

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

Why Work Harder?

THE strike of the electric meter readers has generated what can only be described as a mild hysteria on the part of the daily press.

Not only have the meter readers denounced as little shorts of Communist-led saboteurs, but their has provided a golden opportunity for our Fleet Street Stakhanovites to lead us once again into a new era for production—with them well behind the battle-lines.

They have, of course, been on the scene for a long time now, and unlike Pavlov's famous monkeys they have not produced on their own any great literary works, they have managed continually to find somebody else doing a lot of work. Ever since, in 1939, the meter reader problem was solved in the old way, the cry has been for more production. To win the war, to win the export drive, and now the war again even before it has started, the chair-borne troops have been shouting for words explaining the absolute necessity for more production. Recently, however, our efforts have been sufficient. No matter how we are strained and toiled—and what the Britisher has not bent his back for a little bit more? (Apart from the electric meter readers and the foot-sloggers who went to the foot of the mountain—no matter how much we toiled, it is not enough.

Production, so Mr. R. R. Stokes told us, has gone up 40% in 1946. Not enough. Production has been such that in every line of industry firms have been declaring record profits with dividends in some cases in 10 and 60 per cent. range. Not enough. Still the cry goes up for more and more, in order simply to advance the national economy.

But what none of the bright propagandists ever seem to do is to stop and ask themselves whether the increases in production for which they so vociferously shout are really going to solve anything? For, obviously, in a capitalist society it is not the slightest use producing goods if they cannot be sold.

In order to meet expanding production we must be expanding markets, and it seems that the one feature (it happens to be just about the most important one)

Britain's situation with regard to world economies which our political leaders, union, economist and journalist spokesmen completely ignore, is that world markets for manufactured goods are shrinking, not expanding.

This is no new development. World markets for British goods have been shrinking for the last 75 years. The desperate struggle to maintain them has

Pavlov was a Russian scientist who declared that if a given number of monkeys tapped away at a certain number of typewriters for a sufficient number of years they would type out the whole of Shakespeare's plays, the Bible and the timetable for the London Midland and Scottish Railway. Or words to that effect.

AFRICAN AFFAIRS Tears of the Crocodile

WHEN Rev. Michael Scott appeared as spokesman for the tribe of Hereros before the United Nations, the South African delegate, Dr. Dönges, protested that it was not legal for individuals to receive a hearing which should only be accorded to national delegates. Such a convenient device ensures that dissident groups never get a hearing having no nation status and hence no national delegate.

Under the heading "U.K. Backs Malan on Legal Issue," the *Observer* reports of Sir Gladwyn Jebb, Britain's representative, who associated himself with Dr. Dönges' powerful speech:

"However deeply we may feel on political issues," Sir Gladwyn said, "and more particularly on the type of issue under consideration, we must try, as the Charter itself suggests, to keep the relation of law firmly in our minds. Disregard of the law, disregard of the legal implications of the Charter, can only shake confidence in the organisation."

"He added that Britain would be the first to agree that petitioners should be heard when the Charter allowed it, and referred to the appearance of petitioners from Togoland."

Backing Malan still seems to us like backing Hitler or Franco.

been the cause of our part in the two world wars of this century, to mention only one aspect of the price we have to pay to-day for the fantastic expansion of British industry during the 19th century.

Britain was first in the field of capitalist industry—of large-scale manufacture for profit. Getting away to a flying start, she soon earned the name of "Workshop of the World", with the result that by 1870 one-third of the entire world's manufactured goods were produced in this country. Two-fifths of the world's total exports came from Britain—a little group of islands containing one-fiftieth of the world's population!

It was, of course, too good to last. First Germany and America, then Japan, the rest of Europe and gradually the rest of the world, began to produce for themselves what they had first bought from Britain. In 1912, in the preface to the 2nd edition of *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, Peter Kropotkin was able to write: "Everywhere we see the same decentralisation of industry going on, new nations continually entering the ranks of those which manufacture for the world market. Each of these newcomers endeavours to develop, and succeeds in developing, on its own territory the principal industries, and

thus frees itself from being exploited by other nations, more advanced in technical evolution."

With the result that, by 1938, Britain could claim only one-tenth of the world's manufactures and one-fifth of the world's exports—still a very large share for a country representing only 2% of the world's population but only one-half of what she had enjoyed in her heyday, 1870.

To-day, not only foreign but Commonwealth countries also are producing for themselves. Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, as well as the Middle East and the South Americas are becoming more and more independent of Britain, while only two months ago, Canada was shipping back to this country British cars which could no longer find a market there.

There remains only one large market still open to British enterprise: China. Which explains why the British Government has long since recognised the Communist Government of China and continues to trade with her, while at the same time preparing for war with Communist Russia—who also wants a monopoly of trade with China. Ideologies don't come into it—it's purely business!

So we can see that all those propagandists for hard work are in fact completely unrealistic and out of date. They are still thinking in terms of the world of 1879 instead of 1952. In this they follow our present Prime Minister, who

has no grasp of economics at all and whose political ideas have never left the 19th century in which they were cradled.

From the capitalists' point of view, there is only one market still anxious to buy their products—the Government. Goods which can be destroyed as soon as they are made—armaments—can still be shovelled into the bottomless pit financed by the State with our money. Who can doubt that war is now a permanent feature of capitalist life?

From the anarchist point of view, it is easy to demonstrate that British capitalism in the old form is finished. The system of production for profit and not for use has practically burnt itself out as far as Britain is concerned. Its own solution—war production—can only lead to its own destruction.

Only one course remains then: to scrap the system of production for profit and create one of production for use. Just as other countries are becoming more self-sufficient, so must Britain. Our industry is more than sufficient to satisfy our needs, but agriculture and forestry, deliberately kept down by the industrialists, must be developed to produce as much as is humanly possible—and with modern knowledge wedded to the traditions of good husbandry in this country we could feed ourselves better than we are fed to-day.

If this is not done, then we are in for a thin time, but I cannot see it being done by our ruling classes. In terms of power and pelf they have too much to lose. They are going to lose it anyway, but such is their attitude that they will happily drag down the whole world with them. It's up to us to see they don't.

And meantime—working harder is just a waste of life. P.S.

MILITARISM AND MALAYA

EVEN after the appointment of General Templar as High Commissioner for Malaya, Government spokesmen have continued to plug the line that the main problems in Malaya are "political, not military". Liberal and progressive observers have stressed for a long time now that the Communist menace can only be met by an enlightened social policy which will give to the multi-racial inhabitants of the Malay peninsula something to offset the promises which Communist propaganda offers. We will not here discuss whether an Imperialist Power can realistically be expected to offer such a socially enlightened programme as to be rewarding on the political field. The fact, repeatedly stressed in FREEDOM, is that Labour and Conservative Governments alike have relied on naked military force, martial law, terroristic emergency enactments such as the death penalty for the possession of arms. . . .

