

To Our Comrades Everywhere

Alexander Berkman

November, 1928

The anarchist movement is now living through a very difficult time. Reaction is dominant, and as usual it is our comrades who suffer the worst persecution. Moreover, the Russian Revolution and post-war developments have created much confusion in our ranks: there are many vital problems which urgently press for solution. This situation calls for most earnest thought and the closest cooperation of our comrades everywhere in solving the important matters at issue and bringing greater clarity and activity into the movement.

But instead of the serious application demanded by our cause, particularly at this time, we see the very contrary tendencies manifest themselves. Our movement is torn by personal antagonisms, incriminations and recriminations—the poison of petty and despicable personalities is eating into the very heart of our movement and filling it with the filth of irresponsible accusations and denunciations. It is clear what effect such an atmosphere has upon our propaganda and how destructive it is to our work.

This is the situation which unfortunately obtains of late in various countries, as in Germany, Austria, and the United States. But particularly has this plague infested the circles of our Russian comrades in France, to such an extent indeed that we cannot keep silent any more. We must speak out in the best interests of our movement, and we hereby call upon our comrades to help put a stop to the spreading of this virulent pest.

We refer here particularly to the case of Comrade Volin. For several years now he has been made the subject of spiteful persecution by M. Makhno, the sole reason for it being personal differences and envy. The matter has been disgracing the Russian Anarchist refugee circles in Berlin and Paris for a number of years and has been extremely harmful to our propaganda. But now that persecution has culminated in a most outrageous defamation of Comrade Volin by Makhno. In a booklet recently published by the latter in reply to the Bolshevik Kubanin's charges against the Makhnovtsi, Makhno repeats Kubanin's denunciation of Volin as a renegade. Furthermore, Makhno's own insinuations in this connection virtually make Volin appear a spy.

We, the undersigned, unreservedly condemn these despicable tactics within our ranks as unprincipled, irresponsible and most injurious to the movement. Each of us knows Comrade Volin personally; we have worked together with him in the movement for many years. We esteem Volin as one of the most devoted and active comrades and as a man who has given the best of his abilities and energies to the cause of Anarchism. We are familiar with his year-long work in Russia, in America and in various European countries, and we call upon our comrades every-

where to give no credence whatever to the absolutely baseless accusations against him either by his Bolshevik or "Anarchist" enemies. More: we earnestly urge our comrades to help put an immediate stop to the vile and groundless denunciation of our best comrades by backbiting and irresponsible individuals. We must mercilessly hold up to execration such practices and free our movement from this malign pest.

Fraternally,

ALEXANDER BERKMAN

Paris

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