

Views & Comments Number 27

Libertarian League

1958

Contents

From the Editors	3
Theory and Tactics by Luigi Fabbri	3
Theory and Tactics by Luigi Fabbri	3
A Canadian News-Letter by JGR	5
Kronstadt	7
The Document	7
Extract from the concluding remarks by Alexander Berkman	8
The Libertarian Bookshelf	9
Resolution on Clericalism	10
Anarchism and Organization by Gaston Leval	12
Makhno and Lenin—a Conversation	13
Science and the State	15
State Unionism	17
”Freedom” In Argentina	19
What We Stand For	19
Libertarian Center	20

Views and Comments

A monthly publication of the Libertarian League

Address all correspondence to: Views and Comments, P.O. Box 261, New York 3, N.Y.

Subscriptions: 9 issues for \$1—single copies 10 cents. Views and Comments is published entirely by voluntary labor.

From the Editors

As you may have noted, we're experimenting again with a new layout which enables us to get more material in per issue and use less paper. It should also result in better readability and will enable us to use occasional illustrations and photographs.

That long promised union pamphlet is now in production and will be available within a month.

Next issue we will provide a 1957 Summary of Views and Comments finances. Thanks meanwhile to the comrades in San Francisco for the contribution from the proceeds of their Dec. 17th affair.

Theory and Tactics by Luigi Fabbri

Editorial note: This is a free translation of an article by Luigi Fabbri, internationally prominent Italian anarchist militant and writer. Although it was written years ago, its message is still timely. The validity of its ideas have been confirmed by events. It deals with one of the most crucial problems of our times and deserves the careful consideration of every thinking person. Does the end justify the means—can great aims be accomplished by ignoble and unethical methods? The article appeared in SOLIDARIDAD OBRERA (Paris, France, Jan. 2, 1958), organ of the exiled CNT of Spain (Anarcho-Syndicalist labor union).

* * *

Introduction by the editors of SOLIDARIDAD OBRERA:

The outstanding characteristic of Anarchism, without which the idea of Anarchism is inconceivable, is the re-conquest of real freedom for all. This presupposes the establishment of a social organization in which this liberty will become a fact and will be practiced. It follows from this that a free society is impossible when all the people are not free; when there are exploiters and exploited, rulers and ruled. This principle must be practiced now, in the pre-revolutionary transition period, in the revolution and until the establishment of an anarchist society. There must be no contradiction between our words and our acts. Anarchism would betray itself if it abandons the tactics of liberty while struggling to attain it.

Theory and Tactics by Luigi Fabbri

In the methods of struggle before and during the revolution, the task of the Anarchists is to combat authority in all its forms. They must assert their own freedom to propagandize, associate and experiment, conceding the right of others to do likewise. The Anarchists will not impose by force their own ideas and tactics upon those who are unwilling to accept them. They will not, however, tolerate the imposition of others and they will defend and rebel against anyone who tries it. On these principles there should not and cannot be any compromise. Absolute and

undeviating firmness is indispensable. Lacking this, any movement calling itself "Anarchist" will degenerate into authoritarianism and will sooner or later be suffocated by its own system, killed by its own weapons.

Anarchism in the social, and not solely the individualistic sense of the word, is possible only to the extent that it harmonizes the rights and liberties of all, so that one does not violate the liberties of others and vice-versa. At this stage, the task of Anarchism becomes the organization of the freedom of all the people by the people.

Under Anarchism, social life and all human relations will be built on the principle of voluntary agreement. In past and present societies these relations were regimented, imposed by force. In all the existing human relations, State and authoritarian organization will be replaced by Anarchist or Libertarian organization.

Is this possible? Yes, if as Anarchists we believe that Anarchism can become a reality... On the other hand, if there should exist always the necessity "to impose the good by force," be it by a majority or a minority, then it would be useless to deceive ourselves and others. Anarchism would be impossible. At best it would be a reduced "liberty" unworthy of the name, restraining to some extent the privileges of the Elite, while the great masses of the people would remain slaves. If we were to champion this perversion of a 'liberty' which is based on force, we would be—call it by any name you wish, Social-democrats, Communists, Liberals, Republicans, Monarchists or Fascists—but certainly not Anarchists.

Many revolutionists, by that irresistible power of suggestion which 'success' has over those whose Anarchism is skin deep, were enchanted by the 'victory' of the Bolsheviki over the Russian revolution. They forgot that the main task of every revolution is to give and assure those who had freed themselves from the old bondage, complete and lasting freedom. Instead, they became partisans of the centralized and dictatorial State and separated themselves from the comrades who remained faithful to the idea of liberty.

But some of them recognized their mistake. We knew more than one who was with the dictatorial communists, stood with them for some time, then, disillusioned, they left the party. One of them, very well-known, wrote me from a European capitol about the imprisonment in Russia of the Italian Anarchist, Francisco Ghezzi, "All autocratic regimes are the same." The same thing occurred in respect to some Syndicalists and Anarcho-Syndicalists. One of the most important fractions of the communist opposition was formed in France by a group whose organ is LA REVOLUCION PROLETARIENNE, edited by Pierre Monatte, an old activist in the Anarchist Camp.

All this is understandable—the contact with facts and the experience of Bolshevism in the Russian Revolution confirmed again what the Proudhons, the Bakunins, the Recluses and others have observed in the European revolutions of the first half of the nineteenth century; that the lack of liberty seems to facilitate in the first moments of the revolution, the task of destroying the old order. But this is an illusion, the fact is that without liberty the revolution is soon choked to death. What is left usurps the name of revolution. It is, in reality, nothing more than reaction and counterrevolution. Nevertheless, not all revolutionists understand this because they lack the passion for liberty. Sincere and ardent, they stubbornly attach themselves to the cadaver and thus foment discord between the workers, thereby preparing for themselves and for the others, terrible disillusionments.

The Anarchists, with the exception of some poor dry leaves who fell from the tree of the libertarian movement and withered in other camps, did not follow the example of the authoritarian

revolutionists, nor did they forget the truths so many times affirmed and confirmed by historical experience. On this, irrespective of tendencies, we find ourselves in agreement with the thought expressed by Malatesta: "Anarchism is liberty, it cannot impose itself by force because it would destroy itself..."

