

WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL NEWS

VOL.1 NO.12

DECEMBER 1938

TWOPENCE

“VOLUNTARY CONSCRIPTION”

The immediate “voluntary” Register of both sexes in preparation for war, announced in the House of Commons by the Lord Privy Seal, and glibly covered over with sugary phrases about the free dedication of national effort to the State, is the first feeler towards the imposition of totalitarianism on the British population.

It is voluntary only because the machinery for a compulsory Register is likely to prove more expensive than the added advantages would warrant. The bill to legalise compulsory service is therefore kept handy on the shelf, ready to rush through a National-Unity parliament on the outbreak of war. In the meantime, the “voluntary” character of the peacetime Register serves as a species of blackmail, offering the chance to avoid being sent to trenches when war breaks out by finding a safer place in the war machine to-day.

This first step in mustering the entire “man power and woman power” of the nation for military service gives a hint of the nature of the coming war—a totalitarian war in which the distinction between “democracy” and fascism will entirely disappear. “One land, one people, one Leader” will be the slogan on both sides in the mutual massacre of the peoples. The word “non-combatant” will cease to have meaning; civilian and soldier, woman and man, infant and adult will merge in one common Register of candidates for slaughter.

In the last world war, Germany hoped for a

swift victory won in dashing cavalry charges, in the swooping down of the German divisions on Paris. But this first lively phase of the war ended with the contending forces digging themselves in, and instead of a struggle between armies the war turned into a test of economic endurance. If Germany finally succumbed after years of blockade, it was due to the inner collapse when man-power was drained from the factories and the last desperate expedient to find raw materials had been exhausted. Germany was reduced to an economic skeleton, and famine won the war.

It is famine which will win the coming world war. There will no doubt be another attempt to catch the enemy unprepared, to present the declaration of war in the shape of a rain of bombs from the sky falling at midnight on the densely populated capitals. But after the lesson of the last world war there can be no illusion that surprise will gain any more than isolated victories, such as the German attack in the Second Battle of Ypres when they used poison gas for the first time, or the British successes with the novel tanks on the Somme and at Cambrai. As Clausewitz has pointed out: “We should consequently be arriving at erroneous conclusions if we were to believe that great results were to be obtained in war simply by means of surprise. We often think we are justified in expecting great results from its use, but the friction of the whole machine always militates against its entire success. In tactics, sur-

prise possesses much greater possibilities than in strategy, for the very natural reason that all calculations of time and space are on a smaller scale. A surprise in strategy will, therefore, be more feasible in proportion as the measures lie nearer to the province of tactics and more difficult the nearer they lie to the province of statecraft."

New inventions in the technique of war tend to cancel one another out, and in the last resort the strategy of war remains what it was when Clausewitz propounded its principles. Germany cannot expect to obtain more than episodic initial successes by the repetition of the strategy of 1914, and the war will inevitably dig itself into the ground again and resolve itself into a contest of economic endurance. The war in Spain and China has shown that the bombing of cities from the air cannot in itself subdue the enemy. Not attacks by planes, but the steady march of invading infantry determines the outcome of the war. And the frontier fortifications, the Maginot lines which crisscross Europe, serve to paralyse invasions and transform them into sieges.

These conditions determine the war of to-morrow, in which the final victory will be decided not so much in the trenches as in the factories, the workshops, the mines and the laboratories. The war will be ultimately a "workers' war, and the compulsory Register must inevitably follow the voluntary Register, even, if the Tories get their way, before war breaks out. Conscription is on its way in Britain.

In the meantime, voluntary service enables the ruling class not only to prepare for a surprise attack but also to plan surprise attacks upon the enemy and gain temporary advantages while the system swings over to conscription.

Thus before our eyes is being prepared the totalitarian war which is about to envelop and transform the personal lives of every man, woman and child. Straining all resources to the utmost, the imperialists will bring about the slow strangulation of entire populations in an artificial famine created by mutual blockade. The masses will be subjected to starvation and protracted misery—and to what end? For another Versailles Treaty? For another League of Nations? Will the crippled and the widows, the gassed and the shell-shocked victims once again witness a re-partition of imperialist plunder, a dividing up of territory and reparations, coal and ships among the victorious bosses in a post-war world of ruin and unemployment for the working masses?

Capitalism, with its sharpening trade war, its developing slump, its preparations for slaughter and famine, offers no way out for the tortured masses. It is necessary to struggle against capitalism, to organise its overthrow by the revolutionary workers, to resist its preparations for war. It is certain that the bourgeoisie will oppose the struggle against its war plans with the utmost brutality, will strike

savage retaliatory blows at those who stand in the path of its greed for profits. Many will fall in the struggle, no doubt. But what is the alternative which the bosses offer to those who bow to their desires? That we shall wade waist-deep in the slime and blood of their trenches, and fall defending their profits, so that they can add another million square miles of territory to their empire, bring another race of people to join the oppressed already under their rule, build another cenotaph to commemorate their victories and their gains?

No, we must wage a ruthless and implacable fight against their war preparations. We must refuse to volunteer for their Register or take part in their Air Raid Precautions. "To join the fire-brigade to put out fires caused by incendiary bombs in air raids—can this be described as aiding war preparations?" This is a question which some workers ask; they argue that such work is elementary defence of our own homes and lives and well-being. But we must answer, if we are to assist in air-raid precautions, would it not be logical and consistent to go a step further and man the anti-aircraft units to bring down the planes that drop the incendiary bombs? And to go yet a step further and man the battleships to prevent the bombers from ever reaching our city? Or still a step further and attack the enemy in his own headquarters and prevent his bombers from ever leaving his territory? It will be seen that to support capitalist war preparations even in its mildest "defence" measures must lead us, if we are to be logical and consistent, to support the entire monstrous equipment for the slaughter of fellow-workers, men, women and children, in other lands.

