

Spanish Syndicalists  
Reply - p. 2

For a Revaluation of  
Ideas - p. 2

Frank Leech - - - p. 3

# Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"Individual resistance is a two-edged sword . . . one side the struggle for our individual liberty, the other by example breaking down the morale of our enemy and uplifting the courage of those who are searching for a way out."

—FRANK LEECH

## African Federation for What?

THE second official Conference is now completing its work on the draft federal constitution for British Central Africa. The proposals for federating Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland, into one territory have aroused the strongest possible opposition from Africans, who are completely ignored in the discussions leading to federation. Their objections are simple and fundamental. The Federal Assembly would be dominated by the white minority who would be a permanent parliamentary majority by virtue of the unequal representation. Eventually Dominion status would be asked and granted, and Whitehall rule would finish. Africans would then be subject to the same type of oppressive rule as in South Africa—permanently and decisively—without Colonial Office interference in native questions, yet still with the threat of the British armed forces to suppress rebellion as to-day in Kenya (and maybe tomorrow in South Africa).

It is not that there is much positively to be said for Whitehall rule. Southern Rhodesian Africans jeer at the pretence that "if we don't have federation, the Afrikaners will gobble you up and you will get apartheid". There is not an atom of difference between Malan's apartheid and the systems ruling in Kenya and Central Africa. In Southern Rhodesia the Negro who must have a late pass to be out after nine o'clock is no better off than he would be in the Union. The difference between Smuts and Malan has always been exaggerated. However, Whitehall rule—by its very remoteness—is at least better than rule by the white man on the spot who knows where his interests lie. Africans prefer the present anomalous system—whereby even if in Southern Rhodesia trade unions

are not recognised by law, they can at least organise in Northern Rhodesia (whose railways, for instance, are owned by the same company, so that the Southern Rhodesia railway workers have their union, despite its proscription, recognised in fact if not in law). There is a corresponding divergence of the degree of oppression from state to state, but the federation of Nyasaland with Northern and Southern Rhodesia would lead to one strong state, with the white dominance more firmly entrenched than ever. 6 million Africans would be placed under the domination of 170,000 Europeans, for the scheme proposes a federal parliament of 35 members, of whom 6 would be Africans.

### NKOMO IN LONDON

At a recent Press Conference in London, Mr. Joshua Nkomo, President of the African National Congress in Southern Rhodesia, and secretary of the Railway Workers, put the case against federation from the African point of view. Undoubtedly of sincerity and good will, Mr. Nkomo's case was that co-operation was possible if, as he put it, "Europeans played the game." He deprecated violence but insisted that if it had not come, it was not because Africans were satisfied in any way with the present position. He felt that responsible leaders could not be held responsible for what happened if federation were forced through.

Unfortunately, the effort to keep the struggle on a constitutional basis is inevitably doomed to disappointment in so weighted a parliament. The property and literacy (in the English language) qualifications barred most Africans from the vote, but even those few who had the vote—such as Mr. Nkomo himself—had to admit that it was of very little use to them. They were still second-class citizens, had to carry passes and be subjected to segregation laws.

The attempt to rouse conscience in England so soon becomes bogged down by politicians. It is pathetic to read of

the Nyasaland chiefs who have come to beg the Queen in humility not to ratify the plan for federation. The need of the African above all is not debasement—that has been taught to him by his white conquerors who teach the Christian doctrines of humility to others—but pride in his own heritage and potentialities.

In this way the Kikuyu schools in Kenya blazoned a trail of self-education that might well be pursued by all in Central Africa, and before rejecting the methods used in Kenya, it might be as well to ponder on what drove them to such action—the Imperialist and Christian attack upon independent education. The Nyasaland chieftains, themselves rulers, might consider it expedient to appeal to the Queen, but conscious African opinion which is growing in the Rhodesian and Nyasaland territories, should look to itself for emancipation. The building of independent schools, and a complete boycott of all governmental functions, is the key. The Europeans might well look with amusement at the

Continued on p. 4

## Ships Crews to Resist McCarran?

THE first determined resistance to the application of the McCarran Act to the crews of ships calling at American ports may take place when the French liner *Liberté* makes its next Atlantic crossing. An official of the American immigration service recently stated that he hoped reports that the crew would refuse to have their permits stamped were wrong, because some of the crew were needed ashore to tie up the ship. We hope the reports are right. One way of getting rid of laws such as this one is by non-cooperation. If all ships' crews refused to have their permits stamped, and refused to allow blacklegs tie up the ships, American ports would soon be at a standstill.

Meanwhile, the American shipping companies are making it clear that witch-hunts are all very well so long as their pockets do not suffer. The American President Lines have begun a court action over the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act. They claim that they

should not have to bear the cost of maintaining alien passengers while the Government investigated their eligibility to enter the United States. The company claimed in its petition that the costs of maintenance would amount to about \$6,000 a month.

### Desertions in American Army

Mr. Truman is reported to have said in a newspaper interview that MacArthur's attacks on Korean war policy set a bad example for Service men in Korea, and led to a crop of desertions.

General MacArthur says it is "fantastic and wholly unwarranted" to suggest he bears any responsibility for current desertions.

"If desertions are excessive they can be ascribed more realistically to lack of faith in President Truman's policies of appeasement which forbade victory in Korea 20 months ago."

Whether MacArthur or Truman is responsible is not clear. But what both seem agreed upon is that desertions are occurring in the American Army.

## Aid to Spanish Refugees

**FORGOTTEN MEN** is a cliché we have heard so often that in the last few years it sometimes seems to have lost all meaning. But *forgotten men* is still the best phrase to describe the tens of thousands of men who, after fighting for years against authoritarian despotism in their own country of Spain, now live as a section of the unwanted poor of France. These are the men who represent in a more real sense than anyone else the causes which have been flaunted about the world for the past decade and more. Years before the Second World War was fought, ostensibly for the destruction of Nazism, they were fighting a real and fundamental struggle not only against Nazism, but also against the principles which the Nazis and their opponents between 1939 and 1945 shared in common. And ten years before the clash of interests began to awaken the Western Powers to "the menace of Communism", these men had learnt from bitter and direct experience the real nature of Stalinist politics. Perhaps, indeed, it is because they have lived that struggle for freedom, which the governments of our age have only fought in words, that they are so neglected, since to recognise them would be to admit a reproach which cannot be admitted; it would be like Macbeth actually inviting the ghost of Banquo to his feast.

After the years in internment camps, in forced labour and concentration camps under the Nazis, there are still 160,000 Spaniards left in France out of the half million who crossed the frontier 14 years ago at the end of the civil war. The rest have either returned to Spain, gone to the Latin American countries, or, very many of them, died of privations (8,000 alone died in the concentration camp at Mauthausen). Those who are left live, for the most part, on the lowest possible level in France, since they are usually only given the worst-paid labouring jobs. And there are many others who, through sickness or old age or disablement, are incapable of doing even this kind of work, and live literally on the edge of starvation.

After the war some aid was given to the Spaniards through such organisations as the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees and the International Refugee Organisation. But in February, 1950, all aid to Spaniards from these sources

had ended, and almost the only help they now receive is through the Social Service for Emigrants Aid (SSAE), an agency financed by the French Government, which has some 7,500 Spanish cases on its lists. The aid from this source does little more than touch the edge of the problem, since an old man, incapable of work, is given 3,500 francs a month (less than £4), which in a country with about the highest cost of living in Europe is insufficient even to provide bare necessities.

