

For decades the Socialist movement of the world has predicted the coming of a great world war. Yet when it came, five years ago, it found the international Socialist movement totally unprepared. The leaders of Socialist thought in Europe and in this country as well had always side-stepped a discussion of the problems that such a war would bring. They had sworn opposition to warfare, and yet failed to determine what form this opposition should take. They had decried nationalism and yet built up their movements on an essentially nationalistic basis. The demands of a small revolutionary minority for clearness of purpose and a definite program of action were discouraged and derided, because it was feared that the integrity and oneness of the Socialist movement might be shattered upon the rocks of such a discussion.

Just as opposition to national wars, as the culmination and expression of capitalist international competition, is one of the fundamental principles of modern Socialism, so the overthrow of the capitalist class has been its final aim. Toward this aim the Socialist movement has been working with the same delightful vagueness of purpose that characterized its opposition to war. Questions as to the methods by which capitalist society was to be overthrown were answered by evasions. We were preparing to fight out the social revolution at the ballot box. There were those who insisted upon the necessity of training the proletariat in the use of more powerful weapons, who favored the propagation of the political general strike and political mass action. But they were decried as irresponsible agitators who were bent on wrecking the party.

Then came the war. It wrecked the Socialist movement of the International more effectively than this could have been done by a thousand irresponsible agitators. In Russia, in Germany, in Austria and in Hungary the war was followed by a revolution. These revolutions were not political in character, i. e., they were not directly precipitated by political oppression. They were, essentially, a protest against unbearable economic conditions, the outgrowth of the bankruptcy of capitalism in these countries. These revolutions placed the Socialist movement, which had everywhere assumed the leadership, abruptly before the alternative it had so sedulously refused to consider. It was forced to choose between a system of socialized capitalism, under a "democratic" form of government from which is to evolve, by a gradual process, the Socialist state, or immediate expropriation of capital by a dictatorship of the proletariat. And at that moment, when the Socialist movement most needed unity and harmony,

it was torn by dissension and internal strife. Thousands of comrades in Russia, in Hungary and in Germany have been forced to pay with their lives for the refusal of the Socialist movement to determine its position before the great crisis had arrived. Meanwhile, we here in America, instead of learning from these tragedies, would go calmly on, legislating Socialism into existence, electing Congressmen and Aldermen, who barter Socialist principles for capitalist reforms, appealing for justice to capitalist courts. The protests of those who have learned from happenings in Europe were crushed under the weight of the prestige of our party leaders and the consistent opposition of the party press. They felt the need of re-orientation within the party, but found all avenues of approach to the rank and file of the organization closed. Their principles were often confused, their conceptions vague; they had no definite program to offer to the party membership in opposition to the hitherto generally accepted standards. An organization of these revolutionary elements within the party, for the sole purpose of conducting the propaganda of their principles, had become essential. There is nothing in the constitution of the Socialist Party that forbids such an organization. In Switzerland, where the revolutionary element in the party organized so-called *Communist groups* within the organization, these groups were expressly permitted by the National Party Executive Committee, so long as they did not affiliate with elements outside the party organization; and the same holds true for the parties in France, Italy, Great Britain. In the Socialist Party of America the insurgent element was suspended by a ruthless party autocracy. As soon as the first steps toward the formation of Left-Wing groups within the party were taken, the entire machinery of the party went into action. Local New York suspended whole branches for support of the Left Wing. The State Executive Committee decided to suspend, and did suspend, all Locals that supported the Left Wing. An appeal coming from Local Kings County, the largest of the suspended Locals, for a referendum was ignored for months. In the interests of party harmony it seemed necessary to the party authorities of the State of New York to prevent these Left-Wing Locals from sending their delegates to the National Convention that is to take place at the end of August. To this end the demand of an excluded Local to demand a referendum of the party membership of the state was taken up for consideration only after the elections for the National Convention were already under way. When the referendum that will settle the fate of the suspended Locals has been taken, the Convention will be a thing of the past, and the possibility of influencing its decisions by revolutionary