
**FROM
DEFENSE**

*to
Attack*

By Wm. Z. Foster

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FROM DEFENSE TO ATTACK

The United Nations Seize the Initiative

BY WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

THE basic thing now happening in the World War is that the democratic powers are fast going over from the defensive to the offensive. While the Axis powers have by no means been forced fully onto the defensive, as we see by Japan's drive in the Pacific and the present lurking danger of a new offensive by Germany, nevertheless, the initiative in the war is rapidly passing into the hands of the allied democratic countries.

This is evidenced by the present tremendous counter-offensive of the Soviet Red Army, the strong counter-attacks of the Chinese forces, the British drive in Libya, the swift mobilization of American forces for the war, and the signing of the United Nations Pact. This gradual turning of the tide, from the defensive to the offensive, by the democratic powers must be made to mark the beginning of the end for the fascist Axis, no matter how long and bitter may yet be the struggle ahead.

The great fascist offensive has continued for ten years. It began with the invasion of Manchuria by Japan in 1931. During the ensuing decade, by policies of diplomatic terrorism and military aggression, the offensive of Germany, Italy and Japan swept into their maw Ethiopia, Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Memel, Poland, Albania, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, the Balkan countries, the Baltic countries, and

large stretches of the U.S.S.R. in Europe, as well as Indo-China, Siam and whole sections of China in Asia. The tremendous fascist offensive, threatening to subjugate the whole world, surged up to the very gates of Moscow, and it is still pursuing its violent course in Japan's advance in the Philippines, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies.

The governments of Great Britain, France and the United States, the powers that won World War I, betrayed profound weakness and confusion in the early stages of the developing fascist offensive. This was because the dominant sections of the ruling class in these countries, the big bankers, industrialists and landlords, were themselves saturated with ultra-reactionary sentiments and they looked with sympathy upon the rise of the fascist wave.

The Chamberlain government of England and the reactionary political leaders of France sought to use Hitler against their own peoples, against European democracy in general, and especially against the Soviet Union. With these corrupt ends in view, they tried to appease the fascist tigers by throwing one country after another into their clutches. But the betrayal of Spain, the sell-out at Munich and the rest of the miserable story of appeasement (in which our government also shared) had the contrary effect of stimulating the appetites of the fascist powers. The proposals of the Soviet Union to halt the aggressor fascist states by a policy of collective security, by a great international peace front of the peace-desiring countries, were rejected by the Chamberlains and Daladiers with scorn and cynicism.

When the British and French governments reluctantly realized that the only deal they could make with German imperialism, of which Hitler is the war chieftain, was to surrender outright, they finally declared war upon Ger-

many, over the Polish question. But in the ensuing military action, as well as in the previous diplomatic struggle, these governments proved quite incapable of halting the fascist offensive. The French and Polish armies crumpled immediately under the first blows of Hitler's Blitzkrieg and the weak British army was quickly driven into the sea at either end of the continent, in France and in Greece. England was virtually put under siege, her people heroically fighting against great fleets of German airplanes blasting her cities, while big packs of submarines preyed upon her fast dwindling shipping.

The great fascist offensive rolled over Central and Western Europe, sweeping all opposition before it like chaff. The German army was loudly hailed as invincible. Nowhere was there deemed a force capable of withstanding it. The world appeared inescapably to be heading into fascist slavery.

Hitler Invades the U.S.S.R.

Then, on June 22, 1941, Hitler, with his Italian, Finnish, Hungarian and Rumanian allies, suddenly and treacherously attacked the Soviet Union. In doing this he had two major objectives in mind. First, he wanted to seize the oil, iron, coal, wheat and big industrial centers of the U.S.S.R.; but, even more than this, Hitler was determined to destroy the powerful Red Army. It was fear of the Red Army that had prevented him from striking the death blow to England by invasion after the Anglo-French debacle at Dunkirk, and it was also the Red Army that had blocked him in his drive down the Balkans in the spring of 1941 aimed to conquer the Near and Middle East and to split the British Empire.

Hitler, drunk from his previous easy victories, had come to believe it would be a simple matter to crush the Red Army and to smash the Soviet Government. A few weeks at most would put his conquering hosts in Moscow, he thought. For had not all the capitalist writers and military experts of the world agreed that Stalin was afraid to fight; that the Red Army, purged of its most capable officers, could not resist; that the Red Air Force was worthless; that Soviet industry and transport were feeble and incapable of withstanding the strain of war; that the Soviet workers and farmers, groaning under an intolerable tyranny, would seize upon the first occasion to revolt?

