

# THE MINERS RESIST!

## Union and Coal Board Betray True Colours

THE TRUE NATURE of the State as employer of labour in nationalised industry could not have been more clearly shown than in the actions, provocative and ruthless, of the National Coal Board before and during the recent strikes in the South Yorkshire coalfields. Nor could a better example of the true rôle of the unions in a Socialist State have been put before the workers.

The nationalisation of the mines was hailed by nearly all shades of "Left" opinion in Britain as a great step forward. Politicians were satisfied that at last the mal-administration which characterised private ownership was to be a thing of the past; so-called "spokesmen" of the miners pledged those workers to show their gratitude for being nationalised first by working harder and producing more coal than ever before.

And all the time it was beginning to dawn on the miners that perhaps things were not so very different after all.

### WHO ARE THE MINERS?

Before we go any further, perhaps we should make up our minds once and for all as to just what we mean by the word "miners".

Often we have been greeted by newspaper headlines telling us that "The Miners Agree" to this, that, or the other; that "The Miners Meet" somebody or other, and "The Miners Decide" something or other, only to discover, on reading further, that some union official or other, who has not seen the inside of a coalmine for years—if ever—has had a talk with a government representative and agreed on what thousands of men actually in the pits shall or shall not do.

We do not recognise these men as miners. We do not consider that a man who wears out the broad seat of his trousers on an office chair instead of the knees of his trousers on a rock bottom has the right to continue to call himself by the proud and honoured title of "miner".

For us a miner is a man who works at or in the pit, a man who hews coal or hauls it to the shaft, who is a filler or a winder, or does one of the many jobs necessary for getting the coal to the surface. These are the men who do the work, day in and day out, until they are either worn out or carried out, paying with their limbs or their lives for the right to call themselves "miners".

And these are the men who are learning what it means to be employees of the State—and learning the hard way.

### HOW IT STARTED

The dispute started in a relatively small way five weeks ago, when Ernest Jones, Yorkshire secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers agreed with local N.C.B. officials to increase the "stint" (length of coal face worked) by two feet for the 150 colliers in the Melton Field seam at Grimethorpe Colliery near Barnsley, Yorkshire.

This, the union claimed, was in accordance with the 5-day week agreement which came into force on May 1st, and which has been, because of its conditions, a source of grievance for many miners ever since. Unfortunately for Mr. Jones, he chose in true union fashion, to agree to the extra stint without consulting the men who would have to do the extra work, who, strangely enough, resented this fact. They immediately struck against the new order, offering to return only on the old conditions, but "under the agreed conciliation machinery" this was not possible, so they stayed on strike.

There is much more to the matter, however, than merely a refusal to do more work. The *Daily Mirror* of August 30th printed a letter from a Grimethorpe miner (signing himself "Grimy") which puts the full point of view of the miner in the matter well enough for us to say no more but reprint it. He writes:—

"The conditions under which a collier works are never the same two days run-

ning. Where he may be able to get off a yard more than his stint one day, he may not be able to get off half his stint another day.

"On two faces in the Melton Field seam, the colliers were voluntarily staying overtime to get their stints off—just before the re-assessment committee added the other 2 ft. Is that what you mean by slacking?"

"There will be ten men displaced in the Melton Field seam if the men take the extra yardage. They will be thrown into the 'market'—going down the pit each shift and standing in the bottom until the officials decide where to send them.

"They have to take any odd job that is going.

"You use the word 'pernicious' in your leading article, and this market system is a pernicious system if ever there was one.

"Once in the market, you may be there for months, for as long as the management think fit to keep you there.

"Don't you think you are putting it a little bit too strong when you say we are saboteurs?"

### THE COAL BOARD ACT

National Coal Board officials have been uttering dire threats against the miners for some time now, and saw in this case their chance to act. As the strike entered its third week, the Coal Board chose to dismiss the entire body of strikers—1,600 of them—obviously thinking that they would be intimidated into crawling back on any conditions.

A more stupid action (from the Board's point of view) could hardly have been taken, however. In every coalfield in Britain resentment is growing against the methods and personnel of the N.C.B. and its various regional boards, and South Yorkshire is no exception. Within two days of the dismissals at Grimethorpe, over 16,000 miners from fourteen collieries were on sympathy

## The Tragedy of the Exodus

NO doubt the British Government feels it can justify the attempt to deport attempted immigrants to Palestine to the British Zone in Germany. Administrative reasons will not be lacking, and will be quite sufficient for the administrative type of mind for whom these refugees are no more than ciphers who can be pushed around like cattle. But it is obvious that the treatment of these desperate Jews is utterly cruel, and public feeling about their case has been strong enough to make the Government waver, even despite the anti-Jewish feeling worked up about the execution of the two Sergeants of the British Intelligence by Irgun.

After the passengers on the *Exodus* had refused to be put off in France, they were to have been forcibly disembarked at Hamburg. But one of the ships developed a diplomatic engine trouble at Gibraltar, and the whole convoy has remained there—presumably while the Government thinks it over.

### Scraps of White Paper

This is perhaps an opportune moment to review briefly the commitments of the British Mandate in Palestine. After the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the British Mandate under the League of Nations was constituted with the aim, among other things, of "facilitating Jewish immigration" and setting up a National Home. Whatever one may think of the desirability or otherwise of all this, that was the Mandate. For this reason, when the Chamberlain Government in its White Paper of 1939 stopped further immigration of Jews, the League's permanent Mandate Commission on June 16th, 1939, unanimously de-

nounced the White Paper as contrary to Britain's Mandate. Since the legal right of Britain to be in Palestine at all rests on the Mandate, the White Paper was clearly a violation of International Law.

Now, readers of *Freedom* know well enough that Britain's presence in Palestine actually rests not on legal rights but on military force, and its object has nothing to do with the soft-soap phrases of the Mandate, but with the need to preserve the oil interests of the Middle East, the pipe-line to the Mediterranean, and the communications of the British Empire. But the claims of the British Government do not speak in such realist terms. They speak of their duties in Palestine to uphold the law. Hence the illegality of their anti-immigration White Paper and the present policy built on it is clear evidence of hypocrisy and breach of faith.

Apart from the legal pother, there stands the moral issue. For the Chamberlain government in 1939 virtually slammed the door in the face of the European Jews who at that time were seeking to escape from the spread of Nazi power throughout Central Europe. In accordance with this policy, three refugee ships, the *S.S. Assandu*, *Astir* and *Assimi*, filled with Jews who had escaped from Germany, were refused permission to land in Palestine. A Labour Party member in the House of Commons, Mr. Noel Baker, pointed out that they were simply being sent back to the concentration camps.

### Suicide Ships

During the war, *War Commentary* (*Freedom's* predecessor) reported the case

of the *Struma*, a Jewish refugee ship which escaped from Rumania with 769 refugees on board. The Palestine Government refused to give permission for them to land in Palestine, and ordered them to return to their Fascist port of embarkation. The refugees blew up the ship, and there was one survivor. The *Struma* was not the only ship which became a suicide's grave for massed refugees because of the British government's policy. This was during the days of the Coalition government of Conservatives, Liberals and Labour.

### Labour's Volte Face

On the Palestine issue the Labour Party have executed as complete a somersault as ever even the Communists have achieved. In a letter to the *New Statesman and Nation*, Arthur Koestler recently pointed out that "on no fewer than eleven occasions, from 1917 to 1945, the annual Party Conference had reaffirmed the obligation (to support Jewish immigration). In 1939, Philip Noel Baker prophesied that, if the White Paper was adopted, the only way to stop refugees would be 'to tell those kindly British soldiers to shoot them down'." Those who are most indignant about the two British sergeants might well ponder these words, which the Labour Party have not shrunk from underlining in blood.

Koestler went on to remind the Labour Party readers of the *New Statesman* that the Labour Party Conference in 1944 had reaffirmed its support for Jewish immigration and the establishment of a National Home. Hugh Dalton, in 1945, just before the Labour Party took power, insisted that "it is morally wrong and politically indefensible to impose obstacles to the entry into Palestine of any Jews who desire to go there."

Anarchists do not share Labour's former views about a Jewish State in Palestine, and our views on the question of Jewish Nationalism have frequently been set forth in these columns. But leaving aside political issues, common humanity can only be revolted at the Conservatives' White Paper which aided and abetted the trapping of European Jews in Hitler's territories, and must be held partially responsible for the exterminations during the war. Common humanity is revolted by the Tory-Labour Coalition's murder of the *Struma* victims.

In view of their former declarations, the Labour Government's actions in Palestine cannot be described in measured terms. Indeed their baseness and cruelty speak only too loudly for themselves.

### Habeas Corpus

Nor do the Communists fare much better. D. N. Pritt, of course, is not a Communist Party member; he is just a fellow traveller. But the *Exodus* case was too good a one to miss. In 1927, the American Communists did not scruple to try and capture the final agitation to save Sacco and Vanzetti in order to turn it to C.P. propaganda use. Nor did Torgler and Dimitrov scruple to pile the guilt on to Van de Lubbe in the Reichstag trial for the greater glory of the Kremlin. One wonders whether Pritt's attempt to secure a writ of *Habeas Corpus* on behalf of the *Exodus* refugees last week comes into the same category.

According to the reports in the Press, Pritt seems to have made his plea mainly on political grounds, instead of basing it on humanity and justice. Had he done so, the law would have been driven into granting the plea or denying justice completely. But the introduction of partisan politics into the case gave the Crown and the Judge just the grounds they needed for turning down the plea.

### High Commissioner's Doubts

More hopeful is the fact that Sir Alan Cunningham, High Commissioner for Palestine is said to have advised the Government that it would be a grave error to land the *Exodus* passengers in Germany. No political or administrative voice has so far denounced the business on grounds of justice and humanity, however.

## ARMY EVICT TENANTS

IN the midst of an unparalleled housing shortage, the army are deliberately evicting families who can find no other accommodation. This is happening in several London areas, including Islington, Lambeth, Highbury and Hammersmith. The people in question—there are twelve families in Islington alone—are living in flats which are the property of the Territorial Army Force Association, and which were offered to the inhabitants in 1941, with no terms of vacation attached to the tenancies.

Now the army authorities have decided they want the flats for regular soldiers. The tenants were duly given notice, and in most cases the War Office has since obtained eviction orders. When one case was taken to the High Court, it was ruled that the Rent Restriction Act did not bind the Crown, so that tenants on Government property are completely at the mercy of their landlord, the State.

In spite of representations in Parliament, the War Office still obstinately insists on taking the flats; the Secretary for War made the insulting statement that if there were any disused camps about he might fit the people into them, but he would give no guarantee.

Meanwhile, these people have nowhere to go, and with the long waiting lists in all their boroughs, there is no likelihood of their finding accommodation. It seems probable that they will resist eviction as long as it is possible to do so.

Meanwhile, coupled with this disgusting situation, there is a similar action of the War Office in the Stanford area of Norfolk. Here is a "battle area", and the War Office intend to do their best to keep hold of it. This means that some 19,000 acres of potential farming land will be governed by military whims and fancies, while, in a time of rural housing shortage even more urgent than that in the towns, no less than 165 houses, all completely habitable, will be withheld from the farm

workers. At a time when an agricultural revival is the one concrete hope of improving our situation here, the Government deliberately keeps land and homes idle and useless at the command of its irresponsible gang of brass-hats. A great campaign is being waged in the area to force the War Office to redeem its promise, made in 1942, to restore the district to peace-time uses, but so far no impression has been made on the military stubbornness.

## And Building Worker Squatter Faces Eviction by Council

The following case illustrates the callousness of existing social machinery. John Marley, a building worker, took over as a squatter, one room of a house at 144, Warwick Way, Westminster, which the Borough Council requisitioned in 1944, but have not yet repaired.

As a building worker, Marley's jobs have compelled him to move around the country. As a result he has not lived long enough in any place to be eligible for a place in the housing queue. He and his wife come from Glasgow.

His wife came out of hospital on August 26th, after her second confinement. The family of father, mother, a child of 2½, and an infant a few days old had nowhere to go, and spent the night walking the streets. On applying to

the L.C.C., Marley was informed that the duty of housing him lies with the Westminster City Council. The Council say they cannot do so because their rest centre is full, etc., etc. They now say that he must get out of the room in which the family are squatting—"By going there without authority Mr. Marley is only holding up our work." Unable to carry out the obvious duty of providing shelter, they must needs put the blame on the victim in the usual way of people who are morally in the wrong.

The elder child (2½ years old) has now fallen ill and been admitted to hospital in another borough.

Extreme as this case is, it must be only one of thousands essentially similar.

# THE ANTI-MILITARISM OF SACCO & VANZETTI

THROUGHOUT their defence and in all their letters and other writings, Sacco and Vanzetti thought in terms of justice and equality for all men, for the human race as a whole. To take a quotation almost at random, Vanzetti wrote on July 22nd—just a month before the execution—"Anyhow, even if they kill us they cannot kill all of us; all the working-class; all the good men and women, and still less, kill ideas, rights, necessities, aspirations and ideals. So the cause of freedom and justice, of class and of human emancipation will not be destroyed, not stopped by the bodies, burnt, of two more victims of our foes. So have heart, be cheerful, victory is ahead, and do your share with a glad heart."

Similar extracts could be cited many times over; they all show that Sacco and Vanzetti struggled for the ideal of human freedom, freedom for the whole human race—not just a section of it, whether of class or nation. This is the conception behind Vanzetti's remark, "The only vengeance that could placate me is the realization of freedom, the great deliverance which would benefit all my friends as well as all my enemies . . ." The two men were internationalists in the true sense that they ignored the whole conception of nationalism as a shallow crust which seeks to conceal the actual brotherhood of the whole human race.

