

THE

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Joseph R. Peden, Publisher

Washington Editor, Karl Hess

Murray N. Rothbard, Editor

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## Anarcho-Rightism

Karl Hess's brilliant article in this issue turns the spotlight on a new and curious phenomenon of "libertarians" and even "anarchists" who yet are strongly opposed to revolutionary change, and who therefore at least objectively stamp themselves as defenders of the existing state and the *status quo*. But this opposition to revolution is no accident; it is part and parcel of the entire world-view of these people--whom we may call "anarcho-rightists". For the anarcho-rightist, beneath the veneer of his professed anarchism, still remains what he generally was before his anarchistic conversion: a benighted right-winger.

In a sense, it is heartwarming that the overwhelming logic and consistency of the anarcho-capitalist position has won over a large number of former laissez-fairists and Randians. But every rapidly developing movement has growing pains; anarchism's growing pain is that this conversion has, in all too many cases, been skin deep. The curious conservatism and moderation of the Libertarian Caucus of YAF is but one glaring example of this defect.

Let us analyze the anarcho-rightist. In effect, he says: "O.K., I'm convinced that it is immoral for a government to impose a monopoly of coercion by the use of force, and it possible or even probable that the free market could supply all services now considered governmental, including judicial and police protection. Since this is anarchism, I am an anarchist."

But his anarchism is only an anarchism for the far distant future, to be achieved solely by patient education, the issuing of leaflets and pronouncements, etc. *In the meanwhile*, in his concrete, day-to-day attitudes, the anarcho-rightist remains fully as right-wing as he was before. His anarchism is only a thin veneer laid on top of a moral of profoundly "anarchist" and statist views, views that he has not bothered to root out of his social philosophy.

Thus, the anarcho-rightist remains an American patriot. He reveres the American government as the "freest in the world", he worships the Founding Fathers (failing to realize that the Constitution was a profoundly statist *coup d'etat* imposed upon the far more libertarian Articles of Confederation), he loves and admires the two major enforcement-good squad arms of the State: the army and the police. *Defining* the police *a priori* as defenders of person and property, he supports their clubbing, beating, and torturing of dissenters and opposition movements to the State. Totally ignorant of the American guilt for the Cold War and of the long-time expansionist nature of U.S. imperialism, he supports that Cold War in the belief that the "international Communist conspiracy" is a direct military threat to American liberties. Critical of Establishment propaganda in domestic affairs, he yet has allowed himself to be

totally sucked in by the Establishment propaganda about the Communist bogey. Hence, he supports the American military. Even if he opposes the Vietnam War, he does so only as a tactical error that is not in American "national interests". Although a self-proclaimed libertarian, he shows no concern whatever for the genocidal American murder of millions of innocent Vietnamese peasants. And, beset by a narrow, solipsistic desire to keep his university classes open, he actually takes the lead in defending the State's brainwashing apparatus--the American schools and colleges (either State-owned or State-subsidized)--against the rising opposition to that educational system.

In short, the fact that, in philosophic theory, the anarcho-rightist is indeed an anarchist should cut very little ice with those anarchists who are truly opponents of the American State, and who are therefore revolutionaries. For when it comes to concrete *actions*, actions in which he must line up either for the State or for the opposition to that State, he has generally lined up on the wrong side of the barricades--defending the American State against its enemies. So long as he does so, he remains an opponent rather than an ally.

A strategic argument has been raging for some time among revolutionaries whether or to what extent the anarcho-rightist offers prime material for conversion to the revolutionary position. Basically, how much time one spends working on any given rightist is a matter of personal temperament and patience. But one gloomy note must be sounded: there is a grave tendency among many rightists to be solipsistic: in short, to not give a damn about principle, about justice, or, in the last analysis, about liberty. There is a tendency for rightists to be concerned only with their own narrow monetary profits and immediate creature comforts, and therefore to scorn those of us who are dedicated to liberty and justice as a cause. For these ignoble solipsists, any form of dedication to principle smacks of "collectivism" or "altruism". I had wondered for years why so many Randians, for example, place such great emphasis on combating "altruism" (which has always struck me as an absurd social philosophy of little importance.) Now I am beginning to realize that for many of these people, "altruism" means any form of devotion to principle, to liberty and justice for all men, to any principle, indeed, which may disturb their own cozy accommodations to the statist evils which they recognize in the abstract.

