A Problem in Tactics

By Louis C. Fraina

THE great fact of contemporary history is the proletarian revolution in action. This great fact, the affirmation in life of the theory of Socialism, is now deciding the destiny of the proletariat, and of the world.

And the great fact of contemporary Socialism is that this proletarian revolution proceeds by means of an implacable struggle between Socialism and Socialism, between mutually exclusive conceptions of Socialism.

The uncritical Socialist rhapsodizes over the coming of Socialism in Russia, over the "Socialist" Republic in Germany: Socialism is conquering! But which Socialism—what conception of Socialism?

The proletarian revolution is in action in Germany, has been for one year and a half in action in Russia; and the most unrelenting enemy of this revolution, the enemy behind whom skulks the forces of Capitalism and reaction, is Socialism itself, or rather that "majority" Socialism which dominated the International before the war and betrayed Socialism during the war by transforming itself into an ally of social-Imperialism.

In developing its action against Capitalism and Imperialism the revolutionary proletariat met a staggering surprise—the opposition of Socialism. Shaken by the impact of revolutionary events, and verging on collapse, Capitalism built its last line of defense—an alliance with the moderate, opportunistic "majority" Socialism. The real struggle in Russia, the real struggle in Germany now, is not between Socialism and Capitalism, but between Socialism and "Socialism," between revolutionary "minority" Socialism and petty bourgeois "majority" Socialism. The proletarian revolution against Capitalism and Imperialism is equally a revolution against the old moderate, petty bourgeois Socialism: the decisive phase of the Revolution and the decisive phase in the coming reconstruction of international Socialism—a fact which the American Socialist press either completely ignores or camouflages.

In Russia, in March, 1917, Czarism was overthrown and a bourgeois republic organized. Immediately antagonism developed between bourgeois and proletarian, between Capitalism and Socialism. Shaken by revolutionary proletarian action, by the determination of the proletariat to break through the breach created in the old order for action and the conquest of power, the bourgeoisie concluded an alliance with moderate Socialism, with the "Socialism" of Cheidse, Plekhanov, Tseretelli, the Socialism of the Mensheviki and the Social-Revolutionary Party. What was this Socialism? In substance, in tactics, ideology and immediate purposes, it was identical with the majority Socialism that dominated the International before the war, that betrayed the International during the war (and which is still dominant, except in Russia, Germany and Italy.) It was this Socialism that was dominant in Russia before the Revolution, that captured the imagination of the Socialists of the world, that was considered the real expression of the Russian Socialist movement. This Socialism concluded an alliance with the bourgeoisie, by means of a "coalition government;" it opposed the coming of the proletarian revolution, acted by all means in its power against the revolutionary proletariat. After the proletarian revolution, in spite of all, conquered power, after a new Socialist state of the unified Soviets was organized, this "majority" Socialism stayed in the opposition, and elements of it, such as Maslov and Tchaikovsky, made agreements with international Imperialism for armed intervention—against the Soviet Republic, against the Russian masses, against the proletarian revolution! The decisive struggle in Russia was the struggle between revolutionary proletarian Socialism and moderate petty bourgeois Socialism.

A parallel course is being pursued by events in Germany. The "majority" Socialism of Scheidemann, Ebert & Co., of the Social-Democratic Party, of that party which before the war (and even now, in some quarters) was considered the exemplar of a Socialist Party, did all in its power to prevent action against the war and the government, to prevent the coming of a revolution; this "Socialism" intrigued against the proletarian revolution in Russia, trying to use it in the nationalistic interests of Germany, crushing the efforts of the masses to act in sympathy and solidarity with revolutionary Russia; and ten days before the mass action of the German proletariat flared up into the Revolution, this "majority" Socialism issued a proclamation against revolutionary action, against even strikes and demonstrations hostile to the government! But the revolution came; and now the "majority" Socialism of the Social-Democratic Party, the model of moderate Socialism everywhere, opposes the completion of the revolution, through its slavery to the petty bourgeois democracy of the Constituent Assembly it promotes Capitalism, tries to stultify the revolution within the limits of petty bourgeois action and reforms, is the real enemy of the revolution, the last line of defense of Imperialism and Capitalism in Germany. Simultaneously the pure (in type, but not in spirit) "Menshevik" Socialism of the "centre" Independent Socialists, of Haase & Co., acts equally against the revolution, by wavering between Scheidemann and Liebknecht, between petty bourgeois Socialism and proletarian Socialism. The democratic, parliamentary republic is organized in Germany; but instead of the struggle to transform this bourgeois republic into a Socialist republic, moderate Socialism, in Germany as in Russia, engages in the counter-revolutionary struggle to prevent this transformation!

