

Let Us Be Of Good Cheer!

Errico Malatesta

1 May 1897

Using as its pretext an outrage that we certainly could not have wanted since, as was foreseeable, we are the only ones to suffer any serious damage from it, further persecution is in the coming.¹

Of the outrage itself we shall say nothing. We seek peace and love between men and because we genuinely crave peace and love, we strive, at constant cost to ourselves, to bring about a society where there will be no more grounds for hatred and every man will see every other as his brother.

At the feet of the champions of the most outrageous privileges, planters of the seeds of hate; those who expose the workers to the horrific temptations of hunger; those who plant disconsolation and despair in the hearts of the wretched; those who reply to any remonstrance, any civilized form of struggle for emancipation of the oppressed classes, with police thuggery, imprisonment, *domicilio coatto*, or jesuitical maneuvers that deny work and bread to the family of the man who has the misfortune to be in bad odor with the police, if not with shootings, the gallows and torture—on them we place the entire responsibility for the blood-letting that disfigures this supposedly civilized society.

And on we go, committed, come what may, to the striving after good.

We appeal with confidence to all comrades to stand up to the blows from our adversaries and to breathe fresh life into our party with renewed activity, renewed commitment and further sacrifices.

The tactics now foisted upon us by the circumstances are as follows: since we cannot secure a greater margin of freedom right now, let us at least use that which the law does afford us; but let us exploit it to the fullest extent. If, as they too often do, the defenders of the law breach it in our persons and in our acts, we shall cash in on the anti-law propaganda that is spontaneously generated by every act of whimsy on the part of the powers-that-be.

So, they mean to strip us of our right to engage in propaganda? —Let us, always, proudly and openly and relentlessly proclaim our principles. They would haul us in front of the courts? —Let us ensure that the proceedings become an occasion for greater, more sensational propaganda.

¹ On 22 April 1897, the anarchist Pietro Acciarito made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Italian king, Humbert I, in Rome. Many anarchists were arrested, including part of the *Agitazione*'s editorial staff. For this reason the periodical had to be replaced by a one-off publication for a few weeks.

They mean to strip us of our right of association? Treat us as criminal conspirators? Then let us associate even more, publicly and demonstrably; wherever we can, let us convene in public venues; let us publish the programme and the addresses of our groups, circles, and federations in the press. The public will eventually wonder who these strange new *malefactors* are who, rather than lurking in the shadows, insist upon the light of day and who gladly suffer on behalf of an openly avowed cause—and every man with a heart will feel, in his heart of hearts, that he is something of a *malefactor* himself.

They mean to deny us the right to speak in public? Let every one of us capable of saying a few words seize every opportunity to make our voice heard and, where the opportunity does not arise, strive to create one.

They mean to isolate us and deny us every means of prosecuting our activities? Let us live side by side with the toiling masses, let us join their associations, let us share in their struggles and grievances, let us dedicate ourselves wholly to their welfare, always leading the way when it comes to work, danger, and sacrifices.

They mean to dispatch many of us to *domicilio coatto*?² Seize the occasion of so many comrades' being together and in contact with those poor unwitting victims, the ordinary *coatti*, for them to come to some mutual agreement and ready themselves for even more fruitful efforts and, at the same time, spread the good news to those poor wretches who have thus far known nothing of society but its wretchedness and brutishness. Others will be driven out of the country? Wherever they may go, let them set up centers of propaganda and agitation and raise the means to sustain the movement in Italy. Others will be going to prison? Let them go in the knowledge that they have done all their duty, in the certainty that fresh militants will step into their shoes.

There are enough of us so that if everybody does his duty, persecution cannot halt our progress.

No matter how great the reactionary fury of our oppressors, they cannot imprison, deport or drive into exile more than a tiny fraction of us.

It falls to those left behind to convince the government that ideas cannot be refuted nor destroyed through the handiwork of butchers.

Onwards, ever onwards, for the sake of the blessed cause of human redemption!

² "Domicilio coatto" was the legal term for "forced residence" and "coatti" were the victims of this institution, who were usually sent to small islands in the Mediterranean Sea.

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