

## "IKE" ON THE STRINGS DOCK SCHEME FAILING

NOW that the initial shock of alarm over President Eisenhower's de-neutralisation of Formosa has passed, discussion of its real significance is under way and reveals many aspects of democratic administration which the advocates of democracy do not usually stress.

During his election campaign we drew attention to the many occasions on which General Eisenhower had to fall in with the needs of electioneering at the expense of strict truthfulness. Similarly, his policy in office will not represent what he or even his immediate advisers really want. It will always be a compromise between the views of various factions in the Republican Party, and will take into account the effect on various groupings which represent votes (whether the opposition party, the farmers, the Roman Catholics, the army business men, banks, etc.) It is in this morass that ethical political ideals hopelessly founder and go down.

### A "new" policy

It is becoming increasingly clear in England that the policies of the political parties who are the contestants for power do not radically differ from one another. Nowhere has this been more convincingly demonstrated than in foreign policy. Bevin's policy was admitted to be a continuation of that of his coalition predecessor. The Tories picked up where Bevin and Morrison left off. Foreign policy indeed shows clearly that the party in power administers the machinery which is in existence and which runs along its own lines almost independently of the proclaimed policies of contesting political groupings.

And so it is with Eisenhower. A political commentator remarks:

"For the past eight months there has been a recurrent debate among officials and diplomats in Washington about ways and means of putting increased pressure on Communist China to make her more anxious to conclude a truce in Korea. The chief possibilities mentioned have been a direct military assault from the present line, an amphibious landing on the North Korean coast, the bombing of air bases in Manchuria, and permission for the Chinese Nationalists to make raids from Formosa in order to divert Communist troops from Korea and sup-

### SOLLY SACHS LEAVES

Mr. Solly Sachs, banned former secretary of the South African Garment Workers' Union, has left for England, because, he said, his position in South Africa "has become impossible."

plies from Indo-China. The previous Administration had decided against all of these courses for either technical or political reasons. The new President chose the one course which could be taken on his own authority, and which in his opinion had the least dangerous implications, while at the same time allaying the most insistent Republican disquiet."

He goes on to point out that the crucial test will be "whether Formosa will now be given equal priority with Korea and Indo-China for the supply of American ships and aircraft which will be needed to enable the Chinese Nationalists to make any real impression on the mainland". Despite the "China Lobby"—the supporters of Chiang Kai-shek in Congress—the Chiefs of Staff are said to be opposed to such a move.

### Reaction to Pressure Groups

What will actually happen is important, but we are here concerned with another aspect of the affair. What counts with the President is that he must make a show of departing from the policies of his predecessor in office while actually carrying on very much as before. He has to placate his Republican supporters without doing anything likely to bring his party out of power. In the ensuing months the "China Lobby" may become more powerful, the Chiefs of Staff may change their minds. If so, actions may follow in the Far East which might be the prelude to war. The point is that what President Eisenhower does, does not represent the needs of the situation in his view, but is the resultant of the various forces which are brought to bear on him. And the power which these forces wield depends on electoral considerations—how many votes they represent and what are the views of the particular blocks of voters involved. When it is remembered that the pressure involved may not even represent the real policy of the particular grouping but may result from an agreement with another group "to support them on this in return for soft-peddling elsewhere or whatever," the remoteness of the democratic method from any real meaning or content is revealed.

The over-riding consideration is

the determination to stay in power and it is this which gives the support offered or withheld by the pressure groupings its importance and strength. Their influence depends not on the rightness of their viewpoint but on the number of votes they represent.

### The Men and the Institutions

"Eisenhower's" or "Truman's" policy thus means very little in terms of personal influence, and it is futile to blame the man for the consequences of the vote-dependant method. Analysis illustrates however the rather miserable rôle of the politician who allows himself to be the focus of all these forces which he does not control but is instead their catspaw. He is less to be blamed than despised. Meanwhile, progress consists not in removing "the men in office", but in a revolutionary reconstruction of the whole machinery of social and economic administration.

And it also becomes apparent that our future is not in the hands of men of "wide vision and considered judgment" but in the almost mindless play of vote-manipulating groupings. We shall only be responsible for our own futures when we as individuals control our own lives and the administration of the society in which we live.

## Bentley Execution Protest Meeting

A PUBLIC MEETING to protest against the execution last month of Derek Bentley (see FREEDOM, 31/1/53) and to call for the abolition of the death penalty, has been arranged to take place at ST. PANCRAS TOWN HALL on WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18 at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting has been organised by a few individuals who feel strongly that there should never be a repetition of the manifest injustice of the Bentley execution. Speakers, whose names should be well known to readers of FREEDOM, include Sidney Silverman, M.P., Dr. Donald Soper, Sybil Morrison, Frank Dawtry, F. A. Ridley, Philip Sansom, C. H. Norman, and others.

### NEO-NAZIS SENTENCED AT HAMBURG

HAMBURG, Feb. 4. A German court here to-day sentenced eight former members of the banned neo-Nazi Socialist Reich Party (S.R.P.) to prison terms ranging from six to eight months for illegal activities. Three others were acquitted. The trial, which began yesterday, was the first of its kind since the Federal Constitutional Court at Karlsruhe last October banned the S.R.P. as a Nazi organisation. The convicted men gave notice of appeal.—*Reuter.*

### DEATH BY TEST TUBE NOW

WASHINGTON. The explosion of "a single test tube of new explosive 1,000 times stronger than an atom bomb" wiped out a little Pacific island on November 1, said Senator James Duff.

The Atomic Energy Commission refused to comment on the statement, but it was pointed out that this was the time of the explosion universally taken to be a hydrogen bomb test.

WRITING on the Dock Labour Board's scheme to deal with unemployment in the Docks, in FREEDOM (13/12/52), I outlined how the scheme would work and wrote, "There is no doubt that plenty of dockers will take advantage of it."

I was wrong. Suspicion of the scheme, the fear that once out it would be difficult for a worker to get back on the register, resentment at being simply brushed-off when it suited the employers, together with a worker's natural reluctance to leave the work he has made his life and the workmates he had made his friends, combined to outweigh the apparent financial advantages.

The Portworkers' Clarion, organ of the unofficial Merseyside Portworkers' Committee, carried in its January number the headline "Sack Yourself Scheme Flops". It does not represent an Anarchist or Syndicalist point of view, but we reproduce it below as it is an authentic dockers' point of view.

There are points on which we could argue with it. Its demands are essentially reformist, but we must remember that the dockers are up against it now. Pensioning off the older workers may seem not a very militant demand for those who maintain that "nothing less than Workers' Control is worth fighting for" but for the dockers concerned, it would mean a very real improvement if they could give up their heavy work and receive, together with their Old Age Pensions, a pension from their employers which would ensure them enough to live on.

It's a reasonable enough request surely, but dockers have been requesting pensions for years, to no avail. The heartening thing about the article below is not so much what the dockers are demanding, but how they are going to set about getting their demands.

