

The Confederal Concept of Libertarian Communism

CNT (Spain)

Contents

Preliminary Remarks to This Translation	3
Eighteenth Session	4
Resolution over the Confederal Concept of Libertarian Communism (Approved by the 1936 CNT Congress)	10
The Constructive Concept of Revolution	12
Organization of the New Society after the Revolutionary Act and the First Measures of Revolution	12
The Producers’s Organization Plan	13
Libertarian Communes and Their Functions	14
Internal Mission and Functions of the Commune	15
Relations and Exchange of Products	15
The Individual’s Duties toward the Collective and the Concept of Distributive Justice	16
The Family and Sexual Relations	17
The Religious Question	18
Education, Art, Science, and Free Experimentation	18
Defense of the Revolution	19
Final Words	20

Preliminary Remarks to This Translation

TEXT SOURCE, THE TERM "SINDICATO", ETC.

The original text is by the Spanish CNT in *El Congreso Confederal de Zaragoza 1936* (Madrid, Spain: CNT, 1978), pp. 200-207, 226-242.

I have chosen to translate the term *sindicato* as "syndicate", instead of (workers') "union".

Sindicato refers to several things in Spanish,

- a workers' union at a workplace,
- a workers' union based on a similar trade (what we in the Industrial Workers of the World call an "Industrial Union [Branch]"),
- a workers' union based on geography, such as a town (similar to what we in the IWW call a "General Membership Branch").

In addition to other meanings, it also refers to a worker-run workplace once the bosses are kicked out and the workers' take control of production—an alternative term revolutionary Spaniards use for *sindicato* in this last sense is *colectivo* ("collective").

Throughout the text, syndicate does not refer to *sindicato* in just one of these senses, but in different ones at different times.

Fully italicized sentences indicate that the stenographer is summarizing what was said, not transcribing verbatim.

REGARDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TEXT

This document, which guided the anarchist experiments of the 1936 Spanish Revolution, has multiple precepts that many of us anarchists would disagree with today.

Aside from those flaws, I personally regard this document as an important text in the history of freedom ideas and a text that should be seriously considered by people, newcomers and seasoned, who have fallen in love with the anarchist ideal.

I think still provides indispensable opinions as to what the immediate post-capitalist, post-contemporary Statist anarchist society will look like when we muster enough numbers and voluntary self-discipline to finally take over the administration of our own lives from the Coercers and the State.

Please contact me if you believe more translations of this nature are needed in the interest of creating anarchy in the English-speaking world.

For the Anarchist Commune of Communes!

Death to Patriarchy, the State, Authority, and Our Submissive, Lazy Slave Mentality!

Contact me fellow Texas workers and anarchists!

August 5th, 2016

X363823

X363823@gmail.com

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Eighteenth Session

The session begins at 3:00 in the afternoon.

New affiliated members are read.

The resolution over the "Confederal Concept of Libertarian Communism" has been distributed.

The Draft Committee takes the floor.

Draft Committee: We have tried to establish broad outlines to give form to the idea of libertarian communism.

The resolution is read immediately after. The reading lasts fifty minutes, during which the most absolute silence is observed. All delegates follow along with the reading using the copies they have.¹

Metallurgy (Valencia): We are opposed to the structure of the future society, even though we recognize the liberatory contents of the resolution.

Port of Sagunto: *The delegation reads a series of considerations justifying its thesis opposed to the structure of libertarian communism.*

Graphic Crafts (Gijón): *They subscribe to the resolution in spirit. As representatives of an organization that is not anarchist, I cannot endorse it, also because the organization isn't anarchist.²*

Draft Committee: We feel compelled to clear up two aspects.

First, we completely believe in carrying out the mandate of the syndicates. Second, we have limited ourselves to clearing up the syndicates' agreements and fitting them together.

It would be a good idea to recall that we are not dealing with a program, but a resolution. A program is a closed circle—a thing that we cannot accept.

We are limiting our work to three guides: organization of the working class; a revolutionary outlook; and securing that that revolution is libertarian.

We live in the capitalist system, and we have to start from the syndicate, but without forgetting that the commune—profoundly rooted in the Spanish people—lies adjacently. And of those who try to organize themselves like that, nobody will be able to deprive them of what they live off of.

In conclusion, we say that we are respecting the opinion of the majority of syndicates.

Water, Gas, and Electricity (Valencia): We must object to the resolution because, apart from the spirit that animates it, we find vagaries in the Draft Committee's statements that refer to the organization of work. It is necessary that the resolution contains clarity, above all, in problems that refer to the economy and to exchange.

A Draft Committee member has said that the syndicate is Marxism and that it renounces individuality. But then why do we organize ourselves and accept the principles of revolutionary unionism? Because the negation of individuality disappears upon accepting contracts freely agreed to. Within the syndicate, individuality will find refuge. Here the individual will constitute a being who will be able to think with absolute independence, realize the significance of those opinions, and the syndicate will defend them.

