

The Utopian Mentality

JOURNEY THROUGH UTOPIA, by Marie Louise Berneri. (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 16s.)*

Herbert Read

It is not necessary, in Freedom, to write a conventional review of this book. But even our readers, once so familiar with the journalism of Marie Louise, may allow themselves to be a little dazzled by the brilliance of this posthumous work—it is so calm and coherent, so well organised and well written, and so disinterestedly readable.

Finance (Ideology and Utopia), and it is a book which can be usefully read in conjunction with Marie Louise's historical survey. Mannheim defined the utopian state of mind as one "that is incongruous with the state of reality in which it occurs", and he pointed out that this state of mind becomes revolutionary and dangerous to the existing order of society as soon as the utopia ceases to be part of the cosmic ideology of a period.

utopias of the nineteenth century, they are nevertheless more foreign to us than those of a more distant past. In spite of the fact that these utopian writers were no doubt inspired by the highest motives, one cannot help feeling bitter about the nineteenth century, like the old man in News from Nowhere, bitter even about the love these utopian writers lavished on humanity, for they seem like so many over-affectionate and over-anxious mothers who would kill their sons with attention and kindness rather than let them enjoy one moment of freedom."



mention in passing, was the theme of The Green Child. This does not mean that the utopian mentality itself is necessarily evil. On the contrary, we must repeat with Anatole France, the Utopia is the principle of all progress.

Society exists to transcend itself, and progressive force of its evolution is poetic imagination that moves with organic principle of all evolution, to possession of new forms of life, new of consciousness.

FRANCISCO FERRER 1859-1909 A PIONEER OF EDUCATION

THE anarchist pioneer of the progressive school was Francisco Ferrer, whose Modern Schools were established at the beginning of the century in Catalonia. At that time they were the most revolutionary schools in existence and to-day they still have much to teach us with regard to both the theory and practice of education.

emphasis, then, was overwhelmingly scientific and of course it was anti-religious. Ferrer was an atheist and his schools were thoroughly rationalistic. They opposed not merely the Roman Catholic Church and all that it stood for but the very idea of religion itself.

Not the Ideal School

Perhaps the chief criticism of Ferrer's teaching is that it was too dogmatic. It has already stated, he explicitly taught that the capitalist system was evil, that political government was the root of all evil and that militarism was a crime against humanity.

FREEDOM BOOKSHOP Recommended Books ... Pamphlets by Kropotkin ... Selected Second-hand Books ... Our Special Bargains ... 27 red lion st. london, W.C.1

Co-education It is worth considering in some detail the actual teaching given by Ferrer and the type of education provided by the Modern Schools. The work began with mixed classes, a policy which was, of course, deliberate. Ferrer believed, however, not only in co-education of the sexes but in co-education of the social classes.

Relevance of Ferrer's Ideas The astonishing fact about Ferrer's educational ideas is that so many of them are still relevant at the present time. The Origin and Ideals of the Modern School, unfortunately his only book, remains an excellent handbook for the contemporary teacher and should be read by all who are interested in the freedom schools.

Scientific Basis The real basis of the teaching was to be scientific and rational. Before opening the school, he had already invited the co-operation of the most distinguished scientists of Spain, and several of them wrote textbooks for him with the result that these schools had a series of scientific textbooks which at the time had no parallel anywhere.

Ferrer's Message This is not the place to tell the story of the persecution which Ferrer had to suffer and of his judicial murder by the reactionary powers. It has been told in reactionary detail, with considerable all its tragic death, by Joseph understanding and sympathy, by Joseph McCabe in The Martyrdom of Ferrer, Trial and Death of Francisco Ferrer.

★The MARIE LOUISE BERNERI MEMORIAL COMMITTEE have arranged with Routledge & Kegan Paul for a special edition of Journey Through Utopia for readers of Freedom and subscribers to the Memorial Committee's funds.

