

Freedom

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NOTES.

Four Years Ago.

"This Conference condemns all attempts to bring about any *rapprochements* between Labour and Capital, or any method of compromise aimed at arriving at a more amicable understanding between Labour and Capitalism short of the total abolition of the Capitalist system."

That resolution was passed by the Independent Labour Party four short years ago. No *rapprochements*, no compromise between Labour and Capital. To-day that resolution is forgotten except by a few stalwarts of the party. Ever since the Labour Party (with its many I.L.P. men) took office it has compromised and brought about agreements between Labour and Capital. When the railway strike took place, the Government tried their utmost to drive the men back to work before they had gained anything, and Mr. MacDonald told Mr. Bromley that if he brought out the London Tube men his Union would be dealt with under the Emergency Powers Act, the Act which the Labour Party fought against when it was passing through the House of Commons. Mr. Thomas and Mr. Clynes are continually advocating amicable relations with the employers. A few days ago the Industrial Councils Bill, "to facilitate concord between employers and workers," received the support of the Labour Party and was given a second reading by 236 votes to 16. Then when we come to Mr. Wheatley's housing scheme we find him proposing the building of 2,500,000 houses during the next fifteen years, the cost of which is to be divided between the State and the local authorities and spread over a period of sixty years. From 1940 to 1964 the cost will be £34,000,000 per annum. He told the House of Commons that whilst land, labour, and materials would account for only 3s. 3d. per week per house, "taking the rate of interest at 5 per cent. for the loan period of sixty years, it required 6s. 6d. a week from the house to meet the burden of finance"! So he announced his intention to bring in a Bill to provide penalties for profiteering. In finance? Oh no!—in building materials! No wonder the City views the Labour Party's schemes with favour. They all bring grist to the mills of the bankers and help to stabilise Capitalism. But what do the rank and file members of the I.L.P. think about it? Emergency Powers Act for the railwaymen and millions without stint for the money monopoly!

France and Security.

M. Poincaré's defeat at the elections in France and the probability of a Government of the Left under M. Herriot have led many writers to expect great changes in French policy on Reparations and an early evacuation of the Ruhr. They are making the same mistake as French writers made when the Labour Government took office here. The policy that Poincaré followed was not a personal one, but was dictated to him by the great financial and industrial interests. If M. Herriot comes in there will not be much change in the aims of French policy but merely in the methods. He says that "our party do not believe in the possibility of evacuating the Ruhr before the safeguards laid down by the experts have been put into force, and before the international régime foreshadowed by the experts has been set up." The Allies at first are to control the disarmament of Germany, and later on it will be undertaken by the League of Nations. "We must solve the problem of France's security by definite pacts of guarantee drawn up under the authority of the League." Translated into plain English this means that the French still insist on maintaining the falsehood that Germany alone was responsible for the War, that therefore she must pay every penny that can be squeezed out of her working population, and that as Great Britain refuses direct military support for France's security, she and other nations must guarantee that support indirectly through

the League of Nations, to suppress any attempt made by the German people to revolt against the damnable servitude that is being forced upon them. This country has persistently refused to support the French Reparations policy. Are we now to be tricked into a semi-alliance with France through the League of Nations? Is that the policy of the Labour Party?

U.S.A. and the Naval Ratio.

Few people expected that the Washington Disarmament Conference would prevent competition in naval armaments by merely limiting the size and number of capital ships. Until commercial rivalry ceases naval rivalry will continue. The agitation in America about the unpreparedness of the navy has brought forth a new naval construction programme involving an expenditure of £30,000,000. Mr. Britten, who introduced it into the House of Representatives, said it would place the American Navy "first in the world." Although the Washington Conference fixed the naval ratio at United States five, Great Britain five, and Japan three, this new programme would bring it to United States five and Great Britain four; and Mr. Britten declared that this could be done without violating either the letter or the spirit of the Limitation of Armaments Treaty. The newspaper report does not say whether anyone laughed. With a similar sense of humour Mr. Wilbur, the new Secretary for the Navy, denies that he is a militarist, as stated in foreign despatches; but he added: "I stand for 100 per cent. equality with any other Power plus a *reasonable preponderance* in items uncovered by the Disarmament Treaty." We are sure that our own naval experts will soon respond with a programme which would give Great Britain "a reasonable preponderance" in a similar way "without violating either the letter or the spirit" of the Treaty. And if Japan does not join in the game at once it will be because she is short of cash owing to the earthquake. That Washington Disarmament Conference was a sorry joke for the politicians to play on a simple and too-confiding people.

Industrial Fatigue.

