

Regeneración

English Section

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Speak Out! Speak Out!

Speak Out!

Ford, the preposterous, appears to have learned at least one lesson from his European escapade. It is an Anarchistic lesson; being, in fact, the very corner stone of all Anarchistic thought. He is reported as no longer holding the bankers and ammunition manufacturers responsible for the war, and is quoted as summing up his conclusions thus: "The men doing the fighting have been too content to let those who rule them do their thinking, and they have not taken advantage of their divine right to say for themselves what they shall do and think."

In "The Western Comrade" Mr. G. E. Bolton is kind enough to notice at some length my writings in this section; to agree with me that the whole revolutionary movement is drifting aimlessly, and to suggest that, abandoning what he considers my merely negative and critical attitude, I "make a serious attempt to orient American radicalism;" to "provide a compass and a rudder to the American desorientés." A big enough order!

Two great dramas at this moment occupy the stage; the first, which intimately concerns the whole western hemisphere, being the Mexican Revolution; the second, which is shaking to its very foundations the entire civilized world, being the European war. In my opinion the man who feels no interest in those two dramas is intellectually and spiritually dead. On the other hand, I consider that the men and women who air their opinions on these struggles without having put themselves to the trouble of investigation are infamous. No one has a right to speak until he has attained the point at which he can speak with, at least, something approximating knowledge.

No honest person will pretend that it is possible to reach that point without careful and impartial study. I am sick to death of the alleged radicals whose talk on Mexico—Debs was an example—show that they have never thought it worth their while to master their subject. Still more sick am I of those who talk loudly about this war but cannot tell you when it began, how it started, why Belgium was invaded, or whether Great Britain did or did not endeavor to preserve the peace; who, in short, pronounce verdicts without troubling to sift the evidence.

The Mexican drama is the drama of a gigantic crime; the disinheritation of a nation by a handful of scoundrels who had carved their way to power by the sword. Accomplices in that crime, because wilful receivers of the stolen goods, are men with whom we are all familiar—such men as Otis, Hearst, Rockefeller and the horde of American and European financiers whose money is their God. But they are only the accomplices; the campfollowers with whom the original invaders found it politic to divide. They did not do the original looting; they could not have done it. It was done as it always is done and must be done, by those in possession of the political power; by the men who had it in their power to dispossess the peon, to send soldiers to drive him from his land, to banish him to Yucatan and Mexican Siberia. Porfirio Diaz led the raid, and his chief assistant-pirates were the Cientificos and the Roman Catholic Church. Frepeat it: The Mexican drama is the

drama of a gigantic crime, and we are called on to pronounce and execute judgement on it, justly and righteously. He who wishes to pass judgement must first master the evidence in the case.

If the cry that our millionaires are primarily responsible for the bloodshed in Mexico is false and, therefore, foolish, still more false and foolish is the cry that merchants—mere dealers in food and crockery and hardware—are responsible for this European war. What set of hucksters could have served Serbia with an impossible ultimatum and open fire on her capital within forty-eight hours? What gang of bankers could have suddenly thrown an army of a million across the Belgian border? These are the prerogatives of imperial power that has made itself master of the governing apparatus of a nation, that commands its treasury, that thereby is able to equip, maintain and move huge bodies of armed men—a task altogether impossible to private citizens however wealthy they may be.

