The Swing to Revolutionary Socialism

By Louis C. Fraina

THE Socialist Party is in upheaval. It is being revolutionized by events, and by the organized pressure of the Left Wing within the party. Local after local of the party has adopted the Manifesto and Program of the Left Wing; and now comes the State Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Massachusetts, adopting the Manifesto and Program, repudiating the Berne Congress of the Great Betrayal, and insisting upon affiliation only with the Bolshevik-Spartacan International. Truly, a historic act!

The moderate "Socialists" in our party, sterile in thought and impotent in action, unable to sense the new spirit and understand the giant character of revolutionary Socialism, are aghast at the upsurge of revolutionary Socialism in the party. Unable to compress this movement within the stultifying limits of their own concepts and action, they cry "conspiracy," "organized separatism and division," "a movement to disrupt the party." Contemptible in their policy, they are contemptible in their arguments. They do not understand. They cannot understand. They will be swept aside, and then perhaps they *may* understand that Socialism is done with their petty bourgeois and potentially counter-revolutionary policy.

It is not a conspiracy, this upsurge of revolutionary Socialism in the party. It is the impulse of life itself. It is symptomatic of the revolutionary spirit and policy that conquered power in Russia, Hungary and Bavaria, that is active in every Socialist Party in the world, that is an expression of the revolutionary epoch of the final struggle against Capitalism into which Socialism and the proletariat have now definitely emerged.

The Marxist (not the pseudo-Marxists who have perverted Marxism, and of whom Marx himself said: "I sowed dragon's teeth, and I reaped fleas") in considering this upsurge of revolutionary Socialism, considers the objective facts of the situation. What are these facts?

Capitalism is on the verge of collapse. It is unable to extricate itself out of the multiplying contradictions implied in its maturity, in the final stage of its development. The war, provoked by Imperialism, used as a means of solving insoluble economic contradictions, multiplied these contradictions. The war produced a breakdown of the capitalist economic system in most European countries, and it equally produced the proletarian revolution—the conquest of power by revolutionary Socialism. The forces loosed by the proletarian revolution are incalculable; and they are part and parcel of the contradictions of Capitalism, of an economic collapse that staggers Capitalism. The real power in the world today is not Capitalism, but revolutionary Socialism. The final struggle is on in some countries, is developing in others. Bourgeois society is being revolutionized by the proletariat in action.

But that is not all. *Socialism itself is being revolutionized by these epochal events.* This is a fact of the first importance; it is a fact that the moderate Socialist either refuses to admit or camouflages; but it is the most important fact to the real Socialist, and is the cause of the upsurge of revolutionary Socialism in the international movement.

The proletariat has conquered power in Russia, Hungary and Bavaria. It is preparing to conquer power in other nations by means of revolutionary action and proletarian dictatorship. *But this fulfillment of the ideal of Socialism is being accomplished against the opposition of the old dominant moderate Socialism.* The old dominant moderate Socialism, under the test of revolutionary events, is proving counter-revolutionary. The old parties and the old leaders are against the proletarian revolution, are betraying Socialism and promoting the supremacy of Capitalism. The struggle of the proletariat against moderate Socialism is as implacable as its struggle against Capitalism; in fact, the real revolutionary struggle is the struggle against moderate Socialism, against the betrayers of Socialism.

The Marxist is not astonished at this. It is a situation produced by certain definite social alignments.

