

# F R E E D O M B U L L E T I N

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## DEATH OF MALATESTA.

The Anarchist movement has united in mourning the death of one of its outstanding fighters and thinkers. For fifty years he was an active propagandist, and though he produced no great works on Anarchism his articles and pamphlets have been printed in almost every modern language. He combined action with theory and his years of imprison-

English comrades to write for an English paper; but in the end he usually agreed. He wrote in very good French and complained that translators sometimes distorted his meaning. At last we found a really good translator for one of his articles, and when we took the translation to him and read it, his eyes twinkled as he said it really was his article, not the translator's.

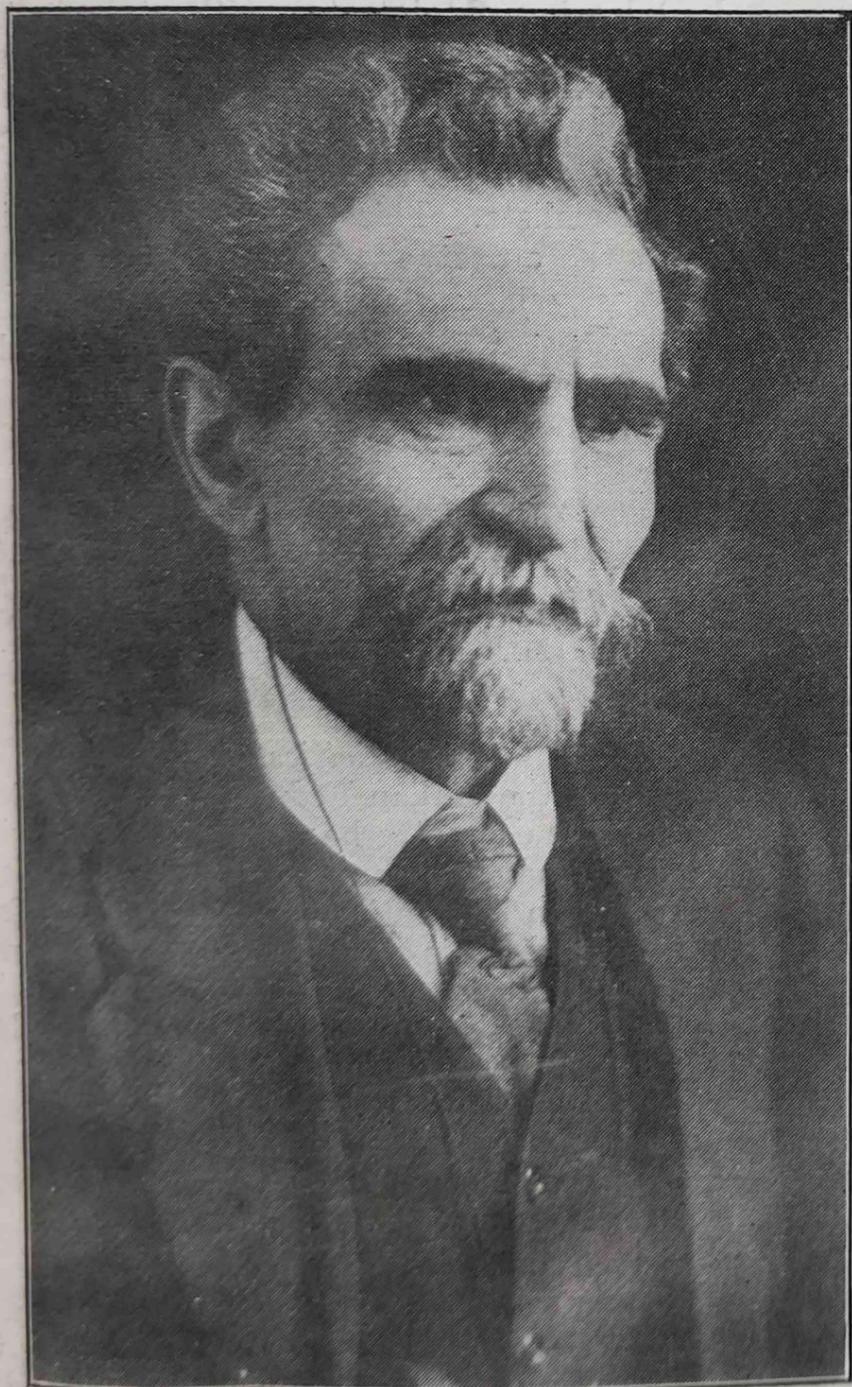
Malatesta had a keen, logical mind and went straight to the heart of a problem. He was never moved by loose thinking, and had no illusions as to the strength of the forces opposed to us. When the war came it was a great comfort to me to have his active support when others had stepped aside from the Anarchist movement.

Some Anarchists in France and Belgium who were supporting the war thought it could be turned to the advantage of the workers when peace was made. They cherished the illusion that a drastic form of disarmament could be forced on all the Powers, whose armed forces were to be strictly limited in accordance with the size of their populations. A comrade came to London to get Malatesta's support. He listened quietly while the scheme was explained. Then he asked how many soldiers would Italy be allowed. The figure was given. "Ah," said Malatesta, "just enough to keep the Anarchists in order."

Whenever Malatesta was announced as a speaker, the hall was crowded. He usually spoke in French. I remember one meeting at the old Athenæum Hall in Tottenham Court Road. Sitting on the corner of a table he began in a quiet conversational tone, and in short, pithy sentences. As he proceeded with his speech he left the table and went to the front of the platform. Not a sound was heard at first as all listened eagerly to his words, but when he began to warm up to his subject and drove his points home with strong eloquent phrases, applause came quickly, and as he left the platform everyone cheered.

It was a sore trial to Malatesta to have to remain inactive in England after the war, whilst events in Italy were moving to an upheaval. He could not get a passport, but his Italian comrades at home finally smuggled him away. Whatever may have been the cause of the failure of the revolutionary movement in Italy, we may be sure it was not due to the lack of energy on the part of Malatesta, who never spared himself. But fail it did completely, and instead of the social revolution he hoped for he was fated to see the Fascist Dictatorship put its heel on the necks of the Italian people. Mussolini persecuted Malatesta, but he dared not kill our comrade, who was loved and honoured by the Italian workers.

T. H. K.



ment proved how much his influence was feared by all upholders of privilege and power.

Malatesta lived for a number of years in London and we met on many occasions at meetings, at FREEDOM office, or at his home. He impressed me as a frank and lovable man, always willing to help us. On one occasion he spent an entire day overhauling our printing machine. If he were asked to write an article he would at first refuse, saying we should get

# SIDELIGHTS ON ERRICO MALATESTA.

(December 4th, 1853—July 22nd, 1932.)

