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INTRODUCTION
HOW I CAME TO KNOW ERRICO MALATESTA

I remember the day that I met Errico Malatesta as the strongest impression of my distant youth.

It was April of 1897. For nearly a year the conservative and bourgeois monarchy of Savoia had scoured the Italian people with suffocating winds of reaction, only to appease them the moment they threatened to disturb the tranquil luxury of the commanding classes.

Francesco Crispi, the old Jacobin-turned-Minister who persecuted all new ideas behind the protection of the banner “of God, king and country,” was forced to resign following a blow of popular indignation at the defeat of Italy’s armies in Abyssinia. The imperialist megalomania of the monarch Umberto I and his Minister was laid to rest, and the peninsula again breathed a small sigh of liberty.

The revolutionary proletarian movement began its ascent. Four months earlier Italy’s first socialist daily, *Avanti!*, had begun publishing in Rome, and the anarchists — disarticulated and reduced to silence by the reaction of mid-1894 — once again had a pair of periodicals: *L’Avvenire Sociale* in Messina and *Il Nuovo Verbo* from Parma.

However, many comrades were still in jail or in *domicilio coatto*,* the most famous being Galleani, Molinari, Gavilli, Binazzi and Di Sciullo. Others including Malatesta, Gori and Milano paced distant streets as exiles. Young initiates surged to fill the breach left by them, and by those who succumbed to the persecution by disappearing from the movement or crossing to the socialist camp. Saverio Merlino, an example of the latter, had even publicly insisted that anarchists accept the electoral and parliamentary system in hope of securing his release from prison.

Meanwhile, some of the condemned and deported recovered their freedom, and some such as Pietro Gori returned from their flight.

On March 14 of that year a new weekly *L'Agitazione* saw light in Ancona, the provincial capital of Marcas and an old home to anarchists. The paper's subtitle declared it to be a "socialist anarchist periodical." At the time I was a law student in the university of the nearby city Macerata. I was 19 and full of enthusiasm for the anarchist ideas which, since I had embraced them in 1893, had already cost me some police persecution, a short trial, and a bit of jail. From Ancona, my old friends Recchioni, Agostinelli and Smorti encouraged me to write for the new paper, where they had already announced me as a collaborator.

I resolved to cement their invitation with a brief vacillation. Reading the paper's first issues had affected me intensely. It was a publication unlike anything I had read before: flawlessly written, compiled and printed, with more the tone of a magazine than a broadsheet. Errico Malatesta contributed from London.

* "forced domicile," a system of house arrest

The authors I read in it were brimming with thought and animated by a spirit that was wonderful and new to me. I confusedly felt that I was their intellectual inferior; all I knew was the anarchist press of the past three or four years. I wrote and sent a theoretical article as polished as I could manage, by the title “Natural harmony.” In it I explained anarchy as an application of the laws of nature to human society through the medium of science, which by negating god brings us to the negation of all authority, political or economic. Above all, it was founded by citations in the intellectual authority of Kropotkin and the Italian philosopher Giovanni Bovio.

Frankly — and who hasn’t been young and committed such sins of presumption as to throw the first stone — I believed that I had written a short masterpiece! Instead... my article wasn’t published. I asked my friends from Ancona what had gone wrong and they told me that they disagreed with my article; they would publish it with a polemic note if I insisted, but I declined in the hope of not giving readers the sense of a disagreement in the family. Furthermore, they invited me to go to Ancona to swap some verbal impressions.

I fell from the clouds! Why didn’t these comrades agree with me? I wrote them a few lines, saying that I wouldn’t bother to travel for something so unimportant — but all the same, I wrote to Malatesta for the first time (finding his London address in the paper) expressing my shock that the paper he wrote for didn’t share my conception of a complete and just anarchy. Malatesta didn’t respond, but a few days later Cesare Agostinelli wrote for me to come to Ancona,

friends would like to see me there, that it wasn't only about the article... They sent me the money I lacked to make the trip, even without which I was already convinced.

I made up my mind one Saturday afternoon, deviating from a strategy of habitual vigilance against the police. I took the train for Ancona, arriving at dusk. Agostinelli was waiting for me in his small store at the end of the Corso; as soon as he spotted me the deal was closed and he took me by side streets to the distant suburb of Piano San Lazzaro.

Arriving at a mansion there, he opened the door with a key, climbing a wooden staircase at the end of the corridor to find that it led to a type of attic.

As we climbed, I heard an unknown voice ask, "Who is this?"

"He's the 'Harmonist'," responded Agostinelli, certainly referring to my rejected article. Clambering to the top, I saw a small room with a country bed at one side, a table on which a petroleum lamp burned, and a pair of chairs. On the chairs, on the table, on the bed and about the floor lay an indescribable quantity of papers, journals and books in apparent disarray. A short stranger with black and dense hair met me with extended hands and deep, laughing eyes. Agostinelli, stepping off of the ladder, told me: "I present to you Errico Malatesta."

When Malatesta embraced me, my heart leapt about my chest — I was dazed and petrified. He was already a legend, incubus of all the police of Europe, the audacious revolutionary, condemned in Italy and other areas and a refugee in London: but here he had been hiding all along. My impression, that of an inexperienced youth full of an almost religious faith, is easier to imagine than to describe.

“What?”, he said to Agostinelli, “You haven’t said anything to him?”

We cleared the chairs and sat, Agostinelli leaving moments later.

My friendship with Malatesta formed almost immediately, as if it were merely being renewed and he had been an older brother or a comrade of years. I would have spoken with him like he was my father if he hadn’t appeared so young — he was forty-four but looked even less — such was his frank and easygoing nature, with a comfortable air that only comes from the familiarity of equals.

He promptly began a lengthy and animated discussion, especially about the points I addressed in my article. It would be too long to repeat, but for the most part is easy to imagine given Malatesta’s ideas and those in my article, which were common enough among anarchists. At three in the morning we were still debating. I slept there as I could, on a cushion that Agostinelli (who had retreated to bring us something to eat) had improvised for me in the corner.

At seven in the morning I was awake again, expressly to continue our discussion. We talked ceaselessly, throughout the work-day, until night cut the moment short and I emotionally parted to take the train for Macerata. I had to be back the next day to help with classes, but I also wanted to avoid the police hearing of my absence.

It had been roughly a month since Malatesta had arrived incognito in Ancona to put *L’Agitazione* together. He still lived beneath the weight of a three- to four- year sentence pronounced against him in Rome in 1884 for “association with ne’er-do-gooders”; the threat changed little about him. He stayed hidden for about nine months before the police caught up with him, but the verdict was already decided.

Two months later a lack of basic needs provoked popular rebellions in Ancona and elsewhere, and he was detained again. This time, the arrest was followed by a longer imprisonment, trial, *domicilio coatto*, and more.

After that first meeting I often returned to Ancona to see Malatesta while he was in hiding and then later, during his prison term and the trial of April '98. That first encounter determined the mental and spiritual course I would take, and I can say it changed the rest of my life as well. In the long colloquium of more than twenty-four hours, I had the sensation that my brain had taken flight in my skull. I remember it as if it were yesterday, when the arguments I had previously thought so certain were discussed, discussed, and discussed... but finally came to nothing. I wouldn't be able to repeat my points now, while Malatesta's arguments affected me beyond their logic: a logic so natural and coherent that it appeared to be what any child would have known, so obvious that it was impossible to refute.

Anarchy, the most radiant faith of my first youth, had grown through this encounter from a simple faith to become a deep conviction. If earlier it were possible for me to exchange my ideas for others, I felt that with that episode I had turned an anarchist for life; that this was already impossible to change through anything other than a flippant and base treachery, or a dark and involuntary twist of my consciousness.

Ages have passed since that remote spring of 1897. The hazards of life and of the battle have more than once brought long separations between us. Since then, years have passed without a letter. But whenever I went to see him —

in London in 1906, in Amsterdam in 1907, in Ancona united again by common work from 1913-14, and finally uninterruptedly through 1920 to 1926 — he always seemed the same as he did that first time. Physically, it appeared that the years failed to take their toll on him. In Bologna in 1920, I saw him playing with my children and full of passion, with the same spirit as in Ancona thirty years earlier when he wanted to play and run in the streets with me, or encouraged me to make a noise to scandalize the older comrades.

He lived as a perennial youth, and his ever-young spirit tamed his physical nature. It is said that age and death are but prejudices, and the profound psychological — even physiological — truth in this paradox can be found in the example of his long life. His fragile health, though, had threatened him with illness since the first signs of trouble twenty years earlier. On meeting him in 1872, Bakunin didn't believe he would last another six months, and his doctors agreed; it can be said that Malatesta had defeated illness for sixty years with his will for life. He never surrounded himself with doctors and nurses in agonized fear of death, but instead had the air of one who doesn't believe in death, with faith in his own energies and skepticism before the medical arts. He had such inner strength that it became a spring of physical energy for him. The greatest portion of that inner strength certainly came from his undevourable optimism, which was never hobbled or fatigued by disillusionment, the bitter messes and disasters, nor the graves that were made. Few have seen such suffering in all the curse of their existence. In the end, when he felt near death,

he saw signs of the imminent rebellion and liberation he had hoped for with such indestructible faith. It is that optimism which — in its wild forms of language reaching to the bounds of a sweeping ingenuity full of humanism — always reanimated him after defeat, like the legend of Anteo, always falling to mother Earth, only to say, “No matter: we will start again.”

When in July, 1926 I went to Rome to greet him before I fled Italy in search of bread and the liberty that my “fascistized” homeland had robbed me of, I couldn’t have guessed that it would be our last meeting. He looked the same as he did thirty years before, less some white hairs and a slightly tired walk, but with his old smile, his eyes alive and deep for friends, remote and pained by the cruel tricks of his enemies. And always in his logic closed to reason, always firmly hopeful that victory is near.

