

Post-Geneva: The Fight for Peaceful Co-Existence

By William Z. Foster

THE BIG FOUR conference, held in Geneva in July, was a major defeat for the warmongers who, under the leadership of American imperialism, ever since the end of World War II, have been threatening humanity with a dreadful holocaust of nuclear world war. The heart of what took place in the conference was that the peoples of the world, after seriously checking the sabre-rattlers during the Korean and Indo-China wars and upon various other occasions, gave the warmakers to understand that they would not tolerate the perspective of any such atomic war. It was a major victory for the principle of the peaceful co-existence of all nations, regardless of the character of their internal regimes. For the time being at least, it lifted the threat of a great war.

Along with this mandate against military warfare, Geneva likewise definitely implied that the cold war, in all its ramifications, should be brought to an end. For in the period just prior to Geneva, the peoples all over the world had made it quite

clear that they were strongly opposed to the insane armaments race and to all the gigantic financial expense and military dangers which this involves. This was the basic mandate of Geneva: to avert the outbreak of a shooting war and to put a stop to the cold war.

But this Geneva mandate does not automatically enforce itself. It has to be fought for by the peace-loving elements, against those reactionary forces who are opposed to most, if not all, of what Geneva stands for. Just what impact Geneva will have upon the history of these years will depend precisely upon the outcome of this struggle between those who are for and those who are against it. Therefore, before discussing Geneva more concretely, let us take a brief look at the major forces upon either side of the struggle around Geneva.

FOR AND AGAINST GENEVA

The great world forces making for the full realization of the promise of Geneva are the common people—that is, the workers, farmers, intellectuals, small business elements

—of all countries; those of the capitalist, as well as of the Socialist world. They constitute the overwhelming majority of the human race. Their whole impulse is to have international disputes settled peaceably through negotiations. Their basic practical demand is for the peaceful co-existence of all nations. They are opposed to imperialist war and all its works. In this basic respect they are virtually immune to the slick pro-war propaganda of the imperialists. They constitute the immense and immovable rock upon which the world conquest plans of Wall Street imperialism are being shipwrecked.

The second basic peace forces, striving to make real the spirit of Geneva, are the governments of the countries of people's democracy and Socialism—the U.S.S.R., People's China, and the people's democracies in Europe and Asia, who speak directly in the name of over one-third of humanity. In the fight for peace and a sane world, based upon peaceful co-existence, the great advantage of these progressive states is that in this vital matter their interests and those of the world democratic masses dovetail together perfectly. From the ground up, these nations are the enemies of imperialist aggression and war. They are a strong steel rod strengthening the world peace camp, the forces that want to have Geneva mark the beginning of a world in which the dread monster War will no longer plague humanity. Significantly allied with

them in an active desire for peace are India and many of the lesser capitalist states.

One of the very greatest handicaps faced by the countries of Socialism and people's democracy in establishing their new regimes over the years and in bringing their blessings of prosperity and freedom in the maximum to their respective peoples, has been imperialist war. This has hung like a millstone about their necks, hamstringing their general economic and political development. Thus, for example, the Soviet Union, which was a backward country industrially when the Revolution came in October 1917, was devastated by six years of imperialist and civil war. Then came the long and harsh struggle to build up the heavy industries, starting from the ground up, in order to develop a potential defense against the rising Hitler threat. After this severe and protracted effort, the country was devastated again in World War II, with half of its industry wiped out and with its agriculture decimated. Over 12,000,000 Soviet people lost their lives in the war. Hardly had this catastrophe concluded than the country again has had to strain its every resource in order to meet the urgent war threat that came from American imperialism. The ensuing bitter struggle to build up a military force capable of defending the regime and its people against the new aggressors, required a super-human effort and it entailed much underplay of the consumers' goods industries, the assump-

tion of many strict self-disciplines by the people, and the acceptance of lower living standards by the masses than otherwise would be necessary.

Once the U.S.S.R. and the people's democracies get rid of this long-time war waste and are enabled to utilize their soaring production wholly for the improvement of the living and cultural standards of the masses, they will develop their general well-being at a rate and upon a scale hitherto unknown in the world. All this was why these countries fought so hard to bring Geneva to pass, and it is also why they are working so tirelessly now to see to it that the conference shall produce the great peace results that the masses hope for—the liquidation of the threat of atomic war and the ending of the murderous strains and tensions of the cold war. This rapid development of the Socialist lands will raise and inspire the fight of the labor movement to higher and more effective levels in all the capitalist countries.