Their decision to by-pass the official union channels, to organise themselves on a nation-wide basis, to rely on their own strength through the use of direct action—these are most encouraging signs in these days of apathy and follow-my-leader.

The Clarion report follows:—

### "SACK YOURSELF SCHEME" FLOPS

THE latest available figures show that only 263 dockers out of a total of 77,000 have elected to sack themselves.

The largest number (119) is from Merseyside, sixty-six dockers in London, thirty in Hull, twenty in Manchester and the remaining 28 from the various ports in the country.

There is nothing startling about these figures for the scheme was doomed to failure from its inception. It was a weak-kneed solution put forward by the union to stave off mass dismissals, and with its obvious failure the Employers will again put forward their "solution" to the problem.

### National Conference

The Employers' solution may be applied at any moment and without any warning. The Merseyside Portworkers Committee's decision to call a national Portworkers conference in London next

month is an indication of the urgency of the situation and comes not a moment too soon. Rank and file delegates are to be elected from every control and sector in London, Merseyside and Manchester, and it is intended that in addition to discussing the Docks situation, the delegates will "lobby" their M.P.s at the Houses of Parliament.

### Our Solution

The Capitalistic solution of the Unions and the Employers have been given great prominence, but the Clarion's solutions to Dock problems, based as they are upon the principles of SOCIALISM and COMMON DECENCY, are indigestible to the Boss Class, and naturally they are ignored by his newspapers.

However, that does not deter us from stating them and our solution to the burning problem of the day—unemployment—is that the old men of the industry be struck off the register at 65 years of age and paid a pension of not less than £2/5/0 per week (half the present guaranteed week). This would eliminate the surplus labour and by taking the strain off the "guarantee", would enable it to be increased to £6.

Thirdly, we would abolish the unnecessary two calls a day and substitute ONE and NONE on Saturdays, for as workers faced with a shortage of work, we demand that days worked per week per man be limited to 40. As human beings we must eat and so must our families and therefore though the hours be less our income must be maintained, and that brings us to our fifth point—a minimum wage of 30s. a day.

### Bosses Will Squeal

To our readers we say the above is our solution, and to the Employers: "The only way you can cut the register peacefully is by pensioning off the Old Timers."

The money can and must be found out of the huge profits that these men have helped to build for the Shipowners. Naturally, the Bosses will squeal they cannot afford it, but this is not true. From time to time the Clarion has published the profits made by these skin-flint firms, proving that the demand for pensions can be met with ease from the Shipowners' overflowing coffers.

### A Stern Fight

Never in history has a progressive step, mooted by the workers, been accomplished without a strong fight being waged against the Employers. Always the men's view is condemned as "absolutely absurd", and the Boss view "absolutely correct", and so it will be in this issue which faces us to-day.

Dilly-dallying by the Bosses or the Union must not be tolerated by the rank and file. We are Trade Unionists who believe (not pay lip service to) the old maxim, "an injury to one is an injury to all". Not one man shall leave the industry under adverse conditions without a struggle by the rank and file. This is an issue which we believe is of paramount national importance and we also believe it is an issue upon which Dockers in all Ports will join hands and fight along the traditional lines... DIRECT ACTION. Brothers, be prepared. ORGANISE NOW.

## "THE COMMUNITY DEMANDS"

THE advocacy of corporal punishment has, during the recent agitation, become connected with that tendency to exalt an ill-defined 'community' over the individual so common in democracies and so dangerous to their well-being. Faced by the collapse of their factual arguments, the advocates of flogging increasingly tend to fall back upon the morality of retribution. Flogging, they argue, may not decrease crime, but it satisfies the 'community's appetite for justice. This insistence that they are not interested in what happens to the criminal so long as the 'community' is satisfied, has exactly that fashionable spuriously realistic flavour which convinces many otherwise respectable persons who fear to be thought sentimental. The argument says nothing of the nature of the 'community' that demands this satisfaction. It is, of course, the familiar uninformed section made vocal by anger, confusion, alarm or more questionable,

if unconscious, emotions. Its muddled well-meaningness has been further befogged by the more sensational newspapers.

The only answer to such a fictitious and dangerous conception of the 'community' lies surely in the individual rejection of it by other members of the real community. Too often, this same fundamental conflict arises over issues whose technical complications or international nature prevent the thoughtful individual from protesting through fear of his incompetence to judge or knowledge of his impotence to affect. The question of corporal punishment is purely domestic; the facts are not beyond the competence of the layman. It would seem, therefore, a unique opportunity to assert the humane and the reasonable over the brutal and the emotionally confused.

—ANGUS WILSON, in a letter to the *New Statesman.*

## NEW YORK TUGMEN'S STRIKE

ONE of the regular old chestnuts of the objections to Anarchism is the one about the Captain of a ship. "You've got to have one man in charge, giving orders" is the usual line, usually silenced by the retort that a Captain would look pretty silly standing on his bridge shouting orders with no crew to carry them out.

The tugboat men of New York have been prepared to see how this worked out, in part at least, by striking to demand an increase in wages and a stipulation in their contracts that no tugboat crew should consist of less than three men.

Many ships have attempted to dock without tugs and so far there have been only two serious collisions with the pier.

The big test came when the mighty Cunarder, the *Queen Mary*, arrived opposite the Jersey shore last Saturday.

At the second attempt, the captain, by a shrewd use of the tides, got the ship safely tied up. But, a slight error of judgment, or an unexpected swirl of the tide, could easily have crashed the 81,000 ton liner into the pier and caused 2 million dollars' worth of damage. But so far, nobody has suggested that the captain did it all on his own!

The tugmen have already been granted a pay increase, but not yet the crew stipulation. However many ships manage to dock without the tugs, the chance of disaster is always there, and we fancy the captains of the big ships will have a sigh of relief when the crews of the little tugs come back to work!

VIEWPOINT ON: THE ANARCHIST REVOLUTION

THE one article of faith held in common by virtually all nineteenth-century progressives—whether they called themselves Liberals, Marxists, Fabians, or Anarchists—was belief in the inevitability of human progress. The fact that—since their conceptions of the nature of “progress” were by no means the same—all their faiths in its inevitability could not be justified by the event does not seem to have troubled them greatly. The ardent flame of faith is seldom darkened by gloomy reflections. Moreover, it was an age of great optimism in which such a belief is readily understandable. Did not each year bring its advances in social reform and in the political emancipation of “the masses”? And even in those countries where progress was painfully slow or reaction constantly set in—in Tsarist Russia, Poland, and the countries under the domination of the Hapsburgs—progressive-minded men and women could at least watch with sublime exhilaration and dauntless hope the triumphs of their comrades-in-arms. Progressives may have suffered much from impatience, but what they did not generally suffer from was impotence.

