

# War Policies, Sanctions, and Socialism

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A PACIFIST can have illusions even about a fascist. L. MacNeill Weir, a Labor member of Parliament and a leader of the pacifist group, on the occasion of Hitler's march into the Rhineland, hailed his subsequent proposals as the "greatest force for peace in recent years." Others saw nothing more significant in the occupation of the Rhine than "Germany occupying its own territory." Such views can only result in a fatal underestimation of the forces driving for war, and criminal failure to prepare the labor movement to fight against war.

The Rhineland is a center of heavy industry. It has enormous steel works and munitions plants. It borders on France, Belgium and Holland; it is essential for the conduct of any considerable war, not only from the standpoint of military strategy, but also as an industrial base for the conduct of a war. Therefore, the military occupation of the Ruhr must be considered as the completion of the first phase of Germany's war preparations—its material preparations. Germany's pace in war preparations has been extremely rapid—rearmament, conscription, air fleet, naval treaty with England, occupation of the Rhine—all these steps can now be clearly seen in their proper niche in Hitler's system.

As if in "answer" to Hitler all the other imperialist powers have begun a well-organized drive for increased armaments on a gigantic scale. But actually this armament race has been on for

some time. The Hitler move has become a pretext for the mobilization of the workers of these countries, who hate fascism and its works, behind the armament program of the imperialist governments and behind their war policies. They are trying to mislead the workers who hate war, into support of an imperialist war as in 1914. After all these years of talk of "permanent peace" it is today crystal-clear that the capitalist world is again headed for war. Capitalist "peace" manoeuvres were merely screens behind which war preparations were going on. The pacifists, and not only the pacifists, who placed their hopes for peace upon imperialist instruments and schemes, are once more disappointed.

Roy Howard in an interview upon his return from abroad said that he expected no war for two years, because while everybody is ready to fight, nobody knows whom he will have to fight. Although crudely expressed, this idea is essentially correct. The physical and material preparations for war are about complete. But the political preparations are far from complete. The alignments are not yet definite. Those who glibly predict the next war between the "democratic" nations and the "fascist" nations are influenced more by their desire to justify support for the "democratic" nations than by objective analysis of the situation. The relations between the leading imperialist powers today indicate that there is greater likelihood of a mixed war than of a sharp "democratic-fascist" cleavage. France and Italy are

much closer in policy than France and England. England and Germany have much more in common than Germany and Italy.

The leaders in the war preparations in the last few years have of course been Japan, Italy and Germany. Japan's seizure of Manchuria and Northern China is already history. Italy's invasion of Ethiopia must be recorded as a success. And Hitler, without having added any new territory to Germany, has nevertheless restored its military power. Have these successes been achieved against the resistance of the "democratic" nations? It is only by answering this question that we can obtain a clear picture of how the imperialist world operates.

Japan's seizure of Manchuria met with no resistance from the other imperialist powers in China. Only after it had firmly established its rule did a League of Nations commission mildly censure Japan "for the record". The Japanese occupation of Shanghai on the other hand aroused such a storm that Japan was compelled to abandon all attempts at gaining a foothold in central China. In Shanghai, Japan was treading on the toes of England and the United States. But in Manchuria these powers had only minor interests. It was against the Soviet Union that Japan's main blow was aimed. Whatever tendency England may have had to resist Japan's plans was further frustrated by France's open support of the Japanese adventure. France, whose interests were largely in South China, had for many years sought to break up the Anglo-Japanese alliance which gave Britain hegemony in the Pacific and Far East. "Democratic" France was not at all averse to seeing the triumph of "reactionary" Japan over a weaker nation, if it enhanced at the

same time France's imperialist position.

Italy did not find such easy going in its efforts to emulate Japan in Ethiopia. Under the drive of England, the League of Nations voted sanctions against Italy and Mussolini for a while became a diplomatic outcast. The voting of sanctions by the League of Nations aroused the greatest illusions in the international labor movement since Wilson's "war for democracy." Pacifists, communists and Tories hailed sanctions as a means of protecting the small nations against aggression; as obstacles to war; as guardians of democracy against fascism. These illusions suffered a severe shock when the sanctions failed to "paralyze" Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. But they received a death blow when the main proponent of sanctions against Italy became the chief opponent of sanctions against Germany for its treaty violations in occupying the Rhineland. The attempt to present sanctions as a "humanitarian" or "anti-war" policy thus received a fatal blow and sanctions appeared clearly in their true garb as an instrument of imperialist policy.

The attitude of England in these two cases arises not from any modification of its moral views, but solely from the different imperialist interests involved. The Mediterranean, with both entrances, Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, in British hands, is essential to British imperial communications. Already Italy is in a position to challenge British control because of its geographic position and its powerful air fleet. With Ethiopia in its hands Italy would hold a trump card. It would be in a position to paralyze British activities in the Red Sea; it would disrupt British plans for the Lake Tana region and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan; it would even be a constant threat to the Suez Canal. British im-

perialist interests therefore dictated that Italy be kept out of Ethiopia. But not because of love for the Ethiopians. British strategy is to throw a military chain in the Mediterranean around Italy, to swing Greece to England's side, and more recently, to rearm Turkey's Aegean territory.

