

Luis Seligson

Throughout the 1960s these caricatures by "Luís" appeared in The Militant newspaper, published by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the United States. Many also appeared in the SWP's monthly journal, International Socialist Review, and the magazine International Viewpoint published by the Fourth International. These images also appeared in the publication Intercontinental Press.

The caricatures he drew and the headlines from the articles they accompany, capture the worldwide political and social revolt of the era.

Below is a biographical sketch provided to the Holt Labor Library by his wife, Eunice Seligson, and sons, Eric and Mark Seligson.

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About the Caricaturist, Luís

Luís Seligson was born in Argentina in 1914, the son of immigrant Russian parents. To escape serving in the Tsarist wars, Abraham (Albert) Seligson, a carpenter, fled to Argentina. Sarah a seamstress, fleeing the virulent anti-Semitism in Russia, arrived in Argentina some years later. There the two married and had two sons.

When Luís was six and his brother, Mauricio, three, the family left Argentina (ironically, because of a pogrom) for the United States and settled in Wisconsin, where Mauricio died in childhood of rheumatic fever.

In the early thirties, in the very depths of the Great Depression, Luís--now an Americanized Louis--entered the University of Wisconsin. He studied journalism and art, became an athlete (boxing and swimming), and was politically active on a campus radicalized by the Depression. He worked his way through college as a sign painter, learning the brush and pen-and-ink techniques that he was to use the rest of his life.

Toward the end of the thirties, Lou had migrated to the San Francisco Bay Area, where he became sports editor of the People's World, a left-wing daily. He wrote two columns, "Pardon My Glove" and "Out in Left Field."

Upon U.S. entry into World War II, he joined the Merchant Marine and sailed on freighters and tankers in the Pacific. Later he worked in the Marin shipyards, where he met and married Dorothy Wilson, a journeyman shipfitter and union organizer. They were both active in winning better conditions for workers in industry and agriculture.

After the war, Lou returned to journalism, and worked for several big-city newspapers across the country. It was during this period that he developed his unique style of doing interviews with an accompanying caricature. Lou would sketch his subject while he conducted the interview and produce a dramatic and often wry pen-and-ink portrait that would appear alongside the feature story. The combination was very popular and the column gave him access to many local and national celebrities.

With the onset of the McCarthy witch-hunt in the fifties, Lou became one of its first victims. An outspoken radical and officially a citizen of Argentina, he was arrested as a seditious alien in 1952.

The Immigration and Naturalization Department began proceedings to deport Lou to Argentina. He was able--for about ten years--to forestall deportation by means of legal maneuvers. However, he lost his job, nor could he remain in any job. No sooner was he hired than a minion of the FBI would call on his employer--and Lou would be dismissed. By the end of the fifties, he had been hounded out of journalism.

Divorced from Dorothy, exhausted by the 10-year struggle to prevent deportation to Argentina (which was then ruled by a right-wing dictatorship), depressed by his inability to work at his profession, and with the Immigration authorities closing in, Lou voluntarily left the United States for Israel, where he would be given citizenship under the Law of Return. Shortly after his arrival in 1963, he found work in Tel Aviv doing his interviews-plus-portraits for the daily newspaper, Ma'ariv. The text of his work was translated into Hebrew for publication. During this time, he met and married Eunice Chankowsky, a Canadian living in Israel.

In the mid-sixties Lou was offered a job as editor of one of Switzerland's English-language newspapers, the Geneva Weekly Tribune. Frustrated with not seeing his work appear in the language in which he wrote, he longed to work in English again and therefore accepted the offer.

After three years in this position, ownership of the paper changed hands and the job came to an end. This was the beginning of a particularly enjoyable period. Lou and Eunice traveled all over Europe in a camper, while Lou wrote a travel book.

Toward the end of 1970, Lou and Eunice moved to Canada, where Lou worked at various times for the Montreal Star, the Montreal Gazette, and the Canadian Jewish News. His column won him many friends, public honors, and a loyal readership. He continued to produce his column until 1997, when failing health forced him to retire.

Lou Seligson spent most of his adult life battling unjust persecution and yet always remained optimistic and steadfast in his political ideals. A stalwart atheist and Marxist-Leninist, Lou fought all the battles of his era tenaciously. Yet Lou was a happy man, gracious to his family and friends, and vitally connected to a network of progressive people all over the world, who will always value him and his work.

Lou Seligson died July 22, 2002.

For Louis Seligson

Lay your bow and arrow down
In memories and words you live on
Renaissance man of the right kind
Marxist man with a bright mind
May your knowledge carry us
May your DNA strengthen us
No regrets, let death be death
No guilt for unsaid things
Bear the fruit, the gifts he gave
Lover of the Sun
Swimmer of the sea
Reader and writer
Artist and revolutionary
My grandfather to me
Lay your tired body down
May your body feed the ground
Thank you for Eric and Mark
Our compasses for righteousness
Thank you for all the checks in hard times that kept us fed
Thank you for Seligson my name and my political mind frame
We will take care of your boys now that they are alone
We will stay strong and sing your song
Goodbye Grandfather.

By Jesse Seligson

the 1960s, as seen through the...

Caricatures

of

"Luís"



Richard Nixon



Lyndon Johnson



John F. Kennedy



Dean Rusk



Charles de Gaulle



Kwame Nkrumah



Jomo Kenyatta



George Meany



(Carey) Estes Kefauver



Hubert Humphrey



Harold Wilson



J. Edgar Hoover



Ngo Dinh Diem



Robert F. Kennedy



Barry Goldwater



Nelson Rockefeller



Ludwig Erhard



James Eastland



Sukarno



Robert McNamara



Robert Wagner



Arthur Goldberg



MAYOR ROBT WASNER



LUIS

NELSON ROCKEFELLER



NGO DINH DIEM



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LUIS



NKRUMA





ROBERT MCNAMARA



LUIS





LUIS



EDSILAND

31.4



J. EDGAR HOOVER





LOUIS



LYNDON JOHNSON



ARTHUR GOLDBERG



DEAD ROSK







KETAUVER



GEORGE MEANY

