

WHEN WAR COMES

Article 2.

The following is the second of a series of articles compiled by the Social and Economic Department of the Red International of Labor Unions, which give in clear outline, the forecast of what war will bring, the conditions that will ensue and the historic developments that will mark the transformation of the capitalist war into civil war, developments in which every worker will find it necessary to act as an agent of that transformation. Let all understand, then, that the developments which are today but forecasts, will tomorrow be grim realities—which must be faced.—Editor.

RADICAL changes (seen already during the last war) are taking place in the very composition of the armies. In the past the armies drew their main strength from the rural population. But the mass armies of the future in the chief imperialist states will—apart from the colonial troops—be chiefly urban troops, drawn mainly from the industrial workers. They will for the most part, be semi-skilled and unskilled workers corresponding to the composition of the proletariat during the period of rationalization.

Such, too, will be the composition of the workers employed on defence work in the rear. True, discounting the experience of the last war, a section of the highly skilled workers will have to be left in the factories. But the bulk of the industrial workers will be sent to the front, their places in the factories being taken by women, children and old men. The further impetus that war and the general features of war production will give industrial rationalization will make it possible to "adapt" these new "hands" and train them even more rapidly than during the last war.

Similar changes will occur in industrial preparations and in the catering for war needs.

The wars of the future will make huge demands on industry, greater than during the last war when the chief belligerent countries were turned, so to speak, into teeming arsenals.

The war and the "peaceful" industries will be completely merged. The whole national economy, and not merely the entire industry, will be rallied to supply war needs. A "war economy" will be established. Already in present-day war preparations we see that the basic thing is not the war industry as such, nor huge stocks of military supplies, but the proper preparation and adaptation of the entire economy to promote the war, this applying especially to the preparation of the whole industrial apparatus of the "peaceful" industry for the mass production of munitions.

Class Struggle Against Imperialist Wars.

All these developments are extremely important to determine the character, the methods and the prospects of the working class struggle

against imperialist war.

The preparation and mobilization of the masses to struggle against war will have to be made on a far wider scale than many think.

Usually, one thinks of permanent armies, fleets, arsenals, factories and piles of explosives, etc., when war preparations are spoken of. But this idea no longer holds true and gives a completely false impression of future warfare. Since the whole economy will, one way or the other, be drawn into the war, since the keynote of all imperialist war preparations today is to adapt the entire industry, all the transport services, communications and agriculture, etc., to war purposes, the struggle against imperialist war must be shouldered by the whole working class, and especially by its basic section—the masses of unskilled workers.

The most vulnerable and, therefore, the most important strategical points in the industrial machine—and consequently in the war machine—are no longer where they used to be. They are to be found now in the district power stations without which the operation of modern industry is impossible, in the chief plants handling chemical materials, which can be switched on to the production of explosives and poison gases, in the great automobile and tractor plants which are increasingly mechanizing the armies and aviation, in the great engineering plants with their mass production which can be rapidly adapted to supply different war needs, the railroads, etc.

The mass character of the armies, the tremendous growth in the size and significance of the entire economic and industrial apparatus mobilized for the war, coupled with the transformation of the national economy into an integral, basic and decisive part of the war machine—will radically change the entire character, the aims and objects as well as the methods of conducting anti-war activities.

All the pacifist twaddle of the reformists about "boycotting war" is meaningless, absurd and exceedingly harmful. Whether he likes it or not, whether in uniform, in the trenches, driving a locomotive or working at the bench, every worker will become a part of the war machine.

This, as we shall see, gives rise, on the one hand, to many serious obstacles in carrying out anti-war activities, and on the other, greatly extends their scale and scope and opens up wide possibilities and prospects. The colossal war apparatus, complicated and sensitive, will feel its smooth running affected even though only one part of the machine falls out. In spite of its flexibility and elasticity, the friction caused by the faulty working of any part will suffice to bring about the gradual dislocation of the entire mechanism.

(To be Continued)