

TURNING POINT
FOR
THE
WORLD

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MUNICH has been avenged even in the hour of its seeming victory. The conspirators of Munich built up the military power of German fascism, and shattered the bastions of peace, hoping to turn that military power against the Soviet Union. Thereby they let loose a different war. Thanks to their handiwork, which led first to the destruction of the liberties of the other European nations, and then to the most dire peril of the British people, the long-planned criminal offensive of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union has at length been let loose. The Soviet people, who could have led the world in peace, while holding fascism in check, had their policy been followed, have now, because of the refusal of their policy, to face the bloodiest ordeal. In place of the bloodless victories of the peace front, they have now the grimmer task to show the world how to fight and defeat fascism, that monster begotten of capitalist reaction and intrigue, which the social and political corruption of the ruling structure in all the capitalist countries first unchained and allowed to ravage the world, and then proved incapable to master. In unity with the peoples of all countries, they and we together will accomplish this task.

But this climax, toward which the entire policy of the Munichites was directed, and for the sake of which they were prepared to sacrifice the interests of their peoples, has come about under very different conditions from their original dream. The launching of the offensive of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union, which should have represented the highest point of victory of the whole program the sponsors of

Munich intended to achieve, has instead led to the victory of the very program they intended to destroy. The launching of the offensive of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union, in place of being followed by the Munichite dream of the united front of world reaction, has been followed by the British-Soviet pact of mutual aid and the growing unity of the British, American, Soviet, and Chinese peoples in the common cause of national freedom and defense against aggression. This is the positive achievement which shows the path of hope and confidence in the present grave hour.

We still have to be prepared to go through heavy trials. We have to be prepared for new sharp turns in the present complex situation. But the path is step by step opening out, across all obstacles, for the common victory of the peoples. The logic of history is defeating and will defeat the logic of counter-revolution.

World history always works itself out with a greater richness and complexity, with more twists and turns than even the most powerful political insight, the insight of the great masters of Marxism, could attempt to plot out beforehand in detail. In the hour of Munich, when such critical alternatives opened out before the world, none could have attempted to lay down with certainty beforehand the precise concrete form in which those alternatives would finally work themselves out.

At that turning point the immediate visible alternatives proclaimed themselves in three main forms: the victory at the eleventh hour of the peace front and the checking of fascism; the victory of the policy of Munich and the launching of combined counter-revolutionary war against the Soviet Union; or the third alternative, against which the Marxist supporters of the peace front gave the most explicit warning, that the refusal of the peace front by the Western powers would give rise, not to the intended war of the combined counter-revolutionary front against the Soviet Union, but to the Nazi offensive to the

West and the consequent outbreak of imperialist war in Western and Central Europe. These were in fact the immediate alternatives between which the event revealed the final choice, consequent on the strength of the Soviet Union and the weakness of the popular democratic forces in the West.

But who at that time could have ventured to foretell that, when the refusal of the peace front had in fact led within less than one year to the outbreak of imperialist war in Western and Central Europe, the very development and consequences of that imperialist war should give rise to a situation in which, at the moment of the launching of the Nazi offensive against the Soviet Union, the alternative common front against fascism should at last be formed in the midst of war? Such has been the final working out to date of the alternatives which opened at Munich.

Sharp turns and changes are increasingly characteristic of the modern international situation. They are a symptom of the extreme instability and breakup of the old order, and especially of the complications resulting from the parallel development of the imperialist antagonisms for the redivision of the world, alongside the existence and growing strength of the new type of state which is outside the system of imperialism and represents the interests of advancing humanity and the future world order. The problems confronting the ruling classes in all countries are daily more acute. In the present world situation, with the growing social and political stress within the old states and empires, there can be no stability. Ceaseless sharp turns of policy must inevitably be expected, as the leaders of imperialism strive to cleave out a way from their dilemmas, now in this direction, now in that.

In the broadest historical sense the avenues of escape are narrowing for world imperialism. For over a quarter of a century, through the first world war, through Versailles,

through the world economic crisis, through fascism, through Munich, through the second world war, imperialism has been drawing the noose tighter around its neck, and, with each twist and turn to extricate itself, adds a new knot. The forces on our side, the forces of awakening humanity, are growing in strength, are gathering and advancing to that unity which will ensure victory. But in terms of immediate power, of states, of resources, of armies, of organization, the balance is still overwhelmingly on the side of imperialism.

Therefore the whole present period requires, more than ever in the history of the working class movement, the utmost skill of leadership, tactical speed, elasticity, boldness of initiative, and ability to maneuver, in order to meet each turn and new situation with a corresponding policy, to prevent any decisive unfavorable combination of forces, and to secure at each point the most favorable combination of forces at the given moment from the standpoint of the interests of the working class and the future of human liberation.

Only the most superficial and naive spectators are capable of seeing in these sharp changes of the world situation and the policy of the ruling classes, and the consequent sharp changes which the policy of the working class must carry through in order to meet each new objective situation, not the demonstration of the instability of imperialist relations and of the correctness of the policy of Marxism, but the triumphant proof in their eyes of the instability of Marxism. The old parrot cry of "somersaults" is still heard from a few irresponsible critics against the Communist Party. It appears that the Communist Party is accused of "somersaults" because it meets changes in the objective situation with corresponding changes in its policy. A party which failed to do this would not be a Marxist party.

