

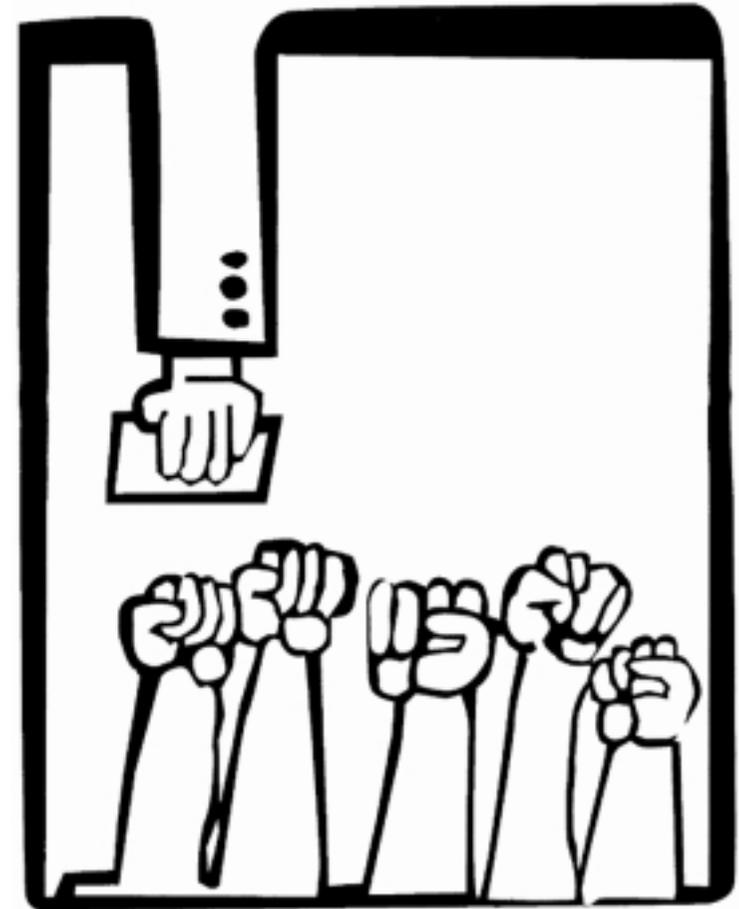
This pamphlet by Alexander Berkman is an extract out of his *What is Communist Anarchism?* In it, he explains how and why the socialist parties of the world have not been able to bring us one step nearer to Socialism. It does not matter if this party calls itself "Socialist Party" or "Workers Party"; it is the fact that anyone who gets into office becomes divorced from the struggles of the workers and poor and corrupted by the power and privileges they receive.

As we have always said, the only way for us to achieve any meaningful change is to organise in our workplaces and communities - for social revolution and Anarchism.

But we recommend you give it a read and make up your own mind. After all, who knows better than you what you want out of life.

For those of us in South Africa reading this pamphlet, we just need to think of our good "comrades in government"; Trevor Manuel, the Minister of Finance, who also happens to be chairman of the World Bank - and so-called "communist" Ministers Jeff Radebe (state business), Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi (civil service) and Charles Nqakula (police), to see the truth in Berkman's words.

THE FAILURE OF SOCIALISM



ALEXANDER BERKMAN



Zabalaza Books

"Knowledge is the Key to be Free"

Post: Postnet Suite 116, Private Bag X42,
Braamfontein, 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

E-Mail: zabalaza@union.org.za

Website: www.zabalaza.net/zababooks

ly also in human government, in the domination of man by man, in the State and its institutions of oppression and exploitation, in the necessity of defending 'their' government and country, in patriotism and militarism.

Is it any wonder, then, that when the Great War broke out Socialists in every country, with few exceptions, took up arms to 'defend the fatherland', the fatherland of their rulers and masters? The German Socialist fought for his autocratic Kaiser, the Austrian for the Hapsburg monarchy, the Russian for the Tsar, the Italian for his King, the Frenchman for the 'republic,' and so the 'Socialists' of every country and their followers went on slaughtering each other until ten millions of them lay dead, and twenty millions were blinded, maimed, and crippled.

It was inevitable that the policy of political, parliamentary activity should lead to such results. For in truth so-called political 'action' is, so far as the cause of the workers and of true progress is concerned, worse than inaction. The very essence of politics is corruption, sail trimming, the sacrifice of your ideals and integrity for success. Bitter are the fruits of that 'success' for the masses and for every decent man and woman, the world over.

