

AMERICAN IMPERIALISM, LEADER OF WORLD REACTION

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WORLD WAR I, from 1914 to 1918, was a struggle between two groups of imperialist powers for control of the world. After four years of the most terrible slaughter humanity had ever before experienced, a sigh of relief went up all over the world. Never again, hundreds of millions were convinced, would mankind be guilty of a similar suicidal folly. Surely an end would be put to imperialism and war. The League of Nations, formed shortly afterward, was hailed as the organization that would maintain world peace. But hardly were the guns of World War I silenced than capitalist forces and trends began to operate which, only 21 years later, were to produce an even more terrible and devastating human butchery.

Now that World War II has barely concluded—indeed the peace treaties are not yet written and the United States has not even officially declared that the war is at an end—the world is once more alarmed by rumors of war. War-mongering is in full cry again. Particularly in the United States, millions of peo-

ple have already decided that a World War III is a certainty, and many are conditioning themselves into accepting the death of at least one-third of our total population in the atomic war that they see as inevitable in the near future.

The world situation is indeed threatening. Reactionary forces are at work, making for economic chaos, fascism, rampant imperialism and war, similar to those that operated in the interim between the two great wars and which finally culminated in the catastrophe of World War II. We should not be astonished at the similarity of these developments, however. Lenin has taught us that we are living in the period of the decay of imperialist capitalism, in the era of wars and revolutions. Naturally, therefore, capitalism throughout its decline displays certain well-marked signs of increasing reaction and crisis.

But we must not make mechanical analogies between the period following World War I and the present one opening up after World War II, for that would lead to a fatalistic acceptance of a World War III. There are profound differences between the two periods. It does not follow that this postwar period, like the last one, must also end in fascism and war. We must view the whole picture dialectically, measuring the shifting relations between the forces of reaction and progress. If we do this, we shall see that the situation following World War II can have a totally different outcome from that

which developed after World War I. Before analyzing the present post-war situation, let us briefly review the period that followed World War I.

THE REACTIONARY OFFENSIVE AFTER WORLD WAR I

World War I was itself the manifestation of the ushering in of the general crisis of world capitalism. One of its most significant consequences was a broad revolutionary upheaval in Europe by the outraged working class. This produced the Russian revolution, as well as big revolutionary movements in Germany, Hungary and other countries. Had it not been for the betrayal of the revolution in Germany by the opportunist Social-Democrats, all Europe would undoubtedly have gone Socialist, the capitalist system would have received a stab in its heart, and there never would have been a World War II.

Desperately alarmed by this profound revolutionary upheaval after World War I, the capitalists of the world, in line with their reactionary trend, mobilized their strength for a general offensive against the forces of Socialism and democracy everywhere. The employers, with the help of Social-Democracy, centered their attack upon the Soviet Union, but they also assaulted every other phase of the peoples' political advance. The general result of this employers' offensive was not only to confine Socialism to the U.S.S.R., but to weak-

en the forces of democracy on a world scale. Even in the United States, which was far removed from the political storm center, the employers' attack was so heavy that the trade union movement lost half its numerical strength in a series of desperately fought, unsuccessful post-war strikes.

The capitalist counter-revolutionary offensive after World War I did not halt however upon checking the spread of Socialism and democracy; it rolled on, with varying intensities and tempos, to new objectives. With the rise of fascism in Italy, followed eventually by its development in Germany and a number of other countries of Eastern and Central Europe, the employers' offensive everywhere took on a new quality. It began to aim at the complete destruction of democracy and the establishment of a tyrannical capitalist control such as the world had never before known. This fascist trend was enormously stimulated by the great world economic crisis of the early 1930's, beginning with the unprecedented October, 1929, crash in the United States.

Fascism was not confined simply to those countries that adopted outright fascist regimes. Capitalism all over the world was saturated with it, its mainspring being in the ranks of finance capital—among the big bankers, industrialists and landlords. These decisive capitalist forces—in Great Britain and France, and also to a large extent in the United States

—began definitely to cultivate (“appease”) the fascist regimes in Germany, Italy and elsewhere, as the tragic stories of China, Ethiopia, Spain and Czechoslovakia made quite clear. Undoubtedly the big capitalists of the world were quite generally looking to fascism as their saviour, as the means by which they could destroy the hated and feared Soviet Union and put an end, once and for all, to trade unionism, democratic government, civil liberties, and the Socialist aspirations of the working class. For the most part they had come virtually to accept the perspective of a fascist world.

