

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE WAR

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Following is the text of William Z. Foster's speech, "The Soviet Union and the War," made at a meeting of 2,000 garment workers at Manhattan Center Tuesday:

Tonight I wish to speak briefly of the policy of the U.S.S.R., especially regarding the present war. The peace policy, like all other important policies of the Soviet government, is being profoundly misrepresented by capitalist spokesmen and their echoes: the Wolla, Dubinaks, Thomas, Stolberg, Lovestones, Ottlows and Cannons, who denounce it as "power politics," "war mongering," "imperialism" and the like.

As against such slanders upon the Soviet Union, George Dimitroff, head of the Communist International, in a recent statement characterized the peace policy of the U.S.S.R. as "a policy dictated by the interests of Socialism, which coincide with the interests of the working people of all lands."

Now let us see by the test of life itself which of these characterizations is correct: whether the Soviet Union's attitude towards the war constitutes a socialist peace policy or of an imperialist war, and also whether or not it dovetails with the interests of the world's toiling masses. In order to do this it will be necessary to consider the various elements that constitute the Soviet peace policy as a whole.

First, let us estimate the long struggle of the masses in the various countries to prevent the war. Surely here was a Socialist task of first magnitude—to halt the outbreak of hostilities—and no honest person can deny that the Soviet Union was the world leader in this struggle.

Ever since the Soviet Government was organized in 1917 it has pursued an active peace policy, repeatedly proposing complete or partial disarmament, of the various governments, only to meet with flat rejection from the capitalist countries, and especially when the present war loomed, after the rise of Hitler, the U.S.S.R., in line with the Comintern and the Communist Parties of all countries, intensified its efforts to hold back the threatening slaughter. The Soviet Union's plan to prevent war was to create a peace front of all the democratic countries and thereby bring the fascist aggressors to a stand-still. This was the policy of collective security. Obviously, however, imperialists like Chamberlain and Daladier would never of their own volition support such an international front in defense of peace and democracy.

hence an additional phase of the Communist peace policy in the various countries was the formation of Peoples' Front Peace-Antifascist movement strong enough to democratize their respective governments and give them a genuine peace policy, or to bring such pressure to bear upon the government; as to force them into a policy of collaboration with the U.S.S.R. to maintain world peace. The international peace front and the Peoples' Front movements in the several countries were the two great sides of the Communist world peace policy.

This policy of collective security undoubtedly delayed the outbreak of the war, and if it did not prevent the war altogether, the responsibility, therefore, rests not only upon imperialists like Chamberlain and Daladier, but especially upon the Social-Democrats, Trotskyites; and also many confused liberals. These people fought against the Peoples' Front in every country and they bitterly opposed applying the policy of collective security in the crises around Ethiopia, Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia, etc. If the war finally was precipitated by the imperialist powers, certainly the Soviet government must be credited with doing everything humanly possible to prevent it. It fought so hard for peace that it had all the fascist aggressors lined up against it; it gave active assistance to China, Spain, and other victims of fascist invasion. It was only when war was right at



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its doors, when it was clear that the British and French governments had not only rejected the international peace front, but were following the hostile policy of seeking to induce Hitler, with their active backing, to attack the Soviet Union, that the Soviet Government disassociated itself from them, signed the non-aggression pact with Germany, and assumed the position of neutrality which it now occupies.

Certainly, the great struggle of the Soviet Government to prevent the war was a Socialist policy and one that truly corresponded to the interests of the toiling masses not only in the Soviet Union, but all over the world. Above all these masses wanted to prevent the outbreak of the war. The Soviet Government acted as their world spokesman and champion; hence to characterize its policy as imperialist is to commit the grossest distortion of reality and to do the work of capitalist reaction.

But the war broke out, in spite of the Soviet Government's efforts to stop it. So now let us look briefly at the Soviet policy toward the war that is here and see whether or not this policy is, as Dimitroff says, a socialist policy which coincides with the interests of toilers in every country.