My part in his life sadly ends here, when he decided to remain in Italy. Though he recognized the grave reasons compelling me to leave, the memory of his decision always reopens the lacerated wound of remorse. He has written several times to say that he has been well, that his decision was based on expectations which never materialized, and so on. In spite of everything, I am often overcome by doubt that if it had been easier to stay... Who knows! But either way, that day he greeted me not like a friend departing forever, who might never be seen again. To the contrary, he accompanied our farewell embrace with a single word whose unyielding optimism came from the heart, as if the separation would be

short, and the day near in which Italy's doors would be thrown open and exiles could freely walk the earth: "Ciao!"

More than seven years have passed, and still neither of us have seen the other!

Curses on the tyrants who divided us forever and denied us even the bitter consolation of throwing a flower on his tomb!

THE MAN

Malatesta will be understood by what is left of him, the vast complex of his ideas and the events of his life, which certainly fill an uneraseable page of history. His living personality is what has disappeared, and however eloquent the testimony of his writings or the cold account of his accomplishments, these will only be an incomplete reflection of what we saw, we who lived a bit of his life and warmed ourselves before the ardent flame of his heart.

The true Errico Malatesta continues alive and whole in our spirits and memories — but won't this impression he made and the influence he had over us also be dissolved by the corrosive labors of time? Regardless, when we who knew him personally have disappeared, some living part of him will disappear. Not to dismiss this inevitability, but to at least diminish its effect, I intend to describe that living part of him here, independently from the material facts of his life and the ideas he defended in his writings, which I will present and discuss separately. My skills are too weak to revive him in his most beautiful aspects, so my attempt will necessarily fall short of reality.

At some point in the future another author will do what is needed better than I; but my powers will at least serve to complete a canvas upon which no painter or photographer has been able to reproduce this light which has gone out forever. I fear that my work might be mistaken for one of the mechanical *apologias* of the party. It is far from being this. I have asked myself more than once, even while he was alive, if I would have felt the same admiration and affection towards him if we had held different political ideas. However difficult it was to separate the person from his thought, I have always answered that my feelings towards him, after knowing him so well, could only have been the same. This isn't simply my own partiality — Malatesta's moral qualities have affected and conquered all who have grown close to him in any real way, regardless of differences of ideas, political opinions, or place in society. On more than one occasion his bloodiest enemies felt driven to respect while before him; including the thugs who were kinder after meeting him for however fleeting a moment.

HIS KINDNESS

The thought and actions of Malatesta cannot be fully understood without knowing what kindness was present in the propagandist and the militant. Despite the mostly theoretical quarrels that could at times separate him from others, he was truly the soul-brother of those who could be called — as Pietro Gori called them — the “heroes of goodness”: Elise Reclus, Peter Kropotkin, Louise Michel, and others less known, including the entirely ignored majority, sometimes uneducated and almost illiterate, as were many who we had known in the revolutionary world. They weren’t exempt from ugliness and baseness either, of course, and were still certainly too few, but already enough to do honor to humanity and to inspire belief in the brightest of hopes for our future. Kindness, not weakness or blindness, is the best inspiration of all constructive rebellions against tyrants and social miseries.

Malatesta’s kindness was united with an inflexible and resolved character, which didn’t fade away in useless words, but which was felt in each one of its spoken or written manifestations as one feels the heat of the sun. When he spoke to crowds, the masses were enthusiastic and listened to him for a solution; their reasoning was not penetrated so much by the literary nakedness of his eloquence, but by both the seriousness of what he said, and the great love that was perceived beneath all of his words.

Similarly, when he tried to convince someone of the attractiveness of his ideas in private conversation, his interlocutor would be won over above all else by a feeling that awoke the best qualities of the soul and produced a reassuring belief in himself and in all people.

Naturally, Malatesta's writings didn't have the same efficacy as his spoken word, considering what light and heat gave his sharp gaze, firm and sweet at once, his voice and gesture so expressive and affectionate. His writings did have an extraordinarily persuasive efficacy, however, not only because of their clarity, wisdom and conciseness, but also because of the lofty and undrownable human love that formed his spiritual substrate, never needing to resort to that sentimental verbalism which is nothing more than the artificial display of kindness. The intimate goodness is revealed there in a reasoned and reasonable optimism that gives the reader the impression of security and comfort at the same time, though always in touch with the most painful contingencies of reality.

I should emphasize the fighting nature and the energizing effects of Malatesta's kindness, so that he isn't confounded with the passive and resigned who are guiltily indulgent of tyrants and the wicked. He knew hate for the bad just as he loved the good; hate, it is said, is often an expression of love, though love and not hate is the true component of human liberation.

His innate kindness was a fighting weapon, an instrument of revolution, the leaven of rebellion. Far from hiding this kindness when faced with the harshest necessities of revolutionary action, he exposed it with resolved animation and affirmed it with an inexorable intransigence. It always remained alert in him, recovering after each cruel battle, thoughtful of the human objective of every fight,

this was so sincere and evident in all his acts and words, particularly for those under the direct influence of his presence, that disarmed to its encirclement and all of the ??? partisan hostilities of those other than officials with him on their list or shameful people paid with the single object of attacking and defaming him.

It would be possible to tell many stories, some curious and others shocking about the influence exerted by Malatesta in the most diverse environments, about people of the highest social classes and furthest removed from his ideas and propositions, with which the almost fortunes of life were made to halt. ??? The papers once construed a stupid conspiratorial novel about the simple fact of the profound impression Malatesta made on the ex-queen of Naples, María Sofía, and the esteem she held him in when they made their chance acquaintance.¹ The known English political writer and journalist William Steed testified the highest consideration to Malatesta and openly spoke of him as one the most interesting Italians of his time. His human influence was exercised over judges, jailers, and police agents; charged with condemning him, keeping him in custody, and watching him.

1 A. Borghi (“Errico Malatesta in 60 anni di lotte anarchiche,” New York, 1933 pp. 139-140) points out an article in *La Stampa* of Turín, written by Benedetto Croce and reprinted later in his book “Uomini e cose della vecchia Italia” (Bari, 1927), in which an intrigue is vaguely spelled out between Malatesta, María Sofía and some Isogno, an agent of the ex-queen: “in 1904... to liberate Bresci, regicide of Umberto of Savoia.” It serves to remember that Gaetano Bresci had committed suicide (or was assassinated) in Santo Stefano prison in 1901, almost three years earlier.

In the course of narrating his life, which will come later, I will have the opportunity to point out some of the episodes which I have already alluded to, which are the most characteristic of this influence of Malatesta's personality. I remember having seen him once, in the Ancona trial of 1898, tears in the eyes of magistrate and soldiers, while he spoke to the judges of love and family. In 1898, an educational judge — a certain Alipio Alippi, catholic and reactionary, later deceased while a justice of marriage — during an interrogation in jail, I spoke incidentally of Malatesta, who he had known in Ancona some months previously for official reasons, and he declared to me that if all anarchists had been like Malatesta, anarchy would have been a realization of the word of Christ. The same was said to me by a modest policeman who had detained me in Bologna in 1920, confessing to me the great secret of his enthusiasm for Malatesta. “Ah, if all of you anarchists could have been like him, then...!” And I know that in 1913-14 in Ancona the guards charged with watching the door of his house day and night sometimes asked him in the afternoon if he wouldn't escape until the morning, and later they calmly went to the house, saying to some neighbor: “A man as good as that can't do anything bad.”²

I believe that in Bologna lives the memory of a meeting of Malatesta in San Giovanni, Persiceto, in the spring or summer of 1920. ???

² It is unlikely that I exaggerate. Something similar happened with the guards who watched Pietro Gori shortly before his death in 1911. Furthermore, it is treated, as is well understood, extraordinarily, then it's also true that in the same year (1914) in Ancona, and later in Milan, Piacenza, Florence, etc., in 1920, soldiers and police were seen to disagree bloodily in the distance, but towards Malatesta, with the apparent intention of assassinating him. ???

The city's little theater was already full, and the public didn't hide its disdain for the large patrol of soldiers at the command of a lieutenant, fresh from Bologna and armed to the teeth in the service of public security, that had lined up all the way down the side wall. It appeared that there would be a provocation! Any trifle could have precipitated a tragedy! Malatesta arrived and someone asked him whether they should reclaim the hall from this public force. "No," responded Malatesta, "leave them in peace; I will speak for them as well." And he began to speak of the miserable conditions of the peasant families in Southern Italy, from among whom the majority of soldiers and police agent were recruited under the impulse of hunger. He evoked the sad figures of distant mothers that wait for help and news of their sons, whose danger that can vaguely sense. Later he came to speak of the other working mothers of the more advanced cities, also trembling that they might not see their own children return to the house after going to a meeting or a demonstration... A shiver passed through the room, of the two agonies which were rooted in the single and only note of discarded humanity. In the silence the listeners paled, already without any hatred; the palest were apparent to all of the soldiers, in whose eyes what might have been a totally new sentiment for those souls could be read. At once the lieutenant was seen to make a curt gesture to his troop, and in file they turned their back to the orator's balcony, marching outside in an instant. The impression that Malatesta's words had made on his people convinced him that it was more prudent to leave and allow the meeting to proceed without any protection.

I won't insist further. But it's precisely to develop the idea that Malatesta, though when it occurred to him that he caused without looking for many sympathies in the environments most distant from his own ???

his great love for humanity was concentrated entirely on the humble, the disinherited, the poor, the weak, the defenseless, on victims of all types without distinction, of the current social system. I remember how he became indignant one day in my presence against a comrade, becoming red and silent, because he had been permitted to speak without consideration of a poor prostitute. ??? And he demonstrated, not only with his words and writings, but with his acts as well, his sentiment of solidarity with the unhappy, anywhere and wherever the occasion presented itself. He was prodigal beyond measure, gave without counting, in the most simple and spontaneous way, like it was the most habitual thing. For example, everyone knows that in the last years, under the fascist regime, he lived in strictness and only thanks to the comrades on the outside. But often nobody knows that that help was given to him in a way to also help the rest, and that frequently he would send some sum back across the border to aid some distant refugee whose misery he had known about. He felt the mishaps of others like his own — and remember, not only those of comrades of faith — the troubled had his immediate and instinctive solidarity above all sectarianism and party spirit.