## Jingo Judge

But it was quite otherwise with the authorities who tried them. Sacco testified to his anarchist and internationalist principles at his trial, and Judge Thayer sought to utilise nationalist sentiment when he retorted to Sacco's lawyer: "Are you going to claim that your client, in collecting this literature, was acting in the interest of the United States?" In his sworn affidavit regarding Thayer's open prejudice, Frank P. Sibley, who reported the trial for the *Boston Globe*, declares that "This sentiment coming from the bench seemed so remarkable in views of Sacco's testimony that I used it in my next morning's story of the day's trial." He adds that Thayer denied saying this, but that "On consulting the actual record of the case I found that Judge Thayer had asked this question not once, but many times, in the presence of the jury."

But Thayer's jingo patriotism comes out even more clearly in the affidavit of another journalist, John Nicholas Befeel, a correspondent of the *Federated Press*: "Many times, during the selection of the jurors in the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, I heard Judge Thayer address the talesmen with regard to 'the courage of American soldier boys in France.' He exhorted them to 'render this service here. . . with the same spirit of patriotism, courage and devotion to duty as was exhibited by our

soldier boys across the seas.' And frequently, in my hearing, he reminded the talesmen of 'the blessings of Government' and urged them to be loyal to their Government."

The purpose of all this jingoism—which was sincere enough in the limited sense that Judge Thayer and his fellow murderers were really incapable of rising above these petty group loyalties—was to excite prejudice against Sacco and Vanzetti because they were "draft dodgers". For during the war of 1914, the two anarchists

had gone to Mexico in order to evade conscription.

## Why They Resisted Conscription

Draft dodgers . . . This is the term used not only by their enemies, but also by their friends of the Defence Committee. But it is one of those expressions which while not flatly untrue, is so inadequate that it is misleading enough to be classed as a lie. Sacco and Vanzetti did not dodge like so many patriots who accepted safe and lucrative war jobs. They

"dodged" because anti-militarism was the inevitable product of their internationalism, of their feeling for the human race as a whole, for the brotherhood of man. This side of their thought was not understood by many of their well-meaning friends who fought to save them. Even now one often hears them referred to even in the anarchist movement as if they were simple minded—"a good shoemaker and a poor fish-peddler". But anti-militarism was something that these two men felt as a powerful force in their being, and it appears again and again in their thought. Not to grasp this is to fail entirely to understand Sacco and Vanzetti.

In his last speech in the Dedham Court-house on April 9th, 1927, when the sentence of death was confirmed, Sacco said: "I know the sentence will be between two classes, the oppressed class and the rich class, and there will be always collision between one and the other. *We fraternize the people with the books, with the literature. You persecute the people, tyrannize them and kill them. We try the education of people always. You try to put a path between us and some other nationality that hates each other.* That is why I am here to-day on this bench, for having been of the oppressed class. Well, you are the oppressor."

## Vision of War

And when Vanzetti on the same occasion said, "in all my life I have never stolen and I have never killed and I have never spilled blood . . ." we may be sure that he had the holocaust of killing which is modern war in his mind's eye. And the same vision lies behind his stigmatizing the present organization of society as a "deem remembering of a cursed past in which man was wolf to the man . . ."

Thus, during the trial, there was on the one side, the American middle-class, scared by the revolutionary movements arising out of the war, scared into the Mitchell Palmer anti-Red arrests and wholesale persecution of all radical opinion; men whose wits were turned by fear of the social upheavals engendered by the war. And on the other, two anarchists, men of vision who refused to participate in the slaughter of their working-class brothers of other nations, and whose dream was of a world in which mankind lived in liberty and therefore in peace. The forces of coward reaction against the visionaries of the future.

But Sacco and Vanzetti's antimilitarism did not arise simply in the course of the trial. It was a main preoccupation with them, and at the very time of his arrest

Sacco had in his pocket a manifesto advertising a meeting at which Vanzetti was to speak. Its theme was anti-militarism:

"You have fought all the wars. You have worked for all the capitalists. You have wandered over all the countries. Have you harvested the fruits of your labours, the price of your victories? Does the past comfort you? Does the present smile on you? Does the future promise you anything? Have you found a piece of land where you can live like a human being and die like a human being? On these questions, Bartolomeo Vanzetti will speak."

Such a manifesto would be as much in place to-day. It was the recognition of the intolerable crime of war that made these two men such merciless fighters against the oppressing class. Vanzetti's speech, "I know the millions of youth that they slandered, the virgins that they have torn in the breast; the millions of wives that they have widowed . . . the old fathers and mothers whom they killed by breaking their hearts . . . the hospitals and crazy-houses filled with their victims . . ."—rings with the indignation of a man who had seen the crime of war and felt for every one of its victims. Vanzetti's speech is a bitter and passionate indictment of the class which benefits from wars, and initiates them without regard for the human misery they strew in their wake.

## Understanding of Capitalism

These two men surveyed the capitalist world. They understood and faced up to its ghastly cost. They spoke and worked to bring the capitalist system of society to an end. Yet with all their sympathy with the sufferings of the victims their vision did not end with the class war; they clearly envisaged a form of society without nations, without classes, without wars. A society in which men were not wolves to men, but in which harmony and freedom reigned.

It is time to abandon the legend of the "good shoemaker and the poor fish pedlar." Sacco and Vanzetti had insight given to few even among the outstanding anarchists. They knew what the world was like, and they fought against it. But they also knew the capacities of the human spirit. Far from being simple-minded idealists, they were far-seeing realists. It is time to recognize them as amongst the most penetrating of the revolutionary thinkers and teachers.

J.H.



IL PERFETTO SOLDATO

(The Perfect Soldier)—from Volunta, Italy.

## Objections to Anarchism:

# ... But Its Not Practical!

Whenever any rebel comes along and talks about altering the insane system of things, you may be sure that soon after him there will come some stolid supporter of things as they are, or a disillusioned ex-militant, to rebut all his arguments with the parrot cry that a different society or a change in things is not practical. It is, of course, very easy to show that it is practical to let things continue as they are: acquiescence is the simplest thing in the world; and the "realist" who lies down under every form of tyranny no matter what is done to him will undoubtedly be able to say at the finish that at any rate his programme was carried out.

However, while it may be "practical" to support imperialist wars and lose your life in the process, to be kicked to death in concentration camps or worn out in the process of living under total capitalism or the total state, and it can well be shown that there is more reasonable chance of fulfilling a programme which entails surrendering our manhood to the ruling-class and licking the boots of the opportunist politicians, it is not very practical to imagine that the people on the bandwagon are going to be very popular with the people under its wheels. The counsellors of submission always hope that they will be on the bandwagon; but as we have no desire to be there whatever national anthem they are playing we find ourselves undesirous of shaping a "practical" programme that entails compromise with political parties, support for any government or submission to military rule or war.

Although it is inevitable in a revolutionary movement that those who

may once have been active become disillusioned in isolation and turn to compromise with the exponents of "practical" policies\*—which inevitably finish up with support for existing evils—this should never deter the further-seeing who realise that the instinct of the downtrodden is bound in the end to react against both the exploiters and also against those who side with them.

We may take many examples. The many who compromise with fascism in the hope of 'humanising' its effect (a favourite excuse in France, for instance, where the stock excuse for office under Vichy was to look after French PW's and deportees) were included in the common hatred against fascist influence. The Italian socialists supported the Allies, giving as an excuse the fact that 'the war against Mussolini would lead to a revolutionary situation'; it did, but it was precisely the Allies who broke the revolutionary situation, a fact which has led to disaster to the socialist movement in Italy. Look at the many British socialists who joined the Army believing that in supporting the war they were helping to bring about a change in feeling; certainly there has been a violent change in feeling; and how surprised the officers of 'Socialist' convictions have been to find themselves just as much disliked as those of Tory convictions.

And those 'practical' reformers who have been asking people to work harder and do this and do that: they may have the Government on their

\*e.g., the former Anarchist Rudolf Rocker who is symptomatic of many formerly rebellious spirits who have become opposed to all revolutionary libertarian activity in isolation.

side now but it is very doubtful if they have the people.

We would prefer to be 'impractical', and accept the old gibe against Anarchism of being 'a clan'. But we would point out that we are not deluded by a belief that Anarchism is possible overnight. We are just as well aware as anyone telling us to 'obey, work, fight' that the Free Society of Anarchism is a long way off and that we have a long struggle to get it. In the meantime, however, we don't just 'dream' of it. By seeing clearly what sort of a society we want, we are able to get it more easy. We are able to give a definite frame to our immediate struggles when we know what is the eventual society we are aiming at, however 'impracticable' it is at the moment. Because we want a society without government—that is, as much freedom as possible—we know that every day we must resist every encroachment on our personal liberties, by opposing conscription, new laws, repression, and every attempt to bring us nearer to total State. By aiming at the control of the places of work by the people who work in them; we realise that strikes ought to be carried out by those on the job—and not by bureaucrats or political careerists elsewhere; such strikes will not only be more efficient, they point the way to workers' control—as did the great stay-in strikes of Italy and France.

The greater is our struggle against the private ownership of the means of production and the government of man by man; the more we shall impress society with the hallmark of freedom, even if our ideas were never completely accepted.

ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST.

## ANARCHISM —A Parable

I see mankind as a herd of cattle inside a fenced enclosure. Outside the fence are green pastures and plenty for the cattle to eat. While inside the fence there is not quite grass enough for the cattle. Consequently, the cattle are tramping underfoot what little grass there is and going each other to death in their struggle for existence.

I saw the owner of the herd come to them, and when he saw their pitiable condition he was filled with compassion for them and thought of all he could do to improve their condition.

So he called his friends together and asked them to assist him in cutting grass from outside the fence and throwing it over the fence to the cattle. And that they called Charity.

Then, because the calves were dying off and not growing up into serviceable cattle, he arranged that they should each have a pint of milk every morning for breakfast. Because they were dying off in the cold nights, he put up beautiful, well-drained and well-ventilated cowsheds for the cattle.

Because they were going each other in the struggle for existence, he put corks on the horns of the cattle, so that the wounds they gave each other might not be so serious. Then he reserved a part of the enclosure for the old bulls and the old cows over 70 years of age.

In fact, he did everything he could think of to improve the condition of the cattle, and when I asked him why he did not do the one obvious thing, break down the fence, and let the cattle out, he answered, "If I let the cattle out, I should no longer be able to milk them."

LEO TOLSTOY.

## The Parliamentary Privilege Cases

Underlying the recent cases of M.P.s hauled up before their Parliamentary colleagues for breach of privilege there is a very sinister implication. For they were arraigned, not for divulging secrets relating to parliament as such, but for providing newspapers with information regarding party meetings which the Labour bosses desired to keep secret. Had the meetings taken place elsewhere, they would have been immune, but as they took place within the confines of the Palace of Westminster, the party bosses were able to invoke the whole power of Parliament behind their decrees.

The possible consequences of this fact are really serious. There might be some plausible argument—within the parliamentary theory—for trouncing an M.P. who betrayed the secrets of parliament itself, though even here one would have thought a real democracy would demand that the people should know all the actions of their so-called representatives. But when parliament itself takes up a question which concerns only the internal business of a political party, it is the beginning of that slippery totalitarian slope where the ruling party becomes identified with and endowed with all the power of the state. When the organs of the state are used to punish recalcitrant party members, we are not a long way off the conditions where, as in Italy, Germany and Russia, the party becomes identified with the state, and recalcitrant minorities find their way into the state's own concentration camps.

Another sinister side of this affair was the attempt to force editors to give information regarding contributors to their papers. It has long been an unwritten law of journalism that an editor should never reveal anything about any of the writers who contribute to his paper without their express consent, and there are times when a dereliction of this custom might result in great harm to the writer in question. If it is in any way broken, the precedent will clearly give the police unlimited power to terrorise the staffs of newspapers into giving up vital information or suffering the results of their steadfastness. In any case, the whole affair constitutes a further attempt to interfere with the freedom of disseminating information to which governmental institutions are becoming increasingly prone. It clearly fits in very closely with all the other means by which a totalitarian form of society is steadily being erected about us, often by incidents, such as these, which at first sight may seem to have no particularly fascistic character.

# A RAILWAYMAN REFLECTS

**T**HE typical trade-union official is apt at times to indulge in a little self-praise. To people occupying well-paid positions in the trade-unions it is very essential that there should be plenty of opportunities for publicly popularising their own personalities. To this end they usually monopolise the union journals, and in articles very often written for them by members of the office staff, try to demonstrate to the naive membership of the union, how very important they are.

But the same V.I.P.'s take particular care that the union journals are not used by members to advance views which might be critical of bad policies, or to advocate a more progressive line of action. Of course, a limited amount of space is allowed to a minimum of members with views critical of a wrong official policy; this obviously gives the impression of discussion by democracy.

When we come to the election of union officials it is a great advantage to have been the recipient of much publicity. For, at the union branch meeting the members come to pay their contributions (very few stay to hear the proceedings) and are presented with a ballot-sheet for the election of some official or other. The ordinary member knows little or nothing about the individuals whose names appear on the sheet, but if a name has been made familiar by publicity, then that name will receive the vote, and the individual who bears the name is made. It would be possible to tell a few amusing stories about the "democratic elections" in the trade unions. I had a personal experience of seeing several hundred ballot-papers which had all been filled in by a secretary, complete with other members' names as signatures. The excuse was that the members would not trouble to vote and, therefore he had done it for them. But, as he himself was a candidate, and the votes had been accorded to his name, it is probable that he was motivated by more than the usual desire for branch efficiency.