Obviously, the first and most basic need of the toiling masses of the world who are confronted by the present war is to know what kind of a war it is; whether it is a just war which they must support, or an unjust war which they must oppose. To answer this great question the Chamberlains and Daladiers rush to tell us that it is a just war, a war "for democracy" and to abolish Hitlerism, and their Social-Democratic hangers-on second their motion and try to get the workers to endorse the slaughter. Hitler, in Germany, also defends his war-making with similar hypocrisy. The Soviet Government's spokesmen, however, true to the Socialist interests of the world's workers, have exploded these monstrous lies. Categorical they have pronounced the war an unjust war, an imperialist war, a ruthless struggle between imperialist powers; that, both sides are equally gully for the war; that both are struggling for markets, raw materials and hegemony over the world; that it is in no sense a struggle for democracy and against Hitlerism. Stalin, Molotov and other Soviet leaders, as well as the spokesmen for the Communist International and the Communist Parties in all countries, are telling the people of the world that the toiling masses have no interest in this imperialist war; that it can bring them nothing but oppression, suffering and death. And their words of enlightenment, especially through the speeches of Molotov, are reaching tens and hundreds of millions of workers and other toilers all over the world.

Who can dispute, therefore, that in this characterizing the war as imperialist, and teaching the masses their true interests regarding it, the leaders of the Soviet Government and the Comintern are following a truly Socialist policy, and that they thereby are doing a gigantic service to the

workers all over the world? To denounce as imperialistic a government carrying on this gigantic and fundamental work of proletarian education, as the Social-Democrats and related warmongers are doing, is a crime against the international working class and Socialism.

From its characterization of the war as an imperialist war the Soviet Government arrives at the main basis of its foreign policy, which is that the war be stopped at once! Surely, nobody can deny that the demand of the Soviet Government for peace is, as Dimitroff says, a Socialist policy which coincides with the interests of the workers of the entire world? The masses of all countries want peace! In no country do they demand war! Not in England—not in France—not in Germany—not in the Soviet Union—and certainly not in the United States! It is the imperialists, in first line the British and French governments, that are insisting upon continuing the war, not the common people. The Soviet Government, in its demand for peace, is voicing the will of these peace-loving masses of all the world.

But the objection is raised, often by confused but honest people, that peace now would mean a repetition of Munich, a Hitler peace. At this point let me interject that it was the Communists alone who condemned Munich as a sell-out of democracy, at a time when liberals, Social-Democrats and conservative trade union leaders were hailing Munich as a great victory for peace. And when the Munich betrayal was carried through it is also very significant that the Soviet Government was absent from the negotiations. The British, German, French and Italian imperialists saw to it that it was kept out. They knew full well that if the Soviet representatives had been present the imperialists would never have been able to put across their betrayal. No, we Communists do not want another Munich, and we would be the last to propose policies leading in that direction.

If the Hitlers, Chamberlains and Daladiers are allowed to dictate the eventual peace terms they will, despite their present glib promises of a just peace, write a much worse one even than either Munich or Versailles. The victorious imperialists would inevitably cut the defeated countries to pieces, and thus lay the basis for new miseries and fresh wars. The only guarantee of a just and enduring peace will be a powerful Soviet Government at the peace table, backed up by hundreds of millions of toilers all over the world. When the eventual settlement of this war comes, if European capitalism is still intact, we may be certain that the Soviet Union, true to its role as world Socialist leader, will be fighting against the imperialists for a peace program which represents the interests not only of its own 183,000,000 people, but also of the whole body of working people in every country. The Soviet's peace policy is a Socialist policy, one which coincides with the interests of the workers everywhere.

This brings us to the next basic feature of the Soviet's peace policy. This is that, obviously, while we are struggling to bring the war to an end, a great world Socialist task at this time is to prevent the war from spreading, from engulfing other populations in the useless butchery. Here again the Soviet Government, true to its Socialist character, has given the toiling masses of the world the correct lead by its policy of localizing the war. The Non-Aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Germany was of enormous service in restricting the extension of the war. Without this Pact doubtless many additional countries would now be in the war. And all the U. S. S. R.'s efforts are directed toward preventing the war from spreading.

