

**CONCERTED  
ACTION**

**OR**

**ISOLATION**

**WHICH IS THE  
ROAD**

**TO PEACE?**

BY *Earl Browder* 10c



CONCERTED ACTION

*or*

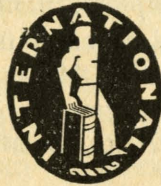
ISOLATION:

*Which Is the Road*

*to Peace?*

BY

EARL BROWDER



*New York*

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

1938

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*The first chapter of this pamphlet, "Collective Security: the Road to Peace," was first published in the New Republic of February 2, 1938. The other chapters appeared in the New Masses. The fourth chapter, "The 'Haves' and 'Have-Nots'" was first given as a speech before the Carolina Political Union at Chapel Hill, N. C., on March 3, 1938.*

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INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS CO., INC.  
PUBLISHED APRIL, 1938  
SECOND PRINTING, MAY, 1938

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

# 1. COLLECTIVE SECURITY

MR. BRUCE BLIVEN has confirmed, in his article of December 1, what I had suspected, that *The New Republic's* advocacy of isolation as the proper approach to foreign affairs by the United States has behind it, at least as one factor, a disturbed conscience in relation to 1917. But I am afraid that he has not studied well what the Communists have to say, either about the last World War or about the one now threatening. Clearly, he does not "understand our language." Allow me, therefore, to make an attempt to put the Communist position as nearly as possible in the language of Mr. Bliven himself, in an effort to break down this linguistic barrier.

Can world peace be maintained? That is the first question toward which we must establish an attitude. If we mean world peace in any absolute sense, then of course the question is meaningless, for right now there are two major wars going on which already have resulted in millions of casualties. The question then must be, can we prevent the two present wars from extending to engulf the whole world?

The answer to this question must begin with that basic fact that the overwhelming mass of the population of all countries, and the governments of most of them, are afraid of war and desire peace. As President Roosevelt expressed it:

"The peace, the freedom and the security of 90 per cent of the population of the world is being jeopardized by the remaining 10 per cent who are threatening a breakdown of all international order and law."

We can dot the "i" by saying that from which Roosevelt is restrained by diplomatic considerations: Peace is being destroyed by Hitler, Mussolini and the Mikado.

Our question is now clearer. Can the fifty to sixty effective governments of the world, with the ardent desire for peace of at least 90 per cent of the world's population behind them, find among themselves sufficient forces for peace to restrain the three war-making powers who may control the remaining 10 per cent of the population but certainly do not command its affection?

Clearly, in this relation of forces, there does exist the possibility of preventing the spread of war, and of extinguishing the wars going on, *provided* the peace-loving 90 per cent can arrive at a concerted program of action, at least to a degree in some relation to that of the concerted action of the Triple Alliance of the "anti-Communist" bloc of fascist states.

What degree of concerted action is necessary? Considering the economic resources of the war-makers, it would clearly be sufficient to bring them quickly to a halt if the United States, France, Britain and the Soviet Union should jointly declare an embargo upon all economic transactions with the aggressors, to be ended when three conditions were met: (1) the withdrawal of all their armed forces into their own territories; (2) the stoppage of all supplies being sent to support civil war in another country; (3) the enforcing of a substantial measure of disarmament.

Considering the military resources of the war-makers, their aggressions would be more quickly stopped, if the peace bloc of powers should, while the aggressions continued, open their markets to the victims of aggression for all their needs, and facilitate their purchases with credits.

Considering the political resources of the war-makers, they would be quickly isolated if the small nations now falling

under their sway once knew that the democratic powers, abandoning their "scuttle and run" policy, were making a firm stand for peace; they would be undermined at home, and their own oppressed population encouraged to reassert themselves, if the peace bloc made a joint declaration of willingness to give full aid and cooperation to any democratic and peaceful government that might succeed the fascist dictatorships.

What are the possibilities that such a policy could be adopted by the four great powers I have named? For the United States, such a policy is clearly indicated as the only possible means of implementing Roosevelt's speech in Chicago on October 5. Clearly, then, in our country the task is to organize effective support behind the President's policy of the 27,000,000 who voted for him in 1936. If that can be done, the United States will uphold its end. It certainly can be done -- unless the great masses are also afflicted with the Hamlet-like paralysis that has gripped the minds of *The New Republic's* editors under the hypnosis of fascism, which I cannot believe. As for France, the joy with which Roosevelt's speech was received by the people in that country is sufficient indication that any government which refused a direct proposal from the United States for this policy would be swept out of office in a week and be replaced by a government which would gladly give its adherence. As for the Soviet Union, it has been urging precisely such a policy for years, and would gladly assume its full share of the responsibility.

There remains Britain. I fully share the doubts of Mr. Bliven about the good faith of the Chamberlain government in the defense of peace. I am also full of doubts about the Labor Party leadership which has found it so easy to go along with Mr. Chamberlain in his, to say the least, equivocal course. But I have great faith in the British working class, which has, more than once, over the heads of its own leaders, called a

sharp halt to reactionary adventures of the British government. I am sure that a clear call from the United States, France and the Soviet Union will bring the great British people into line for this policy, under a new government if necessary.

This, in brief and simple outline, is the Communist conception of a correct and effective peace policy for the United States.

If such a program is adopted, whose interests would be served thereby? Surely it would be in the interests of every nation that wants peace; of the small nations that tremble today under the imminent threat of destruction; of the workers of every land; and of every honest democrat.

But Mr. Bliven says no, this is a peculiar "Russian" program, "not framed in American terms or the American interest." We will not quarrel with Mr. Bliven as to how the policy could be best "framed in American terms"; we are willing to leave that to the President, if Mr. Bliven can agree upon such an eminent authority. But we do have a sharp quarrel with him when he says that world peace is a special "Russian" interest, which may be contrary to the interests of America. *Peace is a common interest of the Soviet Union and the United States, and, as the two most powerful and peace-loving nations, especially of them.*

Mr. Bliven bases his peculiar argument, apparently, upon the opinion that America can *purchase* peace, can *buy off* the aggressor nations with concessions and by granting them a free hand elsewhere. He expresses a deep conviction that any resistance, even purely economic, would lead the United States directly into war. But if the United States *does not dare*, from such fear, to take even economic measures, what reason have we to believe this will insure us from the war danger? It was exactly the conviction that the Nanking government *would not dare* to resist that led Tokyo into the present ad-



venture in China. A continuance of isolation policies by the United States will surely convince the arrogant militarists of Tokyo that now is the time for them to take over the Philippines, Hawaii, Guam and Alaska, as guarantees against the future, when the United States *might dare*. From that it would not be a large step to recall how much more successful are Japanese than Americans in cultivating the beautiful and rich lands of California.

Upon what basis does Mr. Bliven assume that this danger is remote but the danger of a Japanese attack against the Soviet Union is immediate? Is he relying upon the affinity between two capitalist nations, as against the land of socialism? But Japan knows quite well that the land of socialism is fully armed and ready, a tough nut upon which she might break her teeth. She went into China, *expanding along the line of least resistance*. A continuance of the same line leads her not to Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and Chita, but rather to Manila, Honolulu and Nome.

At the present moment in world affairs, America needs the cooperation of the Soviet Union for her own protection from warlike aggression far more pressingly than the Soviet Union needs America for the same purpose. For the Soviet Union is fully prepared to defend itself, is fully united, and has just cleaned house of the last remnants of those who would cooperate with the enemy. But America, rich and full of potential booty, is still considered by the world to be in a pacifist funk, is torn by a constitutional crisis and sharp class struggles, and contains powerful forces that would welcome Japanese aggression for their own fascist ends.

Mr. Bliven says the program of concerted action for peace proposes "to engage in a bluffing game with the fascist powers." He particularly ascribes to the Communists the idea that "the fascists will be outbluffed and will give way." Nothing could be farther from the truth.

It is my conviction that the fascist dictatorships can be halted only by superior force. But with concerted economic action by the great powers to embargo the aggressors and supply their victims, the superior military force that will halt fascism and bring about its downfall is already in action *in Spain and China*. These two heroic peoples are fighting, bravely and steadfastly, and making a good showing *despite* their abandonment by Britain, France and the United States. If we help them, they will do the military job for us, though I hope many thousands more of our best American boys will go to Spain to help the Lincoln Battalion uphold the honor of our people. If we continue to desert them to their fate, as Mr. Bliven advocates, we will have no one to blame but ourselves when we have to take up the full military burden under more unfavorable conditions.

Finally, what is the value of Mr. Bliven's argument that any participation by the United States in a concerted effort for peace would create the danger of extreme reaction, even fascism, coming to power in America precisely as a result of such effort? In my opinion, the truth is exactly the opposite. Only the courageous implementing of the policy laid down by President Roosevelt in Chicago can save our country, and all the capitalist world, from unparalleled reaction and catastrophe.

The greatest threat against domestic progress today, the greatest strength of reaction, lie precisely in the fact, correctly pointed out by Mr. Bliven, that the 27,000,000 who voted for President Roosevelt are not fully united in support of his peace policy. This is true, even though Mr. Bliven underestimates grossly the breadth of this support. All the more reason why all progressives, democrats and lovers of peace, all anti-fascists, should do everything possible to build and strengthen that support, and not to tear it down with doubts, fears and hesitations which cover a complete absence of policy,

a happy-go-lucky drifting with no guidance but faith in America's lucky star.

If President Roosevelt's policy goes by default, through lack of popular support, if the progressive camp continues to be divided by the paralysis of fear, then I foresee the grave danger that the worst reactionary forces in American public life, playing upon the very real dangers that face the American people, will exploit those fears and the absence of a united progressive policy, with demagogic slogans of "preparedness, more preparedness" and "no entangling alliances" and "America for herself alone" and so on, to stampede the people along the path of reaction, militarism and war.

When our country was in its infancy as an independent nation, when it was relatively weak and surrounded by a hostile world, when it was looked upon by older nations as the source of "revolutionary infection," as the capitalist world today looks upon the Soviet Union—in those days we were not afraid to have a positive policy for peace. We had great leaders then, men with faith that the masses of the people would support them.

When in 1793, France, a new republic such as Spain today, was attacked and blockaded, Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State under Washington, wrote to James Madison:

"The idea seems to gain credit that the naval powers combining against France will prohibit supplies, even of provisions, to that country. . . . I should hope that Congress . . . would instantly exclude from our ports all the manufactures, produce, vessels, and subjects of the nations committing this aggression, during the continuance of the aggression, and till full satisfaction is made for it."

About the same time Jefferson wrote to Morris, Minister to France, the following:

"We received information that a National Assembly had met, with full power to transact the affairs of the nation, and soon

afterwards the Minister of France here presented an application for three million livres, to be laid out in provisions to be sent to France. . . . We had no hesitation to comply with the application . . . and we shall . . . omit no opportunity of convincing that nation how cordially we wish to serve them . . . placing our commerce with that nation and its dependencies on the **freest and most** encouraging footing possible.”

