

The Labour Movement Discusses the War

BY J. R. CAMPBELL

WE ARE IN the midst of the Second World War—a war in which millions of people now living are threatened with physical destruction ; a war in which the accumulated labour of generations of workers will be destroyed ; a war which threatens the destruction of existing political liberties ; a war which threatens to extend to involve a counter-revolutionary attack against the Soviet Union.

A Second World War in a generation is in itself an expression of the mortal crisis of that capitalist system which the Labour movement professes to be out to supersede. Has the Labour movement any message for humanity groping its way forward in the black-out of this terrific crisis ? Or has the Labour movement no distinctive message, no way forward for humanity ? Has its professed internationalism to go into cold storage for the duration of the war, and have the rank and file men and women who have devoted their lives to the cause of the workers to join with their own ruling class in denouncing the ruling class and the people of Nazi Germany, in denouncing the victorious workers in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics ?

These are the questions which are arising in the great debate on the war which is now developing in every section of the Labour movement. A big mobilisation of the pro-war officials is taking place in every district of the country. The majority of the Labour M.P.s are mobilised in South Wales against the powerful anti-war forces in the South Wales Miners' Federation. The Lord Provost of Glasgow, Mr. P. J. Dollan, who changed from a supporter of the war into a conscientious objector in the last war, is seeking to mobilise the forces of reaction in Scotland against anyone in the Labour movement who has the temerity to change his mind with regard to this war. Certain large trade unions whose officials prefer flourishing the big stick to indulging in argument, are threatening to withhold affiliation fees from any Trades Council or local Labour Party which dares to come out against the war. All this is a sign that a discussion of fundamental importance has commenced and that influential pro-war elements are already fearful of the results of that discussion.

There is one assumption that we must dispose of at the outset. It is said that those Labour bodies which come out against the war are opposing official Labour Party policy as approved of repeatedly at Party Conferences. It is necessary to say that this is completely

untrue. No Labour Party Conference has as yet approved of this war. They have in the past approved of a policy of collective security directed against Fascist aggression, but the argument that because they have done so they ought to support the present war is an assumption that has got to be proved. It is by no means a self-evident truth. The Trade Union Congress on the other hand did approve of the present war. But a Trade Union Congress in 1936 approved of the policy of non-intervention in Spain. It is possible for Trade Union Congresses to be mistaken.

Another equally unwarranted assumption is that the present discussion is only developing because the Communists have changed their policy and therefore want everyone else to change too. If the Communists think that they have valid reasons for changing their policy the other sections of the Labour movement will be interested to hear them. It may be that they will find the reasons to be equally valid. But in sober fact the discussion has broken out in quarters entirely uninfluenced by the Communists. It is a discussion stimulated by the facts of the war itself.

Our Experience Last Time

The Labour Movement should not be entirely without experience in this situation. This is the second World War and the mechanism of the first World War has been most completely laid bare by the leading statesmen and soldiers who took part in it. Although the motives of these gentry in compiling their memoirs was self-justification, and not objective analysis, their work possesses considerable value. The *Daily Herald* evidently thought so when it distributed Lloyd George's war memoirs amongst its registered readers. We recommend a critical re-perusal of that work to those members of the *Herald* staff who seem to be bitten by raving jingoism.

One of the things which emerges from a critical re-reading of such works is the yawning gulf between the aims of the imperialist statesmen who prepared and carried through the last war, and the highly idealistic purposes pinned on to the war by intellectuals and sometimes adopted by the statesmen as a means of deceiving the people. "Jacky" Fisher preparing the Grand Fleet to drive the Germans from the seas, Lord Haldane preparing the Expeditionary Force for France, Sir Edward Grey, Asquith and others preparing the diplomatic line-up were not preparing for a "war to end war," but for a war to down a rival imperialism. But when the war for which they were preparing came they did not contradict Mr. H. G. Wells when he suggested that it might be made a "war to end war." If well-meaning idealists rushed to provide high-falutin moral camouflage for an ordinary imperialist massacre the politicians who had prepared for the massacre had no reason to object. When people equally well meaning proclaimed that the war was for democracy, the Allied statesmen

busily engaged in framing secret treaties, in inducing Italy to come in to the war and grab other people's territory, had no objection to this excellent smokescreen being put up. True, when the war was over and a vindictive imperialist peace (which had been the real aim of the Allied statesmen throughout) emerged, the idealists complained that they had been basely deceived.

