The Left Wing Manifesto and Program

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III

Revolutionary Socialism

AFTER having indicted the dominant moderate Socialism and indicated the social conditions that produced it, the Manifesto proceeds to project the fundamentals of revolutionary Socialism:

> Revolutionary Socialists hold, with the founders of scientific Socialism, that there are two dominant classes in modern society—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; that between these two classes a struggle must go on, until the working class, through the abolition of the capitalist state and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, creates a Socialist system Revolutionary Socialists do not believe that they can be voted into power. They struggle for the conquest of power by the revolutionary proletariat. Then comes the transition period from Capitalism to Socialism, of which Marx speaks in his *Criticism of the Gotha Program*: "Between the capitalistic society and the communistic, lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. This corresponds to a political transition period, in which the state cannot be anything else but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."

The class struggle is fundamental to Socialism. It is the material basis for realizing the ideal of Socialism.

But the class struggle is not as simple as moderate Socialism makes it appear.

The two dominant classes in society are the proletariat and the bourgeoisie,—the workers and the capitalists. In between these two dominant class divisions there are other minor divisions, which are an important factor in the social struggle.

Moderate Socialism comprises its policy in an attack upon the larger capitalists, the trusts; and maintains that all other divisions in society—including the lesser capitalists and the middle class, the *petite bourgeoisie*, —are material for the Socialist struggle against Capitalism. Moderate Socialism says, in substance: Socialism is a struggle *of all the people* against the trusts and big capital; and it makes the realization of Socialism depend upon the unity in action of "the people," of the workers, the small capitalists, the small investors, the professions,—in short, moderate Socialism actually depends upon the *petite bourgeoisie* for the realization of Socialism. But these non-proletarian classes are not at all revolutionary, simply "liberal;" and moderate Socialism in action becomes dependent upon a liberal progressivism which makes for State Capitalism and promotes Capitalism; and which, moreover, under the conditions of Imperialism is directly counter-revolutionary.

Revolutionary Socialism, in accord with Marx and the actual facts of the class struggle, makes the realization of Socialism depend upon the industrial proletariat. Revolutionary Socialism, moreover, excludes the aristocracy of labor from the revolutionary movement, these skilled workers being united in policy with petty bourgeois progressivism. The realization of Socialism is the task of *one* class alone—the class of the proletariat.

The class struggle of revolutionary Socialism mobilizes the industrial proletariat against Capitalism,—that proletariat which is homogeneous, united and disciplined by the machine process, and which actually controls the basic industry of the nation. In this class struggle, revolutionary Socialism rejects compromise with any other class in society; it is a struggle of the proletariat against all other social groups. The small bourgeoisie and the aristocracy of labor can be forced into line *after* the proletariat has imposed its will upon society, and organized the "state" of proletarian dictatorship.

Moderate Socialism is compromising, vacillating, treacherous, because the social elements it depends upon—the small bourgeoisie and the aristocracy of labor—are not a fundamental factor in society; they vacillate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; their social instability produces political instability; they have been seduced by Imperialism and are now united with Imperialism.

Revolutionary Socialism is uncompromising, resolute, revolutionary, because it builds upon the industrial proletariat, which is actually a producing class, expropriated of all property, in whose consciousness the technological integration of the machine process has developed the concepts of integrated unionism and mass action. Revolutionary Socialism adheres to the class struggle because through the class struggle alone —the mass struggle—can this industrial proletariat secure immediate concessions and finally impose its will upon society, in this way forcing the vacillating aristocracy of labor and the *petite bourgeoisie* to make the decision of aligning with the proletariat.

The class struggle, according to Marx, is a political struggle. It is a political struggle in the sense that its purpose is political—the overthrow of one social system and its government, and the introduction of a new social system and its government. The revolutionary class struggle is political, since its objective is the conquest by the revolutionary proletariat of the power of the state.

The state is the expression of a particular social system and its ruling class. It is organized to impose the will of a class upon society. The state is organized coercion: the bourgeois state is organized to coerce the proletariat. The proletariat must conquer this state, destroy this state, destroy this political power of the capitalist ruling class, and organize a new proletarian state for the coercion of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat.

