Labor's Strategy In "Mixed" Wars

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

(This is the fifth of a series of articles based on the report on "Problems in the Struggle Against War" delivered by Bertram D. Wolfe at the recent plenary session of the National Council of the I.C.L.L. Another article will appear in the next issue.—The Editor.)

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I TURN now to the "mixed war" question. I want to say that the question of "mixed" wars is not nearly as complicated as it sounds. Further, that it is not a burning question for us. It is a burning question in France, because there happens to be an alliance at present between the ruling class and the Soviet Union. Yet, it has some implications for us, besides merely theoretical ones.

The United States and Japan are rival imperialist powers. They have deep-going antagonisms. Between the Soviet Union and Japan, there is a deeper antagonism. Therefore, we are asked to believe that the United States is no longer an imperialist power. That is the Browderian logic. What it forgets is that the antagonisms between the United States and the Soviet Union are far deeper in the long run than those between the United States and Japan, and that the United States would gladly join with the Japanese ruling class to crush a proletarian revolution in Japan or in the U.S.A. or in China or to crush, if possible, the Soviet Union itself.

Nevertheless, for the moment, the international situation is such that the United States has three naval officers in Vladivostok conferring there with naval officers of the Soviet Union and the United States has secretly ordered a good part of its fleet to Honolulu and other sections to Australia and Singapore. So there are certain implications for us which make it necessary to examine, however briefly, the question of "mixed" war.

Even France is likely to renounce its alliance with the Soviet Union long before war comes or at the moment that war is declared. If you have any doubts, look at how the French People's Front government renounced its alliance with the People's Front government of Spain the moment that Spain got into difficulties with Italy and Germany. Moreover, the Franco-Soviet Pact is strained to the breaking point today. Yet, suppose it does not actually break before war begins. Then we can say with absolute certitude that France will surely betray that alliance during the war. It, too, as the war develops, would gladly join the German ruling class against the German revolution or against the Soviet Union.

The confusion on this question, I think, comes largely from the use of an old time formula, the formula of revolutionary defeatism. The word defeatism is too simple a slogan for a "mixed" war. Rather than stress the defeat of its own bourgeoisie in the war, the proletariat in such a hypothetical situation should stress the overthrow of its own bourgeoisie for the purpose of developing a trustworthy alliance with the Russian proletariat for the victory of the proletarian revolution in France and for the victory of the proletarian revolution in Germany. I think if we stop using the word "defeatism" in this connection, the confusion will be dissipated.

I think that the question of "mixed" wars can be made theoretically simple in the following terms:

1. Imperialist powers follow imperialist politics in war as in peace.

2. When an imperialist power joins a proletarian power, it does not thereby become non-imperialist or progressive or revolutionary or proletarian.

3. Any more than a proletarian power becomes reactionary and imperialist or counter-revolutionary in such an alliance.

4. The action of the Stalin government on Spain is actually carrying out the one side of the error of which the Communist Party in the United States is carrying out the other side. That is to say, Stalinism in Spain, both thru the agency of the G.P.U. and the agency of the Spanish Communist Party, is actually attempting to live up to the conception that a proletarian government entering an alliance with imperialist powers must engage in counter-revolutionary activity. Whereas the other side, the logic of the French C.P., is that, once a proletarian government enters into an alliance with the ruling class of a country, then the working class of that country must enter into an alliance with that ruling class.

The LaFollette-Ludlow Amendment

The third question is the question of the LaFollette-Ludlow amendment. Now, the LaFollette-Ludlow amendment has serious weaknesses and it is our duty to point out the weaknesses and shortcomings of any measure of capitalist democracy. Hence we must point out the following:

1. That it won't be adopted. The ability of the bourgeoisie to sabot-

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SCAPEGOATS IN SPAIN

The Communist Party of Spain recently expelled one of its leading members. Astigarrabias from the party on the following grounds:

"He endorsed the reactionary and defeatist policy of Aguirre in the Basque government. The big companies continue to be exploited by the capitalists. He failed to oppose the open support of the government to the capitalists. He prevented the Party in Euzkady (the Basque region) from reacting and, politically, he prevented the organization of the stiff defense of Bilbao and the Basque region."

Need we recall that, **before** the fall of Bilbao, the policy and activities of the Basque government were enthusiastically applauded by the Stalinist press of the world and that Astigarrabias was hailed as a hero while he was committing those crimes for which he is now expelled? Need we recall that those who, **at that time**, while it was yet not too late, raised their voice against the conduct of the Basque government as "reactionary and defeatist," were branded by the Stalinites in Spain and elsewhere as "Trotskyites" and "agents of Franco" and were jailed or shot if the Stalinites could lay their hands on them? After every disaster, a scapegoat is found but the real criminal remains—Stalinism!

THE "HOME FRONT"

Labor After M-Day

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Elegantly called "deferment," it meant that every worker was subject to active service and made the front-line trenches a punishment cell—and often an execution chamber—for malcontents who agitated for a decent living at home. This idea is much thought of by Bernard Baruch who says: "The draft of men for industrial employment is not only impossible. It is wholly unnecessary. The work or fight method is a better way. It is compatible with our institutions and far more effective than any chain-gang or impressment that could be invented."