It is in order to find the additional aid that is necessary in so many cases that a group without partisan attachments has gathered in New York to form a Committee to Aid Spanish Republican Refugees in France. The Chairman of the Committee is James T. Farrell and the Secretary is Nancy Macdonald, whom many readers of *FREEDOM* will remember as the organiser of the excellent parcels service to needy socialists and anarchists in Europe which was operated through *Politics* immediately after the end of the last war.

The Committee, which is now in the first stages of organisation, contemplates giving aid to Spaniards in France irrespective of their allegiances; socialists, syndicalists, anarchists, will all be helped, their need being their only criterion. The kind of assistance which the committee hopes to be able to give is shown in the following passage from its published statement of aims:

### "What Could Be Done:

1. Because of the high cost of living, donations of used clothing would be invaluable.
2. There are three Spanish Red Cross Dispensaries, in Paris, Toulouse and Montauban, which need help to carry on with the excellent work they are doing. For example, the Montauban Dispensary needs about £40 a month to function adequately. They are in imminent danger of closing because of lack of funds. The doctor, a man with four children, does not receive enough from the very small fees which some of the patients can pay, to live decently. The social worker, who knows every one of the 375 families whom the Dispensary cares for and is ready to tackle any kind of problem they may have, is so underpaid that she has to work at night knitting sweaters. The Dispensary needs medical equipment and could use doctor's drug samples.
3. There are 90 Spanish war invalids who are in French Government hospitals but who have no private resources with which to buy soap, tobacco, stamps, extra food, personal needs. A small regular gift to each of these in the form of cash or packages would be of great moral and material aid. Friendly letters of encouragement and remembrance would also be important.

4. According to recent reports there are 754 tuberculars among the Spaniards. Extra food and special medicines would do a great deal of good in these cases.

5. Often a small sum given for a special need will make a big difference in the fortunes of a refugee—for example, a hearing aid, sewing machine, work tools, vacation for a child, an artificial limb for a cripple, a small monthly allowance. To illustrate: a young Spaniard in his early 40s, who has silicosis of the lungs, has been living miserably for the past 10 years in a public hospital in Toulouse. His one pleasure in life is the visit of his family from Spain, once a year. If he had £5 or £6 a month (added to the sickness benefit which he could collect if he were living outside the hospital), he could rent a room with friends and manage to live a more human and happy life.

6. In Perpignan, the local office of the SSAE reports that there are 100 Spanish families who do not have adequate bedding (mattresses, blankets and linen). They do not have the funds to supply them. There are many instances where the most obvious amenities of life are lacking and where a small sum could provide them.

7. A committee devoted to aiding Spaniards alone, could act as a clearing house and information centre for individual problems. Often there are possibilities of assistance in various fields through various international committees that are not known to an individual or even to the Spanish committees. Such social services accomplish a great deal at very little cost."

The situation of the Spaniards in France, though it is less dramatically appalling than that of the opponents of the régime within Spain, is still a terrible one, as anyone who has seen the kind of wastage of personality that takes place in such circumstances will know. The presence of a voluntary organisation outside Spain and devoted to ameliorating their cause, will not only provide material assistance in the most needy cases; it will also give a light of comradeship, a realisation that they are after all not entirely forgotten in the weary corridors of meaningless existence into which so many of their lives have declined.

The address of the Committee to Aid Spanish Republican Refugees in France is: Room 311, 45 Astor Place, New York 3, N.Y., U.S.A., and American readers who may wish to help can get in touch with it immediately, while those in other countries who are moved to do something on their own account will doubtless find that the Committee will be very glad to provide them with information regarding means by which they can aid the Spanish refugees in a direct way.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

## Poverty, Backwardness & Crime

DISCUSSING crime, or delinquency as it is now called when the young are involved, *FREEDOM* has in the past stressed the effect of poverty. It is a most important aspect because poverty is removable, is a condition that society could do something about. For this reason, it is interesting to see the same correlation—between crime and poverty—stressed in a recent letter to the *Observer*.

This correspondent shows a welcome ability to go behind particular aspects and seek for fundamental causes. "During the twenty-seven years since the appearance of Sir Cyril Burt's *The Young Delinquent*," he writes, "a succession of studies have fairly thoroughly charted the factors which lie behind a criminal act. Educational backwardness and semi-illiteracy (seldom total illiteracy) are very common factors and may add to the frustrations of the young offender, but they are nearly always caused by an earlier disorder which leads to truancy or inattention at school, and later crops out in anti-social acts."

He goes on to remark that crime is not confined to poor homes but adds that offenders get rapidly fewer as the economic scale is ascended. "There is ample evidence that the majority of criminals come from poor homes which are made still poorer by the large number of children they usually contain. Mr. B. P. Emmett and I recently estimated, from *Criminal Statistics* and

Metropolitan returns, that the chances of a boy being convicted of an indictable crime during his lifetime are about 1 in 24 in families of fewer than four children, but in families of four or more children the ratio is as high as 1 in 3.

"All the evidence suggests that in such large and usually needy families the pressures of unfavourable physical, economic and moral influences at an early age produce, in the weaker members, emotional troubles, backwardness, and after a dozen years or so, the crimes which are so much deplored."

This letter illustrates a number of positive tendencies. The attempt to seek for a common cause for educational backwardness and delinquency is obviously much more practical than the common assumption that the backwardness is the cause of the criminal tendency with its sterile corollary that more educational facilities are required. The common cause, which seems almost certainly to be poverty, also sheds light on the rather puzzling anomaly that delinquents tend to come from large families. It is in such families that the income per head becomes very small indeed.

The practical upshot of such studies is once again to argue against the wasteful attempt at mere palliation and punishment. If poverty and crime are firmly and convincingly linked, then the retributive, vengeful attitude of the law, unattractive enough already, becomes absolutely unjust and unjustifiable. Crime is clearly seen as one more undesirable symptom of a society based on poverty, and its cure depends on the complete and revolutionary re-organisation of that society.

### NOTICE

London Comrades are requested to note that the London Anarchist Group's Tuesday evening meetings will be held in future at:

GARIBALDI RESTAURANT,  
10 LAYSTALL STREET, E.C.1  
(3 mins. Holborn Hall)

See page 4 for details.

## A STATEMENT

THAT an anarchist should be offered a knighthood is a paradox that could only occur in England; that he should accept it is a decision which may give amusement to an indifferent public, dismay to his comrades, and pleasure only to those friends who have sufficient imagination to appreciate the dilemma in which he found himself.

The honour was given "for services to literature". It might have been given for services to art, for in that sphere I have been more publicly active, and have devoted much time and energy to the work of such bodies as the British Council and the Arts Council. But these services were not mentioned in the official announcement.

That neglect makes no difference to my attitude in the matter, nor to the reasons which led me to accept the honour. I accepted the honour (as I have accepted lesser honours in the past) because, though I am an anarchist, and was an anarchist before any of these unsought distinctions came my way, I have never renounced the society in which I have lived; and having lived in compromise with that society in big things and little, I cannot see why, logically, the empty question of a title should be made a matter of indignant protest.

I would ask my accusing comrades to examine their own consciences before condemning me. Daily and continually, almost every one of you accepts an order of living, which is integrally bourgeois and from which you cannot escape, unless you are prepared to go and live on a desert island. You accept the protection of the state's armed forces; you accept the benefits of the national health service; you use national roads and railways; you eat subsidised food. Moreover, unless you are too poor, you pay taxes which support all these state activities and benefits. Every glass of beer you drink, every cigarette you smoke, helps to sustain the bourgeois society which (in theory) you so rightly despise.

