

The Heroism of Sandino and Pessimism of Scott Nearing

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE.

On the first page of the Daily Worker of December 4 is a picture of an American flag captured in battle by the heroic fighters of the Nicaraguan Army of Liberation, which has been holding out for well over a year now against the American military occupation expedition.

On page four of the same issue of the Daily is an article by Scott Nearing which declares:

"Latin America is impotent before the onrush of United States imperialism. They have no 36,167-ton battleships and no 16-inch guns. Hoover, circling Latin America on the Maryland, is like a sheep-dog rounding up the flock on the way to the slaughter house. One dog can handle a hundred sheep."

It is a fortunate thing for the toiling masses of the United States and Latin America that the men who make up the Nicaraguan revolutionary army and the forces of struggle against imperialism generally in Latin America do not share the pessimistic views of Scott Nearing. To accept such views is to capitulate before the difficulties of big struggles, to cease to struggle, to wait passively for American imperialism to "collapse," to give statistical arguments proving the impossibility of revolutionary struggles, to surrender with feeble denunciations but without a struggle.

The Weaknesses of Imperialism's Strength.

To view so mechanically the strength of American imperialism is to fail to see the class struggle within the United States, the class differences within the very army of imperialism, the alliance between the struggles for liberation in Latin America and the struggle of the revolutionary workers of the United States against the capitalist-imperialist system, the growing contradictions facing the ever-more aggressive imperialism of the United States, the growing resistance that is generated by growing oppression—it is to fail to understand the whole nature of proletarian and national colonial revolution and the unitary connection between them. It sees guns and dollars, tons of explosives and barrels of oils, but not class forces. Tho it may denounce imperialism, yet if this deadly doctrine of passivity pessimism and impotence were to take hold of the American workers and the toiling masses of Latin America, it would immeasurably strengthen the power of imperialism to rule and exploit and enslave at its own sweet will.

It sees the power of American imperialism but it does not see the topheavy character of that power, it sees the might of the little handful of financial oligarchs that is loosely

known as Wall Street, it sees that they run the government of the United States, dispose of its army and navy and state department, control its press and schools and churches and movies, send dollars and gunboats to China, dollars and battleships, military advisers, financial advisers and armies of occupation and "good-will" warships to Latin America, smash unions, reduce wages, control courts, police, national guards and armies in the United States—but it does not see how small is the number of money kings and how vast the number of their "subjects," how small is the number of the oppressors and how great the number of the oppressed. It does not see that "the great only appear great because we are on our knees." And certainly it does not issue the clarion call to "arise."

It sees the weakness of the workers of America and their Latin-American comrades in arms because we are divided, used against each other, not all conscious of our interests and strength. But it does not see the enormous strength of the workers of the United States and the toiling masses of Latin America once they are aroused, united, conscious of their interests and conscious of their power.

Whatever Nearing may have intended, and of course I do not question his subjective intentions, his article has the effect of discouraging resistance, discouraging revolutionary struggle against imperialism and imperialist war, deluding the workers as to the strength of their enemy, encouraging passivity. It is the reaction of an individual who feels impotent by himself rather than the voice of a revolutionary movement that knows the strength that is in its numbers. Certainly such viewpoints have nothing in common with Marxism-Leninism, no place in an organ of revolutionary struggle like the Daily Worker, and cannot go unanswered in its columns.

The sentences quoted from Nearing's article are not a mere "slip of the pen." He has expressed such views before. Last summer he upheld the affirmative of a debate which read: "Resolved that Latin America cannot achieve its independence until there is a Soviet government in the United States."

The very wording of the topic shows a failure to grasp the fundamental relationship between the struggle against American imperialism in Latin America and the struggle against the same imperialist government in the United States.

Our struggle for a Soviet government in the United States receives and requires the aid of the revolutionary struggle of our brothers and comrades in Latin America (and throughout the world). Their struggle requires and receives aid from ours. They are two phases of one struggle. Neither can "wait until the other is completed." Neither should wait. For either to wait would weaken both phases of the struggle, weaken our forces and strengthen those of our enemy.

Nearing's Arguments Examined.

Let us examine for a moment some of Nearing's "arguments."

1. "Latin America is impotent." Latin America is not impotent. Even today, divided as it is into twenty-one republics, betrayed by timid petty-bourgeois leadership of some of its anti-imperialist forces, betrayed by puppet governments that have sold out to American imperialism or are its creatures—even today it already shows a growing consciousness and a growing strength and a capacity for stubborn resistance and heroic struggle that may well amaze those who reason as Nearing's article does. Look how many years it took to conquer tiny Haiti and Santo Domingo (each a half of a little island). In spite of the armies of occupation and the brutal policy of blood and fire and rapine, revolt flares up there again and again. Look at the Nicaraguan forces, betrayed by their faint-hearted and corrupt liberal leaders (Moncada, etc.) yet carrying on for a year and a half against the American "Devil Dogs" with all the latest implements of "civilized warfare." The revolutionary army is still holding out in the mountains of Nicaragua.

Remember the "brave and gallant" expedition of Pershing to "punish a handful of outlaws" under Villa. With machine guns and airplanes and tons of explosives and a whole army division, Pershing marched grandly in pursuit of Villa. One moment his vanguard was just catching up with Villa and the next moment Villa had attacked and routed his rearguard. And in the end Pershing marched out of Mexico again, discomfited, with Villa master of the field. So it was with the occupation of Vera Cruz under the Wilson regime.