Thus, when, many years ago, I raised a call for a *revolutionary* libertarian movement, I was dismissed by these people as crackpotty and unrealistic. There could never be a revolution here, and that was that. Then, in the mid-1960's, when, almost miraculously, the New Left revolutionary

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# Letter From Washington

By Karl Hess

## Conservative Libertarianism

Libertarianism has managed to develop its own form of counter-revolutionary conservatism. Its future as a movement, much less as an influence on future social change, could be crushed by it if unopposed and unanalyzed.

Underlying this conservatism are an undying and undeniable respect for institutionalized, *traditional* injustice, as opposed to possible future injustice, and the unbeatable contradictions of reformism.

No person even on the fringes of a libertarian discussion can have escaped the explicit wording of the former or the overtones of the latter.

Libertarians, this conservative position holds, cannot take part in revolutionary action because, as it now stands, such action always is dominated by persons with a healthy disrespect for private property and a feverish fondness for communist rhetoric.

The argument is made, time and time again, that "if *they* get power, *they* will be worse than what we have." The notion that *they* might include libertarians if only libertarians were up there on the barricades working *with* them either eludes these conservatives or they reject it because of their spotless, yea immaculate conceptions of theoretical purity. But most pernicious is the possibility that such persons truly mean what they say: that they prefer the certainty of the injustices we have to any risk of injustices that we *might* have. There is a trap here deep enough to engulf freedom itself. Theories do not produce revolutionary action. Rather, revolutionary actions *enable* theories to become practices. It is from the ferment of the action that the ferment of the idea brews its future impact. Long before Mao or machineguns it was apparent that political thought, without political act, equalled zero and that political ideas born in the minds of men have a chance to grow only after actions by the hands of men. Not even Christianity or Chadian resistance grew solely as an idea. All great ideas have grown as the result of great actions.

No example comes to mind of a great teacher who was not also a great exemplar, a personification of and not merely a mouthpiece of his ideas. Take Christ and the money-lenders. He unquestionably had the benefit of sound advice in regard to economic analysis and pedagogy. He could have held classes to expose usury to a few who would go out and expose it to more and so on and on until the entire world was revulsed by the practice and ceased doing business with the usurers. The story, of course, is different. It tells of a decision to teach by acting.

In the more real, or at least contemporary world we can think of the many political and economic theorists--some of them libertarians!--who did not have the act of revolution to spread their thoughts, as did Karl Marx.

If Bakunin or Warren had had a Lenin we might live in a free and anarchistic world today.

The consequence of conservative libertarianism's concentration on ideas to the exclusion of action is to turn a prudent sense of priority on its head. The priorities, as I see them, are to first participate in social change so that, second, there will be a chance of influencing its direction later on. Unless one can reject flatly the possibility that there is even going to be a change, the priority should not be to fret about what it might be like, the priority is to maintain a position

from which or in which you can do something about it.

The impossibility of simple neutrality in this situation should be apparent. You cannot just say "a pox on both of your houses" because, unfortunately, you happen actually to live in one of the houses. By that act alone neutrality is made impossible--except for those very rare few who actually can withdraw totally, to dream out their isolation so long as, and only so long as, the unleashed dogs of the system, against which they have refused to struggle, are not set upon them.

From the conservative position comes the position of libertarian reformism. It holds that, since there is a good base to build upon--the at least lip-service traditions of liberty in this country, for instance--that the way to avoid the dangers that might lurk on the other side of revolutionary change is to opt for evolutionary change. The repeal of certain laws is, in this position, held as crucial and, of course, it probably is true that if the withholding tax were repealed that the government would be bankrupted as millions of taxpayers simply found themselves unable to pay up.

