

## IV. THE WAY OUT OF THE IMPERIALIST WAR

LENIN died seventeen years ago. But his spirit lives as the beloved teacher and guide of tens of millions in all lands, because he and his party alone showed the way out of the last imperialist war, the way to peace and socialism.

Today, in the midst of the second imperialist war, we commemorate Lenin by applying his teachings in order fully to understand and master the problems raised by this continuation of the first World War.

The first requirement for understanding our problems is to face facts as they are, however unpleasant. And it is a fact, unpleasant indeed, that America *is in the war*. Most of the current newspaper and radio chatter about keeping out of the war is merely to hide a while longer the fact that we are already in it, that our problem is: "What way out?"

President Roosevelt has submitted to Congress what is called a "defense budget" of seventeen-and-a-half billion dollars, with more to come. It is for defense only in a very special sense that it is a "defense" of the ambitions of Wall Street, of the "sixty families," to extend their power over the world in a new empire—"the mightiest empire the world has ever seen."

The President told Congress that his aim is to bring his conception of "liberty" to "the entire world." That the aim of the gigantic war budget extends to the entire world is not to be questioned. But the quality of the "liberty" involved is more doubtful. That "liberty" is best characterized by the status of the three hundred and fifty

million British subjects in India, whose erstwhile ruler, Lord Halifax, is on his way to Washington to represent "our ally," the British Empire, bearing with him, according to the word of Winston Churchill, all the most intimate secrets of the war aims, which we common people may hope that our children may some day also learn. Or even the "liberty" of our own Solid South, where the vote is the monopoly of some ten to twenty per cent of the population, where Judge Lynch holds sway.

#### WAR AIMS OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

Woodrow Wilson in the last war covered up American imperialism's war aims with similar idealistic chatter. Only he was more modest, corresponding to the more modest role of Wall Street in the world at that time. He only wanted to "make the world safe for democracy." Roosevelt proposes to take his brand of democracy—with Winston Churchill's—and make it supreme over the whole world.

But the extension of American or British control over the whole world is not democracy. It is imperialism. It is a proposal to abolish American democracy at home and spread the control of the "sixty families" of an American banking and industrial oligarchy over all the world. It is a big order, indeed, and seventeen-and-a-half billion dollars is none too much as the current down-payment. It will surely cost a hundred times that before the adventure is closed—in dollars and millions in lives of the American people.

The Roosevelt Administration has entered into a compact to aid the British ruling class to retain control of a slave empire in half of Africa, to continue to rule three hundred and fifty million Indians against their will. The Roosevelt Administration is about to enter into military action which cannot but be directed against Ireland. It is now adding its pressure to that of Churchill and Halifax to compel Ireland to surrender its natural fortifications again to the British Government. We Americans do not wish to have our country made an instrument of war to aid the British

rulers to renew and complete the conquest of Ireland that they have unsuccessfully attempted for seven hundred years.

The war administration of Roosevelt arrogates to itself the right to enclose the whole hemisphere in its control. It is scarcely concealed as a plan to fasten upon twenty Latin American republics the relationship to the United States that India has to Great Britain. Already the Roosevelt Administration presumes to dispute the right of Latin American republics to control their own foreign trade or to regulate their relations with other nations independently of the Washington State Department. This is not democracy. This is imperialism. It is an assault, behind the smooth words of diplomacy, against the sovereignty of twenty heroic independent Latin American nations which we declare will never submit to this conquest.

The true measure of Roosevelt's idealistic demagoguery, and of American democracy in general, may be found in the words of Virgil Jordan, speaking to the Bankers' Association last month, an oft-quoted paragraph which will bear many repetitions. It is, as the saying goes, "right out of the horse's mouth"; it comes from the highest circles of our ruling class. Allow me to repeat Mr. Jordan's revelation:

In peace time it is the accepted custom and normal manners of modern government to conceal all important facts from the public, or to lie about them; in war it is a political vice which becomes a public necessity. . . . People in every country, including our own . . . [are] treated as though they were helpless wards or incompetent inmates of some vast institution for the indigent and feeble-minded. It is in much this spirit and atmosphere that the chatter and prattle about our national defense program proceeds in this country today.