The death of Malatesta means the disappearance of the clearest Anarchist thinker, the most thorough planner and supporter of social revolutionary action, and one of the truest, most militant, and devoted comrades whom the international Anarchist milieu has known since the departure of men like Michael Bakunin and Elisée Reclus. The extraordinary length of his life as a conscious Anarchist militant, more than sixty-one years from 1871, the months of the Commune of Paris, to but a few months ago, this very spring and early summer of his being, as can be shown, in the inmost heart of the movement, up to the mark, competent, and ever helpful in thought, action, and advice—this great length is, by itself, a reason that his development in its origins and later ramifications is by far too little known to the present generation of comrades. His life, indeed, is a not inconsiderable portion of the history of Anarchism for sixty years, and that history is seldom in a connected form before the minds of contemporary libertarians. Nor can all this be recalled on the present occasion, as it forms the contents of long books already, and for Malatesta himself a portion of many chapters in such books, and the bare facts of his life, the minimum of what is unquestionably worth recording of him, would—if set forth with some essential explanations and with some proofs extracted from his writings and other documents—require several issues of this *Bulletin* to be told properly. Hence I must try another way of presenting something of his life in this farewell article, namely to recall attention to a number of salient facts and features without in each case explaining their historical origin, full purpose, and connections to the uninitiated or casual reader, who must accept my word that these are facts verified and of importance for the Anarchist cause, which—subject to mistakes of mine—can be seen upon consulting the proper sources.

*When, born December 4th, 1853, in the small provincial town occupying the site of the Roman Capua, Malatesta became an Anarchist in the spring of 1871, aged seventeen years and a few months, what had been his previous development, state of mind, and ideology?*

Ten years of stirring Italian history around him—Garibaldi's deathblow at Neapolitan absolutism, 1860, the last battles of which centred just in and close to Malatesta's native town; a nominally liberal political régime, with continued discontent, conspiracies, insurrection, war, up to 1870. Social misery of the people. A relatively independent development of the boy (classical studies in a lyceum; beginning medical study at the University of Naples). His ideal is the equalitarian Republic of Caius Gracchus and Brutus and Spartacus. With such means, as a tribune of the people, a tyrannicide, a fighter on the barricades, he would combat modern social inequality and misery, which he keenly resents. He sees but one approximately idealist party, that of

Mazzini, and wishes to join it. But apperceiving his independent train of mind, they do not admit him. He had been, upon entering the University in 1870, very soon active in republican demonstrations, courting prison, and could not help that friends should gather round his open and energetic young personality. *How did he become an Anarchist?*

Being a Socialist revolutionist all along, the Commune of Paris fascinated him, and the abhorrence of Mazzini against it made him turn away from Mazzinism for ever. His striking disposition attracted a young lawyer, Palladino, member of the Neapolitan International and connected with the inner circle of Bakunin, who told him about the International and initiated him in the great struggle then going on between the authoritarian and the libertarian Socialists, Marx and Bakunin. Malatesta, without hesitation, sided with the libertarians, and thus became aware from the beginning that Anarchism had and has a double array of adversaries to confront—the bourgeoisie and the State, and the authoritarian, reformist or dictatorial Socialists. This double struggle, facing him in 1871 at the outset, faced him to his last hour.

*What were his first Socialist activities?*

The Naples section, enlivened by him and his friends, underwent persecution and dissolution in August, 1871. When finally reconstructed in the form of the "Neapolitan Workers' Federation," at the end of 1871, Malatesta was the secretary of the Federation; and the programme, amalgamating the preamble of the Internationale (1864) with the Collectivist Anarchist ideas of Bakunin, may have been formulated by himself, and certainly contains the leading principles of all his work.

*How did his international activities begin?*

As a delegate of the Italian Federation of the International, with other delegates he visited Bakunin, with whom he had already corresponded, in Zurich, September, 1872, when the intimate group, the "Fraternité Internationale," is renewed as the "Alliance des Socialistes Révolutionnaires." He thus enters the inmost circle of Anarchist revolutionists and attaches himself before all to the Spanish members. He proceeds with the others to St. Imier (Swiss Jura) as a delegate to the International Congress, which repudiates the decisions, inspired by Marx, of the Hague Congress of two weeks before (September, 1872).

*His first revolutionary plan, as far as we know.*

When he stayed with Bakunin in the early summer of 1873, at Locarno, they decided upon travelling to Spain in view of expected revolutionary developments. When travelling to Italy to make preparations, Malatesta was arrested, kept half a year in prison, and the plan thus frustrated.

*His first revolutionary action.*

Whilst thus kept in prison, a general Italian insurrection was decided upon by Italian internationalists and Bakunin. Malatesta, when rejoining them, agreed with the plan and undertook the preparations in the

South, from Naples to Sicily. Whatever prevented the complete and successful realisation of these plans, Malatesta and some of his comrades did their share in the Apulian mountains (August, 1874). He was arrested, and after a year's preliminary prison he was acquitted in August, 1875, and complimented by the jury for his brave attitude and upright defence.

*Did his Anarchist ideas undergo a further development?*

With Cafiero, Covelli, and a few others, at Naples, in the summer of 1876, they abandoned measurement and qualifications in distribution (collectivism) and agreed upon their complete absence, that is, upon free Communism. This was done on their own initiative and accepted by the Italian Federation at their congress held in October, 1876. It had been proposed before, unknown to them, by several French internationalists, notably Dumartheray and Elisée Reclus, in the first months of 1876. Kropotkin did not advocate immediate Communist distribution in his writings before March, 1880.

*Are there differences between this early Communist Anarchism of Malatesta and Kropotkin's Anarchist Communism?*

The main difference lies in the voluntary, not exclusivist, theoretically hypothetical, and practically experimental character of Malatesta's free Communism, whilst Kropotkin's faith and imagination, passion and temperament induced him to consider that which he had become convinced was a unique solution to the exclusion of every other one. Consequently, the moment he became a Communist he combated Collectivism, whilst Malatesta, by his far greater sobermindedness, also by his experience of Spanish Collectivism, etc., repudiated exclusivism and considered Socialist economic conceptions not as dogmas, but as hypotheses, which only future experience can verify or modify.

*What were Malatesta's general relations towards Kropotkin?*

He knew him intimately at Geneva (first months of 1879) and in London, 1881-82; also, of course, since returning to London, autumn of 1889, up to their complete rupture at the beginning of the War, 1914. They were personal friends and had the greatest mutual respect for each other's personal character.

Both were intimate comrades, Kropotkin as the secretary since 1877, Malatesta as a member since 1872, of the intimate group derived from Bakunin's early inner group of 1864. As such, when others dropped away, they were always more brought together to consult among themselves; but here they found that on most questions they could not agree, and by and by they ceased to consult. But they always maintained solidarity against outsiders, and did not discuss their differences on theories and tactics in public. This was an advantage for the time being, but it created, in my opinion, the wrong impression that many problems were definitely solved, which, as we now find, were not.

*Which problems are here alluded to?*

I refer to the questions of abundance of products permitting immediate unlimited Communism; to the revolutionary instincts, spontaneity and other favour-

able conditions, presupposed by Kropotkin, but not taken for granted to an unlimited extent by Malatesta. I refer also to Kropotkin's belief in, and advice of, absolute decentralisation of production, with all his detailed propositions of intensive cultivation, the industrial village, etc. All this, to Malatesta, is merely a wish, a personal predilection, one possibility out of many, elevated to the rank of a stringent advice, an economic dogma, a panacea, etc., etc.

*What further revolutionary action did Malatesta plan and try in Italy?*

In Naples, 1876, he and his friends conceived the plan of a general insurrection for 1877 on lines which should guarantee it against the mistakes made in 1874. I cannot discuss this general plan, but what was actually done in April, 1877, when they started the revolt in the Neapolitan mountains, was not part of the real plan, but was a precipitated action hurried on by treason and other unfortunate incidents. Consequently the whole enterprise cannot be judged by this local incident, which really frustrated it. He and many others were in prison until August, 1878, when the jury of Benevento acquitted them. But to avoid administrative persecution (internment) Malatesta then left Italy for several years of voluntary exile.