[After giving examples of various Italian local, regional and national conferences, Fabbri continues.]

All these reunions agreed on the concept that not only the future organization of society, but also the orientation and action of the living Anarchist movement, like the conduct of the Anarchists in the revolution, must correspond to the fundamental ideal of Anarchism—freedom.

All this is true. In the field of propaganda, in the movement, in action, in experimentation, Libertarian and Revolutionary standards must be applied. There is much to be done by true idealists and thoughtful men. There is no other way. Action not illuminated by an ideal and guided by thought is insanity.

There is much to do; a lot can be accomplished toward the realization of our aspirations. But the best road to triumph—I do not say it is the easiest or the most pleasant—is ourselves never to lose sight of our final objective.

We scorn to barter and surrender our principles, but we will help, and cooperate with any force of rebellion and progress which will promote or is directed toward the Anarchist objective—liberty and justice. We will not go back on ourselves nor travel in paths and take shortcuts which will lead fatally in the opposite direction.

The straight road is in the end the practical road. That road has been traced by all libertarian conceptions of the revolutionary movement and by the tactical experience gained in the course of its struggles. Certainly our movement should not consist solely of moral and written propaganda. It must have its instruments of struggle and constructive ideas, its militant organizations, its living experiments, its activity in the world of labor, the field of culture, education and so forth. We must be practical, in short, remain within the reality of things and events, constitute a solid base, work efficiently—in other words—we must emerge from utopian dreams and go about the task of making the revolution; remaining faithful to the Anarchist program, without renouncing even a particle of the ideal of freedom.

I say more. Not to renounce any part of our program, especially the postulates of freedom, is to make possible the real and effective things which are anarchist and revolutionary and at the same time feasible. With surrenders and compromises we will deprive ourselves of our foundations, and become unable to perform constructive tasks now or in the future. Without a solid foundation, a harmony of theory and practice, that which we build will crumble at the first storm, the first gust of wind...

A Canadian News-Letter by JGR

VANCOUVER, B.C. A considerable furor was raised in Canada by a recent press conference of John Foster Dulles, in which he let loose another of his famous "brinkmanship" outbursts, Dulles stated that the "U.S. had nuclear warheads stored in Canada?"

The panic was on at once, and wheels began to turn. The U.S. State Department issued a statement, insisting that Dulles had been misquoted. The U.S. State Department, which obviously regards its chief as being totally irresponsible whenever he opens his mouth, re-writes his faux

paux for public consumption, and contribute their bit to the general confusion. The workings of this procedure have been apparent for some time—Dulles says one thing while his department editors, armed with the weight of Pentagon authority, declared that he said something else. In this case some quick work was needed to quiet the alarm felt in Canada over such "storage."

Tory Prime Minister Diefenbalcer rushed to the rescue to help the official version along, by stating in Ottawa that "Mr. Dulles must have been misinterpreted or misquoted... because to bring atomic weapons into Canada would require the permission of the Canadian government."

"Foot-in-mouth" allies of course, is indifferent to what the Canadian people or anyone else thinks, but the need for votes makes the Conservative administration in Ottawa slightly more responsive to public opinion. Which accounts for Diefenbaker's haste to assume the role of apologist.

Always vigilant in the defense of Russian imperialism's interests in the cold war, the Labor Progressive Party, the Canadian appendage of the Soviet Foreign Office, helped the hubbub along with a hypocritical campaign of protest meetings, petitions, etc., as part of what they call, with semantic curiosity, their "Peace Campaign." A great snot-choked scream arose from the local Stalinist paper, the "Pacific Tribune," that Canada was being turned into the "poor little Belgium" of the atomic war.

The latest incident in the government's policy of harassment against the Sons of Freedom, the radical Doukhobor religio-pacifist sect, is being aired in a case now being heard before the Supreme Court of British Columbia. A suit has been brought against seven Royal Canadian Mounted Police Officers, who are charged with damaging a Doukhobor home, in the course of tunneling underneath a house to effect the heroic capture of a ten-year old "Freedomite" child, in order to compel his attendance at the barracks-school the government maintains at New Denver, B.C., where the children of the Sons of Freedom are being forcibly indoctrinated with that complexity of dubious values and attitudes that is supposed to convert them into good Canadian citizens.

The Sons of Freedom, whose christian-pacifist beliefs forbid the attendance of their children at schools, on the quite reasonable grounds that the schools glorify war, are no strangers to governmental persecution. These latest incidents connected with the government's brainwashing operation at the New Denver school, (which a University of Chicago anthropologist has called the Buchenwald of Canada) are part of a long series of persecutions that date back to the time of the Doukhobors' arrival in Canada in Queen Victoria's day. The pressure has never abated to force the Doukhobors to conform with what cannot, without irony, be called the general pattern of Canadian culture.

Libertarians can find much to admire in the Doukhobors' ideas of peaceful, communal life, and their tenacious defense of their ideals.

Meanwhile, widespread unemployment in Canada is creating more hardship than at any time since the hungry thirties. The latest date for which government statistics on unemployment are available is November 14th, at which time 350,000 persons were registered for work at National Employment Service Offices, an increase of 75,000 from a month earlier; and of 150,000 from a year ago.

At this rate of increase, some half-million Canadians will be looking for jobs by January, and estimates as high as 800,000 unemployed before the end of winter have been made.

At a Vancouver Labor Council meeting on unemployment, attended by 1,000 trade unionists, Tory M.P. John Taylor was shouted off the platform when he told the meeting that "employment was at an all-time high" under the new Conservative regime.

Kronstadt

37 years ago, on March 17th, 1921, the Communist executioners drowned in blood the Kronstadt Sailors, workers and peasants, whose only "crime" was an attempt to carry out the true purposes of the Russian Revolution. The assassins were led by the man who once called the Kronstadt Sailors "The flower of the Russian Revolution," and who, ironically, was assassinated by the regime he had helped to establish. His name was Leon Trotsky.