"Defence" cannot be separated from offence. The gas-mask is the counterpart of the poison gas bomb, air-raid shelters are the counterpart of the bombers. To tolerate the one is to tolerate the other, and the revolutionary must implacably reject both.

But again, some will argue: are we to stand and do nothing while the enemy sends workers from his country to attack us or bomb us? To this we must answer that if we are to aid the German workers to throw off the chains of Hitlerism, we can only do so by showing them that we oppose our "own" bourgeoisie. If on the other hand we rally behind the British bourgeoisie and show the German workers that we are ready to shoot them down at the request of our "own" bosses, then we force the German workers to rally behind Hitler in sheer self-defence.

The greatest treachery of the Stalinist and reformist leaders is precisely in this, that instead of asserting the socialist internationalism of the workers, they set one against the other by advocating the "defence" of our "own" country. In this they repeat the treachery of the leaders of the Second International in the last world war. The social-chauvinists, as Lenin called them, socialist in words and

chauvenist in deeds, acted as recruiting sergeants and led the socialist workers into the bloodiest slaughter in world history. To-day, the "Communist" and Labour leaders who emulate their treachery must be fought as ruthlessly as their masters are fought. No support for the National Register, no support for A.R.P., no support for capitalist "defence"—these must be our slogans. To the patriotic pleas of the workers' movement, we must oppose the socialist policy: to end war, end capitalism; the overthrow of world imperialism is the only defence of the people.

MARXISM AND PRESENT DAY POLITICS:

Lectures and Discussion Circles

at 21 Howard Road, Tottenham,
every Wednesday at 8 p.m.

at 14a Chichester Road, Paddington,
every Tuesday at 8 p.m.

Also in St. Pancras, Stoke Newington and the East End of London

Comrades wishing to attend should write to
J. R. Strachan, 14a, Chichester Road, W.2.

Strikebreakers in France

The general strike of French workers on November 30th failed in its objective. Less than half the organised workers obeyed the call to come out. Daladier, who capitulated so miserably before the Fascists in February 1934 and resigned the premiership, proved that he could be "the strong man" when it came to making a stand against the workers and utilising military conscription to break their strike. In 1936 he was one of the leaders of the Popular Front, to-day he opposes the Popular Front, but both in joining and in opposing he has consistently followed the best method of breaking the strikes of the French workers.

The 3-year plan for recovery put forward by Reynaud rests the greater part of the additional direct taxes on the shoulders of the workers, by increasing the price of sugar, coffee, wine, tobacco and transport as well as postage and taxes. These decrees coming on top of the inroads made on the working week and the moves towards granting belligerent rights to Franco produced an upsurge of resistance on the part of the workers.

The Communist and Socialist leaders put forward the slogan: "Daladier must go!" But to the Daladier government they opposed no positive alternative before the workers. Daladier conferred with the army chiefs and prepared to crush the strike by military measures, the mobilisation of the strikers and the use of troops.

Faced with the prospect of civil war, left unprepared by their leaders, with no revolutionary lead given, large sections of the workers failed to respond to the call for a general strike.

Thorez, leader of the Communist Party of France, declared blatantly that the workers were prepared to accept the economy decrees and the abolition of the 40-hour week provided that Daladier was removed. In other words, the "Communists" demanded that Daladier's foreign policy, seeking an understanding with Germany, be replaced with a

policy consistent with the needs of the Kremlin. To secure such a change in the French government's policy they were prepared to sacrifice the material interests of the workers, who were required to defy the military resources of Daladier to secure a return of the Popular Front government.

After two years of the Popular Front, during which the gains made in the battles of June 1936 have been gradually filched away by currency devaluation, by the increase in the cost of living, by the inroads on the 40-hour week, the prospect of facing the armed forces of Daladier in order to set up yet another Popular Front government was received by the workers without enthusiasm. Where a revolutionary leadership with a fighting policy, consistently set forth over the past period, would have succeeded in lining up the workers to make a reckoning once for all with the exploiters, the "Communist" policy of class conciliation and National Unity could serve only to disillusion and undermine the fighting spirit of the workers.

In June 1936, while the strikes were sweeping France, Leon Trotsky from his Norwegian asylum, warned of the treacherous role that the newly formed Popular Front of Thorez, Blum, Jouhaux and Daladier would seek to play. To-day his words turn out to be a prophecy: "The ruling class has a real staff." This staff is not at all identical with the Blum government, although it uses the latter very skilfully. Capitalist reaction is now playing a big and risky game, but playing ably. At the present moment it is playing the game of "losers win." "Let us to-day concede all the unpleasant demands which have met with unanimous approval of Blum, Jouhaux and Daladier. It is a far cry from recognition in principle to realisation in action. There is the parliament, there is the senate, there is the chancery—all these are instruments of obstruction. The masses will show impatience and will attempt to exert greater pressure. Daladier will

divorce Blum. Thorez will try to shy to the Left. Blum and Jouhaux will part company with the masses. "Then we shall make up for all the present concessions, and with interest." This is the reasoning of the real staff of the counter-revolution, the famous "200 families" and their hired strategists. They are acting in accordance with a plan. It would be light-minded to say that their plan is groundless. No, with the assistance of Blum, Jouhaux and Cochon, the counter-revolution *can* attain its goal."

Daladier did in due course divorce Blum, and the result of the November general strike shows that Blum and Jouhaux have parted company with the masses.

