

WHY WAR?

A Handbook for those who will take part
in the Second World War

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CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Foreword - - - - -	4
I Wars—Nationalist, Imperialist and Civil -	5
II The Causes of Imperialist Wars - -	15
III The Cost of the Last War—and the Next -	28
IV Forces Making for War - - - -	35
V Can War Be Prevented? - - - -	40

FOREWORD

WAR and Fascism are the two great dangers that confront the Working-Class Movement. The growth of armaments and the increasing tension amongst the great powers, as well as the spread of Fascism, have made the war danger a very immediate one.

The British Labour Movement is engaged in trying to formulate its policy in relation to war. Its position at the time of writing is by no means free from confusion. As one writer has said, "The Movement cannot conceivably continue to stand on three legs—the League of Nations, pure Pacifism and opposition to imperialist and capitalist war."

Before a satisfactory policy can be outlined the problem of war itself must be clearly understood. Much of the stuff that passes for Labour propaganda against war is merely Liberal pacifism. That sort of stuff is going to be of little service to the Working-Class Movement. One cannot cut steel with a rubber knife. Propaganda against increased armaments, excellent in its way, is useless unless it is based upon the realisation that armaments are merely a reflection of the needs of the economic system. We have yet to learn of a tiger that has neither teeth nor claws. The common policy of simply attacking armaments as such has resulted in quite a number of publications, both in book and pamphlet form, but there is very little in English giving us a clear explanation of how war arises in modern society. In other words, it is difficult to find a publication that explains simply the root causes of war, and the great difficulties in which war places the Socialist Movement.

This little book sets out to fill that gap. Few people will read it who will not feel that it has enriched their knowledge of the causes of war and the dangers to which war gives birth. It is one thing, however, to understand these causes and these dangers, and another thing to outline a policy that will please everyone. This book does not set out to lay down the law on such matters. Rather does it attempt to lay down a basis for discussion of one of the greatest issues facing the Labour Movement.

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WHY WAR?

CHAPTER I

WARS—NATIONALIST, IMPERIALIST AND CIVIL

A SHORT time ago it suddenly became the fashion for undergraduates to strike attitudes and declare that under no circumstances will they fight for their king and country. This, to most of the enthusiastic voters for the resolution, probably meant little more than the satisfaction of having shocked papa *en masse*. The communist and socialist students could make their mental reservations about a revolutionary war, and undoubtedly there would also be a small minority to whom war would mean prison—the out-and-out conscientious objectors of the 1915 model.

These divisions in the universities correspond to the feeling in the larger world. To-day, Britain is overwhelmingly opposed to another war. She is sated with colonies and disturbed at the effect the war has had on her highly artificial economic system. The whole mood of the people cries for peace, because that serves their deepest interests. But no hope of a permanent peace can be built upon a mood. Given a change of economic interest, a suitable propaganda, the right excuse at the psychological moment, and who can honestly doubt that the war fever would again sweep through the nation? And many undergraduates who had voted for the No More War resolutions would, with equal enthusiasm, be applying eagerly for commissions in the army. Only a widespread understanding of how wars are made can prevent a nation losing its head at such a moment.

Never more than to-day, the issue of peace or war lies in the hands of the ordinary citizen. And in dealing with people of ordinary commonsense, the pacifist-by-sentiment makes the mistake of assuming that all wars are alike, and always have been and must be evil. It is the intellectual domination over its membership of this type of unreasoning pacifism that, since the war, has continually placed the Labour Party, as a responsible political organisation, in embarrassing dilemmas.

Except as an "attitude," this pacifism is so easily punctured by the question, "What would you do if Hitler invaded Britain?" It may be objected that this is of the type of hypothetical poser put to conscientious objectors by the military tribunals during the Great War. Alternatively, it may be argued that the real answer is the one supplied by the Cockney son of an Irish Amazon when asked what he would do if a German attempted to hurt his mother, "I should be sorry for the German, sir." But evasions of the issue will not satisfy the plain citizen who ultimately has to fight and to pay for all wars.

It was, no doubt, a fine gesture on the part of Dr. Maude Royden to issue a call for companions to stand with her between the Japanese and Chinese armies at Chapei. If she had been allowed to carry out her purpose it might have caused a momentary embarrassment to the Japanese generals—they being polite men with an acute sense of what is due to daughters of rich shipowners—but does anyone, except Dr. Royden and her friends, imagine that such pacifism could have deflected by a hair's breadth the course of Japanese imperialism?

The Marxist attitude to war is one of stark realism. It insists on the differences between different types of wars. The Marxist is not concerned with war as such, nor does he condemn war and the use of force under all circumstances. The pacifist regards the essential feature of war as being the dreadful fact that one set of men kill another set of men. The Marxist investigates the economic and social conditions under which the killing takes place, and considers that sometimes it is justified and sometimes not.

War is justified if it furthers the interests of the working

masses. The interests of the workers, and not some vague moral claim of a limited humanitarianism, form the standard by which the socialist must judge any given situation.

In modern times we can distinguish between three main types of wars—national wars, imperialist wars and civil wars.

National Wars

National wars play a predominant part in the first phase of the development of the European bourgeoisie, until about 1870. The wars of the Dutch against the Spaniards; of the French against the feudal powers which, after 1789, tried to destroy the national economic unity of France achieved by the Revolution; the wars of Italy against Austria, of the Poles against Czarist Russia, of Germany in 1864, 1866 and 1870.

Of course, in order to say precisely what is a national war, we ought to know what is a nation. The dictionaries give definitions, every word of which is a challenge to an argument. But though no political scientist can tell us exactly what a nation is, the people concerned know—and that is enough.

What are the conditions under which national wars are possible and necessary?

National wars are always led by the bourgeoisie—the rising and developing merchant and industrial classes. They had to lead national wars against the feudal forces at a time when the rising capitalist system of production could no longer tolerate the dismemberment of Europe into small areas and provinces with rigid boundaries. Their trade and their machines needed larger areas than the feudal village, town or even ducal estate, in which to operate. For such a war to accomplish its task successfully, capitalist economy must have developed sufficiently to make victory probable, and yet must still be undeveloped enough for no real working-class movement of importance to have arisen. For, of course, a large class-conscious working class would tend to be international in outlook.

But given these conditions, the bourgeoisie in destroying feudalism and "creating" the nations can still be regarded as representing the interests of the workers, and can, to a large extent in these circumstances unite the whole of the population under its rule.

Marx and Engels always regarded these national wars as progressive wars, and supported them. They even approved of the first stage of Bismarck's war against France in 1870, so long as it was for the unification of Germany, but changed their attitude when, later on, it became a war for the dismemberment of parts of France.

What is the interest of the workers in national wars?

Apart from the fact (for what it is worth) that any nation has the right to its own language and traditions if it wants to keep them, the stark reality of such a situation is that no proletariat can become class-conscious if its nation is not politically "free," in the sense that it has not the right to retain and develop its own language, traditions and education. Nationalist propaganda and national questions will always occupy the attention of the workers until these questions are settled, as those who are trying to do socialist work in India or Ireland or Upper Silesia can testify.

Stimulated by the propaganda which preceded and the promises which followed the events of 1914-1918, strong nationalist movements have arisen in the non-European countries, which may yet lead to national wars, and prove disastrous to the imperialists who spoke so feelingly of the rights of small nations. As the world economic crisis increases in intensity, the necessities of the great imperialist powers in some cases tend—not necessarily successfully—still further to cripple the activities of the native bourgeoisie, which in such a struggle can only turn to its own proletariat for help. The most striking example of this at the moment is, of course, the alliance between Mahatma Gandhi, the great popular leader of the Indian masses, and the mill-owners of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Calcutta. In such a situation, the socialist, Jawaharlal Nehru, despite his immense personal and family prestige and his own clear-

sighted view of the economic situation, can make little headway against the strong current of nationalist propaganda, financed by big millowners.

Imperialist Wars

Imperialist wars, in the modern sense, dominate the second stage of the development of the European bourgeoisie. These imperialist wars are of two types. Those in the early stages were directed against technically backward countries. They followed the lines of least resistance, which promised easy victories in return for comparatively modest expenditure.

The British Empire increased its square mileage from 4,600,000 in 1862 to 10,800,000 in 1912; the French Empire from 400,000 square miles in 1862 to 4,800,000 in 1912; the German Empire from 240,000 in 1862 to 1,200,000 in 1912; the American Empire from 1,500,000 in 1862 to 3,700,000 in 1912.

This phase ended for all practical purposes with the division of the whole world between the chief capitalist powers, either by direct annexation or through "spheres of influence." Since these powers possessed the monopoly of technical equipment for war-industry, the "victories" seem hardly as glorious to an impartial observer as to the writers of the school-book histories.

Inevitably the conflict between these powers themselves intensified, as certain states, such as Germany, who had entered late into the race for colonies, wanted a greater share of the spoil. From about 1900 the tension heightened, and these conflicts found their first natural culmination point in the First World War, 1914-1918.

This war was chiefly an imperialist war. But it would simplify it too much and ignore certain important aspects of the situation to see it only as such. National aspirations did undoubtedly exist. It would not have been possible to invent the whole of the war propaganda, a fact that at this stage of disillusionment socialists tend to forget. For Czechs and Poles, for example, the war had hardly any other aspect than the satisfaction of their long-repressed national aspirations.