I want to relate an episode here, told in I already forget which journal, by the old French anarchist L. Guérineau, of the epoch in which he found himself a refugee in London with Malatesta. Once, in a moment of crisis, his friends consented that Malatesta try to earn something selling pastries in the streets and plazas. He procured a hand cart, sweets at a low price from a wholesaler, and more... But the first day, while he was in a city square dense with people with his pastries on display, a poorly dressed kid

asked him for one as a present. He gave it to him immediately with an affectionate caress. A bit later he saw himself encircled by an infinitude of poor children from the neighborhood, among whom news of the pastry vendor's generosity had spread in an instant, and he distributed so freely that in the end all of the merchandise had been devoured. Naturally it was the beginning and end of that type of business... Some days later Kropotkin, who knew nothing of this undoing, asked Malatesta how his new commerce was going. "I'm not lacking in clientele," he responded, smiling, "but I don't have the means to procure merchandise."

Such kindness — not only this, naturally — was anarchy for him. In a short discussion that he had with me by letter,³ in relation to justice and anarchy, he wrote: "The anarchist program, founded in solidarity and love, goes beyond justice per se... love gives all that it can, and wants to give more each time... To do to others what you want them to do (to say, the maximum good) is what Christians call charity and we call solidarity; in sum, it is love."

All of his comrades in particular know how he felt about this ideal of love, since for them the affection of Malatesta was immense: a true tenderness, as couldn't be given by the most loving family. Of the enormous anarchist family, vast as the world, he had known an infinitude of comrades. He remembered everything and recognized everyone, even after a separation of decades. He took part in their joys and in their sorrows. In their houses he felt like he was in his own, and in the same way comrades went to his house like it was their own,

³ Published in *Studi Sociali* of Montevideo, no. 21 of September 30, 1932.

until the continual fascist vigilance made him retreat to his suburb. When he already had one foot in the grave, knowing full well that the thing was over for him, he was worried not about himself, but about the illness of a distant comrade, and to stimulate him and not pain him, he wrote that he was recovering. Feeling near death, he shook before the thought of the pain that the most loved comrades experienced; he looked at photographs like a lover deprived of loved. And in reality, what were the dispersed comrades who spun about the world, if not his beloved family, a representation of the future family of humanity he wished for with such faith in the course of his life?

LEGEND AND REALITY

This sentiment of humanity wasn't just an instinctive force in Malatesta, an indirect animator of thought and action, but constituted the fundamental rationale of his doctrine; it was the anarchist doctrine itself. We have seen this previously. According to him, to be an anarchist it isn't enough to believe in logic and theory that capitalist and statist organization is unjust and harmful to humanity; it isn't enough to simply show a conviction that a dispersed organization without exploitation and without governments would be possible and beneficent to all people. These alone would be insufficient, according to Malatesta, to being a good anarchist, if before all else the anarchist didn't feel the pain that social ills cause to others more intensely than the pain they cause oneself. Only that feeling of pain at the ills of others, the human solidarity that rouses and the necessity that provokes the remedy, are able to push a man to action, to make a conscious rebel of a man, to form the complete anarchist who wants to emancipate from misery and oppression not only himself, but all the disinherited and oppressed of the world.

When a problem is presented in which the question of humanity would be in play, he didn't ask if the possible solution corresponded to this or that platform's strategic formula, but if a real and not an ephemeral good would arise from this solution, a good for few or many, that wouldn't be a pain to anyone aside from the oppressors and exploiters. This

psychological and mental predisposition explains well certain apparent contradictions that the dry formalists and doctrinarians, especially if they were rivals, have believed to discover with great mistakenness among the theories affirmed by Malatesta, and certain expressions and shows of feeling in painful or tragic moments of the social fight.

Once, to a certain cold sectarianism that by example of Torquemada appeared ready to sacrifice half of humanity to save for the other half the arid formula of a principle, he said: "I will give all of the principles to save one man!" Another time, against a terrorism that was thought to be revolutionary because mass executions appeared necessary to them for the triumph of the revolution, Malatesta exclaimed: "If victory requires the gallows to be erected in the plazas, I will prefer to lose!" In July of 1921, at his trial in Milan, he ended his statements to the jurors with some words of sorrow for the fierce fighting brought about in their country by fascism, a fight "that is repugnant to all and doesn't benefit any class or party." And on these three occasions they didn't miss the chance to accuse Malatesta of being a Tolstoyan or worse things.

However, it was Malatesta who had reason. It could be construed that this or that sentence, taken by itself and separated from the rest of his reasoning, particularly if the moment didn't allow for long explanations, would be able to leave the simple listeners with an unjust interpretation. But those who knew the intimate feelings of Malatesta and the complex of his ideas knew that his words had a meaning that was in no way Tolstoyan, but in perfect concord with his revolutionary sentiment and anarchist thought, for that it is not humanity that should serve a principle *a priori*, but principles which should serve the salvation of humanity. The principle existed for him only in so much as

it served humanity; if its application would be harmful, that would mean that the principle was in error and would have to be abandoned. But he didn't abandon it precisely because he felt it just and human at the same time; and his ??? words couldn't be interpreted any other way than as simultaneous premise and conclusion of the principle of human liberation that he predicted his entire life.

It is correct to say, though setting aside the possible bad faith with which his rivals are able to have not known Malatesta's personality, that at least has greatly contributed to a poor understanding of his sentiments and ideas, the legends that were created about his name in the long years in which he was constrained to be hidden or in refuge???, outside of direct contact with the people. The contradiction that some, when they saw him directly in the work and knew him, believed to discover in him, was only between the untrue legends and the true reality of his being. But some legends were already so well-rooted in many people's opinions, that nothing less than his presence and the most categorical denials succeeded in fully undoing them, and then by a not uncommon phenomenon, the legend would have been given credit among not a few of his comrades of ideas that they didn't know personally and were disposed to imagine it according to the particular tendencies themselves or through the mental errors themselves. ???

One of the injustices that Malatesta was long a victim of, and that in 1919-20 was aggravated by all of the malicious and ferocious things that his hatred of class inspired against him, was the legend that described him as a promoter of disorders, a theorizer of homicide, as a violent man in propaganda and deed, a demon thirsting for blood. Hints of this rumor were found not just in the conservative, reactionary and police papers,

but in some papers with advanced ideas. I remember among others a violent and ignoble article against Malatesta in *L'Iniziativa Republicanana* of Rome,⁴ where it was assured that he had in his caprice provoked bloody tumults, while it was evident enough that these had always been provoked by the Italian police with the deliberate objective of halting the progress of the revolutionary movement, or to create a favorable moment to rid themselves of the feared agitator.

Since 1870 he had mixed himself up in a quantity of movements and attempted European revolutions and insurrections, ??? and at the same time the fictitious reports of the police of these countries, who the bourgeois journalists and certain writers following Lombroso, by professional servility or by ignorance took for the gold of law, had facilitated the diffusion of the stupid legend. This, especially in Italy in 1919 and more though before 1913, Malatesta was unknown to the great majority of comrades, above all by those who had joined the movement in the last thirty years. Through 1885 he had gone, clandestinely it is true, to Italy several times, but he only saw a few trusted friends; and most others had not heard him spoken of more than as a distant and mysterious person. In 1897 he had been in Ancona for ten months, but hidden for almost nine of them; and in the little time remaining he hadn't been able to spread his activity far outside of Marcas when he found himself already in prison,

⁴ It was written by the director of *L'Iniziativa*, according to what was told to me later, a certain Armando Casalini, later discredited by the republicans, distanced from his party and become a fascist. He was a fascist deputy in 1924 in the Italian parliament when he was killed by a Roman laborer.

later in *domicilio coatto*, and later again in flight.

It was in 1913 when he truly came to live public Italian life like a man of flesh and bone; but also this time the public took time to follow his activity for several months not exclusively through journalism, then the “red week” and the persecutions that took place once more obliged him to leave Italy, where he would be able to return to in 1919. Therefore, when in this last period Malatesta threw himself anew into the whirlwind of Italian agitation, to the masses he was still the man of old legends, certainly not deprived of a certain novelistic prestige, but always a great impediment to the comprehension of his personality and to the evolution that would have been more useful. Despite all of his strength to the contrary, an enormous number of people insisted on obstinately seeing in Malatesta not the man he was in reality, but only that which some desired and others feared and hated, admitting him — save the few who had the occasion to know him better, outside the tumult of public meetings — the old false violent legend, crony to the most poorly planned disorders.

However, all of Malatesta’s past life, the true one and not that of the police and journalistic novels, was all a refutation of the legend that had grown about him. In his acts, words and writings he had always shown, and continued to until the end, that he was guided above all by that high and pure human love that I have tried to illuminate above, by the criterion of the best possible coordination of forces, with the desire of evading his sufferings and pains, ??? with the intention of saving as much as possible of the blood and life not only of friends, but of enemies as well.

Truly, Malatesta was in the most complete way a revolutionary — and as such, a proponent of that type of “disorder” feared by the reactionaries, that is the initial disorder of all revolutions, not unwittingly, but consciously preparing a higher order — as have been so many men universally known for their goodness across the centuries, but who accompany the goodness with a clear vision of reality, for who the insurrectional violence impresses them as an indispensable necessity, ??? like a sacrifice that must be confronted to free men from greater sacrifices and from incomparably greater ills and suffering, bloody and lethal.

