

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

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THE TRIAL OF BERIA

AFTER six months of waiting the Soviet government is now preparing the trial of Lavrent Beria, the man who headed the most brutal and all-embracing police system the world has ever seen. Beria succeeded Yagoda and Yezhov during the treason trials of 1936 and 1937 during which Stalin finally liquidated the remaining old Bolsheviks. Yagoda and Yezhov were also "unmasked" as traitors and their downfall and death were prepared by their successor, Beria.

Dzerzhjinski, who founded the Tcheka and perfected it in the early twenties as the Bolshevik instrument of terror, died in his bed. Lenin described him, rather curiously one may think, as "a saint of the Revolution". All his successors have been traitors, confessing a remarkable degree of guilt going back for years (Beria is accused of having been a British agent since 1920, and will probably confess to it).

Stalin founded his supreme personal power on the secret police, and also based much of Soviet economy on the millions of slave labourers which Beria's department provided. Like Stalin, Beria is a Georgian (three of his six fellow-accused security leaders are also Georgians), but Stalin played the method of divide and rule too astutely and for too long to allow Beria to become strong enough to be a personal danger to his own power. How equally power was divided is shown by the fact that Malenkov has been able to overcome Beria despite his key position as head of the police and the enormous economic power which his vast department wielded.

It has been suggested that in procuring the downfall of Beria, Malenkov has been joined by the Army represented by Marshal Bulganin. The Army also wields considerable economic and administrative power doubtless overshadowed and kept in check by the M.V.D., Beria's department. Malenkov represents the Party, the other great power in the State. It remains to be seen whether the elimination of Beria will bring to the surface the latent struggle between the Army and the Communist Party, or whether the Party, controlled by Malenkov is still able to fulfil Stalin's rôle and play off

Future of Persian Oil

WHILE Persian government spokesmen are still very much on their dignity regarding the resumption of diplomatic relations with Britain, the economic realities of the situation show the true proportions of the actual situation.

For last week the representatives of the world's eight leading oil companies met in London to discuss the future of Persian oil. These companies comprised Anglo-Iranian, Shell, Standard Oil of New Jersey, Standard Oil of California, Socony, Gulf, the Texas Company, and the Compagnie Francaise de Petroles. After preliminary discussions, further progress now awaits the result of diplomatic negotiations in Teheran.

The situation now is said to be that there will be very considerable difficulties in marketing Persian oil at all. FREEDOM many months ago pointed out that the Anglo-Iranian company could take the loss of its Abadan refinery in its stride and could afford to wait. Persian economy was in no such position and the Persian propertied classes have accordingly come to heel.

Since Abadan closed down the Persian output has been largely replaced by increased supplies of oil from Kuwait and Iraq, and by increased refining capacity in Western Europe. Hence considerable adjustment will have to be made before Persian oil can again be marketed. The companies will no doubt impose their own conditions and it looks as if the Persian government will have little alternative to accepting

the Army and the M.D.V. against one another in order to retain power in its own hands. It seems likely that the internal tensions to which the arrest of Beria bears witness are still present in an acute form after Stalin's death.

The People

But it should not be forgotten that the sacrifice of Beria must be welcomed by thousands of families who have lost a member to the slave gangs of the M.V.D. and serves to add some popularity to a government suddenly weakened by the death of a dictator. It also provides a backhanded means of catering for the hatred of Stalin which appears to have lain behind the continual "inspired" adulation, for Beria was both a friend and fellow countryman of the man whom Lenin called his "wonderful Georgian".

Just as Stalin did, Malenkov no doubt intends to use the method of the propaganda trial to promote anxiety about "foreign plots" and so stave off internal resentment until such time as the new government is strong enough to overcome any tendency towards resistance.

It hardly seems possible however that the Russian government can make any basic alteration in the police-state régime, and hence, although Beria has gone, the police terror under which the people live will persist. And this can scarcely be concealed from the Russian people.

Campaign of Abuse

According to the Soviet radio, thousands of workers have attended specially organized meetings and expressed their "anger" and "loathing" against the "traitors and betrayers". Pravda refers to Beria and "his gang of rotters" as "contemptible traitors, agents of international capital, and poisonous reptiles". Factory workers in Moscow "adopted" a resolution declaring that "shame and curses must fall on all who, through their black

treachery, seek to return to the Soviet Union the might of capitalist slavery".

Moscow radio also announces that Beria and his six accomplices have "pleaded guilty to high treason and other crimes". The death penalty is urged.

The Soviet government's indictment makes a reference to a decree of Dec. 1st, 1934 and the Times diplomatic correspondent makes the following interesting comment (18/12/53) on it:

"The reference in the Soviet indictment of Beria and others to a decree of December 1, 1934, raises the question whether the trial is to be rushed through at great speed, and whether the next news may be the announcement of the execution of the accused rather than the date of the trial proceedings. The only recorded decree amending the Soviet criminal code dated December 1, 1934, laid down that cases must be heard without participation of counsel, that no appeals or petitions for mercy should be allowed, and that the death sentence should be carried out immediately after the passing of the sentence.

