

# Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"Those who are lacking in good will or who remain adolescent, are never free under any form of society."  
SIMONE WEIL

## A T.U.C. Testimonial for Churchill O'BRIEN'S MESSAGE

ON the eve of his departure for New York, Mr. Winston Churchill, of the House of Marlborough, leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister of Great Britain, received the following message from Mr. Tom O'Brien, president of the British Trades Union Congress:

"You carry with you the good will of the workers of Britain and the Commonwealth in your courageous mission to the United States.

They will watch with encouragement the outcome of these and other matters you are to have with General Eisenhower for a just and practical solution of the complex economic problems of the Commonwealth, and also in relation to the problems of the United States.

We pray, too, that your visit will reinforce a strong faith in the principles of the T.U.C. as the only solid basis for a true lasting peace among the nations of the world. Bon voyage, a happy New Year and a pleasant holiday."

The Prime Minister replied: "Thank you so much for your most kind message, which I greatly value."

For many workers, the publication of O'Brien's message must have been greeted with a gasp of astonishment. When the workers of the trade union movement—let alone of "Britain and the Commonwealth"—consulted as to whether they wanted their good wishes sent to Mr. Churchill? How many workers thought the visit "courageous"; how many prayed; how many hoped for a "just and practical recognition and solution of the complex economic problems" facing the Commonwealth and the United States from a meeting between an arch-reactionary politician and an ex-General?

Probably not one of Britain's ten million trade unionists, outside of Transport House, thought for one moment along the lines described by Tom O'Brien. But to be astonished that such a message could be sent is to show complete misunderstanding of the attitude and rôle of present-day trade unionism.

Such blatant "crawling" is, certainly, somewhat unexpected. One would expect the experienced leaders of the unions to be more subtle than that—although Sir Will Lawther's famous remark, "Shut yer gob!" at last year's Conference at Margate, was certainly

not very subtle! That, however, was at a gathering of the clans, at an internal discussion, if discussion is the right word, even though it was a public conference. One might quite reasonably, therefore, have regarded it as right and proper for trade unionists to tell each other to shut their gobs, but quite wrong to send friendly messages to the leader of the capitalists' traditional party in Parliament.

I say "traditional" because, of course, the Labour Party is also a capitalist's party in Parliament, only it is not traditionally so. It is so by adoption, and that is why, for us who see things in that way, there was no astonishment at hearing of O'Brien's message, only a raising of eyebrows that he could be so obvious with his dirty work.

For naturally the message has led to protests. Not only from rank-and-file workers who disagree with its sentiments, but also from fellow-leaders of O'Brien's on the T.U.C. who, while agreeing with the sentiments, do not think it should have been said so openly. Such a one is Robert Willis, general secretary of the London Society of Compositors, who complained that O'Brien had created an "embarrassing" situation.

The matter had been aggravated by O'Brien's reaction to the first protest. This came from the City of London Branch of the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen, who

called for O'Brien's resignation for sending such a "disgraceful" telegram. O'Brien was unrepentant, saying:

"My message was necessary, not because it was Mr. Churchill, but because no Prime Minister of Britain ought to go to the United States to discuss economic matters affecting Britain, the Commonwealth, and America, without his knowing and the American people knowing that he speaks not only for the Tory Party but for British workers."

"The only people who will protest," he added, "will be the Communists." Deeper into the mire, you see, and to try and make sure that the T.U.C. as a whole was not committed to this public back-slapping of Winston, Willis came to the rescue. In an article in the *London Typographical Journal*, he wrote:

"Things are coming to a very serious pass when a man holding the high and responsible office of T.U.C. chairman can make a statement which he knows would be controversial, and then attempt to smother all opposition by labelling as Communists any who might have doubts as to the wisdom of his action. One can only conclude by saying that Mr. O'Brien's message and his subsequent statement has created an embarrassing situation and that he has brought no credit to the high position which he at present occupies."

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## ISSUES IN THE PRITT CASE

THE judgment of the Supreme Court of Nairobi dismissing the contempt of court charge against Mr. D.N. Pritt is a considerable triumph for the latter. Pritt had contended that to criticize the government of Kenya for imposing certain conditions on the trial of Jomo Kenyatta was no reflection on the resident magistrate trying the case, and the Supreme Court upheld his contention and dismissed that of the Attorney-General charging him with contempt of Court.

Pritt argued that to hold the trial in a closed district, such as Kapenguria was, had the effect of excluding the public from the proceedings. The government, he said, by excluding certain counsel from the defence had made difficulties for the defence, and the total effect amounted to a denial of justice. He laid this charge at the door of the Government of Kenya, and sent a cable containing these criticisms to four Members of Parliament in London. At the same time he gave the text of the cable to the *East African Standard*, a Kenya news paper, and it was widely published there.

The resident magistrate trying Kenyatta's case objected to this cable of Mr. Pritt's and declared that it amounted to contempt of

Court. Pritt immediately denied any intention of criticizing the magistrate or of implying that he was responsible for conditions imposed by the Government of Kenya. Nevertheless, the writ for contempt of Court was served on him.

### Attorney-General's Arguments

The arguments of the Attorney-General, Mr. Whyatt, prosecuting, certainly added weight to Pritt's protests about the conditions in which the trial was held. Mr. Whyatt said that if he were dissatisfied, the proper course for Pritt to have followed was to have waited till after the verdict and to have lodged his protests then. He said that it was contempt of Court for Pritt to suggest that there was a denial of justice. Pritt replied that if it were true, as he declared, that the Government were hampering the defence, he could imagine nothing more salutary than that his protest should receive the widest possible publicity. This reply seems to us absolutely crushing.

The Attorney-General also argued that in giving the text of his cable to the *East African Standard*, Pritt had created publicity in Kenya for it. Pritt replied that he intended his cable to receive wide publicity in England, and this would then in any case be copied by the Kenya Press. By getting it direct they had merely received the information some hours sooner than they otherwise would have done. His point was conceded by the Court.

### Government Further Discredited

The situation now is that the Government lies still further discredited. Pritt charged them with seeking to make difficulties for Kenyatta's defence. They reply by charging him, the leading defence counsel, with contempt of Court, and they lose. The charge against the Government has received enormous publicity and the fact that they failed to bring home their accusation of contempt of Court can only put them in the position of

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## Stalin and the Jewish Communists

(by an East European correspondent)

EVERYBODY realised the strongly anti-semitic nature of the recent Slansky trial at Prague but many made the mistake in thinking that it was something very new in the Stalinist world. In this case, as in all others, the initiative did not come from the satellites but from their common master, Stalin, because the East European countries only follow the policy laid down by the U.S.S.R. Thus if at Prague among the fourteen accused eleven were Jews, at the first monster trial at Moscow in 1936 twelve of the sixteen condemned to death were Jews. In the same way the present propaganda campaign against Israel is but a repetition of the one began in the U.S.S.R. in 1949.