Undoubtedly the statesmen on both sides engaged in an unconscionable amount of deception but it is unfair to accuse them of deceiving the thousands of well-meaning people who had proclaimed that it was a "war for high ideals." For those people had in many cases deceived themselves. Without for a moment analysing the fundamental causes of the war, without asking the question "Given the capitalist system, given the capitalist class as the ruling class, what purpose can it be pursuing in this war?"—they promptly pinned their own subjective ideals on to the war machine of Imperialism and then complained that it had not functioned in order to realise these ideals. The thorough-going imperialists might reasonably have retorted that they did not build the war machine for this purpose and that if anyone thought they had that was an unfortunate, though useful, misunderstanding.

It is now generally agreed in the British Labour Movement that the last war was an imperialist war, generated by the decaying capitalist system, that it was fought around the question of the division of colonies and semi-colonies in the world and that those who thought otherwise were duped by the war propagandists, when they did not dupe themselves.

Why This War?

The awful questions must therefore arise in the mind of every serious man and woman "Are we being fooled about this present war? Are we fooling ourselves about this present war?"

When we think of it we see that the fundamental traits of this war are those of an imperialist war. It is conducted by three great states in the hands of monopoly capitalists. Before those states engaged in military warfare with each other they were locked in economic warfare with each other—tariff against tariff, subsidy against subsidy. The intensified rearmament heralding the coming war emerged directly out of the economic crisis of 1929-33. The first move to seriously break the uneasy peace which had existed since the Armistice of 1918 was made by Japan in 1931. On September 10, 1931, Lord Cecil was telling the League of Nations' Twelfth Assembly that "there has scarcely even been a period of history when war seems less likely than it does at present." Eight days later Japan opened her Manchurian campaign and the march of the second world war commenced. It does seem that this war is an imperialist war once we examine its origin and development. How do the leaders of the Labour movement face up to this question?

"The war has arisen," says Mr. Attlee, "because there exists in Europe a country the rulers of which have resolved to use force in order to achieve their moral and political objects. These men reject all moral consideration and have no regard to treaties or obligations. They reject in fact the elementary conditions necessary to a civilised existence. The real cause of war is not the invasion of Poland but the challenge to civilisation." Here is the conventional picture of the Nazi gangster operating in a world of shrinking Quakers. The gangster is there all right, but the Quaker characteristics of the other states are a figment of Mr. Attlee's imagination.

In a later part of the same speech Mr. Attlee says: "Civilisation is threatened with destruction because men have so far been unable to control the results of their own inventions." In other words, the cause of war is not the existence of German rulers who "reject all moral considerations," but the existence of capitalist anarchy of which those rulers and the rulers of France and Britain are the expression.

Mr. Herbert Morrison, in a broadcast speech, after blaming the rulers of Germany goes on to declare "the freedom of private business is often another name for economic anarchy—which has always led to war and always will."

Now the membership of the Labour Party must ask themselves which of those statements is to be the basis of their policy. If the cause of war is that the rulers of the enemy country are people without moral scruples, then of course we must direct our energy against those people. But to accept that is to accept the conventional humbug which is used to deceive the people in every war. Undoubtedly, enemy politicians are frequently without scruple in international affairs, but the subsequent history of the war generally shows up our own politicians as people of a similar calibre. If, however, the cause of war is capitalist anarchy then we must direct our struggle against those upholders of capitalist anarchy who are nearest to us—namely, the ruling class in our own country. An examination of the Labour Party's practice shows that its whole policy is based on the resolutely non-Socialist assumption, that the cause of war is the wicked rulers in the enemy country who have got to be fought—the conventional deception in all imperialist wars. The phrases about capitalist anarchy are only introduced to give a Socialist flavour to an otherwise nauseating imperialist mixture.