When, after the events at Clichy, the workers began forcibly to expel the fascists from the factories and workshops, Blum, as prime minister, came forward to protect them, to demand for them democratic rights as Frenchmen. And symbolically, in the strike last month it was these very same fascist protégés of Blum, these followers of De La Rocque and Doriot, who were the first to break ranks among the strikers and lead the way into the factories.

Both the Popular Front politicians and the fascists have served each in their own way as strike-breakers. And now the 200 families, having made use of both, is now for the time being independent of both. There can be no doubt that the bourgeoisie, for all

their fair words about conciliation, will exploit their advantage to the full and launch new attacks on the French workers.

The general strike was an adventure undertaken at Moscow's behest and with the typical light-mindedness of the Stalinist bureaucracy which imagines that it is possible to turn worker's militancy on and off like a tap, or to organise a struggle against a Daladier without pointing the real way out to the workers.

The Stalinists will pay the penalty for this frivolous playing at politics by a further weakening of their influence in France. But what is of real concern is that the workers will pay the penalty for the crimes of their leaders in further encroachments on their standards of life.

In Britain, now that British Imperialism has had time to lick its wounds and work out the new position arising as the aftermath of the Munich "settlement", the question of some sort of Popular Front as the alternative to the National Government has come up as a serious topic of political discussion. The British workers must learn from the experience of their fellow-workers in France that the Popular Front is a strike-breaking conspiracy; at the head of the gang initiating its activities stand the Thorez and the Harry Pollitts, blacklegs-in-chief to the bourgeoisie.

A British Popular Front?

In the last few weeks various moves have been made sounding out the possibilities of forming a Popular Front in Britain. Reports of secret conversations between the malcontent Conservatives, Opposition Liberals and members of the National Council of Labour have leaked into the press much to the discomfort of the Labour Party bureaucrats at Transport House who have hitherto posed as the inflexible and ardent proponents of "pure Socialism".

Despite the din raised by the Communist Party in the past, for the first time the Popular Front becomes if not a practical question of the moment at least a proposition to be discussed as a possible alternative to the National Government in the future. It is kept in the background by British capitalism, now faced with a trade war with Germany which will reach greater and greater intensity as the world slump develops, and which far from being alleviated has received a renewed impetus as the result of the Munich victory of German imperialism. The hopes of the Chamberlain section of the capitalist class in

the policy of appeasement and the Four Power Pact have not been realised owing to the sharpening of the antagonisms between Britain and Germany, France and Italy, due to the steady and inexorable drift of world economy towards the slump and economic catastrophe.

The same causes which have produced the sharpening of international tension, dwindling world markets and the inability of the home market to absorb the surplus goods produced at home, have operated internally to produce the serious talk of a Popular Front. If British capitalism is to survive the competition of German goods produced under totalitarian slave conditions, it is forced to launch an onslaught upon the standard of living of the British workers. Wages must be slashed, and already the railway companies have commenced a campaign for wage reductions heralding the coming offensive of British capital: hours lengthened, speed-up methods intensified to the limit of human endurance if British capitalism is even to hold a decreasing share in the

markets of the world. It is the inexorable and iron logic of capitalism. For capitalism there is no other way out of the crisis short of war. All the burdens of rearmament plus slump must be laid on the shoulders of the workers. But the workers inevitably will organise to resist. There lies the secret of the Popular Front.

In the past few years since the formation of the National Government there has been a period of industrial peace in Britain. This was due to the fact that British capitalism could still afford small concessions to the workers and so keep their discontent within bounds. Corresponding to this was the political line of the Labour leaders, faithful and obedient servants of the capitalist class. They managed to lull the rank and file of the trade unions and labour parties by an occasional platonic gesture about aid for Spain, support for the Abyssinians, aid for China, and demagogic speeches about the misdeeds of fascism in various countries of the world, which committed them to nothing and fitted in quite well with the needs of British foreign policy. At home, in answer to the Communist agitation for a Popular Front they replied pointing out the consequences of collaborating with capitalist parties and the need of the workers for Socialism which would be achieved through the election of a Labour Government.

In this way they could keep steady hold of the reins and maintain control of the masses. At the same time their inflexible attitude to the Popular Front did not stop the trade union leaders from discussions with Chamberlain in order to help in the rearmament programme in Britain, nor did it hinder Attlee and Co. from holding secret conversations with Chamberlain in the recent international crisis in order to collaborate in any measures taken by British imperialism against its rivals.

But the control of the masses by the Labour bureaucracy in the coming period is by no means secure. The membership of the trade unions is steadily rising; it has now passed the 6,000,000 mark and the mood of the masses is now changing; they are preparing instinctively for attacks on their living standards. In the recent strikes of the railwaymen, engineers and building workers the phenomenon was observed of the workers breaking the bounds set them by the bureaucracy, and carrying out the struggle in the teeth of the sabotage and opposition of their leaders, through the medium of their shop committees and under the leadership of the shop stewards, who had direct contact with the workers. Members of the Executive of the Railwaymen's

Union were howled down when they advised going back to work before the demands of the workers had been met. Going over the heads of their leaders in these strikes, they made direct contact with the workers in their own trades, in the factories in the same localities first, and then on a national scale, thus showing in what direction the coming struggles will move. These indications of what will happen evoked in the capitalist press a howl of fear and dismay. The capitalists were now seriously concerned how best to put a bridle upon the impulsive and stormy movement of the masses when it arises in answer to their attacks. That is the significance of the talks on the Popular Front. The Popular Front would serve the purpose if the masses get out of control of once again restoring the firm hand of capital at the helm, and help to put across the "sacrifices" on the altar of "national unity". The illusions and deceptions as to what a Popular Front could accomplish with, as Lenin called all forms of class collaboration, "grandiose schemes, marvellous plans, which remained nothing but plans and schemes on paper" but which could not be carried out under capitalism, would hold the masses in check. Under cover of the Popular Front and simultaneously the capitalism would prepare, train and arm some form of fascist bands.