"On March the 18th the Bolshevik government and the Communist Party of Russia publicly commemorated the Paris Commune of 1871, drowned in the blood of the French workers by Gallifet and Thiers. At the same time they celebrated the "victory over Kronstadt." In this grotesque perversion lies the tragedy of the Russian Revolution. The quotes are from a pamphlet by Alexander Berkman, "The Kronstadt Rebellion," printed in English by DER SYNDIKALIST In Berlin, Germany, 1922. Berkman was in Russia at that time (he was deported to Russia where he was born). He speaks from experience and backs up his charges with documentary evidence. This pamphlet is now out of print. Because of space limitations we reprint only one of the many documents and some concluding remarks by Berkman.

The Document

Resolution of the general meeting of the crews of the First and Second Squadrons of the Baltic Fleet. Held March 1, 1921.

Having heard the report of the representatives sent by the general meeting of the ships' crews to Petrograd to investigate the situation there, resolved:

- (1) In view of the fact that the present soviets do not express the will of the workers and peasants, immediately to hold new elections by secret ballot, the pre-election campaign to have full freedom of agitation among the workers and peasants;
- (2) To establish freedom of speech and press for workers and peasants, for Anarchists and Left Socialist parties;
- (3) To secure freedom of assembly for labor unions and peasant organizations;
- (4) To call a non-partisan conference of the workers, Red Army soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt and of Petrograd province no later than March 10th, 1931 [sic];
- (5) To liberate all political prisoners of socialist parties, as well as all workers, peasants, sailors, soldiers, imprisoned in connection with the labor and peasant movements;
- (6) To elect a commission to review the cases of those held in prison and concentration camps;
- (7) To abolish all political bureaus. No party should be given special privileges in the propagation of its ideas or receive financial support of the government for such purposes. Instead there should be established educational and cultural commissions, locally elected and financed by the government;
- (8) To abolish immediately all "zagryadi telniye otryadi" (armed units organized by the Bolsheviks for the purpose of suppressing traffic and confiscating foodstuffs and other products).

The irresponsibility and arbitrariness of their methods were proverbial throughout the country. The Government abolished them in the Petrograd province on the eve of the attack against Kronstadt—a bribe to the Petrograd proletariat—A.B.);

(9) To equalize the rations of all who work with the exception of those employed in trade detrimental to health;

(10) To abolish the Communist fighting detachments in all branches of the army, as well as the Communist guard kept on duty in mills and factories. Should such guards and military detachments be found necessary, they are to be appointed in the Army from the ranks and in the factories according to the judgment;

(11) To give the peasants full freedom of action in regard to their land, and also the right to keep cattle on condition that the peasants manage with their own means; that is, without employing hired labor;

(12) To request all branches of the army, as well as our comrades, the military Kirsanti, to concur in our resolution;

(13) To demand that the press give the fullest publicity to our resolutions;

(14) To appoint a traveling commission of control;

(15) To permit individual small scale production by one's own efforts.

Resolution passed unanimously by Brigade Meeting, two persons refraining.

Resolution passed by an overwhelming majority of the Kronstadt garrison.

Extract from the concluding remarks by Alexander Berkman

Kronstadt fell. The Kronstadt movement for free soviets was stifled in blood, while at the same time the Bolshevik government was making compromises with European capitalists, signing the Riga peace according to which a population of 12 millions was turned over to the mercies of Poland, and helping Turkish imperialism to suppress the republics of the Caucasus.

Kronstadt is of great historic significance... It exploded the Bolshevik myth of the Communist State being the Workers' and Peasants' Government. It proved that the Communist Party Dictatorship is opposite and mutually exclusive. It demonstrated that the Bolshevik regime is unmitigated tyranny, that the Communist State itself is the most potent and dangerous counter-revolution.

Kronstadt was the first popular and entirely independent attempt at liberation from the yoke of State Socialism- an attempt made directly by the people, by the workers, soldiers and sailors themselves. It was the first step toward the third revolution which is inevitable and which, let us hope, may bring to long suffering Russia lasting freedom and peace.

* * *

Those who will take the 'trouble' to ponder deeply the proclamation and the remarks of Berkman will detect the seeds of degeneration which flowered into the mighty Russian totalitarian Empire. The pattern of Kronstadt was repeated in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and in the revolts in Poland, East Germany and in Russia itself. They will also see in these and numberless other acts of defiance and rebellion that the indomitable spirit of the Commune of Paris and Kronstadt is alive and vital. There is evidence that the third revolution of which Berkman speaks, though long delayed, will yet bring to life the great ideals which the people fought to attain. The new and free world will be a fitting monument to their Memory!

The Libertarian Bookshelf

The following books and pamphlets are available through the Libertarian League. Prices are held as low as possible. We pay postage on all orders. Make checks or money orders payable to S: Weiner. Address all orders to: LIBERTARIAN LEAGUE, P.O. Box 261, New York 3, N.Y.

- WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE UNIONS" by Tom Brown \$.10
THE SOCIAL GENERAL STRIKE by Tom Brown .05
THE BRITISH GENERAL STRIKE by Tom Brown .05
NATIONALISATION & THE NEW BOSS CLASS by Tom Brown .05
REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN SPAIN by M. Dasher .10
ANARCHISM & AMERICAN TRADITIONS by Voltairine de Cleyre .10
WHO WILL DO THE DIRTY WORK? by Tony Gibson .05
FOOD PRODUCTION & POPULATION by Tony Gibson .10
YOUTH FOR FREEDOM by Tony Gibson .15
PLACE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN SOCIETY by Emma Goldman .05
FREEDOM IN EDUCATION (hard cover) by Elizabeth Byrne Ferm 1.50
BATTLE HYMNS OF TOIL by Covington Hall \$1.00
ILL-HEALTH, POVERTY & THE STATE by John Hewetson .20
WILHELMSHAVEN REVOLT by Icarus .10
MUTUAL AID by Peter Kropotkin (hard cover) 3.00 (paper cover) 2.00
ORGANIZED VENGEANCE CALLED JUSTICE by Peter Kropotkin .05
PLACE OF ANARCHISM IN SOCIALISTIC EVOLUTION by Peter Kropotkin .05
LAW AND AUTHORITY by Peter Kropotkin .05
COLLECTIVES IN SPAIN by Gaston Leval .05
VOTE—WHAT FOR? by Errico Malatesta .05
CONSTRUCTIVE ANARCHISM by P.G. Maximoff 1.50
THE GUILLOTINE AT WORK by P.G. Maximoff 2.00
FRENCH COOKS' SYNDICATE by J. McCartney .10
EVOLUTION AND REVOLUTION by Elisee Reclus .10
LESSONS OF THE SPANISH REVOLUTION (hard cover) by V. Richards .75
ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM by Rudolph Rocker 1.00
NATIONALISM & CULTURE by Rudolph Rocker 2.50
PIONEERS OF AMERICAN FREEDOM by Rudolph Rocker 2.00
THE SIX by Rudolph Rocker (leatherette cover) 1.50 (paper cover) .75
THE TRUTH ABOUT SPAIN by Rudolph Rocker .05
The TRAGEDY OF SPAIN by Rudolph Rocker .15
SPAIN by Augustine Souchy .05
THE TRAGIC WEEK IN MAY by Augustine Souchy .10
THE IWW—ITS FIRST FIFTY YEARS (paper cover) by Fred W. Thompson 2.00
NINETEEN-SEVENTEEN and THE UNKNOWN REVOLUTION by Voline (two volumes, hard cover) per volume 3.50
ANARCHY OR CHAOS by George Woodcock .35
BASIS OF COMMUNAL LIVING by George Woodcock .20
HOMES OR HOVELS by George Woodcock .15
RAILWAYS AND SOCIETY by George Woodcock .10

WHAT IS ANARCHISM? by George Woodcock .05
 Miscellaneous:
 HUNGARIAN WORKERS' REVOLUTION .10
 BULGARIA, A NEW SPAIN .10
 IWW LITTLE RED SONGBOOK .25
 UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE MACHINE (IWW) .10
 THE GENERAL STRIKE (IWW) .20
 ONE BIG UNION (IWW) .35
 THE IWW IN THEORY & PRACTICE .15
 HANDBOOK FOR CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS (Third edition, revised July, 1957) .50

Resolution on Clericalism

From the Montevideo continental conference of Libertarian organizations.

It is absolutely necessary that the Anarchist movement carefully study and expose the objectives of the Roman Catholic Church, which has launched a massive offensive in all of the countries of the continent in an effort to rebuild its former spiritual influence, undermined by revolutionary propaganda and by the scientific and philosophic spirit which has reigned since the end of the last century.

But it is necessary that the study be carried to the core of the problem, avoiding the temptation of making the facile condemnations characteristic of a superficial atheism, now outdated. This study must be all the more profound since the Church has been obliged, due to the deep changes which our society is undergoing, to camouflage its true character of eternal ally of power and exploitation especially in those countries where a more or less liberal tradition has frustrated its final goal of absolute domination.

As early as 1891 the papal encyclical *De Rerum Novarum* indicated an effort on the part of the Church to shake off the dust of the Middle Ages and interpret social events with reactionary but realistic eyes. Forty years later Pius XI completed the circle with the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anna*. The Catholic Church then began an active campaign to reconquer the terrain it had lost, to bring up to date its political and economic concepts and to win over new militants, especially among the intellectuals.

For this task it mobilized all of its forces and attacked on all fronts: its ecclesiastical orders dedicated themselves to attracting the youth by means of sporting events, theatrical and movie productions, hikes, semi-militarized organizations like the Catholic Boy and Girl Scouts, etc. Without abandoning its pretensions to spiritual power, the Church invaded the sphere of temporal power by constituting political parties and, from the oppose don and in power, propagating Catholic social doctrine. It entered the labor movement, creating unions and the innovation of worker priests; it penetrated professional societies by forming nuclei of Catholic economists, lawyers, doctors, engineers, professors and historians; it achieved compulsory religious instruction in the educational institutions of various nations; and the activist groups of Catholic Action intervened forcibly in popular meetings and movements. The militant Church is successful in attracting to its ranks well-known thinkers, philosophers, technicians, artists, novelists and actors.

Does this overwhelming offensive by the Church indicate a significant change in its traditional policy of aiding power and exploitation? Has it become more tolerant? Has its rigid hierarchical

framework become more flexible? Has it at least comprehended and championed the peoples' desire for liberty and justice? No! The Church is merely applying to the utmost degree demagogic techniques of modern man to offer him in exchange for his freedom the promise of a refuge and the false security of its protection. In our opinion, this is not a matter of a resurgence of religious feeling, it is only another symptom of social disunity, of the fear and insecurity of the masses and of disdain for human dignity.

In reality the Church itself is an institution organized in a dictatorial fashion and its complicity with despotism and exploitation, far from being fortuitous, is implicit in and is advocated in its social doctrine. The Church has come out openly in favor of capitalism and the State, no matter what the form of government.

We proclaim that the Church, in spite of its liberal poses, is essentially capitalistic, authoritarian and warlike. To illustrate these statements we reproduce some extracts from the Malinas Code (an outline of Catholic social doctrine, revised in 1946):

"Authority, like society, has its origin in nature and, therefore, in God himself. One consequence can be deduced immediately from this principle; to resist authority is to resist the order established by God." (Article 55)

"Men have received from nature and consequently from their Creator the right of private property." (Article 102)

"The regimen of private capitalism, in which all men contribute to the economy, some with their capital and others with their labor, cannot be condemned in itself." (Article 178)

"War is only just when it is declared for the purpose of sustaining right by means of force... It should be conducted with moderation." (Article 192)

The final bit of advice would be comical if it were not so cynical. In the midst of the armament race, under the threat of total extermination through the horrible effects of atomic or hydrogen bombs, to talk of 'moderation' in war is to reveal either incurable blindness or unequalled hypocrisy.

All beliefs should be respected when they are sincere and when they do not try to impose themselves by force or authority, and they are socially useful when they propagate justice, liberty and fraternity among men. They become contemptible and harmful when they become dogma imposed by force, intolerance, hierarchical organization, the teaching of conformity, despotic authoritarianism, complicity with tyrants and exploiters, persecution of ideas, hypocrisy in social relations, the deformity of minds and all that which contributes to diminish the dignity of man. These vices are shared by the churches and even by various political, economical and philosophic movements which call themselves atheistic. We must intensify our propaganda against all of them, pointing out their anti-Libertarian tendencies.

Anarchist atheism can coexist, in an atmosphere of reciprocal tolerance, with all sincere beliefs which do not lower the dignity of man. But it cannot coexist with power, exploitation, hate or egotism.

We must unmask the Church before the true believers without trying to attack their convictions, except by the respectful comparison of ideas. If to love men they must believe in the promise of otherworldly paradise, then let them believe! The important thing is that they react against injustice and fight for freedom.

Anarchism and Organization by Gaston Leval

What is the objective of anarchism, considered as a living force in history? Is it that two or three dozen individuals 'should speak and write—publish articles and orate at meetings, carrying out a propaganda that does not coalesce in general, positive results? If this is so—and it has been too much so in many countries—then we are condemning ourselves to impotence and anarchism to everlasting failure.

And by so doing we also falsify it, twist it and adulterate it completely. From the very beginning with Proudhon, Bakunin, the men of the First International, with Anselmo Lorenzo, Rafael Fargo Pellicer, James Guillaume and others, anarchism has always been: first, a social doctrine working to create a new society, and secondly, as a logical corollary, a movement, the activities of which are directed towards the accomplishment of this great objective.

It has been in Spain that the anarchist movement has had the greatest strength and has penetrated most deeply. And it is precisely in Spain where, from the very beginning, it has had the greatest organizational orientation, so much so that the Congress of St. Imier in 1872 was able to cite the Spanish section of the First International as an example to all of the other sections. In three years our Spanish comrades had organized trade federations embracing all branches of production and had established with their syndical and communal local federations, the framework for a socialized society.

Simultaneous with this, the activity of the Spanish section of the International Alliance, founded by Bakunin, was developed. Thanks to these two organizations with which the Spanish anarchists coordinated their efforts intelligently and systematically, Spanish anarchism, in spite of the inevitable ups and downs of any social movement, has performed tasks that we should like to have seen accomplished in other countries as well.

This has been but natural. We need but a grain of common sense to know that if a thousand people coordinate their efforts, working together permanently in order to carry out the general tasks that they have set themselves, they will obtain more and better results than they would if they were divided into an infinity of small groups, each of which did whatever came to mind, or did nothing at all.

The proverb says that there is strength in union. Being anarchists does not make us different from others in this respect. Bakunin and Elisee Reclus wrote that in spite of their small numbers, the Jesuits had been able to carry out enormous activities, thanks to their organization and their collective discipline. It has been so throughout history. The fact that a certain procedure has been used by the enemy does not mean that it is entirely wrong. Because our enemies study, establish libraries, edit books and newspapers, is no reason for us to oppose education, books, newspapers, libraries and magazines. Techniques can be the same for all—even for plowing the earth and harvesting the wheat. The problem lies in the means of employment, in the objectives that are set, and in the spirit in which they are used.

Our Technical means must be in accord with the ends that we pursue. If anarchism is a simple protest of individuals who, in the last analysis, cannot be suffering too greatly in this society, since they are doing nothing effective to change it then organization is not called for. When I say organization I mean an effective union of anarchists for the purpose of coordinating their strength and their efforts in order to exert pressure on society, causing it to evolve in a libertarian direction.

When only five percent, as in Italy, or one percent, as in France, of those who call themselves anarchists are truly active, even though they do publish newspapers and magazines, to call this organization- is but a dodge to defend individualist or neo-individualist positions.

To transform society implies more than such pretense of activity. Society is composed of tens of millions of men, women and children in each country. These men work in all kinds of useful and productive activities; these men, women and children eat, clothe themselves, are housed. They use furniture, clothing, heat, means of transportation. These children go to school. The whole population needs a number of public services—water, gas, electricity, hospitals, clinics, etc., as well as recreational facilities and a thousand other things.

A revolutionary movement that ignores these realities and that does not prepare to organize them in a new form in accord with social needs, condemns itself to failure. In reality such a movement is revolutionary in name only. For such a preparation millions of people are needed to work diligently, specializing harmoniously, subdividing the tasks and working out plans that omit none of the problems and their solutions.

Such is our task if we are truly to be the successors of Bakunin, Mella and Kropotkin.

If there have been so many desertions in the French and Italian anarchist movements, these must be attributed primarily to the lack of concrete objectives and effective work for a real revolution. The same thing will happen to us in Spain if the anti-organization organizationalists, who agitate inside our movement with ideas, objectives and proposals that are contrary to the purposes of our movement—to all it has done and is doing, to all it was and is—continue to undermine its foundations. Everyone has the right to think as he pleases, but not to gnaw away what has cost such great struggle, pain and sacrifice.

* * *

”It is nobler for a nation as for a man to struggle towards excellence with its own natural force and vitality, however blindly and vainly, than to live in irreproachable decency under expert guidance from without.”

— N.W. Nevinson (The Growth Of Freedom)

Makhno and Lenin—a Conversation

This article, which appeared in VANGUARD, a libertarian communist magazine of December 1936, tells of an interview between Nestor Makhno, an anarchist revolutionary military leader chosen by the Ukrainian peasants and workers. Lenin, like all politicians, accuses the anarchists of being impractical, of having no understanding of immediate, everyday problems, of having their heads in the clouds. This article appeared in the VANGUARD at the time of the Spanish Revolution when the communists were forced to praise Buenaventura Durutti, another anarchist peoples’ military leader who, like Makhno, fought to defend and extend the revolution. When politicians talk about being ”practical” they mean the process by which the revolution is the pretext for the seizure of power by a party, which then proceeds to liquidate both the revolution and the revolutionists.

Sverdlov, the first secretary of the communist party, who took interest in the final preparations for the underground work in the Ukraine, undertaken by Nestor Makhno, arranged this interview between Lenin and Makhno in the summer of 1918. Lenin, who was not given to personal flattery, praised Makhno, who was at that time almost unknown, very highly. Seven or eight months later,

the party changed its line. Leon Trotsky heaped vilification and false accusations upon Makhno, because he would not accept the dictatorship of the communist party, the usurpers of the Russian Revolution.

The anarchists can point with pride to the achievements of the Makhno movement in social reconstruction during the Russian Revolution. In Germany and Hungary in 1919 and in the Spanish Revolution of 1936, the anarchists not only fought the fascists but they developed the libertarian tendencies in the organs of social reconstruction—communes, workers' councils, cooperatives and other peoples' organizations.

In the Hungarian and Polish revolts of 1956, the armies of the communist party suppressed the workers' councils just as they did the soviets in the Russian Revolution. In 1956 they called the Hungarian and Polish militants counter-revolutionists, as they slandered Makhno in 1918.

In the light of all these events, Makhno's conversation with Lenin shows that the reactionary nature of the communist party can be traced to its founder. This portion of the interview is taken from Makhno's book *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, (volume 1, published in Russian and several other languages, but not in English).

* * *

... Turning to Sverdlov, Lenin said, "Anarchists have something of the self-denying heroism about them. They are always ready for sacrifices; but withal they are myopic fanatics, they ignore the present for the faraway future."

But then, asking me not to take it as personal reflection upon myself, he added, "You, comrade, I hold to be a man belonging to real life, responding to the actualities of the day-to-day struggles. Were even one-third of the Russian Anarchist-Communists like you, we would be ready to go in for certain agreements with you and work together for the benefit of a free organization of producers."

... I shot back at him, "Anarchist-Communists hold the interests of revolution dear to their hearts, and that shows that in this respect they are all the same."

"Well," said Lenin, smiling thereby, "we know the Anarchists no less than you do. Most of them think very little about the present. But for a revolutionist not to think of it, not to define his attitude, is more than shameful. Most of the Anarchists think and write about the future without understanding the present. This is what separates us communists from them."

Having spoken this last phrase, Lenin rose from his chair, and pacing up and down the studio room, he added, "Yes, yes, the Anarchists are strong in their thoughts of the future, but in the present they are uprooted, pitiful, and that is so because their empty fanaticism prevents them from establishing any links with that future."

Sverdlov turned in my direction, saying, "You can hardly deny that the remarks of Vladimir Ilyitch are quite correct."

..."Did the Anarchists ever realize their lack of roots in the life of the present? They never even think of it," said Lenin, taking up the thread of the same conversation.

I answered them both, saying that I am only a semi-literate peasant, hardly capable of taking up Lenin on this involved idea about Anarchism which he just expressed to me. But I said, "Your statement, comrade Lenin, that Anarchists do not understand the 'present' and are not linked with it in a real sense is basically wrong. The Anarchist-Communists of Ukrainia gave too many proofs of their close ties with this 'present.' The struggle of the revolutionary peasantry against the Ukrainian Central Rada (the petty bourgeois, chauvinistic government of Ukrainia during

the first period of the German occupation) was taking place under the ideological leadership of the Anarchist-Communists and partly of the Russian Social-Revolutionists.

"You Bolsheviks were conspicuous by your absence as far as the villages were concerned.

"Almost all the agricultural communes and cooperatives were created by the initiative of the anarchist communists. The armed struggle of the working population of the Ukraine against the counter-revolution as a whole and the expeditionary armies of Germany and Austria-Hungary in particular—wasn't all that started by the Anarchist-Communists? True, party interests dictate to you the policy of ignoring all that, but these are facts which you yourself cannot refute.

"You, I suppose, know well the number and the fighting ability of the revolutionary columns of Ukraina. Well, a good half fought under Anarchist banners. All the commanders of these columns, the very naming of whom would take away so much of our time, all of them are Anarchists.

"All that tells convincingly, comrade Lenin, how much you erred in stating that we Anarchist-Communists are helpless, pitiful, 'in the present' and although we like to think about the 'future,' what I have told you points to the conclusion opposite to the one you have arrived at. It tells that we Anarchist-Communists are deeply immersed in the 'present,' that we work in it, and seek to find through it a road to the future of which we keep on thinking in a very serious manner."

Science and the State

It is significant that with the encroachment of the State in social and individual life, more and more people of integrity are speaking out and pointing out the disastrous results that must follow the increasing growth of this parasitic organism. This is refreshing, a welcome contrast to those elements who are clamoring for more and more government funds, subsidies and controls over more and more functions. In the race to "catch up" and "surpass" Russia in some fields of science, in fighting the "cold war" and preparing for the "hot" one, the western "democracies" are imitating the Russian totalitarian system. If this continues, we will lose whatever remnants of freedom initiative and spontaneity we still possess.

Henry Steele Commager, professor of American history at Amherst college, wrote an article which appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, Nov. 24, 1957. He is concerned about the growing control of ideas which "... threatens the most precious of all interests, our intellectual and spiritual integrity." He upholds the principle that no government has the right to exercise authority in "... the realm of ideas and communication—religion, speech, press, assembly, association and so forth':

Commager then gives examples where Government invades or nullifies these rights. The "security" program under Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, the Attorney General's list of "subversive" organizations, puts control over political and social ideas in the hands of the government" and the example of the federal government is followed by the states. Then there is the First and Fifth amendments to the constitution against self-incrimination. The control over foreign travel—who shall and shall not be issued a passport is another violation of basic rights.

"If the right to travel abroad is dependent on the subjective judgment of some subordinate in the State Department as to whose travel "is in the interests of the United States" there is an end in theory, at least, to freedom of travel."

Commager discusses government domination of education which is introduced in the form of federal aid, school building, lunch programs, scholarships and similar devices. This effects not only teachers, who must prove their "loyalty", but also students who "... must be careful what organizations they join, or even what books they read—if they expect to qualify for civil service positions."

In the field of religion and opinion he also gives examples of increasing State interference. "... the spectacle of the Velde committee attacking Bishop Oxnham because it disapproved a pamphlet sent out by the Methodist Church to its missionaries, or of the customs office holding up literature advocating pacifism, or the attempt of a congressional committee to dictate policy to The Society of Friends—the Quakers."

Professor Commager gives much space to government control over science and research. It is so cogent that it is worthwhile quoting him at length:

"A third area of Federal control is science. We know from our own experience, and from the experience of Germany and Italy, how important it is to national security and progress that science be free. But we know, too, that the pressures on science and scientists to be "instruments of national policy" is heavy, and growing. The concern of the Government with the whole area of nuclear physics, for example, is too obvious to elaborate, and it is too obvious, too, that the Government must maintain security regulations in such areas of scientific investigation. This in itself assures extensive Federal control over important realms of science.

"Another factor making for governmental control of science is, of course, the power of the purse. It is in the interest of the Government to subsidize research in-university—and-private laboratories; such subsidy almost inevitably carries with it some measure of direction and supervision.

"But what this means is that in large and important areas scientists are no longer free agents, but subject to governmental pressure. They are committed to projects not always of their own choosing, and sometimes to the neglect of pure research of the greatest value. Universities that accept Federal subsidies find themselves accepting, too, Federal supervision over their faculty members, their research assistants, even over the uses to which their findings may be put. This is not only the negation of the function of the university, it is an enormous accretion to Federal authority. Those who oppose Federal aid to school construction but accept Federal supervision of scientific research are indeed straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel."

Professor Commager's remarks are backed up by an important article which appeared in the February, 1951 issue of SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN: Academic Disorder:

"What U.S. universities need most is 'some peace and quiet and order': according to J.C. Warner, president of Carnegie Institute of Technology. In an article published last month he said that Government emphasis on applied research has so disorganized university work that many scientists are 'living a life of intellectual chaos.' Their energies have been channeled away from teaching and creative research and often are dissipated in administrative work.

"Writing in Chemical And Engineering News, Warner observed that Government money, which has multiplied research work in universities about 10-fold during the past 15 years, is seldom usable at the discretion of the university and its scholars. Most of it is given for contract research which must restrict itself to a fairly circumscribed area. 'I do not believe,' he said, 'that any board, committee, agency, administrator, or the scholar himself can predict ahead of time the most fruitful direction a scholarly study will take... I would rather have \$10,000 in unrestricted funds... than \$30,000 a year in Government contracts.'"

”Warner asserted that Government support of research has had undesirable effects on scientists. Some have ’yielded to the temptation of building research empires... They cease being scientists and become administrators and promoters of team research.’ Team research, he said, does not produce the new generalizations, ideas and comprehensive theories which ’constitute the essence of new science.’

”Many scientists, he added, have become restless, as shown by mounting requests for leaves of absence ’to spend a semester or a year abroad, or in another institution... or on a glamorous missile or satellite project.’ Some ’run from committee meeting and symposium to committee meeting and symposium.’ Warner concluded that with the complaint that fewer leading scientists and engineers than formerly ’have a real interest in good teaching, especially at the undergraduate level.”

It is regrettable that these fine educators and the sincere liberals in general, who see the dangers of the Leviathan State are unable to follow through to the logic of their analyses, which would lead them to the inescapable conclusion that the institution of the STATE ITSELF is the greatest evil—the main cause of all the injustices and abuses which they condemn. The title of Commager’s article, ”Where Government May Not Trespass,” illustrates this inconsistency. It implies that there are areas in social life where Government must and may trespass, and Commager throughout his article admits the necessity for Government intervention in some fields:

”...The danger is not—as the President and many state Governors argue—that the Federal Government has taken on new responsibilities in the realms of social security or hydroelectric power, public health or housing. These developments we can take in our stride. If they prove to be mistaken or misguided, they can be reversed.”

How State interference and regulation of economic functions can be ”reversed” is not stated. Commager concludes his article by saying: ”Once we get a government strong enough to control men’s minds, we will have a government strong enough to control everything.”

This is true enough but it is incontestable that State control of ”men’s minds” is the consequence of control over their bread and butter and vice-versa. The only way to stop Government interference in ONE sphere of life is to fight State control in ALL spheres. Patching up the old State society will not do. It is a malignant growth that must be COMPLETELY eradicated.

When people in all walks of life will realize this, they will work for a new society in which the freely federated economic and cultural activities of the people will replace the government over men by the administration of things in a stateless society.

State Unionism

Scandalous as the whole affair of the Teamsters’ Union was, its aftermath is even more so. The exposures of the Senate Investigating Committee concerning corruption and racketeering in labor unions, the expulsion of the Teamsters and other unions from the AFL-CIO, and the election of Hoffa as president of the Teamsters is no longer front page news. As far as the labor politicians of the AFL-CIO are concerned, the ”labor movement,” purged of its undesirable elements, is now free to go ahead with its work. For the one million four hundred thousand workers in the Teamsters’ Union in particular and the American working class in general, nothing has been settled. A union that is expelled for racketeering continues to function and to grow. Its leader, who is under indictment for wiretapping, is elected president of one of the most powerful unions in the

country at a salary of fifty thousand dollars a year. A three member rank-and-file group of teamsters goes to the federal court and charges that the delegates to the convention that elected Hoffa were fraudulently chosen in violation of the constitution of the Teamsters' union. The court is expected to restore democracy to the union and correct all the abuses of the corrupt leaders.

How was democracy safeguarded? Were Hoffa and his fellow conspirators kicked out of office? Was a new, truly democratic convention called for? No! Instead, Hoffa was reinstated and a three-man board of monitors continues to rule the union. The three-man board of monitors is composed of one representative chosen by the Hoffa machine, one by the rank and file group and the other by the federal judge, Letts. The powers of this board are even greater than that of the executive board of the union. This board in turn is responsible to one man—federal judge Letts, who, in effect, is the absolute ruler of the union! The monitors and Judge Letts rule the union without the consent of the members.

Murray Kempton, columnist for the New York Post, in the issue of Feb. 4, 1958, makes these cogent remarks:

"In reality, all three of these men are only agents for Federal Judge Dickinson Letts, whose order had previously held up Hoffa's accession to office. The monitors are to report back to the judge every six months; they are subject to removal at his whim; and Hoffa can be suspended from office any time the judge finds him engaged in conduct which indicates a breach of good faith on his part.

"We have heard a lot about company unions; under this agreement, Jimmy Hoffa is plainly nothing more than business manager of a court union.

"This represents a tendency as frightening as it is distressing. It is sad that organized labor as a group has so suspended the normal healthy fear which free citizens should have of all government that so far not one of its leaders has entered the slightest protest against this arrangement. It is a piece of outrageous government interference with a private institution.

"It is a universal and distressing tendency among labor leaders. Experience teaches too that it very seldom works. The other day, David Dubinsky, a labor leader of an entirely different sort [?], announced himself in favor of having some government supervision of unions to weed out the criminals among them. Unions don't have subpoena powers, Dubinsky argued. It was a sad confession of inadequacy.

"This tendency creeps on while everyone talks about the need to give unions back to their members. The only way anyone suggests to do this is to turn over the affairs of unions to outsiders, who, however earnest, are only strangers dealing with paper."

The tendency that Kempton speaks of is unfortunately not confined to the labor movement. Government regimentation applies to every aspect of social and individual life. If left unchecked it will paralyze every creative and constructive force in human life and freedom will become a thing of the past. Such is the nature of the State.

Once again it has been demonstrated that when the workers rely on the courts or other government agencies to correct abuses, the medicine is worse than the disease. We have pointed out in previous articles on the labor movement that only a new type of labor movement based on militant direct action tactics and animated by libertarian and revolutionary ethical and social principles can achieve the emancipation of the workers from all forms of oppression and build the new and free world of the future. To instill and cultivate these principles and to encourage all efforts and tendencies in this direction is the task of all of us.

"Freedom" In Argentina

From LA PROTESTA (Anarchist Organ of Argentina) and Das Frie Vort (Jewish Libertarian monthly of Buenos Aires) we gather the following information:

The government of "Revolutionary Emancipation," which supplanted Peron's tyranny, has repudiated its promises. The shaky "right to strike guarantees" are fast disappearing and have been nullified by legal limitations and decrees.

Law 16 defines the legal and illegal in strikes. Although this law dates from Peron's time, it is now used by the present government against the workers. Article 9 of the law demands that when a strike is declared illegal the workers must return to their jobs and accept whatever settlement the authorities decree. If the workers disobey all work contracts, gains and conditions previously won are canceled. Even compulsory arbitration does not apply to illegal strikes. Strikes affecting "public services, interfering with the security or health of the population, or tending to deprive the country of an essential article or service" is interpreted by the authorities to suit themselves. Any strike can be declared illegal, not in the "public interest." All strikes are bound to affect the public in some way, but the strike is the only real effective defense of the workers against the tyranny of the rulers and the only means for bettering conditions of employment. The existence of the labor movement depends upon the right to strike and the workers are defying the rulers and disobeying their unjust anti-labor laws.

The strike movement of 1957 swept the entire country. Telephone, shipyard, railroad and other workers struck against the low wages and high prices. The strikes were declared "illegal" and were dealt with accordingly. The port workers, affiliated to the F.O.R.A. (Anarcho-syndicalist labor federation of Argentina) have been pulling sporadic 24- and 48-hour strikes to get a minimum of 120 pesos take home pay per day.

The old Peron union labor bureaucrats of the C.G.T. agreed to the government starvation wage scale. However, the rank and file, forced by the rising costs of living, and in solidarity with the F.O.R.A., went on strike on Nov. 22, 1957. The national office of the G.G.T. punished the Buenos Aires local for their courageous act of solidarity. Workers in the G.G.T. are expected to pay dues and obey the orders of their leaders, who dictate policy and settle wage rates.

Even when the employers in some cases were willing to negotiate with the union directly, the government, through its minister of Labor, a leftover from Peron's days, refused to permit it. This illustrates the part played by Government in modern society. The ports were placed under martial law. A card was issued to the scabs who continued to work, which stipulated that they will abide by the conditions laid down by the authorities. Those who took part in the strikes of Nov. 22, 1957 were suspended for 60 days without pay. Thus the government of "Revolutionary Emancipation" is building its power on the sweat of the exploited workers.

What We Stand For

Two great power blocs struggle for world domination. Neither of these represents the true interests and welfare of Humanity. Their conflict threatens mankind with atomic destruction. Underlying both of these blocs are institutions that breed exploitation, inequality and oppression.

Without trying to legislate for the future we feel that we can indicate the general lines along which a solution to these problems can be found.

The exploitative societies of today must be replaced by a new libertarian world which will proclaim—Equal freedom for all in a free socialist society. "Freedom" without socialism leads to privilege and injustice; "Socialism" without freedom is totalitarian.

The monopoly of power which is the state must be replaced by a world-wide federation of free communities, labor councils and/or co-operatives operating according to the principles of free agreement. The government of men must be replaced by a functional society based on the administration of things.

Centralism, which means regimentation from the top down, must be replaced by federalism, which means co-operation from the bottom up.

THE LIBERTARIAN LEAGUE will not accept the old socio-political cliches, but will boldly explore new roads while examining anew the old movements, drawing from them all that which time and experience has proven to be valid.

Libertarian Center

813 Broadway (between 11th & 12th Sts.) NEW YORK CITY
ROUND TABLE YOUTH DISCUSSIONS EVERY FRIDAY AT 8
Dinner and social on the third Saturday of every month at 7:30 PM

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Libertarian League
Views & Comments Number 27
1958

Scanned from Views & Comments, Published by the Libertarian League, New York City, March
1958, Number 27
Libertarian League (publisher)

theanarchistlibrary.org