Capitalists are always trying to extract more profits from their slaves, and as the more intelligent of them have realised that the most essential factor is a smooth-running industrial machine, they have adopted co-partnership, profit-sharing, Whitley councils, industrial councils, and similar schemes, which are designed to persuade the workers that they have a share in the control of industry and in its profits—in fact, are partners in the business. Industrial welfare—better factories, hygienic conditions, and factory canteens—is another scheme, much favoured by Labour leaders, to make the workers contented with the capitalist system. During the past four years an Industrial Fatigue Research Board has been at work in another direction. The particular function of this Board is to find out why the workers get tired and then to adjust their methods of working so as to combine a minimum of fatigue with a maximum of production. For this purpose their experts, stop-watch in hand, take note of every movement of those who are being "researched" and tabulate the results, as Darwin tabulated the work of worms and Lubbock that of wasps and ants. These experts take themselves very seriously, and they use all the long words which are so much Greek to the workers whom they experiment upon. In their fourth annual report the Board say: "Physiological research will investigate the conditions under which human movements are best exercised, whilst mechanical research will indicate the machines which are defective in this respect, and will eventually demonstrate how far the physiological requirements eventually established can be made to conform to mechanical limitations." What the workers' share will be in the increased production the report does not say, but we may safely say that if the "physiological requirements" do not conform to the bosses' financial requirements, their answer will be: "Nothing doing."

BAKUNIN'S "REVOLUTIONARY CATECHISM."

In "The Revolt against Civilisation: the Menace of the Underman," by Lothrop Stoddard (London: Chapman and Hall), the author refers to the Anarchist movement, and makes the following remarks (pp. 150, 151):—

"Certain peculiarities in the Anarchist 'Propaganda of the Deed' should be specially noted, as they well illustrate the fundamental nature of Anarchist thought.

"Bakunin taught that every act of destruction or violence is good, either directly by destroying a person or thing which is objectionable, or indirectly by making an already intolerable world worse than before, and thus hastening the world revolution.

"But, in the business of assassination, it is often better to murder good persons and to spare wicked ones; because, as Bakunin expressed it in his 'Revolutionary Catechism,' wicked oppressors are 'people to whom we concede life provisionally, in order that, by a series of monstrous acts, they may drive the people into inevitable revolt.'

"The killing of wicked people implies no really valuable criticism of the existing social order. 'If you kill an unjust judge, you may be understood to mean merely that you think that judges ought to be just; but if you go out of your way to kill a just judge, it is clear that you object to judges altogether. If a son kills a bad father, the act, though meritorious in its humble way, does not take us much further. But if he kills a good father, it cuts at the root of all that pestilent system of family affection and loving-kindness and gratitude on which the present system is largely based.' (Professor Gilbert Murray, 'Satanism and the World Order.' *The Century*, July, 1920.) Such is the spirit of Anarchism."

Wishing to know whether Bakunin was the author of the "Revolutionary Catechism," and whether the above extracts were correct, a letter was sent to our comrade Max Nettlau, who is a recognised authority on Bakunin's life and writings, asking him for his opinion on the matter. The following article is his reply.

The general remark: "Bakunin taught that . . . " purports to be a summary of his teaching. Well, the ideas of Bakunin are expressed in the following words of an intimate document of the autumn of 1868, confirmed by similar remarks in other writings:—

"To make a radical revolution, institutions and things must be attacked, property and the State must be destroyed, then there will be no need to destroy men and to condemn ourselves to the unfailling and inevitable reaction which the massacre of men never failed, and never will fail, to produce in every society."

"But to have the right to be humane towards men, without endangering the revolution, it is necessary to be pitiless towards institutions and things, it is necessary to destroy, before all, property and its inevitable corollary—the State. This is the whole secret of the revolution."

Before this he had written:—

"All revolutionists, the oppressed, the suffering victims of the present organisation of society, whose hearts are naturally full of vengeance and of hatred, must well remember that the kings, the oppressors, the exploiters of all sorts, are as guilty as the criminals who come from the ranks of the people: they are malefactors, but not guilty, because they also, like ordinary criminals, are involuntary products of the present organisation of society. One must not be astonished if in the first moment the people risen in insurrection kill many of them—this will be a misfortune that is perhaps inevitable and as fatal as the havoc caused by a storm."

"But this natural fact will be neither moral nor even useful. In this respect history is full of lessons. The terrible guillotine of 1793, which cannot be charged with laziness or tardiness, did not achieve the destruction of the aristocratic class in France. The aristocracy was, if not completely destroyed, at least deeply shaken, not by the guillotine, but by the confiscation and sale of their property. And one may say in general that political slaughter has never killed parties; it was particularly powerless against the privileged classes, to such a degree power resides much less in men than in the institutions which the organisation of things creates for privileged people, namely, the institution of the State and its consequence as well as its natural basis, private property."

