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The "Communes" of Communist China

All of today's movements for social change have socialist overtones, in response to the social aspirations of humanity. Socialization, Nationalization, Communization, Syndicalization and variations of these terms have become everyday expressions.

The 19th Century debated the desirability of socialism; the 20th Century has accepted its necessity. That some form of profound social transformation is required for the survival and improvement of humanity is no longer disputed by thinking and socially conscious people.

But there are widely divergent ideas as to what constitutes "socialism." The central problem of our time is what form socialism should take and how it may be attained. Our conception of the meaning of socialism will, to a large extent, determine the direction that the great revolutions of the 20th Century will take.

Broadly speaking there are two diametrically opposed currents in the movement towards "socialism." These can be broadly defined as authoritarian or State socialism and Libertarian or free socialism. "Welfarism," as it is developing in many countries is essentially a development evolving in the direction of authoritarian "socialism." The problem for those concerned with Humanity's welfare revolves around the extent to which freedom and socialism are compatible.

The Authoritarians believe that with the abolition or curtailment of private property, economic and political life should be controlled by the State. "Socialism" is imposed from above—as in Russia, China and their satellites. The people are not consulted, the program being enforced by mass indoctrination and a system of rewards and punishments. A graduated and extremely unequal scale of rewards to the functionaries of the ruling party apparatus, the army and secret police, the intellectuals, workers and peasants is so arranged as to ensure to the State the loyalty of the privileged upper strata against the great masses of restless underdogs at the bottom of the absolutist pyramid.

The rhythm of production as laid down by a plan imposed from above, determines the life of the community and the individual. Freedom is allowed only to the extent that it strengthens the system. Lack of local autonomy and of individual freedom are outstanding characteristics of such a regime.

We Libertarians, on the other hand, believe that freedom should permeate every aspect of individual and collective life. We are socialists because we believe that freedom and equality are inseparable and that freedom can be assured only in a social system where the exploitation of man by man will be replaced by the enjoyment of all of the fruits of the collective labor of all. The economic life must reflect the needs and the will of all the people, if the new society is to be free.

A free socialist society cannot be imposed by dictatorial means or through the medium of the State which can only be self-perpetuating. A free society can only be built from below by the cooperation of groups and individuals united in voluntary associations of their own creation. These will not follow any preconceived plan or single pattern, but will grow out of the revolutionary situation and will reflect the infinite variety of life itself. Free agreement is the basis of free socialism. Voluntary association among individuals and free agreement among organizations united for common objectives will provide the federated basis on which the world can best be organized. Federalism is the organization of freedom.

Any society that restricts or prohibits the right of the individual to join or leave any organization, or the right of any group to do likewise, is in essence a slave society. We are opposed to the State because it replaces the free agreement of all with the monopoly of power by the few.

The libertarian commune is an association of these autonomous individuals and groups who unite for the purpose of conducting the affairs of a community. In a libertarian society, a federation of such communes would replace the State. This is the ideal and although it may not be realized at once, it does provide a standard of measurement. As Libertarians, we judge any movement calling itself socialist by the extent to which it adheres to these fundamental principles.

To what extent—if any—do the Chinese "communes" approach these goals?

The Chinese communists and their supporters abroad repeatedly assert that their "communes" were the result of a spontaneous movement of the peasants and that they have not been imposed from above. To what extent—if any—are these claims true? Let us examine some of the evidence. But first a few general considerations:

Just as the Russian dictatorship could never tolerate any spontaneous movement from below, neither can that of "Red China." It cannot allow opposition of any sort. No State, much less a totalitarian one, could allow a social force as massive as 500,000,000 peasants to institute "on its own" a complete change in the country's social structure. How could such a movement come into being without challenging the power of the ruling group? How could such a movement be controlled? If it were allowed free rein what would become of the approximately 50,000,000 Party and Youth League members, soldiers, police and bureaucrats? In all of human history no privileged class or ruling parasitical clique has ever voluntarily surrendered its power.

At all times, it is the dictatorship and not the people who decide. The crushing of the Tibetan resistance was justified by the charge that it was a reactionary movement. This is beside the point. What is important is that it is the State and the State alone, that accuses, persecutes, judges and punishes. This pernicious concept is used by the rulers to justify the liquidation not only of reactionaries but also of revolutionists and rival factions within the power structure itself. The crushing of the Kronstadt rebellion by Trotsky, the murder of the old Bolsheviks and of Trotsky himself, are examples of this basic policy.

Mao tse-tung, the Stalin of China, is no exception to these laws of politics and of history. He endorsed the crushing of the Hungarian revolution of 1956. There is no reason to believe that he would behave differently in a similar situation in his own domain.

The *Monthly Review*, a pro-Communist publication, goes into raptures over the Chinese "communes." The major part of its March, 1959 issue is devoted to that subject. The article by D.D. Kosambi declares that: "The change from cooperatives was not planned from above nor directed from the top." (page 426) But an article by Charles Bettelheim in the same issue flatly contradicts this:

"The movement to establish started on an experimental basis in the very first months of 1958. The results attained showed the efficiency of this organization, and on the 29th of August last, a resolution passed by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) recognized that the establishment of peoples' communes was the 'logical result of the march of events.' This resolution drew the broad outlines of the organization of communes and by October, 1958, 90% of all peasant families have become members of communes."