General Templar's appointment is in line with this militarist policy. It is said that public opinion (whatever that term precisely means in this case) in Malaya was strongly in favour of the appointment of a civilian High Commissioner. Not only have the Government overridden this "public opinion", but they have brought under the new High Commissioner not only the direction of civil affairs, but also the control and responsibility for all police and military operations. They have, in fact, appointed a military dictator. The character of General Templar is of secondary significance compared with the new terms of reference of his post.

As usual in England, smooth words are brought to cover up reactionary deeds. Mr. Lyttelton, the Colonial Secretary, in justifying the new appointment, said that "the most important object of all is that there is no division whatever between the military and civil authority. There comes a time in an emergency of this sort when certain streamlining has to take place in administration." So might have spoken Mussolini or General Franco. . . .

Meanwhile Mr. Eden has stressed, in a speech at Columbia University, that Chinese Communism must be "contained" in South-East Asia. It is obvious that Malaya is inexorably caught up in the pattern of militarism that afflicts all protagonists in present world rivalries.

Social Delays in Singapore

If military matters take precedence over political administration in Malaya as a whole, the effect of capitalist economies

is mercilessly exposed by events in Singapore.

"It is a rather bitter irony," writes the *Manchester Guardian*, "that in 1951, the year of Singapore's record trade boom, her social development programme should have suffered a major setback. Seven and a quarter million tons of cargo were handled in the port compared with five and a half million tons in 1950 (itself a record year), and the revenue collected broke all records, but capital expenditure on medical services was less than a quarter of what had been laid down, the house-building target was not even one-third reached, only eleven Government schools were built instead of a projected 23, and the youth clubs, infant centres, and community centres envisaged for 1951 were hardly even started on."

The *Manchester Guardian* then goes on to explain this paradox in terms exclusively of capitalist economy: "Probably the main cause of the slow-down was the Singapore Government's reaction to the inflation which sent building material prices sky-rocketing at the beginning of the year." Shortage of skilled technicians is advanced as another cause; and "great difficulty in securing steel, cement, and timber in face of expanding world demand and of offers by competing local purchasers."

Despite these difficulties, "Vast schemes

ARE YOU ONE OF THE 200?

Two hundred readers of *Freedom* in London and the Provinces will have received a reminder that their subscriptions are due for renewal.

By attending to this matter promptly, they will be saving us extra work and expense in sending out further reminders, and providing us with the means for continuing to publish *Freedom* each week.

of cinema, hotel, and luxury-residence building were carried through last year, while queues outside hospitals remained undiminished, and the shocking congestion in the slum areas—the result of a shortage of 50,000 dwellings—grew worse because insufficient steel and cement were available for public building."

The consequences are summed-up as follows: "The implications of this are serious. There are still 84,000 Singapore children for whom there is no school provision, and not even a fraction of the public playing grounds they need. The number of out-patients thronging the hospital waiting-rooms is now 500,000 a year compared with 90,000 in pre-war days—largely a result of increased faith in Western medicine. The tuberculosis death-rate is about two and a half times that of, for example, Italy, and the number of tuberculosis sufferers—in spite of unending efforts by the overcrowded Government hospital and the privately organised Singapore Tuberculosis Association—is probably about fifty thousand. Only a very greatly expanded programme of rehousing can reduce the ravages of this disease of squalor and over-crowding. Yet in 1951 the number of low-cost dwellings built was hardly enough to house a tenth of the population increase, let alone replace existing slums."

The breakdown of the social service programmes is due to the trade boom and is inevitable in a market economy. Socialists will say, no doubt, that proper control of prices and of materials would have eliminated the difficulties. Conservatives will retort that if there had been such controls there would have been no boom. . . .

Malay and Singapore are a microcosm which displays the whole mechanism of capitalism—wealth and miserable poverty, progressive administrative aspirations strangled by economic repercussions of plenty. It also displays the aims of imperialism—militarism and the strong arm instead of enlightenment and co-operation. It is not difficult to see that it must be so, and that questions of good intentions and goodwill are powerless against the logical requirements of imperialism and the "safeguarding of our interests."

Copying Russia

Mr. A. Hawthorne Baker, composer, of Coventry, told the Incorporated Society of Musicians to-day that shortly after nationalisation of the mines he was invited to write an official ode celebrating this glorious event. The lyrics might well have been written beyond the Iron Curtain. "I naturally declined as any musician in this society would," he said.—*Manchester Ev. News*, 2/1/52.

"Freedom is not a state of rest, of least resistance. It is a state of action, of projection, of self-realisation."

—HERBERT READ
(Existentialism, Marxism & Anarchism)

EGYPT

INFLAMING PUBLIC OPINION

MANY deaths have occurred in Egypt as a result of the existing struggle for control of the Suez zone. Every one of the deaths is a tragedy, and becomes more wasteful and meaningless the more one realises the purely materialist and political struggle.

All governments now use slogans and agitators to inflame crowds to acts which serve the interests of the government but which involve loss of life and the engendering of a tense atmosphere of hatred and enthusiasm for sectional loyalties, in which violence and acts of sadism flourish. (We have tried, in the past, to indicate the kind of repressions and unfulfilled yearnings in individuals which make them easy game for this government-inspired agitation.) There can be no doubt that governments inflame public opinion intentionally and that they must therefore bear responsibility for the excesses which result.

Newspapers, also, bear their share in inflaming hatreds and irrationalisms. One of the results of the tense feeling in Egypt has been the death of a nun. In a responsible society, or even among a group of normal people, such an event would sober them up and make them reconsider the path of hatred and discord. In our society, the contrary happens: the event is seized upon to inflame public opinion still further, especially at home. In the past, it is easy to see how useful the death of Nurse Cavell, or the sinking of the *Lusitania* were to the wartime governments of 1914-18. The manufacture of atrocity photographs or the deliberate misuse of genuine ones, are things which we know about and are shocked about—afterwards.

It is revolting therefore to see the death of a single woman used to intensify irrational hatreds and national feelings. Hers is as much a tragedy as that of any others who have lost their lives: it becomes much more so when feeling is prostituted in this way.

Newspaper Workers' Lightning Strike

WORKERS at Kemsley House, London, home of the Kemsley Newspapers Ltd.—*Daily Graphic*, *Sunday Graphic*, *Sunday Chronicle* and *Sunday Times*—came out on strike last Friday night as a protest against the management's decision to transfer printing of the *Sunday Graphic* and *Sunday Chronicle* from London to Manchester.

The reason for the transfer is presumably that London printing workers enjoy higher rates of pay than the provinces, and it is therefore in the firm's interests to have their printing done in Manchester.

This is a trend that, owing to the soaring costs of paper and all printing materials, is going on considerably in the trade—to get work done outside London. And it is, of course, a direct result of the "differential", as it is called between London and Provincial rates, and for which London compositors only last year imposed an overtime ban and other restrictions.

The Kemsley workers' direct action, however, has won the day—temporarily at least. Their strike on Friday night prevented the appearance of the *Daily Graphic* on Friday, and would have stopped the two Sunday papers as well, but the management gave in Saturday afternoon and has agreed to open discussions with the unions concerned. By the time this appears in print, their decision may have been made known.

