

POLAND CALLS THE BLUFF

THE events in Poland during the last week have demonstrated most clearly just how limited was the liberalisation and de-centralisation that the Soviet leaders thought was good for the satellite states. For now that the Polish Communist Party has apparently risked all in a throw for independence on Titoist lines, we see that the immediate reaction on the part of the men in the Kremlin is consternation and fury.

It would seem that Khrushchev's propaganda was a little too good. Not so good that he believed it himself, perhaps, but good enough to convince people anxious to be convinced. And the people of Poland had been rendered so desperate by eleven years of colonialism that when they began to be promised relief they didn't wait for official moves—they acted.

The explosion at Poznan was recognisably the work of a desperate people protesting against conditions they could no longer tolerate. In Gomulka's words 'The cup was full'. It was a repetition of the events in East Germany three years ago, and was denounced in a similar way by Communist Party parrots as the work of agents of the West. Those who set themselves up as leaders never credit the people with the ability to act for themselves.

The Change of Line

The difference between East Germany 1953 and Poznan 1956, however, is that the line of the Soviet leaders towards the satellite states has undergone a change. In '53 Tito was still a hyena, Stalin still a god, and no talk of liberalisation had been heard in high places. But now all that is reversed. Tito has been embraced again and the right of Yugoslavia to follow her own road to communism has been admitted, the names of executed 'Titoists' in the Iron Curtain countries have been rehabilitated (even the earthly remains of Rajk, in Hungary, have been dug up and reburied with Communist honours), and talk of

liberalisation and de-centralisation has filled the East European air.

We discussed last week how there was a relationship between the Kremlin's new line on the satellites and the struggle for power going on inside the Soviet Party. This explains Khrushchev's panic-stricken dash to Warsaw last Friday with old guard Molotov (deposed from the office of Foreign Minister just before Tito's visit to Moscow last summer), Mikoyan and Kaganovitch—a powerful delegation from the Supreme Soviet—whose task was to try to stem the tide in Poland.

Satellite Resentment

But the Russian leaders were as impotent as King Canute, and for all Khrushchev's shouting they had to pack their bags and crawl back to Moscow. There, we may be sure, the old Stalin-guard are preparing rough treatment for Khrushchev and a show-down may not be far away.

It may be, of course, that Khrushchev will back down. We showed last week how he is playing with fire, and now Poland has burst into flames. For what the Kremlin has never understood, in spite of Tito, in spite of East Germany 1953, is just how much the satellite countries resented being satellites. The Communists have always tried hard to pretend that there was no domination from Moscow, but in fact the relationship between Russia and the smaller countries of the Communist bloc has been almost identical with that between Britain and the smaller countries of the British Empire.

Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia—all the 'Iron Curtain' countries—have been politically dominated and economically plundered by Russia, in which patriotism and national pride have been revived. Just as the British Government, however, holds patriotism for Britain to be all right, but patriotism for, say, Cyprus, to be all wrong—so we now see that demands for national sovereignty among the Poles (just as it did

among the Yugoslavs) has been received with scorn and resentment in Moscow.

Even while Khrushchev and Tito were holding their secret get-together at Yalta, *Pravda* was demanding to know 'what's this claptrap about national Communism?'—although the whole of Russia's internal and foreign policy since 1919 has been devoted to 'building socialism in one country'.

Either Way The Kremlin Loses

Now Poland, under Gomulka's leadership, is presenting the Kremlin with a king-sized headache. What on earth are the Soviet leaders to do now? If the movements of Russian troops and warships indicate they are prepared to crush the Polish resurgence with force they will demonstrate in a way even most Communists will understand the imperialist nature of the Soviet attitude to the satellites and the completely phoney character of the 'liberalisation' talk.

If, on the other hand, the Soviet Union allows the Poles to gain the degree of independence they demand, they will be rapidly followed by Hungary (already seething) and the whole of the Communist bloc may begin to disintegrate. More than that. Poland has a special importance for Russia as a buffer state between her and the West. Without the mighty Red Army to stop them, Western armies could roll across the wide-open plains of Poland as easily as the Germans did in 1939. With Poland independent, East Germany would be cut off from Russian pro-

tection, except through Czechoslovakia (which most probably will rapidly follow Poland and Hungary anyway), and a second rising of the people could no longer be stemmed as easily as in 1953. And if they suppress Poland they will have a most unreliable ally there and the resentment will spread throughout Eastern Europe.

Either way the Russian leaders are on the spot. The Poles have called their bluff, and the next few weeks are going to provide us with a spectacle fascinating to watch. Just as interesting will be the effects of it all upon the Polish people. After all, Gomulka is still a Com-

munist and much of the anti-Soviet feeling among the people springs from their Catholicism. Poland will be in ferment for a long time yet.

There is one other, more sinister, alternative. This is that Gomulka is, after all, Moscow's man; that he has been 'allowed' by the Kremlin to come back to power so that the march to independence shall not go too far. He is already strenuously denouncing any demonstrations of 'anti-Soviet' feeling, such as the 'Go Home Rokossovsky' cry by the students.

It would not be the first time Communists had seized the lead only to nullify popular movements.

FOREIGN COMMENTARY

Money, Conscience & New Friends

LAST week we discussed the British envoy's 'goodwill' visit to Japan and the fact that much was made by Lord Selkirk to the Japanese press about the generous spirit of Britain when they refused to impose trade tariffs on Japanese textile imports (even though many Lancashire cotton mills had to close down). Behind the friendly spirit are the usual economic and political fears which, in the case of Japan, apply to her relationship with China and the Soviet Union.

