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LABOUR AND WAR

A FRESH LESSON

by Leon Trotsky

Twenty years after the first imperialist world war which completely destroyed "democratic" illusions, the leaders of the Comintern are trying to prove that the capitalist world has radically altered its nature; that imperialism is no longer the decisive factor on our planet; that world antagonisms are determined not by the predatory interests of monopoly capital, but by abstract political principles, and that the new slaughter of peoples will be a defensive war on the part of innocent, peace-loving democracies against the "Fascist aggressors." Human memory must indeed be very short if, on the eve of a new imperialist war, the adventurists of the Third International dare to put in circulation the very ideas used by the traitors of the Second International to dupe the masses during the last war.

There is, however, more to it than mere repetition. Inasmuch as capitalism has, during the last quarter of a century, reached a very advanced stage of decay in economy as well as politics, the falsifications of the Third International assume an incomparably more obvious, cynical and debased character than was attained by the social-patriotic doctrines of the last war. The leaders of the Second International who had already lost faith in the virtues of "democratic" formulæ and were verging on utter despair, seized with astonishment and a new hope upon the unexpected assistance of the Comintern. Following them, a section of the imperialist bourgeoisie cast its eyes toward the Communist

patriots. Such is the chief source of the rotten and infamous policy of "People's Fronts."

Every profound crisis—whether economic, political or military—has its positive side, in that it puts to a test all the various traditional magnitudes and formulæ, laying bare the rottenness of those that served to mask "peace-time" contradictions, and thereby spurring forward the general development. The diplomatic crisis over Czechoslovakia excellently performed this progressive task. It only remains for Marxists to draw all the necessary political conclusions from the recent experience.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LAST WAR.

Let us begin with a brief backward glance. The war of 1914-1918 was, as is well-known, a "war for democracy." The alliance of France, Great Britain, Italy, and the United States enabled the social-patriots of the Entente to keep their eyes shamefully shut to the fifth ally, Czarism. After the February, 1917, revolution overthrew Nicholas II, the democratic front was definitely aligned. Only the incorrigible Bolsheviks could still clamour thereafter about imperialism. Was it really worth cavilling because the liberal Miluikov, and the quasi-socialist Kerensky wanted to grab Galicia, Armenia and Constantinople? In the end, Miluikov and Kerensky explained that the Bolsheviks were simply the agents of Ludendorff (the "Hitler" of that day).

The war ended with the complete victory for the democracies, although Soviet Russia, led by the Bolsheviks, had abandoned their holy camp. The result of that victory was the Versailles treaty, paid for, to be sure, by millions of lives, but designed to establish once and for all on this earth, the reign of democracy, the free development of nations and the peaceful collaboration of peoples on the basis of general disarmament. The League of Nations crowned the conquests of a war which was supposed to have been a war "to end all wars"—so promised Wilson and the Second International.

A paradise, however, did not materialise, but something rather which very much resembled hell. The peace of Versailles suffocated Europe. Economic life was suffocated by protectionism. The war "for democracy" ushered in an epoch of the final decline of democracy. The world became more poverty-stricken and confined. One state after another took the road to a fascist or a military dictatorship. International relations grew more and more menacing. Disarmament came in the form of programmes of militarism which would have seemed like a nightmare on the eve of the last war. The first clashes of new and bloody conflicts began to take place in different parts of the world. This very moment was chosen by the Comintern to abandon the last remnants of internationalism and to proclaim that the task of the new era was an alliance between the proletariat and the decaying imperialist democracies "against fascism." The greatest source of infection in the world is the heap of filth that remains of what was once the Communist International.

THE STRUGGLE FOR AND AGAINST A NEW PARTITION OF THE WORLD.

Certain theoreticians of the Second International, like Kautsky, who tried to envisage some sort of perspective, expressed a hope that the imperialists, having measured their forces in the great slaughter of the peoples, would be compelled to arrive at an agreement themselves and to establish a peaceful rule over the world in the form of a corporation (the theory of "super-imperialism"). This philistine-pacifist theory—a social-democratic shadow of the League of Nations—tried to shut its eyes to two processes: first, the constant change in the relation of forces between the various imperialist states, with the utter impossibility of measuring these changes in practise except by force of arms; second, the liberating struggle of the proletariat in the metropolitan centres and of the colonial peoples, a struggle that is the most important factor in disrupting the equilibrium, and which by its very nature excludes the possibility of "peaceful" imperialist looting. Precisely for these reasons, the programmes of disarmament remain miserable utopias.

The flagrant and ever-growing disproportion between the specific weight of France and England,

not to mention Holland, Belgium, and Portugal, in world economy and the colossal dimensions of their colonial possessions are as much the source of world conflicts and of new wars as the insatiable greed of the "fascist" aggressors. To put it better, the two phenomena are but *two sides of the same coin*. The "peaceful" English and French democracies rest on the suppression of national-democratic movements of hundreds of millions in Asia and Africa for the sake of the super-profits derived from them. Conversely, Hitler and Mussolini promise to become more "moderate" if they obtain adequate colonial territory.

The United States, owing to her almost total possession of an entire continent with inexhaustible natural wealth, and owing to favourable historical conditions, has extended her sway over the world very "peacefully" and "democratically," if we disregard such trifles as the extermination of the Indians, the robbery of the choicest portions of Mexico, the crushing of Spain, the participation in the last war, and so on. This "idyllic" mode of exploitation, belongs now, however, to the past. The rapid and fearful decay of American capitalism poses before it the question of life and death in a more and more obvious military form. From Wilson's pacifist 14 points, Hoover's Quaker A.R.A. (the international philanthropic organisation, Roosevelt's reformist New Deal, the doctrine of isolation, the laws of absolute neutrality, etc.), the United States is heading inevitably toward an imperialist explosion such as the world has never seen.

Hurled far back by the Versailles peace, Germany took the task of "national unification" as the basis of its imperialist programme. Under this slogan, Fascism, the legitimate heir of Weimar democracy, was born and grew strong. What an irony of fate! In its period of historical rise (from the Napoleonic wars to the Versailles peace of 1871) the belated German bourgeoisie proved incapable of achieving national unification through its own strength. Bismarck only half-fulfilled this task, leaving almost intact the entire feudal and particularist rubbish. True, the revolution of 1918 abolished the German dynasties only because the social democracy was powerless to save them!), but betrayed by the social democracy into the hands of the Junkers, the bankers, the bureaucracy, and the army officers, the revolution was incapable not only of assuring a centralised Greater German Republic, but even of centralising bureaucratically the Germany of the Hohenzollerns. Both these tasks fell to Hitler. The leader of Fascism came forward, in his own fashion, as the continuator of Bismarck, who in his turn had been the executor of the bourgeois bankrupts of 1848. But this is, in the long run, only the superficial aspects of the process. Its social content has radically changed. From the progressive factor that it was, the national state has long been transformed in advanced countries into a brake

on the development of productive forces. Ten million more Germans within the boundaries of Germany do not alter the reactionary nature of the national state. In their own way, the imperialists understood this very well. For Hitler it is not at all a question of "unifying Germans" as an independent task, but of creating a broader European drill-ground for future world expansion. This crisis over the Sudeten Germans, or rather over the Sudeten mountains, was an episode on the road toward the struggle for colonies.

A new partition of the world is on the order of the day. The first step in the revolutionary education of the workers must be to develop the ability to perceive beneath the official formulae, slogans, and hypocritical phrases, the real imperialist appetites, plans, and calculations.

THE IMPERIALIST QUARTET REPLACES THE "FRONT OF DEMOCRACIES."

The lamb-like docility of European democracies is the product not of love of peace, but of weakness. The cause of weakness is not the democratic régime as such, but rather the disproportion between the economic foundations of the metropolitan centres and the colonial empires inherited from the past. To this disproportion is added the liberating struggle of the colonies which threatens, especially in time of war, to flare into a revolutionary conflagration. In these conditions, decaying "democracy" really becomes a supplementary source of weakness for the old imperialist powers.