MR. ECCLES REGRETS

Housing may be one of the first victims of economy cuts due to shortage of materials.

The Tory hope of providing 300,000 a year received a blow last night, when building employers pressed Mr. Eccles, Works Minister, for more materials to keep the industry's present target—about 200,000.

The Minister gave no assurance. Everything, he said, depended on the economy cuts yet to be announced.

If the arms programme took up most of the extra million tons of steel from U.S. then, said Mr. Eccles, building would suffer.

—*News Chronicle*, 15/1/52.

THE COMMUNITY OF WORK BOIMONDAU

We conclude below our condensation of Mrs. Thelma Edge's account of the "Community of Work Boimondau," and the Communitarian Movement in Europe. She describes here the system of payment for 'total human value' (which, together with

the differential basic wage seems to us the most questionable feature); the war-time and post-war history of the community; the attempt to combine factory and farm work; the Entente Communitaire; and another work-community venture in Switzerland.

THE second most significant feature of the Communitarian movement is payment for "total human value". In brief, to the amount earned by professional work is added a sum estimated to be the value of the member's contribution to the growth of the social life of the community. This 'human value' payment is divided into two parts on a points basis. A maximum of 50% is awarded on intelligence tests, acquired status, size of family, etc., and remains static, though subject to revision at regular periods, or on application to the tribunal. The other half is assessed each month according to the social activity of each individual—attendance at community courses, personal culture carried on outside working hours, work done for outside organisation and so on. It sounds a complicated process, but in fact works surprisingly well, if a little stiffly.

The "points" awarded for "social value" are: Culture and education 5; Intelligence 9; Family responsibility 9 (single person 1, married 2, one child 3, two children 5, three children 7, four or more 9); Civic sense and civic activity 9; Health 9; Practical knowledge 5; Sense of responsibility 90; Activity in neighbourhood groups 7; Willingness to work 6; Personality and character, Spirit of sociability and loyalty 5. Total points obtainable: 180.

This system of social value assessment is not put forward by Boimondau as complete or final. They state that it is the best they have been able to work out up till now; other communities have differing systems. All such attempts to stimulate the development of each individual and to recognise his whole human value by payment must be regarded as experimental.

As basic salaries, the lowest-paid workers receive £240 a year, chargehands £456, foremen £600, departmental heads £950, and the head £1,560. The average for lowest-paid factory workers elsewhere is £200; the smallest "vital minimum" trade union rate is £170.

All these systems and procedures were worked out in an atmosphere of growing tension under the German Occupation. The position of the community was not made easier by their refusing as a body in 1941 to volunteer for work in Germany. This resulted later in a period of imprisonment for Barbu, complaints by the Germans about the community to the Vichy Government, and finally the authorities decided to confiscate the machines. Fortunately, warning was given in time and when troops arrived at the workshop there were no machines for them to confiscate.

Clandestine activity called for close liaison, and as so often happens, the sense of shared purpose and combined strength was increased by danger and difficulty. A farm was bought on a deserted plateau in the Vercors—the mountains that lie beyond the Rhône valley. Here was not only a hide-out and meeting place for the maquis, but a small contingent of the community worked the land and kept members in Valance supplied with vegetables.

It was the addition of the farm that gave rise to the idea of what was called *contre-effort*, literally, counter-effort. This was a rotation of workers between workshops and farm; the system was continued and extended and was a part of the community organisation until the end of 1949. Its weakness lay in a too rigid application, and it was eventually drastically limited. The original idea was that everyone, men and women

workers and wives, should have a change of work once every two months: the farm was retained, so factory workers went up to the farm or did a spell in the canteen, farm workers came down to the factory, wives did a week's work at the bench and women workers looked after the children. Factory jobs were also interchanged. But it finally became clear that this was a good idea carried to excess. A certain amount of change-round is still carried on to keep interest alive and broaden specialist knowledge, and members go to other factories to gain experience in their particular line of work: visiting workers also come to Boimondau. But as a member of the community said, "the farm exchange of work was hopeless. We got fed up planting beetroots, and the people from the farm were no use in the factories. Even the change-over of factory jobs slowed down production, so we just had to be realistic and give up the idea." A healthy mark of the community movement is its lack of rigidity. A community of work is considered to be an experiment in organisation, not a cast iron method.

In 1944, the deserted workshop was burned down and Barbu was sent to Buchenwald. Nine of the members were seized for deportation. Three escaped on route, one was killed resisting arrest, and two died in concentration camps. Barbu's former assistant, Mermoz, was elected head.

Throughout 1945 it seemed that nothing could stop the community's progress. Legally, they were now defined as "A Community of Work: Workers' Co-operative Society of Production Ltd., with variable capital and personnel, in communitarian form." At the same time they also took the name of Boimondau (BOLTIERS de MONTRE du DAUPHINÉ). Barbu himself decided to enter politics in order to fight for the legislation which would recognise the existence of the already growing number of communities in France, and the following year he was elected a deputy of the Drôme commune.*

And then, in that same year, 1946, the French watch-case market—at first slowly and then with fearful rapidity—collapsed. One by one, watch-case factories cut down their staffs: shops were closed and rival firms watched one another warily. Since few watch-case firms employ more than 200 workpeople, Boimondau was recognised as one of the "big" concerns in France. But a crack-brained affair, nevertheless, in the opinion of orthodox industrialists, and one which would come to grief at the first crisis. It was argued that Boimondau had got well away on a rising market after the war, but that this proved nothing in favour of the communitarian idea. However, they were wrong. Boimondau's tightly-knit structure and clearly established principles had not been crystallised for nothing. No one was laid off: the handling of a crisis, just as much as that of a successful position in better times was considered to be the responsibility of everyone. Production continued at a reduced rate, though some of the factory staff and many of the wives had to get odd jobs elsewhere, and the total earnings were distributed equally among the families. . . . Not only had the community withered the crisis with the loss of only three members, but it had emerged as one of the leading producers of watch-cases in France. Proof of this came in 1949, when three of the largest private firms expressed the wish to come to an agreement with Boimondau and a sister enterprise at Besancon, Le Belier (founded during the 1944 crisis by a group from Boimondau in the old workshop abandoned by Barbu in 1940). This agreement stated that while the individual members retain their independence and have complete control over their own administration, financial and technical activities, the agreement binds them by mutual consent under self-imposed regulations, for concerted action on methods of production, types of products, specialisation, and certain procedures of sales, particularly with regard to exports.

The agreement was signed in 1949 by the three capitalist concerns and the two communities of work. Since then Le Belier has withdrawn from the agreement. Much criticism has been levelled at Boimondau for coming to terms with a group whose basis of organisation is in direct conflict with its own. Boimondau argues that the community does not exist in the millennium but in the present day: to survive they must, without jeopardising their basis and purpose, live within the present day. The point is arguable. But the fact remains that a small enterprise which started nine years ago with a couple of artisans, a handful of all-

sorts, a garage and a new idea had grown into such a sound concern that three of the most important watch-case firms in the country sought an agreement with the people they had described as *ces types communitaires*."

