

WHEN WAR COMES

Article 9

This is the ninth and last 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 today in mass demonstrations—Editor.

Of course, capitalism will fight the revolutionary vanguard tooth and nail with all the force of its military dictatorship. "War is undertaken to divide and poison the minds of the workers with nationalist dope, to exterminate their vanguard in order to weaken the revolutionary movement of the proletariat." But this work must be renewed stubbornly and resolutely, again and again, and with self-denying activities, the message must be carried to all the workers, to all the soldiers. All talk of "boycotting war" must be exposed. There must not be any concessions on this score.

Here is what Lenin wrote during the last war: "Now that the war has begun, it would be useless to turn our backs on it... people at the front begin to think, begin to question things far more than they do at 'home.' We must go there and organize the proletariat for the final objective, for it is utopian to think that the proletariat will reach it by any peaceful means." Or elsewhere: "A refusal to bear arms and a strike against war, etc., is simply foolishness, a wretched and cowardly myth of struggling unarmed against an armed bourgeoisie, the fiction that capitalism can be destroyed without a desperate civil war or series of wars."

The Role of the Revolutionary Vanguard.

In the wars of the future, which would involve the entire population, these factors will become more significant and more widespread in their effects. In the meantime, dependent on the scale and tension of these contradictions, this unnoticed underground work among the masses may evoke a widespread movement and response, may bring about a mighty change in even a shorter period.

As Lenin remarked, it is in war time that "a rapid change occurs in the feelings of the masses, when the backward strata of the proletariat in the space of a few months, sometimes in as many weeks, turn into an army of millions strong following the lead of the revolutionary vanguard of the workers."

There is no doubt at all that the present development of the Communist Parties and the revolutionary unions will enable them from the very commencement of hostilities to achieve substantial successes in this struggle and definitely

prevent the declaration of a war itself.

Of course, the fact that the Communist parties, the Communist International and the Red International of Labor Unions exist, is a tremendous stride forward in comparison with 1914. The experience of the World War of 1914-1918, the experience of the Russian Revolution and the post-war revolutionary wave in Western Europe has not been lost on the workers. It has left its indelible impression on the minds and in the consciousness of the working class.

Neither should we lose sight of the fact, however that the bourgeoisie has also learnt much from the experience of the tempestuous years of the post-war period. In many respects the bourgeoisie were far quicker at grasping the significance of this experience than the Labor movement, were more conscious and systematic in applying it. Their forces are more concentrated by far. Their technical means are more powerful. They will have to fight for their very existence!

Meantime, far shrewder ways of dividing and hoodwinking the masses are being devised; every effort is being made to bring the workers under the ideological influence of capital.

In the capitalist countries, the Communist parties, even the best of them and the largest numerically, still have to contend with the overgrowth of "socialist" traditions and the lack of experience in illegal work.

The Test of Fire.

We must therefore struggle resolutely against all illusions. As Lenin urged we must expose the cheap, pretentious and completely inept catchword that 'we shall not allow war!'

Unquestionably, war will sift out, and lead to the final secession of all the Rights, opportunists and conciliators (including those who have always used "left" phraseology). When with the declaration of war the Communist Parties will be inevitably faced with the necessity of continuing on an illegal footing, of conducting illegal activities on a wide scale, with all the hard work, constant danger, not to speak of the firm resolve, this will entail, all the democratic humbugs, all the opportunist scum will immediately show themselves up.

All those elements lacking a true revolutionary outlook, who have not been through the fire and heat of the struggle, will show their true character. Thus, war will be, so to speak, the touchstone. It will throw aside all who waver and fluctuate, all who are chance-"Fellow-travelers."

But in the meantime it will continue to attract and make an intimate appeal to the thousands upon thousands of new workers to join the revolutionary movement, workers whose eyes will be opened by the war, who will realize from the bitter experience of the grim realities of war whether they be at the front or in the rear, that there is no other way, that there can be no other way, of putting a stop to the devastation, the misery, the ravages and horror of war than to struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist system.

The End