

VULGAR SOCIALISM BY CORRESPONDENCE

Chapter III. The Berenbergian Class Struggle

The Class (Room) Struggle.

There is a small group in the Communist Party of America which seems to think that the class struggle is so named because it is to be fought out in the class room. This theory at least has the merit that it recognizes that the modern socialist movement is not based upon the mere sentiment of unconscious rebellion against patent evils in society and contrasts between poverty and wealth; but is rather a scientific movement based upon generalizations drawn from a study of economic facts. The class room theory of the class struggle is deficient, however, in that it does not recognize that Marxism is a theory of action as well as of observation and generalization. The development of Socialism from utopia to science may be accomplished in the class room, but not the development of socialism from science to action. It is a reactionary movement that makes of Marxism "a mere method of historical investigation," a futile exercise in talmudic interpretation of sacred text. The lessons of the conditions of the victory of the working class, of communism, of Marxism in action, must be learned by actual participation in the struggles of the working class, must be learned, not in the class room, but in the field of the class struggle itself.

The Rand-School-Class Struggle.

Berenberg's explanation of the class struggle, as taught in the Sixth Lesson of his Rand School Correspondence Course in the "Fundamentals of Socialism" seems to indicate that the only type of struggle one can learn in the Rand School class room is a preparation for that type of haggling which takes place between push cart peddler and prospective customer, between A. F. of L. union leader and employer of craft union labor—a sort of fish-wife struggle.

Berenberg represents the be-all and the end-all of the class struggle as a "quarrel over the division of that surplus value which labor produces." If that be the nature of the class struggle, then the A. F. of L. is a fitting instrument for waging it and a thoroughly competent East Side push cart peddler of the infra-petty-bourgeois type will make the best leader of the working class. Furthermore, not a

social revolution, but Wilson-Gompers collective bargaining schemes contain all the requisites for a solution of the class struggle.

It is true that the quarrel over the division of surplus value, not consciously as such, but unconsciously as a struggle for larger profits on the part of employers for the maintenance of the same or the acquirement of higher wage standards on the part of workers, does contribute its share to class friction and to the welding of the proletariat into a class—but the class struggle means far more than that. Such a class struggle would not be a political struggle nor would it have revolutionary significance.

Why the Class Struggle Is Revolutionary.

We saw in our previous analysis of Berenberg's "Material Determinism" that the social organism might be resolved, for the sake of analysis, into an economic "foundation," the mode of production, on the one hand; and a social "super-structure," consisting of law, government, morality, religion, philosophy and the like, on the other. We saw, too, how the legal-political superstructure rose from, and gave expression to, the economic foundation; how the economic foundation changed but the superstructure tended to remain static, until "from forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into fetters upon the forces of production. Then comes the era of the social revolution."

Now this is no mere blind struggle of inanimate forces in which men play the passive part of uninterested, or at best scientifically interested, bystanders. THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE DEVELOPING FORCES OF PRODUCTION AND THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL FETTERS THAT PREVENT THEIR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT MANI-

FESTS ITSELF AS A STRUGGLE BETWEEN OPPOSING CLASSES.

One of these classes, the ruling class, is identified with the superstructure and the other, the revolutionary class, is identified with the developing forces of production. When the ruling class originally attains political power and develops a legal-political-spiritual superstructure to express its needs, it really expresses the needs of society at that time. But as the superstructure through which it rules and retains power changes from a form of development to a fetter upon the forces of production, then arises a new class, the further development of which is identified with the developing mode of production. To this class the superstructure is a fetter, and, therefore, a means of oppression. This oppressed class is gradually led to a realization that its oppressors, the ruling class, must be overthrown, and that it must seize and destroy the instruments of oppression, ruling class law, ruling class government, etc., and establish its own "superstructure," its own government and law in place of that of the ruling class. Then the class struggle takes on a political and revolutionary significance, and the era of the social revolution is begun.

Then it becomes apparent that the further development of society is conditioned upon the victory of the revolutionary class, that it alone represents social progress, that its opponents represent social stagnation and retrogression. And it is this realization that raises the oppressed class to heroic proportions, that makes "mou-zshiks" and ignorant workers into saviors of society, that develops the energy to overthrow the ruling classes at home, defeat their allies abroad, and at the same time go on with the destruction of the whole immense old superstructure, the development of the now unfettered forces of production, and the construction of a new superstructure, the building of a new, better world.

But the Berenbergian struggle of fish-wives over wages can never assume such titanic proportions, and it is small wonder that the Rand School brand of socialism finds no place for revolution in its "scientific system."