Open reaction in France undoubtedly profits from the capitulations of the People's Front. We can expect with certainty a strengthening of French Fascism, favoured by the patronage of leading military circles. In England, where the conservative bourgeoisie is in power, the Labourite opposition will probably gain more in the next period than Fascism. But in view of the entire historic situation, the assumption of power by the Labour party can only be an episode, or more exactly, a stage on the road to more radical changes. Neither Major Attlee nor Sir Walter Citrine will be able to cope with the malignant spirits of our epoch!

Somehow, the "world front of democracies" promised by the charlatans of the "People's Fronts" found itself replaced by a Four-Power front of Germany, Italy, England, and France. After the Munich Conference, where England and France capitulated to Hitler, with the as-always equivocal mediation of Mussolini, the heads of the four states appeared before their respective peoples as national heroes: Hitler has unified the Germans; Chamberlain and Daladier had averted war; Mussolini—helped both sides. Long live the Big Four! The petty bourgeois fraternity which the G.P.U. usually mobilises for all kinds of pacifist congresses is already beginning to turn toward the new messiahs of peace. The French socialists abstained

on the question of voting special powers to Daladier, the hero of capitulation. The abstention was only a transitional step from the camp of Moscow to the camp of the Big Four. The isolation of the Stalinist praetorians in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate symbolised the complete isolation of the Kremlin in European politics.

But it can already be stated with certainty that the Munich quartet is as little capable of preserving peace as the "front of democracies" that was never realised. England and France threw Czechoslovakia into Hitler's maw to give him something to digest for a time and thus postpone the question of colonies. Chamberlain and Daladier made very uncertain promises that a common agreement on all controversial issues would be reached. On his part, Hitler promised to present no more territorial demands in Europe. Thereby he has in any case indicated his intention to present territorial demands in other parts of the world. As regards Alsace-Lorraine, Schleswig, etc., Hitler is at best postponing the solution of these questions until the new world war. Should fascism conquer France in the next year or two, and the Labour party in England, these political changes would alter very little the arrangement of the imperialist figures on the world chess-board. Fascist France would be as little inclined as the France of the "People's Front" to yield Alsace-Lorraine to Hitler, or to share its colonies with him. The Labour party, impregnated with the spirit of imperialism, could not mitigate the antagonism with Italy in the Mediterranean, nor check the development of the world antagonism between German and British interests. In these conditions, the Four-Power combination, if ever realised, will lead only to a new crisis, for which we have not long to wait. Imperialism is inevitably and irresistibly heading to a redivision of the world, corresponding to the changed relation of forces. To prevent the catastrophe, imperialism must be strangled. All other methods are fictions, illusions, lies.

THE MEANING OF THE GOVERNMENTAL TURN IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

The refusal of France and Britain to defend the imperialist interests of the Czech bourgeoisie not only led to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia but also to the collapse of its political régime. This experience revealed in a chemically pure form that Czechoslovakian democracy was not an expression of the "people's will" but simply an apparatus whereby Czech monopoly capitalism adapted itself to its patron states. No sooner did the military patronage fall away than the democratic machinery proved not only unnecessary but harmful in that it threatened to provoke needless friction with Hitler. The Czech bourgeois leaders immediately created a new apparatus of imperialist adaptation in the shape of a military dictatorship. This change of régimes was accomplished without the

slightest participation of the people, without new elections, and even without any consultation of the old parliament. The president, elected by the people, the arch-"democrat," Benes, summoned the ranking general of the republic to power. This summons at first had some semblance of a concession to the people who were aroused, and who were protesting, demonstrating and demanding resistance to Hitler, arms in hand. Resistance? Here is a general as a national leader! Having performed this deed, the president withdrew. Whereupon the general, formerly at the head of the armed forces, and who was, so to speak, the shining sword of democracy, announced his intention, for the sake of amity with Hitler, of instituting a new state régime. And that was all!

Generally speaking, democracy is indispensable to the bourgeoisie in an epoch of free competition. To monopoly capitalism, resting not on "free" competition but on centralised command, democracy is of no use; it is hampered and embarrassed by it. Imperialism can tolerate democracy as a necessary evil up to a certain point. But its ineluctable urge is toward dictatorship. During the last war, 22 years ago, Lenin wrote: "The difference between the republican-democratic and monarchic-reactionary imperialist bourgeoisie is being effaced precisely because both of them are rotting." Further, he added: "Political reaction *all along the line* is inherent in imperialism." Only hopeless idiots can believe that imperialist world antagonisms are determined by the irreconcilability between democracy and Fascism. In fact, the ruling cliques of all countries look upon democracy, military dictatorship, Fascism, etc., as so many different instruments for subjecting their own peoples to imperialist aims. Moreover, one of the political régimes, *viz.*, democracy, includes within itself from the outset, in the shape, for example, of the General Staff, another régime—that of military dictatorship.

In Germany the imperialist bourgeoisie, with the active assistance of the social democracy, placed Field Marshal Von Hindenburg, as a defender against Fascism, in the presidential office. Hindenburg, in his turn, summoned Hitler to power, after which the Field Marshal did not, to be sure, resign, but died. This involves however, merely a question of technique and age. In essence, the overturn in Czechoslovakia reproduces the main features of the overturn in Germany, revealing thereby the mainsprings of the political mechanics of imperialism. The question of the Czechoslovakia régime was no doubt decided behind the scenes at conferences of magnates of Czech, French, British and German capitalism, together with the leaders of the General Staffs and of the diplomats. The chief concern in shifting the state boundaries was to cause as little damage as possible to the interests of the financial oligarchy. The change in orientation from France and England to Germany signified essentially an exchange of stocks, a new division of mili-

tary orders for the Skoda plants and so on.

Nobody, by the way, concerned himself with the position of the social democracy and the ex-communist party, because in Czechoslovakia they were no more capable of resistance than were their elder brothers in Germany. Bowing before "national necessities" these utterly corroded organisations did everything in their power to paralyse the revolutionary resistance of the working class. After the overturn has been consummated, the financial clique will probably hold a "referendum," *i.e.*, provide the people, driven into a blind alley, with the precious opportunity of "approving," under the muzzle of Syrový's gun, the changes made without them and against them.

SHOULD CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S "NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE" BE DEFENDED?

During the critical week in September, we have been informed, voices were raised even at the left flank of socialism, holding that in case of "single combat" between Czechoslovakia and Germany, the proletariat would be obliged to help Czechoslovakia and save her "national independence," even in an alliance with Benes. This hypothetical situation failed to arise. The heroes of Czechoslovakian independence, as was to be expected, capitulated without a struggle. It is impossible, however, in the interests of the future, not to point out here the gross and dangerous blunder of these out-of-season theoreticians of "national independence."

Even irrespective of its international ties, Czechoslovakia is an absolutely imperialist state. Economically, monopoly capitalism reigns there. Politically, the Czech bourgeoisie rules (perhaps soon we will have to say, used to rule) over several oppressed nationalities. A war, even on the part of isolated Czechoslovakia, would thus have been waged not for national independence but for the preservation and, if possible, the extension of the borders of imperialist exploitation.

Even if the other imperialist states were not immediately involved, it would be impracticable to consider a war between Czechoslovakia and Germany apart from the pattern of European and world imperialist relations of which such a war would have been an episode. Within a month or two, a Czecho-German war—if the Czech bourgeoisie was desirous and capable of fighting—would almost inevitably have involved other states. It would therefore be an error for Marxists to define their position on the basis of episodic diplomatic and military groupings rather than on the basis of the general character of the social forces behind this war.

We have reiterated on hundreds of occasions the irreplaceable and invaluable thesis of Clausewitz that war is but the continuation of politics by other means. In order to determine in each given instance the historic and social character of a war, we must be guided not by impressions and conjectures but by a scientific analysis of the politics which pre-

ceded the war and conditioned it. These politics from the very first day of the formation of patched-up Czechoslovakia were of an imperialist character.