Revolutionary Socialism does not propose to "capture" the bourgeois parliamentary state, but to conquer and destroy it. Revolutionary Socialism, accordingly, repudiates the policy of introducing Socialism by means of legislative measures on the basis of the bourgeois state. This state is a bourgeois state: how, then, can it introduce Socialism? As long as the bourgeois parliamentary state prevails, the capitalist class is in power; it can baffle the will of the proletariat, since all the political power, the army and the police, the press and industry, are in the control of the capitalists. The revolutionary proletariat must expropriate all these by the conquest of power, by annihilating the political power of the capitalists, before it can begin the task of introducing Socialism.

Revolutionary Socialism, accordingly, proposes to conquer the power of the state. It proposes to conquer by means of political action *in the Marxian sense*. And political action in the revolutionary Marxian sense does not simply mean parliamentarism, but *the class action* of the proletariat *in any form* that has as its objective the conquest of the power of the state.

Parliamentary action is necessary. On the field of the state, of parliament, the proletariat meets the capitalist on all general issues of the class struggle. The revolutionary proletariat must fight the capitalist on all fronts, in the process of developing that final action which will conquer the power of the state, and overthrow Capitalism. Parliamentary political action, accordingly, is revolutionary: its task is to expose through the forum of parliament, the machinations of the state and Capitalism, to meet Capitalism on all issues, to rally the proletariat for the struggle against Capitalism. The purpose of *Socialist* parliamentary political action is to emphasize and clarify the revolutionary character of the class struggle.

But parliamentarism cannot conquer the power of the state for the proletariat. To imagine that Socialism can secure a majority in the parliaments is sheer Utopia, a refusal to understand that Capitalism can use the power of the state to disfranchise the workers, if necessary.

The conquest of the power of the state is an extra-parliamentary act. It is accomplished, not by the legislative representatives of the proletariat, but by *the mass power of the proletariat in action*, by the dynamic mass action of the proletariat. The supreme power of the proletariat inheres in *the political mass strike*, in using the industrial power of the proletariat for political objectives.

The Belgian workers secured the franchise by means of the political strike. The Russian revolution started with political strikes of the masses. The proletariat in the process of conquering the power of the state must start with the political mass strike, which alone is dynamic, which alone represents power and can mobilize the proletariat for the revolutionary struggle against Capitalism.

Revolutionary Socialism, accordingly, recognizes that the supreme form of proletarian political action is the political mass strike. Parliamentarism is a factor in developing this mass strike; parliamentarism, if it is revolutionary and adheres to the class struggle, performs necessary service in mobilizing the proletariat for the mass struggle against Capitalism.

Moderate Socialism refuses to recognize this supreme form of political action, limits and stultifies political action into legislative routine and petty bourgeois parliamentarism. This is a negation of the mass character of the proletarian struggle, a betrayal of the tasks of the Revolution.

The power of the proletariat to conquer Capitalism lies not in its numbers—which are scattered and can be nullified—but in its control of the industrial process. The mobilization of this proletarian industrial control against Capitalism means the end of Capitalism; and this proletarian industrial control can be mobilized only by means of the political mass strike.

What is the purpose of the final political mass strike, of revolutionary mass action? To conquer the power of the state. How is this accomplished? By destroying the bourgeois parliamentary state and organizing a new state, the state of the organized producers, of the workers in the plants and the farmers in the fields.

The revolutionary proletariat organizes a new state, based on industrial divisions and the industrial franchise.

But the abolition of the bourgeois political state does not immediately dispose of the political state. The proletariat itself needs a state during the transition period from Capitalism to Socialism, a state repressing force, with which to coerce the bourgeoisie. The state is an organ of coercion. The bourgeois state coerces the proletariat. The proletariat must organize a state to coerce the bourgeoisie, since the proletarian conquest of power will have reserves for action against the proletarian revolution.

This state of the revolutionary proletariat, functioning as a proletarian dictatorship, serves two functions: 1) to completely expropriate the bourgeoisie and crush its power of resistance: and 2) to introduce the new system of Communist Socialism, organized integrally and based upon the industrial administration of the industrially, communistically organized producers. After this task is accomplished the political state of the proletariat disappears, together with coercion and proletarian dictatorship, then we shall have, under Socialism, not the government of persons, but the administration of things.