Just as Britain and Japan are prepared to forgive the horror which resulted from their conflict in the last war, so China, who has suffered many times in the past from Japanese conquest, is all set for a fond embrace, and the new lover-Communist China (with hot competition from the Soviet Union), is just as lacking in good taste and real affection as Japan and Britain. Like most marriages of convenience, friendly affection will only survive so long as the foundation is economically sound.

Last week, Peking witnessed the Japanese flag flying alongside the five star banner of Communist China in honour of a Japanese trade fair. On the stone gates of the exhibition hall built by the Russians a few years ago, the epitaph "Chinese-Russian Friendship" has been removed and the words "China-Japan Amity" (shades of *Animal Farm*), put in their place. Prevented by their International Trade Ministry at the moment from selling heavy industrial goods to the Communists, Japanese exhibitors made hay with light machinery, textiles, toys, cameras and televisions, and Mao Tse-tung was delighted by the sight of his face on a television screen transmitted by a receiving set brought by the Japanese.

In the meantime in Moscow the Japanese Prime Minister has signed a joint declaration ending the eleven-year-old state of war between the two countries. The Soviet Union, never far behind where there are a few plums for the plucking, has given up all claims to reparations against Japan and has agreed to return the two islands, Habomai and Sikotan, which she occupied at the end of the war. No mention is made in the declaration of the two other "much more important" South Kurile islands of Etorofu and Kunashiri which have been the cause of some heated exchanges in the Japanese Parliament. Some extracts from the text read as follows:—

The U.S.S.R. and Japan confirm that in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, each of the Powers enjoys the inalienable right of individual or collective defence.

The U.S.S.R. and Japan mutually undertake not to interfere directly or indirectly in each other's internal affairs, whether out of economic, political, or ideological motives.

4. The Soviet Union will give its support to Japan's application for membership of the United Nations organisation.

5. All Japanese citizens sentenced in the Soviet Union will be freed and repatriated to Japan as soon as this joint declaration enters into force. As regards those Japanese whose fate is unknown, the U.S.S.R., at Japan's request, will continue to attempt to elucidate what has been their fate.

6. The Soviet Union gives up all claims to reparations against Japan. The U.S.S.R. and Japan mutually give up all claims for war damages on behalf of the State, its organisations and citizens, against the other State, its organisations and citizens, which may have arisen as a result of the war of August 9, 1945.

7. The Soviet Union and Japan agree to start negotiations as soon as possible for the purpose of concluding treaties or agreements intended to place their trade, merchant shipping, and other business relations on a stable and friendly basis.

We suggested some time ago (FREEDOM May 8th, 1954—"Behind Soviet Foreign Policy") that after China had benefited to the full from the aid to her industrial growth by the Soviet Union, the alliance between these two countries might be loosened by China who now aims for "restored Sino-Japanese relations" and, as has been pointed out in the *Manchester Guardian* editorial (Oct. 27th, 1956),

70 Years of Freedom Press

IN January 1886, five days after his release from Clairvaux prison, Peter Kropotkin wrote to his friend George Herzig (the editor of *Le Révolté* in Geneva), "I am called to London to found an anarchist (English) paper; the means are existent and I will get to work busily".

The paper he founded was not the first anarchist paper in England. Johann Most had published his *Freiheit* in London before emigrating to America, and in 1885 the Yiddish paper *Der Arbeiterfreund* had begun its long career. In the same year Henry Seymour, an English disciple of Benjamin Tucker had started a paper *The Anarchist*. Kropotkin arrived in England at the beginning of March 1886, and the original Freedom Group seems to have been founded in that month or in the first half of April. Seymour was in difficulties over funds for his paper, and at a meeting held at the house in St. John's Wood of the Russian revolutionary Stepniak (Serge Kravchinsky), it was agreed that henceforth the paper would be issued under the joint direction of Henry Seymour and the Freedom Group which consisted of Kropotkin, Mrs. Charlotte Wilson, Dr. Burns Gibson, F. S. Merlino, and Nicolas Tchaikovsky.

But the association with Seymour did not succeed, the Freedom Group withdrew and in October 1886 published the first issue of *Freedom*. Most of the work had been done by Kropotkin and Mrs. Wilson, the latter becoming editor. The launching of the paper was assisted by friends outside the group; until June 1888 the type was composed at the printing office of the Socialist League, an arrangement made by William Morris, while Annie Besant

lent the hospitality of the Free-thought Publishing Company as an office.

In 1894 *Freedom* took over the premises in Ossulston Street, King's Cross, which had been the office of *The Torch*, the anarchist magazine published by the daughters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. This was *Freedom Press's* office until the nineteen-twenties, and here, in the eighteen-nineties, Errico Malatesta helped to assemble the press on which FREEDOM PRESS publications were printed for many years, an old 'oscillator' printing machine, about 75-80 years old at that time, which required three men to turn the crank, another to feed the paper and another to take it off. (During a later visit to this country Malatesta installed the lighting, following his adopted trade of electrical engineer). In 1895 the illness of Charlotte Wilson, and the increasing persecution of anarchists by the police led to the suspension of the paper for a few months. It was revived in May of that year when the Freedom Group amalgamated with the rump of the Socialist League which had split earlier on the fundamental issue of parliamentary or anti-parliamentary activity. Tom Cantwell, from the anarchist faction of the Socialist League, a basket-maker by trade, who had taught himself printing, became the printer of *Freedom*, whose new editor was Alfred Marsh, backed by a group consisting of Kropotkin, Tcherkesoff, Tchaikovsky, Max Nettlau and Cantwell, and assisted to an increasing extent by Tom Keell, a professional compositor on a well-established weekly. Cantwell's health had suffered during his imprisonment with hard

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The 14 Tory Abolitionist Turncoats

The Carrion Crows

LANDUDNO must have presented an excellent place of study for the psychologist who can perhaps explain more scientifically than us the warped workings of the Conservative mind. What a disordered set of case-histories unfolded themselves at the Tory conference, as the usually well-disciplined delegates let loose their mob neurosis.