I take these extracts on purpose from a generally known large

pamphlet—the same which first translated (in a rather slovenly, inexact way, though reproducing the general tenet) the "Revolutionary Catechism"; a pamphlet published in London and Hamburg in 1873, signed by Karl Marx, F. Engels, and their comrades, who hoped to destroy Bakunin's reputation by its publication.

If people prefer to be instructed on Bakunin's opinions by the summary of Mr. Stoddard, I cannot help them.

He goes on to insinuate or imagine that somebody proposed "to murder good persons and to spare wicked ones," those in the latter category to be spared "only temporarily," that "by a series of bestial crimes they may drive the people into inevitable revolt." I translate these words from the Russian text.

This refers to acts of revolutionary terror suggested by the author, who had first instructed the revolutionists not to be guided, in selecting those to be killed, by their individual perversity or the hatred they inspire, but in the first place by the degree in which they are pernicious for the revolutionary organisation and by the terror and loss they inflict upon the Government, depriving it of energetic and intelligent agents. In other words, they are advised to kill strong men and to spare the worthless debauchees or incompetent officials who by scandal and blunder compromise the existing order. In such a life-and-death struggle as the century of preparation for the Russian Revolution has been, this remark is nothing extraordinary; and certainly the whole theory of terror is based on striking in the right place to achieve the greatest effect. This has nothing to do with Anarchism, but all tactics, all conduct aims to be efficient, not ineffective; no more is meant than this commonplace truth.

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What is the "Revolutionary Catechism"?

This was a document, 29 pages in 16mo, in cypher, found in December, 1869, by the Moscow police among papers hidden for the revolutionist Netchaev, and deciphered by means of a key found during another search. The title is a colloquial heading given to the document, which was printed in full Russian text in the *Governmental Messenger* (Petersburg), July 9 (21), 1871, in the record of the great trial of Netchaev's comrades. Before it was deciphered, a publication made by Netchaev called it "the general part of our statutes."

The author was indeed Bakunin, who when he first saw Netchaev in the spring of 1869 was fascinated by his energy and believed the exaggerated accounts he gave of the Russian movement and the revolutionary qualities of his comrades; and in this spirit Bakunin wrote the document in the manner it is written. He had written his own "Revolutionary Catechism" (bearing this title) three years before, early in 1866, and had rewritten similar documents in the autumn of 1868. It is not only interesting but necessary to compare these several documents, for only then can one see where the Russian situation and Netchaev's very great impression induced him to put on deeper colours in the Russian document. I have often looked at the documents of 1866 and 1868—for they will be published this year—and when just now I have re-read the document written for Russia I saw hardly anything unusual in it; whilst when I saw it first, forty-one years ago, it made a tremendous impression upon me. Now it ranges among so many other writings of Bakunin in my memory and fits in with them in many ways, and the few exaggerated expressions in it are nothing to me. But until the last Stoddard writes for the last time on Anarchism he will always hit upon just a few lines of this document and not look at, or purposely ignore, all other Anarchist literature and action.

If comrades ask how the authorship of Bakunin is established, I should say that, without any other evidence, a comparison of texts from 1866 onward would prove it. But the man is still alive who found the original of the document in Bakunin's handwriting among Netchaev's papers in Paris in 1872 and who then destroyed it. He was Bakunin's closest Russian comrade then, and Netchaev, long separated from Bakunin, before his extradition by Switzerland to Russia, where he died in a fortress prison in 1883, sent word to this comrade to rescue and destroy his papers, which he did. These facts were told to me with all details, and were printed long ago.

Let them harp away at some overmild words in the "Confession" and some overharsh words in the so-called "Catechism" of 1869—people who do this are born mental flunkies who feel at home only in the ante-room or on the doorstep: they will never enter the inner rooms and grounds of Anarchism, beautifully laid out by Bakunin and so many other free men.

M. N.

April 23.

LET THERE BE LIGHT.

"What a piece of work is a man!" cries Shakespeare through the mouth of Hamlet. "How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form, and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel; in apprehension, how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!"

But how many believe this nowadays? How many, in this profoundly pessimistic generation, possess the poet's grasp of Life's potentialities, and can see in the rough marble the perfected image of the sculptor's dream? For the most part we are smitten with a blinding scepticism; and, above all, in ourselves we are unable to believe. We think of ourselves still as born in sin and steeped in corruption; as dangerous forces to be held everlastingly in check. On this scepticism the entire Government Delusion rests, and apparently the common sense needed for its overthrow has yet to be developed.

