

Chapter XII

THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

The Russian Revolution is beyond doubt the greatest event in the history of Socialism. Its advent has profoundly modified the situation and outlook of the movement in all countries. While the social and political institutions and the practical policies which it has evolved need not be accepted as models for all future proletarian revolutions, and while the new theoretical doctrines which its authors have formulated cannot claim general and uniform applicability, the Russian Revolution has forced a critical re-examination of the theoretical bases of the movement, a decided shifting of emphasis in its methods and a radical regrouping of its forces.

The principal contribution of Soviet Russia has been, to borrow a pithy expression from Marx, "its own working existence." The fact of the workers' and peasants' republic in the largest country of Europe has forever destroyed the superstitions and unreasoning belief that the capitalist order of society is unalterable and eternal. With one blow it has transferred the Socialist ideal from the abstract and speculative realms of Utopia to the solid ground of reality.

Prior to the Russian revolution the Socialist movement of most countries of Europe was engaged in the task of training and educating the working classes in the general idea of social revolution without a well defined purpose of securing the governments of their own countries in their own day. It was like the routine work of drilling a regular army in times of peace without reference to a concrete impending war. The vast organizations of Socialism and labor were adjusted to such peace-time activities, and when the crisis came a number of the leaders and large portions of the masses were unable to adapt themselves to the new situation. They were passed over by the active revolutionary struggles, just as peace-time generals are discarded and peace-time armies reorganized upon the outbreak of actual hostilities. It is this inevitable development that accounts largely for the "betrayal" of the Second International.

The Russian Revolution has suddenly ushered in a new era in the Socialist movement of the world—the era of direct efforts for the practical realization of the Socialist program. It was the example of Soviet Russia that made possible the attempted Socialist régimes in Hungary and Finland, and to a minor extent in Germany and Austria. And while these first attempts have failed and the revolutionary wave has been succeeded by a state of reaction, the check can only be of a temporary nature. As soon as the prevailing condition of economic depression and the moral

and political aftermath of the war will ease up to an appreciable extent, the workers will undoubtedly reorganize their forces and return to the attack.

In the more advanced countries of Europe the new economic and political conditions have created a potential "revolutionary situation"; the direct objective of the next Socialist attack in any of them may be the immediate conquest of the powers of government. The spirit and tempo of such renewed movements and their eventual success or failure will inevitably be influenced to a large extent by developments in Soviet Russia.

For no matter how justly the conditions of Russia and the special kind of Socialism produced by them may be differentiated from the conditions in the west and the type of Socialism which is expected to be reared on their foundations, the world at large will invariably and summarily sweep aside all such distinctions. To the masses of workers and non-workers Soviet Russia is and always will be a practical demonstration of Socialism at work, and the prototype of all Socialist governments. The successes of the Russian struggle will inspire and stimulate the Socialist movement of all countries. Her failures will be direct set-backs to the whole of international Socialism.

The workers of Europe, moreover, will need the support of Soviet Russia after their accession to power even more than her cooperation in the period of struggle for political supremacy. Every new Socialist republic in Europe will, as suggested in the preceding

chapter, depend for its safety most directly upon the co-existence of a Socialist régime or at least of a potent Socialist influence in one or more adjacent countries. But the active assistance of a powerful country like Russia will be of inestimable value in its struggles against foreign capitalist attacks.

A whole-hearted support of Soviet Russia by the advanced workers everywhere is thus dictated not only by their natural sentimental attachment for the first Socialist republic, but also by their direct class interests.

On the other hand, the destiny of Soviet Russia is indissolubly linked with the success or failure of the Socialist movement beyond her boundaries. So long as Russia will remain the only Socialist country in the world, it will not cease to be the target of capitalist attacks, and every *modus vivendi* which it may establish with foreign powers will be extremely precarious.

Only when additional Socialist republics will be securely established in Europe, can international capitalism be expected to reconcile itself to the new order.

Until the advent of such governments the capitalist classes of the most powerful countries will inevitably be tempted to renew armed hostilities on every propitious occasion, unless they will be deterred from such attempts by the presence in their own countries of strong and determined organizations of labor in known sympathy with the Soviet Republic.

At no time did the Socialist movement stand in greater need of harmonious cooperation of all its parts and at no time was it more disrupted than in this critical period of its history. The most urgent and immediate task before the Socialists of the world is to rebuild an effective international organization, and that task calls for the utmost sagacity and broad-minded statesmanship within the movement.

