

Views & Comments Number 8, October, 1955

Libertarian League

1955, October

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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 exploitive 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 clichés, but will boldly explore new roads while examining anew the old movements, drawing from them all that which time and experience have proven to be valid.

Libertarian Forum

Round Table Youth Discussions Every Friday at 8
Libertarian Center
813 Broadway (between 11th & 12th Sts.)
New York City

"My Country 'Tis of Thee"

While the nation shuddered in horror and the State of Mississippi shrieked that outside agitators were invading its privacy, the all white jury in Sumner reached its expected verdict of "not guilty." The two white men, it decided, had not killed the 14 year old colored boy from Chicago. The trial for the "whistle" murder of Emmet Till was of course a joke. The two defendants were from the very beginning as safe as though they had been in their mammy's arms.

What made this trial different from others of its kind, was the courage of the negro witnesses who testified against the white men and who refused to address the white judge as "Sir."

We salute their heroism even while we tremble for their lives.

For the benefit of our foreign readers, a bit of background information might assist in understanding the atmosphere pervading the trial. The boy Emmet Till was said to have whistled at the wife of one of the defendants. His body, with a bullet hole in the head, was subsequently found in the Tallahatchee River. The defendants admitted dragging the boy from the home of the uncle he was visiting. They denied killing him. On the rare occasions when such cases are brought to trial, the accused white man is always acquitted.

In addition to the radiant whiteness of its culture, our American south has in common with South Africa, a strong faith in the protestant God. There are probably more preachers and Bible thumpers per square foot in the state of Mississippi than anywhere else in the World. However, the relationship between all this godliness and the social acceptance of murder, is material for an article in itself.

Whatever one may think of the kangaroo jury down south one must give it credit for having taken a full hour and seven minutes to deliberate the verdict. This compares favorably with a recent case here in New York. We refer to the killing of a 15-year-old boy by a policeman. It took the jury exactly ten minutes to acquit the cop.

Mississippi is generally recognized as the anus of North America. But New York—our own New York—one of the few cities on the continent with any claim to liberalism, has proven itself as fearful of condemning socially-sanctioned murder as any of the little dung-heaps in the Bible Belt.

And, of course, there were last winter's sedition proceedings in Louisville, Kentucky. Some of you may remember this trial, which the judge kept insisting was not a circus but which made even the editors of Louisville's white newspapers squirm in embarrassment. Here, the white men on trial were convicted—of sedition and conspiracy.

One of the defendants, Carl Braden, had purchased a house in a white neighborhood and transferred title of ownership to a negro friend. The other six were white men and women who had undertaken to guard the house against rock and bomb throwing white hooligans. One of the women, a member of the Church of the Brethren, had distributed an innocuous leaflet urging racial tolerance.

Carl Braden was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment and his bail pending appeal set at \$40,000.

The moral case for the prosecution was bolstered by such sterling characters as Benjamin Gitlow (who was unable, however, to be of any use in the prosecution's efforts to show that the defendants were "communistic") and another witness who, when asked by defense counsel whether he had once testified in a Washington hearing that he would lie a thousand times," answered by saying that the only time he had lied under oath was in San Francisco.

Historical Note

At the behest of the Kentucky Legislature, Thomas Jefferson drafted the "Kentucky Resolutions of 1798" condemning the Federal Sedition Act of 1798 as a measure "which does abridge the freedom of the press, is not a law, but is 'altogether, void and of no effect.'"

The State of Kentucky has, since then, come up with its own Sedition Act.

The New York Times Catches On

The following is an extract from an article appearing on page one of the financial section of the New York Times for Sunday, Sept. 18, where, presumably, it would not be noticed by poor slobes like us. The article was captioned "Brakes on Boom Eyed by Wall Street" and reads in part as follows:

"...But there are dangers in a tax cut if it should come when the economy is in a state of overemployment. In such a state, credit and manpower are fully employed, the job is seeking the

man, wages are rising more rapidly than productivity and prices are rising without economic benefit to anyone.

"If taxes were cut at such a time, money saved by the taxpayer would have a tendency to turn into additional spending—especially if the savings were in the lower tax brackets—and the effect would be violently inflationary.

"It would seem wise therefore to arrange for a dip in business and employment before trying to cut taxes. Then the 'managed' dip could be used as an excuse for the cut—to revive business'—as was done in passing the Revenue Act of 1954..."

Well, do tell! Is the Times trying to say that the capitalist economy cannot function properly unless it has a standing army of unemployed or heavily taxed poor?

We—unrealistic extremists that we are—could have told them that a long time ago.

help, HELP, H E L P

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Won't you Help?

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"Lack of money is the root of all evil."

—George Bernard Shaw (Maxims for Revolutionists)

The Russian Peasants Fight Back

An article appearing in the conservative Russian-language daily, *Russkaya Zhizn* (San Francisco, August 19, 1955) presents some interesting statistics on the Soviet agricultural situation as reported in the official press of that country.

The writer of the article, N. Zhigulev, considers that the Russian economy has been kept in a state of permanent crisis largely through the conscious withholding of labor by the producing masses.

While admitting the effectiveness of the more spectacular examples of resistance, such as the Vorkuta strike or the derailment of a munitions train near Shepetovka (this incident was also reported as far back as Feb. 1955 in the Munich paper "Nabat"—trans.), he feels that the basic attitude of the people has been one of passive resistance.

Because they underestimated the extent of this passive resistance, the Western experts have—through the years—built up a false picture of a resigned if not complacent Russian working class. He claims that the regime has shot or interned far more people for the crime of "economic counter-revolution" than for other political acts.

We are not sure if Zhigulev is or is not correct in his assertion that the Russian people have deliberately—with the awareness of sure famine to follow—resorted to such extensive slow-downs in production. But there are some figures from the Soviet paper *Radianska Ukraina*, which Mr. Zhigulev quotes. The reader should bear in mind that all grain crops in the Ukraine—the Soviet bread basket—should be sown before the end of April to insure them reaching maturity before the killing frost. The 1955 Khrushchev plan called for the sowing of 5.5 million hectares of Corn (maize) in the Ukraine.

"As of the 18th of May, the planting of corn in the Vislavovetz area has not been completed."

"In the Kharkov area, the districts of Petrovsk and Lozovenk have fulfilled, respectively, 19.5% and 14.8% of their corn planting program."

"On May 11th, planting had only just begun in the farmlands of Barvinkov, Lozov, Bogodukhov, Krasnokutsk and Dergatchev."

"In the Volodarsko-Volhynia region the corn planting program has been 14.8% completed. Twenty state collectives (kolgospis) of this region have not started planting." (May 15)

"The collectives serviced by the Ushomir machine tractor station had by May 10 planted only 85 hectares of a scheduled 835."

"The artels serviced by the Ushomir machine tractor station, have planted 145 out of a scheduled 1,216 hectares."

From "Sovetskaya Byelorussia" of December 10 and 15, 1954, he relays some interesting figures on the state of agriculture in White Russia at that time. In size this republic is a comparatively small part of the vast Soviet land mass. However it is of considerable importance as a producer of flax, hemp, meat and dairy products.

"Officials of the Krasny Pakhar collective farm near Mstislavl suggest that collective farmers bring the newborn calves into their homes so that they will not freeze in the ancient cow barns belonging to the collective."

"At the Progress collective farm near Zelvensk in the state of Grodno, there are ample reserves of grain and fodder. However the shortage of drinking troughs allows the livestock to be watered only once every 24 hours. This in turn necessitates a drastic reduction in their intake of food."

"At the Vlast Sovietov collective, eleven calves died of starvation in a single night."

"In the state of Moghilev, the average yield per cow for the first quarter of the preceding fiscal year was 124 kilograms of milk. The figure for the same period of the present year is 85 kilograms of milk. In the state of Gomel the milk yield per cow (for the same fiscal periods) dropped from 114 for last year to 90 kilograms for this year."

"At the Pobeda collective farm, for all of last year only 26 out of 300 pigs were fattened and raised."

"On Feb. 1, 1955 on all of the collective farms of the state of Vitebsk there was a grand total of 28 young pigs ready for fattening."

"The sowing of flax and hemp has fallen off catastrophically. In 1949, 800 hectares were sown to flax—in 1954, 299 hectares." A whole series of collective farms still have on hand a considerable amount of raw flax and unworked hemp harvested in 1953. The collective October has not turned over to the state a single kilogram of its 1954 flax and hemp harvest."

Well, there it is—straight from the horses mouth. Lack of space prevents our giving the rest of the statistics, which are very much in the same vein. The writer of the article may be correct in ascribing this situation to the conscious resistance of the peasants. Equally important as a contributory factor, may be the bungling of party hacks and NKVD agents who double as agricultural planners (and who tomorrow may be disguised as industrial or military planners).

There is also the artificial farm labor scarcity created by the government's frantic attempts to catch up with American industrial production. If the White Russian and Ukrainian reports are representative of conditions in the USSR as a whole, this promises to be the third consecutive year of extensive crop failures in the Soviet Union.

The Political Crisis in Argentina

A military clique supported by sections of the ruling classes boosted Peron to power in 1945. Because he could no longer reconcile the conflicting elements within the exploiting classes and between them and the forces of his own labor front, Juan Peron was deposed. From absolutist dictator of a great country he has become overnight, a homeless exile.

The situation in Argentina is still fluid. Who will get what, and how the whole situation will finally shape up remains to be seen. This much however, is clear: Many of the forces that were held in check by the repressions are now coming out into the open. Various sections of the armed forces, the Roman Catholic Church, the bankers, the foreign imperialist interests, the landholding aristocracy, and the political parties—right, left and center—are all jockeying for power. Some sort of *modus vivendi* will be worked out and a new set of rulers will take over. Meanwhile a military junta is in "temporary" control and has made vague, general promises to the old Peronist labor fakers of the General Confederation of Labor (C.G.T.).

The latter appear to be making the best of what is still a very doubtful situation.

We have had very scanty reports of late from the revolutionary labor movement of Argentina, whose militants it was that suffered the most under Juan Peron's regime. The latest such information available at this writing comes from "CNT," organ of the Spanish National Confederation in exile—issue of August 28, 1955. It consists of two manifestos issued by the Buenos Aires local of Truck Drivers and Helpers of the F.O.R.A. (Anarcho-Syndicalist Regional Confederation of Argentine Labor). They are dated July-August 1955.

Although outlawed and persecuted, the FORA has maintained its organizational identity. Its fighting spirit unimpaired, it carried on the struggle for freedom during the whole decade of Peronist tyranny. We give below the gist of these two manifestos:

"As a result of last June's uprising, the church and the political parties have to some extent recovered legal rights and to a limited degree are permitted to broadcast and to publish. The revolutionary unions have been DENIED these rights. When Comrade Suarez, representing the dockworkers syndicate of the FORA, demanded the re-opening of the union halls that had been closed by Peron when he seized power; he was arrested and has not been heard from since.

The totalitarian regime, hiding behind the mask of labor "welfareism," as represented by the state-controlled CGT, has generated rancor and violence which has not yet disappeared. The tragic era of arbitrary suppression of human rights which culminated in the bloody events of June 16, 1955 must make way for the restoration of these rights.

On the pretext of the "defense of social justice," the workers have been lured into the morass of class collaborationist "legality" and parliamentarism. The creative, revolutionary action of the workers has been sacrificed on the altar of a false economic security.

Under Peronism, the noblest ideals of the labor movement have been prostituted. The purest fountains of proletarian solidarity were dried up by the millionaire labor bureaucrats who acted as lackeys of the dictator. They betrayed their former fellow-workers. The right to strike was exercised by the CGT only when it suited the political plans of the Government, while all activities of the free labor organizations were ruthlessly suppressed.

The death of the militant worker of Tucuman, Aguirre; the torture of the telephone workers and the dockworkers of the FORA, are but a few of the thousands of crimes committed by the Government with the active assistance of the CGT bureaucrats. The "unionization" of unorga-

nized workers by decree of the state, benefited only the employers and gave cushy jobs to the bureaucrats of the Peron labor front.

The closing of the halls of syndicates belonging to the FORA and its autonomous local sections impeded the development of the authentic organizations of the working class. The labor movement must fulfill its mission to achieve freedom from wage slavery and political domination, under conditions of free development without interference by the Government or political parties of any sort. The absolute autonomy and independence of the labor movement is necessary to human progress. Labor must not be a pedestal for tyrants.

In its 54 years of honest struggle, the FORA has never compromised with any Government or political party. We urge the workers to fight for the following demands:

Free and-independent unions—the opening of all the union halls, student centers, and cultural centers—Freedom for all political prisoners—The repeal of all oppressive and anti-labor laws—Total freedom of speech, assembly and press.

Letter from a British Reader

The following letter was received too late for inclusion in our last issue.

Dear Sir:

It was with disappointment that I read the August number of Views and Comments.

Disappointment that a magazine of eight pages should waste most of them in what appears to me to be a puerile anti-communist (or anti-Russian, the distinction is becoming rather blurred) diatribe.

At a time when so many groups and individuals in America are functioning as professional anti-communists it would seem unnecessary for the political non-conformist to join in the hunt, yet such is the fascination of this sport that even the potential victims of the heresy hunters must take their place with the pack.

It is customary at this point to place one's hand on one's heart and assure one's audience that one is not a communist but is a pale pink socialist. I become a little confused at this point for I never know whether it means communism with a big or little C, so place me with William Morris.

That one should protest tyranny or any abrogation of freedom I would not for one moment deny, but at the same time, if we believe that we have a constructive policy whose application will increase the happiness and well being of our fellow men, then surely that should always take precedence in all propaganda.

If we wish to point out the faults in our society it should always be done with a concrete alternative to offer.

In your review of *The Long Loud Silence* you spend two and one half pages reviewing the book and then conclude with the following four lines:

"In every period of catastrophe—either natural or man-made—human beings through their cooperative efforts have repaired the damage and have re-woven the fabric of social living. There is no reason to believe that it would be otherwise in the future."

This surely should have been the theme throughout the review, not simply a concluding paragraph that reads like an afterthought.

If the front page of the August number of Views and Comments had been removed, the "Daughters of the American Revolution" could have hawked it quite happily on the street corners without

being ostracized by the bon ton, when surely what is needed is a magazine that when the doubter or the enquirer ask, "What do you believe in?" "What do you advocate?" can be handed to them with the simple answer, "Read."

Thank you

I am, yours sincerely,

Arthur Moyse

(London, England)

Reader Moyse's criticism of the book review is well taken. As for the DAR, they are welcome to hawk Views and Comments wherever they please.

What does disturb us is the inference that in condemning the Russian Dictatorship we also condemn the Russian people. Even the Jingos in America no longer make this mistake.

Our purpose in writing this series of articles is not to convince the witch hunters that we are not communists. We hope rather to expose the big lie assiduously fostered by both the Stalinists and the witch hunters, to wit, that the Communist Party and the Soviet Union are forces for social revolution.

This widely accepted lie has done more to prevent the emergence of a truly revolutionary movement in the United States than all the other activities of McCarthy, Palmer, the DAR and the American Legion combined. How can it be otherwise, when thousands of idealistic young rebels are led to believe that the opposite of McCarthyism is Communism a la Stalin? Or when the great mass of the people has been sold the idea that radicalism has to do with things like forced labor, censorship and military hierarchies?

We feel that by showing up the rightful location of the C.P. in the political spectrum (on the extreme right) we deprive the reactionary forces of their most potent weapon. We do not agree that it is useless to expose an evil without first devising some substitute.

We are neither presumptuous nor naive enough to belief that we can condense the future society into an eight page bulletin and win its acceptance by uttering the command "Read." Much of what we advocate is old (for the validity of an idea is not determined by its age), and can be found in the works of Kropotkin in Bakunin and Reclus, etc.

Like the rest of the Anarchist press, we make it our duty to point out those instances in which the people themselves have worked out partial solutions to the problems created by an oppressive social structure. Such for example were the voluntary peasants' collectives of Aragon, the early kibbutzim of Palestine, the spontaneous action of the Russian masses in the early days of the revolution and the strike in Vorkuta.

It is one of our functions (a necessary, if "negative" function) to expose the forces and the beliefs which hold back revolutionary progress. Positive programs of action must vary according to local conditions and to be of any real benefit they must emanate from the ranks of an enlightened working class.

Lessons of the Spanish Revolution

How the Agricultural Collectives were organized in Aragon

Wherever the Anarcho-Syndicalist movement was most influential in Spain, and especially in the region of Aragon, agriculture and industry were collectivized under the direct control of the working people themselves. This program, as applied to the countryside, is not to be confused

with the forcible state "collectivization" of the peasantry in Russia. In fact, in Spain it was the Stalinists who were most vigorously opposed to this collectivization. In 1938, under the Negrin Government which they dominated; Stalinist troops entered Aragon and forcibly broke up the collectives, imprisoning and murdering as they advanced.

The record of the Aragon collectives stands as an example of the manner in which Libertarians propose to reorganize society, as distinguished from the manner in which the totalitarians work to bring everything under the direct control of the state apparatus.

This is the second item of our series dealing with the Spanish experience. It is a translation of some extracts from "L'Indispensable Revolution" of Gaston Leval.

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During the war in Spain—1936 to 1939—a social revolution took place. Never before in the world's history had such a complete and rapid transformation been achieved. And never have the achievements of a revolution been surrounded by such a conspiracy of silence.

Agricultural collectives were created, many hundreds of villages were organized on the basis of collective work. In each of them, the united peasants held in common the lands which they had wrested from the big proprietors, the tools, the machines, and the livestock.

They set up Management Committees of each collective composed of delegates for agricultural production, child care, exchange, public works and transportation, education, health, etc. Where an entire village had adopted the new way of life, this committee functioned practically as a municipal council. When the collective was of a more limited character, the Management Committee was the executive council of the collective.

According to the special conditions existing locally, the delegates either worked in the fields like everyone else, or in some cases one or more might be required to work full time in their coordinating posts. They were coordinators rather than directors. They did not decide policies by themselves and they received no more recompense than the other members of the collective. Decisions of a general character were made at monthly or bimonthly meetings of all the members of the collective or by meetings of groups of the agricultural workers.

These working groups were organized according to the needs of production. The lands of the collective were divided by the workers themselves into parcels according to the condition and quality of the soil. One member was designated to take charge of the work, and he himself worked along with the others. Each night, or two or three times a week, the delegates of the work teams met with the general managers of agriculture and livestock to plan and organize the work to be done. The youngest and strongest were given the hardest work, while the older and less vigorous men were given lighter work.

Despite the fact that a great number of men had been mobilized for the front (In Aragon about 40% of the most robust), the collectives increased by 30% the area under cultivation. They increased the yield from the soil by more efficient use of the horses, mules, tractors and other equipment which under the old landlord system had been idle about half of the time. Better plows were procured, selected seeds in large quantities were bought, fertilizers were distributed to all.

After the social parasites fled in July, 1936 the apparatus of distribution was simplified and improved. Everyone participated in useful work, new roads were built and the old ones repaired. The irrigation canals were improved. Electricity and telephone service were extended to all of the collectivized villages and in many cases also to those that had not been collectivized.

The exchange of commodities was organized on a communal basis. All the villages of a district sent their surplus to a distribution center where it was exchanged for needed commodities—cloth,

machines, chemical fertilizers, shoes, etc. The aged, the sick, the children, the mothers of large families received full subsistence allowances according to their respective needs and without discrimination of any kind.

The villages less favored by nature received from these exchanges the tools and supplies that they needed, even though the goods that they themselves had contributed to the exchange were of lesser value. Wherever possible the special equipment needed to work the stubborn soil was supplied to villages with poorer land. Those who were better favored by geography corrected by human justice the injustices of nature.

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In Memory of our dear friend and comrade KATIE PICONI of the Free Society Group of Chicago, died of cancer following a long illness.

September 1955

\* Notice

The next monthly SOCIAL-SUPPER of the Spanish "CULTURA PROLETARIA" Group will be held on Saturday, October 22nd at 7:00 P.M. at the Libertarian Center, 813 Broadway, New York.

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