¹ The resolution is below. —X363823

² Presumably, "the organization" refers to the CNT. —X363823

Neither the Draft Committee, nor the delegates can forget that this is not an anarchist congress. It is a CNT congress. In our hands lies the difficult task of organizing all of the elements of life, and we have to lay the foundations of the future—without putting the future at risk, without enclosing ourselves in an iron circle.

And because we consider that the syndicate's purpose is something more than the conquest of a few dollars, it must be given the commission that it must have in the future—the syndicate being the basis of the organization of work.

Construction (Barcelona): The amendment to the resolution could fill the mistakes that are observed in it, which result simply from a lack of precision.

We deem the CNT to be the embryo of the future, and it is suitable that it be the starting point of the structure of libertarian communism.

The Draft Committee has believed that the CNT should complete libertarian communism with the communes. This is fine and well. But there is the deficiency of appointing the mission that the syndicates are responsible for—which is as important or more important than that of the communes—, and in the resolution there is much detail over the operation of the communes, but that of the syndicates is left in the air.

The confederal concept of libertarian communism must be explained comprehensively, so that those who talk about it at the tribune or write about it in the press do not have to make up anything; so that everyone carries out their duty without any excess, since propaganda over this aspect is not possible when it is intrinsically subject to the caprice and whim of the private interpretation that each wants to give it.

In regards to the committee that has been charged with adding details upon completion of the resolution, it is recommended that the committee includes statistics so that it is known of each sector of industry which are poor and what each needs. This will be data that we must of necessity provide to propagandists, which they will be able to make excellent use of, giving a sense of the powerful and constructive capacity that must distinguish us.

Lumber (Alicante): Anarchism is not a narrow conception. Programs should not be attacked because what we are proposing is the same as how we use clocks in the railway industry.

The clock is a function in the railway as the sea compass is to the boat. The CNT studies its problems and shapes them into a line in order to proceed, and if it is necessary to deviate, the CNT will deviate.

We have the right to function with the communes as we see fit, but the syndicate will also be useful in the beginning moments of reconstruction, since there will still not be other organs capable of regulating economic reconstruction.

The enlarged section of the resolution should be accepted because, as Construction (Barcelona) put well, the appointed committee should improve it.

We know what libertarian communism must be, but there is a great number who believe in the necessity of Authority. With those specific details we will show others our constructive capacity and the superfluity of Authority.

Draft Committee: You should recognize our delicate situation in the defense and approval of the resolution.

Different conceptions had to be adjusted to be able to skirt around the obstacles that will be presented. Right now we will limit ourselves to clearing up that which appears vague.

The resolution is not a bylaw, and this is why it does not articulate all functions that compete with organs of production or with the politics of libertarian communism. This is why we are accepting the amendment that is not ours, which will establish the proper function of each organ.

When we present the completed resolution, it will be apparent that we have known how to draw out the conception of libertarian communism, which establishes:

1st. Individual sovereignty that conforms with everybody.

2nd. The syndicate as an association, an organ of production, will point out the fundamental principles of the organs of production, and

3rd. In the economy and in administration, the commune, where the organs of production converge.

All of these aspects are summarized in this resolution. In addition, common agreement between the Local, Regional, and National Federations of Communes and the Industrial Federations are summarized.

This is what is fundamental. The rest is details because we understand that the CNT should agglutinate all conceptions that establish the relational nexus between the syndicate and the commune.

Glass (Seville): There is a basis in the resolution from which to present an effective propaganda over what libertarian communism will be. Thus the discussion, whose trajectory we are unaware of, has drawn itself to a close. So without losing time, let us approve the resolution.

Hospitalet de Llobregat: We have understood that there has not been any need to make programs. Workers must study the problems of life on their own.

On the other hand, upon presenting a program, workers avoid thinking on their own, and that is grave.

We confess, nevertheless, that the Draft Committee has known how to get around the obstacles presented in order to draw up the resolution.

But on our part, we state that the CNT, a revolutionary unionist organization, completes its mission at the precise moment that the State is overthrown.

We want workers to fortify themselves in study. Every program in an organization becomes a singular, closed dogma.

Revolution cannot be based on improvisation, but it is necessary that we make all the contributions we can.

Let there be as many programs as there are individuals, and let us not submit to the authority of majorities.

Federica Montseny of the Draft Committee: Within the Draft Committee, I represent the classical anarchist conception that the Hospitalet comrades are expressing. Nevertheless, I am signing the resolution, and it is because events are precipitating and revolution is hovering above us. In the face of this, we must evoke the sense that we know what we want and where we are going.

We have accepted the amendment in principle because we recognize that some more details should be specified with visible materials. But this does not mean that they—the appointed committee—must draw from the general lines traced by the Draft Committee, nor must they specify all that must be done because that would diminish individual liberty.

Put it on the record, then, and I say, in the words of the Construction (Barcelona) delegation, that I would withdraw the Draft Committee's signature if with the amendment we tried to turn libertarian communism into a closed dogma.

