The Left Wing Manifesto and Program

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II

Moderate "Socialism"

HAVING indicated the collapse of the dominant moderate Socialism, of the Second International, upon the declaration of war on August 4, 1914, and during the war, the Left Wing Manifesto proceeds to trace the development of moderate "Socialism:"

> In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Social-Democracies of Europe set out to 'legislate Capitalism out of office." The class struggle was to be won in the capitalist legislatures. Step by step concessions were to be wrested from the state; the working class and the Socialist Parties were to be strengthened by means of "constructive" reform and social legislation. . . . No more were the parliaments used as platforms from which the challenge of revolutionary Socialism was flung to all the corners of Europe. Another era had set in, the era of "constructive" social reform legislation. Dominant moderate Socialism accepted the bourgeois state as the basis of its action and *strengthened* that state. . . . The goal became "constructive reforms" and cabinet portfolios—the cooperation of classes," the policy of openly or tacitly declaring that the coming of Socialism was a concern "of all the classes," instead of emphasizing the Marxian policy that the construction of the Socialist system is the task of the revolutionary proletariat alone. "Moderate Socialism" accepted the bourgeois state; and through its leaders was now ready to share responsibility with the bourgeoisie in the control of the capitalist state, even to the extent of defending the bourgeoisie against the working class—as in the first Briand ministry in France, when the official party press was opened to a defense of the shooting of striking railway workers at the order of the "Socialist"-bourgeois coalition cabinet.

It is absolutely necessary to clearly understand the differences between moderate Socialism and revolutionary Socalism in order to understand the development of contemporary Socialism. All the issues in dispute are simply manifestations of one central issue —the castration of fundamental Socialism by that moderate, petty bourgeois "Socialism" which everywhere is actually or potentially counter-revolutionary.

Socialism appears upon the stage of events as a revolutionary movement. It appears as a revolutionary movement, not out of the consciousness of Marx, but out of the compulsion of life itself. Socialism was conceived as a class movement of the revolutionary proletariat, as the most consistent and resolute expression of the working class movement for emancipation.

Considering itself as the expression of the mass movement of the proletariat, Socialism necessarily was affected by the prevailing social condtions. After the Franco-Prussian War and the collapse of the first International, social conditions determined organized Socialism as a *movement* of the aristocracy of labor (skilled workers) organized in the trades unions, and the middle class. In other words, Socialism in action developed into a petty bourgeois liberal reform movement, with nationalism as an inevitable accompaniment.

The emergence of this new movement was characterize by the formation of the Social-Democratic Party in Germany,—the unity of the Eisenachers and the Lassalleans. These factions were unified and the party organized on the basis of the Gotha Program. In this unity, fundamental revolutionary Socialism was abandoned, the Gotha Program being mercilessly criticized by Marx, particularly in its conception of the state as the means for proletarian emancipation. This Program evaded completely the revolutionary task of the conquest of power, of that fundamental problem which Marx, in his Criticism of the Gotha Program, characterized as follows: "Between the capitalistic society and the communistic, lies the period of the revolutonary transformation of the one into the other. This corresponds to a political transition period, in which the state cannot be anything else than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." Evading the actual problems of the Revolution, Socialism developed into a peaceful movement of organization, of trades union struggles, of parliamentary action, of conceiving legislation and the bourgeois state as the means of introducing Socialism.

The period 1875-1900 was a period of feverish industrial expansion on the basis of the national state. In this period there was a joint movement which affected the ideology and the practice of the Socialist movement: on the one hand, the organization of the skilled workers into trades unions, which secured certain concessions and became a privileged caste; and, on the other, the decay of the industrial middle class, crushed by the iron tread of industrial concentration. As one moved upwards and the other downwards, they met, formed a juncture, and united in a struggle to use the state to improve their conditions. This necessarily meant the use of a political party; and in Europe the party chosen was the party of Socialism, upon which the trades unions and the middle class imposed a petty bourgeois policy of reform legislaton and State Capitalism.

The ideal of this middle class crushed under the iron tread of industrial concentration was state ownership and control of the large aggregations of capital, of the trusts. Unable to wield real economic power, the middle class tried through state beneficence, by means of legislative measures, to crush trust capital and reassert its independence. This policy was doomed to disaster, since industrial concentration, being an economic necessity of Capitalism itself, could not be prevented by the state.

