

Twenty five years back, when the last war broke out, people were told that it was a war to defend Belgium, the German barbarians were enemies of peace and civilization and that Britain was fighting to protect the self-determination of small nations. What were the real issues involved then? Long before the last world war broke out, Lenin gave an analysis of imperialism. He pointed out that the development of world capitalism has reached a phase when sharp conflicts must break out between rival groups of capitalist rulers contending for a new distribution of markets, colonies and spheres of influence. British and French had almost shared out the whole world between themselves. German imperialism, coming later on, on the scene, was seeking to unsettle this share out by force. This was basic conflict during the last war.

Despotism was opposed to despotism, injustice to injustice, force to force. Dealt short during the partition of the world, the German imperialist wanted to seize central Europe, conquer the Balkans, bring the Near East under their influence, subjugate Ukraine and entrench themselves on the banks of the Black Sea. The Russian imperialists wanted to enlarge the decayed Tsarist Empire, demolish Turkey and occupy the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. The French imperialists wanted to region Alsace-Lorraine and ensure their hegemony over Europe. The English imperialists wanted to repulse their German compatriots and round off and consolidate the world Empire.

### IMPERIALIST LIES AND SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC TREACHERY

Such were the real issues involved in the last imperialist war. It was of course a lie when the British and the French bourgeoisie tried to tell the people that they were defending Western Democracy against German militarism. Nor had the German bourgeoisie assertions that they were guarding liberty against Czarist barbarism any grain of truth in it. But the continental socialists and Labour Parties of the Second International believed in these false words. They rallied behind the respective imperialist Governments. They tore up the resolution which

was passed at the Congress at Stuttgart in 1907. This resolution which was based on the theses advanced at the Congress by Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg stated clearly :

"If nevertheless the war breaks out, it is the duty of the international proletariat to work its speedy termination, and to strike with all it might to utilize the economic and political crisis produced by the war, to rouse the political consciousness of the masses of the people and thereby hasten the downfall of the capitalist class-rule."

They refused to recognize the imperialist nature of last war. Failure to act up to the principles of international socialism on the part of the reformist social-democratic and labour leaders of Germany, France and England resulted in the break up of the International. In fact the first mortal victim of the world war was the Second International. These reformist leaders renounced all trace of internationalism. They voted war credits to their respective bourgeois governments, beat their war drums, and dragged the workers to the imperialist war of conquest. The unity of the international working class was betrayed. The socialist parties became the tail end of the bourgeois war parties in the belligerent countries. Only one socialist party remained true to the principles of international socialism and that was the Bolshevik Party — the Party of Lenin and Stalin. The Bolsheviks opposed the imperialist bourgeoisie with determination. They mercilessly exposed the robber character of the war and set up as a goal for the proletariat in each country the defeat and overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the transformation of the imperialist war into a war to end capitalism—the source of war.

#### THE BOLSHEVIK LINE

The Bolshevik Party pursuing the policy which was in the interest of the exploited masses, was able to win the support of the entire Russian working class and of the Russian peasantry. When the hour of the Tsar struck, they were able to sweep away decrepit autocratic regime and its capitalist successors and establish worker's and peasants' rule. The victory of the Bolsheviks laid the basis of building-up socialism in one-sixth part of the globe. It created on the one hand the Soviet Union, which backed by the military strength of the workers' and peasants' army was to become a mighty force working for peace. On the other hand, it gave birth to the Third Communist International which gathered together all the revolutionary elements of the old international, striving for a genuine unity of the proletariat against war and for revolution.