As the solitary delegate in favour of the abolition of the death penalty attempted to present a reasoned case the carrion crows descended, picking dustily at the bodies before they had time to fall from the hangman's rope.

Vicarious thrills were evident at the response to a delegate who called for the return of the cat and birch, and here we see the other side of the restrained Conservative; the sadism which is symbolised in the character of Captain Griffiths.

Not so complex, but just as horrifying is the decision of the 14 Tories who voted to end hanging a few months ago but who have now reversed their position. The reasons are explained in the *Sunday Express*, a news-sheet which specialises in collecting garbage, and for once we are prepared to let that rag speak for itself. Cross-Bencher unearths the following:—

"Who are these 14 Tories? I name them:—

Lord Balmiel (Hertford); Mr. Ronald Bell (South Buckinghamshire); Mr. Raymond Gower (Barry); Mr. Alan Green (Preston South); Mr. Brian Harrison (Maldon);

Sir Keith Joseph (Leeds North-east); Mr. Geoffrey Rippon (Norwich South); Mr. John Rodgers (Sevenoaks); Mr. Leslie Thomas (Canterbury); Mr. Arthur Tiley (Bradford West);

Sir Hugh Lucas-Tooth (Hendon S.); Mr. Frederic Bennett (Torquay); Mr. Harold Gurden (Selly Oak); and Mr. Richard Fort (Clotheroe).

Their switch is decisive. The anti-hanging majority in the Commons is now wiped out.

One Minister above all greets the home-coming of these 14 Tories with gleeful satisfaction.

He is 40-year-old Mr. Edward Heath, the Government Chief Whip.

He beams with benevolence. He purrs like a cat full of cream.

For you may be sure he feels that he more than anyone is responsible for their change of front.

How has he shepherded the wanderers back to the fold?

Not with threats. For Mr. Heath is known as Tactful Ted.

Not even with promises.

But everyone knows the Mr. Heath has another title too.

He is the Patronage Secretary.

No names go to Sir Anthony Eden for promotion without his approving nod.

And note a common factor among the 14. Nearly all are young and ambitious. Sometimes for returning prodigals Mr. Heath can kill a fatted calf."

21/10/56.

Two Views on the Freedom Press Anniversary

PEOPLE AND IDEAS

"It is, in the main, a frontal attack upon the doctrine at that time preached by almost every left-wing orator in Europe (with the notable exception of Proudhon and a handful of anarchists to whom no one listened), about the sacred human duty of offering up oneself—or others—upon the altar of some great moral or political cause—some absolute principle or 'collective noun' capable of stirring strong emotion, like Nationality, or Democracy, or Equality, or Humanity, or Progress."

—ISIAH BERLIN, Introduction to Herzen's *From the Other Shore*.

A HANDFUL of anarchists to whom no one listened—if you want to sum up seventy years of anarchist publishing in this country, there it is. But of course it means more than that. When we say that no one listened we mean that there has been no obvious influence on public affairs. We cannot measure the influence on the lives of individuals who have come within the orbit, however narrow it may be, of anarchist propaganda. My life has been profoundly affected by it, and I have no doubt that yours has too. "With twenty-six soldiers of lead I have conquered the world", declared some seventeenth-century radical printer. The anarchist press has conquered no worlds, but it has freed many individual people from the false notions and pernicious standards which govern the world. People drift in and out of its influence. The experience may not mean much to them, but it must surely weaken their acceptance of the unquestioned assumptions which underlie the political, social and economic behaviour of our day. Isn't that really all one could hope to do? The strength of the old order, Herzen said, lies not so much in political power as in the fact that it is generally approved. "We must influence men so that this approval may cease". To us the various new orders are simply a change of scenery, and all we can do is to chip away the foundation of approval and acceptance which underlies them all.

On occasions like the present anniversary it is customary to ask questions like "Why does anarchism progress so slowly?" and to demand the casting off of outworn dogmas, as though the fact that 'no one listened' indicated some error in what was said, and revealed some defect in anarchist ideas. The inference that because anarchism hasn't

"... IT NEVER DIES

triumphed, something must be wrong with anarchism, is based either on the unconscious acceptance of the idea that might is right after all, or on the belief which unhappily is equally illogical, that through some benign law of history right must ultimately and inevitably triumph over might. People who think in these terms ought to reflect on Max Nettlau's remark that "Anarchism is equally dear to me whether held by five thousand people or by five hundred millions, or by a few individuals."