But, in the midst of this general, big capitalist drive towards fascism, another factor was at work that was destined to wreck the “fascist-world” ambitions of the capitalists of all the big countries. This was the imperialist rivalries among the capitalist great powers themselves.

In the early post-World War I days, the world situation was dominated by the imperialist victors in the war—Great Britain, France, the United States and, to a lesser extent, Japan. These powers, particularly the first two, ran the League of Nations as an instrument to further their respective imperialist ambitions. They especially infused it with an anti-Soviet spirit. With the growth of fascism in Germany, Italy, Japan and their satellites, however, and particularly in view of the appeasement policy followed by the reactionaries in Great Britain, France

and the United States, the militant leadership of the post-World War I capitalist offensive passed more and more into the hands of the fascist countries, which eventually formed themselves into the so-called Anti-Comintern Axis and quit the League of Nations.

The big capitalists in Great Britain, France and the United States also undoubtedly contemplated the establishment of a fascist world, one in which they would continue to play the dominant role. But evidently it did not suit the powerful German capitalists and their man Hitler to fulfill the role of smashing the U.S.S.R. (if they could) and then turn the fruits of victory over to the capitalists of London, Paris and New York. They had different plans. They and their Japanese allies wanted to run the world to suit themselves and to relegate the capitalists of the Western democracies to a secondary position.

It was this quarrel between the capitalist great powers as to which should dominate the contemplated fascist world that prevented the hoped-for, all-out capitalist attack, led by the Axis powers, against the U.S.S.R. And it was the realization by the peoples of the world that a victory by the fascist Axis powers would subject them to an unheard-of slavery, that made them fight so desperately for national freedom and a democratic life.

The reactionary capitalist offensive after World War I had, with its

complex of economic chaos, fascism and imperialism, finally reached its climax in 1939, in World War II—although it was a very different type of war from that for which the capitalists had planned.

THE PRESENT POSTWAR CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE

World War II, like World War I, constituted a deep intensification and climax of the general crisis of world capitalism. Not surprisingly, therefore, the capitalist system is now producing a reactionary offensive directed against everything progressive and democratic in the world. Moreover, this offensive, a master sign of capitalist decay, is manifesting itself much as it did in the interval between the two great wars, by an intensification of imperialism, by a gathering economic chaos, by a development of fascism, and by the growth of a militant war spirit. The differences, however, are that these reactionary manifestations are more pronounced after this war than they were immediately following World War I, and that they are taking place in a very changed world setting. Among the major phases of the present reactionary capitalist offensive are the following:

(a) *The drive of imperialism:* During the recent war the soothsayers of capitalism, among them Earl Browder, were busy telling us that imperialist capitalism had come to an end and that at the close of the war the world would enter into a

new period of spontaneous friendly collaboration among the nations, great and small, capitalist and Socialist. The naive supposition of such people was that the finance capitalists, particularly the Americans, had finally learned the folly of war and, in the main, had concluded that the only way they could preserve their social system, not to mention garnering profits from it, was to maintain world peace and democratic relations among all the peoples of the world.

Postwar experience, however, has already shown the futility of this utopian conception of capitalism. Imperialism, far from being dead, is manifesting itself with a new virulence. This time it is the United States that is playing the decisive imperialist role. It has embarked upon a vigorous expansionist program designed to bring the whole world under its sway. With its tremendous navy, air force and army; with its control of the atomic bomb; with its vast industrial system and great financial reserves, and also in view of the war-shattered state of affairs of other great powers, the United States Government, driven on by the big monopolists who control it, is pursuing an unprecedented imperialist course.