To contract out of that society is an idle gesture. It does not cost you anything to keep your seat at the picture-house when the National Anthem is played; it does not cost you anything to stand on a soap-box and shout insults at the Queen or her Government. So long as you keep within the law and pay your taxes, you are free to make an exhibition of your Ishmaelitic self, at the mere cost of embarrassment to your friends. But what positive good do you do? How much nearer do you bring an anarchist society?

Living is one activity, thought is another. Never do they correspond, except in the case of rare hermits, who flee society to live in the desert. Even Gandhi, the purest-minded man of our times—even Gandhi accepted the religious observances of his caste; even Gandhi accepted the title of Mahatma.

By thought one aims to transform the world. The ideas which we

associate with names like Socrates, Buddha, Leo-tse, Jesus, Francis of Assisi, Luther, Rousseau, Tolstoy—such ideas have transformed society. It did not follow from the fact that such men held such ideas, and even attempted to live lives in conformity with their principles, that they were not honoured by the people among whom they lived. When Tolstoy tried to get rid of his title and estate, he caused much suffering to his family and his dependents. He did not advance his ideas by such selfish intransigent conduct; on the contrary, the world has had to forgive him his actions

before it could accept his ideas.

To renounce one's faith in order to find a position in society is the worst kind of treachery; but to take a position in society that will give force and authority to one's faith is an elementary duty.

Whatever the reaction of my comrades may be to the personal decision which I have taken, my own conduct will not be in doubt. My convictions have not changed and will not change. I regard war as the curse of humanity, and governments as the instruments of war. I shall as always work unceasingly to abolish those social and economic institutions which exclude love and foster hatred.

HERBERT READ.

## For a Reevaluation of Ideas

THE end of the year is a good time for recapitulation, a time for making a re-evaluation of basic ideas, and evolving new ones. There must be many comrades who feel sadly confused when they come to try and express the ideas which they would accept as characteristically anarchistic, and yet have no difficulty in criticising anomalies, moral or economic, which are the stuff that governments are made of.

It is easy to detect the fatuous, the futile and the febrile, it is not so easy to produce some yardstick by which the deficiencies of contemporary society may be measured. From personal reading, I find that many, who call themselves anarchists, bring to their aid a collection of well-worn prejudices, developed long previously, which have nothing to commend them beyond the gratuitous emotive satisfaction which comes from their utterance. That is to say, there is no attempt to formulate a critique which

is logically coherent, having for its basis some ideas which could be used to form a definition of anarchism. On the contrary, the whole approach is scrappy, and the only thing which holds it together is the general tone deriving from perhaps a resentment of authority, or an affronted sense of social justice.

This situation may be good, bad or indifferent, I am not in a position to pass judgment. But I do think it will be perpetuated as long as the literature of the movement contents itself with protestations on the one hand, and yearnings after past revolutionaries on the other. I do not see anywhere the attempts that should be made to produce the economics of anarchy, there seems to be no Keynes of Syndicalism.

Let us face it, anarchist polemic may be virile, but the fundamentals are largely neglected. Bakunin and his predecessors are remote, their comments, whilst in some cases still relevant when

## "Lessons of the Spanish Revolution" London C.N.T. Group Reply

[Since, in my view, this reply is no reply but a distortion, I see on reason to modify or apologise for the views expressed in my study of the Spanish Revolution. For the benefit of readers who may not recall in detail what I actually wrote, I have appended comments, in the form of footnotes, to some of the criticisms levelled at me in the present article.]

I have no pretensions as to the completeness of my study or that it is free from wrong interpretations. The subject is so vast and complex, and most of the internal documentation of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. is still under lock and key, that it will be many years before the full facts are known. But so far as my critics are concerned, they add nothing to our knowledge of the Spanish Revolution by their contribution published below. As to whether they demolish my efforts by their "criticisms"—that is a matter which readers of my study can decide for themselves.—V.R.]

OVER a period of nearly six months, FREEDOM has published weekly instalments of a study under the above title, signed by V.R. We expected, at least to some extent, the fulfilment of the self-appointed "important and necessary task" of the author: "to seek the causes of the defeat of the revolution in Spain". The 80,000 words of that study should even have permitted the author: "to re-examine anarchist theory in the light of the Spanish experience and to draw valuable lessons for future struggles", as promised in the introduction. (1)

The group of C.N.T. refugees in this country who have taken active part in the struggle discussed in these articles, have waited patiently during these months for the promised constructive contribution to revolutionary theory and research. It would have mattered little to us if we had individually or collectively disagreed with some or all of the conclusions reached by the author, provided that the honest examination of facts, the play of social forces in the struggle, the rôle of ideas and deeds had brought to light the true problems and permitted us—and the less informed readers—to reach our own conclusions and thereby improve our mental and organisational equipment for future struggles. We waited in vain. The author has chosen to use his considerable efforts and his generous space allocation on a piece of special pleading. He puts forward an argument which is neither factually correct, nor compatible with what is generally accepted to be anarchist thought; and his special pleading is unredeemed by accuracy or consistency even of his single-minded purpose. (2)

The "lessons of the Spanish Revolution" thus remain to be drawn, and the small fraction of the space occupied by the author that we claim for our reply cannot pretend to supply this need. For the sake of the uninformed reader, who might be misled into accepting this highly personal mirage of the Spanish struggle, we must claim from those in charge of what purports to be the

(1) My objectives were much more modest than those attributed to me by my critics. What I actually wrote was: "For Anarchists, therefore, to seek the causes of the defeat of the revolution in Spain is an important and a necessary task, for it will permit us to re-examine anarchist theory in the light of Spanish experience and to draw valuable lessons for future struggles."

(2) My principal sources of information include two volumes, each of 400 pages—a total of more than half a million words—containing hundreds of documents and published by the section of the C.N.T. in Exile of which my critics are the representatives in Gt. Britain. A third volume has yet to appear. If my articles are "special pleading" and factually incorrect then I submit that my critics should charge their organisation and the author of these volumes, José Peirats, with the same "crimes". So far in the Spanish Press (excluding the collaborationist section which in any case is beyond the pale so far as my critics are concerned), I have read nothing but praise for Peirats' efforts.

Anarchist voice in this country, freedom to rectify only the most glaring misrepresentations and unconscious or deliberate misdirections.

For V.R., the lessons of the Spanish Revolution are exceedingly simple. He expresses them in one italicised sentence at the end of the introduction: "The policy of compromise on the part of the C.N.T. leadership as well as the Executive power of the leadership were the most important factors in ensuring that the revolution must inevitably fail." (3) The remaining 80,000 words are only a redundant repetition of this theme with selected quotations from Peirats and Santillan which appear to support the thesis and disdainful disregard of everything else that contradicts it, except for some courtesy bows to scholarly objectivity. ("Let us forestall criticism by saying that we are fully aware . . ." and "Perhaps it may be inevitable that . . ."—and having affirmed his awareness, or acknowledged the inevitability of something contrary to this thesis, he goes on to contradict or attack the same fact, in the next line or paragraph.)

The simple thesis that we are asked to accept is then this: The C.N.T. leaders betrayed the revolutionary principles. The rank and file are exempt from blame, as the betraying leaders imposed their policies of compromise on them. (4) Thus, the revolution was lost. The confusion of thought underlying these attractive simplifications is, unhappily for the author, laid bare in the very first example which he quotes for his justification. The elections of February 1936, according to V.R., are an illustration of this betrayal of the leadership. Not only did the Catalan Regional Committee promote a Conference in which they tried to "sell" the rank and file the idea, if not of avowed participation in the election, at least of some semi-official support to the political "Left" groupings against the Monarchist and Fascists—an attempt foiled by the valiant orthodoxy of the delegations—but we are also asked to believe that there were some dark machinations by which millions of anarchist votes were bartered for some amnesty proposals. The elections came, and instead of the weak Right Government desired by V.R. a "Left" majority was brought in and created the conditions for Fascist and military uprising, all thanks to the anarchist votes. Clear proof of the betrayal by the leaders!

