

The Proposed C. P. Changes

By Robert Minor

"If we are to have a long period of peace, why do we advocate universal military service?"

Because if we don't we will very likely not have a long period of peace.

The Tehran agreement is a solid guarantee of a long period of world peace.

When we speak of international agreements, we don't mean paper and ink.

Without the organization of the physical means of preservation of world peace, and with it the moral means which are pledged in the

Tehran Declaration—there would be no peace either for "many generations" or even for many months after

the close of the present military action. This war has shown the enormous strength of the forces of reaction, even though it has also shown the still greater potentialities (if they are organized) of the forces for the preservation of peace. As a little warning to all civilizations not to indulge in any childish dreams to the effect that bellicose reaction will soon melt into sweetness and light please observe that the Nazis, even in this stage of their military setbacks, are still able to drive their dupes to die on their feet by the fifty thousands. The forces that raised Hitler into power over a slave empire in the heart of European world culture, and almost succeeded in the grandiose plan of a Japanese-built empire over a thousand million enslaved people in Asia are not to be dismissed as though their resources had vanished.

The guarantee of a long period of peace is solely to be found in the superior aggregate of military strength, the strength of the democracy of the Tehran powers, and in the unity of these powers based in a long-time common vital interest.

The military strength and the democracy of all of these powers require that their populations shall be thoroughly capable of supporting their governments in making war better than any breakers of the peace can make war.

Under conditions of this period neither military strength nor democracy can be had without uni-

versal obligatory military training and service. It used to be contended that a standing army under a strong cadre of professional officers would suffice. But this has been disproven in this war. No one believes it any more. It would mean an enormous professional army, which, at that, would be unable to meet the needs of modern wars of million-fold armies.

Universal obligatory service is the only democratic system. A long perspective on this history of the general democratic world movement, as well as the history of the labor movement, without which in modern times there is no democracy, will show that universal obligatory military service has always had the popular support.

On several occasions in the past, we spoke of military "literacy." We do it again in order to make a comparison. The comparison is justified, for both are parts of the development of democracy. I want to show that all persons are mistaken who think there is something reactionary, or contrary to democracy, violating the liberty of the people, in compulsory military training and obligatory service.

I compare this historically with the institution of universal compulsory education in the elementary public school system. Look back at the long struggle initiated by Jefferson and carried on by such pioneer leaders as Horace Mann, Thaddeus Stevens, William Sylvius, Booker T. Washington, DeWitt Clinton and others—for the establishment of the American public school system, which also meant laws of compulsory attendance in schools. The public school system came into existence only against fierce opposition. In the Southern states, where human slavery had been looked upon as the "freedom" of the slave owner to do as he wished with his property, it was only some years after the Civil War that free public schools, even in a crippled form of racial exclusiveness, could be established. Free public education was called putting the burden of "pauper education" onto thrifty taxpayers, and compulsory school attendance was denounced as infringement of the freedom of parents to control the lives of their children. But the development of modern industrial civilization could proceed only with a population possessing a general elementary literacy. Real freedom from economic stagnation required "recog-

nition of necessity" for compulsory education.

But under the more modern conditions, "reading, writing and arithmetic" are not sufficient for the freedom of the human race for backwardness, degradation, stagnation and even destruction. For any modern nation to preserve its right to live at all, and for world civilization to banish war for many generations, it is necessary to have universal compulsory "literacy" in the art of national military defense. Freedom from subjugation by the forces of medieval reaction requires this "recognition of necessity."

Marxists have always demanded that the principle of universal obligatory military service be adopted in one or other form in accord with time and circumstances, though never permitting this demand to become a device for support of reaction. For instance, in 1938 our Party incorporated this demand in the form of the slogan "For Social and National Security."

The pacifist opposition to the course we follow here would lead precisely to the result of new bloody wars.

But we must emphasize now with all possible force that, under the conditions of this generation, neither universal military service nor any formal internal democracy could preserve peace or freedom from military disaster, without a foreign policy that assures that our armaments are used in the interest of the nation and of world democracy—not for its own destruction as the greatest military establishment of all Europe, in France in the 1930's, was used in the hands of Daladier, Laval and Petain. The democratic foreign policy (i.e., a world coalition of the forces of democracy) is incorporated in the Tehran agreement.

We are going to have a long period of peace because our great country and all other countries that do not wish to be enslaved will see to it that their populations are as capable as any others in the world to use the arms that will guarantee that long period of peace. "Military literacy" is necessary to peace for many generations.

The next question, to be answered in Monday's Daily Worker, is:

"Was President Roosevelt's message to Congress an application of Tehran to the United States?"