At that time the national Jewish State of Birobidjan, founded by Moscow in 1926, underwent a severe wave of purges, echoes of which could be found in the Soviet Press. Numerous leaders of the Jewish C.P. in Birobidjan were expelled as "suspect, cosmopolitan, Zionist elements". Among them was the secretary general of the local C.P., his two assistants and the chairman of the Birobidjan Soviet, whose ultimate fate remained unknown.

This anti-Jewish campaign spread throughout the U.S.S.R. The Jewish "intelligentsia" suffered especially. The Soviet press with *Pravda* at its head, published in 1949 a series of articles against Jewish writers, artists and scientists. It has been calculated that of the fifty so-called cosmopolitans publicly denounced in the Soviet press in the two months of 1949, all were Jews but one.

This campaign did not have the character of a simple polemic. It served a pre-arranged purpose, to justify the elimination of the Jewish element in public life. The operation was carried out in several fields at the same time. In journalism and literature simple interdictions made all Jewish cultural activity almost impossible. Newspapers like *Die Einigkeit* and *Der Stern* were suppressed while the Jewish publishing house "Kultur" and the Yiddish theatre were closed down.

The State administration, where numerous Jews who had survived the purges from 1936 to 1938 occupied important positions, proceeded too with

their elimination. Jews in the diplomatic service disappeared. Entry into the higher military academies was *de facto* made impossible for them and the number of Jews appointed to university posts began to decline rapidly.

The C.P. being the absolute master of the U.S.S.R. also reduced the proportion of Jews in its upper ranks. In the new central committee nominated at the recent party congress at Moscow, only two, Mekhlis and Kaganovic, are known to be Jews. Yet the latter's brother belongs no more to the central committee, while Mekhlis lost a year ago his job of supreme political commissar in the Soviet Army. Only five of the 1313 M.P.s of the Supreme Soviet are Jews.

It is noticeable that these measures against the Jews were taken a little after the creation of Israel. The coincidence is not purely accidental. On the contrary, it explains this new aspect of Soviet policy. It does not mean that Stalin is a racist in ideological matters. His anti-semitism springs from his fundamental criterion towards all the Communists in the world. That is to say unlimited submission to the U.S.S.R. is the first necessary condition of being a Communist leader.

According to Stalin no real true Communist leader can have two loyalties: to the U.S.S.R. and his own country. Just as at elections under a Communist régime no opposition is allowed (the result being therefore 100% votes for the government) so a Communist leader is not allowed even within his innermost 10% of local patriotism, because he owes all his loyalty to the U.S.S.R. That is why Stalin purged so many Communist leaders in all the East European countries.

When Israel was founded the Jews acquired a State of their own. This very fact made Communist leaders of Jewish

origin suspect of duality between his loyalty to the U.S.S.R. as the "land of scientific socialism" and his Jewish atavism. To prevent this latter sentiment from taking roots among the Jewish Communists within the Soviet orbit, Stalin adopted his favourite method: preventive elimination.

There is another reason, too, for this anti-semitic attitude. The Jews living in the Soviet empire are, apart from the Catholics, the only group which has many contacts in the outside world by the mere fact that Jewish communities exist almost everywhere and are often related by blood. And since Stalin wants to limit contact with abroad to official channels only, everything that falls outside that framework is, in his eyes, an act of espionage.

The anti-semitic policy of the U.S.S.R. inevitably spread to the satellite countries, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Rumania where a fairly big Jewish minority still exists and where the C.P.'s contained several bosses of Jewish origin. To the well known list of Communists' heresies which begins with Trotskyism and ends with Titoism, a new one, Zionism, has been added. As usual it was amalgamated with all the by now classic accusations: collaboration with the Nazis in the past and espionage for the U.S.A.

In Czechoslovakia, the C.P. leaders, Gottwald and Zapotocky, in their eagerness to curry favour with Stalin were the first even before the Prague trial, to brandish the banner of anti-semitism. Zapotocky declared a year ago: "We shall not tolerate any foreign interference whether it comes from Washington, London or Israel." Gottwald wrote in the *Rude Pravo*: "The unmasked people are traitors without any roots in the soil of our country, they were Jewish and cosmopolitan agents within the C.P."

Under the pretext of espionage for Germany, Japan, the U.S.A., Great Britain and Yugoslavia, the heads of many Communist leaders rolled. At Prague for the first time they condemned Communists for espionage on behalf of Israel. And as there are no isolated phenomena in the Communist system of purges, it would not be at all surprising if in the future there are further executions in Czechoslovakia and the other satellite countries.

B.L.

### FRANK LEECH

WE are very sorry to report the death in Glasgow last week of Frank Leech at the age of 53.

An appreciation of Frank Leech and his work for the anarchist movement will appear in our next issue.

### THICK OR CLEAR?

M. LEGENDRE (Independent), arguing against the overthrow of the Government: If one wants to eat soup one should not upset the pot.

MME. DE LIPKOWSKI (de Gaullist): But the soup is bad.

M. BUSSET (Radical): Christmas time is not the time for soup but for black pudding.

M. LEGENDRE: But before you upset the pot you should know what you are going to put into it and who will be the cook.

M. SOUSTELLE (de Gaullist): Certainly not you.

M. LEGENDRE: As far as we are concerned, we shall do everything to avoid . . .

(Interjection: Upsetting the pot.)

M. LEGENDRE: We believe in stability.

M. SOUSTELLE: The stability of the pot.

M. LEGENDRE: We were saying that overthrowing the Government would also mean overthrowing . . .

The House (in unison): THE POT.

—From the debate in the French Chamber of Deputies, preceding the fall of the Pinay Government.

## Defoe: Father of British Journalism

IT is sometimes suggested, particularly in time of war, that one can publish a paper such as FREEDOM by some sort of grace from above, or by virtue of some privilege conferred by authority. While people using such arguments inevitably use nationalistic phrases, the sad truth is that they are totally ignorant of the struggle for a free press in their own country.

The father of British journalism can well be said to be Daniel Defoe.\* Not that he was the first man to publish a newspaper, but because of the way in which he fought for the right to spread opinion through the printed word. Before him that had only been done with the Bible, and he was brought up in that tradition—the son of Dissenters and one who all his life remained strongly Nonconformist.

Born in 1660, Defoe grew up amongst a fairly well-to-do Dissenting community in London, and knew Milton by sight. His parents and schoolmasters, dreading lest Spanish invasion or the Stuart Restoration might lead to the total downfall of Protestantism, set their son to learning shorthand to join the many who assiduously wrote out the Bible in secret ciphers, so that it might be preserved in the event of its being destroyed by a Catholic King. This probably gave Defoe the taste for prolific writing that characterised him all his life (he wrote hundreds of books and pamphlets, as well as editing newspapers, and the number is not known. He is, of course, best remembered for *Robinson Crusoe*), and he was one of the first to adopt journalism as a profession.