Third: the chief and most powerful forces opposing Geneva are the monopoly capitalists of the world, particularly those of Wall Street. They have strong interests against the perspective of peaceful co-existence, such as flowed from the Geneva conference. They require the cold war in order to enable them to reap fabulous profits from the roaring armament industries; they need the implied or actual threat of war (even though, in the main, they

now largely realize that the prospects of their carrying through a world war successfully have vanished) so that, with their huge armaments, they can intimidate the peoples of their own and other countries. Especially is all this true of American imperialism, with its objective of world domination. This domination program Washington has by no means abandoned, despite the fact that Geneva gave its war policies and perspectives a rude defeat.

World capitalism, in the post-Geneva period, finds itself in a very precarious position. It is increasingly a prey to its general crisis, which began to develop at the time of World War I and the Russian Revolution. It has lost one-third of the world to Socialism; its colonial system, which was a great bulwark of world capitalism, has been largely shattered as a result of the many colonial liberation revolutions and movements; its economic system is also sick in its most vital fibres, the present hectic capitalist "prosperity" resting primarily upon the unstable basis of repairing the damages and filling the commodity shortages caused by World War II and upon the present huge preparations for another world war. After World War I, during the 1920's, world capitalism managed to stabilize itself partially for a few years, but there is no such stabilization perspective in store for the much sicker capitalist system of today, following World War II. This does

not mean, however, that the graph made by decaying world capitalism is that of a direct and continuous decline. On the contrary, the graph is a zig-zag, with ups and downs, but going in a general downward direction. The capitalist system may experience periods of temporary easing of its elementary decline, as in its present post-war economic spurt; but its basic course carries it into an ever deepening general crisis.

The monopolists of the capitalist world, with Wall Street in the forefront, have many fears regarding the ending of the cold war, as implied by Geneva. They are afraid that inevitably this would entail heavy armaments cuts, with a consequent slash in their unprecedented profits, and they also fear that seriously reduced production in this sphere would have catastrophic effects upon the present war-created "prosperity" in the capitalist countries. They are afraid, too, that if the war hysteria should be fully ended the capitalist nations, in consequence of their multitudinous contradictions in their economic and political interests, would take to colliding heavily with each other instead of with the "Reds"—see Turkey and Greece, Israel and Egypt, etc. They believe also that, once released from the war scare, organized labor, breaking with its present paralyzing class collaborationism, would take up a more active defense of basic working-class interests. Especially American imperialism dreads that ending the arms race and the tensions of the

cold war would be disastrous to its fight for world mastery. Deep in the consciousness of the big monopolists of all capitalist countries also is the fear that if, by the liquidation of the cold war, the Socialist peoples of the world are freed from the crippling burdens and wastes of maintaining a vast military organization in national defense, they will then be able to surge ahead with such a rapid development of mass well-being among their peoples as to have revolutionary consequences upon the workers and other oppressed and exploited elements throughout the capitalist world. They dread the revolutionary example of such a demonstration of the effectiveness of Socialism for the working masses. The above considerations are some of the main reasons why the bulk of big capitalist monopolists, notably those in the United States, look with such a jaundiced eye upon Geneva and also why they must be considered and dealt with as the main obstacles to the realization of the peace hopes generated by that historic gathering.

DIFFERENT REACTIONS TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE

The three broad groups described above have responded in character during the weeks that have elapsed since the holding of the Geneva conference. First, the masses of the people all over the world and not least the American people have given an enthusiastic welcome to the peace

currents expressed at Geneva. This has been demonstrated by the statements of the leaders and press of the workers' and general peoples' organizations all over the world, a notable exception being in the case of the American trade unions dominated by the clique of ultra-reactionary Meany type of misleaders, who are diehard warmongers.