Yes, America is in the imperialist war, for imperialist aims, despite all the chatter and prattle about "liberty" and "democracy" and other nice things, and despite the illusion that it is still a matter for debate as to whether "we shall go in."

There are still a few Congressmen who seem to think that Congress has something to say about it. They are dreaming of the past.

Congress abdicated its powers last September, when it gave silent consent to Roosevelt's coup d'état of the destroyers-bases deal, the date of which, September 3, will probably be taken by future historians to mark United States' entrance into the war. Roosevelt already has seized and exercised all the powers that Congress debates giving him; Congress has left for itself no role but that of voting "Ja."

The masses of the people were overwhelmingly and consciously opposed to America's entrance into the war. This overwhelming will to peace was so strong that, during the election campaign, it forced even Roosevelt and Willkie to bow to it, to make hypocritical promises to respect it. That was accomplished by the Hitlerian tactic of concentrating upon a single step at a time, by swearing to high heaven that each step was the last one, by telling lies so big and bold that little people feared to question them.

Thus the American people are placed in a position in many respects similar to that of the German people: both were against the war, both were thrown in by their rulers without their consent, both have lost whatever traditional checks they may have had upon their rulers, both must seek a way out of the war in spite and against the will of their present rulers.

Fascism or Nazism is merely the military rule, the open terroristic dictatorship, or monopoly capital in its final stages of decay, and it becomes approximately the same in character in every capitalist country. Our own country is leveling itself with Germany in this respect even more swiftly than Britain.

#### SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY BEATS THE DRUMS

Our own "liberals" and Social-Democrats are beating the drums most loudly for the imperialist war. They deny most vehemently, of course, that it is an imperialist war. But the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, and other idealistic whitewashers of the imperialist war, who wish to "sell" the war to the people entirely ignore such things as the programmatic speech of Mr. Jordan to the Bankers' Convention. That proves they belong, not among the deceived, but

among the deceivers. If they were honest, they would print Mr. Jordan's speech and try to refute it. But they dare not try it; the country would know that Mr. Jordan is much closer to the seats of power than are the "liberals." They therefore simply ignore, and do not try to answer, such revelations as the following from Mr. Jordan, which should be repeated again and again until it has penetrated the mind of every American worker:

Whatever the outcome of the war, America has embarked upon a career of imperialism, both in world affairs and in every other aspect of life here. . . . At best, England will become a junior partner in a new Anglo-Saxon imperialism, in which . . . the United States will be the center of gravity. Southward in our hemisphere and westward in the Pacific the path of empire takes its way . . . the scepter passes to the United States. All this is what lies beneath the phrase "national defense"—some of it deeply hidden, some of it very near the surface and soon to emerge to challenge us.

The forces that drag the capitalist countries one after another into the war arise from the very nature of the capitalist system, which in its monopolist phase of today, the stage of parasitism and decay, is incompatible with an expanding and peaceful life for the people of any country which it rules. It is capitalism itself that drives to war, and now that the war has been unleashed to the extent of involving practically the entire capitalist world, it is clear that the downfall of capitalism itself is involved in the problem of peace. There is no way out of the war except in the popular resistance to the rule of the war-makers who have involved their whole system of imperialism so deeply that even they now admit that peace cannot again come to the world without their overthrow. It is a veiled admission that the socialist revolution, the coming to power of the working class, is the alternative to unlimited slaughter and enslavement.

Because we Communists proclaim this truth, because we explain it in all its detail, as Lenin did during the last World War, we are being denounced as "traitors," as "conspirators," as "agents of a foreign power." This is based upon the theory that "patriots" are



only those who loyally serve monopoly capital, Wall Street, the economic royalists—and Communists certainly do not; are only those who agree and help put into effect the policies which bring upon our country the devastation of war—and the Communists certainly do not; are only those who help tie America up with one side in the imperialist war—and Communists certainly do not. We Communists are patriots of a different sort; we would serve the country we love by keeping it at peace, by maintaining strict neutrality toward the imperialist war, by freeing it from the yoke of monopoly capital.

