

WAR AND WORLD LABOR

By Bertram D. Wolfe

(The article below is the second of a series of three articles which together constitute, in abridged form, the report on the war situation delivered by Bertram D. Wolfe at a recent membership meeting of the I.C.L.L. in New York.—THE EDITOR.)

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ARE we prepared for the situation which is dramatized by the Chicago speech? Answering first from a world standpoint, we must say that the world is far less able to stand the Second World War than it was the First. If that imperiled the very existence of our civilization then surely that civilization is in far greater danger from the blows that will be delivered to it by a second world conflagration.

The preparations for the Second World War are much grander in scale than were the preparations for the First. Budgets are bigger; armed forces are greater; plans more elaborate, weapons larger, more varied, more effective, more destructive. What was but rehearsal in the last world war—the bombing of cities, the use of chemicals and new mechanical apparatus—will, in this war, start on a scale that the military authorities could not even dream of in 1914.

War Morale

The war morale, too, is at a

ship meeting of record attendance supported the appeal of Stuart Strachan and overwhelmingly approved a resolution endorsing the Board's position on union responsibility.

As far as the General Motors situation as a whole is concerned, the union is now making every effort to undo the effects of the serious errors committed at the November 14 conference and to clear the ground for a resumption of negotiations.

more advanced stage than it was in 1914. In the fascist countries, it is safe to say that, in essentials, they have reached a stage before war begins that it took the various nations more than a year to reach after war began in 1914. That is to say: centralized, unified industry focused upon war; the destruction of any political and union organizations which might resist entrance into or the conduct of the war; the establishment of a wild jingoistic mood and the development of the war machine in the direct sense of that term.

But make no mistake about it! The difference in war morale as between the fascist and non-fascist capitalistic powers is but a difference in degree and road of approach. The organization of the fascist state is the war organization of every imperialist power in the world. The last war proved it. This war will be no exception.

The difference between the non-fascist imperialist powers and the fascist imperialist powers is in the road used prior to war to mobilize the masses for the development of a totalitarian state, a military dictatorship, during the war.

On the road to class peace, class collaboration, the road to development of national defensism in the labor movement, the road to fanning of the flames of rabid nationalism, the non-fascist powers are also far in advance of the analogous situations in 1914. Please remember that the slogans "Make the world safe for democracy," "War to end war," and the like, did not enter into the last world war until the year 1917 when the Russian masses overthrew the Czar and when the United States entered the war and brought with it the slogans meant to mobilize its own people and to keep the Russian masses still fighting, even

without their Czar. Today, similar slogans are fully current in advance of war.

Furthermore, there are no forces in the world today that are capable of resisting the outbreak of war even as well as or as long as did the Socialist (Second) International prior to 1914. Bear in mind that, from 1911 to 1913 and even earlier than 1911, the pressure of the Second International and the fear of the ruling powers of what the proletariat might do, was a factor delaying war and giving more time for mobilizing anti-war and revolutionary forces. The Kaiser did not dare take the final, decisive step until he had gotten private assurances from the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party that they would vote the war credits and support the war. Today, these assurances do not wait until the eve of war. These assurances are being given unasked to the non-fascist imperialist powers by those sectors of the labor movement which should be mobilizing for the revolutionary struggle against war.

Consequently, the forces for turning the Second World War into such a civil war as gives some hope for a progressive outcome are far weaker than they were in 1914.

The Socialist International

Let us examine those forces for a moment. What can we hope of the Socialist International when its symbol is a Leon Blum, leader of the government that betrayed its "People's Front" ally in Spain, leader of the government of war preparation in France? Or that other leading party of the Socialist International, the British Labor Party? The British trade-union movement held a congress this summer at Norwich. Here is

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how the London Times summarizes the Trade Union Congress:

"There is no longer even the appearance of disagreement between the government and the opposition on the need for the rearmament that is in progress....All the shallow pacifism of a few years ago is cast aside like a wornout garment...blown away by the gale of anti-fascism. The government that labor formerly stigmatized as war-minded and reckless are now taken to task for not having stood boldly enough against the powers which to labor are both national enemies and enemies of democracy."

In the resolutions of the Trade Union Congress, we read:

"A labor-government council"—that is, when "we" become the government, says the trade union leadership — "a labor-government council must be in a position to make a powerful appeal to fascist states to agree to the abandonment of the arms race."

"It must also...be strongly equipped to defend this country, play its full part in collective security and resist intimidation by fascist powers designed to frustrate the fulfillment of British obligations."

Consequently, the British Trade Union Congress votes to support against fascism the imperialist government which has been supporting Franco!

So the British trade-union movement refuses to pay attention to rising prices in Britain, refuses to pay attention to the armament boom where labor can recoup its broken forces; it calls off strikes and declares them outlawed when intolerable conditions make strikes necessary; it has actually expelled local leaderships for indulging in strikes at this time. And it supports that government which began pillaging China before Japan even dreamed of it and, in a certain sense, showed the way to Japan in pillaging China. The instigator of the Opium War, than which there is no more despicable war in the history of imperialist aggression, the British government, which bombs Indian villages at this moment, receives defense from labor on the ground that, thru it, China is to be defended!

Those are the two leading parties in the Socialist (Second) International—the French Socialist Party and the British Labor Party.

