WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL NEWS

VOL.1 NO.10 OCTOBER 1938 TWOPENCE

THE COMING WORLD WAR

by LEON TROTSKY

Underlined by recent events, this analysis written by Trotsky in August 1937 *is being day by day translated into fact by the relentless operation of historic forces, and retains the validity and forcefulness it possessed on the day it was written.*—ED.

Every day the press is searching the world horizon for signs of smoke and flames. If one wanted to count up all the possible theatres of war, one would have to use a text-book of geography. Besides, international contradictions are so complicated and entangled that it is impossible to predict with any certainty where the war will break out, or how the opposing forces will be grouped. It is certain that there will be fighting, but who the attackers will be, and who the attacked, we do not know.

In 1914, the chief unpredictable factor was Britain, which kept on expressing concern for international equilibrium right up to the moment when it helped to plunge Europe into the abyss. The second unknown was Italy, which for 35 years had maintained an alliance with Austria-Hungary and Germany, only to turn its artillery against its allies during the war. A powerful but far-off sphinx was the United States, which entered the war only during its last and decisive stage. The small states increased still further the number of unknowns in the equation. However, there were, from the beginning, two constant factors in the situation. These were the alliance between Austria and Germany, and that between France and Russia, and it was these alliances that determined the main axis of the war. The other combatants had no choice but to group themselves round this axis.

To-day it is impossible even to pretend that there is any of the stability of the opposing camps that characterised the good old days. The policy of London, determined as it is by the conflicting interests of British imperialism in various parts of the world, makes prediction even more difficult than it was before August, 1914. In every question His Majesty's government is forced to take account of the attitudes of the dominions, which more and more are developing independent policies of their own. Italy's imperialist expansion has forced it to withdraw, once and for all, from the all too " friendly " guardianship of Great Britain. Mussolini's success in Africa, and the increase in Italian armaments, signify an immediate menace to the vital interests of Great Britain.

For Germany, on the other hand, the uncertain friendship with Italy is a long range weapon for securing the benevolent neutrality of Great Britain. Germany could not abandon this stopping-place on

the road to world domination unless she could come to some arrangement with the Soviet Union. Nor is such a development impossible. It remains in the background as a reserve. It is not because Hitler is in principle opposed to communism that he is struggling against the Franco-Soviet alliance (nobody can any longer seriously believe in the revolutionary role of Stalin), but because he wants to have his hands free to make an agreement with Moscow against Paris, in case he should fail to come to an arrangement with London against Moscow. But the Franco-Soviet pact is no longer a constant factor. Unlike the old Franco-Russian military alliance, it has no real substance. French policy, always following Great Britain, oscillates between a conditional agreement with Germany and unconditional friendship with the U.S.S.R. The greater these oscillations become, the more serious will be the final decision.

The small and medium states complicate the situation still more. They are like satellites that do not know round which constellation to revolve. On paper, Poland has an alliance with France, but in fact collaborates with Germany. Rumania belongs to the Little Entente, but Poland is drawing it, not without success, into the Italo-German sphere of influence. The growing understanding between Belgrade, Rome and Berlin is giving rise to increasing uneasiness, not only in Prague, but also in Bucharest. On the other hand, Hungary is justly afraid that her territorial claims will be the first victim of a friendship between Berlin, Rome and Belgrade.

Everybody wants peace, and particularly those who do not expect to gain anything from war, such as the Balkan countries, the Baltic countries, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, and the Scandinavian states. Their ministers meet in conferences, and make plans and speeches for peace. They resemble a puppet-show on the edge of a volcano. None of the small powers will be able to remain outside the conflict. They will all shed blood. Quite recently the idea that the Scandanavian countries might go to war seemed absurd; to-day it is probable. If Germany were to find support in Sweden, and Great Britain in Denmark, then the Scandinavian "sisters" would find themselves in opposite camps. On condition, naturally, that England and Germany are at war with each other.

At present the United States is keeping as far away from the European powder magazine as possible. But it was exactly the same in 1914. There are penalties for being a great power, especially for being the greatest of all. It is easier to decree neutrality than to maintain it. Besides, there is the Far East as well as Europe. During the years of the world industrial crisis, which paralysed the majority of the great powers, Japan conquered Manchuria and occupied the northern provinces of China, threatening that vast and unhappy country with ultimate dismemberment. The internal crisis in the U.S.S.R., the decapitation of the Red Army, and the lamentable capitulation of Moscow in the dispute over the islands in the Amur river gave an absolutely free hand to the military clique in Japan. At present the fate of the entire Far East is in the balance.

All this is changing the attitude of the Washington government. The concentration of the fleet in the Pacific, the construction of warships and long range bombing aeroplanes, the plan for fortifying islands in the middle of the ocean—all these testify in the most eloquent manner to the fact that the U.S.A. is preparing to abandon its policy of voluntary isolation. But in the Far East, as in Europe, it is impossible to predict the future combination of forces. Japan proposes a "friendly agreement" with England for collaboration in China, with the intention of gradually reducing the British lion's share in the spoil to a suitable allowance. But before accepting or refusing this offer England wants to increase her fleet to complete the construction of the naval base at Singapore, to build new fortifications at Hong Kong. In the East, as in the West, Great Britain remains the principal factor of uncertainty. In the East, as in the West, military alliances take shape much more slowly than military conflicts.

The policy of "wait and see" had some sense as long as Britain was fortunate enough to be faced with a Europe divided into two camps. But when all the states, without exception, are forced to adopt as their own policy of treacherous waiting, then diplomatic relations became a game of madmen, in which the players hunt each other with their eyes blindfolded, and revolvers in their hands. For both the great and the small powers there is evidently nothing to be done except to form military alliances as quickly as possible after the first blows of the new great war have been struck.