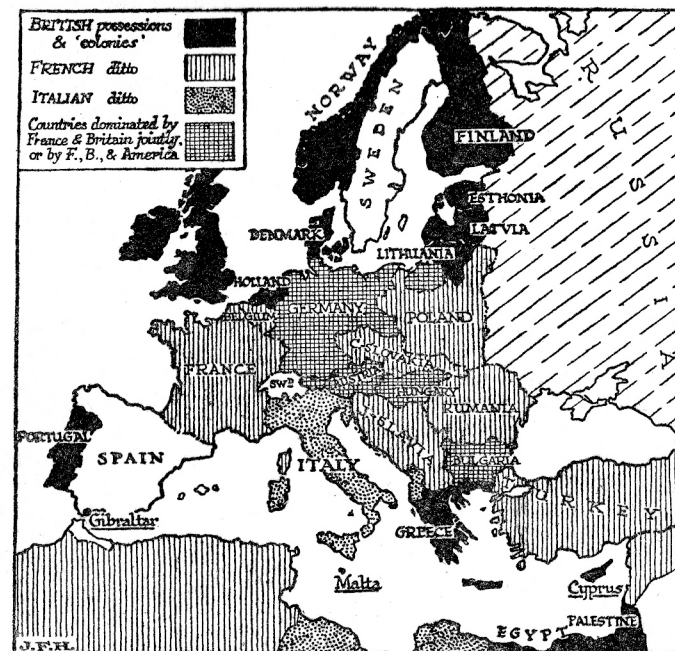
Undoubtedly, as a result of the last war, many formerly oppressed nations were liberated. The number of people belonging to oppressed minorities was considerably less in 1920 than in 1914. A comparison of Putzger's *Historischer Schul-Atlas* in a pre-war edition with an atlas giving the results of the war settlements shows that fairly clearly. Hungary, for example, despite the passionate protests of Awakened Hungarians, was on the whole justly treated by the transference of the Roumanians to the enlarged Roumanian state. Italians had a right to the Trentino, though not to South Tyrol. Putzger's *Population Map of Europe* (1909) shows clearly the existence of a large majority of Polish inhabitants in what is now the Polish corridor. Six million Czechs secured the autonomy they had agitated for, for years.

But however sonorous the speeches of the allied statesmen about the right of self-determination, these national aspirations could only be fulfilled at Versailles in so far as they did not interfere with the predominant imperialist tendencies.

Thus we see that the war which was alleged to be fought for the rights of small nations still leaves in Europe forty million people of fifty nations in twenty states nationally oppressed, especially in Poland—12 million Germans, Ukrainians, White Russians, Ruthenians, etc., out of 30 millions; Roumania—8 million Magyars, Germans, Bessarabians, etc., out of 70 millions; Yugo-Slavia—8.5 million Croats, Montenegrins out of 13 millions; and Czecho-Slovakia—8 million Slovaks, Germans, etc., out of 14 millions.

Of course the nations when "liberated" were at once subjected economically to the great imperialist powers, who had so kindly performed the operation of such liberation for them. Needless to say, France and Britain secured the greater share of this control. (See *Plebs Atlas* map).

In deciding whether a war is a national or an imperialist war, the important thing is to find out what the principal and decisive combatants are *really* fighting about, which is seldom the same thing as what they think is the cause of hostilities. Bolivia and Paraguay have each roused their



From the *Plebs Atlas*.

This Map shows how the Continent was dominated after the Great War by France and Britain, with some assistance from the U.S.A. More recent events, of course, brought about some changes.

citizens to war in defence of their respective fatherlands—a “just and righteous” national war. Actually they are fighting out the question whether the tin resources of the Chaco shall be exploited by U.S.A. or by English capitalists.

The attitude of the workers to the imperialist wars, so far, deserves careful study. For the wars against the technically backward countries the British workers were not specially enthusiastic, and were ready on occasion to join in movements of protest. But the Labour movement was not sufficiently organised politically to give a lead, and the workers were largely under the influence of liberal and religious leaders. The Churches, concerned in missionary efforts, joined in the propaganda of “The White Man’s Burden”—and at that time there were no cynical voices among the workers to add “which the Black Man bears.”

In so far as these “little wars” could be represented as “bringing the Bible and civilisation to the poor savages,” the workers’ attitude to them was pretty much the same as that of the Liberals. The Boer War and the coloured labour question in Africa (Chinese and black) brought in a new factor. There was a strong working-class feeling in the industrial areas which supported the “pro-Boer” agitation, but on the coloured (and therefore cheap) labour question the white workers reacted as a privileged class whose standards were being threatened. The deported white Trade Unionists from South Africa in 1914 received a warm welcome from English workers ready to support them in a fight which was essentially one to maintain the predominance of the white worker.

In the first Imperialist World War, the vast majority of the workers in 1914 were in favour of the war. Only the Russian Bolsheviks and some Mensheviks, some German left-wing people (like Liebknecht), the I.L.P. and one or two other small groups in Britain, and the Italian and Serbian social democrats, the left-wing Bulgarian social democrats and a section of the French socialist party were exceptions.

During the course of the war, the demands for an early peace were supported by large bodies of workers, but the Labour movements did and could do nothing effectively

to stop the war, or even to hinder its prosecution. They did not see—while they were in it did not want to see—the imperialist character of the war. They fought as Britons for democracy versus militarism, as Germans for the defence of their fatherland against invasion.

Civil Wars

Marx said that “revolutions are the locomotives of history.” It is undeniable that very important changes in modern history have been brought about by civil wars. Britain would be a very different kind of state to-day, but for the civil war of the seventeenth century. Through some civil wars social changes have been made by sudden leaps—progress has shown a speed unequalled in other times. The civil wars of the French Revolution—in Paris, in the Vendée and the south—ended the feudal system. The American civil war abolished slavery. Both produced the “free” labourers necessary for the use of the nascent capitalist industry.

The attitude towards civil war even of those who definitely call themselves Marxists, is not by any means a uniform one—especially to the civil wars that are still to come. They justify those who participated in the revolutionary side in the civil wars of the past—Cromwellian Revolution, the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution. Only one section, the Communists, is prepared to argue the case for establishing socialism in its own country by civil war, without regard to legality. The reformist movements prefer to stick by the constitution and claim that they can effect, by legal and parliamentary means, the changes they desire.

Whether in fact that can be done is the biggest problem facing the workers in our day. On July 20th, 1932, the German Social Democratic Minister of the Interior in Prussia, Dr. Karl Severing, handed over the control of the armed Prussian police to the emissaries sent by Chancellor von Papen, with the words, “I will not be responsible for a civil war.” But by that very action he became responsible for the forcible suppression of the workers’ organisa-

tions, by handing over all the chances of success to the Nazis.

On the other hand, communists tend to forget the three essential technical conditions which must exist before an aggressive civil war with the aim of obtaining full power for the workers can be successful—conditions that can be ascertained by a close study of the experiences of armed insurrections of the workers during the last 60 years. They are—one, the weapons must be in the hands of war-trained workers; two, the bourgeoisie must be demoralised (as in Russia in 1917); three, the troops must be unreliable so far as the government is concerned, and not offer any serious resistance to the workers. Without these conditions, which can be found only after a devastating war, there is no reasonable hope for the victory of a workers' revolution. Of course, as in Austria, it is better even where these conditions are not present for the workers to go down fighting in defence of their fundamental rights than tamely to accept tyranny.

CHAPTER II

THE CAUSES OF IMPERIALIST WARS

IMPERIALIST expansion becomes a necessity for capitalist countries at a certain stage of their development. This expansion need not necessarily take the form of the acquisition and annexation of foreign territory. The capitalists of the developing imperialist country want to find cheap sources of the raw material of their industries; they also want a market for their own products, preferably a regular one; then they want a market that can absorb their spare money and pay a high interest for it. British investments abroad have reached £4000 millions.

It is possible to derive all these benefits from (or, as the capitalist would put it, to bestow all these benefits upon) countries which are allowed to keep their formal independence. Naturally the "interested country" must see that "engagements are carried out, and the interest on debts duly paid" which involves a not inconsiderable interference with the economic and political affairs of such countries, which then become known—but not in diplomatic circles—as semi-colonial countries.

Often it is found cheaper to have a country governed by its own nationals apparently on a completely independent basis, and then see to it that it is to the interest of the various sections of the governing class to have the country exploited by the particular interested capitalist power. The U.S.A. has done this in Cuba and among the South American Republics, France with a rather less heavy hand in Yugo-Slavia and Roumania.

In other cases, of which China is the classic example, the imperialist powers cannot come to any agreement, and no one power is sufficiently strong to conquer the country for itself, thus allowing the country to be governed independent of any, but not all of them. In China by 1929 Great Britain had invested £250,000,000, Japan

£250,000,000, and U.S.A. £50,000,000, yet their respective shares in the available trade were £160,000,000, £500,000,000 and £340,000,000.

The Imperialist Period

The term "Imperialism" in its modern sense is generally given to that period of capitalism which began in the eighteen-nineties. Of course, imperialist expansion was no new thing. Since 1500, systematic pillage and robbery in America, Asia and Africa provided the basis and, so far as Britain was concerned, the very profitable basis for the developing capitalism of Europe. But despite the high profits, this expansion remained a by-product, in the sense that it was not indispensable to the very existence of capitalism as a system. This became the case only with the development of "monopoly capitalism" and finance capital.

In the conditions of capitalist competition, speaking generally, the bigger the unit of capital, the greater its advantage in the struggle. In the long run, Big Money wins. So handicraft industry was destroyed, and the tendency to concentrate capital in the hands of a few gained momentum. By the rapid development of technique it was also technically possible to expand enormously the output of products. The development of the credit system accumulated wealth and power in the hands of the bankers. The big bankers and big industrialists combined, and this combination of banking and industrial capital we call "finance-capital."

As experience shows, modern capitalism is constantly faced by the danger of "over-production," which does not mean that more goods are produced than are needed, but that more goods are produced than can be sold at a profit. There are two ways out of this difficulty—raise the purchasing power of the market inside the country, or find new markets outside.

Capitalists of the kind called "enlightened" have tried to find ways of increasing purchasing power within the country of production. America in the boom prosperity period

claimed to have solved the problem. Eminent European socialists returned from visits to America in 1927-28 to announce that High-Wage America had "ironed out the booms and slumps"—the "cyclical" crises of capitalism.

But, in fact, the profit system that the High-Wage Policy is designed to preserve, blocks the way to such a solution. Within that system wages cannot be increased in the same ratio as production is expanded. President Roosevelt is now trying to square the vicious circle. He declares that the High-Wage Policy of the pre-1929 period was chaotic, had too many exceptions. The idea was all right, but the carrying out of it was not properly organised. He has set to work, helped by Brain Trusts and enthusiastic young administrators, to organise higher purchasing power to absorb the surplus products of the Machine Age.