The aristocracy of labor, having secured concessions and a privileged status because of its skill, was equally menaced by this industrial concentration, which expropriated the skilled workers of their skill. These privileged workers menaced by industrial development combined with the middle class to secure legislative measures of reform on the basis of Capitalism.

Out of this unity of the aristocracy of labor, the privileged unions, and the middle class, the small producers, arose the general campaign for legislative reforms and for State Capitalism. The dominant organized Socialism became the expression of this bourgeois policy, abandoning fundamental Socialism and the revolutionary class struggle. Bourgeois liberal ideals were absorbed by the Socialist spokesmen and became, largely, the official Socialist policy, with parliamentarism the means of struggle.

This development meant, obviously, the abandonment of fundamental Socialism. It meant working on the basis of the bourgeois parliamentary state, instead of destroying that state; it meant the "co-operation of classes" for State Capitalism instead of the uncompromising proletarian class struggle for Socialism. Instead of the revolutionary theory of the necessity of conquering Capitalism, the official practice now was that of *modifying* Capitalism gradually, of a peaceful "growing into" Socialism on the basis of legislative reforms,—in the words of Jaures, "we shall carry on our reform work to a complete transformation of the existing order."

But instead of modifying or transforming the existing order of Capitalism, the legislative reform policy of the dominant moderate Socialism *strengthened* Capitalism. Out of this fact, and out of the fact that concentrated capital was mobilizing the typical proletariat of unskilled labor, developed mass movements against parliamentarism and the dominant Socialism.

Syndicalism was a departure from Marxism, theoretically unsound, although its life-impulse was a factor of prime importance, becoming a distorted expression because of the opposition of parliamentary Socialism. But the Left Wing theory of mass action and the American concept of industrial unionism were in absolute accord with Marxian Socialism,—a tactical supplementary to Marxism.

The struggle against the dominant Socialism became a struggle against its perversion of parliamentarism, against its petty bourgeois conception of the state. Industrial unionism and mass action equally realized the necessity of dynamic extra-parliamentary action in order to wage the immediate struggle of the proletariat and ultimately realize the Social Revolution. There was another fundamental point of agreement—the necessity of weakening the bourgeois parliamentary state, of destroying it in order to realize Socialism. The experience of the revolutionary proletariat in Russia and Germany, abundantly confirms, while supplementing, this theory of revolutionary Socialism.

The clash between the dominant moderate Socialism and revolutionary Socialism, accordingly, developed into this: moderate Socalism emphasized the necessity of legislative activity, of using the bourgeois parliamentary state to realize Socialism; revolutionary Socialism rejected legislative measures as a means of realizing Socialism, considered parliamentary action as simply a means of agitation, emphasized that the parliamentary political state should be weakened and finally overthrown by means of revolutionary industrial and mass action in order to realize Socialism. The one was petty bourgeois and moderate; the other proletarian and revolutionary.

Revolutionary Socialism emphasized that the policy of parliamentary reform promoted State Capitalism, and that State Capitalism was directly counter-revolutionary; moderate Socialism maintained that every extension of the functions of the state, of state ownership or control of industry was a "step toward" Socialism. Imperialism solved the controversy, unanswerably, by making State Capitalism the mechanism of Imperialism.

Imperialism develops out of the concentration of industry and the domination of industry by finance-capital—the unity of industrial and bank captal. Imperialism requires the centralized state, capable of unifying the forces of capital, of maintaining the discontented class groups in subjection, of mobilizing the whole national power in the international struggles of Imperialism. *State Capitalism is the particular form of expression of Imperialism*,—the final stage of Capitalism. What the parliamentary policy of the dominant moderate Socialism accomplished was to strengthen the capitalist state, to promote State Capitalism, and, accordingly, to strengthen Imperialism!

The dominant moderate Socialism, expressing the middle class and the aristocracy of labor (two groups which are aggrandized by Imperialism and converted into consciously counter-revolutionary agents) developed into the existing system of Imperialism. Upon the declaration of war, accordingly, this dominant moderate "Socialism" accepted the war and the policy of the imperialistic governments, betrayed the proletariat and revolutionary Socialism. Moderate Socialism is a traitor to Socialism and a betraver of the proletariat in war and in peace, and particularly during the Revolution. Moderate Socialism is the expression of the national liberal movement, which is fundamentally reactionary, the movement in theory of the middle class and the aristocracy of labor, which have been bribed by Imperialsm into nationalism and reaction. It is the worst enemy of the militant proletariat and Socialism.