What a ridiculous insanity it is! Self-evidently Man's very existence depends on his capacity to think, yet we support fanatically all the coercive forces that seek to emasculate his power of thought. All creeds detest the heretic who has the audacity to criticise them, and we cling like limpets to our creeds. All authorities, ecclesiastical and secular alike, frown on the free-thinker, and in our bigotry we furnish authority with the force to put him down. Knowing, as we do right well, that only by the fullest interchange of thought can we arrive at just conclusions, we boycott the writer who disagrees with us and howl down the speaker who dares to tell us ugly truths. We are creed-mad, party-mad, Government-mad. We trust neither ourselves nor one another.

It is small wonder that progress is so slow. How can we act unitedly when each, at the first whisper of hostile criticism, scurries panic-stricken to his own sectarian shell? How can these warring intolerances, each anxious to dominate the other, hope to develop strength? Sectarianism is always sterile. Feeding exclusively on its own thought, it dies of slow starvation. Look at your aristocratic castes. They dare not have an original thought. Examine clerical literature. It never strikes a new note. Your bureaucracies are everywhere the slaves of a paralysing routine from which they cannot free themselves; and to all these timidities your politicians cater. These people, one and all, are sterile. They cannot beget a new order, and it is idle to expect it of them. Their own fear of Life castrates them.

Only in freedom can man create. Who can say anything worth listening to when he is compelled to hide his inmost thought? The writing of an article or book, the painting of a picture, musical composition, scientific investigation, in fact, all forms of human labour mental or physical, call for the release of individual energy. Cripple that energy, limit it dogmatically, fetter it in any way, and its output is rendered proportionately lifeless. It may copy faithfully, but it cannot originate. Its initiative dies. It becomes tied to the past.

This is mankind's great tragedy. Consider, for example, the Great War. It was in its essence a warning that the old order was no longer possible, that a new day was dawning, that basic changes in the social structure had become imperative. In what did it result? In the overthrow of three great Empires, and their replacement by other Imperialisms of an almost identical stamp. The masses, whom an out-of-date civilisation had been squeezing for generations into its antiquated moulds, showed themselves, when called on to create a new social order, completely sterile. Such seeds of thought as they possessed they could not fructify. They lent themselves to the suppression of all courageous thought at the very moment when their own interest needed it most. Just when they should have come together for mutual counsel, regardless of nationality, they encouraged Authority to herd them into their separate pens. They welcomed the re-appearance of all the old fallacies which the world's increased stock of knowledge supposedly had laid to rest. The times called for action, and, having no vision of individual freedom, they bent all their energies to resurrecting the collective tyrannies of the past.

"Freedom and Its Fundamentals," by Charles T.

Sprading,* throws a flood of light on this whole subject; and inasmuch as the revolutionary movement appears for the moment to have lost its bearings, the publication of this work at this particular juncture should be doubly welcome. Mr. Sprading sets out the argument for individual freedom with strong simplicity, and brings forward a magnificent array of witnesses to prove his case. Do we Anarchists understand how uniformly the Immortals, whose work has stood the test of time, are on our side; how all the foremost poets have shared our passionate belief in Life, and our hatred of whatever tends to nail it to the cross of institutions and pin it to the rack of creeds? The men who, like Shakespeare and Goethe, have rescued learning from the pedants, and left on all literature their virile stamp; the men who, like Washington and Thomas Jefferson, in the United States, have led their rebel hordes to the overthrow of ancient tyrannies and opened up the avenues to a larger and less heavily shackled life—all these had in them, of necessity, that optimistic faith without which no movement can hope to realise its aims. They believed in themselves and in the work to which they had set their hands. They trusted Life, and were supremely confident that, when brought into open conflict, the wise would overcome the foolish. Washington stood up unflinchingly for that liberty of conscience at which Lenin habitually sneered, and avowed himself the sworn enemy of "spiritual tyranny and every species of religious persecution." Jefferson declared boldly that "the best Government is that which governs least," which, as Thoreau has pointed out, leads us straight to No Government, or Anarchism.

It is strange how easily it has been forgotten that all these pronounced Anti-Authoritarians were the great men of their respective ages. They succeeded. They reached their ends because they believed in themselves and in their fellows; because they had no fear that in the open battle of opinions they would not hold their own. They felt no need of sheltering behind censorship and all manner of legalised intolerances, as do the craven Dictatorships of Italy, Russia and Spain. They would have scorned the very thought of hedging themselves in with bayonets, as do our modern rulers; those sprung from and pretending to be the representatives of the proletariat being, indeed, the rankest cowards in the pack. These great Libertarians led, so far at least as their own choice was consulted, the openest of lives. Why not? Toleration has no cause to be afraid. It is only when men begin to bully that they see enemies behind every bush and tremble at the sight of their own shadows.