*When did he resume public activity in Italy?*

Upon three memorable occasions—1883, 1897 and 1913. His final return in December, 1919, may be discussed later.

When the International in Italy had been shattered by persecutions and the parliamentary current introduced by Andrea Costa had caused havoc in certain parts (1879-1882), Malatesta, then in Egypt, returned to Italy in the beginning of 1883, was arrested and imprisoned from May to November, and sentenced in February, 1884, to three years' imprisonment, a sentence not executed during his appeal. In the meantime, from December, 1883, to August, 1884, he edited the large weekly, *La Questione Sociale*, at Florence; rallied the sections to a reorganised international, stemmed the parliamentary current by a wide public propaganda, and then tended the sick of cholera in the hospitals of Naples. The three years' sentence, meanwhile, was confirmed, but he left the country in the nick of time, and then went to the Argentine Republic (1885-1889), where he greatly helped to lay the foundations of the Anarchist movement and of the Anarchist syndicates.

When, after the fall of the Crispi Government, some possibility of public propaganda offered again, he settled secretly in Ancona, early in 1897, still under the three years' sentence. He edited the large weekly, *L'Agitazione*, beginning in March, and the police hunted him up in November, only when the condemnation of 1894 was prescribed. But they arrested him in January, 1898, on the occasion of riots, and a large trial was held at the end of April. A splendid defence. A seven months' sentence, until August, after which term he was, however, sent to the deportation islands, from whence he escaped in April, 1899, returning by Malta to London. He soon went to the United States, was editor of *La Questione Sociale*, of Paterson, N.J., for about a

year, held many meetings there, and returned to London, 1900, where he now passed thirteen long years of exile.

He was invited to edit *Volonta* ("The Will") in Ancona, beginning June, 1913, and then, on his many agitation tours, was enthusiastically welcomed by the people. He rallied the scattered movement, expanded his relations, and a general movement of insurrectionary character was preparing. Certain events in the beginning of June, 1914, led to local outbursts in Ancona and the Romagna townships; the famous "Red Week of the Romagna" followed, with Malatesta as the thinking head of an increasing social revolt, which spread over many parts of Italy—until it was treacherously killed by the reformist leaders. He succeeded once more in reaching London, where the War soon overtook him. Without that Socialist treachery this social insurrection in Italy in June, 1914, might have made those who unchained the War hesitate; being thus sure that the Socialists are by all means anti-revolutionary, they were certain that the War would not meet with popular resistance.

*What were Malatesta's other efforts of revolutionary action in Italy?*

A number of his plans are unknown or insufficiently known to me, but one plan, that of combined action by the Anarchists and the Social Revolutionists on May Day, 1891, was prepared by the Congress held at Capolago (Jessin), January, 1891, and much subsequent preparation, also a secret journey by him through Italy, after which he was arrested in Lugano (Switzerland), and, extradition to Italy being refused, after a term of prison he could return to London in September.

When in the winter of 1893-94 the Sicilian peasants' great unrest made a revolution in Italy almost imminent, Malatesta secretly worked in this direction in Central Italy, from Bologna to Ancona, and was looked for by the police as never before. Then also he succeeded in returning to London, whilst Merlino was arrested in Naples in January, 1894.

He certainly made every effort in 1895, again in 1899, and no doubt on several other occasions, to bring about the co-operation of Anarchists, Socialists, and Republicans for an effort in common, to overthrow the Italian monarchy—after which each partner would work for his own aims; but he never succeeded because of the selfishness of the other parties and of the enmity of Anarchists against organisation in general and against organised co-operation in the sense here indicated.

*What were Malatesta's views and practice as to organisation?*

He is usually considered as a fanatical adherent of organisation, but I believe his standpoint has been much misunderstood. What he always wanted to bring about was *action*, and action—with every recognition of the value of initiative, spontaneity, instincts set free, etc., granted—cannot usually be based upon these useful factors alone, but relies also upon properly combined co-operation, upon organised effort, just as work is not produced by genius alone, but may require the most precise tools. In this sense, Malatesta, wanting revolutionary action done, wanted punctuality and other components and conditions of

efficient work. Those to whom Anarchism meant the indulgence of easy-going group and club life scoffed at his requirements of efficiency; having no collective action in mind, they could do without organisation. On these grounds I consider all such reproaches against Malatesta very unfair and quite stale now. *What were his plans and projects of international organisation?*

Here I can only refer to what is known of his participation in the Congress of the International held at Berne (1876), confirmed by the letter which he and the other prisoners of the 1877 insurrection wrote on the occasion of the 1877 Congress (August 25, 1877); to his opinion compared to that of Kropotkin in the long circular letters of both laid before the inner group in 1881 before the London Congress; and to his attitude in the discussion of the new International at that Congress (he was the best-known member of the new Bureau, 1881-82).

Then, in Florence, 1884, he issued, for Italy, "Programme and Organisation of the International Workingmen's Association," a 64-page pamphlet.

Returning from South America, he spread the *Appello* (Nice, September, 1889) and the programme of his paper, *L'Associazione* (Nice; London), most remarkable documents in favour of rallying an international Socialist-Anarchist revolutionary party; and once more in February, 1895, he circulated the proposal of an International Federation of Revolutionary Anarchist-Socialists. Was this his last effort in this direction? It was a weakness of his to believe that Anarchists of various countries might have something to say to each other, combine their efforts on certain occasions, etc.; but to the anti-organisationists the first duty was not to jeopardise their autonomy by any co-operation, and so all his effort fell flat and he was considered one of the most backward of Anarchists.

His plans must not be confounded with the merely nominal International, voted for by the London Congress of 1881, nor with the scarcely less nominal Anarchist International resolved upon by the Amsterdam International Congress of 1907. In both cases he was the best-known member of the Bureau and no doubt did his best, but in both cases the nominal Internationals expired or languished under general indifference, as did every effort to revive the body of 1907 since then. These were never creations after Malatesta's heart.

*What were his best-known activities in movements outside of Italy?*

His travels and temporary residences provided him with new local experience, and he helped on his side the local comrades.

In Switzerland he knew Locarno and Lugano at various times; Bakunin's Russian friends in 1872, 1873, up to 1875; James Guillaume and the Jurasians, Zürich and Berne, Geneva when the *Révolté* was founded (February, 1879), and on other occasions, for the last time in 1914 on his flight from Italy.

He was in Paris for many months, 1879, 1880, and beginning of 1881; very active in the first Anarchist groups there, soon expelled, returning again, arrested, imprisoned for returning. He nevertheless started in 1889 *L'Associazione* in Nice, but had soon to leave;

he was in Paris to watch the May Day movement of 1890, and no doubt on other occasions, but never resident, passing through there in 1914 on his hurried return to London.

In the autumn of 1875 he travelled to Spain; visited Madrid, Cadiz, and Barcelona, and saw the militants of the then proscribed and secretly continued International. He made an open journey, a great lecturing tour, from November, 1891, to January, 1892; but the intimate purpose was the preparation of Revolutionary Days in May, 1892. The tragical Jerez (Andalusia) revolt intervened, and he had to break his journey and leave quickly, reaching London via Lisbon this time.