All movements tend to lose their original idealism. Boimondau is as much in danger as any other progressive social experiment of losing sight of its first high ideals.

They see themselves as pioneers in another stage of social development, as people trying to break away from the old system most simply described as capitalism, in which the benevolent capitalist unfortunately is as dangerous as the bad, since the system keeps up the segregation of people by class. "God bless the squire and his relations, and keep us in our proper stations"; "The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate"; "the deserving poor"; "the respectable working-class woman";—these were comforting words for the conservers of the *status quo*.

Boimondau is linked with other communities of work in France and Switzerland (including co-operative building ventures such as the *Communauté Ouvrier de Logement* at Bordeaux), and a nascent movement in Italy, through the *Entente Communitaire* in Paris.

Besides replying to queries sent by letter, the *Entente* receives an average of 20 visitors a week. They also give lectures when requested, but only on request since the communitarian movement as a whole will have nothing to do with propaganda. But the Entente's most important work is in the visits made to communities and in helping new communities to start on a proper basis—or to advise them not to start at all. Wild enthusiasts who land themselves and other people in trouble and can damage the standing of the movement. The decision to start a community should be made, they say, with "sober enthusiasm".

The *Communauté Porteurs de Lait* in Geneva is of special interest as a Communitarian group a hundred strong, functioning harmoniously within the framework of a large co-operative concern. The *Union Laitiere* are producers and distributors of dairy produce, with 80 shops and some 800 employees. The president, Louis Maire is a doctor of economics with progressive ideas. He wished to see more freedom given to men in their jobs and to recreate a sense of joint responsibility among them. In 1946 he called a meeting between the directorate of the co-operative, trade union officials and the men engaged in milk delivery. He proposed that these

latter should form themselves into a community of work and direct their own affairs. This suggestion was accepted with alacrity. They were left to draw up their own constitution: and they now have full responsibility for the administration and execution of all duties connected with the retail distribution of milk.

This community has been solidly successful. Since it was founded, sales have gone up by 40% and there has been a great improvement in service. Price contracts with the *Union Laitiere* for the bulk supply of dairy produce have been arranged, and within the community minimum wages have been fixed with individual bonus payments on retail sales. The community has a general assembly, and decisions have to be reached unanimously. This is the only definitely communitarian feature about the group which may seem a far cry from Boimondau. But it is an attempt to put into the men on the job the conduct of their own affairs. The gradual evolution of this community of particular interest to the *Entente Communitaire*, since it demonstrates the possibility of developing an autonomous group with some communitarian characteristics within a large enterprise.

Finally, one further point is worth noting. At last year's European Congress of community delegates, the general Secretary of the Entente remarked that no replica of Boimondau exists in Europe—amongst the rural communities. It is of interest that in Europe the only community ventures are No industrial enterprise on lines resembling those of Boimondau's community of work seems yet to have the course.

THE REALITY OF DICTATORSHIP

ON reading *Russian Purge* by Beck & Godin, I was struck by the fact that I seemed to have read it, or something very like it, a few years ago. Yet this book is not another belated post-war *exposé* of the Russian police-state, it is an extremely scholarly and moderate account of the workings of the political inquisition which dominates Russia, and in particular an enquiry into its nature as exemplified in the great purge 1936—1939. The writers are quite undogmatic in their findings.

The book of which it reminded me so forcibly was *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, by George Orwell. It is difficult to resist the suggestion that Orwell borrowed heavily from *Russian Purge*, except for the fact that this book was published in 1951 and Orwell's in 1948. Undoubtedly, Orwell studied various sources of information about the Russian inquisitorial and penal system in the construction of his great imaginative work. Occasionally, there are paragraphs in the two books which are remarkably similar.

"During the journey and in the transit camps, the political prisoners made their first acquaintance with criminal prisoners. These, though a relatively small minority in comparison with the 'politicals', played the chief rôle in the organisation of camp labour. They enjoyed special privileges in comparison with the 'politicals'. They did not count as 'enemies of the people', and regarded the latter with contempt. They provided the overseers and foremen, distributed the work, and filled nearly all the positions of importance to the prisoners' daily life. The 'politicals' first experience, almost without exception, was to be robbed of all their possessions, such as warm clothing and sound footwear, either on the journey or in a transit camp, or at latest on arrival at the concentration camp. The criminals drew lots for the booty and shared it among themselves. This daylight robbery took place quite openly, under the eyes of the escort, who maintained strict neutrality in the matter."

The Party prisoners were always silent and terrified but the ordinary criminals seemed to care nothing for anybody. They yelled insults at the guards, fought back fiercely when their belongings were impounded, wrote obscene words on the floor, ate smuggled food which they produced from mysterious hiding-places in their clothes, and even shouted down the telescreen when it tried to restore order. On the other hand, some of them seemed to be on good terms with the guards, called them by nickname and tried to wheedle cigarettes through the spyhole in the door. The guards, too, treated the common criminals with a certain forbearance, even when they had to handle them roughly. There was much talk about the forced-labour camps to which most of the prisoners expected to be sent. It was "all right" in the camps, he gathered, so long as you had good con-

tacts and knew the ropes. There was bribery, favouritism and racketeering of every kind, there was even illicit alcohol distilled from potatoes. The positions of trust were given only to the common criminals, especially the gangsters and the murderers, who formed a sort of aristocracy. All the dirty jobs were done by the politicals."

—Nineteen Eighty-four.

It must be noted that *Russian Purge* makes it clear (unlike many right-wing attacks on Russia) that the Russian police hierarchy is not composed of callous brutes and bloodthirsty sadists; the reality is more subtle than that. The officials of the N.K.V.D., it is pointed out, were essentially moral men on the whole, squaring their own consciences even when inflicting torture of the most extreme variety.

"The Russian language has a word *izdevatelstvo*, which means contempt for the weak or helpless. The N.K.V.D. did not, apart from its methods of interrogation, show this characteristic, in spite of all its severity, except in individual cases which were not typical of the system. Indeed, any official whom an angry prisoner might accuse of such

behaviour felt deeply insulted and immediately tried to justify himself."

—Russian Purge.

The torture inflicted is more psychological in character—in addition, threats against relatives, friends, interrogation round the clock, but chiefly deprivation of sleep for stretches of many days. In this last torture, the Russian authors write:

"The need for sleep ultimately places every other sensation, even hunger and thirst; it overcomes all resistance and displaces all power of concentration. Among the Chinese and in the Middle Ages prevention of sleep was regarded as the worst form of torture."

—Russian Purge.

But actual violence resulting in broken bones, damaged kidneys, etc., is also part of the Russian system of interrogation. But here the curious moral character of the inquisitors comes in.

"The N.K.V.D. did not always take the time and trouble to apply 'cultural' methods. The interrogation frequently began with beating, particularly in the

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Comment on

A "Little" Anarchism—Please!

