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## Revolutions, Political and Social

BY J. HARRINGTON

SPENCER has said that when he disagreed with a book fundamentally, he was unable to read it; a frank admission to which most of us could say "me too." It is difficult to interest anyone in matters which they dislike. A boy who loaths creepy, crawly things will never be an ornithologist; it takes a Darwin to put a loathsome, vile tasting beetle into his mouth in order to secure two others which are escaping. Such is the scientific spirit. But even Darwin had his weakness; he would tear out of a book all pages dealing with material which did not interest him, leaving only what he decided was useful; at times this was but little. All this of books; when to consider the book of life, we can apply the principle 100% pure.

It is a well recognised principle of jurisprudence, that when a number of witnesses testify to having seen in similarity of detail any event or accident, their evidence is worthless. Mankind is so constituted that what remained in the memory of one is not entertained by another. This in matters of little concern to the beholders. And where the interest is aroused by bias, the difference of vision is greatly augmented. Any game or sport will testify to the unreliability of human observations. A player the visitors will regard as vicious and unfair, the home town will applaud as plucky and resourceful. Extend these remarks to the war and jar of nations and, if we credit man with the wisdom convention allows him, we are likely to become slightly bewildered.

The German, notwithstanding his hands, still red with the blood of countless innocent victims, can now be regarded as a little more than kin, a little less than kind. The song of the Anglo-Saxon is again abroad in the land. Any angle we might take for our searching eyes, affords consistent inconsistencies. It is as though life were a prism through which light reflects according to the angle we hold it at. It would accord well with our vanity but hardly with the facts to assume that everyone is out of step but our Johnny. And yet surely one cannot be right unless we accept the doctrine of the pragmatist: What is useful is true: At that we might echo jesting Pilate and say—what is useful! But, however much we disagree over details, everyone in possession of his faculties will allow the event.

For instance in November 1917 the Russian people overthrew their government. That is the fact. No one would care to deny it. When we enter into detail, however, we at once encounter a controversy which, perhaps, will be endless. The master class and all who see through their eyes had a permanent rave put in their minds instantly. Slowly the revolution permeated the minds of the workers, and then the fun began. We depended for detail upon those who witnessed the events, and here of course we are met with prejudice in the observers, many of whom were merely propagandists bent upon coloring these events to suit the master class; a few there were doubtless not quite honest, who wrote in the interest of the revolution. But discounting all that, enough material might be obtained to enable a proper estimate of that greatest event of modern times.

But just there we encounter our greatest diffi-

culty. Some refuse absolutely to discuss the matter with a view to understanding. Like Spencer, they disagree entirely with the fundamentals and decline to go any further. It is contrary to the laws of God and man and that's an end of it so far as they are concerned. Those who care to discuss it at once commence the weeding out process; and instead of being regarded as a historical event it becomes the yardstick of every cracker barrel soothsayer, or the black beast of every moralist extant.

Aside from its historical significance, which cannot be over estimated, and the unbearable suffering endured by the Russians themselves, it marks one of the most humorous episodes in history. As an example of the sheer inadequacy of human reason the literature of this revolution is unparalleled. There is nothing funny or stupid written about the eruption of Mount Pelee. Anyone who has written of that disaster can, on matters of fact, be given full credit. There might be variance as to the cause.

But of Russia, ye Gods! From the daily song of hate by the communists (some of whom lacked the courage to call themselves so) of all who did not turn when father turned, now changed to a bunny hug, clinging-vine "tactic" with every petty trafficker in working class officialdom, to the lamentation of the mighty and their hired lamentors and sobsters, is surely comedy enough for one short life.

We can well imagine that deep in the minds of many people lurks the idea that a revolution is a theatrical situation, a sort of full dress rehearsal, with a frenzied manager fretting and fuming and a prompter dodging about, openly and without shame giving a word here and suggesting a gesture there. Failure brings censure, success praise; and the actors retire to coffee and doughnuts and a well earned repose.

They should, and they shouldn't. They must and they musn't. They remind us of the French King who could tell whether or not he had boiled a witch, by tasting the broth after the boiling.

Our conception of revolutions is different. To us they are non moral and non ethical; they are laws unto themselves and in no wise incur censure or merit praise. There is also a fundamental difference between a political revolution and a social revolution, too often ignored. A political revolution might happen overnight, as indeed it appears to do; but a social revolution is the work of many years. Politically, the overthrow of one group of men by another ends the revolution. Socially, man has to battle with forces entirely beyond his scope. Politically, he can plan and contrive to overreach his opponent, because he knows the strength of the enemy; but socially he neither knows nor has he the means of ascertaining what lies before him.

Russia achieved the political revolution within a few months. A dissolute and half looney aristocracy, priest ridden if we may believe the records, and without either courage or resource, gave way to a politically inept bourgeois who, in turn, died at the first ditch. We hailed this event as the promised land; we did not then realise that a greater struggle was yet to come.

We have always held that socialists are essential

to a social revolution which aims at Socialism. That the making of Socialists is the main task of a Socialist Party. We know now from the experience Russia has had with her people that this task must be completed, if not before then after the political revolution. What is more to the point, Russia can never have Socialism until Europe at least has her quota of Socialists. The fact that while people chance one tentative eye forward to the promised land, in the wilderness their whole being yearns backward to the flesh pots of Egypt, has been known for long enough.

If the lava of a volcano goes up and then comes down, if in coming down it goes east or west it is well to know and profit by these facts; if after a number of years the land touched by the lava is fruitful beyond all other, that too should be well recorded.

And so if Russia does not measure up to our particular standard of merit let us remember we are not watching a picture show but are participating in life. It is well then to know that revolutions are more than wild viva or hozannas, flag waving and conventions. It is well to know that Russia is voyaging an uncharted sea, as it were, a sea which we may some day be called upon to traverse too. The storms which beat upon her we will without doubt encounter, and what hidden reefs and shallows endanger her voyage, beyond peradventure will lie in our path, and a fair amount of our own for good measure no doubt. But armed with the knowledge of her voyage we will be more apt to steer a straighter course during our own.

Let us then eschew vain criticism, leaving that to the cracker barrel and the smoke room where it serves to relieve the tedious hour when the smut runs dry, and seek to understand the great historical forces that are in action before our very eyes, destroying not one page of what we can be reasonably sure is correct and occasionally, when need be, putting an unpalatable fact in our mouths.

### Socialist Party of Canada

#### PROPAGANDA MEETINGS

STAR THEATRE, 300 Block, Main Street

February 4th. Speaker, W. A. PRITCHARD.  
February 11th. Speaker, A. J. BEENY.  
February 18th. Speaker, ROBT. KIRK.  
February 25th. Speaker, J. D. HARRINGTON.

New Westminster, Edison Theatre:  
February 11th. Speaker, SID EARP.  
February 25th. Speaker, W. A. PRITCHARD.

All meetings at 8 p.m.

MEETINGS EVERY SUNDAY.  
Questions. Discussion.