

# Manifesto and Program of the Left

## Introduction

THE members of the Socialist Party of America are entitled to an explanation for the issuance of this pamphlet by the Left Wing Group.

First of all, be it understood, we are not a secessionist movement, nor do we contemplate splitting the party. We are a very active and growing section of the Socialist Party which is attempting to reach the rank and file with our urgent message over the heads of the powers that be, who, through inertia or a lack of vision, cannot see the necessity for a critical analysis of the party's policies and tactics.

The daily press is closed to us; therefore we cannot adequately present our side of the case.

In the various discussions that arise wherever party members or delegates assemble, both sides grow too heated for calm, dispassionate judgment.

Therefore we have decided to issue our Manifesto and Program in pamphlet form, so that the rank and file may read and judge our case on its merits.

Our comrades—and this is addressed exclusively to members of the party—the situation is such that a careful study of our position is absolutely imperative. We come to you, the court of last resort, for judgment.

## Manifesto

Prior to August, 1914, the nations of the world were on a volcano. Violent eruptions from time to time gave warning of the cataclysm to come, but the diplomats and statesmen managed to localize the outbreaks, and the masses, slightly aroused, sank back to their accustomed lethargy with doubts and misgivings, and the subterranean fires continued to smoulder. Surely, the people reasoned, no one would be so mad as to precipitate a world war!

Besides, they trusted blindly—some in their state-governments, some in the cohesive power of Christianity, their common religion, and some in the growing strength of the international Socialist movement. Had not the German Social Democracy exchanged dramatic telegrams with the French Socialist Party, each pledging self not to fight in case their governments declared war on each other? A general strike of workers led by these determined Socialists would quickly bring a government to their senses!

So the workers reasoned, until the thunder-clap of the Czar's ultimatum to Serbia. Then, suddenly, the storm broke. Mobilization everywhere. Declarations of war. In three or four days Europe was in arms.

The present structure of society—Capitalism—with its pretensions to democracy on the one hand, and its commercial rivalries, armament rings and standing armies on the other, all based on the exploitation of the working class and the division of the loot, was cast into the furnace of the war. Two things only could issue from the flames: either international capitalist control, through a League of Nations, or Social Revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Both of these forms are today contending for world-power.

The Social Democracies of Europe, unable to meet the crisis, were themselves hurled into the conflagration, to be tempered or consumed by it.

### The collapse of the Second International

At first the question which agitated Socialists' minds all over the world was: why have they failed? All sorts of extenuating circumstances were pleaded in their behalf—"defensive war," and "a low type of civilization menaces a higher type," and "Socialism must fight on the side of democracy," and "Socialism is not free from the virus of nationalism." All these excuses equally begged the question.

We know that great mass-demonstrations were held in every European country by Socialists protesting against their governments' declarations of war, and mobilization for war. And we know too that these demonstrations were suddenly rendered impotent by the complete surrender of the Socialist parliamentary and the official Socialist press. Why the sud-

den change of front? Why did the Socialist leaders in the parliaments of the future belligerents vote the war credits? Why did the official Socialist press in Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, etc. suddenly reverse its position and call for resistance to the invader? In short, why did the dominant Socialists support their governments?

We shall attempt to answer these questions.

### The Development of "Modern 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" reforms and social legislation; each concession would act as a rung in the ladder of Social Revolution, upon which the workers could climb step by step, until finally, some bright sunny morning, the peoples would awake to find the Cooperative Commonwealth functioning without disorder, confusion or hitch on the ruins of the capitalist state.

But what happened? When a few legislative seats had been captured, the thunderous denunciations of the Socialist legislators suddenly ceased. No more were the parliaments used as platforms from which the challenge of militant Socialism was flung to all corners of Europe. Another era had set in, the era of "constructive" social reform legislation. All powers to shape the policies and tactics of the Socialist parties were entrusted to the parliamentary leaders. And these lost sight of Socialism's original purpose; their goal became two-fold—"constructive reforms" and *Cabinet portfolios*, of the means to an end they made an end in itself. Moderate Socialism, in the hands of these parliamentary 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 for instance during 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.