Sprading's book is, in its essence, another shout of "Down with Dictatorship—spiritual, intellectual, political, and economic!" It is essentially our own Anarchist cry, and we should never rest until it has found its echo in every heart. For what is the whole Anarchist, at bottom, but a break for Liberty and a revolt against Dictatorship?

W. C. O.

"No More War" Demonstrations.

The International Anti-Militarist Bureau (Waterweg 14, De Bilt, Utrecht, Holland) protests strongly against the alteration of the date of the annual "No More War" demonstrations, as suggested by the International Federation of Trade Unions, of Amsterdam. These demonstrations have hitherto been held at the end of July and the beginning of August, to coincide with the date of the beginning of the World-War. But now the Executive of the I.F.T.U. have decided to alter the date to September. They say that the reason for their decision was the objection of representatives from certain countries that the July-August dates "would strengthen the feeling of bitterness about the occupation of their countries and also the nationalist feeling at the same time, especially amongst the unorganised, with whom we have to count very strongly in this matter." Surely, if this bitterness and nationalist feeling would be roused by a demonstration in August, it would also be roused in September. The day when all the masses were led to the slaughter should be the most appropriate day for the meetings. It is a sign of weakness to pander to the prejudices of the unthinking workers. If their professed leaders merely mark time, war will never be abolished.

* "Freedom and Its Fundamentals." By Charles T. Sprading. \$1.50. Los Angeles, Calif.: Libertarian Publishing Co., 4209 Eastside Boulevard.

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This Labour Party!

We are most earnestly for the united front, but we are not going to swear that black is white in the hope of getting it. Indeed, that is precisely the way in which it never will be got. The slavery of the masses is a matter far too serious for mincing insincerities and cowardly evasions. It is the very sternest of realities, and is not to be used as the stepping-stone of personal ambitions. Moreover, there is not a particle of sense in allying oneself with characterless weaklings. Their failure is foredoomed.

Judged even by the low standard of the politician, the Labour Party is a failure. Barely five months in office have settled that. Its performance has been even more ridiculous than were its pre-election promises. It declared boldly that it had a "positive remedy for unemployment," and it never had any remedy at all. It pledged itself to tackle without gloves the housing problem, and its solution seems to us worthy of a lunatic asylum. In a word, it has shown itself completely impotent, and precisely because it is all things to all men, and eager to catch at anything that may bring it votes. Shams of that kind never last.

At the very outset the Prime Minister threw all his alleged Socialism to the winds by declaring that Europe's disturbed conditions were at the root of all our social troubles. That was the burden of his address at the opening of Parliament, and we read it with amazement. In itself it was a repudiation of Socialism's fundamental tenet, which is that the workers are exploited because the means of production have been monopolised by the exploiter. That is absolutely basic. It is the one common ground on which Socialists, Anarchists, Land Restorationists, and various Radicals who disagree on other details unite. Mr. MacDonald abandoned it promptly in his first official speech. As an old and well-educated Socialist he must have known that the trouble with our masses is that they are dependent for their very existence on the possessing class which furnishes them with the jobs by which they have to live. He preferred not to state that simple truth. He was too prudent, too diplomatic. It paid him better to lay the blame on Europe and the general conditions of the outside world.

Having shuffled at the start, the Labour Party went on shuffling, and one of its earliest performances was the voting of large subsidies to colonial speculators, in the Soudan and elsewhere. In this bolstering up of Special Privilege the Conservatives lent it ready support, as was entirely natural, but Labour Members clamoured for the passage of the Bill. It would bring us work, they declared, and it was stated specifically that the chief recipient of this public bounty proposed to buy his plant in England. These Labour men spoke and voted for that! These Socialists, pledged to the overthrow of the capitalist system!

In reality, the entire business is a sham. For years past Mr. MacDonald has gone up and down this country declaring that Individual Enterprise was the bottom cause of all our poverty, and that it must be rooted out at any cost. We ourselves do not agree with that, for we think the trouble is that the masses are not permitted to be enterprising—that they are denied the opportunity of employing themselves, and are thereby compelled to labour for the personal profit of the employing class. Nevertheless, however that may be, during all those long years Mr. MacDonald talked Revolution; because,

to propose the overthrow of the existing system is just about as revolutionary as anything can be. Mr. Snowden talked that way, as did Mr. Sidney Webb and other Independent Labour Party lights. "Down with Capitalism!" was their everlasting cry, and to-day they are never weary of reminding us that they are Constitutionalists, first, last, and all the time.