One might have thought that the experience of two world wars and the intervening years of “peace” punctuated by relatively minor explosions and illuminated by the sensational horrors of dictatorships would have shattered for ever such fond illusions as the inevitability of progress. Yet, in the fearful face of all this evidence, many progressives still cling with a sort of pathetic frenzy to the remnants of this faith. Paradoxically enough, those who have been most sure of the inevitability of progress have usually been those who have done most to bring it about. Where such a faith impels men to act with impatient vigour in pursuit of their ideals it is a great source of strength, but where it is not confidently held, where it is overshadowed by doubts as to its veracity, by the terrible suspicion that it is wishful thinking and even the fear that, on the contrary, the forces of reaction are so overwhelming that all progressive effort is vain, it merely serves as an excuse for inaction. Both of the alternating elements of faith and despair in this emotional-intellectual schizophrenia encourages a fatalistic lethargy.

This state of mind might be rationalised as follows: “If progress is inevitable then it doesn’t need my help, and if it is impossible it’s no use trying to bring it about.” Where such sufferers are Anarchists, they will almost invariably be Anarchists of the “peaceful” variety—and I fear that there are many of them.

But the truth is, of course, that progress is neither inevitable nor impossible. I do not claim that the “peaceful” Anarchists necessarily consciously hold the view that progress is inevitable, only that on the threshold of the Great Atomic War, their faith in the possibility of further progress by means of gradual reforms must rely on the validity of such a belief for its justification. And to my mind such a manner of thinking is only one step removed in folly and futility from the faith of many democrats that a little—or even a great deal of—adaptation of existing institutions will save our civilisation from destruction.

A number of articles and an unusually heated exchange of accusations and counter-accusations that took place some time ago in the columns of the Anarchist weekly, FREEDOM, serve both to bring into the open this almost universal dilemma of progressives of all shades and to illuminate the issue that divides into two sections the only truly revolutionary progressive movement that is still alive. Although it is not the ends that cannot be agreed on, but the means, this split will prove to be the essential division among Anarchists. At the moment it is, perhaps, only a crack, and it is quite easy to jump from one side to the other, but time and circumstances will inevitably make of it a chasm.

I do not mean to say that one can divorce ends and means, that it is possible to consider one without considering the other. This, indeed, is perhaps what most nineteenth-century progressives tried to do, or rather, they did not give sufficient consideration to the necessary conditions of the particular progress in which they believed—perhaps, even, were not too sure themselves of what they meant by “progress”—and so, without realising it, worshipped false idols. They had their visions of the Garden of Eden

and were too little conscious of the fact that whether it became a reality or proved a mirage depended largely on whether the path they chose to reach it by actually led there or not. Even to-day the ragged heirs of such progressives cling to the hope that liberty and equality will at least be realised through the state, that is to say, through enforced “discipline” and unfair discrimination.

For the most part Anarchists have not been guilty of this cardinal error, of considering ends and means as separate entities. Indeed, Anarchist thought has constantly emphasized their essential identity and denounced the expediency which separation involves. But in spite of the lessons to be drawn from the behaviour of certain prominent Anarchists who during the Civil War in Spain, compromised their principles for purely transient advantages, the gravest danger today is not that Anarchists will defile their ends through the employment of corrupt means but that through fear of doing so they will not act at all. Doing nothing is, of course, one way of making sure you do nothing wrong, but it is of little use to anyone else, and I am strongly of the opinion that it is infinitely more discreditable than acting mistakenly but in good faith.

It seems to me to be a question of whether the Anarchist movement will remain a purely propaganda movement, as at present (until such time, that is, as all radical, uncompromising opposition to authority is finally snuffed out), or becomes once more a movement of revolutionary action. At the present moment, in this country at least, the

Anarchist movement is little more than a debating ground for dissatisfied intellectuals. The essential division—as with all movements with worldly (as opposed to other-worldly) aims—is between those who are apparently content to think and talk and those who desire passionately to act.

As an example of the attitude of those “peaceful” Anarchists who have taken a firm stand on the reformist side of the widening crack I would like to quote some incidental remarks on the subject of revolution or evolution made by Bob Green in an article on “Group Marriage” published in FREEDOM (27/9/52). Comrade Green quaintly refers to revolutionary Anarchists as “bewhiskered bomb-throwers” and declares that “progress depends on some element in society keeping the ultimate ideal in view so that changes tend for the better rather than the worse”. He admits, by implication, that society is very sick, but says that “all that we imperfect beings can do is to try to provide an education for the next generation that is slightly less insane than the one that was inflicted on ourselves. The progress is one of successive approximations”. One might have thought that the use of the word “insane” would mean that it was of vital importance for our counter-measures to be deployed with the greatest urgency—even if one had not stopped to wonder how we were to storm the schoolrooms so that we could educate the next generations (or is it hoped that the Minister of Education will eventually see the error of his ways and consult us on this question?), but Comrade Green believes in “progress”, and even adopts as justification of his faith the evidence which the nineteenth-century progressive considered to be conclusive proof, namely, the inexorable advance of science. “Precision engineering,” he says, “is an established fact, no matter how fantastic it would have seemed to the Bronze Age reactionaries.” And so is the atomic bomb! O enviable men of bronze! “The process is of logical necessity one of gradual evolution not cataclysmic revolution,” he tells us, and “our only realistic ambition is to throw our weight (?) into the balance on the side of enlightened progress, while affirming our faith in the ultimate and inevitable realisation of our ideals.” (My italics.) But the only man who may talk of progress in our tragic epoch are lusters after power and masochistic maniacs, and only the revolutionary action of those who respect Man and—which is the same thing—love Freedom can halt the hypertrophic growth of the

power of the state and save Mankind from destruction.

The opponents of revolutionary action usually call such action “propaganda by deed”, meaning to imply that there is really nothing but an academic distinction between propaganda by word and propaganda by deed. It is perfectly true that where a situation is not revolutionary (that is to say, where the overthrow of authority is not an immediate possibility) all action in opposition to authority is in a sense propaganda. It is also true that a revolutionary situation cannot simply be created by revolutionaries. But it is no less true that it will not come of its own accord, from natural causes, as it were, (though these may help to bring it about), and that what we do or fail to do now may help or hinder its advent.

The effect of revolutionary propaganda, whether by word or by deed, can only be assessed by the damage it does to the power and reputation of the authority it attacks. The power of the written and the spoken word is very great, but unfortunately it seldom bears any relation to the reasonableness or unreasonableness, the truth or falsehood, the good or evil of what is said. It depends rather on the number of times it is heard and on the ages, temperaments, and preconceptions of the members of the audience. There is reason to believe that actions have a potentially greater impression on people’s minds than words. In a “democracy”, in spite of—or rather, because of—the early and very thorough political inoculation undergone by most citizens, and because of the almost ceaseless barrage of words in praise of “democracy” that accompanies their daily lives, most people are more or less inured to the effect of really new ideas. They become insensitive to the real meaning of words, and indeed, “democratic” politics teaches them to believe that they have little genuine meaning, that they are a sort of political currency to be juggled with as a financier juggles with fiscal currency, although somehow the basic misconceptions—that democracy stands for liberty and equality—stick. And generally speaking, this is as true of the exceptionally literate and even the intellectually brilliant citizens as of the mediocre and the inarticulate. On the other hand, whereas words may be quite safely treated as a game, actions have to be taken seriously, for they have serious results. When a man does what he says he will do, when he acts according to his professed beliefs and not in mockery of them, he gains a new stature, a new respect in the eyes of his fellow men. And rightly so.