The heart of American imperialist policy is the gigantic finance-capital set-up, whose major political instruments are the G.O.P.-controlled Republican Party and the poll-tax and Northern ultra-reactionary bloc in

the Democratic Party. Since the ending of the war, the Truman Administration has more and more identified itself with the Hoover-Vandenberg camp, and shaped its policies, foreign and domestic, along militant imperialist lines.

The major objectives of American imperialism are to reduce the British Empire to a subordinate position; to cow or smash the U.S.S.R.; to subjugate China to the status of a satellite country; to reduce Latin America to a semi-colonial system of the United States; to take charge of the internal economies of Germany, Japan and various other countries; to dominate the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans with its big navy and air force—in short, to establish American imperialist hegemony over the other peoples and areas of the world. This drive of American imperialism, which is developing at a much faster tempo than British, French, German and Japanese imperialisms did after World War I, is the center and rallying force of the present world offensive of reactionary capital.

(b) *Sowing the seeds of economic crisis*: One of the major aspects of the reactionary offensive after World War I, which culminated in fascism and World War II, was the devastating economic crisis of the 1930's. This crisis wrought havoc with the living standards of the toiling masses all over the capitalist world, and weakened capitalism everywhere. Now, especially in the United States, economic policies are being applied

which threaten to produce an economic breakdown that will arrive more quickly and have far more disastrous consequences than did the one that followed the First World War. The reactionaries who dominate the United States, with a "boom and bust" outlook, are heading this country into inflation. They have rejected all legislation calculated to keep American industry in effective operation after the war boom has passed. Their foreign loan policy is also cut from a similar reactionary pattern. The loans or projected loans to Great Britain, France, China, Poland, the U.S.S.R., etc., are all based on political rather than economic considerations, and, with the domestic economic factors, they are tending to provoke an eventual collapse in this country, a cyclical crisis of unparalleled magnitude. American big capital's present domestic and foreign economic policies are leading straight to an economic crash within a few years, one that will not only ruin American mass living standards but will also shake the economic foundations of the capitalist world. But the capitalists, seeing the reactionary use Hitler made of German mass unemployment, believe they can also turn the coming crisis to reactionary ends.

(c) *Cultivating a regrowth of fascism*: In the current offensive of reactionary capitalism, spearheaded by American imperialism, strong tendencies for a renaissance of fascism are in evidence. In the United States

here is the ultra-reactionary combination of Republicans and Southern poll-tax Democrats; the K.K.K. is rearing its ugly head once more, and there is a wide outcropping of fascist-like, anti-Negro, anti-Semitic, and anti-labor tendencies. In the field of foreign policy also, American imperialism is providing aid to hard-pressed reactionary forces. Our State Department is definitely protecting Franco Spain and ultra-reactionary Turkey; it is shielding fascist businessmen in Germany, Japan and other former fascist states; it is the mainstay of fascist-minded reaction in Latin America and China and of the pro-fascist opposition in the new peoples' democracies in the Balkans; it is collaborating everywhere with the dangerous clerical fascism of the Vatican. In fact, reactionaries and fascists all over the world are looking to the United States and its British ally for aid, and they are getting it. This cultivation of fascism represents a major world danger.

(d) *Preparing for Another War:* Although the Allied powers after World War I attacked the new Soviet Republic militarily, shortly following its birth, the real war drive of the imperialists which culminated in World War II did not get well under way until Hitler seized power in Germany in 1933. Thus, after the great shock of World War I, it took the war-mongers almost 15 years until they had the world definitely on the way to another world slaughter. This time, however, World War II is

hardly over when the world reactionaries, led by American monopoly capital, are already beating the drums for a new war. Indeed, even while the anti-Hitler war was still going on, strategic plans were being laid by these reactionaries for another conflict.

The new world war threat, which is menacing all peoples, is aimed directly at the U.S.S.R. The anti-Soviet orientation of the imperialists after World War I, which wrecked the old League of Nations, which built up Hitler-Germany, and which led to World War II, is in evidence again, but now more virulently than ever. The great monopolists who control the United States see in the U.S.S.R. the major obstacle in the way of their grandiose imperialist plans of world rule and they are determined to overcome or destroy it. Only in the sense of war preparations against the U.S.S.R. can one understand the present huge imperialist peace-time military program of the United States, the violent anti-Soviet campaign now raging in the American press and on the radio, and the State Department's officially stated policy of getting tough with Russia. The danger of war is rendered all the more acute because of the need of haste that the reactionaries feel to make use of the atomic bomb before the Soviet Union can devise for itself this lethal weapon.