Such a contradiction is an absurdity. It is, in reality, a cowardly fraud. He who pledges himself to the destruction of a system stands thereby in honour bound to bring about its death as soon as possible. He may not seek to bolster it up. He may not devise or support measures calculated to prolong its lease of life. Honest men stand by their guns, and are either friends or foes. However, politicians nowadays are seldom regarded as honest, it being recognised generally that they have a genius for breaking promises and abandoning any principle that threatens to cost them votes. That lesson the public is beginning to assimilate, and the Labour Party is, at least, helping on that useful work.

What is the Labour Party's "positive remedy for unemployment"? First, there is the Cabinet's decision to build a number of cruisers, at some £2,000,000 apiece, for the sake of making work. Secondly, there are Mr. Thomas's effusions on the territorial grandeur of our far-flung Empire and Mr. Clyne's great Empire Day oration, in which he reminded us that "in this heart of the Commonwealth to-day [The Commonwealth!] there are something like 1,000,000 unemployed men and women," and that this helpless mass should look for its salvation to "the far reaches of the daughter nations." These Labour leaders, who only yesterday were cursing Capitalism, are now acting as boosters for the great Tory transportation scheme, advocated so zealously by the *Morning Post*. Thirdly, there is Mrs. Philip Snowden's discovery, she having been recently presented at Court, that our aristocracy's lavish expenditure on its own personal adornment "serves the purpose of supplying a certain amount of work." Fourthly, and lastly, there is the grandiose scheme recommended by the Socialist Joint Council on Unemployment for improving roads and waterways, for afforestation, land drainage, land reclamation, and various electrical improvements. Show us the Tory landowner who will not work and vote eagerly for that!

Then there is the housing problem—a veritable Augean stable, to the cleansing of which a modern Hercules, in the person of Mr. Wheatley, is now bending all his strength. He wields, it is true, no broom of steel, but he has a ready pen, a taste for figures, and long sight. His scheme is to reach its completion in 1980, fifty-six years from date, and its total cost is to be, if we remember right, something over a thousand million pounds. Indeed, the outlay for each successive year is given scrupulously; but that sort of rubbish we willingly forget. How can Mr. Wheatley calculate what will be the cost of land, materials, and labour nearly sixty years from now? All that is humbug. Labour will be housed decently when it gets free access to the materials out of which houses have to be constructed, and to the sites on which they must be placed. As it is, these essentials are under lock and key, and he who would unlock them must pay the landowner whatever he chooses to exact.

The present Chancellor of the Exchequer, however, himself a devout Socialist, proposes to buy out these tribute-levyers, paying them a fifty-years' purchase price, calculated on the estimated total of their rent-rolls at the time of transfer. Again, we forget how many thousands of millions they are to receive, but not for one moment do we forget that Labour, as always, will foot every penny of the bill. Who else can do it? Labour, applying its energies to the natural resources of the universe, produces all our wealth.

All this humbug nauseates us; and very quickly, as we think, it will nauseate the great body of the public. Then there will be an awakening. Then there will be something doing.

ANARCHISM VERSUS SOCIALISM.

By WM. C. OWEN.

32 pages, with Wrapper. Price, Threepence.

The Persecutions in Russia.

The agitation on behalf of the imprisoned revolutionists in Russia is beginning to cause some anxiety to the Communist Party of Great Britain. The Secretariat of the International Working Men's Association, in Berlin, published a four-page appeal to all Labour and Revolutionary organisations, giving a list of 150 names of men and women in prison in Russia, sentenced to death or exiled for having dared to doubt the beneficence of the Russian Government. The circular stated that the total number, could it be secured, would amount to tens of thousands. This circular was reprinted by the Anarchist Red Cross in London, and, together with a covering letter containing a resolution of protest, signed by the Anarchist Red Cross, the Workers' Friend Group, and the Freedom Group, was sent to all the principal Trade Unions and to some Members of Parliament. As a result, letters of inquiry were sent to the Communist Party and to the editor of their organ, the *Workers' Weekly*. Mr. Palme Dutt, the editor, not being able to contradict the facts set forth in the circular, but knowing the mentality of his readers, published the following paragraph in the issue for May 9:—

"ANARCHISTS OR WHITES?"