One of the most striking manifestations of the almost universal popular approval of Geneva developed around the international Atoms-For-Peace conference, also held in Geneva, in August. The attendance at this official UN conference ran far beyond expectations. A strongly cooperative spirit animated the attending scientists, and as they freely exchanged much, if not all, of their collected data upon the hitherto sacrosanct subject of nuclear energy, the whole people's world responded approvingly. Hardly less significant, the mass backing behind Geneva was also expressed by the tremendous reception given to the exchange of farm delegations between the United States and the Soviet Union during July and August. In both countries this important event rose to the height of a broad people's demonstration for peace and for friendly cooperation between the two nations. And at this writing the disarmament conference, freighted with the people's peace hopes, is also meeting in an unprecedented atmosphere of worldwide popular interest and concern.

Second, the government of the

countries of people's democracy and Socialism, fully in harmony with the peace spirit of the world's working masses, are showing their hearty support of Geneva both in words and in concrete actions. Not only has the U.S.S.R. lifted practically all travel restrictions and issued a sweeping amnesty for political prisoners, but it has also announced a cut of 640,000 in its armed forces, to go into effect at the end of this year. And most recently it has returned the Porkalla base to Finland, forty years before its lease ran out. In the same spirit, that the way to disarm is to disarm, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania and Albania have also voluntarily decided to reduce their armies by 47,000, 34,000, 40,000, 18,000, 20,000 and 9,000 men respectively. People's China, repeatedly stating that it is prepared to settle amicably in conference all outstanding questions at issue between the U.S.A. and itself, has voluntarily released the much-mooted eleven American flyers, and has also agreed, in the unofficial U.S.-People's China conference now going on, to allow all other Americans in China, some of whom are guilty of serious counter-revolutionary actions against the people's state, to leave the country.

Thirdly, on the other hand and contravening the people's peace spirit, the Wall Street big monopolists, represented by the Eisenhower government, which had to be pushed into the Geneva conference in the first place, have become distinctly alarmed

at the sweeping popular backing of Geneva among the peoples of the world, including the people of the United States. Through all their gigantic propaganda sources they are warning their allies and followers everywhere not to go overboard on Geneva. This oppositional attitude reached the stage where President Eisenhower, in his speech of August 24th, definitely threw cold water upon the enthusiastic reception given to the Geneva conference by the masses everywhere. Among other negative attitudes, he placed impossible demands as imperative essentials for real peace. These included, in substance, that the people's democracies of Eastern Europe return to capitalism and that the Communist Parties throughout the world be liquidated. This is the old and discredited Dulles "liberation" policy refurbished. It is based on the assumption that only capitalism has a right to exist in the world. Neither of these arrogant demands can or will be realized by Wall Street.

On August 25th, James Reston, star reporter for the *New York Times*, declared that the President's speech indicated: "The Eisenhower Administration has reached a policy decision to put a brake on the optimism created by the Big Four conference last month in Geneva." John Foster Dulles and Vice-President Nixon, a few days later, also spoke in the same derogatory vein, each raising more barriers against world peace and expressing themselves in the tone of world bosses, to which

they are so accustomed. These several speeches, playing down Geneva, were followed up on radio and television and in the daily press by a barrage of anti-Soviet propaganda, reminiscent of the pre-Geneva period.

In the center of this, to say the least, unenthusiastic response to Geneva on the part of the United States government, is the key determination, expressed again and again by authoritative spokesmen, to the effect that the United States has no foreseeable perspective of disarming substantially. Just at the time when the U.S.S.R. and other Socialist countries, upon their own initiative, are deeply cutting their armed forces, the Eisenhower Administration is letting it be known that, in any event, it intends to keep up and to increase its military strength. James Reston (the *Times*, Sept. 6th), summarizing the recent speech of D. A. Quarles, Secretary of the Air Force, says: "The United States was not thinking at all about a disarmament in which everybody would disarm to the point where nobody would have sufficient power to wage a major war" instead, says he, the United States aims for "the retention of overwhelming air-atomic power." Along the same line, Walter Lippmann (N. Y. *Herald-Tribune*, Sept. 1) in dealing with the current meeting of the United Nations disarmament commission, stated: "We are not proposing to disarm. We are proposing to keep our armaments, including atomic bombs, and what we

want of the Soviet Union and are prepared to give them in return, is publicity about where the armaments are."