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A. S. NEILL ON THE WITCH-HUNT

THE fears expressed in the article “School Witch-hunt” (FREEDOM, Feb. 7), that the investigation of Communist infiltration in American schools and colleges, would in fact be an excuse for attacking all opinions that did not conform, seems to be shared by A. S. Neill, the educationist, in a letter published last week in the Manchester Guardian. He is commenting on a correspondent’s remarks to the effect that “no one is prevented entry to the United States because of his political convictions.”

“In 1950—A. S. Neill writes—after having had two lecture tours in the United States, I was refused a visa because of political convictions I did not have. I have never been a Communist. I admired the Russian system of education when it was going my way, the way

of freedom for children. Now that that education has become authoritative character-moulding, it is the opposite of all that I have done and written about for years. So that, if I had got that visa the only things I might have said in my lectures about Russian education would have been strongly ‘anti’.

“It seems obvious that the Act, originally intended to keep out Communists, is now being used to keep out anyone who has liberal opinions on any subject. Indeed I am so alarmed that I hesitate to write to any of my teacher friends in America, fearing that Mr. McCarron might put them in the pillory as dangerous persons who correspond with a foreigner who was refused entry. I suppose I am not the only one to sigh at the thought that a few thousand Americans will enter Britain this summer without any visas whatever.”

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“MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING”

A PERSIAN philosopher said: “Truth is of two kinds—one manifest and self-evident; the other demanding incessantly new demonstrations and proofs.” It is the so-called “scientific” truth which when once established, remains manifest and self-evident. The kind of truth we need for statecraft, for self-government, concerns the Soul of Man, “demanding incessantly new demonstrations and proofs”. A writer in Fortune, discussing the needs of modern education, touched upon this point by saying: “We can probably cope with the air age more successfully by reading Swift, Cervantes, or Goethe—or even by being exposed to Dostoevski, the Bhagavad-Gita, and Lao-tze—than by confining ourselves to courses in aero-dynamics.”

The truths which incessantly demand “new proofs and demonstrations” are precisely the truths which we have most neglected. Some years ago, a reporter remarked to Stringfellow Barr, who for years headed St. John’s College (offering education based upon the 100 Great Books), “You know the trouble with the present generation? They’ve never read the minutes of the previous meeting.” Why should we, since we can always hire somebody to read up on the scientific brand of truth?

This is how we have been spending our money for some years, now. We have the best technicians and we make the best atom bombs. What is a technician? Sir Richard Livingstone makes a good answer to this question: “A technician is a man who understands everything about his job except its ultimate purpose and its place in the order of the universe.”

—“Manas” (Los Angeles).

THE LIBERTARIAN

AMONG the contents of the third issue of The Libertarian, published by the North-East London Anarchist Group (obtainable at Freedom Bookshop for 3d.), are “Anarchism and the Church of Rome” by A. W. Uloth, the concluding part of “Round the World,” a survey of the anarchist movement by Peter Green, the conclusion of an article on “The Story of Nestor Makhno,” and an account of the ideas of Max Stirner.

General Release

“LIMELIGHT”

IT is a fault in minorities to claim a genius as one of its own. Dickens has been acclaimed as a communist, Shakespeare as a Baconian, Goethe as an anthroposophist, Charles Chaplin has been acclaimed as an anarchist.

However, there is no one but ourselves to blame for handing out anarchist honours so promiscuously. The fact about a genius is that he exists. Chaplin exists to the full height of his being, and in “Limelight,” his newest film, just released, he packs enough talent to satisfy one Hollywood star for a lifetime, and enough philosophy to outrage the American Legion for years.

We may look down on the philosophy as “cracker barrel”; that is, small-town small talk, but much of it contains what Chaplin has been saying, through his films for years and much of it squares (dare we say it?) with anarchist thought.

The story is familiar enough. Calvero, an ageing and failing music hall artist, saves a girl dancer (Claire Bloom) from suicide and inspires her to live; in gratitude she promises to marry him, but Calvero sees his professional decline, rejects sympathy and goes back to busking. He is given the chance of a benefit performance and demonstrates his artistry; then in a heart attack, he dies.

The story is “corny”, but it is the touch with which it is handled that re-vivifies it. The inspiring of the young dancer to live is a failure until she is moved to inspire Calvero, after one of his flops. The realisation by Calvero of utter professional failure is conveyed in the irony of an encounter with a fellow artiste who, overjoyed, is going to take Calvero’s rôle.

There is the rejection of the bitch-goddess success and the acceptance of a busker’s life with the philosophical remark, “I guess its the tramp in me.” In his efforts to inspire the young dancer, Calvero reveals his philosophy as “Life is a desire, not a meaning. Life

can be wonderful if you’re not afraid of it. The trouble is we all despise ourselves. . . . The fight for happiness is beautiful . . . Pain is all that matters, the rest is fantasies . . .”

This is a philosophy which works in with anarchism. Calvero is, of course, Chaplin, and he makes several remarks which must reflect Chaplin’s own personal lessons from life.

“What a sad business it is being funny”—an experience common to all clowns and humorists. “We don’t live long enough to be other than amateurs.” This is a personal expression of the realisation from the maturity of old age. “All I must have is truth and dignity.” The indignities to which Chaplin has been subjected by the newspapers, the U.S. State Department and now by the American Legion make this a plea from the heart. “I’m not interested in events,” this is a statement of the a-political nature of genius, a statement of the social irresponsibility for which anarchists have been attacked. It is significant that the film is set in London during 1914 and 1915, yet the war is scarcely mentioned. A young composer (Sydney Chaplin) goes into the Army, but ruefully says, “I was drafted. The army joined me.”

Chaplin goes so far as to mention, “I’ve had five wives already,” and breaks other honoured taboos by mentioning venereal diseases and quoting Gertrude Stein, both for the first time on the screen.

There is much else in this Chaplin film besides the philosophy; there is the amusing flea-circus scene, and the knock-about farce with Buster Keaton. The music, all composed by Chaplin, is moving, and there is ballet for the balletomanes.

Chaplin’s powers seem unspent and we can wait with expectancy for his next. Dare we hope he acts upon an idea to do “The Good Soldier Schweik”?

J.R.

## IDEAS & ACTION

IN a few month's time, FREEDOM will be celebrating its second anniversary as a weekly paper. May of 1951 was not a very propitious time for the change-over from fortnightly to weekly issue. Several of the smaller political papers had to close down altogether, and several others had reduced their frequency of appearance—weeklies becoming fortnightly and so on. Our own financial position was as insecure then as it always is.

The ability to continue as a weekly is perhaps due to factors which may give encouragement. What seems at first sight a source of weakness—the refusal to accept paid advertisements—in fact renders our paper immune from withdrawal of such sources of income, when circulation falls or when the general need for economy impels advertisers to draw in their horns, thereby greatly straitening the position of small papers dependant on them.