"We need more impatience, more of that spirit which will never leave a man at peace unless he is moving forward. We want to forget all about security and *jam to-morrow and look at to-day*—and what we are going to do to-day, not at what we hope to get out of it. We live in a nameless age—a grey time, without fame or fineness."

"There is a sickness abroad to-day; call it, if you like, a 'sleepy sickness', and its chief victims are ourselves—the young men. The symptoms are all too easily discernible: a disproportionate and unhealthy yearning for security—bodily and spiritual—at all costs; an unwillingness to throw off this lassitude, to stride into the open and fight for himself; a preference for watching events over taking a leading part in them. It is the sickness of our century, the curse of the Nameless Age."

"The fashion is to administer palliatives and soothing drugs to ease the pain and make the patient comfortable. We know the drugs—the pension scheme, the endowment fund, and the hope of an easy win on the treble chance. All highly desirable things, but they are only palliatives. What must be done and kept constantly before us as our goal is to instil in the young workers, at bench and lathe, a proper pride in their own work, to teach the young men to set themselves a goal, an object to be striven for, an obstacle to be surmounted. Funds of latent energy must be released."

"The only way is for us to preach a little anarchism—to raise the individual to his true stature—as being of infinitely greater value than the faceless crowd. There is so much that a few young, determined, and energetic anarchists can

do just by choosing the hard-way out of the wood."

If these words had been uttered by an anarchist they would never have been published by the National Press. But they were published and because they are the utterances of a Mr. J. R. T. Gibson Jarvie, at a luncheon of the Institute of the Motor Industry held in London recently. His subject was "Youth and the Nameless Age".

We cannot find much wrong with Mr Jarvie's critique of present society. But he wants to use "the energetic anarchists" and preach "anarchism" (only "a little", though!) not with the same ends as those professed by us anarchists. Mr Jarvie is complaining of living in an age "without fame or fineness"; what must be done is to encourage young people to aim at becoming Lord Nuffields—you know, starting at "bench and lathe" and "setting themselves a goal, etc. . . ."

We share Mr. Jarvie's cynicism about the "palliatives" to "ease the pain". We see it, however, as a means of perpetuating the capitalist system, the class society of exploiters and exploited. Mr. Jarvie instead sees it as a threat to the capitalist system, free enterprise, survival of the fittest.

Mr. Jarvie, we think knows what anarchism means, but in a vague sort of way. What he doesn't realise is the effect of letting loose "a few anarchists" or know just how much "preaching of anarchism" will do the trick. He might find that he had released forces which, as in the case of the Sorcerer's Apprentice, he was no longer able to control. And the Motor Industry wouldn't like that!

FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

- Walden H. B. Thoreau 5/-
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Within six months Berlin received as a surprise herre decided to build set powder (anarchy). He bought lead just outside violence and then launched a grandiose scheme, not of a single community but of a community city, the CBE (Cultural-Behavioural-Embryo) of a new society. Its embryonic form was followed by lawless and Barbu then went to a small community on the Swiss border. It was often said of him "He was a great man, but too much of an anarchist."

COMMUNITIES

THE articles by Mark Holloway and Mrs. Edge's account of the communities of which Boimondau is the chief example, raise many questions of social interest. In this country, as Mark Holloway pointed out, communities have mostly arisen in wartime, out of war conditions. It is, therefore, salutary to consider some of the implications of the community movement outside war conditions, and therefore with some sense of perspective.

Barbu, the founder of Boimondau, inevitably recalls Robert Owen, the Lancashire factory owner who exercised such a powerful influence on the English socialist movement, who is remembered in America chiefly as the inspirer of a number of community ventures. The parallel reminds us that the community movement has always been a companion to the movements aiming at social change. (Owen also has interesting connections through his son Robert Dale Owen, with the early birth-control movement.)

Holloway remarked that all communities are an inspired criticism of existing society and defended them on the charge of escapism. But the depth and extent of the implied criticism varies enormously. One enthusiast urges the necessity for "a demonstration of communal living in practice", for whom communal living is both a way of life and a powerful propaganda weapon, but who usually forget that propaganda is directly proportional to the success of the experiment. Then there are communities grouped round a fairly specialised type of work—the free-school communities, for example—in which the communal aspect is often no more than the expression of a lack of capital and the sharing out of poverty. Such special communities nevertheless possess strength in that the basis of association is a common purpose in work, whereas wartime agricultural communities were often, as Holloway said, mere aggregations of conscientious objectors in the war situation.

What relation has this diverse movement to the social revolutionary movement of today? In considering this question one should remember that in England and America, the communities often seek to give satisfaction in work to their members. Desirable as this aim is, it inevitably attracts those who do not achieve such fulfilment in ordinary life, yet it is possible, even in our society, to have work which is fulfilling and useful, and through which an individual can influence those around him. This often unrecognised factor in communities reinforces the tendency for the movement to appeal to those who see in it a possible solution to the difficulties of their personal lives. It is considerations of this kind that make Mark Holloway's insistence on selection necessary.

But such insistence clashes with certain social aims of the communities. If one is to see in them an alternative mode of life and production from that offered by capitalism, it is desirable that it should both appeal to ordinary men and women and also be practicable for their qualities and attainment. It should not be a rarified existence for the few. In this respect there is a marked contrast both with the early nineteenth century Irish peasant Community at Ralahine with the peasant workers collectives set up during the Spanish war. These were based on local populations and were not minority concerns operating principles of narrow selection in choice of members. The Spanish collectives constitute the most im-

portant contributions to revolutionary economic organisation. They are insufficiently studied and the material for such study is altogether too scarce.

The Boimondau communities are interesting in their comparative economic success. It will be interesting to see whether the criticism that they ought not to come to terms with capitalist concerns gains force from any deterioration in their interior structure. Meanwhile, we can only draw attention to their curious use of economic reward as an incentive to social usefulness as a feature which most anarchists will find both morally and theoretically repellent.

From another point of view, however, it is just this economic experimentation in practice which gives these experiments an especial interest. A most valuable study could be directed towards the unravelling of the interplay between economic inequality, social rewards, and conduct and morals. There is clearly a danger of a rigidity, even a puritanism here, especially when it has economic backing, as well as majority social acceptance to back it.

Culture Control in U.S.

(from a correspondent)

NEW YORK. AMERICAN capitalist groups often attack Stalin for strangling artistic freedom. But U.S. capitalists violate the civil liberty of artists, writers, actors and musicians—who are denied employment on charges of supporting alleged Stalinist or radical movements.

And recent events show a trend toward directly imitating Stalin's policy of telling artists how to paint. In Los Angeles, city councilmen charged that a city-financed art exhibition was Communist because modern art exponents had received prizes.

Not only was modern art called "Communist", but, during the City Council "investigation", Council President Harold Henry said: "One prize-winning exhibit even boldly displayed a hammer and sickle." However, it was discovered that the hammer and sickle was really a sail boat insignia.