What characterised him in particular was the adoption of the pamphlet as a means of propaganda, and above all the double-edged satirical pamphlet. As a modern example, Freedom Press have published Charles Duff's *Handbook on Hanging*, which is written in the Defoe style—a satirically-intended support of the institution one opposes—and so adept was the inversion used by Defoe that ultimately he went to the logical extreme, and accepted positions as editor of Tory newspapers in order to reduce their arguments to such absurdity that anybody could see through them! One sometimes wonders to-day if this does not happen more often—if Tory papers are not edited by Socialists, and Socialist ones by Tories (Communist papers are invariably edited by Fascist Beasts, as later Communist propaganda tends to show!) The irony was not always taken up. *The Shortest Way With the Dissenters*—a brilliant tract carrying the Tory High Church argument to the most absurd point—made Defoe a figure of opprobrium in Dissenting circles, the worthy Nonconformists taking it serious-

\*See the book recently published on Daniel Defoe by Francis Watson (Longmans Green & Co.).

### FREEDOM BOOKSHOP OPEN DAILY

#### New Books . . .

Lewis Mumford Art and Technics 15/-  
The Denton Welch Journals 15/-

#### Forthcoming Penguins . . .

Sophocles Electra and other Plays 2/-  
The Century's Poetry:  
1.—Chaucer to Shakespeare. 2/-  
Sir Leonard Woolley  
A Forgotten Kingdom 2/6  
Dorothy George  
England in Transition (History of  
Industrial Revolution) 2/-

#### Still Available . . .

##### Porcupine Pamphlets:

Oscar Wilde  
The Soul of Man under Socialism  
Leo Tolstoy The Slavery of our Times  
P. B. Shelley A Defence of Poetry  
1/- each; the three for 2/6

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ly! The Tory Government, pretending to take seriously this incitement, sentenced Defoe to the pillory, for sedition. While it was pleaded that if the pamphlet were seditious, so were the sermons which it parodied, Defoe was sentenced to a crippling fine, to stand three times in the pillory, and to be detained in Newgate.

Standing in the pillory was a dreadful punishment, when the mob could hurl bricks, vegetables and what it would at the "criminal". Many a person sentenced to stand there came down nearly dead. But Defoe's own zeal came to his defence. His pamphlets were hawked around the crowd, the offending pamphlet (with a key!), the defiant *Hymn to the Pillory* and his famous *Poor Man's Plea*. He was garlanded with flowers and cheered as the advocate of the "Poor Man" for his *Plea* is remarkable for Restoration times of his radical stand on the "one law for the rich and another for the poor" theme:

"My Lord Mayor has whipt about the poor beggars, and a few scandalous whores have been sent to the House of Correction; some alehousekeepers and vintners have been fined for drawing drink upon the Sabbath-day; but all of this falls upon us of the mob, the poor plebeii, as if all the vice lay among us;

for we do not find the rich drunkard carried before my Lord Mayor, nor a swearing lewd merchant fined, or set in the stocks."

In regard to his day and age, Defoe with all his faults and some inconsistencies, was a great upholder of freedom, and a vigorous opponent both of Stuarts and Catholicism on the one hand, and High Church and Toryism on the other. He was a Whig only insofar as he was anti-Tory, and while an admirer of William of Orange he never sold himself to the Government. His enemies—who were numerous—alleged much against him. Perhaps his actions were not always the most savoury. He did abuse positions of trust as an editor, but how else was the monopoly to be broken? It would be interesting to know what Charles Duff would do if the proprietors of one of the more flagellatory Sunday papers invited him to take the editorship, in view of his brilliant pamphlet in defence of hanging! That was more or less Defoe's position, and when he died in 1731 he left behind a constant tradition of struggle which later proletarian movements a century afterwards were to inherit, when his works were being read with acclaim by the respectable people, whose fellows had pilloried him and persecuted him.

A.M.

## CENSORSHIP IN AUSTRALIA

THE prohibition of the Penguin edition of Alberto Moravia's *A Woman of Rome* by the Australian Customs Department has aroused widespread public protest in Australia, and has caused the whole system of censorship to be brought under searching examination and criticism.

The Australian papers have quoted many examples of books which have been banned. A notable example was *The Golden Ass* of Lucius Apuleius, which had circulated throughout the Commonwealth in many editions until the customs held the Penguin translation by Robert Graves. It was intimated by officials that it had been placed on the department's "very black" list, records the *Sunday Herald*, which goes on to say: "That ought to have settled the *Ass's* hash. Yet within a few months the animal, released by the Literature Censorship Board, was braying happily in the bookshops, while volumes in the merely black, grey, or off-white classifications remained under proscription." Boswell's *London Journal* was held by the customs. Banned books include *Down and Out in London and Paris*, by George Orwell; *Rain in the Doorway*, by Thorne Smith; *Appointment in Samarra*, by John O'Hara; *Fabian*, by Erich Kastner; *The Colonel's Daughter*, by Richard Aldington; *Contes et Nouvelles en vers de Jean de la Fontaine*;

*Apples Be Ripe*, by Llewellyn Powys. Another Penguin banned, only last June, was *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, by James M. Cain.

Some amusing stories are told in *Mary's Own Paper*, produced by the Mary Martin Bookshop, Adelaide, which says that "when two or three booksellers are gathered together, customs stories are to them what Little Audrey is to the saloon-bar bibber." An Adelaide bookseller of nonconformist character and impeccable background, this news-sheet states, had his copies of Thurber's *Is Sex Necessary?* hauled back to the customs department for moral examination. Booksellers were baffled to discover why Professor Martin Buber's *Between Man and Man* had been called in "until it dawned on one less simple mind that the morality inspector at the customs was wading through hundreds of pages of complex metaphysical speculation in the belief that the book dealt with sexual perversion." And the "simplest and the sweetest story," is that of the demand by the authorities for copies of *Trollope*, by Michael Sadleir, owing to the fact that "the customs bloke's sense of spelling was not as strong as his dreams of Scarlett O'Hara."

—The Bookseller, 13/12

the same Engels much later in his *Program*: "It is that our party and the working-class cannot take power except under the form of the democratic republic. It is the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the Great French Revolution has already demonstrated."

We have seen, moreover, that in the Manifesto the point is the "concentration of public power by the democracy."

#### Marxists To-day

We do not maintain that all Marxists to-day are frozen in their admiration of the great masters and we know of certain dissidents—the group "Socialism ou Barbarie" for example—although using the word "State", have conceptions close to those of revolutionary anarchists. Our second number on the State will discuss their ideas.

But the official literature is of an inconceivable poverty. From the Trotskyite side: nothing but a repetition of the formulas of Trotsky on the dissolution of the State. From the Stalinist side, even in searching the weightiest reviews, *Cahiers du Communisme* or *Nouvelle Critique*, we find only emptiness. We would like to point out especially in the number of the 6th of May, 1949, of *Nouvelle Critique*, *revue du Marxisme militant*, an article by Victor Joannès on "The Proletarian State," sub-titled "From the Commune to Peoples Democracy," where the author repeats the phrases of Lenin's *Theses of April 1917 on the State and Revolution*, who likened the Dictatorship of the Proletariat to the Paris Commune but who accomplished quite a totally different thing. Mr. Joannès leaves the theoretical discussion—if he ever entered it—by the simple affirmation that the administration of the U.S.S.R. is under the control of the entire people.