This is so elementary that it is painful to need to waste any space in pointing it out. The accusation is as old as Marxism

(e.g., the controversy over Marx's reversal of attitude in relation to the successive stages of the Franco-German War of 1870-71). The Bolsheviks at one time denounced a pact with the Liberal Cadets, and at another time made such a pact. In the summer of 1917 they demanded the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, and in the beginning of 1918 dispersed it by force. In the autumn of 1917 they denounced Rodzianko's intrigues for a peace with the kaiser, and in the spring of 1918 they signed a peace with the kaiser. Every one of these turns raised a howl from their liberal critics all over the world against their "inconsistency" and "unprincipled opportunism." History has proved the correctness of these turns.

It is obvious to every observer that the present international situation is exceptionally full of extremely sharp turns, corresponding to the extreme disorganization of all capitalist relations, which are by no means finished. Only a little over a year ago the British and French governments were actively promoting interventionist war against the Soviet Union; they were dispatching planes and guns to fascist Finland for use against the Soviet Union; they had prepared expeditionary forces to send, and would have sent them had not the collapse of the Mannerheim Line defeated their plans. Germany was at this time maintaining formal, friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Today the German rulers are leading the most violent aggressive war in history against the Soviet Union. The British government has signed a pact of mutual aid and alliance with the Soviet Union.

Is not this a basic change in the international situation and the relations of the powers? Is it not obvious that the policy of an intelligent party must change with these changes in the situation, if it is to be really consistent? To demand the same policy in two exactly opposite situations would be the real inconsistency. These myopic critics see the fly and miss the elephant; they see the switch in the policy of the Communist

Party, and ignore the switch in the international situation which has called it forth. They would accuse the thermometer of being inconsistent because it registers heat in summer and cold in winter.

A little over a year ago the official governmental apologia, *The British Case*, written by Lord Lloyd with a preface by Lord Halifax, accused Hitler of the "supreme betrayal" because he had signed a pact of non-aggression with the Soviet Union. Today Hitler is accusing the British government of the "supreme betrayal" because it has signed a pact of mutual aid and alliance with the Soviet Union. Is it not clear that there is here a complete reversal in the relations of forces? A little over a year ago Mannerheim and Tanner were held up as the darlings of Western democracy and the Second International, and the Soviet strategic action for the protection of Leningrad was denounced as bloodstained aggression. Today these "heroes" are seen in their true colors, and the justice of the Soviet action is more widely understood.

At the time Stalin was denounced by the Labor Party, in its pamphlet on Finland, as "the Red Czar . . . the executor of the traditional imperialism of Czarist Russia . . . an alien and powerful despot . . . gangster . . . the real depth of the iniquity of M. Joseph Stalin is still unknown." Now the *Daily Herald*, the organ of the Labor Party, declares: "Three great figures lead mankind in the struggle to defend human freedom: Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt." No one in his senses would dream in this moment of supreme crisis and common struggle of launching an attack against the Labor Party on the basis of this change of estimation, or seek to waste time accusing the Labor Party of "somersaults." The only sensible question at the present moment is not whether there has been a change in policy to meet a change in the situation, but: Is the estimate of the situation correct? Is the policy put forward to meet it correct, and adequate?

The war crisis, which has continuously developed and extended to its highest climax, has passed through three main phases of development, each with its distinctive characteristics, and each with its consequent policy for the working class and for the peoples involved.

The first phase, of preparation, during which the world passed imperceptibly, without a sharp distinguishing margin, from peace into war, through a series of extending localized conflicts, into what became in fact by its later stages already possible to be characterized as the second imperialist war, developed from the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in the autumn of 1931 to the Anglo-French declaration of war on Germany in the autumn of 1939. During this phase the initiative was in the hands of the challenging groups of fascist powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan—who, linked together in what eventually took the form of the “anti-Comintern pact,” carried forward their aggressive offensive for the new division of the world at the expense of the non-fascist imperialist powers in possession, Britain, France, and the United States. These powers, however, in place of opposing this offensive, assisted and encouraged it, and in every way built up the strength of fascism, conniving at every illegality and aggression, handing it new victims, breaking down the limitations of Versailles and shattering the peace system constructed from the last war, because they hoped to see the offensive of fascism eventually turned against the Soviet Union. This was the Chamberlain policy which reached its height at Munich and its final fiasco with the Soviet-German non-aggression pact.

During this phase the task of the working class and democratic movement was to build up the strongest common front, both within each country, internationally, and on the basis of a coalition of states with the Soviet Union for the defense

of peace against aggression—or peace front—to check the offensive of fascism and war, prevent its advance to general war, and thus win time for the working class and popular forces in all countries to carry forward their struggle, in conditions of peace, to solve the basic social problems at the root of the crisis, which would otherwise inevitably sooner or later give rise to imperialist war.

