

The Conquest of Power

By Alexander Stokitsky

The Communist Party of America comes into existence under entirely new conditions in this country; new conditions produced by the tightening of class lines and the intensification of the class struggle, with the ruling class taking ever more drastic steps in the suppression of class movements opposed to its regime. The time has forever passed for the revolutionary movement to be able to continue its quiet, uninterrupted organization and educational propaganda. The conquest of markets and the enormous extension of the American imperialists' sphere of influence has resulted in an enormous accumulation of capital in the hands of the capitalists of this country and in order to protect this treasure they will resort to any means for the purpose of crushing opposition. The imperialistic hydra of this nation, clothed in military paraphernalia from head to foot is ready to crush every semblance of opposition to its brutal dictatorship, in order to carry on unhampered its murderous annexation policies.

The Communist Party of America comes into existence at a period of crisis brought about by the imperialistic war; a crisis which produces an ever increasing unrest in the ranks of the workers. Hand in hand with the crisis in the American Socialist movement, just as the same conditions in Europe brought to a crisis, resulting in new tactics and policies, the socialist movements of Europe. We are today entering a period of tremendous social upheaval in this country. Strike waves convulse the country from coast to coast. The slogan of "general strike" becomes the slogan of the masses of organized workers. It is only a step from the slogan of an industrial general strike, to that of a general political strike; the activity of the state in suppression irresistibly forces an understanding of the historical necessity of the political strike; against capitalism, against war and against imperialism. This heralds the climax of the class struggle in this country. The imperialists and their henchmen are using the old tried methods to crush this movement; prisons become the homes of thousands upon thousands of political offenders; papers are suppressed, others held for months in the mails before delivery; people active in the movement who happen to have been born in other countries are deported; even race hatred is brought to the fore by the ruling class; every method of publicity is used to inflame the workers against the revolutionary movement. Spies and provocateurs in the employ of imperialism everywhere permeate and endeavor to vitiate the workers movement.

Even these drastic measures cannot prevent the workers fulfilling the mission to which history has called them. The ruling class in Europe is failing to stem the rising tide and they will fail to stem it here. But the fact that history is working for the freedom of the workers does not justify the Communists minimizing the necessity for revolutionary action. The enemy is strong and pitiless. The broad masses of the proletariat are unconscious and poorly organized for the purpose of coping with the highly efficient capitalist machine of suppression.

This period of darkest reaction cannot

and must not hinder the work of the Communist Party. The immediate problem of the party is to overcome all the barriers of repression and carry our message to the masses of the working class. We must get our message before them in order to convince them of the correctness of our principles and tactics. This is a very responsible duty imposed upon us; a duty we must not shirk at any hazard. Those who feel themselves weak or lacking in courage are not wanted for this tremendous task. "Only a class that marches along its road without hesitation, that does not become dejected and does not despair on the most difficult and dangerous crossings, can lead the toiling and exploited masses. We do not need hysterical outbursts. We need the regular march of the iron battalions of the proletariat." (Lenin, Soviets at Work.) Every revolutionist who has at heart the best interests of the movement will admit the necessity for courageous action. It is the Communist Party of America that must marshal the forces in this country into that "regular march of the iron battalions of the proletariat." We must rid ourselves of all petit bourgeois elements and hesitating slaves with bourgeois psychologies. We must eliminate those who worship the fetish of pseudo-democracy and organize the workers for the conquest of power.

Our Communist Party must have a responsible head that is able to call the masses of the proletariat into action. That head must be the Central Executive Committee; not a committee composed of well advertised names, but of men and women who have studied the problems of the workers and who have sufficient historical foresight to enable them to recognize a revolutionary crisis; in addition they must have sufficient courage to act honestly in such a crisis. To select this committee we should not resort to the pseudo-democracy of a party referendum. This form of "democracy" sounds very well when mouthed by politicians, but as a matter of fact is only a cumbersome machine where names and not ability is selected. Under the old system many comrades have voted for people with whom they have never come in contact, persons who are known only by name and who may have none of the qualifications necessary to lead a revolutionary movement. The old national executive committee of the socialist party is a horrible example of this sort of "democracy." Our central committees should be elected at party conventions and only there. Every delegate elected to the convention is there because the group which elects him has confidence in his ability to intelligently select the most efficient material for the central executive. The same system must be applied to state and district or federation central committees. These committees must be empowered to at all times keep in touch with all the problems of propaganda and organization, in addition to carefully gauging the strength of the enemy. The old form of the central committees functioning merely as executives has become obsolete and incapable of responding to the changes that are taking place in the world of

labor and of capitalism.

Within the organization the widest possible range of criticism must be admitted. No official must ever be considered immune from criticism and discipline, but when we are outside the meetings and facing the enemy every person must be controlled in his actions by a strict discipline. No matter what the personal opinions of an individual may be or how persistently he may express his opinions regarding principles or tactics he must submit to the will of the Communist membership when facing the enemy in the struggle, or he must quit the organization.

We are aware that many of the "old guard" of the movement, who are temperamentally individualistic, will hurl the charge of fanaticism against us. But was the discipline in the ranks of the Bolsheviki on the question of Brest-Litovsk fanaticism? In the delegate caucus meeting where the problems arising out of the conflict with Germany were being discussed by delegates of the Bolshevik party, preliminary to placing it before the Soviet convention the vote stood eight hundred for the treaty to about three hundred against, but when the Bolsheviki party went into the convention of Soviets they voted a solid eleven hundred for the treaty. If this condition had arisen in the old socialist party the vote in the convention would have been divided, because Menshevik organizations do not have party discipline. As stated in the opening paragraph of this article we must adopt new tactics to new conditions. The tactics of the Communists in America must be built on the same principles of democratic centralization and party discipline as in Europe.

There is no use shedding tears over the broken idol of bourgeois democracy. It is a delusion in the ranks of the proletariat equally as much as it is in the hands of a ruling class.

Rally to the call of the Third Internationale and do your duty as revolutionists!

Putting aside for the moment all this extravagant language about revolution, the aims of the communists may be reduced to this elemental proposition:

That each member of society shall take part in the general necessary labor and in return shall receive the full reward of his effort, having an equal voice in the management of the community of which he forms a part.

It seems strange indeed that this should not find favor with intelligent men. Obviously, there is an abundance of worldly goods; there is plenty for all—and nature's vast resources have as yet only been tapped.

Yet men cannot see it. The law of the jungle still prevails and men tear and claw for that which they might have peacefully.

Revolution—counter-revolution—strife—struggle—the clash of arms—the screams and groans of the wounded—and for what? Only that the race may share fully in the fruits of the earth.