Responding to the needs of the present conditions of the Socialist movement the new International must be primarily an organization of action, just as the First International was largely one of discussion and the Second of propaganda and organization in conformity with the requirements in the respective periods of their activities. The tests of membership in the new international body should accordingly be more stringent than those laid down by its precursors. They must include an absolute assurance of active support of Soviet Russia and all other Socialist governments that may hereafter be established and of consistent opposition to any attacks against them on the part of the capitalist governments. They may impose a definite inhibition of Socialist participation in bourgeois governments, and exact a greater degree of practical conformity with decisions on international policies and tactics than the Second International did.

But with the establishment of clear tests in the general policies of an international character, a rational world-organization of modern Socialism must allow

its affiliated parties at least the same independence in the determination of their national tactics, form of organization and methods of struggle as the Second International did. In the period of the latter the conditions and tasks of the Socialist movement of the various countries differed in degree rather than in substance. Strong or weak, old or new, they were all engaged in propagandistic activities and industrial and political struggles along practically uniform lines. It was conceivably possible, though never attempted, to formulate a general code of tactics for all of them.

The war and the revolutions have developed new and radical divergencies in the Socialist movement of the different countries. To-day the Socialist Party is the ruling political party in Russia, a party deposed from power in Hungary and Finland, a plurality party in the several leading countries of the European continent, a weak minority party in a highly developed capitalist state, as in England and America, or an embryonic party of vague outlines, as in the countries of the far East. To attempt to cast all these divergent movements into one mould of program, methods and organization, or to direct their activities from one center is to sacrifice all realities to a doctrinaire scheme.

The new Socialist International furthermore must be international as well as Socialistic, international in form and function as well as in aspirations. It must not be dominated by the movement of one country and must serve the interests of all countries alike. The

Second International was largely ruled by the German Social Democracy, and when the latter surrendered on August 4th, 1914, the whole international structure of Socialism collapsed. The new International must not lean too heavily on Russia if it is to be built on more solid foundations than its predecessor. Just because of the far-reaching effects of the Russian example upon the workers of the whole world, the Socialists of that country must treat their power as a trust for the Socialist movement of all countries. They must shape their policies with reference to these effects and in the largest possible measure in consultation and active cooperation with the militant working class of all countries.

The Russian Communists have had an exceptional opportunity to lead in the re-formation of the International of Socialism, but have lamentably failed to rise to it. The Communist International, which has been created under their inspiration, falls short in all substantial requirements as an effective instrument in the modern world struggles of the working class. As at present constituted and managed, it is not international but sectional and sectarian. It is essentially Russian in structure, conception and program.

Its permanent seat is in Russia, its principal officials are Russian, and its powerful Executive Committee is dominated by Russians. Out of a total membership of twenty, which go to make up the latter body, five are representatives of the Communist Party of Russia

(with five or more additional "alternates"), the remaining fifteen seats are apportioned among all other countries, each receiving one, regardless of size or importance. If it is taken into account that the latter include several members with practically imaginary constituencies, that the whole work of the Executive Committee is virtually financed by Russia, and that the majority of its Bureau or "Présidium," the everyday working body, is composed of Russians, it must be realized that the Communist International represents little more than the international dictatorship of the Communist Party of Russia. The reports of all proceedings of its Executive Committee and Congresses show how thoroughly this Russian rule asserts itself in actual operation.

The absolute Russian control of the Communist International is particularly unhealthy because of the fact that the Russian proletariat is a ruling class.

The Socialist International is in the first instance a fighting organization of revolutionary opposition parties united in the common struggle against the ruling capitalist classes of the world. The political parties of the bourgeoisie need no international organization for the protection of their general class interests. The governments take care of that through established diplomatic channels or their League of Nations. Similarly when the Socialist régime will have conquered the greater part of the world the militant Socialist International will naturally be superseded by

an international federation of Socialist governments. In the transitory period when the Socialist movement contains one or more parties in power amidst an organization of minority opposition-parties, the position of the former will be extraordinarily delicate, as it will not always prove an easy task to divorce their international Socialist policies from the practical politics of the Foreign Office of their government.

I have had occasion to point out this danger in the attitude of the Communist International towards the revolutionary movements of the Far East. A somewhat similar danger seems to lurk in its relations with the Socialist movements of Europe and America.

The hope of an immediately impending world revolution, which seemed so essential to the maintenance of Soviet Russia, and was at the bottom of her domestic and foreign policies, also inspired the organization and program of the Communist International. But while the Bolshevik authorities have definitely abandoned the hope and theory for home consumption, they cling to it with strange tenacity in their international program. The Platform-Resolution of the Second Congress of the Communist International still views the world as on the eve of a general proletarian revolution, and the famous twenty-one "Conditions of Affiliation" represent a plan of battle issued by an international General Staff.