In the furtherance of this cold war line, the United States government, the voice of Wall Street, has taken and is taking a number of important steps, among them: insistence upon an armed and reactionary Germany, to the point of attempting to sabotage the German-Soviet negotiations in Moscow and the October general conference; preparations to increase the United States Air Force by one-third; an announcement that a military treaty with Japan is in the making; Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary army on Formosa is to be increased by ten divisions, which, of course, are to be equipped at American expense; and an announcement of new American army formations of air-borne commandoes, made up of renegade Russians, Czechs, Rumanians, etc., for the purpose of eventually fighting behind the lines of the people's democracies. At this time also, avowedly to prepare American soldiers against non-existent "brain-washing" by the Chinese "enemy," but actually to cultivate a spirit of sadism in the armed forces, in the tradition of the infamous "water cure" in the American-Philippines war and the "bomb everything that moves" practice in the Korean war, United States army recruits are to be trained in fantastic torture methods (see the *N. Y. Post*, Sept. 7th). In the same general militant spirit, significantly,

the House Un-American Activities Committee, seeking to re-create an atmosphere in the country, has embarked upon a whole series of new thought-control inquisitions.

The above indicated cold war measures, based upon the assumption that in the future the world will have to face up to two world military camps armed to the teeth, is contrary to the spirit of Geneva, as well as to the peace will of the great masses of humanity all over the world. It also conflicts with the disarmament proposals of the U.S.S.R., People's China, and the people's democracies in general, which have repeatedly declared for the abolition of the A- and H-bombs and for a progressive process of world disarmament. Official U.S. policy makes for a continuation of the cold war, with the danger of a shooting war always lingering in the background. It shows definitely just what forces the peace-loving peoples of the world have to combat in order to bring to reality the hopes and perspectives of Geneva.

The United States Government, however, will find itself unable to push through these militant cold war policies. First: it will confront an increasing demand at home from the mass forces making for a program of peaceful coexistence. These forces will embrace not only workers and other democratic elements, but also important sections of the bourgeoisie, and even of monopoly capital itself. This domestic opposition will more and more challenge the aggressive

policies of American imperialism in every field—financial, economic, political and ideological. Second: the Washington proponents of the cold war will also have to face a stiffer resistance from their foreign "allies." These imperialist powers, whose basic interests conflict with those of United States imperialism at many points, will be less and less inclined to take orders from Wall Street and more inclined to follow active policies of their own making. The whole system of war alliances that the U.S. has so laboriously constructed will be increasingly weakened by internal dissensions and conflicts. In short, the same elementary forces on a domestic and world scale that operated successfully at Geneva to halt Wall Street's program of world atomic war will continue to operate to block its program of militant cold war.

THE FIGHT TO END THE COLD WAR

The Communist Party statement—contained in the September number of *Political Affairs*—gives a clear lead as to the practical tasks confronting the workers and the peace-loving masses generally in this country, in order to carry out the elementary objectives of Geneva. These need not be repeated here. In this article it is timely only to make a few remarks regarding the general conditions under which the continuing peace struggle has to be waged.

During the past eight years, since the United States launched the cold

war with the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan in 1947, the task of the Communist Party and the rest of the world peace forces has been clear—to fight against every aspect of the cold war, while at the same time guarding against the overall danger of an atomic world war. Now, following Geneva, the big job is systematically to liquidate the cold war—for one would be foolish to conclude that this has been ended. For the time being, at least, Geneva has abated the threat of a world war; but so long as this country's government is in the hands of agents of monopoly capital, as it is now, who are controlling a gigantic military machine, with its ramifications all over the world, there will always lurk the danger of war, and this will have to be guarded against.

One thing we must be very conscious of in fighting to end the cold war—this is the fact that, despite the many knotty and difficult diplomatic problems presented internationally, they have all been made easier and more capable of solution by what happened at Geneva. This was made evident by the progress achieved in easing the very difficult German question at the recent Soviet-German conference in Moscow. The heart of the cold war, the factor that tripled the difficulties in the path of all international negotiations, was the threat of world war that Wall Street kept brandishing before humanity. But now that this weapon has at least temporarily been knocked out of the hands of the war-

mongers, this softens up materially their whole sabre-rattling set-up. Many and powerful reactionaries, therefore, will try tirelessly to re-activate the war threat, but they will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to do so. That is, if the peace forces remain on the alert, those who profit from war scares and war will not be able to re-create the widespread war fears that prevailed before the Geneva conference. They will find increasing resistance from the American people, including from important business circles.

