even widen their own sidewalks).

Mrs. Jacobs issues a word of warning here about the cities need for trucks. Trucks are needed to carry on commerce and help build the primary and secondary generators of diversity without which cities cannot survive, or remain healthy. A selective policy favouring trucks over cars is needed. For instance, some entire streets might be blocked to all traffic except local and *trucks*. In general, though this is a city-wide problem, requiring measures such as permitting use of ramps off crosstown expressways to be used by trucks only, thus forcing local traffic off expressways and encouraging through traffic only, except for trucks.

Many possibilities for direct action would open once a campaign could begin. Each instance of direct action would help advertise through the publicity received the general campaign. Although I have separated out the traffic problems as the focus of the campaign, this is only because it tends to be the most dramatic, ubiquitous, and obvious, of all the cities' problems. In reality, the educational campaign would include an attack on all the many phases of city " unbuilding ". Direct action, as it might be applied to proposals for expressways which " eviscerate the city ", or slum clearance projects which only solidify all the factors (class segregation, single type dwellings, separation of residence and business, etc.) which created the slums in the first place, could include all the many techniques of nonviolence to dramatise the problem, and strengthen the spirit of resistance. Such techniques as: refusal to pay local taxes until a fair hearing has been held: mass sit-downs at city hall, or at the location and time of threatened evictions, etc. (Mothers have staged sit-downs in needed playground areas where contractors are supposed to begin demolition for city " renewal " or clearance projects.)

In this respect it is interesting to note the campaign in New York City which just ended in successfully preventing the *Lower Manhattan Expressway* from becoming a reality. This was reported by the *Catholic Worker* (February) which participated in the campaign. So far as I know, nonviolent techniques were not used in the campaign, but is it possible that a follow through on the campaign, as suggested in the article, might develop into an over-all approach to community, district, revitilisation, possibly using nonviolent techniques, if appropriate. The very success of this campaign is heartening and important. For in our struggle with the larger problem of war it is important to set out limited objectives, which are possible to attain, and which we see and understand as part of the long range objectives. Such successes help to build our ranks and give us courage to move ahead. For here, at least

some of the people have learned the important lesson " that it is not wise or necessary to let public authority do for them that which they can do for themselves " in the words of Father La Mountain, author of the article. If enough people can learn this lesson of how to solve their own problems, of how to *defend themselves,* we may well be on the way to nonviolent revolution, the removal of paranoiac fears, and the casting off of the need for violent " defence " on the part of the paternal state. But it is up to the pacifist to understand and articulate this relationship between short range steps and long range goals.

In relation to the problem of " bank blacklists ", which means the blacklisting of large areas by districts by banks so that mortgage money is uniformily prevented from entering these districts (a process which creates slums in itself) it would be most profitable to study the example of the Back-of-the-Yards district in Chicago. Here, an effective threat of boycott of all the savings banks in the area, was successful in changing the minds of a number of local banks. As a result mortgage money became available and eventually the Back-of-the-Yards district was helped to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. This single factor may be *the* most important one in preventing the creation of slums in the first place, and secondly in precipitating the forces which could begin to " unslum " many areas now rapidly decaying.

I wish to make myself very clear on one point. I am not suggesting that a drawn battle line should be set between planners, on the one hand, and local or district actionists on the other. Quite the contrary. This would be completely against the spirit of nonviolence. On the whole, the intentions of planning units and officials are good, and sincerely meant to be in the best interests of the local people. Their proposals must be carefully and sympathetically considered, even if rejected, and whenever possible a close working co-operation should be established between officials and non-official district groups. Strong co-operation and support on issues and planning proposals where agreement can be reached will increase the effectiveness of resistance when resistance is called for. A strong positive re-inforces a strong negative and lends power to the whole movement. This is certainly part of the power of nonviolence. In the same way many positive and constructive steps may be taken independently by the neighbourhood and district, once it has begun to " flex it's muscles ", and gain insight into its needs. For instance, local business and small manufacturing may be encouraged by the civic groups helping to obtain bank financing (where this is difficult), perhaps organising banks into pools, as insurance companies do, to underwrite risks, in the same way new housing or rehabilitation loans might be underwritten. Small neighbourhood public parks or " tot lots " might be planned by the districts and financed by raising money locally, after forming a corporation; not waiting on city action, and thereby using some small, unused and ugly piece of ground (Hyde Park neighbourhood in Chicago has been successful in this respect, especially before " urban renewal ").

