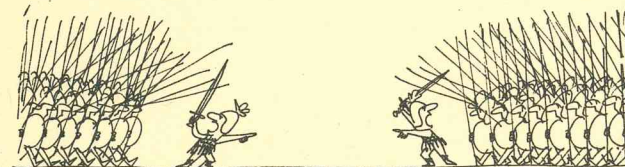


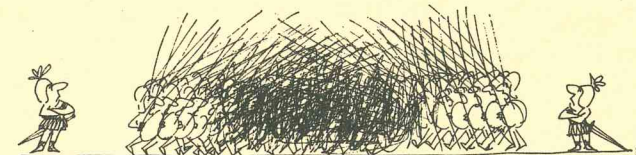
VIEWS & COMMENTS

of the libertarian league

No. 48



War



WINTER 1965

10c

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MFY under FIRE



TWO YEARS AGO an organization, conceived by a group of Columbia University social researchers and supported by city and federal funds, was established on New York's Lower East Side. It was Mobilization for Youth and its approach was founded on a rejection of the commonly-held idea that antisocial behavior of slum dwellers was a result of some kind of psychological inadequacy and looked instead to social roots, to the things that frustrate healthy urges of those who are forced to live in slums. Instead of providing psychiatric aid to these people, they sought instead to improve their condition, generally by finding jobs for unemployed young people and also by publicly promoting civil rights and the right of tenants to decent living conditions. An unpopular discovery of those who worked in this agency was that the energies that went into self-destructive activity such as gang war and dope addiction could successfully be channeled into constructive social action. Eventually the organization began providing aid to rent strikers and recruiting young people for picket lines.

The reaction of other sections of the public was what one would expect. After a steady stream of accusations had been hurled at the agency, it came under investigation by "Bossy" or the Bureau of Special Services, which is the political arm of the New York Police Department, and finally by the FBI. Mayor Wagner, who was elected to office on a Reform Democratic ticket and who enjoys some prestige in liberal circles, and who even before the investigation indicated his unease with the activities of Mobilization for Youth, warned that its budget would be immediately cut if the investigation uncovered subversive influences.

Three hundred people work for Mobilization for Youth. The investigation found 2 Communists, 3 "leftists," and 32 people on record as having signed "leftist petitions."



If anything, Mobilization for Youth was not radical enough. The futility of providing work for unemployed youngsters in an economy which produces an ever-diminishing supply of available jobs, or of supporting rent strikes whose outcome will be decided by a city government steeped in the concept of "property rights."

The fatal weakness of the organization was its source of income. If those in power are sane, they will not provide money for anything which will undermine their own position. If by their hesitation they fail to solve the social problems that confront them, the solution to their dilemma is obvious—the time-honored one of creating ever more departments, bureaus and agencies to deal with the ever-increasing problems.

The real solution to the problem of poverty will come only through the development of mass movements fully conscious of their conflict of interest with the power structure. Public funds may not be forthcoming for such movements, but they and not the government will hold in their hands the power to change society.

--Walter Coy

RUMBLINGS inside the UAW

UNTIL A FEW YEARS AGO negotiations between the United Auto Workers union and the motor corporations followed a familiar pattern. A list of demands was presented to the employers. With or without a strike, an over-all national agreement was signed, subject to ratification of individual plant issues by the locals. Ratification followed almost immediately and was regarded as a mere formality. The leadership's control over the locals assured speedy ratification.

This is no longer so. The Union leadership can no longer guarantee that the workers will resume production as anticipated. The national contract with General Motors was signed October 5, 1964, but the strike continued, and ratification by the locals was withheld for a whole month after the signing of the national agreement.

The workers have lost confidence in their leaders because they have done absolutely nothing to settle 17,900 grievances affecting their working conditions in their places of work. Most of the grievances concerned inhuman speed-ups on the assembly lines, insufficient time to go to the toilet, insufficient rest periods, setting of arbitrary time limits for each operation by "efficiency experts" who would themselves never be able to sustain the speed they set for the workers, harsh disciplinary measures for alleged violations of company work rules, arrogance of foremen and other supervisors, rotation of night shifts; and so forth.

Unable to get their complaints satisfactorily settled through the union channels, they resorted to direct action by staging unauthorized wildcat strikes in defiance of both the employers and their leaders. There have been literally hundreds of "wildcat" strikes involving tens of thousands of workers all over the country. This has been going on since before 1958. In 1961, the

local unions, not the leaders, staged a runaway strike, which the leadership had the greatest difficulty in finally bringing under control. These "wildcat" strikes also concerned grievances. The workers also showed their displeasure by ousting one third of the local officials.

All this explains why the union leadership allowed the workers to prolong the return to work. A New York Times editorial, Sept. 27, 1964 sums up the situation:

" . . . In the view of Industry he (Reuther) found himself a political prisoner of the Locals which wanted to hold out for a settlement that might end some of the 17,900 remaining grievances—letting the members blow off steam by a relatively brief walkout is less damaging to the national economy than a rank and file insurrection that might drag on for weeks and the Union High Command powerless to arrest it. . . ."