The evidence shows that Kasambi was wrong and Bettelheim was right. Is it credible that 500,000,000 people met, deliberated and discussed democratically, voted and dissolved the old "cooperative" system to set up the new "communes" into which they then voluntarily herded

themselves—and all in the space of two months? Bettelheim has let the cat out of the bag. His statements show that the CCP conceived and engineered the whole show. The people had nothing to say, as is evidenced by this further statement.

”The local administration was simply abolished, and the personnel absorbed within the communes, not necessarily as administrators. This covers police, revenue officials, courts and judges and so forth. The commune takes over such of their functions as is still necessary and deals directly with the higher state organs.” (page 426)

A conference was held in Hsiu-yang (Honan Province), scene of the first experimental ”commune,” from July 20 to August 5, 1958, to discuss problems relating to the organization of the ”peoples’ communes.” The directives for their future development were first publicly announced there. It was reported that prizes and special bonuses would be awarded to those members of the ”communes” who ”Obey the leadership with fervor and who work with enthusiasm.” A resolution adopted at this Conference stated that: ”The organizations of the Party must exercise control over the commune members under all circumstances.”

With the establishment of the ”communes,” the individuals, groups, associations and trades have all been deprived of their freedom. All social and economic activities are centralized in the clique of party officials who run the ”commune” which is responsible not to the people, whose rights it has usurped, but to the ”higher State organs.” This procedure has nothing in common with the establishment of genuine communes. It is simply a police action.

The CCP and its apologists justify the ”communes” on economic grounds. The cooperatives, they say, had become an obstacle to the rapid development of the Chinese economy. It became necessary ”to make the great leap forward.” The claims of the pro-Commies and Mao Tse-tung himself demonstrate that the economic factor was a minor consideration in the changeover. Bettelheim says:

”Already in 1956 the socialist transformation of China was complete and the contradiction of capitalist society and the obstacles they opposed to the rapid and continuous economic growth was eliminated.” (page 436)

Mao Tse-tung, in his famous speech announcing the ”hundred flowers” policy, said in February, 1957:

”It is clear then that nothing went wrong with the cooperative movement. How long will it take to consolidate the cooperative and end these arguments about their having any superior qualities? In my view we will be doing well enough if we succeed in establishing the cooperatives in the first Five Year Plan and consolidating them in the Second.”

Mao’s speech at that time said nothing about ”communes.” This major economic policy decision determined the direction of economic development. It assigned ten years of effort to the development and consolidation of the ”cooperative” system. Why this sudden reversal? Why this sudden mad rush to establish communes? Something must have gone wrong.

That ”something” was the open and passive resistance of many peasants, workers, intellectuals and party members. This accounted for the ”hundred flowers policy.” Even the edited version of Mao’s speech was replete with references to the widespread discontent. Thus:

”Certain people in our community were delighted when the Hungarian events took place... They felt there was too little freedom under our peoples’ democracy... They asked for a two-party system.”

Nowhere is there more convincing proof of the antagonism between the government and the people than in the revealing remarks which follow. After repeating that his government represents the people, Mao declares:

"Certain contradictions do exist between the interests of the State, collective interest and individual interest, between democracy and centralism, between those in positions of leadership and the led, and contradictions arising from the bureaucratic practices of certain state functionaries in their relations with the masses."

The "cooperative" system was too loose a form of organization and provided too many opportunities for people to organize discontent.

To facilitate the dictatorship's operation, it finally became necessary to replace that system by the "communes," a more easily controlled form of regimentation. 500,000,000 peasants have been herded into 25,000 concentration camps disguised as communes.

Contrary to Marxist doctrine, authoritarian regimes adjust the economic system to the interests of the political dictatorship. Every increase in political dictatorship is reflected in increased economic monopoly. The militarization of the State requires the militarization of the economy. Stalin's forced "collectivization" in Russia is being repeated by Mao in China in an even more brutal manner. Mao's "commune" is the Chinese version of Stalin's Kholkoz. They are but slightly different forms given to the economic bases of totalitarian regimes.

The claimed phenomenal increase in production in the "communes" as compared to the older "cooperatives" does not mean that China has made a "great leap forward" in a socialist direction. It means simply that the tempo of exploitation has been increased. Tremendous economic productivity has been made under tyrannical regimes. Increased production can, instead of promoting freedom, facilitate slavery. Increased production can be and is used to reenforce the power apparatus.

Great empires were built on the mass enslavement of the "lowly." Armies of slaves built the pyramids. The temples of the mighty were erected on the bones of slaves. The industrial revolution which established capitalism was carried through by the remorseless exploitation of child labor. How much of Russia's vaunted economic progress is due to slave labor?

The evidence shows that this doleful pattern is being repeated in the Chinese "communes." The industrialization of China is being based on the enslavement of the peasantry. The dictatorship came to power through the peasantry and is consolidating itself at their expense.

But how otherwise could industrialization be attained? Russian aid was insufficient. The export of agricultural and industrial products in exchange for machinery, raw materials and consumer goods could not suffice because of the primitive state of China's economy. The only exploitable commodity that China possesses in abundance is human labor power. The "commune" system makes possible the most intensive exploitation of this commodity. In the agricultural "cooperatives" the peasant gave his property and his labor to the State. In the "commune" he gives also his person. He is no longer a person but a de-humanized production unit.