Great struggles were carried forward along this line, in unity with the Chinese, Ethiopian and the Spanish peoples, through the People's Front in France and the Franco-Soviet pact, for the People's Front in Britain and the Anglo-Soviet pact. The Soviet Union conducted through these years a diplomatic campaign, the initiative and statesmanship of which won universal admiration, at the same time as they were able to give material help to the Chinese people and to the Spanish people struggling for freedom.

Today it is recognized on all sides that, had this common front, for which the Soviet Union and the militant workers in all countries, together with wide sections of the progressive forces, fought during these critical years, been established in time, the war which broke out in 1939 need never have taken place, or, if it had nonetheless broken out, would have broken out under the most favorable conditions for the rapid success of the people's struggle.

The reactionary ruling class forces in the West, however, represented by Chamberlain, were too strong, and were able at that time to prevent this common front's being formed. The working class and democratic movement was not strong enough, or united enough, or able to find the necessary policy and leadership, or to establish common ground with the opposition minority in the ruling class, to be capable of defeating the dominant Munichite policy and the rule of Chamberlain.

Munich laid bare the reactionary plans for the four-power

front against the Soviet Union. The complicated moves and counter-moves of the spring and summer of 1939 did not change the basic situation. Despite Lloyd George's warning, the ill-judged guarantees to Poland and Rumania were adopted without effective backing and without an understanding with the Soviet Union. As late as May 1939, the Soviet proposal for an Anglo-French-Soviet pact of mutual guarantee was explicitly rejected on principle, on the grounds that it would divide Europe into two camps. On the very edge of the outbreak of war in Europe, the Soviet military proposals for the combined defense of Poland were rejected.

The Soviet Union, after waiting until the extreme edge of danger to give time for the alternative forces in the West to assert themselves, acted decisively and defeated the counter-revolutionary plans of the Chamberlains and the Daladiers by the Soviet-German non-aggression pact, which succeeded in restricting the sphere of the imperialist war, now made inevitable through the refusal of the peace front, and won time for the Soviet Union to prepare and to strengthen its strategic position. The Munichites replied by declaring war on Nazi Germany, as soon as it had signed the pact of non-aggression with the Soviet Union and thus made clear that its offensive would be directed against their imperialist interests. The second phase of the war, the war of the Western European imperialist powers, began.

The second phase of the war, which opened in September 1939, and extended to June 1941, bore the character of full imperialist war, even though one camp was the camp of fascist Germany. This imperialist character of the war followed, not from the sentiments of the people in Britain and France, who were sincerely opposed to fascism and prepared to struggle for their national independence and independence of the European nations against the hated Nazi system, but from the very different aims and policy of the ruling classes,

which held the power and the aims of which governed the character of the war. The dominant pro-fascist imperialists in Britain and France who entered on the war in the autumn of 1939 still stood for the same basic reactionary aims which they had pursued through Munich.

They saw the war, not as war against fascism, but as war for their imperialist interests against a rival imperialism, and the prelude to anti-Soviet war. For them the "supreme betrayal" of Nazism was not its war on democracy, but its peace with the socialist state. Even while all was quiet on the Western Front, they were actively promoting interventionist war against the Soviet Union. Their official press in the early months openly discussed the possibilities of "switching" the war. For this purpose they advocated a "revolution of the Right" in Germany. Neglecting all serious preparation or intensive rearmament measures during those critical early months, they dispatched the planes and guns, soon to be so sorely needed in the West, to fascist Finland for use against the Soviet Union, which was engaged in the most urgent military operations in preparation for the future conflict with Nazi Germany.

Such was the character of the first stage of the war of 1939, of the "frozen war," during which the ruling classes of the Western powers, especially in France, directed their main fire, not against the foreign enemy, but against the class enemy at home, against democracy, the Communists and working class organizations, and against the Soviet Union.

As the disastrous consequences of this policy made themselves felt in the spring and summer of 1940, with the headlong Nazi advance and the enslavement of the nations of Western and Central Europe, a shift in the balance of relations within the ruling class followed. In France the Munichites and the most open supporters of fascism carried their

policy to its consistent conclusion, threw open the front, disorganized the rear, and directly betrayed their country to the foreign enemy in order to maintain their class privileges, even as subordinate agents of a foreign power. In Britain the Munichite politicians were heavily discredited, but remained strongly entrenched in positions of power.

Direct governmental leadership passed into the hands of the alternative section of the ruling class, represented by Churchill, which had consistently stood for an active policy of opposition to Hitler, and which now opposed the tendencies of capitulation on the lines of France. The aims of this section, while opposed to the policies of capitulation to Hitler, were still the aims of imperialist war against a rival imperialism, and not of a people's war against fascism. They saw the war as a continuation of the war of 1914; their spokesmen, as in the notorious Vansittart pamphlet, insisted that the war was directed, not only against the Nazi rulers, but against the German people; they proclaimed the aim of a super-Versailles which should impose upon the German people for generations even more onerous terms than the Versailles Treaty, whose impositions had sown the seeds for Hitler. Their strategy for victory was based on the alliance with American imperialism, while reactionary influences continuously obstructed every attempt to establish closer relations with the Soviet Union. This policy led to the isolation of the British people from the dynamic forces of the European peoples struggling against fascism, and from the Soviet Union, while involving them in increasingly heavy subordination, in consequence of this isolation, to American finance-capital.