Not so long ago pacifists of various shades of opinion believed, or pretended to believe, that it was possible to stave off the coming war by means of the League of Nations, anti-war conferences, referendums, and other theatrical performances (most of them paid for out of the budget of the U.S.S.R.). How much is left of these illusions? Of the seven great powers, three—the United States, Japan and Germany—are not in the League of Nations, while a fourth—Italy—is destroying it from the inside. The other three are finding it less and less necessary to hide their individual interests behind the smoke-screen of the League. Some dismal believers in the Geneva institution, which yesterday was the "hope of humanity", have therefore come to the conclusion that the only way to save the League of Nations is to refrain from asking it to consider any serious problem. In 1932, at the time of the disarmament

conference about which such a fuss was made, the armies of Europe had a total of 3,200,000 men. In 1936 the number had risen to 4,500,000, and all the time it is increasing. What has happened to the peace ballots of Lord Cecil? To whom will the next Nobel Peace Prize be awarded? The Geneva disarmament policy no longer provides even a subject for caricature.

The new rearmament fever began when fascist Germany, somewhat hysterically, but with infallible instinct, seized the opportunity to tear off the chains of Versailles. But unquestionably it is the example of Great Britain that provides the most convincing evidence of the inevitability of a new world conflict. The conservative pacifism of that country had led, in recent years, to the minimising of expenditure for the protection of the fruits of former conquests. However, the astounding defeats of British policy in Manchuria, Abyssinia and Spain convinced Baldwin and his colleagues that the impetus of former power could not carry them on indefinitely. Hence the self-defensive reflex, amounting almost to panic, in the form of the most imposing or all the military programmes. In the name of peace and of the *status quo*, Great Britain is aiming at becoming, in the course of the next few years, the undisputed mistress of the sea and of the air. But in doing this she gives a tremendous impetus to naval and aerial armaments on the other side of the Atlantic. Great Britain, the most satisfied country, the most "peaceful", the most "democratic", the country that directed the disarmament conference, has moved from free trade to protectionism, and from pacifism to rearmament. What power on earth is there then can prevent the next step from being taken—the step from rearmament to war!

But can we not expect the working masses to resist the threat of war, by general strikes, risings, revolutions? Theoretically, that is not impossible. However, if we do not mistake hopes or fears for realities, *we must admit that it is highly improbable.* The workers of the entire world are at present bearing the burden of the terrible defeats they have suffered in Italy, Poland, Germany, Austria, Spain, and to some extent in France and a series of smaller countries. The old Internationals—the Second, the Third, and the Trade Union International—are tied hand and foot to the governments of the democratic states, and are taking an active part in preparing for a war "against fascism". It is true that the social democrats, as well as the communists, favour a defeatist policy in Germany, Italy and Japan; but the simple meaning of that is that they struggle against war only in those countries where they have no influence. If the masses wanted to make a stand against militarism, they would have to begin by repudiating the authority of the official Internationals. And that is by no means easy. It cannot be accomplished in a day, or even in a month. *In any case, the political awakening of the proletariat is progressing to-day at a much slower pace than the preparations for the next war.*

To justify their militarist and chauvinist policy, the Second and Third Internationals are spreading the idea that the aim of the coming war will be to defend liberty and culture against the fascist aggressors; the "peace loving" countries, with the great democracies of the New and the Old Worlds, on one side—and Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Japan on the other. This classification is unsound even from a purely formal point of view. Jugoslavia is no less "fascist" that Hungary, and Rumania is no more of a democracy than Poland is. Military dictatorship is to be found not only in Japan but also in China. The political system of Stalin comes closer and closer to that of Hitler. In France, fascism might easily replace democracy even before the war begins; and the People's Front governments are doing all in their power to facilitate the change. In the present order of the world it is by no means easy to distinguish the wolves from the sheep.

In order to understand how the "democracies" are struggling against fascism, let us, instead of peering into the future, look at the Pyrenees. To begin with, the "democracies" instituted a blockade against the legal Spanish government, in order to give no "pretext" for German and Italian intervention. But when Mussolini and Hitler intervened without "pretext", the "democracies", in the interest of "peace", hastened to capitulate. While Spain is being laid waste, the representatives of the democracies are floundering in discussions on the best means of securing non-intervention later on. The Moscow government is vainly trying, with radical grimaces, to conceal its participation in the impudent and criminal policy that is facilitating General Franco's task and strengthening the general position of fascism. It is the mineral wealth of Spain and not its political principles that in the near future will determine its relations with other countries. This is a painful, but absolutely invaluable lesson.

The classification of states mentioned above has a certain historical sense, but not that attributed to it in certain popular pacifist writings. The countries that have most easily gone over to fascism, or other forms of dictatorship, are those in which the internal contradictions had become most pronounced: the countries with no raw materials of their own, with insufficient access to the world market (Germany, Italy, Japan); the countries that were defeated in the war (Germany, Hungary, Austria); and finally, the countries where the crisis of the capitalist system is complicated by the survival of remnants of pre-capitalist institutions. (Japan, Poland, Rumania, Hungary). All these nations,

historically retarded or aggrieved, are naturally the least satisfied with the political map of our planet. Their foreign policy has therefore a more aggressive character than that of the more privileged countries, whose main concern is to defend the booty that is already in their hands.

That is the reason for the division of states into defenders and opponents of the *status quo*, the fascist and semi-fascist countries belonging by preference to the second group. But that does not at all mean that it is precisely those two groups who will go to war with each other. When the world war begins, the programme of the *status quo* will disappear without leaving a trace, and the combatants will aim at a new partition of the world. The present fascist opponents of the *status quo* will be found some in one camp, some in the other, the choice of allies being determined not by political sympathies, but by geographic and economic considerations, and above all by knowledge of the relative strength of the opposing forces. Hitler would be quite happy to form an alliance with England for the purpose of taking colonies from France, even if that involved him in direct war with Italian fascism. On the other hand Mussolini is quite capable of "betraying" Hitler, and in all probability will betray him, just as the Italian government betrayed the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs in 1914. The relations between the fascist countries will not be proof against the claims of "holy egoism".