Now for a few Berenbergian gems concerning the class struggle which

gems we cannot afford to miss—and then on to pastures new, to the wonders of "collectivism," to the discovery of three methods of attaining it, and to that long-heralded discovery, "The Bloodless Revolution a la Berenberg." (All of which we shall have to reserve for the future.)

Berenbergian Gems.

"It is impossible to close our eyes and say there is no class struggle, because there ought to be none." Ought there be none, Mr. Berenberg? Is the class struggle another "detriment" which, like material determinism, is to be "harnessed" by you "and used for the benefit of the world"? Or is not the class struggle the only instrument of progress in a class society—a struggle, the awakening of which is to be welcomed, the development of which is to be consciously broadened and deepened until the oppressed class becomes conscious of its historic mission (this time to emancipate society from classes, class rule and class struggles) and until the oppressed class dares to risk its chains to gain the world?

One Hundred Per Cent. Classes.

"Both (classes) will in the end include all the members of the respective classes." This is not so, friend Berenberg, not "by a long shot." The ruling class will have its desertions just as in the bourgeois revolutions sections of the aristocracy, realizing that the further progress of society was identified with the triumph of the bourgeoisie, deserted their class and joined, officered and led the timid bourgeois to his unexpected victories.

And as to the revolutionary working class, it too, will have its deserters and betrayers. And the forces of the ruling class will be led by them. In the name of "Socialism" and "Unionism" they will war upon the re-

IDIOTORIALS

"STRUGGLING RUSSIA"

Truth's a vessel somewhat leaky
Here in times of strain and stress
When the world's in such a mess . .
Speaking of the Bolsheviks,
Do you read the daily press?

LENINE ORDERS

**TROTZKY JAILED;
IN JAIL HIMSELF**
(The World, October 28th)

LENINE AGREES

TO CONCESSIONS
(The World, October 21st)

TROTZKY MOBILIZES

ALL PETROGRAD MEN
(The Times, October 25th)

Facts are such elusive, sneaky
Things at which to try a guess;
Any "no" may prove a "yes," . . .
By the way, the Bolsheviks
Stew—well, read the daily press:

Chaliapine, Plague Stricken.

Reported Slain by Reds
(The World, October 23th)

Chaliapine Not Killed by Reds
(The Times, November 5th)

"News, like bacon, should be streaky;
Pro and Contra, more or less
Mixed, that all may acquiesce,"
Thus as to the Bolsheviks,
Muse the giants of our press.

PETROGRAD'S FALL

**IS NEAR. BUT REDS
STAY IN CRONSTADT**
(The World, October 22d)

BOLSHEVIK GRIP

**ON PETROGRAD
GROWS TIGHTER**
(The Tribune, October 28th)

Rumor, in her chariot creaky,
Dashes up to Truth's address,
Serving her a dispossession. . . .
Shamefully these Bolsheviks
Treat our grave, impartial press!

YUDENITCH DRIVES

NEAR PETROGRAD
(The World, October 30th)

REPORT YUDENITCH

ARMY SURROUNDED
(The Times, November 5th)

Goosep (ah! the jade is cheeky),
Though attractive, still confess,
Never shall achieve success
While 'twixt us and Bolsheviks,
Stand soar stern, veracious press!

Report Reds Will Prohibit

Christian Names for Children
(The Times, November 26th)

(Insert Denial here)
Due on or about November 13th.

Smead.

—FROM "THE TRIBUNE."

When wages are a hundred dollars
a minute you'll work two hours for
coffee and sinkers.

Just think, fellow workers, if you
save a dollar a day for a million days
you will have a million dollars, and
Rockefeller has only a thousand times
that much.

You're not too old to learn—you're
just damned lazy.

NOTICE

Party headquarters will remain at
207 East 10th Street until further
notice. Come up!

revolutionary workers. Yes, friend Berenberg, the leaders of the reaction in Germany are social-democrats, right-wing socialists. Menshevik and right social-revolutionary fought on the side of the enemies of the Russian proletariat. Legien and Gompers will fight the revolutionary workers, and the Communist Party knows it, but the Socialist Party does not. The revolutionary working class will never include all the craft-bound still-possessing aristocrats of labor until after the final stage of the class struggle is fought and won. The Right wing Socialist, afflicted with a petty bourgeois ideology will also be among the missing when the roll call is sounded. Nay, more, he may be, as in Germany and Russia he is in fact was, in the lists of the enemies of the revolutionary proletariat.

Each day new struggles, new attacks, new successes. It moves on an ascending curve. There are no lulls, no descents. It moves from strike to strike, from unrest to greater unrest, from solidarity to greater solidarity. Surely, this IS the era of the social revolution. The workers' revolution in Russia marked the beginning of the world revolution. The spread of unrest throughout the world marks the spread of the world revolution. The Russian revolution will become the world revolution. The success of the world revolution is assured!