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Marcus Graham's Tissues in the Present War

A protest by the 'Workers Friend' Group (London)

Emanuel Michaels

1944

Marcus Graham, late Editor of "Man", has written a pamphlet entitled "Issues in the Present War".

That is alright, and we will defend his right to express his own opinion. But it appears that he is deeply offended with Rudolph Rocker because he is also guilty of the same offence, but does not speak from quite the same point of view as Marcus Graham himself.

We should not take any further notice of that, but seemingly Marcus Graham is very angry also because Rocker has not a good word to say on the side of the Totalitarian Empires, and even wishes for the complete overthrow of the **gentle** and **innocent** Nazi gang in Germany.

So Rudolph Rocker is virulently attacked by Marcus Graham, who accuses Rocker of attacking anarchist "aged theories".

In his evident personal venom against Rocker, Marcus Graham overlooked the fact that Rocker's article in *The Freie Ar-*

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beiter Stimme of New York precisely indicated the “aged theory” to which he alluded.

In the beginning of the second paragraph of the article “**The Order of the Hour**” he refers to “the habit of considering a historical event as the outcome of fixed economic laws which ultimately lead to a higher stage of social life.” Since when has that been an anarchist theory – “aged” or otherwise?

From William Goodwin down to Kropotkin and Errico Malatesta we do not remember one of our leading exponents who asked us to accept such a proposition as a part of anarchist thought.

We believe it to be simply and purely a Marxist fallacy, which the history of the past fifty years has completely discredited.

So the reader will be able to recognise the malice underlying the personal attack upon Rudolph Rocker.

Rocker denies that the present war is only an economic issue. He claims that it is also a power problem. Even Marcus Graham admits that “imperialism plays one of the most important parts in the causes of war.”

Of course, Graham is only exercising an elementary right in saying that, but for Rocker to say something similar is, apparently, a heinous offence.

Marcus Graham refers to the “Weimar Republic” and to the advent of both Nazism and Fascism into European politics.

Rudolph Rocker opposed all of them, and, although he is a native of Germany, was refused admission to that country by the Weimar Republic for a time. Had he remained in Germany, his fate would have been that of many others, viz., decapitation, and his ashes after his cremation sent to his friends in a box.

Even an anarchist may be excused for objecting to that sort of thing, without in any way recanting any principle he ever believed in; and all Marcus Graham’s talk about Capitalism and Economic causes cannot screen from observation the Nazi infamy.

Nor is there anything in anarchism to condone the inhuman abomination of which the Nazis and Fascists have been guilty in their efforts to build up great and powerful German and Italian Empires.

Rudolph Rocker has specially good reasons for deploring the shocking degradation, shame and ruin which the foul Nazi gang have brought in and upon Germany.

To him, who naturally cherishes in his mind all the higher types of legacies from German intellect and science of past times, it was bound to arouse in him keen and painful feelings that Germany has been brought down so low.

But a professed advocate of liberty makes no allowance for this. Not the least reverence is made by Graham to it, and no latitude is allowed. It may be merely a matter for shallow poetical sentiment to Marcus Graham but to Rudolph Rocker it is a most appalling reality.

Rocker may be too generous in his attitude to the countries in which so-named democratic governments exist – and we are not compelled to endorse his or anybody else’s opinion on that – but it must be borne in mind that Rocker for many years has found a refuge in them, and has there been able to express his sincere convictions freely, and perform valuable service in the cause of humanity and liberty.

We are told that Rudolph Rocker proceeds to attack (i.e. criticize) the workers. But why should not the workers be criticized? Are they any more sacrosanct than anybody else? We ourselves, as workers, have never claimed or desired to be exempt from criticism.

Is it not the truth to say that after the vast amount of effort and sacrifice made by large numbers of men and women in Europe, that long before now the European workers should have understood the need of the times, and striven as a great solid International body, not only for the prevention of war but for the overthrow of Capitalism, Landlordism, and Imperialism? Who, or what, could have stood against them?

Is it not the fact that the power of the dominant and exploiting classes is provided from and by the workers?

We notice, too, the unfairness shown towards Rocker in the use made of the quotation stating that “The struggle against totalitarian slavery ... is the first duty of our time.” Which is converted into the implication that the “victory of the Democratic powers (*by itself*) will make possible the development of Freedom and Justice.”

So it might, but that is not the meaning attached to the passage by Rudolph Rocker, or a reasonable reader. Indeed in all countries the struggle against Totalitarian slavery must be actively carried on “as the first condition for a new social development in the spirit of “Freedom and Social Justice.” This is quite plain.

Does Marcus Graham really wish the totalitarian powers to succeed in the present conflict?

If he does, then let him honestly say so, and if he does, then Rudolph Rocker has an equal right, and as an anarchist, to wish the opposite.

He is guilty of the impertinence of lecturing Rudolph Rocker on moral honesty – which is as superfluous as it is insulting. Let him act on his own advice, and, in addition, follow Rudolph Rocker’s excellent example, viz., expound his views without making mean personal attacks on a man who has given a long lifetime to the service of the cause of Liberty and Humanity. Rocker’s views remain unchanged but matured.

Rudolph Rocker came into the movement as a young lad, and soon left the ranks of the believers in authoritarian ideas.

After being exiled from Germany he gave sterling service for many years as the Editor of the Jewish anarchist journal, “The Workers’ Friend”, in London, besides having written many books such as “Anarcho-Syndicalism” and “Nationalism and Culture”, to mention only two which come to mind, besides his activity as a lecturer and propagandist on behalf of anar-

chism, of which he has a full right to be proud. He has never joined the ranks of the mudslingers in their dirty task.

His work in the U.S.A. is well known and his only detractor there is Marcus Graham.

Rocker has treated the attack with contempt, but the Comrades of the Workers’ Friend Group wish to make an earnest protest against it.

On behalf of the Comrades of the Workers’ Friend Group,

E. MICHAELS,

Hon. Secretary.