That is, this situation might be true if it were not for the amazing ingenuity of American state-monopoly-capitalism. Few if any corporation heads would stand idly by and see the source of their prosperity--a partnership with the state--seriously jeopardized. One can imagine a "voluntary" tax withholding system going into effect which, if anything, might be more effective than the state system which, after all, *is* operated by businessmen anyway even though with a lot of wasteful bureaucratic interference. Same with the voluntary or even 'corporate' military concepts. A libertarian should be the first to recognize that such systems would, if anything, make imperialism more effective by making its military machine more efficient. Such reforms, in short, would not necessarily end injustices but might merely streamline them.

More pertinent is the central error of reformism as a possible instrument of change. To reform a system you must, first of all, preserve it against attacks more precipitous than those called for in the reformist timetable. This position not only makes neutrality impossible, it makes siding with the system (the state) unavoidable in the long run.

I sum up my concern over these matters in this way: Libertarians are faced with a real, not merely theoretical world in which revolutionary change is at the very least a real possibility everywhere. If libertarians will not participate in that change they cannot influence that change now *or* later. It is the important characteristic of this journal that it does not intend to relegate the black flag of the most revolutionary of positions, libertarianism, to the sidelines of any revolution, no matter the color of the other banners unfurling.

## The New Boston Tea Party

While thousands of libertarians sit on the sidelines, griping about any *action* that might ruffle the feathers of the State, two hundred and fifty rebellious and admirable taxpayers staged a new Boston Tea Party, on September 14, at the small community of Boston, Pennsylvania, about 20 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. These citizens, many of them conservative businessmen and women, were vigorously protesting the proposal of Governor Raymond P. Shafer to impose that iniquitous instrument, a state income tax.

The protestors, dressed like their illustrious forebears as Indians, paddled a canoe onto the waters of the Youghiogheny River, and dumped into the river cardboard containers labelled "tea".

The tax rebels also revived another institution with a glorious and long-lived tradition in America--hanging politicians in effigy. Governor Shafer was hung in effigy, and any politicians who arrived at the demonstration in person were given a hostile, though non-violent, reception.

## National Review Rides Again

*National Review*, the intellectual Field Marshal of the New Right, is getting worried. After several attacks on myself during the course of this year, N. R. has begun to make clear that the rapid growth of the libertarian movement is getting to be a burr under its "fusionist" saddle. In our last issue, Jerry Tuccille detailed Bill Buckley's devotion of the first half-hour of his keynote address at the YAF convention at St. Louis to a bitter attack upon mine and Karl Hess's articles in the "Listen, YAF" issue of the *Libertarian Forum*. Now, Jared C. Lobdell, in the official report on St. Louis (NR, Sept. 23) tries to pooh-pooh the dramatic confrontation at the convention, repeats the same tired old line that "traditionalists" and libertarians are in perfect agreement (on liberty "within the framework of the Western tradition"), except, of course, for a few "extremists" who are for liberty *outside* Western tradition (whatever that is supposed to mean). That's us folks, us who *really* believe, as Buckley correctly charged at St. Louis, that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice and that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.

But now NR has wheeled out its heaviest gun, Frank S. Meyer, to do battle with libertarianism ("Libertarianism or Libertinism?", NR, Sept. 9)--a sure sign that we are really hurting the Right-wing, for Meyer, a shrewd political strategist, never wastes his words on purely intellectual controversy. All of his columns are calculated for their political impact. Seven years ago, Meyer felt called upon (in his "Twisted Tree of Liberty", now reprinted in his collection, *The Conservative Mainstream*) to print an attack upon what was then a very tiny group because we split with the Right-wing on the presumptuous grounds of being opposed to nuclear annihilation. Now that our polarization from the Right-wing is complete and our ranks growing every day, Meyer attempts a more comprehensive critique of libertarianism.