Mr. Bolton's article smothers me with such compliments that I dislike to write of it, but he raises points which I cannot pass in silence. And first a personal one. He speaks of me as one "who thinks so far ahead of and writes so far above his readers that he gets and holds (and possibly wants) but a limited audience." I hope that is not true. I think it is not. I believe I tell a simple tale which all can understand who wish to. My audience may be limited—how deeply I regret it—but I believe that I have made many of my readers understand quite clearly the real trouble in Mexico and how it came about. I believe also that in this matter of the European war I speak a language that all my readers can understand. I tell them that the analysis which represents capitalism as the ruling power is false. I tell them that our actual rulers are the politicians, from the Czars and Kaisers on their thrones to the slyster lawyers who rig up our conventions and wire-pull our city councils. I tell them that Wilhelm orders bankers and that Wilson summons Morgans to the White House. Then by I attack the whole philosophy of our Bergers, our Emma Goldmans, all that unthinking crew that is mouthing about this being a "capitalistic" war. I point to grossly-palpable facts, illuminated by rivers of human blood, as proof of the absurdity of their teachings, and I am serenely confident that they, as well as my readers, know I hit them hard. But as to that I am indifferent. What I care about is the potency of my attack on Socialism, which is the creed of the State as master of the man; which is the creed of compulsion; which is, therefore, the creed of militarism; which is, therefore, the creed that will keep us eternally at war, the stronger striving tenaciously to overpower the weaker and force them to their will. Against this "Coming Slavey" and indeed it has come already—I raise the banner of "Man Versus the State;" of man who deserves and should have freedom, because only under freedom can he give full play to those truly divine and pre-eminently constructive qualities which are his natural endowment. I am no quibbler, no splitter of fine hairs. I see what the few, equipped with opportunity, have done. By it I measure the enormous achievements possible to a future wherein all shall have the openings now guarded jealously by a mere handful as their special privilege.

Now, as to Mexico. In the "Los Angeles Times" of January

3 I find this heading: "Day of Under Dog Dawning. Mexico to be for Peon now, says Sugar Magnate. Believes Era of Cientifico concessions past. Fears Carranza's policy of no foreign loans." And the first two paragraphs of the article that follows run thus:

"The era of large concessions in Mexico has passed, according to Thomas D. Boyd, vice-president and general manager of the United Sugar Companies, who has been at the Alexandria for the past few days. Mr. Boyd has been in Mexico throughout the late disturbances and, as an official of a company owning about 200,000 acres of Mexican land, is perhaps in closer touch with the actual conditions along the West Coast than anyone who has been here in some time.

"If there is any one thing that stands pre-eminent among the results of the political turmoil of the past few years, it is the absolute certainty of the complete defeat of the ideals of the old Cientifico party," he said, "Special privilege is a thing of the past. Of course I do not mean to say that the individuals holding office and friends of the victorious party will not receive substantial evidences of appreciation for their work, but I do believe it will be impossible for individuals or groups of individuals to obtain by grant vast slices of territory or to receive any other valuable right as a mark of special favor."

I cannot tell, neither can you, whether Mr. Boyd is right, but I think he is. I think there has been a great awakening in Mexico. I think there is a general agreement there that if ever Mexicans are to amount to anything they must own and be masters of the land on and by which they have to live. I think that, as a whole, Mexicans want special privilege to be a thing of the past, and that, as a whole, they are greatly distrustful of and opposed to the formation of a stong, ly-centralized government, because their experience has been that such governments always rob the many to enrich the few.

If the Mexican people, in any considerable numbers, have reached such thinking-point they have, in my opinion, advanced far along the path of political and social wisdom; much farther than have the people of the United States or Europe. And if I am invited to "orient," or give direction to the radical or revolutionary movement I say this: "Stop your fooling. Cease to potter away the precious hours on non-essentials. Have done with the hypocritical pretense that you can win freedom for all by forcing concessions in favor of your particular class, or that you can overthrow what is essentially a system of slavery by exacting terms that make your slavery a trifle less onerous. Those are delusions, are lies, and your propaganda hitherto has poisoned with those lies the thought of the very people you wish to emancipate. Stop that lying. Confess that you have been afraid to face the real music and tell the whole truth. Go for the substantial things. Attack land monopoly. Proclaim to all the world that special privilege—even special privilege in favor of your own class—must go, and that the governmental apparatus which upholds and manufactures it is a bad inheritance from the Caesars, is utterly out of date and must be thrown on the scrap-heap."

Now, as to the European war. It is stupid to attribute my views to the fact that I am of English birth, or to say I hate the Ger-

man. At this moment America—at least so far as the English-speaking element is concerned—is a unit in the conviction that Germany's triumph will mean our most unwilling passage into such a military era as this world has not yet known. It is useless to discuss this question for it has passed beyond the pale of argument. Members of the Socialist Party and so-called Anarchists with German affiliations may squabble and protest, but the nation at large has no doubt about it and accepts it as established fact. In truth it is the fear of German militarism that has lent the campaign of "Preparedness" all its strength. On the other hand, rightly or wrongly, I believe that the spokesmen for France, Italy and Great Britain, at least, are absolutely honest in their repeated declarations that they intend to abolish militarism.