The distinctive issues involved in this situation are: 1. The monetary settlement was not regarded by the workers or the employers as of primary importance; grievances are more important to the workers because they involve their living relationship with supervisors in the place of work where they spend so much of their lives; important as wage increases are, the workers value their dignity as human beings more. 2. The employers are more susceptible to monetary agreements which can be passed on to the consumer. But settlement of grievances encroaches upon the right of the employers to regulate the life of the worker within the factory, and the right of the worker to determine the rate of production; they are apprehensive that such encroachments will gradually lead to what they fear most—workers control of industry. 3. The "increasing wildcat" strikes indicate the beginning of a grass-root revolt of the plain workers against the union leadership apparatus.

The extent to which the smug leadership has lost contact with the needs and temper of the rank and file workers is demonstrated by a high Auto Union official's silly question:

"How can we get greater loyalty from the individual to the union?" one of the United Auto workers officials asked. "All the things we fought for, the corporation is now giving the workers. What we have to find are other things the workers want which the employer is not willing to give him, and we have to develop our program around these things as reasons for belonging to the union."

-- New York Times, Sept. 8, 1963

If this trend continues, both the employers and the union hierarchy will discover, to their unpleasant surprise, that workers will fight for motives which threaten them both.

--W.

Long Night in Bulgaria

THE AUTHORITARIAN government afflicting the people of Bulgaria is now celebrating its twentieth anniversary. In spite of its boasts about its alleged achievements, the Bulgarian regime is so unpopular and unstable that were it not for soviet support, it would be overthrown in 48 hours. The misery continues to mount and the regime cannot even supply the population with vegetables, despite the fact that Bulgaria always had a surplus of garden products. Prices in general continue to rise, especially in necessities, while wages remain stationary. Consequently, the workers, supposedly the backbone of the regime, are the most discontented.

Masses of peasants, in protest against forced collectivization, have left the farms to seek employment in the cities. Agriculture is in the hands of old men and women. This situation has provoked the greatest peasant discontent in Bulgarian history. Youth also is restless, in spite of the propaganda, they oppose the

bolshevik regime. And the Communist Party is in crisis over the soviet-chinese conflict.

Under these circumstances, the Libertarian movement has many sympathizers, but it is absolutely impossible to develop any activity. There is no formal organization, but there is contact between militants who know each other. Relations and contacts abroad are regularly maintained through special channels and arrangements.

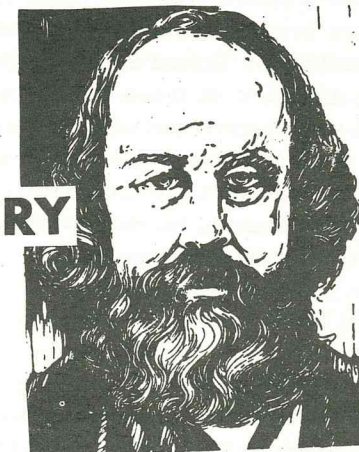
The young people who adhere to Libertarian ideas are of two categories: those whose parents or relations are comrades able to get pamphlets or other literature and learn about our ideas and those who come to our ideas unaided, through their own experiences, who are only vaguely and for the most part, incorrectly informed about our ideas and movement.

The situation of the Libertarians is desperate, as is that of all who will not submit to the communist tyranny. Forced labor camps have been re-introduced in Bulgaria. This time they are populated by many trotskies, anarchists and unaffiliated rebels. Lately twelve anarchist militants have been arrested and questioned by the authorities on the ridiculous and fantastic charge, that they are plotting against the regime by participating in the Russo-Chinese conflict—on the side of the Chinese. As the comrades in Bulgaria are unable to refute publicly and deny that they have any connection with or endorse in any way the Chinese variety of totalitarianism the Commission to Aid the Anti-Fascists of Bulgaria, in the name of all the Anarchists in and out of Bulgaria, declare that they do not take sides in the conflicts between Communists, a conflict between States. The Commission calls on all anti-fascists and lovers of freedom everywhere to “protest to the official Bulgarian representatives in their respective countries, demanding the elimination of the forced labor camps, and the restoration of civil liberties.”

Readers desiring more information or wishing to make contributions should write to: “Notre Route,” Boite Postale 81-20, Paris IX, France.

--B.

A REVOLUTIONARY CENTENNIAL



1

LABOR AND SOCIALIST organizations of all tendencies are celebrating the centennial of the “First International” (International Workingmen’s Association.) founded at a conference in St. Martins Hall, London, September 28, 1864. In 1862, a delegation of 200 French workers, chosen by their fellow workers from the workshops and factories of Paris, went to London to study the technical exhibits at the Universal Exhibition. At a great banquet, given by the English trade unionists in honor of the French Delegation, the English issued a manifesto which read: “We must find some method of international communication which will form a new link in the chain of friendship which will unite the workers of all countries.” In 1863 contacts between the French, Belgian and other workers was renewed and it was decided, at the suggestion of the English unionist Odger, to organize an international congress to devise ways and means by which workers could help each other in strikes, prevent competition of lower paid labor, promote organization of unorganized workers and better understanding between the workers of all lands. If the international would have merely confined itself to these concerns it would have been no different from other attempts at international organization.

