

WHEN WAR COMES

Article 6.

This is the sixth 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. Answer the war makers Nov. 21.—Editor.

OF COURSE, it would be a serious error and illusion to imagine that all the contradictions mentioned previously are going to develop automatically.

Without the conscious direction and effort of a revolutionary vanguard, well-knit organizationally and prepared to stop at nothing, though it be small numerically but clearly realizing its aims as well as the significance and the methods of the struggle, the development of these contradictions will only result in isolated outbursts of desperation. The spontaneous movement of the workers will grow in scale, will become more and more intensified, but will not suffice by a long way to break down the capitalist machine (whose operation will be especially concentrated during war) or to smash the mailed fist of the military dictatorship.

Lenin on War.

This question was raised very clearly and definitely by Lenin in his "Notes on the Tasks of our Delegation in the Hague," in 1922. He wrote that in the "Struggle against the war danger the hardest thing to overcome is the general opinion that this question is simple, clear and comparatively easy." He demonstrated that the seeming radicalism of reformist assertions, that "we shall reply to war with a strike and revolution" made to reassure the workers, was either "foolishness or a lie." He urged that "the people be explained the real circumstances in which war was born and how they were kept secret and how helpless was the ordinary labor organization, even though it called itself a revolutionary organization, when faced with the onset of war. . . ." Indeed, he definitely said that "defense of the Motherland would become an inevitable question, which would be decided by the great majority of the workers in favor of their own bourgeoisie and therefore we would have to elucidate what a mass of theoretical and bread-and-butter questions would become apparent immediately after the declaration of war which would make it impossible for the great bulk of those called up to understand them in any clear way or to consider them in any frankly unprejudiced light." Lenin considers that the first thing that must be done to "explain that the only way to fight war is to form and maintain an illegal organization of all revolutionaries engaged in the war to conduct protracted anti-war activities." The words "of all revolutionaries engaged in the war" are by no means accidental. In order to fight war in any effective way the revolutionaries must take part in it. We saw that in the war of the future it will be impossible to keep out of it, to avoid it. Every revolutionary must take up his place right down among the troops, in the center of war operations. For "Boycott War" is a nonsensical phrase. The Communists must take part in every reactionary war!

Only the conscious, stubborn work of an illegal revolutionary organization inside the army and among the masses employed on war work can turn to good account all the contradictions and possibilities mentioned in the foregoing, can coordinate and direct these forces of protest, antagonism and desperation to definite ends. Only the Communist Party can place itself at the head of these spontaneous movements of protest and indignation springing up among the workers and soldiers, give them a correct lead to turn an imperialist war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie.

Should their "own" imperialists be defeated these possibilities would be immediately opened up, would become actual and real. Such, too, would be the case not only during a final defeat, but during any setback experienced by the military machine whether it be a retreat or a hold-up of supplies, etc.

In such circumstances we would immediately witness (1) the complexity—dealt with above—the unwieldiness and sensitiveness of the modern war machine and (2) what is even more important, the class contradictions inside the mass armies. These contradictions are bound to appear and to take on definite shape and form as a result of the disintegration and disaffection caused by a defeat. They are bound to grow even though the bourgeoisie attempt (frequently successfully for a time) to utilize such periods for a widespread propaganda campaign, to whip up flagging spirits, to appeal to patriotic enthusiasm, to strengthen the "civil peace," etc.

An Army of the Masses.

Bernhardy, the ideologue of German militarism, aptly stresses the importance of the first point when he writes: "Mass armies are a source of danger which would never be underrated."

. . . The mechanism of such an army is so extensive and complicated that it can only function and be directed when all the wheels—at least where the main work is concerned—are running smoothly and moral 'upheavals' on a wide scale are avoided. To exclude the possibility of such upheavals in modern warfare would be as wrong as to reckon only on victorious battles. If such upheavals occur to a limited extent they can be successfully dealt with. But wherever large masses of men have already once got out of hand (through panic or when rations are delayed on a serious scale), and seditious spirit is in the air, then such troops are not only incapable of resisting the enemy, but become a danger to themselves and to their commanders. They break through the chains of discipline, arbitrarily interfere with the development of (military) operations and thus raise problems which the commanders can never solve."

The second point, e. g., the inevitable development of class contradictions is instinctively felt by many representatives of the imperialist clique and by prominent war-office officials, (but, of course, being unable to think to any logical conclusion they hesitate to give any definite expression to their thoughts on this score).

It is precisely the realization and the fear of such a contingency that has given rise to all those speculations about "Fullarism" dealt with in earlier chapters.

The Fullarists realize perhaps more than anyone, the danger of a class war inside the mass armies. Hence their vain attempts to avoid such a prospect with their utopias of war operated by small mechanized armies drawn from reliable fascist groups.

(To be continued)