

NOT TOO MUCH FALL-OUT—YET

ON a small Danish island this week, the water supply of the 100 islanders was declared unsafe for drinking owing to contamination by radio-activity. The water supply on this island came direct from rain-water.

This news item was given by the BBC, and by the third or fourth time it was broadcast, the news-reader was adding the re-assuring comment 'Not many people get their drinking water from rain water.'

But don't they? Is there any source of water for any purpose other than rain? The seas are fed by rivers, which are but drains for the water which has fallen as rain, condensed from clouds which were formed by evaporation from the seas, lakes and rivers themselves.

The water goes round and around, and it will circulate innocently enough as long as there are no malign materials for it to pick up on the way down. Evaporation is, as far as water is concerned, a cleansing process, but when water vapour condenses in the atmosphere and comes down as rain it brings down with it the junk which, thanks to our bomb-testers, is hanging about in the atmosphere.

This would appear to be the simple reason why radio-active fall-out is coming down to earth quicker than was expected. It is not merely a matter of gravity.

Reassurance—Plus Filters

As far as drinking water is concerned, of course, a great many processes of filtering—natural, through the earth, and contrived, through water-works' filtering plants—and of 'purification' and fluorination, take place before it comes sparkling and splashing through our chromium-plated taps.

As usual, the innocent—the humble dwellers on a small Danish island—are having to suffer for the misdeeds of the clever, the advanced, the guilty. Hence the BBC's humorous little reassurance to its British listeners. But the first filter through which rain-water passes is the soil. It is on to the soil also that gravity deposits radio-active material—which is indestructible and carries its deadly qualities for an unknown number of years.

The clever British, Americans and Russians may have their water supplies well protected—*may* have, for do we know?—but so far their twisted technological geniuses have not devised means of producing their food other than through the soil. Thus it is that worried men are constantly checking the level of radio-activity in our food.

Sanguine Supermac

Our Prime Minister, however, is, as we well know, unflappable. He never gets worried. He doesn't get his drinking water (does he drink

water?) direct from the rain-barrel, and his favourite stretches of the good earth are the grouse-moors of Scotland.

Indeed, there are those who are of the opinion that our Premier is really out of this world anyway and is able to soar, like Superman, above the radio-active rubbish clattering about the heads of us mere mortals into realms where his astral policies find the appreciation they deserve.

The situation with Supermac might in fact even be that in his

concern to ensure his place in posterity, he is neglecting to ensure that there will be a posterity to give him a place!

Certainly the statement on radio-activity which he circulated is characterised more by bland self-satisfaction than by concern for the results of his policies.

Supermac's statement maintains that the available evidence shows that:

'the concentration in human bone of strontium 90 attributable to what has

already been injected into the stratosphere is likely to remain below that at which immediate consideration would be necessary.'

And it concludes that the concentration of strontium 90 in bone is unlikely to approach the danger level, but the statement also draws attention to the fact that no precise indication of the future situation can be made 'because the contamination of food is dependent on the rate of deposition in the immediate past.' (Our italics.)

Russian & American Gifts

The heavy rainfall of last summer, it is thought, may have played some part in the greater fall-out rate which

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Suggestion for Candidates

WHILE following the pre-election antics of our leading politicians we have been speculating on the possible benefits of a new electoral system which would force each candidate, on penalty of being relieved of his office, his £1,000 a year and £750 tax-free expenses, to carry out or, at least, show promising signs of having started whichever projects or fulfilling any promises to which he committed himself before the election, in a given time. This could be set at a year for obvious constructive projects such as house building and less for policy changes leading to constructive plans. This is normal business practice, goods in exchange for the price! An order is placed with a firm, a price accepted and the promise of a delivery date made which, if unsatisfactory, means that the customer takes his order elsewhere; should the quoted date be satisfactory but not kept there is invariably a penalty clause expressed in cash terms. If you think of our politicians as dedicated servants of the community these suggestions will appear sacrilegious, but if you have seen through the political racket the analogy will not be entirely meaningless.

The electorate is the customer who has relegated his power in exchange for some pretty shoddy goods and being a naive character he has not taken the precaution of obtaining the usual business guarantees. As a confirmed voter and being slow to learn a lesson he has no choice but the one offered to him every five years, and that as some of us have realised, is no choice at all, therefore, he is stuck with useless goods and services, and no means by which he can return them except, of course, the one fashioned by anarchists

which our voter, being only partly awake, does not think is tenable.

We are aware that the time factor involved in our new electoral scheme has inherent dangers. It may lead to even more chaos than is created by the present system which, at least, gives the elected politicians five years between each election. During this time the voter has usually forgotten the pious promises elicited from him in return for his loyalties, or his mind is taken up with more pressing problems. If, however, only a year passed between one farce and another, instead of five, politicians would be continuously replaced for not fulfilling their promises and disorder on the national front would ensue, but it would be a more honest mode of conduct (measured by the standards of our society) comparable to business practice which states the case unequivocally—a job for a given price in a specified time.