But the International went beyond these limits. Although it lasted only ten years, it was a paramount influence in the develop-

ment of the modern socialist labor movement. The growing number of workers organized into unions and the wave of strikes all over Europe and in the United States frightened both employers and governments. Out of these struggles, the modern labor movement emerged and opened vast perspectives for social change. The bitterness of these struggles and the repressions by the rulers demonstrated to workers the true nature of capitalism, heightened their class consciousness, intensified their militancy and made them receptive to socialist ideas.

Up to this time, the various socialist concepts were held by advanced workers and "avant garde" socialist sects. Socialism became a movement when it emerged from its ivory tower, and participated in the labor movement, thus providing a mass base for the realization of its ideas. It was this participation which enriched socialism by giving it closer contact with practical problems. In turn the labor movement was inspired by the lofty ideals of socialism, taking on a deeper and more revolutionary significance. It was this blending of socialism and class struggle which gave the International its unique place in socialist labor history. It is precisely the divorce from the ethical and inspiring values of socialism which to a large extent accounts for the venality and corruption in the modern labor movement.

2

All socialist factions, of that period believed that a social revolution was imminent. Although this was an illusion, it nevertheless produced some good results. The sense of urgency stimulated the men of the International to evolve a constructive socialism applicable to the overthrow of capitalism and to sketch out the structure of the new society envisioned by them. The debates which took place in the congresses of the International crystallized two diametrically opposed tendencies which differed on the theory and tactics of socialism. These tendencies are today known as the authoritarian-statist and the Libertarian anti-statist schools of socialism. The International is important because these were the ideas that determined the direction of the modern labor movement. All modern labor and socialist movements derive their orientation from the International. The International was the alma mater of the socialist labor movement.

3

As the immediate task of the International was to unite the workers as a class, not politically but economically, and awake the mind of the proletariat to the necessity for international solidarity, it became necessary to draft a program which would be acceptable to all of the workers whatever their religious, political and social beliefs. The preamble to the provisional statutes of the International, written by Karl Marx, met these requirements and was accepted by all the affiliated labor organizations as its basic document. The key points of the preamble were:

"The emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself. The economic submission of the working class to the monopoly of the means of production is the source of their political, material and moral servitude—the struggle for emancipation means a struggle for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule.

The economic emancipation of the working class is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinated as a means."

Since the workers must organize on the economic front, the International stressed the importance of direct economic action, strikes, boycotts, slow-downs, collection of strike funds, sit-ins and various other direct action methods devised by the workers. The Brussels Congress of 1868, for example, unanimously adopted a resolution stating that:

"In case of war we recommend the general strike, and the Congress of the International expresses the conviction that the international solidarity in all countries will be sufficiently strong to insure the help of the people in the battle against war."

The statutes of the International were designed to prevent the domination of the organization by any of its factions while still guaranteeing absolute freedom of expression for all tendencies within its ranks. Both of these conditions were necessary for the

life and welfare of the International. The organization would die if it were to be monopolized by any one group of members. On the other hand, a labor movement which is closed to the circulation of political, social and cultural influences would soon become sterile and useless. It must constantly be stimulated and enriched by the injection of fresh and creative ideas affecting the broader interests of the workers. One of the main reasons for the deterioration of modern labor unions is that they have lost their independence by allowing themselves to be dominated by political parties, the state and even the Church.

Within the decentralized structure of the International, the affiliated sections were autonomous and conducted their own affairs in accordance with the special conditions in their localities. To insure the autonomy of the sections, the organization deprived the General Council of any legislative or policing powers. The General Council was only a clearing house through which the sections exchanged information and coordinated their efforts in matters of common concern. The anti-authoritarian sections of the International were satisfied with the decentralized structure because it was consistent with Libertarian organizational concepts.

The Authoritarian wing, however, was never satisfied with this situation. They had entered the International in the hope that they would eventually mould it to fit their authoritarian pattern.

4

Their first step was to gain control of the International and convert it into an electoral machine for the "conquest of state power." The International must be centralized and the General Council must rule the sections as a state rules its subjects.

To do this it became necessary to neutralize, and failing that, expel the opposition. The conniving began when the General Council staged the London Conference of 1871. The Conference was packed with Marx's stooges. Of 22 voters, only 9 had been regularly delegated to represent their respective sections, the rest were recruited from the General Council and the secretariat. The Conference railroaded through a resolution calling for the establishment of parliamentary political parties in every country. The General Council usurped the powers of the membership and ar-

rogated to itself the right to suspend whole sections, even national federations from the International. Only a Congress had the right to act on such matters, and even then, its decisions had to be ratified by a referendum of the affiliated unions.

The protest of the overwhelming majority of the International was so great that the authoritarian minority saw that it had no chance whatever of capturing the organization. The authoritarians, like all other factions could have discussed their views within the International, but they were not satisfied with this.

Unable to rule, they decided to ruin.

This was accomplished at the Hague Congress of 1872. This Congress like the London Conference was duly packed with Marxist puppets. Bakunin, James Guillaume and other outstanding Libertarian militants were expelled. A resolution flatly violating the fundamental principles of the International stated that:

"-- In the battle against the collective power of the capitalist class, the workers can only act as a class by organizing into a political party."