We can reply to Mr. Joannès and his friends by a simple phrase . . . taken from the Elementary Course of the French Communist Party (pamphlet No. 3):

When one studies a State, it is not necessary to concentrate on the false appearance of its external forms or of the principles which it proclaims, but on its *real social content*."

#### General Conclusion

The Marxist idea of the State is imprecise, fragmentary, not very scientific. Marx started from the study of the capitalist development of England in the 19th century, which was linked to a particular kind of State. Even in this particular case it is not certain that the analysis given by Marx was exact or sufficient, and it did not give a clear account of the reasons why the capitalist era has known many types of political domination.

But above all, in omitting to look for the deepest characteristic of the phenomenon of the State and the general characteristics of the State, Marx and his followers cut themselves off from understanding a number of certain very important social phenomena.

(Translated from *Etudes Anarchistes*, No. 7, (Paris, June 1952, pp. 16-19), by J.G.)

## Marx, Marxists and the State—2

### The Socialist State

Another ambiguity of Marxism resides in the idea of the State in the Socialist society. Without wishing to touch in detail the theses of the State and Revolution (in particular that of Lenin and of his successors—which would have to be the subject of another article), it is necessary to know Marxist thought on the social structure during and after the Revolution.

According to the "Communist Manifesto": "the immediate goal of the Communists is the same as that of all sections of the proletariat: organisation of the proletariat in a class party, destruction of bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat" and then: ". . . the first stage in the workers' revolution and the organisation of the proletariat into a ruling class, the conquest of public power by the democracy. The proletariat takes the political supremacy in order to wrest all capital little by little from the bourgeoisie; to centralise all the instruments of production in the hands of the State, that is to say the proletariat organised as the ruling class. . ."

But, writes Engels in *Anti-Duhring*: "As soon as there will be no social classes to hold under, there will be nothing to repress that would make a State necessary. The State is not abolished, it withers away. The government of individuals is replaced by the administration of things."

Since then, Lenin and Trotsky have taken up the same idea under similar forms: the "withering away" of the State, the "dissolution" of the State in society have taken their place as articles of faith for the diverse tendencies of Bolshevism. Recently, Tito, in Yugoslavia, has given the theory of the

withering away of the State a surprising turn: the withering away is foreseen, wished for and decided on by the government itself, which pretends, according to this law, to make the workers succeed to the control of industry. There is no disappearance of the State because classes disappear, but because a group of men—the party—or better still its leadership—judges the workers' governing capacity to be sufficiently developed and decides to put production into its hands as it had once decided to refuse it.

There is nothing here but a slogan for propaganda, a trick. It might also be a political substitute for a concession of power under working-class pressure, something which isn't very probable, however, considering the state of the country to-day.

The facts in any case illustrate, by the surprising turn taken by a supposed withering away of the State, the looseness of the formula which all partisans of the Workers' State since Marx have repeated.

To say that the State disappears by itself (it is not abolished, it withers away, wrote Engels), that is not only to be vague to one's heart's content and to let one imagine one knows not what sociological miracle, but it is also to construct a sophism; because if one admits that the State is able to be something else than the rule of a class—and we have seen Marx himself admitted that—one might suppose that the disappearance of classes does not necessarily entail the disappearance of a centralised administration, arbitrary and finding its objective and a will to survive in its own self.

The formula is even more ambiguous if one recalls that the Manifesto looks to the supremacy of the proletariat to be affirmed by the centralisation of the

### FILMS

## THE HORRORS OF WAR

LES JEUX INTERDITS (*The Secret Game*), Academy Cinema, Oxford Street, London. Directed by René Clément.

FOR some of us whose knowledge of war is only second-hand, the horror of its effects when our memories are refreshed from time to time through the medium of the cinema, never seems to lose its force. Because of this, and if war is not glorified, it is to be hoped that the cinema will continue to deal with the devastating consequences upon people when nations finally clash.

We do not look to Hollywood or its English equivalent to point a suitable moral when war or its effects are being used as subjects. On the contrary, with few exceptions, they have been intent upon thrusting the doubtful heroism of commandos and marines upon a sick public.

It is generally from the French and Italian studios that an intelligent and realistic portrayal of the effects of war has come, and perhaps the most outstanding in this connection is "The Secret Game" (*Les Jeux Interdits*), considered at the Edinburgh Festival "the cinema's most notable contribution".

Death and the ritual of burial have become the frenzied purpose of the five-year-old Paulette, orphaned by an air attack upon refugees evacuating from Paris in the summer of 1940. Intent upon keeping her little dead dog, she wanders from the column of hysterical refugees into a nearby wood, where she is found by Michel, the eleven-year-old son of a peasant family who temporarily adopt her. The children are united by their gentleness in severe contrast to the adults around them, and when Paulette learns that her dead parents have been buried in a hole together to "keep them from becoming bored," she resolves to bury the pup and surround him with friends. So the animal cemetery is formed, and mice, hens, frogs and beetles are honoured in death as they never were in life, each with a cross (stolen from all and sundry) which has become, through the village priest, a new symbol of death for Paulette.

The children are eventually brutally separated. Paulette is taken to a distribution centre where the dreariness of her future is made known to us by a nun tying a label round her neck, and the expression of her heart-felt need for the boy, Michel.

The reviewer is not a professional, and, uninitiated in the language of the critic, is at a slight disadvantage when trying to convey the excellence of a film. It is therefore hoped that the reader will not find these comments too pompous, since it is very much easier to attack than praise. It is perhaps enough to say for this purpose that the performance of the two children (Georges Poujoly and Brigitte Fossey) stimulates an emotional experience rarely felt in the cinema or elsewhere.

It is said that the handling of children in the cinema is the sole work of the director, but one had the feeling with these two that every situation really meant something to them which conveyed itself in the most startling fashion to the viewer. There is such a wealth of beauty and tragedy here that the Director, René Clément, has to be praised for his insight and delicate use of the situations.

The vocal Christian section of the community is going to express displeasure at the "irreverent" handling of priests and the religious peasants (already slight rumblings have reached us), and before finishing, it does not seem irrelevant to say it is a great pity that judgment and honesty are often submerged in a sea of prejudice. The Catholics, no less than the Communists are equally guilty in this respect. R.M.

## VIOLENCE IN PARIS

THE French Right Wing used to go into hysterics over the attitude adopted by the Anarchist workers of Paris in struggling against police persecution. The Press picture of an "Anarchist" is largely due to propaganda for Paris in the days when Anarchists were carrying out propaganda by deed—because little else was open to them at that time. Following the bitter and bloody suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, the working-class could only be aroused by deeds of vigour, and this period of terroristic activity led to the great syndicalist upsurge of the early days of the century, in which the Paris workers laid the foundations of anarcho-syndicalism.

Various factors made the working-class forego revolutionary organization: the growth of political socialism, patriotic fervour, etc., but the departure from the early principles undoubtedly led to disaster and the present state in which socialism is as dead as mutton, Stalinism pursues the course of rival imperialism and the Rightists reign supreme with the aid of Parliamentary socialists.