Once he had arrived at that conclusion, of the necessity of the return and the revolution???, Malatesta didn't dissimulate the consequences, and disdained the subtle distinctions and hypocrisies of politicians, saying his thought in their entirety; but his thought, if taken whole and not speculated on in bad faith as some insignificant isolated sentence, is the true negation of all systems of violence.

THE ORATOR AND THE WRITER

Additionally, his propaganda, brought to the exposition of his most radical ideas and to the defense of the most energetic acts of rebellion and insurrection, in its form and most of expression was something totally different than violence or dramatic cruelty. I still remember the impression it made on me as a youth to experience of his conferences for the first time — in Porto San Giorgio (in Marcas), 1897, while he was hidden in Ancona and presenting himself under another name. I barely knew him, and the terrifying legends about him still held sway over me. What an proof I had of the contrary! His ideas and their exposition, the reasoning, flowed from the lips of the orator; the sentiment that animated him was communicated to his listeners through his words, his steady gesture, and above all the expression in his spirited eyes. The auditorium sat riveted by that calm word, spontaneous, like the conversation of friends, with neither pseudoscientific pretensions, empty paradoxes, verbal attacks, invectives, nor barks of hate, and distant from all political rhetoric.

In the years of distance between that day and his end, I have always felt the same. He spoke in the languages of feeling and of reason at the same time; never in that of resentment or vengeance. He spoke to the intelligence and the heart, making them think and tremble; he didn't guide the nerves with the sole object of exciting them???. That isn't to say that he wasn't known to take the opportunity to echo tones of rage against the assassins and the traitors of the people;

and these tones were much more effective when less habitual, though his words sometimes climbed to the highest peaks of apostle's inspiration. Some subtle irony produced a smile in the lips of the listeners, or instead words of suffering and pity tore their tears out. In debates, he appeared invincible; interruptions wouldn't distract him, but would fuel further elaborations and confound the opponent, who would look as if torn to pieces by his persuasive and convincing dialect, accessible to everyone. The older people of Romagna still remember his debate with Andrea Costa (in Ravenna, 1884), when after a long session they had to pause until the next day; and the next... Costa had already marched himself out of the city. ???

The oratory of Malatesta was most effective in anarchist propaganda. In my opinion it was best in expositional or theoretical conferences on method, revolutionary teaching, critique, history, and above all polemic; but less apt in the committees of the plaza where the crowd demands exciting words and less idea-substance. And if in the meetings he had devoted groupies, it was more often due to his name, the fact that he said things different than the others, and moment in which he said them, than just because of the truthfulness and the success in itself of his type of oratory. Vulgar people and those same comrades who most love the words and rhetoric at the base of the fountains of artifice, sometimes didn't hide a certain feeling of disillusion after an event that Malatesta had intervened in. When they felt dissatisfied by his lack of gory verbal anxieties and too-few invectives, but instead heard reasoned and realistic affirmations; when they compared it with what came before and what came after ???

THE STUDENT. — FROM REPUBLICAN TO INTERNATIONALIST. — FIRST
ARRESTS. — MEETING BAKUNIN.

Son of the married couple Federico Malatesta and Lazzarina Rostoia, Errico was born in Santa María Capua Vetere, near Naples in the province of Caserta, on December 14, 1853. His family was wealthy and owned several houses in Santa María. But when the boy was a student in the Lyceum, he killed time when he was with them in Naples and lived in the Pignatelli mansion, ??? on a street by the same name. In Naples, Errico pursued classical studies as a boarding student of the Escolapios' schools (a religious order dedicated to teaching), and there he was a peer of Saverio Merlino, a home student who he forged his first friendship with, though still apolitical.

Even then the young boy showed the tendencies and spirit of rebellion. He was fourteen when in 1868 he wrote an insolent and menacing letter, signing it, to the king Vittorio Emanuele II. In consequence, on March 25 he suffered his first arrest. It cost him dearly since his father, a man of moderately liberal ideas, had tried to make the whole thing look like a prank in order to free him, setting into motion every connection he had with the official world in Naples. He was detained all of that day in the police station, and at night, after a rough sermon from the *questore* who had wanted to shut him up in a correctional house, the young boy was returned to his father.

During dinner in the house, his father intended to reproach him to at least act more prudently, but the boy responded with such intransigence and determination that his poor old man concluded by exclaiming with tears in his eyes, “My poor son, I hate to say it to you, but you’ll end up on the gallows!”

The adolescent rebel digested what had already been a year or two of republican ideas. The republicans were the historical party of the Italian Revolution and irresistibly attracted the fiery student, full of classical memories of ancient Rome and the heroic acts of the still-unfinished *Risorgimento*, while Giuseppe Mazzini in his exile exerted such fascination over the youth. Fifteen years later Malatesta explained the nature of his republicanism of this time, in which he saw a promise of the realization of his aspirations for complete liberty and social justice, which later found a better reflection in anarchist socialism.¹ But he, though frequently in the republican element, didn’t belong to the party. He asked, together with his friend Leone Leoncavallo (the older brother of the musician), entrance to the “Universal Republican Alliance.” The request was transmitted to the Central Committee, that is to say, to Mazzini, who rejected them because he judged that the two aspirants had excessively socialist tendencies and would soon cross to the ranks of the International.

Until that moment Malatesta had not heard the International mentioned,

¹ In “The republic of the youth and of the bearded men” in the paper *La Questione Sociale* of Florence, no. 3 of January 5, 1884. Reprinted in the *Almanacco Sociale Illustrato* for 1925, pp. 67-70, Casa Editrice sociale, Milan, under the title “How I became socialist,” though this edition is missing some final lines of a polemic character which would have prevented its publication. Max Nettlau cites several paragraphs in the book mentioned, pp. 18-20.

and he wanted to know what it was. He looked and found it. He then met, among others, Giuseppe Fanelli, Saverio Friscia, Carmelo Paladino, and Gambuzzi, and under their influence (especially that of Fanelli and Paladino) he decidedly embraced — in 1870 — internationalist ideas.² It is known that in Italy at that time, socialism and the International owed their markedly revolutionary and anarchist character to the influence that Bakunin exerted since 1864. The events of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the excitement??? for those strewn about didn't do more than reinforce Malatesta's newly embraced faith, his enthusiasm growing.

On August 4, 1872 a congress of internationalists from various parts of the peninsula met in Rímini, known later as the “Conference of Rímini,” where the Italian Federation of the International Workers' Association was put together. Before event isolated sections had already been diffused about Italy — the most important of them being in Naples — workers' *fascios*, resistance societies, and so on, all adherents to the International. In Rímini the common organization was made concrete. The president of the conference was Carlo Cafiero and the secretary Andrea Costa. Malatesta didn't participate in it, but soon became one of the most active members of the Federation. Through January he had already been the Secretary General of the Napolitan Labor Federation, whose program he had formulated. He had collaborated the previous year (1871) with Cafiero on *L'Ordine* of Naples,³ and he was a regular contributor to *La Campana*, also of Naples (1871-2), the most important internationalist

² These details, some by voice and others by letter, come directly from Malatesta, and at some points I have adopted his precise words.

³ Malatesta said “L'Ordine” to me, but I seem to remember that the complete name of the paper was *Il Motto d'Ordine*.

paper of its time, due to the vivacity, seriousness, and the density of its thought.

The Italian Federation founded in Rímini had a socialist-anarchist revolutionary program, anti-Marxist in its methods, given a public character by its propaganda, but conspiratorial about the insurrection that it tirelessly tried to provoke. Malatesta threw himself into the work of the program body and soul, no longer worried about his studies or personal affairs and gave (as has been said elsewhere) all of his patrimony to propaganda and to the poor.⁴ Indefatigable in his activities as an agitator and conspirator, always in movement everywhere that something to do could be found, able and serious. He radiated an enthusiasm about him which was communicated to all who approached him, already a subtle and persuasive reasoner, soon successfully exercising an extraordinary influence among workers and the youth. This quickly made him the black beast of Italian police, who followed his steps and pursued him without rest, detaining him at every turn with the most trivial pretexts, or sometimes even without that. Later, at his trial in Rome in 1884, he put into relief the fact that without ever having been convicted of a crime until that day, he had already completed more than six years of jail.

The same year that the Congress of Rímini was held, Malatesta went to the antiauthoritarian International Socialist Congress of Saint-Imier (September 15 and 16, 1872),

⁴ Malatesta abandoned his studies in the fourth year of medical school at the University of Naples. In *Socialism e socialisti in Italia* by Agostinelli (cited by Nettlau), it is said that while a student Malatesta was detained once in a tumult in Naples, convicted for the first time and suspended from the University for a year. Nothing more is known of Malatesta's life as a student.

leaving days earlier for Zurich, where he met Bakunin for the first time. He remained in Bakunin's company fifteen or sixteen days before and after the Congress, and promptly entered into complete communion with his ideas, also participating in the Alliance, a sort of secret revolutionary and anarchist fraternity which Bakunin had founded some years earlier under the name "Democratic Socialist Alliance" and which was later called the "Revolutionary Socialist Alliance."

Despite his great energy, the young Errico had fragile health, and it could be said??? That he was properly sick. Since he was 15 or 16 his doctor believed that he would have trouble reaching 24. Bakunin noted this in his first encounter with him, when he was Errico arrive in Zurich with a cough and a fever. On the fiftieth anniversary of Bakunin's death in 1926, Malatesta spoke of this trip, remembering how he met the great Russian revolutionary. Thinking he couldn't be heard, Bakunin said to one of the comrades surrounding him in his house, "What a pity that he is so sick! We will lose him soon; he won't be around in six months."⁵

From then on the relations between Bakunin and Malatesta were close and frequent; they saw each other often and wrote, and for some time Bakunin had the young Italian anarchist as his secretary, when he would be able to go and pass some interval with him, especially in the period in which Bakunin lived in the country house "Rouges' Hall," near Locarno in Switzerland. Malatesta was at the Rougery when in July of 1873 Bakunin entrusted him with traveling to Barletta, where Carlo Cafiero then lived,

⁵ *Pensiero e Volontà* of Rome, no. 11, July 1, 1926.

to put together a rural feast with him in Spain. But there Malatesta was detained, taken to Trani and shut up in the city jail.