As a direct consequence of it millions of workers in every country are discouraged and disheartened. Socialism - they justly feel - has deluded and betrayed them. Fifty, nay, almost a hundred years of Socialist 'work' have resulted in the entire bankruptcy of the Socialist parties, in the disillusionment of the masses, and have brought about a reaction which now dominates the entire world and holds labour by the throat with an iron grip.

Do you still think that the Socialist parties with their elections and politics can help the proletariat out of wage slavery?

By their fruits you shall know them.

THE FAILURE OF SOCIALISM

ALEXANDER BERKMAN

'Vote the Socialist ticket. Elect our party. We'll abolish capitalism and establish Socialism.'

What does the Socialist want, and how does he propose to get it?

There are many varieties of Socialists. There are Social Democrats, Fabian Socialists, National Socialists, Christian Socialists, and other labels. Generally speaking, they all believe in the abolition of poverty and unjust social conditions. But they disagree very much as to what would be 'just' conditions and, still more, how to bring them about.

These days even mere attempts to improve capitalism are often called 'Socialism,' while in reality they are only reforms. But such reforms cannot be considered socialistic because true Socialism does not mean to 'improve' capitalism but to abolish it altogether. Socialism teaches that the conditions of labour cannot be essentially bettered under capitalism; on the contrary, it shows that the lot of the worker must steadily get worse with the advancing development of industrialism, so that efforts to 'reform' and 'improve' capitalism are directly opposed to Socialism and only delay its realisation.

We have seen in preceding chapters * that the enslavement of the workers, inequality, injustice, and other social evils are the result of monopoly and exploitation, and that the system is upheld by the political machine called government. It would therefore serve no purpose to discuss those schools of Socialism (improperly so called) that do not stand for the abolition of capitalism and wage slavery. Just as useless it would be for us to go into allegedly socialistic proposals such as 'juster distribution of wealth', 'equalisation of income', 'single tax', or other similar plans. These are not Socialism; they are only reforms. Mere parlour Socialism, such as Fabianism, for example, is also of no vital interest to the masses.

Let us therefore examine that school of Socialism that treats of capitalism and the wage system fundamentally, which deals with the worker, with the disinherited, and which is known as the Social Democratic movement. It considers all other forms of Socialism impractical and utopian; it calls itself the only sound and scientific theory of true Socialism as formulated by Karl Marx, the author of *Capital*, which is the gospel and guide of all Social Democrats.

Now, then, what do the Socialist followers of Karl Marx - known as Marxian

naturally be obedient to him and his commands. Such people, steeped in ignorance and superstition, are the easiest victims of the masters. But in order to achieve greater success in their election campaigns, The Socialists decided to eliminate educational anti-religious propaganda so as not to offend popular prejudices. They declared religion a 'private matter,' and excluded all criticism of the church from their agitation.

What you personally believe in is indeed your private affair; but when you get together with other people and organise them into a body to impose your belief on others, to force them to think as you do, and to punish them (to the extent of your power) if they entertain other beliefs, then it is no more your 'private matter'. You might as well say that the Inquisition, which tortured and burned people alive as heretics, was a 'private affair.'

It was one of the worst betrayals of the cause of liberty by the Socialists, this declaration that religion is a 'private matter'. Mankind has slowly grown out of the fearful ignorance, superstition, bigotry, and intolerance that made religious persecution and inquisitions possible. The advance of science and invention, the printed word and means of communication have brought enlightenment, and it is that *enlightenment* which has to some extent freed the human mind from the clutches of the church. Not that she has entirely ceased to damn those who do not accept her dogmas. There is still enough of that persecution, but the advance of knowledge has robbed the church of her former absolute sway over the mind, the life, and liberty of man; just as progress has in the same way deprived government of the power to treat the people as absolute slaves and serfs.

You can easily see then how important it is to continue the work of enlightenment which has proven such a liberating blessing for the people in the past; to continue it, so that it may some day help us do away entirely with all the forces of superstition and tyranny.

But the Socialists determined to give up this most necessary work, declaring religion to be a 'private matter.'

