

Views & Comments #23

Libertarian League

August, 1957

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Views and Comments

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What We Stand For

Two great power blocs struggle for world domination. Neither of these represents the true interests and welfare of humanity. Their conflict threatens mankind with atomic destruction. Underlying both of these blocs are institutions that breed exploitation, inequality and oppression.

Without trying to legislate for the future we feel that we can indicate the general lines along which a solution to these problems can be found.

The exploitative societies of today must be replaced by a new libertarian world which will proclaim—Equal freedom for all in a free socialist society. "Freedom" without socialism leads to privilege and injustice; "Socialism" without freedom is totalitarian.

The monopoly of power which is the state must be replaced by a world-wide federation of free communities, labor councils and/or cooperatives operating according to the principles of free agreement. The government of men must be replaced by a functional society based on the administration of things.

Centralism, which means regimentation from the top down, must be replaced by federalism, which means cooperation from the bottom up.

The Libertarian League will not accept the old socio-political clichés, 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.

If you are interested in the League and its program and would like more information see the coupon on page 23.

Looking Forward

With this, our twenty-third issue of Views and Comments, we of the Libertarian League have been able to carry out one of our most important immediate objectives: the publication of our organ in a more attractive, readable form.

This is being done on the Multilith press which we have just bought and for which we are considerably in debt. Paying for it will involve sacrifices in the

months ahead for ourselves and for those of our readers who feel the need to spread Libertarian ideas in this country.

But there is no doubt that the acquisition of the press is worth much more than any temporary sacrifices on our part. Views and Comments, as the League's main propaganda organ, is the voice of our organization. It is absolutely necessary to publish it in as attractive form as possible, in order to insure a constant increase of readers and, consequently—ultimately, of League members.

The advantages of the press are not limited to Views and Comments, however. It is now possible for us to begin a badly needed series of pamphlets dealing with both the current economic, social and political life of the United States and also the classic works of Libertarian thinkers.

There has been a deep need for publication of our literature in the English language for a long time FREEDOM PRESS in London has done a fine job trying to fill the gap, but our English comrades cannot single-handedly propagandize the entire English-speaking world. There is a particular need for works dealing specifically with this country and its internal problems. We shall now be able to begin to satisfy this need.

But what does the purchase of the press mean in the larger picture of the League's activities as a whole? Simply this: it is tangible proof of the ever-growing vitality of our nascent organization. The League is not a splinter from a splinter of an already-dead political sect. Our organization was founded three years ago by a handful of people in New York City who felt the time was ripe for spreading Libertarian ideas in the United States. Judging by our progress to date, they were completely right. And with the continuance of the present upswing in our organizing activities the Libertarian League, which at present is hardly more than an organizational committee, will be an actual force in the U.S. and Canada.

It was stated above that the League is new. That is true. We represent the first real attempt to create a well-organized Libertarian movement in North America. However, our ideas did not spring from a vacuum. They are a continuance of a body of thought which was first systematically formulated by Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and many others. However, we have never allowed this body of thought to crystallize into a block of dogma. We have no infallible thinkers; even the ideas of our most highly-esteemed theoreticians are constantly being reexamined and re-evaluated. Ideas which have been invalidated by experience are discarded, and new ideas are examined, tested and rejected or accepted on the basis of the results obtained. Thus our ideas and our organizations throughout the world contain an inner vitality of their own.

The League does not intend to rest on its laurels, such as they are, now that we have a small press, a new varityper and other odd bits of equipment. We do not aim to become merely a more or less successful publishing venture.

Our efforts are aimed at the building of an organized integrated movement. Those who feel as we do, will join with us in this effort, Those who are young in years and in spirit and who agree fundamentally with our principles, are invited to help us in our efforts, as members of the Libertarian League. This will entail hard work and sacrifice, but has ever-increasing rewards in the knowledge that one is actually contributing toward tomorrow's better world.

(See coupon on page 23.)

"Do you remember the Roman philosophers in the first centuries of Christianity? The one blessing that remained for these people who were strangers to their own times, was a quiet conscience, the consoling knowledge that they had not been afraid of the truth, that, having once grasped it, they had found strength to endure it and to remain faithful to it.

"Another blessing: their personal relations, the certainty that there were others who understood, who sympathised with them, the certainty of a profound rapport that was independent of events."

—Alexander Herzen in *From The Other Shore*

Ghana and African Freedom

by C.W.