Various Trades (Bentasán): We think it is necessary to put on the record that the producer's card will be used to confirm the individual's identity.

Construction (Gijón): We are thankful for the Draft Committee's interest in presenting the rough outline of the future society.

But we think that the Draft Committee members have borne in mind the philosophical concept of libertarian communism and have forgotten the practical concept.

Whoever declares that there was never agreement between anarchist theories over the specificity of the future is mistaken—there has been, and we could point out an infinite number of demonstrative quotations. It has always been agreed that the economic basis of the future society would be equality in that which relates to the economic and absolute liberty in that which relates to the sociopolitical.

But with this argument, other things cannot be taken into consideration. A solution must be given to this problem because workers are asking us to specifically formulate what equality must be—what the CNT must be—by interpreting on a practical, not a philosophical basis. The revolution must be made first and then controlled afterwards.

It has been said that that it cannot be thus because revolutionary unionism is Marxist. It has also been said that syndicates have to disappear after the revolution has been made, but that is untrue because neither revolutionary unionism nor the CNT have Marxism as their sources since revolutionary unionism and the CNT declare that the economy must be worked out at the workplace today and tomorrow. Marxism takes into consideration neither the individual nor society.

The CNT must insist upon the responsibility of preparing and consolidating the economy. That does not mean that the CNT is creating a closed shop, nor does it mean that the CNT will be opposed to any actions that arise in response to violent acts.

Railways (Alicante): We observe that this subject has been included in the agenda with the expectation that it is germane. The law of majorities will be necessary although it is not considered an untouchable rule. Before putting majoritarian decisions into practice, all suggestions that are offered should be observed.

National Committee: The inclusion of this subject in the agenda is being praised and criticized. Let it be understood that it was not us, but the Regionals Plenum of January 26th that decided it would be inserted.

Awakened Maritime (La Coruña): We disapprove of the amendment because the committee that will be appointed would be able to assert dogmas. We accept the resolution. It is necessary to study that which relates to the economy and geographic conditions.

Liberal Professionals (Barcelona): This delegation argues for the following amendment,

The Syndicate of Liberal Professionals of Barcelona moves that Congress agrees that the 'Education' section of the topic 'Concept of Libertarian Communism' is drawn up in the following form:

Education will be free, scientific, and equal for both sexes, and endowed with all the elements necessary for its indiscriminate exercise in productive application or in the realm of human knowledge.

Education will help in the formation of individuals with their own opinions, and for this it is necessary that the teacher cultivates all of the child's faculties and that they achieve the complete pinnacle of all possibilities that are latent in the infant; that an integral education makes the individual their own master, certain of their feelings, their ideas, responsible, and, in short, by them having their own character and nature.

For us, the child—and man—is a precious treasure brimming with potential that we can never limit nor deform with the stamp of *any mold* that simply upon existing negates the quintessence of our ideals that are based on the respect and integral cultivation of human individuality.

After the social revolution, the National Federation of Education will also be commissioned with educating adults, not simply in elementary instruction but in all necessary scientific knowledge for extirpating ancient prejudices that have resulted in the enslavement of men and women.

The National Federation of Education will establish the general rules for our schools and that which facilitates the teaching profession and control its scholarly activities.

Immediately after proclaiming libertarian communism, the National Federation of Education will be created by all teaching centers. Having already-existing knowledge of the teaching profession's purpose, the federation will select those who are intellectually and, above all, morally capable of adapting to the requirements of free education. The same applies to the election of teaching staff in primary and secondary education. Elections will only look for demonstrated capacities through practical exams.

Cinema, radio, and educational missions will be excellent and efficacious auxiliaries for a rapid intellectual and moral transformation of current generations and for developing the individualities of children and adolescents who are born in a libertarian communist environment.

Draft Committee: We agree with the spirit of the motion, but we must explain the impossibility of allowing you room to make changes because that would mean allowing room for all details that all syndicates present to us. That is the task entrusted to the committee that is being proposed in the resolution's amendment.

Because it is 8:00 at night, Manufacturing (Barcelona) moves that the session is extended an hour in order to allow the resolution's approval to take place. The motion carries.

Metallurgy (Barcelona): Equal rights must be granted, which means accepting Liberal Professions' (Barcelona) expansion. The expansions that we other syndicates present in professional and technical aspects will also need to be accepted.

Glass (Zaragoza): This problem should be exclusively dealt with by a National Congress of Teachers.

San Feliu de Guixols: An explanation is asked for in regards to the resolution. The resolution implies a danger, and I propose as a last resort that the expansion is submitted to a referendum of the syndicates.

Draft Committee: We do not object to the matter being passed onto the syndicates.

We are interested in explaining the amendment's purpose. Bear in mind that there are 150 motions and each one contains things accepted in general terms but they must have a more complete articulation. There is not room to give too many turns and that should be accepted in order to prevent the general outline of our resolution from metamorphosing into something else.

The committee will have to consult technical elements, and once they present the complete resolution, all of the current Draft Committee members will revise it, and it will be definitively approved without the general spirit of the present resolution being distorted.

