

AN OUTLINE PROGRAM FOR LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM

Spain, or the Iberian peninsula, will be a *Confederation of free cities and free municipalities*. Back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, prior to the State's capture of the people's freedoms, there were, in Spain as in every other European country, two distinct modes of social community. The *free city*, divided into guild associations arranged by district or street, some of them living on in the street names of certain ancient settlements, and the *Free Municipality*, and in the country settlements as Free Municipalities. The free city had its own militia and within it craftsmen's guild societies enjoyed autonomy and also overlapped with ward societies. The current populations of settlements are rather more complex and sizeable, but may be organized along the lines of guild societies, akin to our modern day trade unions as well as along ward society lines. In the initial stages of the installation of Libertarian Communism, and until such time as the larger conurbations rooted in capitalist and statist parasitism are thinned out by emigration, we are going to have to make use of trade union and ward organizations which jibe with age-old traditions and institutions.

Libertarian Communism, as it has been spelled out by anarchist theorists and as the membership of the CNT understands it, can be boiled down to a minimum program such as the following:

1. ABOLITION OF PRIVATE OWNERSHIP. This is an aspiration pursued by every school of socialism and it represents the sine qua non if an arrangement is to be adjudged deserving the description 'communist'. It is rooted in the natural, essential and primal law according to which everyone has the right to life. It relies upon a rationale as plain and simple as the following: man being a product of Nature, he is not in a position to argue that he has any exclusive title to ownership of her. We have only one legitimate entitlement: that conferred upon us by necessity. Consequently, our rights of ownership extend only to what we need and only insofar as we need it. Everything that we claim without needing it, denying it to others, amounts to thievery and plunder.

If we have no entitlement to hijack Nature, we also have no right to hijack what man has produced either. No one can make the claim to have produced anything on his own, by his own unaided efforts. It is all the product of cooperation and multiple contributions. The right to private ownership is an odious and unfair privilege and it is the underpinning of economic inequality.

Every school of socialism includes this aspiration in its program, albeit that they may differ as to the ways and means of bringing it about. But during their times in government, the socialists have not made up their minds to proceed with it. And in Russia the communists still put up with private ownership. Both those schools of Marxism believe in shared ownership, legislating for it in lengthy articles and leaving it to the State to determine. We anarchists, on the other hand, cannot conceive of any way of making ownership common other than through the straightforward, prompt course of dismantling the laws that protect it and the force that sanctions it and taking the whole wealth of society forcefully into collective ownership.

2. **ABOLISHING THE STATE.** With its rulers and bureaucracy, with its organized might and leadership bodies, the State as an institution is an artificial and parasitical structure that can be eradicated without collapsing the country's production and economic life. The State amounts to the negation of both personal and collective freedom and no communism could be described as libertarian if it is going to preserve any vestige of that noxious, useless institution.

Society is underpinned by the gregarious instinct that everybody possesses as part of his nature and by the convenience and amenities offered by shared living.

A man who has power over others become hard of heart and his sensibilities shrivel. Wherein cruelty and malice are overflowing. The greatest crimes in history have been carried out in the name of Authority and every act of human barbarism has been outdone. Go ask Casas Viejas!

The State is inclined to keep man enslaved so that he will resign himself to deprivation, put up with injustice and tolerate all spoliation. It schools men in submissiveness, a quality that castrates him and holds him back, and which debases and destroys his dignity.

The new society is going to have to educate him for a life of freedom, by stimulating him into rebelling against all personified authority, against any seedling of tyranny.

3. **ALL SOVEREIGNTY RESIDES IN THE ASSEMBLY.** A gathering of the interested parties themselves will always be the decision-maker on every issue. The sum of the opinions and ambitions gathered together into a trade union or local Assembly, will, in every instance, resolve whatever issues the collective may raise.

If the event that unanimity is not forthcoming, this will take the form of a majority vote.

We need not prescribe any set norms or final guidelines. There is no need for legislation, because at each step what needs doing is knowable and because the collective body must not mortgage the future, let alone shrink from revising its accords at any given point.

4. **WORK WILL BE MANDATORY FOR ALL CAPABLE MEMBERS.** Children, the elderly and the ailing will be exempt, with the Assembly having the final say in each specific instance. Anyone refusing to be a contributor to collective production must also forego the benefits of that production. For its part, the collective will apply the economic sanction of withholding access to the products of shared production from those who withhold their contribution from the Community.

The target is not the idler but the parasite. The idler is free to be just that as long as he appreciates the consequences of his idleness and foregoes the benefits of others' labours. Nobody can deny him his right to Nature's unsolicited bounty. What can no longer be tolerated is the parasite, who becomes a burden upon the rest, with a mature rather than a harsh approach being adopted towards him.