Perhaps more important than this, however, is the more positive side of independence; the flow of anarchist ideas, the vitality of its viewpoint and the existence—altogether too small, but nevertheless there—of a public interested enough to keep our paper going.

It is often insisted in the columns of FREEDOM that anarchist ideas have a validity and a practical application today with more urgency than ever before. The ability to produce a weekly anarchist paper in times which are very hard for independent, minority journalism, seems to us indirect support for such claims.

But FREEDOM, though the longest established, is not now the only vehicle for anarchist thought and ideas in English. In recent months other anarchist groups have produced other papers of which *The Anarchist*, and *The Libertarian* (which has appeared in several numbers) have already been brought to the notice of FREEDOM readers. In America also the appearance of *Individual Action* is a welcome sign of renewed activity in this field. During the last week, yet another anarchist periodical has made its appearance in London under the title *Prometheus*. This contains a number of theoretical articles of which we reprint in this issue the first half of one which seems of particular interest.

The article in question illustrates one of the functions of FREEDOM—that of providing material for discussion. It is always a matter of considerable disappointment that many an article, included by the editors more because it is provocative than because it is in agreement with FREEDOM's general position, is allowed to pass without any comment from our readers. And this is especially true of important questions. V.R.'s articles on the Spanish Revolution, for example, apart from one reply, were not commented upon. The article by 'Andreas', which we reprint from *Prometheus*, not only discusses some fundamental issues with considerable clarity, it also shows that the writer has treated a number of articles in FREEDOM as they should be treated: their arguments are understood and weighed up, and then subjected to criticism.

The method of this article revives a certain give and take among independent anarchist writers which has been rather lacking in recent years, but which is essential for a keen and alive discussion of anarchist ideas. Together with the appearance of the new anarchist journals referred to, it may fairly be regarded as evidence of a renewed ferment in anarchist discussion. It also shows that the

attempt of FREEDOM to provide material for such discussion has not been wholly wasted in the past.

'Andreas', in his article, discusses the question of action and the self questioning which impedes and inhibits action. It has always been our contention that thought which precedes action should make that action clearer and more definite, and that an anarchist publishing house has the function of stimulating thought on questions which are fundamental to social justice. An anarchist paper is not there to lay down a line for sympathizers unreflectingly to follow: the material it prints should be thought over and discussed—attacked, if necessary. The political groupings often gibe at the lack of uniformity in the expression of anarchist ideas: may it be a long time before our movement shows signs of uniformity. The play of ideas is the very life blood of a movement like ours, and on its existence will its vitality depend.

But it is on the existence of vital ideas and conceptions also that actions will arise. There is no reality in the anti-thesis of thought and action. Thought may be free, while action has to take account of the realities of its field of activity, but actions are sterile indeed which do not proceed from reflection, and from emotions and feelings tempered by thought and discussion.

Anarchist papers do not always survive many issues, but that does not mean that they have failed. They are evidence of independent thinking and represent action of a fundamental kind: that taken by individuals acting as a group and responsible for all the initiatives which are necessary before any paper can appear. We are far from thinking that the production of a paper is the only or the most important of anarchist activities. But it is carried out by the method which is necessary for all valuable work—that of individuals joining with others of like mind to carry out an activity which seems to them important. This is the pattern for all fertile social activity.

# LAND REFORM IN CHINA

FEW things have been more horrifying in recent years than the accounts of the mass trials of landlords in China, in which people are invited to denounce the defendants and the atmosphere recalls the gladiatorial shows at Imperial Rome. Summary executions often culminate the trials after humiliating confessions have been extorted from the victims. These trials are compulsorily attended and are even broadcast, a fact which made them hard to understand to the western ideas of propaganda. It is now however becoming clear that the horrifying aspects are exactly those required in the carrying out of the land reform in China.

## Communists Bid for Power

A pamphlet on this subject has recently been published, drawn exclusively from official Chinese Communist sources. In a foreword, Prof. David Mitrany remarks: "It is the land and the peasant which, so far, from first to last have given historical meaning to the prolonged revolutionary tremors which have shaken Eastern Europe and Asia since 1917." The Chinese Communists used the injustices of the peasant in their bid for power. More than twenty years ago a League of Nations Technical Mission drew up a detailed scheme of land reform for the province of Kiangsi. Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang rejected it, but the Communists denounced the landlords and offered to give the land to the peasants. The Kuomintang collapsed and the Communists took power.

## Communist Method

What followed is of profound interest and importance to the student of Communist method. At first they enacted laws which appeared to protect the landlords and lulled their fears. Then they systematically went about the problem of creating a situation in the villages which consolidated their own political control. That this is their primary object might have been expected by anyone who has studied Lenin and is in fact frankly admitted. One of the chief Communist theoreticians, Teng Tsi-Nui, wrote: "To look upon land reform simply as a matter of redistribution of land would be a grave political error. To shatter feudal forces thoroughly, we are prepared to see some chaos and a possible fall in production for a certain period."

Another Communist leader declares (in words which have more than a hint of relevance to the purges in Eastern Europe), "When this great movement begins, we should expect a violent situation, a general violent shock. Class discord will reach new heights . . . Even in our own structure we should expect acute uneasiness of mind, hesitation, wavering, and even open resistance and apostasy . . . This is an inevitable situation and we may say it is exactly what we want. For it is only in such a violent struggle that old social dirt will be removed."

"Land reform" is therefore to be seen not primarily as the righting of an ancient wrong, but as the process of consolidating central Communist Party power over the most vast peasant population on earth.

It is planned to take place in four stages. First agitation and propaganda stirring up hatred against the landlords. The second stage is to determine the class status of all the inhabitants of the village—that is to say of the whole of rural China. Third, the confiscation of land and property and its redistribution. And fourth, the destruction of old title deeds and the issue of new land-holding certificates.

## Stirring Up Hatred

The Communists hastily organised cadres for the carrying out of the land reform, and these were sent to one village after another. During the period of the reform, the village is cordoned off and no one is allowed to enter the area except for the purpose of denouncing the landlords.

The organisers then pick on some landlord or landlords who are hated. A Communist paper gives the following advice: "Before the masses are mobilised,

generally you will find some despot-landlord dominating the locality. . . . Mass hatred is centred on these persons: unless these persons are knocked out it will be vain to expect the masses to act. . . . The first stage of land reform and class struggle should be directed at the local despots, and the best slogan to be given currency is 'anti-sabotage' . . ."

The hatred and discord is an essential aspect and accounts are given of failure to achieve it to show how they completely block the next steps. Moreover, as a result of the reform, landlords in unreformed areas have given away their land, performed a peaceful redistribution of land and so won the sympathy, of the poorer peasants. The government describe this as "sabotage".

In stirring up hatred, use is made of all the injustice which unequal distribution of property brings, as well as old scores and every possible motive for hatred against the chosen individuals.

When hatred has reached a sufficient pitch, the peasants are incited to beat up and even torture the landlords and to demand payment for past underpayment of wages. The cadres are instructed that on no account must they take part in the actual attacks on landlords. The Government points out that if the peasants do not themselves attack and are merely spectators, their sympathies may easily be with the victims and against their persecutors. Once the peasants have struck the blows, they are committed to justifying them by maintaining the atmosphere of class hatred.