But what a rude awakening for the Nazi would-be Napoleon! The world has watched in amazement how the brave Red Army, brilliantly led and solidly backed by the united Soviet nation, has withstood and beaten back the great six-month-long offensive of the German Wehrmacht, which was incomparably the mightiest military onslaught ever made upon any people in all history. After inflicting upon the fascist invaders a loss of 6,500,000 in killed, wounded and prisoners, wiping out one-third of their boasted air force and making them pay dearly in guns and tanks for every mile they advanced, the Soviet forces have flung themselves upon the Nazis and their allies and are driving them back helter-skelter in one of the greatest defeats ever suffered by an invading army.

The explanation for the Soviet people's marvelous fight lies not only in the fact that they are defending their country from the ruthless fascist enslavers, but very much because of the socialist structure of their society. The Soviet peoples, owning the land and the industries, have a vastly intensified incentive to repel the invaders. It was the socialist system that made possible the swift industrial

ization of the U.S.S.R. and the building of the mechanized Red Army under the famous Five-Year Plans; that united the workers, peasants and professionals into an unbreakable unity; that, by the abolition of exploiting social classes, made fifth columns and Quislings impossible; that facilitated the resolute application of the scorched earth policy; that gave the Red Army the best High Command on earth. Socialism in the Soviet Union has proved its superiority not only in developing industry, prosperity, culture, democracy and national unity, but also in carrying on, when it has to, war against the invading tyrants.

The entry of the Soviet Union into the war definitely changed the war's character. What had previously been an imperialist struggle between two groups of rival capitalist states henceforth became a people's war of liberation. This was because the presence of the great socialist country in the war gave for the first time a guarantee that a resolute struggle would be carried on against Hitler and that the final peace would not be a repetition of Versailles, and that the victory of the Union of Nations will not result in enslaving treaties.

The changed character of the war, due to the Soviet's involvement, laid the basis for the people's world counter-offensive against Hitler and his allies, which we now see taking shape in the defeat of Hitler's troops before Moscow. The Red Army has dealt heavy, if not mortal, blows to the Nazi Wehrmacht; it has shattered the Nazi invincibility myth and seriously undermined German war morale; it has saved Great Britain's national independence and has enabled that half-beaten country to struggle to its feet again and to undertake its offensive in Libya; it has given fresh heart to the peoples of the occupied countries of Europe; it has stimulated the heroic Chinese.

people to intensified struggle. The wounds given the Nazi monster by the Red Army have saved the world from the menace of Hitlerism. The defeat of Hitler at Moscow definitely marks the beginning of a great people's offensive which, despite setbacks that may yet occur, will continue to gather impetus until the fascist Axis is destroyed.

The United States Enters the War

The second basic factor going to transform the fight of the democratic countries from the defensive to the offensive was the plunging of the United States into the war through Japan's treacherous attack upon Pearl Harbor on December 7. By this vicious assault Hitler and Hirohito hoped to weaken the developing war role of the United States by diverting America's war munitions from the British and Russians to the American armed forces solely; they wanted to force the United States to reduce its naval aid to Great Britain, and also to enable Japan to deliver a deadly stroke while so much of the American fleet was still in the Atlantic. No doubt the fascists, seeing such a strong anti-war bloc in Congress, also hoped by their coup to confuse the American people enough perhaps to enable the America First Committee fifth columnists to come into power.

Although Japan scored a serious victory at Pearl Harbor, because American Army and Navy leaders, drugged by isolationism, were "not on the alert," and although it is now making dangerous gains in the Pacific, nevertheless, the sudden attack has produced opposite effects to those hoped for by its plotters. Like a flash Pearl Harbor made the American people realize the grave danger to our country and the urgent need to fight

resolutely to preserve our national independence. Instead of splitting the American people and strengthening the fifth column, Pearl Harbor united us as never before and shattered the treacherous plottings of the Lindberghs, Woods, Thomases, Coughlins, etc. The swift declarations of war against Japan, Germany and Italy, followed by the gigantic armaments program announced by President Roosevelt, calling for a war budget of \$56,000,000,000, 60,000 airplanes, 45,000 tanks, and 8,000,000 tons of shipping this year with gigantic increases next year, constituted the first phase of the American people's answer to the fascist mass murderers. The last phase of that answer will be the complete defeat of the Axis powers by the united anti-fascist peoples of America and the whole world.