It is true that the totalitarian state is a form that corresponds best to the nature of the "totalitarian" war of our days. But that only means that during the world slaughter, possibly even before it, the present democracies will inevitably become nearly, if not entirely fascist. However, the disappearance of the differences between the political systems will not mean that their interests have become identical. It is highly improbable that fascist France would agree to share her colonies with Hitler. If the heroic Sir Oswald Mosley became dictator of the British Isles historically, it is not out of the question—he would undoubtedly be as little inclined as the present government to allow Italy to become mistress of the Mediterranean. In a word, both the composition of the belligerent camps and the course of the war itself will be determined, not by political, racial or moral criteria, but by imperialist interests. All the rest is just bluff.

Both the forces that tend to accelerate the coming of the war and those that tend to retard it are so numerous and complicated that it would be altogether too risky to predict the date of its outbreak. However, there are certain signs on which a prognosis can be based. In London it is at present considered that the most dangerous period will be over by 1939, when British rearmament, designed to guarantee "peace", will be sufficiently far advanced. According to this view, the dangers of war diminish proportionately to the increase of armaments.

But will not Germany and Italy, for that very reason, seize the opportunity to start a war within the next two years? There are many things that suggest they will not. The decision rests not with Italy, but with Germany. And Germany is not ready. It is true that the lively traditions of Prussian militarism, and the high level of German industrial technique enable Hitler to rearm at a speed such as history has never seen before. But not even a totalitarian state can perform miracles. During the years between the Treaty of Versailles and the Nazi victory, young Germans received no military training. There are no reserves ready to go into action. To give even an elementary military education to several millions of men, it is necessary to have large numbers of officers and non-commissioned officers. To elaborate the most perfect types of weapons, to prepare for their mass production, to procure sufficient supplies or raw materials, to train new general staffs, to lick the human material into shape—all this demands time. Just because of the feverish rate of its growth, Hitler's military machine necessarily shows at every stage serious errors of proportion, and even of definite omission. The rulers of Germany certainly estimate the readiness of their army for war at a much lower level than their enemies do. It will need at least another two years before the headquarters staff in Berlin can afford to stop restraining the noble impatience of the political chiefs.

However, the amount of armaments that a country has accumulated is only one of the factors in the war, and not even the most important. The moment when all the countries feel that they are "sufficiently" armed will never arrive. In itself, the mechanism of rearmament naturally makes for war rather than for peace. But the army is not an end in itself. It is an instrument of politics, which in its turn is an instrument of material interests. The shock that starts the new war will undoubtedly arise out of an economic depression.

Remember that in 1913 a long period of rapid industrial expansion gave place to a depression that affected not only the working of the economic system but its very structure. The national frontiers had become too restricted for the productive forces of Europe. The crisis of 1913 produced in the ruling classes a state of nervous tension under which prudence and caution rapidly evaporated. The result was the war of 1914. It is true that the last crisis (1929-1933) did not produce any military disturbance. The optimism born of the preceding boom was so blind that the ruling classes persisted in seeing in the crisis only a temporary setback. These illusions were gradually dispelled as commerce became more and more paralysed, and the army of the unemployed continued to grow. Foreign policy in those years—except in those countries that were

hardest hit, Japan, Germany and Italy—was characterised by delay, indecision and atrophy.

The new crisis, which all the evidence indicates will come soon, will have very different effects on politics, both internal and foreign. The temporary recovery inspires confidence in nobody, because of the disorganised state of the world market and the persistent growth of unemployment. This recovery, which is chiefly due to military expenditure, involves a wastage of those materials which constitute the foundation of world economy, and thereby leads to a new crisis, even more profound and painful. The ruling classes can no longer assess the situation clearly. The nearer the rearmament programme comes to completion, the less room there will be for illusions, and the greater will be the nervousness of those who control the fate of humanity.

But perhaps the rulers still have some reserves of power which will enable them to ward off the crisis, or—which is more important—to keep it within the limits of a social catastrophe. But for this it would be necessary, at the very least, that tariff barriers should be abolished, that the gold standard should be fully restored, that the problem of international debts should be settled, and that the purchasing power of the masses should be increased. All who are not blind will agree with us that there is not the slightest reason to hope for such miracles.

The commercial representatives of 40 nations met in Berlin at the end of June (1937) to hear Goering singing a hymn in honour of self-sufficiency. The pious discourses of certain delegates who extolled the advantages of economic liberalism sounded like a travesty of the truth. Would the countries that are rich in raw materials agree to supply the needs of their enemies in time of war? Will the colonial powers cede part of their possessions to the unprivileged countries? Will the countries that have concentrated the world's gold in their hands undertake the task of rehabilitating those monetary systems which their competition has reduced to rags? These simple questions answer themselves. It is just when national frontiers play a reactionary part in world economy (that is, when they hamper the free exchange of commodities.—*Ed.*) that they are most furiously defended. Not everyone sings openly the glories of self-sufficiency, but they all try to hide behind its illusory protection. However, "self-sufficiency" does not mean self satisfaction within the national frontiers: the policies of Germany and Italy show very clearly that self-sufficiency is inseparable from the need for colonial expansion. The doctrine of closed economy thus turns out to be nothing but a jumping-off ground for imperialist aggression.

The dangers of war arise out of economic difficulties, and in turn they serve to aggravate those difficulties. To-day every school-boy knows that the breaking off of diplomatic relations, and official declarations of war, or of neutrality, have become anachronisms, like the crinoline or the minuet. Every government is constantly on its guard. The tension that exists in times of peace, and which sometimes assumes forms that previously would have been impossible except at the moment when diplomatic relations were being severed, makes an economic revival practically impossible. Everything suggests that the coming crisis will be far more severe than that of 1929 and the following years. In these circumstances, the policy of "wait and see" becomes impossible. The new crisis will bring every problem to a head, and will force every government to take decisive measures which one will be unable to distinguish from measures of despair.

Thus the war might well break out towards the end of the next three or four years, that is, just at the time when the completion of the rearmament programme should be "guaranteeing peace". It must be understood that this estimate is based on the general situation as it is now. Political events can hasten or retard the explosion, but cannot prevent it. Economic forces, the forces engendered by social contradictions, and the impetus of armaments, all conspire to make war inevitable.