It held out the prospect of prolonged, extended, and destructive imperialist war, developing over many years and reaching toward an imperialist treaty which would sow the seeds of new war. Thus, while the interests of the British people were unalterably opposed to capitulation to Hitler

and to the criminal counter-revolutionary policies of the pro-Hitler capitulators in the ruling class, the interests and aims of the alternative section of the ruling class did not correspond to the interests and aims of the people. The problem remained for the people to achieve a policy and leadership which should express their interests, defend them against fascism at home and abroad, and lead the way to a peace on the basis of the freedom of the peoples.

The tasks of the working class and democratic movement during this period, in this second phase of the war, consequent on the refusal of the peace front, corresponded to these new conditions. The basic task remained to build up the common front of the peoples, in unity with the Soviet Union, for the defense of their interests against fascism and reaction, for the real democratic anti-fascist struggle, and for the achievement of a durable peace which should be based on the freedom of the peoples. But the failure of the fight for the peace front and for the replacement of Chamberlain, and the consequent character of the war thereby launched, basically changed the conditions of this fight in the new phase.

There could be no question of applying the conceptions of the peace front to the very different war which had arisen through its refusal; of trailing behind the reactionary imperialist and anti-Soviet aims which were thinly concealed behind a show of anti-fascist slogans; of assisting the destruction of democracy and working class rights, as in France, which paved the way for the victory of Nazism and home fascism; or supporting the military measures against the Soviet Union which, as the outcome has shown, were an objective help to Nazi Germany. It was necessary to strike out an independent line, even initially against the stream, in order to make possible the conditions for a real common front of the peoples, in unity with the Soviet Union, for the protection of their interests and the victory of their aims.

In accordance with these tasks, the Communists and militant popular forces, in the first stage of the new phase of the war which opened in September 1939, during the "frozen war," while the war was still formal and before actual warfare had begun in Western Europe, strove for immediate peace. This striving was on the basis of the proposals put out in the Soviet-German declaration of September 28 for the opening of negotiations, as the best means for saving the peoples of Western Europe from being involved in war, before the irreparable had taken place, and thus winning back the possibility for building the effective common front of the peoples for the prevention of war.

This possibility finally disappeared with the extension of the war in Northern and Western Europe in the spring of 1940. The most dangerous situation now confronted the British people in consequence of the disastrous preceding policy. The British people were now facing in isolation the power of German fascism extending over all Western and Central Europe—the very situation against which the Communists had for many years given warning as the inevitable final outcome of the Chamberlain policy. The paramount question now became how to save the people in the face of this menacing situation.

It was necessary to combat and defeat the policies of capitulation advocated by that section of the ruling class which sought to emulate the example of Vichy, without allowing the struggle of the British people for their national independence to be sacrificed for reactionary imperialist aims which were contrary to the interests of that struggle. From May, 1940, the Communists put forward their concrete program of how to save and defend the people. Against the policies of both sections of the ruling class, they put forward the proposals for a people's government, which should organize the democratic defense of the people against fascism at home and abroad;

establish the closest unity with the Soviet Union and the peoples of Europe; put forward its proposals for a peace based on the freedom of the peoples; and, in the event of those proposals being refused, carry forward the struggle, no longer for imperialist aims, but for the aims of the liberation of the peoples.

The victory of a people's government in Britain, even if it had not been followed by an immediate corresponding victory of the popular forces in Germany, and even if it had in consequence been necessary for a period to continue the war, would have thus meant the transformation of the imperialist war into a people's war against fascism, conducted in closest association with the Soviet Union. This is in fact the transformation which has now taken place along another route, not by the change of government in Britain (for this the popular forces were not yet strong enough), but by the new situation resulting from the participation of the Soviet Union in the war and the consequent change in the character of the major forces now participating in and governing the character of the war.

The vindication of the role of the Soviet Union during these two critical years is now becoming clear even to the blindest. Had the attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union taken place two years ago, in 1939, with Chamberlain and Daladier in power in Britain and France, it is easy to see with what speed the united counter-revolutionary front would have been formed against the Soviet Union. The Soviet-German non-aggression pact smashed these plans, and won for the Soviet Union two years for the most intensive preparation. It won time for the peoples in Western Europe to begin to rally their forces, and for a situation to be reached in which the united Munichite front could no longer be formed. It gave time for the Soviet Union to take the most active and boldest strategic measures to strengthen its entire Western frontier. Every one of these measures was at the

time abused and denounced by pigmy critics, who remained not only indifferent to the interests of the liberated peoples in the territories concerned, but blind to the plain strategic significance of the steps taken in relation to the future struggle against German fascism. Today these critics may well give thanks on their knees that these steps were taken.