It may be argued that after separating the Sudeten Germans, the Hungarians, the Poles, and, perhaps, the Slovaks, Hitler will not stop before the enslavement of the Czechs themselves, and that in this case their struggle for national independence would have every claim upon the support of the proletariat. This manner of formulating the question is nothing but social-patriotic sophistry. What paths the future development of imperialism antagonisms will follow, we do not know. Complete destruction of Czechoslovakia is, of course, quite possible. But it is equally possible that before this destruction will have been accomplished, a European war will break out in which Czechoslovakia may be found on the victorious side, and participate in a new dismemberment of Germany. Is the rôle of a revolutionary party then that of a nurse to "crippled" gangsters of imperialism?

It is quite obvious that the proletariat must build its policy on the basis of a *given* war, as it is, *i.e.*, as it has been conditioned by the whole preceding course of development, and not on hypothetical speculation over the possible strategic outcome of the war. In such speculations everyone will invariably choose that variant which best corresponds to his own desires, national sympathies and antipathies. Obviously, such a policy would be not Marxist but subjective, not internationalist but chauvinist in character.

An imperialist war, no matter in what corner it begins, will be waged not for "national independence" but for a redivision of the world in the interests of separate cliques of finance capital. This does not exclude that *in passing* the imperialist war may improve or worsen the position of this or that "nation"; or, more exactly, of one nation at the expense of another. Thus, the Versailles treaty dismembered Germany. A new peace may dismember France. Social patriots invoke precisely this possible "national" peril of the future as an argument for supporting "their" imperialist bandits of the present. Czechoslovakia does not in the least constitute an exception to this rule.

In reality all speculative arguments of this sort and raising bogies of impending national calamities for the sake of supporting this or that imperialist bourgeoisie flow from *the tacit rejection of the revolutionary perspective and a revolutionary policy*. Naturally, *if* a new war ends only in a military victory of this or that imperialist camp; *if* a war calls forth neither a revolutionary uprising nor a victory of the proletariat; *if* a new imperialist peace more terrible than that of Versailles places new chains for decades upon the people; *if* unfortunate humanity bears all this in silence and submission—then not only Czechoslovakia or Belgium but also France can be thrown back into the position of an oppressed nation (the same hypothesis may be drawn in regard

to Germany). In this eventuality the further frightful decomposition of capitalism will drag all peoples backward for many decades to come. Of course if *this* perspective of passivity, capitulation, defeats and decline comes to pass, the oppressed masses and entire peoples will be forced to climb anew, paying out their sweat and blood, retracing on their hands and knees the historic road once already travelled.

Is such a perspective excluded? *If* the proletariat suffers without end the leadership of social-imperialists and communo-chauvinists; *if* the Fourth International is unable to find a way to the masses; *if* the horrors of war do not drive the workers and soldiers to rebellion; *if* the colonial peoples continue to bleed patiently in the interests of the slaveholders, then under these conditions the level of civilisation will inevitably be lowered and the general retrogression and decomposition may again place national wars on the order of the day for Europe. But then we, or rather our sons, will have to determine their policy in relation to future wars on the basis of the new situation. *To-day* we proceed not from the perspective of decline but that of revolution. We are defeatists at the expense of the imperialists and not at the expense of the proletariat. We do not link the question of the fate of the Czechs, Belgians, French and Germans as nations with episodic shifts of military fronts during a new brawl of the imperialists, but with the uprising of the proletariat and its victory over all the imperialists. We look forward and not backward. The programme of the Fourth International states that the freedom of all European nations, small and large can be assured only within the framework of the Socialist United States of Europe.

ONCE AGAIN ON DEMOCRACY AND FASCISM.

All of this does not, of course, imply that there is no difference at all between democracy and Fascism, or that this difference is of no concern to the working class, as the Stalinists insisted not so very long ago. The Marxists have nothing in common with such political nihilism. Only, it is necessary in each given instance clearly to comprehend the actual content of this difference, and its true limits.

For the backward colonial and semi-colonial countries, the struggle for democracy, including the struggle for national independence, represents a necessary and progressive stage of historical development. It is just for this reason that we deem it not only the right but also the duty of workers in these countries actively to participate in the "defence of the fatherland" against imperialism, on condition, to be sure, that they preserve the complete independence of their class organisation and conduct a ruthless struggle against the poison of chauvinism. Thus, in the conflict between Mexico and the oil kings and their executive committee, which is the democratic government of Great Britain, the class-conscious proletariat of the world

sides wholly with Mexico (this does not of course apply to the imperialist lackeys at the head of the British Labour party.)

As regards advanced capitalism, the latter has long since outgrown not only the old property forms but also the national state, and in consequence bourgeois democracy as well. The fundamental crisis of contemporary civilisation lies precisely here. Imperialist democracy is putrefying and disintegrating. A programme of "defence of democracy" for the advanced countries is a programme of reaction. The only progressive task here is the preparation of the international socialist revolution. Its aim is to smash the framework of the old national state and build up economy in accordance with geographic and technological conditions, without mediæval taxes and duties.

Again, this does not imply an attitude of indifference toward the current political methods of imperialism. In all cases where the counter-revolutionary forces tend to pull back away from the decomposing "democratic" states and towards provincial particularism, towards monarchy, military dictatorship, Fascism—the revolutionary proletariat without assuming the slightest responsibility for the "defence of democracy" (it is indefensible!) will meet these counter-revolutionary forces with armed resistance, in order, if successful, to direct its offensive against imperialist "democracy."

This policy, however, is applicable only with regard to internal conflicts, that is, in those cases where the struggle really involves the issue of a political régime, as was for instance the case in Spain. The participation of Spanish workers in the struggle against Franco was their elementary duty. But precisely and only because the workers did not succeed in time in replacing the rule of bourgeois democracy with their own rule, "democracy" was able to clear the path for Fascism.

It is, however, sheer fraud and charlatanism to transfer mechanically the laws and rules of the struggle between *different* classes of one and the same nation over to an imperialist war, that is, the struggle waged by *one and the same class* of *different* nations. At present, after the fresh experience of Czechoslovakia, there is no necessity, it seems, to demonstrate that the imperialists are fighting one another not for political principles but for domination over the world under the cover of any principles that will serve their purpose.

Mussolini and his closest associates, so far as one can gather, are atheists, that is they believe neither in God nor the Devil. The King of Britain and his ministers are mired in mediæval superstitions and believe not only in the Devil but in the Devil's grandmother. Yet this does not mean that a war between Italy and England would be a war of science against religion. Mussolini, the atheist, will do all in his power to fan the religious passions of the Mohammedans. The devout Protestant Cham-

berlain will, for his part, seek assistance from the Pope, and so on. In the calendar of human progress, a republic rates above a monarchy. But does this signify that war waged by republican France, say, against monarchist Holland for colonies would be a war of a republic against a monarchy? We shall not even dwell on the fact that in the event of a national war waged by the Bey of Tunis against France, progress would be on the side of the barbarian monarch and not that of the imperialist republic. Hygiene occupies an important place in human culture. But when a murder is involved, the question of whether the murderer washed his hands beforehand is not of decisive importance. To substitute practical or moral abstractions for the actual aims of the warring imperialist camps is not to fight for democracy, but to help the brigands disguise their robbery, pillage and violence. This is now precisely the main function of the Second and Third Internationals.

THE INTERNATIONAL POLICY OF THE BONAPARTIST KREMLIN CLIQUE.

The immediate blow fell this time on Czechoslovakia. France and England have suffered serious injury. But the most formidable blow was suffered by the Kremlin. Its system of lies, charlatanism and frauds has suffered international collapse.

Having crushed the Soviet masses and broken with the policy of international revolution, the Kremlin clique has become a toy of imperialism. In everything essential, Stalin's diplomacy in the last five years was only a reflection of and a supplement to Hitler's diplomacy. In 1933 Stalin strove might and main to become Hitler's ally. But the extended hand was spurned, inasmuch as Hitler, in search of England's friendship, presented himself as the saviour of Germany and Europe from Bolshevism. Thereupon Stalin set himself the task of proving to capitalist Europe that it had no need of Hitler, that Bolshevism contained no dangers within itself, that the government of the Kremlin was a domestic animal, trained to stand up on its haunches and beg. Thus, in moving away from Hitler, or more exactly, in being repulsed by him, Stalin gradually became a lackey and hired assassin in the service of the countries of sated imperialism.