"The decree was passed soon after the murder of Kirov in 1934, and was designed to make it possible to rush through the trials of the maximum number of 'terrorists' in the minimum time." Kirov was governor of Leningrad. In 1934 Stalin had been greatly impressed by the Reichstag fire trial, and the use the Nazis made of it to arrest thousands of their political opponents. And also by Hitler's purge of June 30, 1934, whereby he established his own predominant position in the party. It has been suggested (e.g. by Krivitsky) that Stalin himself arranged the assassination of Kirov. What is certain is that he used the occasion to make widespread arrests and subdue the opposition which the collectivization of agriculture had provoked. It is interesting that such "emergency" legislation, is turned to use now.

COMMENTS

CRUELTY BY LAW

MAGISTRATES are renowned neither for their intelligence nor their humanity, but it is seldom that their ignorant cruelty is so blatant as to make the headlines of the daily press.

Lieutenant-Colonel W. E. Batt, magistrate of Old Street Court, London, has earned that distinction by his treatment of a woman brought before him last week.

She is the mother of two illegitimate children, one of seven years, the other of four, and she lives on national assistance. Through this she receives the magnificent sum of £3 3s. a week, plus a family allowance (on the second child of 8s. a week.

She was hauled into court on a charge of stealing by finding a child's tricycle, worth £3, and she told the court her boy had brought it home when he was 5½ years old. She had tried to find the tricycle's owner, without success, and had decided to keep it.

This, of course, is a criminal act. She should immediately have torn the £3 tricycle from her little boy's grasp and handed it straight over to the police who would have known what to do with it. But she didn't. She kept someone else's property, and in the due course of time and through the act of some informer, she was brought to justice, to atone for her crime.

In the court, a probation officer said that this woman had said that she would not go to work because she was better off on National Assistance.

At this, the magistrate exclaimed: "Isn't that splendid! Really this is shocking and this sort of thing is going on all over London."

He went on: "It's a shocking state of affairs that you can bring bastards into the world and have them kept by the National Assistance"

"I ought to send you to prison, but I'll put you on probation for two years on a conditions that you go to work."

Hardly the statement of an enlightened and generous man. The situation, how-

ever, is an even more biting commentary of the wage levels available for women workers. The National Assistance Board are not all that open-handed and have seen fit to assess this woman's needs, together with her children's, at £3 11s. per week, out of which she has to pay rent, fuel and light, before getting down to food and clothes. No-one could say she was living in luxury, or even in idleness, with two kiddies to look after. Even so, this meagre existence represents a higher standard that she could earn by working!

Another point. Most social workers to-day maintain that a primary cause of juvenile delinquency is lack of emotional security in the home. And a contributory factor to that is the fact that so many working class mothers have to go

Council Evicts Gaoled Man's Family

THE following news item casts many sidelights on our society:

"The fact that the Paddington Borough Council are to invoke an Act of 1838 to eject a family from a council flat at Aird Court caused a storm of protest at last night's council meeting. The case concerns the wife and two children of a tenant serving 12 months' imprisonment for false pretences. At his trial in September the council learned for the first time that he had 10 previous convictions.

"Mr. J. Tuffnell, a Labour councillor, who asked the council to reconsider the matter, said 'nine of these convictions were before his marriage 15 years ago. His wife has done all she could. It is she and her two children, a boy of 13 and a girl of seven, who now have to suffer. Right in the Christmas season they are to be evicted. If you took them to court as a private landlord you would not get an eviction order.'

Mr. R. Burrell (Conservative), chairman of the Housing Committee, said: 'It is regretted there must be hardship in

out to work to make ends meet that they cannot give proper attention to their children.

The two kids in this case had no father living with them, but they had a mother who wanted to be with them. Magistrate Batt's action has now deprived them of that source of love and attention, it has lowered their standards of living, it has in fact laid the foundation for permanent injury to their emotional stability and their physical well-being.

And all because their mother is not married—as if that is their fault, or as if it matters anyway.

Lieut.-Colonel W. E. Batt reduced the woman to tears by his bullying. Some of us might think that fortune has not treated her very kindly already, without having to tolerate this ignorant and vicious outburst from a moralistic and narrow-minded militarist.

this case, but a prior regard must be had to other tenants. It is not in the public interest that wrong-doers be provided with accommodation while the housing situation is as it is."

"Alderman S. H. Crosse, Conservative, said: 'People guilty of unsocial actions should not occupy council flats. Other tenants have to be considered. A private landlord would get possession of his property and so should we. It is a very unhappy case.'

(Times, 18/12/53).

The argument of the Council is that they have to be "more responsible" than the private landlord. In order to be so they deprive their tenants of almost all the normal safeguards. Borough Councils are not subject to the Rent Restrictions Act; they can demand entrance to their flats at any time; they can demand all kinds of restrictions regarding guests and pets and general conduct

The Strike That Wasn't N.U.R. Leaders' Hoax

THE surprising spectacle of a leadership of a large union turned "militant", which presented us last week with the possibility of a railway stoppage throughout the whole country, can be seen this week in its true light.