It's no use looking to see what we can throw over the side in a vain effort to make the anarchist boat go faster. What are we going to jettison? Syndicalism may not be at the very centre of anarchist thought, but how else than through advocating workers' control of industry are we to apply our way of thinking in the field of industry. The "class-struggle" isn't an outworn article of revolutionary faith, it is one of the facts of industrial life that you can see either in the board-room or on the factory floor. The need for a revolution assails you every time you open a newspaper. (Or do you approve of what is done in your name in Cyprus, Kenya and Malaya?) The fact that there isn't going to be one, or that if there was, it wouldn't turn out the way we want it, doesn't alter that need. By all means let us discard messianic revolutionism, sectarian exclusiveness, and utopia-peddling, if they in fact exist among anarchists to-day. But let us recognise that the further we move from the attitude which says to the outside world, "Certainly we are impractical idealists, but look at the mess you realistic people are making", towards that which says, as Kropotkin said in this paper, "All we can do is to give advice. And again while giving it we say: This advice will be valueless if your own experience and observation do not lead you to recognise that it is worth following."—the further we move towards this attitude of finding practical solutions to par-

ticular problems, the more difficult become the daily questions of interpretation and compromise which have to be faced.

THERE are some questions so bound up with the system as it is, that there can be no anarchist solution to them, except to destroy the system itself. As anarchists we oppose conscription, but we can hardly, as anarchists, support proposals for army reform. We have joined in the agitation to end the death penalty for over half a century. What is our attitude to be to the penalological changes which will follow its ending? Do we advocate workers' control in the armaments industry?

On the other hand there are some aspects of our contemporary society where anarchist solutions fit perfectly, and can be seen to do so by people who would laugh at anarchism as a philosophy. An obvious case was that of the Gwan-cae-Gurwen miners. The NCB closed the pits because of continual disputes and low production, and later conditionally re-opened them. FREEDOM's suggestion was that the pits, instead of being closed down should be handed over by the Coal Board to the miners to run on their own. Both the NCB and the miners would have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Now if there had been enough people sufficiently concerned with syndicalist propaganda to make contact with the miners of Gwan-cae-Gurwen among whom, as among all mining communities, there are some memories left of *The Miners Next Step* and *The Mines to the Miners*, and if there had been enough outside publicity for the idea, it could have been made a live issue with enough popular support to make its adoption likely. (The NCB could easily have found ways if it wanted to, to get around certain statutory objections.) If it had been adopted and if it had then

succeeded, the result in British industry would have been much more revolutionary than automation and would have more effect than fifty years of syndicalist propaganda. As usual it's all a matter of *if only*. But these instances where the public advocacy of common-sense libertarian solutions could win widespread support which would not be gained by theoretical anarchist propaganda, point to the vital need for an anarchist newspaper with an active even if small readership.

WHAT is the yardstick for the day-to-day search for libertarian solutions which anarchists can strive for? It is in the distinction between the social principle (families, groups, voluntary associations of every conceivable sort) and the political principle (power, authority, dominion), and in the recognition of the inverse relationship between the two—that when one is strong the other is weak. When society is rich and varied, the state's omnipotence is to that extent reduced. Thus the adoption, in the continual opportunities for such a choice which face everyone, of the social principle increase what Martin Buber calls the community-content of a society. And the extent to which authoritarian solutions are chosen is the extent to which the state is strengthened to the detriment of society and of human freedom.

For us, this is the guiding principle of our social behaviour and activities. But most people have never thought of the existence of this vital distinction. Every time they thoughtlessly say "There ought to be a law about this, that and the other", they are confessing their ignorance about which social decisions make for freedom and which ones reinforce slavery. We have to make people aware of the difference between society and the state. That is another vital task for anarchists and the anarchist press.

It is not a matter of whittling down our anarchism to suit the gloomy outlook in our particular part of the world in 1956 (and if I have said nothing about

the anarchist tradition of individual resistance to authority, it is only to avoid hypocrisy), it is rather a question of creating a climate of opinion which will treat anarchism as something more than a joke or an "interesting" intellectual attitude.

FOR the most encouraging thing about anarchist ideas is that while they may never triumph, they never die out. In every society and at every period, they have appeared, even under the most ruthless and total dictatorships. The anarchists were among the first victims of the Bolshevik elimination of opposition after the Russian revolution. Yet, as we have already mentioned in FREEDOM, there are reports of the black flag of the Machnovists flying during the strikes in the Soviet labour camps, 35 years after the 'elimination' of the anarchists in the Ukraine. It was for years a grim truism that the only places in the Soviet Empire where free discussion persisted were the camps. Two returned prisoners from Vorkuta describing the currents of opinion in an article in the *Observer* (24/6/56) concluded:

"The more radical elements, like the students and younger party members as well as the survivors of old oppositions, approve the demands for economic decentralisation and rationalisation, but go beyond them in two vital respects. First, they believe that the kolkhoz in its present form cannot be saved, but should be replaced by voluntary co-operatives of individual peasants, with co-operative ownership of the machines which are now owned by the State. Second, they attack the principle of totalitarian party control by urging that democratic trade unions and peasant organisations, independent of the party, should play a major role in deciding economic policy and administering production."

It is the same demand that was made by Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin, the same assertion of the social as opposed to the political principle. Looking around the world of 1956 we conclude not that the classical anarchists were wrong but that they were right.

C.W.

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'Nurture the Positive Trends'

SEVENTY years ago a small group of British and European libertarians, headed by Peter Kropotkin and Charlotte Wilson, and befriended by William Morris and Annie Besant, published the first issue of FREEDOM. Perhaps this was not one of the major dates in the history of that struggle for liberty which, to our certain knowledge, has been going on since Classical Antiquity, but, like many other anniversaries, it goes a point from which we can look backward and, if we are bold enough, forward.