Is This War Non-Imperialist?

The Labour leaders, however, are endeavouring to prove that this is a different non-imperialist type of war from any which have taken place in the past and that the Labour Movement is especially interested in carrying this war through to a successful conclusion. The following are amongst the arguments which are now being put forward.

(1) This is not British Imperialism's war. Chamberlain, the representative of British Imperialism, refused up to the last moment to oppose Nazi aggression. This is a war forced upon British Imperialism by the people of Great Britain who refused to tolerate further surrenders to Fascist aggression. The Labour movement is entitled to say "This is our war." (This is the argument of Mr. Brailsford in *Reynolds*.)

(2) This is a war for the principles of the League of Nations which have been trampled underfoot by Nazi Germany.

(3) The existence of Fascism in Germany makes a difference. "Think of it, you people of our cities and towns and villages," cries Herbert Morrison, "government by uniform: government by the rubber truncheon, the gun, and the concentration camp; every newspaper a mere megaphone for some gutter press Goebbels of our own. . . . Peoples as jealous as we have been struck down. This is a real threat."

(4) A more fundamental issue than that of Nazi Imperialism versus British Imperialism has arisen in this war. It is the issue of Western Civilisation (represented inadequately by the Governments of Chamberlain and Daladier) versus the Nazi (and a growing number of voices would add the Soviet) reversion to barbarism.

Let us take first the prevalent argument that, as the British Labour movement supported the League of Nations, it must logically support the present war which is being waged to defend "the rule of law," "collective action against aggression," "the submission of disputes to arbitration" and other League principles. This is the central argument of those who want Labour to support the war.

Here we must clearly distinguish between the support given to the League of Nations by the various imperialist governments and the support given to it by idealists of various shades.

The imperialist governments who built up the League in 1918 were primarily concerned with building up an organisation of victors and neutrals, which would act as a rallying point of all capitalist elements against the advancing Socialist revolution in Europe, and which would give a measure of international sanction to the peace settlement, which had not been negotiated but forcibly imposed on the Germans. The League as formed was a counter-revolutionary instrument. The frontiers that it existed to defend were the outcome of a dictated peace on Germany and counter-revolutionary intervention against Soviet Russia. There was nothing just or democratic or Socialist about those frontiers.

It is true that certain League "Utopians" believed that a new organisation of the utmost importance had been born. These theorists—and they were numerous amongst the ex-Liberal intellectuals who had flocked into the Labour Party—did not conduct a searching enquiry into the real causes of war. They assumed that it would be possible

to develop this international organisation, the League, to induce the Governments composing it to apply certain Liberal principles—arbitration, etc.—to all questions in dispute between states and to gradually build up a world public opinion and a body of regulations to which all states would conform.

The hard-faced imperialists operating the League let the theorists have a certain amount of rope, allowed them to play about in committees and conferences but in point of fact were never at any time prepared to conduct their relations with other states on the basis of the so-called League principles.

"We must have a Government in Germany which will respect the sanctity of treaties" chant the Labour war enthusiasts. There have never been any such governments in capitalist countries. The rule of all capitalist governments is only to respect treaties when superior force or self-interest compels them to do so. Less than ten years ago a British Government, in which the present Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer, refused to continue to repay its debt to America. France did the same. Are the British and French Governments to be trusted to honour their obligations when it is contrary to their interest to do so?

"We must enforce the principle of arbitration in disputes between nations" we are told. No British Government has ever accepted this principle. It is within the memory of everyone how the British Government refused to arbitrate with the Irish Free State on the question of land annuities if the arbiter was drawn from outside the British Empire, and resorted to economic war in an endeavour to compel Ireland to submit to its will. The so-called League principles were never accepted by the governments of France and Britain. They cannot, therefore, be defending them against Germany to-day.