(Reprinted from *FREEDOM* of March 10, 1957.)

"The Prime Minister advanced to the microphone.

"We prefer self-government with danger to servitude in tranquillity!' 'Free-doom! Free-doom!'

"The crowd chanted as their dark and emotion-spent faces left the meeting: wistfully I watched their toga-draped bodies wander off in the fading light of the setting sun...I sat brooding. How had he conquered them? He had held them in the palms of his hands; he had poured scorn on the claims of the opposition; he had allowed no mercy for a contrary opinion; and it seemed that that was all his followers wanted. Prolonged British evasion and aloofness had made them ready to embrace certainty, definiteness...

"The greed of British business-men and the fumbling efforts of missionaries had made an unwitting contribution to this mass movement by shattering the traditional tribal culture that had once given meaning to these people's lives, and now there burned in their black hearts a hunger to regain control over their lives and create a new sense of their destinies...

"What I had seen was not politics proper; it was politics PLUS: It bordered upon religion; what I had seen was a smattering of Marxism plus the will to be, a thirst for self-redemption! And I suspected that Nkrumah himself was but an agent provo-

cateur in the emotions of millions—emotions which even he did not quite grasp or understand in all of their ramifications.”

—Richard Wright: *Black Power*

There is an inevitable paradox in the attitude of the anarchists—those who seek a non-governmental form of society—towards the struggles of colonial peoples for political independence. We are bound to support their aspirations and to play our part in changing opinion about them in this country. The activities of the Colonial Office are conducted in our name, and whether or not we feel responsible for them, the colonial people will certainly hold us responsible. But when a colonial territory has gained its freedom from imperial control, and a new state comes into being, with the usual panoply of armies, law courts, prisons, parliaments and ambitious politicians, we are bound to recognise that from the point of view of human freedom, one struggle is over only to give birth to a new one. And often those leaders who have been most worthy of support in the first one, become the adversaries in the second. For as a *FREEDOM* editorial put it last week, even the new nations born of persecution or through struggle, for liberation, “face a new life with hardened arteries, they have learned nothing from the past, they think and act along the lines of their persecutors and oppressors.”

If we were to say to a citizen of Ghana, the former British colony of the Gold Coast, that from an anarchist point of view, he had merely changed masters, he would reply “So much the worse for anarchism if it elevates theories above observable fact.” Because he knows that to have squeezed out the British without bloodshed, by continually forcing their hand: in the ‘Africanization’ of the government, at a pace which ten years ago would have seemed impossible, is a remarkable achievement; because he has seen during the regime of the Congress People’s Party, a “tremendous release of creative energy” in the development of the country, because he knows the simple truth of Kwame Nkrumah’s remark that “it is better to be able to manage your own affairs, or mismanage them, than not to be free to manage or mismanage your own affairs”; and because he is well aware of the important repercussions which Ghana’s independence will have on the whole of Africa.

Kwame Nkrumah has succeeded where the older generation of nationalist leaders in the Gold Coast failed, because, learning from his student days in America and Britain, he has built up a centralised streamlined political machine, with loud-speakers, great rallies, flags and songs and an atmosphere of religious revivalism. Where the opponents of the CCP have had scruples, he has none. When the American Negro writer Richard Wright interviewed the opposition leaders he found them baffled and resentful. He discussed Nkrumah with Dr. Danquah:

”Do you think he’ll keep power for long?’ I asked.

”Yes; until the illiterate masses wake up,’ he said.

”Why don’t you try to win the masses to your side?”

”I watched a grimace come over his face; he looked at me and smiled ruefully.

”Masses?” he echoed the word. ’I don’t like this thing of masses. There are only individuals for me.’

”But masses form the basis of political power in the modern world today,’ I told him...

”And suddenly it flashed through me that this man was not a politician and would never be one.”

It was the same when he interviewed Professor Busia, the leader of the National Liberation Movement, and asked him the significance of the oath-taking and libation-pouring at the rallies of the CCP.

”It’s to bind masses to the party,’ he said.

”Tribal life is religious through and through. Now these things, when employed at a political meeting, insure, with rough authority, that the masses will follow and accept the leadership. That is what so-called mass parties need... The leaders of the CCP use tribal methods to enforce their ends.’