Marxian Socialism, the Socialism of the First International, was revolutionary. It accepted the revolutionary struggle against Capitalism, and it waged that struggle with all the means in its power. This Socialism considered its objective to be the conquest of power by the revolutionary proletariat, the annihilation of the bourgeois state and the introduction of a new proletarian state functioning temporarily as a dictatorship of the proletariat. This revolutionary International collapsed after the Franco-Prussian war. The Second International was an International of moderate Socialism. It was conservative and petty bourgeois in spirit. It was part and parcel of the national liberal movement, not at all revolutionary, dominated by the conservative skilled elements of the working class and the small bourgeoisie. It was hesitant and compromising, expressing the demands of the *petite bourgeoisie* (for government ownership, reforms, etc.) and was dominated by the *petit bourgeois* ideology, which imagines that it can conciliate Capitalism, "grow into" the new society by means of "class co-operation," social reforms and parliamentary measures. When the test of war came, this "Socialism" accepted the war in the *petit bourgeois* spirit of either national defense or a sentimental pacifism; when the proletarian revolution came, it rejected the revolution in favor of the *petit bourgeois* policy of peaceful reforms and parliamentary action. This moderate Socialism, which may have mouthed revolution as an intellectual sport, when the revolution came discovered (to the astonishment of some naive souls) that it was interested, not in Socialism, but in bourgeois democracy!

But Socialism is not an intellectual sport. It is a necessity of the proletarian class struggle. It is a thing of deeds, not of words. While Socialism as a whole was moderate, it held within itself revolutionary elements, such as the Bolsheviki in Russia, the Spartacans in Germany, the Left Wing groups everywhere. And when the revolutionary proletariat marched on to the assault against Capitalism and Imperialism, it rallied around this minority revolutionary Socialism in an implacable struggle against the moderates. From acceptance of an imperialistic war, moderate Socialism proceeded to an acceptance of the counter-revolution. Moderate Socialism collapsed, miserably and vilely; but out of this collapse, an historic necessity, arose the new revolutionary Socialism (which is the Socialism of Marx and the First International *in action*, adapting and developing Marxism in accord with the requirements of modern Capitalism and the revolutionary struggle)—this Socialism, giant in character, replendent with the glory of the new world, terrible in its acts but beautiful in the full glory of the Communist society that is coming.

The policy and practice of moderate Socialism—reformism and parliamentarism—developed out of a period of peaceful struggles, of compromise and class cooperation. It was not a policy and practice that met the requirements of a revolutionary situation; it broke down and was repudiated by the proletariat in action. It is this situation that has developed the upsurge of revolutionary Socialism, the thrusting forward of the policy and practice of the Left Wing.

But, it is asked, why a Left Wing in the *American* Socialist Party? Our party, they say, was against the war; it favors Soviet Russia; it is not against the Spartacans—why then a Left Wing in our party?

Appearances are not always what they seem. Appearances may often disguise reality. Let us consider the reality.

The Socialist Party, in its majority official policy, has always been a party of moderate Socialism. In its reformism, in its rejection of revolutionary ideas, in its emphasis on parliamentary action to the exclusion of mass action, in its refusal to consider the problems of new unionism and adopt industrial unionism, in its general *petit bourgeois* policy the American Socialist Party has been bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of moderate Socialism in Europe. Consider the party platform—it reeks with bourgeois reformism. Consider the official party press—nowhere does it emphasize the real struggle of the proletarian revolution in Europe, the struggle between majority Socialism and Left Wing Socialism, it shows no understanding or acceptance of revolutionary mass action and proletarian dictatorship. Still the old parliamentarism! Still the old reformism! Still the old *petit bourgeois* policy!

The Socialist Party, they say, favors the Bolsheviki and the Spartacans. But how? I do not wish to be misunderstood: the party has carried out a fine agitation against intervention, in favor of Soviet Russia. But, also, I do not wish to be incomplete in the facts. And the other facts are these: the official representatives of the party were silent about the Bolsheviki until months after they conquered power, when the upsurge of Bolshevik sympathy in the party compelled the official representatives to speak. The National Executive Committee of the party, which was in session at the time, did not accept the Soviet proposal for an armistice on all fronts as a preliminary to general peace negotiations, and agitate for the armistice. The majority of the official representatives of the party greeted, *at first*, the Ebert-Scheidemann Government of the Counter Revolution as a "Socialist Republic"! Again the pressure of events and the upsurge of revolutionary Socialism in the party compelled a change of front. But still there is no real understanding, or refusal to understand, among the official representatives of the party.