Immediately he is involved in the inevitable contradictions of private capitalism. Production expands more quickly than purchasing power can be distributed, and the surplus is there again. Inevitably this must be the case, for if the workers got sufficient wages to enable them to buy back all the goods they produced there would be no profit and therefore no capitalism. Socialism would have been peacefully attained.

Imperialism is the means by which capitalism tries, by finding markets outside the country of origin to which markets the goods can be sold at a profit, to diminish the danger that lies in the surplus goods. This danger of over-production is especially marked in periods of "crisis" or "depression." And, in fact, during its first phase imperialism did manage to diminish considerably the destructive effects of these "cyclical" crises.

At a certain stage in the development of the productive power of the machines, the capitalist countries have three possibilities from which to choose—to abolish capitalism, or to face a perpetual crisis, or to find an outlet for their surplus products in foreign markets.

Since a perpetual crisis would in time put an end to the class rule of the capitalists, imperialist expansion is simply a matter of life and death for the whole capitalist system.

But the finding of markets is not enough. These markets

have to be "made," "developed," coaxed or forced to take goods they do not know that they want. Demand must be created. Modern capitalism finds the colonial peoples living under feudal or tribal conditions. Their purchasing power is small. In 1929, after a hundred years of "development," China, which contains 25% of the world's population, bought only 2% of the outside world's goods.

In such countries ready money accumulates in the hands of tribal chiefs or feudal barons, who buy luxuries, jewels, etc., but are not regular consumers of industrial goods. Industrial production is mass production, the colonial masses must therefore be "enabled" to buy the goods. Unfortunately for the imperialists these peasants themselves grow or make the products they need. Therefore the problem is to make the natives want the goods and get ready money into their hands to pay for them. Christian missionaries make the wearing of clothes the badge of the convert. The hideous "Mother Hubbard," a shapeless garment of cotton which the native Christians wear, becomes compulsory for servants and those in contact with white people. To the visitor it is one of the jokes (or if he be aesthetically inclined, one of the tragedies) of Africa, but it has played a not unimportant part in Lancashire trade. Missionaries, hard pressed for money for their work, have on occasion pointed out the valuable, though of course indirect *quid pro quo*, which missions have to offer in return for generous support. There used to be (perhaps still is) a favourite hymn at missionary meetings:—

"Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee,
Repaid a thousandfold will be,
Then gladly will we lend to thee,
Who givest all."

Where "decency" in the form of wearing of clothes already exists, as in India, the native textile industries have been systematically discouraged, and efficiently destroyed. Even Vicereines, anxious to be gracious about "native culture," have had to be discreet concerning cotton textiles, though they could be as amiable as they liked about the native silks—the competitors of Lyons, not of Lancashire.

It is usual to say sympathetically that, of course, the hand-woven cottons could not possibly face the fierce competition of the mills, and that it is not at all wise or kind of Mahatma Gandhi to try now to revive the handloom industry. This is, of course, true of the towns, but in the countryside of India, where labour, if left in its own village costs practically nothing, the handloom can compete at least in cheapness with the machine product for local needs. So the law and the police are brought in to tip the scale. In the sacred name of "maintaining the king's sovereignty," handlooms are smashed, the training centres (ashrams) closed, the teachers scattered or imprisoned. One of the writers saw not a few instances of this when on a visit to India in 1932. In some areas the actual wearing of home-spun cotton rendered the wearer liable to imprisonment.

Of course this was not done directly to benefit the Lancashire cotton trade. The desire to wear cloth woven by your fellow-villager was merely the evidence of seditious thoughts—which is an example of the way in which imperialist "justice" works. The ruining of the village industry has been equally satisfactory to British and to Indian capital invested in cotton mills, hot as the fight has been between these rival interests on other grounds, and large as have been the donations given by Indian millowners to Mr. Gandhi's campaign—but that is another story.

In Africa, where in the early days the natives were just plundered by robber-traders, enlightened capitalists have taken a hand in the development of the native market. "Free" labourers, cheap enough for high profits, but with a little money to spend on mass-produced goods are needed by finance-capitalism—not the tortured wretches of the Congo shrinking into the jungle at the sight of a white face. Hence, to the indignation and bewilderment of the white settlers, the Duke of Devonshire in 1928, as representing the Mother Country, announced that in East Africa the interests of the natives were to be "paramount"—a declaration later repeated and emphasised by Lord Passfield.

Despite the wrath of Lord Delamere and other great landowners of Kenya, the Home Government has steadily

refused to hand over the natives entirely to the planters for exploitation as forced plantation labour only, as this would prevent the creation of a native consuming market.

How far the interests of the natives are actually paramount is seen in the way they are encouraged to become wage labourers. Gin and clothes are obtainable only for money. Money is given only to labourers. The native reserves grow smaller, especially when, as in the recent case of the gold discoveries in Kenya, the land becomes profitable to the white man. A poll tax is put on which must be paid in money, a system of veiled forced labour which, while it provides cheap labour for the white settlers, also makes the native earn the money to buy the mass-production goods they are encouraged to desire.

This whole process, which inevitably carries with it the destruction of whatever non-capitalist economic system existed previously, is only possible if the colonial country is sufficiently controlled by the capitalist country for the latter to safeguard the safety first of its traders and later of its loans. So long, for example, as the Chinese could kill the traders who displeased them, Western capitalism could not be introduced successfully—hence the wars for the concession ports.

Other causes tend in the same direction. The big trusts can keep their monopoly only if they have also the monopoly of the raw materials they need. Otherwise some other group which can get access to the raw materials will break their monopoly, as Unilever Ltd. have found to their cost. The enormous expansion of modern machine production demands an equally enormous expansion of the production of the raw materials used. If these are found in colonial countries, cheap native labour will be employed to produce them, and at the same time the process provides the free workers who are necessary as consumers.

Loans and Concessions

We said that finance-capital consists of a combination of industrial and banking capital—industrialists taking part in banking and bankers taking part in industry. The

banks, as organs of finance-capital, have a surplus of money which they lend to “backward” governments. They not only demand very high interest, but since they are combined with industrialists through interlocking directorates, they demand concessions as a condition of their loans. In other words, they stipulate the forms the loans will take—railways, harbours, etc. The Government, suitably bribed, allows its country to be “developed,” railways to be built, and for these loans the natural resources of the country stand pledged. Even where a country is already groaning under the burden of debt, if its natural resources (or geographical position) are valuable, corrupt politicians are sometimes induced to accept bigger loans, only a small part of which is really used for the ostensible purpose for which they were borrowed—especially when the capitalists are out for “control.”

The activities of the American tyre companies in the rubber areas of South America and Liberia are excellent examples of the loaning of money deliberately to be wasted—a quite worth-while transaction when the all-important aim is to obtain control.

The governments of the imperialist countries are expected and, of course, willing to enforce the payment of the exorbitant interest and the safety of their nationals engaged in the exploitation of native countries when these are not colonies. For, by the beginning of the 20th century, the concentration of capital had gone so far that the capital of the highly-developed industrial countries was developing towards monopoly and tending more and more to combine into a state-capitalist trust. This growing unity, of course, exists only as against similar capitalist trusts, and in no way prevents continual quarreling among the “national capitalists” themselves.

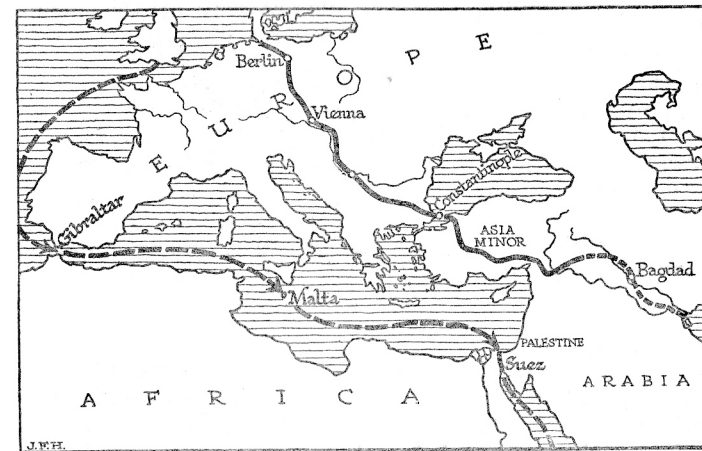
Each year since 1900, but especially since the war, has seen the national states striving to achieve greater self-sufficiency. A monopoly policy which began in single branches of production has extended to the whole national production. Tariffs are the most obvious method of effecting this monopoly. Since the war even “Free Trade” Britain has had to arm herself with this weapon to maintain

her position as an imperialist power. Inevitably the conflict sharpens between the capitalist states striving for economic self-sufficiency. Runciman, the life-long Free Trader, is driven by the monopolistic needs of British capitalism to lead a campaign of economic retaliation against France which the press of the two nations immediately write up in the technical terms of war.

German capitalism got only a small share in the colonial scramble. She came late into the game. From 1890 she started on a policy of imperialist expansion, backed by a formidable army and navy, into all parts of the world, and threatened the position of the other imperialist countries. German imperialism mainly operated through loans and dumping rather than the annexation of territory—and highly profitable her methods proved. Germany captured markets from her rivals, subjected the Balkans and Turkey to German finance capital, threatened England in India by the Bagdad railway and the whole British Empire by her rapidly-growing navy and trade. Scott Nearing, in his excellent book "War," quotes the *London Saturday Review* for September 11th, 1897, to show the state of feeling in certain sections of English society at this time. "A million petty disputes build up the greatest cause of war the world has ever seen. If Germany were extinguished to-morrow there is not an Englishman in the world who would not be the richer. Nations have fought for years over a city or a right of succession; must they not fight for two hundred and fifty million pounds of yearly commerce?"

In 1914 the inevitable happened. England and France won the war against Germany, but were defeated in their main purpose, which was to ruin an industrial rival, because Japan and the U.S.A. emerged from the conflict stronger imperialist powers and transferred the centre of operation to the Pacific—where the struggle had to begin all over again.