It will be up to the individual to select his preferred work from among the range of what the collective deems useful pursuits or activities. But he will have to abide by collective agreements. As anarchist philosophy shows, in Nature everything is about striking a balance between countervailing forces. Matter's so-called law of self-preservation is a balance struck between integrating and disintegrating forces. Life is a product of the harmony between forces that maintain and regulate the environment and those environmental factors inclined to modify them; the law of heredity is a balance between every person's gamut of variations

and the factors in every seed that determine characters. There has to be a consonance, balance or equal harmony struck between selfishness and altruism, between hate and love, between the private interest and the general interest.

Society is going to have to see to it that lines of work are tailored to the circumstances or aptitudes of the individual, and when the latter comes to choose his line of work he will do so mindful of the convenience and needs of the collectivity. A balance can be struck as long as no violence is employed in ensuring or thwarting it.

5. **ABOLISHING WAGE SLAVERY.** The wage is the badge of economic slavery. Also implicit in it is a social injustice, because there is no way of putting a price on work in an effort to see that everyone gets what he deserves. There is a hit-and-miss value to labour that is not dependent upon the amount of energy expended and which cannot be measured in terms of the fruits it brings forth. Setting a value on it on the basis of the product leaves the exhausting toil of the stone-breaker being dismissed and the work of the mechanic repairing the breakdown preventing a ship from putting to sea would be difficult to measure. Retention of the wage system amounts to a futile attempt to pay everyone what he is worth and it leads to an accentuation of social differences between people; that, we want to see ended.

A rational society should see to it that everyone, producers and persons incapable of work all have their needs met. Therefore, no matter what an individual's line of work, he will be entitled to a share in the collective wealth in accordance with his needs.

6. **DISTRIBUTION ORGANIZED BY THE COLLECTIVITY.** In each locality – just the way a housewife handles the household or family budget – the first thing to be considered is needs and production is to be organized and work allocated in accordance with these. Doing things the other way around, like the State does, could not be more nonsensical.

Production arranged, distribution is handled in accordance with requirements, just like in the household economy: food is rationed in times of scarcity but freely accessible when plentiful. For which reason, the best guarantee of the new society's succeeding lies in its ensuring an abundance of basic necessities, which, in a capitalist society results in the very opposite of well-being, in that it leads to crises and, by a cruel paradox, plants the seeds of hunger.

Organized distribution allows for the doing away with exchange currency, money as such, of repulsive metal-made-money, the root of avarice and thus the germ of capital through accumulation.

The value placed on money will in future be shifted across to man, who needs only show his producer's card or proof of his inability to work to authenticate his entitlement to items in the possession of the collective and which he needs.

7. **FREE, DISINTERESTED EXCHANGE BETWEEN LOCALITIES.** Without any equivalency in the value of goods. Surplus given away. What others offer can be availed of, if need be. Attempting to retain equivalency in trade would allow for inequalities between one location and the next, with some areas living in clover whilst others face pitiful shortages, with man required to pay the price for climate differences or the differing levels of productivity of the soil.

Equivalency of value will be a consideration only in cases of trade with bourgeois countries.

8. CONFEDERALIST ORGANIZATION AFTER THE MODEL OF THE CURRENT NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR (CNT). Every area will be induced, by economic pressures, to enter into the Confederation, which is to say by delivery of public services to those localities that may show reluctance to join the overall arrangement, with efforts made to accommodate the local economy to the national economy.

9. THE ECONOMY ORGANIZED IN ACCORDANCE WITH A NATIONAL (or PENINSULAR) PLAN. Delivering produce from fertile areas to less fertile ones, from the perimeter to the centre and from industrial, mining, stock-breeding or timber-producing centres to those that may not be such, can ensure a uniform standard of living across the entire territory of the Confederation.

As we stated with regard to the individual within the collective or locality, so within the Confederation, private interest is going to have to be reconciled with the general interest, through production of whatever best meets the needs of the country and ceasing production of what other regions can supply in abundance. Just as the collective brings harmony to the efforts of its individual members, so the Confederation will bring harmony to the productivity of different localities.

For a start and during the initial moments, production will abide by the current frameworks and ratios and the drive to till uncultivated soil – a drive found in every peasant village – can be allowed a free hand. Structural congresses are going to have to be held frequently and they will provide the channels for the wide-ranging reforms that it will be necessary to introduce in every sphere.

When it comes to orchestration of the national economy, the plan for the domestic resettlement that our country so sorely needs will come into play, as will reforestation, the construction of highways, railways and irrigation canals, intensive, rationalized cultivation, industrialization of the countryside and the exploitation of hydraulic energy.