Those compromises and the repudiation of the real aims of Socialism paid rather well. The Socialists gained political strength at the sacrifice of ideals. But that 'strength' has in the long run spelled weakness and ruin.

There is nothing more corrupting than compromise. One step in that direction calls for another, makes it necessary and compelling, and soon it swamps you with the force of a rolling snowball become a landslide.

One by one those features of Socialism which were really significant, educational, and liberating were sacrificed in behalf of politics, to secure more favourable public opinion, lessen persecution, and accomplish 'something practical'; that is, to get more Socialists elected to office. In this process, which has been going on for years in every country, the Socialist parties in Europe acquired a membership that numbered millions. But these millions were not socialistic at all; they were party followers who had no conception of the real spirit and meaning of Socialism; men and women steeped in old prejudices and capitalistic views; bourgeois-minded people, narrow nationalists, church members, believers in divine authority and consequent-

* In Berkman's book *What is Communist Anarchism?* of which this pamphlet is an extract.

their enemy, that the church keeps them in ignorance, that they are duped by ideas designed to perpetuate the superstitions and wrongs on which present-day society is built. In short, they forgot that Socialism was to be the Messiah who would drive darkness out of the minds and lives of men, lift them from the slough of ignorance and materialism, and rouse their natural idealism, the striving for justice and brotherhood, toward liberty and light.

They forgot it. They had to forget in order to be 'practical,' to 'accomplish' something, to become successful politicians. You cannot dive into a swamp and remain clean. They had to forget it, because their object had become to 'get results', to win elections, to secure power. They knew that they could not have success in politics by telling the people the whole truth about conditions - for the truth not only antagonises the government, the church, and the school; it also offends the prejudices of the masses. These it is necessary to educate, and that is a slow and difficult process. But the political game demands success, quick results. The Socialists had to be careful not to come in too great conflict with the powers that be; they could not afford to lose time in educating the people.

It therefore became their main object to win votes. To achieve that they had to trim their sails. They had to lop off, little by little, those parts of Socialism which might result in persecution by the authorities, in disfavour from the church, or which would keep bigoted elements from joining their ranks. They had to compromise.

They did. First of all they stopped talking revolution. They knew that capitalism cannot be abolished without a bitter struggle, but they decided to tell the people that they could bring about Socialism by legislation, by law, and that all that is necessary is to put enough Socialists in the government.

They ceased denouncing government as an evil; they quit enlightening the workers about its real character as an agency for enslavement. Instead they began asserting that *they*, the Socialists, are the staunchest upholders of 'the State' and its best defenders; that far from being opposed to 'law and order', they are its truest friends; that they are, indeed, the only ones who sincerely believe in government, except that the government must be socialistic; that is, that they, the Socialists, are to make the laws and run the government.

Thus, instead of weakening the false and enslaving belief in law and government, to weaken it so that those institutions could be abolished as a means of oppression, the Socialists actually worked to *strengthen* the people's faith in forcible authority and government, so that today the members of the Socialist parties the world over are the strongest believers in the State and are therefore called Statists. Yet their great teachers, Marx and Engels, clearly taught that the State serves only to suppress, and that when the people will achieve real liberty the State will be abolished, will 'disappear.'

Socialist compromise for political success did not stop there. It went further. To gain votes, the Socialist parties decided not to educate the people about the falsity, hypocrisy, and menace of organised religion. We know what a bulwark of capitalism and slavery the church, as an institution, is and always has been. It is obvious that people who believe in the church, swear by the priest and bow to his authority, will

Socialists, and whom, for the sake of brevity, we'll call simply Socialists - propose?

They say that the workers can never become free and secure well-being unless they abolish capitalism. The sources of production and the means of distribution must be taken out of private hands, they teach. That is to say, the land, machinery, mills, factories, mines, railroads, and other public utilities should not be owned privately, because such ownership enslaves the workers as well as mankind in general. Private possession of the things without which humanity cannot exist must therefore cease. The means of production and distribution should become public property. Opportunity for free use would do away with monopoly, with interest and profit, with exploitation and wage slavery. Social inequality and injustice would be eliminated, the classes would be abolished, and all men would become free and equal.

These views of Socialism are also in full accord with the ideas of most Anarchists.