I cannot see why they should wish otherwise. Great Britain is a commercial bunch of widely-scattered countries, ready and anxious to trade with all the world. War spells death to trade. The French are a people less and less inclined to emigration, satisfied with their own country and anxious to be let alone. In Italy the taxation forced on the nation by Austrian militarism had become intolerable. Why should not these nations wish militarism to pass? Why should not we, who have everything to lose and nothing to gain by militarism, sympathize with them? For the life of me I cannot see why we should not.

I am charged by Mr. Bolton, and it is apparently intended as a slur, with hating the invader. The charge does me credit. It proves that I know my business and understand that all tyranny rests on invasion of human rights, while freedom is simply the condition of being immune from invasion. But, apart from that, I have felt it alike my duty and pleasure to study this war from many angles, because it is unquestionably one of the great turning-points of history; and particularly have I steeped myself in the reports rendered by the men who have been face to face with it. If radicals would study that literature, written by picked men under conditions such as burn facts into men's souls and make it almost impossible for them to lie respecting things that really matter, they would receive an education, I opine, such as at this moment they seem to lack most woefully. These men, who have been in the very jaws of hell, do not speak jestingly of invasion. On the contrary, illustrating their reports with a wealth of personal experience that leaves no room for doubt, they present us with pictures of millions of innocent human beings shelled out of their homes and driven hither and thither with a brutality such as no self-respecting cattle dealer uses toward the stock he ships to market. These men have no good word for war, which they denounce as hideous beyond expression; a diabolical massacre by fiendish mechanical forces, in whose grip man is more helpless than a new-born babe; a iously unspeakably obscene, delirious thing, lustful and cruel, which spreads agony and pestilence and every foulness imaginable wherever it plants its foot. Universally they speak of it as a patently absurd anachronism, and brand as an assassin's lie the military argument that war is needed to purge society, and rescue it from the effeminate vices engendered by years of peace. They have no difficulty, indeed, in overthrowing that silly pretence, for throughout the inferno of the last eighteen months men and women of every nationality, combatants and non-combatants alike, have given us examples of heroism so exalted that no one henceforth is justified in doubting the capacity of man to rise to the sublime heights, or in stigmatising war as composed of selfish

cowards.

Without exception all these writers pay unstintingly generous tribute to the men who march undauntedly to what they know cannot be anything but almost certain death. They may be mistaken, as I think the German are—for I myself consider that their military aristocracy has made them the dupes of a studied deception which, in its coldly-calculated cruelty, is without parallel in history—but they are brave men, they are sincere men, and to brave and sincere men humanity must always take off its hat, however deluded they be. The dearest thing of all is life, and when I find men by the millions voluntarily sacrificing that greatest of all treasures common sense tells me that some supreme impulse is stirring; that some issue of indescribable importance is at stake. Men do not face modern artillery, the loathsome existence of the trenches, and all the heart-breaking suffering that accompanies modern war, without counting the cost. They do not abandon what were happy homes and prosperous careers, as hundreds of thousands of Frenchmen and Belgians and Britishers and men of many other nationalities have done, without weighing things seriously and convincing themselves that one of those crises has arisen in which men have to place principle ahead of everything. Unquestionably there is a higher wisdom, to which superior men and superior races respond instinctively, which warns us that there are occasions when life itself is but of secondary value. The men and the races that have the courage to answer that call ARE superior. They survive. They place their indelible stamp on human thought and human action. They live in the character their example transmits, and character is a thousand times more important to our race than mere intellectual astuteness. This universe is so unthinkable as being constructed on any other principle than that of strength, and without character there is no strength.