There are still some lingering voices which seek to refer to these two years of the most brilliant and audacious policy of the Soviet Union as "appeasement." Their guilty consciences over their own past lead them to seek to turn the plain facts upside down. The essence of the policy of appeasement is the successive surrender of interests, territories, or peoples, in the vain hope of evading or postponing a future conflict, with the final outcome of emerging weakened to face the conflict. The record of the Soviet Union during these two years was the exact opposite: Western Ukraine and Byelorussia; Finland and the protection of Leningrad; the Baltic States; Bessarabia. Every step was a strengthening of the position of the Soviet Union, an extension of its territory, a winning of new peoples to the U.S.S.R., a thrusting forward of its frontier, a delay to the aggressor.

It is only necessary to refer to Hitler's tirade endeavoring to justify his treacherous attack on the Soviet Union to note the continual refrain: "I gave way with a heavy heart . . . I had to be silent . . . I advised acquiescence in the Russian demands . . . this fresh Russian demand . . . continually renewed extortions . . . I remained silent because I was forced to do so," etc. A curious form of "appeasement" on the part of the Soviet Union. These two years of courageous, realistic, and farsighted policy of the Soviet Union prepared the way, not only to save the Soviet Union, but to save the peoples of the entire world, by helping to build up that strategic strength and readiness in the West which are today meeting the shock of the entire Nazi military machine, showing for the

first time how to stand up to that assault, winning thereby hope and the possibility of action for every other people, and constituting the principal—in bitter truth, at present, the only—military barrier between the Nazi dreams of world conquest and the peoples of the world.

By their actions during these two years the Soviet people, assailed by thoughtless critics, were in fact performing as signal service to the world as any in all their proud history.

By the spring of this year it was clear that the decisive turning point of the war and of the whole development of the modern period was approaching. The war in Europe had reached a temporary deadlock. It was evident that the imperialist war could only go forward as world imperialist war between the Anglo-American coalition and Nazi Germany dominating Europe. But before the imperialists could embark with confidence on such a hazardous enterprise, they were faced with the problem of the independent power of the Soviet Union. As at every sharp turning point of the modern period, the question of the Soviet Union and of relations with the Soviet Union dominated the world situation. It was evident that a heavy and evenly balanced world imperialist conflict of the type contemplated would be likely to prove a protracted war, extending with a widening destructive sweep over a series of years, and leading to incalculable consequences for the whole existing social structure.

Already the movement of the peoples was beginning to rise in all countries. Especially the national movements of revolt were growing in Europe against the hated Nazi domination. The Nazi rulers were the most sharply conscious of the crucial problems with which they were faced. They could least afford to wait. Their military machine was mobilized at its highest point. They must go forward in extending aggression, or go down. They were directly faced with the rising national movements of revolt in Europe. They were acutely

conscious of the contiguity of the Soviet Union on their borders, with its socialist peace policy and the advancing prosperity of its people contrasting with the situation of their own war-wracked and enslaved people and embittered subject nations.

It was from the Nazi ruling circles that the emissary went forth to the opposite ruling camp to try out the possibility of common ground for action against the Soviet Union. There were currents in both camps which sought the possibility of resolving the conflict on the basis of turning the war against the Soviet Union. But in fact the antagonism of imperialism over the new division of the world, with the forces now fully set in motion on both sides and the final trial of strength still unresolved, was too deep to permit of any such easy solution. The most critical point in modern imperialist development and in the life of the peoples was approaching. From April the Communists gave warning to be prepared for the most sharp and sudden turns in the international situation. On May 6 Stalin took over the direct leadership of the Soviet government—a change which bore the clearest signal, not only to the Soviet people, but to the international working class and the peoples of all countries, to recognize the seriousness of the situation and be prepared.

Where would the blow fall? What form would it take? Nazi Germany during these critical weeks was publicly concentrating its armed forces on the borders of the Soviet Union. Would Nazi Germany strike without prior agreement with Britain and the United States? This became the crucial question of the international situation. To this question Hess' voyage of exploration sought to provide the grounds for an answer. He was the physical embodiment of that old diplomatic term, a *ballon d'essai*. It was on May 10 that Hess landed in Britain to explore the possibilities of collaboration with

reactionary ruling circles for the purpose of the proposed attack on the Soviet Union.

While Hess' reception showed that there undoubtedly existed influential reactionary elements prepared to consider such proposals, it also showed that, so far as the government was concerned, the proposals fell on stony ground. Why Churchill and the authorities deliberately chose to maintain a mysterious silence about Hess, when in fact the proposals had been turned down, remains officially unexplained. Was this silence, with its suggestion of some possible complicity, a trap to lure Hitler forward on his desperate enterprise with the hope of some possible eventual support, only to turn on him with the most positive counter-thrust as soon as he had embarked on it? Had some bright wit of British diplomacy devised the scheme to use Hess as a boomerang and to catch Hitler with his own anti-Soviet bait with which he had so often in the past gulled the British ruling class? Only future records will reveal the details of this episode.

What is important for present purposes is that Hess' voyage of exploration revealed that in fact the basis was lacking for such an agreement. Acceptance of Hess' proposals, in the existing weakened situation of Britain, would have been equivalent to acceptance of Nazi world hegemony by Britain. There was no road here. The deadlock continued. Only decisive action, in one direction or another, could break it.