If the masses could no longer be held in check by the Popular Front, unprepared for struggle, bewildered and dismayed by the difference between promise and reality, the gangs could then be set in motion to smash the organisations of the workers and hold them down by physical violence. That is the meaning of the "bridle" of the Popular Front.

We have observed in the past the utterances of the Liberals and the "new opposition" of the Conservatives. Lloyd George and Churchill, those candidates for democratic haloes, were responsible for the carrying out of the imperialist war; they led the intervention against the Soviet Union in 1917-1920; Lloyd George came out openly in 1933 in praise of Hitler "as a bulwark against Bolshevism"; Churchill helped break the general strike in 1926, opposed any concessions to India to the last ditch, and organised the diehards in the Conservative Party on this issue; he supported France in the early stages of the civil war; Eden supported Hoare in the attempt to put across a deal with Italy at the expense of Abyssinia; Duff Cooper, another of the heroes of the Popular Front, came out openly in favour of Italian fascism last month. All advocate the necessity of "national unity" and "sacrifices". Duff Cooper is advocating a "Committee of Public Safety", a disguised form of military and Bonapartist dictatorship, a bitter pill which is to be sugared over with phraseology borrowed from

the French revolution. He talks about the possible decay and dissolution of the "party" and "parliamentary system".

From out of the ranks of these gentlemen may possibly come the British fascist leader and the British form of fascism in the future. Their quarrel with Chamberlain and the National Government is how best to save British capitalism. It is with scoundrels such as these, stout defenders of capitalism that the Labour movement is to unite!

The Labour movement in this country has already had experience of collaboration with the Liberals. In the 1924 Labour government the Labour leaders justified their inadequacy and helplessness by pointing to the fact that they did not have a majority. Even the mildest of reforms could not be carried out for fear of being overthrown. Symbolically it was over the question of tampering with the armed forces, when J. R. Campbell (in those days still a revolutionary) was prosecuted for sedition, that the Labour Government received its quietus. Under the pressure of the rank and file in the trade unions and the Labour Party, the case was withdrawn. It was then that the Liberals used this issue in order to throw out the Labour Government by supporting a vote of no confidence proposed by the Tories.

Again in 1929 the complete impotence and paralysis of the Labour Government, the complete inability to carry through a single major measure against capitalism, a complete incapacity to get through even one major reform was demonstrated. They shielded themselves from the wrath of the masses by the plea that they were a minority government, relying for their existence upon the support of the Liberals who were not prepared to allow these measures to go through. The suppression of the colonial peoples, all the misdeeds and crimes of the Labour leaders were laid at the door of the Liberals.

Let us never forget that the defection of MacDonald, Snowden and Co. in the formation of the National Government was covered by the Liberals who played no small part in the deception of the people and who participated in the National Government as an integral part. It was they who rendered invaluable service to the capitalists in discrediting and securing the downfall of the second Labour Government. There is nothing to show that in any future government of the "Left", they will behave any differently, or will not use exactly the same means in combination with other capitalists to bring about a like result.

For years the Communist Party have been pump-

ing the poison of chauvinism and Popular Frontism into the ranks of the working class. They have demoralised and disorganised their own rank and file in the direction of betrayal with the hope that the capitalists would make an alliance with Russia. They have pursued a policy of conscious deception with the idea in the minds of their paymasters that this would help in the defence not of the Soviet Union but of the privileges of the Russian bureaucracy.

The masses, striving for a way out of the crisis, moving in the direction of independent action, are diverted by "communists", Liberals and Labour leaders into the cul-de-sac of Popular Frontism.

What then is the alternative? We know that only workers' revolution can solve the problems and contradictions of the present economic impasse.

But this is not enough. We must give the workers a fighting lead and a practical answer to the problems of to-day. The revolutionary socialists form only a tiny minority within the working class. Having rejected any form of collaboration with the capitalist parties as leading to inevitable disaster we must consistently develop and put forward the slogan of a Labour Government with a majority. The Communist Party have misused Lenin's "left-wing Communism" in order to justify the policy of the Popular Front. But this work provides the key for our agitation among the masses. The decrepit Liberal Party is falling to pieces; we must not allow it to be revived by the Popular Front. In left-wing Communism Lenin explains clearly why we should give "critical" support to a Labour Government—not because a Labour Government can accomplish anything when hamstrung by the bonds of private ownership of industry, not that a Labour Government would be able, especially in the coming period, to ameliorate the lot of the masses in essentials, but as a stage in the education of the masses.

In order to expose completely the Labour misleaders of the working class it is necessary to show in action their complete inability to alter in any way the fundamental position of capitalism. Side by side and together with the masses we will struggle and fight for a Labour majority. We demand that the Labour and Trade Union leaders break completely with collaboration of any sort with any of the capitalist parties. We demand that they wage a genuine struggle for power, that they organise a campaign up and down the country for a Labour Government. The Labour Government cannot be achieved if they sit on their behinds in Transport

riouse and wait for miracles. The T.U. and Labour Party bureaucracy do not want power and that is why they are stealthily flirting with the idea of a Popular Front in case the masses get on the move. Already there is a swing in the country in the direction of the Labour Party. This can only be further encouraged if Labour develops a bold campaign in the country by mobilising the masses round partial demands and organising a tremendous movement against the National Government on all fronts.

