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Freedom?

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209

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When the French revolutionary armies, in the autumn of 1792, took the offensive against the rotten reactionary states of Middle Europe, and gained their first historic victory at the Battle of Valmy, when they proceeded to shatter the medieval monarchies one after another, the surrounding peoples felt that France was waging a war for freedom, a democratic war, a just war. Reactionary German and English historians have repeatedly attempted to brand the war of revolutionary France against the European princes and feudal lords as an unjust war, their chief argument being that the French revolutionary armies were the first to attack, that it was they who crossed the German and Belgian frontiers as the aggressors.

And it is true that, militarily speaking, the French revolutionary armies were the attackers—they had anticipated the slow and clumsy preparations for attack of the Prussians, Austrians and British. But did' this alter the fact that the war was a just war, a war for freedom on France's part? Not in the least. It improved the case of the Prussian and Austrian reaction as little as it damaged the case of the French Revolution. Hence it is clear that the character of a war is not determined by who it is that attacks first, by which army is the first to cross the frontier.

The war of revolutionary France against monarchist, feudal and reactionary Europe was a just war, for it was being waged by what were then the most progressive classes in society—the bourgeoisie and the peasants. It was a just war because these classes had won power by revolutionary means and had swept away the decaying feudal system, because they were helping, weapon in hand, to clear the way for a new and better system of society, and because their military attack was launched in defense of the new-born revolutionary democracy. The decisive thing, therefore, in judging this war is the policy that preceded it, the question—which classes were waging the war, and for what system of society was the war paving the way? Lenin once declared:

“At the bottom of the genuinely national wars, particularly such as took place between 1789 and 1871, there was the long process of mass national movements, of struggle against absolutism and feudalism, of overthrowing national oppression and creating states on a national basis as prerequisites for capitalist development.” (V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol V, p. 132, International Publishers, New York.)

And elsewhere Lenin says:

“A national war can be transformed into an imperialist war, and vice versa. For example, the wars of the Great French Revolution started as national wars, and were such. They were revolutionary wars because they were waged in defense of the Great Revolution against a coalition of counter-revolutionary monarchies. But after Napoleon had created the French Empire by subjugating a number of large, virile, long-established national states of Europe, the French national wars became imperialist

wars, which *in their turn* engendered wars for national liberation *against* Napoleon's imperialism." (V. I. Lenin, "The Junius Pamphlet," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX.)

When judging the character of a war, it is absolutely of minor importance as to who was the first to take up arms or the first to cross the frontier. It is not the changing military situation, but the political purpose of a war that lends it its specific character.

Let us take a more recent example. No Socialist, and no democrat either for that matter, can entertain any doubt that the war of the Spanish people against Franco and his military allies was a just war, a war for freedom. It was a just war, a war for freedom, not only because Franco had called in the aid of foreign troops, but also because the Spanish people were protecting their newly-born liberties; they were protecting the land of their peasants and the education of their children; they were fighting so that they might continue to live without the big feudal landlords and without the unbridled dictatorship of the reactionary bourgeoisie.

It was a just war, a war for freedom, because the German and the Italian troops had come to Franco's aid not from unselfish motives, as the famous International Brigades had come to the aid of the Spanish Republic, but because it was the intention of the German and Italian imperialists to bring Spain under their sway, to subjugate the Spanish people and establish a more or less disguised foreign rule. It was a just war because one side was headed by the working class in alliance with the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie, while the other was headed by the class of reactionary landlords and capitalists.

Or let us take the case of China. The war of the Chinese people against the Japanese imperialists is a just war, a war for freedom, because the Chinese people are uniting in a mighty national-democratic movement against the Japanese invaders; because large sections of the Chinese bourgeoisie have joined in alliance with the working class and the poor peasants, as represented by the Communist Party; because the Chinese soldiers are not defending colonial possessions, but only China's right to national independence; because China is seeking to shake off the yoke of foreign imperialist rule and to be the mistress of her own destiny. This war is no less a war for freedom in the regions captured by the Japanese, where the Chinese are assuming the offensive against the conquerors, than in the regions where the Chinese are defending themselves from the military assault of the Japanese.