## Classification of Villages

The second stage is the classification of rural status into five categories—landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants, and landless labourers. For huge numbers this classification has been a matter of life and death. The reform has shown that a fifth of the rural population of Central China are landlords. To be classed as such means complete dispossession, destitution and even death. A rich peasant will therefore fight hard to avoid being classed as a landlord. The beating-up and torture of individuals has the object of forcing them to admit that they are landlords.

The fight against being graded high goes all down the village. Political advantage is given to the poor peasant and the labourers. If the former are graded as middle peasants, they lose this advantage. The result of all this is that the village is completely divided against itself and the vast mass of peasant millions becomes manoeuvrable by the central government.

## Confiscation

The third stage is the confiscation of

land and property, and its redistribution. Landlords may even lose the clothes they wear and they are sent to live by begging. Torture is applied to make landlords divulge any hoarded wealth.

With this wealth enormous public dinners are given, the so-called "Class Struggle Dinners". Corruption is widespread and the Communist press accuses the cadres, "While the peasants are starving, the cadres are indulging in heavy drinking and eating."

Finally, there is a symbolic burning of title deeds and the issue of certificates of land tenure which are really new title deeds in that the land is given to the new owners and they are free to sell or rent it.

## Effect on Rural Economy

The effect on rural economy has been disastrous. In unreformed areas the landlords have sought to divest themselves of the attributes of "class hatred" rather than concern themselves with production. Poor peasants make no effort to better themselves for fear of being classed as rich or middle peasants. There has been a disastrous fall in the numbers of farm animals, as landlords fearing the future have ceased to keep them.

## Political Control

Moreover, where the preliminary stage of stirring up hatred has succeeded in getting the peasants to take action, the government is then concerned to control them. The cadres are warned that, once roused to action, the peasants will have to be restrained at some point.

Another difficulty of the government arises from the fact that the peasants may pay less rent but they pay more taxes, especially since the landlords are no longer there to pay them. Obviously it is not a long step to regard the government as having taken the place of the landlord as chief exploiter. Reform of education, improvement in the health services and suchlike form the government's main weapon against such feelings.

The above sketch gives some idea of the gigantic operation—it affected 80,000,000 peasants—of altering Chinese land-holding structure. It will be seen that the conception of ownership, of rent, and the right to sell are still there. A redistribution of property has taken place without the government losing the advantages which the property system confers on those who would rule.

Nor is the present position in any way final. The governmental theoretical papers openly proclaim their intention to collectivize the land on the Russian model. The peasants will then find that they have all been relegated to the lowest category—that of landless labourers.

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## For What Purpose?

WE were discussing a very natural topic, the two tremendous power blocks that at present stand poised, as it were, half a world apart. We asked our American friend what he thought was the general American opinion regarding the place of Great Britain in the event of a conflict between the two. He was quite matter-of-fact in manner, and replied without hesitating that, from the beginning, we would be written off as a useful ally although possibly important, for a time at least, as a base for military operations. He asked us whether, in view of our geographical position, we could expect anything else? His charming simplicity totally disarmed us as he went on to compare our position with that of Korea, pointing out that no-one, the United Nations maybe least of all, appeared to be worried about the fate of the Korean peoples. What mattered was the principle involved, the greater struggle made the lesser unimportant. He asked us how many of the British "men in the street" cared two hoots for the sufferings of the Korean peoples, and pointed out that our own attitude towards Korea was exactly that of the average American towards ourselves.

Of course, our own indifference towards the sufferings of others (Korea, Malaya, Africa, etc.) was old stuff to us, and one for which we had no answer, but it was something of a shock to learn that many of our American cousins are apparently quite prepared to see the "Old Country" wiped off the face of the earth in a fight against the menace of communism, whether the result be a win, loss, or draw. Our Prime Minister recently told us that, in the event of another war, atomic weapons would probably be used within the first few hours. Even if we assume that "the enemy's" stock of atomic weapons is small—and we have no

possible reason for such an assumption—a few score or so dropped on the major cities of this country would most certainly deprive us of much of our ability to fight, even if the will did remain. Of course, some millions of corpses (or rather, heaps of dust, atomic radiation being the force that it is) would have the satisfaction of knowing that our gallant allies were engaged in knocking equal hell out of the enemy and that right would eventually triumph, for God is always on the side of the big battalions.

It would now appear that the majority of people, in all countries, are sublimely indifferent to their fate, or to the future of their loved ones. The prospect of "Atomisation" has ceased to send a cold shiver down their backs although they know that the atom bombs (let alone hydrogen) are now many times more powerful than those which reaped such terrible destruction at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We have all seen the reassuring charts showing what would be the effect on London if a bomb were to be exploded at Piccadilly Circus; it is a source of lasting comfort to know that the city would not be totally destroyed, but there is one question that always bothers us—"What if the cunning rascals were to drop two?" This Asiatic guile would probably upset all our carefully laid plans, yet such infamy must always be in the reckoning. . . .

But, seriously, what do you think of the whole sorry business? We do not think that we are "defeatist", in any aspect, surely our attitude is one of ordinary common sense. It is all very well to talk of fighting on the beaches and in the gutters, or wherever it was, but what if there are no gutters left, and precious few beaches, let alone men to fight, for heaven's sake what could be done, and for what purpose?

—The Libertarian.

## U.S. ECONOMIST SENTENCED FOR PERJURY

NEW YORK, Feb. 4. William W. Remington, an economist formerly employed by the Commerce Department, was sentenced today to three years imprisonment for perjury in defending himself against accusations of communism. His lawyer told the Court that he would make a "speedy appeal". This was Remington's second trial for perjury. He had been convicted at his first trial, sentenced to five years imprisonment and fined \$2,000, but the conviction was quashed on appeal.—Reuter.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

## SPRING CLEANING ANARCHISM

I WAS surprised to find my recent letter utilised as a catalyst for the Editor's cerebrations, and I would like to amplify my comment on the significance of technological developments in the formulation of anarchist social theory, which I expressed perhaps too concisely in the interests of space.

I criticised Kropotkin on a fundamental issue: given a continuous development of techniques in pure and applied science, considered apart from the circumstances in which these advancements are made, there is attained a stage at which, if resources are to be fully utilised, a qualitative rather than a quantitative change is needed in our social structure. This is obvious to any student of economic history.

I make the suggestion that we have again reached the stage at which a change is due, and this is since the publication of Kropotkin's work. Again, for it is evidently a recurring phenomenon, and its frequency will increase until a form of society is evolved whose bases are sufficiently fluid, and at the same time rational and humanitarian, to accommodate it. Present centralised authoritarian society is too rigid, and cannot keep up with technology unless it canalises its achievements into war. The most novel scientific and technical discoveries are first wasted in military projects, and second in the interests of a minority seeking profit. However, the Editors have slipped into confusing technological advances with their application, and then condemned the latter as the former.