It is not too much to say that it appears that the officials of the National Union of Railwaymen had not the slightest intention of calling out their 400,000 members. It was all a gigantic hoax, calculated only to encourage confidence in the leadership, on the part of an embittered rank and file, and at the most to give the Government and the Transport Commission a very public hint of what could happen if the railmen got too raw a deal.

The only excuse a trade union leadership has to justify its existence to its membership to-day is that it can, in the course of plenty of time, negotiate wage increases with the employer. But the result of the arbitration court's deliberations on the railmen's wage claim was so niggling an award that the leadership knew perfectly well it could not be accepted without a show of fight.

The railmen were insulted by the 4s. offer, and incensed by the insult. Their immediate response was, in many areas, to institute some form of direct action—go-slow or work to rule—and it was clear that it would spread and most probably have led, in a very short time, to an unofficial strike of considerable proportions.

Ten Days' Notice

This was on its way when the N.U.R. leadership stepped in and an-

nounced an official stoppage—but not an immediate one. The N.U.R. gave 10 days notice of its strike—thereby allowing plenty of time for the Press to whip up a panic and for the Ministry of Labour to intervene.

Not only that. The move by the officials put a stop to the threat of an unofficial strike of any size, and put the leadership in control of the situation. Once in control they have shown their ability to hold back the threatened stoppage. They pretended to lead it, even to instigate it, only to prevent it.

The ten days' notice served its purpose. Everybody thought how beastly it would be for the railwaymen to strike in Christmas week. Every national newspaper assured its readers of the justice of the railmen's case but maintained that public sympathy would be alienated by the strike.

A lot of midnight electricity was burned at Unity House, N.U.R. Headquarters at Euston, and a lot of comings and going by Very Important Persons went on between there and the Ministry of Labour in St. James' Square—while the engine-drivers and porters and signalmen conscientiously carried on with their work—which is what the V.I.P.'s wanted.

Rejection—then Acceptance

When the 4s. award was first announced, the other two railway unions, the footplate men and the clerks, announced that they would accept it on the understanding that immediate discussions should take place on the whole of the wage structure throughout the industry. The N.U.R., however, rejected this—and rejected the 4s. award—issuing its strike notice instead. Now what is the result? After Government intervention, the N.U.R. has accepted the 4s. award—on the understanding that a further 3s. will be forthcoming in six weeks' time!

So the insult stands—for six weeks—and then, instead of the 15 per cent. rise which was the original claim, the increase will total 7s.—about a third of what the 15 per cent. would have represented on the average railman's pay.

The action of the N.U.R., in accepting this arrangement, has been described as statesmanlike, responsible, and a triumph for negotiation. Sir Walter Monckton, Min. of Lab., has been complimented on having come through his first big ordeal after 2 years in office, with flying colours—although the effort seems to have been too much for him and his doctors have ordered a few weeks' rest.

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of their tenants' private lives: and they can evict more or less at their own pleasure so that their tenants have no security of tenure.

In this case, the Council's action has substantially added to the sentence of the law. The imprisoned man suffers the impotent anxiety of wondering what is going to happen to his family and is wholly unable to help them. The wife has this additional punishment thrust upon her although she is in no way guilty. She will probably blame her husband rather than the Council, and the marriage, already strained by the imprisonment will be subjected to this still further strain.

[See Editorial Comment—p. 3]

FREEDOM'S HOLIDAY MISCELLANY

NATURE & FUNCTION

THE essential thing among all those things which once helped man to emerge from Nature and, notwithstanding his feebleness as a natural being, to assert himself—more essential even than the making of a "technical" world out of things expressly formed for the purpose—was this: that he banded together with his own kind for protection and hunting, food gathering and work; and did so in such a way that from the very beginning and thereafter to an increasing degree he faced the others as more or less independent entities and communicated with them as such, addressing and being addressed by them in that manner. This creation of a "social" world out of persons at once mutually dependent and independent differed in kind from all similar undertakings on the part of animals' work. Apes, too, made use of some stick they happened to have found, as a lever, a digging-tool or a weapon; but that is an affair of chance only: they cannot conceive and produce a tool as an object constituted so and not otherwise and having an existence of its own. And again, many of the insects live in societies built up on a strict division of labour; but it is just this division of labour that governs absolutely their relations with one another; they are all as it were tools; only, their own society is the thing that makes use of them for its "instinctive" purposes; there is no improvisation, no degree, however modest, of mutual independence, no possibility of "free" regard for one another, and thus no person-to-person relationship. Just as the specific technical creations of man mean the conferring of independence on things, so his specific social creation means the conferring of independence on beings of his own kind. It is in the light of this specifically human idiosyncrasy that we have to interpret man's journey with all its ups and downs, and so also the point we have reached on this journey, our great and particular crisis.