Meyer begins with the complaint that libertarians are really "libertines" (hedonists? sex-fiends?) because we "reject" the "reality" of five thousand years of Western civilization, and propose to substitute an abstract construction. Very true; in other words, we, like Lord Acton, propose to weight the growth of encrusted tradition and institutions in the light of man's natural reason, and of course we find these often despotic institutions wanting. To Meyer, we propose to "replace God's creation of this multifarious, complex world . . . and substitute for it their own creation". Very neat. The world as it is, in short the *status quo* of statism and tyranny, is, in the oldest theocratic trick in history, stamped with the approval of being "God's creation", while any radical change from that tyranny is sneered at as "man's creation". Meyer, the self-proclaimed fusionist and "conservative libertarian", thus stamps himself as simply another incarnation of Sir Robert Filmer and Bishop Bossuet, another intellectual apologist for the divine right of kings.

Meyer then proceeds to set up a straw man: we libertines, he thunders, believe in liberty as man's highest end, whereas conservatives uphold liberty as man's highest political end, i.e. to free man so that he can pursue his own ends. But no libertarian I have ever heard of considers liberty as anything but the highest *political* end; the whole idea of liberty is to free man so that every individual can pursue whatever personal ends he wishes.

Having knocked down this straw man, Meyer leaps to his real complaint: that we libertines wish to free man so that each person can pursue whatever goals he desires. *This*, not the phony political end vs. absolute end, is Meyer's real grievance. No, he declares, men should only be free to pursue their ends within the framework of tradition and "civilizational order". I have wondered for years what Meyer and his cohorts have really meant by their constant

talismanic incantations to "Western civilization". What, after all, *is* "Western civilization" or "civilizational order"? In attacking us for our sympathy with the "rampaging mobs of campus and ghetto" and our opposition to the war machine against Communism, the answer becomes fairly clear; what Meyer means by the "bulwarks of civilizational order" is, plainly and bluntly, the State apparatus. It is the State that Meyer is anxious to preserve and protect; it is the State that he holds to be synonymous with, or at the very least, essential to, his beloved but highly vague "Western civilization". If one reads the *National Review* theocrats long enough, one almost begins to sympathize with the Russian "Anarcho-Futurists" of Kharkov who, in 1918, raised the cry, "Death to world civilization!"

If Meyer's poorly reasoned piece is the best that can be hurled against us, and I suppose it is, then we libertarians have nothing to fear on the intellectual front. Libertines of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains--and the privilege of endless subjection to theocratic cant.

## Abolition: An Acid Test

It has come to our attention increasingly of late that many self-proclaimed libertarians balk at the idea of abolishing slavery. It is almost incredible to contemplate, for one would think that at least the minimal definition of a libertarian is someone who favors the immediate abolition of slavery. Surely, slavery is the polar opposite of liberty?

But it appears that many libertarians argue as follows: the slave-masters bought their slaves on the market in good faith. They have the bill of sale. Therefore, respect for their property rights requires that slavery be left intact, or at the very least that the slave-master be compensated for any loss of his slave at the market value.

I used to believe, and have written articles to that effect, that the idea that right-wingers uphold "property rights over human rights" is only a left-wing smear. But evidently it is not a smear. For these libertarians indeed go to the grotesque length of upholding property rights at the expense of the human right of self-ownership of every person. Not only that: by taking this fetishistic position these pro-slavery libertarians negate the very concept, the very basis, of property right itself. For where does property right come from? It can only come from one basic and ultimate source --and that is *not* the pronouncement of the State that Mr. A belongs to Mr. B. That source is the property right of every man in his own body, his right of self-ownership. From this right of self-ownership is derived his right to whatever previously unowned and unused resources a man can find and transform by the use of his labor energy. But if every man has a property right in his own person, this immediately negates any grotesquely proclaimed "property right" in other people.