The stifling of artistic freedom in the theatre recently was denounced by Brooks Atkinson, the well-known *New York Times* critic. In his column he blamed the witch hunt spirit inspired by red-baiters like the notorious Senator Joe McCarthy, Wisconsin Republican.

Atkinson cited the economic handicaps of the theatre, which must earn profits for capitalist backers, but he added:

"If there were any real intellectual or spiritual drive at the core of the contemporary theatre, the wild economics would not be the decisive factor. Nothing materialistic or practical can destroy an art that is vital. But something elusive and intangible seems to have drained the vitality out of the theatre and perhaps out of other American arts as well. No one knows the reason exactly.

"But could it be that the spiritual climate in which we are now living smothers all that is really creative, and that the emphasis on public expression of all kinds is toward meekness and conformity? People are playing safe. They hesitate to say what they think. The intellectual and artistic life of the country has been flattened out.

"The ignorant heresy-hunting and the bigoted character assassination that have acquired the generic title of McCarthyism are succeeding. The hoodlums are in control here as well as in Russia, and the theatre begins to look as insipid in

Blaming the Anarchists

DRESS and radio throughout Germany last month reported that the editor of a newspaper in Bremen and his stenographer were killed in his office, and seven other persons seriously wounded by a bomb which was in a parcel sent by post.

The police started a frantic country-wide search for the criminals, mobilised press and radio and, where possible, the public as well, but nobody was found.

It took the slanderous German press agency, and the newspaper *Hamburger Abendblatt* to accuse the anarchists of the crime. The newspaper published the cunning report of the news agency on this crime. The special police commission "SS" (not to be confused with the former "SS") is at present following up clues which lead to the conclusion that the criminals are to be found in anarchist circles. The parcel in which the bomb was sent was in the meantime been examined by experts of the Hamburg police, and it seems to be evident that whoever sent the bomb and packed

"THERE ain't no justice" may sound an outmoded cliché of the tub-thumper to those optimists who think that every man has the same chances in the eyes of the law, and especially now that legal aid, like false teeth and toupees, is provided free of charge. But in fact money still counts in the administration of justice whether this word is viewed from the legal or the social angles. As one lawyer once told me, "You get as much law as you can afford to pay for. If you have £100 to spend you will get a hundred poundsworth of law; a £1,000 will buy you a thousand pounds worth." You see, for the lawyer, law is a commodity like meat is for the butcher, and pictures for the art dealer.

And last week there were cases in the courts which showed how money speaks in the case of justice in its wider, social, sense.

At the Old Bailey, a 49-year-old man appeared in the dock of whom it was said that in the past 32 years he had spent 29 in jail. He had started his criminal career in 1916, that is when he was thirteen years old. His crime was stealing cakes. He graduated through Borstal, took to burglary and in 1930 shot at the police. He is without doubt a desperate man. Released last July, after serving an eighty-years sentence for armed robbery passed on him in 1945, he now returns to 12 years preventive detention for threatening a police officer

the one place as in the other. (My emphasis.—J.L.)

"No one can create art without looking into the bottom of his private soul and reporting the truths he finds there. Things that are expedient are not art if, in fact, they are anything at all. Art is frank, first of all. . . . Some of our greatest artists have been in opposition to the intellectual and cultural life of their periods and they spoke up like men of insight and courage. Aristophanes, Ibsen, Strindberg, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Shaw, O'Casey and O'Neil were not content to give lip service to mediocrity. For it is the nature of great artists to be more alive than most people are: to have more imagination, keener eyes and more passionate convictions.

"We cannot expect to have vital art in our theatre if we emulate totalitarian countries and yield the control of cultural life to hoodlums," declared the *New York Times* critic.

The anti-cultural totalitarianism of Communists and American capitalists should cause artistic workers to oppose both war camps.

JOHN LOEB.

VERBODEN—KEEP OUT

FAR from the late Ernest Bevin's wish being realised that travelling to any part of the world should be released from all the present paraphernalia of visas, passports and currency, an added obstacle to the "freedom of travel" is the growing number of areas of the world which are so important in the war preparations programme that they are being closed to foreign visitors. In Russia a list of forbidden areas was first issued in 1948. Last week a supplementary list was sent to all Embassies, and contains a further 22 cities not previously banned. These include Kharkov, Vitebsk, Stalinsk, Kirovograd, Omsk and Tomsk.

One is reminded also of the ironic reversal of policy in one area of the Belgian Congo where visitors instead of being welcomed with open arms are forbidden to enter. It is the Shinkolobwe area which is rich in uranium, and

the parcel was an expert with experience in the production of explosives for acts of sabotage.

That was the judgment of the police force, the majority of whose officers were once in the service of Hitler, and in whose service arrested anarchists and handed them over to the Gestapo, which took "care" of them in their way.

And the Yellow Press rendered the same service to the police as it did in the case of Sacco and Vanzetti, and the martyrs of Chicago, etc., etc., by casting suspicion, without proof, on innocent persons. Ten days after this lying article appeared in the press, the criminal was found. He is anything but an anarchist. He is a young nobleman who is, it seems, suffering from megalomania. He had asked the editor several times for a job as a reporter, but the editor had refused to give him the job because he had not the necessary experience.

To revenge himself for the imaginary insult to his self-esteem, the young man killed the editor. CARL LANGER.

LAW—NOT JUSTICE

with a loaded revolver. The press report give no details of this man's background. "Stealing cakes" might indicate the economic situation in his childhood, and one can surmise that each time this man has been released from prison his record has followed him, making it almost impossible for him to obtain or keep a job; and the few pounds the Discharged Prisoners Aid put in his pocket provided him with food and shelter for a few days. Then what? No friends, no trade, no job . . . the only alternative is to try again and hope he won't be caught.

But there is no hope for men like him; and no justice, for in fact society never lets him "expiate his sins". His past is always the barrier to his rehabilitation. All society can do is to send him to Preventive Detention, a sentence which can, under the new Criminal Justice Act, be passed only on persons over 30 years of age, who have three previous convictions on indictment and if the court "is satisfied that it is expedient for the protection of the public to do so". No more "corrective training"; he is now a "persistent offender", an enemy of society beyond redemption and all society is interested in is to keep him locked up for as long as is legally possible. And for the next 12 years (for there is no remission for good conduct in a Preventive Detention prison) society will sleep in peace. Will no consciences be disturbed by the way we treat the misfits in our society?

AND as this Old Bailey case closed, one opened in the High Court which was bound to receive publicity. Mr. Leopold Harris was claiming damages from a solicitor for slander. Now, Mr. Harris, who was a Fire Insurance assessor, was involved in a particularly sordid case nearly twenty years ago. He was convicted on 10 counts of conspiracy to commit arson and on 13 counts of attempting to obtain money by putting up false claims to insurers, and sentenced to 14 years penal servitude. He served seven years of his sentence, but during this time, his wife and two sons "stood by him" as his Counsel put it and founded a firm of fire insurance assessors, so that when he emerged from prison he was able firstly to obtain his discharge from bankruptcy and then to become a partner in the firm started by his family. Now, some ten years since his release, his Counsel is able to tell the Court that, "to-day his firm is one of the largest—if not the largest—fire assessor businesses in London.