Put to the congressists's consideration, the resolution is unanimously approved with the following amendment:

Amendment Approved by Congress That Is Attached to the Resolution over the Confederal Concept of Libertarian Communism

This amendment is relegated to a referendum of syndicates for its approval or rejection:

In view of the little time that this Draft Committee has for writing the resolution, we move that a committee of five comrades is appointed, who, complying with the outline and principles pointed out in this resolution, will make a properly articulated and more elaborated resolution that is more complete in form and which integrates proper technical advice.

If Congress agrees to this, this work should be completed at the end of two months from the approval of this amendment.

Draft Committee. Zaragoza, May 9th, 1936.

It is 9:00 at night. The session adjourns.

Resolution over the Confederal Concept of Libertarian Communism (Approved by the 1936 CNT Congress)

It is known by all delegations attending this congress that within the CNT there are two ways of interpreting the direction of life and the structural basis of the post-revolutionary economy.

These multiple conceptual tendencies are due doubtless to doctrinal and philosophical reasons that originate in our militants' psychologies and that create two incontrovertible forms of thought whose potent energies today are being strengthened by propaganda that provide an outlet for these two channels.

Well, if it could be guaranteed that in this double movement of confederal energies the natural desire for hegemony would not manifest, there would be no problem. But that spiritual aspiration, tenacious and constant, could manifest with new force in our localities, opening up in disputes serious dangers to the unity that we have just obtained in this Draft Committee with the serenity and conscience necessary for examining and accepting the historical and transcendental responsibility of these times.

The Draft Committee has needed to find the formula that gathers the spirit and thought of the two currents and articulates the foundations of our new life. So we declare:

First. Putting the cornerstone to the architecture of this resolution, we have managed to construct it on these pillars with an austere sense of harmony: the Individual and the Syndicate, giving equal articulation to these two currents and conceptions.

Second. We put in writing the implicit recognition of individual sovereignty, confirming this as the precise guarantee of social harmony. With this overarching principle, which defends liberty against all threatening norms, we must articulate the distinct institutions that are essential for determining what we need, providing connections to those needs.

Thus, when the heap of the social wealth is socialized, when the possession of the instruments of work are guaranteed to all and all mental work is made equal and a responsibility for all in order to be able to consume, the instinct for natural law will assert itself in all imperatives for the conservation of life.

The anarchist principle of free agreement will arise in order to arrange the scope, transaction, and duration of pacts between people. The federation's liberty and power will have to guarantee and conceive the individual as a cell with a lawful identity and the key entity of successive articulations. The Federation must constitute the connections and nomenclature of the new society to come.

We must all consider that structuring the society of the future with mathematical precision would be absurd because there is often a real abyss between theory and practice.

Because of this, we will not fall into the error of politicians who present definitive solutions for all problems, solutions that sensationally fail in practice. And this is because they try to impose a method for all times without bearing in mind the evolution of human life itself. We, who have a vision more elevated than our social problems, will not do that.

By outlining the principles of libertarian communism, we do not present it as a single program that does not permit transformations. These transformations will come, logically, and particular needs and experiences will indicate them.

Although it perhaps seems that it is a bit outside the mandate Congress has charged us with, we believe it is necessary to clarify some of our concept on revolution and the most pronounced premises that in our opinion can and must govern the revolution.

The topic according to which revolution is none other than the violent episode by which the capitalist system is destroyed has been tolerated too much. Revolution, in reality, is none other than the phenomenon that is in fact a step toward a state of things that has for long previously taken shape in the collective conscious.

Therefore, revolution has its origins in the same moment in which, comparing the difference existing between social conditions and individual awareness, the latter, by instinct or analysis, sees himself forced to react against social conditions.

Because of this, we conceptualize in a few words that revolution begins:

First. As a psychological phenomenon against a state of things, that struggles for individual aspirations and needs.

Second. As a social manifestation when its organized shape in society clashes with the capitalist system's strata.

Third. Organizationally, when the need is felt to create a force capable of imposing the realization of its biological purpose.

On the other hand, these factors deserve to be highlighted as revolutionary catalysts:

a) Downfall of the moral doctrine that serves as the basis of the capitalist system.

b) Bankruptcy of this moral doctrine in its economic aspect.

c) Failure of its political expression—the democratic system as much as its ultimate expression, state capitalism, which is nothing other than authoritarian communism.

The whole of these factors converging at a given point and moment is the call for determining the appearance of the violent act that must proceed in order to enter the truly evolutionary period of revolution.

Considering that we live in the precise moment in which the convergence of all these factors are giving rise to this promising possibility, we have believed it necessary to draw up a resolution that, in its general lines, sets the primary pillars of the social edifice that will shelter us in the future.

The Constructive Concept of Revolution

We understand that our revolution must organize itself on the basis of strict fairness.

The revolution cannot be founded upon mutual aid, nor solidarity, nor on that archaic topic of 'charity'.