The Social Democratic treachery at the out break of the last war found its logical continuation in their betrayal of the revolutions which broke out on the continent after the war. The revolutionary workers of the European countries had no firm and monolithic parties like the Bolshevik Party to lead them. This was the legacy of years of reformism. The social democratic agents of the bourgeoisie in Germany and Austria and Italy and other countries retrieved the upper hand. They prevented the development of socialist revolutions. They united with the generals and officers of the old regime to crush the workers revolution in Germany, Austria and Hungary. The results was that the federal bourgeois army and bureaucracy, the reactionary classes who were saved and left in power, blew up the sham democracy built with their aid and established fascism the naked dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

#### THE SEED OF THE NEW WAR

It was during these post-war days and years of social democratic treachery and counter revolution that the seeds of fascism and fascist aggression were sown and the road cleared for second imperialist world war. This war has matured and developed under entirely different conditions than last war. The post-war world was split into two halves. The socialist power of the Soviet Union occupying one-sixth of the world was not only out of the imperialist partitioning of the world but was a force working against imperialism and for peace. Capitalism which still ruled the rest of the world was not the same. It has entered into a state of permanent crisis. Imperialist rivalries remained and sharpened but together with it new contradictions had grown. Proletarian movement grew both in magnitude and revolutionary intensity (growth of communist parties), threatening imperialism at home. Revolutionary independence struggle of the colonies and subject nationals grew up in China, India and Indonesia threatening imperialism at its colonial periphery.

The existence of the Soviet Union and the growth of the revolutionary movements in capitalist and colonial countries were powerful forces working for peace. Immediately after the November Revolution, the Soviet Government called upon the peoples of the warring nations immediately to conclude armistice and conclude a peace without annexations and based upon the right of self determination of all nations. Such a plea would have been possible, had proletarian revolution triumphed in Germany and spread to other European countries. Had this come about, world imperialism would

have received such a serious blow that the second imperialist war would have been well nigh impossible. But the revolutions failed because of the disunity of the working class, and the betrayal of social democracy. Instead of peace without annexations which the Soviet proposed, came the peace treaty of Versailles bearing the seed of the present war.

### THE DICTATED PEACE OF VERSAILLES

The treaty of Versailles was a dictated peace — a peace of vengeance. It sought to solve the inter-imperialist conflict which had given rise to the last war : (i) by maintaining the defeated countries, esp. Germany in a state of political inferiority and by ensuring their spoilation by victor States, (ii) It made division of the spoils of war among victor States, fixing the frontiers of Europe, distributing colonies and colonial mandates in such a way that their hegemony throughout the world was maintained. The peace system of Versailles, inasmuch as it temporarily solved the inter-imperialist conflict, make it possible for capitalist nations to combine against the new enemy, the Soviet Union. Immediately after the armistice the British, French, American and Japanese imperialism combined to support of intervention against the Soviet Union. Soon after the complete rout and defeat of the interventionists, British and French imperialists pursued the policy of isolating and encircling the Soviet Union with hostile pacts and of provoking a war against it.

But the inter-imperialist crisis broke out again in all their virulence after the outset of the great crisis of 1929-33. During the period of political stabilization (1922-28) new German imperialism had begun to rise. Revolutionary forces rose in Germany too but were unable to take advantage of the period of crisis and make a bid for power, because of the split created in the working class by Social Democracy. German Imperialism was able to throw off the mask of democracy, crush revolutionary forces and establish fascist dictatorship. The period of the great crisis was also the period of a new revolutionary wave in Europe and in the East. The emergence of the Soviets, in China, revolution in Spain, Civil Disobedience movement in India, revolutionary clashes in Germany and Austria, rise of revolutionary waves in France were significant events of the period. This period also coincided with phenomenol rise of Soviet Union. British Imperialism true to its tradition, now began to support Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as the bulwark of reaction against the rising tide of revolution. Germany was allowed to stop its reparation payments. Naval agreements with British

allowed Germany to build its navy. Hitler introduced universal conscription. This meant the virtual collapse of the system of Versailles — the weakening of the hegemony of France in Europe and the opening up the road to the expansion of German Imperialism in the familiar old lines.