Hence, this sudden frenzy of genuflection before gangrenous bourgeois democracy on the part of the totalitarian Kremlin gang; hence, the idiotically false idealisation of the League of Nations; hence, the "People's Fronts" which strangled the Spanish revolution; hence, the substitution for the actual class struggle of declamations "against Fascism." The present international function of the Soviet bureaucracy and the Comintern was revealed with especial impudence at the pacifist congress in Mexico (September 1938), where the hired agents of Moscow tried to convince the peoples of Latin America that they had to fight not against the all

too real imperialism that threatened them but solely against Fascism.

As was to be expected, Stalin gained neither friendship nor trust through these cheap manoeuvres. The imperialists have become accustomed to applaud society not by the declarations of its "leaders," and not even by the character of its political superstructure, but by its social foundation. So long as state ownership of the means of production, protected by monopoly of foreign trade is maintained in the Soviet Union, the imperialists, including the "democratic" imperialists, will continue to regard Stalin with no more confidence and incomparably less respect than feudal-monarchist Europe viewed the first Bonaparte. Surrounded by the aureole of victories and his suite of brilliant marshals, Napoleon could not escape Waterloo. Stalin has crowned the series of his capitulations, failures and betrayals with the wholesale destruction of the marshals of the revolution. Can there be the slightest doubt about the fate awaiting him?

The only obstacle in the path of war is the fear of the property-owning classes of revolution. So long as the Communist International remained true to the principles of proletarian revolution, it represented, together with the Red Army, with which it was closely bound, the most important factor for peace. Having prostituted the Comintern, and turned it into an agency of "democratic" imperialism; having beheaded and paralysed the military power of the Soviets, Stalin has completely untied Hitler's hands, as well as the hands of Hitler's adversaries, and pushed Europe close to war.

The Moscow falsifiers are nowadays heaping

cheap curses upon their former democratic friend Benes because he "capitulated" prematurely and prevented the Red Army from crushing Hitler, regardless of France's course. This theatrical thunder only illuminates all the more glaringly the impotence and duplicity of the Kremlin. When then compelled you to believe in Benes? Who forced you to concoct the myth of the "alliance of democracies?" And, lastly, who prevented you in the critical hours when all of Czechoslovakia was seething like a cauldron, from calling upon the proletariat of Prague to seize power, and sending the Red Army to their aid? Apparently it is much more difficult to fight against fascism than to shoot and poison old Bolsheviks. . . . From the example of Czechoslovakia, all small states and especially all colonial peoples must learn what sort of help they may expect from Stalin.

Only the overthrow of the Bonapartist Kremlin clique can make possible the regeneration of the military strength of the U.S.S.R. Only the liquidation of the ex-Comintern will clear the way for revolutionary internationalism. The struggle against war, imperialism, and fascism demands a ruthless struggle against Stalinism spotted with crimes. Whoever defends Stalinism directly or indirectly, whoever keeps silent about its betrayals or exaggerates its military strength is the worst enemy of the revolution, of socialism, and of the oppressed peoples. The sooner the Kremlin gang is overthrown by the armed offensive of the workers, the greater will be the chances for a socialist regeneration of the U.S.S.R., the closer and broader will be the perspectives of the international revolution.

To be continued in our February issue.

NOW READY

By LEON TROTSKY.

THE LESSON OF SPAIN

The Last Warning.

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Stalin Completes Hitlers Task

From the *Opposition Bulletin* (No. 66/67) organ of our Russian section we take the following news about the whereabouts of the German Communist immigrants in the Soviet union.

The following members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany were arrested and shot as spies: Heinz Neumann, Hermann Remmele and the parliamentary candidate Schubert.

Werner Hirsh, known as the right hand of Thaelmann had been released from Hitler's concentration camp in 1935, only to be arrested a short while later as a Gestapo agent (!) and as the organiser of the arrest of Thaelmann. He was shot in the year 1937. In the same year further shootings were carried out as follows: Susskind, former editor of *Rote Fahne* in Berlin and Nikolaus Birkenhauer, former editor of the *Ruhr-Echo's* and the *Rote Fahne*. At the end of 1937 Rudolf Haus, (Hauschild) was also shot in Moscow. Haus has been a well-known journalist for the party press, his main subjects were problems on imperialist war and philosophical questions. He is mostly known through the study on the relations between Marx and Feuerbach. Hermann Kupferstein, a former leader of the Red Front organisation, left in 1935 for Moscow from Paris. Kupferstein was mixed up in a shooting affair of two policemen in 1932 in Berlin. Hitler publicly swore to avenge this deed and asked for this purpose for the extradition of Heinz Neumann from Switzerland. Professor Felix Halle, the well-known advocate of the C.P.G. was appointed for his defence and eventually he succeeded in preventing the extradition. But Hitler has the fullest satisfaction—through Stalin! Kupferstein, his wife, and Heinz Neumann were shot as spies and even Professor Felix Halle has been in prison since 1936!

Further people imprisoned are: the author Ernst Ottwald, who was in the first years of his immigration a regular contributor to the Communist press, *Weltbuhne* and author of a couple of novels. Only in 1936 he transferred his residence with his wife from Prague to the S.U. where they were soon arrested as Gestapo agents; Kurt Sauerland, former editor of *Roter Aufber* in Berlin, author of a scandalous book about dialectical materialism: the Austrian, Dr. Herber, contributor to the periodical *Die Internationale* and Boross who was for many years correspondent for *Inprecorr* and *Rundschau*. Erjauz, one of the leaders of the Austrian Schutzbund, is

also imprisoned in Kharkov for the past year.

The above list is by no means complete. A large number of unknown minor functionaries, rank and filers of the party, fled from Hitler's concentration camps only to be tried by the G.P.U. The reasons for this revolting work of slaughter, which excels the hangman work of Hitler and Goering, are quite unknown. One thing is sure: that the G.P.U. is lying in its accusation that all these people are Hitler's spies. Naturally are these accusations lies but they are a low stupid, for what stronger condemnation of the political regime of the S.U. could there be than the just the known opponents of Hitler transform them into spies when they enter Soviet territory, whereas all those who emigrated to other countries remained faithful to the cause. Correct on the other hand is what we had pointed out as early as 1930, that Remmele, Neumann, Hirsch and Co. helped Hitler to his victory by their policy but that Remmele and Neumann were nothing but the obedient tools of Stalin. Stalin is the super agent of Hitler and Fascism as was pointed out a short time ago by Mussolini himself. The old leaders of the C.P.G. as living witness of Stalin's own catastrophic policies, now stand in his way. Seeing in them his own reflection he can find only one tested remedy—to put them against a wall. In this way again he only serves Hitler and Mussolini.

Amongst the imprisoned who were released from Hitler's jails only to find themselves in Stalin's jails are: Professor Felix Halle who has put his tremendous judicial knowledge and life long experience at the disposal of the fight for proletarian emancipation. In 1919 he conducted the campaign for the liberation of the Soviet representative Axelrod from the hands of the Bavarian reaction. With Alfred Apfel he took part in the years long campaign for the release of Max Holtz. To assist the proletarian revolutionaries against the traps of bourgeois court procedure he wrote the excellent pamphlet "How a Proletarian Defends Himself in a Bourgeois Court." He also took a leading part in the fight against abortion laws. As judicial advisor he assisted the parliamentary faction of the C.P.G. in the Supreme Court in its guerilla warfare in defence of the freedom of their press and organisation. His work has always been of great thoroughness and devotion. His tremendous knowledge of his subject, his excellent argumentations never failed to make a deep

impression even on the reactionary judges and they respected, against their wish, such an outstanding man. At the same time he worked for a very small income. He took without a murmur the most unbelievable treatment from the bureaucrats of the parliamentary faction who hated him because of his superior culture and knowledge.