In any case, these three formulas—which throughout time have appeared to try to fill the deficiencies of rudimentary types of societies in which the individual appears abandoned in the face of arbitrary laws and taxes—, should be merged and clarified in new forms of social co-existence that find their clearest interpretation in libertarian communism:

giving to every human being that which he needs, without the satisfaction of such needs having other limits than the necessities demanded by the newly created economy.

If all roads that point to Rome lead to the Eternal City, all forms of work and distribution that steer towards the conception of an egalitarian society lead to the realization of justice and social harmony.

Consequentially, we believe that the revolution should cement itself upon the social principles and ethics of libertarian communism, which are:

First. Giving to every human being that which he needs, without the satisfaction of such needs having other limits than the necessities demanded by the newly created economy.

Second. Soliciting from every human being the maximum contribution of his efforts in accordance with society's necessities, taking into account the physical and moral conditions of each individual.

Organization of the New Society after the Revolutionary Act and the First Measures of Revolution

The violent aspect of the revolution finished, the following are declared abolished:

private property, the State, the principle of Authority, and, consequentially, the classes that divide men between exploiters and exploited, oppressed and oppressors.

The wealth being socialized, the producers' organizations now freed, these will oversee the direct administration of production and consumption.

Established in every locality, the Libertarian Commune will put into operation the new social mechanism. The producers of each branch or section, gathered in their Syndicates and in their workplaces, shall freely determine the way in which this will have to be organized.

The Free Commune shall seize as much of what the bourgeoisie formerly held illegitimately, such as provisions, clothes, metal casts, raw materials, work tools, etc. These work tools and raw

materials will pass into the producers' authority, so that they can immediately administer them for the direct benefit of the collective¹.

As their first purpose, the Communes shall take care to lodge with maximum accommodations all the inhabitants of each locality, ensuring assistance to the sick and education for children.

In accordance with the fundamental principle of libertarian communism, as we have said before, all shall prepare to fulfill voluntary duties—which will turn into a real duty when man works freely—to provide their aid to the collective, in relation to their strengths and capacities, and the Commune shall fulfill its obligation to take of their needs.

Certainly, it is already necessary from now on to establish the idea that the early period of the revolution shall not be easy and that it shall be necessary that every person contribute the maximum of their strengths and consume only that which the possibilities of production permit. Every constructive period requires sacrifice and individual and collective acceptance, as well as not creating difficulties to the work of societal reconstruction that we shall all realize in common agreement.

The Producers' Organization Plan

The economic plan of organization, in whatever manifestation national production takes, will be adjusted to the strictest principles of social economy, administered by the producers through their different organs of production, designated in general assemblies of the various organizations and controlled through them at all times.

At the grassroots (at the workplace, in the Syndicate, in the Commune, in every regulatory organ of the new society), the producer—the individual—is the cell, the cornerstone of all social, economic, and moral creations.

As a connective organ inside the Commune and in the workplace, the Workshop and Factory Council comes to agreements with all other work centers.

As a connective organ from Syndicate to Syndicate (the association of producers), the Statistics and Production Councils shall continue to federate with one another until they form a constant and tight network among all the producers of the Iberian Confederation.

In the countryside the producer is the foundation and will act through the Commune.

The Commune will manage all natural wealth of a political and geographical demarcation.

As a connective body, the Council of Cultivation—formed partly from technical elements and workers integrated from the associations of agricultural producers—will be responsible for guiding the intensification of production, deciding the lands most appropriate for intensive production, according to their chemical composition.

These Councils of Cultivation will establish the same network of relations that the Workplace Councils, Factory Councils, and Statistics and Production Councils establish. They will complement the free federation that represents the commune as a political territory and geographical subdivision.

While Spain is the only country that has realized her social transformation, Industrial Producers' Associations and Agricultural Producers' Associations will federate nationally if dilemmas and experience indicate that such large-scale federation is appropriate for the most fruitful development of the economy.

¹ "Collective" here and below is vague. It may be synonymous to "society".

Large-scale federation will take place for those services whose characteristics are inclined toward it, facilitating the necessary and logical relations between all Libertarian Communes of the Peninsula.

We think that as time passes the new society will manage to endow each commune with all agricultural and industrial elements that are necessary for their autonomy, in agreement with the biological principle that declares that the freest man—in this case, the commune—is he who needs least from others.

Libertarian Communes and Their Functions

Our revolution's political expression must be laid upon this trilogy: the individual, the commune, and the federation.

Within a plan of activities structured in all orders from a peninsular point-of-view, the mode of administration will be of an absolute Communal character. The basis of this administration will be, therefore, the Commune.

These Communes will be autonomous and regionally and nationally federated for the realization of objectives of a general character.

The right of autonomy will not exclude the duty of fulfilling agreements of collective coexistence, these agreements being made in full awareness and accepted in depth.

So, therefore, a Commune of consumers, without limits on voluntarism, will commit itself to obey those norms of a general character that have been agreed upon by the majority after free discussion.