From the capitalist standpoint, the difficulty about an imperialist war is that the relief it brings is only temporary. In fact, that is true of all these successive stages we have outlined by which capitalism tries to avoid the inevitable results of its own contradictions. From the first "little



This Map, reproduced from J. F. Horrabin's "Plebs" *Outline of Economic Geography*, shows the British sea-way to India and the East, and the German Berlin—Bagdad overland scheme which in 1914 threatened its security.

war" to teach the natives "Who's Who," to the First World War, each new effort at relief brings fresh difficulties. The introduction of capitalism into the colonial and semi-colonial countries brings new customers, but very soon new competitors. The more competitors, the more bitter the struggle for markets and for raw materials, the nearer draws the possibility of a new imperialist war.

In this mad race, the undeveloped areas, to which the surplus products can be sold, become fewer, while the technical possibilities of production increase. At the height of the difficulties thus created the imperialists have to make a choice—a war to capture markets from their trade rivals (a course which has the incidental advantage of blowing up surplus goods and surplus workers, which is always one way of getting rid of them) or the possibility of the sweeping away of their power by the discontent at home. When Cecil Rhodes said that street riots in London were best prevented in Rhodesia he saw the inevitability of this choice—which is more than can be said of certain socialists and pacifists of our own day.

The Moments of Decision

During the period when these decisions are in the balance new factors enter into the situation which reinforce the tendencies that are driving the capitalist countries to war.

Commodities which it is technically easy to produce, but from the production of which there is no hope of profit, are not produced at all. The relative exhaustion of profitable markets, actual or potential, compels the capitalists not only to refrain from increasing production, but greatly to reduce production. In the present depression, the productive activities of the capitalist world have fallen very greatly. This is indicated by the fact that the volume of goods exchanged internationally in 1933 was 30% less than in 1929. This enforced reduction is driving the capitalist states to the desperate resort of even risking their whole capitalist civilisation in further wars. At the same time a great army of unemployed comes into being in such numbers as to constitute a new and dangerous problem.

Unemployment on the scale of the nineteen-thirties is a double nuisance to capitalism. The unemployed not only yield no profit, but they must be provided with some sort of subsistence out of the existing profits. They form in themselves a discontented mass. More serious from the capitalist point of view, they are a vivid object-lesson in the failure of capitalism as a system, and form the best argument for anti-capitalist propaganda.

All these threats to the stability of the system are temporarily abolished by war. At once a market is created for everything that can be produced. At once there is a job for every pair of hands. Purchasing power is created. Food, clothes and necessaries can be distributed to the workers without altering the existing system of social relationships, a most important consideration for capitalist power.

True, most of the goods produced in war time are for destructive rather than useful purposes, but capitalism as a system is concerned with the profit not the use, and nothing yields higher profits than the production of war material.

In modern citizen armies the men are well clothed and fed, and on the whole intelligently handled. They risk their lives, but the comradeship, and the sense of being worth something again, after the dreary uselessness of unemployment, is a powerful counter-attraction. In Germany this was a much more powerful appeal to the unemployed to join the Nazi Storm-troopers than any material benefit they could be offered in the earlier days.

Thus, both materially and psychologically, the chief difficulties of capitalism seem to be solved by war. Inevitably, therefore, an economic depression of the present-day intensity leads towards war.

Why then have the capitalists not begun a war, after four years of the most serious and widespread depression known in their history? Because, although war provides an immediate relief, the results of the last war have shown the serious danger of revolution, especially in those countries which lose. No one can say beforehand who will win a great war, but the consequences of the last war have been

sufficiently serious even in the victorious countries for a new one to be approached with caution. After the experiences of 1923-33, war has become the final remedy to be taken only if there is no other course open—no other way, that is, which will at the same time maintain the capitalist system.

But if there is no other way out? If the capitalists realise that the rising tide of discontent will overwhelm them anyway? Then war it will be. But war with safeguards.

What the capitalist has to safeguard above all is not only his immediate profits, but the system which will allow capitalists to go on making profits whatever the result of the war.

Therefore, before entering a new war on the modern scale, capitalism must first destroy all the forces in a country which oppose them, and oppose war. Hence they favour the introduction of Fascism, which, by smashing all opposition and all traditions of free speech and free right of meeting, diminishes the danger of opposition both during and after the war. It is not enough to say that the fascist countries are those which want war. Fascism is an indispensable condition of a new world war. When Dr. Goebbels said, "We will not leave our opponents in a position to make trouble for us," he described the rock on which fascism as a system is founded.

The connection between imperialism and war is very close. War is not merely a regrettable but accidental feature in imperialist politics. War is an inevitable product of imperialism. Obviously it follows that imperialist nations must prepare for the unescapable results of the policies they are pursuing. Britain therefore spends 12/8 out of every pound of state income for war purposes, past and present; U.S.A., in 1930, 72 cents out of each dollar raised by taxation. From 1901 to 1925, the average was 61 cents. Imperialist "peace" is in reality, a continuous chain of wars. We speak of "peace" in imperialism if the wars are far away; if they are localised; if the war is being waged against backward and uncivilised peoples.

After 1918 Great Britain had a war in Russia, India

(1919-21), Egypt (1919-21), the Black and Tan war in Ireland (1919-21), in the Iraq (1920-21), against Turkey in 1920-23 by means of the Greeks, in Arabia in 1924 between Ibn Saud and King Hussein, in China 1927, Palestine 1929, India 1930, Cyprus 1931, Burma 1931-32 and numerous smaller actions. France had a war in Morocco in 1925, in Syria 1920 and 1925, and in Indo-China in 1927; Italy destroyed the tribes of Tripoli during this time; U.S.A. invaded Nicaragua (1926-28), fostered the civil war in Mexico and numerous conflicts between South American countries. We must also not forget the imperialist campaigns in Russia (1917-20) and the war of Poland against Russia.

The best evidence of the preparation of new wars in the near future by the civilised nations is the heavy and increasing burden of armaments and the farcical failure of all attempts at disarmament.

The *Economist* gave in 1929 the total yearly expenditure of the world for war-preparation as £860 millions. The following list is very instructive; it shows the armament expenses of the chief countries in 1914 and in 1933, a year of deep trade depression:—

	1914	1933
Great Britain,	£77 millions.	£111 millions.
France,	56 "	95 "
Japan,	19 "	47 "
Italy,	26 "	49 "
U.S.A.,	58 "	133 "
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£236 "	£435 "
	<hr/>	<hr/>

In the period between 1905 and 1914 the big powers spent £1000 millions in naval armaments; between 1922 and 1932 £1845 millions. Even allowing for the difference in the purchasing power of money, this represents a considerable increase in the period which immediately followed the "war to end war." Moreover, as a result of great improvements in the death-dealing weapons, the killing capacity represented by each £1 of expenditure is very much larger than it was in 1914.

CHAPTER III

THE COST OF THE LAST WAR—
AND THE NEXT

CONSIDERING the cost of the last war, the bitterest sarcasm that can be offered as a reply to the workers' demands for improved conditions of life is to say that "there is no money," for there is always money for war. If more is wanted—then it is just "made," and the workers' needs are again set aside. Then the workers have to pay back as a debt the "money" that did not exist, plus heavy interest, to those who were so kind as to allow it to be "made" for their countries' needs.

The direct cost of the war is estimated to have been at least thirty-six thousand million pounds. A figure like that is something new in the history of the world. The period 1793 to 1850 witnessed many great conflicts. It included the revolutionary wars of France and the great Napoleonic conflicts. The bill for the 67 years was £1848 millions. The difference between that and the cost of the four years of the first World War is fantastic.

Note also the rate of increase in the years of the World War. In the first year the cost was £3760 millions. In the last year £18,000 millions. A staggering increase, even allowing for the increase caused by inflation. The cost of the first year of the Second World War will beggar an impoverished world.

Thirty-six thousand millions! Such a sum would have re-housed Europe in garden cities, would have paid for the electrification of the entire continent, abolished preventable disease, given a chance of health and straight limbs to a whole new generation of children. Thirty-six thousand millions intelligently spent could have re-equipped Europe to the standard worthy of a scientific century. It could have irrigated the Sahara and made the desert into a fertile

land. But a planned Europe would be a Socialist Europe. A capitalist Europe means a war-devastated Europe.

Nor can that devastation be measured in terms of money alone. Ten million men in the prime of life were killed, twenty millions wounded—six millions "seriously." Those who have had to deal with nerve-wrecked men of forty, ten years after the war, men who were not even classified as "casualties," smile bitterly at that official "seriously." The official twenty million wounded are only part of the actual casualties of the war. Not all the war tragedies are those of the women who wore mourning for loved ones lost. As deep is the tragedy of some whose men came back—men who could not leave behind them the effect of the hell they had been through.

The casualty lists do not exhaust the loss side of war's diabolical account. Add the 13 million civilian lives lost either in the war or because of it; the ten million refugees who had to leave their homes in the fighting areas; most shameful, of those young people in Germany and Austria who to-day are suffering from the effects of the blockade of Central Europe by the Allies during their babyhood.

The Doomed Generation

Only those who themselves belong to the doomed generation of the war can understand the psychic effects of those four years. How can the younger generation understand? Even the most horribly realistic of the war films and war stories presents the war to youth as something somehow heroic, compared to the drab and sordid reality that those who endured it knew.

But the younger generation have to meet the bill of the deferred costs of that war. The economic dislocation, the disorganisation of trade and of social life generally has ruined the lives and the hopes of a useful career of tens of thousands of young people who were adolescent when the war ended. To some of them it has offered a grim alternative.

Unctuous sermons were preached during the war of its stimulus to heroism, and all the finer moral qualities.

Soldiers, in the eyes of sentimental non-combatants, wore haloes. Of course, decent men did decent things, as they always will—anywhere. But the hidden horror of war is the direct stimulation of all the most brutal elements in human character. The few soldier-writers who have dared to tell the full truth about the war as they knew it have borne witness to its degenerative effects on the men around them. It is obvious that this must be so, but the passionate necessity to hide from itself the truth, to keep a world that human beings could bear to live in, faced each combatant country. All the cruelties of the war, the inevitable atrocities of which all sides were guilty, had to be attributed to the enemy alone. To each country its own soldiers were gentle knights, the enemy's—sadistic brutes.

