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PART II.

WHERE then, is the compromise of world capital? What is meant by world capital? The association of several Imperialist groups for world supremacy? British Imperialism v. American Imperialism v. Japanese Imperialism? Together with various subsidiaries and dependents scattered throughout the world? And Soviet Russia battling for the Soviet revolution, scoring advantages from intimate capitalist necessities as opportunity offers. Politically playing one off against the other as occasion serves? Is that it? So that Britain, in alliance with Turkey, may preserve her Empire in the East; in trade with Russia challenge American commercialism; in the revival of Germany, strengthen her dominions in Europe; modify French Imperialism in the West, by French cupidity, and fear of the East; enable Anglo-Persian to smite the Western Eagle; and the armament ring to grow portly on its last crusade? While the American Textile Trust forces the doors of the Orient; the rivalries of corn and cattle and shipping grow keener; steel spreads its tentacles over wider resources; and oil more insistently pursues the power of corporate industry.

Everywhere there is the fusion of monopoly into greater monopoly; the increasing application of science to technical perfection; the elimination of waste movement; the general consortium of rising efficiency. Therefore shall production wait on the effective market; unemployment necessarily reach greater magnitude; social misery sink to deeper degradation and humanity plumb new depths of exhaustion. It is said that society can endure no lower levels of destitution. But the answer to that is that society can—and must—endure the piled up affronts of exploitation—if it does not know the cause of its misery. For without knowing the cause how can it move to its rectification? Without conscious perception of its slavery, how may it achieve freedom? If the suffering proletariat does not understand social relation and class status and if the social revolution must be the work of the proletariat, then it would seem that that revolution cannot be regarded as just at hand. Moreover, social understanding is primarily the fruit of social development, i.e., the development of technique, and the inevitable reorganisation of social relation and ethic. If, therefore, Capitalist development has not fructified social perception; social confusion and labor disunity need occasion no surprise. And party enthusiasm and impatience must abide the hour of its awakening—and use the present to cushion the shock of discovery, if it be a shock.

On the other hand, the impetus to further capitalist development cannot be long deferred. Not alone for reasons of social disturbance, but chiefly for reasons of competitive necessity. For just as it is the necessity of the proletariat to achieve its own freedom, it is also the necessity of Imperialism to substantiate its privilege. The particular route of this expansion is important only to competing capitals. To them it is economic life or death. But to society it makes no difference whether expansion is by way of Imperialistic rivalry or Imperialist monopoly. The result is the same—the reduction of its living standards. It would appear in the nature of things that this expansion would be rapid. If so, the awakening of social understanding would be proportionately quickened. This, then, implies social revolution at no distant date. But it also implies our initial contradiction. For, if, taking social misunderstanding as a basis, the revolution recedes into futurity; precisely the same basis, by allowing Imperialist ambitions to propagate, hastens it on. Where is the joint in the armor?

Clearly it lies in measuring society by the rule of the individual. But society is not a collection of individuals merely; but a combination of heterogeneous forces, temporarily in association. The sum

total of social psychology is not, therefore, a simple addition of all its component psychologies. It is on the contrary, the combination of associated forces, constantly differing in purpose, under the impulse and interactions of necessary development. And the outcome of that development is not the direct magnitude of common intent, but an unknown symbol of contingently modified relation and accelerated concept.

Thus social concepts follow social growth, accelerating motive and purpose in mutual modification of origin and experience. The misconceptions of society and the greed of its rulers seem to indicate social collapse. But societies do not collapse like a building, nor despair like individuals. They may languish in class struggle, but the processes of life are not negated. Nor are their accomplishments wholly lost or forgotten. Rome was finally overwhelmed in a recrudescence of barbarism, but the institutions of Rome are interwoven in the life of modern society. So with capital. Its achievements, world-wide and interconnected, may languish in the restrictions of class need, but the full power of their efficient functioning awaits but the conscious guidance of the new social artificer. If capitalist greed compromises with capitalist privilege, it will do so only in furtherance of a greater greed. In the working out of that compromise, through the merciless rivalry of competition, capital will fetter society beyond the limits of social existence, and in the abyss of that delimitation society will react to the new acceptances of fact and go on deliberately to the qualification of other social quantities.