When the Soviet Union entered the League of Nations it did so without illusions. It did not believe that the League was capable of uprooting the causes of war, or that the Imperialists in the League were concerned with applying League principles. But it did know that there were imperialist interests in the League (the French particularly) who were not interested in unloosing a new imperialist war. It believed that it was possible to build up a combination—on the basis of immediate interests—between the Soviet Union and imperialist governments which would preserve peace by holding the German and Italian Fascist aggressors in check. The Soviet Union, in doing so, was not enamoured by the European *status quo*. It was less enamoured, however, by the war which the Fascist states were then preparing, a war which might cost millions of lives and lead to greater injustices and oppressions than before. Its whole policy was directed to saving humanity from this war.

As is well-known, the British Government stood for the opposite policy of "appeasement" and ultimately forced the French Govern-

ment to accept it also. This policy was based on the assumption that German Imperialism must expand and that it was in the interests of British Imperialism that the expansion should be encouraged and directed against the state which the Nazis had designated as Public Enemy Number One—the Soviet Union. Though couched in pacifist phrases the essence of appeasement was to unloose war—against the Spanish Republic, against Czech democracy, against the Soviet Union. To help forward this policy the British (and later the French imperialists) dismantled the League of Nations, stone by stone.

At the time that this policy was being operated there were grave misunderstandings amongst the Labour and Progressive forces as to its meaning. We had talk about Chamberlain sacrificing imperial interests to class interests. This was incorrect. The policy of appeasement aimed at a 100 per cent. defence of the positions of French and British Imperialism (and even at the strengthening and extension of these positions) to be secured by the promotion of a war of exhaustion between Germany and the Soviet Union, to be followed later by Franco-British intervention against both. In order to force Germany to pursue this policy, however, a powerfully linked French and British Imperialism was necessary. If Germany preferred to attack France and Britain rather than the Soviet Union, the Western Imperialists were ready for it.

This policy of “ appeasement ” was rightly condemned and opposed by the Labour movement, although the refusal to build a Peace Alliance of Labour and Progressive organisations in Great Britain to lead a fight against it completely sabotaged the effectiveness of the opposition. It was a thousand times correct to oppose British Imperialism’s policy of co-operating with Nazi Germany to unloose a new war ; it was a thousand times right to struggle to prevent the destruction of democratic ramparts like Czechoslovakia which stood in the way of German Imperialism’s drive to the East. The Trotskyists and Pacifists who opposed the policy of collective resistance to this aggression were in fact applauding the destruction of the last barriers in the path of the war-mongers. They were applauding the preparation of a full-blooded imperialist attack against the Soviet Union.

But there can be no greater deception of the people than to assert that this present war of British and French Imperialism against Nazi Germany is a logical outcome of Labour’s policy of collective resistance to Fascist aggression. That policy was never at any time adopted by the British Government. In the negotiations with the Soviet Union in August, 1939, we find the British Government still resisting the organisation of effective collective resistance to aggression ; supporting (or rather encouraging) the Poles to refuse the entry of Soviet troops into Poland ; supporting (or rather encouraging) the Baltic States and Finland in their refusal to give the Soviet Union those naval and air bases which would enable it to play its part in a genuine Peace Front.

When Mr. John Jagger, M.P., tells us that the Soviet Union "clamoured for a pact of non-aggressive states to resist all aggression, and when at length France and Britain had been converted to her point of view she lined up secretly with the chief of all aggressors, and announced a pact which shocked the whole world" (*New Dawn*, December 23, 1939), he seems to be unaware that his central thesis that Britain and France had been converted to the Soviet Union's point of view lacks all confirmation. The Soviet Union's point of view was expressed in the demands she put forward during the Moscow negotiations, which were emphatically refused by the British and French negotiators. Is not the British Government going to publish a blue book glorying in this fact and seeking to justify it?

This war is therefore not the outcome of Labour's policy of collective resistance to aggression. It is the outcome of the British Government's "appeasement" policy, of its prolonged resistance to the policy of the Peace Front. The literature of the advocates of the Peace Front predicted that this war would come if the British Government persisted in its policy of encouraging aggression. It did persist in that policy and war has come. It is Chamberlain's war and not the war of the Labour movement which opposed his policy.