This war has brought into evidence the almost limitless capacity for heroism latent in our race; but it has only brought it into evidence. It has not caused it, for it was there. It has simply brought it to the surface and diverted it, as the purest stream may be diverted, to the foulest uses. All the writers I refer to agree on that. Usually, writing for an American audience and being unduly anxious to maintain a reputation for impartiality, they do not definitely place the blame; but they one and all agree that the rulers, the military chiefs, the diplomatists, the politicians, the few responsible for suddenly hurling our race back to what we suppose must have been the conditions of the cave-age, are criminals for whom no earthly punishment can be too severe. All agree that, if we have one grain of common sense, we shall make up our minds that such a monstrous calamity as is this war shall never be permitted to occur again. All agree that this business of invading and slaughtering hordes of perfectly inoffensive people must be stopped once and for all, and most of them agree that the way to stop it is to make things intolerably hot for the invader, wherever he may come from and whoever he may be.

With all that I am in entire accord, not because I am an Anarchist, but because, as I hope, I am humane and sensible. But the task of stopping war is enormously larger than at first sight it appears to be. In the first place an immense number of people believe in invasion, provided they can be the successful invaders. As a class the military, of every nationality, believe in it, for the simple reason that, as a class, they do not believe in freedom. They consider that the social machine can only be run under orders, and that back of the orders there must be the armed force to compel obedience.

In the second place, we do not understand the vast extension this doctrine of opposition to invasion must take. Every one will admit that Belgium was invaded, but most people will ridicule my assertion that Porfirio Diaz and his myrmidons made Mexico the victim of an invasion just as cruel and unjustifiable, and few will agree with me when I state that the entire social question is one of the invasion of the rights of the weak many by the powerful few. We have not progressed anything like as far or as rapidly as we think we have. We think we have shaken off feudalism, but the quintessence of feudalism was the paramount power of the land-

lord, and that power is fully as great today as it was at the time of the French Revolution. We laugh at the idea of comparing our civilization with that corrupt Roman Empire whose inevitable fall shook society to its foundations and ushered in the Dark Ages. As a matter of fact our laws, upheld by all the powers of the State and therefore the one great power to which the mightiest plutocrat has to bend, are based on and are, in their main features, identical with those of that accursed Roman Empire, and the entire philosophy of our governing institutions is that of military Rome.

Under the shadow of that ancient sword we petty men still creep about, with little to look to at the last except dishonorable graves. Under the shadow of that sword, which shapes it at every turn, our industrial life is grey and grim and sombre, as they paint the murder-ships which typify it truly. From that grey-ness the only escape at present permitted is into the shambles of the battlefield, where all the atmosphere is crimson-red.

Mr. Bolton invites me to point the way out, and suggests that I write a book because, as he says, I have some acquaintance with the teachings of Proudhon, Stirner and a lot of other scholars. How absurd! Who was Proudhon, for example? Simply a man who believed in justice and thought this earth should be for the use of the living. So does the untutored Mexican peasant, and so do the peasants of Belgium, Serbia and I know not how many other countries now laid waste by war. Proudhon hated the bureaucracies, and prophesied that all this wire-pulling by the few eventually would land the many in tragic trouble. That is exactly what has happened, and the innate hatred of officialdom which the peon shares with the common people of every country is more than justified by the world-shattering events now bringing down the hole temple of civilization—a temple it has taken thousands of years to rear. All the writers Mr. Bolton names shook their heads ominously over the growing power of militarism. The simple Mexican peon detests militarism, and so do the simple masses in every country; with excellent cause. Has not the United States itself been peopled largely by men—thousands of them Germans—fleeing from the terror of conscription?

No; this is not an affair of scholars or books, but of arousing the deep and universal instincts of the masses, which are true to life itself. Books and scholars deal too largely in abstractions, and we are faced today with the gravest and most sternly-practical facts. War, and the military philosophy which supports it, is the great central fact of this inestimable present hour. Stop it! Not by mealy-mouthed orations which amount to nothing, but by crushing the life out of the few who are responsible for crushing out the lives of millions. Find out first who were responsible—and it is an easy matter if we will but be honest with ourselves—and read them such a lesson that militarism everywhere will understand that its day past, that it belongs to the "Ias Beens" that the game is up.

