

Freedom

THE ANARCHIST WEEKLY

"Official history has always been the story of great murderers. But it is only today that Cain is killing Abel in the name of logic and then claiming the ribbon of the Legion of Honour."
—ALBERT CAMUS

France mourns for Frejus and for Camus, but ignores the TORTURED MEN & STARVING CHILDREN OF ALGERIA

THE Paris newspaper *Le Monde* published in its Jan. 4th issue a summary of a confidential International Red Cross report on conditions in French detention camps in Algeria. That issue of the paper was confiscated in Algiers for its "grave indiscretion", and on the following day the Paris police seized the daily *Libération* and the Nice police seized a Communist paper, for their commentary on the text and on the statement by the French Prime Minister, M. Debré, in which he congratulated his government on having provided facilities for the Red Cross, and deplored the use of the text "for political ends", but stated that his government would "take full account" of it.

In that case, comments *Le Monde* unrepentantly, the "grave indiscretions" will have been worth while. Most of the Paris papers on the following day contented themselves with reproducing the Prime Minister's statement. Only those few papers which have consistently been vigilant and critical of the "irregularities" by the French police and military authorities in Algeria commented on the summary of the Red Cross report. *La Croix*, a Catholic paper spoke of the use of torture by "people who are pretending to defend Christian civilisation", and the *Paris-Presse* declared that "a single act of injustice condemns the system which claims to cover it legally".

The Central Committee of the League for the Rights of Man, examined both the analysis of the Red Cross report and the Prime Minister's statement, and, noting that the latter "could not contest either the contents or the value" of the former, continued:

"An examination of the two texts confirms the truth of the practice of torture and brutality which the League has unceasingly denounced since 1955, in spite of the denials, continually re-affirmed against all the evidence, by successive governments."

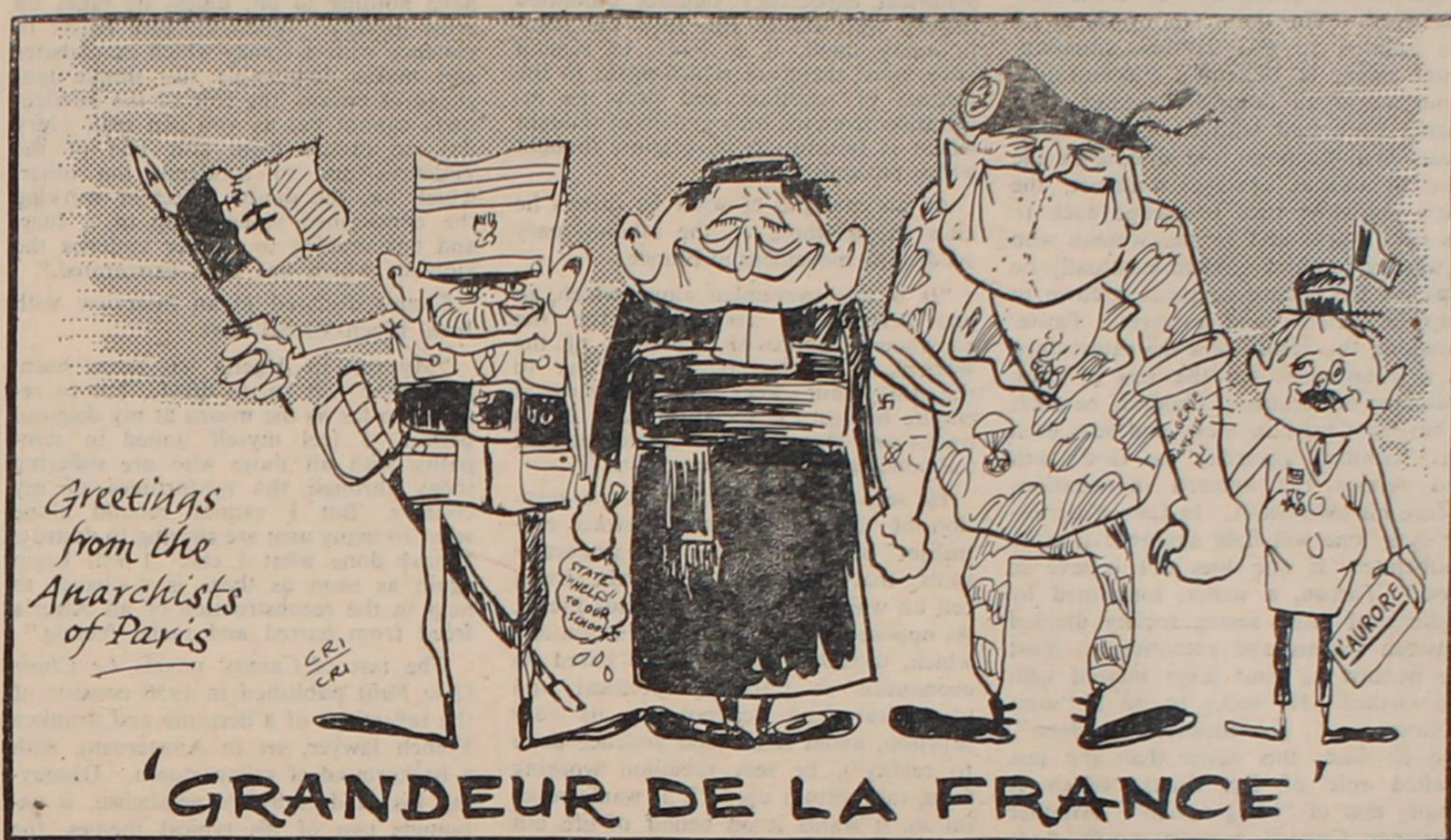
Only last month the weekly *Témoignage Chrétien* described the training of officers in "the conditions under which torture of prisoners can properly be practised" at the Joan of Arc camp at Philippeville in Algeria. The account was confirmed by *Le Monde* on December 20th. A reserve officer, a priest in civil life, said:

"Here are the notes I took during Capt. L.'s lectures in the second half of August 1958. Capt. L. laid down five conditions:

- (1) Torture must be clean. (2) it must not happen in the presence of young soldiers. (3) It must not happen in the presence of sadists. (4) It must be carried out in the presence of an officer or someone responsible. (5) it must be humane, that is to say, it must stop the moment the man has talked—and, above all, it must leave no trace.

"With these conditions satisfied you have a right to water and electricity. (These are the instruments of two well-known methods of torture which leave little trace). These are the notes I took while he was talking."

THE International Red Cross inspectors who toured 82 camps and prisons found conditions better than they were on the last visit in December 1958, but were told by prisoners that some improvement



were made only hours before the team arrived. One third of the camps were good, one third were average, and the rest "frankly bad". In the bad camps prisoners claimed of having been tortured by electricity or water when interrogated.

"Too often prisoners were reported killed while attempting to escape".

"In one cell in the Camp of the Five Palm Trees we found six prisoners of whom three bore recent bruises; in the midst of them was the corpse of a man who had died during the night, yet it was 11.30 a.m." In another camp prisoners "were chained throughout the night". In others living conditions are "disastrous". "Prisoners sleep on the ground, have no blankets or crockery and eat out of old jam tins, although the camps are three years old."

The Red Cross inspectors visited military internment camps, 'shelter' camps, which are internment camps under a theoretically civilian administration, but actually, like so much else in Algeria, under the control of

soldiers, 'sorting' and 'transit' camps. They discovered, by accident, the existence of other camps, which were not on the list provided them by the French authorities.

The International Red Cross in Geneva, in a statement, regretted the publication by *Le Monde*, of extracts from their confidential report, but confirmed their authenticity.

THE Red Cross report does not touch upon the "regroupment" camps, also under military control, where, according to *The Times* (28/12/59) children are "dying of hunger", children with malaria "for whom there was no quinine, were shivering with fever on the ground without blankets", while others "were only kept alive by lumps of sugar left over after coffee in military messes".

Funds have been opened in France by churches and a lay organisation, but they have been ignored by almost the whole French press and by the radio. The Ministry of the Interior reports that for the victims of the Frejus disaster more than

four-and-a-half million pounds has been subscribed from within France and abroad. But for the far more numerous victims of the war in Algeria the popular press in France (and in this country for that matter) has not a word.

