

The Forking Road

OUR bourgeois educators, who labor with such self-effacing zeal for our intellectual advancement, frequently assure us that Marxism is a vain dream; a Utopia, impossible; long since disavowed by all competent thinkers. And if reiteration were as powerful a solvent of logic as it is of proletarian interest, their arguments would be as fatal to the mind of the thinker as they are to the mind of the mass. But reiteration stands in the same relation to reality as belief does to fact—the propaganda of self-interest—and its most convincing disproof, is found in the repetition itself. For, no sooner is Marxian philosophy discredited than it reappears more vitally insistent than before; no sooner is its theory “demonstrably” errant than world fact substantiates its truth. So the class struggle visibly progresses.

It appears that Marx has again been vanquished. According to late economists (late is a good adjective) Marxism is fatalist in philosophy, and being so is impotent in the face of social forces, that its powers are dissipated by inaction, and that therefore Marxian doctrinaires are thrown back upon constitutional methods, and reforms to achieve social regeneration. It would appear further that instead of capitalist concentration, a la Marx, there is actually an increase in the numbers of the capitalist class. Apparently there is an unsuspected affinity between the modern “chevalier d'industrie” and the opium eater.

Marxism in brief is the progress of society, through the development in the technique of wealth production. As such, it is linked on to the larger process of cosmic evolution. Indeed it is but a little cycle within the universal law. Casting aside from “fatalist” the implication of a tenet, and regarding it as a principle, the Marxian theory of social development is no more, or no less fatalistic, than any other evolutionary process. Every organism, every co-ordination, undergoes a sequence of changes determined by the circumstances of environment, by the laws of individual being, and by the necessities of reactions of life condition. This individual cycle of events and its whole train of cumulative effects takes place according to the nature and conditions of the initial starting point.

This point of departure of society is necessarily the means whereby its social requirements are satisfied. Its habits and customs, laws and regulations, institutions and ideas, are the necessary product of its system of wealth production. They are the manifests of social interest, the expression of life-condition, and as such must blend in and with the source of their sustenance. And because the forces and tendencies, derived from the prime foundation of society, are unalterable by any reforms within its own corporate body, so the powers and privileges (of class) which are its resultants, are impregnable within the venue of constitutionalism.

Constitutional methods, i.e., the legal formulæ of slave control, cannot by their very nature afford a weapon for the emancipation of slaves. To expect the miraculous, is to expect the beneficiaries of power to annihilate themselves. If property is an “eternal right,” how comes it that all of society do not own property? If all of society owned property in the means of life, how could that be capital? If the “right to live” is the heritage of man, why is the means to perpetuate that right denied him? If not denied him, how account for world distress? If “freedom” is our inalienable possession, why does degradation face us if we exercise it? If “social justice” is not a figment of the imagination, why does social misery exist? Not only on so vast a scale, but at all? Were government the idealism which the “loose criticism of wooden thinking” supposes it to be, why is the long series of reforms enacted in all countries so profitless? the long years of “agitation” and “uplift” so fruitless? the “justice” so long delayed? Why? Why because, and entirely because, the function of government is the subjection of peoples to the exploitation of the property owning class, and the suppression of all data of fact,

from which alone reason can be effective. And constitutional devices is the machine which transmutes the will of the master into the “law” of the land.

But, although the forces and tendencies flowing from a particular social foundation are unalterable within the scope of their evolutionary cycle, the application of those forces is susceptible of human direction, in the same way that physical forces, although in constitution beyond the will of man, can yet be commanded to his service. It is this application, through social interest, social sentiment, and social tradition, which makes the will, of the class appear as the wish of the people. Class society rose to dominion as the expression of social interest. When its disruptive influences, i.e., its inherent class antagonisms, produced from its own progressive development—threaten its supremacy, it appeals to the traditions of a bye-gone age to maintain its existence. Its authority and power, therefore, can crumble away only with the same rapidity in which its rapacious process of expropriation proceeds. It is only when its productive forces are fully developed, when its task of socializing the machinery of production is complete, and when as a consequence of that it prevents the satisfaction of the social interests it once conserved, that those same social forces now expressing the imperative necessities of a fundamentally different society, sweep the obsolete obstruction away with all its paraphernalia of legal procedure, and inaugurate the social forms necessary for the growth of the new interests. This evolution is not governed by the “will” of man: it is not even his desire. It is the “will” of continually augmenting necessity.

Nevertheless, although this process is not of the mind of man, the mind of man is one of the factors in its progress. Man's ideation is the product of man's life condition; condition stimulates thought; thought modifies condition, and according as this conception of social processes is greater or less, in that proportion is his influence on social direction.