Why?

All sorts of arguments are made to explain, or condone, the attitude of moderate Socialism in Russia. The war, say some: but why, now that the war is over, should moderate Socialism still act against the Soviet Republic? The Mensheviki and the Social-Revolutionists, say others, did not think a proletarian revolution could be accomplished; but why, after the revoluton was accomplished, should the tendency of moderate Socialism still oppose the Soviet Republic, often in alliance with the bourgeois counter-revolution and international Imperialism? But the great argument of the Russian Mensheviki, and their petty bourgeois Socialist supporters everywhere, is that Russia was industrially undeveloped, economically unripe for Socialism, the proletariat not strong enough to make a proletarian revolution and introduce Socialism. Socialism, say these perverters of Marxism, requires a highly developed Capitalism, ignoring that the coming of Socialism implies a series of international revolutionary class struggles in which proletarian class power decides the issue. Revolutionary Socialism in Russia was determined not alone in a struggle for the proletarian revolution in Russia, but for the proletarian revolution in Germany, and in Europe. Still, considering Russia alone, there was a deceptive color of truth to the argument that industrially undeveloped Russia was not prepared for a proletarian revolution.

But now consider Germany. Germany, industrially, is the very antithesis of Russia. If any nation in the world is industrially prepared for Socialism, it is Germany: a completely industrialized unit, in which the peasantry is a minor factor and the industrial proletariat at least one-half the population. Germany is a small country, territorially, close-knit by concentrated industry, in which concentrated industry controls. It is inconceivable that industry in Germany itself, under Capitalism, could develop any greater measure of maturity. Even the perverters of Marxism would admit that Germany, objectively, is ready for Socialism. *And yet, in spite of this difference with Russia, moderate petty bourgeois Socialism pursues in Germany the identical policy of moderate Socialism in Russia, is against the proletarian revoluton, against Socialism in fact!*

Why? It is clear, it is incontrovertible, considering the dissimilarity of industrial conditions in Russia and Germany, and the similarity in policy of moderate Socialism, that there must be a general policy, one fundamental tactic, that each possesses and which determines them in a counter-revolutionary course.

It is not a question of individuals, or of their personal motives and character; but of the tendency they represent.

What this fundamental tendency is, is apparent upon considering that the issue that split Socialism in Russia and in Germany was the issue of "All power to the Soviets!"—the issue of state power: the issue, the old bourgeois state or a new proletarian state?

The fundamental tendency of moderate Socialism, which is at the same time the cause and the effect of its petty bourgeois ideology, the bases of its compromising tactics and opportunism, and the reason it avoids the real industrial struggle and rejects mass action, is the conception that the coming of Socialism is a process of introducing measures of socialzation on the basis of the bourgeois parliamentary state. Petty bourgeois, moderate Socialism considers the "democratic" parliamentary state as the centre of its activity, the instrument for the coming of Socialism. Parliamentary action is the decisive instrument of action: nationalize industry after industry, perfect the "democracy" of the state, secure a parliamentary majority—and then comes Socialism!