Follow this military philosophy into all its ramifications. Show how all government, which is simply the invasion of the governed, rests upon it. Show how all this business of landlordism, of special privilege, of social caste, rests on the philosophy of militarism, which justifies and glorifies invasion by declaring it as the basic law of nature that the weakest must be driven to the wall. But do not imagine that you can do all this while carefully building up your own special caste, forming your own labor bureaucracy, or conducting petty military campaigns which consist either of carving your way to office by the brute force of the majority or feeling hirlings to blow up those with whom you do not happen to agree. Not at all as a dreamer or bookworm, but as a practical observer of practical affairs, I tell you that those tactics and that philosophy also are utterly out of date and completely played out. For well-nigh a century past you have been trying them and they have led to less than nothing.

Go to the people, instead of flocking in a sectarian corner by yourselves. Have the pluck and honesty to state straight what you actually want, instead of patting yourselves on the back, conceited prigs, and declaring that you dare not put your real ideas before the people, because the people are not sufficiently educated

to understand them. If an ordinary man cannot understand what I write my writing is to blame.

Tell the masses that this business of conquering the earth, either by the sword or by the purse, and putting a ring round it for the enrichment of the conquerors, is played out and must be stopped.

Tell the masses that they must do their own thinking and acting for themselves, inasmuch as politicians are, by the very nature of their trade, the trickiest scoundrels yet unhung.

Tell them that every form of special privilege robs the many to enrich the few.

Tell them that monopoly is not a good-natured domestic animal that can be drilled into decent behavior, but an untamable tiger that must be killed.

Speak out. You have tried everything else under the sun and to no avail. You have dealt mainly in thin-spun theories, thought which any competent logician or historian can drive a coach and four. Supposing, for a change, you come down to actual facts. They lie all around you, and to the lever of a really bold and honest agitation they supply the fulcrum with which it is possible to raise the world. Do you think this world is happy, or that this war is making it happier? Add hope to discontent and you possess the formula which will revolutionize society from top to toe. It needs it, and it knows it needs it. It is asking for it. Otis himself would welcome it. But with your miserable half-way measures; your yawps for freedom and your own detestable tyrannies among yourselves, he has no patience. In that I am at one with him, heart and soul.

WM. C. OWEN.

Fair Warning.

The death met by sixteen American capitalists at the hands of the Mexican peons at Santa Isabel, State of Chihuahua, Mexico, must be regarded as a fair warning by the rest of professional skinners of the poor.

Those men did not meet death for being Americans,—for a great many of American workmen enjoy at present a healthy and safe life in Mexico, but because they were wealthy miners that lured by greed went to Mexico to further enrich themselves at the cost of the misery and slavery of the Mexican people.

The Mexican peon has made up his mind to become free, and, therefore, he has been fighting ever since five years ago to regain possession of what he has been stripped of. Since five years ago he has been soaking the Mexican soil with his generous blood, determined to perish in his task rather than returning to the same horrible conditions that forced him to pick up the gun.

We Mexicans do prefer the extermination of our race till its last specimen, rather than returning to slavery, oppression and exploitation. Therefore, we go after Land and Liberty or Death. We do hate halfways, for we feel that Life is not worth living if not married with Freedom.

In consequence, we Mexicans do make open and relentless war-to-death to Capital, to Authority and to Church, in whom we recognize the greatest enemies of human freedom.

Hence, the punishment of those who dare even to attempt to oppress and exploit us, no matter to which nationality they may belong to.

In this special case of the execution of the sixteen American capitalists, there is no body else to be blamed but Woodrow Wilson, Venustiano Carranza and the American capitalist press. That blood must stain Wilson's head because it is to his interfering in Mexican affairs that are not his own, that this men went to Mexico. On Carranza's because he guaranteed the lives and properties of foreign capitalists while his own are at the mercy of the Mexican peon. And on the American capitalist press for deceiving its countrymen and having them to believe that peace and safety for exploiters reign in Mexico.

Anyway, let the execution of the sixteen American capitalists at the hands of the Mexican peon, to be a fair warning for the rest of professional skinners of the Mexican people, whatever their nationality might be.

ENRIQUE FLORES MAGON.

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