

Chipping the "Rock of Ages"

IN all political times all countries have their enemies. The recorded instances of world peace are few—almost non-existent. Down from antique ages race hatred has been taught, glorified and perpetuated. Egyptian tomb and pyramid, Babylonian obelisk and temple, Persian Mosque and Grecian column—all testify to race hatred, as clearly as to class struggle.

But while historical struggles are class struggles—records of changing class dynasties—the impulse to race hate appears to be pedigreed, like an Ariosto—or the more useful Jersey. The class struggle is a product of political subjection—the only subjection there is—but the antipathy of tribe to tribe is an historic inheritance from our wild ancestors, developed by them from their ancestral wild. Long before "Carthage delenda" was chanted by the peddlers of Rome, or Spartan Helot coveted Attic wealth; as distant from the old empire of the Pharaohs as this is from us, tribe fought tribe for pasture and water-course; savage quarrelled and slew, for the hunting grounds of the green forest. Self preservation is the basic principle of evolution, even in co-operative society, whether animals or human, and from this has been developed the clear eye, the nimble foot, the alert sense, the keen mind of living forms. From the first has descended selfishness, from the second the potential of race hate, both of which are sharpened and accented to an abnormal degree under the aggressive influence of political society.

In this way the psychology of modern commerce mingles with our heritage of ancient milleniums, and the appeal of capitalist greed chords with the latent instinct of being. In the same way—but in more subtle fashion—at the passionate oratory of the bourgeois patriot, rekindles the consciousness of its dimly remembered reality. It is this subconscious remembrance of Gentile custom and conservatism that impels us away from innovations, from things new and strange. It is this "sleeping" memory of the thousands of years of apparently static savagery that causes us to turn a deaf ear to present reason, and, by apperception holds us, a ransom to the philosophy of the ideal. And it is these very peculiarities, so naturally generated, which militate against our real interest, which correspond with the natural tendency to uniformity and which operate so powerfully—and for a time so harmoniously—with the ambitions of class law and rule.

Nevertheless, present environment is more potent than heritage, and by the same token, logical deduction more influential than apriorism. Change, (although slow) does come, and concept takes on the hue of changing circumstance. The turn of circumstance produces the strangest combinations, and conversely, those combinations induce new and unexpected circumstance. The law of yesterday is at once the parent, and the enemy of the need of today. And mechanically, the need of today will generate the greater impulse and the dynamic antagonism of tomorrow. The ally of the present becomes the foe of the future, the association of interest the most deadly obstacle to continued association. The modern mummeries of ancient custom still hold us in thrall; the siren song of country blends with the old saga of the soil; the appeal of class interest wakens the dormant instinct of a primitive estate; the ethic of "right" calls to the ethic of a lost communism. But the ancient traditions are now overlapped with the petty abstractions of bourgeois shop-keeping; Gentile reverence has become commercial sanctimoniousness; the spirit of kin fraternity appears as the Janus faced standard bearer of individualism; and the hallowed custom of class association—the creation of immemorial time, and mutual

comity—now garbed in Puritan prudery, has become the vulgar providence of an unrestrained accumulation. So countless gradations of passion and emotion; of culture and apathy; of ideal and self, mingle inextricably together in a baffling play of force and influence, without plan or conscious conception, and without intelligent objective of ultimate consummation.

History screens the drama of the past on the moonlit soul of present prejudice. Hence, the past appears with colored edges, chromatic with time—perspective; its unlovely idolatry, its appalling misery and stoical cruelty, unrelated and spectral abstracts. And the juggling mind veils, even from itself, its visionless inability to co-ordinate the theoretic and grasp the essential amidst the myriad manifests of flying change. We have seen race pitted against race; class against class; creed against creed; kingdom against kingdom, with constant repetition without perceiving the identical unity of conflict. We have exchanged one slavery for another; one government or god, or king—all social creations—for new forms and novelties, and have scarcely glimpsed the prime principle in them all. We have cast our image on the crystal vault of heaven, and built shrines to its majesty. We have invested it with a thousand forms, endowed it with the most fantastic attributes, and do not, even yet challenge its identity. We have burned and crucified, tortured and buried alive; sacrificed with numberless devices, and with a ghastly ceremony of fear for the towering shadows of man; man the sport of all ages; the creature of a moment, the slave of his convention; whose life is, to the aeons of univsal life, as a bubble bursting on the river.

