

Economic and Menshevik Determinism

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(Continued from Last Issue)

ECONOMIC DETERMINISM

All that has been stated under the heading of historic inevitability is just as true of economic determinism, but with this addition: the latter not only accepts and regards the mental development and understanding as an essential cause contributing to social results and conditions but goes still further by explaining that the mental stage is itself the result of previous material conditions of which it was the outgrowth. Thus we conceive of each mental stage not only as the cause of what follows, but as the result of what preceded. For each one is born in an environment, not of his own choosing, to which he must react and in which he must reach a certain maturity: he may then as the product of one environment, influence another. In short, economic determinism treats not alone of causes, but of the causes for causes in a continuous chain, which then constitutes a connected interpretation covering the entire sphere of history.

In this sense, therefore, the class struggle is a necessary result and a necessary cause; not as an eternal condition, however, but **only so long as society saw no other path of progress than by class struggles**, in other words, only just so long as our mental development did not enable us to diagnose the presence and nature of classes and class-antagonisms, and by finding their causes, remove them.

This diagnosis was made possible not alone by the material of history, but also by the discovery of mental methods and processes in the field of philosophy and science. Class struggles have made up the entire period of known history, yet it was only in the nineteenth century that the class diagnosis was made. History presented the symptoms and indications, and continued to do so with ever greater emphasis and incisiveness, until the "pressure and more pressure penetrated to the consciousness" just as the continued presence and recurrence of disease in the human body led to medical science and its cures.

This development of the human understanding to the point where it could grasp the nature of social factors and entities, so as to be able ultimately to control them, is the accumulated result

of many centuries and many minds. First it was necessary to make human reason a perfect instrument of observation; this made possible the accumulation of natural and historical material of perfect accuracy and universal reliability, i.e., scientific material. This took up to the time of the French Revolution and reached a practical result in the exact and natural sciences.

"But this method has left us as a legacy the habit of observing objects and processes . . . in repose not in motion, as constants not as essentially variables, in their death not in their life." The addition of the dialectic method of reasoning discovered by Hegel, and perfected and applied by Marx made possible not only the perfect observation of things in repose, but of things in motion, of forces and their underlying principles, and consequently of social evolution. This mental development was accomplished simultaneously with the rise in human society of a permanent industrial proletariat, and resulted in a diagnosis of permanent causes and permanent remedies of social and class struggles.

Ever since the time of the Communist Manifesto the mental impediments to the abolition of the class system has tended to disappear, in proportion as the working mass learnt the message of final social liberation. When to the power of the worker is added the knowledge or consciousness of his class relation, this combination of knowledge and power in the hands of the mass means the vanishing point of progress by class control and class interests.

Had this knowledge been possible a thousand years ago there is no reason why the class system could not have been permanently dispensed with at the time of such realization. In other words whenever the producing class is able to analyze its class condition and social evolution, when society can thereby really master the forces of production so as to fully control them and no longer to be driven by them, it means that pro-

duction will be operated and society's affairs conducted by one class, i.e., there will be no classes. This realization might have been possible (so far as the objective factors are concerned) at any period of history from the time of the first class system.

However, the abolition of classes is not absolutely necessary at any and all stages of the class system. Under ancient slavery, under feudalism, and under early bourgeois capitalism, there were periods of general well-being, and not until each stage led to a condition of oppression did the material conditions indicate the inevitable necessity of a change. The producing mass then rebels against the conditions of ownership as it sees them, and the new system then corresponds to this understanding of cause and remedy. But each time such a change is made, it is accomplished under the impression that the oppression of ownership has been disposed of, not in favor of a new oppression, but permanently. In other words, the world has all along been seeking the freedom of a one-class society, only to find that it is deceiving itself each time that it thinks that it has found it. The aspiration has remained unfulfilled because the mentally indispensable factors were not yet present.