”I had the feeling that he was speaking sincerely, that he could not conceivably touch such methods, that he regarded them with loathing and that he did not even relish thinking that anybody else would. My personal impression was that Dr. Busia has not the force and drive that makes a mass leader. He was too analytical, too reflective to even want to get down into the muck of life and organise men. I sensed, too, that maybe certain moral scruples would inhibit him in acting...”

Mr. Wright questioned Mr. John Tsiboe, the editor of an opposition newspaper in Ashanti, and asked him what he thought of Political parties as instruments of the popular will. He replied:

”Now, it’s not widely known, but the British offered us the party system before Nkrumah came along. We refused it. It clashes with our deepest traditions. We rejected it because it divides us. Our outlook upon life is based upon social cohesion. Until recently, I didn’t know what politics was. We Africans still don’t know. In its election campaign, the CCP painted everybody black and white: all who were for the Convention People’s Party were white, those who were against it were black bribe-takers, agents of imperialism... Our simple tribal people believed it. Do you realise that, for six weeks during the positive action period, my home and office had to be protected by the police?”

It is precisely this messianic and demagogic character of Dr. Nkrumah and the party which he wields so firmly, that has enabled them to achieve so much in the six years since his release from prison to become first ’Leader of Government Business’ and then Prime Minister. And it is this too which makes the future so perilous, In his laudatory biography of Nkrumah, Mr. Bankole Timothy remarks:

"As a politician, Nkrumah's strength lies in his popular appeal, his powerful oratory, and his methods of rendering his political opponents unpopular, which are both direct and, mostly, indirect. Nkrumah's hold on the masses is strong; he can switch their emotions, like a radio set, to whatever pitch he desires at any given time. He also has made profitable use of the gullibility of the masses and never relaxes his intensive propaganda campaign for his party. As Elspeth Huxley puts it, 'as yet, Africa has no technique for curbing people like Nkrumah; he has the ball at his feet...'"

Will he, now that the struggle for political independence has been won, change his methods? Or will his opponents adopt them too? Their apprehensiveness over the future has been clear in the last-minute negotiations to write into the Constitution regional assemblies in addition to the National Assembly, and other safeguards for Ashanti and the Northern Territories, where the CCP has by no means the almost universal support which it has won in the coastal regions. It would be tragic if the first fruits of Ghana's independence are to be found in an acrimonious and possibly bloody struggle between centralist and regionalist politicians, with a revival of Ashanti tribal militarism and the people as pawns. Tragic, not only for the Gold Coast because it will divert so much energy from the urgent task of conquering illiteracy and disease, but also for the whole hopes of African freedom. For while the world's eyes are turned on Ghana's independence celebration this week, not all of them are friendly. The French Government, and the other imperial powers like Belgium and Portugal, the governments of the East African colonies, Mr. Strydom and his party in South Africa, as well as the Tory imperialists and the Beaverbrook press here in Britain will be watching with glee to see if Ghana becomes another Liberia.

* * *

The whole tragedy of the new nations struggling into independence is that their leaders, the educated and articulate minority upon whom so much depends, are shaped in their thinking by the same assumptions which lie behind the political Systems of their former masters. There is not even that degree of fundamental political thinking that accompanied the break-away from the British empire, the American Declaration of Independence in 1776. Whether the aim is socialism or 'free enterprise', the means involve the centralised state, the party system, and all the second-hand regalia of political power. In Accra, they even have Mr. Speaker with his wig and mace. The worst remaining aspects of indigenous social systems are exploited because they are useful politically, and the best aspects of tribalism are destroyed:

"In the Gold Coast...under the old system Village Councils usually comprised all the male inhabitants of the Village concerned, normally summoned to meetings by beatings of gongs, ringing of bells or other traditional methods announcement,

Under the modern systems only a few people, selected by election, constitute the Village Councils.”

—Ntiyong Akpan, Epitaph of Indirect Rule

”You may never get rich, but you’ll never starve, not as long as someone who is akin to you has something to eat. It’s Communism, but without any of the ideas of Marx or Lenin.

”The men with whom he had shared life were his brothers; men of the same generation were brothers... He had brothers, not the sons of his mother, but men to whom he felt a blood relationship, brothers who fed him when he was hungry, let him sleep when he was tired, consoled him when he was sad... He had a large ‘family’ that stretched for miles and miles... I tried to visualise it and I could not.”