They Have Only Begun to Fight.

Look how long Mexico has resisted many of the demands of American imperialism. Now its government has sold out (Lamont De La Huerta Treaty, Non-Retroactivity of article 27, annulment of oil

regulations and frontier land regulations, etc.). But the revolutionary determination of the workers and peasants is unbroken. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, which is growing with astounding rapidity in numbers and understanding, they are beginning to organize their forces for struggles which will make those of the period of 1910 to the present seem like child's play.

The revolutionary forces of Latin America are not exhausted and broken. They are only beginning to grow. The very strength, the very aggressiveness, the very encroachments and advances of American imperialism in Latin America, arouse the masses, unite them on a continental scale, strengthen the forces of resistance and struggle. The march of the dollar has created the Anti-Imperialist League and makes it increasingly a mass force in every country. The aggression of American imperialism and the supine cowardice, treachery and corruption of phrase-mongering petty bourgeois governments, the tyranny of autocracies set up and controlled by Wall Street, the growing differentiation of classes, have resulted in the enormous growth of worker and peasant forces under leadership of the most advanced sections of those classes. Increasingly the working class assumes leadership over all revolutionary forces. Communist Parties, sure signs of the maturing of the working class and the revolutionary forces, are growing up in countries where there were none before. In countries where there were little propaganda sects they are becoming mass parties. The Communist Party of the United States, too, is becoming increasingly critical of its former neglect of this important phase of the struggle, increasingly conscious of its tasks and is in process of transition from a mere propaganda organization to the leader of masses in struggle on many fields.

Sandino's Heroism Has Aroused Latin America.

The heroic struggle of the Nicaraguan Army of Liberation has inspired the masses throughout Latin America, set the continent aflame with the spirit of revolt, with the demand for a unified struggle, with impatience at the treachery and cowardice of the Latin American governments, with determination on the part of the workers and peasants to take affairs into their own hands.

The population of Latin America is almost equal to that of the United States. Its area ditto. With the exception of Brazil, all speak the same language, have a common historical tradition. Most of them have a roughly similar class structure and all have a common enemy.

The population of the United States (something which Nearing forgets) is made up of exploiters and exploited. The exploited are many, the exploiters few. The enemies and oppressors of the American workers and working farmers are the same as the enemies and oppressors of the Latin American masses. Both must carry on their

regulations and frontier land regulations, etc.). But the revolutionary determination of the workers and peasants is unbroken. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, which is growing with astounding rapidity in numbers and understanding, they are beginning to organize their forces for struggles which will make those of the period of 1910 to the present seem like child's play.

common struggle on a continental and world scale.

2. "They (the Latin Americans) have no 36,167-ton battleships and no 16-inch guns." To this we must answer:

First, while battleships can overawe and 16-inch guns control a coast line, they can never make possible the permanent military occupation of a whole continent against guerilla forces that know mountain and jungle and have the support of the entire population. Military occupation is only a temporary expedient and on a limited scale.

Second, the armies and battleship crews are recruited from workers and poor farmers in the main and therefore are not eternally dependable instruments of imperialist aggression. Therefore, instead of telling the Latin American masses their struggle is hopeless, we must multiply a thousandfold our feeble work among the soldiers and sailors. This will be aided by the revolutionary struggles of the Latin American masses (cf. the desertion of marines in Nicaragua, the mutiny of American forces in Archangel) and will aid them in turn.

3. "One dog can handle a hundred sheep." This may be true. Besides I will not quarrel with you as to whether Hoover is to be likened to a dog. But Comrade Nearing, if you think that the Latin American masses are sheep, then you don't know our Latin-American allies.

Our Heroic Allies.

We have confidence in them, in their bravery, in their determination to struggle in their capacity for struggle. We must strengthen their confidence in us. We must raise the fighting power of our Party and our class. We must multiply enormously our anti-imperialist activities, our struggle against imperialist war and pacifist illusions, against passivity and pessimism, against chauvinism and provincialism. We must multiply enormously our anti-imperialist work in the unions and among the working masses. Our work in the armed forces. Our activities on every front of the class struggle. We must make statistics and knowledge a weapon of struggle, not a substitute for struggle, not a paralysing of struggle. We must draw tight the bonds that unite us with our brothers in arms in Latin America. We must support them in every struggle. We must urge them to struggle and we must fight side by side with them. Together with them we will defeat American imperialism and build a Union of Soviet Republics on the American continent which will be a part of the Union of Soviet Republics of the world.

DISCHARGE UNION FARMERS.

LONDON, (By Mail).—Big landowners have discharged over 400 farm hands for being members of the National Union of Agricultural Workers.

the masses in subjection to its rule. The worker who accepts the illusion of a master in the skies can be more easily subjected to the master class here upon earth. The attempt to make it appear that god is separate from capitalism, or that the masses should worship a non-capitalist god, is an anti-

Communist concept. It is pure christian socialism, one of the most poisonous doctrines that ever cast its blight upon the working class movement and such viewpoints have no place in a Communist publication.

Religion, in all its forms, is the opium of the people!