

# Economic and Menshevik Determinism

By MAURICE BLUMLEIN

(Continued from Last Issue)

This same new application of an old principle is equally true for all backward nations and colonies. They must abolish class rule as a means of installing big-scale production and distribution, and not attempt to wait for the introduction of big-scale industry as a means of abolishing class rule. Even Lenin goes too far when he says that a revolutionary government can support national movements in backward countries, and in colonies against the mother country. If these movements are in favor of bourgeois supremacy they ought not to be supported by the Social Revolution because it would be strengthening the forces and institutions in those same spheres, that will then fight the Revolution itself. The backward countries and the colonies need the most improved form of exploitation for that purpose. Marx, in 1852, writing about the Revolution of 1848, urged the proletariat to support the bourgeoisie as a means of overthrowing the feudal government of Germany. But with the uncanny keenness that he possessed to such a rare degree, he adds, "the preparation of such a movement otherwise than by spreading of Communist opinions by the masses, could not be the object, etc."

Incidentally the most extreme Menshevik must admit that should the Social Revolution come in the way that he himself claims to be indispensable,

production will not cease to improve from that point on, but an ever growing productivity will be the basis of social progress the same as before. And unless this be denied, it amounts to a concession that progress by a one-class system ought to be just as feasible as under class rule. Russia, of course, must develop fully the stage of industrial production as it represents a superior development, but it is a "consummation devoutly to be wished" that this will be accomplished not through a bourgeois nightmare but by the one-class state.

Finally there is also an international objection to the wisdom of a social revolution in Russia at this time, and again based on the economic factor. It is feared that Russia with her inferior productive capacity, at least at the beginning of the Revolution if not later, must easily succumb to the counter-revolutionary power of the international bourgeoisie. It is perfectly true that a united bourgeoisie can crush the Russian Revolution, not because of its inferior productive capacity, but entirely irrespective of it.

It is not a question of insufficient productivity and productive capacity, for that does not decrease through Revolution, but is plainly the con-

sequence of former conditions of reaction. Therefore, if we are not to deceive ourselves by sophisticated economics we must realize that an isolated proletariat cannot withstand the counter-revolution indefinitely; the isolation must be broken or the Revolution will break down. The Revolution isn't asking the outside world to perform its production, it only wants a chance to do its own producing in its own way without interference, not to mention, the most venomous sort of interference at that.

Thus we must find that the Menshevik diagnosis, in spite of the profound scientific standard that it claims sins

(1) in transferring historie inevitability intact from one place to another,

(2) and thereby incorporating in economic determinism not only the stage of production, but also the human agency, the bourgeoisie. It thus also makes of history and historical necessity, a duplication instead of an evolution. That Russia must undergo the same progress in production as the bourgeoisie has accomplished in the economically advanced nations is perfectly true, but that this must be done by duplication so far as the agency is concerned, is not true. For this does not come under the economic determinism but is merely the subjective determination of the individual Menshevik.

## FOREIGN OFFICE REPORTS ON BOLSHEVISM IN RUSSIA—A SCATHING ANALYSIS

[From "Common Sense," London, Eng.]

THE Foreign Office has just issued a "collection," or rather a "selection" of Reports on Bolshevism in Russia. It consists of 88 pages, and has been swallowed with avidity by an innocent Press. The character of our Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service is known to those who have read the Report and Evidence of a Royal Commission, which reported shortly after the war began in favor of reforming it, so that persons of liberal views of humble origin might be allowed to enter the service. This selection of Reports is obviously intended for the sole purpose of bolstering up the official policy of continuing the war with Russia. It is just the kind of Report which Pitt would have issued to justify his war, against the French Revolution for the re-establishment of monarchy in France. Many diplomats and officials are pressed into the service. But there is no report from Mr. Douglas Young, our late Consul at Archangel, and nothing from the Quakers who have been doing Red Cross work in different parts of Russia.