In the evolution of mankind hitherto this, then, is the line that predominates, the forming and reforming of communities on the basis of growing personal independence, their mutual recognition and collaboration on that basis. The two most important steps that the man of early times took on the road to human society can be established with some certainty. The first is that inside the individual clan each individual, through an extremely primitive form of division of labour, was recognised and utilized in his special capacity, so that the clan increasingly took on the character of an ever-renewed association of persons each the vehicle of a different function. The second is that different clans would, under certain conditions, band together in quest of food and for campaigns, and consolidated their mutual help as customs and laws that took firmer and firmer root; so that as once between individuals, so now between communities people discerned and acknowledged dif-

ferences of nature and function. Wherever genuine human society has since developed it has always been on this same basis of functional autonomy, mutual recognition and mutual responsibility, whether individual or collective. Power-centres of various kinds have split off, organizing and guaranteeing the common order and security of all; but to the political sphere in the stricter sense, the State with its police-system and its bureaucracy, there was always opposed the organic, functionally organized society as such, a great society built up of various societies, the great society in which men lived and worked, competed with one another and helped one another; and in each of the big and little societies composing it, in each of these communes and communities the individual human being, despite all the difficulties and conflicts, felt himself at home as one in the clan, felt himself approved and affirmed in his functional independence and responsibility.

—MARTIN BUBER:
Paths in Utopia.

★

How Much Longer...?

AS they went past a tall, very young Negro turned and caught my eye. But the look he gave me was not in the least the kind of look you might expect. Not hostile, not contemptuous, not sullen, not even inquisitive. It was the shy, wide-eyed Negro look, which actually is a look of profound respect. I saw how it was. This wretched boy, who is a French citizen and has therefore been dragged from the forest to scrub floors and catch syphilis in garrison towns, actually has feelings of reverence before a white skin. He has been taught that the white race are his masters, and he still believes it.

But there is one thought which every white man (and in this connection it doesn't matter twopence if he calls himself a socialist) thinks when he sees a black army marching past. "How much longer can we go on killing these people? How long before they turn their guns in the other direction?"

It was curious, really. Every white man there had this thought stowed somewhere or other in his mind. I had it, so had the other onlookers, so had the officers on their sweating chargers and the white N.C.O.s marching in the ranks. It was a kind of secret which we all knew and were too clever to tell; only the Negroes didn't know it. And really it was like watching a flock of cattle to see the long column, a mile or two miles of armed men, flowing peacefully up the road, while the great white birds drifted over them in the opposite direction, glittering like scraps of paper.

—GEORGE ORWELL:
England, Your England.

Hedgehog and Fox

THERE is a line among the fragments of the Greek poet Archilochus which says: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." Scholars have differed about the correct interpretation of these dark words, which may mean no more than that the fox, for all his cunning, is defeated by the hedgehog's one defence. But, taken figuratively, the words can be made to yield a sense in which they mark one of the deepest differences which divide writers and thinkers, and it may be, human beings in general. For there exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel—a single, universal, organising principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance—and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way, for some psychological or physiological cause, related by no moral or aesthetic principle; these last lead lives, perform acts, and entertain ideas that are centrifugal rather than centripetal, their thought is scattered or diffused, moving on many levels, seizing upon the essence of a vast variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves, without, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to fit them into, or exclude them from, any one unchanging all-embracing, sometimes self-contradictory and incomplete, at times fanatical, unitary inner vision. The first kind of intellectual and artistic personality belongs to the hedgehogs, the second to the foxes; and without insisting on a rigid classification, we may, without too much fear of contradiction, say that, in this sense, Dante belongs to the first category, Shakespeare to the second; Plato, Lucretius, Pascal, Hegel, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Proust are, in varying degrees, hedgehogs; Herodotus, Aristotle, Montaigne, Erasmus, Molière, Goethe, Pushkin, Balzac, Joyce are foxes.

—ISAIAH BERLIN:
The Hedgehog and the Fox.

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Unsuitable Friends and Regrettable Jokes

ONE of the simple facts which cannot be got into the skulls of purely political persons is that a natural-born anarchist, when fully grown, cannot be a Communist and is likely to detest Communism.

The natural anarchist is not a sinister chap with a bomb. He is one who thinks that while individuals are sometimes wise and good, organisations—especially large ones—are always silly and generally wicked. He tends to make unsuitable friends and regrettable jokes, and is the salt of the earth.

—FREDERICK LAWS in the
News Chronicle.

MASS ENTHUSIASMS

IT is intriguing yet most difficult to assess the damage done to children who have not been allowed to play as much as they wanted to. I often wonder if the great masses who watch professional football are trying to live out their arrested play interest by identification of selves with the players, playing by proxy as it were. The majority of our Summerhill old pupils do not attend football matches, nor are they interested in pageantry. I think that few would walk very far to see—say—a royal procession. Pageantry surely has a childish element in it; its colour, formalism, slow movement have some suggestion of toyland and dressed up dolls, and maybe that is the reason why women seem to love pageantry more than men do. As people get older and more sophisticated they seem to be attracted less and less by pageantry of any kind, and I doubt if generals and politicians and diplomats get anything out of State processions except boredom, but it is possibly unfair to form any judgment, because, personally I cannot easily share crowd emotions, loyal or disloyal, religious or pagan, political or unpolitical, and in every judgment the subjective will always lend some colour.