## Servility a Necessity

The official usually develops a contempt for the mental capacity of the dues-paying membership. This is really inevitable when a person is permitted

## THE FARMER'S SHARE

The recent granting of a small wage increase to farm workers, bringing their rate up to the princely total of £4/10/0 a week, gives a certain relevance to a survey which has recently been published by the Economics Department of Bristol University, showing the proportion of farm income (over and above expenses) received by landlord, farmer and workers respectively.

It should be borne in mind that the 100 farms used for the survey are fairly large ones, and that they represent the more prosperous farmers who rely on employed labour, and not the very numerous small farmers who play an active part in working their land and often gain a comparatively small return.

The survey showed that while, between 1938 and 1944, the proportion of the total income received by the landlord had fallen from 32% to 16%, that of the farm workers, in spite of higher actual wages rates, had fallen from 49% to 47%. In other words, the benefit of the increases in prices had gone almost exclusively to the capitalist farmers, whose personal share, excluding interest on capital, had increased from 6% to 30%. In other words, the farmers now get six times as big a share of the farm income as they did before the war.

In more precise terms, the average managerial surplus of these farms in 1944, when allowance had been made for the value of the farmers own work, was no less than £782! In other words, while agricultural labourers were receiving less than £4 a week, their employers were enjoying an average total income for their work of £950 a year, or about £18 a week!

The report also includes a chart of the rise in net output per worker. Taking 1938 as 100, it shows that, with the hope of a better deal which was promised them by the government, the average output of farm workers rose to 129 in 1942-43; then however they began to realise that all their wages increase had been swallowed by rising prices, and it is revealing to see that by 1944-5 their output had dropped to 111. This merely shows that a real incentive to these workers in terms of a fair share of the products of their labour would result in a vast increase in production. But when the gentleman farmer gets four or five times as much as his labourers for less work, they certainly cannot be expected to respond to the appeals for hard work which are being showered on them. The collective operation of the land by communes of land workers would undoubtedly combine justice with a vast increase in enthusiasm and production.

## N.U.R. Democracy

On the railways, we have had just recently a good example of the "leaders" modernised conception of democracy. After the propaganda of the war years, preparation of post-war programmes for higher wages, etc., the unions made a belated application for shorter hours and higher wages. Though the union officials in their self-praising efforts had always claimed that the negotiating machinery on the railways was "the best in the world", it was noticeable that the machinery had to be by-passed and a government court of inquiry set up to consider the claims. The court of inquiry sat on the 14th, 16th, 17th and 18th of June, 1947, and issued a report several days later, which came before the annual meeting of the N.U.R. on July 27th, 1947.

No more than a small fraction of the 4,000 branches of the union could have had an opportunity to consider the recommendations of the court of inquiry, but the annual meeting passed a resolution of a rather pathetic character accepting the recommendations and the membership is told what has been accepted and it occurs to nobody that the members should have any other views. The resolution of the annual meeting of the N.U.R. points out the original

claim was submitted on the 30th Jan., 1947, and there is to be back-payment only from the 30th June, 1947. During these six months, it is claimed by others that more than 40 articles of consumers' goods went up in price. The authors of the resolution showed that they had a pronounced political complex by including the following phrase in the resolution:—"We are taking cognizance (how pompous, just the sort of jargon for the Labour front bench) of the need of the country to maintain a stabilised balance in its economic life."

## "Stabilisation" and Profits

A "stabilised balance". What a beautiful economic term. How impressive! But what it really means is another matter. Apparently a few shillings added to the worker's wages might render unstable the "balance in the country's economic life". Of course, £132,000,000 spent mainly on armaments for the Greek ruling clique, or the millions spent on atomic research and plants, or on inflated armed forces do not affect the "stabilised balance in its economic life". The high salaries of nearly 2,000,000 bureaucratic State officials, the expensive politicians (Mr. Attlee's office requires £100,000 per annum)—presumably these help to

weight the scales to maintain "stabilisation".

Always it is the lower-paid worker who suffers the economic burdens arising from the capitalist and State order of society. There is no thought of restricting industrial profits, no intention on the part of politicians to make any material sacrifices. In this period when everything is done to emphasise the importance of productive labour, surely the worker will realise that the waste of money on State power politics, on bureaucratic officials and politicians, the toll of dividends from industry, is a colossal robbery of their productive toil. And the worker must appreciate the fact that whilst those in power exhort him to work harder and even harder, it is proposed to keep down his wages and confine him to more austerity and less food. And surely it doesn't make sense to expect more work from a worse-fed worker.

It was recently said that a "spiv" is a "minister without portfolio". If we are to judge members of society by the amount of productive or socially useful work they perform, then there will be many politicians and people of their kind who must be judged.

In the meantime, we workers will insist that the highest wages and shortest hours of toil are the best guarantee of a happy and contented society and necessary to ensure "a stabilised balance in the country's economic life".

C. H. ROOKE.

## ONE of the worst aspects of modern

American trade union practice, namely the "check-off", received its official endorsement by the Annual Conference of the National Union of Mine-workers held in July. The agreement between the National Coal Board and N.U.M. provides for the deduction of union-dues from the miners' wage packet. In many districts deductions of union-dues at the colliery offices became the practice, even before its official endorsement, in some instances. Such deductions were, and are, clearly illegal, for all deductions from wages (P.A.Y.E., N.H. and Unemployment Insurance apart) must have the signed permission of each individual employee. In the vast majority of cases this permission was never given!

This notorious form of "legalised robbery" of the miner was introduced ostensibly to facilitate the easy collection of dues from members and as a convenient (?) method of roping in defaulters and non-members. The facts of the matter are, rather, that the financial bosses of the union, observing the steady drain away from the union of dues-payers who had become disgusted with the role played by the T.U. bureaucrats, and the "bosses"

## MINERS AND THE "CHECK-OFF"

having had no success in selling the necessity of such unionism to large numbers of new entrants to the industry, they then turned their earnest attention towards the task of wooing the N.C.B. to the idea of having as a faithful stooge a trustworthy, well-disciplined union. In this they have been successful, for the N.C.B. has agreed that in return for full co-operation they would pick the miner's wage packet for the union.

The "check-off", as it is more commonly known, marks a further stage in the inevitable fusion between the State-employer and the trade union within the Nationalised industry, resulting in the imposition of a "closed shop", viz, membership in the union a condition of employment. This is indicated by the promise of the N.C.B. to the Mine-workers' Union that the latter shall be the sole negotiators for all grades of workmen. A promise which precipitated the recent strike of colliery clerks in South Wales,

who were members of the Clerical and Administrative Workers' Union; a direct result of the closed shop policy of the larger Mine-workers' Union.

The "closed-shop policy" with the "check-off" provides ample evidence of the absorption of the trade union set-up into the State machine. The prevailing economic crisis entails the necessity of a servile union to assist the State to place greater burdens on the backs of the mine-workers, to re-impose the 6-day week, etc., to gull the workers into the continued acceptance of military and industrial conscription, to fasten the shackles of wage-slavery and economic servitude.

To break these shackles, the miners must repudiate the actions of the State-worshipping union bosses and demand the immediate ending of the "check-off". In short, the miners will have to take determined steps to build up a militant rank-and-file union movement with the revolutionary aim of both waging daily warfare against the employing class in whose interests the mining industry is still being run, and, prepare themselves for the task of taking over complete control of the mines, of instituting Workers' Control, of operating the mines for the benefit of the world's workers. The Mines for the

TOM CARLILE.

## Land Notes

# BACK TO THE LAND!

**W**E have pointed out in these columns so often how Britain's part in world capitalist economy has demanded the subjugation of agriculture to other industries that it seems almost unnecessary to do so again. British capitalism since the industrial revolution has depended so much on the existence of markets overseas for our industrial products such as machinery, that food production in Britain has been deliberately—and I mean deliberately—restricted in order to provide a market here for the agricultural countries who buy our industrial products.

This has worked alright as long as these other countries have not been able to produce their own machinery, as long as the markets for British goods were expanding, and as long as there was no serious competition from other highly industrialised countries. To-day none of those three conditions exist.

For the capitalists, it is an unfortunate feature of competitive capitalism that it inevitably leads to war. There are plenty of other unfortunate features for those who are not capitalists, of course, but when, in wartime, world trade becomes, to say the least, dislocated, it is apparent to all that there is something to be said for home-grown food.

## Cinderella

At the beginning of the late war, many farm-workers spoke to me in bitter tones of the way in which the authorities suddenly began to woo the men who produce the food. Waving their magic wands, fairy godmothers disguised as officials of the County War Agricultural Committees descended upon the farms and changed the Cinderella industry into a paradise of subsidies and machinery. Well, almost . . .

But the bland manner in which the authorities expected landworkers to forget the years of neglect between the wars, the two million arable acres gone back to grass or thistles for want of markets for

their produce, the dwindling labour force as men sought living wages in the towns, was not lost on the farming fraternity, who set out to get what they could while the going was good.

Since the war, however, things have been gradually slipping back again. For over a year in some cases, County Agricultural Committee men have not been seen on the farms. Some of the subsidies have been withdrawn, the aid they had given in maintaining machinery has fallen off. Farmers were getting their spare parts for ploughs in June, for broken binders in February. Things were getting back to normal.

## Saved Again

But it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. The failure of the good old capitalist methods to continue delivering the goods is forcing Britain back upon her own resources in food production. With a great blare of publicity the government announced its plans for agriculture, and is all of a sudden terribly concerned at the fact that since the war things have been slipping a bit.

It is just slightly amusing that our Socialist government has been driven to take far-reaching steps in this direction, not because of its desire to create abundance for the people (they were as embarrassed by the recent vegetable glut as anybody) but by the dollar shortage!

## Why Not Before?

The target the government has set for agriculture (how fond they are of targets!) is an increase of home food production by £100,000,000 a year within five years. Farmers are to be encouraged by fixed prices for their produce ensuring good profits; farm workers, of course, have just had their wage increases ratified. There are one or two little snags, of course, like the fact that the tied cottage will have to remain for a few more years, but we should conveniently forget awkward issues like that, shouldn't we?

What I would like to know, however, is

this: If it is possible now to expect this great increase in productivity, why was it not possible before? Why is agriculture always the last industry to be considered, only to be turned to in time of crisis? Why is the lie continually maintained that Britain can only live by export, cannot feed herself?

The answer, I suggest, is in the first paragraph of these notes . . . capitalism.

## DIRECT DISTRIBUTION

**I** HAVE hardly left myself any room now to deal with a matter of some interest which only occurred just as we were going to press last issue. I refer to move to form direct trading associations among farmers and market gardeners to combat the conditions in the wholesale markets where buyers could not be found for their produce because abundance was forcing down the prices. A month ago I mentioned that some farmers were being "forced" to plough in good vegetables for this reason and I'm glad to see that some effort is being made to prevent that.

Admittedly, the farmers are only doing it for their own good. "To each according to his need, etc." is not their motto—at least, I doubt if it is but, nevertheless, we cannot but welcome a move which breaks the stranglehold which middlemen have upon distribution of necessities, and attacks the mentality through which a greengrocer would rather sell one pound of apples at sixpence than two pounds at threepence.

And the public appreciate the move too. There is no question of the food not being wanted. Wherever the growers have set up their stalls they have been besieged by housewives only too pleased to buy really fresh vegetables at their own prices.

The growers bring the produce straight into the towns themselves and deliver it straight into the hands of the consumers. In a free society distribution could hardly be more direct!

P.S.

## BRISTOL BUSMEN OUT

The passenger transport industry has been seething with discontent all this year and at least two fairly widespread strikes have already occurred. This week 3,000 drivers and conductors employed by the Bristol Tramways and Carriage Co. struck for roughly the same reason as the previous strikers.

The strikers earlier in the year were against the slowness of the Transport and General Workers' Union in establishing for the workers in private companies the same conditions as those existing in municipal undertakings.

Well, at last the union made a settlement with the employers at Bristol—and the present strike is the men's objection to the "award" accepted by the union on their behalf. The award still keeps private company employees in a disadvantageous position compared with workers on the city-owned buses, and the union leaders are having a difficult time explaining to the men why they accepted conditions unacceptable to the men.

The union officials have been booed at meetings, and only one man broke the strike, to calls of "blackleg" and "traitor" by his fellows who announced their decision not to work with him in future. The strikers ran a special service without pay for hospital visitors on Saturday and Sunday, and made a voluntary levy among themselves of 2s. 6d. a head to cover expenses and to help needy cases among themselves.

## HEARD THIS ONE, CLEM?

"The work's too hard. I won't take the job."

"Hard work never killed anybody."

"That's just the point. I want something with a spice of danger in it."

Evening News, 25/8/47.

Letter from

**France**

# A Congress for Nothing

For some ten days the French press has presented the debates of the Socialist Congress at Lyons as if they might have a decisive importance on the fate of the Ramadier government.

The organs of right and left alike calculated the respective chances of the main tendencies there present, that of the "leftist" Guy Mollet and that of the "reformist" Jaquier.

It was finally the resolution presented by Guy Mollet which carried the day with a clear majority. But no one will take the chance of predicting the end of socialist collaboration in the government, or a new orientation of the Socialist party.

## Ramadier Continues

The despatches of the American press agencies summarised the direction of the congress when they said simply: "The Ramadier government continues."

The majority of the delegates, however, made a lively criticism of the policy of the Socialist ministers. They emphasised that successive electoral defeats mark the decline of Socialist influence, that the Ministry for Overseas, Marius Moutet, defended the position of the imperialists, that the policy of blocking wages without blocking prices was a fraud, that Ramadier was acting as the champion of a dying regime.

