

John [Johann] Most

Jay Fox

1906

John Most is dead, and with his death the movement has lost a most ardent worker. Most was a born rebel, and early in life harnessed himself to the revolutionary movement. He died in his sixtieth year in Cincinnati while on his way to Chicago to speak at the commune celebration.

Most was one of the great individualities the German revolutionary movement has produced. For forty years, with pen and tongue, he has fought the powers of privilege, and so powerful was the force of his words that, for more than twenty-five years he had the honorable distinction of being the most feared and hated individual in the revolutionary movement. A powerful orator, with strong convictions and an undaunted courage he soon brot down upon his head the wrath of the capitalists and their watchdogs — the governments. Jailed and jailed again in every country he has honored by his presence this mouthpiece of the social revolution could not be subdued. The unconquerable could not be conquered, the untameable could not be tamed. Each term of imprisonment, instead of cowing and subduing him, only added fuel to the fire of his revolutionary genius. the terms of imprisonment were mere recreation for him, wherein he recuperated his forces and stored up fresh supplies of energy to renew his masterly attacks upon the system immediately upon his release.

Most always hewed to the line, attacked the enemies of society openly, and chose his words for their force and directness. Like all men of force and genius, he was no respecter of forms of literary expression and where language did not afford him proper vehicles for the expression of his thots he promptly invented words that suited them. He had no liking for the English language, and, altho more than twenty years in this country, his propaganda was confined to his native tongue. With the exception of his autobiography, and a few pamphlets, Most's literary

work was confined to the publication of his paper *Freiheit*. Like all men of worth he was little understood, even by the wage-slaves, for whose emancipation he was among the foremost champions of the age. It is a sad commentary upon men of genius that to be understood they must be dead a long time.

Comrade Most cared nothing for reputation; he hated it. To him the truth was of more value than all the wealth of popularity and gold the world could heap upon him; and truth in John Most had one of the ablest and most devoted champions ever born of woman.

Truth has always been unpopular. Few there can be, even in this age of advancement, who care to hear it spoken. The great mass of humanity moves carelessly along on the beaten paths of its ancestors, and it looks with suspicion on the man who ventures to suggest the building of a new road. And if he persists it treats him with scorn and derision, if not with the hangman's noose. In spite of the scoffs and sneers of the mob, in spite of the threats of the privileged tyrants, in spite of jails and gallows, men and women are constantly coming to the front with the red flag of truth in their hands and the burning words of liberty on their tongues. It is such men and women that have made the world advance in spite of itself. They prod it in the ribs, and urge it forward, and it hates them for disturbing its sleep. The world has always hated its benefactors. It hated Most; that is his reward. A striking example of the esteem in which he was held by the capitalistic hound-dogs was given by the *New York Times*. That slimy sheet, in an editorial comment upon his death, declared him a mad dog in human form, and rejoiced at his death.

Well may *The Times* rejoice. It knows its enemies well, and the bigger the game the slimier its epithets. No better appreciation of Most and his work could have been written than that vile screed. *The Times* can croak in perfect safety at a dead man. It may be forced to recant sooner than it thinks.

Most has left his mark on the history of his time, and the influences of his work will be felt for ages. He died in the harness. I honor his memory.

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Johann Most died March 17, 1906.

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