From each country in turn a little of that comforting veiling has been torn. The Americans have seen a revival of the horrors of the Ku Klux Klan, and of the lynching of working-class fighters as well as of negroes. The racketeering which followed the war has been universally set down to the account of Prohibition. Quite a lot of propagandist money has been spent to achieve that useful belief. Undoubtedly the funds accumulated by bootlegging have played their part, but accumulated wealth was not wanting even in inexperienced hands previous to the war. How much of the contempt for law and human life of the America of 1919 to 1932 should be debited as one of the deferred costs of the war, can probably be decided only after a few years' experience of the results of Repeal.

What is Forgotten

The English have duly deplored the excesses of the Noske troops against rebelling workers in Germany, 15,000 of whom were killed by Noske's men. They have shuddered at the Hitlerite atrocities, but have found it convenient to forget Jim Connolly strapped with broken legs to a board when taken out to be shot; the tortured body of Kevin Barry, and similar pleantries of the Black-and-Tans in Ireland or the suppression of the Red Shirts on the North West border of India. The deferred costs of the war have been heavy already, but the total bill is not yet in our hands.

While the account of the last war is maturing, we can look ahead and imagine what the next one will be like. There can never be another war in which the civil population will be recognised as non-combatants. The difference between war-production and peace-production has also come to an end. The industrial areas of the hinterland, not the fortified places of the frontiers are already the avowed objects of war strategy. That has been decided by the wireless-controlled aeroplane, and the new far-shooting guns.

To smash the centres of industrial production is to paralyse the modern army in the field; although Sir Samuel Hoare, in a speech in Parliament, when Minister of Air, hoped that it might be possible to conclude a treaty beforehand by which the centres of cities would only be bombed when those who worked therein had gone home!

In the same optimistic spirit, thirty-one states signed the Geneva Protocol forbidding the use of poison-gas. But perhaps just to show the exact value of Geneva conventions, each one of these thirty-one countries is busy preparing new and deadlier gases. About 1000 different forms are known.

Conscious of the growing alarm of the people, governments have already found it useful to have scientists to explain that all this talk about the horrors of gas-warfare is very exaggerated. A chemist on the Imperial Chemical Industries Company's staff has recently told the world that all that is necessary in such an emergency is to get into a hot bath, smoke a pipe, and smile till the trouble is over. Presumably the people who have no hot baths to get into are not the sort whom scientists need worry about anyway. No doubt, as was arranged for people of birth and wealth in the last war, the Really Important Ones will be allowed through the cordon to the Alps or Islands where air may still be breathed.

For the rest, the defence problem of each country, as an enthusiastic air-expert has recently explained, is really one of tact. "People must get used to the idea that the next war cannot be fought in the trenches." The authorities are already preparing trained bodies like the fire

brigades, ambulance units, and voluntary aid detachments to deal with the effect of a gas bombardment. This is a useful way of getting the population accustomed to the idea of war.

But if, instead of being afraid to rouse the fears of the civil population, the powers-that-be did their duty in preparing for what is likely to happen, this is the sort of thing that would have to be done.

What a Gas Attack Means

All the cellars in every street would first be examined to see if they were air-tight (how many would be?) and whether the roofs would stand the strain of the other stories falling on top of them. Then a ventilation shaft would have to be planned of sufficient height to prevent the people crowded into the cellar during an attack from suffocating either through gas-leakage or lack of oxygen. The people living in the house would have to be told that once they and the children were inside that cellar it must not be opened for anyone until the "All gas cleared" signal was given, which at the best might be twenty-four hours, at the worst two or three days.

Suppose mustard gas bombs were being dropped by the attacking planes. This gas clings to the skin and clothes and vaporises in a warm room. If little ones were caught coming home from school, or the husband coming back from work, then, however piteously they knocked at the cellar door, those inside must be strong enough not to take them in. Nothing could save *their* lives once they had been exposed to the deadly gas, but if the door was opened not only would the gas come in, but the vapour from their clothing would contaminate the others and all would die together.

Mustard gas is a comparatively simple proposition. All you have to do is to avoid contact with it—if you can. Death-Dew and Phosgene are more complicated affairs needing special and expensive protection—not only masks, but protection for the whole body.

Tests of gas do not need the extensive, and therefore

semi-public, testing grounds that every other form of armament requires. What gases are being prepared in secret in the richly-endowed gas-research laboratories no one knows. But everyone fears. And it is this fear that is being skilfully played on to damp the rising tide of indignation against the terrific and growing cost of post-war armament.

Gas not only kills direct, it contaminates food and drink. A mother in the next war would have the problem of trying to keep a gas mask on a frightened baby while trying to prevent the other children, hungry perhaps, terribly thirsty certainly, from eating or drinking anything in the house. It will take some courage for such a mother to burn all the food her family is crying for, not knowing when, or if, it will be possible to buy non-contaminated food for miles around.

In the latest military handbook, the authors give directions for "three dimensional warfare aiming at the non-combatant." In plain English this means combining poison gas with high explosives and fire-raising bombs to get the maximum of terror in the quickest time. The new electric thermite bombs can eat through stone and steel, and develop a temperature of 3000 degrees centigrade in 30 seconds. These will eat through to the gas and water mains, and water intensifies the heat of termite. The ignited coal gas would add horror and fire to the cloud of poison gas and the falling masonry resulting from the high explosive bombs. In such a war Britain for the first time would really know what it feels like to be no longer an island country in war time.

If horror and fear could prevent wars, these facts and the pictures in such a book as *No More War**, should be sufficient to make the peoples of the world say, "Never again. Whatever the alternative, we will not fight." But fear of the personal consequences has never yet prevented men from waging a war they thought they could win. Nor has the fact of the wounds of war nerved men to the great resistance necessary to prevent war. Always there is the psychological reaction, "Perhaps it won't happen to me."

* Obtainable from the N.C.L.C. Publishing Society, 9d (10d post free).

Always the public mind is absorbed by the issues of the war propaganda of the moment.

With characteristic thoroughness the Nazis are already immunising their population against the debilitating effects of "horror propaganda," by giving it to them in homeopathic doses. Pictures of war casualties so horrible that they would not be allowed on sale in this country are already to be bought at Nazi bookshops.

Nor are workers who are enduring the horrors of peace the best subjects of propaganda about the horrors of war. To a shipbuilding town like Jarrow-on-Tyne, with its 80% unemployed, its shipyards sterilised for 40 years ahead, a declaration of war would mean food, clothes, wages. If you speak of the possible horrors of thermite bombs they will reply with the certain horrors of slow starvation, of phthisis, and what it means to go through a winter with thin clothes, insufficient food and debilitated body. Horror, alas, of itself will not stop war.

CHAPTER IV

FORCES MAKING FOR WAR

EVEN a superficial glance round the world shows two well-marked groups, the nations which do not particularly want a war and are prepared to give a good deal to avoid it, and the nations which see no other way out of what seems to them an impossible situation and which are definitely, though with varying degrees of caution, preparing for it.

U.S.A., France, Russia, and of course Britain, are the nations who are all for peace just now. Their statesmen express pacific sentiments and make the appropriate gesture of love to all mankind.

The Soviet statesmen had no reason to show much faith in the general benevolence of mankind to keep them out of war, but their actions, their studied moderation to Japan [until goaded beyond all endurance and encouraged by American recognition] speak even more eloquently of peace than the perorations of the more orthodox statesmen of the capitalist countries.

Germany, Italy and Japan are preparing for war, and everyone except the more determinedly blind type of pacifist knows it.

The explanation of this state of affairs, most soothing to Anglo-Saxon ears, is that Britain, France and America are the more civilised nations, their citizens more reasonable, intelligent and peace-loving. They have said, "Never again" to war, whereas Germany has slipped back to the barbarism of the Middle Ages and well — "one knows what Germans are!" Meanwhile the young men of the B.B.C., with more than a sneaking admiration for Herr Hitler, sustain the pose of tolerant sophistication by sympathetic talks about the strain on German pride caused by the Treaty of Versailles.

As has been pointed out in earlier pages, there is a lot of sentimental cant talked about the Treaty of Versailles. The root of the trouble lies deeper than any treaty. The fundamental fact of the situation is that the factors that caused the war of 1914 are still present. . . . and more so. As they drove the nations to war then, they will do so again. Versailles did not cause the trouble, but only aggravated it.

The difference between the "peace group" of nations and the "war group" is the difference between satisfied and unsatisfied countries. France and Britain are well provided with colonies and could not gain much by a war. Britain, in addition, has her own special problems. In comparison with certain other powers, she is in a state of economic decline. At the time of "prosperity" (1928) Great Britain had lost 10% of her industrial production of 1913, whereas France had gained 25% and U.S.A. 66%. Going off the gold standard and depreciating the currency altered the international purchasing power of sterling. This cheapened British goods in the export market—a temporary relief until other currencies were depreciated in like manner.

Britain's Difficulties

The defence of Britain's widely scattered colonies and dominions is already really beyond the present economic resources of the British Isles. It is, therefore, difficult for British capitalists to enter into competition with the armaments of the U.S.A.—and even of Japan, which is geographically well-placed for a conflict in the Pacific, the scene of its operations. So, naturally, therefore, Britain is more honestly in favour of disarmament than other countries, especially in those weapons of sea and air, submarines and aeroplanes, which threaten her for the first time as an island.

As her ruling classes do not want any more territory at present, the tendency of Britain is to take an increased interest in the land already annexed which is not yet developed. Elderly statesmen who tend to forget that thirty-four years ago they drunk a toast to usher in a new century may angrily dismiss Lord Beaverbrook's Empire Campaign

as "ill-bred colonial bunkum," but "a Marxist from Mars" being given the facts of the situation in Britain and in the world of to-day would deduce that some such movement as the Empire Free Trade Campaign must inevitably exist in such circumstances.

Because Russia is "all of a piece," it is forgotten that the Moscow Government is in fact the head of a huge colonial empire—a legacy from Czarism. Enormously rich in natural resources and largely undeveloped, the land could easily maintain double the present population and, at the present rate of increase, will soon have to do so. The Russian mind is naturally and rightly absorbed in its vast social experiment. As realists the Russians train their youth for war. No one knows, however, better than the present rulers of Russia how unprepared, technically, Russia still is for a large-scale war.