Before 1914, the doctrine of the swift and crushing blow reigned supreme. It was a costly doctrine, especially for France, for the "blow" lasted more than 52 months. Once the evil genius of humanity had invented incomparable instruments of murder, the armies that were equipped with them were forced to take to the earth like moles. But the fact that operations in time of war were strictly determined by the trenches has not prevented military thought from taking some daring flights since the peace of Versailles was signed. The humiliating defeat of strategy, and the astronomic expenses involved in the mutual exhaustion of the peoples, have compelled military imagination to look for more brilliant but less costly methods.

Various new schools of thought have therefore arisen. One of these considered it advisable to use a small army of specialists instead of arming the whole people; another devoted all its attention to the aerial forces; and a third pinned its faith to death rays. General I. E. Fuller quite seriously predicted than electrical energy could be utilised in war so as to "eliminate the vulnerable point in all past wars, that is, the "human factor". General von Seeckt has reached the conclusion that the side with the best technical equipment is bound to win, no matter what human masses the other side may have at its disposal. Hence the theory of the small highly qualified army that will penetrate an enemy country like a torrent of molten iron. As a matter of fact, the antithesis between "technique" and the "masses", or between "quality" and "quantity", as it is sometimes put, is a lifeless abstraction. If

Continued on page 10

Defend the Soviet Union

The future course of events in the unfolding of the Czechoslovakia crisis is still being decided behind the scenes. Chamberlain plans to make Czechoslovakia another Abyssinia, a sop to hungry German Imperialism; Mussolini hints that it may become another Spain, the scene of a "localised" war; "Labour" and "Communist" parties seek to make it another Serbia, the starting point of world war.

Chamberlain's solution was another Hoare-Laval plan, and when it was mooted in the *Times* of September 7th, it met with much the same reception as the original Hoare-Laval plan for Abyssinia. Determined that it should not meet the same fate as its predecessor, Chamberlain staged his spectacular flights to Germany, cynically permitted the convulsion of the entire British population in an unprecedented war-scare, poured out the public money and energy in torrents for "air raid precautions". Hitler for his part played up to the situation, and Chamberlain emerges with a victory for the Anglo-French Plan. This Plan marks a turning point in world history, imparting a new direction to world foreign policy. It leads to the torpedoing of the Franco-Soviet Pact, it initiates the Four Power Pact, it re-stabilises the tottering Hitler regime, it isolates Russia. For such a result British finance-capital would proceed to even greater lengths of callousness than it has done in the past weeks in deliberately deepening a war-scare to force its policy on the British people.

Behind the crisis over Czechoslovakia lies the steady extension and deepening of the world slump, to-day the mainspring actuating the swift political changes that are taking place all over the world. Starting in the United States, economic paralysis is steadily engulfing the whole world, and the struggle for markets and raw materials, savage in the "prosperity" period, sharpens daily.

The first brunt of the economic crisis falls upon the peasants, especially in colonial and semi-colonial countries. The revolt in Palestine and the West Indies, the developing peasant movement in India, the stirring of colonial peoples all over the world are the preliminary convulsions of the slump.

In Europe, the fascist countries, Germany and Italy, are the first to register acute distress. The German population, even before the outbreak of war, is enduring war conditions: shortage of eggs, meat and fat, shortage of raw materials for civil needs, shoddy substitutes for textiles. The seizure of Austria gave too small a measure of relief: the plundering of wealthy "traitors", the taking over of factories, foundries and engineering works, the depression of workers' conditions created hostility among Austrians that is a source of weakness within Greater Germany, for the Austrian workers went down fighting, and will fight again.

Besides this, rival imperialism swiftly retaliated by a series of staggering blows aimed at German trade in the Balkans and in South America. Dwindling German exports dwindled still further. And the already shaky structure of German finance was still further weakened when Britain compelled Germany to take over Austrian loan liabilities by threatening to seize foreign payments destined for Germany. Sharp slumps on the Berlin Bourse gave warning of approaching disaster.

The toiling masses of Germany were exploited to the limit of human endurance. After the conscription of labour which literally reduces the entire population to complete slavery, it is not possible to add a single straw to their burden. And the victories of Hitlerism in the Rhineland and in Austria fail to answer the fundamental questions which the German masses are asking: "When do we eat? When do we rest?"

When Hitler destroyed the Social Democracy he deprived the German workers of their instruments of struggle, their trade unions and their parties. But at the same time he deprived the German bourgeoisie of that treacherous bureaucracy which served them to sidetrack the workers' struggles. To-day the classes in Germany stand face to face, with nothing but the threat of Nazi violence between the workers and insurrection.

With workers' revolution treading on his heels, Hitler is forced to ever more desperate adventures. He planned the invasion of Czechoslovakia. He informed Neville Chamberlain that he was "ready to risk world war." Under present conditions, Hitlerism fears the denouement that the coming winter may well bring, and with the boldness of desperation, Hitler risks a world war which means inevitable defeat for Germany.

But Germany's defeat does not mean victory for Britain and France. It means the German workers' revolution, with its inevitable repercussions all over the world. Nazism, in its death agonies, threatens to drag down its rivals in common ruin.

Herein lies the dilemma of Britain, France and America. To share with Germany the dwindling markets, to grant colonies, to permit German expansion, all these are out of the question, because the developing slump has already shaken them to their economic foundations.

To ignore Germany is equally out of the question, since Hitler prefers suicide in a world war to destruction in revolution, and his suicide is also their finish.

To crush Germany in war is a solution they will accept only when it is forced on them, for such a war will certainly have, in Roosevelt's phrase, "incalculable consequences," and in particular, revolutionary consequences.

Unable to help or to destroy or to ignore Germany, the rival imperialist states are caught in the meshes of the insoluble contradictions of Capitalism. Roosevelt utters his pions peace messages while American imperialism tightens its stranglehold on German trade in South America. Chamberlain weeps his crocodile tears while British imperialism intensifies its drive to oust Germany from Balkan trade for its own benefit. Crying for peace, they speed the coming war. "With closed eyes, they toboggan to certain destruction."