From the jail in Trani he managed to send a letter to friends on the outside, but it was found by police in a register. ??? An investigation was made, and resulted in the prisoner being isolated in a daunting fort called “the tower of Tiepolo,” under the special custody of an ex-religious??? guardian. But he, who had been in a military prison under the Borbones, a curious type of patriot, became a friend of Malatesta, and the young revolutionary’s letters left the jail better than before. That guardian, who had been a member of the cabinet of the minister Silvio Spaventa under the old government, confided to Malatesta that he would love to kill the minister to punish him for having abandoned his old comrades; and he showed him with great secrecy the dagger he had been honing for that purpose at the end of every day.

In that period of imprisonment Malatesta also befriended the director of the jail, a certain Carlo Battistelli, also an old patriotic political prisoner. The friendship began with an enraged outburst by the director, when Malatesta mentioned “police agent.” A discussion took place, and Battistelli became very sympathetic of his prisoner. Malatesta stayed in jail for six months and was freed, all without any concrete accusation or trial.

These short episodes can serve to show the influence Malatesta exerted over all those who came across him. We will see another example in an episode not much later.

He suffered a little for his time in jail, but above all for the great waste of his busy life — at the time he left the jail in Trani, he had been dedicated to work to prepare for the next insurrection in the South of Italy,

joined in Locarno by Bakunin, Costa, Cafiero and other — his health had been drained. His doctors ordered a period of absolute respite; and he, by invitation of Carmelo Paladino, was to pass some days of vacation at his house in Cagnano Varano (during the carnival of 1874). In that little city, Malatesta came into contact with the strategic group of that place, which met at night in a pharmacy and in little time proceeded to come to grips with the devil in the form of the town's auditor, the priest, and the marshal of the guard, all from the pharmacy. For the final day of the carnival they put together a political masquerade: "The death of the bourgeoisie," and in the streets of the town was seen the funeral of the dead bourgeoisie, the coffin surrounded by these four in disguises, in the funniest way. After Malatesta departed, something should be felt in the highest???: the marshal was transferred, the priest called by the bishop, and the auditor censured by the prefect.

THE BENEVENTO UPRISING (1877)

Max Nettlau points out that there is a fundamental difference between the movements of 1874 and the one in Benevento which Cafiero and Malatesta helped stage in 1877. The first promised to unleash an insurrection throughout Italy, while the second had more of a demonstrative character, of propaganda by deed. In 1874 the movements were prepared and inaugurated in several parts of the peninsula, but that of 1877, on the other hand, was local to the countryside of Matese, in the province of Benevento. Naturally, we shouldn't overlook their hope that the movement would evolve and extend itself — Malatesta always said that “the substantial breeds the substantial” — but the concrete objective was to announce the revolution with their example, independent of the eventual practical success. It must be noted that Andrea Costa stayed uninvolved in this movement, which he showed himself to be adverse to.

The preparations went flawlessly, and they had successfully obtained promises of help in the intervention from a considerable number of farmers, especially through a certain Salvatore Farina, who could brag of being locally influential. But this Farina had conspired in the past against the Bourbons with his friend Nicotera, who was then minister. This time, he betrayed everyone he knew and had them arrested, with the exception of Cafiero and Malatesta, who knew how to ably avoid police investigations. Contact with the farmers was interrupted by Farina's treachery, but plans

continued. The Russian revolutionary Sergei Stepniak (Kravchinski) found himself in Naples at the time and wanted to participate in the attempt.

The movement was precipitated by an unexpected and disgraceful situation, not surprisingly in similar circumstances. Stepniak, a Russian woman and Malatesta had rented a house in Cerreto under the pretext of an old woman's convalescence, but which would actually serve as an arms dump.¹ The arms arrived in large boxes on April 3, 1877. The house was inadvertently being watched by the police, and two days later a group of internationalists battled with the soldiers who lay in waiting nearby: two of them were wounded and one died of injuries later. There had been some arrests and the comrades, barely a quarter of the number hoped for, judged that it was urgent to begin their campaign without waiting for the rest. They left during the night, armed, and stationed themselves in the surrounding mountains where they were joined by a few others without weapons.

They had about thirty people, with Cafiero, Malatesta, Stepniak and Cesare Ceccarelli at their head.² They crossed the mountainous locales of Mount Matese between April 6 and 8 — Pietravia, Montemutri, Fileti and Bucco — eating and sleeping by night at the houses of farmers (who were generously paid for everything), until they arrived at Lentino. They entered the town with the red banner

¹ Following Nettlau's version, taken from that of Angiolini: *Socialismo e socialisti in Italia*, already cited, modified somewhat to agree with the elements extracted from other lectures and from conversations with Malatesta.

² The participants, less three or four (Cafiero and Malatesta included) were all from Southern and Central Italy, with many Romans like Ceccarelli.

unfurled and invaded the Municipality precisely when the Town Council was in session. In the name of the social revolution they declared the king an old fossil and demanded the handover of official documents, arms seized from the citizens, and the municipal coffers, giving a receipt of all this to the town secretary in these terms: “We, the undersigned, declare ourselves to have come into possession of the arms in the hands of the municipality of Lentino in the name of the social revolution.” The arms that had been confiscated, the tools, and the little money that was found in the treasury were distributed among the town’s inhabitants. The scale for calculating the tariff on farmers was destroyed, and all of the official documents irrelevant to the public good were burned. Speeches were made and listened to approvingly by the townspeople.

They continued to the neighboring city of Gallo. Before they entered they met the parish priest Vincenzo Tamburi, and they obliged him to enter with them — he preceded them and calmed the people by declaring himself a communist, too. They invaded the municipality and proceeded as they had in Lentino. After the final conference, according to Nettlau’s account, a farmer took the spotlight and asked, “Who can assure us that you aren’t soldiers disguised to discover how we think and arrest us later?” Nettlau accurately observes that this distrust would have been caused either by the recent memory of Farina’s treachery, or by the fact that the insurrectionists were all Northerners. The Southern city held much resentment against the government of Savoia, beneath Piemonte, which had introduced obligatory military service in the South and a degrading, exploitative system of tribute.

In the meantime, government troops began to occupy the region while, like in Puglia in 1874, the people listened sympathetically to the rebels' lectures, but were careful not to join them. On April 9 and 10 the insurrectionists fought the soldiers, eventually beating a retreat. Malatesta went to Venafro one night to buy ammunition, was almost arrested, and saved himself by fleeing into a forest. It began to rain, snowing on the high mountain. The situation was desperate. Their weapons, furthermore, had become unserviceable once the cartridges were wet. They wanted to cross to the next province of Campobasso, but would have had to scale a tall mountain: impossible! They discussed what they should do, if they should disband or not; they decided to remain united. Two who wanted to leave removed themselves a short distance. Malatesta and Cafiero would rather have saved themselves, but were alone, so they chose to stay with the rest to confront their shared responsibilities. The twenty-six turned back and took refuge in the hamlet of Cacetta a few kilometers from Lentino, and a farmer denounced them to the soldiers. At night, between 11 and 12, the military surprised them in the house and twenty-three were detained. Of the other three who had scattered, two were taken in the vicinity and the last in Naples later.

Therefore the enterprise, which had lasted ten or twelve days, met its end. Those detained were taken to the judicial jails of Santa Maria Capua Vetere. More arrests were made. Twenty-six, including Malatesta, were in Santa Maria; eight in jail in Benevento. The idleness of prison wasn't entirely useless. Cafiero occupied his time by writing the *Compendium* of Marx's *Capital*, and Stepniak the book *Underground Russia*; Malatesta wrote a report to

the Correspondence Commission of Florence about the events of the uprising, as well as several articles. They studied, discussed, and so on. When the ninth congress of the International was celebrated in Verviers (from September 5 to 8, 1877), a statement signed by those implicated in the events of Benevento was read, addressed from the jail as “Internationalist Section of Mount Matese.”

Meanwhile, the king Vittorio Emmanuele II had died on January 9, 1878 and his minister Crispi gave a general amnesty to political prisoners that February. The implications for the band of Matese should have been clear, but they were kept in jail because the magistrate doubted whether the amnesty applied to the death of a soldier in Lentino on April 5, 1877. It was decided to send them to be judged before the Court of Benevento, where the accused submitted two questions to the jury: First, if the accused were guilty or innocent of the death of the soldier; second, in case they were guilty, if the death had taken place in the course of the insurrection or not. If the death had occurred in the course of the insurrection, it would be a political crime and the amnesty would apply. In April all of the accused were transferred to the Benevento jail, and in August, 1878 the trial began. In the trial — a new chance for propaganda — the accused stated that they had shot over the heads of the soldiers; but regardless of any of this, the jurors found them not guilty of the act at all, and they were acquitted.

Among those who figured in the trial’s defense was Francesco Saverio Merlino, Malatesta’s trusted lawyer. Merlino, who was a lawyer in Naples at that time, didn’t have firm political views; but when he heard in the papers that his teenage friend was in jail and undergoing trial for the events of Matese, he offered himself to the defendants.

Malatesta accepted him with pleasure, and in the long prison colloquiums between detained and defense, he took the opportunity to explain his own ideas to Merlino, giving him arguments to allow him to prepare a defense knowing something of his cause. But to defend Malatesta, Merlino had to become an internationalist, socialist and anarchist, and when he pronounced their defense he had already become all of these. In the same year Merlino published his first propaganda pamphlet: *A proposito del processo di Benevento, Bozzetto sulla questione sociale*.

HIDDEN IN ITALY. — “L’AGITAZIONE” OF ANCONA (1897-98). — ITALIAN MOVEMENTS IN 1898. — ARREST, TRIAL AND VERDICT. — JAIL AND “DOMICILIO COATTO.” — ESCAPE. — “LA QUESTIONE SOCIALE” OF PATERSON (1899-1900).