By way of testing real value of this piece of propaganda, we may take No. 58, entitled "The Progress of Bolshevism in Russia: Memorandum by Mr. B—." This document is one of the latest, and is dated January, March, 1919. It makes a great show of accuracy and of intimately correct information. It starts (page 64) with a statement that Russia has been divided (by the Bolshevik Government) into four Federal Republics. There is no truth whatever, we are informed in this statement. It is true there was once a Commune of the North; but this has ceased, and there is now in Petrograd only a Soviet, as in other towns. On the next page (65) Mr. B— says: "The Central Committee is composed as follows." Then follow eleven names. But there are about 200 persons in the Central Committee! Mr. B— has probably mixed it up with the Council of Peoples' Commissaries. Even so, his list is hopelessly wrong. He does not mention the Ministers of Trade, Agriculture or Health. He gives Podrovski as Minister of the Interior, and describes him as an ex-professor of History at Moscow. As a matter of fact, the name of the Minister of Interior is Petrovski. The name of the ex-professor of History is Podrovski, who is assistant Minister of Education and Keeper of the Archives.

He is quite a famous historian. Next, Mr. B— declares that Lenin's wife, Oulianova, is Social assistant to the "Central Committee." But Madame Lenin has for a long time been ill and lives in the country. The name of the woman Commissary is, we are informed, Kollontaia. Then Mr. B— states that Stoutschka is Minister of Justice. As a matter of fact, the Minister's name is Kursky. Mr. Stoutschka is President of the Lett Republic. On the next page (66), we are told of a certain Boris Asvinkof who is working against the Bolsheviks. The person referred to no doubt is the well-known Social Revolutionary, Boris Savinkof. If our information on these points is correct, what credit is to be attached to Mr. B—'s statements, and what is to be thought about a Foreign Office, supported, regardless of expense, out of the taxes which after five years of war and secret service does not possess any competent editor or editors with a knowledge of Russia or of Russian sufficient to enable it to issue a carefully coloured White Book for a critical occasion like the present?

One little bit of unconscious humor may be quoted from page 69. It appears that Mr. B— is a Norwegian or a resident in Norway. He tells us: "A man named J—, who has arrived in Norway from Russia," states that Bolshevik propaganda pamphlets have been printed in Sanskrit! Sanskrit is a dead language. They might have been as well printed in Etruscan, Assyrian, or Ancient Gothic! We wonder how many people besides Mr. J— have been pulling the legs of Mr. B— and the Foreign Office.

## THE TROUBLE IN EGYPT

### Treatment of the Fellahin

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian:

Sir,—May I, after over three years in Egypt, confirm the main statements in Captain Guest's account of conditions there? As he points out, the causes of the present unrest must be sought for in something deeper than the grievances of the Nationalist party. The fellahin have become embittered, for the first time in the history of our occupation, and there is no doubt that the military authorities of the E. E. F. are mainly to blame for this. Recruiting for the Egyptian Labor Corps and similar bodies was at first popular, for the pay is good. But before long the supply of volunteers ran low, and then the military authorities gradually adopted a system of compulsion.

The governor (mudir) of each province was required to supply so many men; he assigned the various districts to his subordinates, and they informed the head man (omdeh) of each village how many fellahin he must provide. The system was absolutely secret, and the districts that suffered most were the country ones, where public opinion could least express itself. It was extended to the towns as the needs of the army grew, until at last only Cairo and Alexandria were exempt. No doubt it would have reached them but for our victories in Palestine—victories to which, according to all accounts, the work of our Egyptian auxiliaries substantially contributed.

With regard to the treatment of these "volunteers" while they were in health opinions vary, but several British soldiers have informed me, unasked, that it was brutal. With regard to their treatment in sickness there is only one opinion. It was disgraceful. Insufficient in number, ill-equipped unsupervised, the hospitals promoted rather than checked the typhus epidemics that were raging. The official view, apparently, was that Egyptians were never ill, but if ill are certain to die, and treatment seems scarcely to have existed. In a case for the facts of which I can vouch, a native was sent into one of these hospitals with some slight ailment and at once caught a fever which almost carried him off. He had to bribe the orderly for everything, including a bed, and around him men were dying unattended. Small wonder that the hospitals were regarded by our own troops as centres of infection, and that they dreaded being camped in their vicinity.

We can never replace the fellahin whom we have so needlessly destroyed, but we can perhaps enter into the feelings of the survivors and realise why the present disturbances have occurred quite as much in the country as in the town. When I arrived in Egypt the people were invariably friendly, but in 1918 there was a marked change—silence from the adults, and from the children an occasional hooting which, trivial in itself, showed how the wind was blowing. And just at the time of our victories a plaintive little popular song was born and sung to a minor tune about the streets:

"My native town, oh my native town!  
The military authorities have taken my boy."

E. M. FORSTER.

Harnham, Monument Green, Weybridge, March