War Means Fascism For America

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

(This is the third in a series of four articles based on the special report on "Problems of Strategy and Policy in the Struggle Against War" made by Bertram D. Wolfe to the plenary session of the I.C.L.L. held recently.—The Editor.)

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I WANT to emphasize again that, under the slogan of a struggle against fascism, the plans for the development of war-time fascism in the United States are being carried out. Let's go behind this smoke-screen of words to the real war plans of this democratic country of ours.

I have made an analysis of the plans for what has now become popularly as well as technically known as "M Day"—Mobilization Day.[1] Those plans are fully worked out. The government began working on them as soon as the last war was finished and worked continuously, from 1920 to 1933, on the complete drafting of the mobilization plans for America's participation in the Second World War. These plans, as worked out, give the President and the War Department complete and absolute power over labor and over the armed forces, and sweeping powers over industry but the power over industry is specifically limited by the provisions of the Constitution of the United States providing for no seizure of property without "just compensation." The other provisions of the Constitution, about free speech, freedom of press and freedom of assembly, the mobilization board intends to scrap, but those on property the mobilization board says must be respected.

The power of the Executive must be made complete. I quote from Colonel C. T. Harris, in charge of the Planning Division and representative of the War Department at the Congressional hearings: "My opinion is that in time of war you should write a blank check to the President." And it is necessary for us to recognize that "Comrades" Landon, Knox, Stimson and Browder have already written out the blank check.

There are seven bills in this mobilization plan. The War Department refuses to submit the text of these bills prior to the declaration of the war. They do not want any debate on these bills. They want to wait until war is declared and then jam the bills thru. And then, whoever wants debate on them will be branded as a "wilfull obstructionist," and "enemy agent" and the like. But the seven bills have been summarized by the War Department for the benefit and information of Congress. And the summary provides, among other things, that the President shall get the authority to create a machinery answerable only to him for the control, complete and absolute, over the man-power of the nation, over the channels of public opinion and information and over industry as limited by the provisions of the Constitution. They also provide that labor is to be disarmed and its organizations paralyzed or destroyed by a combination of propaganda plus coercion.

These bills stipulate that no male between 18 and 45 is exempt from the draft. There are to be no exemptions, only deferred classifications. Anyone classified as valuable in civilian service for the conduct of the war may have his classification changed if he subsequently proves of no value or harmful.

Barney Baruch, who should know what he is talking about because he handled the last war from this angle, testified to Congress in the following language:

"Every man in military service —whatever may be his domestic or other circumstances warranting deferment or exemption—must be usefully and faithfully employed in an occupation essential to the military progress of the nation. . . . The work or fight method . . . is far more effective than any chain-gang or impressment that might be invented."

One of the seven bills sets up a Public Relations Administration —a P.R.A.—under executive control. I quote four of its provisions:

"A. To mobilize all existing mediums of publicity . . . "

Well, the Daily Worker is already mobilized. It is time for us to ask ourselves: what will happen to the Workers Age?

"B. To combat disaffection at home . . . "

"C. To combat enemy propaganda at home and abroad . . . "

"F. To establish rules and regulations for censorship. . . . "

The Communist Party, it can safely be assumed, will, in America as it does now in Spain, furnish the most expert political censors that the government will possess.

According to these seven bills, as explained by the War Department, we find the following: that, when

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1. This account is based on Rose M. Stein's excellent book, "M-Day," which should be read in full.

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United States to keep 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."

In one form or another, this appeal has been repeated a dozen times since. What is being urged here: a foreign policy expressing the "whole-hearted desire of the American people for . . . peace" or one directed towards "protecting the vested or property interests . . . of large corporations in this country"? The answer is obvious. There cannot be any doubt that the Stalinist war-mongering under the guise of "collective security" is diametrically opposed to the fundamental idea of the United Mine Workers resolution on war.

After this, it is hardly necessary to expose the petty trick perpetrated by the Daily Worker in connection with the names of some prominent union leaders. Martin. Frankensteen, Thomas, Reuther and others are quoted as heartily in favor of the U.M.W.A. convention decision and the impression is created that this is somehow equivalent to a repudiation of the resolution previously adopted by their own union. But here there is manifest fraud. There is no conflict between the two resolutions and there is no reason in the world why any one who supports one should not be able to support the other as well.

The fact of the matter is that, between the United Mine Workers declaration on war and that of the United Automobile Workers and the S.W.O.C., there is no contradiction at all. In direction and line, they are fundamentally the same; the only difference is that the former does not go as far as the latter nor is it as clear in its conception and formulation. For the labor movement of this country, the U.A.W.-S.W.O.C. resolution still remains the best and most reliable guide in the present difficult situa-

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war begins, the ruling class, which brought it on with its policies, is made absolute master. On the working class will fall the burdens, the pains and the sorrows. The ruling class will get the profits involved.

When the capitalist class was in its progressive stage and when its wars were of a revolutionary or progressive character, the ruling class could depend on the voluntary enthusiasm of the masses for recruiting and support—at least in the main and in its beginnings. But when capitalism is in decay and its interests are no longer in harmony with those of society as a whole in any sense, and now when capitalism needs the entire nation's population on account of the nature of modern war, it can only depend on conscription, impressment and the chain-gang.

I want to point out another feature of the results of war as it is waged today. The ruling class of any country stands to gain more in the crushing of the labor movement in its own country than it will gain by whatever it may wrest from the ruling class of lands that it may defeat, because what it gains by crushing its own labor movement is much greater and more lasting than what it can possibly gain by taking something from another ruling class, some right to exploit the masses of some other country. This is true not only of victorious but also defeated ruling classes, provided revolution does not intervene in the defeated country.

Next, I want to emphasize that the coming of peace at the end of the war does not restore the old time status-quo. The last world war certainly proved that. Compare the attitude towards trusts that prevailed in America before the United States entered the World War with the attitude towards big business which has prevailed in the United States since the war and up to the present day. Compare the concentration of wealth since the war. Compare the concentration of power in the hands of the Executive. Compare the size and the magnitude of the powers of the burocracy since and prior to the war. After such a war as is waged today, we never return to the status-quo. Those steps toward dictatorship over the masses taken in war time leave indelible imprints on the status of a country after peace is restored. Win or lose, the ruling class wins in a war, and win or lose, the working class loses.

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age. It can well take its place with the older progressive unions in the American labor movement. During the last year and a half, it has shown its ability to organize the great masses of the workers in its industry, to lead them in militant action and to defend the gains they have won. In November, it splendidly demonstrated its readiness to take up the banner of independent working-class action on the political field. And now it is proving that it can rise to a broad view of our decaying industrial civilization and of labor's needs in the crisis.