The Blanquist ally of Marx, Eduard Vaillant, in arguing for the Resolution warned that:

"-- as soon as this resolution has been adopted by the Congress as the Bible of the International, it will be the duty of every member to follow it under penalty of expulsion."

The Authoritarians completed the destructions of the International by removing the General Council to New York, where it peacefully expired two years later, (for further details consult the Marxist historians Otto Ruhle and Franz Mehring). Rudolf Rocker, hits the nail on the head when he wrote:

"By this, Marx and his followers directly provoked the open split in the International with all its disastrous consequences for the development of the labor movement,

and inaugurated the period of parliamentary politics which of natural necessity led to that intellectual stagnation and moral degeneration in the socialist movement—" (Anarcho-Syndicalism, page 90-91).

The attempts of the Marxist authoritarian bloc in the International to capture the European labor movement was a calamity. The same policy followed by Marx's authoritarian disciples from the Russian Revolution of 1917 up to the present is an even greater catastrophe. The decline of the International was not due to the animosity between the followers of Marx and Bakunin. It involved fundamental disagreements about the principles and tactics of the socialist movement. Two diametrically opposed ideologies clashed. The Libertarian and Authoritarian Socialist tendencies in the International could not co-exist, they cannot do so today.

5

In different forms, the struggle between the two tendencies continues. The world has changed radically in the past century, but the issues raised by them are no less pertinent.

The French political scientist, Michel Collinet, points out that the issues discussed by the authoritarian Marxists and the libertarian Bakunists, in their time, seemed like abstract speculations about what might happen in the distant future. The problems which then seemed far fetched, he says:

"-- are today crucial; they are being decisively posed not only in the totalitarian regimes who related themselves to Marx, but also in the so-called capitalist nations which are being dominated by the growing power of the State --" (le CONTRAT SOCIAL—Jan. Feb. 1964).

Collinet correctly pinpoints the basic points of dispute between the Authoritarian and the Libertarian ideological conceptions in the International. How to assure liberty and free development in an increasingly industrialized society? How can capitalist exploitation and the oppression of the state be eliminated? Must the state be supplanted by a workers state or should the organized workers

destroy all forms of state power? Must power be centralized, or should power be diffused among multiple federated units? Should the International be the model of a new society or an instrument of the state? In the congress of Lausanne (1867), the Belgian delegate Cesar de Paepe asked:

"The efforts now being made by the International for the emancipation of the workers, could this not result in the creation of a new class of ex-workers who would wield State power, and would not the situation of the workers be much more miserable than it is now?"

Collinet remarks: "In this sense the criticism of Bakunin and the Belgian collectivists was singularly cogent. Is it not in the name of 'socialism' that the peoples in the totalitarian countries are in our times so heavily oppressed?"

For the various state-socialists in and out of the International, the answer to these questions was relatively simple. The workers control "their" State, therefore they, through the apparatus of "their" state would in effect be solving their problems. Is this not the theoretical justification for the Cuban, Russian and other dictatorships?

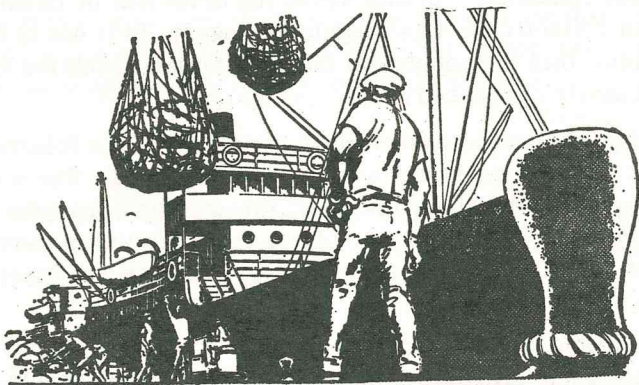
The position of the Libertarian wing of the International in respect to these questions differed radically from the authoritarians. At the, Basel congress (1869) the Libertarian delegates, through their spokesman, the Belgian Delegate, Eugene Hins, outlined the program which underlies the modern revolutionary syndicalist movement.

The Congress endorsed the following resolution:

"The Congress declares that all the workers should strive to establish associations for resistance (unions) in their various trades. As soon as a trade union is formed the unions in the same trade are to be notified so that the formation of national alliances in the industries may be begun. These alliances shall be charged with the duty of collecting all material relating to their industry, of advising about measures to be executed in common, and of seeing that they are carried out, to the end, that the present wage system shall be replaced by the federation of free producers---"

In explaining the merits of the resolution, Hins said:

“-- by this dual form of organization of local workers' associations and general alliances for each industry on the one hand and the political administration of the labor councils on the other, the general representation of labour, regional, national and international, will be provided for. THE COUNCILS OF THE TRADES AND INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS WILL TAKE THE PLACE OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENTS, AND THIS REPRESENTATION OF LABOR WILL DO AWAY ONCE AND FOREVER, WITH THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE PAST.”