The present owners - Socialism further teaches - will not give up their possessions without a struggle. All history and past experience prove that. The privileged classes have always held onto their advantages, always opposed every attempt to weaken their power over the masses. Even today they fight ruthlessly every effort of labour for betterment. It is therefore certain that in the future, as in the past, the plutocracy will resist if you try to deprive them of their monopolies, special rights, and privileges. That resistance will bring about a bitter struggle, a revolution.

True socialism is therefore *radical* and *revolutionary*. Radical, because it goes to the very root of the social trouble (*radix* meaning root, in Latin); it does not believe in reforms and makeshifts; it wants to change things from the very bottom. Revolutionary, not because it wants bloodshed, but because it clearly foresees that revolution is inevitable; it knows that capitalism cannot be changed to Socialism without a violent struggle between the possessing classes and the dispossessed masses.

'But if a revolution', you ask, 'then why do the Socialists want me to vote them into office? Is the revolution to be fought there?'

Your question is to the point. If capitalism is to be abolished by revolution, what do the Socialists seek office for, why do they try to get into the government?

Here is just where the great contradiction of Marxian Socialism comes in; a fundamental contradiction that has been fatal to the Socialist movement in every country, and that has made it ineffectual and powerless to be of any use to the working class.

It is very necessary to realise that contradiction clearly in order to understand why Socialism has failed, why the Socialists have gotten into a blind alley and can't lead the workers to emancipation.

What is that contradiction? It is this: Marx taught that 'revolution is the midwife of capitalism pregnant with a new society'; that is, that capitalism will not be changed to Socialism except by revolution. But in his *Communist Manifesto*, on the other hand, Marx insists that the proletariat must get hold of the political machinery, of the government, in order to conquer the bourgeoisie. The working class - he teaches - must grasp the reins of the State, by means of the Socialist parties, and use the political power to usher in Socialism.

This contradiction has caused the greatest confusion among Socialists and has split the movement into many factions. The majority of them, the regular Socialist parties in every country, now stand for the conquest of political power, for the establishment of a Socialist government whose business it will be to abolish capitalism and bring about Socialism.

Judge for yourself if such a thing is possible. In the first place, Socialists themselves admit that the possessing classes will not give up their wealth and privileges without a bitter fight and that it will result in revolution.

Again, is the thing at all practical? Take the United States, for instance. For over fifty years the Socialists have been trying to elect party members to Congress with the result that after half a century of political work they have now just one member in the House of Representatives in Washington. How many centuries will it take at that rate (and the rate is declining rather than growing) to get a Socialist majority in Congress?

But even suppose that the Socialists could some day secure that majority. Will they then be able to change capitalism to Socialism? It would require amending and altering the Constitution of the United States, as well as in the individual States, for which a two-thirds vote would be necessary. Just stop and consider: the American plutocrats, the trusts, the bourgeoisie, and all the other forces that benefit by capitalism; would they just sit quietly and permit the changing of the Constitution in such a manner as to deprive them of their wealth and privileges? Can you believe that? Do you remember what Jay Gould said when he was accused of getting his millions illegally and in defiance of the Constitution? 'To hell with the Constitution!' he replied. And so every plutocrat feels, even if he is not as frank as Gould. Constitution or no constitution, the capitalists would fight to the death for their wealth and privileges. And that is just what is meant by revolution. You can judge for yourself whether capitalism can be abolished by electing Socialists to office or whether Socialism can be voted in by the ballot. It is not hard to guess who'll win a fight between ballots and bullets.

In former days the Socialists realised this very well. Then they claimed that they meant to use politics only for the purpose of propaganda. It was in the days when Socialist agitation was forbidden, particularly in Germany. 'If you elect us to the Reichstag' (the German parliament), the Socialists told the workers then, 'we'll be able to preach Socialism there and educate the people to it.' There was some reason in that, because the laws that prohibited Socialist speeches did not apply to the Reichstag. So the Socialists favoured political activity and took part in elections in order to have an opportunity to advocate Socialism.

It may seem a harmless thing, but it proved the undoing of Socialism. Because nothing is truer than that the means you use to attain your object soon themselves become your object. So money, for example, which is only a means to existence, has itself become the aim of our lives. Similarly with government. The 'elder' chosen by the primitive community to attend to some village business becomes the master, the ruler. Just so it happened with the Socialists.