The Labour Government can only be achieved by the independent mass activity of the working class. It could be a stage on the road of the revolution only if a revolutionary party can be developed in the coming period. Inevitably the reformist and Stalinist leaders will lead the working class to defeat. Ours is an epoch of blood and iron, of wars and revolutions, in which a party and a leadership that is able to measure up to events is the crying need.

If the working class cannot create a leadership which will show them consistently the way out, they will be defeated. There is no easy road to salvation. Only through stern and relentless struggles, through tremendous sacrifice and effort will the masses achieve their emancipation. We must help them to realise this. Only by relying on their own independent strength can they achieve anything. One way of mobilising independently is round the slogan of a Labour Government. The day to day struggles of the workers must be generalised round this rallying point. At the same time the only possibility of the success of the masses is through a revolutionary party which alone can lead the masses out of the hunger, misery, degradation, unemployment and war which are inseparable from capitalism and open out a new road for all humanity.

Against the strike-breaking conspiracy of the Popular Front! For a Labour Government! For a revolutionary party!

Soviet-Polish Pact

The Franco-Soviet Pact received a deadly blow at Munich, and when Daladier successfully resisted the attempts of the Stalinists to bring about his fall by means of the November general strike, his policy of rapprochement with Germany was strengthened and the Franco-Soviet Pact correspondingly weakened.

Faced with the possible collapse of the entire diplomatic structure erected by Litvinov during the past four years, Stalinism has now begun to erase the distinction between "peace-loving democracy" and "war-loving fascism". The imperialist character of the coming world war has been rediscovered by Dimitrov, who in his article in *Pravda* of November 7th (reprinted in *World News & Views* of November 12th) wavers between the concepts of the democratic states and the so-called "democratic" states. Dimitrov's perplexity and contradictions symbolise the present foreign policy of Stalinism which flounders after a new orientation.

When triumphant German Imperialism carved itself chunks of Czechoslovakian territory, the Polish vulture descended on the corpse and secured its share—Teschen. The Stalinist government which had been the stout defender of "Czechoslovakian democracy" against the "German and Polish fascist bandits", the "wolves", the "ruling fascist clique of

Poland" has now concluded a pact with the Polish fascist bandit, the Polish wolf. It is impossible then that Stalinism will just as speedily forget its epithets of yesterday and conclude a pact with the other fascists bandits and wolves, Hitler Germany? With cynical contempt for world opinion, Stalinism changes its characterisation of neighbouring regimes as lighthearted as it changes its heads of state departments. Can we expect in the near future to hear the Third Reich described as a "peace-loving fascist regime" menaced by "war-loving democracy"?

The constant shuffling of phrases by Stalinism which now seeks to salvage the remains of its recent foreign policy and rebuild the fragments into some new structure can only disorient and confuse the world masses. Far from strengthening the defence of the Soviet Union each new contortion weakens those defences still further. Pacts with capitalist powers cannot replace the support of the world proletariat; they can at most supplement such support. If in the interests of fleeting diplomatic deals, a jumble of conflicting phrases and ideas are produced in world proletarian opinion, the substance is being thrown away for the shadow. The defence of the Soviet Union and the struggle for peace can only be carried out in implacable struggle against the Soviet bureaucracy and its hirelings in the national "Communist" parties.

The Bandits Quarrel

The unsettled nature of European relations since the Munich settlement gives rise daily to new kaleidoscopic arrangements, a bewildering series of moves and countermoves that are symptomatic of the instability of a changed Europe facing universal economic crisis and the swift approach of imperialist world war. While Britain and France consolidate their war-alliance with courtesy visits of royal and presidential dignitaries, while Germany and Italy reassert the stability of the Rome-Berlin axis, British diplomacy assiduously courts Italian friendship and German diplomacy that of France, and the two seniors in the diplomatic partnerships engage in mutual vituperation, a bandit's quarrel in which each speaks out aloud some ugly home-truths about the other.

Hitler's bloodless victory in the Sudetenland has solved none of the problems of the totalitarian regime in Germany, where the underfed and over-driven masses are goaded to desperation under the strain of a war-economy already imposed in "peace"-time. In place of the food and the elementary necessities of life urgently required by the German people, they are given plans, an 8-year plan to continue the previous 4-year plan, plans to establish a "grosswirtschaftsraum" in Central Europe. In place of an easing of the compulsory labour regulations, new categories of workers and even petty officials are conscripted for labour on the military roads and fortifications. Goebbels finds it necessary to attack the "degenerate intellectuals", the remnants of the middle classes whose crazed support carried the Nazis to power and who are now completely disillusioned. The underground opposition which already embraces the lower ranks of the Nazi party has increased since the invasions. The surest sign of the apprehension of Nazidom lies in the unprecedented savagery of the latest wave of pogroms which have shocked a world grown blasé in the face of universal barbarity. The pogroms have gone far beyond revenge for the assassination of a minor official, far beyond a panic-stricken attempt to discourage terrorist assaults, far beyond the need

to bolster up the tottering Reich finances by the wholesale plunder of the Jews. All these elements have their part in the Nazi outrages, but the main driving force is the same as that which has given rise to the plundering and persecution of minorities by every reactionary and oppressive regime—the need to provide an outlet for mass discontent nearing the point of explosion.