After Hitler's coming to power when the majority of the faction had fled the field, Halle still remained working in his little office under the roof of the Reichstag, while Nazis already carried the petrol for the fire. He was arrested on the night of the fire, February 27-28, but at that time people were still concerned over his fate. Well-known advocates the world over, such as George Branting, Moro Gjafferi, Pritt, protested and intervened. And the Leipzig judges who has already had enough discomfort at the preparatory examinations of the Reichstag Fire Trial were not in the least keen to put such a highly intelligent advocate in the box, because they were facing enough trouble with the raw and vulgar Dimitrov. After a few months imprisonment he was freed and fled to France where he took part in the counter-trial at Paris.

At the end of 1934 or the beginning of 1935 he was called as a lecturer in International Law at the Moscow University. The public only once more heard of him in the fight for the right of asylum of Heinz Neumann in Switzerland. Since then there has been complete silence about Felix Halle. To-day we know why. Since 1936 he has been in prison and nobody knows if he is still alive. It is important to know the date of his arrest to find the cause which gives a clue to the reasons. In 1936, at the first Moscow trial of Kamenev, Zinoviev, Smirnov, etc., Stalin wanted to force the famous lawyer to take over the defence of the greatest scandal in the history of law, in the opinion of the world. While the English K.C. Pritt, voluntarily or in the hope of jingling coins, offered his services, Halle, even at the price of his freedom and his life, was not to be bribed. Even though he said he was not competent in the spheres of Party politics he always submitted to the prevailing Party line, to fulfil his duties in his special sphere. This man, the most honest and straightforward ever to serve the Stalinist movement, had to draw a line when he was asked to defend not as usual a worker against his exploiter, but to defend old bolsheviks against the injustice of the Kremlin oligarchy.

The question must also be posed: what has happened to Halle's wife, a faithful and irreplaceable helper? Has Stalin extended his revenge also to her?

Among the victims of Stalin is also the actress Karola Neher, the wife of the dead poet Klavund, who took the part of Polly Peachum in the Three-penny Opera (*Dreigroschenoper*). Madam Neher has been in close contact with the circle of radical intellectuals such as Brecht, Weill, and Eisler, and was sympathetic to Communism, and escaped in

1933 to the Soviet Union. In her naïveté she thought she was in a free country and began in her social contacts with old Bolsheviks to interest them in the fate of the exiles. This was too much for the G.P.U. and the delicate woman learned to know prison and banishment. There was a rumour in 1935 already that she had attempted suicide by severing the artery in her wrist. According to the report of the reliable Swedish *Handels och Sjöfartstidning*, Karola Neher was a victim of the mass slaughter in 1937. The saddest and most shameful chapter in this bloody tragedy is the attitude of the official German emigration towards the fate of their members who found refuge in the Soviet Union. The German "Popular Front", Messrs. Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Bertold Brecht, Lion Feuchtwanger, Arnold Zweig, Max Braun, Pieck, Dengel, Merker, and Jacob Walcher, as well as their papers the *Weltbuehne*, the *Pariser Tageszeitung*, the *Volkszeitung* and the *Neue Front* remain in complete silence.

You, Mr. Brecht, knew Karola Neher. You know that she was neither a terrorist or a spy, but a plucky person and a great artist. Why are you silent? Is it because Stalin pays for your publication *Das Wort*, this lowest and most scurrilous periodical that has ever been published by German intellectuals? Where do you find the courage to protest against Hitler's murder of Liese Hermann, Edgar Andre, and Hans Litten? Do you really believe that you can force the prison doors of the Third Reich with lies, baseness and praise for rogues? It took you, Mr. Thomas Mann, five years before you decided to sacrifice your German book market after they had put your chair outside the door. Surely no one expects you to take the part of the Stalin victims? Would you perhaps "cut off contact with the Russian readers?" The extent of sacrifice of "the most humane conscience of our epoch" has its limits.

If Felix Halle, Ernst Otwald, Karola Neher, Rudolf Haus, etc., were sitting in Hitler's cells and were in danger of their lives, how you would shout and clamour that the poor "world conscience" is being flouted. But if Stalin kills the very same people it does not move you in the least. Must one not conclude from this that you would not have worried the least about Ossietzky, Litten and Andre if they had been tortured to death by Stalin instead of Hitler? Perhaps you would even have had the impudence in that case to slander them and you are still surprised that you are losing ground step by step and that Fascism draws greater and greater circles? Fascism only finds it so easy to progress because you are defeatist in advance, because you have given up a thousand times the besmirched and meagre principles which you pretend to uphold against Fascism, because you are no longer convinced fighters, without character and a hollow moral parade behind which one can discern the sinister features of Stalin. Stalin bought your moral authority to soothe

the world conscience and, lowering yourself to this extent, you are still surprised that world conscience turns its back on you. Your whole work can be summarised in one word: Treachery! Treachery towards your own writings! Treachery to your morals! Treachery to the victims of Stalin and Hitler! Treachery to the masses! Treachery to yourself!

Indeed Fascism could not find better allies than such "enemies". If you were not in existence, Goebbels would have to invent you. Hitler's victory is unshakeable as long as people like you are the official noises of the anti-Fascism fight. Only when the suffering masses, who bear the unheard-of misery partly because you hold out your hands for the trivial bribes of Stalin, and who are really your primary victims, have silenced you and forbidden publications such as *Das Wort* and the misuse of the name anti-Fascist, only then is the day of anti-Fascist revenge assured.

MARKISM AND PRESENT DAY POLITICS

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SPAIN

The Third Winter

The Spanish Civil War is now in its third winter.

Last spring when the fascists penetrated into Catalonia and sundered the Republican territory at Vinaroz, exultation within the Franco camp knew no bounds. The war of the restoration of the privileged nobility seemed to be nearing its end.

Then on July 24th, the heroic Catalans crossed the Ebro and compelled the withdrawal of artillery which had been systematically pulverising the outer defences of Valencia.

Both sides saw then the inevitability of a third winter campaign.

The Government immediately sought to compromise, and speeches deploring the frightful loss of life were to be heard issuing from the various Ministers, while Dr. Negrin looked forward to the time when the names of the dead "of both sides" would be graven on the war memorials.

The Fascist Duke of Alba took a short rest cure in Switzerland and by the strangest of all coincidences happened to bump into the worthy Dr. Negrin who, believe it or not, had chosen that particular moment to attend a Conference on Physiology.

The prospects of an armistice, however welcome to the Government, are by no means necessarily entertained by the fascists, for they enjoy considerable advantage over the Loyalists and are anxious to utilise them before aid can reach the dithering statesmen who head the Republic.

With an open seaboard and the friendly non-intervention of his capitalist allies, Franco is well supplied with food and war material, though he lacks textiles. Technical assistance abounds in plenty in the Nazi "Legion Condor," whose members are busily gathering valuable technical data in preparation for the war that is to come. The German "HISMA" commercial agency is furiously energetic in exploiting the mineral and agricultural belts in the interests of German imperialism and to this end highly efficient civil air lines are spanning Nationalist Spain. All this money is not being expended out of personal admiration for Franco and many of the Spanish bourgeois are apprehensive concerning their future safety should the Peninsula become a German colony.

According to military experience gained from the campaigns of the Peninsular War, the Pyrenean frontier is the most vulnerable of all France's borders. Were this frontier to fall into the hands of the German fascists it would be possible to institute a complete blockage of France's southern borders, particularly if Italian men-of-war maintained the naval strangle-hold from their Majorca and Balearic bases. Thus we see that behind the Spanish bourgeoisie there looms the gigantic shadow of German militarism ready to sweep their pawns to one side, once their purpose is served.

The fears of the Franco aristocracy are well founded for of all the groupings supporting Franco, one, the Falange Espanola Tradicionalista, is now indisputably the ruling clique.

The Falange is modelled closely on the Nazi Party and like it, pays considerable attention to mass propaganda. A high sounding *Labour Charter* has been embodied in Franco's social programme which is almost indistinguishable from Dr. Negrin's *Thirteen Points*.