Little by little they changed their attitude. Instead of electioneering being merely

tics to aid the cause of labour. Such a confession would mean the end of their political career, with its emoluments and advantages. So the great majority of them are content to keep their own counsel and let well enough alone. Power and position have gradually stifled their conscience, and they have not the strength and honesty to swim against the current.

That is what has become of Socialism, which had once been the hope of the oppressed of the world. The Socialist parties have joined hands with the bourgeoisie and the enemies of labour. They have become the strongest bulwark of capitalism, pretending to the masses that they are fighting for their interests, while in reality they have made common cause with the exploiters. They have so far forgotten and gone back on their original Socialism that in the great World War the Socialist parties in every country in Europe helped their governments to lead the workers to slaughter.

The war has clearly demonstrated the bankruptcy of Socialism. The Socialist parties, whose motto was 'Workers of the world, unite!' sent the toilers to murder each other. From having been bitter enemies of militarism and war they became defenders of 'their' land, urging the workers to don the soldiers' uniform and kill their fellow workers in other countries.

Strange indeed! For years they had been telling the proletarians that they have no country; that their interests are opposed to those of their masters, that labour has 'nothing to lose but its chains', but at the first sign of war they called upon the toilers to join the army and voted support and money for the government to do the work of carnage. This happened in every country in Europe. True, there were Socialist minorities that protested against the war, but the dominant majority in the Socialist parties condemned and ignored them, and lined up for the slaughter.

It was a most terrible betrayal not only of Socialism but of the whole working class, of humanity itself. Socialism, whose purpose it was to educate the world to the evils of capitalism, to the murderous character of patriotism, to the brutality and uselessness of war; Socialism, which was the champion of man's rights, of liberty and justice, the hope and promise of a better day, miserably turned into a defender of the government and the masters, became the handmaiden of the militarists and jingo nationalists. The former Social Democrats became 'social patriots.'

This did not happen because of mere treachery, however. To take that view would be to miss the main point and misunderstand its warning lesson. Treachery it was indeed, both in its nature and effect, and the results of that treachery have bankrupted Socialism, disillusioned the millions that earnestly believed in it, and filled the world with black reaction. But it was not only treachery, not treachery of the ordinary kind. The real cause lies much deeper.

We are what we eat, a great thinker said. That is, the life we lead, the environment we live in, the thoughts we think, and the deeds we do - all subtly fashion our character and make us what we are.

The Socialists' long political activity and co-operation with bourgeois parties gradually turned their thoughts and mental habits from Socialist ways of thinking. Little by little they forgot that the purpose of Socialism was to educate the masses, to make them see through the game of capitalism, to teach them that government is

glances, smile and joke, and the assembly goes over to the business in hand.

Our Socialist perceives that he is regarded as a laughing stock. His colleagues are getting tired of his 'hot air', and he finds more and more difficulty in securing the floor. He is often called to order and told he must speak to the point, but he knows that neither by his talk nor by his vote can he influence the proceedings in the slightest degree. His speeches don't even reach the public; they are buried in the *Congressional Record*, which no one reads, and he is painfully aware of being a solitary and unheeded voice in the wilderness of political machinations.

He appeals to the voters to elect more comrades to the legislative bodies. A lone Socialist cannot accomplish anything, he tells them. Years pass, and at last the Socialist Party succeeds in having a number of its members elected. Each of them goes through the same experience as their first colleague, but now they quickly come to the conclusion that preaching Socialist doctrines to the politicians is worse than useless. They decide to participate in the legislation. They must show that they are not just 'spouting revolution' but that they are practical men, statesmen, that they are doing something for their constituency, looking after its interests.

In this manner the situation compels them to take a 'practical' part in the proceedings, to 'talk business,' to fall in line with the matters actually dealt with in the legislative body. Full well they know that these things have no relation to Socialism or to the abolition of capitalism. On the contrary, all this law-making and political mummery only strengthens the hold of the masters upon the people; worse, it misleads the workers into believing that the legislatures may do something for them and deludes them with the false hope that they may get results by politics. In this way it keeps them looking to the law and government to 'change things,' to 'improve' their condition.

So the machinery of government carries on its work, the masters remain secure in their position, and the workers are held off with promises of 'action' by their representatives in the legislative bodies, by new laws that are to give them 'relief'.