What America needs today, what the world needs, is a foreign policy based upon these lines of Thomas Jefferson. Such a policy has been proposed by President Roosevelt. The whole country must be rallied to support it, and to demand its energetic application in life.

## 2. CONCERTED ACTION OR ISOLATION?

COMING out of Spain on February 9, I picked up the *New Republic* of February 2 at Brentano's in Paris. There I found published my article in reply to Mr. Bruce Bliven, written on his invitation in the latter part of December. I was mildly surprised to find that my polemic with Mr. Bliven had been transformed into a debate with Dr. Charles A. Beard. On second thought, however, it seemed only natural that Mr. Bliven should call for help in the controversy, considering that the very essence of his position consists of raising doubt and uncertainty to the level of a principle.

But my surprise at discovering myself thus unceremoniously thrust into an unannounced debate with Dr. Beard was as nothing compared with the astonishment caused by reading what Dr. Beard had to say. I had thought myself inured to all possible surprises, but Dr. Beard carried my education in disillusionment to a higher stage.

This is not because Dr. Beard ascribes to me a bloodthirsty ambition to help President Roosevelt throw America and the world into a general war of mutual extermination. We have long grown used to such a charge; it is old stuff; it is the common stock-in-trade of all isolationists, which they share with the open apologists of fascism. It is a complete begging of the question, of course. All our isolationists, while ostensibly taking up a rational discussion as to which path gives more prospects of maintaining world peace and stopping the

current wars, invariably avoid such a discussion in reality as though it were something indecent; they proceed in their arguments upon the *assumption* that everyone who disagrees with them wants war. They do not even seem to be embarrassed when this dishonest little trick is exposed. So far have the isolationists departed from rational discussion that it is difficult for them to speak or write except in terms of hysterical denunciation of their opponents and a wild appeal to irrational prejudices. Dr. Beard, unfortunately, shows himself no exception in this respect, although we might have expected something better from him.

Dr. Beard, however—and this is the astonishing part—proceeds from the usual isolationist attitude to grounds far beyond any taken by Mr. Bliven, or by any other responsible writer in the liberal or radical press. He proceeds upon such *assumptions*, he poses his questions in such a form, as to admit the validity of all the basic arguments of the fascists.

Tacitly, but nonetheless effectively, Dr. Beard's position is one of *ideological disarmament* in face of the offensive of fascism. He reveals himself as contemptuous of democracy, skeptical of the desirability of peace, and opposed to any struggle against fascism. He does not defend isolation as the path to peace; he merely declares there is no such path.

Nothing that has ever been written in favor of concerted action as the path to peace is quite so conclusively in its favor, as are Dr. Beard's arguments supposedly against it.

Let us examine a few samples. Dr. Beard says:

"It is highly probable that Great Britain could tear Hitler away from the Rome-Berlin axis by handing back to Germany the vast African colonies. . . . Does Great Britain want peace on such terms? Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Browder may know. I may be permitted to have doubts."

Here as in a drop of water is reflected the "cosmos" of

isolationism. It *assumes* that there is no way to peace except surrender to the fascist demands. If Mr. Roosevelt or myself have any hopes of peace, we are called upon to substantiate these hopes by "inside information" that Hitler is going to be given what he wants, or else our hopes are discredited. It is inferred that it is not only unreasonable, but also unjust, to hold any other view. This may be anything else, it may even be the basis for a partnership with Hitler, but it is not in any sense or degree the basis for any struggle against fascism and war.

To follow Beard's thought another step:

"I find in history no justification whatever for assuming as truth that Italy, Germany, and Japan would surrender unconditionally to a grand quarantine if the quarantine could be arranged. On the contrary, I suspect that they would strike back. . . ."

Here is a clear acceptance of the fascist bid for world rulership. The quarantine is rejected because the fascists might resist it. Since the fascist powers are in a "war frenzy," a spirit of "world power or downfall," therefore the United States must simply keep out of their way at all costs, allow them to seize the rest of the world piecemeal, and trust in God as to what will happen when they get around to us and can handle us alone. How we can keep out of the way in a world where elbow room is at a premium, and where the United States holds half of the world's wealth that the fascists covet, does not concern Dr. Beard. Since the fascist powers do not invade our territory first, that is sufficient basis for an isolationist policy.

Having laid such a sure foundation, Dr. Beard then draws a deep breath and plunges into the deep water of surrender to fascism. He says:

"Could a quarantine maintain indefinitely the *status quo* of populations, resources, and empire throughout the world? If this

were desirable, it scarcely seems possible. . . . There are likely to be profound changes in the distribution of population, resources, and imperial possessions in the future as in the past."

In these words Dr. Beard proclaims the futility of any effort to prevent a general war. He leaves open for argument whether war may not even be "desirable." He only wants to keep the United States out of it—at least until we are fighting for a bigger share in the distribution of the world as the fascists are. He rejects as utopian all idea of international readjustments except through war. He thereby abandons in advance all hopes of restraining the war-making powers.

Coming to the question of democracy, Dr. Beard here also abandons the field to fascism. He wipes out all effective distinction between the democratic and fascist powers (as for the Soviet Union, it is mentioned only in passing). He ridicules any reliance upon the democratic powers. He proceeds to sneer at the labor movement of France, England, and America, as inevitably only an appendage to the imperialist circles. He says that all efforts to save democracy can only lead to war—"and the probabilities are that we should then have universal fascism rather than universal democracy." His conclusion is that the more determined is the effort to save democracy, the more certain is it that the very effort will bring the victory of fascism. Democracy is doomed, it has no vitality, and it has no value worth trying to salvage.

In short, for Dr. Beard all roads lead to the inevitable victory of fascism throughout Europe and Asia, and by inference also in the United States in the last analysis. He only hopes that, perhaps, if we keep real quiet and don't talk too loud, the fascists may overlook us for a few years.

From all of which, there is only one practical conclusion, one line of advice for action: Don't do anything, don't say anything, don't try to stop the threatening war, don't try to maintain democracy—everything you do will only bring the



catastrophe all the quicker. Fascism and war are inevitable under any circumstances, but if we sit very quiet, do nothing, say nothing, we might be overlooked for a little while. Let us be thankful for even such a short breathing space before we go to our inevitable doom.

Such are the pitiful depths to which the logic of isolationism has led Dr. Beard. It is indeed a tragedy to see a man, whose life contained so many fearless words and deeds against reaction, come forward in the twilight of that life and in the midst of the world's greatest crisis, with advice of such complete and cowardly surrender.

Dr. Beard proceeds to cover up his surrender with "theoretical" considerations. He rebukes the advocates of concerted action for peace for their supposed "assumption that politics—democratic theory—can be separated from economics." Now if anyone makes such an assumption, it is of course a fatal error, and Dr. Beard has scored a heavy blow. But who assumed this, when, where, how? Dr. Beard is silent on these questions. He merely *assumes* that we are guilty of such an assumption, and lets it go at that.

But this diversion of Dr. Beard, to call upon economics to help him dispose of politics he does not like, is not a naive gesture. He is hinting, what he dared not say openly, that the defense of democracy is useless or impossible until there has been established full democratic control of the national economy in each country. He has used the statement of an abstract truth to cover up a concrete falsehood of the worst sort. In the name of a perfect democracy, he rejects the struggle for a democracy because it cannot be perfect and entire from the beginning of the struggle.

Dr. Beard is thus operating with a logic that deals only in absolutes. It has no room for a democracy that is in process of becoming, for the struggle to realize democracy. It is a formal, static, mechanical logic, which leads only to doubt, skepticism,

passivity, and surrender. It is connected with economics itself only formally. It in no way expresses the *economic urgency of the masses*, which throws them necessarily into *struggle for democracy and peace*.

It is the economic needs of the masses which is the living connection between politics and economics. It is this to which Dr. Beard is completely blind. This blindness is not something new for Dr. Beard. In his historical studies, with all their merits, he has always displayed a lack of understanding of the mass struggle for democracy, an underestimation of its achievements, a cynicism as to its value, a blindness with regard to the mass forces that make for historical progress and which unite politics and economics. This long-standing weakness has now brought Dr. Beard to full capitulation to that reaction which he tried to oppose during most of his active life.

Dr. Beard closes his remarkable essay on how to keep peace by collaborating with fascism, on a "high moral note." He thinks that "anybody who feels hot with morals and is affected with delicate sensibilities can find enough to do at home." While I yield nothing to Dr. Beard in moral heat against the miseries in America, I must protest against his attempt to use it to reduce our heat against the crimes being committed in Spain and China.

When I arrived in Barcelona last week, I visited many of the thirty-five apartment houses blown to bits by high-power bombs from Italian planes, dropped the day before, a sunny Sunday morning. I saw dismembered and mutilated babies and mothers being removed from the wreckage. In my mind rose the question, how long will it be before similar bombs drop on New York, Chicago, San Francisco, with similar results "at home" to our women and children—perhaps to my own family too. When I read the horrible dispatches from China, I see behind the grim statistics the faces of my many

Chinese friends, most of them now corpses from the effect of Japanese bombs and machine guns.

What reason have we to assume that America is immune to this madness that is sweeping the world? What reason have we to think we can shut ourselves away from it all, and with impunity wash our hands of the fate of our brothers in other lands?

When I see these things, I do indeed become "hot with morals," to use Dr. Beard's derisive phrase. And I cannot forgive Dr. Beard for that derision. It is a shameful and unworthy thing. As for me, I cannot rest until I know that I and the people which gave me birth, the American people, are doing everything in our power to stop these crimes in Spain and China, to make them unprofitable, and to make their recurrence impossible. That several thousand American boys are giving their lives in Spain to help do this job makes me proud of our people, and very humble that we are not doing more. Fascism must be stopped in those places where it first strikes. The Spanish and Chinese peoples are fighting the battles of all mankind. We must come to their help. We must stop all direct and indirect aid to the fascists. We must end once and for all the farce of "non-intervention." If we fail in this duty, then we deserve no better fate for ourselves, and I am sure we will get our deserts. There is no way forward for America, or for the world, except we find the way together, through concerted action for democracy and peace.

### 3. THE ISOLATIONIST UNITED FRONT

IT WILL help throw light into the confused discussion on concerted action *vs.* isolation, to examine the unprincipled and undeclared "united front" among the isolationists, which they put forward as a camp of "peace advocates."

First of all, their "Left wing": This found its classic expression in the "round robin" to the *Nation*, rebuking that journal for rejecting isolationism (*Nation*, January 22, p. 111). In the list of forty-five signers, we discern the following groupings: open Trotskyites, who for several years have worked in alliance with the fascist powers on the principle of serving their aims by "ultra-revolutionary" catch-words; Lovestoneites, who since 1935 passed to the Trotskyite position on all world issues; the Socialist Party leaders, since 1936 pitifully dependent upon Trotsky for all their central thoughts; the extremist-pacifists, for whom all struggle is anathema and destructive of social ends, and who, therefore, openly advocate capitulation before aggression at home and abroad; the primitive-Christians, who reach the same goal through ethical, "turn-the-other-cheek," considerations; the practical politicians, who see some future left in exploiting the naive isolationism of the middle-western farmers and small-townsmen; and officials of the auto workers' union who adopted a pro-Japanese resolution, under the influence of Trotskyite-Lovestoneite intriguers.

