

London, January 21st, 1937.

Dear Comrades,

You probably know already that I am out of Spain. I can assure you it is much to my regret. I wanted so much to remain with our comrades; but they decided otherwise. In their eagerness to have their case put before the Anglo-Saxon workers in the right light they credited me with more than I deserve. They did not realise that my name in Spain having opened all doors continues to affect capitalist countries like a red cloth does a bull. They thought I could and would rouse the people in England to the understanding and appreciation of the marvellous struggle the C.N.T.-F.A.I. is making. And so I had to leave Spain. It was very painful indeed to leave our brave comrades in danger knowing that I would be in safety in "His Majesty's" country. But since I had put myself and whatever I can still give to the struggle in Spain at the disposal of our comrades, I could not very well refuse their request to go to England for an intensive publicity campaign.

Well, here I am in the country where I have always felt completely lost and where I have never succeeded in reaching people. This time it seems I may really have better luck. But then, the power of attraction is Spain. It is anarchism so maligned and misrepresented as criminal and impractical that has at last been proven a living force. With such a factor to attract English people it will not be so bitter hard as it had been in the past. I will now be able to bask in the glorious sun of the Spanish revolution - of the great courage and fortitude of our comrades of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. In point of fact my main quest here is to make the C.N.T.-F.A.I. known in England. So far its importance has been grasped only by the few. On my arrival I found that while much was being done in England for the Anti-Fascist struggle and the various parties allied with the C.N.T.-F.A.I. very little was done for the latter. This partly out of ignorance, and mainly out of deliberateness. This could not have happened had we an anarchist movement in England. Unfortunately we do not. There are a few comrades in London and a few provincial towns willing enough; but either too old to do much, willing as they are, or not able to make themselves heard. They have done what they could in making the work of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. known. Alas, it was but a drop in the sea. More reason for my being here and straining every nerve to put the C.N.T.-F.A.I. "on the British map" as we used to say in America.

I arrived the 23rd December, rather an unfortunate time to begin a publicity campaign. If anything the English

make more fuss about Christmas than people do in the States. It is a great holiday here, and this year it was more so, because it gave the Britishers an extra day. Many went away on a holiday. Anyway, I did not think I would succeed in getting even our comrades together; but I did, in fact more came than I had ever seen at a private gathering. I mean in England of course. And greatest of wonders they responded enthusiastically and practically. A mass meeting was agreed upon for which 16 pounds was contributed. It was most encouraging. Never before on my visits to this country have I succeeded in raising 16 pounds in five months.

However, the material response of our comrades and those who are interested in the Spanish struggle, while most necessary, is not so important as the new interest in our ideas in ranks that had always repudiated them in the past. Imagine, I actually found willingness on the part of members of the Independent Labour Party to co-operate with me on behalf of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. Thus Fenner Brockway, General Secretary of the I.L.P., has consented to speak at our mass meeting January 18th. And he and other members have shown eagerness for a joint Exhibition of the material I brought from Spain. This is indeed an event. Ten years ago when I tried desperately to make the plight of the political prisoners in Russia known here, not a single person in British Labour ranks would help. Not even Fenner Brockway who is among the most revolutionary in the I.L.P. This time he and others are willing to be of help. But then, the C.N.T.-F.A.I. are not to be sneezed at. They are a great force, in fact the most dominant force in Catalonia. One cannot afford to ignore them, especially one's comrades- who are the POUM in Catalonia- have had a change of heart towards the anarchists.

Next to our first mass meeting will come our Exhibition. I have brought handkerchiefs and other things. I had planned an independent Exhibition but I have since decided to throw my stuff in with that of the I.L.P. I have, however, made the condition that C.N.T.-F.A.I. material should have a prominent place and a share of the proceeds after expenses will be covered. I am certain the people I am working with on the Exhibition will keep the agreement.

I said before that the part of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. in the Spanish struggle is hardly understood by the outside world. I fear even some of our comrades are still sticking in understanding of the colossal share our Spanish comrades had and have in events there. I am led to this conclusion by the reports of the condemnation coming from our own ranks. In Holland for instance, some of the pacifist-anarchists are carry-

ing on a systematic attack on the C.N.T.-F.A.I., heaping the same insults and calumny on their heads as the fascists do. And from private correspondence I gather that our comrades in Spain have been charged with nothing short of treachery. That is very deplorable. To say the least it proves lack of understanding of the situation in Spain, and the conditions under which the C.N.T.-F.A.I. are labouring. Perhaps I can put them right even if all the actual facts of the inner work of the so called United Front cannot be given to the world. The truth has its own way of coming to the fore. Just at present we cannot oblige Franco and his backers. Once Fascism will be defeated, as it must be, if the revolution is to go on with its marvelous constructive work, all our comrades, as well as the rest of the world will learn the truth. The truth of the gigantic share the C.N.T.-F.A.I. have played from their inception until this day.