"There has frequently been occasion in the past to observe the close connection between the Russian Whites and certain of the Anarchist groups. Once again, now that the Anglo-Russian negotiations are in the balance, the same phenomenon has appeared. A leaflet is being widely circulated in this country containing denunciations of the Russian Bolshevik Government by various Anarchist groups, and declared to emanate also from the 'International Working Men's Association.' Unfortunately for these documents, the hand of the author's is too evident: for instead of the language being revolutionary in character, the denunciations of the Bolshevik 'criminals' is couched in the language of the *Morning Post*. Sincere working-class Anarchists will do well to be on their guard against being exploited in this way by the Russian Whites; and the British working-class has had enough experience of these documents to know how to treat them."

The man who wrote that knew that it was a deliberate lie, but his readers have been kept in such ignorance of real events in Russia that most of them probably will accept it as truth. Anyone who is a student of Russian affairs and does not confine his reading to the *Workers' Weekly* knows that this persecution of Anarchists and Syndicalists has been the deliberate policy of the Bolshevik Government since April, 1921, when, at the tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, Lenin declared open and merciless war not only against Anarchists, but against "all petty bourgeois Anarchist and Anarchist-Syndicalist tendencies." That is not the language of the *Morning Post*, but of the leader of the Communists. The "sincere working-class Anarchists," to whom Mr. Dutt refers, will no longer allow their sympathies for the Russian workers and peasants to be exploited for the benefit of the Moscow Dictators. Mr. Dutt stresses the fact that the circular was distributed whilst "the Anglo-Russian negotiations are in the balance." Everything we have published in recent years concerning the true character of the Russian Government has shown its capitalistic outlook, and would help rather than hinder an agreement with foreign capitalists. In this respect we will again refer to the statement by Mr. S. A. Heller, Russian Trade Envoy to the United States, in the *New York World* (December 18, 1922), in which he assured investors of capital in Russia that "there is an industrious and intelligent population eager to be exploited at lower wages than can obtain in any other white man's country." And Trotsky told U.S. Senator King last September that the Soviet Government would "support all genuine foreign firms which desire to invest their capital permanently in Soviet Russia's industries." That is quite good enough for British capitalists. But when we issued the circular to the English Trade Unions it was with the hope that they would at least ask that before a Labour Government helped to arrange an alliance between Russian and British capitalists it would try to gain some small measure of free speech and freedom of thought for those Russian comrades

who are now in prison. Does Mr. Dutt disagree with us in that hope?

PROTEST MEETING IN EAST LONDON.

A public meeting, under the auspices of the Committee for the Defence of Imprisoned Revolutionists in Russia, was held on May 30 at the hall of the Ladies' Tailors' Union, Whitechapel, to protest against the continued persecutions in Russia. John Turner, general secretary of the Shop Assistants' Union, was in the chair; the other speakers were W. Tcherkessoff, H. W. Nevinson, W. Wess, Mr. Baikaloff, I. Kaplan, and Wm. C. Owen. In his opening speech John Turner read a letter from Mr. W. Coates, secretary of the "Hands Off Russia" Committee, who is evidently much perturbed because he had heard that Turner was going to raise this question at the General Council of the Trade Union Congress. Mr. Coates said he had made inquiries—he did not say where—and had been informed that many of those whose names appeared in the circular had never been arrested, some had been amnestied, and the condition of the majority in prison was not as stated. Most of them had been sentenced for "armed banditry"—the stereotyped lie. As a matter of fact, he wrote, the Soviet Government had amnestied more prisoners than any other Government—which, of course, is proof to us that they had made more prisoners. These apologists for the Bolshevik Government should certainly get some new arguments in their defence.

The speakers roused much indignation by their recital of the tortures and shootings in Russia; and, despite interruptions by a few young Communists, who thought strength of lung was a suitable substitute for argument, the following resolution was carried almost unanimously:—

"This meeting of East London workers joins the French and American comrades in protesting against the continued policy of imprisonment, exile, and execution of Anarchists, Socialists, revolutionaries, workers, and peasants by the Soviet authorities, who, whilst calling themselves a Workers' and Peasants' Government, withhold from the workers and peasants even the elementary rights of free speech, free press, and free association.

"This meeting sends its greetings to the imprisoned men and women who have fallen in the struggle for freedom, and calls upon all honest friends of the Russian people not to rest until the victims of this new tyranny are released and the elementary rights of a free people restored in Russia."

We hope comrades in other cities will call similar meetings and give wide publicity to these persecutions.