For example, because we rightly deplore "the dark satanic mills", the filth and overcrowding of Bennett's Five Towns, or the stench of a large gas works, it does not follow that these are the inevitable concomitants of large-scale production of textiles, pottery and fuel. There is no justification, as some would wish, to return to folkweave and hand pottery made by rushlight, in order to be free of capitalist society. It does not follow that political centralisation and the centralisation of certain industries are inevitably linked, and it would be an achievement if anarchists could find some solution by which the most efficient units of production can be administered in a society formed of autonomous groups, when one of these units produces far more than its

operators could ever consume. It is sometimes assumed that maximum efficiency is measured only from a profit standpoint, and that there is no such thing as a maximum technical efficiency, valid no matter what sort of society is producing, be it totalitarian, libertarian, anarchist or capitalist.

There will be little time for cultural expression, and little time for the human relations and the craftsmanship that the Editors so rightly value, in a society that split its units of production below the optimum size in the belief that it would gain freedom. Freedom from dependence on neighbours, at the expense of a new slavery to natural resources, is a dubious gain. There is no sense in every village having its own blast-furnace and rolling-mill, no sense in every hamlet synthesising nylon, or in building a hydro-electric scheme around every duckpond.

But this is the ultimate result of trying to fit technology into an anarchism which derives from a mystique of "Human values" rather than the cold reality of survival.

On one other point I would like to conclude. Generally speaking, the expression of political ideas remains intelligible for centuries, but in one respect Anarchist theory may not, for it is more closely tied to ideas of psychology and ethics than other systems. In these fields, particularly in the last fifty years, there have been such fundamental changes, in the analysis of language, and the application of scientific method to human behaviour, that ideas expressed previously may have to be reanalysed both in their content and form if we are to continue to regard them as tenable.

Derby, Feb. 7. ROBT. A. M. GREGSON.

## ANARCHISM &amp; VIOLENCE

I WELCOMED the series "Lessons of the Spanish Revolution," completed in FREEDOM, 20/12/52, because the little I had read about Spain during the revolutionary period had convinced me as much as any anarchist theory that anarchism was realizable. In spite of the mistakes made by Anarchists and Syndicalists enumerated by V.R. in what struck me as a fair and honest historical survey of the Spanish Revolution, I am still convinced of this.

What V.R. has done has been to synthesise a staggering amount of material, official and unofficial, into a whole, and it remains for us to draw our own conclusions so that we can learn from the mistakes as well as the achievements of the Anarchists who took part in the Spanish struggle.

I had hoped that these important articles would have stimulated some intelligent comment from those who claim to have first hand experience, as well as from those who have studied events in Spain. I have been disappointed. The reply from the C.N.T. Group led me to the conclusion that their knowledge of English is so limited that they misunderstood most of what V.R. had written or (as is more likely, since their comment was written in perfect English)

that they deliberately misrepresented him.

Their accusations of inaccuracies and inconsistencies look rather silly in view of the fact that V.R.'s principal source of information was the C.N.T. documents which contain over half a million words. They may, of course, repudiate their own documents, which would not surprise me at all. One of the impressions left in one's mind after reading their "reply" is the aura of romance, implicit in the hope that they will one day return to Spain as leaders of the next crusade. I do not in any way wish to minimise the part these exiled Syndicalists played in the Spanish Revolution, but I, too, am a romantic, and have always held a theory that is the "cream" of the revolutionary movements who fall in battle and the opportunists who live to tell the tale.

When George Woodcock came into the discussion one would have expected an additional contribution to our knowledge. Nothing of the kind, however. After taking us through about a 900-word academic discussion on words, we arrive at his main point which seems to be that V.R. has misrepresented him in one article out of twenty-three.

I cannot speak for V.R. but when he

uses the word *necessity* it seems to me that his meaning is quite clear and does not imply that necessity rules in every revolutionary situation and therefore it is ridiculous to say things could not have been changed and V.R. "might just as well saved himself the trouble of writing his articles". It seems clear that there may be one, or two, or three situations where *circumstances* decide the action taken but this certainly does not apply to all revolutionary situations.

While I agree that a *tactic* may become a *means*, surely the general political use of the words have two distinct meanings, and when V.R. says that the use of violence has hardly ever been justified by anarchists either as a principle or a means to an end, but that at the most anarchists have justified its use as a revolutionary necessity or tactic, his distinction is quite obvious.

When George Woodcock says that "some anarchists feel that in some circumstances violence is justified" but "they say they have no principle of violence; the only alternative is that they justify an unprincipled use of violence," the operative word here seems to be *principled*. Would it be more acceptable to G.W. if those of us who are anarchists but not pacifists had a *principle of violence* whether we may need the use of it or not; and would he object to an unprincipled use of *non-violence*?

Again, I think G.W. is being unnecessarily pedantic when he attempts to dispose of the very real distinction V.R. makes between "violence which is used as a means for imposing the will of a group or class, and that violence which is purely defensive". Does it matter whether violence is "incidentally defensive" or "not purely defensive" as long as we are aware that it is *only* defensive and if it is prolonged it might degenerate into a greater evil?

I think V.R. sums this up in the article G.W. attacks:—

"Violence, contrary to popular belief, is not part of the anarchist philosophy. It has repeatedly been pointed out by anarchist thinkers that the revolution can neither be won, nor the anarchist society established and maintained, by armed violence. Recourse to violence, then, is an indication of weakness, not of strength, and the revolution with the greatest possibilities of a successful outcome will undoubtedly be the one in which there is no violence, or in which violence is reduced to a minimum, for such a revolution would indicate the *quasi* unanimity of the population in the objectives of the revolution. Unless anarchists declare that the only revolution, or insurrection that will meet with their support, is the one that will usher in the libertarian society, they must face the situation created by those uprisings, the objectives of which represent only a step towards the desired society, and declare what their position in such struggles will be."

G.W. goes on to say that V.R. misrepresents an article he wrote some years ago, and proceeds to prove this by quoting from a different article he (G.W.) wrote in FREEDOM in the same year.

I think G.W.'s position is made perfectly clear in the first article quoted by V.R. (13/12/52). He says: "It is an objective of this essay to contend that not only are violent revolutions evils, which cannot in their nature lead to human liberation, but also that they are unnecessary hindrances in attaining revolutionary objectives." In his recent article (7/2/52) he assures us that he would not change the "important thesis contained therein". Why then quote from an article which puts a somewhat different point of view thereby implying that he has been misrepresented?

When V.R. poses the question "What should the people have done on July 19th?" It is surely a question directed at pacifists, meaning "what would they have done?" G.W. says that this is a hypothetical and absurd question, on the grounds that it cannot be regarded as an isolated factor in the whole historical development of the Spanish political struggle which contained the seeds of violence, and which culminated in the actions of July 19th.

All this may be true for the purposes of historical study. But the question was very real to the Spanish people on July 19th when they were faced with the possibility of Franco seizing power by force. That a history of passive resistance may have led to different results in Spain can perhaps be acknowledged. But this is a far more hypothetical speculation than the question posed by V.R.

