

Against Militarism

Errico Malatesta

1902

La Voix du Peuple (“The Voice of the People”), organ of the “General Confederation of Labor” of France has published, when the conscripts were being called up, a very successful special issue. It is adorned with beautiful evocative drawings, capable of showing, even to less developed intellects, what the eminently anti-worker role of the army is, and how the barracks are a school of degradation. And it contains excellent articles aimed at young soldiers, which explain to them the purpose for which the government arms them, and what they must do to not become the butchers of their brothers.

This is good and healthy propaganda to which all anarchists, all socialists, all friends of freedom and progress should dedicate their efforts; quite unlike the propaganda of the “democrats,” who ask for decreased military expenses while professing love and respect for the national army and arguing that they want a reduction in the number of corps, because that way the army would gain in force and cohesion, while less would be spent. And quite unlike the propaganda of certain socialists (Enrico Ferri for example) who declare that militarism is the degeneration of the army.

For us, it is truly the very existence of the army that we want to destroy, however it is organized. It is loathing for the role of soldier—the role of slave and cop combined—that we must inspire in the spirit of the people and especially of the youth.

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