On the other hand, those communes that are resistant to industrialization, that agree to other types of coexistence, for example the naturists and nudists, will have the right to an autonomous administration, free from general compromises.

Since these naturist-nudist Communes and other types of Communes will not be able to satisfy all of their necessities, limited that these Communes will be, their delegates to the Congresses of the Iberian Confederation of Autonomous Libertarian Communes will be able to arrange economic agreements with the other Agricultural and Industrial Communes.

In conclusion we propose:

- The creation of the Commune as a political and administrative entity.
- That the Commune will be autonomous and confederated with all other Communes.
- That the communes will be federated county-wise and regionally, fixing by free will their geographical limits. Creating single Communes from small towns, small villages, and places when it is convenient to do so.

The whole of these Communes will constitute an Iberian Confederation of Autonomous Libertarian Communes.

For the distributive function of production and so that the Communes can better nourish themselves, they will be able to create those supplementary directing organs to achieve this, for example, a Confederal Council of Production and Distribution with direct representations from the National Federations of Production and from the Annual Congress of Communes.

Internal Mission and Functions of the Commune

The Commune must tend to that which is of interest to the individual.

It must oversee all the work of coordination, maintenance, and beautification for its population, from its inhabitants' accommodations to the articles and products that the Syndicates or Producers' Associations put at their service.

It will also occupy itself with hygiene, communal statistics, collective necessities; with teaching; with health establishments; and with the conservation and improvement of local means of communication.

It will organize relations with the other Communes, and it will take care to stimulate all artistic and cultural activities.

For the good fulfillment of this mission, a Communal Council will be appointed to which representatives of the Councils of Farming, Health, Culture, Distribution, Production, and Statistics will be aggregated.

The election procedures of the Communal Councils will be determined in accordance with a system that is established in consideration of the differences that population density warrants, taking into account that it will take time to politically decentralize the metropolis, constituted with its own Federations of Communes.

All of these posts will not have any executive or bureaucratic character, apart from performing technical or simple statistical functions. People elected to these posts will carry out their productive missions, meeting together in sessions at the end of the workday to discuss questions of detail that will not need the endorsement of the Communal assemblies.

Assemblies shall be held as often as the commune's interests deem necessary, by request of the members of the Communal Council, or by the will of the inhabitants of each one.

Relations and Exchange of Products

As we have already mentioned, our organization is of the federalist type and secures the individual's liberty within the group and the Commune. The Communes' liberty is secured within the Federations. And the liberty of the Federations of Communes is secured within the Confederations.

Therefore, we proceed from the individual to the collective, securing his rights in order to preserve the inviolable principle of liberty.

The Commune's inhabitants shall discuss among themselves their internal problems: production, consumption, instruction, hygiene, and, when necessary, moral development and economy.

When encountering problems that affect a whole region of Communes or a province, the Federations will have to deliberate such matters using meetings and assemblies that have gathered with representation from all Communes. The delegates to these meetings will provide the viewpoints previously approved by their Communes.

For example, if it is necessary to build roads, linking together the peoples of a region or transportation and product exchange between agricultural and industrial regions, it is natural that all Communes explain their opinions, since it will also be necessary to offer their cooperation.

In matters of a regional character, it will be the Regional Federation that puts into practice agreements, and these agreements shall represent the sovereign will of all of the inhabitants of the region.

Therefore, it all begins in the individual, passes to the Commune, from the Commune it moves to the Federation, and finally, to the Confederation.

We shall approach problems of a national type in the same way, since our organizational bodies shall complement one another.

National organization shall regulate relations of an international character, being in direct contact with the proletariat of other countries, using their respective organized bodies as intermediaries, linking one another as in our International Workers' Association [IWA-AIT].

For the exchange of products from Commune to Commune, Communal Councils will be fixed in relation to the Regional Federations of Communes and the Confederal Council of Production and Distribution.

Communes will acquire what they need from one another and offer surpluses to one another.

By the network of relations established between the Communes and the Statistics and Production Councils—created by the National Federations of Producers—, the problem of exchange is resolved and simplified.

In reference to the Commune's internal exchange of products, the production card shall be enough. The production card shall be made by the Workshop and Factory Councils, giving one the right to purchase everything he can to cover his needs.

The production card constitutes the principle of an exchange symbol that remains bound to these two regulatory elements:

First, the production card is not transferable;

Second, that a procedure is adopted whereby the production card contains a record of the value of the day's work that the holder has performed, and this value is only valid for the acquisition of products within a maximum of one year.

In regards to the non-working parts of the population, the Communal Councils will provide consumption cards.

Of course, we cannot settle on an absolute standard. It is necessary to respect the autonomy of the Communes, which, if they see fit, can establish another system of internal exchange, provided that these new systems are not able to harm the interests of other Communes in any way.

The Individual's Duties toward the Collective and the Concept of Distributive Justice

Libertarian communism is incompatible with all correctional regimens, and this implies the disappearance of present systems of correctional justice, and therefore, punitive instruments (jails, prison labor, etc.).