There are five possible positions on the abolition of slavery question. (1) That slavery must be protected as a part of the right of property; and (2) that abolition may only be accompanied by full compensation to the masters, seem to me to fall on the basis of our above discussion. But the third route--simple abolition--the one that was adopted, was also unsatisfactory, since it meant that the means of production, the plantations on which the slaves worked, remained in the hands, in the property, of their masters. On the libertarian homesteading principle, the plantations should have reverted to the ownership of the slaves, those who were forced to work them, and not have remained in the hands of their criminal masters. That is the fourth alternative. But there is a fifth alternative that is even more just: the punishment of the criminal masters for the benefit of their former slaves--in short, the imposition of reparations or damages upon the former criminal class, for the benefit of their victims. All this recalls the excellent statement of the Manchester Liberal, Benjamin Pearson,

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**ABOLITION: AN ACID TEST** — (Continued from page 3)  
 who, when he heard the argument that the masters should be compensated replied that "he had thought it was the slaves who should have been compensated."

It should be clear that this discussion is of far more than antiquarian interest. For there are a great many analogues to slavery today, an enormous number of cases where property has been acquired not through legitimate effort but through State theft, and where, therefore, similar alternatives will have to be faced once more.

**ANARCHO-RIGHTISM** — (Continued from page 1)  
 movement began to take hold in America, these libertarians shifted to a new position: that a revolution in this country would never be libertarian, it would only be Marxist and dictatorial. But now, now when libertarian revolutionism has begun to spread like wildfire among the youth, now the anarcho-rightists have begun to display their cloven hooves: they have begun to reveal that they oppose even a *libertarian* movement. Several of such people have recently declared that I, or rather the revolutionary libertarian movement of

which I am a part, am "more of a threat to them" than the State. Why? There appear to be two reasons. First, that *any* revolution will disturb their cozy accommodations, their petty profits, their lousy classes. In short, their dedication to liberty is so weak, so feeble, that they oppose bitterly any rocking of the boat, any disturbance to their cozy little lives. They don't really oppose the State, certainly not in practice. They can "live with" the State quite contentedly. The second reason is that many of these people cringe from revolutionary justice, because they know that much of their income and wealth have derived from unjust State robbery.

And so these anarcho-rightists sit basely on the sidelines, hugging their petty comforts, griping and carping about the revolution while the New Left and other revolutionaries put their lives on the line in opposition to the very State which they *claim* to oppose but do so much to defend. And yet, should the revolution ever succeed, these people expect that the fruits of liberty will drop into their laps, that they will reap benefits which they have done not one whit to earn through struggle. And O the recriminations that they will heap upon us if liberty is not then handed to them, unearned, upon a silver platter. For their own opportunist sakes, anarcho-rightists might ponder the fact that successful revolutionaries, no matter how libertarian, tend to be very impatient with those who have opposed them every step of the way. As Karl Hess has eloquently written, the position of any revolutionary tends to be: "No voice, no choice; no tickee no shirtee; no commitment now, no commitments later."

### Recommended Reading

*RAMPARTS*, October, 1969 issue. An all-star issue. Particularly recommended are: Karl Hess's beautifully written, "An Open Letter to Barry Goldwater" (must reading!); David Horowitz' "Sinews of Empire", a blistering exposé of international studies institutes in academe; Michael Myerson's dissection of David Dubinsky and the ILGWU in "ILGWU: Fighting for Lower Wages"; and Peter Collier's sensitive critique of the myths propagated by the moondoggle in "Apollo 11: the Time Machine".

Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff, "The Great Moondoggle", *Monthly Review* (September, 1969). An excellent dissection of the various reasons for the incredible moondoggle program, especially the desire to instill patriotism among the masses by and on behalf of the ruling class. A thoroughly anti-State critique, this is the article Ayn Rand should have written, instead of the jejune apologia for the space program that she did write in the *Objectivist*. The fact that this article was written in a leftist magazine is a precise indicator of what's wrong with the Right.

Charles A. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War* (Archon Press). A reprint of the best single book on Pearl Harbor by the great leader of Pearl Revisionism.

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