"He acts for the Midland Bank, Lloyds Bank, Barclays Bank, and individual companies whose names are household words. That, of course, could only be done by scrupulously

honest practice—and that he has done."

In his opening remarks, Mr. Harris' Counsel asked: "If a man has committed a criminal offence, and has been punished for it, ought he not to have the opportunity of turning over a new leaf, and leading an honest life?"

No one will disagree with these sentiments. But the operative word here is "opportunity". Mr. Harris had that "opportunity", so did Mr. Hatry. When they came out of jail they knew that their immediate future, at least, was secure, that they would not have to spend their nights in a Rowton House and take their meals in cheap cafés. In the case of Mr. Harris he was even able to make good in the very business which had been the scene for his crimes. That, indeed, is justice.

NOW try to imagine the position of that "violent and dangerous criminal" either last July or in 12 years time when he will once more be thrust out into the hostile world. What "opportunities" will be offered to him to "make good"? What friends or family does he possess who will be building up a nice little business for when he comes out? There will be no business for him and no job. A few weeks at large, always watched by the police, and he will be back again—for good this time.

THERE is a third case, of a 36-year-old man who obtained £200 from a bank with a forged cheque. He has since repaid £65 and offered to realise his Insurance policy and repay the balance. But of course the Law in its Majesty is not concerned with the money involved and the judge sent him to prison for fifteen months. Passing sentence, he said the prisoner had 12 previous convictions but for nine years, from 1943 until this cheque offence, he had gone straight. "The worst thing you probably did was to fall out with your wife, whom you married in 1944 just after you began to go straight."

It was the judge's concluding remarks, however, which expose the real rottenness, and inhumanity of the system: "I hope this is not going to crush you, and I hope you will make an effort to go straight again."

In other words, the judge was expressing a feeling that sending this man to prison would undo all the good of "going straight" for nine years; that in fact prison makes criminals. But "justice" demands that the Law be vindicated!

LIBERTARIAN.

LETTER FROM PARIS

"For Paris is playing a game. Not only in publishers' offices but still more so in the most serious, not to say the most official, of settings. Paris plays at opulence while the franc goes down. It plays at building a palace for UNO while reconstruction is stopped for lack of money; plays with military headquarters without enough soldiers, and gambles on the piastre while Indo-China goes rotten. In the corridors of the Bourse, the temple of the lost Faith, you can see the 'Shanghai Tramways' surreptitiously laying down lines in the forests of the Congo, the rubber trees of Indo-China bleeding in the Cameroons, and the mining companies of Doc-Lap boring their shafts in the heart of Oubangui. It is a game, a dance, a quadrille of hard and soft currencies going through the motions of prudence and recession. To a background of bugles—if M. Mauriac was a poet we might have had a new *Dérouté*—can be heard odd phrases: 'We will fight to the last ditch. That's why I have re-invested everything in Morocco . . .'

"It is a curious game, if it were not heart-breaking for those who know the rules, a mixture of politics and business. Even literature does not escape. Even the big publishers are buying up chains of bookshops in Africa; the big firms are dividing up as they did before, half-Vichy, half-London; the chips are down, rien ne va plus."

—Pierre Seghers' Letter from Paris (World Review, Jan. 1952)

A Modern Robin Hood

The Israeli police are searching for a man in a long grey coat who last night robbed a bank of £10,000, hired a taxi to an immigrants' camp, and distributed the money in £5 and £10 notes. He told the immigrants: "You are hard up and need the money." He later went to another camp and gave away more notes. —Reuter.

WHO WANTS TO READ METERS, ANYWAY?

THE comment on the London electricity meter readers' strike in the last issue of FREEDOM, raises questions beyond those which it deals with.

But what is stop the meter reader and his supervisor from going off to the pictures or a cafe together? Only supervisors for the supervisors.

It is not for us to suggest how the L.E.B. can give meter readers a pride in their jobs and a resolution to break all previous records in meter reading.

Now the idea of an anarchist society based on the existence of an abundance of goods and services—"take what you like".

that the L.E.B. and the Ministry of Labour is interested in, but in the sense that a free society cannot condemn its members to such a dreary and unproductive livelihood.

And so we come round to the moral problem (or if you won't accept the word "moral", the problem of enlightened self-interest).

AN article on the "Compulsive Drinker", published in the New Republic and reprinted by the Manchester Guardian, supplies additional statistical and other material in connection with my article on "Drinking in this Age of Anxiety".

The Yale Centre of Alcohol Studies, in seeking the causes of alcoholism, discards the startling suggestions which have been put forward in recent years that it is hereditary or an allergy or malfunctioning of the glands.

"For a real cure it is highly desirable that the individual should find out what is the frustration, anxiety or insecurity (or group of them) that has caused him

to seek to escape into alcohol-induced unreality. He will begin to be well when, voluntarily, he will select a way of life—physical, emotional, and social—that precludes the compelling need of such an anaesthetic."

London, Jan. 20. R.

IN your issue of Jan. 5th, you define Anarchism and its aims. "Men can live together in mutual assistance and freedom..." and "act according to one's sense of right, not simply according to the herd".

I am reminded of the writings of the Dutch philosopher, Van Edden: "Centralised organisation needs force, but

man tends to decentralise, and to unite through the consciousness of each individual. The culmination of this tendency would be the ideal anarchy—a perfect unity through equal consciousness (sense of right) in each. . . . All force would disappear."

London, Jan. 11. E.A.

DISCUSSION GROUP IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA?

SEVERAL young men and women in the Sydney, N.S.W. area wish to form a group. The general idea is that it should start off as a discussion group and gradually develop into an active anarchist body.

MAKING GOOD USE OF THEIR COPIES OF FREEDOM

WE certainly enjoy the paper and pass on our old copies. While that's not much help to you financially, you do have more readers in this part of the world than you might think and have caused many lively discussions.

SYNDICALIST NOTEBOOK

COTTON WORKERS' HOLIDAYS

A SUB-COMMITTEE representing employers and trade unions has been set up in Manchester to consider the difficulties arising from the recent award of a second week's paid holiday for cotton workers.

It is almost amusing to see what difficulties can be foreseen in a capitalist economy by those who think they are going to suffer by this simple granting of an extra week's holiday.

For example, the Federation of Hotels and Boarding-house Association has protested that the extended holiday will have an adverse effect on the Lancashire resorts.

In Lancashire, cotton workers' holidays are taken in what is known as "wakes" weeks, when all the factories in a town close down together, and special trains are run to resorts such as Blackpool and Southport.

Now, people outside the cotton industry, but living in mill towns, are afraid that they will be deprived of shopping facilities for a fortnight, which may mean at least inconvenience in these days of small rations and short supplies.