And the intransigent leftists refused to negotiate a compromise motion which would have brought unanimity. So that to the eyes of the voters who will be called to the booths to elect the new municipal councillors in October, the congress will have made the appearance of a democratic assembly of advanced militants.

A minimum programme was even voted: it gave a mandate to the Socialist ministers to follow a definite policy in anything concerning production and food, and put forward a plan for the status of Algeria which the President of the Council had abandoned under pressure from the Christian Democratic and Radical parties, who are associated in the ministry.

But motions, discussions and resolutions will hardly obstruct M. Ramadier, whose action cannot be governed by the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, and who feels himself upheld by the whole of the parliamentary group.

## Powerlessness of the Left

Guy Mollet and his followers, even supposing that they had the will to redress effectively the party's line of policy, will be powerless to impose their views on the ministers and deputies, who are only responsible towards the Chamber—and the foreign ambassadors.

All the traffickings with associated parties, all the external pressures, all the threats of financial catastrophe will combine to efface the words spoken on the floor of the Congress.

Already, on the Algerian problem, the plotting is in progress, and it is obvious that the final text will give nothing new to the populations of North Africa.

The comedy of Lyons lays bare the vast deterioration of the Socialist Party. On one hand it shows to what degree of parliamentary cretinism the socialist militants have come, when they still gull themselves regarding the effect of an assembly of deputies on the progress of a capitalist nation.

On the other hand, it shows that this cretinism exists equally in the party's own internal parliament, that is to say, in the Congress. That the spokesmen

## STEEL BEFORE BREAD

The atmosphere in which contemporary politicians are coming to regard Germany as a potential battlefield, is indicated faithfully enough in the recent decisions by the British and American authorities on the question of raising the level of German industry.

Significantly, the emphasis is on steel production. At present Germany is in need of a vast mass of consumption goods. Food, clothing, fuel, building materials, are the essentials for reconstructing Germany. Yet priority is given to steel, the great raw material of war, and everything else is subordinated to that. No doubt the increase of food supplies to Germany will be tied up with the increased war potential of its factories.

Once again, the Germans, like the rest of us, are being subjected to the need of the two rival camps in Europe to keep themselves prepared for the war which is the outcome of the prevailing world systems to-day. Their need for the most elementary necessities is being exploited to make them the means of re-equipping the protagonists in the next great conflict.

of the revolutionary left like Marecau Pivert should let themselves go so far as to combine their voices with that of Guy Mollet, without seeing clearly that they were losing a rare occasion of addressing themselves to the working population in order to denounce the trickery of reformism, to speak clearly and utter precise warnings, shows to what extent the ravages of pseudo-democracy (of words without acts) have infected even the best.

It was hardly more than a tiny fraction of the Federation of the Rhone that retained right to the end its revolutionary position.

## Party Unity

Must we believe that party solidarity and patriotism would be enough to bring together under one flag reformists, imperialists and revolutionaries? Looking more closely at the matter, there are common attitudes which, in spite of all the phrases and resolutions, unite the majority of the Socialist militants.

In the first place, at once a cause and a consequence, there is the influence of the Freemasons, to whom belong the majority of the Socialist leaders. Here is one explanation, of reduced but still not negligible importance, for the solidarity of the party.

In the second place, the hatred of Stalinist Communism and an avowed or unconscious preference for the Western bloc reunites equally well men who seem theoretically to belong to very different schools.

Finally, there is the general disorder and ideological confusion, reflected in the loss of confidence in an independent revolutionary movement, which is the consequence of the incapacity to surmount the death of the myth of the historic mission of the proletariat.

Ramadier presents a programme—the Marshall plan, and a means of struggle against Stalinist dictatorship—entry into the American camp in anticipation of a future war.

The leftists and the revolutionaries present nothing, except doctrinaire exhortations and inconclusive analyses. Logically, the last should rally to their leader, however repugnant this may be for them.

## Young Socialists

This mental confusion was repeated at the Congress of Socialist Youth, recently excluded from the Socialist Party.

Strongly infiltrated by Trotskyists, the leadership of the Socialist Youth has immediately committed suicide by agreeing to resume contact with the Union of French Republican Youth, with the view of achieving a front of common action.

The U.F.R.Y. is under communist influence, and presents a reformist, patriotic and vaguely radical programme, limiting its activities to organising

parties, dances and popular fetes to induce better slumber among youth destined for the next butchery.

Under the pretext of infiltration, manoeuvring and Bolshevik machiavellianism, the Socialist Youth, which could constitute a focus for the disoriented working-class youth, will lose its influence and use its militants in obscure intrigues and an agitation without a future.

These so deceiving congresses have at least the advantage of showing that the whole of the organised working-class movement which follows the old formulae is entirely by-passed by events and that the work of gathering together the healthy revolutionary forces can only be done by starting from below, through the experience of practical struggle against employers and the government, and throwing overboard the out-of-date organisations, relics of a society in complete degeneration.

S. PARANE.

## WITHOUT COMMENT

We German prisoners feel very bitter because, when we send part of our wages to Germany, the rate of exchange is 15 marks to the £ instead of the usual 40 marks to the £. It seems to be not enough that we cannot go to our families. We must be robbed, too. Our families at home are suffering because the breadwinner and father is working here in your country as an underpaid slave.

Desperation, resentment and hatred have taken possession of thousands of us. It is better not to mention the words "humanity" and "democracy" among PoW's in connection with the name of your country.

I have become acquainted with many Englishmen of the most different circles during the last 15 months. I feel deeply touched by the kindness and even heartiness I have found in many cases. I am the more sorry that the inhumane and very often silly policy of your authorities must create considerable bitterness in us and in our suffering families. Goebbels did not succeed in making the German people hate your country; your authorities understand this task much better.

Some weeks ago Mr. Bevin said that the German PoW's live much better here than they would in Germany. We got into a rage when we heard it. We know that behind these beautiful and cheap words of care there is the will to hold the good and cheap German slave workers as long as possible. If he would really take care of us he would secure to us a decent payment for our work and help everybody of us who wants to do so to go home.

—German PoW (name and address supplied).

Letter in *Evening Standard*, 26/8/47.

# The Legacy of Imperialism

The English conquerors have moved out of India, but they have left their legacy of disunity and bitterness among the Indian peasants and workers. Instead of being ready to seize the opportunity to make their freedom real, large numbers of Indian workers and peasants are spending their energies in killing each other over futile doctrinal differences, while their new masters are being given the excuse to impose their power more ferociously in the name of re-establishing law and order.

Undoubtedly, the Punjab massacre is an appalling event, not only for the lives that are lost, but also because it shows so many Indians being led away from their real interests into futile conflicts. But when the British ruling class raise their hands in horror, when the Indian party leaders express a pious indignation at the acts of their followers, it is necessary to denounce their hypocrisy.

For there is no doubt at all that the policy of division which was for so long followed by the British ruling class helped

to exacerbate the communal hatred within India. For years the Moslem League was nurtured as a means of balancing the influence of Congress, until such time as Congress had itself become sufficiently impregnated with political corruption to serve the old ruling class ends. In the same way, the leaders of the Moslem League and the Congress Party also did their best to encourage the differences of religion so as to serve their own political ends.

Now they pretend to be horrified at the results of their own political handiwork. But there is no doubt at all that they will take full advantage of the rioting to establish their own power all the more strongly, on the excuse of "pacifying" the affected regions.

Once again the Indian workers and peasants are subjected to unscrupulous masters, and they should reserve their energies to fight against these instead of struggling between themselves over the illusory differences bred of religious dogma—the ruler's old devices for blinding the eyes of his subjects.

# Fraternisation Corrupts Russian Soldiers

A sensational admission of the way in which fraternisation with conquered populations is gradually breaking down the morale of Russian occupation troops and giving them a distaste for their Soviet fatherland is contained in the following highly significant order which has just been issued by Colonel General Kourasov, the Russian Commander-in-Chief in Austria.

"For some time certain Soviet Army officers have fallen under the influence of bourgeois ideology. Following private contacts with the population, they have either adopted a hostile attitude to the Soviet, or have simply become traitors to their country. A certain number of officers have lost sight of their oath of fidelity, and are trying to satisfy their material appetites by enriching themselves. Moreover, they take up living quarters with foreigners, frequent music-halls and night-clubs, and abandon themselves to drink.

"Thus these officers begin to slide down the fatal slope leading to eternal shame. They forget they have been brought up under the discipline of the world's highest culture—Marx-Lenin-Stalinism. They forget too easily that they are armed with Stalin's doctrine, which is better than all others.

"Certain officers, through intrigues with women, have also placed themselves in a difficult situation and through fear of punishment, have found themselves on the path of treason."

Apparently this order is typical of those which have gone out to all Russian occupation troops. The instructions emanate originally from Moscow, where the authorities are seriously concerned about the possible effects of fraternisation in weakening the loyalty of Russian army officers and men towards their leaders. It seems as if the Kremlin has come to a desperate pass when it has to pit the dry dogmas of "the world's highest intellectual culture—Marx-Lenin-Stalinism"—against the civilising factors of human relationships.

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## Foreign Commentary

THE *New Statesman* recently recalled, how, last February, it introduced the term "a phoney peace" to describe the period which ended with the fuel crisis, a phase, which, it points out, "has been used widely since". But old readers of *Freedom* and *War Commentary* will remember that in May, 1945, in the week when the war in Europe ended, we used the phrase as our main headline, and opened our leading article with the words: "The period between September, 1939, and May, 1940, was popularly known as the phoney war. The period between May, 1945, and some unspecified future date may well be called the phoney peace."

Unlike the *New Statesman*, we do not consider that the phoney peace ended with the fuel crisis. It does not seem likely to end until the resumption of world-wide hostilities,—and there will be nothing phoney about that.

## No End of War

America and Russia have been at war by proxy for years in China, in Korea a war of nerves is beginning, and in Japan, the grandiloquent General MacArthur is building up a "bastion against Bolshevism".

The whole of Europe is a battlefield to-day. Some sectors are quiet, some areas are secure behind the lines of one or other of the protagonists, some flare up with sudden skirmishes and swift engagements, while in others the big guns thunder in unrelenting combat over desolate country.

# The Phoney Peace

In Greece, puppet governments rise and fall and open warfare continues with a brutality which no longer surprises us. The country's American masters vainly seek to instal a government which on the one hand is ruthless enough to successfully keep the people docile and strong enough to defeat the Communist guerillas who still pour in from the Bulgarian, Yugoslav and Albanian frontiers, and yet, on the other hand, is astute enough to maintain a mask of democracy and liberality. That the last item is required purely for window-dressing purposes is confirmed by the report of the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent who described America's requirement in Greece as a government which:

"on paper at least, must appear to be what American public opinion considers liberal and democratic, though in fact, circumstances may prevent its policy from being different from that of its predecessor."

Meanwhile the Greek Army Commander at Komontine announces that he will henceforth safeguard his troops and supplies "by sending a truckload of Communist prisoners ahead of each convoy, to explode the mines which Communist guerillas plant in many roads."

## The Face of Justice

Treason trials are proceeding in Bucharest, in Budapest, Belgrade, Warsaw and Sophia. The puppets of Britain and America, the real revolutionaries, the peasant leaders, and the non-political opponents of brutality

and dictatorship, all are charged indiscriminately with the same offences.

The phrases, the procedure, the inevitable outcome of the trials in these "People's Courts", are identical with those we were so familiar with in pre-war Germany, Italy and Russia. Occasionally, as in the case of Nikola Petkov, leader of the Bulgarian Agrarian Union, world-wide publicity and protests result, but what of the thousands and thousands of others?

As the fringe of the famous curtain

"The French recently rejoiced to learn that the American maize crop this year is the worst for eleven years.

Now, perhaps, they will get some wheat in their bread."

"Franc-Tireur", Paris, 19/8/47

envelopes Hungary, the struggle between Russia and America intensifies in Austria, and the familiar frontier incidents are reported from the Austro-Yugoslav border. The Russian occupation authorities have committed a tactical error in confiscating a further 217,000 acres of agricultural land while Britain and America have striven to increase their influence in Vienna by remitting the payment of occupation costs.

From Italy, *Time* reports: "In the struggle between Communism and the West for the political allegiance of the Italian

people, the U.S. last week made an important tactical move: it crossed Italy's war debt (about one billion dollars) off the books. Italy's frozen accounts in the U.S. will be thawed, her merchant ships returned... but with the scepticism of a long-suffering nation, many wondered what the U.S. would ask in return."

## General Hunger

In Germany, the running sore across Europe, despite facilely optimistic reports of increased output, and the tinsel of the Hanover fair, millions are dreading the approach of winter. Sir John Boyd Orr, too honest to be optimistic stated at Geneva that:

"Many millions in Europe will be worse fed, three years after the termination of hostilities, than they were during the war."

Canada and America report bad harvest prospects, and in France the bread ration has been reduced by one-fifth from last Monday, in view of the "deplorable state of the harvest and the unprecedented deficit expected between France's needs and available potential supplies."

Throughout the continent, where the sum total of human misery and suffering must be greater than it was in the so-called Dark Ages, the helpless populations are not only to be sacrificed as pawns in the undeclared war of the Great Powers, they are at the mercy of General Hunger, the most universal and relentless enemy of all.