There are many and urgent tasks before the peace forces in this central job of easing world tensions and ending the cold war—such as the reunification of Germany, the reactivation of NATO and SEATO, the revitalizing of East-West trade, the re-establishment of cultural relations, the seating of People's China in the United Nations, the American evacuation of Germany, the dismantling of the U.S. world network of air-bases, and numerous other problems. All these tasks must be undertaken systematically, and their solution will call for endless patience, resolution, and flexibility. The center of this whole complex of diplomatic problems is the general question of world disarmament. This is the key to nearly all the other issues. So long as the arms race is allowed to continue, the cold war will go on in one form or another. Geneva has created basic opportunities for lessening the arms frenzy, and this can be realized, notwithstanding the loudly-voiced

determination of Wall Street's political spokesmen to maintain and increase the armed forces of the United States and its "allies."

With the whole world crying out that an atomic world war is unthinkable and with even President Eisenhower conceding that the Soviet Government sincerely desires peace, it becomes increasingly difficult for the arms monopolists (save for profit considerations) to find any convincing reasons why armaments should be continuously piled up in this and other capitalist countries. From now on the demand for a progressive reduction and eventual abandonment of the arms race will increase in this country, as elsewhere.

Indeed, already the demand for disarmament is spreading fast. The *New York Post* (September 2) has the following to say about how this movement is developing abroad: "Leading NATO allies are evincing an alarming intent to slash defense plans. The list includes Britain, France, Italy, Greece, and the Netherlands." Turkey is also letting it be known that, unless the United States comes across with bigger subsidies, it is going to cut its military program. Likewise, Japan, swept by peace sentiment, is protesting against the statement made by its Foreign Minister Shigemitsu to the effect that that country, now being re-armed by the United States, is being readied for an active role in Western "defense." In West Germany, too, rising peace sentiment is creat-

ing new obstacles to Wall Street's plans for the re-armament of that country. And in the United States, despite all the clamor of the militarists, the mass demand for a deep slash in the present monstrous arms appropriations and in the over-swollen armed forces will grow rapidly. In all probability, also, the United States, despite the expressed determination of the Government to keep up and even to increase its military forces, and notwithstanding its "heads-I-win, tails-you-lose" conception of negotiations, with the USSR making all the concessions, will, in the face of the world-wide peace demand, be forced to make some steps in the direction of partial disarmament or slowdown of the arms race, at the current United Nations conference on this question and possibly also at the present General Assembly meeting of the U.N.

In the United States the fight to end the cold war will be greatly aided by the pressures of the common people of the world for peace. The time is past when, disregarding world opinion, the moguls of the imperialist countries, the United States included, could, without restraint, carry out their policies of reaction and aggression. This is true not only of foreign, but also of major domestic policy. During the past several years the Wall Street imperialists have been taught this new and vital lesson upon a number of occasions. Thus, it was largely indignation abroad at the American Jim Crow system that compelled the

U.S. Government to at least partially desegregate its armed forces, and the same foreign democratic pressure had very much to do with the Supreme Court's issuing its order to desegregate the schools. It was also largely due to the tremendous opposition abroad against the rising menace of fascism in the United States that McCarthy came a cropper and found himself so discredited. McCarthy fatally compromised Wall Street's pretenses abroad of democracy, so he had to be disciplined. Finally, of course, there was the classic check administered to American imperialism's whole war program by the peoples of the world at the Geneva conference. International democratic pressure has now become a great constructive force in the world, which cannot be ignored by imperialist rulers, and which will play a decisive role in the struggle everywhere to end the cold war in all its manifestations.