The claim of this group to be a "Left wing" is based upon its open or implied adherence to the Trotskyite thesis that

democracy is not worth defending, that its defense will only hasten its own destruction, that there is no essential difference between democracy and fascism, that the victory of fascism is inevitable, that fascism and war may even prove to be a good thing because they will hasten the downfall of capitalism and the consequent rise of a new society. The "Left wing" coloration is thus made an incentive to take up more boldly the slogans of the fascists themselves, and thus transform anti-fascist and peace sentiment into helpers of the fascist world-plan.

Typical of the "center" of the isolationist united front is David Stern and his newspaper chain, headed by *The New York Post*. Ostensibly "open-minded" and moved by immediately practical considerations to the exclusion of dogma, Stern and his associates drive consistently to the same end of extreme isolationism.

The "Right wing" of the isolationist agitators and propagandists among the masses is typically represented by Father Coughlin, by the *American Mercury*, and the Hearst press. In them we have the case of isolationism presented in its most openly fascist form, with fully developed nationalism, chauvinism, and frank admiration for the fascist dictators, as chief characteristics.

There is no hard-and-fast division between these various groups. On the contrary, there is quite a free collaboration between them. Thus O. G. Villard, "liberal," extends his public congratulations to Father Coughlin for returning to the air to uphold the isolationist cause, without even a blush for his new ally. Thus Norman Thomas and Hearst collaborated last November to blanket the news of the historic Congress for Peace and Democracy, with four and a half million members represented, by an isolationist blast against the congress written by Thomas, which was combined with a "Catholic" picket line to identify the congress with "Communism." Thus

Trotskyites boldly collaborate in the fascist *American Mercury*, and Bruce Bliven writes them "explanatory" letters.\*

The main body of the isolationist propaganda machinery consists of the majority of the big newspapers of the country. They plug along, most of them, without any special ideological slant, broadcasting any and every variety of isolationism with magnificent impartiality. Equally impartial is the support given to all by the Nazi and fascist organizations in the United States, and by the open apologists for Japan.

This broad united front of the isolationists of all stripes is particularly in evidence in the past six months, since the great stream of public sentiment began to run in the direction of concerted action for peace, and especially since President Roosevelt's famous speech of October 5 in Chicago. All the isolationists are especially vindictive against the President because of that speech. But, being good practical politicians, they would like to avoid a head-on collision with the broad personal popularity of the President. Therefore, their arguments are seldom directed openly against the President; since the Communists support the President on this issue, and since the Communist Party is a small and weak group as yet, they find it convenient to direct their main polemic against the Communists. That may not be particularly honest and frank, but at least it is "smart" political tactics.

Our isolationists are, as a rule, desirous of keeping all discussions of war and peace quite separated from issues of domestic policy, and as far as possible on the plane of abstractions. But foreign policy is inevitably tied up very concretely with all issues of domestic life. Therefore, we will expect to find these groups and individuals prominent in the agitation of isolationism also tending to take up a common view on the chief domestic problems of the day.

In this expectation we will not be disappointed. Take the

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\* See page 63 of this pamphlet.

issue of Roosevelt's proposals for curbing the Supreme Court. That was the question which most stirred our political life in 1937, which most hastened the growing political realignment of the country. And on this question, we will find that at least 95 per cent of the individuals and groups most vocal in fighting against the President's indication of a positive peace policy were equally vocal (and equally vicious) in opposing his proposal to deflate the Supreme Court. The same instincts, or the same logic, or the same class interests, which bring them to a common position on the one question, seem to work with equal precision to bring them to a common front on the other question. That is, of course, only natural and to be expected.

Behind all the difference between the various groups of isolationists, certain revealing uniformities can be traced in the structure of their arguments. Since it is these uniformities which constitute the basis for their united front, it is worth while tracing a few of the chief ones.

For example, examine the isolationist logic in evaluating the recent resignation of Eden from the British government, and Chamberlain's open conciliation with fascist aggression. One and all, the isolationists denounce the British course as a crime against humanity, and a proof that they were always right when they said it was impossible to establish a "united front of the democratic nations" that would include Britain; and then, in the same breath, they proceed to "prove" by the British example, that the only correct course for the United States is one closely copied after that of Chamberlain—that is, to hell with the rest of the world, make our own arrangements, and, above all, keep out of the way of the bandit nations, the fascist aggressors, and speak softly to them.

All groups of isolationists are agreed that the United States is, under all circumstances, incapable of pursuing an effective peace policy in collaboration with other nations. They dis-

agree only in their explanations why this is so. Some of them, like Norman Thomas, look upon the United States as equally a bandit with the fascist governments; the only way to keep the United States from doing mischief is to keep it from doing anything at all. Others, like many of the pacifists, think that on the contrary, the United States is of a Christlike purity of morals, which can only be preserved by cutting off all contacts with other nations. Still a third, and the largest, group is convinced that even with the best intentions in the world the United States goes into world affairs mortally handicapped by the superior abilities of other nations, especially Great Britain, to trick the United States out of our very shirt and pants; we are like the country boy going to the city, sure to be sold a gold brick by the city slickers. But, however much they differ as to the reasons, all isolationists are agreed upon the conclusion that the United States must at all costs keep out of world affairs and make no difficulties for the bandit nations.

Another item of common agreement among isolationists is their agreement that the Communists are a dangerous and pernicious influence, and especially so because of our advocacy of concerted action as the path to peace. The various groups place varied emphasis upon this idea, but all are agreed that the danger from this Communist influence is much more serious than the danger from fascist trends. For the Trotskyites, whose one function in life is to destroy the Communist movement by all means, the Communists are not only the chief but practically the only danger to world peace. Norman Thomas and his Socialist friends strongly incline to the Trotskyist view. The other groups adopt the idea to the varied degrees they are able to exploit it.

Most important of all their common ideas is the isolationist conception of the Soviet Union as the chief menace to the peace of the United States. It is of no consequence to demon-



strate to them that the Soviet Union is consistently, and from its very nature, an advocate of peace and prepared to cooperate with all peace-loving peoples to preserve peace. All evidence to prove that only convinces the isolationists all the more of the insidious role of the Soviet Union which would inveigle the United States into war precisely through the common interests of the Soviet Union and the United States in maintaining peace. They have a very strict logic in their inveterate hatred of the Soviet Union. It consists of the main proposition that the only way the bandit nations can be prevented from making war is to give them whatever they demand; the secondary proposition, that the Soviet Union, no matter how much it wants peace, will never agree to surrender to the fascists as the path to peace; and, conclusion, that therefore the Soviet Union is the enemy of peace, and every one who wants peace by surrender to fascism should dissociate himself from the Soviet Union.

When one goes over all the ideas generally agreed upon among all the isolationist groups, ideas which form the basis for their united front among themselves, then one cannot but be struck by another feature of these ideas. They are not only held in common by the isolationist groups, but they form the basis of possible agreement with Hitler, Mussolini, and the Mikado; the ideologists of the bandit nations are closely in sympathy, if not in agreement, with all these ideas. In fact, they consider the victory of these ideas in the United States as an essential step toward the general victory of fascism throughout the world. The ideas of isolationism are a necessary part of the fascist system in its march toward world conquest.

Thus it comes about that the sharper grows the world situation, the more are peace and democracy endangered by the advance of aggression by the bandit nations, then all the more do the isolationists, fighting desperately for withdrawal from world affairs by the United States, proceed step by step to

prove as a desperate last resort that democracy is an illusion which it is not worth risking anything to preserve; that peace itself is a questionable goal, not worthy of serious effort to maintain; that the natural, inevitable, and perhaps desirable condition of the world is a wild and bloody scramble for its redivision; that in such a condition, the rule is each nation for itself, and the United States has nothing to do but keep its eyes open, preparing to join in the general blood-bath only after all others have seriously weakened themselves by fratricidal struggles which will open the way for America to grab the lion's share at a minimum risk for itself.

These logical conclusions of isolationism are, of course, not yet drawn consciously by all or even by a majority of those advocating isolation. But the more logical and consequential minds among them are visibly moving in that direction. They will all soon come to the point, where they must either accept this as the main current of their thought, or else make a clean break with isolationism and take the only effective path to peace—the path of concerted and organized action by the peace-loving majority of the peoples of the world and their governments.

#### 4. THE "HAVES" AND "HAVE-NOTS"

RECENT events, since I accepted your kind invitation to address the Carolina Political Union, serve to sharpen considerably the issues involved in finding an effective peace policy for the United States. The aggressions of the bandit governments have engulfed Austria, in the heart of Europe, and proclaim quite openly that Czechoslovakia is next. To the north of us, the province of Quebec seems to have been rather firmly seized by admirers and imitators of Hitler and Mussolini. To the immediate south, in Mexico, only the firm actions of President Cardenas have forestalled a fascist putsch, inspired and directed from Europe with the collaboration of American-vested interests.

At our Caribbean doorstep, in Cuba, the puppet Batista, raised to power by the American sugar interests, has passed over to the tutelage of Herr Goebbels. Within the United States itself, the incitations of big business fascism to the assassination of President Roosevelt have become common knowledge; and in the last days has been added the revelation of a German spy-ring actively operating on our soil to purchase military secrets, especially regarding the defenses of the Panama Canal. The events in China continue their inexorable course, more obviously than ever involving the future of America.

In facing the problem of finding an effective policy to main-

tain peace and democracy, in a world where winds of war and fascism blow ever more wildly, the people of the United States are involved in deep confusion of counsel. In a world setting quite new, the disillusionments of the last World War are gathered into a system of deep-seated prejudices, and call for the isolation of the United States from the rest of the world, which is to be allowed to go to hell in its own way, while the United States finds its own path for itself alone. Against this naive and irrational dream, there arises more and more the understanding that peace (and consequently democracy also) can be preserved only by the cooperative and concerted action of all peace-loving peoples of every country, and the governments whose policies they can still determine.

The central issue is the choice between isolationism or international concerted action as the path to peace. The greatest debate of our day is on this issue, which is gradually involving the whole of the thinking population.

The position of my Party, the Communist Party, has from the beginning of this discussion been definitely against isolationism and in favor of the path of concerted action.

Last year, during the discussions around the falsely-named Neutrality Act, we formulated our views with much precision, advocating legislation which would sharply distinguish between those governments which upheld their treaty obligations with the United States, under the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the Nine-Power Pact, and those which violated these obligations. We advocated that those governments which upheld their treaty obligations should be guaranteed freedom of access to the American market, and if necessary be assisted by credits when the victims of the treaty-breakers; while the bandit governments, which dishonor their obligations, should be barred from access to American markets or credits. We advocated consultation between the United States and the governments maintaining their treaty obligation, to obtain the maxi-

num concerted action along these lines to restrain the bandit governments.