Great as are the strides that have been made, Russian industry is still inefficient relative to that of the West. In a brilliant bit of satire in his speech to the 17th Party Congress of the Communist Party of U.S.S.R., Stalin, with good-humoured malice, described as "a noble talker," an official who, when asked what was being done about production, announced proudly that "they had declared the party slogan, had sharply put the party question, had sent greetings to Comrade Stalin, elected the entire Central Committee to their presidium, and what else could be expected?" The "noble talker" was quite hurt when asked how much land had been sown.

The congress roared with laughter at the well-aimed thrusts, but the wastage in the machine shops remains sufficiently serious to make the Soviet chiefs anxious at all costs to avoid being involved in a large-scale war during the next few years.

The War-Like Countries

On the other hand, compared with the satisfied nations, the fascist and war-like countries, Germany, Italy and Japan are comparatively poor in natural resources. Moreover, their resources have been exploited to the full, and

they have a surplus population which *under capitalist conditions* they cannot feed or provide for without gaining new territories and spheres of influence.

Take Germany, for example. In 1870 it had 40 million inhabitants, 65 millions in 1914, and about the same in 1933. Between 1870 and 1914 the economic life of this growing population was based on a rapid imperialist expansion. By their defeat in the war they lost this foundation completely, and the basis of their economic life was further crippled by the Polish Corridor and by the loss of the Alsace Lorraine and Upper Silesian coal and iron fields on which so much of the 1870-1914 expansion had been based.

Effect of the War on the Middle Class

It is the smashing of this economic basis which has left a considerable part of the German population hanging in the air, as it were. The middle class which, of course, profited considerably from this expansion, was, after the losses of the war, ground between the upper and nether millstones of finance-capital and organised labour, the two strongest forces in Germany after the war. The answer of the ruined middle class when it awoke to the situation and was able to organise is Hitler, a name which to them means the uniting of all the forces in the national life to regain the old imperialist position on which, under capitalist conditions, their livelihood, and the whole future of their families depend.

Here Germany's geographical position provides the clue to her future and to her only possible policy, if expand she must. She is cut off from the seas of the world by the Channel, and its powerful watchers, Britain and France. Her natural line of expansion is therefore to the East—the Baltic States, Poland and the Balkans. Hence the importance of Austria, as providing the road to the Balkans. Nor is Rosenberg's policy, dangerous though it be, as mad from the Nazi standpoint as the English press makes out. To come to an arrangement with Poland, which would recognise, and in fact has recognised, Poland's right to her corridor to the sea, naturally leads to thought of a *qui pro*

quo—not to be proclaimed so openly to the world as the satisfactory Corridor settlement.

The Ukraine offers the best outlet for surplus Germans to settle when all other doors are closed to them. And the only Ukraine that could be secured with the consent of Poland and the Allies is assumed to be Russian Ukraine. The scheme has to be pigeon-holed for the moment, until Britain makes up her mind, but in the meantime Hitler is left free by the Polish pact to devote his energies to the cleverly prosecuted (though still undeclared) war on Austria.

From which general sketch of the situation it can be concluded that the fascist countries have an aggressive, and the democratic countries a defensive imperialism in the present situation. But making allowances for difference in national phraseology, the unanimity of the verbal worship of peace is most comforting to the people who in all countries like to look on the "bright side of things."

CHAPTER V

CAN WAR BE PREVENTED?

THAT the present world situation is leading rapidly to war is so obvious as to need only emphasis, not argument. The problem that needs discussion is—If economic forces are making for war, can war be prevented, and if so, how?

By Revolution?

The simple method, on paper, and the only effective method, in fact, would be to abolish imperialism itself, and with it the capitalist system which is the root of imperialism and hence of war.

The argument for revolution is clear and simple. The needs of the growing populations, which cannot be properly provided for under the conditions of chaotic and wasteful capitalism, can be met by a properly planned socialist economy. Therefore, introduce socialism and you tear out the root of war—the necessity of imperialist expansion.

Then why isn't that done? Rivers of ink have flowed to prove that the working class, especially in Britain, does not understand its own interests, that the type of propaganda hasn't been right, the leaflets not sufficiently well written, the leaders all wrong. But are we so sure that the reason that the workers do not as a class respond to anti-imperialist propaganda is simply that the idea itself, not the type of printing nor the leaflets, is not particularly attractive just now to the British worker?

Marx frequently complained in his letters that the English working class has a direct and material interest in imperialist exploitation. Why has the Labour Party consistently evaded the plain issue of whether or not the colonies should be given up? It really is no answer to this question to talk about "reactionary leadership."

The blunt fact is that except to the left socialist minority, ideals are not weighed against the solid advantages which the workers in Britain have undoubtedly derived from the colonial Empire. True, they do not receive all the plunder, but that they have some share in it cannot be denied.

But the orthodox communist says, "The worker ought not to feel like this. He ought to refuse any share in the profits of imperialist exploitation. If by a revolution the workers took power and gave the colonies* to the workers who live in them, the British workers would lose their share of colonial exploitation, but by the socialist reconstruction of industry, they would gain far more than they would lose." This reasoning, as reasoning, is indubitably correct. But in this pamphlet we are trying to look at facts as they are and not as we think they ought to be. The Promised Land looks all right from a distance—but there is the revolution between.

The blunt fact is that the communist parties have lost each one of their struggles with the new force—fascism.

The communist success was won against the corrupt and broken forces of Tsarism, which despite powerful outside backing, were already out of date. It is forgotten that the first defeat of communism by fascism happened while Lenin was still alive, and very actively interested in this struggle.

There is no disgrace in losing the first battle with a new enemy. Had Lenin remained alive he would have set himself to study this new phenomenon, and might have revised his strategy and his theory to meet it. But the communist thinkers, though they at least have measured the urgencies of the new menace, seem so far to have a psychological resistance to the idea that workers can go fascist and that fascism can be made attractive to them.

It is most interesting and hopeful that since their smashing defeat in Germany some responsible communists, men of the standing of Remmele and Neumann of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party, have begun to consider how and why the facts of the situation did not

*The self-governing Dominions are not colonies in this sense.

fit into the rubber-stamped paper-patterns which had been taken for granted.

Neumann has said as the result of his reflections that German communists were defeated because they isolated themselves from the rest of the population, and that the moral is that the communists in the future will have to prepare not a proletarian but a people's revolution—an interesting thesis which, if adopted, would end the theory of the hegemony of the proletariat.

Communist and Labour Policies

The smallness of the Communist Party of Great Britain cannot be explained away as a result of inferior leadership or lack of devotion of its members. No party leadership in recent British history has shown more courage in the face of the odds against them or such resources in ideas and organisation.

But in spite of these qualities their political attitude has not in fact attracted the confidence of the workers sufficiently to cause any appreciable number to join them.

On the other hand the Labour Party, the large and rapidly growing mass party of the workers, has in fact, when in office, followed a policy of continuity so far as imperialist exploitation is concerned. The colonial native can hardly notice the difference between a Labour or a Conservative government. Mr. William Leach, the Labour Under-Secretary for the Colonies in 1923-4, explained the essential humanity of the bombing of Irak villages in terms which were certainly not bettered by Sir John Simon's passionate plea for the continuance of this mercy on the North Western Frontier.

Yet it is doubtful whether this policy has directly lost more than a handful of votes to the Labour Party. The votes lost in 1931 were lost on far different issues.

Now suppose, for the sake of argument, that the working class did decide to fight against British imperialism, and decided further that the next Labour government must give up the non-self-governing colonies as an initial act of justice. What would be the result? The middle classes have no reason, not even an idealistic one, for giving

up the colonies. As in Germany, the livelihood of a considerable proportion of these classes is directly derived from imperialist domination. There would be a repetition of what happened in Germany, where the middle classes united, not only with the upper classes, but with certain elements, especially the younger ones, among the workers, and crushed the proletariat as an organised class.

That interpretation of Marxism which isolates in fact the working class, or, to be more exact, its class-conscious advanced guard from the rest of the population must lead inevitably to defeat, to the destruction of the advanced guard and of the working class as an organised force.

This mistake, though it is the most obvious feature of the stricken battleground of European Socialism in 1934, is still ignored by the ardent "lefts." Before we bring the workers into direct antagonism to the powerful middle classes,* we must be quite sure we have adequately prepared for the show-down.

By the League of Nations?

The opposite wing of socialists and liberals, those who certainly need no warning against antagonising prematurely the middle classes, are strong advocates of the League of Nations. They urge the idea of an International Police Force which is thought of (by English people) not in terms of nasty things like poison gas and tanks, but as an international counterpart of "the man in blue"—a simple case of wish phantasy.

The influence of the League of Nations has palpably diminished in direct ratio to the increase in the tension of imperialist conflict. A glance at the League States on the map shows that any pretence it may have had to world authority has become a farce. By June, 1934, the League had become reduced to England and France as the vital states. Even the entry of Russia and the U.S.A. on the basis contemplated at that time would not itself offer any *permanent* guarantee of world peace for reasons that are shown later.

*The technicians and higher grades of salaried workers, members of the professions, *e.g.*, doctors, lawyers, etc., and the shopkeepers.

The weakness of the earnest advocates of the League in its present form and of the International Police Force idea is that they seem to think that wars happen because of sheer naughtiness, or because a Sir Edward Grey says "Perhaps" instead of "Certainly," or because some telegram is held back at a critical moment.

Books are written to prove that "if only" something quite trivial had not just happened when it did, this or that war would not have occurred. The retrospective indignation of historians makes Marxists marvel.