An entirely different policy was followed toward Germany. From the moment Hitler announced his intention to rearm, England has done everything to make his path easier. Ramsay MacDonald, then premier, was the first to put the stamp of approval upon Hitler's plans. Now England, taking advantage of its strong position in the League, prevents any action against Hitler for his occupation of the Rhineland. Obviously this is not mere coincidence. It represents British traditional policy of preserving its own hegemony by balancing one rival against another, and not permitting anyone to become too strong. When French fear of Germany was re-awakened by Hitler's ascent to power every move by France to strengthen itself against Germany (and incidentally, of course, against England) was countered by a British move on behalf of Germany. It is no accident that the Anglo-German naval treaty followed upon the heels of the Franco-Soviet pact, or that the ratio of 35% for Germany's navy is very close to France's ratio. Hitler's occupation of the Rhine, it is now clear, was carried out with the prior knowledge of England, if not with its active consent, and therefore England has prevented, and will continue to prevent, any punishment of Germany. Again we see how, when their imperialist interests coincide, a "democratic" country (England) can work hand in glove with a fascist country (Germany).

The friendship between France and England, which is all that has kept the League of Nations together up to now, is further strained by their mutually opposed relations with Italy. For the last five years France and Italy have been working very closely together. They signed a pact of mutual assistance about a year ago. Austria is one of the bonds that keeps them together. France supports Italian rule in Austria through the Heimwehr in order to keep Hitler's Nazis out of power. With great reluctance France voted for sanctions against Italy, but managed to stave off all sanctions. Since the Rhineland incident, France and Italy have drawn even closer together. Sanctions are dead and Italy's campaign is assured of success.

The "democratic" nations, far from placing obstacles in the path of the fascist war-mongers, have, if their own imperialist interests demanded it, even made that path easier. The final line-up in a war may not be the one present developments seem to indicate, but these developments do show that the alignments will not be based on the internal political system, but on the inter-relationship of imperialist interests. The next war, like the last, will be a war of conquest, an imperialist war for the re-division of the world among the rival imperialist powers. Any illusions that on one side this will be a war for "democracy" (shades of Woodrow Wilson!) for the defense of the small nations (notice how the slogans of 1914 repeat themselves) only means that the working class will be drawn into such a war on the side of one of the imperialist alliances.

It is only in this light that the new capitalist schemes for luring the working class into war can be understood and exposed. The League of Nations has

obviously broken down. Temporarily rehabilitated by its sanctions policy, it is now absolutely impotent before Hitler, impotent to such an extent that France, one of its original protagonists, talks seriously of withdrawing. The League of Nations was never anything more than the instrument of the victorious imperialist powers. It has been ruptured from within by the development of new contradictions among the very victors. Yesterday's allies are tomorrow's enemies. With the League of Nations has gone overboard the myth of "collective security", which was simply a euphonious term for imperialist alliances. But all such alliances inevitably bring forth counter-alliances and eventually develop internal contradictions.

These schemes did serve a purpose. They harnessed a considerable section of the labor movement to the imperialist war schemes. It has by now become clear how fatal was the class collaboration expressed in labor support for imperialist sanctions. Support of sanctions by the labor movement takes the very heart out of the working class anti-war struggle and makes impossible the most important phase of this struggle—the struggle against the capitalist government in the home country. It is easy to understand why pacifists should have become enamored of sanctions. But why revolutionists who were able to see through the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations, who scoffed at the Kellogg Pact and capitalist disarmament should become defenders of sanctions is more difficult to understand. The Soviet Union argument would be legitimate were it not for the fact that the Soviet Union has been in existence since 1917, has been in constant danger of attack by imperialists, has had to

repel invasion and blockade and counter-revolution, and has done all that for almost two decades without consummating an alliance between the workers and the capitalists of any country for its defence.

The role imperialist France is playing in the Italo-Ethiopian struggle should explain why France desires an alliance with the Soviet Union. France has visions of the splendid Red Army being used to crush its imperialist rival—Germany, and to perpetuate the hold of the French capitalists not only on France, but over a vast colonial empire. Soviet Russia signed the Franco-Soviet pact as a measure of self-defence, even though mistakenly so. France on the other hand sees in the Franco-Soviet pact the means to promote its imperialist ambitions. Herein lies the great danger. The advanced proletariat of Europe will enroll in an imperialist war under the illusion that it is fighting for the Soviet Union. But in the final analysis, as Lenin pointed out in 1917, the advanced proletariat of Europe can help the Soviet Union best by getting rid of its own ruling class. And this task must be carried out particularly during a war, or in the face of war danger.

These questions would not arise if the advanced workers kept in mind that no real proletarian struggle against war is possible without simultaneous struggle against capitalism. This is the essential difference between a utopian-pacifist anti-war movement and a realistic Marxian one. Pacifism divorces war from capitalism, creates the illusion that war can be successfully opposed or abolished within the framework of the capitalist order. But Marxism shows that wars derive from the very organization of bourgeois society, are inevitable outgrowths of capitalism, and can be abolished only

with the abolition of capitalism. The most sensational successes of an anti-war movement, which is not at the same time an anti-capitalist movement, can at the best be superficial and temporary. A proletarian socialist struggle against war may have less sensational or less immediate successes, but they will be basic and lasting.

To separate the struggle against war from the general fight against capitalist society is to deprive the labor movement of one of its most potent anti-capitalist weapons. War is the crowning crime of capitalism. More than any other feature of capitalist society war exposes the inherent rottenness of the entire system. If the inter-relation between capitalism and war can once be brought home to

the workers, the struggle against capitalism will be considerably broadened, since the masses are essentially opposed to war. The masses must be made to see that only the socialists are consistent opponents of war; that the socialist claim that war is an outcome of capitalist rivalries is constantly justified by the outbreak of new wars; that capitalist "peace" plans are only covers for new war preparations. War and capitalism can be defeated only if the specific activities against war, while not consisting of abstract socialist propaganda, are based on a consistent Marxian analysis of war and are carried on in the spirit of an uncompromising struggle for a socialist society.

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