We assure our readers that we are not considering putting up FREEDOM's editors for election, nor we hasten to say, are we defending business and the profit principle. Our fantasy is the result of the nauseating spectacle of men of reputed integrity who are theoretically our moral superiors exploiting the hopes and fears, the needs and greediness, the stupidity and sincerity of ordinary people.

The examples of vote-catching slogans and dishonest reasoning used by all parties are too numerous for hasty selection. The latest Tory 'winner' is over grants for Catholic Schools which we hope to deal with next week. The Labour Party has dropped its bomb which, whether it explodes or not, is going to cause them embarrassment if they get into office. R.



'YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT M'DEAR. THESE AMATEURS WILL KILL THE GAME!'

'Mutiny' at Shepton Mallet Military Prison

NINE of the 13 former soldiers charged with mutiny with violence in Shepton Mallet military prison, were found guilty by a military court-martial last week. Four of them were sentenced each to five years' imprisonment, and five to three years. A total of thirty-five years imprisonment were awarded to these unfortunate young men (whose ages, with the exception of one prisoner who was 26, range from 19 to 22) and for what? From the point of view of the Establishment, as a warning to others who might, even for only six and a half hours (the duration of this "mutiny") challenge the authority of their jailers. Certainly it would be difficult to justify the savage sentences by what actually happened. According to the prosecution they were said to have taken part in a riot in which dinner tables were overturned, diet tins thrown, a flight-sergeant butted and another N.C.O. attacked.

The trouble started when after dinner on March 10 a staff-sergeant gave an order concerning the return of books which prisoners had in their "rooms" over and above the two allowed under the rules. According to the prosecution "somebody" said: "We are not standing for that lads, are we?" Immediately all the tables were overturned, forms upturned and diet tins thrown. "This happened spontaneously and at once all over the dining room" admitted the prosecution. It sounds fairly obvious that the order over

books was just one provocation too many for young men already under enough strain by the very fact of suffering imprisonment, and they let fly. Once such troubles start those concerned realise the hopelessness of their protest, but awareness of the reprisals to which they will be subjected, and the disciplinary action that will be taken against them by the authorities spur them on to acts of violence, to the smashing up of the contents of their cells and sometimes, as happened recently in the United States, to loss of life.

Staff-Sergeant McAndrew — to whom one prisoner shouted "You, you bastard, you caused all this"—said in evidence that some of the soldiers under sentence were "running around wild". Soldiers' boxes and bedding were being thrown on to the protective netting between the ground floor and No. 2 landing. Later a number of the prisoners barricaded themselves in their rooms. Only in the evening when the commandant told the men to come out and gave them assurances "no one would be assaulted unless he started attacking or causing further trouble", did they emerge, "peacefully".

The complaints voiced by a number of the men were that they were not getting their share of television viewing time, nor sufficient indoor games. They complained of the spit and polish demanded of them which was not expected of prisoners in another part of the prison. One witness for the prosecution had

stated that the meat on the previous day was "bad" and that "we had an extra slice of bread at tea-time to replace it". As to the television viewing time, Capt. Hughes said that

The rules regarding watching television were that men of good behaviour were privileged to watch it once a week, although selected men might also watch televised sporting events on Saturday afternoons. At any one time about forty men in his company could watch television provided that their conduct had been good, but the number also depended on the availability of N.C.O.s for security and on the accommodation. The last time soldiers under sentence had seen television had been on February 17.

The date of the "mutiny" was March 10 so that there had been no television for these men for more than three weeks in spite of the rules. One of the men sentenced to five years is alleged to have shouted at the R.S.M. "We were told we had no T.V. because of shortage of staff. There is plenty of bloody staff here now". How right he was, and how pointed his comment. The authorities are allowed to ignore the rules blaming *force majeure*, such as shortage of staff. But the prisoner who breaks the rules is invariably punished; for him there is no *force majeure*, yet who but an unimaginative bureaucrat can deny that the prison system is the greatest of provocations to any normal human being, and a military prison run by active military men (civil prisons are run by ex-military men!) is that much worse?

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Freedom

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Can Human Rights be Legislated for?

AT the end of the last war there was a lot of talk about making the world a place fit for . . . human beings to live in and to develop as free men and women. True, no one apart from the anarchists, suggested that we should dispense with governments and national frontiers, but there was a feeling abroad which seemed to recognise that in a civilised world the individual had certain inalienable rights which no government should be allowed to violate, and that some supra-national body should be created to which any individual whose rights had been trampled on by those in authority could appeal for justice. There was also a feeling that we were our brothers' keepers, that those of us who enjoyed a high standard of living and of literacy had a duty to our less fortunate brothers and sisters in the other half of the world who neither had enough to eat to maintain bodily health nor could enjoy Man's spiritual heritage either because they lacked the most elementary education or because they were starved of the printed word and the means to express themselves.

