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# “Open Civil War”

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“In nearly every country in Europe and America the class struggle is entering upon the phase of civil war.” Such is the opening sentence of the third of the famous 21 Points issued by the Communist International as necessary conditions of allegiance. This statement is not merely incidental. It is the fundamental proposition upon which all Communist tactics are based.

Point 6 obligates every party that wishes to belong to the Communist International “to unmask the dishonesty and hypocrisy of social pacifism,” and insists on the necessity of “the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.”

Point 12 says: “In the present epoch of acute civil war the Communist Party will only be in a position to do its duty if it is organized along extremely centralized lines, if it is controlled by an iron discipline,” etc.

## “War” Meant Literally.

Again, in point 16, rising from the national parties to the international organization, it reads: “The Communist International, which is working under conditions of the most acute civil war, must be constructed along much more centralized lines,” etc.

The use of the word “war” is not here intended to be merely an emphatic manner of proclaiming the class struggle. It is to be taken literally. That first phrase quoted shows that. The opposition to “social pacifism” and insistence on “revolutionary overthrow” adds proof that legal struggle is not meant. And, finally, the insistence on “cen-

tralization” and “iron discipline” corroborate the idea of military or armed force being invoked as the means of victory.

If we seek further for enlightenment concerning the attitude of the Communist International we find it in the reply issued to the application of the American Socialist Party for affiliation. In that reply, which has been printed and spread broadcast, occurs the following:

The Communist International is an organ of aggression, the general staff of the world revolution, for the forcible overthrow of the capitalist state everywhere.

The Communist International is an army in wartime. None but revolutionary Communist parties are accepted. They must adopt as their program the program of the Communist International — open revolutionary mass-struggle for Communism.... [They must] prepare for revolutionary action, for merciless civil war.

The committee which has recently attempted to organize a new Left Wing in the Socialist Party has announced that the 21 Points are entirely acceptable to them. That may be. If so, we can see no good reason why they should not leave the Socialist Party and join one of the 2 or 3 Communist groups. It is, of course, true that none of these Communist groups has any economic or political strength.

In California and 34 other states they are outlaws under the criminal syndicalist statutes, unable to exist openly, precisely because they believe in open civil war. They meet, where they still continue as an organization, secretly, “underground” name and purpose camouflaged, and they are, in consequence, utterly impotent and ineffective.

If the Socialist Party were to follow the Communist tactics, if it accepted the idea that it should be a militarily disciplined brigade in an open civil war here and now, it would be suppressed and wrecked just as the Communists have been suppressed and wrecked.

We may grant freely the proposition that there are times when it is necessary to defy the law, to advocate armed insurrection, to accept imprisonment and death for the cause. Such times are times of revolutionary ferment, when all other paths but that of direct force are barred. But in America there is no revolutionary ferment. For a million voters for Debs there were 20 million voters who deliberately voted for capitalism, and a 6 million majority of those voted for a through-going reactionary.

Lenin, in his speech before the 10th convention of the Russian Communist Party in March of this year [10th Congress: Moscow: March 8-16, 1921], said: "During the period in which the international situation is marked by the extremely slow development of the revolutionary movement of the world, we can in no way base our policy on its speedy victory." If that holds true for Russia, how much more certain it is that here in the United States we must base our policy, not on a quick revolutionary development, but on a solid educational and political progress within legal limits.

"Tactics are determined by the nature of the conditions," said Wilhelm Liebknecht. And Lenin bids us keep our eye on the realities. The facts are that there is not the slightest possibility of a revolution in America today, and if we should go out to advocate it, as the Communist International commands, the only people in the world that would listen would be the police, and our destruction would be as swift and complete as that of the Communists. There would be left no organization to advocate Socialism.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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