"The world proletariat is on the eve of decisive battles," proclaims the Platform-Resolution. "We are

living through an epoch of direct civil wars. But the decisive hour is near. In almost all the countries where there is a considerable labor movement the working class will have before it in the immediate future a series of fierce encounters.

Now more than ever does the working class need a solidified organization. The working class must prepare ceaselessly for the coming decisive struggle *without losing a single hour of the precious time that remains.*" (Italics mine.)

In the twenty-one Conditions the assertion is made even more pointedly: "The class struggle in *almost every country of Europe and America* is entering upon the phase of civil war." (Italics mine.)

If words mean anything these statements convey the assertion that the working classes are arrayed for a decisive armed contest for the immediate conquest of political powers in almost every country of Europe and America, i. e., in the United States and Canada as well as in the Central and South American republics; and it is on this fantastic assumption that the scheme of organization of Communist International is based.

"*À la guerre comme à la guerre.*" Civil war calls for military tactics. "The Communist International till now was primarily an organ of propaganda and agitation. The Communist International now becomes a militant organization, *which will have to assume immediate direction of the movement in the various coun-*

tries." (Italics mine.) Zinovieff announces ¹ and the Conditions of Affiliation thus formulate the logical application of the doctrine:

"At the present time of acute civil war the Communist Party will be able fully to do its duty only when it is organized in a sufficiently thorough way, when it possesses an iron discipline, and when its party center enjoys the confidence of the members of the party, who are to endow this center with complete power, authority and ample rights."

The phrase about "iron discipline" is by no means mere rhetoric. The "Conditions of Affiliation" impose upon the international Communist fraternity a code of rules and regulations which bears a close resemblance not only to the ordinary military regulations but also to the "Letter on Obediencē" of the ingenious founder of the Jesuit Order. All Communist parties are directed to make periodical "clearances" of their members in order to rid them of all "petty bourgeois elements"; they are also bound to "inspect the personnel of their parliamentary representatives and to remove all unreliable elements therefrom." The entire party press must be edited by "reliable Communists" under the strict supervision of the party authorities, and all national platforms or programs must be submitted for confirmation to the next Congress of the Communist International or its Executive Committee.

¹ At the second congress of the Communist International.

To the same general spirit of St. Ignatius of Loyola is also to be traced the intolerance of criticism, the reglementation of opinion within the Socialist movement. All Socialists who fail to subscribe to every article of the neo-Communist creed are branded as "traitors" and "agents of the capitalist class," and parties desiring to affiliate with the Communist International are warned of the necessity "of a complete and absolute rupture with reformism and the policy of the 'centrists,'" and of advocating such a rupture "among the widest circles of the party membership."

To the Socialist movement of the world the Communist International has brought not peace but the sword. At a time when the movement, weakened and disrupted by the war, stands most in need of reconstruction and re-union, it offers it a bigoted policy of rupture and expulsion.

And the new policy is working to perfection. Within the first two years of the energetic activities of the Communist International the Socialist movement of every country in the world was successfully "ruptured."

What the Communists of Russia have contributed to the Socialist movement of the world by the inspiration of their soviet republic, they have more than offset by the disruptive activities of their International. The Communist International as at present constituted may be justly defined as the instrument with which Soviet Russia frustrates its own effectiveness as a factor in the proletarian world revolution.

On the other hand, all other attempts to recreate a virile International of Socialism have so far failed. The process can evidently not be forced. It must wait upon the healing hand of time, and to the optimistic and hopeful the working of the hand is already discernible.

The Communist re-orientation inside of Russia is in the long run bound to reflect itself upon the international Socialist movement.

With the abatement of foreign capitalist warfare upon the workers' republic and the definite defeat of all counter-revolutionary movements within the country, Soviet Russia will inevitably abandon the policy of terror and suppression, and settle down to the constructive tasks of building up her economic and cultural systems. This task will enlist the wholehearted support of the Russian Socialists of all shades and lead to co-operation in practical work.

Similarly, the resumption of active revolutionary struggles in the countries of the West may be expected to re-unite the Socialist factions in those countries, and union at home will infallibly lead to international union.

After the dissolution of the First International it took about fifteen years to prepare the ground for the creation of the Second. But events move much faster in our agitated times. The revival of the Socialist International may be nearer than outward appearances indicate.