### COMINTERN WARNS AGAINST NEW WAR

The great crisis and its revolutionary aftermath opens up a new period of inter-imperialist conflict in which Japanese, Italian and German Imperialism begin a new partition of the world by force. Japan attacked Manchuria, Italy seized Abyssinia, and Germany prepares for her drive towards the East. In 1935 it was quite clear that the setting of a new imperialist war was getting ready. The Communist International correctly foresaw its developments warned the people that the Sceond Imperialist War was coming and called for a fight against it. In this resolution on war at the 7th World Congress of the International pointed out that as result of the great economic crisis, an intensified struggle on the world market has begun, leading to an economic war and a new partition of the world. Singling out German fascism as the new instigator of war it predicted in 1935 all the developments which have taken place in the succeeding years :

"This adventurist plans of the German fascists are very far-reaching containing a war of revenge against France, dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, annexation of Austria, destruction of independence of Baltic States, which they are striving to convert into a base of attack on the Soviet Union, and the wresting of Soviet Ukraine from the USSR. They are demanding colonies and are endeavouring to arouse moods in favour of world war for a partition of the world.

"The dominant cricles of the British bourgeoisie support German rearmament in order to weaken the hegemony of France on the European continent, to turn the spearhead of German armaments from West to the East and to direct the aggressiveness against the Soviet Union... This policy of the British Imperialism is one of the factors accelerating the outbreak of a world imperialist war".

### FOUR YEARS OF AGGRESSION

A review of the crowded events of the last 4 years is enough to convince anyone of the correctness of these analysis. This is quite clear that fascism and fascist aggression notably that of Germany is the main cause of present war. But it must not be forgotten that fascism and its

aggressive phase are the product of the extreme decay of the worked capitalist system as seen in the great economic crisis. The repartition of world by force was begun by Japan when it conquered Manchuria and occupied four provinces of North China (1933-34). This was followed by the conquest of Abyssinia by Italy (1935-36). The middle of 1936 saw the beginning of rebellion in Spain and the bloody war of intervention by Italian and German fascism against Spanish Republic. This object was to destroy the victory of popular front in Spain and its alliance with popular front of France. They wanted to convert Spain into a base of their military operations in a future war of aggression. In 1937 Japanese imperialism took advantage of the preoccupation of European powers to launch a war of conquest against China proper. In March 1938 Hitler having sufficiently consolidated his military strength proceeds to carry the land policy outlined in "Mein Kampf". Austria is annexed by force. Within four months, the well-known technique of Nazi disruption is brought to bear on Sudetan land. Sudetan land is annexed and the disintegration of Czechoslovakia republic begins. This year opened with the fall of republican Spain. This was soon followed by Hitler's absorption of Slovakia and the annexation of Ruthenia by Hungary. The disappearance of Czechoslovakia opens Hitler's march towards South Eastern Europe. His next step was to take Danzig and the Corridor, dominate Poland on the one hand and Hungary on the other and then to spread out in the Balkans and the Near East. Italy was preparing to share in the adventure by annexing Albania and dominating Yugoslavia.

#### INSTIGATORS AND ABETTORS OF WAR

This long catalogue of the aggressive acts of fascist States headed by Nazi Germany clearly bring them out as the chief instigators of the present war. But this is only one side of the picture. Each one of these developments mean the unsettling of the status quo of the last war. They meant the complete annulment of treaties of Versailles and Washington (Washington treaty fixed the relations of Naval Powers in the Pacific and the "rights" of foreign powers in China). These acts of aggression meant the destruction of small nations who were the victims, and a menace to the Soviet Union, against whom Nazi Germany was openly avowing its aggressive designs. But above all they mean a threat to the status quo of the great imperialist powers, namely England, France and America. Japan's conquest of Manchuria and the invasion of China affected all the powers principally Britain. Italy's conquest of Abyssinia was menace to Suez Canal and the British