In Egypt, 1878 and 1882, and in Rumania, 1879, he lived in the Italian *milieu*, though he came to Egypt in 1882 for a revolutionary purpose connected with the natives' revolt in the days of Arabi Pasha. He intended, for romantic reasons (rivalry in combativeness of the young Internationalists with the young Garibaldians), to join the Servians in their war against Turkey, 1876, but was twice stopped in Austria-Hungary and sent back to Italy.

He passed some time in Belgium in 1880 and a few days in 1881. He visited the country in 1893 during the political general strike, also 1907 during the violent Antwerp dock strike. Holland he knew at the time of the Amsterdam Anarchist Congress, 1907.

In London he saw the early days of the Socialist movement and knew Joseph Lane and Frank Kitz very well. Returning in October, 1889, one of his first visits was to the Socialist League, where he saw William Morris. My acquaintance with him dates from that same evening and lasted until a letter of his to me of May 31, 1932, was the last one I got from him. He was always a friend of the Freedom Group and a contributor to *Freedom*, occasionally also to Tochatti's *Liberty* and, I believe, to the *Torch*. He also wrote in several single issues or short-lived papers in Italian, published in London.

He lectured in New York and most of the Eastern industrial towns in the United States where Italian workers live (1899-1900). To Cuba, 1900, for Spanish lectures; he was either not admitted or his lectures were prohibited.

In the Argentine Republic, as mentioned already, his activities from 1885 to the first half of 1889, mark the beginning of a more intense and co-ordinated movement there.

After the Russian revolution of 1917—I do not know at what stage of the ensuing events—he wished to go to Russia, to see things with his own eyes, but the British Government refused to let him depart.

This covers about all his known movements, though I do not pretend that I can retrace all his steps.

His last journey abroad was made in September, 1922., when a Jessinese comrade led him across the high mountains on smuggler paths into Switzerland, where he met the Italian Anarchists residing there in Biel, and the local and international comrades in St. Imier, at a private conference in commemoration of the St. Imier Congress of 1872, of which he was the sole survivor. When the meeting was over, the Swiss police with their order of expulsion of 1879 wanted to get hold of him, but he had just that moment been spirited away and returned to Italy.

Harry Kelly, who visited him in Rome in the summer of 1931, was perhaps the last international comrade of the old London days—at least as far as I know—who had an hour's undisturbed talk with him.

*What was his attitude towards Syndicalism?*

He was from the beginning a friend of the organisation of the workers; and the Federazione Operaia Napoletana, of which he was the first secretary, was in its public form mainly a militant labour body, but the continuous persecutions left little breathing room for such organisations in Italy.

We find him in 1894 with Pouget, Kropotkin, and others in perfect agreement that the movement suffered from isolation, and that Pelloutier's efforts to make the French syndicates sever their connections with the Socialist politicians and to concentrate their energies upon economic action were most welcome. He worked with Pelloutier, Hamon, Cornelissen, and others to secure a large representation of the syndicates at the London International Socialist Congress of 1896, to oppose the Marxists, and he was himself a delegate to that Congress with French and Spanish credentials. He was pleased at every contact with the Labour movement, and had the smallest possible opinion of Anarchists choosing to remain in splendid isolation (and these reciprocally of him).

But when it came to this, that some believed that Syndicalism could, should, and ought to replace Anarchism, he remonstrated and warned. He had done the same, about 1890, when many fancied that the general strike could and should make the social revolution superfluous.

At the Amsterdam Anarchist Congress, 1907, he held his ground splendidly against all the young advocates of an exclusivist Syndicalism, and the article, "Syndicalism and Anarchism," which he soon afterwards wrote for *Freedom* (November, 1907), gives his standpoint in the clearest possible way.

*What was his position on the War?*

His articles and letters of the years 1914, 1915, 1916, and later are there to show it in every detail, and his rupture with Kropotkin and *vice versa* vouches for the seriousness of his feelings. I will only give his standpoint thus, that he did not think that Anarchists should consider any institution or personalities of the Capitalist and Statist system with other eyes after the proclamation of war in any country than they had done for so many years before the great calamity had happened.

*What was his attitude towards Bolshevism?*

He knew the Marxist dictatorial spirit from the very beginning of his connection with Socialism, 1871, and he saw Marxism at work all his life. Nevertheless, as with many, his satisfaction at seeing the great social change happen in Russia must have been so great that he was a mild critic of Bolshevism at first. But when he saw its usurpation of the dictatorship over the whole body of Socialism in Russia, when he saw the Communist parties raise the same pretensions everywhere, inevitably he spoke up in unmitigated condemnation of such pretensions.

The libertarian conception of a revolution was for him—I state what he wrote in his paper on September 28, 1920, addressing himself to the Italian Socialists—that the revolution would take a different de-

velopment according to the different material and moral conditions of the various regions, communes, and corporations; that it would take a different colour according to the local preponderance of this or that party, and that it would reach a common goal by the gradual assimilation of interests and wills and not by arbitrary coercion from above. If the Socialists accepted this programme of freedom for all, he continues, we might co-operate to-day to crush the present régime, and could also help each other to-morrow in the interest of the happier development of the future of the revolution.

No one was more willing to practise and to accept friendly co-operation with Socialists of other shades of opinion, no one more determined to resist dictatorial impositions of any kind.

*Under what conditions did Malatesta return to Italy?*

Practically all revolutionary and popular Italy called upon him to return when the War was over; his action of June, 1914 (the Red Week of the Romagna), was not forgotten; his prestige had grown immensely, and discontent and rebellious feeling ran high; the Russian example was before the minds of all. What Lenin has done for Russia, that and more Malatesta will do for Italy—was the reasoning of the many good people, who never think of doing for themselves what they wish to see done.

The Italian comrades in the country and abroad prepared in 1919 the publication of a large daily Anarchist paper to be edited by Malatesta. The programme then published, no doubt written by himself, appealed to the comrades of all shades of opinion to sink their differences, and such opinions, scarcely listened to when expressed in the *Appello* of 1889, met with response thirty years later, and the paper began under the sign of general mutual goodwill among very many comrades.

But Malatesta had to come to Italy first, and he was not allowed to leave England. By the help of the organised Italian seamen, however, he went on board of an Italian coal steamer straight from Cardiff to the Port of Genoa, where all work was stopped and the working-class population welcomed him in triumph, as if Garibaldi himself had returned from the dead. No government could have dared to interfere with him at that juncture.

*What were at that time (end of 1919) his plans and actions in Italy?*

His aim was then, as always, the Revolution—if not the general, then the Italian revolution; if not the Anarchist revolution, then, at least, a revolution which would do away with the present State, the monarchy, with the monopolies in capital and land, with very many forms of oppression, and permit a new start: upon the latter aim also the Socialists and, as to the monarchy, the Republicans agreed, and nothing ought to prevent their joint action to overthrow the existing system in this unique moment of post-war enormous social discontent and unrest.

Malatesta would have thrown in his weight with any action of this kind, and he urged the absolute necessity to do something and to be quick: else the revenge of the reaction would be the more fearful in proportion to their present anxiety and fears. This means, he saw that the reaction nursed already their

“black hundreds” of pogromists, who came forward in the form of the Fascisti and soon laid hands upon everything and threw the Italian development back for centuries.

