THE SECOND WORLD WAR IS HERE

By Bertram D. Wolfe

(This is the first article of a series of three that, in their entirety, constitute a condensed version of the stenogram of the report delivered by Bertram D. Wolfe to a recent membership meeting of the I.C.L.L. in New York, opening a discussion on the war situation.—The Editor.)

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THE Second World War in reality has already begun. Its flames are burning inward from the periphery of our world towards its center where they will meet in a general conflagration.

As in 1911 to 1914 it was in the Balkans and Northern Africa, so today in the Mediterranean and the Far East, the war is already on. The first World War of 1914 to 1918 settled absolutely nothing. Imperialist capitalism, whether masked in Wilsonian phrases and covered by a League of Nations or no, can settle nothing fundamental in the matter of imperialist antagonisms. The present rivalries out of which the Second World War is springing are nothing but a continuation and extension of the rivalries which began in the closing years of the last century and which brought on the First World War.

By a strange turn of fate, the Roosevelt administration seems destined to follow a course similar to that followed by the Wilson administration. They began alike at the end of periods of depression and drifted alike into a new depression. Each of them was accompanied by a weakening of the two-party system. Each opened with a liberal policy in domestic affairs. Each of them, it seems, has a parallel fate—to end by bringing the nation into war—and, in both cases, the liberal domestic policy is converted in the end into a weapon for the preparation of a war morale and for carrying the liberals and the labor movement along with the master class into the war. Make no mistake about it—if this curve should be completed during the present administration as it is already begun, those who resist our entry into war, now as then, will meet with the most savage and self-righteous repression.

In order to guarantee the continuity of imperialist policy, Norman Davis, Morgan agent, was appointed by Herbert Hoover in his closing term, or in the closing months of his term, and was continued by the Roosevelt administration as ambassador-at-large and representative plenipotentiary of the House of Morgan and the government of the United States at the same time.

However much the New Deal may represent a change in domestic policy as between the Republican and Democratic administrations, there has been no change whatsoever in fundamental foreign policy.

Norman Davis had an important hand in preparing the line of the present government. He it was who tipped off Stimson so that he might be prepared the very day after the Chicago speech with an elaborate declaration endorsing it. Norman Davis, it is clear, will be the Colonel House of the Roosevelt negotiations, a Colonel House more authorized than was the preceding one for the role that he has to carry thru.

The fundamental meaning of the Chicago speech does not lie in its fair-sounding words. The primary concern of the American government is not a concern for the fate of small nations. If you have doubt as to that, you need only recall the attitude of the Roosevelt administration in Ethiopia or you need only consider the unilateral boycott in the Spanish civil war.

The central concern of the Chicago speech is the concern of the head of a great imperialist power with the interests of American capital in the Far East. And, from such a source, if no war comes at present but an agreement is reached, we can rest assured that it will be at the expense of China and in the interest in varying degrees of the imperialist powers concerned.

Diplomatic Background Of The Chicago Address

Let us examine the background of the Chicago speech. Last Spring, President Roosevelt called the representatives of the Navy and the State departments into a single joint conference—a most unusual affair. He asked the heads of the Navy to prepare a strategic plan to block Japan's advance into China. The admirals present answered him by proposing a naval blockade to be run jointly by England and the United States. This blockade, they said, might avoid war if sanctioned by either the League of Nations or by the signatories to the Nine-Power Pact! The admirals proposed the American naval base for the blockade should be at Panama and the British naval base should be at Singapore, both of them considerably removed from Japanese waters.

The plan was adopted in principle at that time but Roosevelt correctly judged that the public was not yet ready for it. He decided to wait for a strategic moment and we must say, to his credit, that he selected his moment with great skill.

Why was the State Department present at this conference? The State Department was present because it had the task of transmitting the plan to Great Britain. But the British admiralty has since objected to the whole proposal. Their objections were not political but technical. They said: Six of our fifteen battleships are in drydock. We are tied up with our hands full in the Mediterranean. The British admirals finally agreed to send two cruisers, two squadrons of destroyers and maybe two or three battleships to their Pacific base. After making the agreement, the admirals raised further objections later. Because the Italo-British situation in the Mediterranean became much sharper, they said: We are too busy in the Mediterranean now to go thru with the plan even as originally adopted.

This, I take it, explains the real meaning of the Nyon conference, the recent warm professions of friendship for Italy, the conversations for a settlement, the dickering as to what Spain must pay. I think this, too, is the real background of the Pope's intervention in China which was so quickly denied. Despite the denial, it is perfectly clear that the Vatican—instrument today of Italian foreign policy—expresses the fact that Italy is ready, for the time being at least, together with Germany and Japan, to go in a sort of robber's league of "hungry" imperialist powers. It is this, too, that gives us the key to the marking time and the behind-scenes operations at the Brussels conference which has just begun.

How does the stock-market analyze the Chicago speech? I quote from the financial page of the New York Times: "A strong wave of opinion that President Roosevelt's speech in Chicago . . . represented a warming up to an approaching extensive rearmament program swept the financial district yesterday."

How is it that stocks did not shoot up? the Times analyst asks. And he answers: "It naturally would take some months for a rearmament program to be formulated, coordinated, enacted into law and carried into effect. It would, therefore, be a long time before mills began rolling steel for new battleships, cannon or other armaments that might be required."

This, then, is the political significance of the recent Chicago speech which has pleased Earl Browder and the editors of the Daily Worker so well.

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(The second article in this series will appear next week.

—The Editor.)

Marxism and U. S. Labor

By LYMAN FRASER

IT is becoming fashionable to argue that Marxism is un-American, that it is inapplicable to American conditions and problems. But what is Marxism? In its general theoretical and tactical principles, Marxism is the expression of the historical movement of society and of the experience of the working class in the struggle against capitalism, for socialism.

America Ripe For Socialism

From the historical angle, Marxism maintains that capitalism moves toward socialism. It does so in two ways: by preparing the objective economic conditions for socialism—socialization of the means of production within the relations

rights of employers in the enterprises of the nation, a foreshadowing of the complete abolition of those rights when the working class becomes master of industry and society. The C.I.O. and its industrial unionism are further limiting those rights. Now the American workers are moving toward independent class political action, still hesitantly, incompletely, crudely. But the impact of the permanent crisis of capitalism will driving and deepen that movement, drive American labor toward the larger consciousness and action necessary to conquer capitalism.

The Active Role Of Marxism

But while that is true, it is equally true that American experience differs essentially and importantly from European experi-

the consciousness and activity of the workers of the world. Those exceptional conditions and historical peculiarities are decisive factors in the struggle for socialism, not the general principles whose true value lies in making possible an understanding of the "exceptions" and peculiarities.

Marxism, moreover, is not satisfied with appearances. Often things that appear different are at bottom the same. That American labor did not develop the socialist consciousness of European labor is in itself no evidence of the backwardness of the American working class. The dominant socialism in Europe was reformist; it was identified with the struggle for the fuller realization of bourgeois democracy. American reformist democracy was essential-