The basic reason for this militant war drive against the U.S.S.R. by

the American imperialists is that these reactionaries understand quite well that the Soviet Union forms the backbone of world democracy. They realize that a blow against the Soviet Government is at the same time a blow against the world labor movement, against the new democracies now springing up in Europe, against the far-reaching national liberation movements in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, and against the rising demand for Socialism throughout the capitalist world. They know too that a military defeat of the U.S.S.R. would open the way to a fascist world, with American imperialism in the saddle. In the war-mongering against the U.S.S.R., the postwar reactionary capitalist offensive takes on its most acute and dangerous aspects.

OBSTACLES IN THE PATH OF THE IMPERIALIST REACTIONARIES

World reaction, led by the American monopolists, has already, even in this early stage of the postwar period, created a highly dangerous international situation by its reckless economic policies, its cultivation of fascism, its rampant imperialism, and its pro-war orientation. In these respects the tempo of the offensive of world reaction is now swifter than after World War I. At the same time, however, this offensive faces resistance and obstacles far more formidable than those which confronted the reactionary forces following World

War I. The counter forces may well defeat all the scheming and plotting of reaction.

First, there is the weakened economic condition of the capitalist system itself. This is much more marked than in the period after World War I. The industries of nearly all of the important capitalist countries are war-ravaged. The people are impoverished and their purchasing power has been catastrophically reduced. The international gold standard is gone and trade is now being carried on almost exclusively on barter or quota systems. Many countries, including our own, also are suffering from galloping inflation. The United States, it is true, fattened on the war and experienced a spectacular industrial growth. But it is idle to expect, as capitalist economists are trying to convince us, that this country can or will re-invigorate the capitalist system of the world. Its monopolistic, imperialistic policies are choking, not developing, the capitalist world economy. This crippled condition of world capitalism definitely puts a damper on the plans of those American imperialists who would try to solve all their problems and make themselves masters of the world by overthrowing the Soviet Government.

Second, there is a definite dearth of potential allies for the war aims of the American imperialists. Germany, Japan, Italy, France, and many other capitalist states are war-ruined and could not, even if they

wanted to, at present render material assistance to this country in an imperialist war against the U.S.S.R. Great Britain, it is true, is an ally of the United States and is following a virulently anti-Soviet line. But the people of Britain ardently desire world peace and cooperation with the U.S.S.R. Despite the failure, at the Labor Party Convention, to repudiate the Labor Government's imperialist policy, Britain may easily prove a most shaky ally in the general anti-Soviet enterprise of world reaction. The Labor Government, taking its lead from British big capital, is out to strengthen the British Empire wherever it can. And British imperialism accepts with very poor grace its "Number Two" position in the Anglo-American bloc and will lose no occasion to play its own individual game. The possibility of the United States being compelled to fight almost alone frightens the anti-Soviet war-mongers, even though they do control the atomic bomb.

Third, the Soviet Union is now incomparably stronger than it was during the period between the two great world wars. The Red Army, which met and defeated the Wehrmacht, could hold its own against any capitalist force that might be sent against it. With this in mind, General Eisenhower has seen fit to warn sharply of the futility of the U.S.A. trying to defeat the U.S.S.R. All this constitutes a very painful reality for the Anglo-American im-

perialists, and it may well be the decisive fact in maintaining world peace. Fear of defeat may accomplish what common sense cannot.

Fourth, the reactionaries who would again plunge the world into fascism and war also have to face a whole series of popular mass movements, which constitute a much greater menace to the imperialists' plans than existed in the period after World War I. These movements are alert to the dangers of economic chaos, fascism and war. Among them may be listed the new World Federation of Trade Unions, with its 66,000,000 members. There are also new and powerful national and international movements of veterans, youth and women. Then there is the rapid growth of the Communist parties in many parts of the world, and also their tendency to combine or cooperate with a number of rejuvenated Socialist parties. This time there no longer exists the powerful and almost uniformly reactionary Social-Democracy that smoothed the way for the imperialists after World War I. Besides the popular movements enumerated above, there are the new peoples' democratic governments in Europe and Asia, as well as the great national liberation movements now developing in India, China and other colonial and semi-colonial countries. All these movements are formidable barriers to the American imperialist designs for world domination.