— Richard Wright, Black Power

Here are two facets of the old tribal culture which could be built into a new social order, the first into a network of village communes, and the second into a system of mutual aid, more genuine and comprehensive than any ‘welfare state.’ But, instead, the CCP has made use of the most primitive and irrational features of tribalism, while the opposition has been bargaining for the support of the backward-looking local chiefs. An article in the journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs notes that:

”The 180 local councils set up in the last five years, with powers similar to those of rural and urban districts in Britain, have been mainly remarkable for party struggle and a complete executive apathy. Many have been replaced by management committees, often of nominees picked out by the Accra Ministry but unknown in the area. It seems significant that in the last three years there have been no local council elections.”

and it goes on to express that:

”It is probable that the greatest reproach of Nkrumah, whose will is really the only unifying factor in the Gold Coast today, is that he has been so caught up in the whirl of development—the creation of modern amenities, a stadium, a library, a state house, a national museum, a national bank, in short a capital which could stand comparison among the nations of the world—that he has had little time to consider with any care the basic characteristics of the old tribal culture of the Gold Coast.”

All friends of African freedom will rejoice in the independence of Ghana, but they must hope for something more than an imported imitation of a European state, trapped in the web of politics. If the hunger for education and the pathetic ‘thirst for self-redemption’ of the people who swept Nkrumah into power, are left unsatisfied, Ghana, which could be a beacon to the whole of Africa, will merely be a warning of the folly and sterility of nationalism.

Franco's Propaganda Stunt Lays an Egg

When the motor ship 'Ciudad Toledo' arrived in Veracruz, Mexico, the public was invited aboard to visit the exhibition depicting the glories of Franco's Spain. The 'Young Libertarians of Mexico' took advantage of the occasion to distribute thousands of leaflets that were read avidly. They then addressed the crowd from a truck equipped with loud-speakers that drowned out all other sounds with the tune of the Spanish Revolution, "To the Barricades," and a recorded speech that Federica Montseny of the Spanish CNT had delivered on her recent trip to Mexico.

One of the leaflets distributed read as follows:

"WHAT IS NOT EXHIBITED ON THE MOTORSHIP 'CIUDAD TOLEDO':

"200,000 lovers of liberty in jails and concentration camps.

"150,000 cases of tuberculosis caused by the inhuman exploitation in factories and workshops.

"100,000 people executed after the victory of the 'Glorious National Movement.'

"One million people killed in Franco's 'National' Uprising.

Young Libertarians, Vera Cruz, 1956"

Opus Dei

Our discussion of the Opus Dei (Work of God), that sinister new instrument of the Vatican's foreign policy, can perhaps begin best with a translation of the editorial from the latest issue of Solidaridad Obrera, clandestine organ of the Spanish National Confederation of Labor (C.N.T.). The following article appeared in the issue for the first fortnight of April, 1957:

"We respect all ideas and beliefs within the limits of each individual's conscience, just as we detest institutions which tend to smother freedom of thought, which are impelled by a spirit of absolutism, aimed at making man submit to their dogmatic canons.

"A mysterious or, rather, deceptive institution has appeared recently in Spain. It is a thoroughly totalitarian organization and is called the Opus Dei.

"This is one of the most dangerous and terrifying laboratories of the Black International. And it desires to throw its tentacles over Spain with a much more ambitious end in mind...

"All areas and spheres of life which interest its leaders are being inundated with its specialized robots. Everywhere it is carrying on a stubborn, ferocious fight for absolute control.

"There are people who have never given up the idea of erecting a scaffold or a stake on every corner for providing public autos da fe. But since this would scan-

dalize too many people in our century and an indignant public opinion would rebel against them, these people, who lack sufficient temporal power to carry out their plans but do have enough personnel, are uniting and forming their Ku Klux Klans. They are preparing their poisonous weapons and laboring in their mission, that of halting any real progress and seeing to it that true freedom never reigns in the world.

”Ignacio de Loyola and the Company of Jesus also came out of Spain. The Jesuits were feared by even the most powerful, including their own Popes, even though the Order had been accepted and blessed by the Church.

”Now the Opus Dei is coming out of Spain, supremely ambitious, desiring an absolute spiritual empire ab majorem Dei Gloriam.

”The blessing of the Vatican is not lacking. And its direct promotion to the Government has already begun. Ullastre, one of its representatives, has been given a ministry. It is evident, therefore, that its pressure is beginning to make itself felt.

