

Europe 1931

HUNGER AND WAR

by Jay Lovestone

From the very moment your boat docks you are impressed with the tragedy of capitalist Europe: *Hunger and War!*

It's been years since things have been so bad. The plight of the masses defies description. The capitalist economic machine is out of gear at least as seriously as at any time within the last ten years.

Every capitalist democracy, every Fascist dictatorship, is in the clutches of the armed forces of the employing classes. Fear of their proletariat, fear of their competitors—often but yesterday allies in war—grips the ruling class and drives the exploiters to feverish war preparations. In France and Italy especially sabre-rattling fills the air. The capitalists are not sure of the present. They are even less sure of the future. In fact, in all Europe, the great mass of the people are living in the expectation that something unexpected is going to happen. Very soon too! About this "unexpected" everybody talks. Everybody dreads it. It's war. The deepgoing economic crisis and the white-hot preparations for giant military conflicts have wrapped Europe in an apprehensive and defensive mood—in the most gripping anxiety within eight years.

On the multiplying signs of workingclass resistance, only the red rays from the land of Socialist construction, the Soviet Union, pierce the dense poisonous fog enveloping Europe and show the light and the way out of this misery and degradation.

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HUNGER STALKS A CONTINENT

The present economic crisis can be best understood if measured with the yardstick of decades. What has happened in the last ten years? The year 1921 saw a collapse of the post-war artificialities, of the first reconstruction and "normalcy" booms. Soon, with the defeat of the workers' hammer blows at the gates of Warsaw, in the cities of Germany, in the metal factories of Italy, in the poverty-stricken Balkans, the capitalists began to put their house in order on a more

"stable" basis. So they thought because so they wished. The edifices which their economic architects have been putting up are now coming down, collapsing. Yesterday's dreams of capitalist stabilization are today's nightmares of the exploiters. The year 1931 marks the collapse of some of the rosiest hopes of capitalist stability and efficiency—of "rationalized" capitalism.

Of the more than twenty millions jobless in the world today, Europe has at least twelve millions. But even this is not the worst. A miserable end is bad enough. But misery without an end is much worse. There seems to be no let-up in the deluge of joblessness which is bringing untold suffering in its train. Within two weeks of my stay in Germany—in the Christmas-New Year's holiday season—unemployment increased at the rate of at least 200,000 a week. In 1930 the army of jobless almost doubled in Germany—from about 2,326,000 at the end of 1929 to over 4,500,000 on New Year's Eve 1931. For England the situation is no better. Under the Labor government of MacDonald the army of no occupation has doubled in the British Isles. In Italy unemployment has been mounting in recent weeks at the rate of about 100,000 a month.

No capitalist country is immune from this paralyzing germ. From the smallest to the biggest, from the richest to the poorest. Estonia, Denmark, Switzerland—all have the plague. Even France, which last year was not yet sucked into the economic maelstrom, is now getting into the crisis and its slough of joblessness head over heels. Official statistics already indicate scores of thousands unemployed or only partly employed. Comrade Naile of the city administration of Red Clichy, a great industrial center of the Paris region, told me that there are already at least 250,000 fully and partly unemployed workers in France—and that things are going rapidly on the downgrade. More and more one hears in France this most embarrassing question: "What will happen tomorrow when things

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get worse and we will have to send out of the country, back to Poland, Hungary, and Italy, the hundreds of thousands of workers whom we only yesterday called in for work?" No French bourgeois economist, journalist, or statesman dares answer this question.

Of course, in Europe the workers have forced, to a limited, insufficient degree, the ruling class to grant some social insurance. But this "relief" doesn't begin to help. It's anything but a solution. And because of the generally lower standard of living, because of the worse poverty of the masses, unemployment means for our European brothers an even more dreadful plight than it, at the outset, means to us. I can never forget the rows and rows of beggars and their dogs, in the busy shopping centres of Berlin, on Christmas Eve. It is impossible to lose the very painful impression of lines of beggars in the railroad yards and wharves of "prosperous", "cultured" victorious France, as you say goodbye to Europe. Men, women, children—all in the army of jobless, hungry and miserable!