# THE ARAB WORLD

THE importance of the Arab world in modern affairs can be realised when one thinks of Franco's headache over the escape of Abdel Krim: the endeavour of Jinnah in India to bid for the support of neighbouring Moslem States, and to ask for a Moslem bloc to include Pakistan, thus menacing Hindustan: the desire of Russia to extend its boundaries eastwards, leading to the troubles in Iran and Iraq: the quarrel between Britain and Egypt over the future of the Sudan—whether British-influenced independent or Egyptian-owned: the anxiety of the Emperor of Abyssinia as to whether a vast Nile Valley kingdom of Egypt and Sudan would not be a direct menace to Abyssinia, from whence the Nile flows, and whether an aggressive Egypt-Sudan kingdom—or an unaggressive one wanting to ensure its water supply and life-blood—might not overwhelm his sovereignty (maybe even using the Abyssinian Moslems as "Sudeten" Arabs): the move of Stalin to dislocate Britain's plans for Palestine by toleration of open and silent pogroms throughout Russian-dominated territory, leading to civil war in Palestine, concentration camps in Cyprus, and anti-British speeches in New York.

## Arab Industrial Revolution

Apart from its significance in relation to every political crisis of the major powers, the Arab world is silently undergoing an immense industrial revolution. The placid complacency and lethargy of centuries—the somnolence of the hashish pipe—is being shaken by the big changes that are transforming even the most backward parts. America in particular plays the major role in industrial development—economic imperialism. In the Saudi Arabian feudal tribal atmosphere, the oil boom will soon bring a capitalist revolution on the scale we have seen in "backward" countries such as Japan, Turkey and Russia, which leapt from feudalism

## THE MINERS RESIST

(Continued from page 1)

and resumed work although Grimethorpe bitterly hung on, after the N.C.B. had been forced to withdraw the dismissal notices, and promise to reconsider the question of increased stints.

## THE VALUE OF THE ACTION

As we said at the beginning, better illustrations of the true nature of State and Union could hardly have been given. The Grimethorpe miners, fighting against very real grievances, found who their true friends were—not the union, not the Coal Board but their own fellow workers.

Strangely enough, the Yorkshire miners seem able to differentiate between the Government and the Coal Board. The latter, they say, consist of a Tory caucus of "lads with a bit of book learning", ex-bosses from private companies and reactionary types. While the former, the Labour Government, they still support.

How can this distinction be logically made? The N.C.B. officials have been chosen by the Government to do their work. Given positions of power and authority over the workers, Lord Hyndley and his army of bureaucrats have but one task to-day. With the help of the servile N.U.M., with whom they are plotting to destroy a smaller union among colliery clerks, the N.C.B. are out to screw as much work out of the miners for as little return as the miners will stand for.

The position of the workers (need we repeat it?) in a nationalised industry is every bit as bad as, if not worse than, their position under private ownership. There is only one condition within which the workers can attain their full dignity and satisfaction, and that is a condition of complete and free Workers' Control.

And that could be achieved by spreading the militancy of such men as the Grimethorpe miners, canalising it and organising it into revolutionary syndicalist organisations created and controlled by the workers on the job, existing, not for the purpose of defending the bad against the worse, but with the aim of winning the means of production for the workers, and freedom from dictatorship and exploitation for all!

to industrial slavery almost overnight. The potentialities of oil are not as great everywhere, and some areas may not be so involved in industrialisation at first: but there is a vast cheap labour power which tempts the money barons, aided in their schemes by politicians who see industrialism as a fetish, who think in "Fabian" terms of progress through technical development and whose ideal is the modern State.

The industrial revolution will express itself in political forms: and nationalist politics in particular. At present, Arab political leaders talk exclusively of Palestine because it is the one subject that keeps rival Arab States and rulers together, but the big transformation that is coming will by and large take in the entire Arab world. It is possible too that American imperialism may show its hand more openly than it has done.

Britain has at all strategic points its old agents—the so-called "pro-Arabs" who are only pro-Arab while

the Arabs can be beaten and who lend their gracious patronising friendship to Arab rulers and the Moslem religion: the British ruling class section of generals and diplomats and even strag literary men and Oriental scholars in the style familiarised by Lawrence of Arabia. They have the task of consolidating British Imperialism in independent countries. On similar lines Russian agents work—on trade missions or in Communist parties. American business men work on American business lines—and in Washington. Abdul Rhaman Azzam Pasha has shamelessly declared his endeavours to get American commercial and political intervention in Arab countries.

## Excuses For The Next War

One sees in the political conflicts in the Middle East at least the excuse for World War III: there are many "Belgiums" and "Polands" abounding—one sees the race for economic domination providing the cause for

World War III. One sees the impending giant calamity of an industrial revolution on capitalist lines ruthlessly carried out by a callous ruling and educated class which has become accustomed to looking at the masses through "Western" eyes—as the British Sahib looked at Indian coolies, or the Russian commissar looks at peasants. What a difference it would be if this great transformation were made in a free world—where economically backward people were given the choice of transformation, and allowed to make it as they wished, without compulsion or the desire for economic aggrandisement. Where students, instead of having their eyes on a legal career and rising to the top by politics, renounced their petty ambitions and nationalism, and in the style of the old Russian rebels, "went to the people" with a message of bread and freedom that would shake feudalism as it did in Russia, but not replace it by the inhuman monsters—the State or Capitalist industrialism. Such a possibility is dependent on a libertarian world revolution, and the effect it could have is at present inconceivable.

A.M.

## Middle East Notes

### CONSTITUTIONS FOR SYRIA

"Downing Street: happy spot, where they draw up constitutions for Syria and treaties for China with the same self-complacency and the same success!"

—BENJAMIN DISRAELI ("Tancred")

BY one of those oversights which the most far-seeing statesmen can make, Syria was not included in our list of spoils from the last world war, and it went to France instead. The effect was to make Britain acutely conscious of the Syrians' genuine desire for national independence; and soon after the struggle against the Vichy French administration in those far-off days of five years ago when we armed the Palestinian Jewish underground, the British agents in Syria were able to stir up sufficient feeling to oust the French altogether when the war for liberation was over.

The future in Syria is—like everything political in that part of the world—unsettled, but the latest stories of the 'informed circles' in Cairo are the mooted plans for a 'Greater Syria' behind which is undoubtedly British influence. The plan is that Syria should be enlarged (its present boundaries being quite arbitrarily decided, like those of all its neighbour desert States) and made into a federation which would be self-supporting and more prosperous; and include Palestine (according to some, all Palestine, according to others, a semi-independent Jewish Palestine and/or a semi-independent Arab Palestine) and Transjordan. The King of Transjordan, Abdullah, is very strongly inclined to the idea. He does not in the least mind seeing his State merge into the 'Greater Syria' not as semi-independent but as a component part. It is known that Abdullah was very dissatisfied at the piece of desert he got for his portion in the share-out among the Arab tribal chiefs according to the promises made by Lawrence and other British agents; and he certainly never wished to see himself 'king of the rubble'. Naturally, in supporting 'Greater Syria' he wants to see himself King of Syria, replacing the kingdom of Transjordan he recently assumed in great pomp, and the republic of Syria recently declared with the great jubilation.

He states he wishes to see the end of Zionism but it is expected he would compromise with Zionism if by doing so he got his own way in expanding his influence into a Greater Syria.

His opponent is Fawzi Kawukji who is bitterly anti-Zionist and aims at personal power for himself also. But Kawukji's followers might be seduced from their allegiance if Abdullah could offer them an Arab Palestine, part of Syria. How far the proposed Greater Syria would be anti-Zionist or a compromise with Zionism is not known; but it is generally believed to be included in Downing Street's plan for Palestine and its neighbouring countries.

Say what you like about the plan—after all, nobody will ask your consent—agree or disagree—your opinions are not invited. The point is that to enforce settlement means warfare of some sort. You are expected to back it, by industrial exertion or (for some) by laying down your life. Therefore, you cannot be uninterested and say it has nothing to do with you. But what reason have we for drawing up 'constitutions for Syria and treaties for China'? How is it our affair? Why should the tribal quarrels of the Arab rulers, or the Messianic beliefs of the Zionists for that matter, be affecting us so personally and directly?

So far as 'Greater Syria' is concerned, the poor and oppressed in the countries directly concerned know nothing of politics and in the majority of cases cannot even read what is going on. But we, who are not really in the least affected, have a direct personal responsibility. Such is Imperialism.

A.M.

## Letter from

### Germany

# NAZIS STILL IN OFFICE

The way politics are being conducted to-day by the Allied Powers in Germany can only become comprehensible if another war between the Western Powers and Russia is anticipated. Otherwise it would be completely senseless, and I doubt this in American and British statesmen.

Among the ruins of Germany the Nazis have, for the most part, managed to cling to their former position. In industry, commerce, law, politics and as civil servants in the employment of the Military Government, everywhere they are to be found. Of course, they no longer make decisions entirely on their own account, but they are always in the majority and thus manage to make the most important decisions. The Military Government has removed the most outstanding individuals, but in comparison to the mass these hardly matter. If one puts the proportion of Nazis removed from politics, industry and law at 20%, this is a very high estimate. After Military Government took over, many got the sack, but have been reinstated in the meantime.

## Farce of De-Nazification

By order of the Military Government a committee has been founded in each town, which decides whether Nazis shall be removed from public life. These Committees have no power of punishment—they can merely remove officials from their positions. But it is important to know that the Military Government often cancels the decisions of the committees and reinstates the cashiered Nazis. For instance, in my town the entire police force was dismissed when the Allies marched in, and anti-Nazis were employed instead. But since then nearly all of the latter have been sacked and once more many of the former police officers are doing duty.

The Committee is composed by orders of the Government, and the majority is usually so reactionary that there is little hope of a negative decision. Each of these committees has between 12 and 16 members, and the majority vote counts. Each public corporation of any importance delegates one member, and so does each political party, each church, etc.

In the most favourable circumstances there are at most four votes against continued retention of the ex-Nazi, but these have always eight or twelve against them. Once more the Nazis are reinstated in office, and the whole business is nothing more than a farce. Because of the good treatment they receive from the Military Government, the Nazis become more sure of themselves, and those who are kept in office help the others by every means, even turning the law to their own advantage.

To give an example, the Rhine and Ruhr areas belong to the administrative district of the Provincial Supreme Court at Hamm. There all political prisoners were condemned during Hitler's regime. The number was between 50 and 60 thousand, which does not include the inmates of concentration camps, who had no trials. These prisoners were condemned to from 2 to 15 years imprisonment, sometimes even to death, after having experienced the hell of the Gestapo cellars. None of these prisoners had committed any kind of crime, but they were sent to prison in batches of 50 to 120 at a time. There was no question of examining the facts of the case, to find out what the accused had done; his sentence was fixed the moment he entered the courtroom. The chief of the judges who sat in this court is to-day scot-free; he was not even cashiered, but has merely retired from office because of illness and receives a pension.

## Nazi Political Activity

The official Nazi party has been liquidated, but in each zone there exists a party in which the Nazis prefer to

collect. This party is usually the largest and most influential, since the Nazis with their great fortunes exercise a wide influence in all directions. The political leaders of these parties have naturally never been in official Nazi positions, but they have had economic interests in common with them.

In the Western zones the Nazis prefer to gather in the C.D.U. (Christian Democratic Union). After the allied occupation, the Nazis also became to all appearances very Christian and democratic, just as the reactionaries did in Germany after the first World War. The Fascists of all countries have up to now always used democratic institutions to obtain their ends; in Germany they will even hang the Christian cross round their necks for that purpose. They seem to make a great success of it, since the Churches take up the Nazis when they need assistance, and the petty functionaries of the former Nazi Party propagandise for the churches. The Nazis help each other and act to the detriment of the anti-Nazis as far as possible. Most of them, indeed, manage to live almost as well now as they did under Hitler.

F.W.

## German Health Conference

On the 12th August, a conference of German specialists in public hygiene and micro-biology met at Göttingen University in the British zone of Germany. It was attended by some 225 delegates from all zones, including the Russian zone.

After an intensive discussion of the condition of the German people, this conference came to the conclusion that the present standard of feeding was producing an alarming increase of illness of every kind, and particularly a catastrophic rise in the incidence of tuberculosis, and that these tendencies would continue to get worse unless some radical steps were taken to increase the food supplies of the German people.

In issuing this warning, these medical scientists called on the doctors of the whole world to assist in arousing consciousness of the situation and in obtaining medical and material

aid in this humanitarian work.

It is significant that these conclusions were reached unanimously—even the delegates from the Russian zone participating, which effectively gives the lie to the Stalinist contention that Germans are better off in the Russian zone than elsewhere.

## GREAT DAYS

In Frankfurt a teacher set "My most wonderful day" as the theme for composition for a class of little girls.

This is what some of them wrote, according to the Speyer diocesan journal *Christliche Pilger*:

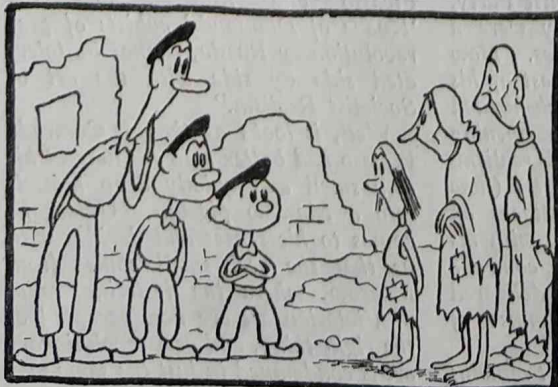
"My most wonderful day was the day when my brother died and I got his coat and shoes."

"My most wonderful day was my birthday, when I was permitted to sleep in my own bed."