The employers, too, have their problems, and the main one is how to overcome absenteeism through married

couples who both work having different holiday dates and therefore tending to have two holidays (one paid, one unpaid) in order to go away together.

To get round this, the employers and unions are considering the grouping of towns, so that a whole group of neighbouring towns closes down for the same same fortnight.

How unnecessarily complicated we make our lives by our stupid economic system! In a free society the Blackpool landladies would not have to worry about possible loss of business (we don't think they have much to worry about now, anyway, since even if some workers do go somewhere else, others will be staying twice as long!)

COTTON WORKERS ON SHORT-TIME

IF present trends continue, not many cotton workers will be able to take advantages of their extra week's holiday. Mills in Birtwistle, Blackburn, Darwen, Haslingden, Nelson and other mill towns have announced that they are going on short time.

Unemployment is still on the increase in the textile industries. Ministry of Labour figures show a decrease of total

employed of 7,000 between November 12th and December 10th, and January figures are expected to show the trend continuing.

In the clothing trade, 10,000 less were employed. The total figure for unemployed stood at 302,956 on Dec. 10th.

GRUMBLE—NOW!

DURING our brief inglorious excursion into "Socialism", the Conservative Housewives' League carried on deliberate whispering campaign of grievance. Since October, presumably because of the sensational improvement in our rations, they have fallen strangely silent.

Now it's the turn of the other. During Labour's reign, the Trade Union most active work was for loyalty to Government. Now we read in January circular to members of Boilermakers' Society, from Mr. E. Hill, the general secretary: "Labour porters should get cracking right away organising a campaign of grumble-growl. They should protest against increased living costs, shortage of food and consumer goods, the likelihood of interference with and worsening of social insurance benefits, and the increasing number of houses to be built for rent."

Surely all but the last item could have been just as heartily grumbled at before October 25th?

MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP

Weather Permitting HYDE PARK Every Sunday at 3.30 p.m. TOWER HILL Every Friday at 12.45 p.m. MANETTE STREET (by Foyle's, Charing Cross Road) Every Saturday at 4.30 p.m.

INDOOR MEETINGS

at the PORCUPINE, Charing Cross Rd. (next Leicester Sq. Underground Station) Every Sunday at 7.30 p.m. JAN. 27—Tony Gibson on THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION FEB. 3—Philip Sansom on SOCIALISM & ANARCHISM INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS Every Wednesday at 7.30 p.m. at the CLASSIC Restaurant, Baker St. (Near Classic Cinema)

NORTHEAST LONDON DISCUSSION MEETINGS

IN EAST HAM Alternate Wednesdays at 7.30 Enquiries c/o Freedom Press

LIVERPOOL

DISCUSSION MEETINGS at 101 Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool, 8 Every Sunday at 8 p.m.

GLASGOW

INDOOR MEETINGS at Central Halls, Bath Street Every Sunday at 7 p.m. With John Gaffney, Frank Leech, Jimmy Raeside, Eddie Shaw

The Reality of Dictatorship

case of simple people, or those whose occupation or character suggested greater powers of resistance, such as soldiers or officials of the N.K.V.D. itself. "Beating was by far the most frequent of the violent methods employed. In milder cases it was done with the hand, but in most cases improvised objects were used for the purpose, among which broken-off chair-legs played the chief rôle. It was no accident that more suitable implements, such as whips or rubber truncheons, were not provided. Also the fact that only the examining magistrates or their assistants did the beating, and never the prison staff, indicated a desire to maintain the fiction that beating was not a regulation method, but was only carried out at the whim of the individual magistrate."

This is in clear contrast to the methods of the Thought Police envisaged by Orwell, which are nearer to those of the Hitlerite S.S. who glorified in truncheons, steel rods and whips. Orwell also makes the distinction between the ruffianly louts who tortured for the joy of it—the uniformed guards who had the "softening up" of the prisoners in their charge, and the "Party intellectuals, little rotund men with quick movements and flashing spectacles, who worked on him in relays," who applied the psychological torture.

Orwell's book fills one with a sense of horror, a sense of a completeness of doom, which makes any future seem attractive in contrast to the blank eternity of pain in Nineteen Eighty-four. Beck and Godin's book about Russia, on the other hand, fills one with a sense of sadness and pity. In describing the police organisation, which rules, exploits and maims the whole of Russia, they make this point:—

"But even the greatest luxury which Soviet life could offer to the highest officials of the N.K.V.D. scarcely compensated them for the nerve-shattering nature of their work. . . . Hardly any of the examining officials, perhaps only the simplest, fully believed in the prisoners' guilt. Most of them told

themselves that they were confronted with 'enemies of the people' and dutifully carried out their task of extorting confessions, knowing that the accused were lying and that their 'legends' were untrue, but convinced all the same that there must be 'something in it'. The cynics, who knew perfectly well what was happening, were rather the exception; the over-whelming majority repressed all doubts about the rightness of what they were doing. They never asked themselves any awkward questions, because the answers would have brought their whole universe tumbling about their ears. Meanwhile, they continued doing what was required of them, partly out of loyalty to the Soviet cause, partly out of ambition, lack of civil courage and, not least, because of fear of being arrested themselves. Thus one had the curious picture of a country living in terror of an organisation the members of which could not enjoy the fruits of their power, because they lived in terror themselves. The N.K.V.D. lived in terror of the special department, the members of which themselves lived in terror of a change in their superiors, which would bring about their downfall."

Orwell takes us a step further; he shows us a ruling clique which has got over its infancy, which has realised the fundamental nature of its own appetite.

"The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness; only power, pure power. What pure power means you will understand presently. We are different from all the oligarchies of the past in that we know what we are doing. All the others, even those who resembled ourselves, were cowards and hypocrites. The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognise their own motives. They pretended perhaps they even believed, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and that just round the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal. We are not like that. We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means, it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictator-

ship. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power. Now do you begin to understand me?" —Nineteen Eighty-four.

No clearer indictment of the trend of modern politics than this has ever been written, and we must face the fact that just as the primitive Leninism of the early 1920s has logically developed into the Stalinism of to-day, so—if it continues to live—it will develop into the maturity pictured in Orwell's book. It is important to remember that the Power-State of Russia is no peculiar feature in the modern world. The desire for absolute power is endemic in every State to-day; the horror which we witness in Russia will perhaps be worse if the same concentration of power becomes vested in a capitalist State. Even to-day there are features of greater brutality in the army and police of America, than in Russia where the cruder excesses of violence are often held in check by the curious mystique of Bolshevism.

Neither Beck and Goden nor George Orwell have concerned themselves with holding out any hope for the future of Russia or of humanity in their books. For this we must be grateful. These authors were apparently too intelligent to believe in the stock bourgeois illusion of democracy and they have left us with nothing but a masterly analysis on the one hand, and an inspired imaginative book—one might almost say a prophetic work—on the other. Such works as these strengthen our conviction that only by struggling directly for the maximum of freedom from all authoritarian institutions can we hope to preserve the best in our own lives and ensure the continued existence of humanity.

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