So we, in the image of yesterday confront the future, complexing the problems of the present, with concepts of the past, and—characteristically—looking to the "good times" ahead, draped in the habiliments of the storied "what has been." But neither the intelligence of evolved condition, nor the spirit of the new age, nor the necessity of latest change can accept the philosophy of the traditional. Today is the day of science; of empirical test and demonstration, and surely if slowly is the new concept of life and being, weft and woven on the throbbing loom of experience into the web of daily existence. We may not see it; we may not want it. That is quite immaterial. The laws and forces of causation, underlying the current and phenomena of matter in motion, urge and impel, out of their inexhaustible fountain of objective reality, the progress of wider change, and further climax. It is not philosophy that plans progress, nor wisdom, nor wisdom that gives it effect. It is the substantial of change that originates and motives the entire process, and out of the stormy experience of the ever varying phenomena of the new, is wisdom thrust upon us, and out of which may haply come the long dreamt of sovereignty of the intellectual.

It is the concept of progress that conditions the strength and virility of philosophy. For to be wisdom, thought and reality must coincide. If they do not, it means—the world we have. Philosophy must influence—in some degree—life and its conduct, but it can only add lustre to that life, and beauty to that conduct, when it is based on material fact and relation, not on the gossamer web of idealism. It is this union of natural fact and its cultural experience, which can alone redden the white blood of apathy; rouse the time-slave from the dormancy of doubt, to the robust enthusiasm of perception, and in understanding, take and control his own destiny, to crown the ages with the greater man. R.

THE BERLIN CONFERENCE.

AFTER three years of war among the socialists—war to the point of slaughtering each other with light field artillery—the cry has gone up among masses of workers in Europe for a "united front." In obedience to it there met on April 2 in the Reichstag building in Berlin executives of the three existent socialist internationales, the right-wing Second, the centrist "Two-and-a-half" or International Working Union of Socialist Parties, and the left-wing Third Internationale. There was also present Serrati, leader of the powerful Socialist Party of Italy, to speak for the socialist parties of Italy, the United States, Argentina, and other groups which are not affiliated with any of the three internationales.

After two days of stormy meeting accord was reached on seven points. The most important of these is the appointment of a committee of nine, three from each internationale, to call a world congress of socialist and labor parties. These points provide, among other things, for a rapprochement between the Amsterdam International Federation of Trade Unions and the rival one organized by Moscow; for public trials of the Socialist Revolutionists prosecuted in Russia, no death penalty to be imposed on them; for international demonstrations to be held against unemployment; for the eight-hour day, and for aid to Soviet Russia.

The present movement for a united front is largely the reaction of workers to a major drive against them by their common enemy, . . . the employing class. Wage cuts, assaults on labor organizations, lockouts, unemployment, and all that goes with the after-the-war economic slump are now more living realities to the workers than questions of revolution versus evolution, dictatorship of the proletariat, and the other issues that have split their ranks in the last three years. What, therefore, the workers do in the way of staying united will depend largely on what the bosses do. The stronger the attack on them, it would seem, the more they will feel the need of unity for defense.

One of the first casualties of the war was the socialist Internationale, smashed not by direct capitalist fire but carried along in the temporary collapse of international capitalism. Most of the socialists ceased attacking their governments and shouldered arms. A considerable number remained loyal to their international principles, and despite official prohibition representatives of these minorities met during the war in Switzerland. Most of these internationalists formed the germ of what later, after the Russian Revolution, became the Third Internationale. But among those who at first supported the war internationalism also reasserted itself, and opposition to the rather docile collaboration with capitalists which was part of the war psychology. The anti-collaborationist parties withdrew from the old Second Internationale soon after the Great War officially ended and the war among socialists only grew sharper. In Russia Bolshevik fought Menshevik, in Germany Majority Socialist fought Communist, and in Czecho-Slovakia the right wing fought the left wing with every weapon from revolvers to light field guns, from hand grenades to poison gas; and this at a time when their common enemy was most disorganized. In almost every country where there were socialist parties splits took place.

In the United States a growing party of over 100,000 members polling a vote ten times that number broke into something like fourteen fragments, of which the largest counts barely 20,000. Soon to complete the picture of disorganization came a third international grouping, the "centrists," most of whom had been among the radicals during the war but who were opposed to the dictatorial dogmatism of the Russian leaders of the Third Internationale. This group gradually became a sort of bridge toward unity of all the socialist forces. In time a sharp shift in Moscow policy came to its aid. The Third Internationalists, once preachers of "purity of doctrine," maneuverers of splits, began preaching the "united working-class front."

Those who see direct cause and effect between the needs of Soviet Russia and the deeds of the Third Internationale can make out a strong case. They point out that when Soviet Russia was being attacked by an international ring of capitalist troops and diversion in the rear of those armies was needed, the Third Internationale called for revolution everywhere. To achieve the decisive morale for such a desperate step socialist parties had to be divested of all hesitant right-wing and centrist elements; hence a program of splitting was ordered and effected.

Later Soviet Russia came to need alliances with capitalist governments and found the Third Internationale a source of embarrassment, as illustrated in the case of Turkey. Soviet Russia wanted an immediate alliance with Turkey. The Third Internationale, on the other hand, was committed to a

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