In conclusion, it seems to me misleading to give a list of selections without saying in which contexts they were used.

R.M.

## AID FOR SPANISH REFUGEES

WITH reference to the article by George Woodcock on the need to assist Spanish refugees in France, in your issue of January 17th, may I inform those of your readers who may not be aware of it that a Committee with the same aims exists in this country. The "Save Franco's Victims Committee" is sending medical supplies, clothing, deaf aid equipment and similar material to Spanish refugees in France and dependents of prisoners in Spain.

As in the case of the American committee you mention, assistance is given to all groups of the Left with the exception of the Communists.

Readers who wish to send much-needed contributions in cash or kind should address them to the secretary, 195 Bickenhall Mansions, London, W.1. London, Feb. 8. E. ROSENBERG.

## COMMUNIST DAILY SUSPENDED

TEL AVIV.

The Israel Government suspended the Communist daily *Kol Haam* for ten days.

## "SPIRITUAL CRISIS" AT A HIGH LEVEL?

ROME.

It is rumoured that Aldo Togliatti, the son of the Italian Communist leader, is "in touch with a high prelate and going through a spiritual crisis." He is Signor Togliatti's only son by Rita Montagnana, from whom he is separated and who is a senator.

## JUDGE FINES A VILLAGE

An Irish village is to pay £30 for the malicious stabbing of a ram.

A judge at Strabane, N. Ireland, ordered a levy on the village of Glenroan Upper after learning that a ram, belonging to a woman in Glenroan Lower, had to be destroyed.

Collective punishments are common in N. Ireland when malicious damage is proved and culprits cannot be found.

## MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP

## OPEN AIR MEETINGS

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

## INDOOR MEETINGS

## 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)

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

FEB. 17—Albert Meltzer on  
CRISIS MONGERS

FEB. 24—Edgar Priddy on  
DE SADE, THE MAN AND THE MYTH

## NORTH-EAST LONDON

DISCUSSION MEETINGS  
IN EAST HAM

Alternate Wednesdays  
at 7.30 p.m.

FEB. 25—S. E. Parker on  
ANARCHISTS AND ASSASSINS

## 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,

## THE ANARCHIST REVOLUTION

Continued from p. 2

The nature of an Anarchist's beliefs deny him almost the only field of political action—as opposed to propaganda—that the "democratic" state allows. I mean standing for parliament with the possibility of becoming a member. I do not mean to say that for the ordinary individual member this sort of political action is worthwhile, or is, indeed, much more than propaganda, only that it appears to give slightly more scope for the exercise of the energies of a man who wishes to reform society than is afforded to the average intellectual progressives. It does at least create the illusion of action, and the burning need of all those with the true revolutionary spirit—as distinct from the Kaffeehaus revolutionaries who are merely playing with exhilarating ideas—is the need to feel that they are materially helping to bring about the revolution. If they do not feel this, if they can find no outlet in real life for their revolutionary ardour, the tormenting suspicion of impotence will grow until they really and truly are impotent, through sheer force of conviction. When this happens not just in one but in many men, it is no longer just a personal tragedy, it is a universal catastrophe, for it means that the forces of resistance and revolt, which have their life-source in the hearts of individual men, are as powerless to change the fate of mankind as the trembling servility of serfs and sycophants.

This agonised frustration of the revolutionary intellectual was quite brilliantly portrayed in an article with the pertinent title "Why Not Use Dynamite?" published in FREEDOM while the question of the political trials in Spain was still a burning issue and not a dead and buried cause, another paper protest gathering dust in the attic room of forgotten iniquities. The writer of this article spoke of "that growing necessity to come to grips with naked tyrannical violence", but for all that he gave as an excuse, seemingly, for not doing so the fact that "we know too much", that "we cannot face a single, simple issue and react spontaneously, for the greatness of our awareness of the world-wide

situation mocks our initiative in any one direction". Here is no shallow optimistic belief in the inevitability of progress, but rather a deep, despairing conviction of its impossibility, a counsel of impotence, for all the brave, bright words about steady spade-work in the propagation of anarchism with which the article ends. Once again the intellectual, faced with a situation which is too much for him, buries his head in a comforting cloud of words. "The central issue," the author proclaims, "is not one of identifying tyrants" but "of understanding tyranny". That indeed we must do in order to identify the tyrants, but the problem of tyranny and of resistance to tyranny is not merely an academic one, and his question remains unanswered!

I believe that it is this fear or conviction of impotence which underlies the objections of the "peaceful" Anarchists to revolutionary action. Sometimes these objections take the apparently unemotional form of "the-time-is-not-ripe" variety. At other times they are unashamedly (and rightly so) emotional. The abhorrence of violence of this kind, and in giving it as my opinion that it is less fundamental as a cause of inertia than the fear of impotence, I do not mean to infer that it is not genuinely and deeply felt, but only to suggest that if the feeling of impotence could be removed there would be no insuperable object to revolutionary action.

Nevertheless the problem of violence is a very real one for Anarchists, and it has not been made any easier by the wild expostulations and confused analyses of certain of their number. An article entitled "Assassination and Coercion," translated from the French of Fontenis and published in FREEDOM (6/9/52) was full of self-contradictions on questions of principle. The arguments of the writer were made more difficult to understand by his entirely emotional distinction between "assassination", which he equated with legal executions, and "elimination", which he used to describe illegal or revolutionary executions "whose necessity is imposed by the struggle". "No one will feel to be an

assassination the execution of a few public enemies and avowed traitors," he writes, and our flesh creeps with this sinister echo of Bolshevik propaganda. As Tony Gibson rightly pointed out in a letter criticising this article, killing is killing under whatever name it goes, and it is as well to acknowledge this before one asks whether it is justified under certain circumstances or whether it is always inexcusable. Again, on the question of coercion generally, Fontenis introduces an emotional distinction between revolutionary acts and anti-revolutionary acts. I believe that a legitimate distinction can be made here, but *only* if it is based on clearly recognised principles of justice, for after all, were not the Jacobins and the Bolsheviks revolutionaries who killed and coerced in the revolutionary cause? Nor can the plea of self-defence, put forward by R.M. P. L. Lewis, Simon Watson Taylor, and Fontenis himself, justify coercion by itself, for the state can also excuse its coercive acts on this ground. Here again one must clearly recognise the *moral principles* one is defending—which again is no academic question, for it is on these principles that the lives and happiness of people depend—before one can make any attempt to solve the problem of coercion. But of what I believe those principles must be I will speak later.

Altogether there is an unpleasantly authoritarian odour about Fontenis' article which his talk of the "aspirations", "wishes", "decisions", and "direct power of the masses" does nothing to dispel. Minorities can also be oppressed, and at all events "the masses" are nothing but a fabulous, multi-headed monster invented by demagogues to frighten the bourgeoisie. It is the *individual*—each and every unique individual—who matters, and it is only in terms of the individual that a libertarian philosophy can be built up. He who does not understand this is no true Anarchist.

ANDREAS.

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(To be concluded)