I was asked to write an article which would express the forward-looking viewpoint, an article on the next seventy years in the prospects of anarchism. I accepted, but since then I have been filled with the most acute doubts as to whether I am indeed the right person to deal with such a subject. Years ago, in the apocalyptic enthusiasm of my twenties, I was rash enough to assume the mantle of prophet and to talk of dire and radical events that would precipitate, perhaps in our time, a secular Kingdom of God on earth; as all prophets deserve, I was proved wrong in most of the things I said. The prophetic mantle, in its own way, became a kind of shirt of Nessus; now I look to the future with neither confidence nor the illusion of foreknowledge. The most I am prepared to say is that certain tendencies seem to exist in the modern world which may in the end militate towards the expansion of human freedom.

Another consideration that makes me feel dubious about my qualifications to write this article is that in recent years I have become something of a political agnostic, and my position is similar to that of the religious agnostic who accepts the Christian ethic but doubts whether it has much to do with the churches that call themselves Christian. If anarchism, according to its strict philological definition, means an enduring distrust of government and a corresponding desire to achieve the utmost possible freedom, then in that sense I remain an anarchist. But I am inclined more and more to believe that anarchist movements, and particularly those sects which in the past have sought to push forward various exclusive brands of anarchism (anarchist collectivism, anarchist individualism, anarcho-syndicalism, mutualism, etc., etc.) have often, by their mutual intolerances, their yearnings for mass followings, and their tendencies to harden the visionary future into Utopian forms, done more harm than good to the pursuit of freedom.

Here, at any rate, is a point on which it is perhaps possible to look backward and forward with some feeling of certainty. The basic ideas of anarchism, under one name or another, have persisted since the days of the Stoics; they may have existed even before that time. Century after century, men of many nations—groups like the Diggers and the Doukhobors, and individual thinkers like Lao Tze and Tolstoy and Thoreau—have denounced the notion that any man is fit to be another man's master. And even as a developed system of thought, libertarianism is at least as old as *Political Justice*, which was published 153 years ago.

But the attempt to link that idea with quasi-political mass movements dates from Bakunin's participation in the First International during the 1870's, and it can be said to have died during the 1930's in Spain—not from the bayonets of Franco, but from the manifest failure of the mass-based CNT to resist the temptation to have a hand in government, a failure which cannot be dissociated from the authoritarian tendencies that spring up in all large organisations. Whatever relics of those old anarchist organisations survive to-day are pathetic rumps, as cut off from the masses by their manifest ineffectuality as they are detached from the resolute pursuit of freedom by their sectarian immersion in the past. As a movement in the sense that Bakunin and Kropotkin envisaged, anarchism has been passed over by history; it belongs with the dinosaurs, and to try and reconstruct it would be as pointless and unrewarding as to try to recreate the empire of the Incas.

But as an idea, as a point of view from which to judge the world as it is and as an ideal destination, anarchism is not dead, and in this form it will never die as long as the idea of freedom flickers in the minds of men. There will always be new Godwins and Proudhons to chart its relationship to the world of their time, there will always be new Shelleys and Tolstoys to transform it into the dimensions of art, there will always be disinterested men and women (many of whom will not accept the anarchist or any other label) to apply it in the fields of social relationship. Indeed, it is perhaps because, for so much of its career, FREEDOM has refused to be the organ of any would-be mass movement, and has retained its willingness to explore the idea of liberty anew in all its forms and manifestations, that it has

lived to start on its eighth decade of publication!

Anarchism, I have suggested, will doubtless remain as an idea, a critical viewpoint and an ideal destination. But when I come to translate this statement into terms of the future, I find myself forced to speak, not in prophecy, but, at the risk of appearing smug and presumptuous, in tones that are very near to exhortation. First, I would suggest, let us abandon all ideas of perfectionism. The ideal society will never exist, except in our minds. There will always be unhappiness and struggle in the real world; there will always be urges towards power which, however they may be transmuted and sublimated, will never completely cease to exist. A perfect society is, in fact, impossible; nor, as Proudhon pointed out, is it desirable that it should come into being, for perfection would be the end of development, the running down of life in the stasis of Utopia. But the ideal of complete freedom, though it may never be realised, remains important, as a landmark that can lead each generation to struggle for the maximum liberty within its world and time.

Secondly, let us abandon all social, economic or organisational dogmatism. There was a time when certain sectarians, taking up Kropotkin's suggestions with a fanaticism he did not share, claimed that the society of the future must be organised in communal form. There were others, equally fanatical in their anarcho-syndicalism, who claimed that only through associations of workers could society be properly managed. Such attitudes as these, by their very exclusiveness, carried within them the seeds of authoritarianism, the suggestion of majority tyranny. In fact, unless we are to fall into the Utopian illusion, we must accept every suggestion of social organisation as tentative, to be modified or rejected according to its adaptability to circumstances. To imagine that any one social or economic pattern will exist at any future time is an act of millenarian self-deception. Even if the centralised state disappears, even if property as we know it becomes obsolete, there is little likelihood—and little desirability—of their being succeeded by some uniform system. A pluralist society is much more likely to emerge, where many kinds of institution would exist together—as, indeed, they do to-day.