Our sharpest criticism of President Roosevelt and his administration has been, for a long time, against their failure to come forward with such a positive peace policy; their apparent willingness to compromise with or surrender to the crudest isolationism, is exemplified in the infamous Neutrality Act and its special application against loyalist Spain, while the bandit nations continue to draw war materials from American markets.

Therefore, when President Roosevelt made his peace speech in Chicago, on October 5, indicating a turn away from isolationism and toward concerted action, we of the Communist Party gave immediate and unstinted support to this declaration of policy, and called upon the people to demand its practical application. We recognize full well all the difficulties that beset the implementation of this policy, but we also recognize that the only alternative is the drift to certain disaster.

Such is the confusion in public debate in these days, that there are still people who reject President Roosevelt's Chicago speech, either wholly or entirely upon the grounds that the Communists support it, and therefore it must be wrong. What would such people, most of them good Christians no doubt, answer to a Communist declaration of support of the Ten Commandments? Let us hope that, in a day in which the Communists more and more find themselves in agreement on current issues with great sections of our population, and often even with a majority, to refute such argumentation will soon be unnecessary. At least I hope that with this audience I need not demonstrate that those who reject Communism as a program of social reorganization, need not necessarily take an opposite position to that of the Communists on every issue of the day, that our arguments should be dealt with on their merits on each question under discussion.

Another appeal to prejudice that is made by enemies of the policy of concerted action consists in charging that this is a special interest of the Soviet Union; since this policy is also supported by the Soviet Union, this is proof, they say, that the whole policy is a clever trap by Stalin to trick America into fighting his battles. Even David Stern, the supposed New Deal newspaper publisher, issued a hysterical outburst to this effect on the occasion of Stalin's recent letter in which he pointed out that maintenance of peace is an international problem, can only be solved by the international action of those who want peace, primarily the workers, and concluded that it is necessary for the Soviet Union to pursue such a peace policy that will win the support of the workers of the capitalist lands so that they will help restrain the war-makers.

It is not necessary to be an enthusiastic supporter of the Soviet Union, and an admirer of Stalin, as I am, in order to see the falsity and downright dishonesty of such appeals to prejudice. First of all, the policy of concerted action for peace, or "collective security" as they say in Europe, was first enunciated by the French republic—before the People's Front came to power there. Then it was adopted by the League of Nations, with the withdrawal of the bandit governments from that body as a consequence. The Soviet Union came into the picture to support a peace policy already worked out by all the democracies of the world except the United States; and at the same time it greatly improved its relations with the United States.

Surely even the most rabid enemy of the social and economic system in the Soviet Union must, if he is really an advocate of international peace, welcome joyfully the accession of that great power to the peace alignment of the world. No one who is ready to base his opinions strictly on the record can deny that the Soviet Union has been the most consistent supporter, in word and deed, of world peace and disarmament as its needs have been formulated by the great body of democratic

nations in the world. Stalin's letter was a further rallying of the one hundred and eighty million population of the Soviet Union in the cause of peace; instead of attacking him for it, it would be more to the point if his non-Communist or anti-Communist critics should demonstrate that they also, from their own point of view, can help arouse the masses of the United States for an equally energetic attempt to restrain the bandit governments from further engulfing the world in war.

But the viewpoint of isolationism leads its defenders into ever more irrational and reactionary positions. For the broad masses who are influenced by isolationist moods and sentiments, largely as a disillusionment with the hypocrisies of the imperialist World War, isolationism is in reality a peace sentiment unilluminated by any consistent political thinking through of the problem. But for the political leaders and ideologists of isolationism, who must face and answer all questions, and who must draw the logical consequences of their position or abandon it, isolationism very rapidly is becoming a deliberate abandonment of the ideal of peace, of all struggle to maintain peace.

The greatest danger in our public life today is this, that under cover of isolationism, to which great masses adhere as a peace sentiment, there is being broadcast a spirit of cynicism toward peace as a goal to be striven for, and as a consequence also toward the very idea of democracy.

We Communists are often attacked as enemies of democracy in general and of American democracy in particular. That was never true, for we have always been adherents of democracy; that is less true than ever today, for since democracy is being actively threatened by the rise of fascism, we Communists have come forward as its most consistent and self-sacrificing defenders.

We are, of course, keenly aware of the limitations of democ-

racy under the modern capitalist system. This democracy based upon private property in the means of production has even lost much of the strength of its early period, because it has largely lost its economic foundation. Where one hundred and fifty years ago widespread distribution of private property, based upon individual production, was itself something of a guarantee, while it lasted, of the democratic rights and powers of the mass of the people, such private property today has largely disappeared, and has been replaced by giant corporations which occupy all the commanding heights of the national economy. This corporate economy is the antithesis of democracy; its control is the acme of self-perpetuating oligarchy, with the oligarchs constantly diminishing in number, a small fraction of 1 per cent of the population exercising decisive power over the whole economy upon which the livelihood of all depends.

So long as the democratic forms of government follow the leadership of the oligarchs of industry, the economic royalists, these forms are tolerated and even defended by them. When, however, as today has clearly shown, there is a conscious split between the mass of the democratic electorate, and the economic rulers, then as President Roosevelt pointed out in his Constitution Day speech last year, the economic royalists begin to question why they should continue to support a democracy which threatens to curtail their special privileges, and they begin to turn toward fascism. This is the danger of fascism from within our country, that rises simultaneously with the fascist aggression from abroad, and develops in conscious collaboration with the foreign fascist powers.

That is why it is impossible effectively to fight against reaction, and the warmongers at home, without at the same time fighting the same forces internationally, and vice versa. It is the height of futility, and that means, in the last analysis, of stupidity, to try to follow a domestic policy of a progressive,



democratic, and peaceful character, and at the same time in foreign affairs to be "neutral" as between fascist and democratic, between war-making and peace-seeking governments, to retreat before and surrender to the bandit governments.

Precisely to that futility does isolationism lead some of our best intentioned and energetic progressives. For example, no one can question the honest progressivism and good intentions of Congressman Maury Maverick. And yet his isolationist prejudices caused him to draw back, to withhold his name, from one of the most historic demonstrations of American democracy's solidarity with world democracy. I refer to that splendid greetings by sixty-six Senators and Representatives of the United States Congress sent to the meeting of the Cortes, parliament of the Spanish republic, when it met on February 2 in the midst of a life-and-death struggle with the international bandits. No, Maury Maverick had been so poisoned by isolationism that he considered it dangerous to American peace even to express congratulations to the Spanish parliament because it was still alive, meeting, and fighting the fascist invasion to the death. Even to express good will to the Spanish republic, he fears, may bring the wrath of the bandit governments down upon our American heads.

What Maverick forgets, with those who think along the same lines, is this: If Hitler and Mussolini can already, from so far away, dictate so thoroughly what the Mavericks may do and say in America, then indeed American democracy has already gone a long way along the road of surrender, and it is not much farther to the establishment of a fascist dictatorship upon our own soil.

So, also, it is the pacifist funk of isolationism which leads our Mavericks into such childish blind-alleys as the belief that with such paper weapons as the Ludlow amendment, or the kind of fight they are making against the Naval Appropriation Bill, they are really fighting for peace. Nothing could be

more dangerous to peace than precisely the Ludlow proposal; in a period when the chief characteristic of wars is that they are *not declared*, it turns its whole attention to the problem of the technique of declaring war. At a moment when all energies should be turned to preparing the conditions for peace, it turns all attention away to the problem of making war difficult to declare on the side of one of the chief peaceful powers. And in fighting the huge naval appropriations, this is done by emphasizing a hundredfold precisely that condition which furnishes the chief influence behind these huge expenditures, namely, the conviction that in a hostile and war-mad world the United States can cooperate with and trust no other nation, people, or group, nor even trust its own president to follow a real peace policy. These are the logical fruits of isolationism, which cultivates national exclusiveness, chauvinism, division from other peace-loving peoples, suspicion and distrust, and finally cynicism even toward the very ideas of peace and democracy.

As a matter of fact, capable of verification, it is exactly this fear of and retreat before fascist aggression, that itself creates the danger of further fascist attack. Every concession to fascism has led to new aggressions; but in those few instances when the democratic powers sharply challenged the bandits, precisely those were the few times when the bandits drew back and showed some respect, however brief, for something besides their own mad appetites. All the hypocrisies of the Non-Intervention Committee only encouraged Mussolini and Hitler to spit in their faces and redouble their intervention in Spain; but the Nyon Conference, in a few hours culminating in sharp decisions, brought the submarine piracy to at least a temporary halt—and decreased the immediacy of general war. France was placed in mortal danger, not by coming to the help of the Spanish republic, but precisely by refusing to do so, a danger that was partially overcome, not increased,

when France finally began in a small way to counter big-scale fascist intervention for Franco by some small favors to the republic. The Soviet Union strengthened itself against fascist aggression, and did not further endanger itself, when it generously provided the Spanish republic with the needed supplies when all others had run away in fright before the fascist threats. Concessions to fascism, fear of fascism, retreat before fascism, these are not ways to peace; on the contrary, they are the infallible way to a general world war that will involve also the United States.

Examine how the isolationist newspapers have treated the recent developments in Great Britain, and you will find dramatic exposure of the fundamental unsoundness of their position. Almost universally these newspapers expressed two thoughts: first, that Chamberlain had betrayed democracy and world peace, specifically that "he had let us down," when he threw Eden into the discard, and openly went toward capitulation to fascism; second, that this proves that the policy of the United States should be modeled along Chamberlain's lines, that is, go it alone, make the best possible bargains for ourselves, and to hell with the rest of the world. Truly, a marvelous logic, which brands Chamberlain's crime only to urge the same course upon Washington. It is the logic of such cynicism that can result only in open acceptance of fascism in full, if followed to its conclusion.

But there were two sides to the British events, while our isolationists see but one. The other side is this: that Eden's open challenge and resignation, followed by the Labor Party's going over to active opposition and appealing to the country, and a split within British imperialism itself shown in the opposition of Winston Churchill and Lloyd George, two old war-horses of British imperialism, all go to demonstrate how near to complete collapse is the Chamberlain policy of surrender to the bandits. The greatest threat against a general

united front of the democratic nations to halt fascism was always the almost solid front gathered around the Baldwin-Chamberlain line of equivocation and compromise, a united front that included even the Labor Party. That is now smashed to bits, and the broad democratic forces in Britain, first of all the labor movement, are now released to fight for their own natural line of resistance to fascism, a line which can be enormously strengthened and brought closer to victory by demonstrating that in the United States it finds sympathetic understanding and the possibility of future cooperation.