A pity that the mechanism of this betrayal is not explained more clearly by V.R. After all, the handful of leaders of the higher hierarchy of the C.N.T. class society could hardly have created the electoral majority. Though Peirats states, and V.R. repeats with glee, that the anti-electoral campaign of the C.N.T. was more conspicuous by its absence than by its vigour, nobody has yet suggested that the C.N.T. launched the slogan of participation in the streets. It would seem, therefore, that the rank and file worker and the "man in the street" were left to their own devices, and a great number of them decided to vote. (5)

(3) The operative word in this sentence, and which has been lost on my critics, is "ensuring". I have nowhere minimised the many other factors with which the revolutionary workers had to contend.

(4) I suggest my critics read, or re-read, the chapter on "Anarchism and Syndicalism".

(5) This is what in fact I wrote: "Tactics are like the game of chess which demands that each move shall be viewed not only in the light of its immediate results but in all its implications several moves ahead. The moment the C.N.T. leadership was prepared to abandon principles for tactics . . . new factors besides the original one of liberating the political prisoners would have to be considered." "For instance, by ensuring the Popular Front victory as a result of their participation at the election the C.N.T. had to take into account that such a victory made certain that the preparations for the military putsch would proceed unchecked. On the other hand a victory of the Right, which was almost certain if the C.N.T. abstained, would mean the end of the military conspiracy and the coming to power of a reactionary but ineffectual government which, like its predecessors, would hold out for not more than a year or two. There is no real evidence to show that there was any significant development of a fascist movement in Spain along the lines of the régimes in Italy and Germany. The Right-wing parties were much the same as they had always been."

## America's Intellectual Future

THE rediscovery of the springs of creative power cannot be bound into any simple problem of geography, particularly at present, when the barriers of time and space are rapidly becoming non-existent. The American artist and intellectual must give over expecting the future to develop according to region or historic example. America is soaked with Europe, in any case; and there is no sign that Europe, as it rebuilds itself, may not provide vitality and perspective for American life, art and thought. For although Carthage never recovered after its furrows were sown with salt, Rome, like Troy, rebuilt itself innumerable times; and what may Europe not produce out of its present ruins?

lifted from their context, are in the main of purely historical interest—and if we come nearer to the present day, there have been such rapid advances in technology that the theories of Kropotkin on productive capacity need considerable modification if they are to be of any applicable value. I suppose some will accuse me of an offence tantamount to sacrilege for saying this, but I end with a plea.

Can we have more discussion of the A.B.C. of Anarchy, rather than the X.Y.Z.? It is better, surely, to advance some working hypothesis, and review it constantly in the light of social change, than to criticise from a set of implicit axioms to which reference is practically never made, or even worse to criticise from no definable standpoint at all. It is this latter that earns anarchism the reputation of being purely destructive. Derby, 26th Dec. R. A. M. GREGSON.

The Italian post-war arts are at the moment strongly influencing American taste; and American students and a new kind of tourist are flowing back to Europe in quantity. In addition, the American intellectual must realise the great wave of decentralisation occurring in America itself. The real day of the cities is over, together with the era of passive "appreciation" of the arts. The art centres and "creative writing" courses at state universities, from which untapped creative forces must come; the steady piling up, on the level of the informed and practicing amateur, of various kinds of artistic expertise; the renewal of regional romanticism, folklore feeling, and pre-industrial custom, in many localities where the imitation of the urban was once usual—all this points to a steady working away from provincial as well as industrial limitations. The American people are rapidly leaving behind them a set of outworn mores. The bohemianisation of the outlands has begun. All this points to a time when our present mannerist art and literature will become obsolete, in a natural renewal of romantic idealism. For it is only in periods of idealism that order and integrity come back to thought; that the life of a people is washed over with emotional and spiritual release; that the restrictions of either/or thinking disappear; that a time of abundance is at hand.

—LOUISE BOGAN in *Partisan Review* (New York).

To read V.R., one would picture the "leaders" having sealed their shameful pact with the politicians, getting their Executive powers moving to force the rank and file to the polls . . . Instead, we see that V.R. is really sore not about the executive power of the leaders, but about the fact that they did NOT impose their will on the rank and file to prevent them from voting. What V.R. wanted were "good leaders" who, in the best traditions of monolithic party politics would have made the millions of Spanish members and supporters of the C.N.T. toe the "correct line". (6)

There is no space, nor have we the time, to follow V.R. through the history of the Spanish Civil War, to show that every time the basic complaint is the same: the leaders should have imposed on the members the "right" policy. Oh! had we but seized the gold of the Bank of Spain! After all, what leader can expect to win a revolution without the gold of the State bank? Santillan certainly does not, and V.R. is in full agreement (7) The long series of political provocation, military defeat, foreign intervention; the inherent effect of a long struggle sustained by a poor economy, without equipment, raw materials or even productive hands, would all have disappeared by a miracle if only those scoundrels of the higher hierarchy had given the right order! What a simple world it is, the one conjured up by V.R.

All this special pleading leads to the formulation of the "Conclusions"; a recapitulation of the particular interpretation of anarchist doctrines adopted a long time ago by the Freedom Publishing House and its friends. A respectable point of view, which indeed fundamentally differs from the concepts prevailing in the Spanish Anarchist and anarchosyndicalist movements. It is only to be regretted that, to support this point of view, V.R. should have felt it necessary to distort the volume of evidence on the Spanish struggle. (8)

The great disservice done to the serious student of revolutionary history by this cavalier treatment of the facts lies in that it obscures the fundamental issues from which the lessons thus remain to be drawn, by others, approaching the problems with more critical and unprejudiced minds. When we warn the unprepared reader against the oversimplifying expedient of levelling charges of treason at Anarchist committees and ministers, we are far from suggesting that everything done by the Spanish Movement during the war was correct and infallible, or that we were merely the victims of hostile circumstances. Most of the problems blithely settled by V.R. by means of a quotation torn from its context or background, (8) of the words of Santillan, Peirats, Federica

Continued on p. 4

"The C.N.T. in taking part in the Popular Front campaign should have therefore taken into account the effect of a military uprising. Who would resist the Military? And the question fundamental to the C.N.T.'s very existence as a revolutionary organisation: Can such a situation as will arise be converted to the advantage of the social revolution?"

(6) This is precisely the opposite of the viewpoint expressed in my articles! I am opposed to all "leaders", "good" or "bad".

(7) My words were: "The more one studies the history of the Spanish struggle the more is one shocked by the gravity of the error committed by the workers' organisations in not seizing the gold reserve during the first days when they were strongest and the forces of government weakest." Note my reference to the workers' organisations and not the "leaders". And this sentence was supplemented by a long footnote in which I wrote: "Are we justified in saying that if the social revolution is to succeed it is necessary to abolish every vestige of property capitalism and bourgeois power? If that is conceded then it is the height of revolutionary naïveté to leave hundreds of tons of gold in the hands of an otherwise powerless government or ruling class. It is, however, only an error if, having the possibilities to seize the gold, no action was taken. Were the revolutionary workers in Spain in a position to do so?"

(8) So far my critics have been distorting the evidence contained in my study, as these footnotes only too clearly demonstrate. I have yet to learn in which specific instances I have "distorted" the evidence or torn quotations from their context and background.