”Attention, Spaniards, to the Opus Dei, another of the many dark institutions which are secretly working to continue Spain’s misfortunes.”

This organization, so aptly described above, is designed to train laymen to guard the Church’s interests in all walks of life. The following quotes from Camino (Road), Ediciones Rialp, Madrid, 1953, the handbook of the organization written by its founder, the Jesuit Father Jose Maria Escriva, will give the reader an idea of the type of mentality which the Opus Dei seeks to create:

”To serve as mouthpiece for the enemy is a crowning idiocy; and, if the enemy is an enemy of God, it is a great sin. Therefore, in the professional terrain, I will never praise the science of anyone who uses it as a position from which to attack the church.” (page 259)

”Have you bothered to consider how absurd it is to stop being a Catholic when one enters a university or a professional association or a learned assembly or a parliament, as one would leave his hat at the door?” (page 116)

”The priest, whoever he may be—is always another Christ.” (page 34)

”To obey the sure road. To obey the superior blindly, saintly road. To obey in your apostolate the only road: because, in a work of God, the spirit must either be obedient or leave.” (page 292)

”’Minutes of silence.’ Leave that for atheists, Masons and Protestants, who have dry hearts. We Catholics, sons of God, speak with Our Father who is in Heaven.” (page 44)

”Will. Energy. Example. What must be done, is done...without hesitating...Without considerations... without this, Cisneros would not have been Cisneros; nor Teresa de Ahumada, Saint Teresa...; Nor Inigo de Loyola, Saint Ignatius...God and audacity! ’Regnare Christum Volumus!’” (page 19)

"To love God and not venerate the Priest, is not possible. Like good sons of Noah, cover with the cape of charity the defects which you see in your father, the Priest." (page 36)

"Be thankful, as for a special favor, for that holy disgust, which you feel for your own person." (page 68)

"Immovable: thus you must be. If the miseries of others or of your own shake your perseverance, then I have a poor idea of your ideal. Decide, once and for always." (page 308).

The ideal militant for this organization is clear: a mindless, disciplined automaton. A person who will do whatever is asked of him, without hesitation, completely convinced that the end justifies the end [sic]. The comparison between a militant of the Opus Dei and a militant of the Communist Party immediately comes to mind.

However, it must not be believed that the Opus Dei is something completely new. The organization itself is new, but its concepts and tactics are common to the entire Roman Catholic church and especially to the Jesuit order, which is the very essence of totalitarianism. Nor is it the only lay organization of its kind. We are all familiar with the Knights of Columbus and Catholic Action, whose Spanish section drew up with the Falange long lists of enemies whom it methodically murdered after the fascist uprising of 1936. Among the most prominent of its victims was Federico Garcia Lorca, one of the greatest Spanish poets of all time.

But the Opus Dei is the newest of these groups, and one from which the church apparently expects a great deal. As was mentioned in the above-quoted editorial, the Opus Dei does not intend to limit its sphere of action to Spain alone. It is destined to become international in scope, and we will undoubtedly see a section created in this country in the near future, if it has not been created already.

This is but one more proof that the church lies when it tries to claim that its activities are only limited to the spiritual field. It is also a grim warning for the future, for just as the church drew up its lists of the doomed during the Spanish Revolution, so will it here when its long-desired day of reckoning finally dawns.

Dictator Salazar's Latest Crimes

Two new political murders committed by the P.I.D.E. (International Police for the Defense of the State) in Portugal are described in a letter from our comrades in Portugal forwarded to the Libertarian League by the Intercontinental Commission of the Anarchist Federation of Iberia.

The first murder was that of the Anarchist militant Joaquin Lemos Oliveira on Feb. 14 in the P.I.D.E. headquarters in Oporto, Portugal, on Herossmo Street. The

crime is described by a manifesto issued by the Portuguese comrades and distributed throughout that country, extracts from which read as follows:

"Joaquin Lemos Oliveira has been imprisoned since Jan. 29...The P.I.D.E. (whose local inspector is Costa Pereira and whose chiefs are Pinto Soares and Patacho) submitted him to the "Statue" torture, during which he was kept without sleep for seven days, always on his feet in a room brilliantly illuminated by a strong electric lamp, by guards who were relieved every two hours. On Feb. 8 he was able to smuggle a note to his wife telling her not to worry if something happened to him. On the 14th he was dead.

