

CREATIVE REVOLUTION

(Continued from page 1)

early winter months of 1917 was the direct cause of the revolution, unless perhaps some labor jumping-jack, who for the moment perceives such a course will preserve his ten cent meal ticket, or salve his conscience for some act of chicanery.

Our authors should have allowed more than eight pages for a discussion of the Russian Revolution in a work dealing with Creative Revolution, and we mildly insist they should not have squandered six pages in discussing the attitude of Socialists toward the war. A very disappointing chapter.

Nor can we say more of the chapter on the Third International, concerning which we read some very curious statements: "The Third International is an International of revolutionary socialists who consider parliament effete; who believe that class-conscious workers must deliberately override what is spoken of as the popular will, in so far as that will is the expression of capitalist ideology, and of capitalist imposed illusions concerning the structure of bourgeois society;" In the first instance the Third is nothing of the kind, not now at any rate; in the second instance, they might override deliberately or otherwise, but it will be only in their dreams. So long as the popular will is possessed of capitalist ideology all talk of overriding is nonsense.

The 21 points are not discussed although the book was reprinted in March 1921, but the dictatorship of the proletariat is printed in extra large type, and the workers' council in similar type as the apparatus with which the revolution is to be accomplished.

The chapter would require drastic alteration to bring it up to date. The Italian movement has withdrawn; of those whom our authors expect to join in the immediate future (written in 1920) the I. W. W. have rejected the R. I. L. U. and in many European countries the extra-left-wingers have repudiated the new policy of the Soviet Government, along with the Third International; and so far as we can judge from this continent the Third International is composed of groups of reformers who can in no wise compare in courage and revolutionary activity with the reformers of the Italian Socialist Party whose expulsion has been demanded by the Third.

The "personal view" of the authors, we have it on page 121, is that the hour of revolutionary change is at hand and that participation in parliamentary and municipal activities is a sheer waste of time and energy, tending to promote confusion. They would participate in elections for propaganda purposes, but if elected, would not sit,—page 122.

A year or two ago such sentiments were common enough but today they are not accounted sound by the Third, and never were by any one who had given the situation serious study.

Again (on page 179) we find this sentiment: "An absenteeist policy is no longer impossible for those who believe that the momentous hour is upon us. The call to arms has sounded and we no longer have time in which to prepare and use all weapons. One who has the advantage of utilising a really up-to-date weapon of attack and defense, a Lewis gun, let us say, will be foolish if he decides that he will also make use of a knob stick. . . a man has but two hands. The revolutionary worker's best weapon in this country is not parliament but the British equivalent of the Soviet." In fact this is the recurring theme of the book, this and a vague vital impulse bred of Bergson.

Of course, for those who believe "the call to arms has sounded" this might be the proper course, but it is doubtful policy in any contingency to translate terms from one field to another entirely different. When the call to arms does sound, that group which does not possess arms of modern type will at best leave one more glorious page in the history of forlorn hopes. The Pauls display the tendency, common in the so-called left wing, to ignore the actual facts of life. One of which cannot be too much insisted upon; that the working class today, and for the past few centuries, supply almost the entire fighting force of society. Talk of knob stick and blowpipes is sheer nonsense, the fundamental question is: Do the working class want Socialism; and if not, why not?

Chapter 11 on Creative Revolution leaves one somewhat bewildered and to anyone not acquainted with Bergson, Freud, Darwin, and Marx, it will prove an entirely indigestible mulligan. It certainly does not enable us to grasp the meaning of "Creative Revolution."

For lack of space we take one of the several contradictions in this chapter: "Utterly false is that conception of Marxism commonly put forward by superficial observers, that it reduces the entire content of history to an automatic process, wherein the consciousness of the human units plays no part. In the first place it is the human intellect in conjunction with man's impulses and emotional likings, and urged on by the spur of man's desire which brings about the changes in the material methods of production. In the second, the material condition of production react upon the mass psychology of society, arousing new tastes, generating fresh impulses and desires, modifying the intelligence and thus leading to yet further advances"—pages 191, 192. There is much here requiring correction. Wherein, for instance, does man's desire differ from his emotional likings, and how can either be distinguished from his intellect? Sufficient for our purpose, however, is the fact that the intellect is given as a factor in man's development, an active and uncontrolled factor, sitting in judgment on the desires, impulses, likings, etc.

Turn now to page 198. "Psychoanalysis shows that our most trifling acts are rigidly determined upon the mental plane. Into all the reconsiderations, philosophical, psychological, and sociological, involved in this new idea of mental determination, we cannot enter ever in our time." But we are told that, "while it is the popular belief that the will is the servant of reason, the truth is that reason always has been and always must be to a very large extent the hand maid of will"—page 199. We conclude from reading this chapter that the will is free but not too free, than it is determined but not over-determined. Our authors themselves however were evidently apprehensive and call this chapter "brief and inadequate." We are inclined to agree with them.

At the close of the book this apprehensiveness is still more evident. "Human Freedom with all its inevitable limitations, is precisely one of those phenomena wherein is displayed the triumph of life over material causation. We grant for the purposes of argumentative discussion that this may be but another example of what Hamon has boldly termed "the universal illusion of Free will."

It is so for practical purposes also, and leads us to conclude, with Huxley, that you cannot put the generous new wine of science into the old bottles of theology. Further, it is useless to build up a revolution, creative or evolved, upon desires and impulses, vital or impelled.

We consider this book has value in so far as it emphasises the folly of trying to attach such moonshine creators as Bergson to our philosophy. It will serve as an example, not as a precept. The mists and obscurities of proletarian thought are sufficiently thick; what good purpose is served by adding to them?

J. HARRINGTON.

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