

WHEN WAR COMES

Article 8.

This is the eighth 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.

As the foregoing has made clear all these conditions will become far more apparent, more far-reaching in their effects during future wars than was the case during the last.

1. The changing fortunes of war and the instability of each capitalist government will become more and more manifest and more and more glaring. The new military technology will call up a thousand and one unforeseen contingencies; unexpected attacks, air raids on the great industrial centers, the constant uncertainty and dread of the morrow. Instead of, or rather besides, the front lines, lying inactive perhaps months and years, there will be sharp dispersed movements, numerous partial, but severe, defeats, set-backs, crises and stoppages. In short, new "cracks" will appear every day.

2. Poverty and distress will become general; the exploitation of the masses will be increased many times over, will reach the limit of human endurance, will exhaust all further desire to make any more sacrifices.

3. Universal mobilization, the close connection between the rear and the front (the uninterrupted operation of the war machine being dependent upon the "agreement" and obedience of the toiling masses), the far-reaching effects on the psychology of the masses of all the horrors, privation and nervous tension of wartime will prompt the masses to take up action, which will be instrumental in rapidly weakening the hold of their own imperialist group.

Clearly, "one cannot expect the rise of a revolutionary situation exclusively with the declaration of war."

War Develops Weakness In Ruling Class

Only as the contradictions of war develop, are the foregoing factors brought into play, becoming especially manifest during defeats, retreats

and all setbacks suffered by their "own" imperialists, the position of the ruling classes becoming especially precarious. Hence, during "a reactionary war, the revolutionary class cannot but see that all military defeats are contributing towards the overthrow of the rulers. The only policy of rupturing the "civil peace," not in word but in deed, and of recognizing the implications of the class war, is the policy whereby the proletariat will utilize the difficulties of its Government and its own bourgeoisie to overthrow them. This cannot be achieved, and indeed cannot be our aim if we fail to desire the defeat of our own Government, if we do not do our best to bring about such a defeat... or if we do not facilitate the break up of our own "great" imperialist power.

The instability of capitalism described above with the hopeless suffering and distress of the masses of toilers and soldiers (which will become intensified, especially after a defeat), will create the psychological pre-requisites for the rise of these aspirations. As Lenin wrote: "War cannot release in the masses those vehement feelings and passions violating their usual state of torpid somnolence, and (as a result of their misery and desperation) hatred of their government and of their bourgeoisie."

Rebel Or Die

Every soldier at the front is faced with the practical question: "Either die fighting in a war between the slave-owners, remain a blind helpless slave, or die for attempting to get the slaves to fraternize to overthrow the system of slavery."

Such, too, is how the question confronts the working masses. "War breeds blind hatred of the enemy, for the bourgeoisie does its utmost to direct all the dissatisfaction of the people along these channels, thus diverting their attention from the chief enemy, namely the Government and the capitalist class of their own country. But the war which saddles the workers with poverty, horror and endless suffering, simultaneously enlightens and trains the finest representatives of the working class. If we must die, then we shall die fighting for our own cause, for the workers' cause, for the social revolution, but not to defend the interests of the capitalists, the landowners and the tzars—that is the way every class-conscious worker sees the situation and feels. In spite of the difficulties of revolutionary activities today, they are nevertheless possible. They are forging ahead in every part of the world. They are our only salvation."

(To be continued)