Comparison is not odious . . . for the promise of grandiose reforms is a prominent feature of all political swindlers.

Point 1 of the fascist programme provides for the National Unity of Spain, "the interests of individuals, groups and classes will be remorselessly waived." Compare this with point 5 of Negrin's Programme: ". . . Protection of the personality and individuality of the various regions of Spain . . . is the best way of welding together the various elements of the nation." Point 4 of the fascists: "Our armed forces must be efficient and as numerous as may be necessary to ensure Spanish independence," synchronises almost exactly with Point 11 of Negrin's ". . . The Spanish Army shall be free of all Party leadership and the people must be able to see in it the instrument for the defence of their independence." The Falange goes one better than Negrin and makes a sham attack on Capitalism: "We repudiate any capitalist system which ignores popular necessities, dehumanises private property and huddles workers into shapeless masses . . . we repudiate Marxism (so does Negrin and with the same bloody methods) . . . it is intolerable that the masses should live in misery and the few in luxury!"

Quite distinctly the fascist bourgeoisie expresses its fear of the Spanish Revolution and attempts to placate the rising storm with a show of social legislation—precisely the same method of the Popular Front Government which, beneath a welter of reformist sentiment, states (Points 7 and 9) ". . . the State shall guarantee property legally acquired . . . the State shall ensure the workers' rights by an advanced social legislation."

Agricultural reform is promised by both sides.

Religion, nicely whitewashed and well groomed, is guaranteed its former privileges by each contestant.

Private property is declared holy and inviolable in a unanimous duet.

The one thing that emerges clearly from this programmatic comparison is, that the whole of the ruling class was scared stiff by the militant attitude of the workers in the early days of the war, and now the Liberal-Stalinist Government is terrified at the prospect of a winter which will serve to accentuate the already deep divisions within the Republic.

By imprisonment, torture and murder they have sought to decapitate the inevitable revolution.

The war has been converted into an issue of "fascism" versus "democracy" by the conscious

throttling of the Revolution by the Stalinists who thereby become the counter-revolutionary accomplices of the bourgeoisie.

Had the Revolution succeeded and reached its completion Franco would have been swept into the Atlantic. Because of the substitution of liberal-capitalist promises for genuine revolutionary actions, Franco has been enabled to reach the Mediterranean. The difference between reform and revolution can be actually measured in kilometres!

Within the Republic, two currents are clearly discernible. On the one hand the Government, the Stalinists and the Socialist and Anarchist bureaucracies will cling to the idea of preserving at all costs the formal Republic. As long as the Pyrenean frontier is not entirely in fascist hands Spain may be said to have some value to Stalin, who seeks to restore his broken alliance with French imperialism. In so far as this asset is not negated by the temporary possibility of incurring British displeasure, Stalin will support the tottering Spanish republic for the sake of a French-British-Russian alliance.

The Government's value to the various imperialisms is the decisive factor to the Republicans who will sue for peace if only in order to save what they have left of Spain. The great grey mass of the workers, eager and willing to fight, constitutes the greatest problem, possesses the greatest opportunity, and presents the greatest menace to the capitalist vultures.

They have seen the futility of anarchistic principles. They have seen the reward of wavering centrism as represented by the P.O.U.M.

Not yet have they clearly seen the treachery of the Stalinists, for that Party which provided arms in plenty at the critical moment of the War still enjoys prestige in the eyes of the backward workers.

But hunger . . . and winter are fearful foes, foes that will not be stayed by demagogy. The rising anger will mount as the Government steadily retreats. Then, a Party which can formulate the suspicions of the confused proletariat into open demands, which can make plain to the workers the necessity for waging a revolutionary war, which can call upon the world proletariat in terms of workers' solidarity and not in the honeyed platitudes of peace and democracy, such a Party would sweep all before it and would have the duty and the responsibility of establishing the Spanish Soviet Republic.

Does that Party exist? It need not be big, for the hungry winter will swell it, it need not be famous for the biting winds will spread its name far and wide.

Upon this Party the whole future of Spain will depend. Those courageous comrades who still work to establish the Party work in the shadow of Lenin and Trotsky, work with the historic responsibility of all Bolshevik-Leninists.

Help WIN

In these days of swiftly moving events, when each morning's paper brings news of fresh battles, further changes in the world-map, old treaties cast overboard, new treaties signed and then torn up before the ink on them has dried, official policies reversed not merely overnight but almost in the middle of a sentence, in days like these, a month is a whole geological epoch, and a monthly paper like "W.I.N." is restricted to the recording of the broader tendencies in the swiftly changing situation. It is necessary to plan for the more frequent appearance of this paper, to reduce the time-lag between events and responses.

In this task our readers can render effective aid by sending in not only their own subscriptions for the coming year but additional ones for the new readers they can win by passing on their copies. Carrying no lucrative advertisements, subsidised by no powerful bureaucracy, we are dependent entirely on the subscriptions and donations of friends of the revolutionary socialist movement. This means that in the present period of reaction we are weak in the matter of funds, but correspondingly strong in that we are free from the distorting influence of those

who have a stake in the present system of hunger and war, misery and blood.

Steadily increasing sales during the past year have proved to us that "W.I.N." fulfils a useful function and will continue to gain new friends in the coming period. We have succeeded in establishing discussion circles in many parts of London, drawing together workers and friends of the working class movement around the banner of militant socialism, and making a beginning in the task we set ourselves a year ago of rallying militants in a stand against the confusion sown broadcast in the socialist movement by Stalinist-reformist treachery.

In the face of the colossal tasks facing the workers and primarily the task of building the revolutionary workers' party, such accomplishments as we are so far able to record are small, no doubt, but by no means insignificant. A beginning has been made. By patient and steady work, by increasing and extending sales of "W.I.N." and the circles of militants, we can, we will create the nucleus for that party which is the only guide along the revolutionary road that leads out of present chaos and oppression and into the new era of socialism.

Trade Crises

The published terms of the Anglo-American Trade Agreement were received in Berlin with dismay, since one of its direct effects is to squeeze German trade from American and British home markets to the tune of millions per annum. German business circles reacted sharply and the prices quoted on the Berlin Bourse showed immediately the unfavourable effects of the new agreement. The anger of the German bourgeoisie was reflected in the vituperation that burst forth in their press last November and has continued ever since, developing into a duel fought with printer's ink with the Reich on the one side, Britain and America on the other.

As the trade war accelerates the verbal battle grows more bitter, the recriminations more personal and the political issues raked up to mask the commercial character of the struggle, more diverse. The persecutions and brutalities on both sides, the refugee question, the rights of national minorities, all kinds of issues are invoked to whip up national hatreds in preparation for the inevitable war for the redivision of the world.

In Britain, a spirit of pre-Christmas optimism was diligently cultivated in the yellow press: decline was reported to be checked, big improvements taking place in Britain's industrial position. Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer, told the National Union of Manufacturers that there were signs that the trade pendulum was preparing again to swing in the direction of recovery. But the official returns show no cause for optimism. British imports have dropped twenty per cent. compared to a year ago, and half that drop was in raw materials. Nearly ten million pounds less of imported raw materials in one month means a deficit which will reappear in the shape of diminished exports and increasing unemployment. The latest returns for exports show a fall of five per cent. over last year, but when it is noted that this decline is entirely in manufactured goods, and would have been sharper if it had not been for the increased export of war materials—iron, scrap, raw and waste wool—once again there is indicated the inevitable prospect of a further growth of unemployment in the coming year.

The desperate character of the developing economic crisis is manifested in the open linking together of the government machinery for commerce with the war machine. The Export Guarantees Bill, the text of which was published last month and received "with great enthusiasm" in the House of Commons, not only increases the fund at the disposal of the Board of Trade to establish or encourage the export trade. It also allows for the use of the funds on a political basis, an entirely new departure in British commercial policy.