Eugene Varlin, writing in “La Marseillaise”, official organ of the French section of the International declared:

“-- the social riches can be assured to humanity only on the condition that it be controlled by labor. Otherwise, it (social wealth) will be monopolized by the centralized authoritarian State. The State will then institute a hierarchical organization of labor from the top down in which the worker will be reduced to the level of a cowed, domesticated animal, indifferent, without initiative and without freedom--”

Bakunin insisted that the internal organization of the International must correspond to the new society that it was trying to establish:

“Since the organization of the International has as its goal, not the setting up of new states, but the radical destruction of every outside sovereignty, it must have an essentially different character than the organization of the State. To just the degree that the state is authoritarian, artificial, violent, alien and hostile to the natural development of the interests and instincts of the people, to that same degree must the organization of the International be free, natural, and in every respect in accord with these interests and instincts.”

Together with the Libertarian sections of the International, Bakunin declared that the workers of the International, in constructing their unions in accordance with libertarian principles were creating, within the old society the living germs of the new social order—they are creating not only the ideas, but also the facts of the future itself....”

Present day autocratically organized unions that are themselves miniature states can never be the cornerstones of a free society. It is neither practical nor desirable that a new society should be exclusively controlled only by unions, however free, or by any other single agency. Men are prone to sin and the danger of abuse of power is always present. A libertarian society must necessarily be a pluralistic society in which the infinite needs of men will be reflected in an adequate variety of organizations. But there can be no doubt that libertarian syndicates will be one of the cornerstones of the free society, irrespective of how that society may be organized.

In this field the International made many great contributions. Among them are two basic principles of revolutionary syndicalism, which are still relevant for our time: 1. Both the monopoly of property and the monopoly of political power, the state, must be eliminated. In view of the increasing control or ownership of the economy by the state, this principle is even more cogent that it was in the days of the old International. 2. As a practical alternative to the state, the libertarian wing of the International, worked out a system of free, federated workers councils, which would “replace the government over men by the administration of things”. This

principle is to-day known as workers control of industry.

6

The desire for worker's control of industry is deeply rooted in the heart of the world proletariat. The movement for free soviets (councils) which the workers of Russia fought for and which was finally crushed with the massacre of the Kronstadt soviet in 1921, the crushing of the workers' council movement in the Hungarian Revolution, the Polish uprising in 1956, are a few of the many attempts that were made. There is, of course, the classic example of the Spanish Revolution of 1936, in which the great constructive work of the Libertarian movement in the rural collectives and workers' control of urban industry were carried out according to the principles of the First International.



The June 1964 issue of the reformist, "News Bulletin of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Associations," declares:

"The issue that really matters is workers' control, that is, the ability of the worker to control decisions affecting his life in industry. Almost always the life of the worker is no different in nationalized industries than in those owned by non-governmental corporations—it therefore may be that the demand for workers' control will become the common ground of the most advanced sectors in the labor movement in both 'East' and 'West'."

It is obvious that workers' control in the true sense of that term is possible only in the kind of a libertarian society envisioned by the pioneers of the International. Deep changes in the structure of society will have to be made, and many hard battles fought before workers

control is a reality. But the fact that the advanced workers are beginning to understand that neither corporation or state ownership are satisfactory substitutes for workers' control may make them receptive to the libertarian alternative. They will sooner or later come to realize that they must divorce their unions from the State and their employers.

The political scientist, Geoffrey Ostergard, in a masterly article, appropriately titled "The Relevance of Syndicalism", says this:

"If there is a road, (to a socialist society) I am convinced that it is the third road which the syndicalist helped to pioneer. I believe that the socialists of this generation will have to take a long step backwards if they are to move forward again in the right direction. They will have to reassess the whole libertarian tradition from Owen to Sorel and from this reassessment draw sustenance for a new third camp movement." (ANARCHY, Number 28 — By 'third road' Ostergard means an alternative to both the social-democratic and Bolshevik varieties of socialism).

Ostergard also quotes the historian of socialism G. D. H. Cole, who also placed himself squarely in this third camp toward the end of his life Cole said:

"I am neither a Communist nor a Social Democrat because I regard both as creeds of centralization and bureaucracy—a socialist society must rest on the widest possible diffusion of power and responsibility—"

Ostergard's suggestion that a re-assessment of the libertarian tradition is necessary in order to adjust socialist ideals to the realities of our computerized atomic age should be examined by concerned non-conformists of all tendencies. In such an inquiry much can be learned from both the failures and the successes of the pioneers in the first International who fought for freedom a century ago.

Sam Weiner

latin american notes

CUBAN LIBERTARIANS MEET

On Last Labor Day weekend a representative of the Libertarian League was privileged to participate in a plenary conference of the Cuban Libertarian Movement in Exile. The meetings were held in Miami, Florida with over a dozen representatives of the groups in Miami, New York and Puerto Rico. There was frank and sometimes heated discussion in an attempt to evaluate recent activities and in the planning of future ones.

Inside Cuba, our comrades are still active in five of the six provinces. They are working under conditions approximating those faced by the various left opposition movements in Russia in the twenties. In many cases they are able to do little more than minister to the needs of the numerous members and sympathizers imprisoned by the Castro regime. Several have been executed. Some are involved in the activities of the scattered guerrilla groups. The libertarians work together in the underground with the other working class forces opposed to the totalitarian dictatorship. These include social-democrats and Trotskyists as well as people from the old 26th of July and Revolutionary Directorate who feel the need to fight against the counter-revolutionary policies of the Castro-Communist State.