ALL FOR WAR—WAR FOR ALL

The intolerable stress of the economic crisis is a terrific force driving ruling class after ruling class into ruthless attacks on the workers, into economic policies of fierce discrimination against competitors, into the most enervating war fever. The war is not yet on, one already feels much of the atmosphere of the barracks. Everything is being bent toward war—a war which will draw in everybody, a war without neutrals and without limit to its hellish destruction.

The continent is strewn with the rotten-ripe fruits of the Versailles Treaty, the whole infamous Versailles system, with its Treaties of St. Germain, Sevres,

Mamma! It Doesn't Hurt To Die a Hero's
Death, Does It?



—From ULK

with its Young Plan, and with its Peace of Riga. Capitalism with its ever-sharpening inherent contradictions and antagonisms, makes impossible any real security, from war or hunger for the great masses of the people. Indeed, the first principle of every capitalist statesman is: *Peace conferences and peace treaties without sword are useless!*

There may be some military logic to some of the new frontiers, with which their complicated and burdensome tariff regulation only serve to deepen the economic conflicts. Created to "solve" some of the pre-war contradictions of capitalist Europe, they are not only no solution, but are indeed fertile soil for another and more devastating war. The economic map

of capitalist Europe looks as if it had been made by a fly walking out of inkpot filled with dirty ink.

In Italy Mussolini bellows war from the house-tops. Mass murder is the language of Fascism everywhere. German imperialism is not yelling for disarmament but for equality in armaments with France, with England, with all of the other first class imperialist powers. This means only more armaments. France is building a chain of impregnable fortresses on the Italian frontier, rushing a huge armada in the Mediterranean, constructing the mightiest forts in the world in Alsace-Lorraine, and frantically arming her satellites, Polish, Czech, and Jugo-Slavian militarism. England boasts that it will "arrive at the next war ahead of all other nations, both as regards the quality of armored fighting vehicles and as to the ideas underlying their use". Nor do the British imperialists mince words about the London Conference. They openly say the United States has wrecked this conference "as an instrument of pacification" and that its only practical result has been to give England an inferior navy and "to stimulate naval rivalry on the continent."

But thru all these war preparations there runs a sort of steel rod, the core, a lever pointing to the main target towards which the heavy artillery, machine guns, poison gas and battleships and airplanes are turned. The most serious source of the imperialist war danger is against the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. The world-famous French armament corporation of Schneider-Creuzot has just made an official open loan of a million francs to the Polish government. Poland and Roumania have just concluded an agreement for pooling their armed forces and military resources under a unified French command. The Krueger Match Trust is financing heavily all Polish imperialist military ventures. An army of 100,000 White, monarchist Russians is being harbored and trained in "democratic" France. Truly, the recent trial of counter-revolutionists in Moscow has unfolded only a very small part of the world-wide imperialist conspiracy against the Soviet Union.

AT THE TURNING OF THE ROAD

The political skies of Europe are today black with the heavy clouds of Fascism and War. The economic order of capitalism is in its period of decay and decline. The breakdown may not come at the same time and in the same fashion in every country but the collapse is on. No wonder then that the British *Fortnightly Review* recently said:

"Out of this clash of opposing forces and interests on the continent may very well come that later and bigger struggle between Fascist Nationalism on the one hand and International Bolshevism on the other . . . Perhaps M. Briand saw furthest in his plans for a United States of Europe."

It is a European crisis. Hence, it's a world crisis involving every capitalist country. Capitalism can't feed the country dwellers. It is starving the city workers. The capitalists may be planning war as a solution; they may be driven to war as a final solution. But empty stomachs don't always make soldiers. Under certain conditions empty stomachs make good revolutionary fighters.

The imperialists have made their war adjustments. This economic crisis is hastening new attempts to adjust these readjustments thru the highest and most intense expression of capitalist competition—War. But the revolutionary proletarian forces will also have quite something to say about a *real* adjustment, a fundamental overhauling of the whole desperate situation.

What is the concrete situation in the main countries of capitalist Europe? What are the ruling classes doing to maintain the present tottering order? What of Fascism? What of the workers? What of the Communist movement? Who will come out on top? These questions and others later.

The next article in the series by Comrade Lovestone will be *FASCISM ON THE RAMPAGE*. It will be followed by: *COMMUNISM IN ALSACE, AN EMPIRE IN ITS DEATH THROES, EUROPE AND THE SOVIET UNION, and THE INTERNATIONAL OPPOSITION CONFERENCE*.