For years this process has been going on in all the countries of Europe. The Socialist parties have succeeded in electing many of their members to various legislative and government positions. Spending years in that atmosphere, enjoying good jobs and pay, the elected Socialists have themselves become part and parcel of the political machinery. They have come to feel that it is no use waiting for the Socialist revolution to abolish capitalism. It is more practical to work for some 'betterment', to try to get a Socialist majority in the government. For when they have a majority they will need no revolution, they now say.

Slowly, by degrees, the Socialist change has taken place. With growing success in elections and securing political power they turn more conservative and content with existing conditions. Removed from the life and suffering of the working class, living in the atmosphere of the bourgeoisie, of affluence and influence, they have become what they call 'practical.' Seeing at first hand the political machinery at work, knowing its debauchery and corruption, they have realised that there is no hope for Socialism in that swamp of deceit, bribery, and corruption. But few, very few Socialists find the courage to enlighten the workers about the hopelessness of poli-

an educational method, it gradually became their only aim to secure political office, to get elected to legislative bodies and other government positions. The change naturally led the Socialists to tone down their revolutionary ardour; it compelled them to soften their criticism of capitalism and government in order to avoid persecution and secure more votes. Today the main stress of Socialist propaganda is not laid any more on the educational value of politics but on the actual election of Socialists to office.

The Socialist parties do not speak of revolution any more. They claim now that when they get a majority in Congress or Parliament they will legislate Socialism into being: they will legally and peacefully abolish capitalism. In other words, they have ceased to be revolutionists; they have become reformers who want to change things by law.

Let us see, then, how they have been doing it during the past several decades.

In almost every European country the Socialists have secured great political power. Some countries now have Socialist governments; in others the Socialist parties have a majority; in others again Socialists occupy the highest positions in the State, such as cabinet offices, even those of Prime Ministers. Let us examine what they have accomplished for Socialism and what they are doing for the workers.

In Germany, the mother of the Socialist movement, the Social Democratic Party holds numerous government offices; its members are in the municipal and national legislative bodies, in the judiciary, and in the Cabinet. Two German Presidents, Haase and Ebert, were Socialists. The present Reichskanzler (Chancellor), Dr. Herman Muller, is a Socialist. Herr Loebe, President of the Reichstag, is also a member of the Socialist Party. Scheidemann, Noske, and scores of others in the highest positions in the government, in the army and navy, are all leaders of the powerful German Social Democratic Party. What have they done for the proletariat whose cause the Party is supposed to champion? Have they brought about Socialism? Have they abolished wage slavery? Have they made the least attempt toward those objects?

The uprising of the workers in Germany, in 1918, forced the Kaiser to flee the country, and the reign of the Hohenzollern was at an end. The people put their trust in the Social Democrats and voted them into power. But once secure in the government, the Socialists turned against the masses. They combined with the German bourgeoisie and the military clique, and themselves became the bulwark of capitalism and militarism. They not only disarmed the people and suppressed the toilers, but they even shot and imprisoned every Socialist who dared protest against their treachery. Noske, as Socialist chief of the army during the Revolution, ordered his soldiers out against the workers and massacred them wholesale - the very proletarians who had voted him into power, his own brother Socialists. At his hands perished Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, two of the most devoted and loyal revolutionists, cold-bloodedly murdered in Berlin on January 16, 1919, by army officers, with the secret connivance of the Socialist government. The Anarchist poet and thinker, Gustav Landauer, and scores of the best friends of labour shared the same fate all over Germany.

Haase, Ebert, Scheidemann, Noske, and their Socialist lieutenants did not permit the Revolution to accomplish anything vital. The moment they got into power they used it to crush rebellious labour. The open and stealthy murder of the truly revolutionary elements was but one of the means used by the Socialist government to subdue the Revolution. Far from introducing any changes for the benefit of the workers, the Socialist Party became the most zealous defender of capitalism, preserving all the prerogatives and benefits of the aristocracy and master class. That is why the German Revolution accomplished nothing except to drive out the Kaiser. The nobility remained in possession of all its titles, holdings, special rights, and privileges; the military caste retained the power it had under the monarchy; the bourgeoisie has been strengthened, and the financial kings and industrial magnates lord it over the German toiler today with even greater arbitrariness than before. The Socialist Party of Germany, with many million votes behind it, has *succeeded* - in getting into office. The workers slave and suffer as before.