The general picture of regimentation is graphically described by Dr. Sripati Chandrasekhar, prominent Indian social scientist recently returned from extensive travel in Communist China:

"Everywhere men and women of all ages are working day and night. They are dressed in blue trousers and buttoned up coats with collars like the uniform of Mao Tse-tung, the CP chairman.

"Hundreds of thousands of men and women in blue padded coats and trousers look like an endless army of blue ants scurrying to their appointed tasks. This dull uniformity numbs one's vision in the beginning. But soon one grows used to seeing a whole nation in blue uniforms.

"Another thing that no one can escape is the ubiquitous wired radio loud-speaker. The radio blares away at you in the bus, the train and in the trolley, in sleepers and dining cars, in villages, towns, and cities—just about everywhere.

"And what does this radio pour out night and day? It is the most important medium for approved news—news of the nation's progress, industrial output, how to make a smelter, how to defeat the American imperialists, how to be a good communist, how to be neat, how to denounce the rightists and a thousand other things, interspersed with Chinese opera and marching songs. The radio and relaying loud speaker cannot be controlled and cannot even be turned off."

The Chinese peasant formerly worked a maximum of 200 days a year. Now he "voluntarily" works an average of 300 days a year with two days off a month. In the "commune," workers belong to units organized into divisions, battalions, companies and regiments. Reveille is at 5 a.m. After roll call, all march to work. Breakfast is at 8 a.m. One and one-half hours are allowed for lunch and the working day supposedly ends at 6 p.m. But with "voluntary" overtime, millions work 18 hours a day. Military training is an integral part of the "commune." The slogan is "One hand on the hoe and one hand on the rifle," but only reliable political activists get rifles and then only after rigid tests. (*Wall St. Journal*, Jan. 5th, 1959)

As a source, *The Wall Street Journal* is unacceptable to some, but its contentions are backed up by the Chinese Communist Party press. The *Peking Review*, a Chinese Communist weekly published in English (Dec. 2, 1958) tells us, for example, how Kwangtung Province won back the leadership in the rat-race of production:

"Lack of understanding of the pace set in other parts of the country and their less-than-tops tempo were the chief reasons for Kwangtung's comparative lag. To win back their leadership in grain production, the people of the province adopted emergency measures, concentrated on close planting and an intensive application of fertilizer. FOR A HUNDRED DAYS OR SO THE PEASANTS WORKED, ATE AND SLEPT OUT ON THE FIELDS" (our emphasis).

Radio Peking broadcast the interesting information that:

"The July First commune plowed 600 acres of land in six days and one of the production brigades refused to stop work-and leave although it was 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning... workers in the number 17 cotton mill voluntarily asked for the abolition of the quarterly bonus... The CP of Honan province suggests: 'If, after day and night shifts on steelmaking, the workers participate in a little farm production, they will be refreshed.'"

The "communes" are organized along military lines in units that vary from 2,000 to 7,000 families although some have ten or even twenty thousand families. "Labor battalions" can be conscripted from their ranks for any work within or outside the "commune" itself.

Boarding schools are part of the "commune" system, since the children are taken from their parents and live in barracks-like dormitories. They are trained by the Communist Party and taught not to think about their homes. For relaxation, they sing "Formosa is ours" and "Socialism is best," and play with toy guns provided by the "communes."

When parents complained that the children are being deprived of mother love, the *China Youth Daily of Peking* (Oct. 25th, 1958) declares:

"Parents should understand that they are going to live in a Communist state where the old and young will be properly taken care of. It is for society to raise and educate them young into a new generation and give the kind of love that no maternal love can hope to compare with."

Families are destroyed and women are mobilized to augment the labor force. Over ninety percent of peasant households have already been absorbed into the system. They eat in common dining rooms, and sleep in dormitories segregated by sex.

Thus has the State prohibited any form of human association that does not fit into its twisted doctrine. The complete control of life and the enslavement of the individual is carried to heights never before attained by any society in history.

Second Youth March for Integrated Schools

The struggle for racial equality has made important advances in recent years. With continued mass pressure and direct action methods, much greater advances can be made in the immediate coming period. The second Youth March for school integration, in Washington on April 18th, mobilized a total of about 25,000 demonstrators, most of them students of all ages, double the turn-out for the first march last October.

The authorities had tried to ignore the October march and their representatives had been refused audience by anyone in authority at the White House. It had taken place on Pennsylvania Avenue in the heart of the city, ending with an inspiring meeting at the Lincoln Memorial, where the marchers vowed to return in the spring in larger numbers to make their demands heard.

But the second demonstration was actually less impressive. The President was too busy on the golf course, but two of his aides were on hand with large hand-outs of soft soap. The March was kept to the Mall, where a minimum of local people would see it, and the actual march only lasted about five city blocks, terminating in a meeting at the Washington Monument where the whole assemblage was talked to the point of exhaustion for about five hours by several dozen speakers.

Some of the speeches were good and militant but most droned away to the over-tired, drowsy multitude. The politicians and "celebrities" vied with each other to get in on the act. The whole affair was conducted in an atmosphere of comradeship and good feeling. Decorum was observed at all times. Few got really excited as it was reported that the White House had promised to "help."