Or take a third example. If ever the Ethiopians, or the Hindus take up arms and attack their foreign oppressors, such an aggressive national war will be a just war, a war for freedom.

Thus the character of every war is determined by its political purpose, and not by the military concepts: attack and defense.

Would any Socialist proclaim a strike of the workers for higher wages and better conditions unjust solely because the strike has the outward appearance of an attack by the workers on the capitalists? Would any Socialist base his judgment of a strike on whether it is undertaken in "defense" of existing wage standards, or as an "attack" for higher wages? Would any honest worker take the part of the capitalists in the class war on the grounds that they are "defending" their right to exploit the workers, and that socially the workers

appear to be the "attackers"? It is obvious that the struggle of the workers against the capitalists is just, and the struggle of the capitalists against the workers unjust. The character of every struggle depends upon its social, its political purpose—and war is nothing but struggle in its most acute form.

The instinctive feeling of the masses that there are just wars and unjust wars was formulated by the Bolsheviks in clear and unmistakable terms during the first imperialist World War. The *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* states:

"It was not to *every kind* of war that the Bolsheviks were opposed. They were only opposed to wars of conquest, imperialist wars. The Bolsheviks held that there are two kinds of war:

"(a) *Just* wars, wars that are not wars of conquest but wars of liberation, waged to defend the people from foreign attack and from attempts to enslave them, or to liberate the people from capitalist slavery, or, lastly, to liberate colonies and dependent countries from the yoke of imperialism; and

"(b) *Unjust* wars, wars of conquest, waged to conquer and enslave foreign countries and foreign nations.

"Wars of the first kind the Bolsheviks supported. As to wars of the second kind, the Bolsheviks maintained that a resolute struggle must be waged against them to the point of revolution and the overthrow of one's own imperialist government" (pp. 167-68).

The attitude of the working class to any war, therefore, depends on whether it is a just war, a war for freedom, or an unjust war, an imperialist war. In a just war, the working class fights in the forefront with greater courage and

persistence than any other section of the people. This has been proved in Spain and in China. In an unjust war, an imperialist war, it is the duty of the working class to oppose the war with the utmost determination, to the point of revolution and the overthrow of its own imperialist government.

* * *

A new war of vast dimensions has broken out in Europe. The biggest capitalist states of Europe—England, France and Germany—are involved in it. Huge armies have been mobilized and unparalleled quantities of war material have been piled up. The whole life of the nations is dominated by the war, and the people are being threatened with the most frightful suffering. The Moloch of war is swallowing everything and everybody in its terrible jaws. The front stretches deep into the interior of the warring countries. The masses are being saddled with ever increasing burdens, and ever greater sacrifices are being demanded of them. Never before has a war, from its very outbreak, exercised such ruthless and imperative sway over the personal life and fate of every individual. And never before have nations been confronted with such inevitable atrocities, devastation and slaughter as in this war, which is as yet slowly developing to its full measure of death and destruction.

The attitude of the working class to this war is of decisive importance. The belligerent bourgeoisies of Germany, England and France are keenly aware of this. They know that everything in the war depends on winning the support of the workers; the workers are not only the producers of the tanks, the guns, the airplanes and all the other munitions of war; they are not only the most highly skilled soldiers, on whom the functioning of the war machine depends; they are also

the strongest and most class-conscious class in modern society, on whose attitude—right or wrong—the attitude of the other toiling masses largely depends.