With closed eyes, because whichever way they look, they see disaster for themselves. Desperate ills require desperate remedies, and Chamberlain still seeks the way out which has formed a guiding principle in British foreign policy since the Russian masses seized and held power in the Soviet Union. He seeks to prolong the life of capitalism by the reduction of Russia to a cluster of colonies of the imperialist powers.

The Four Power Pact, isolating Russia and making Germany the spearhead of capitalist attack, is his first objective. Hitler is to conduct the war, aided passively if not actively by the others. Hitler has repeated his willingness to take this role but Britain demands guarantees. Hitler, if he is allowed to invade Czechoslovakia will be in an admirable situation to bargain between Russia and the Western Powers. Britain does not dare to let him get into a position where he can choose his allies. And so there arises the crisis over the *method* by which Germany shall be allowed to gobble up Czechoslovakia and pass the first barrier to the East and the South-east.

The British bourgeoisie demands that the method shall be, not force, but "negotiation". In other words, Hitler must join in a Four-Power Pact, must give guarantees that his future attack shall be directed not against the Balkans but against the Soviet Union. If he invades Czechoslovakia, if he takes unconditionally what Britain and France are prepared to give him on conditions, the Western Powers are prepared to initiate the World War. Fleet movements and partial mobilisation, the genuine preparations for war, serve to drive home to German Imperialism the insistence of the British and French bourgeoisie that Germany's sole chance of saving itself is at the expense of the Soviet Union.

Under this pressure Hitler has no recourse but to abandon his plan of invading Czechoslovakia and of becoming the arbiter of the fate of Europe. He postpones the order for German mobilisation. He agrees to confer with France, Italy and Britain. The Soviet Union is excluded from the conference, diplomatically isolated. The Four Power Pact begins to take shape before our eyes, and the ring of aggressive capitalist powers closes in around the Soviet Union.

To-day as never before, the Soviet Union stands in danger of capitalist attack. Stalinism abandoned the world proletariat and the international struggle against capitalism as the price for pacts with the "peace-loving" bourgeoisie of the "democracies" which are now, in the name of the preservation of peace, preparing the downfall of the Soviet Union! The only real allies of the Soviet masses are the international proletariat, the only real safety of the Soviet Union lies in the overthrow of capitalism all over the world. And now, as never before, is needed the new, Fourth International, the instrument of class struggle for the liberation of the toiling masses throughout the world, the sole fortress against menacing imperialism which now prepares its onslaught on the Soviet Union.

The Social-Patriots face War

The drums and bugles, the banners and patriotic songs, the marching columns and cheering crowds of August 1914 gave a warm romantic glow to the war that was slowly extinguished in the blood and slime of the trenches, in the daily rain of tears when the casualty lists . . . dead . . . wounded . . . missing . . . were published. To-day the picture is different.

In the past days we have witnessed the elaborate war machines of the imperialist powers, prepared over a period of years, swinging relentlessly into action, thrusting with inexorable power the shuddering and reluctant European masses into the line-up for the world conflict. Blindfolded by secret diplomacy, deeply distrustful of the propaganda showered upon them, the peoples of Europe have shown no enthusiasm for this war, no sympathy with its declared aims.

The Paris correspondent reports in the *Times* of September 26th: "At the Gare de l'Est yesterday the station and approaches were packed with patient men, stolidly awaiting their turn to leave. Often their womenfolk were with them, some stony-faced with grief, others weeping quietly and apologetically, but nowhere was there any sign of flinching from an expected necessity. Once, it is true, there was a shout of *"A bas la guerre"* from a group driven under the strain to a natural reaction by the noisy cries of a few young Communists, who for their part shouted their readiness to meet Fascism in the supreme struggle."

From this passage, two points glaringly obtrude themselves. The bourgeoisis even finds it necessary to restrain the "Communists" in their enthusiasm for the imperialist war, to admonish them irritably for their too noisy patriotism. In the second place, the bourgeoisie finds itself able to pose sanctimoniously as the innocent victim of the warmaker, sympathising deeply with its fellow victims among the masses. Never before has the world seen so shameless a betrayal of socialist principles by a self-style "workers' party". Never before has the bourgeoise been in so powerful a position as to completely hide its rapacity behind the mask of "peace-lovers," and to reprove the "Communists" even while it made use of them.

In London too, the "Communists" out-yelled the yellow press in their enthusiasm for the imperialist war. For the first time in history the "Communists" were permitted to establish a platform in Whitehall itself, unmolested by the police. The War Propaganda Department in Whitehall becomes redundant when the Stalinists enter the administrative centre, symbolising their service to the British bourgeoisie. The *Daily Worker* impudently boasts of a gift of £10 from an army officer who recognised that its aims were his own.

In the years since the end of the Great War there have been many war-scares but none so far-reaching and so serious as that which convulsed Europe during the past weeks. The preparations that have been made serve the ruling class in the last resort to face up to a sudden war announced by enemy bombers over the great cities. And in the event of a compromise being reached, they serve the purpose of a full dress rehearsal for the outbreak of the war of to-morrow. An expensive rehearsal, yes, adding to the already staggering burden of taxes borne by the toilers, but a necessary one for the ruling class and one very gratifying to them in the political results achieved.

If agreement is achieved, Chamberlain emerges as the Angel of Peace, in a powerful position to contest a General Election, to impose with ease conscription measures upon Britain and to speed up war preparations.

While Chamberlain receives the Nobel Prize, the Labour Party receives the execrations of the masses just as soon as they have sorted things out and realised that the Labour Party yelled louder than anyone else for the imperialist slaughter, with the possible exception of the Communist Party.