Only a few months later, in March of 1897, Malatesta was once again hidden in Ancona, Italy, this time to publish a new paper: *L’Agitazione*. About a month after his arrival I had the great pleasure of seeing him for the first time, as I have related in the Introduction. His 1884 sentence would be enforced within a few weeks, but he arrived with the urgent desire to quickly dam the devastation menaced by Saverio Merlino’s recent shift towards parliamentary socialism.

Merlino’s extraordinary ingenuity and education, his obvious good faith and the influence of his name made the menace that much more dangerous; Malatesta didn’t hesitate in taking a stand against his old friend and comrade, though preserving the utmost serenity and cordiality in the argument with him. A brief discussion between the two had already taken place through public letters in a popular Roman daily,¹ and it was pursued at length in *L’Agitazione*, from the first

¹ *Il Messaggero* of Rome printed Merlino’s first letter to anarchists to win them over to the electoral method in no. 29 dated January 29, 1897. Malatesta responded in no. 38 of February 7; Merlino’s reply came in no. 41 of February 10.

issue (March 14, 1897) throughout the entire year. When the polemic ceased, its effects were evident. Almost no anarchists followed Merlino — the only well-known exception was the young lawyer Genuzio Bentini, who later became one of the most eloquent socialist representatives. Merlino remained isolated, too revolutionary, eclectic and independent to be accepted to the socialist scene, but too legislative for the anarchists, who he continued on the most friendly terms with until his death. Malatesta gave Merlino the widest freedom to develop his ideas in *L'Agitazione* that year, naturally refuting him in the most complete fashion.

Being obliged to remain hidden made practical action and public propagandizing nearly impossible, but this didn't derail him from his intellectual work. This periodical, which I believe has been the most historically and theoretically important of those which Malatesta has edited, had more the character of a magazine than a broadsheet, and its impressiveness brought it to the immediate attention of both comrades and adversaries. Due to his influence, more than a few new members, especially socialists, crossed to the anarchist camp: among others, Giuseppe Ciancabilla, editor of *Avanti!* And Mamolo Zamboni of Bologna (father of the Anteo Zamboni who made an attempt on Mussolini's life in October of 1926). It was *L'Agitazione*, in conjunction with the activity he generated at conferences, which ignited in Italy an anarchist movement of coherent ideas and deeds, and which wasn't nearsightedly absorbed in the moment.???

The ideas and tactics that Malatesta proposed in this paper were the same as those expressed in the first issue of *L'Anarchia* of London. There he had emphasized a critique of Marxism and individualism, he reacted against Kropotkin's tendencies towards harmony and spontaneity — without polemizing, however

against him directly, and almost without naming him — he insisted on the necessity of organizing anarchism into a party, and of propagating in Italy for the first time syndicalism and direct action.² The language he used to argue propaganda and critique the active institutions was serene, completely devoid of verbal violence and rhetoric. There were comrades who reproached him at the time for being “too English,” but he replied that he preferred to speak in a way that would be accepted and understood by the public rather than in a grating fashion that would only appeal to the converted, distancing him from the people or provoking the seizure of the paper. That would be the same as saying nothing. In *L'Agitazione* he showed experimentally how the most transgressive and audacious things could be said with the least violent and most reasonable words.

The tone of the paper and its rapidly rising popularity ??? worried the Italian government. Its agents had already discovered that Malatesta had disappeared from the outskirts of London and they began to suspect that he was in Ancona or a suburb. A cloud of spies, in the most assorted and comical disguises, fell upon the little city. All over the province of Marcas they barged into the houses of old internationalists and they seized days worth of the paper's correspondence, but in vain. Surprisingly, Malatesta was rarely hidden physically. The only precaution he took was to leave the house alone and never in the company of other anarchists. At times known rivals would stumble across him, and he didn't refrain from holding several conferences in the area (including the cities of Iesi, Fabbriano,

² It was in *L'Agitazione* where, while hidden, he published the first ten dialogues of his work *En el Café*. It was interrupted by ulterior circumstances and only pursued and finished years later.

Porto S. Giogio, Foligno), where he simply presented himself by the name Giuseppe Rinaldi. A bit later he published a letter in *L'Agitazione* pretending to be written from a distant little Italian city, in which he protested against the snooping police. In it he acknowledged that he had been in Italy all along, but avoiding public attention in order to stay out of prison, since the old sentence from Rome was still a threat regardless of whatever right he had to be left in peace.

But in the end, after nine months of remaining hidden, he was discovered by chance in November. To unearth the secret of her husband's mysterious visits, a woman went to the house where Malatesta had been living, 24 via Podesta. Ignorant of everything, she believed he had been seeing another woman who lived on the top floor of the building, and confronted her face-to-face in the street. The offended neighbor shouted that the man had been seeing "someone hidden." It caused a small scandal and there was a meeting. That night his friends advised Malatesta to quickly change houses; but he chose not to. He preferred to face whatever would come. The next morning police went to the house and had to do no more than push an open door to find an unknown man writing at a table, in the middle of a mass of books and periodicals. He immediately told them who he was and was arrested, then taken to the precinct with a pile of his letters; but a few hours later, and with only brief explanations to his interrogator, everything was given back to him and he was left free.???

Then, able to move about, he took a more active part in the movement. He multiplied his lectures in the city and province, held debates with speakers from other parties, organized meetings, and so on. Sadly, it would be for only a short time. In January, the tumults over the steeply rising price of bread began in the South and eventually propagated to the province of Marcas,

??? that later proceeded to all of Italy for about half a year. During a popular demonstration on the 18th of January, Malatesta was arrested with a group of comrades on a city street. Also arrested were Adelmo Smorti, administrator of *L'Agitazione*, Felicioli, Bersaglia, and others. And in new numbers they were subjected to trial for the crime of “association to be delinquent.” There was a novelty in this trial: until then anarchists brought to trial regularly denied the fact of being organized, entrenching themselves well in a conception of antiorganization, but Malatesta and his comrades declared themselves to be organized, reclaiming the right of anarchists to associate in a party.

That sparked an agitation in all of Italy “for the freedom of association,” promoted by the Roman socialist anarchist Federation, and conducted with fervor through the columns of *L'Agitazione*, which continued printing, despite the repeated seizures and the successive arrests of the various editors who arrived from abroad to take charge of the work (Vivaldo Lacchini, Nino Samaja, Luigi Fabbri). More than three thousand comrades, in the name of an infinitude of anarchist groups and circles, pressed a public manifesto — in which they declared their faith, affirmed association in a party and total solidarity with those tried in Ancona. The protest exceeded borders. Associated with it were comrades and sympathizers of other European countries and famous members of other popular parties, among the first Giovanni Bovio.

Therefore the trial became a true civil war for public liberties, aside from being like so many others an optimal medium for anarchist

propaganda. The sessions took place before the Correctional Tribunal of Ancona between April 21 to 28; they were rich with incidents, the accused making energetic declarations, and finally Malatesta making a self-defense that moved everyone. Numerous witnesses spoke in favor of those on trial and of the freedom of thought and association, including Enrico Ferri, Saverio Merlino, and Pietro Gori, the latter making use of the occasion to give one of his captivating conferences in apology of the anarchist ideal. Despite this, the desired acquittal was not obtained; Malatesta was sentenced to seven months of detention, Smorti, Felicioli, Panfichi, Petrosino, Bellavigna, Baiocchi and Bersaglia to six months, and Cerusici was acquitted.

This time, as had also taken place in the trial against Malatesta, Merlino and comrades in 1884, the representative of the prosecution paid homage to the personal honesty of the accused, who had become “delinquents” only by the fact of being organized. The public Minister said more regarding the morality of the accused: he noted with prestige?? That when Malatesta’s propaganda had begun in Ancona, there had been a noticeable drop in delinquency in the city, especially disputes, violent acts, drunkenness, etc. But, he added to the explanation, delinquency diminished only because much more grave things were being prepared! For this the sentences were handed out, however not the tributes for the official accuser... ???

However, from the political point of view this sentence was a victory because the accusation of “association to be delinquent” was excluded, radically changing Italian jurisprudence in relation to the anarchist associations, which were not yet considered as being comprised of evildoers, but simply subversives. It was also a benefit materially, since the

Association to be delinquent could imply sentences of up to five years of reclusion and seven for the leaders, or supposed leaders, while the seditious association couldn't receive more than a maximum of 18 months of detention. The verdict was later confirmed in appeal and in ??? and therefore became definite.

During Malatesta's time in prison the popular disturbances had been communicated from the South to the North of Italy; a few days after the trial, May 8 (1896??), in Milan there were outbursts more violent than the previous, followed by a fierce repression with much death and injury. The reaction unleashed on all Italy was of the most implacable type. *L'Agitazione* was suppressed and the few editors remaining free were detained or fled. The Parliament approved exceptional laws, the *domicilio coatto* was overhauled and outfitted with worse systems than before. Malatesta should have been freed in mid-August and the rest a month earlier; but they were all kept in jail and condemned to five years of *domicilio coatto* on the islands. Malatesta was transported to Ustica, from where he later arrived at Lampedusa.

He wasn't on the island for long. The idea of escape presented itself immediately and spontaneously, faced with the Mediterranean, while on that type of sterile and inhospitable boulder he felt that he passed his days bored and useless. His transport from Ustica to Lampedusa was motivated precisely by the government's fear of an escape, easier from the first than the second island. But in Lampedusa the task was easier due to a circumstance like his friendship with the director of the jail of Trani in 1874. Malatesta inspired such a lively sympathy in the head of the penal colony, that he told him and the

other political prisoners of all the favorable conditions, closing his eyes to everything. Many deportees lived outside their destined places, had correspondence with the mainland, and made excursions to the interior of the island. The preparations for flight were made comfortably. I know he was also helped by the socialist Oddino Morgari, who visited the colony once in his capacity as Parliamentary representative. The truth is that the night of May 9th (1899), in the most total darkness and a choppy sea, Malatesta, the comrade Vivoli of Florence and a fellow prisoner swam to a fishing boat which (with the Sicilian socialist Lovetere on board) they hoped would take them away, and once aboard they took off for Malta.