Those of our readers who were too young to remember that very short period in our affairs and whose yardstick is the politically hide-bound present may imagine that we are overstating the situation at the time. We are not saying that the end of the war was accompanied by a wave of idealism and that the world was at peace on the contrary it was a bitter world, full of unrest. While the big powers were sharing the spoils and carving up the map of the world, the colonial nations were engaged in their private wars against subject nations in revolt. Millions of people were homeless or "displaced". Millions of people were unable to obtain even the necessities of life because war—mere "conventional" war had destroyed the factories in which they worked for a living. Yet perhaps because of what the world had gone through during those war years coupled with the extravagant promises made by the Allied politicians to work up enthusiasm in the ideological nature of the armed struggle against Germany, there was this feeling for and hope in a kind of intellectual and spiritual renaissance based on international co-operation; not at government level, but between the people, between workers and workers, between intellectuals and intellectuals.*

SUCH, for example were the hopes many had in Unesco, offspring of the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation. As Naomi Mitchison puts it, in the *New Statesman* (18/4/59) "it was alive and kicking in Julian Huxley's time and under his Mexican successor, Torres Bodet". Then, it was ill-housed. "Now it is magnificently housed but seems to be gradually running down.

*For evidence that we anarchists had no illusions we refer our readers to the files of FREEDOM. Fourteen years is a long time to rely simply on one's impressions. To relive the past as we have just done by flicking through the pages of FREEDOM for the period 1945-1947 makes us realise how important it is to refresh one's memory about even the recent political past. Not that by so doing one becomes more tolerant to what is happening in the present, but that one corrects a tendency to be too tolerant of the past. It makes one realise, in fact, that at a political level there is no change, at least towards enlightenment. The same mistakes, the same abuses of and contempt for human rights, the same apathy among the victims, the same illusions among the do-gooders.

What has happened?" asks Miss Mitchison.

"Two things, I think. In the old days a small body of top intellectuals, all genuinely enthusiastic for international co-operation, met rather informally and produced plans and ideas. Perhaps they even produced too many plans and ideas; some of them doubtless were unpractical. But now Unesco is organised on a national basis like the United Nations. Every country sends an intellectual; but some countries have not got so many to choose from and their delegates, who are not necessarily fluent in any of the four official languages, tend to do very little but vote.

"They do vote, of course, and they duly arrange themselves in blocs. That seems to be the idea."

To say that Unesco, (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) is "gradually running down" is polite understatement. Though it was sponsored by those governments not within the Russian orbit, the fact that it was sponsored, financed, by governments made it quite clear that any freedom of action it might enjoy was dependent on the magnanimity of its sponsors. After all it is not surprising that who pays the piper should also want to call the tune. And as far back as 1950 the United States, which contributed nearly half Unesco's annual budget, was insisting, to quote the *News Chronicle's* Paris correspondent (14/8/50), that

"UNESCO enter the cold war by spreading pro-Western, anti-Communist propaganda . . . This is not the first time that America made the demand."

In fact it was announced in August of that year—1950—the Executive Council had decided that Unesco would support the U.N. action in Korea—as urged by the United States Government.

A further crisis occurred in 1952 when at Britain's instigation, and with American approval, Unesco's budget was cut. And this virtual vote of censure was preceded by the election of Franco's Spain to membership of Unesco. Now, all that Unesco does, is to provide a niche for mediocre job-hunters in a very imposing building. The initials UNESCO are meaningless. But Miss Mitchison's concluding paragraph is particularly interesting and meaningful to anarchists when she writes

I wonder what would happen if an international organisation were to be established in a small inconvenient, perhaps ugly, building, not in Paris or New York or any desirable capital. Is it possible that in this way you would only

Our 'Wonderful' Police

I Twenty minutes before a case was due to open before the magistrates at Dewsbury, Yorks, the policeman concerned telephoned his inspector and said: "That coal case, sir, is all wrong.

"The statements are not true, I made them up. I never saw the defendant."

The policeman, Arnold Smalley, 26, of Moorlands Road, Birkenshaw, near Bradford, told Leeds Assizes yesterday that he did not carry out an investigation ordered by his superiors and finally "knocked a file together" on the case.

Smalley was found guilty of fabricating evidence with intent to mislead a judicial tribunal and with intent to prevent the course of justice. Sentence was postponed.

Mr. G. Baker, prosecuting, said Smalley was told in October to investigate a case of a bag of coal being delivered to the wrong house. His report contained five false statements.