There is some evidence that children brought up freely and with the maximum of play do not tend to become mass-minded. Among Summerhill old pupils the only ones I can think of who could easily and enthusiastically cheer in a crowd are the ones who came from Communist homes. Again I cannot get away from the idea that crowd emotion has something to do with the repressed play instinct. I had that impression strongly when, in 1935, I stood in an enormous crowd in the Tempelhof in Berlin when Hitler made a speech. The hilarity of the crowd gave a school-picnic feeling. Only children seek a leader, but free children do not. It almost looks as if

BERTRAND RUSSELL in the
Rationalist Annual, 1954.

★

Phrases & Realities

WE all know those meetings now—the fraternal handshake, the reek of tobacco, the indistinguishable hubbub of tongues, the frothy violence, the bottomless inanity of abstract discussions, that have less concern with human realities than the curve of the hyperbola through space. We all know that, and sometimes, perhaps, at the sight of some artist or poet like Heine—or, shall we say?, like William Morris—in the sulphurous crater of that volcanic tumult, we have been tempted to exclaim, "Not here, O Apollo, are haunts meet for thee!" But we had best restrain such exclamations, for we have had quite enough of the artistic or philanthropic temperaments that talk a deal about fighting the battle of the poor and the oppressed, but take very good care to keep at a clean and comfortable distance from those whose battle they are fighting, and appear more than content to live amongst the tyrants and oppressors they denounce. And we remind ourselves, further, that what keeps the memory of William Morris sweet is not his wall-papers, his beaten work of bronze or silver, his dreamy tapestries of interwoven silks or verse, but just that strange attempt of his, however vain, however often deceived, to convert the phrases of liberty into realities, and to learn something more about democracy than the spelling of its name.

—HENRY W. NEVINSON:
Words and Deeds.

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Notes for the Malatesta Centenary—4

Anarchist Organisation

"There are anarchists—Malatesta once wrote—who while admitting that men must organise to defend their ideas and their interests, always see authority or the threat of authority, in organisation; and for this reason they accept it unwillingly . . . and hope that the day will come when everyone being able, and wanting, to act for themselves, will make organization unnecessary . . . We believe instead that organisation is not a transitory necessity, a question of tactics and of opportunity, but is an inherent need in human society, and must be considered by us as a question of principle. And far from there being a contradiction between the idea of anarchism and that of organisation, we believe that anarchism cannot exist, cannot be conceived, if not as a free organisation, made by the people concerned themselves, of all common interests."

For these same reasons Malatesta believed in organisation among anarchists for the purpose of propaganda and struggle and in his long life as a militant many were the polemics with the anti-organisers that took place on this subject. There is a certain amount of confusion in some anarchist circles about Malatesta's views on organisation as expressed in his early and late writings. Briefly, it can be said that his early hopes

in the revolutionary potentialities of Syndicalism underwent considerable modifications in the first decade of the present century. His biographer, Luigi Fabbri,² quotes from a letter in which Malatesta expressed the view that in 1897 he had more faith and hope in syndicalism than in later years. And in a letter to a comrade written in 1931 he expressed the view that "workers organisations, revolutionary when they are weak, become, with increasing membership and struggle, bureaucratic and conservative, egotistic and political. Perhaps the same would have happened to the *Unione Sindacale Italiana* [the revolutionary syndicalist organisation with anarchist inspiration], if it had become a majority."³ But this observation did not prevent Malatesta from adding: "Yet the organisation of the workers, where it can be achieved is the best—and perhaps the only—means for bringing together that necessary nucleus for a resolute action."³

But his views on anarchist organisation here and now were held firmly and defended with, to our

minds, convincing arguments against both the "individualists" and the "authoritarian" anarchists, and if the distinction between Malatesta's views on "workers organisations" and "anarchist organisation" is clearly drawn, there is no reason for suggesting as does G. Fontenis in the current issue of *Le Libertaire* that it is possible to "interpret" Malatesta's ideas to fit in with the various tendencies in anarchist thought. Whilst Fontenis mentions this to anticipate any attempts that "anti-organisers" and "individualists" might make to claim Malatesta for themselves, he proceeds to do just what he deprecates in others by claiming Malatesta for the French Libertarian Communist Federation (until recently the French Anarchist Federation)!

Those who have followed developments in the French "Anarchist" movement, and the political manoeuvres of such personalities as G. Fontenis, and who also have read Malatesta's post-1900 writings as well as the earlier ones, cannot allow these distortions of his thought to pass unchallenged. The French Libertarian Communist Federation and its organ *Le Libertaire* represent an authoritarian tendency which has developed beyond even the propos-

¹From "*Il Principio d'organizzazione*" in *Il Pensiero* Rome Oct. 1, 1910.