He was not listened to, and that was the tragedy of Italy. The selfishness of the parties and easy-going counsels of no hurry, of gradual preparation prevailed, and the battle was lost before it ever began, because the enemy slowly surrounded the whole advanced forces and made them prisoners.

I cannot say whether Malatesta by a determined initiative of his own could have altered this state of things. Probably he saw the weakness of all as to efficient faculties of co-operation and real will of general, non-party action. A Revolution must be a general cause, and if each party only nurses and fondles its particular plan of a party revolution, such petty party revolutionism rather obstructs than helps a general popular Revolution. This certainly also applies to Anarchists, and Malatesta, surrounded by enthusiasm, felt alone all the same, as intelligence and a clear will, which he liked to see, were but too seldom met with.

*What did he do under such conditions in the years 1920, 1921, 1922?*

He was constantly active in spite of his prevision that ground was being lost and not won. The *Umanità Nova*, of Milano, February 27, 1920, to March 24, 1921, contains much of his work up to his arrest on October 17, 1920. The Anarchist Congress held at Bologna in July accepted an elaborate programme written by him. That Congress also resolved to create *nuclei locali d'azione*, local groups for action in urgent cases; so such groups do not seem to have existed until then. It is useless to discuss this Anarchist “life of party” in these stirring times, when suddenly the occupation of the metal factories in Northern Italy (September) established a revolutionary situation unheard of before. It was fully understood by the *Umanità Nova*, but—as the Romagna revolt of 1914 had been—this economic revolt on a large scale was also baulked by the Socialist reformist leaders, who thus opened the doors wide to reaction and Fascism. Very soon afterwards Malatesta was arrested (October 17) and only put on trial in the summer of 1921, when the jury acquitted him (July 29).

He then lived in Rome, where *Umanità Nova* was published once more, with less participation of his, with wings broken, later becoming a weekly, and suppressed when the Fascists seized power (May 14, 1921, to December 2, 1922).

*What were Malatesta's activities under Fascism?*

He began to work again, in 1923, nearly seventy, opening his little shop of mechanical repairs and electrical installation. But his clients were systematically molested by the police, and he had to close the shop for ever. By the way, his almost constant imprisonment or absorption by revolutionary work since 1873 had made him abandon his medical studies. He did odd sorts of work, manual or teaching; but since Paris, 1879, and still more since London, 1881, he became an expert mechanic, specialising in work which he could do himself, unaided—repairs and installations, fittings, and he worked thus in Argentina and in London for very many years, on his own behalf in an independent way.

From January 1, 1924, to October 10, 1926, he edited the bi-monthly review, *Pensiero e Volontà* (Thought and Will; Rome), which contains many of his most mature writings. It had to stop when every non-Fascist publication in Italy was forbidden to continue (November, 1926).

Since then when he had anything to say it appeared as article or letter in Italian publications abroad, up to the time of the long and fatal illness of April, 1932.

*Which are his principal writings?*

They range from 1871 to 1932, nearly all as articles in many Anarchist periodicals, Italian, French, Spanish, English before all. Of pamphlets, mostly taken from papers, the most widely known are the popular dialogues *Fra Contadini* (1884; A Talk between Agricultural Workers) and *Al Caffé* (1902; In the Coffee-house), which should be consulted in their latest, much-increased editions. Also *La politica parlamentare nel movimento socialista* (1890); *In tempo di elezioni* (1890); *L'Anarchia* (1891); *Un peu de théorie* (written 1892); *Il nostro programma* (written 1899); the Bologna programme, 1920; *Le due vie* (The Two Roads; 1920), etc.

However clear and concise these pamphlets are, eminently useful for Anarchist propaganda, it would be difficult to understand from them Malatesta's own full Anarchist thought, though of course it finds expression also in the pamphlets. But we see that work in the articles, old and new, always neater worked out, and based upon larger experience as the years pass on and he considers it necessary to speak without reserve. In this respect the writings in the review of 1924-26, many later articles, the retrospect on the Italian International (1928), his impressions on Kropotkin (written at the end of 1930), etc., are invaluable, and are, in my opinion, the most notable productions of modern Anarchist literature, something based upon an experience and keen reflection, akin to the Anarchist experience of his long life which Elisée Reclus in the last ten years of his life has preserved for us in his "L'Homme et la Terre."

Even this form, which I adopted believing it to be the shortest, has led to a long series of statements on Malatesta, unsupported by direct proof and documen-

tation; and I interrupt it here, not from want of materials, but because it is still far from being ended. I have said but little of Malatesta's conceptions on many theoretical, practical, actual Anarchist questions, and I feel that this would be the subject of particular study which everybody is invited to begin, as it would be worth while. Particular circumstances made his real opinions comparatively little known, and exaggerated casual things or outside appearances. The journalists of quite a number of countries think that they can do nothing better than invent that he was three times sentenced to be hanged or beheaded, and they combine in penning lines on him with cringing flattery to Mussolini, as when the *New York Times* of July 26, 1932, reported "wireless" from Rome that he had lived "in a humble dwelling which had been placed at his disposal by the Government." Such lies are the lallations of softened brains, but they seem to be all that the world's "press" is able to scrape up on this modest man, who to the Italians was and is what Mazzini and Garibaldi were to them before. He ranks for us with Bakunin and Elisée Reclus and but very few others.

I will not dwell here on the physical and moral torture which the virtual internment in his rooms and the separation from nearly all friends inflicted upon him for many years; the conditions always became harder. Nor on his fatal illness, the consequence of this constrained and stifled life. From April onward he suffered terribly, kept breathing only by oxygen. At the end of May he had hopes of recovery; at the end of June he knew that he would die; on July 18 he sank finally, and on July 22, at 12.20 p.m., he expired. His body had to be hurried through the streets, the family pent up quickly in a closed car, and two carloads of police following. A bunch of red carnations which his adopted daughter wished to take with her to the cemetery was to be taken from her; she threw them out of the window.

Fascism must be trembling in its shoes if it is thus afraid of the dead body of an old man, its own victim.

Farewell greetings and thanks of all of us to Errico Malatesta, whose work, for us, is living.

August 28, 1932.

M. NETTLAU.

## ANARCHISM AND SYNDICALISM.

(Reprinted from FREEDOM, November, 1907.)

The question of the position to be taken in relation to the Labour movement is certainly one of the greatest importance to Anarchists.

In spite of lengthy discussions and of varied experiences, a complete accord has not yet been reached—perhaps because the question does not admit of a complete and permanent solution, owing to the different conditions and changing circumstances in which we carry on the struggle.

I believe, however, that our aim may suggest to us a criterion of conduct applicable to the different contingencies.

We desire the moral and material elevation of all men; we wish to achieve a revolution which will give to all liberty and well-being, and we are con-

vinced that this cannot be done from above by force of law and decrees, but must be done by the conscious will and the direct action of those who desire it.

We need, then, more than any the conscious and voluntary co-operation of those who, suffering the most by the present social organisation, have the greatest interest in the Revolution.

It does not suffice for us—though it is certainly useful and necessary—to elaborate an ideal as perfect as possible, and to form groups for propaganda and for revolutionary action. We must convert as far as possible the mass of the workers, because without them we can neither overthrow the existing society nor reconstitute a new one. And since to

rise from the submissive state in which the great majority of the proletarians now vegetate, to a conception of Anarchism and a desire for its realisation, is required an evolution which generally is not passed through under the sole influence of the propaganda; since the lessons derived from the facts of daily life are more efficacious than all doctrinaire preaching, it is for us to take an active part in the life of the masses, and to use all the means which circumstances permit to gradually awaken the spirit of revolt, and to show by these facts the path which leads to emancipation.

