

A PARALLEL IN HISTORY

Russia—France.

Ancient history is wonderfully modern. The story of one uprising is the story of all. The pictures on the curtains are changed and the names of the characters, but the drama is the same. For Paris to-day we have St. Petersburg, for Louis we have Nicholas, for Necker we have Witte, for the States General we have the Douma. But in Russia to-day, as in the France of yesterday, the provinces are aflame with burning palaces, the cities are crowded with hungry men, mutiny is feared in the army, the cruelties of government are answered by the outrages of the mob, and everything seems ready to make the 10th of May, 1906, as memorable a date in history as the 5th of May, 1789.

Whenever it comes to be the overwhelming sentiment of a people that a certain obstacle to their progress must be removed, then some kind of a revolution is bound to follow. If the obstacle yields, it will be a peaceable revolution. If the obstacle resists, and in proportion to the resistance, it will be a violent revolution.

In France, the obstacle that everybody determined must go was the old regime. There was no hostility at first to the king. There was no quarrel with the monarchy. But there was a ring of lords and bishops, the court, as it was called—a small privileged class, men who enjoyed fat pensions, were exempt from taxation, consumed the revenues, meddled in public affairs, were tenacious of their privileges, successful in thwarting reforms, enemies of a free press, and generally obnoxious. This court clique must go. These two or three hundred thousand men should not be permitted to forever suppress the liberties and prevent the progress of twenty-five millions of people. The nation could be nothing until they and their privileges were brushed aside. This was the overwhelming conviction, this was the state of the public mind on the eve of the French Revolution.

But if the people were almost a unit that this court clique should go, why then was there any trouble about it? Why was it not done easily and peaceably? The court had the army, and the court resisted. That was one condition that favored violence. That condition exists in Russia as in France. But that is not all. Let the government have the army; if the people have the votes, the army will be of little use. But just there was the rub. In France as in Russia, while the government had the army, the people did not have a vote. Here was an overwhelming sentiment in the nation that the court clique must go. But this sentiment was disfranchised. It had no voice in the government and an army was opposed to it. How, then, could this overwhelming sentiment express itself except in violence? These were conditions that made a revolution of blood inevitable. These conditions prevailed in France. These conditions are strikingly characteristic of Russia to-day.

On the 10th of May, at the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, the Douma, the States General of Russia, convened. But whom does this Douma represent? Not the Russian people. In St. Petersburg there are a million and a half of people. And of all that number only 9,000 can vote. Of the 410,000 inhabitants of Odessa, only 7,000 can participate in the elections

In the days of the Revolution Paris had upwards of a million people, and only 14,000 of them were given any voice in the government. The government had closed the gates against the nation of France, and when the floods rose the gates broke, and abuses that might have yielded in peace were destroyed in a rage. Every limitation of the franchise is an invitation to revolution. This is a lesson which Russia might have learned from the history of France. Tyranny is a disease for which the leeches of insurrection must be applied. Democracy is the surest guarantee of peace.

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A SOCRATIC DIALOGUE.

"When we were discussing overproduction, O Bicyclades, you called Lycurgus a farmer."

"Yes, Socrates, and deservedly; for he would not agree that men are in want because they produce too much of every thing they need."

"Did you mean then, Bicyclades, that he was a cultivator of land, or do you consider that to be a farmer is equivalent to being stupid?"

"Assuredly the latter, Socrates; for I think farmers are poor because they are stupid—that is, excepting those that farm farmers instead of farming farms."

"Then either there is something stupid in cultivation of land, or else a stupid class of men takes to it. Is that not true?"

"Yes, Socrates."

"But to farm requires much knowledge and skill; moreover, the stupid are inclined to keep their places as professors rather than to go to the country; therefore, it cannot be that a stupid class of men takes to farming."

"True, Socrates, I had not thought of that."

"Is it not also true, Bicyclades, that contact of men one with another, more than anything else, makes men bright and sharp?"

"I believe that to be the fact."

"What class of men then is the most isolated, O Bicyclades?"

"Surely the farmers, Socrates, unless we except keepers of lighthouses, and the wise."

"But why are the farmers isolated—is, then, all the vacant land adjoining the cities used for farming or otherwise?"

"Indeed, no, Socrates; around Athens, Ohio, are many miles of unoccupied land."

"Are those such 'Vacant Lots' as Potato Patch-rockles allowed the disemployed persons to cultivate?"

"I do not understand you, Socrates; for, if the people cultivated lots, they would not be disemployed."

"I meant disemployed from their natural avocations of building or manufacturing or trading on those lots."

"They are the same kind of lots, Socrates."

"Who holds those lots of land?"

"No one, Socrates; they stay there without being held."

"You say truth, Bicyclades; but I mean who owns them?"