"The funeral, which was scheduled for the 18th, was suspended at the last minute by the civil governor, Dr. Braga da Cruz, on the orders of the P.I.D.E. Many workers and well-known liberals had gathered in the cemetery to lay flowers on the grave, and pay their last respects to the victim. On the 19th, an hour before the funeral procession was due to start, the flunkies of the P.I.D.E. took the corpse, leaving the family waiting in the cemetery. Nevertheless, more than 10 automobiles went to Fafe, a town which is now living under a reign of police terror, where the burial took place in a cemetery surrounded by police, some of them armed with machine guns. This did not stop the four orphans and the widow from crying "criminals, murderers" at them.

"Joaquin Lemos, who had previously been imprisoned in 1936 and 1949, was highly esteemed for his integrity and libertarian activities. His family and the workers of Fafe have lost an excellent comrade under the most horrible circumstances.

"For 30 long years the people of Portugal have been slowly dying, and the men who struggle most for liberation are condemned to death by the flunkies of dictator Salazar and the criminal agents of the P.I.D.E.

"But they will have to answer for these crimes to a justly aroused people..."

The second murder was that of Manuel Finza Junior, an old Anarchist militant who was arrested in the city of Viana del Cactelo for distributing the above-quoted manifesto. Finza, who was 70 years old and who had been editor of the Anarchist newspaper *A Voz do Faminto*, published in the days of more democratic government, was submitted to all of the P.I.D.E.'s tortures, dying during the fourth day of the "Statue." In order to hide the crime, the P.I.D.E. forbade the publication of his obituary. Nevertheless, the news soon traveled over the entire country, infuriating all those who still conserve some sense of humanity.

The letter of the Portuguese comrades to the organization in France ended with this appeal:

"We ask you, libertarian friends in exile in a country where freedom of expression is still respected, with all the force of our outraged consciences, to denounce in the press and to public opinion these two new crimes of Salazar's Clerical-Fascist government."

And we ask the readers of Views and Comments to speak up to their friends and acquaintances about these events in a country about which unfortunately so little is known by the general public.

"The only guarantee of the Bill of Rights which continues to have any force and effect is the one prohibiting quartering troops on citizens in time of peace. All the rest have been disposed of by judicial interpretation and legislative whittling."

-- H.L. Mencken in Minority Report

Two Dictators and a Krock

After the article on the latest atrocities of Salazar, the Portuguese dictator, which appears elsewhere in this issue, was written, an article on both Portugal and Spain, written by Arthur Krock, was published in the New York Times of May 21st.

The story contains such statements as the following:

"In Spain the Government, and the apparently large majority that supports it, are pleased with the fairly new discovery that they are now popular in (the U.S.) Congress..."

"A Week in the peninsula does not entitle a foreigner to form positive political impressions, but this is the substance of opinions sought from many others: the large Spanish majority envisages no Government at this time that would suit it better than Franco's. The overwhelming mass of the Portuguese has merely to hear that Dr. Salazar, wearied of his tasks, might even contemplate returning to teach economics at Coimbra to bombard all the saints with prayers that the Premier may live forever."

That these statements are simply barefaced lies is apparent to anyone who reads even the New York Times regularly, not to speak of the radical press. The recent strikes, student demonstrations and boycotts which took place throughout Spain were a clear indication of how the overwhelming majority of the Spanish people feel about Franco's regime. They may not be in agreement as to what should be done when Franco falls, but they are almost unanimous for his fall as soon as possible. As for Portugal, our readers will have formed their own opinions after they read our article on the subject.

The interesting thing about the Times article is that such lies should be published at all, in the face of the enormous mass of evidence to the contrary. It can only be explained by a deep desire on the part of those who control the paper that those things should be true, or at least should be believed in the U.S. Government, and especially, in the State Department. What more clearly than this indicates the totalitarian trends in the thinking of those trying to orient American public opinion and U.S. foreign policy?

Book Reviews

The Biosocial Nature of Man by Ashley Montagu (Grove Press, N.Y., 1956.)

In this book Ashley Montagu, eminent psychiatrist, anthropologist and sociologist, refutes the doctrine of man's fall from grace and his innate wickedness and sinfulness, which has been repeatedly taught throughout the generations, and permeates man's thinking to this day. The social evils were ascribed to the sinful nature of man. Montagu, on the contrary, proves that this doctrine has no scientific foundation.