On the political level the overall long-range objective would be to persuade planners, officials and citizens of the need to make far-reaching changes in thinking and in political structure, along lines of

horizontal districts, rather than the confused vertical structure now almost universal (see Mrs. Jacobs' chapter on " Governing and Planning Districts "). At the same time that such changes are being made it should be axiomatic that having demonstrated its praticality the nonviolent method would gain immensely in currency, as it has gained in the south (and north) in relationship to race segregation. It would be up to the peace movement as to how clearly such methods would be related to the problems of War and Peace, whether or not a vital connection will be made and the public moved a few more inches towards a nonviolent foreign policy at national level. Several factors are in our favour here and argue for the adoption of this approach simply as a strategy for political peace action, if for no other reasons: (1) We would be speaking to the heart of vital issues, on the local and daily level of people's lives, It is these kind of issues which more often shape political issues and parties; (2) It is in the cities, especially in the north, where the peace movement is strongest and best organised for such a large undertaking; (3) few will be against us, except the patricians who want to " wipe up the mess " in the city from their surburban heights (where they plan an alternative—the Bomb—in case other plans are unsuccessful; (4) The city directly effects every man, woman, and child, especially through city centred mass culture and the struggle with the motor car which is sprawling suburbs spawn; (5) Further, an atack on revitalising centre cities is also an attack on segregation in all its forms: First, by *reversing the flight to the suburbs* with their class, race, and religious segregation (winning the legal battle of school desegregation isn't going to have much value as M. L. King pointed out recently, if at the same time suburb and housing segregation continues to reproduce school segregation in practice); and second *by preventing vast areas of the city itself from becoming solidified in class segregation (which tends towards race segregation)*, and third, by *unslumming the ghettoes themselves,* developing income and race diversity.

Simultaneously, as a by-product of successfully halting the suburban sprawl, it would succeed in preventing the further devastation of vast areas of vitally needed farmland, and wildlife preserves.

Human beings, and cities, in particular, vitally need wild life and farmland within close proximity to provide, not only the farm products needed, but the sharply contrasting environment as a natural balance to the concentration and intensity of city life. In this fashion country side and city form a polarity increasing the vitality and meaningfulness of each—a mutual symboisis. What human beings do *not* need is the pseudo-city found in suburban life with its rather " sentimental desire to toy, rather patronisingly, with some insipid, suburbanised shadow of nature " (Jacobs). Suburban life with its sterilised segregated pattern, free from contact with the noise and smell of industry, means raising children in the atmosphere of a matriarchial society, which in turn breeds its own evils, perhaps out of sheer boredom and ennui, in extremes of adult and teenage sexual debauchery and delinquency (the city may have its brothels but it was the suburb which created " wife

swapping" parties). The highest crime rate in cities are areas which were yesterday's suburbs. The dull, grey areas with their monotonous row, or single family housing. These are the areas—neither genuinenly city or country—which give the most problems, are the most difficult to digest into the complex life of the city itself. Today's suburbs will be tomorrow's headaches. "The suburbanised and semi-suburbanised messes we create in this way become despised by their own inhabitants tomorrow. These thin dispersions lack any reasonable degree of innate vitality, staying power, or inherent usefulness as settlements. Few of them, and these only the most expensive as a rule, hold their attraction much longer than a generation; then they begin to decay in the pattern of city grey areas. Thirty years from now we shall have accumulated new problems of blight and decay over acreages so immense that in comparison the present problems of the great cities grey belts will look pidling. Nor, however destructive, is this something which happens accidently or without the use of will. This is exactly what we as a society have willed to happen." (Jacobs.)

In the late eighteenth century, as Mumford points out, along with the sentimentalist there was a healthy impulse to escape the disease and congestion of the city ("women and children first"), but in the motor car age it has become a rout to avoid facing either the complex problems of the city life or real rural life.

One final point while I am attacking suburbs: Historically, cities, centre cities, do not in general reproduce, biologically, as rapidly as rural or suburban areas it may relate more to simple boredom. At any rate, taken in combination with the tendency of all species to reproduce under threat of extinction (Mumford), suburban life may in large part account for the population explosion" (at least in U.S.A.).

At the same time that the city as a social invention is probably better adapted to our technological civilisation than it was to other less techncally developed civilisations, it is by virtue of the same technology that cities have been able virtually to eliminate their ancient enemy, disease. But most important for the first time in history, thanks also to recent studies in the life sciences, we are growing to a revolutionary understanding of the kind of problem a city is: "organised complexity." With this new understanding we can now begin to analyse and see how a city really function. This is essentially what Mrs. Jacobs' book is about. If at the same time we can apply our new understanding of nonviolent techniques as a means to bring new health for cities, real social and political transformations may take place, which, partly as a by-product, will eliminate the threat of war.

If for India with the vast majority of her population in villages, the most pressing need was a constructive programme to revitalise village life, for Western civilisation with the vast majority of its people in cities of 30,000 or more, is not the most pressing need a constructive programme to revitalise cities?