Smalley said, in evidence: "I had delayed so long in doing nothing about it that I sat down and knocked a file together. My object was merely to stave off what would have happened when it became known I had done nothing."

(*News Chronicle*)

II Hampshire Education Committee decided that it regarded as "extremely undesirable" the action of the police in taking fingerprints of all children at a county secondary school without first obtaining the consent of parents. The school had been broken into, and two pairs of scissors stolen.

(*Manchester Guardian*)

get the really keen people, willing to make material sacrifices for the sake of an idea? Or is this a dreadfully reactionary notion?

LAST month, in Strasbourg the first international court for the protection of human rights was inaugurated. The European Court of Human Rights was set up following the signing of the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms by all the 15 Council of Europe members in Rome, in 1950. The convention has been ratified by all except France. But it has taken nine years for a court to come into being; that is it has taken nine years for the necessary eight acceptances to be received. They are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Western Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

Britain's refusal to sign was explained last November in the House by Mr. Ormsby Gore, junior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs on the grounds that

Britain did not recognise individuals (as opposed to States) as the subjects of in-

ternational law. Since the International Court of Justice at The Hague already exists to hear disputes between States, the European Court of Human Rights would be likely to be concerned chiefly with individual applications against their own as well as foreign Governments.

That is of course just what the Russians would maintain. But they are totalitarians and not democrats and so one is not surprised by such an attitude. But Britain, the cradle of democracy, which is to parliamentary democracy what Pitman is to shorthand, not recognising the sovereign rights of the individual . . . ! And France the cradle of European culture, and Italy cradle of European civilisation! What a bitter disappointment this must be for our parliamentary democrats.

Of course the trouble is that Article 3 of the Convention states that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". Can one imagine how many applications the Court would receive from the colonial subjects of Britain and France on one or all of these counts? And how many non-colonial citizens of these two countries and Italy could

not with justification appeal to the Court for redress against the excesses, the violence and the fabrications of evidence, of which they have been the victims at the hands of their national police?

And talking of "inhuman or degrading treatment", is not the lot of the working man, whose very existence depends on the willingness of another man or of an organisation to employ him, inhuman and degrading? Is it not degrading, an insult to the average intelligence, that Parliament should consider it necessary to enact legislation to "protect" us from so-called "obscene" literature? Indeed, is not government, for people of average intelligence, inhuman and degrading?

We doubt whether even an International Court of Human Rights would understand that. Torture is something tangible which they might well discern. But can one hope that legal minds should perceive or understand what somebody means when he talks of the inhumanity of being obliged to be a wage-slave or the degradation of being ordered to learn how to kill one's fellow-beings?

Land Notes

RECENTLY I visited a school in Southern Scotland where the Neill tradition of education is being developed. I say 'developed' because a positive attitude can never be crystallised into a rigid pattern.

The agricultural background seems to provide the right background for the school and to give the reality that is so lacking in orthodox education. Here is more than a school; it is a community, where social relationships and emotional development are regarded as the first in importance rather than the acquiring of knowledge, and without which knowledge, in that sense, is unimportant. In a rural background the child starts with a physical freedom that in the case of this school is part of an atmosphere that is also in the attitude of those who are carrying on this oasis in an educational desert.

How often we hear the cry of 'who will do the dirty work?' from those who see a white, sterile liquid at their breakfast table and never see the other substances that come from that end of a

cow. I am sure that these children who drink their milk and clean the shit out of the shippin sometimes will have a more wholesome sense of reality, than the educational authorities who are demanding that the boys and girls have separate lavatories. It will be a great loss if the Education Acts of the Labour Party results in the closing of these schools because lack of funds makes it impossible to carry out the alterations the bureaucrats require. What enlightenment there is in the orthodox educational establishments I think is due to these educational pioneers, and their essentially anarchistic attitude to people and children.

It may be said that much of this could be more appropriately described as Educational Notes but if I spread myself I must plead Anarchist's licence, and I have always believed that most subjects are essentially related. Agriculture requires a large variety of skills and most children find life on a farm exciting and naturally educational.

The play by Marghanita Laski on BBC

television on 14th April, called "The Offshore Island", can, I think, appropriately be mentioned in these notes. It is an occasionally play like this that makes one realise that the medium has some potential for good in it. For those who did not see the play, Rachel Verney is a widow with her two children, James and Mary, in an isolated valley that by some freak had escaped contamination in the nuclear war some eight years before, in a remote part of England. The artist is basically a realist and a society that rejects its artists also rejects the essence of life that is reality. There is a tragic fear of a real reevaluation of this society and fear of losing a sophistication that is for the most part a fragile crust that unless supported by some solidity, crumbles under the stresses of modern civilisation. Here in this play you had the mechanistic attitude to life exposed. Many critics afraid of the truth about the civilisation they support, which they think erroneously can be reformed without personal effort, have condemned this presentation of the Americo/Russo state of mind as being exaggerated, but the terrible thing is that these critics do not want to admit the naked truth about their civilisation.