The extreme Right Wing is, however, plunged into gloom because of its war-time associations with Germany. Many leaders were arrested as collaborators, many journals were suppressed, for instance, the notorious royalist *Action Française*. In order to wake matters up a bit, the Royalists turn to violence. It seems that their old protests when the Right was under attack were not made out of principle. But how true it is that there is a world of difference between their violence and ours! Recently, correspondence in *FREEDOM* suggested that this is a very self-satisfied and somewhat hypocritical remark, and made like that it appears so. Let us therefore look at the facts.

Voluntary street-sellers of *Aspects de la France* (which is the successor to the banned collaborationist *Action Française*) amounting to about a hundred, picketed the office of the Supreme Resistance Committee the other Sunday. As M. Pierre Bloch and his almost totally incapacitated secretary, M. Goldschmidt-Forgeot, left the building, they were attacked, beaten and kicked, sustaining severe rib injuries. The attack was made presumably in retaliation against M. Bloch as a member of the organisation acting as custodian of confiscated newspapers. According to M. Bloch: "I did not think a hundred men would make a cowardly attack upon a single person accompanied by a war invalid. But I mistook the fascist mentality. Yelling 'dirty Jews', the whole pack hurled themselves at us. The attack was both anti-Resistance and anti-Jewish, for last week a similar attempt was made on M. Bidault when he was leaving church." It will be recalled that in 1936 a similar attack was made on Leon Blum, from which he only escaped by the intervention of painters on the scaffolding of a nearby building.

In the nineties and early days of this century, Anarchists made attempts on many people whom they held to be responsible for oppressions, but these were frontal attacks made upon the President in his open carriage, for instance, where one man on his own initiative exposed himself to the fury of the entire street. Such methods have become outdated by events, in the West, at least, but when we read of the outraged horror of the bourgeoisie at such methods, one can only contrast them with the Right

## Canadian Letter

THE labour situation in Catholic Quebec, Canada's most conservative province, has long been moving towards open conflict. The nationalist government of Duplessis, a Vichyite sympathiser during the war who still preserves fascist ideas of administration, is all out to break the rising movement of the workers which in the past few years has been steadily forcing up the standards of working conditions and wages in Quebec—once the Deep South of Canada and still well below the rest of the country, except Newfoundland, in its living conditions.

The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, which formerly stood in open alliance with the most reactionary politicians in the province, has changed its attitude considerably to take in the new tendency, and Quebec, as I have mentioned before in these pages, stands as a good example of the resilience of the Roman policy, which can swing from reaction to liberalism and, if it fears the leadership of the people may fall out of its hands, can even adopt a pseudo-radical labour policy in opposition to its former allies of the reaction.

The largest trade union in Quebec, the *Confédération des Travailleurs Catholiques du Canada*, with 90,000 members, is clerically inspired. This has not prevented it from becoming involved in some bitter struggles, such as the hard-fought Asbestos strike of 1949, and there is no doubt, whatever one may think of the leaders, there are some excellent militant fighters in the rank and file of this union.

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Wing methods of violence. It is simply the difference between courage based upon propaganda by deed, and cowardice based upon power by intrigue. The history of Left and Right Wing violence in France is an object lesson. In the 1900s no Anarchists would have stooped to use the methods the Right Wing used later on, no matter how harshly laws were directed against them. But in the 1950s we do not find that the British Press is making "Monarchist" synonymous with violence, as it chose—for reasons of its own—to do with the name "Anarchist".

INTERNATIONALIST.

## Police Violence in Quebec . . .

The Asbestos strike, three years ago, caused deep divisions in Quebec society and even within the Church itself, between the bishops and some of the younger clergy who were beginning to think in uncomfortably literal terms of certain passages of the Gospels. These divisions have recently been revealed once again by a strike at the textile town of Louiseville, where the mill is run by Associated Textiles of Canada, a company which has worked in close cooperation with the reactionary provincial government of Duplessis.

Last March, the company refused to sign a new agreement unless certain clauses which they had formerly agreed to, such as union shop, were deleted. The 750 workers of the mill walked out, and until July the mill stood empty. Then 500 farmers from the surrounding villages (it is the rural peasant class who are the most fervent supporters of Duplessis and his radical-baiting and labour-hating government) were recruited as blackleg workers and the mill was re-started. Duplessis fulfilled his part of the bargain by sending Provincial Police to guard the blacklegs.

Meanwhile, with their mill working and protected, the directorate of Associated Textiles began to demand more and more disadvantageous conditions from the workers. In particular, they wanted to keep their new scab employees, as a means of breaking up the syndicate even if the strikers returned to work.

Finally, and somewhat belatedly, the strikers decided to begin mass picketing. On the morning of December 10th, 235 of them marched in columns towards the mills. But the authorities had already got wind of their intention, and awaiting them at the gate was a large body of Provincial Police. Immediately, although the strikers were advancing peacefully and intended only to exercise their legal right to picket, the officer in charge stepped forward and read the Riot Act. As he finished, and before the strikers even had a chance to—as the Riot Act puts it—"disperse immediately and return peacefully to their homes", the police sprayed them with tear gas from a nearby wall. The strikers turned and retreated to the union hall. The police followed, clubbing down the men as they caught up with them, and pursuing them into the hall, where they began to shoot. Eventually, the men were expelled from their own hall, after twenty of them had been wounded (one seriously shot through the neck) and twenty-five more had been arrested. It was a scene reminiscent of the bad old days of the American strikes of the 1880's.

The incident caused an immediate reaction of indignation in French Canada even on the part of people who were normally not particularly friendly to labour unions. But, instead of making immediate use of this fact, the inertia which has characterised the strike throughout, became evident once more. A general strike was immediately talked of, and, after a fortnight of delays, it has now been decided by the Catholic syndicates, supported by the Montreal sections

## HYPOCRISY

WHY is it that the Anarchists who do not believe in nations or nationality, fail to support the world government movement? For one thing, because they do not believe in government either. The idea of a free federation is anarchistic, and it is absurd to suppose that it can grow out of government action. This was amply demonstrated the other day, according to a report in the *Manchester Guardian* (29/12/52).

"A frontier barrier was set on fire here to-day when partisans of European union held a demonstration intended to foreshadow a Europe without frontier barriers. M. Spaak, the Belgian Socialist and former Prime Minister, and one of the main forces behind the United Europe movement, travelled from Brussels to attend the Franco-Italian rally.

"French and Italian citizens enthusiastically threw their passports into the bonfire built to destroy the barrier across the bridge of Saint Louis here, one of the transit points from the French to the Italian Riviera.

"It was understood that both the French and Italian Foreign Offices had expressed readiness to supply new ones for those burned to-day. A new frontier barrier, already prepared, was put into place immediately after the ceremony."