It has been possible for the Libertarian Movement in Exile to maintain a continuous if tenuous contact with the groups inside of Cuba. Financial and other assistance is sent regularly to the people of the underground.

Argentina

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION about the activities of our Argentine comrades organized in the Libertarian Federation of Argentina (FLA) has been extracted from a report sent to us by the Secretary for International Relations, Comrade Pedro Herrera.

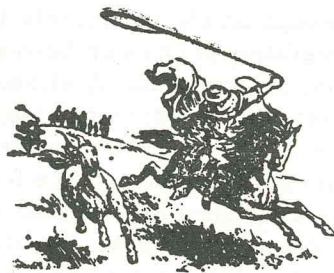
The FLA is a federation of groups, united in a permanent national organization, on the basis of a commonly accepted statement of principles worked out through preparatory discussions and definitely formulated in the national congresses. The tactics of the FLA, while constantly adjusted to changing situations, must at all times be in harmony with its principles. The FLA maintains relations with all other sections of the libertarian movement and cooperates loyally for common aims.

The organizational structure of the FLA is federalist. The groups, local and inter-local federations of the various zones and provinces are directly and indirectly integrated into the National Council which is the representative body of the FLA. The National Council, in Buenos-Aires conducts the national overall affairs of the organization, through an elected secretariat of seven members. The local Federation of Greater Buenos Aires consists of groups in San Martin, San Fernando, Avellaneda, Lanus and Remedios de Escalada. In the interior of the country there are organized and federated groups in Mar de Plata, Bahia Blanca, Villa Maria, Mendoza and San Rafael. The federation of the province of Santa Fe which includes Rosario, the second largest city of Argentina, is almost as large as the Greater Buenos Aires federation. Numerous isolated groups and individuals, who because of distance cannot form federations are in constant touch with the regularly organized bodies. About 800 comrades carry on the work of the FLA, 200 being especially active.

The official organ of the FLA is the eight-page Accion Libertaria. With brief interruptions due to governmental repression, (especially during the regime of Peron) it has appeared regularly since 1938. The Rosario organization publishes an Official Bulletin. In 1948 the theoretical magazine Reconstruir was founded. It is now a bi-monthly.

Reconstruir is highly regarded for the quality of its articles in intellectual and student circles, not only in Argentina but also throughout Latin America. Reconstruir has published, to date 18 good sized pamphlets and two books dealing with the history of our movement and various aspects of the libertarian ideology, by internationally known libertarian thinkers. In conjunction with the magazine there is a library and bookstore, carrying foreign libertarian and related literature which is widely distributed throughout Latin America.

The FLA publishes the Spanish edition of the bulletin of the International Commission of Labor Relations (CILO) which carries articles about the labor movements in various countries from its special correspondents. Each bulletin consists of 22 to 26 mimeographed pages. The FLA in cooperation with the publishers TUPAC, the cooperative publishers LANARA and the Anarchist Federation of Uruguay established in 1960 a libertarian publishing enterprise which issues not only Libertarian works, but also books of general cultural and literary interest. So far the eleven books have been published and others are in preparation.



The FLA stimulates and promotes the participation of our affiliates within Argentina's largest labor organization: the Peronist-Communist dominated general Confederation of Labor (CGT). This organization, despite the fall of Peron is still dominated by him and is now engaged in a campaign to bring Peron back from Spain. The policy of the FLA is to counteract the totalitarian influence in the CGT and prepare the ground for the revival of the libertarian

traditions and tendencies of the Argentine labor movement. The militants of the FLA are active in the following unions: printers, commercial employees, plumbers, railroads, banks and insurance. All of them, with the exception of the plumbers, (which is independent) belong to the CGT. The activity of the FLA also extends to schools cooperatives, neighborhood associations and other societies.

The FLA is fighting a valient battle against great odds. Despite its numerical weakness and limited resources, it is nobly and energetically fulfilling its purpose—spreading libertarian ideas and constructive Libertarian solutions to social ills by stimulating the healthy and noble forces in community life.

Brazil

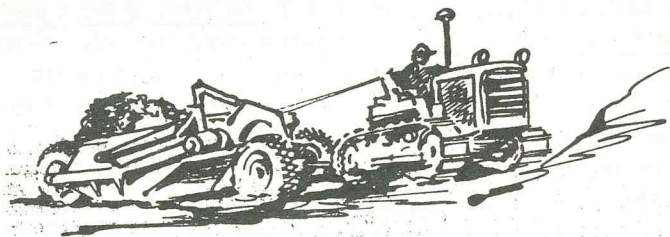
THE LIBERTARIAN-SYNDICALIST, Bulletin of the Commission for Labor Relations (CILO) carries news about the labor movement in various countries supplied by its special correspondents. The Latin-American edition, (Aug. 1964) summarizes a report titled, "The Situation in Brazil," from two trusted and informed correspondents—one in Rio de Janeiro and the other in Sao Paulo. From this and other libertarian sources we extract the following information.