While the widow recognised too late the nature of their rescuers, the fisherman with his insight recognised that their discovery by the unaltered civilisation would result in the destruction of the reality they had rediscovered. Many were depressed by this play but the positive recognition by most artists that the fundamentals of civilisation are not measured by motor cars and refrigerators, is reflected in much of the work now being produced. It was evident that the playwright understood that culture and the needs of life, love and sex are not dependent on an industrial civilisation which indeed by its very nature and its effect on human beings may well destroy the essence. The survivors were not considered by their 'rescuers' as people but as C.P.s or contaminated persons to be confined in camps and sterilised to avoid the genetic consequences of the radioactivity, and the land and the livestock that had been carefully nurtured had to be contaminated in the interests of the policies of those in power. People do not see that this concept is with us now and art, agriculture, sex and love regarded as a business, which is slowly but surely crushing the joy and satisfaction out of these activities.

It is significant that the countries that are most highly industrialised have the highest suicide rate in spite of their relative freedom from want and the puritan protestant group that were the emotional climate of the industrial revolution also have a high suicide rate.

All the underdeveloped countries want to import this industrial madness of sleeping pills and pneumatic drills, narcotics and neon lights, and lunatics and lunar rockets.

ALAN ALBON.

Communities of the Past-2

Continued from p. 2 world a slave to a trinity of the most monstrous evils that could be combined to inflict mental and physical evil upon the whole race. I refer to private or individual property, absurd and irrational systems of religion, and marriage founded upon individual property, combined with some of these irrational systems of religion."

To be free from this trinity takes something more than a declaration. The community collapsed and the rest of the world was not impressed.

Skanteles also had the distinction of being a non-religious community, and said so in its statement of principles. It was also opposed to all governments, disbelieving "in the rightful existence of all governments based upon physical force; that they are organised bands of banditti, whose authority is to be disregarded; therefore we will not vote under such governments, or petition to them, but demand them to disband; do no military duty; pay not personal or property taxes; sit upon no juries; refuse to testify in courts of so-called justice; and never appeal to the law for a redress of grievances, but use all peaceful and moral means to secure their complete destruction." Their epithet is the usual one. The community it was that disbanded. In commenting on Brook Farm, Mark Holloway, from whose book *Heavens on Earth* most of the factual material in this discussion is taken, remarks "Their success lay partly in the modesty of their aims, which never included the conversion of the world."

Needless to say, with its system of "Complex Marriage", Oneida attracted publicity without having to look for it. It survived many attacks, often with the goodwill of the immediate neighbours who benefitted from the presence of the community. Finally however, they were forced to give up their open sexual freedom. Noyes carried on continuous propaganda for the religious ideas behind

his community, which as mentioned before were rather unorthodox. The founders of Whiteway colony were all anarchists or libertarians who were interested in propagating their own views, but the rapid ending of the communist form of society prevented them from coupling the colony as such with organised propaganda.

There does not really seem to be any direct connexion between the success or failure of a community and its propaganda activities. It is rather that the types of people who go to make up a stable and sane community are not interested in converting the world on a short-term basis. Those whose desire is to convert the world usually lose their own soul in the process and are unable to benefit from the communism which they so freely advocate.

Our chief centre of interest must of course be the people who live in communities. Emerson described their eccentricities thus: "One man renounces the use of animal food; and another of coin; and another of domestic hired service; and another of the state . . ." Certainly communities have always been a haven for eccentrics, and have been despised at times by authoritarian social reformers and revolutionaries. However, these people are the salt of the earth at times; they and their communities have kept alive the idea that human endeavour can be put into effect here and now instead of only after a revolution; and that people with good and rational ideals can lift themselves above the dregs of modern society if only they try. Perhaps the trouble with the rest of us is that we do not try hard enough. An amusing but quite touching tribute to pioneers of anarchist communities is given by Nellie Shaw in her book *Whiteway. A Colony in the Cotswolds*. "The quality termed by the phrenologist (?) 'human nature' seems to abound here." P.H.

HELP us to FIND MORE NEW READERS

Constructive Achievements of the Spanish Revolution

"The anarchists were still in virtual control of Catalonia and the revolution was still in full swing. To anyone who had been there since the beginning it probably seemed even in December or January that the revolutionary period was ending; but when one came straight from England the aspect of Barcelona was something startling and overwhelming... Above all, there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom..."

—GEORGE ORWELL,
"Homage to Catalonia".