Every child is born with the mechanism of love. It is the result of the cooperation of the parents. From the moment of conception the child and the mother are dependent on each other. This biological relationship determines the nature of man. Love and cooperation are not only biologically, but also socially necessary if man is to live and develop. Competition and hate are a violation of man's nature. They are acquired and distort his personality. People who claim that these negative qualities are inherited misunderstand the meaning of heredity.

Montagu says:

"Man is human by virtue of the potentialities that he possesses for being a functioning member of human society. It is the extent to which these potentialities are culturalized in society which turns him into a functioning human being, and the kind of functioning human being he becomes will depend upon the interaction between his genotypically influenced potentialities and the cultural influences to which they have been exposed. The culture into which an individual is born and which acts upon him for any durable period of time constitutes his SOCIAL heredity, and his uterine environment his UTERINE heredity and his genotype constitutes his GENETIC heredity. Together these three heredities constitute the HEREDITY of a person."

What makes the human being unique is his independence of a particular environment. With his great adaptability and creativeness he is able to change his environment and his society to suit himself. Aggressive, antisocial, and destructive behavior are not inherited, but are learned by man. They indicate an unhealthy condition in the individual and the social system which can only be corrected by a return to our natural endowment which is love and cooperation. What man learns which is bad he can unlearn. He is not the victim of a predetermined fate but can enrich and expand his life along constructive lines. Montagu finds that the scientists who are politically conservative and reactionary tend to become hereditarians while those who are progressive are environmentalists.

This noble book supplements Kropotkin's main thesis in his book MUTUAL AID. By a mass of new material from many fields Montagu demonstrates the validity and timeliness of the libertarian concept of the biosocial nature of man.

The following item appeared in a recent issue of the Bergen Evening Record of Hackensack, N.J. It refers to the conduct of the convicts at New York's Riker's Island Penitentiary, when a Miami-bound airliner crashed on the island.

TO FEEL LIKE A MAN, WONDERFUL

In the background bulked the blank grey prison buildings on Riker's Island. In the foreground lay the crumpled wreck of the air liner that crashed in the sleet and fog February 1. Between that and the camera were 11 prisoners. They were some of the 81 inmates being released with shortened terms for good behavior which was their incredible heroism the night 20 persons died in that flaming crash but 81 were saved. Some of the prisoners went into the holocaust as many as seven times to lead out passengers—the only trouble Warden Harrison had with the trustees released to help in the rescue was, he said, to keep them from getting killed themselves.

That day they were criminals. That night they were all that humanity aspires to be in selflessness and courage. Next morning they were criminals again. They have been restored to their selfhood. Said one of them:

'It's wonderful to forget you are in prison, wonderful to be of help, to feel like a man again.'

To be of help, to feel like a man: if society went as far out of its way to afford people this feeling as it does to punish them after their manhood has given way to temptation or passion, wouldn't we have our crime problem pretty well in hand?

More "Unionism"

Vancouver, B.C.

In an election conducted by the Canada Labour Relations Board this spring to determine bargaining rights on the Imperial Oil fleet, the Seafarers International Union managed to scrape by with a bare 51% majority. The choice in this election was between having the S.I.U. or no representation at all, and the large vote cast against the union is a good indication of the general dislike felt toward the S.I.U. For quite some time now it has had members working aboard these boats, actually close to 100%, so the results of this vote was a case of union members voting against their own organization—a reluctance to work under an S.I.U. contract, but willing to maintain union membership as a necessary evil for the purpose of getting jobs elsewhere thru the union hiring hall.

The motives for distrust felt by the membership in the S.I.U. are the usual ones in these days of job-brokerage unionism—high dues, frequent assessments that no one ever gets to vote on, the amassment of huge funds that are unaccounted for to the membership, and most of all, the infamous "Do Not Ship" list, that is the mainspring of the S.I.U.'s grip on the membership.

This "DNS" is a black-list, maintained by the union leadership, that keeps several thousand seamen on the beach, and is the most potent weapon the S.I.U. bosses have against the membership. Originally supposed to bar known "performers" from shipping thru union hiring-halls, it had been extended to include just about anyone who has ever criticized the leadership, or who has ever shown any independence in dealing with them. Most of the militants who participated in the 1948 strike called by the old Canadian Seamen's Union are on the D.N.S. list.