This Draft Committee is of the opinion that social determinism is the principal cause of the so-called crimes that occur in the present state of things and, consequentially, when the causes of the crimes disappear, crimes will cease to exist in most cases.

So we take into account that:

First. Man is not naturally bad and that wrongdoing is the logical consequence of the state of social injustice which we live in today.

Second. In order for man to cover his needs, it is also necessary to give him the chance to a rational and humane education, which will eliminate the causes of crime.

Therefore, we understand that when the individual fails to comply with his duties, as much in the moral capacity as in his functions as a producer, popular assemblies will be the ones to give a just solution to the matter with a harmonious sentiment.

Libertarian Communism, therefore, will rest upon Medicine and Education, unique preventatives that science recognizes as a right.

When an individual is victim of a pathological phenomenon and violates the harmony that governs relations between people, therapeutic education will cure his disequilibrium and stimulate within him the sentiment of ethical social responsibility that an unhealthy inheritance denied him of in the first place.

The Family and Sexual Relations

One should not forget that the family was the first civilizing nucleus of the human species, that it has fulfilled admirable functions related to moral culture and solidarity; that it has survived within the evolution of the family itself, and within that of the clan, the tribe, the town, and the nation; and that it is fair to assume that it will even survive a lot longer.

The revolution must not violently operate against the family, except in those cases of dysfunctional families, in which it will recognize and support the right of separation.

Since the first measure of the libertarian revolution consists in securing the economic independence of individuals, without distinction of sex, the interdependence created in the capitalist system—due to it being an inferior economy—, between men and women will disappear with capitalism.

It is understood, therefore, that the two sexes will be equal, in rights just as much as in responsibilities.

Libertarian communism proclaims free love, with no regulation other than the will of man and woman, guaranteeing children collective security and saving them from human aberrations by the application of biological-eugenic principles.

Likewise, from a fine sexual education beginning at school, we will tend toward species selection in agreement with the objectives of eugenics, so that human couples consciously procreate fine and healthy children.

In regards to problems of a moral nature that love can raise in a libertarian communist society, such as love rejection, the community and liberty have no more than two paths, so that sexual and human relations develop normally.

For the person who wants love forcefully or bestially—if consent of or respect of the individual's rights is not enough—, separation will have to be resorted to. A change of water and air is recommended for many sicknesses. For love sickness—which is a sickness when it creates stubbornness and blindness—it will be necessary to recommend a change of Commune to remove the ill from the environment that deprives him of good sense and drives him mad, although it is not probable that these frustrations will be produced in an environment of sexual liberty.

The Religious Question

Religion, a purely subjective manifestation of the human being, will be recognized as soon as it remains relegated to the shrine of individual conscience. But in no case will it be respectfully considered when it comes in the form of public ostentation or in the form of moral or intellectual coercion.

Individuals will be free to conceive how many moral ideas will suit their needs, doing away with all rituals.

Education, Art, Science, and Free Experimentation

The problem of teaching will have to be approached with radical methods.

In the first place, illiteracy will have to be energetically and systematically combatted.

Culture will be returned to those who were dispossessed of it as a duty of restorative social justice that the revolution must undertake, taking into account that just as capitalism has been the hoarder and detainer of the social wealth, cities have been the hoarders and detainers of culture and instruction.

Returning material wealth and culture are the basic objectives of our revolution. How? Expropriating capitalism materially and distributing culture to those who lack it morally.

Therefore, our educational labor will have to be divided into two periods. We have an educational labor to realize immediately after the social revolution and a general human labor to carry out within the newly-created society.

The immediate task will be organizing among the illiterate population an elementary culture consisting of, for example, learning to read and write, bookkeeping, physical culture, hygiene, the historical process of evolution and revolution, theory of the nonexistence of god, etc.

A large number of the cultivated youth can carry this out, who, lending a voluntary service to culture, will accomplish this during one or two years, properly controlled and guided by the National Federation of Education.

Immediately after the proclamation of libertarian communism, the federation will take charge of all teaching centers and assess the value of the professional and voluntary faculty. The National Federation of Education will separate those who are intellectually and, above all, morally incapable of adapting to the needs of a free education. The election of teaching staff in primary and secondary education will only consider a demonstrated capacity in practical exercises.

Teaching as a pedagogical mission fit to educate a new humanity will be free, scientific, and equal for both sexes, endowed with all elements necessary for its exercise, regardless of the branch of productive activity or human knowledge. Hygiene and pediatrics will be accorded a preferential place to educate women on how to be a mother from school.

Likewise, principle attention will be dedicated to sexual education for the improvement of the species.

We deem the fundamental function of education to be the formation of men with their own opinions—let it be understood that when speaking of men, we speak in a general way—, and for this it is necessary that the teacher cultivates all of the child's faculties and that he achieves the complete development of all of the child's potentialities.

Within the education system that libertarian communism puts into practice, the system of punishments and rewards will be definitively excluded because all inequality is fermented in these two principles.