## FREEDOM BOOKSHOP OPEN DAILY

### New Books:

The Bridge of Asses J. J. Goutier 10/6

(translated by Albert Meltzer)

The Babeuf Plot D. Thomson 7/6

Documents of Humanity

(ed.) K. O. Kurth 5/-

"Conceived on behalf of man's

dignity."

Né Franco, Né Stalin Gaston Level 7/6

(in Italian)

Some Second-hand Bargains:

Male and Female Margaret Mead 15/-

Conquest of Violence Bert De Ligt 10/-

The Anarchist Prince

George Woodcock &

Ivan Avakumovic 15/-

A New Remained Title:

Shelley's Socialism (Two lectures)

Edward & Eleanor Marx Aveling 2/6

Obtainable from  
27, RED LION STREET,  
LONDON, W.C.1

## TITLES OF HONOUR

TO those who addressed him as "Prince", Kropotkin would gently say: "My first name is Peter." Anarchists have indeed always rejected titles, and for two main reasons. First, the idea of equality and the rejection of leadership seem incompatible with distinctions which appear to raise a man above his fellows. Secondly, it is not consistent to condemn the institution of government on the one hand and accept honours from it on the other. Malatesta, for example, refused a decoration offered to him by the Italian Government for voluntary work he did during the great cholera epidemic at Naples.

The inclusion of Herbert Read's name in the New Year Honours List is, therefore, paradoxical and has aroused comment—in some cases amounting to considerable concern. Indeed, the acceptance of a knighthood by so prominent an exponent of anarchism makes it necessary to consider afresh the whole question of honours in our kind of society.

It is obvious that in any healthy society, individuals will derive pleasure from the esteem of their fellows, and it is this esteem itself which will seem valuable to them rather than any particular codification of it into a specific award. There is nothing wrong with such concern for the good opinion of others and indeed one looks with some reserve at those who seem wholly indifferent to it. But our society does not hold the same ideals as anarchists do, and often it honours its members for activities an anarchist would roundly condemn. Honours conferred for outstanding service to the repressive aspects of imperialism can hardly be regarded with favour, though some would say that this was the kind of activity it is in the nature of governments to admire and award. Nevertheless, in this country, the Honours List also include names of men who have achieved distinction in non-governmental activity—those of literature, the arts, the sciences. In general it is true that it is public activity in these fields which is rewarded though this is not always so: Alexander Fleming, who discovered penicillin in the remoteness of a laboratory was knighted; Augustus John received the Order of Merit.

Herbert Read's distinction as an art critic and in the field of literature make it no surprise that an honour has been offered to him—for he has long been an obvious choice. In the spheres of non-governmental activity, the government is advised by prominent representatives of such activities, and when literary men, or musicians, artists, or scientists are honoured, they may be regarded as enjoying the good esteem of their colleagues in these fields. They enjoyed this before: what the title adds is a badge whereby the uninstructed world outside their particular field now knows of that esteem. Some would say that the good opinion of one's colleagues was enough, and that the opinion of the uncomprehending mass was far less important and added little to it. Yet such an argument can be pushed too far.

Men—not necessarily anarchists—have refused honours before, and it is difficult not to feel that this is the natural course for an anarchist to follow. He might well gain in stature and in honour by just such a course, for suspicion of the titles conferred by our society is more widespread than might appear. If Herbert Read did not follow such a course, he must have had good reasons. And if he felt that acceptance strengthened his hand in the

## FRANK LEECH

"THE year was 1920," wrote Frank Leech, "The last world holocaust had finished, and most of those who had survived were back home 'demobilised'. It was International Labour Day. Many were marching in the processions to the Flesher's Haugh in Glasgow. The meetings were in progress. Speakers holding forth from their various platforms, John Maclean amongst them. Around the meetings, literature sellers were busy. One of them, a middle-aged man of somewhat smaller stature than most. He was holding up two publications, FREEDOM and George Barrett's *The Anarchist Revolution*. The earnestness of his quiet appeal, 'Comrade, you should read these,' drew my attention—I purchased. I saw him many times at following meetings, often in the company of Willie McGill. I learnt his name—Alex Howie. These two comrades were responsible for sowing the seeds of anarchy in my thoughts."

Frank Leech was born at Wigan of Irish parents and was a sailor (heavy-weight boxing champion in the Navy) and worked in the pit with the late Dan Mullin, before he became well-known and well-liked as a newsagent and shop-keeper in the Netherton Road in Glasgow. For years he was active in the body known as the "Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation" before forming with the other Glasgow anarchists, the "Anarchist-Communist Federation" in August 1937.

In 1935-6 he gave shelter to some refugees from Nazi Germany and printed a bulletin in German for clandestine distribution, and when the outbreak of the Spanish revolution brought a resurgence of anarchist propaganda in Glasgow, he and his comrades were immersed in activity on behalf of the Spaniards, circulating *Spain and the World*, printing and publishing the pamphlet *The Truth about Barcelona*, and the C.N.T.-F.A.I. *Boletín de Información* in English as well as a series of anarchist pamphlets, among them Maximov's *Bolshevism: Promises and Reality*, Berkman's *What do you want out of life*, Emma Goldman's *Trotsky Protests too much*, and Harry Derrett's *Under the Fifth Rib*.

They raised funds for Spanish relief, supported several of the Spanish refugees and organised the Scottish meetings of Emma Goldman, who was delighted with the warmth and hospitality with which she was received by Frank Leech and Jessie and Jimmie Wilson.

Early in the Second World War, Frank Leech, Eddie Shaw, Frank Dorans and James Kennedy were arrested and tried in the Sheriff's Court on charges of inciting men to evade military service, by the holding of a mock tribunal for conscientious objectors. They successfully defended themselves, the Sheriff declaring that, "One can hardly say that a man whose ambition was to swim the channel was incited by his swimming instructor." This was one of the first of the many wartime prosecutions of the Glasgow anarchists, the most notable of which were the trials of James Dick and Eddie Shaw.

The well-known incident of Frank Leech's hunger strike is worth describing at length because it epitomises his determined and passionately libertarian character. In November 1943 he was summoned to the Sheriff's Court for refusal to register for fire-watching. He addressed the Court in these words:

LEECH: Twenty-seven years ago, during the war of 1914-18, I volunteered for

pushing of certain ideas in his work for, say, the Arts Council or the British Council, one can only say that the decision lay with him, and that it is impossible for people outside those fields to weigh up all the pros and cons.

Nevertheless, the main anarchist objections remain. Titles, especially those like knighthoods, do seem to imply social distinction. They will expose Herbert Read to many attentions which he will certainly find very unwelcome. It is greatly to be hoped that the work he is doing will in fact be strengthened by public recognition of his merits. If it is to do so it can only be by an increase in that intransigence which anarchists must always show in the face of accepted authoritarian concepts. In this way, the paradoxical situation of an anarchist knight may perhaps be happily resolved.

the armed forces, being partly taken in by decoy phrases similar to those used in this war. They then were "Poor Little Belgium," "Land Fit for Heroes, etc. . . ."

SHERIFF: I will not listen to a political tirade. I also served in the last war, and perhaps did more than you.

LEECH: I want to explain why I did not register. I discovered that our ruling class were not concerned with "Poor Little Belgium," or a "Land Fit for Heroes to Live In," but were only concerned with the preservation of their right to hold the common people up to ransom, demanding their labour or their lives.

I then determined to give my energies towards the destruction of this régime and all forms of tyranny. I determined never again to place myself voluntarily under a Government and to resist conscription. I have done so ever since and have also encouraged others to do likewise.