The isolationists make the assumption that a policy of concerted action to halt fascism would be immensely expensive for the United States, whereas, they argue, isolation would be very economical. Nothing could be further from the truth. To halt fascism now will entail a minimum of economic cost for the United States. The main burden of the job is already undertaken by the immediate victims of fascist aggression, and with a little help, enough to bring them the victory they are promising to win even alone, they will save us from the gigantic bill of having to do the job alone later on. But a consistent policy of isolation will quickly become, directly and indirectly, an enormous economic expense. Indirectly it will saddle us with the future costs of dealing single-handed with the bandit powers. Already it is responsible for the enormous military burdens that are being laid upon the country, upon the theory that we must go it alone. Directly, with the spread of war, isolation will result in such far-reaching economic dislocations as to make the losses of the 1929-33 crisis look small in comparison.

Some of the isolationist propagandists are already playing with the idea that, if the Soviet Union can develop its own self-contained economy which, even while doing business with the rest of the world as far as possible, is quite independent of the course of world capitalist economy, then the United

States also, with its much higher development of productive powers, can shut itself off from the rest of the world and make economic advances equal or comparable to those of the Soviet Union.

There is only one little thing wrong with this calculation. It forgets that the Soviet Union could make its tremendous economic advances, in the face of a world of crisis and economic retrogression outside its borders, only by virtue of its unique social and economic organization, in which private capitalists and profits are entirely eliminated, and in which the entire economy can be directed to the single end of raising the general living standards of the population, an aim limited by but one factor—the needs of defense from outside aggression. We have nothing of the kind in the United States, and our isolationists do not propose to give us anything of the kind. We have capitalism in our country, with the economy directed by the single aim of making profits for the benefit, primarily, of the “sixty families,” our economic royalists. Leaving aside all arguments of whether this is good or bad, advisable or inadvisable, necessary or unnecessary, one central fact is clearly demonstrable—that given this capitalist system, the sudden cutting off of the United States from the world market or any considerable portion of it would precipitate an economic crisis that would inevitably result in upheaval, and some kind of sudden and drastic change in our system of government and the direction of our policies. Capitalism, in its modern stage presented in the United States today, cannot be cut off from its world connections without undergoing profound convulsions and deepgoing modifications. Application in practice of the policy of isolation, carried to its logical conclusions, would quickly defeat itself.

Propagandists for isolationism, seeking to discredit the policy of concerted action for peace by identifying it with unpopular symbols, go hunting with a double-barreled shotgun.

One barrel contains the charge that collective security is a Communist conspiracy, or "orders from Moscow." With this I have already dealt. But the other barrel contains the much more deadly charge, that collective security is a Wall Street conspiracy, that it proposes to make war for American imperialist interests. Although these mutually contradictory charges are fired from the same gun, by the same marksmen, and should logically cancel one another, I often find it is not safe to depend upon logic alone, but that it is necessary to give concrete answers to all, even the most contradictory charges.

One of the most interesting examples I have seen of this was contained in an "open letter," signed by forty-five isolationists who consider themselves of the "Left wing," published in the *Nation* of January 22. Rebuking the *Nation* for its support of President Roosevelt's quarantine proposals, these pacifist-isolationists fire point-blank with the second barrel of the shotgun. They say:

"The *Nation* seems to have ignored the embarrassing fact that at the time of the attack the *Panay* was convoying three Standard Oil tankers. Indeed, in its editorial of December 18 these tankers were actually described as 'three American ships containing American refugees.' Is this liberalism?"

There we have the full argument, in all its glory. Since American ships, outside of naval units, are necessarily private capitalist ships, even "imperialist" ships, and perhaps even Standard Oil tankers, therefore "liberalism" demands that if they are in Chinese waters and the Japanese army and navy order them out, and proceed to bomb them out of existence, they shall obey the Japanese orders or take the consequences without any protest from American liberalism. Against Standard Oil tankers, this "liberalism" demands for the Japanese bandits a free hand. And if the *Nation*, a liberal magazine, joins the world-wide protest against the Japanese bandits, this

“liberalism” of the “Left-wing” isolationists hastens to the help of the Japanese with the “embarrassing fact” that the *Nation* is really defending the profits of Standard Oil.

The *Nation's* crime, in their eyes, is all the worse, because they described these tankers as “three American ships containing American refugees.” That they actually did contain American refugees is only another of those devilishly clever tricks for which Standard Oil is famous. But Norman Thomas and his friends will expose this trick, and with “true liberalism” will hand over to Japan the liberal privileges of doing what it wishes not only with the Chinese people but also with any Americans who fail to obey their orders and get out of China and stay out—especially if they are fleeing on Standard Oil tankers.

Thus does isolationism come to the service of the Japanese bandits, betray the Chinese people, and surrender American rights—all in the name of fighting against Standard Oil and American imperialism! Truly, it is a wonderful “Left wing” that lines up with William Randolph Hearst, Hamilton Fish, Father Coughlin, and Norman Thomas, with the common demand that we get out of China precisely when the Chinese want us to stay and the Japanese army and navy has ordered us out. You will excuse us Communists if we say that this kind of “left wing” smells awfully bad to us, and we have nothing in common with it.

The isolationists are determined that nothing shall be allowed to disturb the serenity of their “neutrality.” Therefore their main interest in life is to prove that all foreign governments are equally bad, the fascist bandits no worse than those of the democratic countries, and perhaps even a little better since they have the virtue of frankness. And, above all, they would engage our sympathies on the side of the bandit powers and against the democracies by describing the bandits as the “have nots,” the “proletarians among the nations,” and

the democracies as the "have," whose wealth is to blame for the aggression of the bandits.

How false and misleading is this facile classification of "haves" and "have nots," instead of the correct one of "peaceful" and "war-making" governments, is clear from the most cursory examination of events leading up to today's world crisis. Was Manchuria one of the "haves" in 1931, when Japan grabbed it by force? Was Ethiopia one of the "haves," even as compared with poverty-stricken Italy, when Mussolini raped this backward but peaceful nation? Is Spain one of the "haves" to incite Mussolini and Hitler to their invasion? Is Austria one of the "haves" as compared with Germany, to excuse Hitler's latest aggression? Is Czechoslovakia, next on Hitler's list, one of the "haves"? Is the whole China, bleeding from the ferocious Japanese assault, paying for the sin of being more wealthy than Japan? And if the "have" and "have not" classification, used to drum up sympathy for the bandit nations by our isolationists, really means that they propose to divide up the wealth of the world in favor of the bandits to buy them off, do our isolationists propose that the United States, with almost half the wealth of the world, is to present the bandits with its proportionate share of the bribe? Merely to ask these questions is to expose the hypocritical dishonesty of the "have" and "have not" classification, as nothing but an empty apology for the war-makers, to excuse and condone their violent seizure of the weakest and most "have not" countries.

That does not, of course, mean that the greatest and richest democracies are not in danger. England, France, and the United States are certainly in deadly danger. England is in danger, before all, because she is ruled by a group which is more and more tending to enter into partnership with fascism. France is in danger, before all, because her "two hundred families" and their agents are in league with Hitler and Mussolini, and conspire a fascist *coup d'état* with their help.



The United States is in danger because our "economic royalists," holding economic power unparalleled in history, are moving toward fascism. All the democracies are in danger, because of the confusion of their counsels, and their inability hitherto to find a common path to ensure peace. It is these dangers from within the democracies that give menacing power to the drive toward world conquest by the bandit dictators.

The fight to maintain peace and democracy, to halt the march of the war-makers and fascists, is the precondition for all hopes of human progress today. This task must unite all the forces of progress among the people, regardless of our differences on other questions, all progressive Democrats and Republicans, Socialists, and Communists, and especially the great mass of working people and farmers.

We of the Communist Party have our own particular views about the necessities of future progress of the United States and of the world. We believe that the final solution of all our problems will require the transfer of our national economy from private ownership to social ownership and operation for the common benefit of all. We will continue to do our utmost to convince the majority of the American people to that program. But we are keenly aware that a relatively small minority of the population as yet share our views on this fundamental reorganization. We have a long and arduous task of education ahead of us, before we can lead a majority of the American people to the establishment of socialism. And in the meantime we want to do everything in our power to prevent the victory of fascism, and the consequent world disaster of war, which would throw back the prospects of socialism together with all progress into the mire of universal catastrophe. This view we share with the majority of the people. We want to help organize that majority to secure guarantees against fascism and war.

On the basis of these views, the Communist Party offers its

cooperation to all honest democrats, progressives, and lovers of peace. We have given the utmost guarantees of the solidity and permanence of our policy, in the self-sacrificing performance of our tasks in building the democratic front. We have earned our place as recognized participants in this democratic front. No one can deny us this place, except by adopting the Hitlerian formula of the "anti-Communist" alliance of the bandit powers, by capitulation to the enemy before the fight is well under way.

But America will certainly reject the Hitler slogans. America will resume her old proud place in the vanguard of world progress. America will not turn aside toward a vain and false isolation. America will take a leading part in preserving the world, and thereby herself, from the disasters of fascism and war. America will take the path toward concerted action of all the peaceful and democratic forces of the world. Our present capacities and our past history join in giving us this assurance. We of the Communist movement will do our best to help realize this promise.

## 5. THE TRADE UNIONS AND PEACE

**N**OWHERE is the national debate on concerted action versus isolation being conducted more seriously than in the trade unions. And nowhere will the results be more important, for the trade union movement is the backbone of the democratic camp against fascism and war. There is no possibility for a determined course of concerted action without the wholehearted backing of the organized working class.

It is therefore highly important to know what are the currents of trade union thought arising out of the great debate now going on.

As late as a year ago, the trade union movement in its large majority was dominated by isolationist moods and ideas, and in general tended to ignore world affairs. In this it was but continuing uncritically the course adopted after the disillusionment of the first post-war period out of which arose the whole isolationist tendency.

With the sharpening of the war danger, however, the trade unions have followed the general trend to re-evaluate the whole question. The trend of their debates on the question has been in the direction, more and more, of taking up the position of concerted action and rejecting isolation. This is in accord with the historic tendency of organized labor away from narrow nationalism and toward internationalism.

It cannot be said that the trade unions stand in the vanguard of the movement for a peace policy based on concerted

action, taking the labor movement as a whole. But some sections of the labor movement are standing in the forefront.

First of all should be considered the trade unions which are connected with the American League for Peace and Democracy (formerly the American League Against War and Fascism). In its Third Congress, in the beginning of 1936, the League had representation of unions combining about 650,000 members; at the Fourth Congress, in November, 1937, the representation rose to over 1,600,000, while additional unions not represented but endorsing the League's program brought the total to well over 2,000,000. This is 25 to 30 per cent of the organized labor movement.

More significant than the rise in numbers, however, is the change in political outlook. At the 1936 congress, the trade unions shared the isolationist moods which caused that congress to adopt a program which straddled the issue of concerted action versus isolation. But in the 1937 congress, the trade unions were in the forefront of the great swing in sentiment which placed the American League squarely upon the side of concerted action.