Very nice to throw away your passport when you know a new one is guaranteed, or burn a barrier when the new one is already prepared! The incident was meant to be typical of the "European union" movement. It was more typical than its sponsors perhaps intended.

of the AFL and CIO, to call a general strike unless the government does something about the police violence. But still the general strike remains only a threat, a pawn in negotiations which is steadily losing its value as the days go by. If and when it comes it cannot help finding the government fully prepared to counter it, whereas if it had been put into operation immediately, the day after the battle at Louiseville, it might even now be gaining results and contributing to the undermining of the reactionary power of Duplessis. But it is evident that the priests who control the Catholic unions, while they are willing to be carried far enough to appear liberal and to reap the benefits therefrom, are certainly not willing to allow the movement they have created for the continuance of their own power to indulge in activities, like a lightning general strike, which may bring about an uncontrollable surge of rebelliousness on the part of their flock. The workers of Quebec will have to learn—and it will probably be the hard way—that shepherds are only for sheep and men should look after themselves.

Some months ago, I mentioned the fact that a couple of frivolities by Joe Stalin and Mae West had been put under the ban in Canada. Now, from the blue-law-ridden town of Ottawa, a further attack on the freedom of literature has been made. This time the object of the attack was one of the leading contemporary American writers, Erskine Caldwell, a man to whom we owe a great

## . . . Book Burnings in Ottawa

deal for his exposure of conditions in the Deep South in such novels as *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*.

The books by Caldwell which have aroused the anger of the frustrated old women of both sexes who rule in Ottawa are *Journeyman* and *Tragic Ground*.

The news of the County Court decisions made me, and I am sure many other Canadians, read the books again just to see what the Pharisees were objecting to. Both are extremely well-written books, dealing, with a great deal of humour and compassion, with the condition of certain sections of poor whites in Georgia. The language is at times bawdy, the action is uninhibited, but nobody who had lived anywhere near a hillbilly community will doubt that it is substantially authentic. If the good puritans of Ottawa are at all interested, I can show them out-of-the-way communities in Canada itself where life goes on to an essentially Caldwellian rhythm. What is much more important in these books is not the "obscenity", but the attacks which are made on certain aspects of contemporary American society, and I think that it is the fact that these have landed rather near at home that has been the real cause of the prosecution. *Journeyman* deals with a phoney hot-Gospeller, a kind of Billy Graham of the underworld, who goes to a hillbilly community and, while preaching steadily and gargantuanly, manages to cheat the Hicks out of everything he can lay his hands on. The climax of the book is a magnificent burlesque sermon which is about the most consummate piece of satire on contemporary evangelism that I have yet read. It will easily be seen why the religious people of Ottawa detested such a book. *Tragic Ground* discusses the problem of poor whites from the hill country who are brought down to a coastal town to work in ammunition plants during the war, and then are left stranded in the local slums, with neither work nor money. The older people become desperate, the children are drawn into thieving and prostitution. Again, Caldwell describes an actual situation with a good deal of compassion, and his comedy, while it may be exaggerated in fact, is not so in spirit. Here, it is perhaps as well to remark that he unmercifully satirises the Welfare Officers who bumble their way through personal situations and problems which their prejudices and stupidities prevent them from understanding. The woman Mayor of Ottawa, let us remember, who has been the leader of the savage campaign against so-called "obscene" books in Canada, is herself a former Welfare Officer. How much hurt professional pride goes into the attack on this book is something we can only surmise.

At the trial in which these books were involved, leading Canadian literary critics testified to the literary merits of Caldwell's novels. This, however, did not satisfy Judge McDougall, who said that he could not see how the distribution of a book like *Tragic Ground* "served the public good".

Canadians, and Canadian politicians in particular, are very fond of pointing out how much freer their country is than the United States. But which is worse,

to witch-hunt Communists or to witch-hunt books? It seems to me that there is little to choose between them; Hitler did both. And it is the words of an American judge, Benjamin Greenspan of New York, when he handed down a decision of another Caldwell book which the purity maniacs sought to kill, *God's Little Acre*, that seem to give the best answer to the Canadian blue-lawyers:

"This is not a book where vice and lewdness are treated as virtues or which would tend to incite lustful desires in the normal mind. There is no way of anticipating its effect on a disordered or diseased mind, and if the courts were to exclude books from sale merely because they might incite lust in disordered minds, our entire literature would very likely be reduced to a relatively small number of uninteresting and barren books. The greater number of the classics would certainly be excluded. In conclusion, *God's Little Acre* has no tendency to inspire its readers to behave like its characters; therefore, it has no tendency to excite 'lustful desire'. Those who see the ugliness and not the beauty in a piece of work are unable to see the forest for the trees. I personally feel that the very suppression of books arouses curiosity and leads readers to endeavour to find licentiousness where none was intended. In this book, I believe the author had written what he believes to be the truth about a certain group in American life. To my way of thinking, *Truth* should always be accepted as a justification for literature."

Despite all the stuffy language which the law forced upon him, Judge Green-

## Issues in Pritt Case

Continued from p. 1

making further, if this time unsuccessful attempts to embarrass the defence.

One of the curious features of the proceedings against Pritt is that the Supreme Court at no time concerned itself with the question as to whether Pritt's charge that "it amounts to a denial of justice" was well founded or not. It was solely concerned to determine whether he was criticizing the Court or the Government. In the course of the proceedings some light was shed on the conception of "contempt of Court". Judgments in previous cases were read as, for instance, that of Lord Russell of Killowen (*Rev. v. Gray* 1900): "Any Act done or writing published calculated to bring a Court or the Judge of a Court into contempt or to lower his authority is a contempt of Court." Or the statement of the Privy Council (1936) that, "Everyone will recognise the importance of maintaining the authority of the Courts in restraining . . . attempts to depreciate the authority of the Courts themselves."

Pritt's cable clearly did not fall within this conception of contempt. But the conception itself requires the very highest conduct of the Courts themselves, and it could be held that their prestige would be better maintained by their own high standard of conduct than by the judicial powers—which are quite extraordinary—they possess against those who, in the course of a case, criticize them adversely, and so commit contempt.

## Effect of the Judgment

The effect of the Supreme Courts' judgment must be to strengthen Pritt's criticism of the conditions under which Kenyatta's trial is being held. Pritt has shown considerable courage, resource, and formidable legal ability. It is to be hoped that the credit for these qualities will not be reflected on the Communist Party, or that Kenyatta will be affected by his counsel's political associations.

# THE ENGLISH VICE

THE newspapers are having a boom in flogging. Flogging appears on the news-vendors' placards; flogging is in the headlines. Learned and respectable lawyers, Members of Parliament and journalists are paid large sums to write serious and not-so-serious newspaper articles on flogging. Truly we are having a jolly orgy of what has come to be called "the English vice".

It is not generally known in this country that England is almost unique in the whole world for retaining flogging in its penal code and in its schools. The people of other countries, however little they know about our social customs, know this one fact, that the English are addicted to the equivocal pleasures of the rod as a national institution. The City of Sodom added a word to the vocabularies of many nations; the Bulgarian troops added another word by their especial interests. It will be sad if England goes down in world history simply as a bye-word for inordinate interest in flogging.

The newspapers are playing up this topic with varying degrees of sensationalism. It is hard to know where to draw the line between informed comment and mere pornography. The writer of this article is well aware of the implications of dealing with this subject at all, but it appears well worth while facing the simple realities which are basic to it. There is nothing to be gained by treating the pros and cons of the issue in penal law, and in the upbringing of children, without frankly acknowledging what the emotional drive is that makes people so excitedly interested in the subject.