Amongst these means the Labour movement stands first, and we should be wrong to neglect it. In this movement we find numbers of workers who struggle for the amelioration of their conditions. They may be mistaken as to the aim they have in view and as to the means of attaining it, and in our view they generally are. But at least they no longer resign themselves to oppression nor regard it as just—they hope and they struggle. We can more easily arouse in them that feeling of solidarity towards their exploited fellow-workers and of hatred against exploitation which must lead to a definitive struggle for the abolition of all domination of man over man. We can induce them to claim more and more, and by means more and more energetic; and so we can train ourselves and others to the struggle, profiting by victories in order to exalt the power of union and of direct action, and bring forward greater claims, and profiting also by reverses in order to learn the necessity for more powerful means and for more radical solutions.

Again—and this is not its least advantage—the Labour movement can prepare those groups of technical workers who in the revolution will take upon themselves the organisation of production and exchange for the advantage of all, beyond and against all governmental power.

But with all these advantages the Labour movement has its drawbacks and its dangers, of which we ought to take account when it is a question of the position that we as Anarchists should take in it.

Constant experience in all countries shows that Labour movements, which always commence as movements of protest and revolt, and are animated at the beginning by a broad spirit of progress and human fraternity, tend very soon to degenerate; and in proportion as they acquire strength, they become egoistic, conservative, occupied exclusively with interests immediate and restricted, and develop within themselves a bureaucracy which, as in all such cases, has no other object than to strengthen and aggrandise itself.

It is this condition of things that has induced many comrades to withdraw from the Trade Union movement, and even to combat it as something reactionary and injurious. But the result has been that our influence diminished accordingly, and the field was left free to those who wished to exploit the movement for personal or party interests that had nothing in common with the cause of the workers' emancipation. Very soon there were only organisations with a narrow spirit and fundamentally conservative, of which the English Trade Unions are a

type; or else Syndicates which, under the influence of politicians, most often "Socialist," were only electoral machines for the elevation into power of particular individuals.

Happily, other comrades thought that the Labour movement always held in itself a sound principle, and that rather than abandon it to the politicians, it would be well to undertake the task of bringing them once more to the work of achieving their original aims, and of gaining from them all the advantages they offer to the Anarchist cause. And they have succeeded in creating, chiefly in France, a new movement which, under the name of "Revolutionary Syndicalism," seeks to organise the workers, independently of all bourgeois and political influence, to win their emancipation by the direct action of the wage-slaves against the masters.

That is a great step in advance; but we must not exaggerate its reach and imagine, as some comrades seem to do, that we shall realise Anarchism, as a matter of course, by the progressive development of Syndicalism.

Every institution has a tendency to extend its functions, to perpetuate itself, and to become an end in itself. It is not surprising, then, if those who have initiated the movement, and take the most prominent part therein, fall into the habit of regarding Syndicalism as the equivalent of Anarchism, or at least as the supreme means, that in itself replaces all other means, for its realisation. But that makes it the more necessary to avoid the danger and to define well our position.

Syndicalism, in spite of all the declarations of its most ardent supporters, contains in itself, by the very nature of its function, all the elements of degeneration which have corrupted Labour movements in the past. In effect, being a movement which proposes to defend the present interests of the workers, it must necessarily adapt itself to existing conditions, and take into consideration interests which come to the fore in society as it exists to-day.

Now, in so far as the interests of a section of the workers coincide with the interests of the whole class, Syndicalism is in itself a good school of solidarity; in so far as the interest of the workers of one country are the same as those of the workers in other countries, Syndicalism is a good means of with the interests of the future, Syndicalism is in the interests of the moment are not in contradiction itself a good preparation for the Revolution. But unfortunately this is not always so.

Harmony of interests, solidarity amongst all men, is the ideal to which we aspire, is the aim for which we struggle; but that is not the actual condition, no more between men of the same class than between those of different classes. The rule to-day is the antagonism and the interdependence of interests at the same time: the struggle of each against all and of all against each. And there can be no other condition in a society where, in consequence of the capitalist system of production—that is to say, production founded on monopoly of the means of production and organised internationally for the profit of individual employers—there are, as

a rule, more hands than work to be done, and more mouths than bread to fill them.

It is impossible to isolate oneself, whether as an individual, as a class, or as a nation, since the condition of each one depends more or less directly on the general conditions of the whole of humanity; and it is impossible to live in a true state of peace, because it is necessary to defend oneself, often even to attack, or perish.

The interest of each one is to secure employment, and as a consequence one finds himself in antagonism—*i.e.*, in competition—with the unemployed of one's country and the immigrants from other countries. Each one desires to keep or to secure the best place against workers in the same trade; it is the interest of each one to sell dear and buy cheap, and consequently as a producer he finds himself in conflict with all consumers, and again as consumer finds himself in conflict with all producers.

Union, agreement, the solidary struggle against the exploiters,—these things can only obtain to-day in so far as the workers, animated by the conception of a superior ideal, learn to sacrifice exclusive and personal interests to the common interest of all, the interests of the moment to the interests of the future; and this ideal of a society of solidarity, of justice, of brotherhood, can only be realised by the destruction, done in defiance of all legality, of existing institutions.

To offer to the workers this ideal; to put the broader interests of the future before those narrower and immediate; to render the adaptation to present conditions impossible; to work always for the propaganda and for action that will lead to and will accomplish the Revolution—these are the objects we as Anarchists should strive for both in and out of the Unions.

Trade Unionism cannot do this, or can do but little of it; it has to reckon with present interests, and these interests are not always, alas! those of the Revolution. It must not too far exceed legal bounds, and it must at given moments treat with the masters and the authorities. It must concern itself with the interests of sections of the workers rather than the interests of the public, the interests of the Unions rather than the interests of the mass of the workers and the unemployed. If it does not do this, it has no specific reason for existence; it would then only include the Anarchists, or at most the Socialists, and would so lose its principal utility, which is to educate and habituate to the struggle the masses that lag behind.

Besides, since the Unions must remain open to all those who desire to win from the masters better conditions of life, whatever their opinions may be on the general constitution of society, they are naturally led to moderate their aspirations, first so that they should not frighten away those they wish to have with them, and next because, in proportion as numbers increase, those with ideas who have initiated the movement remain buried in a majority that is only occupied with the petty interests of the moment.

Thus one can see developing in all Unions that have reached a certain position of influence a

tendency to assure, in accord with rather than against the masters, a privileged situation for themselves, and so create difficulties of entrance for new members, and for the admission of apprentices in the factories; a tendency to amass large funds that afterwards they are afraid of compromising; to seek the favour of public powers; to be absorbed, above all, in co-operation and mutual benefit schemes; and to become at last conservative elements in society.

After having stated this, it seems clear to me that the Syndicalist movement cannot replace the Anarchist movement, and that it can serve as a means of education and of revolutionary preparation only if it is acted on by the Anarchistic impulse, action, and criticism.