The Italian anarchist monthly *Volontà* devoted its entire 56-page October issue to an account by our friend Virgilio Galassi of a month spent working in Algerian refugee camps in Morocco. The publishers of *Volontà* have started an Italian fund for the children's home at Souk el Djemaa in Morocco. The Dutch pacifist paper *Vredesactie* also devoted an issue to the plight of Algerian refugees in Morocco and Tunisia and are raising funds for money and clothes, and the Dutch Protestant radio started a campaign for "direct help to the 50,000 Algerian children dying along the Moroccan-Algerian border" and within a month sent £120,000 to the Moroccan Red Crescent. International Voluntary Service (72 Oakley Sq., N.W.1.) are raising funds for the home set up for orphans by their Swiss branch at La Marsa near

Tunis. IVS have joined with four other organisations (Friends Service Council, Christian Action, War on Want and the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief) to form the U.K. Committee for Algerian Refugees (49 Denison House, 296 Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W.1.) to collect money for immediate relief for these forgotten people, who will not even benefit from the British World Refugee Year.

IN France, with honourable exceptions, the organs of public opinion and publicity have ignored their existence. The war in Algeria, conducted with the utmost ruthlessness on both sides, shows not the slightest sign of ending. (Last week 60 French soldiers were killed and the French killed 344 Algerians and captured 150). The 1 million Europeans in Algeria are determined that no compromise solution shall be found with the 9 million Moslems, and the French, with the same pre-occupation with *la Glorie* which caused the disastrous war in Indo-China to drag on for so long are determined that Algeria shall remain part of the French Union.

The death of Albert Camus last week was treated in most of the French newspapers as yet another occasion for national self-congratulation. Camus' ideas can hardly have been in accord with those of the reactionary press, but two aspects of his career and character were grist to the patriotic mill. Firstly that he was a Nobel prizewinner, thus bringing the same mystical vicarious glory to France as the British were enjoined by the *Daily Express* to feel over the four-minute mile or the conquest of Everest. Secondly, the silence of Camus over the moral issues of the Algerian war (which is touched upon in the article in this issue of *FREEDOM*) was used as a means of suggesting that he was on the side of the French *colons* from whom he came. "Algeria weeps for the man who remained faithful to his native land" says the headline of one paper, while another, reminding its readers that Camus, when the Swedish Academy gave him the Nobel Prize, thanked them for the honour to a "French Algerian writer", interprets this as meaning that "he refused to betray the honour of French Algeria."

France has for several years been in the grip of that mood of resentment and intransigence which is characteristic of public opinion in declining imperial powers. In this country we have no reason for self-congratulation in this respect; Suez and the Hola Camp are aspects of the same thing.

"Official history, Camus once wrote, "has always been the story of great murderers. But it is only today that Cain is killing Abel in the name of logic and then claiming the ribbon of the Legion of Honour." France, where the cult of the paratrooper has not only mesmerised the public, but paid dividends to the politicians, needs today, more than ever, those who will rebel in the name of conscience and human dignity.

Rocket Base Protesters Released

THE 82 demonstrators arrested at the Harrington missile base appeared in Court on January 6th, and pleaded guilty to obstructing the police. The magistrates discharged them all conditionally, without even attempting to extract from them undertakings that the offences would not be repeated.

This nicely illustrates the dilemma which these acts of civil disobedience imposes upon the law. If they are imprisoned they become martyrs and a focus for agitation. If they are discharged the demonstration is regarded as a victory, and others are encouraged for the future.

It also underlines the curious situation of the original members of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War, organisers of the demonstration, who have been in

prison since the middle of December.

They had committed no offence whatever. They didn't go to Harrington. They didn't obstruct the police. They simply refused to give an undertaking not to do so. So we must draw the conclusion that to commit an offence can be far less serious than to refuse to promise not to commit one!

The law looks pretty foolish doesn't it?

And Strike Threat Worked

THE threat to strike over bad conditions in schools at Rochford, Essex, has been withdrawn by the teachers because the Essex educa-

tion authority has speedily erected four pre-fabricated class rooms on which work started just before the Christmas holiday.

The pre-fabricated class-rooms are for temporary use while a new school is being built, and have replaced the Congregational Church Hall and British Legion hut which were totally unfit for use and conditions of which started off the threat of strike action. Some parents co-operated with the teachers by keeping their children away from school.

The conditions which existed in these two buildings at Rochford are not uncommon, as many surveys show; teachers who have to cope with children working under the strain of inadequate space and equipment, sanitation and cold, should learn a lesson from their colleagues at Rochford.