I hope I am still the old anarchist and that I still believe in the necessity of criticism of steps taken that apparently look inconsistent with our ideas. I have never justified the notion that wrong acts committed by one's own comrades should be ignored more than when committed by our opponents. And if I know anything of the comrades of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. I can say with certainty that they themselves would be the last to expect complete acceptance of anything they have done with which we cannot agree in full. They do, however, expect our comrades outside of Spain to acquaint themselves with the real situation and the steps imposed on them by the factors working in their own country. These factors left our comrades only one of two alternatives: either dictatorship or direct participation in the government. Never before was a revolution and its leading organisation so scandalously sabotaged as in Spain. In point of truth, the sabotage was systematic and flagrant enough to jeopardise the rescue of Madrid from the fascist hordes. It was only the decision of the C.N.T. to take a responsible share in the Madrid government that the City was made ready at the eleventh hour for the defence since known to the whole world as one of the most heroic battles in history. For it was only when the ~~Madrid~~ Caballero cabinet betook itself to Valencia that the real drive against the fascist gang, equipped with every sort of German and Italian arms, could be undertaken. As on the 19th July, so in Madrid, the people themselves, the dumb inarticulate masses undertook the defence of Madrid and with it the defeat of Franco and his hirelings.

Let it be understood by all comrades that the C.N.T. is not at all unaware that the anarchists in Ministries are an anomaly. In the first place, government and ministers do not mean the same thing to the Spanish anarchists as they do to

Europeans and Americans. They are mere makeshifts to them, to be dispensed with in due time. In the second place it meant the safety of Madrid, in fact the safety of Spain. Only the future will tell whether the C.N.T.-F.A.I. acted wisely or not. For the present it should suffice our comrades outside of Spain to know that the next step to entering the Ministry was armed revolt against the sabotage that had been going on for months on the part of some of the parties that had joined the united front.

I have already stated that our comrades had only one of two things to choose: dictatorship or the widest possible freedom for all their so called friends in the Anti-Fascist struggle. I am glad to say that the C.N.T.-F.A.I. chose the latter. It may seem an exaggeration when I say that Catalonia today is the freest place politically in the world - outside of the fascists every party enjoys unlimited freedom of speech, press and assembly. In fact some of them are interpreting liberty to mean license. They have requisitioned the most conspicuous buildings, they hold forth until all hours of the night in loud speakers and meetings. They have daily parades in military formation and music. They do pretty much as they damn please including intense preparation for the happy hour when they might be strong enough to put our comrades to the wall. True, they will have as much luck in that as Franco had so far. Our comrades are not blind to the danger, they are prepared for it. But so deep-rooted is their faith in freedom that they would rather endure the daily annoyances that would try the patience of saints than to forcibly prevent those who must rely on other methods to win adherents. Our people feel that anarchism and libertarian communism are so ingrained in the Catalonian workers and peasants they need no public shows to arouse their enthusiasm and devotion.

This will have to do for the present as proof that far from having betrayed our ideas, the C.N.T.-F.A.I. are today the only gallant fighters and defenders of them. Actually they are the only large group of people in the world who still love liberty enough to struggle and die for it. I feel therefore that whatever our regrets may be of our Spanish comrades having entered Ministries, or having made other mistakes, we have no right to ~~judge~~ judge them until fascism has been crushed. At present there is only one menace, that is fascism, by whatever name it goes. Everything else must wait. Our duty outside of Spain is to help our comrades, to help the anti-fascist battle with material and moral support. To help the women and children evacuated from the various fronts.

Dear comrades, bear in mind Catalonia is carrying the whole weight. Thousands of dollars and pounds have been raised for anti-fascist Spain. But not a cent went to Catalonia. Yet Catalonia is feeding Madrid, and it is feeding 30,000 women and children from other parts of Spain. Last but not

least, Catalonia is the banner bearer of the revolution, the one part of Spain that is doing constructive work amidst the horrors of war, cold and hunger. In all this the C.N.T.-F.A.I. is playing the leading and dominating part.

All strength to the C.N.T.-F.A.I.

Later I hope to send you something on the collectivised industries and farms. For today I have said enough. I am here for three or the most, four months. Then I will return to Spain. I want nothing grander for my last years than to be at the side of our comrades, to share with them in their struggle. To help them if only in a small measure to victory, or if needs be to lay down my life if this should be their lot. But it never can, will, or must be. And all our comrades in every country must see to it that the battle of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. should be victorious. You can, if you will, be less fault-finding and more active with your moral and financial support.

Salud, as we say in Spain.

18, Castleton Road,
London, W.14

P.S. The meeting on the 18th was a huge success. 55 pounds were collected for the evacuated women and children.