War or "peace", the bourgeoisie stand to gain. They prefer, at this moment, the "peace", bringing with it a new lease of life for the Chamberlain Government and a more decisively anti-Soviet foreign policy. The "Labour" leaders, fearing to take office, are relieved of the necessity, and join in the bourgeois applause for Chamberlain's "peace" efforts. And the wretched Maxton, of the I.L.P. typifies the blindness, if not the downright treachery, of the I.L.P. parliamentarians when he fails to see, or refuses to see, the real meaning of Chamberlain's "peace" manoeuvres, and adds his congratulations to those of the "Labour" traitors.

For the bourgeoisie, peace is merely the continuation of war by other means, to pervert the famous dictum of Clausewitz. Beyond this present crisis, assuming that it will be solved by compromise, it is possible to see only successive crises, culminating sooner or later in the vast blood-letting.

The conditions that breed crisis will remain, even after Czechoslovakia, Schleswig, Alcase, the Polish corridor, have gone the way of Austria. Crises are the bursting ulcers on the skin, originating from the deepseated inner decay of capitalism, a disease which can be cured only by the surgery of civil war, class against class, for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of workers' power.

Profit and Loss

With Mussolini, plunderer of Abyssinia, as "mediator", the plundering of Czechoslovakia was arranged by the Four Powers at their Munich meeting. In four bites, German Imperialism swallows the German areas, and sweeps up the crumbs by October 10th. The question of frontier guarantees will be settled in the bargaining with Poland and Hungary, and it becomes possible to draw a trial balance sheet of the profits and losses of the Czechoslovakia crisis.

British Imperialism is one step closer to the Four Power Pact leading to the isolation of the Soviet Union, a distinct gain for British finance-capital in its foreign policy.

The British war machine has received a test, revealing any weaknesses that a declaration of war might bring out. The civilian "defence" machine is subjected to a similar rigorous test, and the population pushed through a dress rehearsal for war. And a multitude of volunteers has poured into the recruiting offices of the Regular Army, Territorials, A.R.P. and other war forces. British war preparations record a huge profit from the crisis.

Chamberlain has manoeuvred himself into a favourable position to contest a general election this autumn, as the "saviour of world-peace". Liberals and Labour Party find themselves not unjustifiably, in a position of unpopularity as warmongers. Politically the Tories are able to chalk up a win for themselves, and compel their opponents to manoeuvre desperately to avoid giving them a chance to go to the country. In this situation they are able even to put over conscription on Britain, forcing Liberals and Labour either to agree or go to an election defeat on the issue.

And finally, the Stock Exchange "jitters" and the subsequent recovery has brought in a golden harvest to those who knew that the war-scare would culminate in nothing more explosive than the Munich Agreement.

Against these gains of the bosses it is possible to set only the losses of the toiling masses, the increases in the burden of taxes that the expense of the rehearsal brings, the disruption of homes and routine, the days of anxiety and dread through which the masses passed.

French Imperialism too has gains to record. The grip of Stalinism has been weakened and Daladier has triumphed over the "Left". The war machine has been tested. And above all, the developing crisis over the 40-hour week has been for the time being overcome. In France as in Britain, the workers shoulder the losses.

Hitler also has scored a victory. He has kept his word and "invaded" Czechoslovakia in a police-conducted invasion. He gets another brief breathing space to work out his tactics for the next crisis. His power of bargaining between Russia and the Western Powers is now diminished, it is true, but the chains are rivetted afresh on the German workers for the coming months. Nazidom, living as it does from hand to mouth, must count any respite as a gain.

But where the capitalist powers may well smile with satisfaction, the Soviet Union emerges with serious losses. A smashing defeat has been inflicted on Stalin's foreign policy, and Litvinov may soon find himself "confessing" to Trotsky-Fascist-wrecking in the field of diplomacy. On September 3rd, *Pravda* announced the forthcoming trial of Rakovsky who was sentenced last March to 25 years in prison in the trial of the twenty-one. He is now to be tried on charges of espionage on behalf of Japan. The appearance of Litvinov, Maisky, Troyanovsky and the rest of the Ambassadors of Peace and Democracy as fellow-accused with Rakovsky in another frame-up trial is not too far-fetched for a Stalin to organise.

The cry of "peace and democracy", the social-patriotism diligently cultivated in the Communist Parties all over the world by Stalinism, these things become assets in the hands of the imperialists to be used against the Soviet Union once they have effected the isolation of Russia. By disorienting, confusing and scattering the socialist militants, by degrading the Comintern to a collection of hirelings and timeservers, by packing the Communists Parties with a rabble of middle-class liberals and patriots, the Stalinist bureaucracy has prepared its own doom. It has created a machine that the bourgeoisie will be able to use for its own ends, when those ends are directed towards securing the downfall of the Soviet Union as a workers' state.

The outcome of the crisis forces a new policy on the Stalinist bureaucracy. The Spanish Republican Government has already shown that it has no further need of the Stalinists' strike-breaking activities in Spain, by forbidding its army officers to associate with political organisations and by disbanding the International Brigade. Behind closed doors in Munich, the Spanish situation enters perforce into any arrangement for "general appeasement", and the Soviet Union was excluded from the conference chamber. For the Soviet Union, the outcome of the Czechoslovakia crisis must be written up as a disaster.

Hitler is one step closer to the Ukraine, with the consent of the "ally" of Russia, imperialist France. To defend the Soviet Union is the imperative task that confronts the world proletariat to-day, a task that places upon socialist militants the duty of building the Fourth International.

The Coming World War

Continued

a mechanised army of 200,000 men is capable of performing miracles, two such armies can perform not twice as many but four times as many miracles. The law of numbers holds good even on the basis of the most highly developed technique. In simpler language, a nation at war will be compelled not only to put the largest possible number of soldiers into the field, but also to equip them with the best possible weapons. But that is precisely what makes the "shattering blow" impossible.

Seeckt's theory of the small army arose not out of the actual demands of militarism, but out of the restrictive conditions laid down by the Treaty of Versailles. When those conditions were removed, Hitler restored compulsory military service. In England, where traditions and financial considerations are against conscription, there are still theoreticians who recommend the substitution of machines for men. But the first day of the war will be for England, no less than for other countries, the day of the call to arms.