To-day we are supposed to be fighting "Fascism," yet what have we here with our regulations and regimentation and with our concentration camps?

SHERIFF: Would you rather be in Nazi Germany?

LEECH: No. We anarchists opposed Hitler and Mussolini when your ruling class, including Winston Churchill, were praising and supporting them. To-day, November 11th, you hypocritically remember those who fell in the last war. But November 11th has another meaning for the anarchists. It is the anniversary of the day on which the Chicago anarchists were hanged on a framed-up charge in 1887. We still remember. To-day, you threaten me . . .

SHERIFF: I don't threaten you.

LEECH: The very fact of your position is a threat to me. You threaten me with imprisonment or a fine if I refuse to obey you, but neither of these punishments would be as heavy as the punishment to myself if I gave in to authority in these issues. That is all I have to say. Do your worst.

He was sentenced to a £25 fine or, in default, sixty days imprisonment. He declined to pay the fine and was imprisoned in Barlinnie Jail. He declared his intention to go on hunger strike, and did so, his strike lasting 17 days, when some friends paid the balance of the fine. Much sympathy was aroused by his action amongst Glasgow workers, and the girls at Barr and Stroud's factory

took a collection in recognition of the help he gave them during their strike in the previous year, and when he left Barlinnie the tram conductress recognised him and would not take his fare. His appearance and his gaiety at the party held at the hall in Wilson Street to welcome him back from jail was very moving to those who witnessed it, and Frank himself declared: "I was amazed at the amount of interest aroused by my protest." He emphasised that his action ("Hardly a picnic," he said) was small in comparison with that of many others who suffered for their convictions, and pointed out that since there was no response to the anarchists' call for mass resistance to conscription, they had fallen back on individual resistance which he described as "a two-edged sword plunging into the heart of the present régime. One side the struggle for our individual liberty, the other by example breaking down the morale of our enemy and uplifting the courage of those who are searching for a way out."

★

FRANK LEECH was not what is generally regarded as a successful man. Much

of his time and energy was spent in propagating a point of view which is as far from general acceptance as ever. Though he was a thoughtful and well-read man it cannot be claimed that he added anything to social theory, his writing was mostly confined to reports of industrial disputes, and when his innumerable friends and his enormous street-corner audience are dead, he will be forgotten.

His claim to our affection and respect was in his completeness and integrity as a person. He was immensely strong, he seemed able to turn his hand to anything and handle any situation, he was witty and shrewd and kind. Frank Leech was a revolutionary not through a grudge against life but because he loved life.

He died at his home, near Glasgow, on January 2nd. At his cremation on January 7th, a tribute was paid to his memory by Janet Strachan. We would like to send our sympathy to his comrades in Glasgow, especially to those who were closest to him.

FREEDOM PRESS GROUP.



## A Tribute from Glasgow

Dr. Thomas Robertson writes:

ABOUT 20 years ago, I was called to attend a very ill child, who died in spite of all that could be done. The father, who was opposed to religious views and practices, arranged for his only child's cremation without the usual ceremonies.

I had often met people who professed anti-religious sentiments, but this was the first time I had ever seen them carried into actual practice. This was sufficiently remarkable but I was to have another surprise. A few days after the death I receive a sincere and memorable letter from the child's father thanking me for my, as I thought, very inadequate services. Down the years I have attended many such cases, but never before or since have I been the recipient of such a letter.

The father of that child was Frank Leech and I have never forgotten either his courage or his kindness. This was the beginning of a deep and delightful friendship which was unhappily terminated by Frank's death last week, and in paying this tribute to him perhaps it will appear the more impressive when I say that we differed in many fundamentals.

I took the opposite view in religion, could not follow him all the way in politics, and was aware of foibles and inconsistencies in his character. But what are these to be measured against the man himself? My friendship with him was based on personal grounds into which beliefs scarcely entered. His was a genuine and genial humanity which is all too rare in these days

of increasing mediocrity. When so many men are debased to the level of numbers, to the status of ants, to the cramped confinement of peas in their bureaucratic pods, here was a man who had resisted the rot and clung to his manhood, and for this he will command my everlasting respect.

Frank was a big burly man and a delight to the eye, whether he was running his business in his décolleté shirt showing an expanse of massive chest, or coaxing an ancient car to proceed on its sometimes unlawful occasions with manifold libations of water to the leaky radiator.

He was a boxing enthusiast in his younger days and like so many big men his personality was equated to his physique. He had countless brushes and often fights with the law courts, with the police, with Communists, and with hecklers, and indeed with anybody who, as he judged, threatened to deny him his rightful place. At one time he suffered a period of imprisonment which was cut short, to his annoyance, by his more tender-hearted comrades.

Many were the men and women, mostly the outcasts of the social order, whom he helped. He assisted considerable numbers who had fled from the wrath of Hitler's Germany or Franco's Spain. One of these men, I remember, he kept in his house for a long time and even provided a printing press from which poured out German propaganda and invective against the then régime!

He took up the cause of pacifists and other war objectors, supported

comrades in legal difficulties and asserted himself in every way in the cause of Anarchism to which he gave his life. He spoke effectively, spread the literature, and arranged meetings for years; and if any comrade was ill or destitute Frank would help him, and frequently my services were asked and freely given.

Amidst this grim battle with events and persons, his humour was unflinching and his laughing cynicism a delight. If ever men are to be victors over the incubus of "Statism", if they are ever to conquer this monstrous régime of slavery which the bulk of mankind seems content to endure, we shall need more of such resolute individuals as Frank Leech.

His body was cremated to-day without the religious ceremonies of which he so roundly disapproved, but I observed that the pall which covered our stalwart friend was emblazoned with the mystic cryptogram "I.H.S." Some say this means "In His Service" and I am bound to say that if the beliefs which I hold have any validity, the soul of Frank Leech will stand better than many who have cried "Lord, Lord."

### Shrinking Markets

Lancashire's exports of textiles to Europe were almost halved last year. By the end of October only 33,000,000 square yards were sent to the main markets compared with 62,100,000 square yards in the first ten months of 1951. The European section of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce issued these figures in its annual report yesterday.

# CENTRAL AFRICAN FEDERATION

Continued from p. 1

old chieftains who propose to "catch the Queen's heels" or the inevitable six careerists who will take the six seats so contemptuously offered. Faced with the silent hostility of six empty seats, however, the twenty-nine white federal members might well wonder what retribution they were going to bring upon themselves.

Most local leaders of the present, like Mr. Nkomo, reject a stand for African Independence on the Indian model. "We will co-operate with Europeans, if . . ." They do not see what tremendous possibilities lie before the African faced with achievements in so many countries for a least political independence. "The Christian Church may remain in an independent Africa—providing it does not agitate for the smashing of independent schools now." "The white settler will not be exiled—providing he does not treat natives as inferiors now." Many liberal-minded whites dare not face ostracism on account of expressing their sympathy with Africans. But how many whites would not make some such bargain—remembering India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma? Compromise is leading nowhere, but bargaining might—accompanied by a boycott of commissions and committees and governmental functions.

The Africans who are at present only

## Food for Thought

Twelve months ago, £75,000 was won on a football pool by four miners at Glapwell Colliery, near Chesterfield, and each received over £18,000. Three of the men are still working at the pit. They are: Bill Ford, 27, of Cross Street, Hephthorne Lane, Old Tupton, near Chesterfield; Stanley Wright, 33, of King's Street, Clay Cross; and Malcolm Pugh, 25, of Flaxpiece Road, Clay Cross. The fourth winner, who left the pit for farming, was Cyril Calladine.

struggling for recognition of human rights may soon find themselves achieving a type of national independence. With other traditions and other possibilities, it may not merely mean yet another nation arising, but be a prelude to something on a higher level. Why need the African follow discredited 19th-century European democracy, or the Marxist slave-state? His own background has elements of freedom and communal living about it that may yet lead to a form of life higher than parliamentary democracy or the State. The new generation of Africans may rescue African life from patriarchy and chieftainship, without following European traditions. It is not necessary to throw out the baby of happy living with the bathwater of primitive life.

