

World Crises

By Victor Mage

The *Revue de Paris* has recently given to the world some hitherto unpublished pages by Waldeck-Rousseau. There (he is speaking of the revolutionary programme) you may read the following words:—

“Changing the face of the world in eight days by getting rid of the troublesome shackles of legality, and suddenly throwing every institution, all that now *is* into the melting-pot of violent reform. Yet it took three centuries for a prodigious being to found Christian society, and from that fact the inference is—drawn that he really was God”.

As to the point that it needed three centuries for the doctrines of Christianity to transform society, I think we can contest that. The institutions of the Roman State were rotten to the core; they made no real resistance in spite of all their outward show. Of their own weight they fell into decay.

We Marxists of to-day are awaiting the Revolution as a measure indispensable for the substitution of a new order of things for that at present in existence. Nevertheless, as determinists, we are convinced believers in *Evolution*. Whereas the liberal school of thought sees everything as a fixed, stable, and immovable system, our whole scheme rests on the idea of continued and infinite change. Whilst liberals look upon human society as something fixed and eternally frozen, as it were, and in consequence dead, we look on it as it really is, a changing, living thing, like a plant or an animal, which from the moment of birth to death is in a process of being unceasingly changed.

But this idea of *Evolution* is by no means incompatible with that of *Revolution*. On the contrary, Evolution is sometimes accomplished through crises, and by sharp and violent transition from one stage to another. When the chicken comes out of the egg is it not with heavy blows of its beak that it breaks its shell? Before the birth of this animal there has been a very slow and gradual evolution from a germ. To the ignorant onlooker this “changing” is invisible and even incomprehensible. Then one fine day, when evolution is in a sufficiently advanced stage, a shock takes place: the shell, which to all appearance was quite hard, is broken. *There has been a revolution.*

Just so in this society of ours the change has gone on very slowly. Business enterprises pass into fewer hands, production becomes collective. The only thing remaining is to break the shell which stands between us and full flight. But one needs very little foresight to see that, in view of certain symptoms, the “shock” is not a great way off. These symptoms are crises, harassing and overwhelming in their frequency. In America a money crisis, making itself felt more than any other because of its recoil on all the various branches of production. In England, Germany, France, all the world over, crises of over-production and unemployment resulting from the progress of machine-power and the under-consumption which the lack of resources on the part of the great mass of consumers brings in its train. These latter comprise the working class, wage earners who have not the means wherewith to buy back the products of their own toil!

Moral crises follow in the wake of economic crises. Was it not a leading theatrical

newspaper, circulating amongst the middle-class, which recently proved to its own satisfaction that the bourgeois public, which alone has the means of attending performances, is incapable of appreciating and understanding things of beauty?

Crises even in love, as a great daily paper proves, the industrial system making woman a foe to every family tie.

These crises are getting bigger, awaiting the rapidly approaching day when they will allow the capitalist regime to topple over and be buried under its own ruins; as it is destined to perish owing to the very circumstances to which it has itself given birth.

(translated from *Le Socialisme*).

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