²Luigi Fabbri, *Malatesta. l'Uomo e il Pensiero* Naples 1951.
³Rome Oct. 17, 1931 published in *Malatesta, Scritti Scelti* Naples 1947.

HUMAN PROBLEMS

ELSEWHERE in this issue we report actions by public authorities which seem absolutely fantastic in their cruelty and inhumanity and which at the same time epitomize the actions and outlook of authority. In one case a man is sent to prison and the Borough Council Housing Committee proceed to evict his wife and children from their flat. In the second case a magistrate tells a woman in effect that National Assistance is not there to support her illegitimate children.

To anarchists and, we venture to think, all normally constituted humane people, a man who is sent to prison (and certainly his wife and children) and a woman who had no other support than herself or the N.A.B. for her illegitimate children are unfortunate. They are not people on whom fortune has smiled. Whatever one may think about them in critical terms (this is regarding stealing or illegitimacy), one is sorry for them and one's impulse is to help them.

Not so authority. Speaking with Conservative Housing Committee Chairman Mr. R. Burrell, it declares that "It is not in the public interest that wrong-doers be provided with accommodation while the housing situation is as it is." And again (this time it is Conservative Alderman S. H. Crosse speaking): "People guilty of unsocial actions should not occupy council flats. Other tenants have to be considered..."

Evil likes to masquerade under the pretence of righteousness. "Other tenants have to be considered". In such cases as we know, other tenants come very much to the assistance of wives whose husbands are gaoled. Other tenants are frequently inebriated with an instinct of mutual aid in these sad situations ("It is a very unhappy case," declared the Conservative alderman), such that authority but seldom shows. We do not know in this case. Perhaps the Alderman's concern for the other tenants is not wholly hypocritical—they may have complained. If so the authorities should have behaved with mercy and forbearance, whereas they have supported such envious complaints—supposing they were indeed ever made.

What of the other case? The mother of illegitimate children lived on assistance and would not take a job and send the kids to a nursery. So the magistrate orders her to take a job—or he will send her to prison.

Now what is the position of a mother of illegitimate—that is, socially fatherless—children? To go to work she must send them to a nursery for which there is often a charge, or find a minder which also costs money. Such a relinquishing of her position as a mother would only justify itself to her if her income were so increased that she could effect considerable material improvements in the way her children were brought up. In fact, as miserable as National Assistance payments are they are often greater than the difference between minding and nursery charges and the kind of wage many working mothers can afford.

Even if it is economically possible it means separation of children from their mother, a proceeding which everybody who has to do with children knows to be fraught with danger for the character and future of the child. Yet authority in this case says: "Separate or go to prison—and so separate in any case".

A humane society would regard such a woman as unfortunate and it would cherish her. Those who occupy the lowest position in the social scale are the very people who are most in need of love, who most need to feel that society has affection for them and that they belong. The welfare State and its higher admin-

What is Obscenity?

THE *Antiquarian Bookman*, the American "Specialist Book Trade Weekly" in listing the contradictory rulings of American Courts as to what constitutes obscenity in literature shows quite clearly that legally there is no clear definition—which of course is not surprising. Is it not time that the stupid nose-parkers and self-appointed protectors of our morals busied themselves with some other more useful occupation? They should be now realise that suppression only whets the appetites of those who seek pleasure in pornographic literature, and in our society there are always those who are prepared to take a risk to make money and who therefore "cash-in" on this demand which cannot be satisfied through the normal channels. The black-market in pornography is so well known as to be a music hall joke and all the vice-squads in the world will not succeed in wiping it out, if only for the fact that among those who are the most vocal in their denunciations of this "disgusting" and "filthy" stuff are surely some secret pornography fans, and they will see to it that the business is kept within bounds for the sake of appearances, but wipe it out? Oh dear, no!

What is Obscenity?

At one time or another, the courts have held

1. Indelicacy and bad taste are obscene.
2. Indelicacy and rudeness are not obscene.
3. The language, not the meaning, contains the obscenity.
4. The meaning, not the language, contains the obscenity.
5. A suspicion of obscenity is enough to convict.
6. A suspicion of obscenity is not enough to convict.
7. A word is, of itself, obscene.
8. Words, of themselves, are not obscene.
9. The effect on the child is the test of obscenity.
10. The effect on the average person is the test.
11. The effect on the lewd is the test.
12. The effect on the pure is the test.
13. The effect on the reader is immaterial.
14. Intent of author is the test.
15. Intent of author is immaterial.
16. Comparing one book with another is test.
17. Comparisons are immaterial.
18. Medical books are not obscene.
19. Medical books may be obscene: truth is not a defense.