THE achievements of the Spanish social revolution showed by the advances that they made upon previous revolutionary attempts that the men and women of the working class can still show an extraordinary inventive capacity and power of social organisation even in the face of overwhelming difficulties. We should not forget the general atmosphere of defeat against which they made their revolutionary stand. Nor does the fact that their achievements on the material plane were first encroached upon by the Communist-Right Wing Socialist government of Negrin, and then swept away by Franco's final victory, destroy the moral effect of their achievement.

Never again can it be held that workers and peasants are unable to organise and control their society and their lives without direction from a government of 'leaders'. Virtually for the first time in history the Spanish people showed what workers' control of production can do; that production for need is entirely practicable and not at all the 'utopian dream' of the sneering or patronising sceptics.

The Historical Background

Historically, Spain resembles the Europe of the Middle Ages, when the communes had a great deal of autonomy and when each member played an active role in the running of the communities. Unlike the communes in Mediaeval Germany, France and Italy, which flourished mostly in the towns and were composed of artisans and merchants, the communes in Spain existed mostly in the countryside and were composed of peasants, herdsmen, shepherds. There were also communes of fishermen on the coast. Provincial and municipal feeling was therefore very strong and every town was the centre of an intense social life. This autonomy of the towns and villages allowed the full development of the people's initiative and rendered them far more individualistic than other nations, though at the same time developing the instinct of mutual aid which has elsewhere been atrophied by the growth of the state.

It is difficult to understand Spain if one has not read *Mutual Aid*, and, indeed, some of the pages of Gerald Brenan's *The Spanish Labyrinth* would form a valuable supplement to Kropotkin's work. Spanish communalist institutions would have offered Kropotkin a tremendous amount of material to illustrate his theory of mutual aid, but it

is probable that the material was not available to him at the time. Brenan's book has filled the gap to a great extent by giving examples of agricultural and fishermen's communities which have survived through centuries, independent of the central authority of the government. While communes in the rest of Europe were gradually absorbed by the state and had lost most of their liberties and privileges by the middle of the thirteenth century, they survived much longer in Spain.

"There is of course nothing very remarkable about this communal system of cultivating the land. It was once general—in Russia (the *mir*), in Germany (the *flurzwang*), in England (the open-field system). What is, however, remarkable is that in Spain the village communities spontaneously developed on this basis an extensive system of municipal services, to the point of their sometimes reaching an advanced stage of communism..."

"One may ask what there is in the Spanish character or in the economic circumstances of the country that has led to this surprising development. It is clear that the peculiar agrarian conditions of the Peninsula, the great isolation of the many villages and the delay in the growth of even an elementary capitalist system have all played their part. But they have not been the only factors at work. When one considers the number of guilds and confraternities that till recently owned land and worked it in common to provide old age and sickness insurance for their members; or such popular institutions as the *Cort de la Seo* at Valencia which regulated on a purely voluntary basis a complicated system of irrigation; or else the surprising development in recent years of productive co-operative societies in which peasants and fishermen acquired the instruments of their labour, the land they needed, the necessary installations and began to produce and sell in common: one has to recognise that the Spanish working-classes show a spontaneous talent for co-operation that exceeds anything that can be found today in other European countries."

When one takes into account the fertile growth of communistic institutions, the mutual aid displayed among peasants, fishermen and artisans, the spirit of independence in the towns and villages, it is not difficult to understand why anarchist ideas found such a propitious soil in Spain.

The theories of the anarchists, and of Bakunin and Kropotkin in particular, are based on the belief that men are bound together by the instinct of mutual aid, that they can live happily and peacefully in a free society. Bakunin through his natural sympathy for the peasants, Kropotkin through his study of the life of animals, of the primitive societies and the Middle Ages, had both reached the conclusion that men are able to live happily and show their social and creative abilities in a society free from any central and authoritarian government.

These anarchist theories correspond to the experiences of the Spanish people. Wherever they were free to organise themselves independently they had improved their lot, but when the central government of Madrid through the landlords, the petty bureaucrats, the police and the army, interfered with their lives, it always

brought them oppression and poverty. The Socialist party with its distrust of the social instincts of men, with its belief in a central, all-wise authority, went against the age-long experience of the Spanish workers and peasants. It demanded from them the surrender of the liberties they had fought hard to preserve through centuries and for that reason never acquired the influence which the anarchist movement attained.