With great uneasiness, the bourgeoisie of all the belligerent countries are observing that the masses are entering this war doubtingly, hesitatingly and unwillingly, that they have not the slightest enthusiasm for it, that they are by no means convinced of its necessity. Wide sections of the people in the belligerent countries cannot overcome the feeling that this war has nothing to do with their own interests, that it is the result of some inscrutable policy hostile to the interests of the people, that it has not sprung from the national needs, but from the sordid machinations of the governments. They have a vague suspicion of what Karl Marx formulated very clearly some seventy years ago, when he said:

“The highest heroic effort of which old society is still capable is national war; and this is now proved to be a governmental humbug, intended to defer the struggle of classes, and to be thrown aside as soon as that class struggle bursts out into civil war.” (Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*.)

In view of the uneasy mood of the masses, the belligerent bourgeoisie finds it necessary to set every means of propaganda going to obscure the truth which the working masses suspect, and to envelop the war in a mist of legend. It is unfortunate for the governments that millions of working people still have a very good recollection of the last imperialist war, which they entered singing and decked with flowers, for they believed the ruling classes when they declared that it was a war for freedom and democracy, a war to achieve

lasting peace by the establishment of a just system of social and international relations.

They now know that, after more than four years of carnage, it was not a just system that was erected on the mountains of corpses, but the criminal and impracticable system of Versailles, which was nothing but the senseless piling-up of material for new wars, nothing but a system of coercion, despotism and injustice.

They now know that the much-trumpeted freedom and democracy were only a mask for a shameless robbery, that the victors divided up the world among themselves, like a band of robbers dividing up their booty, and, with the sword, hacked out frontiers that were so many wounds and gashes in the body of the nations. They now know that the war gave rise to devastating economic crises, with the parasitic war profiteers at one pole and the impoverished masses at the other. And when they are told again that the present war is being waged for the noblest ideals of mankind, it only recalls to their minds the monstrous humbug of their governments twenty-five years ago.

At that time, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, headed by Lenin, described the character of that war in the following words:

“Neither of the two groups of belligerent countries lags behind the other in plunder, atrocities and the endless brutalities of war. But in order to fool the proletariat and distract its attention from the only real war of liberation, namely, civil war against the bourgeoisie both of ‘its own’ and ‘foreign’ countries, in order to further this lofty aim, the bourgeoisie of each country strives, by means of lying phrases about patriotism, to extol the significance of ‘its own’ national war and to assert that it

strives to vanquish the enemy, not for the sake of plundering and seizing territory, but for the sake of 'liberating' all other peoples except its own." (V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. V, pp. 124-25.)

And Lenin submitted a resolution at a conference of the Sections of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party Abroad from which we quote the following passage:

"The real essence of the present war is the struggle between England, France and Germany for the division of colonies and for the plunder of rival countries, and the attempt on the part of tsarism and the ruling classes of Russia to seize Persia, Mongolia, Turkey in Asia, Constantinople, Galicia, etc. The national element in the Austro-Serbian war occupies an entirely subordinate place and does not alter the general imperialist character of the war.

"The whole of the economic and diplomatic history of the last decades proves that both groups of belligerent nations have systematically prepared for precisely such a war. The question as to which group dealt the first military blow or first declared war is of no importance in determining the tactics of the Socialists. Phrases about the defense of the fatherland, resistance to enemy invasion, war of defense, etc., are, on both sides, nothing but a means for the wholesale deception of the people." (V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. V, p. 132.)

While, therefore, on both sides the imperialists of all shades, including the Socialist leaders, declared that the war was being waged for the noblest ideals, the Bolsheviki from the very first exposed the true character of the war and the true aims of the bourgeoisie, stripped of all their wordy disguises. The coercive Peace of Brest-Litovsk, under which the German

imperialists extended their sway to the Black Sea, and, still more, the coercive Peace of Versailles, by which the British and French imperialists shamelessly enriched themselves at the expense of the people, proved that in all countries the war-mongering bourgeoisie and their Socialist lackeys had deceived and hoodwinked the masses, and that the Bolsheviks were the only ones who had told the masses the truth from the first.

And we have the same state of affairs today in the present war. The belligerent imperialists and their Socialist henchmen are again trying to fool the masses into believing that the war is being waged in the interests of freedom and democracy; and again it is the Communists, and only the Communists, who are exposing the unjust and predatory character of the war.