20. Excerpts from the Bible are obscene.
21. Nothing in the Bible violates the law.

Censor's Guide

The thinnest ice on which customs inspectors are obliged to skate involves art and literature. What may look like a hunk of bronze on which duty should be paid, Kennedy warns the class, may actually be a work of art, which gets in free. Such, to the embarrassment of customs men who held it up, was the verdict of three United States Customs Court judges in the famous case of *Bird in Space*, a sculpture by the Rumanian modernist, Brancusi. Nor are books sprinkled with four-letter words necessarily obscenities which regulations require to be destroyed. Customs discovered this when it seized copies of James Joyce's novel, "Ulysses", only to have United States District Judge John M. Woolsey rule that it was not obscene. On the other hand, many a gusty classic remains on Custom's black list—the Decameron and the massive German survey of sex in the arts, Edward Fuchs' "Sittengeschichte", to name two of the most sought-after—and these, Kennedy reassures his students, they will be fairly safe in confiscating. Regarding those two books and several others, however, city and state censors evidently do not share Customs' dim view. While the books cannot be legally imported, editions published here are sold openly by many bookshops.

—School for Customs Inspectors, from *The Saturday Evening Post*, July 11, 1953.

[Ed. Note: "The Decameron" was legally 'cleared' as admissible in a Federal Court decision in 1930].

Film Review A World I Never Made

THE JUGGLER (Berkeley)

WHEN one hears of a Hollywood-made film that does not get a commercial booking, or a booking on the big circuits it is generally an indication that it is a good film or at least, an interesting one. It is very often a film with ideas, like "They Came to a City" or "The Captain of Kopenick", both of which were shown off the commercial circuits, Hollywood (and the box-office) are afraid of ideas.

Unfortunately, Edward Dymtryk, the director of "The Juggler" became afraid of his own idea and "The Juggler" never completely came off.

The opening scenes are very promising. A boatload of Jewish refugees is sailing into Haifa harbour, the disembarking passengers are met with cheers, they crowd into buses and are driven off into the all-too-familiar surroundings of the barbed-wire.

A father has difficulty in persuading his small daughter to get off the bus, "You promised me we wouldn't go into a camp again," she cries. Hans Muller, a juggler (played by Kirk Douglas), has also descended from the bus and says: "That's one of the things you have to learn about people, they never keep their promises." A camp official intervenes, "We're doing the best we can under the circumstances." "And that's another thing about people, they always make excuses."

The refugees are ushered into a hall where they have to answer a questionnaire. Muller replies that he is a juggler by profession. They are conducted into the dormitory and soon a call comes for plumbers and carpenters and Muller

realizes he is alone with a blind man and a frail, old man. Even the new State of Israel has no use for his talents. From this point the story deteriorates. Muller walks out of the camp, is cornered by a policeman, who, in an attack of claustrophobic panic, he mistakes for a Nazi and seriously injures. From this point it develops into a cops-and-robbers chase. Douglas is befriended by a 'Young Pioneer' who conducts him across Israel. The 'Young Pioneer' is a rather griggish boy-scout type who is injured in a mine-field placed in front of kibbutz to keep out the Arabs.

At this point in the story there enters the wholly deplorable, but box-office desirable, love element in the person of a campus cutie in shorts with a rifle who never convinces one that she was nearer a kibbutz than Broadway.

The small girl whom Muller has befriended is interviewed by the police for her photograph and she lies like a saint to protect her friend, which is far more than any of the adults do, however the adults assure her that it's for her friend's own good and she hands it over.

The film closes with Muller deciding not to resist and overcoming his claustrophobia by deciding to stay at the kibbutz with the kuty.

But the main problem of the film has been side-stepped, the archetype of our time is the refugee and the world has no place for the "neurotic" artist, particularly in an autarchic society like Israel. It is no solution to psycho-analyze him and fit him into a society which has no room for the artist for it is the world which is neurotic and no psycho-analyst's couch is big enough to contain it.

UNTOUCHABILITY STILL RIFE IN INDIA

TO Western modes of thought one of the most difficult aspects of Indian life is "Untouchability" and the caste system. Indians themselves were (and, in Africa, still are) subject to the colour bar prejudices of Europeans. But the Hindu caste system is far more complicated and far reaching in its effect, being accepted both by caste Hindus and the untouchables and low caste groups themselves.

Gandhi devoted a considerable part of his practical teaching to breaking

down this rigid hierarchical system which condemned untouchables to a permanently outcast position. One of the results of his work was the forbidding of untouchability under the Indian Constitution (Article 17), but the difficulties of eradicating such ideas is shown by a report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, discussed by the House of the People on December 18:

"The report gives only a sketch of the condition of 51 million untouchables and

19 million so-called scheduled tribesmen, but it was found that in the rural areas, which means most of India, orthodoxy, superstition, and resistance to reform prevailed over a more enlightened approach. In Madya Pradesh, for instance, untouchables were still not allowed to use village wells or to enter temples, and in Madras they were too afraid to use shops, bathing ghats, and roads for fear of offending the caste Hindus who employ them.

"In Saurashtra they could not ride horses or eat ghee (clarified butter) and the wearing of personal ornaments by women was frowned upon. In the Punjab they walked miles to fetch water or waited hours at wells for caste Hindus to draw the water for them and pour it into pits, 'for direct pouring into their vessels would be pollution'. In some villages they tried to draw water under police protection, but 'caste Hindus stoutly resisted'.