I recently received a bundle of pornographic literature of the variety which is concerned with those who gratify their sexual appetites with whipping, and all that appertains to whipping. The more usual kind of pornography which is of a bawdy and directly erotic nature, and which is severely repressed by the police in this country, does not appear to me to be capable of doing any harm whatever, but this flagellant pornography has certain aspects of a distinctly anti-social nature. The social harm that it tends to perpetuate does not call for police repression, but for clarification as to the real nature of flagellant practices in Britain to-day.

It would appear that in order to make the subject sufficiently tasty it has to be garnished with the most absurd religious and moral trappings, but there is another reason for this moralistic nonsense which I shall deal with later. I have before me a pornographic booklet which describes a flagellant *affaire* between a girl and her uncle—pure trash to anyone of ordinary sexual interests, but spicily written for the flogging-conscious reader. This booklet has a religious preface written by a Reverent Minister of a Glasgow parish, and is distributed free also by its publisher. Accompanying it he also makes one a present of another pamphlet of a somewhat less spicy character, with a Rural Dean writing the preface, and five sheets of propaganda. The propaganda is partly concerned with advertising the sale of various instruments of flagellation at extraordinary prices, and partly with books concerned with every aspect of

whipping. There are also extracts from a journal (5/- a copy!) which deals with the following topics—presumably these are the titles of articles—"A girl caned across riding breeches—Knickers down or up—The G-string—A school captain caned in front of her fellow pupils for talking during Prayers—A Doctor of Theology's comments on corporal punishment—A master nicknamed 'Joyous' who called his instruments of correction 'toys' and 'tickled' boys in the most doubtful manner—The question of posture."

That I do not mention the name of the enterprising individual who publishes this matter is not because I fear that he will sue me for the libel of pointing out that he is a business racketeer exploiting pornography, but because I do not wish to give his racket free advertisement. I have no objection at all to anyone getting all the fun he can out of reading whipping stories, being whipped himself, or whipping other people—*provided that they are consenting partners*. But very few people will consent to being whipped for the fun of it, and professionals who pander to this game charge very fancy fees; so those who seek victims not uncommonly seek them among children who can be forced to submit to the cane on the pretext that they are "naughty". I am not going to discuss the rights and wrongs of using corporal punishment on children, but even if we assume that in certain cases children need to be punished physically, that does not mask the fact that a large percentage of adults get sexual pleasure from whipping them. Adults who have a conscious or unconscious *penchant* for whipping not uncommonly seek to get into positions of authority where they may gratify this at the expense of children. The occupations of schoolteacher, cadet trainer, housemaster at approved schools, have a special attraction for those who take pleasure in corporal punishment. This is well known to racketeers like Mr. X who take special pains to can-

vass people who have charge of children knowing that here is a fruitful field for the sale of his publications. Under the law of this country it is a criminal offence to use children as sexual objects—but the law takes no cognizance of the fact that in Britain it is an all too common practice to use children sexually by savagely beating their buttocks. Few flagellists have the opportunity of flogging criminals, of course, but the interest of reading about criminals being flogged in prison, of knowing that it actually takes place, counts for a great deal in satisfying the morbid craving vicariously. It must also be remembered that sadistic delinquents actually do get themselves jobs in the police and prison service to gain the opportunity of satisfying their unpleasant emotional drives. (See von Hentig: *The Criminal and his Victim*.)

The harm that the whipping pornographer may do is irrelevant to the usually accepted ideas of sexual morality. People who find the idea of whipping exciting will continue to do so whether they have access to whipping pornography or not, but this sort of literature serves to provide a *rational excuse* for this form of sexual abuse of children and for our unique penal laws. It is for this reason that the pornographers dress up their publications in so much moral and religious trimming. Many of the whipping addicts may thereby persuade themselves that their assaults on children are really for the victims' good, and perpetrated in the service of morality and religion. I am sure that the Rector of A and the Rural Dean of B do not consciously admit to themselves that their inordinate interest in the whipping of children is sexual in character, or that they are lending their names to pornographic publications. I am sure also that the many schoolteachers, parents and others who find these pamphlets an excuse for the way in which they mistreat the children under their care, do not face the fact that they *welcome* juvenile misbehaviour as providing the

occasion for enjoyable experiences. Presumably the violent hooliganism of the "cosh boys" can also be turned to pleasurable account if such people as Lord Goddard have their way.

It is not that I grudge the whippers their pleasure, but I would point out that, not only do children have to suffer painful physical assault to provide their fun, but such activity tends to leave more than a physical weal on children. The natural sexual development of children may be interfered with by the part they have to play in these encounters. There is some evidence to show that being subjected to this sort of assault in childhood is one of the contributory factors in the evolution of the adult flagellist himself, and so this activity may tend to perpetuate itself from generation to generation in a vicious circle.

In some countries corporal punishment in both schools and prisons is illegal. In Britain the publication of pornography is illegal, but the sort of pornography which I have been discussing is not recognised for what it is and thus escapes the ban. Many people advocate the tightening of the law both to protect children from flagellists and to suppress flagellant pornography. Certainly children should be protected from sexual or any other assault, but I doubt if legal enactments can be very successful in this direction. The best protection for children from the unfortunate practices of adults lies in the movement to liberate the sexual impulse from the restraints which cause it to take such anti-social forms. The legal repression of pornography in general is a vast impertinence. If certain individuals are by constitution or by opportunity unable to achieve sexual gratification by the more usual methods it is sheer cruelty to deny them what poor crumbs of comfort they may get from reading pornographic literature. I will go further and state that there are probably very few men and women, even among those who have a harmonious sex life, who do not get some sort of pleasure from pornographic, bawdy or erotic literature—these three categories being invariably interwoven.

The objectionable feature of the flagellant pornography is not, as the moralists would claim, that people get pleasure from it; that is all that can be said in its favour. The objectionable feature arises directly from the moralistic tone which the writers are forced to take to justify the sexual activity. If it were openly admitted that whippings are administered for fun and not because the victims are "naughty", then the moralistic tone could be dropped, and then the flagellists would lose all moral justification for their assaults on unwilling children.

There seems little hope that any reform of the penal law in respect of corporal punishment will have any permanency. The law is not a rational thing; it is the reflection of the neurotic unbalance of society, and while currently accepted sexual morality encourages the growth of "the English vice" as a substitute for more healthy expressions of the sexual urge, there is going to be a greedy demand for more victims to be flogged. The fact that the so-called "cosh-boys" are being picked upon as possible victims, does not seem to me to be so very tragic. What is more tragic is that the appetite for flogging grows in this gloating atmosphere, and that the real victims are the children who will suffer in the general movement to reward "delinquency" with the rod in both home and school. Thus "the English vice" is perpetuated from generation to generation.