JOHN MOST.*

Through "Der Syndikalist," of Berlin, Rudolf Rocker presents the storm-tossed revolutionary world with a new and much-needed work—"John Most: the Life of a Rebel." No better title could have been selected; for, whatever else Most may or may not have been, he was essentially a rebel. Born into poverty and brought up in a home which a brutal step-mother had turned into a hell; bullied by tyrannical schoolmasters and thrust, when he was only twelve, into an apprenticeship he himself has described as slavery incarnate; battling incessantly toward the light and forced to fight single-handed for his own ideas; betrayed repeatedly by his own comrades in revolt; hounded down by the degenerate society he himself attacked, and imprisoned and exiled by the Governments on which he warred; always driven hard; always in controversy, alike with friend and foe—this is the record. He became a Socialist when he was 20, and was one of the German Social-Democratic Party's earliest and most able organizers and parliamentary representatives. While he was advancing it was giving way, and this made him eventually its most relentless critic. He died when he was 60, but into those 40 years of

* "Johann Most: Das Leben eines Rebellen." Von Rudolf Rocker. Mit Vorwort von Alexander Berkman. 5 Mk. Berlin O 34: Der Syndikalist, Kopenhavensstrasse 25.

propaganda he had crowded the activities and experiences of centuries.

To read this life is to follow step by step the road to Calvary trodden by the disinherited of all the world. Most was perforce a wanderer; and this author of "The God-Pest," this new Prometheus everlastingly at war with all Olympus, revived in his own career the tradition of the earlier Christian martyrs. His intimates were the men who fought and fell, were imprisoned, shot and hung, because with the enslaver they would not make peace. For twenty-five years, in the United States, he kept his paper, *Freiheit*, going, and it was always in the thickest of the fray. To such men life is necessarily a bed of thorns. Nevertheless they live, and always at the high tension of the heroic. Of all existences theirs is undoubtedly the most exalted, and their particular service the one a servile world most needs. Never should they be forgotten, and Rocker has done good work in keeping green the memory of one of their most typical representatives—Johann Most.

It appears that the group "Golos Truda," of Moscow, stirred Rocker to his task. Much excellent work has come out of that group, in spite of the repressions of a Dictatorship which fears, above all else, the letting in of light. Let these undaunted propagandists not lose heart, for they, in company with countless others working at countless other points, are kindling fires no tyranny can quench.

The making of this most comprehensive book, with its more than 400 well-printed pages, must have cost no little labour, and Rocker specially acknowledges the great assistance he received from Max Nettlau as also from Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and other indefatigable workers. Berkman contributes a spirited preface. The book is, in reality, a broad survey of the entire Revolutionary and Labour movement during the period covered by Most's activities. We wish it could be rendered into English, but as to this we are not at present sanguine, for our own movement appears to be sunk in the political opportunisms of the moment and heedless of its valiant past.

A DISILLUSIONED COMMUNIST.

(To the Editor of FREEDOM.)

DEAR COMRADE,—You asked me, when I visited your press while passing through London on my way to Manchester, to write an article for your excellent little paper, but I prefer to do so in the form of a letter.

I have been, as I told you, in Russia and Siberia about a year and a half. I went there a staunch supporter of the Bolsheviks, and came back disillusioned. I shall anticipate my critics, who will be numerous, and state quite candidly that I do not believe I have a right to expect people to regard my generalisations as having been founded on sufficient personal empirical knowledge to be considered reliable. I advance them because only by doing so can I hope to have them verified by others with similar experiences.

I went to Russia as a worker and party member in August, 1922, under the belief that Russia was controlled by units known as Soviets (composed of Workshop Committees and Peasants' Village Communes), which elected delegates every year to some all-Russian representative gathering, the rank-and-file having almost complete control over their particular delegates. In all my experience I never saw or heard of a delegate being freely elected. During the short time I was in the Russian Communist Party a so-called election took place for the local or district Soviets, and it consisted virtually of the appointment of certain individuals who were considered "reliable" by the local government machinery. After being in the Russian Party for about three months I sent in my resignation, finding that my preconceived notions would not tally with hard fact.

Russia, in my opinion, is controlled politically and economically by an oligarchy which is upheld by the rank-and-file of the Communist Party, who are bribed into this function by being given an economic advantage over their fellow-workers, in that not only are their particular individual means of earning a livelihood assured to them but they are more certain of advancement

than their fellow-workers outside the party. This party is equivalent to the Masonic Orders of Europe and America, which exist avowedly for mutual benefit (to be gained at the expense of the populace), and which are the most loyal defenders of the State.

From these observations I advance my thesis: That no party should be considered in the correct sense revolutionary who aim for political control because, human nature being what it is, no individual or individuals are to be relied upon by the class they have worked in and along with when the interests of these individuals are not likely to be identical with the interests of that class after a revolution. "Power, like a desolating pestilence, pollutes whatever it touches," wrote Shelley, and I say Amen.—Yours comradely,

NOEL W. ROBINSON.

Ashton-under-Lyne.

"Freedom" Guarantee Fund.

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