The final acute indication of the need of removing class production is the presence of a permanent proletariat. Just as fever in the human body means that there is something radically wrong, so the existence of a proletariat is a specific indication that there is a dangerously unhealthy condition of society which cannot last. Where the proletariat is transient, that is to say, where it disappears by a change of class relations, the class system is again made tolerable for a time instead of being abolished. The first two proletarian situations, that of the Roman proletariat and the agricultural proletariat, were solved in this manner. But no class system can be made healthy by merely trying to maintain and perpetuate proletarian conditions. It is doomed the moment that the necessary mental equipment is placed in the hands of society.

Next Issue: The Social Revolution

Motion Picture Play Exposed

In last week's issue of the Red Flag we published an advertisement to motion picture theatre managers and advertising agents, under the caption, "Anti-Bolshevik Propaganda on the Cinema, a Peep Behind the Scenes." This was taken from the Moving Picture World, of April 19, a trade journal, and the title of the play in question was "Bolshevism on Trial." We had no wish to advertise either the journal or the play and so withheld both their names. However, we have learned since that the inflammatory advertisement has also been exposed by the New York Call, and so there is no necessity to withhold the names any longer, more especially as the U. S. government is expected to take action against the Chalmers Publishing Company, 56 Fifth Avenue, New York City, and against the Mayflower Photoplay corporation, Isaac Volper, president, which is producing the play.

We quote from a press despatch in the Butte Daily Bulletin:

"WASHINGTON, April 26.—Denial of the mails and federal prosecution for inciting to riot probably will be meted out to the editors of the Moving Picture World, a New York magazine, for editorial recommendations in its current issue on the production of a coming photoplay entitled "Bolshevism on Trial."

"Secretary of Labor Wilson today wrote to Postmaster General Burleson and Attorney-general

Palmer, requesting that immediate action be taken against the Moving Picture World and against the producers of the play, as a prize commercial venture. In his letter to Mr. Burleson, the Secretary of Labor said that "never in all my life have I seen more dangerous editorial advice. It is calculated," he says, "to produce violent disorder wherever the play may be advertised in the manner proposed."

In addition to the editorial advice the magazine had four pages of cartoons in flaming colors picturing what was supposed to be Bolsheviks running around with torches, burning factories, ravishing women and all the other atrocities that the fertile imaginations of the bourgeois press agents are capable of. It will be remembered that this story of "Bolshevism on Trial," was taken from a book by a reverend apostle of the Prince of peace, namely Thomas Dixon, author of another book from which "The Birth of a Nation" was filmed, another play which has served the purpose of stirring up racial hatreds and misunderstanding in a world already so torn asunder by such means as to endanger civilization itself.

It would be an invidious distinction, however, to single out the Reverend Mr. Dixon as though he was a solitary offender in this respect. The whole organized weight of the bourgeois press in all countries is also thrown into the struggle to keep the working class divided so that their ruling classes may continue to rule and rob.

THE NEMESIS OF THE "KEPT PRESS"

John Galsworthy, the well-known English writer, in an interview, was asked what he thought about a remark of Lord Haldane's quoted in the London "Times," which was to the effect "that the worst features of the present is that the working classes refused to believe anything we tell them."

"I should say that is probably true," replied Galsworthy. "It may not apply to the trades union leaders, but the rank and file—yes. It is a curious Nemesis that a press which has led the people for centuries or at least decades should come to this."

That's so; you can't fool all the people all the time. There comes a time when the institutions become so rotten that the lies of the propagandists who are bolstering it up become too obvious for even the most credulous.

JAPANESE METHODS OF "PENETRATION" IN SIBERIA

Following in the wake of the armed forces were swarms of Japanese land buyers, concessionaires and surveyors. The natives were induced to part with their land and other rights for a song. They feared that they would lose the land anyway, so soon as Japanese rule was established, and if the Bolsheviks gained power again they expected to get it back. The capital invested by these speculative buyers of land and concessionaires will now furnish Japan's excuse for staying in the country.