By thus openly stating its intention of subordinating immediate commercial interests to long-term war interests, the British ruling class admits that the trade war now raging is likely to reach the pitch at which it can no longer keep within the bounds of "peace"-time competition but must inevitably explode into war. Pious hopes are expressed that some sort of trade agreement might be reached between Britain and Germany, to share markets and end the cutting of prices which now prevails. The visit of Dr. Schacht, Reichsbank President, to London is represented as a hopeful sign that the discussions on export trade competition will end in a trade pact, and Mr. Stanley, President of the Board of Trade, suggests that markets might be shared "on a fair basis."

A great outcry has been raised by the "unfair methods" used by Germany in the trade drive in the Balkans, Eastern Europe and South America. The barter system by means of which German imperialism has penetrated the markets is denounced as a fraud on the purchasing countries.

But the real reason for German advance, the enslavement of its working class, has given Germany the power to produce goods more cheaply, and this advantage the rival imperialists, faced as they are with an organised working class, are unable to counter. They are confronted therefore with the

alternative of either imposing totalitarianism on their own workers or crushing Germany in war—in other words, civil war or world war.

Tentatively the British bourgeoisie has been feeling out the prospects in both directions. Suggestions for "new methods," "national sacrifice," an "alternative government" have been thrown out, and, as the trade depression deepens, the Popular Front in Britain is more and more soberly discussed by the ruling class. On the other hand the question of subsidising shipping and providing guarantees for export trade takes on more and more the character of active preparation for war.

The German bourgeoisie, for its part, is haunted by the spectre of popular revolution. To a working class already starved and sweated to the limit of human endurance in time of "prosperity," the further worsening of conditions due to the growing crisis will prove the last straw. Deliberately the Nazi regime stakes everything on war. It was brought to power by the crazed middle class and the slum-proletariat; it has deprived itself of the support of the clerks, minor officials, artisans and petty traders by sending them to the coal mines and fortifications and is now busily searching the slums and doss-houses to suck up the last dregs of labour. This undermining of its own foundations is dictated by desperation and is in itself the proof that the Nazis have abandoned hope of any solution save war in the near future.

The trade-war, the war of words, the war of bombs and battleships; these are the three stages of capitalist crisis, bringing cumulative misery to mankind. Desperate diseases need desperate remedies. Only the civil war, class against class, for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of worker's rule can cut across the process and open up a different road for humanity, the Socialist road to peace and plenty.

A Black Year

With this issue, *Workers' International News* commences the second year of its existence. The past year has been one of deepening reaction, the further disorganisation of the socialist movement by the treachery of the reformist and Stalinist leaders, further attacks on the working class, the growth of fascism, the rapid approach of world war.

The Spanish war drags on, kept alive by rival imperialist gangs at the expense of the lives of the Spanish toilers; we have witnessed during the year the steady increase of the territory under the control of Franco, who has cut republican Spain in two. The war in the Far East, taking its steady toll of lives, similarly drags on, and here two the

more reactionary forces slowly gain the upper hand. And Hitler in two successive world-shaking crises has succeeded in prolonging the life of German fascism. Spanish, Italian and German fascism today conduct a simultaneous campaign of jewbaiting and plunder, a common orgy of persecution to mark the turning of decrepit capitalism back to the feudal barbarism from which it had emerged.

In the so-called "democratic" countries the trend has similarly been towards reaction. After steadily gnawing away the reforms won by the French workers in 1936, their attempt to stand against the encroachments on their rights was met with a

smashing blow in the defeat of the General Strike of November. And the Arabs of Tunis, like the Arabs of Palestine, have been massacred at the hands of "democratic" imperialism, which has similar exploits to boast of, in India, Burma and Jamaica.

In the Soviet Union the "purges" have continued to the extent that shootings and removals have ceased to be news, and are taken as part of the day's routine in the press, like the weather report or the radio programmes.

The background to these events has been the inexorable development of world slump, which shows no sign of abatement but on the contrary gives indications of a steady worsening in the coming year.

Symptomatic of the gathering gloom has been the crop of books and articles proclaiming the

decline and fall of Marxism, the bankruptcy of leftism, the eclipse of socialism. Another series of books is appearing debunking the Soviet Union from the inside, and the waverers and deserters increase.

Revolutionary socialism has weathered these storms and crossed these deserts before, because its endurance is derived from the constantly regenerated struggle of the working class for life. Individuals may drop out by the wayside or straggle to the rear, but the working class perforce fights on, now advancing, now retreating, but unceasingly in the struggle.

It is in that struggle that W.I.N. takes up its position to aid in re-forming the ranks of revolutionary socialism, holding aloft the banner of Marx and Engels, of Lenin and Trotsky, the revolutionary banner of the Fourth International.

The French Betrayal

After the Munich Pact, Daladier, taking advantage of his temporary popularity as a "Peace-lover" and encouraged by the attitude of the reformist and stalinist leaders, decided to go several steps further in the liquidating of democratic liberties and the last remains of the social conquests of June 1936. At the Marseilles Congress of the Radical Party he launched a violent attack on the C.P., and a few days later his party withdrew its representatives from the Popular Front. On the day after Armistice Day the Daladier-Reynaud decree-laws were published. These, put into force, deal the labour movement of France the most serious blow it has yet received. Its provisions are already well-known, drastic restrictions of trade union and democratic liberties, foreign workers (who in the mines and other important industries constitute 20 to 30% of the number employed) are barred from electing shop-stewards, workers who have at any time been convicted (including naturally for political reasons) cannot be elected, "agitating" against the lengthening of the working week in National Defence industries is punishable by imprisonment, those who refuse to work the extra hours are sacked without unemployment relief. The decree-laws provide for increased taxes of small middle class incomes; and the discharge of 40,000 railwaymen under the guise of economy. The publication of the decree-laws was a signal for the unleashing of a violent anti-union campaign by the bosses. Within a few days literally thousands of trade-unionists were sacked and in many factories the management announced that the workers would have to work on the Saturday morning. It was clear that the decree-laws

would provide the only guide, worsening of the conditions leads out of these processes and would lay the foundations of a thoroughly disguised military dictatorship. What were the reactions of the masses and their leaders to this? Was the working class to allow itself to be coerced into accepting the decree-laws or was it going to stand up and fight?

The working-class did not wait for its leaders to pronounce themselves, it told *them* what to do; the bureaucratically-run Congress of the C.G.T. at Nantes received over 1,500 telegrams from trade union branches and shop stewards demanding the calling of a General Strike. It was only under the tremendous pressure of the aroused rank and file that Leon Jouhaux, the Walter Citrine of the C.G.T. was forced to agree to the principle of a 24 hour general strike, but managed to get the date to be fixed later, in the hope that in the meanwhile a compromise would be reached.

The working-class, however, was not disposed to "compromise." On Monday the 21st, strikes broke out in the chemical, engineering and textile industries in Paris and the North (France's heaviest industrial region). On the Wednesday, a general strike of the metal workers in the Valenciennes region was called under rank and file pressure; it was to spread the next day to all the mines, railways and textile factories in the area. Simultaneously, as a protest against brutal police attacks on workers' demonstrations, strikes broke out in Lille, Dunkirk, Denain, Anzin, Nantes, Rouen and other industrial centres. In most cases the workers occupied the factories. During the afternoon of the 24th, a stay-in strike broke out in the Renault fac-

tories in Paris, one of the largest in France, which employs nearly 40,000 workers and whose buildings occupy the area of a small town. The workers resisted all attempts of the police to dislodge them until 1 a.m. on the Friday morning. During the evening over 15,000 armed Mobile Guards had been concentrated in the Boulogne-Billancourt suburb which was virtually in a state of siege, all the main streets being barricaded. It was only after ferocious pitched battles and the use of tear-gas that the workers were driven out, leaving behind hundreds of wounded and over 300 prisoners.

The next day, the 25th, the movement developed still further. In Paris most of the engineering factories were on strike. At Anzin, in the North, as a reply to the government's military requisition of the railway, the strikers occupied the station and blocked the line by overturning coal-trucks on the rails. Behind these improvised barricades the workers successfully resisted the charges of the Mobile Guards and only evacuated their positions on the demand of the local Stalinist leaders. During the evening, clashes occurred at three of the biggest railway stations in Paris, between the police and railway workers, who were joined by passengers in demonstrations against the Government. In other towns there had been raised.