The argument is sometimes produced that surely the fact that Britain is now at war with Germany is decisive enough proof that the British Government is now resisting Fascist aggression. This argument overlooks the two-fold character of the appeasement policy. That policy was aimed at the 100 per cent. defence of British imperialist interests against any threat from Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy. It hoped to ensure this defence by inciting Germany against the Soviet Union, but if this failed then British Imperialism was ready to tackle Germany, not in the interests of resistance to Fascist aggression but in defence of its Empire, of its right to rule over millions of colonial slaves. From March till August, 1939, the British Government, while dragging out negotiations with the Soviet Union, was engaged in all kinds of appeasement moves with Nazi Germany (the Hudson-Wohltat conversations for example).

The Soviet-German Pact was the outward and visible sign that Nazi Germany was refusing to attack the Soviet Union and was preparing to attack British and French imperialist interests. It was then that British Imperialism (dragging French Imperialism with it) fell back on the second aspect of its policy—that of armed struggle against German Imperialism.

It reaffirmed its pledges to Poland because, if the struggle with German Imperialism was due, it would be better that it should commence on an issue that appeared remote from British imperialist interests. This would enable the Government to play on all the feelings aroused by the left forces about Fascist aggression and the defence of the independence of the peoples; it would give British and French

Imperialism an Eastern Front for a time (for few anticipated such a speedy collapse in Poland) ; and it might willy-nilly drag the Soviet Union into British Imperialism's war, for it was clear that the Soviet Union could not tolerate a German advance to its old frontiers.

The writer is not denouncing the many genuine anti-imperialists in the Labour movement for being mistaken about this war. He was mistaken himself. What were the basic mistakes ? (1) We regarded certain tactics of British Imperialism in seeking to defend itself against Nazi Germany, i.e., the tactic of diverting Germany to the East, as fixed, long-term tactics. Hence, after Germany had signed the Pact with the Soviet Union and abandoned the drive to the East for the time being, we kept on warning the people against the danger of a "second Munich," although the central meaning of the Munich policy was the diversion of Germany against the Soviet Union. With the signing of the Soviet-German pact a new Munich had no immediate meaning for British Imperialism. (2) We regarded the tactics of the Soviet Union and of the Communist International as being fixed long-term tactics, and not tactics adapted to a situation which had been terminated by the definitive refusal of British Imperialism to adhere to a real peace front. That refusal not only led the Soviet Union to sign the pact with Germany. It also resulted in British Imperialism deciding to try conclusions in an imperialist war—an imperialist war, however, in a different world situation from 1914-18. This we failed to see. The possibilities of a Peace Front were dead, but we proceeded to transfer the phrases of the Peace Front to the war which had commenced in consequence of British Imperialism's refusal to have a Peace Front. That is what many supporters of the Peace Front in the Labour Party are still doing.

I understand that the Welsh mining M.P.s who support the war are asking the question what change can have taken place in the situation since last August, when we were clamouring for the establishment of a Peace Front against aggression, that we should now oppose the war against the Fascist aggressors. Surely the answer leaps to the tongue. Chamberlain opposed the establishment of the Peace Front, and continued his policy of diverting Germany against the Soviet Union. The Nazis, however, flinched from attacking the Soviet Union, which was thus enabled to conclude a non-aggression pact with them.

The change consisted in the fact that from the signing of the Pact the Chamberlain policy of appeasement at the Soviet Union's expense was smashed to smithereens, the Peace Front was no longer possible, and the Labour movement should have faced the fact that Chamberlain's policy had resulted in an imperialist war, which was not a continuation of the Peace Front policy but on the contrary the direct consequence of the sabotage of the Peace Front by Chamberlain.

Perhaps the most miserable trick being played by the Labour supporters of the war is that connected with "Labour's Peace Aims."