Upon the issue of peace policy, there is not discernible any clear differentiation between the two main centers of trade unionism, the A. F. of L. and the C.I.O., their differences being mainly in their modes of expressing themselves. The A. F. of L. discourages expression from its lower bodies, and tries to concentrate its pronouncements on peace in the higher officials, while the C.I.O. shies away from taking a position in its higher councils, but grants full freedom of expression in its lower and constituent bodies. The result is that, with the current being toward concerted action for peace in both main branches of the movement, this is shown by the C.I.O. unions mainly through their industrial and local branches, while in the A. F. of L. it is in the main through the expressions of the leaders.

However deep may be the discrepancy between the views of members and leaders of the A. F. of L. on many questions, there is no reason to doubt that on the issue of peace policy the dominant trend was expressed by William Green in the *American Federationist* for February, 1938. Precisely because we of the Communist Party are in sharp collision with Mr. Green on other questions, it becomes all the more necessary to register an important degree of approval of his expressions on this question of peace. The following quotations, taken from William Green's editorial, are fundamentally correct and become of high significance because they represent the views of the main body of the more conservative camp of trade unionism. Mr. Green said:

“When the first European country initiated a war of aggression to extend its territories, no concerted effort was made to maintain the integrity of the nation attacked and to maintain respect for international peace and law. Under protection of this international situation Japan made her first raid on China. . . . As a consequence Europe lives in fear of the shot that will proclaim general war. Since the life of the civilized world is organized on a world basis, it is practically impossible for any nation to live within itself, and no nation can escape becoming involved in a general war. The only way to protection against irresponsible nations and to world peace is to set up international agencies for adjusting our common problems and for enforcing the peace of the world. In other words, we must extend to international relations political organization that will reclaim this area from anarchy and conflict.

“The majority of the citizens of the United States deeply resent the action of Japan in making an unprovoked invasion of China and waging war upon her civilian population, threatening to destroy one of the oldest civilizations. We condemn such action as do many other countries, but only concerted action can make Japan feel the effects of our disapproval. The A. F. of L. has urged its membership to boycott the manufactured goods of Japan. While that action has been effective, we realize that only a general boycott can bring the desired economic pressure on Japan. We realize that unless the democratically governed people stand together refusing to sell arms and munitions or to make loans to any country violating interna-

tional peace and law, the other countries, whose interests lie in aggression and arbitrary rule, will make common cause with Japan, and protests of individual countries will be useless."

The central core of Mr. Green's argumentation, namely, the indivisibility of peace and the necessity for concerted action to maintain it, is sound and incontrovertible, notwithstanding that some formulations reveal reactionary prejudices and nationalist preconceptions. In practice, of course, Mr. Green and his associates do not carry out this line. They are opposing international trade union unity, they betray republican Spain, they stultify their boycott activities against Japan by placing it under the Hearstian slogan of "Buy only American goods." Yet it is certainly a fact to be welcomed that the American Federation of Labor is predominantly on the side of concerted action for peace. We can only applaud the main thought expressed by Mr. Green, and demand that the A. F. of L. apply it in life.

The Atlantic City conference of the unions of the Committee for Industrial Organization, held in October, 1937, like the A. F. of L. convention in Denver at that time, adopted a decision for boycott of Japanese goods. It did not, however, adopt a general peace policy.

The first and clearest declaration of policy from the C.I.O. unions came from the convention of the National Maritime Union last summer. It declared for embargo against aggressor governments, help to their victims, and concerted action among the peace-loving and treaty-maintaining peoples. This clear-headed and well-formulated resolution was a model of working-class internationalism. It is no accident that it could be unanimously adopted by precisely this union, ahead of the whole labor movement, because the seamen, from the very nature of their work and life, are compelled to think hard and deep and realistically on all questions of war and peace.

In the United Mine Workers' convention, held last Decem-

ber, we had the expression of the largest and most influential union of the C.I.O. The resolution adopted was noteworthy, on its positive side, for its forthright condemnation of Germany, Italy, and Japan as aggressors making war "to impose their vicious principles" upon democratic and weaker nations, and for its resolute endorsement of the boycott of Japanese goods. It was further noteworthy for its decisive rejection of all the nostrums of isolationism, and for the emphatic rejection of an attempt to amend the resolution to include a condemnation of Communism. Thus the United Mine Workers took decisive steps away from isolationism, and avoided the fascist trap of the anti-Communist alliance, although it failed to give positive expression to a rounded-out program for concerted action.

The Ohio State Convention of the C.I.O. unions, held in February this year, representing 250,000 members, adopted a resolution repeating the decisive sections of the Mine Workers' resolution, but adding, significantly, endorsement of the O'Connell Peace Bill (H.R. 527) which provides for embargo of the aggressors and help to their victims.

About the same time, the Labor Legislative Conference of Western Pennsylvania, representing several hundred thousand members, took President Roosevelt's Chicago speech proposing quarantine of the fascist governments as the central point for its resolution, which was unanimously adopted. This brief resolution, remarkable for the conciseness with which it declares for a policy of concerted action, is worth quoting in full:

"The people of the world are face to face with a new world war with all its devastation, bloodshed and death. The war-mad fascists, Hitler, Mussolini and the Mikado, threaten civilization and the peace of all humanity. From this war there will be no escape unless we protest and vigorously oppose this threatening war menace.

"The American people being opposed to war and desirous to maintain peace must add their support to the efforts of all peace-

loving people throughout the world to maintain peace and save itself and all humanity from destruction. Therefore be it

“Resolved: That this Social and Labor Conference declares its opposition to the war plans of the fascist war aggressors and pledges to support the peace policies of our President for cooperation with the people of all nations for the maintenance of peace and against fascist war aggression.”

Such expression as we have noted above are typical of the American labor movement's trend of thought in the national debate now going on. They show a tremendous movement to break away from isolationism, and to find the path to peace in concerted international action in which the United States should take a leading role commensurate with our position in the world.

One important exception to this trend must be noted in the leadership of the Auto Workers' Union, mainly expressed by its president, Homer Martin. In the past few months Mr. Martin has stepped forward as a national leader of the isolationist camp, in fact almost its only important trade union figure. He appeared recently at a New York meeting of the isolationist “united front,” which its chairman, Mr. Villard, announced had been organized by “the tireless energy of Mr. Bertram Wolfe,” another of the speakers. Mr. Wolfe, it so happens, is a “tireless” member of the Lovestone group, closely associated internationally with the Bukharin-Brandler group, exposed as agents of the fascist governments actively engaged in inciting and preparing war. Mr. Martin, who seems to be particularly ignorant on international questions, takes his policy predigested from his close associate Lovestone, and openly demands complete acceptance of the demands of Japanese imperialism by the United States government. His isolationist shouting is handy, at this moment, to obscure the unfortunate position in which his policies, under the guidance of Lovestone, have placed the auto union in relation to the labor-hating auto corporations.



The exceptional position of Mr. Martin among labor leaders, as an extreme isolationist, can hardly be taken as an expression of the real trend of thought among the broad mass of auto workers. The auto workers, like the miners, steel workers, and others who adopted the clear-cut decisions for concerted action in Ohio and Pennsylvania, are unquestionably breaking away from isolationism. If they had an opportunity to make a choice by ballot, between President Roosevelt's Chicago speech of last October, and Mr. Martin's recent New York speech, there is not the slightest doubt that they would support Roosevelt against Martin by an overwhelming majority.

Closely connected with the trade unions are such mass political movements as the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party which controls the state administration, and the Washington Commonwealth Federation which is a rising political power in its state. Both these great organizations are definitely on record for concerted action for peace and against isolationism.

Summing up, we can say on the basis of the evidence that the trade union movement as a whole, both A. F. of L. and C.I.O., is rapidly breaking away from the isolationist moods and ideas which dominated it for many years. It is, with various degrees of clarity, already adopting the basic principles of a program of concerted action of all peace-loving peoples to restrain the war-makers. It will certainly, in the not distant future, become the most solid, consistent, and determined fighter to realize in life, in the practical actions of the United States government, the principles of collective security.

## 6. THE NAVAL BILL AND A PEACE PROGRAM

LAST week Maury Maverick made a speech in the House, in which his main point was the declaration that the Communists are for the Naval Appropriations Bill. Later, to substantiate his point, he gave *The New York Times* some extracts from my speech in Chapel Hill to the Carolina Political Union.\*

Certainly we Communists have criticized, and continue to do so, Maverick's way of fighting the big naval appropriations. But we have never endorsed the enormous naval proposals, directly or indirectly. Our friend Maury was indulging in a little old-fashioned demagoguery when he made that speech. Of course, something must be forgiven a man who is in a tough spot, who feels the ineffectiveness of his arguments, and who, therefore, is casting about desperately for new points which will appeal to the prejudices of his audience. In Congress as in the New York Assembly at Albany, there seems to be a majority ready to outlaw the multiplication table if it can be proved that the Communists have endorsed it. Since the small Communist Party endorses the United States Constitution, these gentlemen have been deeply embarrassed; they have stopped talking about the Constitution for fear they might be suspected of secret connections with the Communists.

Maverick's pleasantries, however, cannot hide the deep seriousness of the problem that is posed, when he and other

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\* This speech appears as Chapter 4 of this pamphlet.—*Ed.*

progressives abdicate the field of foreign policy in favor of the reactionaries. Maverick and Senator LaFollette, by their stand on the question of peace and how to maintain it, are decisively strengthening the hands of the reactionary forces which they fight against so admirably on domestic questions.

Maverick and LaFollette are, to do them exact justice, not leaders of isolationism so much as its victims. Neither of them has contributed any independent thought to the question, but rather they reproduce and express the isolationist moods and prejudices of their particular social backgrounds. Neither is a "convinced" isolationist as yet, in the deeper sense of having thought the question through to its end, faced all the consequences, and finally adopted isolationism knowing what inevitably flows from it. This fact gives us a right to hope that neither of them are as yet lost to the camp of concerted action for peace. Both of them, surely, will review the whole question again when their constituents back home swing over to a positive peace policy. In this sense they are practical men.

Senator LaFollette, for example, certainly did not know when he spoke on March 6 in New York at an "isolationist" meeting, that the organizer of that meeting, Bertram D. Wolfe, is a member of the Lovestone group, which is connected with the Bukharin group that admitted its organic relations with the Japanese secret service. He surely did not notice that, from the same platform with him, Wolfe gave out the slogan calling for the defeat of America in any conflict with Japan. Norman Thomas was there with full knowledge, but LaFollette was in the fullest sense an "innocent" on all these things.

Congressman Maverick is reported to have passed the judgment on Norman Thomas, not long ago, that "he insists, on principle, upon always being in a minority." But the same criticism seems to have a special application to Maverick himself, when he throws his influence on the side of isolation, and thus builds up the very foundation of the big navy

advocates, and then, to save his conscience, fights against the big navy bill which his isolationism has helped make certain of adoption by an overwhelming majority.