Such mass demonstrations can serve in that they give to the participants a sense of their own power, but only if carried out in a militant manner. It is no secret that it was the militant elements who did most of the hard, back-breaking work over a period of several months preparation. But at the March itself, passivity prevailed. At the present rate, token integration will probably be achieved this year in another dozen or so of southern towns. If there is continued reliance on petitions and court cases, total integration maybe achieved by the end of the Twenty-First Century.

Seven teenagers of the New York Libertarian Youth Organization participated in this march. Participation was a moral obligation as an expression of the peoples' will. But it is not an obligation to criticize positively the all-too-passive, meek spirit of the affair. We feel that much more could have been accomplished by insistence on the right to march through populated streets, and a snappy meeting limited to four or five really militant speeches.

The petitions and the visit to the White House are but formal gestures—a publicity gimmick at best. If the people ever want to get anything they will have to take it.

On The Class War Front: Solidarity in New Jersey

A successful strike of 400 maintenance men and toll gate collectors, members of Local 1511, State, county and Municipal Workers Union, against the New Jersey Turnpike Authority shows that unity of the workers on the job is still labor's best weapon. Although this was a "small" strike, it had large implications. It showed how workers in other industries, farmers and university students could cooperate and win against the tremendous power of a state agency which was backed by the press and other reactionary elements. Solidarity on the picket line is a far better tactic than fruitless attempts to elect politicians "friendly to labor."

This strike demonstrated that the feeling of Mutual Aid is still capable of stirring men to action. If this can be done in one place it can be done in another. Where necessary, local action could be coordinated on a regional and even on a national scale. The principle of Mutual Aid is universal and can be universally applied by the practice of local autonomy and free agreement. This is the antidote to centralized, autocratic business unionism. Solidarity from the bottom up is the answer to dictatorship from the top down.

The demands of the strikers show that men are willing to fight for a principle. Important as wages, working hours and better conditions may be, they are not the only consideration. Workers are capable of striking against the unjust treatment of a fellow worker, against the refusal of the boss to recognize the dignity and self-respect of the worker or his right to organize in a union.

The men had struck because the authority suspended two maintenance men. They demanded the right to show and wear union buttons. The authority threatened to discharge them but the men held fast. Although things looked bad, help arrived. The bus drivers and the farmers refused to use the Turnpike.

The authority was losing from 30 to 50 thousand dollars a day. The authority recruited scabs from some of the rich fraternity clubs of Rutgers University. Help came again. The rank and file students from Rutgers University marched in the picket line against the college scabs and forced them to quit. This massive demonstration of solidarity made the bosses give in. Mutual Aid won the strike. When intelligently practiced it can win others to its side. A study of this and other strikes should help the workers to develop a new tactic for the application of old and tested principles long used by the oppressed in the never-ending battle for freedom.

Grooming the Crown Princes

A.H. Raskin, labor expert of the *New York Times* (April 13th, 1959), writes about the leadership training program of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union. The article reveals—once again—the progressive degeneration of the American Labor Movement. David Dubinsky, the secretary and treasurer, who is getting on in years (he is now 67), is worried about his successors. He has been labor faking since 1932 and wants to leave the union in good hands when he goes to his reward. The members who built the union and whose dues paid his salary and the salaries of the horde of lesser officials are incapable of running their own union. Therefore, the new leaders must be trained under Dubinsky's general direction and be prepared to take over when the old line pie-cards retire. New labor leaders must be sought—not from the membership but from outside.

The reason for the violation of the old union principle that leaders should be elected from and by the ranks and trained in the shops, was explained by Dubinsky, who told the general executive board: "The increasing complexity of union affairs make it necessary to rely on men trained as lawyers, accountants and technicians for much of the union's future direction." It is natural that this state within a state, which is called a union, needs an army of bureaucrats and politicians to regulate the organization and its members.

This sort of thing is typical of all big business type unions. It is the inevitable result of centralization and business unionism. In effect, the union has become the property of its own officialdom. The function of the members is to pay dues and lend their strike-power to reinforce the leaders' disputes with management. They serve as loyal troops who are occasionally sent to battle under orders of their union bosses.

The I.L.G.W.U. has been recruiting labor fakers for the past nine years. It has opened a school for that purpose. The recruiting advertisement introduces a military note: "The International Ladies Garment Workers Union conducts its own West Point to prepare young men and women for careers in labor leadership. The one-year course combines classroom and field work. Those who complete the course are assigned to a full-time job with the union."

We are not crying alone in the wilderness. Workers are beginning to resent the increasing power of the labor fakers. The following article was written by Charles D. Adams, President of Local 216, UAW-CIO, Los Angeles. It was printed in *The Assembler*, organ of Local 216 (March 19th, 1959). Although we cannot agree with the reference to labor leaders in the second paragraph, it pinpoints some basic evils of American unionism and provides some helpful suggestions. It is a welcome change from the usual claptrap of labor "journalism."

Hooray For Progress!

In a recent conversation with a Labor Relations Representative concerning what might be done to improve the lot of today's workers I stated, "the first thing I would do would be to scrap the entire National Agreement and abolish the grievance procedure."