On June 22 Hitler struck. Hitler gave the orders for "the greatest march in history"—against the Soviet Union. In the midst of the war which he had not yet won, Hitler took on a new enemy, the greatest military power which was alone capable of standing up to his own. Hitler delivered his treacherous attack on the Soviet Union, not only without a declaration of war, but without the pretense of raising first any issue of disagreement. This meant that the entire calculation was based on the lightning thrust. Hitler struck without any prior

agreement with Britain and the United States. Hitler struck against the Soviet Union, while the war against the Anglo-American coalition was still on his hands. This meant that Hitler deliberately took on the possibility of the war on two fronts, which he had previously made it the main political and strategic lesson from the last war and from all German history to avoid, and which only two years before he had directed all his efforts to prevent. What considerations drove the Nazi rulers to carry through this reversal of their preceding policy and embark on an enterprise which inevitably placed in the scales the future existence of their regime?

First, strategic. Nazi Germany could not afford to wait and to see the gradual amassing of the strength and mobilization of the superior potential resources of the Anglo-American coalition, while the power of the Soviet Union remained unbroken in its rear. The only hope to escape from the net that was closing in became to seek by a lightning thrust to break the military power of the Soviet Union and then to turn to advance against Britain and the United States. Thus the attack on the Soviet Union is the decisive preliminary to the attack on every other people still unconquered by Nazism. The attack on the Soviet Union is the attack on the one effective military barrier which stands between the Nazi rulers and their dreams of world conquest. Thereby the attack on the Soviet Union is the attack on every people in the world.

The second series of considerations derived from the social-political situation. The advancing national movements of the subjugated peoples in Europe, who by no means intended to place their heads under the yoke of either imperialism but were beginning to look more and more toward the Soviet Union as the representative of the freedom of the peoples, as well as the growth of discontent in Germany among the working masses, confronted the Nazi rulers with sharp problems. Once again they sought to solve their dilemmas by vio-

lent action, by a thrust at the fountainhead, at the Soviet Union, which had already shown in relation to the Spanish and Chinese peoples its stand by peoples struggling for freedom, and by its example inspired all oppressed peoples with the hope of liberation. Thereby the attack on the Soviet Union is an attack on the national liberation movement of every people oppressed by fascism.

The third series of considerations was diplomatic. By the attack on the Soviet Union the Nazi rulers hoped to divide ruling class opinion in Britain and the United States, on the basis of an appeal to reactionary class sympathies; and by this means to paralyze or weaken their participation in the war, and to delay the entry of the United States into the war.

Of these considerations the most important were those of a strategic character. During the second phase of the war, critics and commentators in the Western countries all too often lost to view the world significance of the independent reserve power of the Soviet Union, which exercised its influence and remained capable of exercising its influence with increasing effect as events developed, on the side of the interests of the peoples and against any and every form of reactionary world domination which might threaten to arise from the military fortunes of the conflict.

But Hitler understood this very well. When his legions overran Poland, and the Western powers remained passive and unable or unwilling to help, it was the Soviet armies that barred his further advance and liberated thirteen millions of people. As soon as the Nazi advance overran Western Europe in the spring and early summer of 1940, leading to a complete shift in the balance and the most acute danger for the British people, it was the Soviet forces whose presence on the Eastern frontiers of Germany restored the balance and really saved the British people.

In this connection Hitler's own statement with regard to

the reason why he was unable to win the Battle of Britain and finally vanquish Britain in those critical months of the late summer and early autumn of 1940 is worthy of note:

“While our soldiers from May 10, 1940, onwards had been breaking the power of France and Britain in the west, the Russian military deployment on our eastern frontier was being continued to a more and more menacing extent. From August 1940 onwards I therefore considered it to be in the interests of the Reich no longer to permit our eastern provinces to remain unprotected in the face of this tremendous concentration of Bolshevik divisions. Thus came about the result intended by the British and Russian cooperation—namely, *the tying up of such powerful German forces in the east that the radical conclusion of the war in the west, particularly as regards aircraft, could no longer be vouched for by the German High Command.*” (Hitler’s Proclamation June 22, 1941.)

Thus the crucial role in the Battle of Britain was played by the Soviet Union, whose forces canceled out the otherwise overwhelming Nazi air superiority, enabled the RAF to stand up to the remaining Nazi air forces, and saved Britain from an annihilating assault. Today the British people will understand better the debt they owe to the Soviet people, not only at this moment, but also during these preceding two years. Thus the attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union is in fact the attack on the main military barrier to its dreams of world conquest. With the attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union the war passed from its second phase into the third phase, the war of German fascism for the enslavement of the world.

As soon as Nazi Germany launched its attack on the Soviet Union the critical question of the international situation became at once the attitude of Britain and the United States.