### "Sausage Socialism"

This situation was brought about by mixing pure scientific Socialism with bourgeois reforms and the democratic cant of the eighteenth century. The result was what Rosa Luxemburg called "sausage Socialism." The Socialist parliamentarians forgot that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. They emphasized petty bourgeois social reformism in order to attract tradesmen, shop-keepers and members of the professions, and of course the latter flocked to the Socialist movement in great numbers, seeking relief from the constant grinding between corporate capital and awakening labor.

The Socialist organizations actively competed for votes, on the basis of social reforms, with the bourgeois liberal political parties. And so they catered to the ignorance and prejudices of the workers, trading promises of immediate reforms for votes.

Dominant "moderate Socialism" forgot the teachings of the founders of scientific Socialism, forgot its function as a proletarian movement—"the most resolute and advanced section of the working class parties"—and permitted the bourgeois and self-seeking trade-union element to shape its policies and tactics.

This was the condition in which the Social Democracies of Europe found themselves at the outbreak of war in 1914. Demoralized and confused by the cross-currents within their own parties, vacillating and compromising with the bourgeois state, they fell an easy prey to social-patriotism and nationalism.

This is the explanation of the failure of the Socialist movements of Europe in the crisis of 1914.

### Sparticides and Bolsheviki

But revolutionary Socialism was not destined to lie inert for long. In Germany, Karl Liebknecht,

Franz Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin organized the Spartacus Group. But their voices were drowned in the roar of cannon and the shrieks of the dying and the maimed.

Russia, however, was to be the first battle-ground where "moderate" and revolutionary Socialism came to grips for the mastery of the state. The break-up of the corrupt, bureaucratic Czarist regime opened the flood-gates of Revolution. Centuries of oppression had paved the way.

Three main contending parties attempted to ride into power on the revolutionary tide: the Cadets, the "moderate Socialists"—Mensheviki and Social Revolutionists—and the revolutionary Socialists—the Bolsheviki. The Cadets were first to be swept into power; but they tried to stem the still rising flood with a few abstract political ideals, and were soon carried away. The soldiers, workers and peasants could no longer be fooled by phrases. The Mensheviki and Social Revolutionaries succeeded the Cadets. And now came the crucial test; would they, in accordance with Marxian teachings make themselves the ruling class and sweep away the old conditions of production and thus prepare the way for the Cooperative Commonwealth? Or would they tinker with the old machinery and try to foist it on the masses as something just as good?

They did the latter, and proved for all time that "moderate Socialism" cannot be trusted.

The Socialists began to understand why dominant "moderate Socialism" had broken down. "Moderate Socialism" was not prepared to seize the power for the workers during a revolution. "Moderate Socialism" had a rigid formula—"Constructive social reform legislation within the capitalist state;" and to that formula it clung. It believed that bourgeois democracy could be used as a means of constructing the Socialist order; therefore it must wait until the people, through a Constituent Assembly, should bring Socialism into existence. And in the meantime, it held that there must be established a Government Coalition with the enemy, the bourgeoisie. As it had with all the means of controlling public opinion in the hands of the bourgeoisie, a Constituent Assembly could or would ever vote the Socialists into power.

Revolutionary Socialists hold, with the founders of scientific Socialism, that there are two dominant classes in society—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—that between these two classes a struggle must go on until the working class, through the seizure of the instruments of production and distribution, the abolition of the capitalist state, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, creates a Socialist order. Revolutionary Socialists do not propose to wait until the vast majority of the people vote them into power; but, "if the proletariat during its struggle with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class; if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and as such sweeps away by force the old conditions of production; then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms, and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class."

Marx and Engels clearly explain the function of the Socialist movement. It is the "moderate Socialists," through intellectual gymnastics, evasions, misquotations and the tearing of sentences and phrases from their context, who make Marx and Engels sponsors for their perverted version of Socialism.

### Problems of American Socialism

At the present moment the Socialist Party of America is agitated by several cross-currents, some local in their character, and some a reflex of cleavages within the European Socialist movements. Many see in internal dissension merely an unimportant difference of opinion, or at most, dissatisfaction with the conduct of the party, and the desire to replace those who misused it with better men.

We, however, maintain that there is a fundar-