Spiritual Values

Another cause for the rapid and extensive growth of the anarchist movement in Spain was, according to Brenan, the intense religious feelings of the people, particularly the peasants. This may at first seem paradoxical. The anarchists in Spain, perhaps more than in any other country, bitterly attacked religion and the Church. They issued hundreds of books and pamphlets denouncing the fallacy of religion and the corruption of the Church; they even went as far as burning churches and killing priests. Brenan does not ignore this, but he distinguishes between the Christian beliefs of the Spanish masses and their intense dislike of the Church, and one must admit that his interpretation of the relation between religion and anarchism is very convincing. He describes the Spaniards, and in particular the peasants, as a very religious people. By religion he does not mean, of course, belief in and submission to the Church, but a faith in spiritual values, in the need for men to reform themselves, in the fraternity which should exist among men.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century a general decay of religious faith took place, but religion had meant so much to the poor that they were left with the hunger for something to replace it and this could only be one of the political doctrines, anarchism or socialism. Anarchism by its insistence on brotherhood between men, on the necessity for a moral regeneration of mankind, on the need for faith, came nearer to the Christian ideas of the Spanish peasant than the dry, soulless, materialistic theories of the Marxists. The Spanish peasants took literally the frequent allusions in the Scriptures to the wickedness of the rich; the Church of course could not admit this. The Spanish people in their turn could not forgive the Church for having abandoned the teachings of Christ, nor could the Church forgive them for inter-

preting to the letter the teachings of the gospels. Brenan suggests that the anger of the Spanish anarchists against the Church is the anger of an intensely religious people who feel that they have been deserted and deceived.

Brenan foresaw that his interpretation would give rise to many criticisms from the anarchists and even more from religious people, and he says:

"It may be thought that I have stressed too much the religious element because Spanish anarchism is after all a political doctrine. But the aims of the anarchists were always much wider and their teachings more personal than anything which can be included under the word politics. To individuals they offered a way of life: anarchism had to be lived as well as worked for."

This is a very important point. The anarchists do not aim only at changing the government or the system; they aim also at changing the people's mode of thinking and living, which has been warped by years of oppression. Whatever the cause of this attitude, whether religious or otherwise, it is important to stress it. Anarchists are always accused of having a negative creed, but critics overlook that anarchism through its attempts to render men better even under the present system is in fact doing some positive and very useful work. Brenan has seen this very clearly and he refuses to judge the anarchists through their material achievements alone. He does not consider merely the number of strikes they have carried out, the rises in wages they have obtained or the part they have played in the administration of the country. Their role, he says, should be judged not in political terms but in moral ones, a fact which is almost universally ignored.

For example, the role of anarchists in educating the Spanish masses is often overlooked. While the socialists thought that education was a matter for the state to deal with, the anarchists believed in starting work immediately. As early as the middle of the last century anarchists formed small circles in towns and villages which started night schools where many learned to read.

Growth of Anarchism

At the beginning of this century anarchist propaganda spread rapidly through the countryside and it was always accompanied with efforts to educate the masses.

Not Too Much Fall-Out Yet

Continued from p. 1

followed that 'summer', but, since that rate has continued, unflappable Mac is forced to the conclusion that the rubbish is coming down quicker anyway—but that is the Russians' fault:

"In subsequent months in which the rainfall in the United Kingdom was more nearly normal, the data so far available indicates that the rate continued high. There is evidence from the nature of the radioactive material deposited that this is likely to have been due to recent tests, presumably those conducted in the autumn by the U.S.S.R., the fall-out from which possibly occurred more rapidly because they took place in high latitudes. The so-called 'Argus' experiments conducted about the same time by the United States are understood to have been three low-yield nuclear explosions at great heights; they therefore resulted in only a very small addition to the radio-activity already in the stratosphere."

Between them, then the Russians and the Americans are ensuring a steady supply of radio-activity. The Russian poison comes down quickly and the American stuff comes along later, in a more leisurely, gum-chewing fashion.

As far as the effects of this deadly muck in our food are concerned, we must be patient until more facts are available. Mac tells us:

"The results of the food survey for 1958 are now being prepared for publication. They indicate that, although the extent of contamination varies between different parts of the country, the amounts of strontium 90 in food and drinking water are well below those which are likely to give rise to concentrations in human bone which, in the words of the Medical Research Council's report (of 1956) would require 'immediate consideration'..."

"The quantity of strontium 90 in human diet in the United Kingdom rose much less in 1958 than did the rate of

deposition, this may have been largely due to heavy rain washing strontium 90 from herbage into the soil. Once strontium 90 has entered the soil it may still be absorbed through the roots of grass and other crops, but the amount at present taken up in this way is relatively small."

No Immediate Hurry

In other words, we still await the results of last year's heavy fall-out, for it is this year's harvest that will be bearing the Strontium 90 washed into the soil during last year's disastrous harvest-time. From the sodden sheaves and flattened corn in last year's fields, the fall-out was washed into the good earth.

This year's hay crop—soon to be fit for mowing—will carry into our milk not human kindness but traces of strontium 90 which in its macabre turn will lodge cancer in our bones. Perhaps if the American gift parcel hustles down it will be in time to contaminate the corn harvest and present us with leukaemia along with the Christmas pud.

But as Mac says, the amount of contamination is still well below levels which require immediate consideration.