The absurd lie is spread against us that we Communists conspire to commit sabotage and "fifth column" work to achieve our ends. What nonsense this is! Such methods are not ours. Why should we dream that any puny efforts of a few individuals at destruction could have any importance in a world where the monster powers of the capitalist governments are devoted to destruction on the most gigantic scale? We are not such fools. The destruction of the capitalist world is being carried out under the direction of Hitler and Churchill, of Mussolini and Petain, of Franco and the Mikado—and now of Roosevelt. We Communists are not entering into that competition. We have other work to do, to explain to the masses the reasons behind all this senseless destruction and disaster, to show them the way out of this chaos, to prepare them for the construction of the new world—the world of socialism, of the common ownership of the country's economy and its operation by and for the masses of the people. As old Wilhelm Liebknecht answered the Kaiser's court in 1872, replying to similar charges, we Communists conspire only in the open, as the sun conspires against darkness and night.

#### THE WAY OUT OF THE WAR

What then is the way out of the war? Look back at the last World War! The nations were locked in the embrace of mutual destruction, and the ruling classes of none of them could point any way out except to complete the destruction. Peace came only when

the masses, the workers, peasants and soldiers, of one great country, Russia, took their fate into their own hands, overthrew the old rulers, proclaimed socialism and peace. They were threatened with the most dire consequences. The Kaiser's Germany forced a victor's peace at Brest Litovsk—but the people of Germany soon overthrew the Kaiser in a revolution of their own. The United States, Britain, France, Japan made an undeclared war against them—but the peoples stirred against their own governments, and forced them to withdraw. The Russian Revolution in 1917, under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin, brought the end of the last World War.

The present imperialist world war will be brought to an end by a similar revolution in one or more of the major countries of Europe. It cannot be ended by the present rulers, but only by their overthrow. The peoples themselves must end this war.

Those whose first and only loyalty is to capitalism, to the little group of rich families who own most of the nation's basic economy, cry out that this is "treason." But the world has seen, in country after country, that it is precisely the capitalists and their agents who betray their country, who will make any kind of abject surrender to foreign powers whenever they find it impossible otherwise to keep their own people in subjection, to keep possession of their profits. The real traitors in every nation are those who put the profits of finance capital as their first consideration. And these are the present rulers in all capitalist countries.

Not so long ago, some of these basic truths, now labeled "treason" by the warmongers, had such wide acceptance that even President Roosevelt repeated them in his speeches. It is very interesting today to quote some past utterances of the leader of the war party.

... We could get a world accord on world peace immediately if the people of the world could speak for themselves. Through all the centuries of recorded history and down to the world conflict of 1914 to 1918, wars were made by governments. . . . They [the people] wondered . . . whether the people themselves could not some day prevent governments from making war . . . to propose in this newer generation that



from now on war by governments shall be changed to peace by peoples. (December 28, 1933.)

... The United States... can play but one role; through a well-ordered neutrality to do naught to encourage the contest; through adequate defense to save ourselves from... attack; and through example... to persuade other nations to return to the ways of peace.... (January 3, 1936.)

... It is clear to me that greatly to exceed that basis [of normal peacetime exports], with the result of earning profits not possible during peace, and especially with the result of giving actual assistance to the carrying on of war, would serve to magnify the very evil of war which we seek to prevent. (February 29, 1936.)

... Industrial and agricultural production for a war market may give immense fortunes to a few men; for the nation as a whole it produces disaster.... It was the prospect of war profits that caused the extension of monopoly and unjustified expansion of industry and a price level so high that the normal relationship between debtor and creditor was destroyed. Nevertheless, if war should break out again in another continent, let us not blink the fact that we would find in this country thousands of Americans who, seeking immediate riches—fools' gold—would attempt to break down or evade our neutrality.