The director of the colony still didn't know of the escape, when the following day a government inspector arrived on the island. It appears that some word of Malatesta's projects had already reached Rome. The inspector asked to see Malatesta, but... Malatesta couldn't be found. In a word: the flight was discovered and the news telegraphed to Rome and Girgenti. New prisoners were arrested, friends and comrades of Malatesta suspected of complicity, and a few days later the directory of the colony quit. ??? Those arrested and transferred from Lampedusa to Girgenti, finding themselves in the jails of this city, received a visit one day from the ex-director who wanted to say hello. He was shared their joy over Malatesta's escape, exclaiming only with bitter sorrow and almost with tears in his eyes, "Malatesta had no trust in me; if he had told me, I would have escaped with him, too!"

Malatesta arrived in Malta. He was there eight days, the time needed to wait for the boat which would take him to England, and some days later he was in London,

in his old lodgings in the neighborhood of Islington.³ He didn't stay long. Accepting invitations which came from North America, in particular from his old Spanish friend Pedro Esteve, who resided in Paterson, N.J., he conceded to go and spend a few months propagandizing in the United States. By August he was already in Paterson.

Nettlau recalls in his book that while Malatesta was on the island, socialists and republicans proposed to take him as a candidate in the communal elections to oblige the government to free him; but he refused energetically with a letter to the *Avanti!* of Rome (January 21, 1899). Saverio Merlino, who perhaps consulted with the socialists and republicans who made that proposition, tried it again in May after the flight; but Malatesta protested again with a letter to Jean Grave through London (*Les Temps Nouveaux*, Paris, June 9).

In Paterson, N.J. the anarchist paper *La Questione Sociale* had been published since 1895 with a communist anarchist program in the name of the group "Diritto all'Esistenza." But it had been entrusted to Giuseppe Ciancabilla since 1898, who abroad and during his stay in Paris has turned little by little to antiorganizational individualism. The paper changed its orientation a bit, however the "Diritto all'Esistenza" group remained faithful to the original program. ??? When Malatesta arrived in Paterson, the contrast between the group and the paper became more acute; in a meeting it was

³ These details of the escape from Lampedusa are taken in part from Malatesta's comrades who remained on the island, and in part have been taken from an article by the dramatist Achille Vitti in a paper whose name I don't remember. Vitti was on Malta at the time with his troupe and spent a few days with Malatesta.

decided by eighty votes against three that the paper remain faithful to the original organizational program, Ciancabilla retired and founded another paper in West Hoboken, *L'Aurora*. *La Questione Sociale* was then entrusted to Malatesta, who enlarged ??? the format and gave it his usual personal touch.

La Questione Sociale under the editorship of Malatesta was like a continuation of *L'Agitazione*. As was inevitable, in some issues it sustained an animated polemic against *L'Aurora*; and the divergence of ideas assumed a personal character for a moment, due to the special temperament of Ciancabilla and maybe that of Malatesta. It was during this polemic, and as an unintended consequence of it, that during a conference, in the heat of discussion, Malatesta was shot with a revolver and was wounded lightly in the leg. But Malatesta energetically refused to give importance and continuity to the incident; he didn't speak of it in the paper, and as distant friends insisted in vehement protests, he intervened with these simple words, in an impersonal way: "The comrade Errico Malatesta — seeing the protests that are published in the Italian papers, in addition to those that were sent directly to us, regarding the little disgrace that occurred to him and which we believe isn't worth the pain of discussion — thanks the friends who have wanted to express their sympathies in this manner, but begs them... to cease."⁴

⁴ *La Questione Sociale* of Paterson, N.J., no. 8 of October 28, 1899. After Malatesta's death, regarding that incident, a North American journalist said some untrue things in his book, attributing the revolver blast among other things to Ciancabilla, who wasn't even present. To restore and rectify this muddiness, *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* of New York (no. 5 of January 28, 1933) clarifies that Malatesta's shooter had been an outcast who was not given any consideration among comrades; some Pazzaglia, who disappeared immediately after the movement ??? and died a few years later.

During his stay in the U.S. he gave numerous propaganda conferences in Italian and Spanish in the most important cities from the Atlantic to the Pacific, sustained ??? various controversies, among others some with the socialist representative Dino Rodani. In the paper that he edited, he published some essays on theory and tactics, some of fundamental importance, which were translated and reproduced more than once in other countries. Notable among these was a series of articles of “Il nostro programma,” that he used later in 1920 while in charge of editing the program of the Italian Anarchic Union in Bologna. But personal reasons soon decided his return to London.

Before his return to England he went to Cuba to give some conferences there. He arrived February 27, 1900; and gave the first conference in March 1 in the Workers’ Circle. The local government had prohibited it, and only at the last moment allowed it on the condition that the subject of anarchism not be treated, Malatesta made a complete exposition of the anarchist principles without ever using the word “anarchy,” and at the end, ironically pointing to where the government delegate was seated, said, “As you see, since there wasn’t any other choice, I have spoken of everything but anarchy.” He gave three other conferences, evading as he could the governmental prohibitions; but these were so constraining at the end that Malatesta decided to leave, and embarked once again for New York on March 10.⁵

In April, he was already in London.

⁵ See the article “Visita de Malatesta a La Habana en 1900” in *La Revista Blanca* of Barcelona, no. 229 of December 1, 1932. Malatesta published a call to the Cuban people on that occasion in *La Discusión* of Havana (March 10, 1900); and an interview with him appeared in the same paper (February 28). In the anarchist paper *El Nuevo Ideal* he also published an open letter to Cuban comrades, reprinted later in *La Questione Sociale* (April 7).

A WORKER'S LIFE IN LONDON (1900-13). — PAPERS AND PAMPHLETS. — ANARCHIST CONGRESS IN AMSTERDAM (1907). — IN PRISON IN LONDON. — RETURN TO ITALY (1913).

After departing from the United States, Malatesta remained in England for thirteen years without interruption, save for brief trips to the continent.

In the year of his return, 29 July 1900, king Umberto I was shot to death with a revolver in Monza park by the anarchist Gaetano Bresci. He had arrived from America expressly to take vengeance on the person of the monarch for the victims of the war in Africa and the massacres of workers from 1894 to 1898; he hoped to put an end to the antiliberal and reactionary regime that oppressed Italy, which the king was mostly responsible for, and he tried to push Italians to revolution with the example he set.

It was recognized later, in articles by Enrico Ferri, Filippo Turati and others, that the *attentat* made the Italian situation much more democratic. However, at the time the deed provoked stupid shows of feigned pity and love for the monarch, in reaction to which Malatesta —

who had known Bresci in Paterson and begun a good friendship with him¹ — published a pamphlet, *Cause ed Effetti* (London, September 1900), in defense of the hero of Prato, explaining his gesture as a logical “effect” of the “cause” represented by the tyrannical and bloody monarchy.

In London, naturally, he took up work as a mechanic (now he was also an electrician) in his little workshop in Islington, near where he lived. As I have already had the occasion to say, work absorbed the majority of his time and above all exhausted him, in a way that left little to dedicate to his constant and continual intellectual work. He would also devote his nights to giving lessons in Italian, French, and general culture to any student that fell on him, to give him some reprieve from his manual labor. Moreover, he dedicated much time to following the intellectual currents, not only the particulars of anarchist practice and ideology of different countries, but also the development of scientific and philosophical thought of his time, which he paid attention to with great interest. Nothing was foreign or uninspiring to him, and as an electrical mechanic he wasn't content with the day-to-day work which his clients engaged him in, but through books and magazines tried to extend his knowledge more each time.

The idealist and combatant, however, was always alive in him, even when his interests lay in things that appeared furthest from the object of his

¹ I have been told for years (but I don't know how much truth is in the tale) that the night Malatesta was shot in America, it was Gaetano Bresci who with obvious danger to himself threw the fiend holding the revolver to the ground and disarmed him.

dominant passions of a revolutionary and anarchist. In the various currents of contemporary thought he always found new arguments in support of his own ideas, and these ideas acquired new freshness. In the progress of mechanics, physics and chemistry he looked for weapons that could give the revolution ways to confront the formidable means of death and destruction of the dominant classes. But he didn't exaggerate the importance of his knowledge. He saw things as they were, the little use he could take from them, leaving the rest aside. For example, it was during this residence in London that he diligently cultivated Esperanto, without believing in any way that grand results would come of it. He contented himself with being able to, by the medium of Esperanto, have friendships with comrades of the furthest countries, where the differences in language had impeded all correspondence.