interests in Sudan. Italy was making new claims against French Empire (Tunisia). Italian domination of Spain and Albania was a menace to the British passage to the East. German expansion and domination of S. Eastern Europe was a threat to the British interests in the Near East. It was the interests of British Imperialism which were every time affected by these successive acts of aggression. British Imperialism with the powerful resources would have been able at every stage to check this development. British Imperialists now talk of democracy, and of destroying Hitlerism and claim that they are fighting this war to make the world safe from aggression. Why did they not from the very start take effective measures against "war mongers" ? If they were the guardians of peace, why did they sabotage the League's action against Japan's aggressions in Manchuria ? Why did they reduce the economic sanctions to be imposed against Italy for her attack against Abyssinia to a farce ? Why did they undermine the League of Nations and the system of Collective Security by themselves proposing an amendment to the section 15 of the League Covenant ? Why did they organise and uphold the monstrous fraud of "non-intervention" in Spain and allow Nazi Germany and fascist armaments to destroy the Spanish Republic ? Why did they allow Hitler to arm, to build up an air and submarine fleet ? Why did they help him to take Austria ? Why did Chamberlain grovel before Hitler at Munich and allow him to take the Sudetan land ? Why did he allow the destruction of Czech democracy, the Czech army and the Franco-Soviet-Czech Pact ? And to come to the very recent past why did he sabotage the Anglo-Soviet anti-aggression pact which would have effectively stopped Hitler and averted this war ?

#### THE DILEMMA OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

These questions bring out the apparent contradiction in British imperialist policy. This contradiction is characteristic of the new situation which arose on the eve of the second imperialist war. In the present period a new conflict is super-imposed on the old inter-imperialist conflict. That is the conflict created by the rise of the Soviet Union on the one hand and the growth of revolutionary movements in capitalist and colonial countries on the other. British Imperialism is faced by the rise of new German Imperialism pursuing the old aims, and by the Italian and Japanese aggression. But it was also faced by the growing revolutionary potentialities of the Soviet Union and the Red Army, by the Spanish revolution, the revolution in China, by the rise of Popular Front in France and the developments in its own country. Immediately after the war it was able to mobilize all the

reactionary forces together to crush Soviet Union and the revolutions in the continent. It failed in the former objective, but succeeded in the latter. A decade later it is confronted with another revolutionary wave and by the invincible power of the Soviet Union – trying to act in unison with anti-fascist popular forces, to defeat the game of the fascist war-mongers. In this situation British Imperialism deliberately pursued a policy of aiding the fascists, to crush the forces of revolution, and to provoke war against the Soviet. British Imperialism allowed the fascists to destroy the Popular Front in Spain and France. They destroyed the Czech democracy and Czech-Soviet Pact. By doing so they destroyed Czechs against Nazi-Fascist aggression. They did this because they wanted to solve the inter-imperialist contradiction in a different way viz by achieving a European Four Power Pact aimed against the Soviet Union. The meaning of the policy of "appeasement" was that the Nazi greed was to be satisfied at the expense of small nations, and of the Soviet Union. Chamberlain destroyed Czechoslovakia and executed a graceless surrender before Hitler because he hoped to get a Four Power Pact aimed at the Soviet. But he failed. At Munich the last barrier to Hitler's expansion was removed. He could not more be checked. The inter-imperialist contradictions could no longer be squared inside a Four Power Pact. Munich and its aftermath resulted in tremendous sharpening of the conflict between Nazi Germany on the one hand and Anglo-French bloc on the other.

#### FAILURE OF CHAMBERLAIN'S DIPLOMACY

Chamberlain's next move to get out of the impasse was to stage another and a grander Munich. For this he wanted to use negotiations with the Soviet for an anti-aggression pact to bring pressure upon Hitler. Perhaps Hitler would agree to a settlement on the Danzig issue, renounce the South Eastern drive and turn his attention to Ukraine and attack the Soviet through the Baltic States. It was thought the mere threat of "encirclement" with an Anglo-French-Soviet anti-aggression Pact would be enough. Failing the Chamberlain wanted a one-sided pact with the Soviet. Soviet was to fight Hitler to prevent him from expanding eastwards to British interests. But Britain refused to guarantee the Soviet Union against a German attack through the Baltic. The Soviet refused to be used in this manner to serve British imperial interests but proposed a straight forward cast-iron anti-aggression pact which would have completely stopped all Nazi aggression and strangled Nazism itself. Chamberlain did not want that. The result was that after 5 months of futile negotiations which failed to impress

Hitler, Chamberlain found himself faced with the attack on Danzig and the ultimatum to Poland. The Soviet finding that an imperialist war was now inevitable accepted the German offer for a non-aggression pact. It was a decisive victory of Soviet diplomacy — firstly because Germany faced with an imperialist rival was forced to renounce its anti-Soviet aims. Secondly, because the Soviet was able to preserve its neutrality and keep away from the imperialist war. Thirdly, because it left the imperialist rivals to fight, weaken each other creating conditions favourable for the revolutions in Europe.