The British bourgeoisie has in press and public utterance condemned the anti-semitic barbarities of the Nazis in terms with which all civilised men and women must agree. But the sympathy for the persecuted and the virtuous indignation expressed by the British boss class does not go so far as the organisation of practical measures of relief for the victims. Just as the United States government, while barring its doors against the refugees, hopes to profit from their misery and helplessness by sending them to Alaska where they will serve as an outpost against Japanese imperialism, so also the British government discusses schemes for placing them as garrisons in former German colonies. The Australian government, which expressed through its delegate as Evian, its determination to exclude refugees from Australia, is now prepared generously to permit them to serve in the front line of imperial defence by placing them on Melville Island, strategic outpost against enemy attacks. In thus seeking to profit from the plight of the refugees to gain commercial or military advantages for themselves, these pious bourgeois hypocrites are no whit better than the Nazis themselves, who also plan to use them in a similar manner. The German government negotiates with certain Latin American countries, notably the Dominican Republic, to admit Jewish refugees who will serve as commercial representative to further German interests in the trade war now being waged in South America; no doubt a system of hostages will serve to keep them tied to their persecutors.

In face of the unwillingness of the British

bourgeoisie to take any step to aid the victims of Nazi brutality unless their own needs for profits and security are the main consideration in such aid, the protests of these hypocrites ring rather false, and the Nazis have underlined their hypocrisy by pointing to the deeds of blood and violence perpetrated by British Imperialism in the Empire. The entire Nazi press has come out in a chorus of protest against the shooting, the bombing, the terror and repression carried out in Palestine against the Arabs.

When the British boss class declares that the persecution of the Jews by Hitler's gangs is an outrage against elementary human decency, they speak no more than the truth. When the German boss class asserts that the bloody repression of the Arab people in Palestine must be condemned as a crime, they too speak no more than the truth. The fact is that the bandits are quarreling and exposing each other's brutalities for the benefit of the bystander, who observes that the fascist pot is no less black than the "democratic" kettle.

If the crimes that are so roundly denounced on both sides are to be ended, an end must be made of both criminals, and this is the task of their victims, the workers of Germany and Britain, the toiling masses of the whole world.

In this task the workers and peasants can no longer look for leadership to the Third International. Stalin's government has bolted the doors of the Soviet Union against the refugees; in offering them refuge in Biro-Bidjan where they will serve as a front line garrison against Japanese attack, Stalinism seeks to take advantage of their helplessness and despair in precisely the same manner as capitalist Britain, America and Germany. And in its policy towards Palestine, Stalinism is actuated by precisely the same motives as the Nazis, and seeks only to further the nationalist foreign policy of the Kremlin,

as the Nazis do that of the Reich. The protests of the Kremlin at the persecution of the Arabs has the same value as Hitler's protests, because it can never be forgotten that when the Arabs of Morocco, Algeria and Tunis revolted against the unhuman conditions imposed by French Imperialism, the Stalinist press condemned the uprisings as plots engineered by the fascists of Germany and Italy. The strikes of the Indo-Chinese workers against the brutal exploitation of French Imperialism were similarly condemned as due to the work of "Trotsky-fascists in the pay of Italy and Germany." In this way the crimes of the French Popular Front government which shot down the Arab and Indo-Chinese demonstrators were justified as "anti-fascists measures," because at that time Stalinism was in alliance with French Imperialism. But in spite of all its efforts, the Kremlin bureaucracy has no alliance with British Imperialism yet, and therefore not only mildly protests against the massacre of the Palestinian Arabs but disaffiliates the Palestine Communist Party which had protested against the naked opportunism which is a feature of its pro-Arab policy.

To this Comintern, which becomes the champion of oppressed nationalities in precisely the same sense and for precisely the same power-politics motives as the Nazis, the workers cannot look for leadership. From this Comintern which seeks to utilise the plight of the Jewish refugees in precisely the same way as the Nazis and the other capitalist powers, the workers cannot expect anything but further treachery. To end fascist jewbaiting, to end the slaughter of colonial slaves, it is necessary to end capitalist-imperialist world domination, a task which calls for the solidarity of the exploited of the world, the revolutionary workers, peasants and oppressed nationalities united under the banner of the Fourth International.

NOW READY

By LEON TROTSKY.

THE LESSON OF SPAIN

The Last Warning.

Order from:

WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL PRESS
14a Chichester Road, London, W.2.

“War to the Knife”

When British Tory ministers speak hopefully of a reversal of recent trends, a revival of world trade, a new turn to prosperity, they are consciously whistling to keep up their own spirits, because almost in the same breath they discuss new economy measures, savings in national and local government expenditure, measures which experience has taught them can only deepen the slump. And figures for world trade show a steady decline throughout the year. The foreign trade returns compiled from the records of 53 nations—practically the entire world—show that instead of the usual seasonal upward turn at the end of the summer due to the appearance of the European harvests on the market, there has actually been a further decline. Latest returns for British overseas trade shows that not only are both imports and exports dropping in comparison with last year's figures, but the drop grows more steep each month. United States figures show a decline even from last year in which the “recession” was already far advanced.

It is against this background of universal decline that the Anglo-American Trade Treaty must be viewed. The desperate thrusts made by Japan in China, by Germany in the Balkans and in South America, arise from the perilous position in which their national economy has been placed by the developing world slump; menaced in this way, Britain and America which are themselves now faced with crisis have been forced to smooth over outstanding differences to draw together in defence of their common trade interests in Latin America and China insofar as it is possible for bitter rivals to draw together.