But in the past twenty-five years the masses have learned many a bitter lesson, of which they knew nothing at the time of the first imperialist war. They regard the monstrous event with a more critical eye. They are inclined to believe that this war is nothing but a continuation of the first imperialist war, nothing but a continuation of the policy of Versailles. It is no coincidence that again, as in the last imperialist war, England and France are lined up against Germany, that it is the same antagonisms which have led to another frightful explosion.

The belligerent imperialists, by trying to prove that the present war is a just war, are obliged to maintain that the war of twenty-five years ago was also a just war—which puts the German Socialists particularly in a tight spot. Those same German Socialists who twenty-five years ago hailed the war of the German imperialists as a just war and who had lustily cried "*Gott strafe England!*" are today hailing the war of the British imperialists as a just war and are crying just as lustily,

"God bless England!" And they are doing so, even though it is an open secret that both the German and the British imperialists are only continuing the first war, and are essentially pursuing the same war aims as twenty-five years ago.

The masses, having become more critical, can detect the voice of the past beneath the voice of the present. The Chamberlains and Daladiers are mere gramophones playing the records of speeches made by the statesmen of 1914. All this talk about a war for freedom and democracy, for the self-determination of nations and world peace, we have heard before. It is the voice of the past, and it is continually being drowned out by the disgrace of Versailles, by the call for help of oppressed nations, or by the thunder of the guns of the new war engendered by the criminal peace treaties. Can Chamberlain and Daladier inspire more confidence in the people than Poincaré and Sir Edward Grey? Have the smooth lies become any more honorable and trustworthy now that they are twenty-five years older? Have the imperialists been transformed in these twenty-five years from criminal youths into benevolent old gentlemen, or the Socialist leaders from young errand boys of imperialism into old soldiers of the revolution? Nothing of the kind—just as the twig is bent, the tree is inclined; and the old adage applies equally well to the imperialists and their Socialist lackeys.

* * *

The uncomfortable feeling is growing on the bourgeoisie of all the belligerent countries that the old lies of 1914 will not do, that it is no good digging up the dead cries of the first imperialist war, that new cries have to be fabricated in "ideological" workshops. The German imperialists have therefore decided—with no light heart, of course—to represent their

war as a war "against Western capitalism," as a war "for socialism." The British and French imperialists, on the other hand, have decided—after having crushed the anti-fascist war in Spain and smashed the anti-fascist People's Front in France—to proclaim their war an "anti-fascist" war. Neither the German nor the British and French imperialists feel very comfortable about it, but they can see no other alternative but to resort to the most unscrupulous demagoguery. That they are not very comfortable about it can be seen from the inherent contradictions in their war propaganda. Even a bourgeois paper, the Basle *National-Zeitung*, has pointed to these contradictions. In its issue of October 11, 1939, immediately after Daladier's reply to Hitler's peace offers, this newspaper wrote:

"It is interesting to note that the French reply expressly refrained from giving an ideological interpretation of the character of the war, but off-handedly referred to Germany's striving for hegemony as the cause of the war. . . ."

"In England, on the contrary, the war discussions are momentarily entirely swayed by doctrines. The press is full of private opinions about the purpose and aims of the war. . . . Subtle distinctions between Hitlerism in foreign policy and Hitlerism in home policy, utopian demands for a comprehensive European peace program, and vague proposals for a universal conference . . . are examples of this remarkable doctrinal excitement in a war which, as far as England is concerned, has a no more complicated meaning than the war against Napoleon. As in that case, the whole thing is nothing but a collision between the Island Empire and the will to hegemony of a continental power. . . ."