All over the country the Labour chiefs are holding delegate meetings at which the "six principles of peace" as laid down by Mr. Attlee in his speech to the Labour M.P.s are explained. The explanation of these six principles is often accompanied by considerable demagogic criticism of the National Government. The Conference is then asked to vote for or against the six principles and if it votes for it is held to have registered a decision in favour of the present Imperialist War.

The six principles may be summarised as follows: (1) No dictated peace; (2) the right of all nations to live and develop their own characteristic civilisation; (3) the settlement of all disputes by negotiation or arbitration; (4) protection of all minority rights; (5) recognition of an international authority superior to the national states; and (6) abandonment of Imperialism.

Apart from the fact that no one of the above principles could be applied to a society whose basis is monopoly capitalism, it is perfectly certain that not a single one of them is accepted even in words by the National Government. And yet workers are deluded into voting for these pious principles and their vote is interpreted as a vote in favour of supporting a robber war with which these principles have nothing to do. The Labour leaders are thus engaged in deluding their followers that the gigantic war machine in Britain controlled by the most reactionary British Imperialists is engaged in fighting, not for the predatory principles of British Imperialism, but for "the abandonment of Imperialism," for peace on earth and goodwill to all men.

Does Fascism Make a Difference?

A favourite game of the same leaders is to quote from what the Communist leaders said about Nazism in the past in order to suggest that the Communists in refusing to support this war have in some way or other abandoned the fight against Fascism, leaving those Labour leaders who supported non-intervention in Spain as the sole heroic defenders of democracy.

Now the Communists have no reason to withdraw their main characterisations of Fascism. But the question before the Labour movement to-day is not whether Fascism is a loathsome thing or not, but the question "from whence comes the danger of Fascism to the British people?" In the past it undoubtedly came from the policy of the Chamberlain Government in encouraging German aggression. Hence the defeat of democracy in Spain and Czechoslovakia. The Communists did all in their power to defeat this policy, but in the new situation it is becoming clear that the main danger of Fascism to-day lies in the attempt of British Imperialism to regiment the people for war. For there can be no doubt that from the point of view of waging an imperialist war a Fascist capitalist economy has certain advantages over a capitalist economy that is not yet Fascist. That is one reason why as the war develops there emerges the tendency

in the so-called democratic states to Fascist methods of political repression and of labour regulation. Hence, the emasculation of the French Parliament, and the introduction of a series of measures of labour regulation such as the arbitrary fixing of wages at the pre-war level, compulsory arbitration, industrial conscription and other measures hitherto confined to the Fascist states. And Nazi Germany and near-Fascist France are held up to the British people as examples to be followed.

"Two-thirds of the consumption of the people of this country," says Chamberlain, "is by those who have only small incomes and therefore I say it is necessary that they too should make their sacrifice as is done not only in totalitarian Germany, but also in the great democracy of France." The difference between Chamberlain and the Labour leaders appears to be that Chamberlain wants the imperialist war to go on and demands that those who favour this war shall make the necessary sacrifices, while the Labour leaders, who want this imperialist war to go on, and who want the Imperialists to retain control of it, pretend that this can take place without any worsening and even with an improvement in the conditions of the workers.

As the resistance of the workers to the reduction in their standard of life grows, political repression will grow also. In Britain, as in France, the Labour leadership by their attacks on the Communists and the anti-war forces generally are clearing the way for the adoption of repressive measures which may first be applied to the Communists, but will assuredly be extended to the trade union movement.

Therefore to genuinely resist Fascist tendencies in Britain means to fight against the imperialist war which is enormously strengthening such tendencies.

But how stands the question of democracy versus Fascism in the international sphere? It is well known that both groups of Imperialists are seeking to work round each other's flanks, to extend the war to Finland, Scandinavia and the Balkans; that for this purpose British and French Imperialism are seeking to pull Fascist Italy into the war. This reduces the fight against aggression to an absurdity, for it is clear that Mussolini will only come in on the basis of being offered territorial concessions at the expense of other peoples.