In the actual state of world affairs, if the social revolution is delayed, society will be faced with sterner want and more drastic discipline. If it is delayed through Capitalist compromise, this will not save society from further sacrifice. Capitalist society will continue to sink into dissolution, in either case. It is this fear of delay, and the visible tightening of the Capitalist toils, which inspire much of the interest in Soviet Russia. Aside from impatient enthusiasts, apparently ready for anything, desperate or feasible, there is a section watching Russia with wistful eye, hopeful that Soviet example may fire the world's workers—less fortunately circumstanced—to bring on the revolution; while still others, knowing the vanity of such hopes, see in Russia merely a possible city of refuge from the gathering cares of proletarian existence. But natural as such ideas may be, they are not the concepts of revolution; nor are such hopes the means of its harvesting. They but prove that only in the grip of the rending antagonisms of Capital can society find its single interest of purpose, from its single identity of need. Society must be driven far beyond the stage of watchful waiting before a social change is imminent. Nothing will ever turn up; wishes will not materialize; revolution will never be real until society, as a whole, feels, knows, realises, singleheartedly and with the affinity of instinct, that there is no other way to freedom; and is ready, unflinchingly, to face the solemn and stubborn necessity, be the cost as it may.

However, backward and reactionary as the wide world appears to be, there is yet hope of the revolution at hand; and blindly though the workers may sway with the tumults of the hour, tomorrow they may march to the drum beats of reality. For in the savage struggle of bloated monopolies, or Imperialist improvisations, the world market is, ultimately, a visionary thing. In the freedom of the one, it cannot suffice; in the entanglements of the other, it cannot thrive. And thriving or not, and regulated or not, in its wake, continually more menacing, continually more irresistible, is the deepening need of society and the awakening wisdom of perception.

On its human side, the reactions of society are

not only to be computed in the negative equations of class obsessions. They may be confused, but not thoughtless; misguided, but not inept. They may be hampered by the sordidness of poverty, and foiled by the cunning of power. But at the spreaded table of daily experience, in the conquering of stubborn difficulties, and in the triumph of indomitable resource they are acquiring a weight, an influence, a power, which shall be invincible, touched by the morning fires of facts. The mechanical processes of development may be measurable by the engineering standards of profit, but the differential of ideation is quite unknown. Undoubtedly the machine age has quickened thought; probably the fettering of human necessity may quicken it still more. And as the insensate speed of profit production has made the mind plastic to its laws and technique, so the enhanced versatility of percept will as readily render it as sensitive and apperceptive to the greater psychology of creative need.

Hence, although social knowledge is the vanguard of social movement; the aptitude of percept is a determinant of time condition. Time-condition is a constantly increasing magnitude. That is why history never repeats itself—or as Marx has it “repeats itself only as a farce.” Because this time condition, this glowing stream of accumulating experience, is a constantly augmenting differential. But the definite force of conditioned knowledge is not to be confused with the varying quantity of time-differential. They are not equivalents, but complements; they are not interchangeable, but interacting; therefore, no substitute can symbolise their activity. No idea can independently dominate the mass; nor can the mass exclude the idea. Man and environment is the totality of time; their actions, reactions and interactions the summary of progress. Consequently in the coming of the social revolution, class consciousness of social status and relationship is fundamental. It is the necessity of movement; the re-agent of necessary progress. And be its acquirement as it may, swift or slow, active or passive, it is the essential requirement of the social “will of power” and freedom. Thus the “which” of speculation resolves itself into the fact of understanding; and the eventuation into the conditional opportunity of time development. R

Why was it that in Russia the civil war did not begin to rage with all its intensity until after November 7th, so that subsequently in the north, the south, the east, the west, we had to wage civil war for nearly five years without intermission? The reason was that we had conquered power so easily. It has often been said that we have overcome our possessing classes. Politically speaking, Russia had but just emerged from Tsarist barbarism. The peasantry had no political experience; the petty bourgeoisie had very little; thanks to the Dumas, the middle bourgeoisie was somewhat better instructed in political matters; the nobility had organized its forces to some extent in the zemstvos. Thus the great reserves of the counter-revolution—the rich peasants; for certain groups, the middle peasants as well; the middle bourgeoisie; the intellectuals; and the petty bourgeoisie as a whole—the reserves were practically intact. As soon as the bourgeoisie began to understand what it had lost through the loss of political power, it endeavoured to mobilize the potential reserves of the counter-revolution, and naturally turned in the first instance to the nobility, to the army officers of noble birth, etc. . . . Thus it came to pass that the long-drawn-out civil war was the historical penalty for the ease with which we had conquered power. L. TROTZKY

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