Especially we in the United States should bear in mind the great lesson of the efforts of the Soviet Government and the Comintern to localize the war. Concretely, this means that on behalf of the interest of our own people, as well as in the sense of our common interests with the workers in other countries, we must do everything humanly possible to keep the United States out of the imperialist war. At the present time the imperialist forces in this country are pushing this country toward the brink.

The Roosevelt Administration adopts a more and more warlike policy. The lifting of the arms embargo was a long step toward getting us into the war. And so is the war hysteria created by the Dies Committee and many other war propaganda instruments. The vicious attacks now being directed toward the Communist Party, especially the arrest of Comrade Browder on trumped-up charges, are an attempt to strip the masses of our country of their civil liberties in order to make them helpless before the advance of the war-mongers. And especially sinister is the growing anti-Soviet agitation, one of the main war aims of the imperialists of this country being to draw the United States into a war against the Soviet Union. Obviously we must know how to block all these attempts to involve this country in the war, and all this is quite in line with the Soviet's peace policy.

From the foregoing it is clear that the policy of the Soviet Government to localize the war is not one merely in the interest of the people of the Soviet Union; it is a policy based upon the interests of the workers of all countries—a Socialist policy—an internationalist policy—a policy which the workers throughout the world should support, and all the capitalist and Social-Democratic slanders cannot make it into anything else.

Still another great phase of the Soviet's policy toward the war, and this is also the policy of the Communist International and Communist Parties everywhere, is to shield the masses of the warring and neutral countries as best it can be done, from the terrors, hardships and slaughter caused by the war. Thus the Soviet Government and the leaders of the Communist International will be the greatest force to prevent the use of poison gas, the bombing of open cities and the like. It is also sounding the note of the struggle against the profiteers who are sucking the life-blood out of the various peoples. They are, leading, furthermore, a fight in defense of the masses' civil rights; for not only in the warring countries, but also in the neutral capitalist countries the governments are stripping the masses of their democratic rights. Against all these things the Communists have spoken out loud and clear, for all the world to hear. An important feature of this general phase of Communist policy to protect the masses from the hardships of the war is the Soviet Government's recent protest against the British blockade contraband list. This list, by making subject to seizure at sea the main necessities of life, whether in belligerent or neutral ships, throws unspeakable privations upon children, the aged, the sick, not only in the belligerent countries but also in European neutral lands. Hence, when the Soviet Government, in the name of European peoples generally, protests against this barbarity, it performs a great world Socialist duty. And the imperialist war-makers will do well to hearken to this protest against the starvation of the peoples. The masses of Europe are not going to tamely submit to wholesale starvation through the British blockade. Their cry for food will eventually become a revolutionary demand, one that may well sweep before it many European capitalist governments if this outrageous war is prolonged.

There is still another great

side of the Soviet and Comintern peace policy that I wish to emphasize in analyzing the Communist attitude in relation to the war. This is the fundamental matter of strengthening the world fight for Socialism. The present imperialist war constitutes a great crisis of international capitalism, of which the protracted industrial crises of recent years, the growth of fascism, and the spread of war throughout the world are but so many expressions. It all signifies that the capitalist system is breaking down and preparing place for the growth of Socialism as the new world order. The Communists alone are teaching the masses these fundamental truths and showing them that only in Socialism can they find the final remedy for the accumulating horrors and miseries of capitalism.

Undoubtedly there will be a big growth of Socialist sentiment as a result of the present war. The masses will not experience the terrors and hardships of this wholesale butchery without turning against the social system responsible for it. If the capitalists dare to keep this war long going on it will be at the peril of the system of capitalism, and of their establishment of a socialist Europe.

