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EDITORIAL

DANGEROUS!—EXTREMELY SO!

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE increasingly ominous tidings from Russia are now accompanied by certain mutterings from that country's ruling class that are fraught with grave danger to any ruling class anywhere. The despatches announce that a Russian nobleman entered into a dialectical controversy with the Revolution. The nobleman had been given a revolutionary placard or hand-bill in which the "original accumulation," as we would call the thing in capitalist countries, of the Russian landlord class was traced back and shown to be born of rapine. Answering this point the nobleman is said to have declared: "This means a subversion of the social order, TIME HEALS ALL DEFECTS IN TITLE!" This is dangerous ground to tread: the second part of the sentence knocks the bottom out of the first.

If past rapine can be healed by Time, why should one despair of present rapine (granting, for the sake of argument, that the Social Revolution means "present rapine," as the ruling class contend everywhere)—why should one despair of present rapine faring as well? If Time can heal past wrong, why should not Time have as prophylactic an effect upon "present wrong"—granting, for the sake of argument, that the social Revolution means "present wrong," as the ruling class contend everywhere? Obviously, some social order, of some sort or other, was subverted by the methods which placed in the hands of the ruling class of to-day, whether Russian or American, the property through which they rule, and the incipient defect in whose title, they claim "Time has cured." If Time cured the defect in a title that sprang up from the subversion of some past social order, for what reason should not Time prove equally potent with regard to the unquestioned subversion of the existing order that the Social Revolution contemplates? If one subversion was done, with what grace can the beneficiaries of the first subversion ask the expectant beneficiaries of the next to abstain?

It is evident that the historic ground is a dangerous one for the modern plunderer to flee to. It offers no asylum. It furnishes only weapons against himself, besides unarming him. Wiser far in their generation are those plunderers who know not history and will none of it, and who declare that, as things are, they always have been. Only to the extent that they can besot people into that belief is there any hope for them. The knowledge of history, however, fires the peoples to emulation—even if the thing emulated be the very original sin against whose consequences they now revolt.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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