

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

The object of this booklet is to clarify the main issues and problems of the present-day Socialist movement.

I approach the task with a full realization of its difficulties. The current of the Socialist movement since the outbreak of the war has been so swift and so replete with unexpected turns, as to make it well-nigh impossible to discern its meaning and tendencies in all cases. The Socialist movement of the pre-war period has broken down or lost vitality. The new movement has not yet crystallized. It is in the process of formation, and the violent clashes and hostile divisions within its ranks are but manifestations of that process.

Eventually the movement will be compelled to adjust itself to the new conditions and requirements, and the sooner the Socialists of all shades begin to analyze the grounds of their disagreements candidly and dispassionately, the sooner will the process of regeneration be accomplished.

Our first task, therefore, is to discover a sound basis for such an analysis, a generally accepted premise from which the discussion may proceed fruitfully.

Such a basis will be found in the common appeal to Marx. X For Marxism is still the avowed creed of all contending Socialist camps, each claiming strict adherence to the doctrine and spirit of the theoretical founder of the modern Socialist movement and charging its opponents with a palpable departure from them. X

The essence of the Marxian method of historical research is to look to material causes for the explanation of all vital social and political events. The sudden disintegration of the powerful pre-war Socialist movement, generally designated as the Second International, is undoubtedly such a historic event. It, too, must be understood on the basis of material facts and circumstances. To account for the world-wide division in the Socialist movement on the sole theory that certain sections of it have become "Social-Patriots" and traitors to the cause, while others have remained steadfast to the ideals of revolutionary Socialism, is to beg the question, because it furnishes no explanation of the reasons why some groups succumbed to the inroads of Social-Patriotism, while others resisted it.

Every great crisis in a revolutionary movement which puts its sincerity and courage to a sharp test will inevitably prove fatal to many of its leaders, and not infrequently the most violent and "uncompromising" types will show the largest percentage of desertions. The events of the last years have subjected

the Socialist movement to the severest trial in its history, and whole groups of leaders and followers have surrendered to the heavy pressure of the capitalist forces in practically every country. But this undeniable fact is one of the manifestations and symptoms of the breakdown of the old Socialist movement, rather than an explanation of its causes.

In a somewhat similar situation arising from the collapse of the revolutionary movement of 1848, Marx caustically sums up the shallowness of the liberal bourgeois analysis of its own failure in this language: "When you inquire into the causes of the counter-revolutionary successes, you are met on every hand with the reply that it was Mr. This or Citizen That who 'betrayed' the people, which reply may be very true or not, according to circumstances, but under no circumstances does it explain anything—it does not even show how it came to pass that the 'people' allowed themselves to be thus betrayed."<sup>1</sup>

Nor does the Moscow classification by "wings" (the Right, the Left, and the Center) shed much light on the causes and meaning of the divisions within the Socialist ranks. It is a thoroughly ideological attempt to measure the degree of "radicalism" of Socialist groups and individual Socialists. There always are and always will be sharp personal and temperamental differences in every large mass movement. Such

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<sup>1</sup> "Revolution and Counter-Revolution," American edition, 1919, page 15.

differences exist within each group as between groups. They were very pronounced in the Socialist movement of all periods. Still the movement maintained itself as an organized unit, particularly in the international field, until the 1st day of August, 1914.

The Second International was split by two main causes, the war and the Russian Revolution. The differences between the Socialist parties in the belligerent countries created by the war have been largely attenuated with the cessation of hostilities. The revolution in Russia and the Soviet régime which it has established, have proved a more acute and lasting factor of Socialist disunion.

X The Socialist world was not prepared for a social revolution in Russia. The event came to it as a startling surprise. It upset its theories and threw confusion into its ranks. The Russian Revolution was utterly out of keeping with the conception of social evolution which dominated the international Socialist movement before the war. It developed a complex of new social institutions substantially at variance with those prevailing or anticipated in other countries, and it is this divergence of concrete material and political conditions, rather than mere theoretical and temperamental differences that lies at the bottom of the heated discussions in the ranks of the present-day Socialist movement. X

To avert misconceptions it may be stated at the outset that my attempted analysis of the specific fact-

tutions of the Russian Revolution and the policies of the Soviet government are not intended as "criticism." The new social forms of Soviet Russia have been shaped by the inherent forces of the conditions and events which have given birth to the first Socialist republic. Its policies are still in the making. History has not yet recorded its final verdict upon their merits, and judged by the pragmatic test of immediate success, Communist Russia has had the best of the argument up to the present. Mistakes and excesses have undoubtedly been committed, but these are inevitable in great revolutions and of comparative unimportance in the long run. The Russian Communists have preserved and stabilized the Russian Revolution. Perhaps this could have been accomplished in the same way or better by other and less painful methods. But the latter is speculation, while the former is fact.