That afternoon, when many were trying to make the General Strike a accomplished fact, when they were occupying factories, mines and railways, and standing up to Mobile Guards and tear-gas bombs, the Administrative Commission of the C.G.T. met, and as if nothing had happened during the last few days, fixed the date of the general strike for five days later—the 30th! "Discipline!" cried Jouhaux, Blum and Thorez, "on Wednesday, everybody must stay at home; no pickets, no meetings, no demonstrations, and whatever happens all must go back to work on Thursday." At the same time the reformist and Stalinist cohorts were frantically trying to put a stop to the mounting strike wave. The railwaymen of Anzin were persuaded to go back to work on the Saturday morning, although 400 of them had been sacked for striking. On the Monday morning, the bureaucrats had succeeded in ending the miners' strike in the North, while in Paris and other towns work was resumed in many factories. Only the metal workers of Valenciennes stood firm, although they had been persuaded to evacuate the factories. It was in this district that the militancy of the workers had forced the Mobile Guards to temporarily withdraw the previous week. At the Renault, S.N.C.A.C., and S.O.M. factories in Paris, the workers, sent back to work by their leaders, found that the bosses, taking advantage of this capitulation, had declared a lock-out. The only positive action undertaken by the C.G.T. over the week-end was the organisation of a nation-wide series of meetings and demonstrations.

Instead of throwing all their weight behind the

revolutionary movement of the masses, instead of organising the general strike immediately, thus paralysing the partially unprepared bourgeoisie and continuing until the workers' demands were won, the reformists and Stalinists cut across the growing strike movement, squashed it, and substituted for it a perfectly harmless and platonic one day strike. Moreover, they gave the Government five whole days in which to put into action its whole repressive apparatus from the military requisition of the key services (transport, etc.) to the sowing of confusion among the masses through the powerful means of propaganda (press, radio, etc.) which it controls.

The bourgeoisie made very effective use of this respite. During the days that preceded the General Strike the masses were inundated by a torrent of radio speeches and newspaper articles. Over the week-end we were treated to speeches over the radio from Reynaud, Daladier, and de Menzie, minister of Public Works, where assertions that the 40 hour week and the "social laws" were not being attacked, alternated with threats of court-martial for workers in State and requisitioned industries who dared to go on strike. The bourgeois propagandists made great play of the C.P.'s motives, and many workers and especially the petit-bourgeoisie, remembering the war-mongering attitude of the C.P. in September knew full well that its hostility to Daladier was caused more by his foreign policy than by the decree-laws, they were persuaded that they were being used as pawns (which was partially true) and rallied to the Government. The radio and the whole of the bourgeois press, from the reactionary *Matin* to the "radical" *l'Oeuvre* (Mme. Tabouis' paper) printed exaggerated reports of lack of enthusiasm in various industries and long lists of company unions, professional and ex-servicemen's organisations, which had declared themselves against the strike. As the leaders of the C.G.T., instead of answering this propaganda and organising the movement, spent their time in behind-the-scenes manoeuvres aiming at a compromise, the workers were completely demoralised and everyone had the impression that everybody but himself was going to work on Wednesday. Simultaneously, the railways, buses, underground, telephone exchanges and all the key services were put under military control and troops were being concentrated in the industrial centres and the Paris area. On the morning of the 30th, Paris looked like a besieged city; in front of every important factory, of the telephone exchanges; in the corridors of the underground stations were groups of Mobile Guards and regular troops in full war-equipment.

It was under these conditions that the General Strike took place. On the morrow, the bourgeois press rejoiced at the defeat of the workers while *l'Humanité* wrote: "The General Strike was a tremendous movement . . ." Who was right? Was the General Strike a failure or a success?

While in the country as a whole the great majority of the factories were forced to close, in Paris, except among the metal workers, engineers and chemical workers, the proportion of strikers was very much smaller. In the key industry of transport, the workers suffered a stinging defeat. The busmen and underground workers, as advised by their leaders, presented themselves at the depots at the usual hour (5 a.m.) but refused to start their machines. The following is an account from *La Lutte Ouvrière* of what happened at the Puteaux bus depot:

"By 5 a.m., 150 out of 400 workers had arrived at the dépôt which they found occupied by mounted and foot police and the 36th Infantry Regiment from Rouen. The busmen refused, in spite of threats, to get the buses out. As by 6.30, no buses had started the workers were surrounded by Mobile Guards and the inspector in charge asked those who wanted to work to step to the right, the rest to remain in the circle of Guards. Three workers who protested were immediately arrested and taken away, the inspector declaring that he would not tolerate any words, except answers to the roll-call. One by one workers hesitatingly stepped to the right, especially fathers of families. An hour later, only a stubborn little group still remained within the circle. The inspector then launched an ultimatum: "Those who do not start work within five minutes will be court-martialled." The comrades, powerless, gave in. The buses started off. The workers had been defeated."

What happened at the Puteaux bus depot was more or less repeated in every other bus and underground depot in the Paris area and the railway terminuses. It is interesting to note the fact that though the C.G.T. at 7 a.m. gave the transport workers who still resisted, the order to go back to work, this was not reported in either *le Peuple Populaire* or *l'Humanité*.

Many workers, seeing that the buses were running and being badly shaken by the prophecies in the bourgeois press of the preceding days, came to the conclusion that the strike was off, and hurried to their factories. Militants seeking instructions or news, found the C.G.T. headquarters shut, and as neither of the organs of the C.P., S.P. or C.G.T. appeared that day, had to rely on the radio news-broadcasts. In June 1936, when a factory did not join the strike, workers in the area spontaneously organised a demonstration outside the factory and called its workers out; numerous meetings and demonstrations gave courage to waverers. But on November the 30th, the C.G.T. forbade even indoor public meetings "to prevent disorders." The workers completely unprepared and demoralised by the passivity of their leaders were not in the position

to organise the movement spontaneously.

"But to stand up to the troops and Mobile Guards the workers would have to be armed and that would mean civil war!" object Jouhaux, Blum, Thorez and their English counterparts. Precisely! Under the conditions of decaying French capitalism a serious struggle for the defence of the liberties and standard of living of the masses must inevitably develop into a revolutionary movement for the overthrow of the Daladier government. The C.P. wanted to replace it by a government of "collective security" and of the Franco-Soviet Pact. But workers and peasants did not want to replace Daladier by Herriot or Reynaud (even the Stalinists refrain as much as possible from attacking as he favours "collective security"). They wanted a government that would make the rich pay, expropriate the trusts, liberate the peasants from the exploitation of the grain trusts and big landed proprietors, and the small tradesmen from dependence upon the banks, a government what would abolish the two years military conscription, liquidate unemployment, guarantee the 40 hour week and holidays with pay and put an end to rising prices. Such a Government could only arise out of a revolutionary general strike, and would base itself upon the mass organisations of the workers and peasants. The workers had shown during the strike wave that preceded November 30th, that they were willing and capable of fighting *as a class* and standing up to Mobile Guards until their demands had been satisfied. That that time the Socialists or the C.P. had called upon the workers to fight for such a government, and had actively helped them to organise their mass committees and armed self defence squads, with the tremendous resources at their disposal, the movement would immediately have broadened out and taken in its wake the more class conscious soldiers, who with their families are equally badly hit by the crisis. But such action could not be expected from either Blum or Thorez whose whole policy these last three years has been one of class-collaboration and capitulation. Objectively, the situation was revolutionary. What was lacking was a powerful revolutionary party to lead the workers, who, in the absence of their own party were not defeated but betrayed. Once again the Popular Front has justified its existence as a strike-breaking conspiracy, with Daladier, the former leader of the Popular Front, using the military against the workers while Blum, Jouhaux and Thorez cripple their struggle from within. The betrayal in France underlines once again the need for unrelenting struggle against Popular Frontism under the revolutionary banner of the Fourth International.

Paris, December 12th, 1938.

H.R.