But this does not mean individual man, or individual ideas. Politically, man is not an individual, but an amalgam of social law and circumstances. No man, or no group of men, can completely dominate society. Each mind, each group, each condition adds its quota of influence, and the combined totality of influences, with their manifold modifications and correlations, set their inevitable impress on the individual. So it comes that individual concepts are social products. So the sum of individual mind and individual interest takes on the color of the social ethic; individual volition, dominated by social volition, the status of the man, bounded by the status of the mass, and the nature and character of the community itself, the aggregate of its understanding of social evolution.

This is the real parting of the ways. The problem is not to regenerate society by regenerating the man. On the contrary, the regeneration of man involves the prior regeneration of society. And this regeneration is revolution. Revolution of the idea of property in the means of life. The fundamental of wealth production alike determines the complex of social relationships and the complex of individual being. It is the necessities of social life which constitute the necessities of social man. It is the fact, not the philosophy that is the driving power and to that fact alone can man respond.

Historic materialism is not an energy of progress, but an explanation of social change, and in that explanation its powers are not expended in vain. It is the only philosophy that in the presence of the social forces can explain the phantasmagoria of social phenomena in terms of causation. Any philosophy which oversteps reality in its analysis of social events assumes a vitalism of some nature and by that assumption demonstrates its inherent impotence, and when the certain development of the social forces reaches its climax of change, that philosophy will vanish like morning mist.

If capitalist concentration were not going on; if the numbers of the capitalist class were increasing there must be an increase of capital accumulation. But increased accumulation implies a concurrent ex-

pansion of the labor forces, and a greater body of wealth equality. But the exact opposite is the fact. Industries are closing down; production is on the ebb; unemployment is widespread; there is a greater disparity of wealth; a greater mass of dependents; a more gigantic volume of misery. These things have but one interpretation—the expropriation of the capitalist class by the economic processes of capitalist production. The alternatives are not, therefore, constitutional methods, or despair; the alternatives are social destruction, or Socialist society.

R.

ARE THE PRINCIPLES TAUGHT BY JESUS CHRIST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE WORKING CLASS?

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effort to meet the circumstances of living conditions throughout the ages, his effort to survive, and not in any one particular from any God or gods. His knowledge of the forces of nature and natural phenomena was such today that the appearance of a comet, the eclipse of the sun or moon, carried with it no terrors for him. Indeed he could foretell such occurrences, to the day, to the minute. The age of superstition was past for modern man. And therefore the stronghold of religious concepts was broken down. Man's ignorance of social forces in past ages had given him his gods and religious concepts; his present day enlightenment and understanding enabled him to cast them aside. Illustrative of this he closed with a quotation from Swinburn.

Mr. Cook had now ten minutes' time in which to conclude the debate. He talked mostly of the love of Christ. He took the opportunity now, however, to say that Harrington's scientific learning was not up-to-date. The germ-cell, protoplasm, was not the ultimate particle. Science had now discovered the electron, and he claimed adherence to evolutionary doctrine as well as Harrington and, as in this statement, he said he went beyond him.

Harrington, of course, had now no chance to adjust Mr. Cook's foolish misrepresentations, in this connection. Harrington's references to embryology constituted a simple statement of science that each man at the beginning of his existence was a simple cell,—protoplasm, upon which all organic life is built. Mr. Cook's eagerness to proclaim himself an evolutionist took him into another branch of science—chemistry, wherein, according to him, the electron now takes the place of the protoplasmic cell. This is not only the confusion of sciences but the confusion of terms used in each branch of science. In short, it is just plain nonsense.

CARRYING OUT ANGLO-RUSSIAN TREATY.

Moscow, April 14th.—The Council of Commissaries has authorized the Commissariat for the Interior:

1—To take immediate steps for the sending home from Russia of all British citizens who wish to go and to issue the necessary orders to the officials concerned.

2—To prepare regulations with the Commissariats concerned for the special privileges of the officials agents of the British government who will come to Russia under Article 5 of the treaty; at the same time to prepare regulations relating to their dealings with the Soviet authorities in accordance with Article 5 and to take steps that these regulations should be generally observed.

DEALING WITH LIES.

Moscow, April 8th.—“Westnik” writes:—The anti Soviet press everywhere is attempting to prevent business relations with Russia in spreading lies and forged documents. The alleged instructions of the Third International for the commercial delegates of Soviet Russia are malicious inventions and forgeries. No instructions of any kind have been given the commercial representatives of Russia by the Third International. Instructions of the nature of the contents of these forgeries have been issued by no one to any Soviet delegate. The whole document is generally an ordinary forgery whose aim is to injure Russians commercial relations.

—“Rosta Wien.”