Would the Nazi calculations to spread dissension in these countries play on anti-Soviet ideological sympathies, and thus divide them from the Soviet people, cut them off from the alliance which could save them, and paralyze them in the decisive world conflict, win any success? That the heart of the people would rally on the side of the Soviet people was certain. The last unofficial poll in the earlier months of 1939 had shown eighty-seven percent of the population in favor of an Anglo-Soviet pact, at a time when it was still being resisted by the British government. But would the understanding of the most farsighted representatives of the ruling class equally recognize the common interests, overriding social and political differences, defeat the Nazi trap, and proclaim the common cause in the present struggle? To this question Churchill's broadcast of June 22 gave the emphatic answer. This was the speech which Stalin referred to as Churchill's "historic utterance." There followed on June 23 the declaration of Sumner Welles on behalf of the United States. On June 24 came the announcement by Eden of the agreement of the British and Soviet governments to cooperate on a reciprocal basis, followed by the exchange of missions, and finally the signing of the British-Soviet pact of mutual aid and alliance in July. Hitler had had his answer.

Sharp as was the reversal of policy of the Nazi rulers, who in the preceding years leading up to 1939 had devoted all their efforts, first by the collaboration with Chamberlain and then by the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, to prevent and avoid by every means the war on two fronts, and now in 1941 by their own action had plunged into the war on two fronts; no less sharp was the reversal of policy of the British ruling class, who in those same years had devoted all their efforts to promoting war of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union, and now, when that war had broken out, had ranged themselves with the Soviet Union.

It was indeed an ironic commentary on the whole preceding policy of the Clivedenite lords and ladies and the pro-Hitler magnates of the City, who had ruled the roost during those years, who had applauded Chamberlain and denounced Churchill, who had acclaimed Hitler as their darling and their champion against Bolshevism, that now, when at last they were to witness their erstwhile knight and champion proceed on his so-called "anti-Bolshevik crusade," they should find themselves unable to accompany him; that, after they had for so many years been bilked by false promises and sacrificed so much to see the longed-for and constantly deferred war of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union, now at last, when it broke out, they should find themselves compelled, under the leadership of the politician they had denounced, to march in a common front with the Soviet Union. Such was the answer of the event to the poisoned dreams of Munich.

What lay behind this transformation? Two years of history. Two years of deepened crisis of British imperialism. Two years of bitter defeats and humiliations consequent on the whole preceding policy, the refusal of the Anglo-Soviet alliance and the resulting isolation and weakness. It is only necessary to recall the situation immediately preceding the new events, the debates in the House of Commons during May and June, the anxiety following the evacuation of Greece and Crete, the revelations of unpreparedness, the facts of production, the slowness of American aid, the dissensions, vacillations and alarms in the ruling class, the accusations of Pe-tainism against leading political representatives, the new motto which had begun to find currency in the popular press that "we may lose the war," to recognize how critical was the situation to which the British people had been brought by

the faults of their rulers. In this situation the Anglo-Soviet alliance was no longer a question of political controversy; it was an imperative necessity forcing itself on the recognition of all; not a dissenting voice dared to make itself heard.

The Anglo-Soviet alliance came as a salvation and a new hope, inspiring new confidence in the people. Gone were the old days of grudging and patronizing recognition. The very existence of the British people is now bound up with this alliance. It would no doubt have been better if this understanding had come earlier; if it had come six years ago, when this alliance was first advocated by the Communist Party; if it had come five years ago, four years ago, three years ago, even two years ago, when it could still have prevented the present war.

But it may be that only the ruthless teaching of experience could have created this wide and general understanding. War is a harsh political school which compels its lessons to be learned quickly or not at all. The Anglo-Soviet alliance is based, not only on the deep friendship of the peoples, now strengthened by the sense of partnership in a common struggle against a hated and reactionary enemy, but also on the powerful immediate foundation of inescapable common interests in an hour of grave danger, when the greatest possible unity is indispensable for victory. This alliance must now become the rock and the anchor for the salvation of the British people, and be carried forward through the present days of trial to victory and to lay the basis for a better future.

For the British ruling class the Anglo-Soviet alliance is the expression of common interests in an urgent immediate struggle. In the calculations of a ruling class there is no room for sentiment; but there is room for the recognition of practical common interests. In isolation Britain is not able to defeat Nazi Germany, and is faced with the most acute immediate peril. American aid takes time to become effective, and the

peril is immediate; further, American aid is bound up with onerous conditions in respect to the concessions, economic, political, and strategic, which have to be made. The Anglo-Soviet alliance strengthens the position of the British ruling class in relation to the American ruling class. Undoubtedly for the ruling class there are also ulterior calculations; and only the politically naive would be blind to them. They are well aware that the colossal conflict of all the forces of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union weakens both, while their own forces and the American forces are temporarily immune; and they look forward to a future perspective in which the Anglo-America forces will be able to ensure those social and political conditions which they regard as representative of civilization and order, but on which the masses of the people and the nations oppressed by fascism will have other views when the time comes.

These issues of the future will be settled by the peoples and their power to settle them in their own interests will depend on the strength of their active struggle today. But these issues of the future must not be allowed to stand in the way of the maximum unity and maximum common effort of all forces opposed to Hitlerism in the present struggle, when every source of strength and every ally, irrespective of social and political outlook, is needed for the defeat of the common enemy.

The war of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union and the British-Soviet alliance have transformed the world situation and the political situation in every country. Every issue needs now to be judged in the light of this supreme conflict. The second phase of the war, the reactionary war of the Western imperialist powers for the new division of the world, has passed into the third phase of the war, the just war for the liberation of the peoples against German fascism. The imperialist rulers remain in power in Britain; they still oppress India

and the colonial peoples; they maintain their class system in Britain; they still maintain their imperialist aims.