The military coup d'etat of March 31, 1964 which ousted the constitutional government of Joao Goulart, replaced it by the government of Castillo Branco, whose mandate was legalized by Congress. The communist propaganda apparatus deliberately had spread the lie that the Goulart government, with the enthusiastic support of the workers and peasants was making a social revolution and that this genuine people's revolution was drowned in blood by the armed might of the counter-revolutionary classes. The true situation can be summed up as follows:

Long before the beginning of March, it was clear that Goulart, supported by various totalitarian "marxist" groups, (Kremlinities, Maoists, Castroites and others) was plotting to grab all power by staging a coup d' etat. In addition to the communists, Goulart was

supported by a goodly number of adventurers who, like Goulart himself favored a Peronist style dictatorship. The schemers did not trust each other. The communists planned to dump Goulart after using him to climb to power, while Goulart plotted to use the communists, getting rid of them, when he felt strong enough to do so. All these factions were supremely confident that the coup d'etat would succeed because it was backed up by the immense power of the Brazilian government controlled by Goulart and Co.

The confidence and insolence of these groups was so great, that days before the coup, they were already threatening to shoot all those who disagreed with them. They strutted and swaggered, insulting, assaulting, threatening everybody—behaving as if they were already the masters of Brazil, as if Prestes (leader of the Brazilian Communist Party) was the new Fidel Castro—as if a new Russian satellite had already been launched in Latin America.



In spite of the clamor and the noise, in spite of the months of propagandizing and bulldozing by these politicians, it was evident that the people as a whole, and especially the workers, remained passive and failed to respond to their appeals. The union leaders who were integrated into the totalitarian groups, tried in vain to arouse the masses, but they could not win them over to their "revolution." The attempted power grab was a colossal flop. That it was not a true social revolution is proved by the fact that the military takeover was accomplished without firing a shot. Nothing happened. There were no strikes, no demonstrations nor any other sign of popular resistance. The irresponsibility and cowardice of the leaders was shown when they fled without putting up even a token resistance.

The overthrow of the Goulart government alarmed progressives all over the world because they knew that the policy of rightist dictatorships is based on the belief that "it is better to annul the freedom of a hundred liberals than to free a single communist." The first news from Brazil, announcing that the Branco government prohibited the sending of all written propaganda, increased the alarm. As the days passed, the Branco government in its endeavor to mollify the anti-communist liberals at home and public opinion abroad, granted limited freedom of expression and democratic leaders in Latin-America justified the "temporary" curtailment of political freedom on the grounds that the communist menace had not yet been entirely eliminated.

Superficially it would seem that the Branco administration is a benign, tolerant paternalist regime which promises to hand over its power to a democratically—elected government when the emergency is over. Whether this promise will be fulfilled remains to be seen. It is at best extremely doubtful. The relative tolerance of the Branco government is only a mask, behind which the fascist forces are secretly operating.

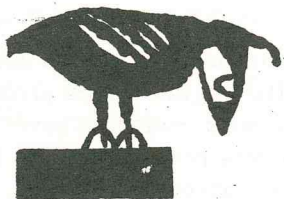
Liberal papers in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo have protested that the Branco government has allowed PIDE, the secret police of the Portuguese fascist Salazar dictatorship, to enter Brazilian prisons in order to question and even torture Portuguese anti-fascist refugees, jailed by the Branco police.

The homes and shops of Portuguese anti-fascist refugees have been raided, many of them have been abused and jailed, and many are not communist. The home in Rio de Janeiro of our comrade the Portuguese anarchist Edgar Rodriguez, was also raided. These atrocities are going on while the pro-Branco press, radio and television reassures the people that it respects civil liberties and is not a dictatorship.

The myopia of all rightist governments has one common denominator—McCarthyism. All the lefts are "communists," and while concentrating on repressing the "subversives," it leaves the door open to the fascists, who gradually maneuver themselves into key governmental posts. In order to liquidate the communists, the

Branco government welcomes all allies, including the Portuguese Fascist state.

Many months have passed since the Branco government has come to power. It has not, and cannot do anything to halt the economic and social crisis which is assuming catastrophic proportions. The Branco government is a hybrid regime in which there are also liberal and democratic elements. If the pro-fascist faction can be checked by the democratic forces and the limited areas of freedom enlarged, it will enable the anti-totalitarian left movement to re-organize for coming struggles.



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BOOKS

brief experiment

SOVIET COMMUNES. Robert G. Wesson. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J. 1963. \$7.50

COMMUNES, IN THE SENSE of voluntary, equalitarian productive units, flourished and multiplied in the Soviet Union for 10 years after the Revolution in spite of indifference and hostility of the Bolshevik regime. Wesson's book is an interesting analysis of the spontaneous growth of this movement and its eventual, deliberate destruction by Stalin.

Russian traditions, both that of the dispossessed peasantry and that of the revolutionary urban dwellers, was fertile ground for the communal doctrines of equality. But neither Marx nor Lenin were capable of understanding these spontaneous impulses.

In the "Letter to Bebel," Marx (writes Wesson), "emphasized state interests must be paramount and land must be publicly owned. The program was clean in outline: Confiscation of estates, conversion of these into cooperatives under state ownership. . . ."

Not for Marx sentimental "brotherhood and equality" slogans Nor for Lenin: "It is necessary to 'clean up' the land of all this medieval rubbish," he wrote in The Development of Capitalism in Russia.