The entry of the United States into the war, an action in which it is being supported by many Latin American countries, has given a great impetus to the growing counter-offensive of the anti-Axis forces. Not alone have these forces acquired the additional strength of the American Army and Navy, but also the production of armaments in these United States has been vastly accelerated. In consequence, a higher wave of fighting spirit has spread through Great Britain, China and the U.S.S.R., and the peoples in the occupied countries are infused with new hope and courage. By the same token, the peoples in the Axis countries are alarmed and depressed by seeing the new giant, the United States, now arrayed against them in the war.

The Union of Nations

Together with the victories of the U.S.S.R., and the entry of the U.S.A. into the war, a third great force going

to develop the anti-Axis counter-offensive was the formation of the "Union of Nations" compact, as Roosevelt has called it, on January 2, by the U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Great Britain, China and twenty-two other nations. These powers, comprising a huge majority of the world's population and controlling the greater bulk of its economic resources and industries, have formed themselves into a loose military alliance and have pledged themselves to make no separate peace and to fight side by side until Hitler and his Axis allies are defeated.

This world coalition had been gradually forming for many months. Important steps in its crystallization were the formulation of the Atlantic Charter of war aims by Churchill and Roosevelt, the development of the Anglo-Russian alliance, the holding of the American-Soviet economic conferences in Moscow, the increased support given to the Chinese people, and the growing collaboration generally among all the anti-Hitler nations. It remained for the entry of the United States into the war as a belligerent to bring this development to fruition in the formation of the Union of Nations.

The establishment of the Union of Nations is of gigantic significance. It is a crushing blow to Hitler's scheme of organizing the capitalist world for a crusade against the U.S.S.R. While not yet a full military alliance, the Union of Nations nevertheless establishes a strong degree of collaboration among the anti-Hitler peoples. It provides a basis for the development of a common military and economic strategy among all the anti-Axis powers, for a unification of their entire forces against the common enemy. By setting up a united front of the democratic nations, it goes far toward defeating the Hitlerian strategy of isolating and crushing the democratic countries one by

one. The Union of Nations, by its very establishment, has already greatly intensified the growing counter-offensive against the Axis, and its further growth into a full military alliance will carry this offensive to complete victory over Hitler and his allies and puppets.

Some Tasks Confronting Us

In developing the world offensive against Nazi Germany and its supporters the United States has a tremendous role to play. This in turn thrusts a host of problems and tasks upon the American people, and especially upon the trade union movement. It means that our people must see to it that our government is held steadily to a resolute anti-Hitler policy; and that it receives the support of united labor in that anti-Hitler policy; we must build up a gigantic American armed force to take its place in the battle lines on all fronts; we must increase manifold our present output of war munitions so that we can quickly supply ourselves and our allies with all needed arms and other supplies; we must carry through vigorously the complex tasks of civilian defense; we must be ceaselessly vigilant against the ever-menacing fifth column of Hoovers, Lindberghs, Dieses, Thomases, Coughlins, etc.; we must protect the health and working efficiency of the great masses of toilers; we must build the trade unions and generally strengthen the whole structure of American democracy.

The main obstacle in the way of accomplishing the vast victory production program is the business-as-usual attitude of the employers. This must be overcome and the productive power of the great industries directed primarily toward war production. This will require a pooling of plants, managements and materials. The capitalists alone cannot be relied upon to accomplish this. The gov-

ernment and organized labor must also directly participate. The Murray Industrial Councils Plan of the C.I.O., with its separate C.I.O. plans for various industries, offers the best means to mobilize industry for maximum war production. Such joint regulation by employers, labor and government does not, however, imply government ownership and operation of the basic industries, and still less their socialization, a bogey with which the reactionaries are trying to frighten the country. As for the railroads, they should be operated directly by the government, as a major means of efficiency. Already over-taxed by war materials transportation, the burden on the railroads, under private control, will soon become impossible because of the extra load thrown upon them by the gradual lessening of auto and truck traffic as a result of the tire shortage. Government operation of the railroads, with a consequent pooling of all their facilities, has now become imperative as a war measure.

