

The "Making of Revolution"

By F. CUSACK.

A recent issue of the Clarion contained two articles of a somewhat historical nature.

Those articles, written respectively by Radek of the Communist Party of Russia, and Mr. Taylor of the British Labor Party, may be taken as representative of the general philosophy of their parties on the subject of revolution.

These two political parties, the Russian and British, are popularly considered as representing the two extremes of the labor and socialist movements—both in theory and practice.

Considering the views set forth by Mr. Taylor in "The Importance of History" and comparing them with the general gist of Mr. Radek's brochures, written during the past few years, we find that "extremes do meet" on the facts or fancies of revolution. From Mr. Taylor's point of view, Revolution—as he understands the phenomena conveyed by that term—is an historical fact worthy of condemnation by all right-thinking men and women.

If my understanding of Mr. Taylor's historical outlook is not at fault then those social upheavals which he terms revolution are the results of the well laid schemes of plutocrats or the wild deeds of senseless violence committed by "excitable children."

From this standpoint history is unintelligible—to the Marxian. Revolution, from the Labor point of view, does not arise through developing economic contradictions and social antagonisms; on the contrary it is "made," designed and premeditated—with malice aforethought—consciously and in advance of the "event."

That is the neo-Marxian "synthesis"; a voluntaristic, idealistic and vitalistic concept of history. Paraphrasing Marx, it may be summed thus by: "Man makes his own history—OUT OF the whole cloth." This concept of history has made a considerable number of converts in working-class circles, consequent to the Great War and the Russian Revolution. We find its philosophical expression in the "creative revolutionists" (à la Bergson) the "ergatocracy" and the dictatorship of the proletariat, the wide-spread belief that socialism may be imposed by "will" on backward countries "where the material conditions necessary for its existence" have not been evolved in the "suppressed society."

Now, as I understand the position of the S. P. of C., the Party is not an advocate of "bloody revolution." Neither does it hold the view that such an event is inevitable or the *sine qua non* featuring the defeat of capitalist political power by the working masses; further, that revolution is not a moral question but an historical fact—a subject of explanation, not an article of faith.

On the other hand, the Communists agree with the Labor viewpoint that revolution is "willed"; "made." This is a cardinal article of faith in all well-regulated Communist Parties, which parties, theoretically at least, are supposed to be on a war footing, prepared for armed insurrection. History is distorted to bolster the idea that revolutions are prepared by vigorous, aggressive leaders, who place themselves at the head of unconscious masses and direct them towards the New Jerusalem. As an instance: in the organ of the Canadian Communist Party, there recently appeared an article on the Paris Commune which contained the astounding information "that the Parisian National Guard was organized by Blanqui" previous to the establishment of the Commune. The "idea" which this distortion of fact was intended to "put over" was that the National Guard was organized immediately preceding the 18th of March, for the purpose of "seizing power." The Parisian National Guard was a long established organization—a militia. It was composed of petit bourgeois small shopkeepers and

artizans. On Sept. 4, 1870 the Guard made an armed protest demonstration against the shameful surrender of the French armies and the Emperor. Anyone familiar with the history of the Commune cannot be "taken in" with the Fordian brand of history—Bunk.

There is this distinction, however, between the philosophies of Radek and Taylor: The former (and the Party he represents) considers violent revolution a social "good," while the Britisher looks on such revolutions as a social "bad." Thus it enters the realms of morality and an historical fact is no longer a natural phenomenon. Mr. Taylor wields a wicked pen. Here is a shaft directed at the "real" Marxists: "There are weird mental freaks who have gathered messages of hope from the present (or would it be better to say late!) revolutionary regime in Russia." If the Communists were not involved in the tactical operation of "uniting" they might retort in like measure regarding the present regime in Britain. And the millennial expectations rampant among some "weird mental freaks"—of a different ilk who see in the Labor Party a lot more than a mere message of hope. "I see in the Labor Party," said Bernard Shaw, "the most extraordinary heterogeneous mass of people, full of opinions of different kinds. I see there are Methodists and atheists; jingoes and conscientious objectors; there are Protectionists and Free Traders. I see the most amazing mass of people of all sorts and kinds immensely equipped for any kind of discussion, for the most violent electioneering, and for no action whatever."

Among this "most amazing mass of people" it is evident that historic materialism is not a popular philosophy, neither would its open profession entail any profits. As Franz Mehring puts it, "It must be admitted that nowadays it requires a good deal of ethical idealism to have the courage of professing historic materialism, for it invariably carries with poverty, persecution and slander, while the profession of historic idealism is the business of every heel, for it offers the best prospects to all earthly goods, to fat sinecures, orders, titles and dignities."