Thirdly, let us re-examine, rigorously and incessantly, the ideas which have been associated with the libertarian tra-

dition. The thinkers who belong to it were men of their own times; their views were coloured by influences and circumstances which no longer exist in our modern world, and in the best of them, when we read their works to-day, we find much that is no longer relevant. This does not mean we should reject them outright; personally, I have found much that still seems to me valid in the ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin, and even more in the ideas of Godwin and Proudhon, of Tolstoy and Thoreau, perhaps because the last four were less involved in ephemeral mass movements. What still seems good in the works of these men we should use as mental tools in operating upon the world of our own time; what is obsolete we should leave to history. Above all we should be careful not to raise any of these men, or any other theoreticians, into heroes or prophets; if no man is fit to rule another man's body, then it seems to follow that no man is fit to exercise dominion over another man's mind. Nor, for that matter, is any body of theories or attitudes. The man who aspires to freedom owes to himself, as well as to others, a duty of perpetually examining the thoughts he has acquired from others as well as those he has created for himself.

Fourthly, let us beware of the revolutionary illusion. By this I do not mean that we should abandon the hope that society will undergo, by the processes of social evolution, radical changes in its nature which may bring it closer to the libertarian ideal. But I do suggest that we should abandon the apocalyptic view of the Revolution, the chiliastic dream that the struggle at the barricades—or the general strike for that matter—is likely to usher in a free society. No revolution in history has failed to produce its own authoritarian structure, and very often the result has been a worse tyranny than existed before. Any foreseeable revolution in the world to-day would result in the triumph of either Communism or rabid nationalism, except perhaps in Russia, and even there it seems likely that nationalist groups within the various parts of the present Communist empire would rapidly take the initiative out of the hands of such libertarian groups as might emerge.

As an alternative to pursuing the illusion of "revolution in our time", I would suggest that the libertarian of the next seventy years may be better employed searching out the various positive tendencies that emerge in society, almost spontaneously, and in trying to

Continued on p. 4

Looking Forward

THAT the FREEDOM PRESS has succeeded in publishing a journal more or less without interruption for the past 70 years; that the rhythm of publication has progressively increased from a monthly to a weekly whilst at the same time maintaining the voluntary principle of unpaid editors and contributors: these and many other "statistics" on this, FREEDOM PRESS'S 70th birthday are, we believe, achievements worth recording. They are a link with hundreds of anarchists of the past as well as of the present who have made possible the appearance of more than 1,000 issues of a minority journal as well as distributing it and many hundreds of thousands of pamphlets and books besides.

That FREEDOM PRESS has reached the respectable age of three score years and ten and is physically—as well as spiritually—"still going strong" is only relatively important to us. For unlike commercial publishing ventures our reason for publishing is not economic success nor is it a job or an outlet for literary or journalistic ambitions. We publish because we believe that the written word is in the last resort the most powerful influence for effecting social change towards freedom. (And we say this in spite of the fact that it is clear the methods of mass-communication are to-day being used for very different ends; for controlling or even destroying independent thought against social change). We are less concerned with attempting to prove that anarchism has the answer to every problem of our time and for all time, than with discussing ideas and problems in a way that will incite our readers to think for themselves and to build up a philosophy of life which satisfies their needs and aspirations without transgressing the equal rights of others to satisfy theirs.

THE question, therefore, which is uppermost in our minds when we are made aware of the fact that FREEDOM PRESS has been in the field for 70 years is: how far have we and our comrades and predecessors succeeded in our task as anarchist propagandists? It is a most difficult question to answer objectively or scientifically. On another page we publish two contributions to the discussion. It is perhaps not without significance that the gloomier, critical, and one might say, "agnostic" approach comes from a former editor of *Freedom*. Is he more objective because more detached than C.W.? Is the judgment of middle-age all that much more reliable and objective than the "apocalyptic enthusiasm" of one's youth? We commend to George Woodcock—and alas, many other socialist and anarchist agnostics—the confessions of Herbert Read contained in a short prefatory paragraph to his collected political essays, *Anarchy and Order**

The first essay is now published for the first time. The rest have been revised, sometimes drastically, but though I may here and there have removed a rash or ambiguous phrase, I have not attempted to give an air of caution to the impetuous voice of youth. Indeed, I now envy those generous occasions.

In these columns three weeks ago we published an article (*Notes on Reformism and the Youth of Today—Freedom*, Oct. 6) which we imagined would be provocative enough to produce some response both from our "philosophical" anarchists as well as from the young people among our readers. Curiously, or significantly, enough, not a single letter was received confirming or rebutting our thesis! We mention this detail because an explanation of it might reveal whether the cause for this silence was a mistake in approach on our side or in fact

a confirmation of our forebodings. For while we agree with George Woodcock that, at any rate some sections of the Anarchist movement, mainly in the latin countries, hold dogmatic views on anarchism we think that if "anarchism has been passed over by history" it is for reasons other than the ones he suggests.

The continued defeat of anarchism is inevitable so long as the short term view of the social problem is accepted by a majority of the people, or even by the politically conscious minority within society. To-day while anarchism (and revolutionary socialism) as an idea and an ideal is acceptable to many it is not acted upon because its realisation appears too long term, too costly in human effort, and with no guarantees of ultimate success.

Whereas in some fields of science we are at present working on ideas which may—or may not—be converted to practical everyday use in two or three decades; whereas in branches of human activity such as land reclamation—in Holland or parts of Africa for instance—and afforestation, man can plan and work on schemes the fruits of which will be enjoyed only by generations to come; yet in the field of ideas and social organisation we seem to lack the same imagination and spirit of adventure.

That the propagandists of anarchism have failed to convince even a small minority of people that to work for the achievement of the free society is in fact no more costly in human effort (and certainly more rewarding personally) than living as sheep in the authoritarian, regimented, society of to-day is the principal fact that emerges from a survey of these 70 years of anarchist propaganda.