The strategists of Rome and Berlin are playing with the idea of aerial attacks that will destroy the vital centres of the enemy at a single blow. The source of this idea is to be found in the fact that Berlin and Rome lack the petrol and the gold that are necessary for a long war. But while he boasts of the coming aerial attacks, Goering at the same time prides himself in his aerial defences, designed to make his enemies hesitate to attack him from the air. Unfortunately for him, the other countries are also developing simultaneously their offensive and defensive air forces. An aerial battle may result in a big tactical victory, but not in a strategic decision.

Nor is there any more foundation for the hope that some extraordinary "secret" weapon may make it possible to gain a sudden victory over an unprepared enemy. Every new discovery stimulates further research in every civilised country. The technique of war is more fully internationalised than any other technique. The trusts of the war industries, and espionage, take good care of that. The General Headquarters have secrets for their own people, but not for the General Headquarters of other countries.

No army on earth can keep in reserve ready-made chemical or electrical miracles as if they were reserves of rations. Every invention must be submitted to the test that only war can give it. It requires a year, or even two years, to prepare for the mass production of armaments. And that alone rules out the possibility of the use of any "decisive" technical device that has not already been tested in actual warfare. In war, eclecticism goes very much further than it does in economy. In general, each new war begins at the level where the last one ended. The new techniques will gradually be adapted to the old ones, thereby increasing the size and reducing the mobility of the army.

In the realm of capitalist economy, where the amount of production is limited by the purchasing power of the population, machines begin, at a certain level, to take the place of men. But in the military sphere these limitations do not exist: men are exterminated independently of their "purchasing power". In spite of motorised transport, the armies of to-day require, as in the time of Napoleon, one horse to three men. That means, in round numbers, an army of millions of horses. In exactly the same way, and in spite of all-round mechanisation, the number of men who serve the instruments of war will not diminish but increase.

Military operations in recent times (the Far East, Abyssinia, Spain) have, in spite of the fact that they have involved a number of relatively isolated actions instead of unified campaigns, been enough to bring the military theorists down from the clouds to solid earth. As the war danger increases, official strategy reverts more and more to proved methods. To-day all the naval powers are busy modernising their fleets or building enormous new battleships which, within a year or two after the war, will be regarded as obsolete. In the navy, where the machine exercises a despotic control over the men, strategy is particularly conservative and backward.

For all her dreadnoughts, England will once more be forced to defend herself on the continent of Europe. Men live neither in the water nor in the air but on the earth. Ships and aeroplanes are only auxiliary means of invading an enemy country or of defending one's own country. The outcome of the war is decided on land. The territorial army is still the main instrument both of attack and of defence. This is certainly true for Europe, if not for the world as a whole. Other things being equal, the chances of victory depend primarily on the size of the infantry forces.

The war will be totalitarian, which means not only that operations will take place simultaneously on land, under the earth, on the water, under the water and in the air, including the stratosphere, but also that the entire population, with all its material and mental resources, will be swept into the conflict. While one portion of humanity is fighting on a three-dimensional front, another portion will be manufacturing munitions, suffering from hunger, and dying "behind the lines". In spite of the conquest of the air, of the stratosphere and of the Pole, and in spite of death rays and other apocalyptic terrors, the army will be buried in mud as in the last war, and perhaps even deeper.

Lastly we have to consider the differences in economic and technical achievement between the several countries. The advantages of a superior culture will be particularly obvious during the war. Even if a "secret" is known to all the belligerents, there will

be inequality in the capacity to turn it out by mass production methods. However, these differences will be largely neutralised, as they were in the last war, by the way in which the various countries are grouped in the opposing camps. Thus if Germany began to get the upper hand of France, Great Britain would redouble her efforts; and Italy might be scared into a "wait and see" attitude, or even into an agreement with France. Or again, supposing that the technical superiority of the German army enabled it to score heavily against Great Britain—or *vice versa*—then the United States would have to abandon its policy of vigilant neutrality.

The mutual interdependence of the several parts of our planet is such that we cannot expect the military conflict to be restricted in place. Wherever the war may break out, and whatever its immediate cause may be, a big victory scored by one of the great powers will not bring it to an end but will widen its scope. Fear of the victor would add new recruits to the enemy coalition. Our entire planet will be irresistably drawn into the vortex of the war. Perhaps the only neutral spot will be the South Pole: the North Pole: the North Pole will certainly be used as a base for military aeroplanes. If the world war were allowed to run its logical course, it would be, under the present conditions of technique, a complicated and very costly method of exterminating the human species. A much simpler way of achieving the same result would be to put everybody into a cage measuring about one cubic mile and plunge it into one of the oceans. Modern technique would be quite equal to this "swift and decisive blow". And it would be much cheaper than the military programme of any of the great powers.

In war the small and weak powers succumb to the big and strong. Consequently we may expect the United States to emerge with a decided superiority over the other countries. This is assured by its military situation, the wide expanse of its territory, the size of its population, its supplies of raw materials, and its resources in gold and technique. Assuming that the war drags on to its natural end, that is, until the combatants are completely exhausted, the United States must become the overlord of the whole world. However, domination over destruction and ruin, over famine, epidemics and barbarism, would inevitably spell the downfall of American civilisation. How far is this outlook based on reality? The slow ruin of humanity after a new war is not out of the question. But fortunately that is not the only outlook. Long before the nations can complete their mutual destruction, the political and social structure of every country will be subjected to a severe test. Revolution can put an end to war.

We have indicated above why we are not inclined to nourish the hope that the proletariat will, at the right moment, be able to revolt openly against military operations. During the time when the danger of war is approaching, and also during the early stages of the war, the masses will in fact quite naturally be dominated by patriotic sentiment and by the demands made upon them by the state. This applies not only to the classes and groups within any one state, but also to the component parts of an organisation like the British Empire. However, the prolongation of the conflict, with its accompaniment of impoverishment, savagery and despair, will give rise to friction, antagonism and anti-patriotic sentiment which sooner or later will swell to a climax and give birth to insurrections and revolutions. But even so, it need hardly be said, war is the greatest disaster that can overtake humanity. And the sooner the masses put an end to it, the easier it will be for humanity to heal its self-inflicted wounds. But from this point of view what can one say about the duration of the coming war?