In striving to liquidate the cold war, the greatest weakness of the peace forces in the United States is the ultra-reactionary character of the Meany group of mis-leaders now dominating the A. F. of L., and soon to have their influence spread further, through the current merger of the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. These people, who have nothing in common with the interests of the working class, are definitely a part of the reactionary forces which are trying to negate Geneva and to continue with the cold war. In this respect, these policies echo those of Wall

Street and they reflect the warlike ideology of the McCarthys, Nixons, and Knowlands. For the past 15 years especially these misleaders have worked in the closest collaboration with the big monopolists of the country. This open partnership with the big bosses explains their long-continued warmongering and red-baiting, which in many cases has exceeded that of the capitalists themselves. It also explains why they do not want the cold war liquidated.

But Meany and his cronies in no sense represent the spirit or interest of the great masses of trade unionists in this country. The latter definitely want an end put, not only to the threat of atomic war but to the whole practice of the cold war, with its arms race, huge armaments expenditures, and domestic reaction. This basic spirit of the workers is also being expressed more and more in official ranks, as clearly large numbers of trade union leaders also do not share the Meany conception of continuing the cold war. Whether such as Meany like it or not, the course of events in the United States makes for a sharpening of the attack against the cold war and also for a more intensive defense of the workers' economic and political interests. The coming period in the United States will be one of increasing class struggle. There will be more and more of the workers' challenge to the ultra-reactionary policies of the Meany type of leadership.

One immediate task of no little importance in the struggle to realize

the peace perspectives of Geneva is to send an American labor delegation to the USSR to establish contact with the great trade unions of that country. But Mr. Meany has the arrogance to state that the American trade union movement will send no such delegation. Politicians, newspapermen, actors, businessmen, scientists, farmers, women, clerics, and the youth are sending one delegation after another, to improve cultural and political relationships between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. It is intolerable, therefore, that organized labor should fail to fulfill its progressive peace role in this general respect. Like the workers in other countries are doing, the organized trade unionists in this country should also send their delegations to the U.S.S.R. and invite the Soviet workers to have their union representatives visit this country.

The coming A. F. of L.-C.I.O. merger, which is scheduled to take place at a series of conventions this December, also faces important tasks regarding the easing of the cold war and world tensions. In this respect it will constitute a real challenge to the progressive forces in the American labor movement. It would be a serious setback for the general peace situation if the Meany pro-cold war policies were to prevail at the merger conventions. The new body must speak out clearly for peace. The newly merged organization possesses enormous potential power for the working class. One of the first steps in realizing this potential is to com-

mit the new organization definitely to a policy of peace in the spirit of Geneva. Another needed step, in the same general direction, is to democratize the proposed constitution of the merged labor organization, which has been especially designed to keep the Meany reactionaries in control of the American labor movement. This criticism of the new body's constitution is now being made by numbers of trade union leaders and organizations. The needs of the American labor movement require a program on domestic and international affairs which truly reflects the peace, economic and democratic interests of the American people.

In the 1956 Presidential elections the question of liquidating the cold war, and with it the feverish, over-swollen military build-up of the United States, should also be made a vital issue. Inasmuch as the workers, in the main, function politically through the Democratic Party, this requires that a fight be conducted in the ranks of that party against the Harriman-Meany-Truman-Paul Douglas pro-cold war line. Such attitudes conflict with the strong peace will of the workers and the whole American people, and if the Democrats do not reject them and take a pro-Geneva stand, this could contribute heavily to a Republican victory in the Fall elections. Organized labor will make a fundamental error in the elections if it does not put itself at the head of the mass peace sentiment in this country

and bring forth a program to end the cold war by fighting against all of its many manifestations.

Presidents Meany and Reuther of the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O. both aver that the current merger of their two organizations will produce increase political activity by the labor movement. This assertion is good, so far as it goes; but it is necessary nevertheless to see to it that this stepped-up political activity is directed toward advancing the true interests of the working class. Among others, this calls for two basic considerations: first, that it be aimed at breaking the grip of the militarists upon this country and to writing "Finis" to their cold war; and second, that it move in the direction of developing independent political action of the working class. The American labor movement has far too long, dragged tamely after the two bourgeois political parties and their reactionary leaders and programs. If the labor movement, during the coming period, lives up to the spirit of the Geneva conference, by fighting against the warmongers and arms profiteers, one of the sure results in the near future will be a substantial increase in independent working class political action; first within the Democratic Party (as outlined in the program of the Communist Party) and ultimately in the direction of creating a great labor-farmer party, worthy of a labor movement with some 16,000,000 members.