Previous to 1948, the Canadian Seamen's Union was the dominant organization in the marine field, having the then-considerable deep-sea fleet on both coasts well organized, and most of the Great Lakes and coastal shipping under contract. The C.S.U. was a Stalinist owned and operated outfit, but there is no doubt that it had the support of most Canadian Seamen.

The S.I.U. at this time had only a few hundred members around Vancouver, principally on a couple of coastal ferry companies, and was not recognized by the Trades and Labour Council, which condemned it as an imported dual union.

When the C.S.U. called a general strike in shipping in 1948, the government went all out to smash the C.S.U. in a strikebreaking, red-hunting orgy that was a spectacle for men and Gods. Strikers were thrown in jail under provisions of the archaic Canada Shipping Act, ships were transferred to foreign registry and scabs were mobilized to man the Great Lakes fleet, protected by troops and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

It was in this situation that the S.I.U. hit the jackpot. Sponsored and protected by the government, the S.I.U. moved in and organized the scabs, signed contracts violating previous C.S.U. contracts, and proceeded in general to take over everywhere as the C.S.U. collapsed.

A remnant of the old C.S.U. persisted on the West Coast until last year, when it merged with the S.I.U. They maintained a hall on Wino Row in Vancouver, and administered a contract with the Tow-Boat Association, the employers' outfit, that featured a 56 hour week, no pay for overtime and of course the check-off. It existed principally as a meal ticket for a few Stalinist pie-cards and as a source of revenue for the Labour Progressive Party. The passing of this outfit is not mourned, and the same old commie pie-cards are now lined up at the bigger trough spread by the S.I.U.

So there you have the picture of the Canadian S.I.U.—an organization that had its origins in scabbery, and is now a fusion of the two worst features of big business unionism—the Dave Beck influence and Stalinism.

—Seaman

"The man who enjoys marching in line and file to the strains of martial music falls below my contempt; he received his great brain by mistake—the spinal

cord would have been amply sufficient. This heroism at command, this senseless violence, this accursed bombast of patriotism, how intensely I despise them!”

— Albert Einstein

Cormorants

The Chinese and Japanese, being ingenious people, discovered centuries ago that they could make cormorants catch fish for them. It is a simple trick—PAY THEM WAGES. It is as simple as the tricks used for exploiting men.

They catch the young birds and feed them by hand, But that is not all. They slip a ring over their young heads and, as they grow, they cannot get the ring off. It remains around their neck like a collar. They are fed very small minnows or bits of fish small enough to pass through that ring.

Then they are carefully trained to be good EMPLOYEES. Their natural instinct is to catch fish, but they cannot swallow the fish they catch without the help of the “middle man” to “process” it. They look upon their boss as a helper. He “rewards” them with very small pieces and they are grateful, but the EMPLOYER takes the whole fish that they cannot swallow and puts it in his basket.

Travelers in Japan and China are attracted to Cormorant fishing as a tourist attraction. Eunice Tietjens has written a book about the strange things she saw It is called Profiles From China. Here are her own words:

”Cormorants:

”The boats of your masters are black, filthy with the slimy filth of ages. Like the canals on which they float, they give forth an evil smell.

”On soiled perches you sit, swung out on either side over the scummy water—you who should be savage and untamed, who should rise on the clean breath of the sea and beat your pinions in the strong storms. Yet you are not held. Tamely you sit and willingly, ten wretches to a boat, lurching and half asleep.

”Around each throat is a ring of straw, a small ring, so that you may swallow only small things, as your masters desire. Frequently, when you reach the lake, you will dive. At the word of your masters, the parted waters will close over you. Hungrily you will search in the darkened void. Swiftly you will pounce on the silver shadow. Then you will rise again, bearing in your beak the struggling prey.

”And your lousy lords, whose rings are around your throats, will take from you the catch, giving in its place a puny wriggler which can pass the gate of straw.

”Such is your servitude. Yet willingly you sit, lurching and half asleep. The boatmen shout one to another in nasal discords. Lazily you preen your great wings, eagle wings, built for the sky, and you yawn.

"Faugh! The sight of you sickens me, divers in land filth! You grow lousy like your lords, for you have forgotten the sea.

"Wages:

"Wages are always a fraction of the product of the worker. Frequently a very small fraction. If you accept wages, or pensions, or social security, you, too, are a Cormorant. To you belongs 'the earth and the sea and all that in them is,' yet willingly you sit lurching and half asleep."

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