Although last week a Harvard professor speaking at the Royal Society of Health Congress at Harrogate blamed on nuclear tests the birth of between 2,500 and 13,000 deformed children, and between 25,000 and 100,000 cases of leukaemia, other scientists hastened to point out that these were small figures set against total world population.

Its' hard luck, of course, if you happen to be one of these few. Console yourself with the thought that many millions more people are not contaminated (as far as they know)—yet.

The anarchist press not only published books by Kropotkin, Bakunin and Spanish anarchist theoreticians but also books on science, geography and history. The anarchist newspapers were avidly read. The anarchist movement had several dailies, but more important perhaps was the great number of provincial papers. In a relatively small province like Andalusia by the end of 1918 more than 50 towns had libertarian newspapers of their own. The work of editing these newspapers must have provided the members of the movement with a good deal of education and experience. The work of Francisco Ferrer in setting up free schools, the first outside the control of the Church, is well known.

The anarchists tried to live up to their ideals within the movement itself. They had no paid bureaucracy as that of the parties. In a country like Spain, where there is the greatest distrust for money and those who seek it, the attitude of the anarchists brought them the sympathy of the masses.

H. E. Kaminski, in his *Ceux de Barcelone* has given much space to an analysis of the political parties in Spain, and in particular to an analysis of the anarchist movement. He searches for the reason why anarchist theories "have penetrated deeply in the non-organised masses and even into the ranks of other organisations". The answer, he writes, is to be found in the fact that "the ideas and, even more important, the tactics of anarchism are wonderfully adapted to the character and conditions of livelihood of the Spanish proletariat."

The powerful libertarian and federalist tradition in Spain was the chief factor in making the response of the Spanish workers to the threat of fascism take a different form from that of working class movements elsewhere which were heavily influenced by reformist socialism. But the revolution of the 19th July, 1936, was much more than an effective defence against Fascist threats. It showed that the creative abilities of the working class acting directly on its own behalf can reveal potentialities for society hitherto known only in the 'utopian dreams' of anarchists. In the short space of a few weeks and despite the necessity to fight a bloody struggle at the same time, it achieved more than all the gradualist reforms of political method in which workers handed over the direction of their lives to parliamentary 'representatives'.

(To be continued)

MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

LONDON ANARCHIST GROUP

Regular Sunday meetings now held at "Marquis of Granby" Public House, Rathbone Street (corner of Percy Street, Rathbone Place and Charlotte Street), 7.30 p.m.

MAY 10.—To be arranged

NEW YORK

MAY 15.—Vince Hickey on YOUTH AND SOCIAL CHANGE

MAY 22.—David Atkins of the "News and Letters" Group on ART AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

All Meetings will be held at THE LIBERTARIAN CENTER, 86 East 10th Street, New York City, U.S.A.

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Shepton Mallet 'Mutiny' Continued from p. 1

Only a week before the court-martial, the *Manchester Guardian* published a series of three articles on conditions in local prisons. In the second one, the author, Mr. Michael Frayn wrote:

The first thing that strikes the outsider who makes an official, guided tour of a prison is that the atmosphere is military. Anyone who has served as a private in the Army, one feels, would not be too hopelessly lost as a convict. The clattering of boots on hard floors, the timetable, the way of serving food, the food itself, the shabby uniforms, all combine to make a prison into a sort of barracks—a barracks without leave and with almost no activity to keep it going, a barracks with 'paranoically strict discipline and with an undercurrent of mutinous feeling. The impression is reinforced by the relations between governors, officers, and prisoners. The prison officers are the N.C.O.s; they all but salute the governors, and march prisoners into their presence shouting, "Full name and number to the governor!" The governors are distant and a little patronising, in just the way that C.O.s and company commanders are, and the prisoners, like demoralised privates in a bad unit, either obsequious or surly.

In the large, overcrowded prisons there is almost continual friction between the

prisoners and the "screws" or "twirls", as they call the officers. Some officers are certainly sympathetic and humane, and some prisoners are co-operative. But on the whole the officers despise the prisoners and believe that tough treatment is the only sort which will hold them down ("I have old-fashioned views about prisons myself," they say defensively if you ask them). In return, the prisoners have no respect for the "screws"; but a surprisingly fierce hatred. Mr. Frank Norman says in "Bang to Rights", which he wrote after two years' corrective training (considered to be a more elevated form of convict life than the local prisons can offer): "No man can correct another while there is this feeling of distrust between jailer and convict and until this barrier can be removed, there will remain this feeling of dispondancy on one side and hate and fear on the other."

All the findings and sentences in the Shepton Mallet court martial are subject to confirmation by a higher authority. One doubts however that much in the way of enlightenment will come from such a quarter. But is it too much to hope that one section of the British public will not watch nine young men lose between them 35 years of their youth without a word of protest?