The bold words and bolder deeds of Japan in China are out of all proportion to her capacity to back up her claims with military force. In the first place, the Japanese economic structure lacks a basis in heavy industry, and dependent as it is on textiles and secondary manufactures, it is the first to feel the effects of dwindling world markets. Japanese shipping predominates in the East, but the mercantile fleet is composed for the most part of second-hand ships purchased from her rivals, since she has no considerable shipbuilding industry, and with this antiquated equipment she survives only by the imposition of subhuman conditions on the workers. Japanese agriculture, carried out on the narrow strips of arable land in a mountainous country, has caused the exhaustion of the soil and necessitates the use of huge quantities of fertiliser, which as bye-products of iron-smelting and coal-distillation, cannot be produced in sufficient quantity in a Japan which lacks both iron industry and coal mines; again Japan is placed in dependence on imports from the United States if her teeming millions are to be fed on the traditional handful of rice. To pay for fertiliser, silk must find a market, and when American silk-purchasers declined in the present slump, fertiliser imports fell catastrophically, so that

the American recession imposed starvation on the Japanese as well as on the millions of unemployed American workers.

Corresponding to her top-heavy industrial structure, Japanese finance is notoriously unstable and has trembled on the verge of the abyss over a period of years. The need for a basis in heavy industry has forced Japan into a series of adventures on the mainland where she hopes to find the necessary raw materials as well as markets and populations to exploit. But the absence of heavy industry diminishes her chances of success, all the more so because she is compelled to hold her forces in reserve to face the coming world war and does not dare throw more than a fraction of her fighting forces into the Chinese adventure.

Chinese strategy is based on a slow exhaustion of Japan, systematically falling back before her troops and leaving her in possession of gutted towns and a devastated countryside. British, French and American imperialist interests are content to look on, to accept the bombing of their ships, the seizure of their property, the inroads upon their trade, the series of hectoring orders, because as the war drags on and Japan is increasingly exhausted, her chances of enjoying the fruits of victory grow correspondingly slender. The angry tone of the European imperialists of a few months back has been replaced with an unnatural tolerance. To-day they float silently over the Chinese battlefield like vultures waiting till the firing ceases before they settle to feast on the corpses. Their only fear is that Japan may reach breaking point before she has conquered China for them, and the inevitable and long delayed Japanese revolution, with its repercussions throughout the world, rob them of the anticipated plunder. With concurrent interests in the Far East, Britain and America draw together in a Trade Treaty of mutual concessions, and the White House is got ready for the Royal visit.

In unison, too, they chorus their condemnation of the pogroms in Germany, while the Nazis pointedly remind them of their treatment of the minorities under their own rule—the lynching of negroes in the United States, the barbarous repression of the natives in British Africa. It is, of course, no accident that the belated protests against Nazi anti-semitism, the trial of Nazi spies and the recall of the Berlin ambassador occur simultaneously with the announcement of the intensified American drive to capture the South American markets, the arrangements for United States credits in Latin America and the launching of Roosevelt's vast new arms programme to “defend from aggression” the South American Republics. The victories of the “democratic” elements over the Latin American fascists, the crushing of the fascists revolts, the expulsion of German and Italian settlers and commercial agents from South American republics, these

episodes mark the retreat, step by step, of German commercial influence before the determined drive of American Imperialism to assert to the full its economic hegemony in South America.

Simultaneously Britain has been busy conducting a like drive in South Eastern Europe. Ever since Hitler turned his eyes decisively towards Austria, early this year, British Imperialism has been busy building a Maginot Line of credits across the Balkans, reorganising their alliances, receiving their kingly loans, financing their loans, arranging their military defences and directing their politics. The vicissitudes of Balkan politics, like those of the South American republics, have always reflected the ambitions and intrigues of the great powers. With their predominantly peasant populations paralysed by centuries of rural inertia, the palace cliques have carried out the designs of their imperialist backers unhampered by the popular control. As the imperialist antagonisms have sharpened they have reflected themselves first of all in the puppet states in the making and unmaking of kings, in assassinations and terrorist plots. The corpse of Codreanu

is now added to the mound of dead Balkan politicians to commemorate a victory for British Imperialism, and the City of London may now invest its millions in Roumania in greater safety.

German imperialism stands desperately in need of the markets and the primary products which are now being wrested away by rivals. With cheaper and more productive labour at her disposal, with better transport facilities to the Balkans, Germany nevertheless lacks one asset which these rivals possess—an accumulation of fatty tissue in the shape of capital reserves, which enables them to face a famine. Reduced to a financial skeleton, confronted with the prospect of vanishing markets, she is, like Japan, forced into one desperate adventure after another.

The bourgeois politicians now speculate on the date of Germany's next move and its direction. They differ in the matter of months and miles, but that Germany will move and move soon is universally taken for granted. The conclusion of the Anglo-American trade pact has brought the "next crisis" perceptibly nearer.

South African Landscape

South African politics is a luxury enjoyed only by the two million whites, but though the struggles take place over the heads of the overwhelming majority of blacks, this does not divest them of an extreme bitterness which has in the past broken out into armed conflict—the Boer War, the 1915 rebellion, the Rand Revolt of 1922.

In this country, whose wealth depends entirely on the grinding exploitation of the backward natives, the fundamental conflict to decide is whether the big farmers or the mineowners shall have the greater share of the profits. In recent years the struggle has taken on a sharper character as the landowners have suffered from the world-wide crisis in agriculture.

The form of the struggle is determined by the fact that while the Chamber of Mines has the economic power, the landowners can muster the great majority of the electorate behind them. Almost the whole of this support comes from the rural Dutch, whose national antagonism to Great Britain and her South African lackeys serves as a cloak for the political struggle of the landowners. The half million landless whites—in their desperate attempts to preserve a standard of living higher than the starvation level of the natives give this nationalism an extremely militant character.