The movie theater, radio, educational expeditions, books, cartoons, projections—will be excellent and effective aids for a rapid intellectual and moral transformation of the current generations and for developing the personalities of children and adolescents who are born and develop in a libertarian communist system.

Apart from the simple educational aspect, in the first years of life in libertarian communist society, everyone will be assured, for as long as they live, access and the right to science, art, and investigation of all fields compatible with indispensable productive activities, whose exercise will guarantee equilibrium and health to human nature.

In a libertarian communist society, producers will not be divided into manual and intellectual workers, but all will be manual and intellectual workers at the same time. And access to the arts and sciences will be free because the time in which that is accessed will belong to the individual, not the community, who will free the individual to do this, if that is desired from him, once the work day concludes—the producer having fulfilled the producer's task.

There are needs of a spiritual nature, parallel to material needs, that will manifest with more force in a society that satisfies primary needs and that leaves man morally emancipated.

Because evolution is a continuous line, although not a straight line at times, the individual will always have aspirations, desires to improve on what his parents, his fellow man, or he himself has achieved.

A society based on free examination and the liberty of all human life will not be able to drown materially or in a general nature, cravings for improvement, for artistic, scientific, and literary creation, and for experimentation.

Libertarian communist society will not allow these cravings to be lost as occurs today, but, on the contrary, it will encourage and cultivate them, bearing in mind that *man does not live by bread alone*, and that a humanity that lives just by bread is disgraceful.

It is not logical to suppose that we will lack the desire for leisure in our new society. For this purpose, in Autonomous Libertarian Communes days will be allocated for general recreation, which assemblies will designate, choosing and setting aside symbolic dates of history and of nature.

In the same way daily hours will be dedicated to theatrical and cinematic presentations and cultural conferences that will provide joy and fun in common.

Defense of the Revolution

We admit the need to defend the conquests made by revolution because there are more revolutionary possibilities in Spain than in the countries surrounding her.

We must suppose that capitalism in these countries will not resign themselves to be dispossessed of the interests that they have acquired in Spain.

Therefore, while the social revolution has not triumphed internationally, necessary measures for defending the new regime will be adopted, be it against the danger of foreign capitalist invasion, signaled beforehand, or to avoid counterrevolution within the country.

A permanent army would constitute the greatest danger to the revolution because dictatorship would forge itself under its influence and deal the deathblow to the revolution.

In moments of struggle, when the State's forces, in totality or in part, unite against the People, our organized, armed forces will lend their cooperation in the streets to defeat the bourgeoisie. Once our forces have defeated them, their work will be done.

The People Armed will be the best guarantee against all intentions of restoring the destroyed regime by forces from within or without. There are thousands of workers who have marched in the barracks and who are acquainted with modern military technique.

Every Commune will maintain its armaments and defense elements. Until the revolution is definitively consolidated these will not be destroyed in order to convert them into work instruments.

We recommend the need to conserve planes, tanks, armored trucks, machine guns, and anti-aircraft canons because the true threat of foreign invasion comes from the skies.

If this moment arrives, the People will quickly mobilize to face the enemy head on. And the producers [workers] will return to work as soon as they have finished their defensive mission.

This general mobilization will be composed of all people of both sexes who are able to fight and prepared to carry out multiple, necessary missions in combat.

Commanding officers within our confederal defense, extended to production centers, will be the most valuable auxiliaries for consolidating the revolution's conquests and for training elements for fighting in struggles that we should sustain in large territories in defense of the revolution.

Therefore, we declare,

First. The disarmament of capitalism means delivering arms to the Communes, which will be entrusted with their own conservation and which will take care of—at the national level—effectively organizing defensive methods.

Second. In the international setting, we will have to carry out an intense propaganda among the proletariat of all countries, so that they energetically elevate their protest, declaring movements of a solidaric nature in the face of whatever attempt at invasion on the part of their respective Governments.

At the same time, our Iberian Confederation of Autonomous Libertarian Communes will help, morally and materially, all the earth's exploited to liberate themselves once and for all from the monstrous guardianship of capitalism and the State.

Final Words

We have finished our work. Before arriving to our final point, we think we must insist at this historical hour on the fact that we must not suppose that this resolution should serve as something definitive that becomes a closed standard before the revolutionary proletariat's constructive duties.

This Draft Committee's hope is much more modest. It would be happy if Congress saw in this resolution the general lines of the *initial* plan that all the working classes must carry out,

Humanity's point of departure toward its integral emancipation.

Let our work be improved by anyone who feels intelligent, courageous and capable enough to do so.

Anarchist library
Anti-Copyright



CNT (Spain)
The Confederal Concept of Libertarian Communism
1936

El Congreso Confederal de Zaragoza 1936 (Madrid, Spain: CNT, 1978), pp. 226-242.
Translated by X363823, a San Antonio, Texas (USA) member of the Industrial Workers of the
World, who can be reached through X363823@gmail.com.

en.anarchistlibraries.net