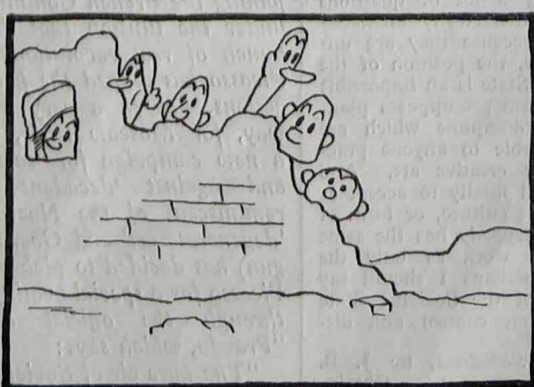
"My most wonderful day was when an Amy (American soldier) gave me a piece of chocolate."

Universe, 1/8/47.

## THE THREE MUSKETEERS—12



## FOR THIS RELIEF . . .



By JOHN OLDAY



## George Woodcock's

THE effect of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, although it shocked very many workers in England, was much less strongly felt here than on the continent. By a coincidence, at about the same time as I read the article in last issue of *Freedom*, I came across a book describing Paris during the 1920's which gave some idea of the depth of that impression.

The book is called *A Narrow Street*, and its author is Elliot Paul, an American writer, who says of the Sacco and Vanzetti execution:

"The only occasion on which I felt utterly ashamed and lonely in the rue de la Huchette was the night of August 22nd, 1927. For in distant Massachusetts that evening, my native State, a 'good mason (sic) and a poor fish pedler' were put to death, after seven years of mental torture, for a crime they had not committed.

"What had been confused and distorted on Beacon Hill was perfectly clear to the inhabitants of my little street, and to the workers of Paris generally, namely, that Sacco and Vanzetti were being murdered because they had been 'anarchist' and foreigners and that Judge Thayer and Alvan T. Fuller destroyed them for the good of their privileged kind.

"Previously it had seemed to me that the slogan of 'Frenchman first and partisan afterwards' had retained its force, but in little side-streets like mine and on the broad boulevard Sebastopol the hand that turned the switch in the Massachusetts prison that night started the preliminary rumblings of a series of quakes that jarred France's hostile inimical classes apart and ended in the death of a nation."

He goes on to describe the deep effect of the execution on people he knew, and the way in which the workers demonstrated angrily in the streets of Paris, while the rich and their right-wing jackals kept behind their shuttered windows, quaking at the anger that everywhere had been aroused against the ruling class over this incident.

Apart from this timely passage, *The Narrow Street*, which has been published by Penguins, will interest anyone who has a feeling for pre-war Paris. The author lived for many years in a working-class street, and his descriptions of the people among whom he moved are acute and evocative. Some of his commentary

on political events is rather woolly, but it is certainly actuated by the good type of American radical feeling. In any case, if you wish to gain or regain the atmosphere of the real working-class Paris of that era, as distinct from the corruption of fashionable Paris, it is an excellent book, and should certainly find its way to the shelf beside *Down and Out in Paris and London* and Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*.

### Sweated Hacks

I have often claimed that the mass of writers are among the worst-paid sections of the intellectual proletariat, but it was only the other day that I discovered to what degree sweated work actually exists among the less prosperous strata of journalists and writers. Some months ago, when I was hard up, I approached the largest literary agents in London, a firm with an international reputation, for casual work reading manuscripts of books submitted to them. At the time they said there was no work available, and I heard nothing further until a few days ago, when they rang me up and asked if I would read a book of critical essays for them. I was about to agree when it occurred to me to ask what fee they intended to pay.

I was told 7/6, and, on my protesting, was informed that this was the standard fee paid to their readers. When one considers that to read a book at all seriously and write a recommendation takes at least a day—unless by chance it is so bad a book as to be thrust aside immediately—it will be seen how low the standard of pay of a literary agent's reader stands in the scale of wages.

Naturally, I refused to work for such a pitiable sum, but the fact that literary agents are able to fix such standard rates shows that there are many writers who are poor enough to accept such work and not militant enough to unite to demand higher pay.

There is a general tendency in the literary trade to "sweat", and this seems to apply more to the old "respectable" undertakings, the standard publishers, agents, and so forth, than to the younger

firms. It is certainly time that writers began to unite to refuse work for publishers or agents who work on a commercial basis and do not pay adequate fees. The commercial publishers' and agents, after all, would be in a pretty fix if they had to write all their own books!

### Trollope Against Conscription

Dipping into Clara Cole's interesting booklet on C.O.'s in the 1914-18 war, *They Did Not Fight—Will You?* I found a quotation from the Victorian novelist, Anthony Trollope, which seemed well worth preservation. Trollope was writing to a friend in 1862 about the methods of conscription which were being used in the American civil war. He said:

"This conscription is very bad. Was it absolutely necessary? My feeling is that a man should die rather than be made a soldier against his will. One's country has no right to demand everything. There is much that is higher and better and greater than one's country. One is patriotic only because one is too small and too weak to be cosmopolitan. If a country cannot get along without a military conscription it had better give up—and let its children seek other ties."

Reading this, I could not help being struck once again by the deterioration in the ethical consciousness of writers during the past fifty years. Trollope was in many ways a typical Victorian, but the idea of human brotherhood meant something real to him, and he considered the freedom of an individual to refuse service something worth struggling for. Admittedly, Trollope himself did not have to struggle a great deal—he was born too fortunately for that—but at least he had a consciousness of the human values which should underly social intercourse. (Perhaps because of that he was able to draw some quite cynical pictures of nineteenth century political life.) But how many distinguished novelists saw fit to protest when conscription was introduced during the last war? A pitifully small handful. And among those writers who claimed to be radicals, the acquiescence in conscription was almost as universal as among those who claimed no leftist sympathies.

Lately, I have been rather bored by

the self-conscious revival of Trollope by our younger critics. But this heavy old Victorian certainly retained radical values which had their social relevance, and which the spread of doctrinaire politics and the turning of writers into propaganda machines (begun by Wells and his kind in 1914) have very nearly suppressed in our own generation of writers.

### New Periodicals

Two new periodicals which should be of interest to readers of *Freedom* are *The Ark* and *Politics and Letters*.

*The Ark* (2/6) is the magazine printed and published by a group of young anarchist writers in California, and it really does give an impression of intense vitality among these American comrades. Besides articles on Anarchism and related subjects, it contains literary contributions by an impressive team of American writers, including Kenneth Patchen, Kenneth Rexroth, Richard Eberhart, Paul Goodman, William Everson, E. E. Cummings and William Carlos Williams, as well as many very lively younger writers. It is a really solid manifestation of the intellectual calibre of the new movement now rising up in America.

*Politics and Letters* (2/6) is a new English quarterly devoted to the relationship between literature and politics. It is uneven in quality and at times exasperatingly donnish in tone, but there are quite interesting studies of such subjects as the social ideas of D. H. Lawrence and W. B. Yeats, and a thoughtful article by James Hemming on the psychological aspects of political and social activity.

*Politics* (2/6) is, of course, an old standby, and one is always certain of finding something of real interest in its columns. The last issue (July—August), is, however, of special interest, because it is devoted wholly to French political writing, and includes work by all the leading French writers who display a social consciousness and some independence of thought. The articles by Camus and Sartre are particularly lively, but all the material shows a high standard of argument and thinking, although I do not find agreement with many of the ideas expressed. However, as an anthology of what the livelier French writers are thinking to-day it fills a gap and provides something which has so far not been available in England.

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## Book Reviews

AT a rally of the Fabian Society in the Albert Hall earlier this year, after the big guns like Attlee and Laski had been fired off, one of the workers at the show got up and said his piece.

It was Sir Thomas Beecham, who had been conducting the orchestra, and as the audience were getting up to leave at the end, he is reported to have stood up and cried angrily something that sounded like: "You have been talking a lot about providing for the ordinary people: don't forget the extraordinary people—like me!"

Now don't run away with the idea that Sir Thomas was angling for a bigger old-age pension, or some other privilege; he was drawing attention to the fact that in all London there is not a single hall suitable for the presentation of performances by a full-size orchestra, and that though plans abound for speeding up the traffic, relaying the roads, cleaning the House of Commons and getting town and country residences ready for the Royal bride and groom, plans for providing Londoners with suitable accommodation to hear good music are conspicuously lacking.

It is of interest therefore to find this matter taken considerably further in a lecture actually delivered to the Fabian Society by J. B. Priestley and recently published in pamphlet form.\*

But it is mainly interesting because Priestley, who is a socialist and supporter of the Labour Party, in outlining the position of the artist in a Socialist State, finds himself raising a lot of questions which he cannot satisfactorily answer—mainly, I submit, because they are unanswerable. In fact, the position of the artist in a Socialist State is an impossible one, because Socialism presupposes planning, control and discipline which are absolutely unacceptable to anyone practising sincerely any creative art. And since I am prepared finally to accept as satisfactory only that culture, or form of society in which everybody has the same relationship to his work as only the artist has to-day, perhaps I should say that the existence of the Socialist State presupposes planning, control and dis-

\**The Arts under Socialism*, by J. B. Priestley. Turnstile Press, 1/- . Obtainable from Freedom Press.

# The Artist and the Socialist State

cipline which will then be wholly unacceptable to anyone.

I must admit that when I picked up this pamphlet it was with the misgiving that I should find that in the wording of the title (*The Arts Under Socialism*), "Under" would be the operative word. But I must give Priestley the credit for having sympathies with the artist first and the State second, although he makes the usual Socialist confusion about the nature of the State. For instance, he starts off by making clear that he means by the State "the political organisation of a national society and not the community itself, the total of all its individuals", but only sees it as a benevolent organisation existing, it seems, to nurse the welfare of the community. Whereas we have, in fact, seen the State as the very opposite of that wherever it exists.

However, even if Priestley misunderstands the nature of the State, he does not misunderstand the nature of the artist, and my heart warms to him when he points to the misgivings the artist has

for the conception of a planned society, and goes on to say, "He is ready to reject the devil of commercial exploitation but cannot look forward to the deep sea of Arts Councils and Committees. Do not make haste to blame him, for he has his own private demon to satisfy, his own terribly difficult tasks to perform, and must of necessity, to get the job done, be something of an individualist and an anarchist." And later, in the same strain—"That tidy housewife, Socialism, will not take as a husband that disreputable fellow, who is probably an anarchist at heart, who keeps no regular hours, whose values are strange and disturbing, the creative artist; who, in his turn, will refuse to settle down, fill in all his forms and pay his dues, will find no inspiration in this vast hygienic beehive, and will take to drink and despair. I have said that the State must leave the artist alone with his work after creating reasonable conditions for him."

As one who has for long maintained that the artist must be an anarchist, I

welcome this admission from a socialist writer, and it is a pity that J. B. Priestley's view of a new society is such a mundane one that he merely sees the artist passing from dependence on the rich patron to a similar patronage by sympathetic individuals who are to be expected to put pressure upon the committees of the Socialist State to "help" their favourites.

I forget who it was who said "Art only flourishes in a plentitude of freedom", but whoever it was put his finger on the spot. Give the artist freedom from economic restriction and freedom to work in a society of equals similarly free, and society will not get the worst of the bargain. Artists have always been prepared to give more than they receive. Their burning will to create is the only real incentive and the only compulsion tolerable. Give these anarchists Anarchy, and culture will mean something more than a word in a Mayfair parlour!

As a postscript to his lecture Priestley suggests several petty reforms calculated to relieve the present cramped conditions under which artists of all kinds labour to-day. More materials, more paper for books, better premises and so forth are obvious necessities. His suggestions for their provision now are simply obvious. But he wonders why the present government are not doing anything for the artists. Is it not because they are unimaginative, mediocre people grappling with problems too big for them and unable to sense the real needs of a war-weary world? For, as Priestley says, "Never did men need the artist more than they do to-day."

PHILIP SANSON.

## Pablo the Decadent

Some time ago, Pablo Picasso, the artist who has done more to introduce revolutionary techniques into painting than any other painter of our age, was led away by human credulity (to give the most charitable explanation) into joining the French Communist Party, under the illusion that they were a bunch of real revolutionaries. Now Picasso has reaped the harvest of his actions, but in a very back-handed way, for Moscow itself, in opening a new campaign for 'social realism' and against 'decadent art' (how reminiscent of the Nazi attacks on 'degenerate art' and Goering with his gun) has decided to pick out comrade Picasso for a special beating, delivered through the official columns of "Pravda, which says:

"The pure air of Soviet art remains in danger of pollution from epidemics

of the putrescent bourgeois formalistic art of the West . . . The existence in our country of a school representing the admirers of bourgeois decadent art, who acknowledge the spiritual paternity of the French formalists, Picasso and Matisse, and the 'Knave of Diamonds' cubists of pre-revolutionary Russia, cannot be tolerated side by side with the art of Socialist Realism."

Well, it looks as though Comrade Picasso had better hold his nose at his own smell and quietly drop himself into a Moscow pig-bin. Unless he comes to his senses and decides with us that the real smell comes from Moscow, where the festering relics of Victorian art are now accepted as the right thing, and real revolutionary art is condemned in just the same way as it was by the Nazis.

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# THE FIGHT AGAINST PUBLIC OPINION

GEORGE WOODCOCK'S article "Public Opinion"—independently of the controversy with George Orwell—raises some interesting points. In point of fact it cannot be denied that Public Opinion to-day is an article that is bought and sold in a capitalist society or nationalised in a State society, and to a very large degree it cannot be considered as anything independent at all; it is simply conditioned by the society under which we live. The merest glance at a Fascist State shows how people can be conditioned from childhood up to believe glaring untruths simply by constant repetition and totalitarian propaganda can impress itself not merely on the "master race" but even on its other victims. We can see that too in the imperialist State where the colour prejudice of "white" superiority is not only indoctrinated into the "white" but also in the other "colours".