"Now, now," he soothed, "you know you don't mean that, you are a Technician." In my book I told him, that is a dirty name, because my next suggestion would be to swap all of our so-called Labor Technicians and Labor Statesmen for a handful of crude but resolute Labor Leaders. The sole duties of these leaders would be to bend every effort to see that the man in the shop earned enough to keep body and soul together without having to kill himself while doing it. The problem of maintaining the company's profits would be left to the stockholders and the corporation's executives.

Supervision of the Union Leader's personal deportment and morals would be returned to his wife and his clergyman, releasing the Ethical Practices Committee and the high salaried law makers who have presently assumed this obligation back to their golf and the business of extracting a few more tax dollars from the \$4,000-a-year-and-under bracket.

How could we possibly operate without the Agreement and a procedure for handling grievances? It's really quite simple; whenever a problem arises the plant closes until Management steps in and corrects the condition that has caused the problem. Sure we all know that utter chaos would reign for a while but Management would catch on quick and in no time at all they and their Supervision would become downright reasonable in their attitude toward their employees' welfare.

As a kid in the coal fields of Southern Illinois I watched such a procedure in action and it was remarkably successful. The miners gathered at the head of the pit and listened to the grievant's complaint. The Pit Committeeman said, "O.K., boys, throw out your water." This was the signal for all of them to empty the drinking water from their dinner pails and head for home. The mine whistle blew one long mournful blast as they departed and everyone stayed away until it tooted twice. This meant the problem was satisfactorily settled and work would be resumed.

No one got up and attacked the Pit Committeeman for his lack of judgment, integrity or morals. There were no International Reps to warn the men they were violating the Agreement and they better go on to work and the problem would be handled when it came up to their step through the proper channels. There was no one going through the crowd attempting to distort the issue, create doubt and indecision and start a back-to-work movement. Come to think of it, the miners had a Plan B, which they put into effect when these necessary shut downs became too frequent. The mine manager or an unreasonable Face Boss would be suspended head first down the mine shaft, which is some seven hundred feet deep, by his ankles. As the miners' demands were slowly repeated to him the grip on his ankles was gradually loosened. In a surprisingly short time all differences were usually resolved. However, Management did object strenuously to this type of negotiations, complaining bitterly that it tended to create a shortage of trained Supervision.

Today the Agreements are so complicated no one understands them. The polished Labor Statesman of today lives in a world far removed from the strife and grime of the shops. He is equally at home in the White House, the Senate Chambers or the drawing room of International Celebrities. He speaks to you with an eloquence comparable to a Roosevelt or a Churchill, justifying the necessity for you to endure your miserable existence for the duration of another long term contract, while he devotes full time to the election of governors and congressmen whose avowed purpose is to enact restrictive labor laws as soon as they take office. I just don't get it.

Do It Yourself

In recent years, as a reaction to life in a super-mechanized society, there has been a healthy growth of interest in arts, handicrafts and hobbies of various sorts through which the individual can exercise his natural creative instincts and talents by producing something tangible with his own hands. Most forms of labor have become excessively routine and boring, to the point where the strain of eight hours on an assembly line is greater than was twelve hours at an artisan's bench under a more "primitive" form of production.

The interest in hobbies of a creative sort is a good thing. It has probably enabled many people in modern society to maintain their personal sanity, and may even have brought genuine happiness here and there. In a world the values and objectives of which are bound to the profit motive, it is only natural that a large business has grown up to provide people desirous of working creatively in their spare time with the means—or alleged means—to do so.

Works of "art" for one to "do" by filling in numbered colored spaces with the appropriately numbered color in the accompanying set of paints, are to be found in all the dime stores. Space ships, frontier forts and dinosaurs are provided in "kits" for the kiddies to assemble... with their own cute little hands. Thousands of hobby shops have sprung up throughout the land to supply the market. Older children and many adults find satisfaction in assembling scale-model miniature cars, trains, whole railroad systems and plastic villages for the right-of-way.

It can be argued that the resulting products of the hobbyists' activities are not really creative, but so long as they satisfy to some degree an inner yearning and make life more livable, we shall not take issue with them.

However, in its search for new hobby items of packaged ersatz happiness, fresh products are continually being designed. No angle is overlooked and new surprises are always being prepared by the quick-buck boys. Upon discovering a recent "kit" put out by the Precision Plastics Company (4647 Stenton Ave., Philadelphia 44, Pa.) which makes the item we are about to describe as one of their "Precision Hobby Kits" (No. R-501-100—retail price \$1) we cannot but suspect that perhaps at long last, the ultimate in Do-It-Yourself hobby kits has been achieved.

On the attractive, colorful box, the title reads: "Crucifix—Inspiring... Beautiful... Authentic." Upon opening the box one finds a mahogany colored plastic cross—in two pieces—plus Jesus Christ in fourteen (14) neatly machined, realistic bone-white plastic slices, all ready to be assembled and personally crucified by the devout hobbyist.

The manufacturer includes a guarantee covering any pieces that may arrive broken. He does not for some reason guarantee the degree of religious ecstasy to be derived by the do-it-yourselfer. A Crown of Thorns is of course provided (in three sections) and six plastic nails are supplied so that the job can really be accomplished "authentically."