This policy, clearly, would determine moderate Socialism in Russia and in Germany in a struggle ror the democratic parliamentary state. If the democratic state is the instrument for the introduction of Socialism, then the real struggle is to establish the democratic parliamentary state—which was precisely why moderate Socialism in Russia and in Germany was dominantly interested in the parliamentary state, adherents of bourgeois democracy.

But this policy of moderate Socialism has another aspect—if the state and parliamentary action are considered decisive, then the "co-operation of classes" becomes imperative, Socialism becomes the concern of all the classes which must unite in the introduction of Socialism—which was precisely the policy formulated by the German Social-Democratic Party in its Wuerzberg convention in 1916. This circumstance develops the corrupt, compromising, counter-revolutionary ideology of moderate Socialism.

Out of this policy emerges necessary and relentless opposition to "All power to the Soviets!"—to a dictatorship of the proletariat. "All power to the Soviets!" implies a new state—but moderate Socialism believes the old parliamentary state is the instrument for the introduction of Socialism; proletarian Socialism implies the one-class state, that the introduction of Socialism is the concern of the proletariat and the proletariat alone—but moderate Socialism believes in the democratic state "of all the classes" and that the introduction of Socialism is the concern of all the classes, a process of class co-operation.

The fatal, un-proletarian character of this policy of moderate Socialism is not very apparent in normal times, except on the problem of unionism; but it becomes as clear as crystal in the Revolution, necessarily reveals its counter-revolutionary character. And all other defects of moderate Socialism are simply an expression of this fundamental tendency, this petty bourgeois policy.

Revolutionary Socialism, Marxism, completely repudiates the attitude of moderate Socialism on the problem of the state. Marxism projects, and revolutionary experience confirms, that the proletariat can not simply lay hold of the ready-made machinery of the bourgeois state and use it for its purposes: this machinery must be destroyed and a new state organized—the state of the organized producers, of proletarian dictatorship. Marxism conceives the introduction of Socialism as the process of one class, determined by the struggle of one class—*the proletariat*, all other classes, in the final test, are necessarily counter- revolutionary. It is imperative, accordingly, that the revolutionary proletariat annihilate the "democratic" state "of all the classes" in favor of the new proletarian state. And what is this new state? It is simply the state of the organized producers—the working class; dispensing with the reactionary parliamentary forms and fraudulent democracy of the bourgeois state. The bourgeois state is an instrument of class rule, the authority of one class over another, its army, police and bureaucracy instruments for the terrorism of the proletariat. It is upon the basis of this new industrial state, with industrial and not territorial constituencies, that Socialism can be introduced. The complete political expropriation of the bourgeois is the necessary preliminary to his complete economic expropriation. The first concern of the revolutionary proletariat, accordingly, is the conquest of the state power by mass action, the annihilation of the bourgeois parliamentary state, and the organization of a new proletarian state functioning temporarily as a dictatorship of the revolutionary proletariat. This state is the state of the organized producers—the state comprised in "all power to the Soviets!" Revolutionary Socialism in Germany and in Russia, instead of using the revolution, the breach in the old order, to "perfect" the "democratic" parliamentary state, used this breach for a larger and Socialist purpose—the destruction of this "democratic" state, the completion of the proletarian revolution and the organization of the new proletarian state—a policy which alone can realize Socialism.

And, in terms of simplicity and life, this problem is comprised in the class struggle and life itself.

This great issue split Socialism in Russia and in Germany: it is decisive. It has many vital aspects: the relation of parliamentary action to all forms of proletarian action, the necessity of developing the dynamic mass action of the industrial proletariat, the rejection of "class co-operation" under any and all conditions. To us in the United States, the problem of state power and its correlative aspects are instinct, for one thing, in the problem of industrial unionism. In the coming reconstruction of Socialism, the problem of state power will play a decisive role.

The general policy comprised in the revolutionary attitude to the problem of state power is not realizable in an actual revolution alone; it affects the policy of Socialism and is realizable in general forms under any and all conditions, in the piping days of peace and in the stern days of revolutionary struggle.