And what shall we say of the Third International, the Communist International? The Third International has entered into an unsocialistic competition with the Second International. It has equalled and surpassed the social-democratic parties in the rapidity with which it has taken the path once peculiar to renegade social-democracy, the path of social-chauvinism. It engages in the active mobilization of the masses for the coming war. It invents a pink haze of radical slogans with which the imperialist objectives in the non-fascist countries are enveloped. It votes the war credits in France long before war, whereas the Kaiser "socialists" of 1914 did not vote the war credits until

after war had actually been declared. It is engaged in fostering the basest and vilest forms of vulgar nationalism in its own ranks and in the ranks of the proletariat as far as it can get their ear. It is prepared to act as the recruiting sergeant and, more than that, as the bootlicking words of Earl Browder to President Roosevelt have shown, it has pledged itself in advance to assume the role of provocateur and of active counter-revolutionary spearhead in the coming war.

I have here a sheaf of clippings from the Daily Worker showing how energetically it is carrying out the line of the Chicago speech.

First there is an editorial headed (Oct. 7): "The President Has Spoken, Let the People Act. President Roosevelt's Chicago speech projected a powerful ray of hope for peace that penetrated to every nook and corner of the world. It had an electric effect, shocking the war mongers and galvanizing the forces of peace."

The Communist Party boasts of having sent its agent into that stronghold of anti-militarist traditions, Minnesota, which boasts of the only congressmen who stood firm thruout the World War, men like the elder Lindbergh and Ernest Lundeen. Now the C.P. goes there to see if it cannot demoralize the anti-war forces which it has already succeeded in confusing by its pseudo-pacifism. Here is the report of A. B. Magill in the Daily Worker of October 25:

"After ten days in Minnesota, I can report that the breakup of hidebound isolationism has definitely begun....Since President Roosevelt's Chicago speech, the sentiment for collective action by the peace-loving nations to curb the fascist aggressors is growing rapidly...."

"I don't think," quotes Magill with approval, "there is any issue on which sentiment could be crystallized so strongly as on the issue of Japan."

"A firm policy by the Roosevelt administration," Magill resumes speaking in his own name, "in defense of the Nine-power Treaty

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and the Kellogg Pact is all that is needed to convert this groping sentiment into active support of collective measures to quarantine the aggressors."

But the gem of the Daily Worker article is its boast of the conversion of the Tory press. I quote:

"Even the Tory press in Minnesota has sensed which way the wind is blowing. . . . Thus, the Minneapolis Tribune . . . on October 12 . . . declared: 'We admit that our neutrality policy is a farce but we waver between it and concerted action against aggressors. The most important task that our political leadership has is to reconcile our general desire to remain out of foreign disputes (that is, the desire of the masses—B.D.W.) with our far-flung economic interests. We cannot arrive at such a policy without assuming some responsibility for the maintenance of international law.'"

When the Tory papers state the problem so cynically and the Daily Worker hails them as blood-brothers and converts, it is time for members of the C.P. to ask what role their party is playing!

The Daily Worker ends with a warning to Lundeen "Senator Lundeen . . . is already being repudiated by the American people. Senator Lundeen should hurry back to Minnesota and find out what the home folks are thinking."

I hold no brief for Lundeen. Under Communist Party tutelage, he has lost some of his uncompromising way. But if I have to choose between his hatred of war and the Daily Worker's new tenderness for the steps leading to it, or between him and the Minneapolis Tribune that tried to hound him to death in 1917, I should still expect more of Lundeen than of the new C.P.-Tory alliance.

Finally, I appeal to that "revolutionary" organ, the New Masses, for light on the situation in the Far East. In an article by Theodore Draper, one of the editors of the Daily Worker, we read:

"We have continually postponed coming to grips with the real issues." "We"! And here are the real issues: "It is good business for the United States to keep

Union Holds Forum on War

The Educational Department of the Joint Council Knitgoods Workers Union is conducting a series of forums and symposia on different problems facing the working class movement.

The first symposium will be held on Thursday, December 2, at 7:00 p.m., at the Brooklyn union headquarters, 765 Broadway, Brooklyn. The subject will be "What should be the attitude of the American workers toward the coming war?" Speakers from the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the Independent Communist Labor League have been invited. The speaker from the Socialist Party will be Gus Tyler; for the Independent Communist Labor League, Jim Cork. The spokesman for the official communist point of view has not yet been designated.

In addition the union is also planning a symposium on Spain. Bertram D. Wolfe, noted lecturer and writer who has been in Spain and is a close student of Spanish affairs, has been invited to speak at this meeting together with a representative of the Communist Party.

These forums are a part of a general program of recreational and educational activities conducted by the union for its members.

China's vast but undeveloped resources out of Japanese control, despite the short-sighted attitude from the viewpoint of their own self-interest, of some big business men in this country."

This is written to convince the short-sighted big business men to join the long-sighted ones.

"Secondly, China remains the greatest potential market and source of capital investment in the world. . . . Our present stake in China is but a tiny fraction of our potential stake in a unified and revived China. Political friendship would be a first-rate business asset."

This is sufficient to characterize the role of the Communist International and its American section in the Second World War.

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(The third article will appear in the next issue.—THE EDITOR.)