"FEDERATION"  
One must add one point, and that is how African objections to Central African Federation may teach some European enthusiasts for federation *per se* a thing or two. "World Government," "Federation," "Federal Union"—it all sounds very nice until you come down to brass tacks. The oppressed in Nyasaland, Southern and Northern Rhodesia will not only not be a whit better off under federation—they will be correspondingly worse off as their masters are better organised and more efficiently integrated. A good few English idealists, with the delightful confusion of the liberal-minded, find themselves in both camps—with the Central Africa Committee or Racial Unity and similar organisations against Central African Federation—yet on other committees for European and world federation.

The practical objections to Central African Federation cannot be gainsayed by anyone who sees what the Union of South Africa means in terms of racial oppression. Federation is *not* a good thing necessarily. It depends on what you are federating. "Unity is strength."

but for what? No, we do *not* want to see the French and German and Italian Governments federating (the English taking a back seat in case anyone wants their colonies)—as believers in freedom we want to see governments disappearing and peoples federating. If there must be nation-states let them be of the size of Luxembourg and Andorra so that they can be dissolved more easily.

INTERNATIONALIST.

## OUR HOUSING GENIUS

At the end of the year (1951) Mr. Macmillan inherited 226,000 unfinished houses started under his Labour predecessors. Thus, regardless of the Government's complexion, only some very singular bungling could have prevented the completion of at least 230,000 houses during 1952. —*The Times*, 3/1/52.

## Special Appeal 1952

December 9th to 31st :

Denver: R.B.\* £19/5/0; San Francisco: S.C. 14/-; Birkenhead: G.H.W. 17/-; Anon 2/-; Hyde Park: K. 1/9; Cardiff: S.F. 5/-; San Francisco: Social Nov. 8, and Celeste £26/5/0; Croydon: A.U.\* £2; London: S.E.P. 10/-; Dovercourt: L.C.W. 3/8; Sheffield: H.W. 3/-; Dublin: J.M. 2/7; Colemans Hatch: D.M. 2/8; Manchester: J.E.B. 2/-; Glasgow: A.MacD.\* 4/-; Whetstone: D.C. £1; Edinburgh: T.O.M. 10/-; Blackpool: R.B.B. 2/6.

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GIFTS OF BOOKS—Rochdale: J.R.; Nottingham: K.N.  
\* Readers who have undertaken to send regular monthly contributions.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

## Promoting Mob Psychology

DID you read the article in the Nov. 8th *Collier's* entitled "Why Half Our Combat Soldiers Fail to Shoot"?

*Collier's* calls it a "frightening situation" that "in any given action of World War II, only 12 to 25 per cent. of all the combat soldiers who were armed and in a position to fire their weapons at the enemy were able to pull the trigger!"

The main reason for this situation is that "All his life the boy's mind works unconsciously to suppress desires to kill. Then, abruptly, he is put into a soldier suit and told to shoot fellow human beings."

The army's remedy—which has raised the average to 50 per cent. in Korea—is to "provide the man with a fatherlike leader" and to "promote mob psychology", merging the consciousness of the troops to get them to "act as they would never dare to act as individuals".  
*New York, Dec. 5.* SID ABERMAN.

## SCIENCE & SUPERSTITION

I HAVE just been reading your editorial of January 3rd. While in general agreement with the views expressed, I should like to point out that these scientists who can, but won't debunk the Bible are themselves fallible human beings, and as such in occasional need of debunking. We may, for example, recall Rutherford's remark that the practical utilisation of atomic energy was "moonshine". The whole of science rests on the assumption of the uniformity of nature. While I admit that this has proved an extremely useful working hypothesis, we have no means of knowing whether or not it is universally

true. To find this out, we should have to observe everything that ever has happened and ever will happen. There is a great deal to be said for the Greek idea of moderation in all things—even in the worship of science and reason, which itself tends to become a fetish. Surely our quarrel is with existing political, economic and religious institutions because and in so far as they support the exploitation of man by man; and we shall not get very far by setting up a new infallibility in the place of the old. We should take heed lest we find ourselves in one of those nightmare worlds dominated by technology, which we visit so often in science-fiction. I seem to recollect that Bakunin was of the same opinion.

Wood Green. R. J. FERGUSON.

## Defective Logic

Sentencing a man to three months' imprisonment, Sheriff Prain said at Perth to-day: "You should be dealt with as a mental defective in an appropriate institution, but there is no place to send you. Under these circumstances you will have to go to prison."

James Ferguson (20), of Hunter Crescent, Perth, who pleaded guilty to stealing a bicycle, was said to be illiterate and to have a mental age of eight. Two doctors described him as mentally defective.

The prosecutor said that under the Criminal Justice Act Ferguson should be sent compulsorily to a special mental institution, but all the institutions referred to in the act were full, and although building was going on it would be two or three years before patients such as Ferguson could be accepted at short notice

## TOO STUPID . . .

If I had not been rather stupid as a boy, I should have been a doctor. But I was not able to pass the exams, so I became Minister of Health.

—*News Chronicle*, 6/1/53.

## MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP OPEN AIR MEETINGS

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

### INDOOR MEETINGS

See page 1 for new address.

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

JAN. 20—Rita Milton on INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND "THE WORKERS"

### 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 Carlin Jane Strachan, Eddie Shaw,

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# C.N.T. GROUP REPLIES

Continued from p. 2

Montseny or Juan Lopez, were the cause of much heart-searching among all the militants at the time: some of them will never receive a single, simple and satisfactory answer, while others await the searching test of individual and collective discussions and, even more, of new experiences in the daily struggle.

## PROBLEMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is essential to re-state here some of those problems less the reader might believe, in all good faith, that V.R.'s twenty-three short lessons on "How to be a good Anarchist" have settled them.

One group of problems relates to the structure and self-expression of a revolutionary organisation, simplified into a problem of "leadership" by V.R. From his point of view—that of a bystander, interested in the purity and aesthetic perfection of ideas—the answer is simple indeed, and he gives it in his conclusion: "mass organisations contaminate": "refrain from having them or from participating in them." (9) If you do not believe him, take Malatesta, whose word is surely good enough for you.

For those of us to whom words are not parts of an intellectual exercise, but preludes to and parts to action in a practical struggle, this sort of answer is not very helpful. When great sections of the people are each individually willing to go a long way in practical and self-sacrificing action to achieve progress on the road to social justice, organisation is not a debating point but an elementary fact of life. The question whether to have or not to have a C.N.T. has not arisen for generations of Spanish workers. The only question constantly, daily facing them is how to have it and what steps it should take.

The mere existence of a mass organisation carries with it the creation of three constant problems. One is the presence in the organisation of elements with a different degree of readiness for self-sacrifice, or sometimes just with different views on any given situation. The second is that the force constituted by the striking power of a mass organisation attracts to it individuals who see in it a means for their personal advancement, and that those who thus join a revolutionary movement, consciously or unconsciously, under false pretences are not easily recognised and weeded out. The third is that elements of the movement appointed into representative positions labour under two heavy responsibilities: on the one hand, to ensure that their daily actions and pronouncements correspond to the general view of the membership, on the other, to know that even their casual words will have grave and practical consequences in the lives of those who entrusted them with their representation. This double responsibility unknown to those individuals who speak for themselves, and who never have to suffer, or make others suffer the consequences of their actions, may well tend to make committees overcautious and hesitant.