No one doubts that the overwhelming majority of the American people are for peace, against war. But at the same time an equally large majority, if Congress is an even approximate measure, approves the big naval appropriations. The reason for this is the fact that the United States actually stands alone in the world, without as yet any practical program of collaboration with other peace forces in the world, and without any program for making its own influence felt in restraining the war-makers, but, on the contrary, a practical program which is encouraging and helping the war-makers. So long as the United States stands alone, and is itself contributing to the war danger in the world, the simple common sense of the masses will continue to align them behind the big navy advocates as the obvious answer to the war-making forces that threaten world peace.

Maverick is opposed to the proposed enormous increase of the navy. So are we of the Communist Party. Maverick has a splendid opportunity to reach the ear of the country with his position in Congress as Democratic leader of the progressives, in a Democratic Congress, while we of the Communist Party are a small and persecuted group, able to reach no ears except through our own limited channels. And yet I venture to say that, despite our handicaps, the Communists are convincing ten times as many people to oppose the big naval increase as Maverick can convince. That is because we, first of all, undermine and destroy the prejudices of isolationism which are at the foundation of the big navy idea, while Maverick supports isolation but stops short only of its logical consequence in the naval appropriations.

Let this much be clear. The naval bill is the inevitable conclusion to the policy of "neutrality" and isolation, that still

remains the practical foreign policy of the United States. No matter how much we Communists vote together with the Mavericks against a big navy, so long as isolation remains our practical foreign policy, the vast expansion of the navy will be carried over our dwindling votes. But to the degree that all progressives, including the Communists, can swing the country to a practical policy of concerted action for peace, to that extent we also organize the masses to cut naval and military expenditures by making them obviously unnecessary.

There is still much confused thinking, caused by confusion as to what is really the policy of the United States government. Some people think that because President Roosevelt made a strong speech for concerted action to restrain the war-makers on October 5, 1937, at Chicago, therefore the policy of the United States government is no longer an isolationist policy. And because last Thursday, Secretary of State Hull made an international radio broadcast along the same lines, they become confirmed in their impression. But, unfortunately, it is not true.

Roosevelt's speech was a splendid contribution toward a change in policy—but it did not yet bring about the change. Hull's speech registered a continuing and growing determination to change—but the change is still not made. These speeches are, of course, also political acts in some degree, and influence the world, because they *promise* (or threaten!) to change American practical policy. But meanwhile—and this is the rub—practical policy remains isolationist.

And that is the central contradiction in the Roosevelt Administration, from which spring a hundred paradoxes. The gap between word and deed becomes the more glaring, the more international relations sharpen, the more imminent becomes the war danger.

Litvinov spoke to the world also on Thursday, on behalf of the Soviet Union. He suggested an international confer-

ence to organize restraint of the war-makers. The spirit and direction of his declaration were in close harmony with the speech of Hull. No one can doubt that the entire Soviet Union is behind Litvinov's initiative with full strength. But Washington has not responded as yet to Moscow's proposal. The reason is this, that while Litvinov's speech represented the considered policy of the whole Soviet government and people, Hull's speech represented an *aspiration* toward a policy, while the practical policy being carried out is still the opposite.

This fact was dramatically emphasized by the simultaneous bombardment of Barcelona, with the killing and wounding of over 4,000 people, mostly women and children, by German and Italian airplanes *carrying ammunition made in the United States*. In the same week boats sailed from Baltimore for Germany carrying two thousand additional aerial bombs, to replace those just dropped on Barcelona. Japanese and German boats continued to load and ship American scrap iron, for the making of shrapnel to kill Chinese and Spanish women and children. And at the same time President Roosevelt declared no move will be made to lift the embargo against the Spanish Republic, even though it is in violation of our solemn treaty obligations to that nation.

The United States is every day helping the fascist war-makers in a practical way, while reading them moral lessons in speeches. The United States is denouncing the treaty breakers, but at the same moment is breaking its own treaty with the Spanish nation. The United States places an embargo against the weak and helpless victims of aggression, who could not threaten us if they would and who would not if they could, but it carefully refrains from an embargo against the strong aggressors, who threaten the peace of the whole world.

*What a picture of blatant hypocrisy all this must appear to the rest of the world! How the fascist war-makers must laugh*

*at our moral lectures directed against them! And how low must our moral authority be falling among the peace-seeking peoples of the world, who know that America, among all nations, is the only one with the power to throw the scale one way or the other without resorting to warlike measures.*

With such contradiction between our expressed ideals of concerted action for peace, and our practical isolationism which is service to the fascist war-makers, the colossal naval expenditures proposed only create further confusion. Still worse, the fight for and against the naval bill is such as to perpetuate that confusion, taking attention away from the fundamental questions of foreign policy making for peace or war.

Reflecting and perpetuating this contradiction is the spectacle of many congressional progressives, who are the best fighters for Roosevelt's domestic program, deserting the President on his proposals for a positive peace policy, thus throwing the decisive influence in foreign policy over to the reactionary side.

The only way out of this swamp is to organize the masses who favor concerted action for peace, arm them with a sharp and clear understanding of the issue, bring them to expression as aggressively and as clearly as the minority of convinced isolationists whose influence they must overcome, and show the Congressmen that it is just as practical politics, and maybe more so, to demand the execution in life of the President's Chicago speech as to oppose it. Wipe out the contradictions in American foreign policy, wipe out the contradictions between the line-up on foreign and domestic policy, implement the Kellogg Pact and the high ideals expressed by Roosevelt and Hull, accept the latest proposal of Litvinov—this is the road toward keeping America out of war by keeping war out of the world. And this is the way, therefore, to render obviously unnecessary any enormous expansion of the war expenditures that burden the people.

## 7. A LONG-TERM POLICY

THE editors of the *New Republic*, together with some Socialist Party spokesmen, have recently defended their isolationist advocacy by speculating (in print) that the Communist Party will itself soon abandon its energetic support to a policy of concerted action. The utter unsoundness of that speculation is of a single piece with their whole isolationist position. The policy of concerted action for peace is not a short-time or emergency policy merely; it is valid for a whole period, and for all circumstances of that period, whether in the fight to prevent war or the fight to end a war already under way. The immediate practical aspects of such a policy may change from time to time, as some forces swing over from one side to the other, and as war is broadened or narrowed, but the essence of the policy is valid so long as war is the main danger to the world.

In saying this, of course, there is no intention to deny the *emergency* phase of the fight for peace today. These are truly critical days, when millions of lives hang in the balance, and when the balance may be turned one way or the other, accordingly as the United States turns decisively toward isolation or toward international cooperation for peace. The time is short for the masses of the United States to come to a conclusion—if they really desire to exercise their full potentialities for world peace. Time is the essence of the problem, and haste is needed as never before in history.

It is necessary, however, to dissolve once and for all the



fatally mistaken notion that international cooperation for peace is a makeshift policy, hurriedly concocted for an emergency, which must at a moment's notice win full support of all its potential adherents or be dropped as a failure.

At this moment, the dangerous implications of such a short-sighted view are seen in the opinion, expressed by many shallow publicists, that the latest moves of the Chamberlain government at London, which take Britain another step away from concerted action for peace, and which strengthen the war-makers, become a signal of the bankruptcy of the policy of cooperation.

It is unfortunate that the short-sighted view seems to determine the practical course of the Washington Administration, however much President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull may reiterate their sound and correct ideas in general terms. The Administration had opened the door for the repeal or fundamental revision of the distasteful "Neutrality Act," when it consented to the House Foreign Relations Committee opening hearings on the various bills directed to that end. But it suddenly caused the cancellation of the hearings, when it learned of Chamberlain's latest pronouncement. It is clear that for all practical purposes the Administration is conditioning all its moves upon the leadership of England. The theory of "parallel action," which is at variance with the theory of international cooperation, is the theory that the United States must under no circumstances take the lead. It is a cowardly and dangerous theory, which is paralyzing American action at the most crucial moment, and doing incalculable damage to the world.

American policy at this moment is thus subordinated, in the most humiliating form, to dictation from Downing Street, London. And one of the ironic jokes of history is this, that precisely those who are most pleased by this are the men who have been wailing loudest against the policy of concerted

action, on the grounds that it would subordinate us to British interests! This paradox reveals that the isolationists do not fear taking policy from London so long as the reactionary Chamberlain determines the policy, but they refuse to have agreement with London only if the Labor Party determines the policy.

That may be completely consistent for Hearst and Coughlin, for whom the British Labor Party is only another web of Stalin's "red network." But Norman Thomas, Frederick Libby, and Oswald Garrison Villard swallow the identical conclusion with equal equanimity. They are no more disturbed by their alliance with Chamberlain abroad, than they are by their hook-up with the most reactionary circles at home.

Norman Thomas, especially, stands in an ambiguous position, for which he had offered the public not a word of explanation. He is National Chairman of the Socialist Party, affiliated with the Labor and Socialist International; his brother Socialists all over the world are fully committed to the policy of concerted action for peace, both as national parties and collectively through the Executive Committee of their International. But Thomas and his party in America fight for Chamberlain's line and against the line of the Labor Party, co-members with Thomas in the International. Thomas fights against the line of Blum, Socialist Premier of France, and against the line of the French Confederation of Labor, and for the line of the Right-wing Radicals who keep Blum's government paralyzed in relation to Spain. Thomas fights against the line of Negrin, Socialist Premier of Spain, and supports those elements who are trying to overthrow Negrin and his government. Thomas fights against the line of the Scandinavian Socialist Parties, whose leaders participate in their governments and demand collective security. Thomas is in full and complete contradiction to the policy of every European Socialist Party and of the whole organized labor move-

ment of Europe. But he remains in the same International with them, and offers not a single word of explanation to America. He fights against their official position—but in America he attributes this position only to the Communists and says he is against it because it is a “Russian” policy. *He never explains that he is fighting against the position upon which the world Socialist and Communist movements are agreed.* He never explains that his policy is not only isolation for the United States government, but also isolation for United States Socialists from their brothers in other lands. If he would frankly withdraw from the Labor and Socialist International, this would at least remove some of the worst hypocrisy, even if it would leave him in error as deeply as before.

Thomas may reply that his brothers abroad carry out their professed policy of international cooperation very poorly or even not at all. That is an entirely different issue. To the extent that they do execute their declared policy they are working for international unity and for peace, and the problem is to secure the execution of an established policy; but the more Thomas carries out his policy, the more is international unity disrupted and the cause of peace damaged, and the problem with Thomas is therefore to change his policy.

Roosevelt and Hull must be sharply criticized for allowing the reactionary maneuvers of Chamberlain to determine American policy. We must call upon them to have the courage of their own convictions. If Chamberlain, in control of British policy, does not agree with them, all the more reason for implementing their declared convictions together with those powers which do agree, without delay. The United States, which is in the most advantageous position of any nation, must assume the leadership, the responsibility which we inherit from our privileged position.