IS this a fault of approach or is it that we are being overwhelmed by that disease of middle-age—reformism—spreading to the youth of to-day? Fifty years ago working hours were longer, work was more arduous and exhausting than it is to-day. Yet a large number of working men found the time and the energy to read serious political writings and to cultivate their minds. That young people to-day have "no time" for serious, sustained reading (many proudly declare that they don't even read the newspapers) explains in part the disappearance of intelligent discussion in the political press of our day and its almost complete absence in personal relationships. It explains too the ossification of the political parties and the Unions when the white-hopes of socialism are such ageing politicians as Aneurin Bevan and Frank Cousins!

In such an atmosphere of demoralisation and intellectual bankruptcy it is perhaps not surprising that the impact of anarchist propaganda should be so slight. We are sometimes told that the trouble is that *Freedom* is too "high-brow" for working men to understand. Again this is perhaps a sign of the times, for if one looks through the files of *Freedom* or socialist journals of fifty years ago which were largely read by workers, one finds that long and learned articles were regular features and the correspondence columns are a clear indication that these articles were read and discussed intelligently. *Freedom* to-day is, if anything, less "high brow" than its distinguished grandparent, yet is apparently less understood by those people to whom its appeal should be strongest.

We believe that before even considering making *Freedom* an anarchist *Tribune* or *Forward* we should all ask ourselves whether in fact the 'crisis' is not only in the world outside but in the anarchist movement (and we use the term broadly) itself. It is probably true to say that to-day there are more people in this country sympathetic to, or calling themselves, anarchists, than fifty years ago. Yet where are the propagandists? Have they withdrawn from the struggle, satisfied that the idea is good and that it is enough to share with George Woodcock the

Soviet Planning in Practice

IN a previous issue of this paper we gave the very briefest description of the Perm-II marshalling yards and wrote of their being the latest thing in this branch of railroad organization. It must not be thought, however, that it is the men on the job (the engineers, shunters, loco-men, and the others handling the traffic) that are allowed to use this valuable equipment in the way it should be used to obtain maximum efficiency in its exploitation for the commonweal.

Whilst it is the politicians who move armies about aimlessly and destructively, squandering men's lives as they do so, it is the bureaucrats and the planners who play with the railways, the mines, and all the machinery of production generally. Under State capitalism this is another factor hindering any movement towards a higher standard of living for the masses. No matter how hard the workers toil, sand is constantly being blown into the wheels of production by the planners. These are the people we hear so much about as being the architects of the Soviet industrial machine. These are the folk who dream of "Catching up with and out-stripping the West in all techniques". This has been their dream for the past thirty years, and they are no nearer their goal. They and their bosses of the Party look at the worker and see only the mote in his eye...

Mountains of Rubbish

At Ustyat on the Tomsk line in Siberia over a thousand cars are loaded with coal every day. But as the rolling stock comes in to carry away this coal it is found that the empty cars are not cleared of the remains of the previous load, not properly empty. The "customers" using the line's services don't bother to have the wagons brushed out as is correct practice. Instead, they find it cheaper to pay the Transport Ministry the nominal fine of ten roubles for the dirty wagons returned as empty. Ten roubles is a meaningless figure and easily paid.

The station, then, has to keep a gang of men—one hundred altogether at this station—merely to clean out the incoming wagons. Their job is to throw out with their shovels the stuff left over from previous loads of coal, cement, granite chips, and ore. As there are no rubbish tips handy, this is shovelled overboard wherever the wagons have been halted: no system! In the result, rubbish is scattered all over the place. It has got so bad that the wheel tappers and other

PROGRESS OF A DEFICIT! WEEK 41

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| Deficit on Freedom | £840 |
| Contributions received | £645 |
| DEFICIT | £195 |

October 12 to October 18

London: H.M.* 2/-; Los Angeles: "Man" Group £5/5/0; Glasgow: R.R.M. 1/6; London: A.W.U. £2.

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|-------------------------|---------|
| Total | 7 8 6 |
| Previously acknowledged | 638 1 9 |

1956 TOTAL TO DATE ... £645 10 3

GIFTS OF BOOKS: London: V.R.; Stroud: S.L.R.

*Indicates regular contributors.

consoling thought that "so long as the idea of freedom flickers in the minds of men" anarchism "as a point of view from which to judge the world as it is and as an ideal destination" is not dead and "in this form will never die"?

We cannot share such a view (which strikes us as being almost as unscientific as the scientific determinism of the 19th century anarchist and marxist thinkers!) and we refuse to accept Woodcock's logic that because hitherto organisation has led to authoritarian structures, and revolutions have very often produced "a worse tyranny than existed before", that therefore we must reject mass organisation and revolution as illusions and "chiliastic dreams". Only in the ivory tower can one dream of an unorganised world—assuming that one forgets the organisation that is required to produce and convey electric light and power, to print one's books and to grow and distribute the food one needs to sustain life! Organisation is in fact the basis of communal life and social revolution the weapon of radical change in society. That they have been used as means for coercion and the weapons for worse tyrannies, we are obviously agreed. But to argue that because they have

railmen detailed to inspect the trains before they start their long journeys are hampered in their work. They complain that they can't even see the sleepers on which the rails are bolted.

11,000 Tons of Coal Wasted

All this rubbish is shovelled aside so as to allow the trains to go through and when sufficient has accumulated it is re-loaded on to open trucks and driven away to open country and there tipped out. In 1955 alone from this one small station some eleven thousand tons of coal were taken away and then thrown away. Yet on the extraction and transportation of this coal hundreds of thousands of roubles had been spent. But what matter! It is only the workers who are robbed. They can stand it.