10. LOCAL AUTONOMY. Every region, and indeed every city and every Free Municipality, will enjoy full local autonomy in respect of oversight of the local economy, in accordance with the norms of the Confederation, and in determining their own affairs. Every locality will be able to make its own decisions through its Assembly and in accordance with local characteristics:

- a) Mandatory participation in production.
- b) The precise conditions for qualifying as a producer.
- c) The minimum weekly working hours.
- d) Allocation of staff to various ventures, on the basis of aptitude or randomly.
- e) How distribution is to be organized.
- f) Housing services.
- g) Rights of usufruct (market gardens, poultry facilities, etc.) that may be awarded to individuals.
- h) Items for individual use and items for collective use.

Etc., etc.

11. WORKING THE LAND IN COMMON. Working the land in common lightens the burden of labour, rendering the task more palatable and boosting each producer's delivery. Providing an education in cooperation and solidarity. Farming in common allows for the exploitation of

marginal lands left unworked, for improved organization of sowing and growing and the use of farm machinery, relieving the farmer of the onerous burden of his slavish toil.

Farming in common allows for a reduction in work hours, for an increase in leisure hours and thus for opportunities for learning and improving living conditions.

12. INDUSTRIALIZATION AND MACHINERY ARE DEMANDED BY THE TIMES. They offer man the chance of relief from the burden of toil, reducing work hours to a minimum and doing away with donkey-work and unpleasant labour, neither of which is appropriate for man. Man has an entitlement to leisure and, far from its being harmful to society, it represents an opening for the whole gamut of intellectual output. A man worn out, exhausted by toil, has fewer opportunities to think, educate himself and boost his mental capacity. Leisure time is what holds out the best prospects for intellectual and moral betterment, scientific and artistic improvement and for life enhancement.

13. THE COLLECTIVITY WILL STRIVE TO THWART CRIMINALITY. Anti-alcohol and eugenic propaganda, which have always had their most zealous supporters in the ranks of extremists, are the most effective of all measures of governance. The collective DECLINES to sit in judgment of crime because it is a rash undertaking by man and there is no way of delving into the recesses of his psyche, without thereby running the risk either of absolving the guilty or convicting the innocent, as bureaucratic courts today frequently do in that tiny percentage of cases come to their attention.

The collectivity also DECLINES to IMPOSE PUNISHMENT, as punishment neither corrects nor serves as an example. It provokes fury and rebelliousness, but not repentance nor a mending of ways. Prisons and jails are hotbeds of moral corruption, a stain upon Humanity and an affront to JUSTICE.

The collective's defence against anti-social activity will come unsolicited from groups or individuals and may be sanctioned by moral suasion by the Assembly or by scorn and shunning.

In the face of a criminal act, our approach should be the same as when we are faced with a natural disaster. It does not occur to anyone to punish the boulder that breaks loose from the hillside and wipes out a village and its inhabitants. Nor do we at present punish a mental patient who takes the life of his neighbours, even though Medicine does resort to corrective measures as blighted as those of the courts, which must also be subject to radical reform.

14. ABOLITION OF THE ARMY. War will be impossible, other than in the event of an invasion of the territory, since the collective foreswears all imperialism. The entire productive population will take up arms. Training for battle, the acquisition of military expertise and the handling of special weaponry will be left up to the determination and private initiative of the Defence of the Revolution groups that take over from the Confederal Defence groups. A popular uprising against the invader always takes place against the backdrop of the best psychological combat conditions.

15. FURTHER EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE TO ALL. Making the pursuit of the intellectual professions a monopoly no longer. Elementary education will be rationalist, along the lines of the Ferrer school. We must work gradually towards the eradication of social inequality in the shape of the division into those who work with the brain or manually, and aim for a well-balanced

individual equipped for both. Open competition should be the only means of picking out the best and most apt persons in every manifestation of human activity.

All youngsters between the ages of fifteen and twenty will be exempt from the requirement to participate in production and may instead pursue technical training in engineering, architecture, agriculture, chemistry, mechanics, medicine, pedagogy, etc.

16. BUREAUCRATIC POST-HOLDING SHALL CARRY NO EXEMPTION FROM MANDATORY LABOUR.

Neither the individual nor the collectivity should look to anything outside of themselves. They must act on their own behalf and search their own lights and assets for the best solution to each problem. These are the minimum demands we require of Society: common ownership and shared enjoyment of wealth, dispensing with any division into rich and poor. Freedom not contingent upon the whims of the authorities, so that there is no division into authorities and subjects. Universal entitlement to consume in accordance with one's needs. Abolition of money which has a corrupting effect upon people. Improvements to work life and human life. A fraternal rapprochement between people, so that every person may live in society and do as little harm as possible to his neighbours.

That certain things may have been omitted and not pre-determined does not matter. We can always fall back upon the option of entrusting them to the good judgment of the Assembly, it being the sum of all opinions and all advice.

Isaac Puente "Ensayo programático del comunismo libertario" (*Estudios*, No 117, May 1933)  
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