Why Countries go to War

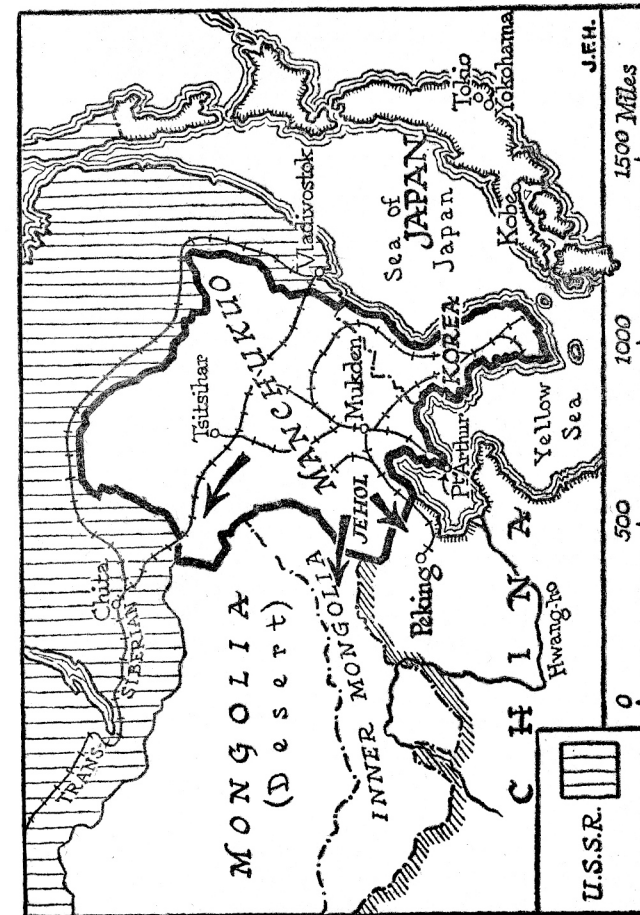
Countries go to war because of the deep underlying economic facts of the situation at the time, whatever the momentary excuse may be. In the present state of the world, all an International Police Force could do would be to defend the satisfied imperialist nations against the hungry ones—if it could—and so preserve the present state of division of the world.

But suppose it could not. Japan is better organised and much nearer to the scene of its imperialist operations than other countries with colonial empires to defend, and we have seen what happened to Manchukuo.

Actually it is idle to speak of a League Police Force when important countries like Germany, Russia, Japan, U.S.A. are not in the League. Again, as we pointed out in Chapter II. the League can have no authority in matters of first-class importance, and a new imperialist war will be a matter of supreme importance.

The most favourable reading of the history of the League shows that it has been of use only in comparatively small matters, where weak nations were involved, and even in such cases only when England and France had a common interest in peace. Among these successes can be reckoned the settlement of the Aaland Island question between Sweden and Finland in 1921, of Corfu between Italy and Greece in 1923 and various cases of keeping the peace in the Balkans.

Of course this work is useful. The League localised the



From An Atlas of Current Affairs

area of conflict and prevented a major war from developing. It is stupid to withhold appreciation of the work of the League within its limits. But whenever the issue involved serious imperialist interests the League not only broke down but was humiliated. In the Russian-Polish and Greco-Turkish wars it was not allowed to interfere. It had to receive the scarcely veiled insults of Pilsudski when the Poles walked in and took Vilna, and when Lithuania similarly appropriated Memel. It could do nothing to prevent the invasion either of the Ruhr or of Nicaragua. In the war between Bolivia and Paraguay its activity consisted in sending notes which were completely futile. Most serious of all, when one of its constituent states, China, was the victim of the most open and cynical imperialist aggression, by a member state, Japan, the League, as it exists to-day, finally forfeited any claim it had ever possessed to be regarded as a serious factor in the prevention of war.

In issues as great as these the League has done more harm than good for it has acted as a smoke screen behind which the imperialist groups could operate—while the statesmen of these groups deceive public opinion in their own countries by paying rhetorical compliments to the League idea at critical moments.

But in any case, how can the League act as any serious check to imperialist design, while its membership consists of imperialist statesmen? It is surely the quaintest of political delusions to imagine that a Simon or a Tardieu or a Grandi leave all their countries' interests in the left luggage office when they take train for Geneva, in order to look at the issues before them as disinterested statesmen.

Nazi Germany

Germany is again the obvious example. The imperialist powers France and Britain have each a different attitude to the growing imperialism of Hitler Germany. France considers that it is a matter of life and death to her people that the potentially strongest power on the continent shall not expand. On the other hand, England

may one day use the Nazis as mercenaries in a possible conflict with Russia, meanwhile they are useful in keeping France nervously afraid of offending England.

Similarly the position of the League with regard to the Sino-Japanese conflict has been up to recently one of stalemate because the imperialist powers could not make up their minds how to deal with the situation. But if Britain had agreed to share China with Japan and the U.S.A. to the exclusion of the other powers, what could the League do? Unite all the others in a war against U.S.A., Japan and Britain? As it is, Japan has most plainly intimated that she regards China as a Japanese protectorate and still the League does nothing.

The League is paralysed in face of the Far Eastern conflict, not because the majority are indifferent—they have been anxious from the first to check Japan—but because Britain and U.S.A. have quite different interests in the matter. England is friendly to Japan and continued to be so through the worst period of Japan's invasion of China, partly because it feels itself threatened in Singapore, India and Australia, but still more because Britain has so many points of conflict with the U.S.A. in South America.

Britain cannot break with Japan while these differences with America exist, however many resolutions are sent in from ardent pacifist bodies. (It is significant how hesitant was the Grand Council of the League of Nations Union in Britain to take any strong line in this matter).

We can see the root and the inevitability of these conflicts between the United Kingdom and the United States if we look at the increase of the exports of the U.S.A. since 1914 and the direction of this increase. In 1928 (the last year of "prosperity") American exports to Europe increased 72% but to Canada and Newfoundland 173% and to Australia 264%. The increase to Latin America was 175%, but to Africa 349% and to Asia 369%.

In face of facts like these and the sharpening of the imperialist conflict all round, the right-wing policy of "Trust the League of Nations to keep the Peace" is as Utopian as the left wing policy of "Let's have a revolution and remove the seeds of conflict."

By a General Strike?

A third policy, more attractive because more direct, is to urge a general strike of the workers to stop a war at its beginning. This was passionately advocated by many socialists before 1914. The people to whom this course seems so simple and efficient, forget that no imperialist power will begin a war without having prepared the minds of its population by a long and careful propaganda. Innocent Britain, caught so unawares in 1914, had had in fact both under a conservative and under a liberal pacifist government a steady soaking in anti-German propaganda since 1908. Hardly a fiction magazine appeared without a German spy story. People who speak so sentimentally about care-free British youth on the tennis lawns in 1914, ought to turn over the pages, not merely of the *Daily Mail* but of the *Times* and *Telegraph* between 1908 and 1913. Let us suppose, however, as may well be true, that 1914-1918 has immunised the workers against this propaganda. The effects of the injection certainly lasted for some years after the war. Suppose, further, that the strikers have the sympathy and support of at least the lower strata of the middle class, without which it would be difficult to make a general strike effective, the country, say Britain or France, is paralysed. Its workers will not move a gun or a soldier.

But suppose the enemy among its preparations for war has taken the precaution of turning fascist. At the outbreak of war it will have no general strike, and while the British and French strikers are arguing the matter out with their governments the fascist aeroplanes will bomb the big towns.

The immediate reaction will be "The Trade Unions have left us defenceless." They would be swept away under the wave of fear and fury which would follow such an attack.

No answer to this certain psychological reaction has been found by the idealists who make passionate speeches at the T.U.C. or the Labour Party Conferences advocating a general strike against war. They first create a dream world where all the workers are in the same stage of political development, equally immunised against government and

imperialist propaganda, and then say "A general strike against war will render capitalism helpless" and denounce as right wing and reactionary all who do not follow this will-o'-the-wisp. There might be at least some justification for this attitude if the organisations of the workers had conducted for years previous to the outbreak of war a steady and consistent policy against war; but in fact they are not doing so on any really serious scale.

Consider the attitude of the social democrats and of the Second International leaders to this question—not in their goodwill talks at congresses, but where, as responsible men, they would have to stand the test of action. What is the attitude of the social democrats in Japan, for example? They have defended the war against China and helped it. Their attitude is expressed by their General Secretary: "The intervention in Manchuria is not of an imperialist nature because even Socialist Japan will have to fight for the necessary raw materials for its industry."

The New Battle Cry

All the Labour Party and Trade Union leaders in Britain, all the chief figures of the Labour and Socialist International abroad, have been making passionate speeches in defence of democracy as against fascism. But if democracy is the ideal, must it not be defended against Hitler by force of arms if necessary? Could any democrat logically refuse to bear arms against the Nazis, if the imperialists were clever enough (and they have always risen to such occasions hitherto) to make democracy the issue? In Germany the social democratic deputies voted in the Reichstag for Hitler's foreign policy. It is hardly complimentary to them to explain this away as fear of threats.

In France, after Hitler came to power, 124 out of 129 deputies of the socialist party voted for the war credits. The originator of the law which mobilises and militarises the entire French nation in case of war was Paul Boncour and this was not the reason for his being excluded from the socialist party.

Compared with the social democrats, the communists can claim a consistent campaign against imperialist war. In

Japan they have opposed the war and suffered the frightful consequences. But would they oppose with equal heroism a war whose aims were favourable to the aims of Russian foreign policy?

In Germany, the only country outside Russia where the Communist Party was strong enough for their policy to have some decisive influence on events, they pursued a consistent anti-Versailles policy. They eclipsed the Nazis at times by their denunciations of the "shameful treaty," of the "tributary system" of the Young Plan. They issued a famous manifesto, "For the national and social liberation of the German people" ("national" mentioned first!). They prepared the workers to fight with the imperialists against the Treaty of Versailles. This was not a momentary confusion caused by the Nazi wave. As far back as June, 1923, the *Rote Fahne*, the central organ of the Communist Party, wrote: "The German Empire, the German cultural unity can only be saved if you, the adherents of the Deutschvoelkische Party (a Nazi group) see that you must fight together with the masses who are organised in the German Communist Party."

