

THE PROMISE OF THESE LEADEN DAYS (Continued from page 1)

dom. Hungary, a land of agrarian reaction, attempted to follow the blazed trail. And Serbia, a land of peasants, was the one and only country whose socialist representation voted against the war-credits, and hence against war. Nevertheless, usually, and in general, town and country are opposites, with opposite aims and interests. What then? One of two things: Either the hard pressed and partly socialist towns in the opportunities of social connections seize and control the state, using the food producers, by acceding to their primary demands, as a bulwark of their power, and holding that power against time until, through further capitalist decadence, counter revolution is disarmed by progressive understanding and new adherents to communist opinion. Or, through lack of food, of disrupted industry, of organized foresight, of the common unity of purpose that is the basis of power they are crushed in the helpless impotence of destitution, disunity and ignorance. Which of those two ways loom nearest us at the moment? Apparently, the latter.

The reaction of North America has become a "hissing and a reproach." But by the terms of its "hustle" and "go" it is highly adaptive and capable quickly of new social transformations. Britain, the excellence of "radical" and "labor" democracy, wanders in the bloomless garden of Proserpine. While Europe generally presents a highly ornate effect of Fascism. Germany and Austria have demonstrated that suffering and misery alone are not only not enough to accomplish revolution, but are not even the forces for its achievement. They are but the harbingers of coming events; the soil into which are driven the lusty roots of necessity. The threatened disintegration of the capitalist centralization in industry does not presume the disintegration of the power of the state. Not at all. That great nerve centre of oppression not only keeps its power intact, but draws to it, in the clash and turmoil of proletarian struggle, every weapon and force of reaction and privilege. Nor is it to be forgotten that although capitalist democracy is "government by consent," nevertheless that government is but the variegated camouflage of capitalist property; and that, by its ultimate force — military power—its identity will be preserved at all costs until such time as a social majority can take that power and make it the agent of its interests. The military power of France has beaten Germany to the dust, and who can say her nay? Not even sovereign Britain, mightily as she would like to do so. Austria was crushed, and resuscitated by loans (even in the lean years of "financial stringency") from the powers that crushed her, in the interests of democratic commerce. Bela Kun was crushed in Hungary; and Horthy governs by the White Terror. Italy devastated both socialism and radical labor, and supported the "democratic" Mussolini. All Central Europe is a festering hotbed of reaction, puppets of imperialism, nursing political ambitions aplenty but with little visible semblance of understanding or revolution.

The revival of capitalist industry to adequate proportions being impossible, and the forces of progress struggling for necessary expression being unpreventable; the continued and enhancing restrictions of capitalist industry must reduce a greater mass of society into the needy ranks of the proletariat. Everywhere the hall-mark of capitalist decline; masses striving in misery; pitiable in degradation; helpless in the grip of the repressing state; hypnotised with its lying gods; and the false psychology of their nothingness. Everywhere the means of life are equipped, but idle; organized, but privately owned; co-ordinated, but market bound; waiting, ready for the will of awakened society. The interrelations of capitalist industry, although not destroyed entirely, will be ruptured and dislocated, the connecting thread of social life strained and taut in the struggle of social forces. And in their suppression, the struggling nations will engage in a deeper struggle for bread and life against power and possession. For it seems hopeless to look for a social change among

the industrially correlated, but socially antagonized, ranks of labor division and repetition, so long as the social forces can juggle with subsistence; operate with expectation; and intermittently realise a modicum of their hopes. To expect a revolution before the capitalist relations are broken, and aborted, and incapable is to expect a miracle—the miracle of cognitive wisdom antecedent to its causal condition.

Industry and production cannot, of course, altogether vanish. Life must and shall live. But movement will be languid and desultory. There will be growing tumults. Yet some will "make money" from its suffering. There will be greater fruitless effort. Yet some will prosper in its misery. There will be a deepening weariness of intolerable struggle. And even here content shall lie soft. Nevertheless, capitalist industry and commerce will steadily decline. Conferences may confer, but markets do not grow from deliberation. Economic commissions may readjust, but imperialist rivalries are not therefor set aside. Ambition may inaugurate new economies; but cheap production vitiates its endeavors. Merger and monopoly may intensify exploitation; but their consummated effort ruins both the society and the condition that made it necessary. Ships will lie rotting at their anchors, their builders idle, their machineries in want. Town and country will negate each other's necessity. There will be need and stint; hunger and riot; revolt and repression; probably war and desolation.

Yet pitiable as it is, it is the necessity of change. For, as stated, it seems that so long as society can labor and live, even niggardly, in the tradition of the old regime, it cannot be induced to put forth its strength and build the new "city of the good god." It can only progress, like a little child, on its own growing experience, gathering the elements of reality from the empirical reactions of trial and error, and disappointment.