Another very necessary war measure is to grant the workers full representation in all government boards and other regulative bodies, from the Cabinet on down. Only if this is done can the workers make their full contribution to the national war effort. Today almost the whole government war machinery is monopolized by representatives of the employers. It is worse than absurd, for example, that the great American trade union movement, over 11,000,000 strong, has not even a single member in President Roosevelt's Cabinet.

Organized labor also has the imperative duty, as a basic war necessity, to unify itself. In its support of the war the labor movement is hampered at every turn by the division within its own ranks. The C.I.O. and A. F. of L. should confer together nationally, work out labor's war program,

with regard to foreign policy, national unity, production, civilian defense, etc., and then they should cooperate loyally to put it into effect. Organizational unity of the labor movement will come later, probably out of this war-time cooperation. Here in Chicago the trade unions have recently given one of the many current fine local examples of the possibilities and advantages of A. F. of L., C.I.O. and Railroad Brotherhood cooperation on war issues. Another form which labor unity should take is for the two great national trade union centers to affiliate to the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee. This step would do much to bring about the much-needed closer cooperative relations between the American and Soviet Governments.

Another basic task confronting the American people for developing our maximum war effort is to maintain the Bill of Rights in full vigor. One of the most urgent jobs in this respect is to secure the release of Earl Browder. To accomplish this it is necessary for the people to speak out, especially organized labor. Browder must be freed!

For the vigorous prosecution of the war the American people should strive to develop the Union of Nations into a full military alliance, based upon a complete recognition of the sovereignty and national rights of all the participating peoples. Those who urge that the international alliance be dominated by the United States, as some would have it, to create a situation in which Great Britain and the United States, in close collaboration, would control and "police the world," are not helping cement this alliance, and in fact would weaken the war effort. The Union of Nations must be built upon the basis of a genuine partnership among all the cooperating nations. Only if this is done can the war be prosecuted victoriously and the eventual peace be formulated democratically.

Furthermore, to conduct the war successfully we must constantly bear in mind the fact that Nazi Germany is the main enemy. The menace of Japan is great and it must and will be attended to; but at the same time our heaviest blows must be directed against Nazi Germany. The whole world strategy of the Union of Nations should be based upon this conception, which has been repeatedly enunciated by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. Secretary of the Navy Knox stated the situation correctly (*The Associated Press*, January 13) as follows:

“We know who our great enemy is, the enemy who before all others must be defeated first. It is not Japan; it is not Italy. It is Hitler and Hitler’s Nazis, Hitler’s Germany.”

We must cling to this conception until Hitler is smashed. Therefore, we must be doubly on guard against those elements, often fifth columnists, who, shouting panic to the people over the threatening Far East situation, would cut off the sending of munitions to Great Britain and the Soviet Union and would concentrate our entire forces against Japan. This is exactly what the hard-pressed Hitler wants us to do. Instead, not only should we re-double our shipments of munitions to those forces directly fighting Hitler, especially to the Red Army, but we should also move with Great Britain to establish a Western Front in Europe in order to crush the weakened German armies within the fatal pincers of a two-front war.

Above all, we must realize the necessity of pushing the war against Hitler and his allies to complete victory, without let-up or compromise. There can be no peace until Nazi Germany and the whole Axis are destroyed. There are those elements among us, either Hitler dupes or conscious

fifth columnists, who are trying to misdirect the natural desire of the masses for peace into a demand for a negotiated peace with Hitler. But such a peace would be no peace. It would be surrender to Hitler, and merely an interlude before a still more terrible war. Hitlerism must be destroyed most resolutely on all fronts, in the spirit of the scorched earth policy of the Soviet and Chinese peoples. Only when the armies of Hitler and his allies are completely broken will the harassed peoples of the world be able to set about establishing the just and lasting peace which they so ardently desire.

The tide has begun to turn against Hitler and his allies. The anti-fascist peoples of the world are going over to the offensive. This is the great lesson taught by the present world situation. The Red Army has dealt a vital blow against the fascist armed forces, and the Union of Nations is mobilizing overwhelming power to finish their destruction. But let there be no illusions as to the bitter fight ahead. The fascist Axis powers are still strong: they control virtually all of Europe and a huge section of Asia; they are desperate, and they are fighting for the mastery of the world. But the anti-fascist peoples of the world can and will destroy these mass murderers, who are trying to subjugate, enslave and degenerate all mankind for the benefit of the great capitalist exploiters of their countries.

So let us Americans do our full share in this fight to defend our national existence and to free the world from monstrous fascist tyranny. *Forward to victory!*

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