The great wars of the past two generations have all dimmed in

revolutionary outbursts. The Franco-German War of 1870 produced the Paris Commune, the first Socialist government; the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 culminated in the first Russian Revolution; and the World War of 1914 gave birth to the present Soviet Union, extending over one-sixth of the globe. It is safe to say, therefore, that the present far-reaching crisis of capitalism will result in a big spread of socialism. Indeed, the world foremost of socialism, the Soviet Union, has already taken the lead in the world necessary task of building Socialism. It has liberated a dozen millions of oppressed Ukrainians and White Russians in what was once reactionary Poland; it has strengthened itself enormously in the Baltic and Balkan areas; its position in the Far East has been vastly improved and it has come forth tremendously as a power on a world scale. To condemn this fundamental strengthening of the whole position of international socialism as imperialistic is to turn reality on its head and to walk right into the trap of the capitalists who are trying to organize a general war against the U.S.S.R.

At present the Socialist strengthening of the Soviet Union in the Baltic is being insolently resisted by Finland. This country, ever since its foundation 20 years ago,

has been a tool of imperialist enemies of the Soviet Union, is now being instigated by Great Britain and the United States. But the Soviet Union is about to take away the gun that Finland has been pointing at Leningrad all these years.

Now to sum up very briefly the foregoing analysis of the Soviet Union's peace policy: Facts prove what Dimitroff says, that the peace policy of the Soviet Government, and of the Communist International and its affiliated Communist Parties, is a socialist policy, one that coincides with the interests of the masses all the world. The Soviet Government's long fight to prevent the war; its active support of China, Spain and other victims of war aggressors; its characterization of the war as an unjust, an imperialist war; its present demand for peace; its struggle to localize the war; its fight to spare the masses from the hardships of the war; its fight for the strengthening of socialism—all these elements of the Soviet's peace policy, taken singly and together, constitute a socialist policy—one that expresses the interests of the toiling masses in every country on the face of the globe, as well as those in the U.S.S.R.

From all this it is clear that we workers in this country should back up the peace policy of the Soviet Government and of the

Communist International—not because we must take orders from Moscow, (another ridiculous charge against us) but because in supporting the Soviet peace policy we are not only acting intelligently, internationally but are also defending the best interests of the American people. We must fight to keep America out of the imperialist war; we must demand an immediate peace; we must defend the living standards of the workers from the profiteers; we must organize the unorganized into the trade unions; we must fight to protect the civil rights of the masses. And to do all this we must defend the legality of the Communist Party, prevent the jailing of Comrade Browder. For the Communist Party is the first line trench of democracy in this country and if it should be overrun by the reactionaries it would not be long until their increased attacks would threaten the whole system of American democracy.

In this great period of crisis the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties all over the world are doing their socialist duty. They are fighting for the interests of the masses of all countries, both immediate and ultimate. Clear-sightedly and courageously they are living up to the best traditions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Every worker should rally to the support of our Party!

after 100 days..

THE HUNDRED DAYS ARE OVER. On this, the day after, we review our accomplishments in the financial campaign.

First, let the figures speak. They reveal that we raised over \$117,000 in less than 15 weeks. This is nearly \$30,000 more than was raised in a comparable period last year. The sustained weekly average of \$15,000 for the past seven weeks is also a record. And so were two \$22,000 weeks.

It is a splendid job—but not a finished one. We are still \$80,000 short of our \$250,000 goal. Every cent is vital. Every item in the budget irreducible. Remember, our state budget was formulated before the outbreak of the second imperialist war. And it is plain that our financial needs rise with the fever line of history.

Hence, the drive is being extended. We are out to finish the job.

Speed is essential. Every day is underlined with shell-fire. Every hour is filled with the ugly screams of disintegrating capitalism. Every moment is important when history takes gigantic leaps.

Our campaign must be intensified to keep pace with events. Finances are organization. The best and most correct policies are worth only as much as the persons and organizations which carry them out into line. Speed the financial drive so that we can bring our position on war and imperialism to the masses of people.

Complete the drive within the next few weeks!

Every Party member active in the financial campaign!

Finish the job!

Sections that went over the top: