

Views & Comments Number 9, November-December 1955

Libertarian League

1955, November-December

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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 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 cooperatives 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 cooperation 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.

The Spanish Underground Unions Speak Out

A Plenum of Regional Committees of the National Confederation of Labor (C.N.T.) was held "somewhere in Spain" on Sept. 24-25 last. All regions, excepting one, were represented by delegations. The Plenum expressed satisfaction with the work and with the positions taken by the Spanish Libertarian Movement in exile. Plans were made for continuing and intensifying the activities of the underground movement along the sane general lines as in the recent period.

Two new underground regional newspapers are to be published.

A strong resolution was approved, in which the underground C.N.T. condemns the attitude of the democratic powers as well as that of all who temporize with Franco's regime. They declare that neither the Spanish working class, nor the Spanish people as a whole, will accept any whitewash of Franco's dictatorship which was established through the open support of Hitler and Mussolini. In conclusion, the resolution declares: "The C.N.T. maintains an independent attitude vis-a-vis any bloc of powers, allied for purposes of war or imperialism, and declares its complete support of peace among the peoples and of international solidarity of the workers over and beyond all differences of race, belief, or political or social systems."

Libertarian Forum

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

Conceptions of Social Revolution

The following extracts are from "1917--The Russian Revolution Betrayed." Copies of the book can be obtained by writing to Views and Comments. Price \$3.50.

"As a general rule, an erroneous interpretation--or, more often, one that was deliberately inaccurate--pretended that the libertarian conception implied the absence of all organization. Nothing is further from the truth. It is a question, not of 'organization or non-organization,' but of TWO DIFFERENT PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZATION.

"All revolutions necessarily begin in a more or less spontaneous manner, therefore in a confused, chaotic way. It goes without saying--and the libertarians understood this as well as the others that if a revolution remains in that primitive stage, it will fail. Immediately' after the spontaneous impetus, the principle of organization has to intervene in a revolution as in all other human activity. And it is then that the grave question arises: What should be the manner and basis of this organization?

"One school maintains that a central directing group--an 'elite' group--ought to be formed to take in hand the whole work, lead it according to its conception, impose the latter on the whole collectivity, establish a government and organize a state, dictate its will to the populace, impose its 'laws' by force and violence; combat, suppress and even eliminate, those who are not in agreement with it.

"Their opponents (the Anarchists) consider that such a conception is absurd, contrary to the fundamental principle's of human evolution and, in the last analysis, more than sterile--and harmful to the work undertaken. Naturally, the Anarchists say, it is necessary that society be organized. But this organization should be done freely, socially and, certainly, from the bottom. The principle of organization should arise, not from a center created in advance to monopolize the whole and impose itself upon it, but--what is exactly the opposite--from all quarters, to lead to points of coordination, natural centers designed to serve all these quarters.

"Of course it is necessary that the organizing spirit, that men capable of carrying on organization--the 'elite'--should intervene. But, in every place and under all circumstances, all those valuable humans should freely participate in the common work, AS TRUE COLLABORATORS AND NOT AS DICTATORS.

"It is necessary that they, especially, create an example and employ themselves in grouping, coordinating, organizing, using good will, initiative and knowledge, and all the capacities and aptitudes without dominating, subjugating or oppressing anyone. Such individuals would be TRUE ORGANIZERS and theirs would be A TRUE ORGANIZATION, fertile and solid because it would be natural, human and effectively progressive.

"Whereas the other 'organization,' IMITATING THAT OF THE OLD SOCIETY OF OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION AND, THEREFORE, ADAPTED TO THOSE TWO GOALS, would be sterile and unstable, because it would not conform to the new purposes and, therefore, would not be at all progressive."

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"According to the libertarian thesis, it is the labouring masses themselves who, by means of the various class organizations, factory committees, industrial and agricultural unions, cooperatives et cetera, federated and centralized ON A BASIS OF REAL NEEDS, should apply themselves everywhere to solving the problems of waging the revolution. By their powerful and fertile action,

because they are free and conscious, they should coordinate their efforts throughout the whole country.

"As for the 'elite,' their role, according to the libertarians, is to HELP the masses, enlighten them, teach them, give them the necessary advice, impel them to take the initiative, provide them with an example and support them in their action--BUT NOT DIRECT THEM GOVERNMENTALLY.

"The libertarians hold that a favorable solution of the problems of the revolution can result only from the freely and consciously collective and united work of millions of men and women who bring to it and harmonize in it, all the variety of their needs and interests, their strength and capacities, their gifts, aptitudes, inclinations, professional knowledge and understanding.

"By the natural interplay of their economic, technical and social organizations, and with the help of the 'elite' and, in case of need, under the protection of their freely organized armed forces, the labouring masses should, in the view of the libertarians, be able to carry effectively forward and progressively arrive at the practical achievement of their tasks."

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Pertinent to the subject discussed above are these lines from Rudolf Rocker's Nationalism and Culture:

"Federalism is organic collaboration of all social forces towards a common goal on the basis of covenants freely arrived at. Federalism is not disintegration of creative activity, not chaotic running hither and thither; it is the united work and effort of all members for the freedom and welfare of all. ...Monopoly of power must disappear, together with monopoly of property, that men may be eased of the weight which rests like a mountain on their souls and cripples the wings of the spirit. ...The sense of dependence on a higher power, that source of all religious and political bondage which ever chains man to the past and blocks the path to a brighter future will yield place to an enlightenment which makes man himself the master of his fate."

Lessons of the Spanish Revolution

Many of the great lessons of the Spanish Revolution are to be found in the exemplary lives of the thousands of revolutionary workers--most of them anonymous--who lived and died for it. In this issue, Views and Comments reprints in translation from CNT of Toulouse.(16 Oct. '55), the obituary notice of one of these comrades who recently died in exile. The movement which produced such revolutionists can never be definitively crushed. Such a revolution must ultimately triumph.

Sebastian Boltaina

Anarchists have a way of dying where they stand, like the trees, without ever having been on their knees. It was so that our old comrade, Sebastian Boltaina, ended his days in the General Hospital of Montpellier, on Sept. 9th, after a long and difficult illness.

He had begged us that his funeral be an intimate, civil affair without flowers or ostentation of any sort, which last request was fulfilled. One of the comrades spoke a few words on the life of our departed friend. The Local Federation of this city and the International Libertarian movement have lost much with his passing.

Boltaina was a man of great self-abnegation and a defender of our anti statist ideas. His affable nature never imposed itself and he was usually able to persuade by his example and kindly manner.

His early youth was spent in France--mostly in Paris, where he came to know the ideas to which he later devoted all of his energies. He was well liked by all who came into contact with him.

When the so-called republic was proclaimed in 1931, he realized that the moment had come for a great forward surge on the part of the C.N.T. Now was the time to advance the ideals of that organization with renewed vigor and intensified activity. He returned to Spain throwing himself completely into the struggle. The role of the political charlatans of the republic was fast becoming obvious as the masses of the Iberian people underwent ever greater hunger and privation.

Boltaina redoubled his efforts in humanity's cause and suffered repeated persecution. But threats and persecution did not deter him. He fought on in the underground with the will and persistence that characterize those who are dedicated to the overthrow of tyranny. Stoically and with enthusiasm, he overcame obstacles.

July 19th, 1936 arrived and comrade Boltaina was among the many thousands who did not rest until the fascist rebellion had been crushed in Catalonia. He then moved to Valderrobres (Prov. of Teruel) to help organize the agricultural collectives.

He found satisfaction in working tirelessly with other comrades, laying the foundations of the new society. Later, the hordes of the Stalinist Lister,- incapable of constructive activity themselves and jealous of the imposing achievement of the C.N.T., assaulted the collectives and imprisoned the members of their councils, who only escaped the firing squads of the "Cheka" thanks to the protests of the whole labor movement. Comrade Boltaina had been among those marked for death.

In exile, Comrade Boltaina never lost contact with the other comrades who continued working for the ideals of the Revolution. Of recent years, his health began to fail as a result of his great exertions. Common sense would have dictated repose but his pride would not allow him to be a burden to others. He would not stop working and this aggravated the ailments which carried him off to a premature grave.

What an exemplary life this comrade lived! His mind was clear to the very last moment. He left his savings to S.I.A.(Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista) to be used for the needy of the movement.

Rest in peace, Comrade Boltaina. The libertarian seed that you have sown throughout your life and with your unimpeachable conduct, will germinate and in the near future bear fruits of victory for social justice.

Our sense of loss is united with that of Comrade Boltaina's relatives in Spain.

The Libertarian Federation of Montpelier (France)

From the Anarcho-Syndicalists of Argentina

Saluting the tardy downfall of the Peronist tyranny, FORA (Federacion Obrera Regional Argentina) warns that the new rulers of the country are no more to be trusted than 'nose whom they replaced. The workers must be wary of all who would use them and their industrial organizations as tools in the struggle for political power. The political parties are engaged in a mad

scramble for the electoral votes controlled by Peron's old labor front, the CGT. And the rank and file of that union still contain numbers of misguided "shirtless ones" who have yet to be shown that no saviours, whether millionaires, like Peron, or just military, like the new lot, can give them shirts without ruining them.

On Sept. 22, 1955 the FORA council of the province of Buenos Aires issued a manifesto which declares, in part: "Revolutions must have social content. They are not effected by 'coups,' by military operations or by homicidal violence let loose from above. The FORA insists that the workers must rely on their own economic power. Their place is with those truly revolutionary organizations which foster in their membership a feeling for freedom, for individual worth and for the dignity of useful labor. Therefore, the FORA calls upon all workingmen to join its ranks--that they may carry on their fight, unhindered by 'leaders' who invariably betray them...

"After a half century of active existence, the FORA stands out as the one organization in all the land whose record has been consistently libertarian and free of opportunism. Its anarchist militancy insures it against corruptibility and invests it with an emancipating force of a high order...The FORA re-affirms its traditional stand that the daily struggle for immediate economic gains must be accompanied by a long term struggle for the abolition of all political and capitalist power."

Our International Movement

The Libertarian Association of Cuba--ALC

The Libertarian Association of Cuba has approximately 1,000 members throughout the country. Most of these are organized in syndical groups by industry, although quite a few of them, especially in the small towns, operate individually.

Our principal work and our main influence is in the organized labor movement, and the majority of our members are active in labor unions. We also have a number of student members in secondary schools. In various places outside of Havana, our members are active in other types of organizations--neighborhood associations, recreational organizations etc.

In each labor organization where our Association has members, they form a syndical group to work within it. Sometimes the syndical groups include workers who, although not members of our Association, accept our general orientation.

In this manner, our position finds expression in about a hundred local unions throughout the island, where we share the leadership with other elements. We have minority representation in the leadership of the 6 Provincial Labor Federations and in 10 of the National Federations of Industry. Two of our comrades are on the Executive Committee of the National Confederation of Workers (Confederacion de Trabajadores de Cuba--CTC)

As regards the organization of the ALC itself, there are groups or local Associations in each locality where we have members. These local groups maintain relations directly one with the other and, also, with the National Council located in Havana, which is composed of representatives of the local Associations and groups.

We have usually been able to publish a newspaper of our own, which was suppressed after Batista seized power on March 10, 1952. However, our voice is still heard through Solidaridad Gastronomica, a paper published by our syndical group in the food workers' industry, where we have our strongest foothold.

The Libertarian Youth, which is auxiliary to the ALC, holds regular discussion meetings at our hall in Havana. When it was possible to do so, we held occasional public mass meetings of our own in union halls, theaters and public squares. In the recent period, we have had to limit ourselves to participating in such meetings under auspices of cultural groups etc., in which some comrade of ours speaks in the name of the ALC. We hope soon to re-issue our own paper. At this point the main difficulty is financial.

Notice

With deep sorrow, we report the death in Mohegan Colony, N.Y., of our beloved comrade Milly Witcoff Rocker. She was in her 79th year. Memorial services in New York City were attended by approximately 300 persons. To comrade Rudolph Rocker, her companion during many decades of life and struggle, the friends and members of the Libertarian League extend their heartfelt sympathy in his bereavement.

Spanish-Russian Interviews

(Items on this page are reprinted from Iberica, November 15, 1955)

Reports from reliable sources indicate that a normalization of relations between Russia and Spain is more advanced than is generally known. Representatives of the Spanish and Russian governments met during October in Lisbon and formulated a preliminary agreement to the effect that the radios of the two countries refrain from further attacks on each other's regimes.

And conversations have taken place in Paris during the past few weeks between representatives of the two countries, and both countries hope to arrive at important concrete agreements.

Russian Delegation in Spain

The International Congress of Industrial Chemistry which opened in Madrid on October 23 was attended by a delegation from the Soviet Union composed of nine members, eight men and one woman. The Chairman of the delegation was Dr. Nazarov of the Academy of Science of the U.S.S.R. The Russian delegation brought a message, addressed to the Chairman of the Congress) from the President and Secretary of the Russian Academy of Science.

The Spanish Minister of Education, Sr. Ruiz Gimenez, has stated that "The Russian presence here, is not at all strange. We live in a free country, and these Russians are technicians."

Spanish Delegation to Czechoslovakia

Spain has sent an official delegation to the Industrial Fair at Brno, Czechoslovakia. This is another manifestation of the improved relations between Spain and the Soviet bloc.

ABC and the Kremlin

The Madrid newspaper ABC reports in its issue of October 19 that the Kremlin is willing to re-establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See, on condition that the Vatican agree to the principle of the establishment of concordats between the churches of the eastern European countries and their governments. ABC describes this Soviet offer as 'sincere.'

Notice

Because of lack of finances, "Individual Action" is forced to suspend publication. We would like to thank those readers of Views and Comments who have graciously supported us through three trying years.

--John Goldstein

A Profitable Love Affair

Those who kept up with the Communist press of Spain during the civil war years (1936-1939) will perhaps recall its accusation that Mussolini was a welcher. This referred to the fact that he had not paid for the aviation gasoline which Russia had been exporting to Italy ever since the Abyssinian war. Intending merely to show that Il Duce was an all around louse, the C.P. unwittingly reminded people that the Italian air force which was then bombing the cities of Loyalist Spain, operated largely on Soviet fuel.

There are some of us who have not forgotten. So that it comes as no great surprise to learn that Hispano-Russian trade relations have continued almost without interruption since 1947. The chief items of exchange are lead, mercury and textiles from Spain to Russia--and wheat, cotton and petroleum in return. It will be interesting to watch this commerce expand and become more open as diplomatic relations between the two military dictatorships are placed on a more comfortable footing.

Steps are being taken to ease the mutual hostility into which both governments were forced by the exigencies of propaganda. The Spanish and Russian radios seem to have agreed not to attack each other's governments. And Franco has just declared (Dec. 1, 1955) that the death of Stalin and the execution of Beria have eliminated the "police terror"--that with military men assuring complete control of the country the situation of the Russian people has been alleviated.

A considerable number of Falangists who fought with Hitler's armies on the Russian front have been repatriated from Soviet concentration camps while an equally considerable number of Spanish anti-fascists remain in said camps. With Madrid playing host to Soviet scientists (at the International Congress of Standardization) and sending official commercial visitors to the Brno Industrial Fair in Czechoslovakia the ice would appear to be definitely broken.

Presumably the first passes were made by the Kremlin, for the Franco regime must consider its obligations to Washington and Vatican City. It can hardly afford to lose face in these two capitals by taking an aggressive male role in the budding romance. But it is sorely tempted by the many millions of dollars worth of Spanish gold held by Russia.

This gold was taken as partial payment for the miserable trickle of arms and wheat sent by Russia to Loyalist Spain--the rest of the Payment being exacted in the form of enormous military and police powers given by the Loyalist government to the insignificant Communist party of Spain. If the establishment of a Moscow-Madrid axis should now result in the transfer of these golden millions, it would be but the logical conclusion of a process which began during the civil war.

We refer to the Stalinist military assaults against the collectives of Aragon, their attempt to muzzle the Spanish Anarchist press, the murders of Durutti, Ascaso and Berneri, and the unceasing efforts of the Communists to destroy those organizations such as the C.N.T., which were

the first to resist Franco's seizure of power. And it looks as though the Caudillo is beginning to understand that the Kremlin can be as useful to him in the future as it has been in the past.

Basic Training

A Short Story by G.W.R.

The straw dummy hung grotesquely from the tree limb. The arms and legs stuck out stiffly and it swayed slightly in the hot wind, like a corpse on the gallows.

"Okay you guys. Run and stick it. And remember, it's alive and it's the enemy and you hate his guts. Lead off, Russell."

The sergeant stepped back and Russell ran forward, crouched over and slid his bayonet into the dummy with a long, smooth movement. As he ran back with an easy stride, Peter could see he was smiling.

Then Jones ran out and was sticking the dummy with short, furious jabs, and when he trotted back, Peter noticed that he was panting and that his big, beefy face was flushed deep red.

Then it was Peter's turn and as he ran at the dummy, he only noticed that it looked rather like a man and that the sky was a deep blue behind it. He jabbed at it once, half-heartedly, just pricking the worn khaki jacket, and trotted back.

"Anderson," the sergeant roared, stepping out to meet him in front of the others. "What's the matter? Get mad, fellow. That's the enemy. Now go back and rip his guts out."

Peter felt his cheeks get hot and for once, surprising himself, he spoke back. He was angry now, really angry, for the first time since he had been drafted. He had hated it all along, but for some reason, now it all exploded in a blinding rage.

"I can't. It looks like a man."

"Of course it does, you sonofabitch. It's the enemy."

"I don't care if he is. He's a man, just like you and me."

"Why you dirty goddamn bastard," screamed the sergeant, running at Peter with his fists clenched.

Peter watched him come and again he was blinded with white-hot rage. He simply lifted the rifle slightly and the sergeant, trying to stop too late, ran the bayonet into his own stomach up to the rifle muzzle. Peter jerked it free and the sergeant, his hands clasped over his stomach and a surprised look on his face, slowly sat down on the ground.

Peter let the rifle slip out of his fingers, staring at the red-stained bayonet. The next moment a railroad train seemed to hit him in the back and he staggered, knocked off balance. He managed to turn around and saw Russell's face smiling over the black, smoking hole in his rifle barrel. Peter felt no pain as he sank down with his ears ringing. He saw Jones's beefy, shocked face in a swirling red mist. He was surprised it didn't hurt. He couldn't understand why...

When the stretcher bearers came, Peter was unconscious and muttering words over and over to himself. The other soldiers could only make out a little from time to time:

"...die by the sword...not kill...thou shalt...die...kill..."

"What's he saying?" one of the stretcher bearers asked Russell.

"I don't know. Doesn't make sense."

"Why the hell did he do it?"

"He's a nut." Russell forced a smile. "A real nut." He spat on the ground.

"Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ." Jones was murmuring over and over again, his face buried in his big hands.

"What the hell's the matter with you?" asked Russell irritably. "He killed the sergeant, didn't he? He asked for it, didn't he?"

Jones looked up at him. He had a deeply horrified look on his face. "But why did you shoot him?"

"Oh, what the hell," said Russell, walking away. "They're all nuts. The guy was a murderer and I shot him. So what? They ought to give me a promotion for it."

Peter died later that night without regaining consciousness. It was decided not to tell his family the whole story. It all became an accident, a regrettable accident. After all, the truth would have created quite a stir, and the colonel had learned, recently, through highly reliable sources, that he was to be promoted and sent to Washington. The colonel had his career to think about. Russell was promoted to corporal for "unusual resourcefulness in time of danger" and the whole affair was hushed up.

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