It is precisely against American leadership in the struggle

for peace that the isolationists fight frenziedly, hysterically. Whenever this idea is broached, they immediately begin to tell us that the Americans are such nincompoops, so constitutionally inferior, such utter incompetents, that we cannot engage in a leading role in international affairs without being cheated out of our pants. They picture Uncle Sam as the country bumpkin who went to town once in 1917, bought a gold brick, and now must be kept strictly at home on the farm in order to keep him from giving the old homestead away to the first sharper he meets.

Of course, this caricature of Uncle Sam is tempered by the assurance that if our brains are mush, at least our hearts are pure gold. If Europe has a monopoly upon intelligence, then America, they assure us, has a monopoly on virtue. But to keep our virtue, we must remain strictly at home behind our garden walls. We may continue to help the war-makers, but at all costs we must not help their victims or we are irretrievably lost. Such is the isolationist estimate of American character and intelligence.

If there was any truth in this gross caricature, then it might occur to even the most empty-headed of such a moron nation that perhaps we are predestined to fall victims to the devilish clever men of other lands, isolation or no. In such a case, the quicker we get some of those brains on our side the better, if we are really convinced we have no brains of our own.

As for me, speaking as an American whose line can be traced back to 1680 in Virginia, and speaking also for the latest naturalized citizen, I would like to denounce this whole picture as a vile slander upon our people. It may be accurate for some of the degenerate sons and daughters of our "sixty families," who furnish most of the money for isolationist propaganda, but it has not the remotest resemblance to the American workers and farmers, and those middle classes who have not been corrupted by monopoly capital. Americans do

not claim any monopoly upon virtue, and we hotly resent any idea that we are excluded from our share of intelligence. We can take care of ourselves, and hold up our end, anywhere and everywhere, provided we learn how to take care of our own reactionaries—and muddleheads—right here in America itself.

America must step forward. Litvinov, for the Soviet Union, after waiting long for an initiative from elsewhere, called for an international conference. If Roosevelt and Hull, for reasons of "practical politics"—that reason which produces so many impractical results—or reasons of prestige, cannot directly respond to that initiative, then let them take the initiative themselves. And if we want something practical to result, let the United States clear its own record a bit to win more international respect, by canceling the infamous "Neutrality Act," and adopting the O'Connell Peace Act, on the basis of which real cooperation is possible.

There are still some people who argue: concerted action was possible several years ago, as a practical measure, but now with so many great powers out of the League and others showing their contempt for it, this has become a utopian project. That is the same thing as saying that concerted action for peace is practical, so long as there is no immediate danger of war. When war approaches as a serious prospect, they say, concerted action becomes impractical. That is of a piece with the logic which assures us a certain remedy is very good so long as we are not sick, but as soon as we fall ill, it is dangerous to take it. It is precisely now, when every action or inaction is fraught with many dangers, that the peace-seeking peoples of the world must find the way to act together or face the consequence of going down together in a chaos of fascism and war.

To the degree that war spreads, to that degree does the policy of concerted action among the peace-seeking peoples

become all the more important and necessary. This is a long-time policy, which must direct the fight for peace over a protracted period. It is the only road for the prevention of war, and it is the only road for the ending of war already begun. Concerted action must begin at home, by the concerted voice and action of all our fighters for peace. President Roosevelt has indicated the correct policy in his speeches, but he still lacks the courage or the support necessary to put it into effect. Let us see that he does not fail for want of support.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**T**HERE have been but a few questions from readers in response to our invitation. Most of them have been fundamental questions so directly involved in the central arguments, that the main articles must stand as my answer to them. But from a long letter from D. W. C., Jr., I cull the following, which can best be answered in this Questions and Answers section:

*Q. Is it not possible to agree with you thoroughly on the aim of collective security, and yet to have strong doubts as to whether collective security will achieve that aim?*

A. Yes, undoubtedly, and the great mass of supporters for concerted action have but recently passed through those doubts, and many more are only now in process of overcoming their doubts. Precisely that fact is what makes the national debate now going on of such supreme importance. Most people who hold to isolationist views are not conscious that these views lead to surrender to fascism; most of them are not conscious, also, that the active agents of fascism in America are the most zealous ideologists of isolationism. When we expose these roots and consequences

of isolationism, we are by no means imputing a desire to help fascism or promote war to all those who are influenced by these ideas.

*Q. Granted that effective concerted action would gain the results hoped for, is it not possible to doubt the possibility of securing such concerted action?*

A. Yes, it is always possible to doubt, and the right to do so (at least in secret) is a right which even a fascist regime could not fully deprive one of. But such doubt, persisted in to the point of paralyzing action, on the part of enough people, could itself become the factor defeating the realizable program. Since concerted action is the only way proposed by anyone for maintaining world peace, the only question involved, in the final analysis, is whether it is worth while to fight for world peace with all the forces that can be united, whatever they may be. The isolationists frankly abandon the goal of maintaining peace, they accept the war as inevitable; they only hold out the illusory hope that, if we do not fight for peace, we may be allowed to stay out of the world war—at least for a short time!

*Q. Assuming that the fascist powers are restrained, and do not answer their quarantine by general war as a last desperate measure, would this not refute the Marxian prediction that capitalism in its death agonies is impelled to more and more desperate acts of self-preservation?*

A. No, successful curbing of the fascist war-makers would in no sense be a refutation of any conclusion of Marxism; on the contrary, it would be a supreme illustration of the truths of Marxism. Such a struggle, especially clearly if successful, would finally expose monopoly capital in every land, and all the reactionary forces under its leadership, as the force making for fascism and war, for the destruction of all civilization, for the betrayal of each nation from within to promote its own selfish interests, and would pose the necessity of socialism, the central point of Marxian thought, with full sharpness and clarity before the great masses of every land, especially of the industrialized countries. And precisely this, the taking control of their own destinies by the masses of the people, led by the industrial working class, is the conclusion and crowning point of Marxism; what better example could be given of this than successfully to bring the fascists to a halt?

*Q. Assuming that war between Japan and the United States arises out of the situation in China, as illustrated by the Panay incident, would the Communists support the Roosevelt Administration in such a war?*

A. All of our proposals are directed toward creating such a relation of forces as to prevent war and to rectify wrongs without resort to war. If in spite of all our efforts to this end, war between Japan and the United States arises out of the present world situation, it is our firm conviction that the cause of progress and democracy everywhere would demand the defeat of Japan. We would support the American government in such a war to the extent that its policies and methods contributed toward the national independence of China, and the protection of democracy and progressive policies at home and abroad. We reject the slogan of defeating "our own government" as the main orientation in the present world situation, in which the American government is clearly not aggressive nor moving to subject other peoples.

*Q. Does "collective security" or concerted action include military sanctions?*

A. Not necessarily, and we are not proposing military sanctions. Such military sanctions as might prove necessary could be undertaken by the nations most directly involved, without the United States, but with American moral and economic support.

*Q. Is advocacy of the Ludlow Amendment inconsistent with concerted action for peace and democracy?*

A. Yes it is inconsistent, but doubtless there are many people who still find it possible to combine these two positions.

*Q. Are you in sympathy with the effort to stir up hostility to Japan as a result of the Panay incident?*

A. I think it was absolutely correct for all progressives to use the Panay incident to arouse the American people to the criminal and bandit policy of Japan in China, to crystallize American sentiment against Japan, and to try thereby to cut off Japan from the enormous help she is receiving from the United States in murdering millions of people and crushing an independent friendly nation. I am only sorry we Communists did not make effective enough use of the incident for this purpose.

*Q. Are you primarily interested in the welfare of the people of the United States or the welfare of the proletariat of the world?*

A. Starting from my primary interest in the welfare of the workers and farmers of the United States, I have learned that this cannot be advanced by policies based upon *exclusively* national considerations, but must always be adjusted to the needs of international cooperation. Any



departure from this viewpoint will always and inevitably lead to enthroning the most reactionary forces in power within the nation. All apparent conflicts between the interests of the American toilers and the toilers of other lands are only illusions, created by the reactionaries in order to break down international solidarity for their own reactionary purposes. The Communist Party always finds the common interests of the peoples as the determining factor in every major problem and situation.

*Q. Do you agree that the President's Chicago speech was motivated by vague moral humanitarian ideas, having nothing fundamentally in common with your realistic Communist (class struggle) ideas on the subject of fascist aggression?*

A. I realize that the President shares none of our understanding of the class struggle, nor of our objectives of the future society, but that does not change our opinion that the full execution of his Chicago speech by the United States government is in the interests of progress, and therefore in the last analysis of the future of socialist society.

## TWO LETTERS

TO THE NEW MASSES:

SINCE the correspondence given below, the *New Republic* has gone over openly to the Chamberlain line (March 30 issue) by advocating rapprochement with Hitler without political conditions. This is a logical follow-up of the letter to *The American Mercury*.

EARL BROWDER.

March 4, 1938

Dear Mr. Browder:

It seems to me that you were very unfair in your reference to me in the *New Masses* of March 8. You say "Thus Trotskyites boldly collaborate in the fascist *American Mercury*, and Bruce Bliven writes them 'explanatory' letters."

I have written just one letter to the *American Mercury*. They accused me of being a Communist, and I replied defending myself from that charge. Your insinuation that this is an act of friendship on my part toward the *American Mercury* is either an extraordinary piece of muddlement, or something worse. What would you have had me do? Permit their long attack upon me, in an article, to go unchallenged?

Sincerely,  
BRUCE BLIVEN.

March 8, 1938

Dear Mr. Bliven:

Upon returning to the city I find your letter of March 4. First of all I must apologize for having spoken of your letter to the *American Mercury* in the same sentence with the reference to the Trotskyist collaboration with that organ. This inclusion of the two matters in that single sentence was wrong because it could be misinterpreted that I was trying to directly connect you with the Trotskyites. Accept my apologies for this mistake.

I must, however, say that the reference to your letter, if separated from its direct context with reference to the Trotskyites, was in order and must stand. The very fact that you considered it necessary to defend yourself from a charge of the fascist *American Mercury* that you are a Communist and to defend yourself in an explanatory letter to that publication gave some justification for the *Mercury's* exultant comments that their charges against you had borne good fruit, inasmuch as it had brought you into the international anti-Communist pact. I did not insinuate that this was an act of friendship upon your part to the *American Mercury*. I was pointing out that it was a step toward capitulation to the *American Mercury*. The *American Mercury* itself so greeted it, and you did not consider this important enough to make a public statement on.

In conclusion, let me assure you that I have not the slightest desire to develop unnecessary differences. In the past period, before the sharpening of the issues of isolation, I had considered the *New Republic* representative of some of the healthier elements in the non-Communist Left circles. It has been a great disappointment to me to see the *New Republic*, under your leadership, break down so completely on this issue.

Sincerely,  
EARL BROWDER.



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