It would not be impossible to invent a game whereby after a few quizzes one could guess the newspaper somebody read! The slogans and catchwords—and even more, the imputations—put over by the Press help to mould public opinion. As regards "imputations" one has only to look at the Radio and Cinema—to a lesser degree because less influential, the pulpit, stage and literature—where certain assumptions are ground into the public. Note, for example, American film types. The kindly R.C. priest; the genial cop; the well-intentioned employer of labour; the lank, fanatical agitator; the foreign villain; the handsome young hero from college with plenty of money and no brains; the bespectacled figure of fun—the person who actually

thinks; the happy-go-lucky childish Negro servant; all have been so carefully and seductively associated into our minds that we almost begin to expect the real character to act to form (for instance, somebody once said to me, "But you don't look like an Anarchist!") just as English music hall audiences begin laughing as soon as they see somebody in a parson's dog-collar. Look at the British radio with its terrific class propaganda; the announcer with the lah-de-dah accent that passes off as standard English, while the average man's accent whatever it may be is ridiculed to such an extent that we begin to take it for granted that a man with a Scots or Lancashire accent is automatically going to tell funny stories. It is deliberately intended to give us an "opinion"; to make us think that "Oxford English is English and the rest of us are foreigners!"—in other words, to make us embarrassed and ill-at-ease in the presence of someone from the governing classes. A trick that has not lost its force in the army, for instance.

How can one truly speak of public opinion as an independent force in a capitalist society? And one cannot overlook that from a different angle public opinion may well be "moulded" even in a free society—for instance, by writers—but at least there will be no venal influence at work to direct it. It will be the case in a free society that a man may still have to overcome the prejudices that may cling to his fellows like ghosts from the past. There is no way a free society could "legislate" against that. But what we can say is that since food and clothing and housing would be at the disposal of all, there would be none of the evils

## Letters to the Editors

### FROM A GERMAN COMRADE

COMRADES,

I am German and am learning to write English only since several months. My father has always been an anarchist and I am also a fighter for the same ideal.

And now something about Germany. I am afraid it is for me impossible, being only a worker and without much knowledge of the English language, to describe to you the indescribable pain and misery that has befallen the German people during the tyranny of fascism and its institutions of violence. What has happened here in atrocities during Hitler's time could only find the like in Dante's Hell and Purgatory, and only such a poet may describe it.

The national-socialist confusion that reflects the product of a hyperbolic megalomania and a state direction of Marxist stamp has of course contributed the great part in what happened, for it raised the faith in the state to complete idolatry. Faith has stoned the prophets, burned the heretics, murdered the Jews, denounced parents and friends. Faith is the obstacle to critical thinking.

About the economic and political situation and its future shaping I am not yet

able to give a clear picture. Up to now not much has changed concerning the revival of industry and economy, commerce and transport, and hunger is an everyday matter. The former political parties have, since the collapse of fascism, returned to the political platform, and to their own spheres of activity, revived again their political and trade-union organisations, exposed to the perpetually believing electors their community, district and county reconstruction schemes. The elections took place and then, according to the number of votes obtained, they took the leading offices. But so far these parties, and the trade unions under their influence, have done nothing at all for a new settlement of social life. In spite of all their present assertions, the trade union leaders cannot liberate themselves from the old personalities and their one-sided dogmas.

The S.P.D. (social democratic) and KPD (communist) parties fight for predominance within the new German Trade Unions, whose members, as in the past, are still only considered as voting animals for the parliamentary struggle of the parties.

Because of the great communication and traffic difficulties, I have not yet had the opportunity to find here in Germany any connection with comrades of our movement. The loss of comrades like Pierre Ramus and Rudolf Rucker, and those like Eric Mühsam who could really write and were murdered in the concentration camps during the reign of Hitler, has left our movement in Germany a void which will not be so easily and rapidly filled.

Let us hope, however, that the German working people, which is deeply prejudiced by its faith in the State, will liberate itself from this faith and, together with all the other peoples, destroy the Chinese wall of the State capitalist economy, in order to reach the immediate liberty assured by economic independence. But, in order to accomplish this, the German people must resolve itself directly for the destruction of all moral and material obstacles, that it may build the real social order of anarchy.

Lebenstadt.

K.E.

## 'PROGRESSIVE' SCHOOLING

DEAR COMRADES,

In the issue of 9th August, Tony Gibson writes to interest readers of *Freedom* in a progressive school. As an experiment in education on free lines this would be of interest, but perhaps our comrade could give us more information on the ultimate result of such schools. From what I have seen of the finished product of what is called 'progressive schooling' (and I admit in advance that probably a lot goes by that name without being so) so far from the Anarchist parent seeing his child grow up in free surroundings unhampered by the State influences at work on him elsewhere, what he does see is the child cut off from his normal environment which he would get in the average school (that is to say, the society of children on the same level as himself) and growing up among the sons and daughters of the middle-class liberals and adopting their social outlook with their dash of political liberalism to it. The trouble is that a private school has to depend on the cash customers and plenty of them come for the snob value of it.

Whereas at the average school with its admitted defects of State control, the child with a background at home of social consciousness, learns to struggle against the State even if only in (what may seem) minor things like refusing to march past and salute the flag on Empire Day, join the various military training outfits, or similar activities.

For that reason I think it far better for a youngster to stand on his own feet and—if he is going to be a rebel—learn to be one himself; rather than to retire from the fray in a private school which does not cater for the children of the average man (partly through economic necessity).

I would not say however that I disagree with the idea of a Free School, but only if it contains the same social elements as the retrogressive council or State-aided school.

Perhaps Tony Gibson would care to make some comments on this since he probably knows more about progressive schools than I do; but I think he will admit the disappointing results of, for instance, A. S. Neill's scholars as far as their subsequent careers were concerned.

K.A.B.

## WORKING TO RULE

Scene: A provincial Ministry of Labour employment exchange. A customer waits for attention; and assistant is writing on the other side of the counter.

Customer (becoming impatient after a long wait): "Aren't you going to attend to me?"

Assistant: "You haven't pressed the bell."

Customer, noticing a bell on the counter, presses it.

Assistant, laying down his pen: "Can I help you?"

*Evening Standard, 18/8/47.*

## SOLIDARITY

*Sucked In.* In Lodi, Calif., saddened by the plight of fellows inside the local jail, outsider Jacob Hohnstein tried to spread a little cheer by siphoning in slugs of booze, got caught at it, became an insider himself.

*Time, 26/8/47.*

## FELLOW PERFORMER

The security guards failed to keep one interloper from the top-secret lecture given yesterday by Field Marshal Montgomery at the Victoria Palace.

A black and white rabbit hopped on to the stage and almost to Lord Montgomery's feet, then began a tactical withdrawal. It had nearly reached the wings before Monty noticed it. "Did I see a rabbit?" said he.

The rabbit is a minor performer in the Crazy Gang show at the theatre.

*Evening Standard.*

## MANŒUVRE—

### NOT MAGNANIMITY

By making sweeping changes in the Soviet Zone denazification laws—excepting all but war criminals from prosecution or forfeiture of office—Russia has this week-end buried the hatchet with the "little fuhrers" of Germany.

The move is interpreted here as a significant step in winning over not only the Germans of its own zone, but also of the British, U.S. and French areas to Communism, which for a long time has been losing ground in Germany.

The Soviet decision is also, no doubt, the first manoeuvre for the London Conference of the Big Four in November.

*News Chronicle, 18/8/47.*

## GETTING THE HAMMER (AND SICKLE)

A "reshuffle", with all the characteristics of a minor but significant purge, is now under way in the higher Soviet administrative posts of the Russian zone.

Assistants of the Soviet C.-in-C., Gen. Sokolovsky—his political adviser, Semjonov, his principal deputy, Gen. Kurtschin, and his Chief of Staff, Col.-Gen. Dratwin—have been relieved of their offices and recalled to Moscow.

*News Chronicle, 13/8/47.*

# Through the Press

## TALL STORY

If the Labour Government stays in power another ten years children will be 3 in. taller than the previous generation through better feeding, Dr. Summerskill, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Food, said yesterday.

*Daily Mirror, 1/8/47.*

## SCHOOL FOR DICTATORS

As a protest against a new regulation compelling them to attend all lectures, many Frankfurt university students sign the classroom registers with the signatures of Hitler, Borman, and other missing Nazi leaders.

*Evening Standard, 8/8/47.*

## TRUTH ABOUT SEX . . .

A new Army publication called *Truth About Sex* says that thousands of men of the British Army of the Rhine "are traitors to themselves, to their families, and to their nation."

It adds, says BUP: "Civilisation is tottering. The threatened crash is due to the millions of loose family bricks in the foundation. Families are being split up and home life is being eaten away by selfishness and immorality."

"Needless to say, the recent war has helped in the destruction, but the greatest modern threat is the vast increase of sexual immorality . . . the numbers of divorces and illegitimate children tell their own sordid story."

The pamphlet debunks the theory that a man must have "experience" before marriage and that clean living leads to sterility.

Penicillin, it says, is not the cure-all for disease. Medical authorities now realise that penicillin is not so effective as was at first thought. It fails to cure a very considerable proportion of cases.

German girls have the reputation of being 'easy'. Far too many soldiers are taking advantage of them. German girls deserve all our sympathy and understanding.

"That they are 'easy' is not difficult to believe, and to-day three out of every four you meet are infected with disease. It is only a cad or a man who is acting thoughtlessly who can take advantage of their plight."

Suggestions made in the pamphlet are: "Don't look at pictures of scantily-clad pin-up girls; find a good hobby; and be a Christian."

*Star, 13/8/47.*

So sex is as simple as that?

## IDIOT'S DELIGHT

Four new, partly-built houses at Dunstable, Beds, are to be destroyed under the noses of the working families who paid deposits on them. It is being done, said the builder yesterday, because he wants "to draw attention to a ridiculous situation."

Mr. William Gray, secretary of Greens (The Builders), Brixton, London, then explained: "Our workmen will pull them down, ruining hundreds of bricks."

"We'll do it because the Dunstable Borough Council rejected our application for a licence. The case had been explained by Mr. Evelyn Walkden, M.P., to Mr. Aneurin Bevan. It was Mr. Bevan who referred the responsibility back to the council."

"These four houses were being built in advance of the issue of a permit—as twelve others have been."

"This method was my idea. I call it showing foresight."

"Through acting ahead of licence we have been able to house eighteen families who might have waited indefinitely."

Mr. Seath, deputy borough surveyor of Dunstable, said last night: "If Mr. Gray wants to pull houses down, that's his affair."

"He has had a large share of building permits. There are other builders to be considered."

"We have houses here which have been standing unfinished since before the war, and the owners still unable to obtain a permit to finish them."

*Daily Mirror, 26/8/47.*

Ridiculous it not the word! The sheer irresponsibility of this affair—from all sides, even that of the prospective tenants—takes some believing.

## WHOOPEE!

A train on New York's underground went crazy to-day. It passed stations where it should have stopped. It stopped in tunnels. It went 60 miles an hour. Reason: Motorman drunk.

*Daily Express, 22/8/47.*

## MAN OF SENSE

Hundreds of cucumbers and several bushels of apples were to-day given away by a Horsham fruiterer, Mr. C. A. Black. "I knew I could not sell them," he said, "and I do not want to let them rot."

*Evening Standard, 22/8/47.*

## SACRED

A landlord who took the lock off a woman tenant's door because, he said, he must have constant access to the room "in case of fire" was told yesterday by Miss Dorothy Scott-Stokes, chairman of Lambeth Rent Tribunal: "In ordinary decency a woman should be able to close her bedroom door and this lock must be restored."

Ald. H. Wilmot, another member of the tribunal, told the landlord, Mr. Christopher Feekery: "That room is her home and in this country we regard a home as sacred to the individual."

The tenant, Mrs. Katie McGee, who paid 25s. a week rent for a room in Milkwood Road, Herne Hill, S.E., which she shared with her two daughters, aged 18 and 15, and her six-year-old son, had her rent cut to 12s. 6d. She got three months' security of tenure.

*News Chronicle, 21/8/47.*

One room for four of them—and we hear cant about it being sacred!

## MUTUAL AID

With 23 days left before the ejection order obtained by Norwich Corporation against her can be enforced, Mrs. Harty, of Woodcock Road, Norwich, was to-day considering two offers of help she has received from fellow Londoners.

In spite of Judge Carey Evan's description of the corporation's attitude as "almost callous" the housing committee confirmed their decision.

Mr. Alfred Butcher, writing from James Cottages, Station Road, Hounslow, has offered to take two of the boys.

"I am a widower, aged 62," he says. "I have a five-roomed cottage. One of the boys could come for a time to see if he likes it and I will try to help with the fares."

Mrs. Harty told me she is grateful for the offer, but is reluctant to split up the family.

The other offer is from a London family squatting at an aerodrome in East Suffolk. They say: "We are Londoners who have been bombed out, too. Take a chance and come and join us here. There is a hut to spare."

This suggestion appeals to Mrs. Harty, but she is anxious about living in a hut because the baby, Jillian, a year old, had pneumonia last winter.

Meanwhile, the petition of tenants in the Hartys' neighbourhood has reached more than 500 signatures. It demands that the family be given accommodation in the city and is to be presented to the Housing Committee on Tuesday.

*News Chronicle, 25/8/47.*

## DON'T CALL ME EARLY, MOTHER

Young people are slack about church and communion partly because there's no one to wake them in time on Sundays, says Canon Hassard-Short, of St. Luke's Bromley, Kent.