Lenin's last words on the communes (in 1923) was that it was "harmful, even fatal for communism to try to put into effect purely and narrowly communistic ideals."

The basic crime of the communal movement, in Bolshevik eyes, was its spontaneity, for it thus existed outside their direct control. To be sure, communes were forced to register with the Division of Collective Agriculture in 1918. By 1919, the Government was trying to tie them in firmly at the center. The understandable confu-

sion at the center prevented this, so that in 1920, communes were legally placed under control of local soviets and under the guidance of state bureaucrats. In theory, the Bolsheviks had, by 1919, decided in favor of state farms with their "hired labor, managers appointed from above, having no more authority than any state factory." Between the theory and action, however, a decade intervened . . . a decade in which communes grew and spread throughout the soviet empire—from a few in 1918 to 7,000 in 1930, spread through the North Caucasus, Siberia and the Far East.

The average farm was relatively small: between 12 and 30 families farmed between 45 and 90 hectares of land. "There seems to have been two basic directions in the commune movement," writes Wesson. "The small peasant brotherhood without official connections, possibly sparked by left Social-Revolutionaries or anarchists, were dominant at the time when Bolshevik control over the countryside was weak. As control was established from mid-1918, more or less politically oriented communes were founded with some help from soviet authorities and thus owed them some allegiance."

In 1925, Wesson learned, some one-third of the communes contained party cells. From 1928 on, communes "were subjected to a bombardment of orders from soviet and party authorities that was sometimes, if not always, overwhelming." At least one commune president used party directives to roll cigarettes.

The role of individual anarchists is not spelled out in the book. Wesson does mention an anarchist commune in the Kharkov region, "closely watched by secret police and subject to vexatious discrimination by soviet authorities."

The reasons for discriminations and fears of the Authoritarians are made clear with the following description of the anarchist ideal:

"The anarchists denied the right of the worker to the fruit of his work . . . and would grant him only an equal share of the goods of society, to which he and all

other humans were entitled as humans. . . . The labor of many different skills is intermingled in every product, and it is wholly arbitrary to say that one worker has contributed more than his fellows when the efforts of all are indispensable. . . . Even special skills of obvious value, such as engineering, do not merit special reward, for it is society as a whole that has made possible the necessary higher training. . . . If workers are to be drawn into certain lines or encouraged in dangerous or unpleasant occupations, this can be achieved merely by shortening work hours in these lines . . . factory and farm workers will trade places for variety's sake . . . nor does greater productivity deserve compensation, because it is due either to inequality of tools or to greater mental or physical powers; the latter are blessings in themselves, not title to extra goods in addition."

Anarchist ideals were by no means the only force behind non-authoritarian communes. Sectarian communities were perhaps the most numerous. These included Dukhobors ("Spirit Wrestlers"), Molakane ("Milk Drinkers"), and Strannikil ("wanders"). These, says Wesson, "were among the most efficient and stablest of all. . . ."

Anarchists and sectarians shared at least two things in common: They were against the government and against private property. No wonder the model charters sent by Moscow were so frequently ignored by the communards, most of whom preferred to live with simple and informal rules. In a 1924 Ukrainian commune, the rules included these points:

- Everyone entering the commune must understand clearly that he who works eats, so that he should take pains to do the job assigned him, knowing that, if he works for all, all will work for him.
- No matter what job anyone has, he receives equal shares with everyone else.
- Don't use strong drinks and don't go on binges.
- Don't start arguments . . . either about goods or politics.

Despised and feared by the soviet regime, short of mechanical implements, almost totally without trained agronomists or highly conscious non-authoritarian cadres, communes sprang leaks which made them easier to finish off. The communists were able to claim, with some justifications, that labor was frequently wasted (in fact, it was sometimes hired . . . a phenomenon we see again in the Israeli kibbutzim), books were poorly kept, livestock-keeping habits were pretty bad and, being unselective and open, communes had a high membership turnover.

Communes were annihilated with the Machine Tractor Station, which long remained the communist technocrats' favorite weapon against peasant solidarity. So long, in fact, that in the Ukraine in 1964, a miracle could be defined as "when you sow wheat in the Ukraine and reap it in Kansas."

When equalitarian principles were replaced by incentive pay, Wesson concludes, "a profoundly discordant note in an increasingly conformist and regimented social structure" was extinguished. Twelve years after Kronstadt, the last nail was finally hammered into the coffin of the Revolution.

--Gee



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Their current power struggle leads inexorably to atomic war and the probable destruction of the human race.

We charge that both systems engender servitude. Pseudo-freedom based on economic slavery is no better than pseudo-freedom based on political slavery.

The monopoly of power which is the state must be eliminated. Government itself, as well as its underlying institutions, perpetuates war, oppression, corruption, exploitation, and misery.

We advocate a world-wide society of communities and councils based on cooperation and free agreement from the bottom (federalism) instead of coercion and domination from the top (centralism). Regimentation of people must be replaced by regulation of things.

Freedom without socialism is chaotic, but socialism without freedom is despotic. Libertarianism is free socialism.

These ideas are expanded upon in the provisional statement of principles of the Libertarian League and in other literature that will be supplied free on request.

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