Military men are not noted for tact but even they have not the brazen nerve to propose such a technique—at least not in peace time. That it would have been used if the World War had lasted longer is most probable; that it will be used in the next war is very possible. But the Industrial Mobilization Plan dishes out a good deal more soft soap with its regimentation. It speaks vaguely of "questions to be considered"—and I suppose, settled—such as "measures to prevent grievances of employers or employees, whether actual or imaginary, from interfering with war production" and again of the "necessity for the modification of the statutory work-day" and again of the "maintenance of maximum production in all war work and the suspension for the period of the actual emergency and a reasonable adjustment thereafter of restrictive regulations . . . which unreasonably limit production." Also proposed are the abolition of restrictions on women's and children's labor.

The Sheppard-Hill Bill carries this a very logical step forward by providing that, "in the event of war or of national emergency . . . the President is authorized to draft into the military service such members of the unorganized militia (that means you and you and you and you) between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one as he may deem necessary." That is: work, fight or get court-martialled.

You don't think that such measures can be foisted on democratic America? Ah, but wait till the drums beat, the flags fly and the boys march down Fifth Avenue, while the Daily Worker denounces anti-war Congressmen as "Lovestoneite agents of Japanese fascism" . . . .

Labor Mobilization And Fascism

Labor mobilization for war is, in a certain sense, beyond fascism; in other respects, short of it. Control over labor and punishments for militant workers are more stringent than in any dictatorial state. But the control is primarily a military one and the military men are more intent on winning a war than on guaranteeing profits from sweated labor altho, of course, they have no objection to that either. Bluntly the chains of a military dictatorship may be somewhat lighter than those of a business dictatorship. But not much. . . .

The gravest danger, of course, is the continuance of this thralldom in the post-war period—note that the Industrial Mobilization Plan speaks of "and a reasonable adjustment thereafter"—a continuance into a very genuinely fascist scheme.

What can labor do? Mr. William Green, in a disgraceful speech that has not had the publicity it deserves, offered one solution. In essence, he said that he was against war but that, if there were a war obviously labor mobilization would be needed but that, ". . . if labor

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Labor and "Mixed" War

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age proposed amendments to the Constitution is limitless.

2. Even if it were adopted, it would never be carried out. The ruling class has no respect for its own democratic rules when they hinder its essential objectives.

3. That it implies a referendum and that the usual element of fraud in every election is present there.

Modern wars are not declared; they are started. They are first started, then sometimes declared, and then it is much too late for a referendum on whether we should declare war or not.

But, despite these negative criticisms of the weakness of the LaFollette - Ludlow Amendment, there is a more important aspect to the idea than these.

First, the movement for the La Follette-Ludlow Amendment is essentially an anti-war movement and we have to treat it as such.

Secondly, the movement for the LaFollette-Ludlow Amendment is a movement for the extension of democracy and we have to treat it as such. We are in favor, in my opinion, of a fight for the LaFollette-Ludlow Amendment because it will help to rally the enemies of war, because today it is becoming a sort of dividing line between those opposed to war and those who are for war and who are denouncing it, beginning with Stimson and Landon and ending with Earl Browder. We are in favor of the LaFollette-Ludlow Amendment because the fight for it will help to crystallize the anti-war movement. It will help to precipitate a discussion of the war danger. A good fight for it will leave us with a basis for agitation on the immediate eve of a war. We are in favor of any amendment which gives the workers more say in the government, altho we have no illusions about the total say of the workers in the government. Only those who are merciless critics of the shams of capitalist democracy, can honestly criticize the weaknesses in the LaFollette-Ludlow Amendment. All other criticism, whether from Browder, Landon, Roosevelt or Stimson, is mere war-mongering and hostility to democracy in any form.

For that reason, I think it is more important to support the La Follette-Ludlow Amendment than to criticize it. If it were really carried, we would have to develop our criticism further. We ought to state our criticisms even now. But that should not be our central activity on the LaFollette-Ludlow Amendment. We must immediately carry a campaign for it into every trade union in this country and use it to expose the war-mongers, the opponents of popular rule, the treason of the Stalinites to the working class, to expose the Stalinist "democracy" which is hostile to the extension of democracy.

And, for once, we have an advantage over the war-mongers with something that is simple and clear and acceptable to the masses in the trade unions. Generally, in recent months, the Stalinites and other war-mongers have built on backwardness and lack of class consciousness. Their recklessly demagogic slogans have had the advantage of sounding plausible to backward workers. This time, we have the inside track, basing ourselves on the sound instincts of the masses. Let the war-mongers fight us on this in the trade unions. Let them oppose the right of those who have to fight the war to decide whether the war should be declared or not. Let them oppose the extension of American democracy. Let them propose the giving of absolute dictatorial power over the lives and fate of the masses to the President. Let them make that fight in the unions and see how far they will get.

VANGUARD GROUP FORUM

James Rorty, **WHAT PRICE MACCHIAVELLIANISM?**, a discussion of the policies of Stalinist-liberal journalism.

Sunday, Feb. 27, 8:30 P.M.

Vanguard Hall, 22 W. 17 St.

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