This policy was defended on Leninist principles. We are not concerned to apportion blame as between the social democratic and the communist parties in their different relationships to the Treaty of Versailles. The motives of both were no doubt of the best. The point is that none of the radical phrases which were used by the communists in their printed and spoken propaganda against the Treaty could prevent the inevitable psychological reaction of the workers that the communist leaders thought it was just and right to fight by a war against the oppression of Germany by the victors of the last war. Obviously, after such propaganda, it would not be possible for the Communist Party of Germany at the *outbreak* of such a war to prevent it by any action it might take at that time. Nor can it be denied that the fact that a number of communist officials in the big towns have gone over to the Nazis is largely due to propaganda of this kind.

But all we are concerned to point out here to those who advocate a general strike at the outbreak of the next World

War is, that neither the socialist nor the communist parties of Europe by their actions since the last war *have prepared the moral basis which alone could make such a strike successful*. However good the reasons for what they have done may be, we are only concerned here with the effect of those policies.

In one way or another, none of the socialist or communist parties of Europe can escape the charge that they have all taken a hand in the moral preparation for the Next World War, and that at the outbreak of such a war, their alignment would correspond fairly closely with that of 1914.

But although the general strike cannot be relied upon as a sure preventive of war, it may have definite uses in certain situations. The serious threat of a General Strike would cause a capitalist government to exhaust all other possible means before embarking on a war. If the capitalist class is already divided as to the wisdom of war, the possibility of a general strike would tend to strengthen the peace party among the capitalists. For the capitalist class the risks of going to war are, of course, greatly increased by the threat of a general strike which, even if it failed at the outbreak of the war, might prove a valuable preparation for a revolutionary movement that might later end the war and pave the way for socialism.

By Educating the Imperialists?

Of course there always remains the possibility of instructing the imperialists about their true interests—of explaining to the wolves that mutton is not really the best of diets at the price that has to be paid to get it. Sir Norman Angell has won a deserved and world-wide reputation for his lucid and logical exposition of this case. His first and greatest work on the subject appeared previous to 1914. Other excellent books on these lines have been published at intervals between the end of the last war, and the present active state of preparation for the next. All they say is demonstrably true but precisely what difference has it made?

The Women's International League, the Society of Friends, the various peace societies that make their special appeal to the upper and middle classes organise lectures with prominent imperialists in the chair to show that war is a bad bargain, that it does not pay, that it will drive mankind back to barbarism, that it is an "undefensible crime against God and Man." But how will all this weigh a featherweight at the moment of crisis against the facts of the case as explained in Chapter II?

Some of the most effective pacifist speeches of the post-war period have been made by men like Mr. W. L. Hichens of Cammell Laird's. Who could improve on the series of speeches on the theme "War is Hell, and the only way to stop it is to make it more like Hell"—a fashion started by the late Lord Fisher and continued with elegance and sincerity from the Government Front Bench by Mr. Alfred Duff Cooper as Under-Secretary for War?

It isn't possible to avoid the results of a system by explaining to gentlemen who are individually good husbands and fathers that quite a lot of people get killed in wars. Some of the killed will undoubtedly be their own sons—but what is the alternative? "The imperialists wage war to avoid civil war"—they must expand imperialistically or they cannot keep their system going. How can you expect a class, whose whole existence depends ultimately upon war, to give up the basis of that existence? Japanese gentlemen, in their intimate social life, we are told, are not unaccustomed to receive invitations to commit harakiri and on occasion have been known to accept them. The capitalists as a class have as yet evinced no such obliging tendencies.

By Waging a Preventive War Now?

The picture is a black one—its validity admitted more by actions than by words. In despair a number of public men are of the opinion that even if war cannot be prevented altogether, at least the Second World War might be postponed if the immediate threat from Germany could be dealt with at once.

Hitler's skilful change of phrasing, since the earlier crude warlike speeches, his talk of peace (while waging an effective war-without-declaration against Austria and in the Saar) has caused a certain change of feeling in Great Britain. The British governing class, as has already been explained, have cogent reasons for wishing to keep on reasonable terms with the Nazis. Britain is, therefore, willing now to apply to Germany the policy she has consistently followed in the case of Japan—of simply conceding without war, what could be defended only by war. Within certain limits and in the pursuit of certain definite aims this policy is temporarily effective. It may be described as waging a preventive peace.

But strong currents of opinion in France are anxious to crush Germany now, before she is strong enough to tear up the Versailles settlement completely. They urge that a "police" expedition now would prevent a world war ten years hence.

Of course, it is technically possible to march into Germany and crush Hitler in a military sense. But it is impossible to destroy Germany if only because too much foreign capital is invested in German industries. Moreover, it is equally impossible for a conquering power to govern the country. Germany can be divided, but who can rule those divisions? There is no body of Germans who would be willing to do so; or, if they tried, could secure sufficient confidence to do so effectively—as the French discovered to their cost during their experiments in the Ruhr territory. And how could a foreign government maintain itself? Again, the bill of costs in the Ruhr is sufficient answer.

Colonial methods are impossible for more than a short time against a highly intelligent and highly industrialised people. It is possible to wage a preventive war, but quite impossible to conclude a preventive peace.

Thus the policy of France and Britain oscillates between the two extremes—a situation eminently satisfactory to the Nazis, who have used their advantage to the full. Meanwhile the preparations for the Second World War are being pressed forward. Under the joyous banner of N.R.A. the Roosevelt Government orders 3000 new aero-

planes, and in cancelling the air-mail contracts with the private companies for graft, tried to hand over the civil air services to the army, which would have allowed the Army Department to extend its training programme with no embarrassing questions on the score of economy. Of course it was not intended that the fight against graft in the air-mail contracts should have the indirect effect of altering at one stroke the air power balance of the world—but all things work together for good to those who are financially interested in one of capitalism's chief industries—war!

Canned Optimism

We have now examined in turn each of the methods by which various sections and interests in the state hope to prevent the next war. As we have seen, there is not one method that can be relied upon with any confidence—not because of subjective factors (the “treason” of leaders, the weakness of the revolutionary parties, etc.) which might be altered by propaganda, but because of objective economic factors which make the propaganda of each method ineffective.

No canned optimism, whether of official speeches or of emotional resolutions can hinder the remorseless march of events. Marxists at least can find no comfort in opiate myths. Capitalist imperialism produces war as inevitably as an explosion of oxygen and hydrogen produces water.

If mankind is to survive, capitalism must go. As has been shown, it is, to say the least, extremely unlikely that this can possibly be effected before the Second World War occurs. Socialism is on the defensive everywhere where it has not been decisively beaten. Fascism, the preparatory stage of the development for war, has not yet had to suffer a serious reverse.

Actually, in cold fact, all that probably remains for socialists and communists to discuss is how to make the best use of the war situation when it comes, in order to destroy capitalism. Having been driven into the grim folly once again, the population will soon have had enough.

Next time it will not be possible to keep the filthy horror that is war, respectably and comfortingly in the front line trenches, to be sentimentalised in safety. The reality will be on the doorsteps of the people.

Is it a council of despair to say, “As we cannot prevent the next war, let us determine to use it?” Might this not, in the long run, be the best way of meeting the danger? To say in effect to the capitalist classes of the world who are preparing for war, “We cannot stop you declaring the next war, for that is in your power, but by that deed your class power dies.” Would that not be the only way—to face the capitalist class with the one alternative that may make them hesitate—to make war an even more dangerous gamble for them than the impossible contradictions of the perpetual crisis they call peace?

This determination to make socialism the result of the next war cannot be narrowed into a struggle against war as such. With it is inseparably bound the daily struggle of the whole working class, including the agricultural workers, the technicians, and that fifty per cent. of wage-workers who are still outside our organisations, but who would be as important at the moment of crisis as the more politically-minded. That lesson at least the Hitler success should have taught us.

In socialist countries alone would the drive to war not operate. The only effective work we in this country can do for peace now is to carry on an unceasing struggle for a planned economy not based on profit, and that during the coming two or three years, for indeed we are engaged in a race with time. Moreover, it would be a mistake to act on the assumption that all that is necessary is for the Socialist Movement to obtain Parliamentary power. That power will be ineffective unless it can count on the backing of the workers and the technicians in the factories. Thus the workers and technicians must take a keen interest in the problems with which the obtaining of power will confront the Socialist Movement.

As Rosa Luxemburg has said, “Only in the factories where the workers are fettered to capitalism can their chains be broken.”

By this method we secure also a momentum which, even if socialism cannot be obtained before the war breaks out, could be used against the capitalists in the crisis of that war, and so ensure that the war ends in socialism and not chaos. Real politics in the war situation will depend on the amount of discipline and confidence in themselves and their leaders which has been built up among the workers beforehand, rather than on any paper policies which would only be burnt up in the heat of that dreadful time.

INDEX

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Bourgeoisie, 7, 8, 9 | Labour Movement, 12 |
| Britain, 36, 44, 46-48, 53 | Labour Party, 40, 41, 48, 49 |
| | League of Nations, 43-47 |
| Capitalism, 15, 24, 25, 49,
51, 52, 54 | Marx, 8 |
| Civil War, 13-14 | Marxism, 6, 43, 54 |
| Communists, 13, 14, 41, 42,
49, 50 | Middle Classes, 38, 42, 43 |
| Contradictions, 17, 22, 55 | Monopoly, 20, 21 |
| Crisis, 8, 17, 24 | Nation, 7, 8, 15, 20 |
| Democracy, 49 | National war, 7, 9 |
| | Nazis, 14, 47, 49, 50, 53 |
| Fascism, 26, 38, 41, 48, 49,
54 | Pacifism, 6, 24, 52 |
| Finance Capital, 16, 19, 20 | Proletariat, 8 |
| Germany, 35, 38, 46, 53 | Reformists, 13 |
| | Revolution, 13, 40 |
| Hitler, 6, 38, 49, 53, 55 | Russia, 37, 47 |
| Imperialism, 7-10, 16-17, 22,
24, 26, 39, 40, 42, 43,
46, 48, 49 | Self-sufficiency, 21 |
| Internationalism, 7 | Social democrats, 13, 49 |
| | Socialism, 17, 54, 55, 56 |
| Japan, 15, 35, 36, 44, 7, 49
50, 53 | Socialists, 24, 43 |
| | Soviet, 35 |
| | Unemployed, 24, 25 |
| | Workers, 12 |