In 1932, the landowners, beaten to their knees by the crisis, were forced to make a compromise with Imperialism and a fusion government was formed. Amidst a deafening chorus about the new era of prosperity without racial strife the rural poor were

skillfully manoeuvred into voting solidly for the new Imperialist line-up. Only a small section of the old Nationalists under Dr. Malan refused to participate in the horse deal, and carried on a demagogic struggle against Imperialism.

During the recent years of relative prosperity they remained isolated, but with the approaching slump and the disillusionment of the rural Dutch they are staging what promises to be a victorious come-back.

During the past year they have been actively preparing to celebrate the centenary of the Great Trek, when the Dutch slaveowners, ruined by Britain's emancipation of the slaves, trekked north to found a new slaveowning Africa free from the interference of the Colonial Office. Thanks to the superiority of their muzzle loaders over Zulu assegais they finally defeated the blacks at the Battle of Blood River on December 16, 1838. The peak of the centenary celebrations will be reached when the foundation stone of a Trek memorial is laid on December 16. The Nationalists have planned to reproduce on that day the genuine atmosphere of the Trek complete with corduroy breeches, powder horns and beards. The result is that a large section of the white male population has grown beards, each one a symbol of the thoroughly reactionary content of Dutch Nationalism which expresses the desire of the rural poor to return to the good old days when they had no rivals in the exploitation of the conquered natives.

Realising the danger of the rising tide of nationalism the Imperialists plaintively ask that the celebrations be kept "free from politics." But against

the demagogy of the nationalists they can do nothing, not even make promises—the only positive line coming from the Jingoos, who polish their “Sons of England” Badges and shave themselves more scrupulously each day.

That the Nationalists are at present only a potential danger to Imperialism was revealed in a bye-election during the European crisis when they lost the seat in spite of neutrality slogans and the accusation that the Fusion Government was spending vast sums on improving the conditions of the native peasantry. This last, in spite of the fact that imperialist policy aims at keeping the native peasant so poor that he is forced to seek work on the mines for a meagre £3 a month.

This type of anti-Imperialist and anti-black demagogy has always found a ready response amongst the rural poor white whose appalling living conditions and chronic malnutrition impel them to seek some way out.

To this traditional brew the Nationalists have in recent years added the heady potion of anti-Semitism. At their conference held in November they fulminated against “Imperialism and International Jewry” in the best Nuremberg manner. Delegates called for legislation prohibiting Jewish immigration, the changing of names and discrimination against Jewish traders and professional men. In a country where almost the entire Jewish population is middle class and furthermore where many trade union leaders are Jews, anti-semitism is sweeping the country.

Denunciations of Liberalism and Communism as the two worst manifestations of the influence of the Jews have raised an outcry against fascism from the pious “friends of the native” and the Stalinists. Since it is possible that this cry may be taken up the Imperialist press Dutch nationalism merits an analysis.

Although it is the most reactionary trend in South African politics, nationalism is not fascism. The ruling classes do not need fascism since the natives, who are the bulk of the proletariat are not even organised in Trade Unions, while the craft unions of the white workers can be smashed without the aid of fascism. The clearest refutation of the charge that Dutch Nationalism is fascist lies in the fact that they make no attack whatsoever on bourgeois democracy in a country where this democracy, limited to the enfranchised whites, is a much greater mockery than in Europe. Furthermore, the natural allies of the landowners in their struggle against the Chamber of Mines are the skilled white workers. The landowners who employ only black labour can afford to support the demands of the white workers in the mines with impunity.

It is not unlikely that the Nationalists in order to

come to power will conclude a pact with the Labour leaders as they did before. To be sure, these “Labour” heroes of conciliation whose battle scars are hidden by the seats of their pants, are not one whit abashed by the thoroughly reactionary programme of the nationalist party. The Labour Party programme expresses the desire of the white skilled workers to prevent the natives from supplanting them in industry. Their cry for a white South Africa is louder, if anything, than that of the nationalists.

The organisation of the 300,000 native miners on the Witwatersrand and the inevitable unity of whites and blacks in trade unions will pose the question of fascism squarely before the ruling classes. Until then a regime based on “democracy” limited to the whites will serve its criminal purpose of trampling the native workers and peasants into the mire.

This fascist organisation will unquestionably arise out of the present nationalist party with its following of rural petty bourgeoisie, but it is altogether false to describe the present Dutch Nationalist Party as fascist in spite of the verbal broadsides against Communism and “International Jewry.”

As to its republican propaganda, the Nationalist leaders have again and again demonstrated their role of loyal opposition to British Imperialism. As in every backward country in the world the landowners have been sucked into the vortex of capitalism and are too intimately bound up with the financial structure of imperialism to touch a hair on its head.

It is most probable that when they do come to power they will attempt to hide their inability to alleviate the sufferings of the rural whites with a smoke-screen of anti-Semitic legislation. No serious change in the political structure of South Africa can take place while the eight million natives lie prostrate beneath the boots of the landowners and the Chamber of Mines. Until such time as the overwhelming majority of the workers and peasants are roused into storming the citadel of the possessing classes the political struggle here will remain a petty quarrel between the big farmers and the mineowners for the biggest share in the profits.

The native workers with their meagre wages and intolerable living conditions together with the land hungry native peasantry represent a quiescent volcano which will inevitably erupt, and with the help of the British proletariat inaugurate a socialist regime in this truly dark continent.

Comrade Trotsky has defined the historic task of the South African proletariat: “To help the negroes catch up with the white race in order to ascend hand in hand with them to new cultural heights, this will be one of the grand and noble tasks of a victorious Socialism.”

R.F.