#### THE WAR AIMS OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM

The outbreak of war is signal failure of the diplomacy of Chamberlain. The reactionary imperialist clique behind the British Premier did not want the war not atleast in this way. They wanted to involve Soviet Russia also in the war against Germany. It is a failure for Chamberlain because he failed in the 4 power Pact through appeasement, he failed to provoke an anti-Soviet war by keeping Britain out and finally he failed to involve the Soviet in the war making her fight his battle. The British imperialist in spite of the profuse declarations they are making now never wanted to fight for democracy or against fascism. All their efforts right upto the last moment of the outbreak of the war were to achieve a settlement with Hitler – an appeasement – a Munich. It was their criminal game to sabotage the Anglo-Soviet Pact which had landed the people of the British and French Empires in this mass slaughter. Even now their "war aims" are not the destruction of fascism – let alone imperialism (that would be suicidal). British Imperialism is fighting to preserve its status quo, its empire. Yet it is out to "destroy Hitlerism" (not fascism). It would like Hitler to be replaced by an equally reactionary military clique which would be willing to come to a settlement with Britain. It is steadily keeping up the anti-Soviet propaganda. It still hopes that Hitler may be replaced by another reactionary government which would be willing to join with Britain in a holy war against the Soviet. These are the war aims of British Imperialism.

#### THE SOVIET UNION'S FIGHT FOR PEACE

On the eve of the last war the working class movement and organization were not strong enough, not revolutionary enough to unfold an effective anti-war movement to stop war. On the other hand

when war came it simply broke up thanks to the reformism and treachery of the Social Democratic leaders. This was not so in the years that immediately preceded the present war. The Soviet Union backed by the might of the workers' and peasant's Red Army had grown into a great power which had to be reckoned with. It had joined the League of Nations and was trying to uphold the system of Collective Security which fascist nations were trying to disrupt. With the further development of fascist aggression the Soviet attempted to build a system of anti-aggression pacts based on the Franco-Soviet-Czech Pact. The Soviet Union always stood for building a powerful peace front of non-aggressor nations in order to put a stop to fascist aggression and preserve peace. But the efforts of the Soviet power for peace could only be successful if they could be reinforced by the efforts of the proletariat in capitalist countries. A peace front with the Soviet Union can only be realised when the proletariat in the various non-aggressor countries would succeed in replacing their reactionary pro-fascist governments by popular front of anti-fascist parties. Therefore the struggle for peace required unity of proletariat against capitalist reaction – against fascist supporters and building up of a broad anti-fascist people's front in the non-aggressor countries. That is why, when the Communist International warned the world of the approach of the Second Imperialist war, they called upon the proletariat to close up their ranks, so that the united proletariat may be able to build up broad peoples front against war and fascism and to defeat the war machinations of the reactionary ruling cliques in France and England. Communists took the initiative in cementing proletarian unity and building up powerful popular fronts in France and Spain (1934-37). The mighty success of these first efforts at unity succeeded in staving off the attack of fascism in France.