"Last year Rajput landlords shot men when they refused forced labour, stood for election to village assemblies, and gave up their profession of flaying skins of dead animals'. Punitive expeditions were made by the police and villages were fined, but the terrorized untouchables were long afraid to cultivate their lands without protection.

"The untouchables are generally afraid to claim their new civic rights and degrees of untouchability divide them. In Mysore, the commission reports, 'untouchability is experienced even between Adidrae Vidas and Adi-Karnitka, both of whom belong to the scheduled castes, and they have separate wells'.

"The Home Minister, Dr. Katju, in opening the debate, said that a Bill would be introduced to penalize the practice of untouchability, but persuasive rather than coercive methods were required to bring about a change of heart."

(Times Delhi Correspondent, 19/12/53).

This shows once again that legal prohibition is inadequate to put an end to a social evil. But it also shows what formidable difficulties lie in the way of the attempt to abolish practices and ways of thought which are well rooted in religion and tradition, especially in a country like India where tradition plays so powerful (and colourful) a part.

Nevertheless, the legal prohibition of untouchability and the present concern about difficulties of making such prohibition effective also show that Gandhi has achieved the beginning of a revolution in thought regarding caste. In the last resort the replacement of traditional ideas by more humane ones depends on the efforts by individuals.

Malatesta & Anarchist Organisation

Continued from p. 2

moral and material preparation for the future we hope to achieve."

To the "Platform's" suggestions that Executive Committees and "collective responsibility" are anarchist concepts Malatesta replies:

"In my opinion anarchist organisation must be founded on quite different bases to those proposed by those Russian comrades.

"Full autonomy, full independence, and thus full responsibility, of the individuals and the groups; free agreement among those who believe in the use of coming together to co-operate for a common purpose; the moral duty to carry out one's accepted commitments and do nothing which is contrary to the accepted programme. On these bases the practical formulas, and the suitable instruments to give real life to the organisation are adopted. Follow the groups, the federations of groups, the federations of federations, the meetings, congresses, correspondence committees, etc. . . . But all this must be done freely, in such a way as not to fetter the thought and initiative of individuals, and only in order to render more effective those efforts, which made in isolation, would be impossible or hardly effective.

And Malatesta goes on to show that anarchist congresses with all their defects

"are free from any authoritarianism, because they do not lay down the law, and do not impose their deliberations on others. They serve the purpose of maintaining and increasing the personal contact between the most active comrades;

of summarising and encouraging the programmatic study of ways and means for action; to inform everybody on the conditions and on the activity most required in the various regions; the formulation of the different opinions current among anarchists and to express it statistically, as it were. Their decisions are not obligatory rules, but suggestions, advice, proposals to be submitted to all concerned, and do not become binding and executive except for those who accept them. . . .

"In an anarchist organisation the individual members can profess all opinions and use all tactics which are not in contradiction with the accepted principles and do not prejudice the activity of the others. In all cases a particular organisation will last so long as there is a greater measure of unity than of dissension; otherwise it dissolves and makes way for other more homogenous groupings."

But always the organisation, as Malatesta conceived it, had to have a life of its own, a *raison d'etre*:

"Experience teaches us that organisations created by the initiative of a few individuals, and without the need for it being felt by the many, in the hope that they will eventually grow and justify their existence, either remain sterile and die, or they confuse means with ends and become an end in themselves and use up their energies in useless formalities, and are a hindrance rather than a help to the movement."

Thus to those comrades who were proposing vast national and international federations Malatesta suggested first things first. The important thing was to "continue to form groups, increase contacts between them and to bring them together in local, provincial and regional federations. If then the actual needs of the work demanded the formal constitution of a national federation then the demand would rise from all sides and such a federation would be

justified and useful."

Can comrade Fontenis and his friends of the French L.C.F. still claim Malatesta? They, who in creating the "homogenous", "strong" organisation, have expelled or driven away individuals and groups from it? Whose journal *Le Liberaire* speaks with one voice, that of the National Committee, and rejects every contribution which does not conform to the "party line", or which disagrees on questions of fact or with opinions expressed in its columns? It is because the columns of *Le Liberaire* are not open to criticism that we have felt it our duty to introduce in these notes on the Malatesta centenary our protest at this wilful distortion of his ideas which one would expect from a communist journal, but hardly in one which professes to be anarchist or, as they now call themselves, libertarian-communist.

Perhaps there is something in the change of title. In Malatesta's early days there was not sinister meaning attached to the word communist. It is significant that the *Liberaire* should adopt it now that the word "communism" is discredited and tainted with authoritarianism, and drop the word "anarchism".

But though we have no illusions that our protest will influence these "libertarians", its introduction in these notes on Malatesta's thought is not altogether out of place, for in our view they underline his foresight and his understanding of human behaviour which informed all his writings and give them an importance and validity which are as real to-day as they were when they were written.

*From the article "Per l'organizzazione anarchica" in *Volontà* Dec. 6, 1913.

(To be continued)