The "party favors" the Bolsheviki and the Spartacans, but there is no statement and emphasis of the implications of this; precisely as "the party was against the war," but there was no emphasis of the implications of this revolutionary policy among most official representatives of the party, who either sabotaged the anti-war policy or interpreted it in the terms of *petit bourgeois* pacifism.

The National Executive Committee has issued literature against intervention and "favoring" Soviet Russia; but this same National Executive Committee selected (unconstitutionally) "delegates" to "represent" the party at the Berne Congress of the Counter-Revolution, of social-patriots and betrayers of Socialism, where Bolshevism and proletarian revolution were repudiated.

If the party "is for" the Bolsheviki and the Spartacans, let it express this in its policy and practice, in its platform and official acts. Let it accept the Manifesto and Program of the Left Wing, which is the Spartacan and Bolshevik policy and program. We do not want pious gestures: we want deeds. But, they say, the Bolshevik and Spartacan policy is a policy during a revolution, and we are not yet in a revolution. No; this policy of revolutionary Socialism is necessary at all times and can be pursued at all times; the policy is the same, the application differs. It is a policy not only during a revolution, but a policy to promote and prepare for the revolution. The Bolsheviki and the left wing groups were in action before the Revolution; the Revolution simply made them dominant. *Moreover, we have emerged definitely into the revolutionary epoch of the final struggle against Capitalism*: the Socialist Party must act accordingly.

Turn to the Left!

Resolutions adopted by the newly elected State Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Massachusets, at its first session, April 6, 1919.

THE LEFT WING

Whereas, the trend of world events and the experience of the Revolution in action have demonstrated the necessity for a clear-cut definition of the Socialist position; and

Whereas, the growth of opportunism and bourgeois parliamentarism within the Socialist Party has made a re-statement of the revolutionary Socialist position imperative; and

Whereas, the tendency of the officialdom within the party has been in contradiction with the revolutionary sentiments of the rank and file within the party as manifested in the St. Louis program on the war; be it therefore

Resolved, that the State Executive Committee of the State of Massachusetts herewith endorse the Manifesto and Program of the Left Wing as printed in *The Revolutionary Age* of March 22, 1919; and be it further

Resolved, that we call upon the rank and file throughout the party to work and co-operate with the Left Wing movement to the end that the Socialist Party of America may become the true revolutionary expression of the American working class, and a proper party to participate in the Third International with the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviki) and the Communist Labor Party of Germany (Spartacans.)

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

Whereas, the rank and file of the Socialist Party of America has clearly demonstrated on many occassions that it is in sympathy with Bolshevik Russia and the revolutionary section of the working class everywhere, and is opposed to the tactics of right wing and centre Socialism in Germany and France, in spite of the efforts of the majority of the N. E. C. to line our party up with the reactionary Berne conference dominated by the Ebert-Scheidemann gangsters and reactionary European Socialists generally; therefore be it

Resolved, that the State Executive Committee of the State of Mass. protests against the sending of Comrade James Oneal to Europe; and be it further

Resolved, that we call upon the rank and file everywhere through its locals and branches to endorse and second the resolution of the Central Branch of Local Boston printed in *The Revolutionary Age* of Morch 8, 1919, stating that the party shall participate only in a conference called or participated in by the Spartacan and Bolshevik parties.

THE AMNESTY CONVENTION

Whereas, the resolution of local Queens County of the Socialist Party calling for the convening of a National Emergency Convention is being circulated for referendum; and

Whereas, the calling of the proposed National Amnesty Convention to be participated in by bourgeois groups in contrary to the best Socialist practice and was intended to head off the growing demand for a National Emergency Convention of the Party, be it therefore

Resolved, that the State Executive Committee of the State of Massachusetts condemn the proposed Amnesty Convention; and be it further

Resolved, that we support the call for a National Emergency Convention; and be it further

Resolved, that we call upon the rank and file to support our action in these matters by voting "yes" on National Referendum B, 1919 and by condemning through their branches and locals the proposed National Amnesty Convention.