Figures worked out on the spot show that the total loss for one year to this railway station was close on two million roubles. This is for one station. But this is what is happening all over Soviet territory, on all Russian railroads.

If the railways were being run by the workers themselves through their syndicates this simply could not happen. Co-operating with their engineers, the men on all grades of railway work would prevent such technical crimes from taking place. Under the Soviet planners they can do nothing.

Tomsk, and now Omsk

Meat for the cities comes in great part from Siberia. The Ishimsk stockyards need eight refrigerator-cars daily for the despatch of chilled beef to Western Russia. But as from the beginning of this month so far as we know the management of the Omsk line has provided only one fridge-car! The chilling rooms are full to more than capacity. No more beef on the hoof is being accepted from the collective and State farms round about; beasts are not being driven to the yards. Non-acceptance of animals came a bit late and almost ten thousand head of cattle are standing in the yards awaiting grading and killing. Meanwhile they are getting thinner, since supplies of fodder are not held by the stockyards. (There is, of course, no society for the prevention of cruelty to animals in Russia).

Not Sabotage, just Bureaucracy

Repeated urgent telegrams to Comrade Beshchov, Minister of Transport, and to Comrade Golikov, chairman of the Omsk line, have remained unanswered. Enormous losses are being sustained by the State or the Government, the over-all boss. But for the workers it means loss of the chance of an extra bit of meat.

V. Kitayev, head of the Meat Trust in the nearby town of Tyumen reckons that at least ten fridge-cars will be the daily requirement from now on if the situation is to be brought under control and meat supplies set on a normal footing. (He was writing in *Pravda*, 285/13948). We dare to opine that more cars will be needed—just a simple sum in arithmetic, but perhaps too much for a bureaucrat.

Minsk to Bryansk via New Siberia

Planners love complications. Because of the chronic crisis in Soviet agriculture the motor-car industry has been made to participate in the building of sowing

machines and harvesters. Quite good as an idea. However, the planners have bungled everything as usual. And the greater the number of changes to various parts of the machines and the more numerous the re-repeat instructions with amendments the greater the confusion in the factories.

That different parts of a machine should be made in different plants is nothing new. Our German friends did this very successfully during the war. But this is how the Soviet planners work these things. Minsk is not so very far from the Baltic which laps the shores of Denmark (whence comes our bacon across the North Sea). The Far East Province of Siberia is on the Pacific, more than half way round the world. So much for the geography of this tale of incompetence.

Minsk Auto Works was instructed in the third quarter of this year to make certain parts for trailer machinery to be used on the land. These parts were then to be sent to the other end of Siberia, to the Far East Province, to a factory in Birobijan. There the said parts were to be given finishing touches and thereafter to be returned to Russia-in-Europe for final assembly. This last operation is performed in Bryansk.

The whole job could have been done inside one works; but, no, the planners must make it a complicated business. Result: these machine parts spend a longer time on the floors of railway wagons than they do on the production belt. Plainly, their transportation over many thousands of miles from one end of the Soviet Empire to the other and back costs just as many thousands of roubles in rail charges.

Honouring Contracts

State capitalism suffers from the same diseases as free or private capitalism. Once an order has been given for the production and supply of an article and the necessary contracts signed, production just must go on. There is no stopping it. A war may come to an end and mothers and wives rejoice that the butchery of their menfolk is finished, but the war profiteers go on turning out the tanks and all the other weapons and will religiously incorporate new modifications (which will be just as conscientiously forwarded by the Ministry of Supply) until the contracts are fulfilled.

A Whetstone Perhaps?

Under State capitalism this is happening all the time. Last year the Calibre Works of Moscow was ordered to produce a handy-sized whetstone with hook and handle and string. The planners itemized it as an article in wide demand—in their jargon *shirpotreb*. Well, they set to and up to date they have produced 90,000 of these articles of widespread consumption. Wherever you go in Moscow (and not so oddly if you know Soviet planning, in Stalingrad, as well), you will see these whetstones piled up in the shop windows. There doesn't seem really to be any great demand for them, though they are a good job of work as whetstones. Nonetheless, they are still being produced and the planners are asking for an output of 20,000 a month. Incredible but true.

The Calibre Works is not to blame. More than once they have appealed to the Ministry of the Machine and Instrument Building Industry of the U.S.S.R.: "Why produce something for which there is no demand? We have quite a number of machines turned over to this job. We think other uses could be found for our machines."

The Ministry, however, cannot make up its ministerial mind about the matter. It asserts that there is a contract with the trading organizations and that the planned production must be carried through. Did you ever hear such drivel? The contract, of course, was drawn up without the slightest attempt being made to find out what the real needs of the people were. Why, before the revolution a whetstone would pass up and down a whole village from one hut to the other just as it happened to be wanted for use. It was exactly as if it belonged to a pesky bunch of Anarchists. Only Dyadya Ivan Ivanych, Uncle John, would stick to one of his own and cantankerously declare against all science that his spit was the best and his scythe the sharpest.

The whim, then, of a single bureaucrat commands that whetstones be dumped on the market whether needed or not. Shop assistants helpfully suggest to customers: "A whetstone, perhaps?" before they move to the cash-desk. But still they pile up. People want bread and are offered a stone. In effect, as cannot be too often stressed, in Soviet Russia the workers count for naught and possess not one iota of control over the means of production. Herein lies the kern of the matter. I.P.