#### WHO BETRAYED PEACE

But the unity achieved was not strong enough to withstand fresh fascist onslaught. Its weakness lay in the fact that the reactionary Social Democratic leaders were not yet completely isolated. It is the reactionary Social Democratic leaders who prevented the unity of French working class in a consistent fight against the criminal policy of non-intervention in Spain. That was the main reason for the defeat of the heroic Popular Front of Spain. Similarly, French Socialists refused to join hands with the Communists in fighting Daladier when he co-operated with Chamberlain in staging Munich in 1938. In England the reactionary Labour Party leadership persistently rejected the policy

of building a popular front with the Communists and Liberals to oust Chamberlain. The reactionary trade unionists of European countries refused to allow the Soviet Union to affiliate themselves to the International Federation of Trade Unions. Finally, the Social Democratic and Labour leaders believed the imperialist lie that it was the Soviet who was delaying the Anglo-Soviet Pact and joined with the bourgeoisie in attacking the Soviet instead of joining with the communists to bring pressure upon their government to sign the Pact immediately. *Social Democracy must share the guilt for war inasmuch as it betrayed the peace.* Now that the war has broken out we once again find the disgusting spectacle of the Social Democratic and Labour leaders of France and England joining their voice in the chorus of imperialist war-mongers. They are quietly submitting to the semi-fascist measures which the "democratic" governments are imposing upon the people. French Socialists have nothing to say about the suppression of L' HUMANITE by Daladier. Nor do the British Labour leaders worry about the repression against British Communists. In their enthusiasm for the "war for democracy" they quietly forget that British Imperialism is introducing fascist methods in countries in the name of war. All what they are busy about is the condemnation of "Soviet treachery".

#### "REFASHIONING THE WORLD" – ROLE OF THE SOVIET

All the chatter of the imperialists and their social democratic and labour lackeys cannot make this imperialist war into "War for Democracy" and the Soviet into an "ally of the Nazis". The Second Imperialist war is bound to refashion the world by leading to the defeat of both fascism and imperialism. In this outcome the Soviet Union and workers' and peasants' Red Army is going to play a significant role. Already the skilful move of the Soviet Union has secured the defeat of the diplomacy of Hitler as well as of Chamberlain. Hitler has been forced to wind up his anti-Comintern front and his war designs against the Soviet. Chamberlain is defeated in his plan to stage another Munich and forced to fight Hitler. The military action of the Red Army which is condemned as "a stab in the back of Poland" has forever smashed Hitler's "DRAG NACH OST". The occupation of Eastern Poland by the Red Army coupled with the diplomatic action which the Soviet is taking in conjunction with Turkey to protect the Balkan States completely closes the door on Hitler's eastern ambitions. Chamberlain

should be placed with this development. It checks Nazi expansion in the Near East. But he is not. He shudders to think of the revolutionary consequences of the march of the Red Army into Poland. Chamberlain knows that the Polish proletariat and people would like to get rid of their corrupt, landlord fascist government which landed them into this bloody war by refusing to agree to the entry of the Soviet army into Poland in case of German aggression. Chamberlain knows that the advance of the Red Army is assisted by the Polish Army and greeted by the Polish people. The presence of the Red Army on the Slovakian border where the Slovaks are in revolt and so near Germany, where the discontent against Hitler is rising cannot but be of the greatest revolutionary consequences. The Second Imperialist War began with the much abused pact of the non-aggression between the Soviet and Germany. It would end with a pact of real friendship between the Soviet Union, Poland and Germany but it would be with a Soviet, Poland and a People's or Soviet Germany.

#### CONVERT IMPERIALIST WAR INTO A DEMOCRATIC WAR

Communists and revolutionary Socialists in England and France who have this perspective before them will go on mercilessly exposing the imperialist character of the present war, and attempting to win the majority of the proletariat for a fight against the present war mongering governments. Only when the present governments of Chamberlain and Daladier are replaced by real anti-fascist popular governments would it be possible to convert the present imperialist war into a real democratic war against German fascism with the help of the Soviet and bring about the downfall of Hitler. Only when this is achieved will it be possible to effect a democratic peace removing the threat of aggression and granting the national minorities of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Germany full freedom from oppression within the framework of Soviet democracy spreading over Central Europe.

These are the mighty changes scheduled to follow as the outcome of the second imperialist war. They will not come automatically. They will come as the result of bitter struggles on the part of the proletariat in the countries of Europe. They will change the face of the world.