Legal reformism in this context is sterile as most other reformist endeavours; it attacks the symptom and not the disease. It is quite fruitless to point out that the category of crimes of violence has decreased since the abolition of flogging for it in 1948. The floggers *just don't want to know*. In plain terms, they want their vicarious gratification of pleasure, and are prepared to go to absurd lengths to rationalise it, and be damned to the fact. Only a thoroughgoing revolutionary attack on the sexual mores of our time can affect this issue, and once again we find that the cause of freedom, sanity and health is one, and that no aspect of it can be approached as an isolated issue.

## UNREST AND DISTRESS IN POLAND

THE connection between show trials and governmental failures in the Communist countries is shown clearly in the present events in Poland. There has been considerable underground activity against the Communist régime, often taking a "terrorist" form, for several prominent Communist officials have been assassinated. And such subversive activity has been sympathetically regarded by the people especially in the rural areas where the peasants have stubbornly resisted the Government.

The Communists seek to discredit the underground movement by linking it up with foreign governments and so rousing national and patriotic feeling against it (such feelings are more easily raised in urban populations than among peasants where patriotic feeling is often very slight indeed). The Polish underground

is said to be financed from abroad, up till 1949 by the British Government, but since by the Americans.

Warsaw radio recently declared that an American aeroplane dropped two "diversionists" and equipment which included radio receivers and transmitters, photographic material, weapons, etc. Alleged members of the Polish underground are said to have confessed to receiving the usual instructions from abroad but to have recanted and denounced the whole "Freedom and Independence" movement.

### Foreign Interference

There is no doubt that government espionage systems do indeed try to use discontented factions for their own ends. If they can acquire some control over revolutionary movements they certainly do so. All of which helps the home government to discredit its critics and opponents. The continual denunciation of Western Governments, especially America, by the Iron Curtain governments shows what use can be made either of pure fabrication or of exaggerating the truth. But it must be remembered that the same process goes on in the West, especially in America, where every progressive, oppositional movement is dubbed "Communist", and where "Russian gold" still has its propaganda uses.

### Economic Distress

The present propaganda about "diversionists" in the pay of the West, suggests that the underground opposition is still something to be reckoned with. But it is also a cover for the failure of centrally controlled economy in Poland. A *Times* correspondent summarises the Polish Government's announcement on Warsaw radio on Jan. 4th as follows:

"The Polish Government, according to the Warsaw radio yesterday, announced its decision to abolish food rationing, together with the system under which goods were sold at one price under rationing and at a higher price on the free market. At the same time the Government announced increased food prices and wages.

"The double price system is admitted to have been a failure, for which capitalist elements are blamed. This drastic step is undoubtedly due to the peasants' refusal to sell their produce at Government fixed prices, to the acute shortage of food, and the alarming growth of the black market.

"The Government, according to the Polish radio, has issued a decree providing for an increase in prices of food, consumer goods, domestic coal, electricity, postage, and railway fares, as well as increased wages for miners, workers in steel and iron foundries, scientific workers, and those employed in special industrial enterprises. No increase of salaries for Civil servants is mentioned. The price of food has been increased by nearly 100 per cent.—in the case of meat the increase is even greater—but the rise in wages is fixed at from 12 to 40 per cent.

### FREE SALES

"The decree abolishing the points system for industrial workers also removes all limitation on the sale of surplus agricultural products. In areas where compulsory delivery of farm produce has been fulfilled at least up to 90 per cent., the peasants may now sell their surplus freely at uncontrolled prices. This is not a mere concession to the peasantry, but constitutes a surrender by the régime to the wealthier element of the Polish peasantry.

"The statement says that the basic cause of the crisis in the food market lies in the discrepancy between urban and rural development. Polish agriculture, it says, largely individually owned and still inefficiently run, has been unable to keep pace with the growing demand of the expanding working class. The result has been a continuous rise in the prices of foodstuffs sold in the free or black market and an enrichment of 'kulaks'. The increased railway fares are intended, it is said, to prevent the 'kulaks' from using the railways too frequently to bring their goods into town."

Of course, changes in economic policy, and manipulations of currency are used by governments in order to break up the economic basis of resistance, especially peasant resistance. Nevertheless, these measures, and the propaganda fanfares that go with them indicate the magnitude of this resistance, and the extent of government failure.

## O'BRIEN'S MESSAGE Continued from p. 1

"Whilst no responsible individual would wish to impede any Prime Minister, whatever his party, in carrying out his task, it is surely not expected that organisations supporting the Labour movement, having representatives sitting among the Opposition in Parliament and fundamentally opposed to most of the Government's policy, should send congratulatory messages of goodwill on a visit, the true purpose of which has not been made public and might well be in direct conflict with the aims and objects of the trade union movement."

But there's another set of equivocal, politician's, statements, if you like! "No responsible individual," says Mr. Willis, would wish to impede any Prime Minister, whatever his party . . ." On the contrary, it is precisely the responsible individuals who would wish to impede any Prime Minister, for responsible individuals recognise that no Prime Minister could ever speak for them. National leaders speak only for the irresponsible who have given their responsibility away.

It is clear from Willis's statement that he is simply among those who "doubt the wisdom" of O'Brien's action—that is, of coming out publicly and giving support to one of the working-class's most stubborn enemies. The TUC is

still trying to live down (without actually backing down) its immediate post-election statement that it would loyally support the Tory Government. And Willis, like, I am sure, the rest of the General Council of the TUC, really has no objection to what Churchill is going to do in America, but he thinks it should not have been said so openly.

It is amusing, incidentally, to notice that one of the first things the old man said on arrival in New York was a complaint that he had not been given the fullest possible information about U.S. atom bombs, as he had been promised by Mr. Roosevelt. Since he had been out of office from 1945—1951, there hardly seemed any reason why he should have been supplied with the information, in any case, but—this one of the subjects about which British workers should be praying? Jolly good working-class interest, here!

Perhaps, however, Mr. O'Brien had a personal reason for sending his message to the Prime Minister. Being a mediocrity with no personal qualities, he probably sees in this sort of behaviour his only chance of following in the footsteps of Lincoln Evans and John Benstead, trade unionists knighted in the New Year's Honours List. Or shouldn't one say things like that now? P.S.

## MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP

#### OPEN AIR MEETINGS

Weather Permitting  
HYDE PARK  
Every Sunday at 4.30 p.m.

#### INDOOR MEETINGS

The present series of indoor discussion-lectures will continue at the premises of the British Drama League, 9 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1 (off Warren Street, Tottenham Court Road).

The meetings will be held on TUESDAYS at 7.30 p.m.

JAN. 13—Oswell Blakeston on  
MODERN ART AND THE  
INDIVIDUAL

#### NORTH-EAST LONDON

#### DISCUSSION MEETINGS IN EAST HAM

Alternate Wednesdays  
at 7.30 p.m.

#### LIVERPOOL

#### DISCUSSION MEETINGS at 101 Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool, 8.

Every Sunday at 8 p.m.

#### GLASGOW

#### INDOOR MEETINGS

at  
CENTRAL HALLS, 25 Bath Street  
Every Sunday at 7 p.m.  
With John Gaffney, Frank Leech,  
Jane Strachan, Eddie Shaw,  
Frank Carlin

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