We have wondered at times why a religion supposedly based on love and compassion should have selected an instrument of torture as its sacred emblem to replace the innocuous fish of the early Christians. The abysmal ignorance of the Middle Ages has hallowed it, but it has remained for the more perfect culture of the Twentieth Century to turn the holy symbol into a hobby item whereby the devout are invited to "Do It Yourself."

Regional Picnic

Under the joint auspices of the Libertarian League groups of Cleveland, Canton and Youngstown, Ohio.

All day, Saturday, July 4, 1959, at Marina's Farm, 3825 Lanterman Road, Youngstown (North-west edge of the city).

All comrades and sympathizers welcome.

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Nationalism vs. Freedom

The people have nothing in common with their rulers in either new or old nations. The struggle for national independence does not of itself assure the freedom of a down-trodden people. In too many cases a native dictator steps into the shoes of his imperialistic predecessor from whom he learned the trade. The behavior of the rulers in the newly established republics of Ghana, Sudan and Tunisia illustrates this principle.

The Premier of Sudan, Lt. Gen. Ibrahim Abboud, seized power in November, 1958, by staging a military coup. On March 4th, 1959, he dismissed his twelve fellow conspirators on the supreme council and made himself dictator. He dissolved all political parties, locked their offices and appointed himself Minister of Defense.

The situation in Ghana is not much better as this dispatch from the *New York Times* indicates: "ACCRA, GHANA, Nov. 11—The arrest of forty-three members of the Opposition United Party was denounced by the party as a frame-up to provide an excuse for setting up a totalitarian state. The Government... said those arrested persons, all members of the Accra branch of the United Party, are being held under a new act that allows detention up to five years. It was charged that Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, Interior minister Krobo Edusei and information Minister Kofi Baako had been marked for assassination."

In his efforts to build up the economy of Tunis, President Habib Bourguiba is following the pattern set by totalitarian and semi-totalitarian rulers. His program differs only in degree—not in principle—from that of Gen. DeGaulle in France, President Frondizi in Argentina, Premier Khrushchev in Russia, or Chairman Mao Tse-tung in China. Political and economic power is being built up at the expense of the people. The workers and peasants are forced to sacrifice their freedom and their labor at the behest of the rulers. President Bourguiba outlined his program in a number of speeches in January 1959.

We quote certain sections of his discourses as reported in *La Revolution Proletarienne* of Paris (March, 1959):

"...when the individual shows himself incapable of safeguarding his liberty and accepting freely the restrictions made for his benefit, when from lack of judgment, he does not know how to control his appetites, he deserves then to be treated as an animal or as a child who must be guided for his own good." (Speech of Jan. 22)

"The government has made the working class an inseparable part of the nation, since it has extinguished all vestiges of class antagonisms, the generator of conflicts, hate and envy . . . we must work with enthusiasm. We must have a healthy emulation and competition to increase production. This is the mission of the unionists... Upon the devotion of the working class depends the success of our projects."

How are affairs conducted in the government controlled Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT)? A Tunisian street-car worker wrote a letter to the General Secretary of the UGTT which appeared in *El Talia*, a Tunisian paper (Feb. 2nd, 1959). The letter was reprinted in *La Revolution Proletarienne*:

"I have the honor of calling to your attention a regrettable violation of union rules, during the general assembly of our union. These violations have provoked deep dissatisfaction and resentment among all tramway workers.

"1. The outgoing executive committee nominated to the assembly, the members of the new committee. The union rule is that the assembly nominates and chooses the committee.

"2. As far as voting is concerned, the right of the assembly to control voting procedure has not been respected. Brother Tahar Borsali should not have been allowed to participate in the assembly because he is one of the bosses in charge of traffic control. It is not possible for the employees to make propositions unacceptable to the bosses for fear that sanctions and discriminations would be used against them if they told truth... the truth can be unacceptable to the chiefs.

"3. The presence of administrative authorities is against union rules because the general assembly is a meeting of workers and not of their bosses.

"4. Newly hired workers only two months in the union were allowed to vote for the new committee, when they had no right to do so.

"5. The election was a fake because it was not controlled by the election committee. Mysteriously the count went wrong. There were 180 members in the hall and 225 votes were counted, 128 for, 77 against and 20 abstentions!! Obviously some voted many times.

For all these reasons the vast majority of the workers in the National Transport Society, true to the union rules and, union democracy, insist that a new General Meeting be called to hold new elections which will be controlled by the Regional Union of the Federation of Public Works ...We inform you of this situation in our union in the hope that you will try to find a solution to these problems.

Worker's Control - A review

One of the great tragedies of our time is the inability of the international labor movement to meet the challenge of entrenched despotism caused largely by the apathy and indifference of the workers. They have lost their militancy and revolutionary zeal. They no longer have the self-confidence and the intense belief that their organized power can change the world and this force, which once threatened the bastions of power and pelf is now sorely needed in the desperate emergency facing mankind.

A long period of indoctrination by the bosses, the political parties and the State has sapped the spontaneity and paralyzed the revolutionary capacity of the working class. The worker has been made to feel that his fate depends either on the capitalist "welfare" state or upon the "Communist" state capitalist government. Things are done for him and to him. Since he feels that he can do nothing about it, he cannot act for himself. Labor feels trapped and sees no way out.