They would tell you—and, unfortunately, their views would get wide publicity—that if they could produce and ship this and that and the other article to belligerent nations, the unemployed of America would all find work. They would tell you that if they could extend credit to warring nations that credit would be used in the United States to build homes and factories and pay our debts. They would tell you that America would once more capture the trade of the world.

It would be hard to resist that clamor; it would be hard for many Americans, I fear, to look beyond—to realize the inevitable penalties, the inevitable day of reckoning, that come from false prosperity. To resist the clamor of that greed, if war should come, would require the unswerving support of all Americans who love peace (August 14, 1936.)

... Vast armaments are rising on every side and... the work of creating them employs men and women by the millions.... Such employment is false employment;... it builds no permanent structures and

creates no consumers' goods for the maintenance of lasting prosperity. We know that nations guilty of these follies inevitably face the day when either their weapons of destruction must be used against their neighbors or when an unsound economy, like a house of cards, will fall apart. (December 1, 1936.)

Those words were profoundly true when they were spoken; they are a thousand times true today. But the man who uttered them was himself unable to "resist that clamor." Step by step he has violated every warning he himself uttered, until he is the unchallenged head of the greatest war dictatorship the world has ever seen. He is piling up for the United States and all the Americas those "inevitable penalties," that "inevitable day of reckoning," the chaos and collapse that have already engulfed Europe and a large part of Asia and Africa.

Because the Communists have stood firm, have resisted the clamor of that greed, have stood unswerving with "all Americans who love peace" and with the lovers of peace in all lands, especially the great stronghold of peace, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—that is the reason why the Communists are being persecuted with exceptional legislation, that is why all real progressives and lovers of peace are being labeled "Communists" and included in the persecution, all according to the formula which Hitler used for his rise to power.

It is for the realization of the aim that "war by governments shall be changed to peace by peoples," that the great People's Convention gathered in London over this last week end. We join with all peace-loving people everywhere in greeting that Convention and hailing its great work, which shows the way for the people of all belligerent countries, for the people of the suffering world.

The constant and increasing struggle for labor organization, for higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions, is the most essential foundation also of the struggle for peace, and to defeat every new step to take us deeper into the war. It goes hand in hand with the unrelenting battle to preserve and extend popular democratic rights and civil liberties, for preserving public education from the warmongers and red baiters, for a democratic people's culture.

But it must be recognized that the destruction of these democratic rights is an inseparable part of the Roosevelt "power" bill; it is a proposal for the overthrow of the republican form of government set up by Washington and Jefferson, and defended now, not by the Republican and Democratic parties, but only by the workers and farmers, by the masses.

#### THE PEACE POLICY OF THE SOVIET UNION

These things are not lost, however, because our rulers have plunged our country into the war; they are merely under more fierce attack than ever before; they can never be lost except the masses give up their fight for them. And it is my firm conviction that the American workers will never give up that fight.

The year 1941 differs from 1917 in many respects. The greatest difference is that today the greatest power in the world is the socialist Soviet Union, that it is outside the orbit of the imperialist war and will not participate in it on one or the other side, that it is pursuing a consistent policy for peace for itself and for the whole world. The foundation for this great stronghold of peace is the magnificently successful building of the new socialist society, which rises to new heights of achievement at the moment when the capitalist world descends into a welter of blood and destruction. This great power, the U.S.S.R., is the embodiment of the rule of the people, of the working class, of the masses, in every phase of life. It is a democracy infinitely higher than anything even dreamed of before. It is the realization of the teachings of Lenin, and of his great and wise successor and continuator, Stalin. It is the guarantee of the ultimate attainment of peace and democracy in spite of the war-makers, of the abolition of capitalist exploitation, from which war arises, of the liberation of all humanity from all oppression. It is the living example of the path out of the imperialist war to a life of well being and peace, which all the world will ultimately follow.

*Speech delivered at the Lenin Memorial meeting, Madison Square Garden, January 13, 1941.*