In England the most reactionary section of the Conservatives has come to the front and claimed individual control of the war-machine. A puppet of the Brass Hats has been installed in the War Ministry, a big business administrator controls the Board of Trade, every key position in the machinery of state control is in the hands of big business executives. The camouflage of "British democracy" is wearing terribly thin. In France the big industrialists, the reactionary clericals, the high officers in the army are playing a bigger and more open rôle than ever before. Both French and British reaction is seeking the aid of Mussolini against the Soviet Union as well as against Nazi

Germany. How can anyone say that this is in any way a war for democracy against Fascism?

The Defence of Western Civilisation

What is the "Western Civilisation" for which the British imperialists are alleged to be fighting? Mr. G. D. H. Cole tells us that this Western Civilisation "does embody certain values which it is vitally important to preserve—a certain liberty of speech and writing and personal conduct, a certain tolerance of differences of opinion, and not least a certain culture and way of living that will not easily be reproduced if they are once destroyed." (War Aims, p. 11.)

What is being done here is evident. Out of the complex of Western imperialist civilisation certain values (won by the bourgeoisie in its progressive period and menaced by the bourgeoisie in the period of its decadence) are arbitrarily selected and labelled "Western Civilisation." The economic basis of this civilisation, namely predatory monopoly capitalism, is ignored, its widespread economic crises, its colonial repressions, its depressed areas, its bloated militarism are glossed over, and the representatives of British and French Imperialism are represented as fighting for the values left over from the progressive past of the bourgeoisie. How can any Labour man be so blind as to imagine that Chamberlain and Daladier are engaged, not in defending the central positions of decaying imperialism, but only of certain progressive values?

Now it is unquestionably true that these progressive achievements are trodden underfoot by Nazism, but that is only the expression of the fact that capitalism in the period of its decline is engaged in undermining all the achievements of its progressive past. Undoubtedly Nazism is a menace to certain values of Western civilisation, but the immediate and direct menace is the development of Fascist tendencies by the British Imperialists in connection with the present war. To present Chamberlain as the defender of those "values" of civilisation that are worth defending is folly. It is precisely from Chamberlain that the attack on those values is most likely to come.

Not only the centrists in the Labour movement (Messrs. Brailsford and Cole) seem to be concerned with pinning the "defence of Western Civilisation" on to the war chariot of allied Imperialism but the same phrase is to be found more and more on the lips of Fascist Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and of the Vatican diplomacy which co-operates with them over a wide field. Unlike the blockheads amongst the Labour intellectuals, the reactionary elements listed above, do not see in the present policy of the Soviet Union a "betrayal of Socialism" but on the contrary a policy increasing the danger of social revolution in Europe. They regard Bolshevism as Public Enemy Number One, and Nazi Germany as being ill-advised in its refusal to play an open anti-Soviet game at this stage. Those anti-Soviet

forces are being strongly encouraged by British Imperialism. They strongly favour a united capitalist crusade against the Soviet Union. Naturally, they do not want to march forward under the slogan of "capitalism versus socialism," nor is the slogan of "democracy versus dictatorship" an appropriate one for them and so they are inclined to accept the slogan of "Western Civilisation (a designation wide enough to cover Parliamentary, Fascist and Half-Fascist capitalist states) versus Asiatic Barbarism." Those Labour men who are playing about with the concept of "Western Civilisation" are thus in danger of preparing the way for a war of the rotten, corrupt, Western Imperialism against the Soviet Union.

The Lesson of Finland

Where all this is leading is seen in a copy of the *Daily Express* of January 11, which lies before me as I write. On page 2 there is a map with the caption "Seven Nations Sending Help for War Against Bolshevism." (Not be it noted war for "Finnish Democracy." That humbug has been dropped and the purpose of the war, i.e., "against Bolshevism," is clearly stated). On the map ships marked U.S.A., Britain, Norway, France, Sweden, Italy and Spain appear. On the same page there is an account of how Fascist officers in full uniform are volunteering at the Finnish Legation in Rome. On page 12 there is the headline "Citrine chosen to visit Finland." Here you have an unsurpassed picture of where support of British Imperialism has led the British Labour movement. The British Labour leaders are lining up their forces alongside those of the Italian legionaries for the "war against Bolshevism" or in plainer English against Socialism in the Soviet Union. Surely the rank and file who see their leaders sinking deeper in this filthy morass of imperialist corruption can now see that they are on the wrong road, and that continuance along this road can only lead to the acceleration of a Fascist victory in Britain.