*Daily Mirror, 1/8/47.*

## THE REGULAR THING

The farmers blame the holiday season for low consumption and say they cannot sell the food.

Ministry of Agriculture attitude is that it is better to have a glut than a shortage. "Ploughing back into the land occurs every year," a spokesman said.

There are plenty of herrings as well. Sixty-four boats landed a record catch for the season of 5,500,000 last week.

*Sunday Pictorial, 10/8/47.*

Nice of the Min. of Ag. to think abundance better than shortage, isn't it?

## BOOKS FOR SALE

Copies of a book by Francois Rabelais, 16th century French satirist, monk and doctor of medicine, intended for a Port Elizabeth bookseller, have been stopped by the Customs authorities.

The Minister of the Interior has banned the import of the works by Rabelais into the Union, and the bookseller has appealed against the ruling.

Despite this Customs action copies of Rabelais's works are on the shelves of at least one shop in the centre of the city for anyone to buy.

*Evening Standard, 8/8/47.*

Copies of *Mein Kampf* are again being sold "under the counter" in many bookshops in the American zone, at 1,000 marks a copy, American soldiers paying \$15, reports the Jewish World News Agency. Efforts to track down the Nazi group supplying the bookshops have proved fruitless.

*Jewish Chronicle, 8/8/47.*

## EFFICIENCY

Ministers in nearly every country tell their people they must tighten their belts and work hard to make imports pay for exports—and then this sort of thing happens.

A man in Jutland, Denmark, wanted a special kind of machine for his factory, but could not find any available in Denmark. So he made inquiries abroad, and found they had just what he wanted in Czechoslovakia. After taking a good deal of trouble and filling a lot of forms, he got his machine.

When he unpacked it he found it had been manufactured at Odense on Funen, only about 30 miles from his factory.

*Leader, 30/8/47.*

# A BASIS FOR ORGANISATION

THE British Anarchist movement, which is so fertile intellectually, is strangely barren of organisational capability, and it is a sad fact that many Anarchists have reconciled themselves to the inevitability of this situation. Yet it would be imagined that an ideological system so universal in appreciation, and one expressive of the reality principle in social affairs might awaken a greater response from the community generally.

The question thus arises of the application of propaganda technique. Does the fault lie with the movement in ignoring the ideological character of the community whose co-operation can alone bring into being a free society? Is it prepared to adapt the organisational method to the type of individual with whom it has to deal? The problem here stated involves, not principles, but practice, and it is suggested that the experiences of the movement in East London indicate a form of activity which might well be emulated elsewhere.

The handful of individuals comprising the N.E. London Group when compelled because of accommodation difficulties to gravitate Eastwards, found themselves not only virtually isolated from the main current of Anarchist activities, but complete strangers in a district where hitherto no

movement had ever existed.\* Under such circumstances, complacency would have been suicidal and as the result of steady work a lively group was brought into being. Furthermore, the overflow from the original group has made possible the formation of yet another, situated further East, and its nucleus has been established.

How was this brought about? The answer lies in the actions of the group which refused to be isolated, which made contacts in other movements, but above all in the state of mind of the young men and women on the fringe of the socialist and pacifist movements, who, aware of the rottenness of contemporary society had approached very closely to the Anarchist position of their own accord. These people recognised in Anarchism the answer to a question that is ignored by the orthodox movements, and perceived in its principles a key to the whole problem of mankind.

Furthermore, it was soon evident that the paper *Freedom* had gone ahead of us. It was circulating in the local PPU together with other Anarchist literature, and, in addition to this, once a meeting place had been established within reach, individual readers came forward from all quarters.

In view of these circumstances it was not difficult to build up a group, yet at the same time it became obvious that an organisation whose membership contained so many degrees or stages of appreciation of Anarchist thought, could not be confined within narrow margins, and therefore the discussion group became the medium best suited to our purpose. Within the group, social, moral, cultural and political problems are discussed in the light of libertarian thought. Discussion is keen, often ruthless, but always good-humoured. The State is dissected with avidity, and as the true character of society is exposed, there is a growing recognition of the validity of Anarchist principles.

The advantages of the small group are enormous. Firstly, the size permits of meeting in the private houses of sympathisers, and thus all overheads, rent, etc., are avoided. Secondly, the intimate contact which the small group alone preserves, creates a sense of real comradeship free of acrimony. Within such a group are gathered individuals who are concerned with the social question not merely as an abstraction, but in its relation to their own personal existence. Such comrades are deeply sincere and serious in their views because they are acutely aware how their fates are woven in the tragedy of society.

The local group regards the discussion group as the advance party of the Anarchist movement. Its object is to break the web of illusions which make social acquiescence possible, and to prepare the soil for the reception of Anarchist ideas. Its end is the creation of the active, socially conscious Anarchist, possessed of the will and ability to carry his mission into further fields, and thereby to multiply the efforts of the initial group.

It is suggested that the groundwork of a numerically large Anarchist movement can be laid by similar means. A movement of small, compact and loosely related groups can expand without sacrifice of depth, and provided that it proceeds intelligently, will be met with sympathy rather than resentment. The establishment of such discussion groups could play as effective a part in our sphere as did the Left Book Clubs in the past, in theirs, and to infinitely greater ends. As an outer ring of the movement, they would be the means of introducing the movement into areas where it is at present unknown, and would provide the opportunity for the hundreds of scattered readers of *Freedom* to get down to really valuable work.

The writer has in mind the establishment of a liaison between these comrades and suggests that a bureau operated through the columns of *Freedom* would be invaluable in linking-up individuals who, though resident close to one another, are often unaware of each other's existence. Freedom Discussion Groups would be of equal service in extending the circulation of the paper, and our literature generally. In no sense could they fail to add to the influence and extent of Anarchist ideas.

Organically, British Anarchism is in its infancy. It is within the power of the readers of *Freedom* to bring it to maturity.

ERIC MAPLE.

\*Our comrade is evidently unaware of the active group centred round *Rocker's The Worker's Friend*. As a paper *The Worker's Friend* no longer exists, but the group carries on.

[Readers who are interested in the suggestions put forward in this article should communicate with Eric Maple, c/o Freedom Press, 27, Red Lion Street, W.C.1. —Eds.]



"BUT WE'RE YOUR FRIENDS!"

## Letter from a Comrade

# THE LAST 50 YEARS

DEAR COMRADES,

I feel I must take exception to the statements made recently in *Freedom* that no fundamental advance has been made in Anarchist thought in the last fifty years—since "Mutual Aid". While self-deprecation and modesty are all very fine, it would be a pity if these admirable virtues prevented anyone from reading any Anarchist literature published in the last fifty years, during which the major part of Anarchist literature has appeared and practically all its foremost theoreticians have lived.

Read's original statement might be taken as an expression of opinion that there was in fact no worthwhile reading in modern Anarchist literature except Kropotkin; an opinion with which I disagree, but which could be held. But C.W. asked if we could set aside the activities of the last 50 years (the movements symbolised by Zapata, Makhnow, the Spanish Revolution, etc.) because they had not found a literary expression, and the editors surprisingly answer that the movement cannot "indefinitely neglect" to incorporate the lessons of these revolutionary experiments in anarchist general theory.

Now this is a mis-statement of fact, and it would be a great pity to deter people from what has been written by such modesty.

Admittedly, a lot has not been translated into English, and there is a wide field for this in years to come. For instance, Volin's exhaustive study of the

"Makhnowist" movement is an example that immediately comes to mind in refuting C.W.'s statement that this movement has been neglected by Anarchist historians and theoreticians; although admittedly it is not yet in English. Again, to say that "no advance" has been made in the "fundamentals" of Anarchist thought in fifty years would be to assume that syndicalism, which had little place in Anarchist theory fifty years ago, had no place in it to-day; whereas in point of fact not only has syndicalism been expressed in activity, it has also been incorporated in Anarchist theory.

To mention all the Anarchist writers whose works are available in English would take too long—Malatesta and Berkman spring to the mind at once. But let us not go back fifty years, but only ten. Are you justified in claiming there has been no 'literary expression' of Anarchist activity in the last ten years? To go no farther than the English language, one has only to glance through

the files of *Spain and the World*, *War Commentary* and *Freedom* to find a wealth of original expression and re-statement of Anarchist ideas; which would make a very impressive sum total if it were in book form.

I am quite willing to concede your point if by 'literature' you mean of a certain literary quality; but as Kropotkin pointed out, it is impossible for the revolutionary theoretician, who has to sit down to cram an essay on the origins of law into a penny pamphlet, or to fill so many lines in the next issue of a paper, to achieve the same style as the genuine 'literary man'. But so far as original thought and re-statement of general Anarchist principles in the terms of recent events, are concerned, it would be misleading to state that we have nothing to offer. Not only does a wealth of untranslated material lie waiting (of which perhaps somebody else could supply a far more comprehensive list than I could myself) but it is unwise to neglect one's own doorstep.

## The Campaign Against Street Traders

FOR some weeks now, the press has been indulging in a widespread campaign against barrow boys and other street traders. There has been a quite deliberate attempt to give the impression that every street trader is also a black marketeer and receiver of stolen goods. There have also been vastly exaggerated statements of the profits which are made by barrow boys.

Under cover of this barrage of prejudiced propaganda, the authorities have now begun to move in against the traders. The worst instance of official interference has come from Brighton, where the barrow boys have been forbidden to trade in 103 streets of the town, because of alleged traffic obstruction, and have been restricted to 10 streets at the back of the town where their living will be materially less.

Elsewhere the campaign goes on in a less overt manner, by greatly increased police interference. Last Saturday, for instance, I went to Camden Town, a well-known barrow pitch of long standing. There were about ten policemen patrolling in a very small area, continually moving the barrows on, and making it extremely difficult both for the traders and their customers. No doubt the same thing was going on at the same time in many other parts of London.

What is the reason for this campaign? Clearly the talk about obstruction is ridiculous, as Camden High Street, for instance, is a very wide street, and a line of barrows on each side of the road would make no appreciable difference to the fairway for traffic. The same, of course, applies to Brighton, a town of particularly wide streets. Nor are the general public opposed to the traders; on the contrary, most shoppers find it of great convenience to be able to buy fruit and other goods from barrows rather than stand in queues at greengrocers' shops. In London I have noticed housewives often show their solidarity by buying from barrow boys under the noses of the police, while in Brighton no less than ten thousand residents signed a petition against the ban.

The stories of large profits are also greatly exaggerated. Barrow boys rarely sell above the controlled prices, and for

uncontrolled goods their prices are usually well below those of ordinary shops. For instance, the other day I noticed that peaches were being sold from barrows at 3d. and 4d. each, while in a greengrocer's shop just round the corner similar fruit were being sold at 10d. Which was the real profiteer? To my mind, while money trading exists, these men perform a real service by attacking the monopoly of the shopkeepers, and by providing fruit at a price which comes near the pockets of working class buyers.

The only people against them are, clearly enough, the shopkeepers and the authorities, the former because they interfere with their own high profits, the latter because the barrow boys are an independent section of the community who, although they are not averse from hard work—as anyone who has tried to push a loaded fruit barrow will know—are disinclined to be regimented into the kind of work the authorities think best for them. At present they may be making a good turnover—but there are times when street trading is, particularly in the winter, an arduous and unremunerative job. Perhaps they make hay while the sun shines. But which of their critics fail to do so? The shopkeepers who charge double prices for their goods? The Labour M.P.s who voted themselves a £400 a year rise in wages? The hack journalists who will misrepresent any issue for a few guineas?

The freedom of the streets is an important one for us all to maintain. Minority literature sellers have long been the victims of official interference. Now any man who wishes to make an independent living without submitting to labour directions and factory discipline is to be included, and street traders are to be forced into industrial slavery by their means of an independent living being taken away from them. The large capitalists remain and flourish under a Labour government; their very small-time rivals are being squeezed out to render the people in general more dependent than ever on the state-capitalist monopoly of the necessities of living.

## Meetings and Announcements

### UNION OF ANARCHIST GROUPS:

### LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP

Sunday Evening Lectures  
Every Sunday at 7.30 p.m.  
at 8, Endsleigh Gardens, W.C.1

### COMMENCEMENT OF NEW SERIES

SEPT. 14th Mat Kavanagh  
"What is Anarchism?"  
SEPT. 21st Sylvia Pankhurst

### N.E. LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP

NEXT MEETING,  
at Flat 3, 43, New Wanstead  
(Nr. Green Man, E.11)

TUESDAY, SEPT. 9th, at 7.30  
It is hoped to have a speaker from the Summer School to open the discussion.

Any enquiries to:—  
27 Red Lion Street, W.C.1.

### GLASGOW ANARCHIST GROUP

Open Air Meetings  
at Maxwell Street, (Argyll St.)  
every Sunday at 7 p.m.

Speakers: Eddie Shaw Frank Leech  
Preston Clements

### BIRMINGHAM ANARCHIST GROUP

Regular fortnightly public discussion meetings are held on Sundays at 7 p.m.  
at Dick Sheppard House,  
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## From One Reader To All Others

Dear Comrades,

I've just read "Freedom" and wish to congratulate all concerned in the 23rd of August issue.

The article that was of most interest to me, and I do hope others too, was "The Different Crisis".

I wrote a few weeks ago suggesting to your Editorial Board to raise the price. Others objected, but when our movement can only produce one booklet, through lack of finance, then WE are to blame. Surely our readers could do more by sending a small subscription once in a while?

I suggest to readers to make an effort at the week-end by making a donation to the Press Fund.

Yours in the struggle,  
Leeds. G.L.

### Press Fund

August 16th—31st, 1947

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