Thus the answer of the present to the future is trial, not triumph; hope, not consummation; struggle, not supremacy. It is the building up of conscious power from the wreckage of an effete civilization. It is the laggard organization of common social unity, fashioned invincibly from the sparkling forge of life. The leaden days now upon us will test the institutions of capital with the reagents of a more rigorous necessity; exposing their class nature, and thereby arresting the waverers in social uncertainty. The politics of the capitalist state will be forced, by explicit fact, to the sanctity of property right, thus thrusting aside the illusion of its class bound "equality." The repressive purpose of government will become unmistakably apparent, thus denying the travesty of "liberty." The aim of imperialism will become more undeniably exploitative; its methods more corrupt, thereby shattering its last stronghold—"humanitarian idealism." Clear as the frosty skies, the nature of capitalist civilization will bear witness against itself. Everywhere, idle means and starving men will evidence their own absurdity. Intricate organizations of production, fruitful, bounteous, unlimited; and famine and nakedness, and cold, overshadowing the piles we call home. The wonders, the treasures, the triumphs of science—its own a classbound "ware"—and yet unceasing toil; premature decay; and the plague and disease and emaciation (physical and mental) of malnutrition. Boundless expanses that will not, or can not, produce; and beleaguered towns that are not allowed to, will constitute, altogether, forces too imperious to be denied.

Hence the needs of man will furnish man with the vision of a new world, and widen the horizon of life with the conscious purpose of a greater destiny. And it will also furnish the moral impulse that will lift society out of its rut of apathy; that will inspire it with the kindling consciousness of perception, and sweep it in the flood tide of its passion to social victory. Economics will be the base of its necessity, the bedrock of its movement; but it will not be through the thirsty realms of economics that the great trial will come. The final stand will be made under the shimmering standards of a moral issue, because it is only a moral issue in those times of specialized confusions, that can unite a harried, stricken, broken, destitute and untutored proletar-

iat, with the vim of purpose; the strength of will; the impassioned fervor; the single mind and reliant intensity of inflexible execution. And the moral issue will be no antique "rights of man," but the rights of society; not a fair wage and the right to work, but the individual right of social life and its amassed grandeur of social effort; and the socialization of the bounteous means which alone make life possible, its gladness a delight, its endeavors a triumph, and lead it "by the right hand of righteousness to the soaring exultations of reality." R.

UNEMPLOYMENT—CAUSE AND CURE

(Continued from last issue)

To sell there must be markets, and owing to the rapid industrialisation of the last 50 years there is now relatively little demand for the manufactured products of the advanced nations.

The competition for the markets causes wars, but far from solving these only aggravate the problem. During the artificial prosperity of war time great strides are made in powers of production, and when peace comes the glut is worse than ever. The Right Hon. C. A. McCurdy, M.P., writing in the "Daily Chronicle" (14th September) pointed out that the steel industry of this country after the war was developed much above the demand of the market for its products. And it is foolish to suppose that trade depression and unemployment can be avoided by reducing wages or by lowering the cost of production in any other way. The enormous wage reductions in Great Britain which followed the Labor leaders' campaign for increased production, certainly did not stem the tide of unemployment. And if it were true that lower prices would cause a trade revival, the capitalists are perfectly free now to lower their prices by cutting into profits. They would do so if this policy would lead to a corresponding increase of sales. But the world economic position is such that no reduction of prices would cause any appreciable increase in demand. In fact in many industries (cotton for instance) this has been clearly realized, and the policy is being followed of deliberate and agreed restriction of output in order to raise prices. Sir Charles Macara stated this explicitly for the cotton trade ("Business Organization," March, 1923). He argues that the loss of foreign markets led to cut-throat competition at home without any material growth in home sales. The producers sold no more by lowering prices and merely sacrificed profits. It has been said that the Capital Levy, by reducing taxation, would enable manufacturers to sell cheaper, and thus would revive trade. The argument is fallacious, because it assumes that capitalists who now do not reduce prices, would do so then; ignoring the fact that they could do so now if they wished, and that they would not be compelled to do so then if they did not wish. They do not reduce now because it does not pay to do so, and unless the world situation as a whole were changed, it would still not pay them to do so after a Capital Levy. Assuming a reduction in taxation occurred, only profits would benefit.

If then, as we say, unemployment is a necessary adjunct of capitalist production, there is only one remedy. The workers must deprive the capitalist class of their ownership and control of the means of production. Once made the common property of society, they can be used for the purpose of satisfying society's needs; not the unstable demands of a market, but the direct human needs of the people.

For the application of this solution only one thing is lacking. The political machinery exists through which the workers can constitutionally express and enforce their will. The knowledge of the productive process in all its branches is contained within the ranks of the working class. But the majority of the workers still support the capitalist system of society. The Socialist party is doing all it can to undermine that trust in capitalism, and it invites the immediate and active assistance of all workers who recognise the accuracy of our contention, that there is no future for our class except in Socialism.

—In the Socialist Standard (London)