Anarchists, then, ought to abstain from identifying themselves with the Syndicalist movement, and to consider as an aim that which is but one of the means of propaganda and of action that they can utilise. They should remain in the Syndicates as elements giving an onward impulse, and strive to make of them as much as possible instruments of combat in view of the Social Revolution. They should work to develop in the Syndicates all that which can augment its educative influence and its combativeness,—the propaganda of ideas, the forcible strike, the spirit of proselytism, the distrust and hatred of the authorities and of the politicians, the practice of solidarity towards individuals and groups in conflict with the masters. They should combat all that which tends to render them egoistic, pacific, conservative,—professional pride and the narrow spirit of the corporate body, heavy contributions and the accumulation of invested capital, the service of benefits and of assurance, confidence in the good offices of the State, good relationship with masters, the appointment of bureaucratic officials, paid and permanent.

On these conditions the participation of Anarchists in the Labour movement will have good results, but only on these conditions.

These tactics will sometimes appear to be, and even may really be, hurtful to the immediate interests of some groups; but that does not matter when it is a question of the Anarchist cause,—that is to say, of the general and permanent interests of humanity. We certainly wish, while waiting for the Revolution, to wrest from Governments and from employers as much liberty and well-being as possible; but we should not compromise the future for some momentary advantages, which besides are often illusory or gained at the expense of other workers.

Let us beware of ourselves. The error of having abandoned the Labour movement has done an immense injury to Anarchism, but at least it leaves unaltered the distinctive character.

The error of confounding the Anarchist movement with Trade Unionism would be still more grave. That will happen to us which happened to the Social Democrats as soon as they went into the Parliamentary struggle. They gained in numerical force, but by becoming each day less Socialistic. We also would become more numerous, but we should cease to be Anarchist.

E. MALATESTA.

## THE BLOODY ORIGINS OF FASCISM.

The orgy of blood and fire with which the Fascist despotism in Italy was ushered in is almost forgotten to-day when the Press, with few exceptions, is united in singing the praises of Mussolini and his black-shirted hordes on the occasion of the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the march on Rome. It is well, therefore, to have that story recalled to mind by one who is able to speak with authority. Pietro Nenni's book\* sets out the facts in a very able manner. As a colleague of Mussolini prior to the War, he relates the Dictator's early days in the Socialist movement when he was the most revolutionary of speakers, becoming editor of the leading Socialist organ, *Avanti!*, in 1912. When the War came Mussolini opposed intervention, but in November, 1914, he started a paper of his own, the *Popolo d'Italia*, heavily subsidised from France, and worked strenuously for intervention.

At the termination of the War, Mussolini restarted his paper, but he had few followers and little influence. At the elections in November, 1919, he stood at Milan as a Parliamentary candidate, but polled only 4,000 votes, whilst the Socialist Party candidate got 180,000 votes. The sweeping victories of the Socialists at that election caused consternation amongst the wealthy class, and in the following month a Socialist speaker in Parliament said it was obvious that the conservative and militarist parties were preparing to use open violence in order to avenge the Parliamentary revolution of the November elections. The occupation of the factories in September of the following year brought things to a head. The capitalists decided they had not a moment to lose.

"It was, moreover, the thirst for vengeance of the classes which had trembled at the menace of a proletarian revolution, together with the treachery of the State, that afforded Fascism, hitherto an almost negligible factor, the opportunity of exploiting the nationalist neurosis of the generation which had grown up in the vitiated atmosphere of war."

In 1921 the civil war broke out. All over Italy, from Sicily to the Alps, landowners and reactionaries launched their offensive against the workers. Mussolini and his Fascist units were joined by many young men of the middle and upper classes, and they became the willing and eager tools of all who had privileges to defend. The General Staff of the Army supplied the Fascist forces with arms, the civil courts guaranteed their impunity, the State hushed up their crimes, and the bankers supplied them with unlimited funds. Armed with bombs, petrol and rifles, they swept through the industrial centres of Italy in their determination to destroy organised Labour, murdering, looting and burning everywhere. Trade Union and Socialist headquarters, peasant associations, co-operative buildings, all were given to the flames, including the magnificent office in Milan of *Avanti!* of which Mussolini was at one time editor. "We are ready to kill

\* "Ten Years of Tyranny in Italy," By Pietro Nenni. Translated by Anne Steele, 7s. 6d. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.

and be killed!" was Mussolini's slogan, but as few of his victims were armed, the killing was all on one side.

The Dictatorship inaugurated with massacre and incendiarism is maintained by a despotic rule which forbids freedom of speech, freedom of the press, or freedom of association. Hated by every Italian who has a spark of liberty in his soul, Mussolini dreads the fate which is surely reserved for him, and moves abroad only when surrounded by a swarm of spies and armed police. And the workers, fed on speeches about reviving the glories of Imperial Rome, as their share of this glory get the lowest wages in Europe. Such are the fruits of Fascism.

Another book on Mussolini\* appeared last October in Paris. The author, Armando Borghi, was general secretary of the Italian Syndicalist Union, one of the most important of the Italian workers' organisations when the Fascists destroyed all free associations of the workers. He knew Mussolini very closely when he was a young and ardent revolutionary Socialist, and has watched his evolution; and in this book he has undertaken the task of showing us the real Mussolini as opposed to the legendary hero pictured by the Fascists.

Armando Borghi has a grim and sardonic humour, and contrasts the actions and sayings of Mussolini in his pre-Fascist days with his actions and sayings as the Dictator. He gives chapter and verse for all his statements, and quotes documents from many sources, and shows Mussolini as an unprincipled and unscrupulous adventurer, always seeking his own advantage, and contradicting to-day everything for which he stood in his earlier days. A revolutionary Socialist, now an anti-Socialist; an atheist, now a devout Catholic; a Republican, now a Monarchist; an anti-Statist, now everything for the State; an apologist for bomb-throwers and regicides, now giving death sentences for merely plotting attacks on himself. When the War came, as editor of *Avanti!* he opposed intervention, and bitterly assailed all those Socialists who supported the War. In less than two months he turned a complete somersault, was denounced by his comrades, resigned his editorship, and started a paper of his own, fiercely attacking all those who opposed intervention. That this change-over was bought and paid for is proved by Borghi, who quotes Maître Henri Torrès, a well-known French advocate, to the effect that when the Italian Socialists declared against intervention, the French Government examined the question of finding ways and means of converting some Socialists to intervention on the side of the Allies. "The name of Mussolini was pronounced. The first payment was 15,000 francs, and afterwards they allowed him 10,000 francs monthly." This is why the future Dictator betrayed his comrades and the workers of Italy. Judas—not a Cæsar.

\* "Mussolini en Chemise." Par Armando Borghi. Préface de Han Ryner. 15 fr. Paris: Les Editions Rieder, 7, Place Saint-Sulpice.

## WALKING IN THE OLD RUTS.

At no period in its history has the British Labour Movement given rise to so much speculation, and for quite obvious reasons. Born out of the conflict of class antagonisms, it has survived a century before it has been brought face to face with the incontestable argument of the Anarchists, that the emancipation of labour from the wages system is an economic problem, and that to make an assault on the House of Commons through the medium of a political Labour Party to achieve its salvation is as fatal as practising nudism at the poles.