The old generation of workers who were capable of militant class struggle against the exploiters and of inspiring younger workers with revolutionary ideals, were either liquidated or demoralized by the bolshevik counter-revolutionists or fell in the unequal struggle with the various fascist movements. A whole new generation of workers have grown up. To them the ideas and the tactics of the pioneers are a closed book. They must be re-educated. They must learn to apply the old principles to the new realities facing them.

Our British fellow workers of the Syndicalist Workers' Federation, through numerous pamphlets, are striving, against great odds, to carry on this vital work of re-education. Pamphlets like *The Hungarian Workers Revolution, Nationalization and the New Boss Class, What's Wrong With The Unions* and now their latest: *Workers' Control*, are designed to inspire the workers with a sense of their power. They reiterate that the workers need not choose between the frying pan and the fire. There is a way out of the statist capitalist trap.

This way out is Workers' Control, to be achieved through direct action. This is the message of the pamphlet. As far as the worker is concerned there is no real choice between "Communist" state capitalism and "welfare" capitalism. The distance between them is rapidly narrowing as welfare capitalism evolves in a totalitarian direction. The pamphlet points out that "In the so-called Communist societies, where in theory everything is administered by the state on behalf of the people equally, in practice there are even greater inequalities than in most capitalist countries."

The Labor Government in power in Britain for six years "left the capitalist structure of society intact, with attendant economic insecurity for the individual worker, basically unaltered." Attention is called to the fact that "in nationalized industries like the railways the workers are shamelessly expected to accept lower wages for longer hours in worse conditions than workers in private industries."

The pamphlet proves by numerous examples from past to recent times that workers' control is practical, and outlines in a general way the structure of a workers' world in a stateless society. It gives the facts about workers' control in Spain, Italy and Russia when a revolutionary situation existed in these countries. It gives examples of workers' control in the Israeli kibbutzim. Written in simple and eloquent language, this pamphlet encourages by inspiring hope and confidence in the creative capacity of the so-called "common man."

Note: The pamphlet, *Workers' Control*, is available from the Libertarian League. Price: 5 cents.
* * *

Among the acres of electronic brains that are the center of activity at Cape Canaveral is an old Chinese abacus, encased in a glass cabinet. On the cabinet is the legend: "Break Glass in Case Of Emergency."

Spain's Labor Underground Fights On

Notices from Barcelona tell us that in the textile factories of that city (2,200 factories employing 177,580) the workers are again demanding higher wages to meet the increasing cost of living. The government discharges and denounces as agitators anyone who protests. Widespread strikes are expected there and in both Sabadell and Tarrasa where factories operate on the three day week and various factories are closing, thus increasing the already sizable unemployment.

In numerous textile factories of Catalonia there were found on the ground and at employee's entrances mimeographed leaflets urging the workers to united action against tyranny. Here are some excerpts from the leaflets. "Unite with your comrades and friends. Organize in tight intimate groups and fight tyranny. The future of Spain depends on our own strength of action. Our strength will build our syndicates."

"Act in solidarity with your fellow workers. Protest against any and every injustice committed in your workshop, factory or office. Demand wage increases, better safety conditions, more and better social benefits. Prepare for the great days when we will construct the solid foundations of our union movement. The C.N.T. is with you."

(From *Solidaridad Obrera*, organ in Mexico of the Spanish National Confederation of Labor, C.N.T., Anarcho-Syndicalist labor movement.)

Work and Save

A few Sundays ago there appeared on television a drama which illustrates the skillful brain-washing and headfixing techniques of the Madison Avenue opinion makers.

A young married man, father of a baby, is complaining about the long hours and monotony of his job, the insults of his boss. When he quits, his wife attributes his inability to stick to his job to his desire to go fishing with his jobless neighbor from across the hall.

The neighbor is an older man who has been his companion on previous trips. Albeit a good mechanic, he has a reputation as a job-quitter. The young man argues with his wife that there is nothing wrong in what he is doing since he has always managed to provide for the family and they have some money in the bank. The little woman is adamant, She does not want to be like her neighbors who have never gotten ahead. She goes to the neighbor's wife and together they concoct a scheme to make their husbands conform.

They both take night jobs in a factory. The wife leaves her baby in the care of its father. On pay-night she goes out with the "girls" from the factory for a good time to further impress upon her husband his inferior status and to make him feel ashamed of himself. After giving the baby its bottle, the young husband goes to his neighbor to arrange for the planned fishing trip.

But now the older man backs out. Shamefacedly, he admits that since he had surmised that his neighbor was quitting his job, and since he has been unemployed all winter, and having "learned his lesson," he had hastened to put in his own application and has now been accepted for the young man's job. He had promised the boss, who knew his bad record as a job-quitter, that he would be a "good boy" and work steady.

Sadly, and slowly, the young man goes across the hall to his apartment to think long, long thoughts. When his wife does not return on time, he paces the floor, a jealous, troubled man; visualizing his seductive wife in the arms of another. However, the little wife, who is of coarse, a "good girl," returns home with a big pizza pie for her husband. They fall into each other's arms. He promises that he will turn over a new leaf. He will take the menial job which her brother has offered, even though he had turned it down before, because of his patronizing attitude and because he had called him a "jerk" and a "loafer."