Neither the everyday work, nor the necessities of life, nor the constant study that was indispensable to his intellect impeded him from doing what he could for propaganda and for the movement, however tightly poverty constrained the means of his activity. Always remaining in contact with the English movement and the few Italian comrades in London, he contributed from time to time to the papers of different languages and followed with passion the events of Italy.² In 1901 he founded,

² One of his interventions I remember sharply, as it served as a lesson to me. I was in Rome in 1901 and the editor of *L'Agitazione* when the president of the United States was killed in Buffalo, on September 7, by the anarchist Czolgosz. Fooled by false news in papers, I wrote about the act, disapproving of it, in a totally unjust and out-of-tune article. Malatesta promptly responded with another article: "Arrestiamoci sulla china," in which he indignantly protested against what I had said, vindicating the socio-political character of the *attentat*, the importance of it being a revolutionary act that, opportune or not, gave its generous author the right to the most cordial sympathy of anarchists (published in *L'Agitazione*, *Il Risveglio*, and *La Questione Sociale* of Paterson).

with a group of comrades, the publication *L'Internazionale*, of which only four issues were printed; in 1902 *Lo Sciopero Generale*, in Italian and French (three issues) and *La Rivoluzione Sociale* (nine issues); in 1905, *L'Insurrezione*.³

In that period he also [contracted] the hopes of many anarchists for the development that direct action labor syndicalism had taken in France, of which 1890 had been a precursor. [?] In 1906 this movement was at its apogee and anarchists exercised a preponderous influence in it. On the eve of the first of May it was dreamt that the French working class, especially in Paris, would take the opportunity of the traditional demonstration to take to the streets and wage open battle for the eight-hour day. Malatesta was then hidden in Paris and stayed there until the next day. He published a pamphlet in Italian, *L'Emancipazione*, to which Cipriani, Malato, Felice Vezzani and others also contributed. They didn't hold many illusions: "this movement will not mark," it said, "a great conquest, maybe it won't even be a great battle, but at least we hope that there is a big show and a great experiment that will bear fruit for futurity."

³ I'm obliged to state that, while Malatesta contributed and participated in the work, the paper *L'Internazionale* was edited by S. Corio; and *Lo Sciopero Generale* edited by a group of Italian and French comrades (Corio, C. Frigerio and others). I only remember having read the circular announcing the *L'Insurrezione*.

But he returned to London disappointed. At the year's end, invited by him and a group of Italian comrades from North America, I went to London and stayed in his house for a week in December of 1906. I slept in an improvised bed at his side, and as can be imagined the conversations stretched across day and night. He had taken a week off of work, and could pass the entire time with me. What surprised me most was his diminished faith in the syndicalist movement, which had been so great in 1897. Paris had given him the impression that syndicalism was already in a declining phase and that it was decreasing rather than supporting the liveliness of the anarchist element. Above all he had the impression that the fighters' beautiful tempers had immobilized them and put them in a position of responsibility and leadership of the syndical organizations; and that on the other hand the hostility of the revolutionaries found gory and violent expression only against the pettiest little wheels of state machinery, gendarmes and urban guards, or against the unknown strike-breakers, while they never took action against those most responsible, or against the capitalists, who they instead spoke with in a friendly way, with hat in hand.

"Imagine," he said, "that on the First of May, in a demonstration, the police chief Lepine accidentally found himself somewhere in Paris, lost and separated from his agents in the middle of a crowd. They didn't touch a hair; people encircled him respectfully and even cleared the street so that he could retake it with his people. If it would have been a poor isolated agent or a scab, they would have smoked him with blows."

I didn't share his opinion, maybe because in Italy the revolutionary syndicalism was still

in its ascendant phase and it allowed me many illusions; but three or four years later I saw that his previsions had been realized there as well.

More, he told me of his fear that the spirit of rebellion was fading among Italian anarchists as well, indicated by their tendency to take the easiest roads, though without falling in a true and proper incoherence with their principles. “Syndicates, groups, federations, strikes, conferences, demonstrations, and cultural initiatives — yes, they are all beautiful things and also necessary, but all this becomes useless without the fight and the direct and active takeovers, without concrete revolutionary deeds. These deeds may ask grave sacrifices and may seem to ruin for the moment the practical work and particularly sympathetic initiatives, but are those which keep open the doors of futurity and of real victory.” One day when we were talking in his little room, I saw a manuscript of his on the table about “Anarchists and violence.” Knowing his ideas on the debate, I asked if he would have it published. “No,” he responded, “this isn’t the moment. Today it seems to me that anarchists suffer from the opposite defect of the violent excesses that occupied me in this article. It’s better to react now against the tendencies towards accommodation and living quietly that are showing in our environments. Now it’s more urgent to resuscitate the revolutionary passion that lies languishing, the spirit of sacrifice, the love of risk.” About all this I found myself in total agreement with him.⁴

⁴ I had the occasion in those days to read a manuscript of his, a short drama in three acts: *Lo Sciopero*, that had been performed a while earlier by a crew of Italians in London, comrades and sympathizers. They told me that they had liked the work very much, and I had also. But Malatesta — who had consented with disgust to my reading it — told me

I remember that, a few months after Mateo Morral's *attentat* against the king of Spain in Madrid, Malatesta told me that the editor of an important and reactionary English daily insisted on tearing an interview from him, or at least a few words denouncing the act. Malatesta had refused: "You are enemies, and explanations aren't given to enemies." Since the editor was insistent and kept talking of the innocent people hit by shrapnel, Malatesta at some point grew impatient and interrupted him, "Honestly, that poor gentleman wounded to death was without exception innocent." The journalist, on leaving, said to him, "It's alright that you haven't wanted to concede me an interview; but I have already done it, and I'll publish it just the same." "Believe interviews now!", Malatesta concluded.

I returned to Italy as if it were a bath of enthusiasm and faith. Malatesta had promised me, that he would soon return with us, work on our papers, and so on, and I therefore went to several Italian cities in preparation. But I wouldn't succeed in persuading many people about the projects that had been suggested, and the circumstances Malatesta believed indispensable for his return to not be in vain would wait many years yet. Another reason that he didn't move from London was to make it easier to attend the next year's international anarchist Congress in Amsterdam, which was held from the 24 to the 31 of August, 1907.

At that congress, Malatesta played a crucial part, with noteworthy discourses, including some on anarchist and syndicalist organization, which helped a position equally distant from individualist exaggerations and syndical unilateralism gain prevalence.

he considered it a mistake and made me promise that, however it had fallen into my hands, I would never have it published.

He argued in particular with Pierro Monatte, exponent of the syndicalist current.

Having gone to the congress myself, together with the late comrade Aristide Ceccarelli, who I had the pleasure of spending the seven days with. (I remember his brother was with him, a shopkeeper in Egypt, then traveling and only at the conference by chance since he wasn't a comrade.) At the congress, when I went to vote on syndicalism I signed a different motion than theirs (Monatte, Duvois, etc), however I later also gave the vote to them, for it didn't seem to completely contrast with what I preferred. On that occasion Malatesta gave me an interview, this one authentic, for an Italian paper. I lived for journalism then, and they had asked me for some articles about the congress, helping me earn part of the trip's expenses. The interview was published upon my return in *Il Giornale d'Italia* of Rome (I don't remember the date).

Malatesta wrote a long account of the congress, summarizing and making commentaries, expounding his ideas on the most important arguments, in *Les Temps Nouveaux* of Paris.⁵ In similar articles he discussed syndicalism in *Freedom* of London and *Il Risveglio* of Ginebra (1908 and 1909). In Amsterdam he had been named a member of the Correspondence Commission

⁵ In the magazine *Il Pensiero* of Rome, nos. 20-21 of October 16 and Nov 1 of 1907. In the same magazine, that I edited with Pietro Gori from 1903-11, can be found reprints of almost all of Malatesta's articles that seemed most important to me from *Les Temps Nouveaux*, *Freedom*, and the Italian papers and London pamphlets mentioned previously.

of the “anarchist International” that he had dreamt up with R. Rocker, A. Schapiro, J. Turner, and G. Wilquet, its headquarters to be in London. But the comrades of various countries, more worried about the internal movements of each one of their nations, sadly didn't take the international project seriously, and so little by little the function of the “Bureau” of London ceased.

Max Nettlau describes in his book the years of Malatesta's life which follow in minute enough detail; his relationships with Kropotkin, Tcherkesoff, Tarrida of Marmol, E. Recchioni, Arnold Rollor, and more. He notes that in this period Malatesta began to feel the weight of age, together with the hazards of his profession. He once cut his hand while working badly enough that it was a wonder he avoided a blood infection. Often he would have to install ducting for gas and electricity, making repairs, and was frequently obliged to work in cold places, exposed to wind and sometimes laying on the freezing pavement. This started another attack of pulmonary inflammation that put him in danger of death some weeks; and if he was saved it was only by the attentions of his guests, especially the woman of Defendi, who took the most careful and incessant care of him.

In December of 1910 Malatesta had an adventure as unpleasant as involuntary, that could have serious consequences for him, even without his cold blood and the general opinion of his health's eventual consequences. He had permitted a Russian terrorist from Letonia to work for his wages in Malatesta's Islington machine shop. The Russian, abusing his hospitality, had taken a cylinder of oxygen which was used later in a robbery attempt. Discovered, he and his comrades,

caught red-handed, defended themselves with shots and were followed to his house on Sidney Street, where they were bombarded and died with the valiant dignity of a good cause. The act had extraordinary repercussions. The police soon discovered the origin of the cylinder and its passage through Malatesta's shop. He proved what had happened and wasn't bothered any further. But imagine the consequences for him in a different environment (Italy, for example), or in England itself if things had gone otherwise and the truth of his words could have been cast in doubt.

The incident gave Malatesta the opportunity to write one of his clear and precise articles about the practice of robbery and the relationship between the legal robbery of the bourgeoisie and the illegal: "Capitalists and thieves," in *Les Temps Nouveaux* of Paris.⁶

When in 1911 the Italian government, with Giolitti at its head, brought the country to conquer Tripolitania and Cinerica, with the clear goal of shifting popular attention from internal questions and to alleviate the more and more urgent pressure of the working masses, it seemed to Malatesta that the conditions lacking in 1907 would be realized in Italy (although outside the anarchist party). He wasn't mistaken: the African war revitalized revolutionary spirit in the proletarian opposition, which before had appeared sunken in the dead valleys of predominant reform. He wrote to several of us about his intention to return to Italy.

⁶ In Italian in *Il Pensiero* of Rome, no. 6, March 16, 1911. A characteristic detail: the socialist Benito Mussolini made an enthusiastic apologia of the tragically deceased protagonists of Sidney Street in a completely opposite feeling from Malatesta's, in the magazine *Pagine Libere* of Lugano (no. 1 of Jan 1, 1911).

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