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Soviet Russia, from the S. P. of C. Viewpoint

Editor's Note:—The length of the manifesto precludes the possibility of its printing all in one issue. The other half will appear in next issue and will include, following from the sub-divisions of the subject herein presented, the Socialist Party Attitude Towards Soviet-Russia; The Process of Revolutionary Change; The Effort to Re-establish Foreign Relations; Soviet Mistakes. The reader is asked to keep the present issue by him until the appearance of the next, and to study the Manifesto in its appearance as a whole.

A perspective or point of view on social life drawn from the Socialist philosophy, it is realised that what is outlined below falls far short of what might be, both in conception and execution. Taking courage, however, of the knowledge that individuals and parties are never so great as the causes they fight for, the contents of his manifesto are published in the hope that they may assist in a general readjustment of views toward unanimity of working class opinion on Soviet Russia, as well as on the general social problem.

For the purpose stated above, a detailed survey and analysis of Russian affairs might be most effective but is for the present beyond our compass. In any case, such a treatment would lose some of its interest and value as the future brought on its changes. The Party perspective here submitted, however, is offered as a permanent standpoint of valuation, which the reader may acquire and further improve by a study of the Socialist philosophy, and from which he may in the shifting course of future events be enabled to evaluate them and form his judgements.

Naught in what follows is set down in a censorious spirit. When it is taken for granted that there prevails a habit of reasoning from wrong principles, or it is implied that opinions may be derived from other than rational considerations, it is so done in the belief that a frank recognition of the sources of error is essential before a readjustment of views is possible and unanimity of opinion reached.

Truth about Russia necessary

To know the truth about Russia is more than ordinarily necessary because that country has, to use a figure of speech, conducted a reconnaissance into the Socialistic future. The taking thought of and discussion of the experiences of that venture and its successes and failures, credited to whatever factors or combinations of factors they may be—influences domestic or foreign, or to facts of administration—should be of great value to the working class movement everywhere and to society at large.

Yet the truth, prosaic and matter-of-fact, has been hard to come by, not because its materials were hidden, but because Russian affairs have not been viewed clear-eyed, objectively. In the main they have been seen through a perspective of subjective passions and prejudices, for the most part unconsciously motivated by material interests, and blind unreasoning partisanship aroused by the revolution's challenge to deep-rooted social habits. It is probable that no other event in history has ever evoked such a mess of "faked" reasoning, emanating from all sides in the clash of dispute it brought on.

The deplorable lack of unity on the Russian question in the working class movement itself, is due to lack of a common perspective rather than to misinformation; subjective biases rather than objective considerations have, in general, been the

bases of opinion. What is especially unfortunate, even the class-conscious revolutionary section of that movement is but little less at fault in that respect, and with less excuse. Much of its thought on Soviet Russia has tended to degenerate into romantic sentimentalism. And this, largely because revolutionary ends have been kept in view, to the exclusion of any studied and rational regard to the means, always conditioned by circumstances of time and place. Sentiment is not here decried, for it is recognized as having a survival value in the struggle for existence; but its value is as a stimulating, sustaining influence, not as a substitute for intelligence strengthened by knowledge, without which it is blind, impotent for good, and often a sign of weakness and a source of danger.

There should be, then, an effort of detachment from all influences that would prevent an objective consideration of Russian affairs. As the basis of the manifesto's argument, it is taken as a general truth that the differences of opinion on the Russian question are due to differences of perspective. From the standpoint of the Party perspective, or line of thought, by which it throws historical forces, human nature and human conduct into perspective in the social flux, and which is submitted as a truly rational perspective, what must be regarded as erroneous opinions are to be attributed to faults of perspective.

The exposition will open up by outlining the nature and origin of social perspectives in general, and of the Party perspective in particular. As a whole, the exposition will also serve to illustrate why the Party recognizes and supports the Soviet regime as a revolutionary administration.

Nature and origin of mental perspectives

It is often said, as clinching an argument, that "facts are facts." Yet the saying seems inadequate in that it conveys the impression of ignoring the quality inherent in facts, and of stressing mere quantity. Opinions differ on social questions, in the main because varying points of view lead to varying estimates as to the relative importance, or quality, of the facts considered. Where emotional interest, or material interest, or both combined are strongly engaged too, facts maybe are very often under or over-estimated, distorted out of semblance of reality, or altogether ignored.

But even when such irrational interests are the motives, equally as when the reasoning process is free from such ulterior influences, there are always preconceptions held in common to which resort is had as a basis of rationalization for conduct or opinion. These preconceptions are social standards and principles of knowledge and belief, and of law and morals, as to what is fact and credible and what equitable and good. By a people of any social epoch, such principles and standards of judgement are regarded as matters of common-sense, eternally right and good and true; they are, in fact, the common-sense ideas of the epoch and make up what is known as its point-of-view. So we can speak of the point of view of antiquity as differing from that of medieval times, as does that of the latter from that of modern times. In such wise, that witchcraft, sorcery, miracles, the casting of horoscopes, etc., once believed in, are now no longer held credible in the modern point of view.

Points of view are habits of thought unconsciously acquired, which become orthodox under the

long enduring and unremitting discipline of habits of life enforced by the material conditions of social life. In particular, among these forces of habituation, the facts of industrial use and wont must be regarded as fundamental, conditioning the growth and scope of culture and giving character to the scheme of institutional facts which may obtain. These latter facts in turn, react back upon the state of the industrial arts and, as in feudal and predatory states, where the social relationship between the graded classes are those of status or mastery and servitude, the high institutional character of the society stamps its marks deeply in the culture of the time—religion, philosophy and such science as may be, betraying its influence.

So soon as new material conditions of life appear, including a change in the state of the industrial arts sufficiently profound, enduring and comprehensive in character as to enforce new habits of life, then there is a corresponding growth of new habits of thought; a slow upward infiltration of new principles and standards into the general body of social concepts takes place. The old concepts may continue in force as traditional concepts gradually losing force, or they may perhaps disappear by displacement, those sections of the population upon whom the new material conditions bear with greater force being the first to give evidence of the new habits of thought in a changed and unorthodox point of view. Thus, the character of the "idea" appears as a matter of material causation or, as the response of an organism to the stimuli of its environment. As it has been said: "The history of man shows that, collectively, he has learned by habituation rather than by precept or meditation." Or again: "While man may, to a great extent be the creator of the world he lives in; he will always be its mirror."

The Machine Proletariat. Cultural Basis of its Viewpoint.

Intellectually, in so far as new habits of life have weakened or have displaced traditional habits of thought with new ones, the modern proletarian wage workers are creatures of the modern method of production. As a cultural factor dominant in their daily life, directly, the modern productive process has two aspects. In one aspect, that is, technically, the character of the process is a mechanical process. For that reason it is known as the machine process of production, even so when in some branches of industry mechanical appliances may not be used. It is a question of the "character" of the process. In its other aspect, the productive process is large-scale, the work being carried on co-operatively; it is "social" production, world-wide in its scope and inter-connections.

This "social" nature of modern production, in its cultural effect on those engaged in the process, begets a habit of thinking on social affairs in social terms rather than in individualistic terms. In the other aspect of its processes, being mechanistic in character, the work of attending to or taking thought of the processes inculcates a habit of reasoning in the mechanistic or materialistic terms of material cause and effect. "The machine throws out anthropomorphic habits of thought" as being useless for the work to be done.

The chance interventions of daemonic powers
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