The difficulties arising out of these three problems are known to the Spanish anarchosyndicalist Movement, but the universal panacea against it has so far eluded us. The practical, traditional remedy applied is that of a purely empirical approach: organisational customs and practices are created and modified in the light of day to day experience; men whose approach to problems makes them suspect of self-seeking are given the benefit of the doubt, until they overstep the mark and are swept overboard by a wave of indignation; and honest and capable men, appointed to positions of trust have been

## (9) What I actually wrote was:

"In organisations with a mass following, the small anarchist minority can only retain its identity and exert a revolutionary influence by maintaining a position of intransigence. By that we do not mean that they should oppose those actions the workers may take to improve their economic situation and working conditions. On the contrary, the anarchists are the first to encourage such activity, recognising nevertheless that such activity is essentially reformist and cannot result in the social revolution which aims at the abolition of all classes and privileges."

and are being ground away, and made sometimes into nervous wrecks, under the burden of daily self-examination and that of constant collective critical examination of each of their words and their acts. And yet, among all the attempts at revolutionary organisation, the C.N.T. alone can look back over its own history and claim to have signified, if not in every single step, at any rate over the main trend, the true expression of opinion of the militants of the rank and file. That this is done at great expense, with occasional false steps and at a high expenditure of militant effort, is recognised by all. And errors and expenditure were higher than usual under the stresses of the civil war, and under the stresses of illegality and exile in the following years. The problem is there; the answer is wanted and constantly sought for. But we may perhaps be excused if V.R.'s advice: "to avoid mistakes, do nothing", does not appeal to us.

The other group of problems more specifically related to the civil war in Spain is eloquently mis-stated by Borkenau and quoted with approval by V.R.: "a revolution must either be carried through to the end, or had better not start at all".

If this "old rule of revolutions" (presumably derived from the hundreds of successful social revolutions witnessed by Borkenau and V.R.) has any meaning at all, it is in its last words. "A social revolution had better not start at all". For it is not explained, either by Borkenau or V.R., who can give a satisfactory written guarantee just before we start our little revolution, whether it will be possible or not to "carry it through to the end". So when in doubt, do nowt. (10)

This view was not shared by the Spanish workers, who manned the barricades everywhere when the first news of the military pronunciamento came. When the dust of shooting and barricades had settled, the position was this: in Catalonia and Aragon, a revolution was as good as accomplished; but a large part of Spain was occupied by the military and Falange, and the rest of the country had declared itself "anti-fascist", but did not follow, except in small isolated circumstances, Catalonia and Aragon on the road of revolution.

This short picture gives in a nutshell the tragedy of the Spanish Revolution. The revolution, started without Borkenau's guarantee, was only partially successful. What to do in such a circumstance is indeed a problem which might well be important at the next attempt. But for the militant on the spot, it will be of little use to know that, at a distance of seventeen years and one thousand miles, V.R. has shrugged his shoulders and said: "My dear fellow, you should never have started it unless you were sure you could finish it." (10)

It is easy enough, from a distance, to be heroic and say that the right thing to do in such a situation is to die on the barricades. (11). For some, it is not a difficult decision (and quite a few did just that), but it is impossible for anybody who is not a Bolshevik or a general to take this decision, not for themselves but perhaps for a million of their comrades. What is more understandable than that some or many should hope to retain at least a few of the achievements of the revolution and, more important, perhaps, a coherent body of revolutionaries, and hope to await the possibility of a new

(10) As any intelligent reader will understand, that the sentence quoted from Borkenau (and which was preceded by a long paragraph by way of explanation) means that once the revolutionary process has started it must be encouraged to go as far as the revolutionary workers are able to advance it. To attempt to halt it before it reaches its full stature is to place the revolution in jeopardy. Nowhere in my articles have I suggested—as my critics would have me suggest—that the resistance to the military rising should never have started. What is more, I have throughout recognised that the situation on July 19th, though revolutionary, did not necessarily have an anarchist solution.

beginning tomorrow? In this frame of mind, each backward step, each concession, is the last one and none of them in itself is important enough to sacrifice to it all the lives, and all the hopes for the future. How easy it is to be wise after the event and to say that these were vain illusions (and be it said, in passing, that the writers of this reply and quite a few other Spanish militants, said so at the time). But how difficult it would be, given the same circumstances, to avoid the same conclusion on a future occasion, not by a few treacherous leaders but by the great bulk of sound revolutionary militants.

Oddly enough, a similar argument a few years ago divided the ranks of the C.N.T. again. During the Civil War, a prevalent current of opinion called for the sacrifice of some fundamental traditional tenets of our revolutionary movement for the sake of fresh revolutionary action once the war was ended. Some individuals corrupted by power, may have given their reasons with their tongues in their cheeks. But the great majority sincerely believed that the sacrifice was only an unwelcome means to a good end.

With Franco's reign continuing unabated after fifteen years there were those in the C.N.T. who, once more, thought that any solution which would mean Franco's end was worthy of support, even to the extent of mortgaging future freedom of action or of adopting a "lesser evil" solution, such as might be provided by a coalition with the monarchists. Some probably sincerely thought that this would reduce bloodshed and bring about conditions in which a better start could be made. Others may have added this latter part again with their tongues in their cheeks. Be that as it may, the great majority of the movement, inside and outside Spain, refused this solution and, in fact, refused any overt or covert act which would in any way mortgage the future or the fundamental principles of the Movement.

So blind is V.R. to anything that does not support his line of the "leaders' treason" that this fundamental decision, which reaffirms the vitality of the C.N.T. and its ability to maintain its course in conformity with the traditions and sound instincts of its rank and file militants, to him, though "ostensibly a crisis between the 'collaborationist' and 'purist' tendencies has in fact been a struggle between personalities aiming at the control of the organisation".

V.R. is entitled to his prejudiced view of the real achievements and real blunders committed on the field of battle by the militants of Spanish anarchism. But we feel, that the readers of the only paper claiming to defend Anarchism in Britain, are equally entitled to this brief statement by those who, rank and file militants or "exalted" leaders, have had to take their share of responsibility for the decisions made in Spain in 1936 and who hope one day, as soon as possible, to face the same responsibilities again. Far from claiming that we have been individually or collectively right in every case, we would like those in other countries on a future occasion to understand and reflect upon the real problems of our struggles, and exercise their right and duty of criticism in a manner which equips us—and them—better for future battles.

C.N.T.—GT. BRITAIN COMMITTEE OF RELATIONS.

## (11) What I actually wrote was:

"It is when the use of violence is prolonged, and the armed struggle ceases to be related to its objectives, that we find ourselves on common ground with the so-called non-violent anarchists, and consider that anarchists in justice to themselves and to their fellow workers, must question the validity of the prolongation of the armed struggle. . . . In Spain that situation arose after a few months. The delays in following up the initial successes and the failure to prevent the establishment of a bridgehead from Morocco, permitted Franco to reorganise and reinforce his army and to launch his large-scale offensive from the South and threaten Madrid with encirclement. Faced with this situation, the leaders of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. capitulated to the Popular Front point of view for militarisation. The consequences of this capitulation have been dealt with at some length in the course of this study. Could the C.N.T.-F.A.I. have acted otherwise? That is a question which perhaps one day our Spanish comrades will be prepared to face objectively and will answer."