Fifth, there is the widespread war-

weariness and anti-capitalist spirit prevailing among the peoples of the world. Mankind is appalled at the thought of another war, especially one that would be fought with atomic and other super-dreadful weapons. The masses are also determined to resist a regrowth of fascism and to prevent the economic system from being plunged into an even worse chaos that it is now in. Therefore, even the Anglo-American imperialists, for all their vicious anti-Sovietism, will think twice before defying the powerful anti-fascist, anti-war sentiments of the peoples. Even the big financial moguls in Wall Street have seen that one-sixth of the world went Socialist after World War I, and that the indications are that, in the long run, even a larger section of humanity will turn to Socialism after World War II. Hence, they are haunted by the fear that a World War III that did not accomplish their fascist, imperialist objectives, might just about wipe out capitalism altogether.

A WORLD PROGRESSIVE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

From the foregoing it is clear, first, that world reaction, organized and led by American imperialism, is now conducting a militant offensive which is in many respects sharper than that which followed World War I and which is leading the world in the direction of economic smash-up, fascism, and a new world

war; and, second, that this world drive of reaction has to deal with popular mass resistance forces on a far more extensive scale than existed after World War I. These great democratic anti-fascist, anti-war masses are potentially very much stronger than the imperialist forces that are making for fascism and war. But whether or not the world will escape a new bloodbath at the hands of reckless imperialists will depend upon how well the democratic forces can mobilize and unite themselves to resist the new crop of world enslavers. No greater error could the peoples commit than to conform to Browder's criminally wrong notion that the fate of the world can be left to the "intelligent" monopolists to decide.

Naturally, the most urgent task of the democratic forces of the world is to stop the reactionary capitalist offensive, by insisting that Big Three unity be re-established; that the Moscow, Yalta, Teheran and Potsdam agreements be loyally carried out; that the fascist war criminals be vigorously punished; that the defeated fascist powers be thoroughly demilitarized; that the colonial peoples be completely liberated; that sane domestic and foreign economic policies be adopted; and that every defense be thrown around democracy and for the prevention of another war.

But such preventative measures are not enough. The progressive forces must go over onto the offen-

sive themselves. The axe must be applied to the root of the evil. The power of finance capital, the breeder of economic chaos, fascism and war, must be systematically weakened and eventually broken. In this respect the new people's democracies of Eastern and Central Europe are blazing the trail by the seizure and division of large landed estates, by the confiscation of the industries of collaborators with the Nazis, by the nationalization of the basic industries generally, and by the strengthening of the workers' representatives in the governments. But finance capital can be eliminated as a power for evil only when capitalism is abolished and Socialism established. It is to this goal that the workers all over Europe, despite many betrayals by Social-Democratic leaders, are steadily marching.

In no country have the workers and other democratic forces so great a responsibility in the present world crisis as here in the United States. The great trusts and monopolies of this country, with their political concentrations, are the center of world reaction. It is they who are

furnishing the main motive force for the present international capitalist offensive against democracy and peace. They are a menace to our country and the world. They must be curbed by the workers drastically strengthening their trade unions and vastly improving their political activities. They must be finally eliminated and a Socialist regime established.

Finance capital, in the United States and abroad, has been responsible for two devastating world wars, an unprecedented economic crisis, the growth of fascism, and the development of a world famine now involving at least a billion people—all in one generation. These great tragedies, not to mention the daily exploitation of the workers, would seem to be about enough damage to submit to from the obsolete capitalist system. Surely the democratic forces of the world will not allow the parasitic big landlords, industrialists and bankers to thrust upon humanity another round of economic crises, mass unemployment, wholesale pauperization, fascist tyranny, and imperialist war.