The same picture you find in the other countries. In France the Socialist Party is strongly represented in the government. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aristide Briand, who had also held the post of Prime Minister, was formerly one of the greatest lights of the Party in France. Today he is the strongest champion of capitalism and militarism. Many of his former fellow-Socialists are his colleagues in the government, and many more present-day Socialists are in the French Parliament and other important offices. What are they doing for Socialism? What are they doing for the workers?

They are helping to defend and 'stabilise' the capitalistic regime of France; they are busy passing laws increasing the taxes so that the high government officials may get better salaries; they are engaged in collecting the war indemnity from Germany, whose workers, just as their French brothers, have to bleed for it. They are working hard to help 'educate' France, and particularly her school children, to hate the German people; they are aiding to build more warships and military airplanes for the next war which they are themselves preparing by cultivating the spirit of jingoism and vengeance against their neighbour countries. The new law mobilising every adult man and woman of France in case of war was introduced by the prominent Socialist, Paul Boncour, and passed with the aid of the Socialist members of the Chamber of Deputies.

In Austria and Belgium, in Sweden and Norway, in Holland and Denmark, in Czechoslovakia, and in most other European lands the Socialists have risen to power. In some countries entirely so, in others partly. And everywhere, without a single exception, they have followed the same course, everywhere they have foresworn their ideals, have duped the masses, and turned their political elevation to their own profit and glory.

'These men who rose to power on the backs of labour and then betrayed the workers are scoundrels,' I hear you say in just indignation. True, but that is not all. There is a deeper reason for this constant and regular betrayal, a greater and more significant cause for this almost universal phenomenon. Socialists are not essentially different from other men. They are human, just as you and I. And no man turns

scoundrel or traitor over night.

It is *power* that corrupts. The consciousness that you possess power is itself the worst poison that corrodes the finest metal of man. The filth and contamination of politics everywhere sufficiently prove that. Moreover, even with the best intentions Socialists in legislative bodies or in government positions find themselves entirely powerless to accomplish anything of a socialistic nature, anything of benefit to the workers. For politics is not a means to better the conditions of labour. It never was and never can be.

The demoralisation and vitiation take place little by little, so gradually that one hardly notices it himself. Just visualise for a moment the condition of a Socialist elected to Congress, for instance. He is all alone, as against several hundred men of other political parties. He senses their opposition to his radical ideas, and he finds himself in a strange and unfriendly atmosphere. But he is there and he must participate in the business that is being transacted. Most of that business - the bills brought in, the laws proposed - is entirely foreign to him. It has no bearing whatever on the things the Socialist believes in, no connection with the interests of the working class voters who elected him. It is just the routine of legislation. It is only when a bill of some bearing upon labour or on the industrial and economic situation comes up, that our Socialist can take part in the proceedings. He does, and he is ignored or laughed at for his impractical ideas on the matter. For they are indeed impractical. Even at best, when the proposed law is not specially designed to grant new privileges to monopoly, it deals with matters involved in capitalist business, with some commercial treaty or agreement between one government and another. But he, the Socialist, was elected on a Socialist ticket, and it is his business to abolish the capitalistic government, to do away with the system of commerce and profit altogether, so how can he speak 'practically' on the submitted bills? Of course he becomes a butt of ridicule to his colleagues, and soon he begins to see how stupid and useless his presence is in the halls of legislation. That is why some of the best men of the Socialist Party in Germany turned against political action, as did Johann Most, for instance. But there are few persons of such honesty and courage. As a rule the Socialist remains in his position, and every day he is compelled to realise more and more what a senseless role he is playing. He comes to feel that he must find some way to take a serious part in the work, express sound opinions in the discussions and become a real factor in the proceedings. This is imperative in order to preserve his own dignity, to compel the respect of his colleagues, and also to show to his constituents that they did not elect a mere dummy.

So he begins to acquaint himself with the routine. He studies river dredging and coast improvement, reads up on appropriations, examines the hundred and one bills which come up for consideration, and when he occasionally gets the floor - which is not very often - he tries to explain the proposed legislation from the Socialist standpoint, as he is in duty bound to do. He 'makes a Socialist speech.' He dwells on the suffering of the workers and the crimes of wage slavery; he informs his colleagues that capitalism is an evil, that the rich must be abolished and the whole system done away with. He finishes his peroration and sits down. The politicians exchange