But the objective significance of their war against Hitler has now become a part of the just war represented by the Soviet Union in association with the peoples oppressed or menaced by fascism for liberation against fascism. This is the vital issue which is now the common concern of every people in the world, including the colonial peoples, who have still to win their own freedom, but who are equally and unconditionally interested in the victory of the Soviet Union and the defeat of fascism. The Soviet Union has no imperialist interests or aims; the Soviet Union has from the first day of the conflict made clear that it regards the war as war against the Nazi rulers, not against the German people; it has made clear that victory carries with it the liberation of all peoples oppressed by fascism. In this way the participation of the Soviet Union has transformed the character of the war, and opened the way to the participation of all the peoples oppressed by fascism, in the common struggle for their liberation, with the sure confidence that the strongest power which is taking part in the fighting will equally protect the interests of their liberation in the final settlement. The way is opened for the British people, fighting alongside the Soviet people, to range themselves for the same common aims of a peace based on the freedom of the peoples.

The urgent need now is full mobilization and active unity of all sections of the people for the fulfillment of the tasks of the common struggle with the Soviet people. We strive for the united national front of all sections of the people (not only of the Left anti-imperialists or pro-Soviet elements, but of all opposed to Hitler and supporting the pact) to drive forward the maximum effort in the joint war with the Soviet Union for the defeat of Hitler.

The alliance needs to be made effective with the fullest strength of the British people. We cannot be satisfied with a situation in which one partner to the alliance is bearing the entire brunt of the fighting, while the other remains inactive in a military sense. We cannot be proud of a situation in which the Soviet Union in isolation is engaging nine-tenths of the military forces of Nazism, while the remaining tenth, containing mainly the older and invalid elements, is thinly spread over the occupied countries, and the entire might of the British empire, with sea power at its command, finds it beyond its strength to attempt to engage or even harry the tenth. That is a very unequal and one-sided alliance. As the terrific battle goes forward in the East, the question of the military second front becomes every day more pressing.

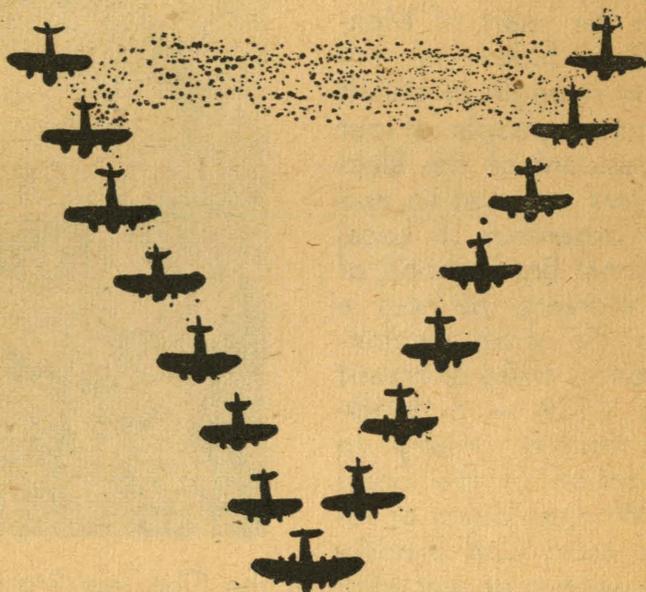
We need to combat the widespread passivity and complacency which is as fatal as it is short-sighted. We need to awaken the people to the urgent sense of their own peril, to the understanding that their fate depends on what is done now. The same spirit which animates the Soviet people, that spirit of invincible dynamic energy, unsparing common endeavor and single-minded purpose, overcoming every obstacle, needs to be emulated here. The disorganization of production cannot be tolerated, but, despite the limits of the existing structure of industry, needs to be combated with that burning urgency which can compel action even from the most lethargic and incompetent authorities.

All this can be accomplished only to the extent that the masses of the people themselves, and the organized workers in the first place, act, push, drive, and take the initiative, both politically and in the sphere of production, industry, and social organization. Within the broad national front the working class and democratic movement must necessarily be the driving force; the need for working class unity and the revived activity of the labor organizations is greater than ever. It is necessary to be prepared for the sharpest issues of every

type in front. The present situation, in which every day is carrying the fate of all peoples in the balance, calls for the greatest effort.

The strength of the initial stand of the Soviet people against the onslaught of the Nazi military machine has given rise to the most dangerous false confidence and illusions here. Our concern and responsibility are to see that the people of this country do their full part and pull their full weight in the common alliance. This is the single practical task which governs every activity today.

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for his courageous denunciation of the Christian Front and other local exponents of Hitlerism, as leader of numerous demonstrations at the German Consulate in protest against the persecution of Jews in Germany. Nurses and teachers know him for his consistent defense of hospitals and schools against the budget slashers, the unemployed know him for his leadership in the fight to preserve WPA and to raise relief standards.

Carl Brodsky is a charter member of the Communist Party and a leader of the International Workers Order.

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