What is the main gist of the plot of history? "It is," answers Mr. Taylor, "the story of how a great and well organized gang of rulers robbed the people of their rights for century after century."

Therefore, if "real reason" and "justice" had reigned in the world the "people" might have got their rights" five hundred or one thousand years ago and saved mankind untold suffering. "If the machines could run without slaves," quoth Aristotle, "there would be no necessity for slavery!"

The Marxian doctrine of historical development through class struggles offers little attraction for a ruling class, neither is it respectable. And the B. L. P. is nothing if not respectable. "The British people," said Frank Hodges, Labor Leader, at the Portland Convention of the A. F. of L., "will not tolerate any government that is not respectable." So we have the spectacle of Lacashire legs, encased in silk stockings and knee breeches, tall hats and white wands, history without class struggle and an English working class who, in the words of a minister of the gospel, "bear their poverty with truly Christian fortitude."

We can agree with the statement "that a great many so-called risings of democracy have been inspired by interested persons on the other side." When he places such mighty mass movements as the French and Russian Revolutions in the category of coup-d'etats and palace revolutions Mr. Taylor no longer appears as an impartial investigator. "Added up in the cold columns of economic fact" it would require a special arithmetical theory to prove that the economic conditions of the French masses were worse, under Napoleon and the Empire, than preceding 1789. Loria states that "there was a dis-

tinued advance in wages" in the years following the revolution. The abolition of Feudal dues, rights, provincial customs, etc., removed barriers to trade and industry.

From the social standpoint the ideas associated with the Revolution, Liberty, The Rights of Man, etc., spread throughout Europe. It marks an epoch in the long struggle of mankind to escape from the kingdom of intellectual slavery and economic servitude. The ideological roots of the Socialist movement—Utopian and Scientific—run back to the works of the great encyclopedists. The modern democratic movement of which Labor Parties are an expression find their intellectual genesis in the "Rights of Man" and the "freedom of contract." Imperialism, indeed, may be "sentimental hysteria." At the same time it has a real economic basis, in a society where wealth presents itself as "a huge accumulation of commodities."

No doubt there are many honorable men who believe in Imperialism (I presume they are capitalists—all honorable men), men who will admit the facts when the facts are against them. Well, these gentlemen might as well have seen the "light" 20 years ago, as today! Strange that it is only when their trade is "going west," when their military power is ebbing, at a time when their giant competitor the American Empire is now preparing the instrumentalities necessary to the achievement of its "manifest destiny"—world Power or Downfall—that the British Imperialists do lip service to pacifism and humanism, their bankrupt system being canonized by the Labor Party—an expedient "at once innocent, agreeable and easy."

There is no sign of decadence among the American ruling class such as appears among their British brethren. Here in the U. S. A., is a ruling class inspired with a "vision" and a mission akin to that of old Pizarro. No Labor missionary from Britain could convince the "real democrats" of the U. S. A. that Imperialism is "sentimental hysteria." The demand for a world market, the result of commodity production, cannot be "moralized" by the Labor Party's version of the Sermon on the Mount. Only a change in the method of appropriating the products of labor can prevent those wild deeds of senseless violence which are apparently the contents of history.

The Marxian viewpoint has no favor with the Labor Party in general. Yet Robinson in his "War and Economics" says, "It is from this standpoint that modern historians have written the story of every war, from the Peloponnesian struggle to the Russo-Japanese war, finding each at bottom inspired by economic necessity, by the hunger for colonies, for trade routes, and for markets."

There are lessons in history that the British workers might learn. And one of these is the history of the great Chartist party which collapsed because the small tradesmen and middle-class men who composed it got scared by the revolution which so unexpectedly broke out in Paris in 1848. Property interests and working class interests are as oil and water. They don't mix.

These may be the views of a "hag ridden" Socialist of a single devouring "destructive" idea. Nevertheless, when we see the spectacle of a "constructive and pacifist statesman" appropriating public funds for the building of warships, instead of the amelioration of the oppressed, the ditching of the disarmament resolution by the I. L. P. conference in order not to embarrass the pacifist Premier—a resolution which the same Party have passed annually for the last thirty years—then there is an argument in favor of the "hag-ridden" idea.

As a contributor to the Clarion (May 16) says: "So that on its fundamental doctrines, Marxian appears to be in need of no revision. . . . We are too far off our objective yet to ditch the pilot."