He has learned his lesson. All his spontaneity he will crush within himself. No spring zephyrs will lure him with their insidious perfumes. He will forget about fishing trips up in the green woods alongside rippling streams. He will work, work, work. They will save, save, save. Then they will buy a car, and a house, and fill it with all the heavenly wares advertised on television.

Thus are dissipated the admirable skills and talents of writers, producers, actors and technicians who so graphically dramatize the familiar occurrences of our lives. Man is dehumanized. A halo of sanction is spread over the ugly features of our society and wage slavery made more palatable.

Franco's Jails—America's Responsibility

According to *Iberica*, Spanish Republican review published in New York, Antonio Gil Benet is now 62 years old, but he cannot realistically look forward to a peaceful retirement with his grandchildren playing at his feet, and a pitcher of good Spanish wine at his elbow.

At the termination of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, he was condemned to 30 years imprisonment for his part in the armed struggle against fascism. Since a substantial part of the country's labor force was economically unproductive in jail, many of the political prisoners were later released and this militant was among those released.

In 1945, he was again incarcerated under the usual phony accusation of Communist activities. He was again sentenced to 30 years (by a court martial in Oviedo) and has been rotting in prison ever since. He is now in the penitentiary at Burgos.

This worker's lot is merely one of many thousands held in Spanish prisons with the acquiescence and assistance of the United States Government, whose loans and grants in aid to Hitler's stooge, Franco, have enabled this regime to survive.

You Can't Take It With You

For some time we have intended writing on a matter that can only be considered with some reluctance. However, as revolutionary realists we feel that it should be discussed frankly.

Over the last few years we have had repeated news of the deaths of old-timers of the Anarchist movement and of the I.W.W. Death is something that sooner or later reaches us all, but people are reluctant to consider it where it concerns themselves. Most of these fellow-workers and comrades, after spending long years on the treadmill of production, have little or nothing to leave to their descendants, other than the memory of a lifetime spent in devotion to the cause in which they believed. Most of them leave little more than sufficient for a decent burial.

However, we have heard of a number of cases where old "comrades-in-arms" have returned to Mother Earth with several thousand dollars in the bank—set aside to assure their declining years—and with no will and no legal heirs. Then it is the State that benefits. Many of the old-timers who read these lines can probably remember one or more such cases, and a few that we know of have made provision that this should not happen to them.

Certainly no Anarchist or Wobbly wants his savings to pass into the coffers of an institution that he has struggled against all of his life. When Frank Gonzales of the Cultura Proletaria group died a number of months ago, leaving no relatives or legal heirs, it was found that he had arranged for his insurance and his savings to go to the Spanish Libertarian movement in Exile. No one can deny that this was as it should be. But not everyone has had this foresight.

Quite recently an elderly old-timer of the I.W.W. died on the West Coast, leaving several thousand dollars to the organization that had, during his lifetime, embodied his highest hopes. But for every one who has taken this provision there are several others whose hard-earned dollars have been lost upon their death.

Most of the old-timers to whom these words are especially directed, have some particular organization or cause to which they would prefer to make one last, final contribution. We do not feel that it is in bad taste to urge them to take steps now while there is yet time. The Industrial Worker or L'Adunato need your money more than the State does. The Workers' Defense League, the Civil Liberties Union, the Spanish Refugee Aid, the Libertarian League, S.I.A. and the American Friend's Service Committee are all worthy causes that would benefit through such bequests. We can think of others and so can you.

A word of warning, however. Some familiarity with the State and its courts would indicate to us that it is not advisable to leave money directly to any of the organizations mentioned. It is

suggested that the will be carefully drawn, providing for everything being left to some friend in whom the party concerned has the utmost confidence. This friend should have instructions as to the final disposition of the inheritance.

We hope that no one will take offense at our frank treatment of this problem, and that it will be considered in the spirit in which it is intended.

It Happens...

A.F. (San Francisco)

Conversing with a fellow wage-slave at lunch the other day, the subject of elections came up. I immediately asked him, "Why do you take part in that foolish show?" and he answered with brain-frozen dogmatism, "Because it is my duty to vote for the man that represents the people's interests."

I then explained that neither party was concerned with his or any other human's problems and that the ignominious pretense of promising everything under and including the sun has long been exposed for the lie that it is, by the consistent past actions of the political lice of both parties. Concluding, I granted my somewhat taken-aback co-worker that I did see differences in the two parties, in that a vote for the Republicans can insure, from past performance, a good chance of starving to death, while the pleasant alternative of the "Democratic" party has been the wearing of a uniform and the possible ending of your life by a quicker method.

My fellow worker thought for a moment and then said, "You know, I more or less agree with you. That's why I vote for one party one year and the other the next."

Ed. note: To which we might add that votes for a "Labor" or "Socialist" party would be just as futile as shown by the experience of every such party that has ever held power in any country.

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 League Activities

New York:

The Libertarian Center 86 E. 10th St. (between Third & Fourth Avenues)

Open Forum every Friday at 8 p.m.

Dinner and Social on the third Saturday of every month at 7:30 p.m.

Cleveland:

3705 West Park Road (near Lorraine and Triskett)

Discussions on the last Friday of each month at 8 p.m.

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