Since the new massacre will begin at the level reached at the end of the last one, the rate of the destruction of human life and of the expenditure of war material will be from the start very much greater than at the beginning of the last war, and moreover will tend to increase rapidly. The rhythms will be more feverish, the forces of destruction more overwhelming, the sufferings of the people more unbearable. Accordingly it is legitimate to expect that the revolt of the masses will take place not after two and a half years, as in Tsarist Russia, or after more than four years, as in Germany and Austria-Hungary, but very much sooner. However, only the events themselves can give a final answer to this question.

In all this turmoil what is going to be the fate of the U.S.S.R.? Public opinion in the West has gone through several phases in its evaluation of the Soviet regime and of the Red Army. The specific gravity of the Soviet Union fell to zero as a result of the chaos of the first five-year plan; but the subsequent growth of its war industry during the period of the world crisis greatly enhanced its prestige. Soviet diplomacy profited from Freach fears of the revengeful policy of Germany, to acquire considerable influence in European politics. *At the same time the fame of the Red Army grew not day by day but hour by hour.* But that did not last long. The murderous political purge dictated by the interests of the ruling caste, involving as it did the disappearance of the best generals, produced a universally unfavourable reaction. The deplorable capitulation of Soviet diplomacy in the affair of the islands in the Amur River encouraged Japan to launch another attack against China, and added weight to the advice which London gave to Paris—to put no faith in Moscow but to seek an understanding with Berlin.

However, the present poor reputation of the Red Army is just as one-sided as yesterday's belief in

the invulnerability of Stalin. The false indictment and execution of the heroes of former years naturally disturb and demoralise the ranks of the Red Army. But the reviews and manoeuvres that are staged for the benefit of foreign generals testify to the endurance, the mobility and the precision of the Soviet soldier and officer; and there is no denying the high quality of Soviet tanks and aeroplanes, or the daring and skill of Soviet aviators. The main significance of the murderous purges that constitute such a danger to the defence of the country is that there are now irreconcilable differences between the interests of the ruling oligarchy and those of the people and the Red Army. Besides, the very fact that those differences are so intense is a proof of the enormous strides that have been made in the economic and cultural development of the country, which is finding it more and more irksome to submit to the dictatorship of Stalin. It is certain that one of the first consequences of the war will be the political revolution of the U.S.S.R., that is, the overthrow of the bureaucratic caste that is now rotten to the core. On the other hand, there is every reason to believe that, if humanity as a whole is not thrown back to barbarism, the social foundations of the Soviet regime (the new forms of property and planned economy) will resist the test of war, and will even emerge from it with added strength.

As for the capitalist world, we can state in advance, as an immutable law, that the regimes that will be the first to fall on the field of battle will be those of the countries where a democratic solution of the agrarian question has been too long delayed, and where the evils of capitalism are brutally aggravated by the relics of serfdom. This time, the weakest link in the chain of great powers will be Japan. Its social order—a militarised capitalism resting on a foundation of semi-feudal barbarism—will, under the blows of the war, become the victim of a first-class catastrophe. Among the states of second and third magnitude, Poland, Rumania and Hungary are faced with the greatest dangers, for their peasant masses have not yet completely emerged from their ancient bondage.

Next in the list come the fascist countries. It was not by mere chance that fascism came into power first in those countries where the internal contradictions had become most acute. It is true that the totalitarian states enjoy distinct military and diplomatic advantages over those that still cling to the ponderous machinery of democracy, and in particular the advantage of greater freedom of movement, unhampered by internal contradictions. But that does not mean that there is no resistance. At present it is underground, but at the moment of the explosion it will come into the open. In Germany and Italy the shortage of food and of raw materials will condemn the masses to unbearable suffering; and even if their armies score notable victories during the early stages of the war—which they certainly will do—those countries will subsequently, and sooner than their enemies become the scenes of social convulsions.

Howvere, the difference will be only a temporary one. War equalises all regimes. In every country the state will assume control of economy. As always happens, military censorship will also be political censorship. All opposition to the state will be suppressed. Official falsehood will enjoy monopolistic rights. The frontier between the home country and the front will disappear. Martial law will be applied everywhere. Differences in regard to the availability of war supplies and raw materials will be much more real and important than differences in regard to political principles.

France's position in the world, as it was fixed by the Treat of Versailles, no longer bears any relation to the actual resources of the Republic. Her population is not increasing. Her economy is stagnating. She has no petrol of her own. Her supplies of coal are inadequate. Her finances are broken down. More than in any other country, national security in France depends on other countries—on Great Britain and the United States, if not on the U.S.S.R. The war will reduce France to the rank of a second-rate power. And when she loses her present position among the nations of the world, so also will her social order be shattered.

The separatist tendencies that are apparent in the British Empire result from a lack of correspondence between the actual power of the metropolis and its historical heritage. By means of its gigantic programme of rearmament London is trying to convince the colonies and dominions that Britain alone is able to protect them.

The cost of defending the Empire grows more rapidly than the profits derived from it. Such a manner of administration leads inevitably to bankruptcy. The new war will weaken and ruin Great Britain. And the collapse of this imperialist power will mark the beginning of a period of wholesale social convulsions.

Not a single country will escape the effects of the war. Its tortures and convlusions will change the face of the entire world.

Our forecast may appear to be very gloomy, but that is not our fault. The colours on the palette of our period include neither rose pink nor sky blue. We must perforce draw our conclusions from the facts and not from our own desires. The aged Spinoza was fully justified in teaching us neither to laugh nor to weep, but to understand.

Coyoacan, 9th August, 1937.

Printed and Published by J. R. Strachan, 14a, Chichester Road, London, W.2.
SET BY TRADE UNION LABOUR. PRINTED BY VOLUNTARY LABOUR.