Despite the position with which it is confronted, there is as yet no sound evidence that any lesson has been learned. The only activity of any particular note that has resulted from the debacle of the past twelve months is afforded by the breakaway of the I.L.P. from the leading strings of the Labour Party. But even the I.L.P., in spite of the unquestioned qualities of its leaders, appears to be still putting the cart before the horse, for in the plans arising from the specially convened Bradford Conference one finds a surveying of constituencies "with a view to nominating Parliamentary candidates" taking precedence over the attention directed towards the industrial movement.

Even more unfortunate still is the passive attitude of the Trade Union movement. Here, over a long period, active work in the Trade Union has been regarded as a stepping stone to Parliamentary honours; and when one tries to discover what gains the workers have derived through the incentive of political-minded Trade Union leadership one is immediately reminded of the sabotage of the general strike in 1926 by men whose careers had been launched down the slips of Trade Unionism.

It is not surprising, therefore, that at a moment when the Labour movement is divided amongst itself, the powers that be, confronted with a steady but persistent decline in world trade, should be launching fresh attacks on the already impoverished standards of the workers. Never, from the point of view of the employers, was there a more opportune moment for such an onslaught, and the offensive which began in the coalfields has now burst out anew upon the cotton workers of Lancashire. Cotton, however, like coal, has its explosive qualities, and signs are not lacking that the challenge thrown down to the workers may be thrown back at the masters. Either the weavers will have to weave their own shroud or that of the cotton barons, an issue which can never be in doubt if Labour will mobilise its forces with sound under-

standing. But it is exactly at this point that serious misgivings present themselves. A clear understanding of what is to be aimed at and how to achieve it is obscured by erroneous theories. One finds, for instance, the same type of careerists advocating compromise, and urging the workers to prepare themselves for the struggle at the next election, whilst others assert that with the collapse of private enterprise in industry the State must take over the control of all derelict enterprises and democratise them, whatever that may mean. And then one finds that revolutionary type who look upon the present collapse of capitalism as a stage in a malignant disease, and who are advocating the workers to prepare to run industry as soon as opportunity presents itself for them to seize power. Socialism to them is an inevitable phase in economic development, and must necessarily follow the capitalistic era. The fervour of this type is magnificent and it is easy to be aroused by their enthusiasm, but enthusiasm cuts no ice unless it is properly harnessed. Bad as things are, there is as yet nothing to indicate that the masses have lost faith in the institution of government. Astute enough to see this fact, and possessing all the cunning of a Machiavelli, the rulers of this country will carry the day. Let necessity prove the need for the nationalising of this, or the State ownership of that, and the rulers will bring it to pass; but let not the workers think this will mean workers' control. Let circumstances point to the advantages of abolishing unemployment, and the rulers will bring it to pass; but let not the workers imagine this will bring economic liberty.

Economic Liberty; Free Communism; Anarchism; these, it is alleged, are dreams, and until the workers are aroused out of their coma, dreams they will remain. Poverty, with all its trail of misery and want, stalks the land. To offer sympathy without help is a crime, but to offer hope without understanding would be treachery of the vilest degree. The emancipation of the workers from the bonds of wage-slavery is a difficult task but not an impossible one. Just as the totems of a bygone age have been relegated to the museums, so must the fetishes of to-day be brushed aside. All the needs of the workers lie within their own power to supply, and nothing will withstand them when they engage in that task, for, as Goethe has written:

"Only engage, and then the mind grows heated—  
Begin it, and the work will be completed!"

H. MACE.

## FREEDOM IN THE NURSERY.

An eminent scientist has said the human race cannot evolve any further. He must be the world's champion pessimist. And the disconcerting thing is that he's probably right. I find the theory a most depressing one; and I doubt whether even the philosopher in "Candide" would be so silly as to sit in a tramcar and hail his fellow passengers as the best of possible inhabitants of a best of possible worlds; or whether anybody except a sentimentalist of the

very worst type would kid himself that even his friends justify Creation. An honest man won't believe he justifies it himself. So if Creation is an experiment and if we are the finished results, we can cross Creation off as an experiment that's failed.

But, after all, is the theory of evolutionary finality so depressing? We may be the finished results, but much of the imperfections we reveal are results rather of the finishing processes of ourselves as individuals

than of the raw material from which we're formed; and by finishing processes I mean the way we've been, as they say, brought up.

Nothing more perfect could be imagined than the way a fertilised ovum develops into a fully-formed babe. A few abnormalities apart, each stage of the nine months' process is a miracle of smooth functioning. Because for the first nine months of existence a human being is left entirely without interference.

Comes the dawn of life breaking over the pre-natal twilight—and the interference promptly begins. So do most of the mental (and many of the physical) disabilities to become manifest later in life in the shape of neuroses, fears, hysterias, anxieties, inhibited developments, thwarted aggressiveness, self-hate and hate of others, slave mentality—practically of every one of those ills that flesh—or mind—is heir to. If only we could be as free from interference after birth as we were before, what a different kettle of fish we might become!

The most lamentable thing about the interference thrust on us is that the younger a child is the more helpless he is to defend himself from the interference, and the deeper and more ineradicable the impressions that interference makes on him.

Any condition of culture must unavoidably impose certain restrictions on individuals; and these are resented by us as adults in so far as they limit our possibilities of self-expression and self-gratification. But they are not a hundredth part so disastrous in result as are those—generally quite avoidable—imposed on children. The adult has a mind that largely is already formed; he can recognise through reason the expediency of the restrictions for his own good in so far as he shares in the general good; and he can direct the motive-power of his inhibited desires into channels less harmful to the society of which he's a part. But the child has not a formed mind; he can't recognise the expediency of the restrictions (which probably doesn't exist anyway, except to the convenience of adults), unless these are so few and simple that their significance is obvious; and his opportunities and capability of diverting the energy behind the desires into alternative channels are much more limited than in the adult's case—and much less necessary.

I believe that, in spite of the restrictions imposed on adults by the requirements of culture, a high degree of what we might term psychical freedom is possible, providing that the possibility hasn't already been destroyed or too seriously lessened by tampering with the mind in its infant condition. In nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of ten thousand the tampering has taken place. (The estimate's a conservative one.) Voltaire's philosopher can see the result any day he cares to board a tramcar.

Of course, we shift the responsibility for this on to government, capitalism, militarism, private property, religion, or any other excuse that's handy. But we're not very honest in doing so, because, though these are responsible to a great extent, still a good deal of the blame must remain attached to our individual selves. Granted, we are all of us victims in our turn of "conditions"; but you must grant as

well that we also have some modicum at least of independent reasoning powers. Unless we exert this power to mitigate conditions we must write ourselves down as slaves. Freedom doesn't consist merely in recognising chains.

"The Problem Parent," by A. S. Neill (published by Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., price 5s.), has a number of very practical things to say about the deplorable way in which children are brought up, and, more usefully still, a number of equally practical things about the way they should be and could be brought up. Much of what the author of this book writes is founded on experience gained in managing a school in which the guiding principles are non-interference and its corollary non-coercion. A big circulation for "The Problem Parent" would do an immense amount of good. It would make for more freedom and more happiness for children and for the adults those children are developing into.

Next time you stand as a god parent don't give the baby a christening rattle: instead give a copy of this book to the infant's parents. The kid will have much more reason for saying "Thank you" for the gift.

We may have arrived at the highest attainable level of evolution: we certainly haven't reached the highest peak attainable on that level. We can only climb to that by freedom—and freedom begins in the nursery. "The Problem Parent" goes a long way towards showing how the nursery can be emancipated.

B. B. W.

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