In their speeches the Labour leaders are trying to play the trump card "How can we call for the ending of the war with Germany and at the same time support the war of the Soviet Union against Finland?" If those Labour leaders could think for a single moment not in terms of "aggression and non-aggression" (as interpreted of course by British Imperialism) they would see that the action of the Soviet Union in supporting the Finnish People's Government, headed by Otto Kuusinen, is a tremendously important part in the struggle against the imperialist war. It is precisely because the Imperialists are endeavouring to extend the war to Scandinavia and Northern Europe, that the Soviet Union had to rescue the Finnish people from the grip of the Tanner-Mannerheim clique, which is the puppet of Anglo-French Imperialism. It is precisely because the Soviet Union is pulling Finland out of the imperialist war and because its victory will strengthen the Scandinavian workers in their struggle against those who want

to draw Norway, Sweden and Denmark into war, that the British imperialists are manifesting the most extreme hatred of the Soviet Union. It is precisely because a victory of the Soviet Union would strengthen those forces in the Balkan countries which are seeking at one and the same time to prevent Italian aggression and to prevent their countries from being drawn into the war, that Signor Mussolini joins British Imperialism in furious denunciations of the Soviet Union. It is because the Finnish workers when they elect their new Government will probably draw Finland out of the area of capitalist exploitation that a united front of capitalism has been formed against the Soviet Union and against the liberation of Finland. Yet a section of the British Labour leadership has sunk so low that they cheer the horrible prospect of the continuation and extension of the imperialist war and curse the prospect of the extension of the area of Socialism.

Is it not clear that continued support of the imperialist war will transform the British Labour movement into one of the dark reactionary forces of the world, a force co-operating with pro-Fascist toryism, with the plutocratic militarist dictatorship in France, with Italian Fascism, with Vatican diplomacy against the Soviet Union? Those forces stand for no Socialist objective. The dismemberment of Germany, the restoration of the Hapsburg monarchy, the Italian domination of the Balkans, the advance to clericalism and to Fascism is openly inscribed on the banner of most of them.


For the Labour Party the initial mistake of supporting the war was understandable (although the same cannot be said for Communists). But now the true character of the forces that are waging the war is being revealed in every issue of the newspapers. Shall the membership of the Labour Party insist on the truth being told, on the Labour movement cutting loose from support of the Imperialist war against Germany and of the counter-revolutionary war against the Soviet Union; or shall the movement stand by and applaud the slaughter of millions, all the time indulging in hideous cant about "the six principles," about the "new world order" to be secured by the victory of British Imperialism? Have the soldiers serving in the trenches, the seamen facing mine and torpedo, the women waiting at home, to receive no liberating message from the great mass organisations of the British working class, nothing but a stale rehash of the cant of a Halifax?

The rank and file of the British Labour movement cannot participate in this pitiful degradation; they cannot allow the Labour movement to fail and to betray as it did in 1914-18; they cannot tolerate a continuation of the political and economic co-operation of labour with the class which has dragged mankind into a new war; they must get on to the path of struggle against the war and against the social system which has produced the war.

The reactionary leaders will use every device to prevent the rank

and file taking this path, they will impose regulations on their members in the interests of imperialism and call it party discipline, they will resort to expulsions from the unions. But the great mass of Labour Party members will find their way forward to new forms of organisation and struggle, to closer forms of co-operation with the workers of the Soviet Union and of Nazi Germany. They will find ways and means of isolating the reformist leaders and advancing to stopping the war by ensuring the victory of Socialism over Imperialism.

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