This newspaper has openly expressed what the British imperialists are anxious to conceal: that they are waging war on Germany in order to prevent German imperialist hegemony in Europe. The French imperialists are rather fearful of making too much play of "anti-fascist" demagoguery; the memory is still all too fresh in the minds of the French people that the French bourgeoisie smashed the anti-fascist People's Front, that it put up a savage resistance to every anti-fascist movement, that the keynote of its propaganda was that France must not allow herself to be involved in an "ideological" war. Besides, it is a little difficult to preach an "anti-fascist" war and at the same time prosecute the Communists, whom the masses have been taught by years of experience to regard as the most tried and determined opponents of all reaction. The French bourgeoisie are therefore leaving it to their oiliest and most servile lackeys, men like Léon Blum and Paul Faure, to preach an "anti-fascist" war, while they themselves are far more sparing of "ideological" effusions.

In this war, however, the French bourgeoisie play a subordinate role to the British bourgeoisie; the British imperialists set the tone in every respect, and they know very well that the masses are not prepared to shed their blood solely for the sake of British supremacy. They therefore attach the highest value to a popular war "ideology," and they are setting their whole propaganda machine going to paint the war in "anti-fascist" colors. In this, they have the direct assistance of the Second International, whose function it is to convert the anti-fascist sentiments of the masses into a war potential in the interests of British imperialism.

And there is no doubt about it that the masses harbor a profound and justified hatred of fascism. Their hatred of fascism is their hatred of the ruthless dictatorship of the

capitalists, of the brutal oppressors of the working people, of the destroyers of the bourgeois-democratic liberties of the press, assembly and the right to organize; it is their hatred of the pack who are hounding revolutionary workers just because they are Communists, who arrest, try and imprison revolutionary workers because they will not forsake their revolutionary views; it is their hatred of the bandits who have forcibly seized the workers' clubs, printshops and libraries; it is their hatred of the scoundrels who fling true champions of liberty into concentration camps; it is their hatred of the imperialists who oppress other peoples and drive their own people into criminal wars.

This hatred is not directed so much against the label "fascism" or "National-Socialism," as against what this label implies socially and politically.

It is therefore impossible to conceive why the British and French workers should be more sympathetic towards the torturers of the Polish people than towards the torturers of the German people, why they should fight for the former oppressors of the peoples of Western Ukraine and Western Byelo-Russia against whose brutalities the Labor Party had protested several years ago to the League of Nations—or why they should fight for the abolition of concentration camps in Germany when concentration camps are being set up in France.

It is impossible to conceive why it should be more reprehensible for the German imperialists to drop bombs on Poland than for the British imperialists to drop bombs on Palestine or India. It is impossible to conceive why the German imperialists should be hated for doing what in the case of the British and French imperialists is regarded as nothing more than an unavoidable necessity. No, the workers hate all oppression,

all capitalist villainies, whether cloaked in the garb of "fascism" or in the garb of "democracy."

There are special reasons why the hatred of the workers in recent years has been mainly directed against fascism. The bourgeoisie of the states in which fascism has gained the ascendancy had received the worst of the bargain during the partition of the world. They had been weakened both at home and abroad, and were, moreover, faced by a strong anti-capitalist movement among the masses. In order to maintain their rule at home, and at the same time launch into a struggle for supremacy abroad, they thought it necessary to lend their dictatorship a more acute form, to abandon the democratic for the fascist form of dictatorship. The result was the worsening of the conditions of the working people in the fascist countries as compared with the so-called democratic countries.

More, the struggle of the working people in the so-called democratic countries to prevent the advance of fascism, that is, to prevent their standard of living from being lowered as in the fascist countries, offered bourgeois democracy a last chance to imbibe a popular spirit. Signs of a movement in this direction were shown by the success of the People's Front in France and by the new type of democracy in Spain; by defending democracy against the onslaught of fascism, the People's Front in both Spain and France was really defending the vital interests of the working people.

But it was precisely this growing tendency of democracy to acquire a new popular character, it was this revival of the Jacobin traditions, of the fighting democratic spirit of the working class—which steadily spread to the middle class—that induced the bourgeoisie to curb the revival of democracy by every means in its power. With the aid of the Socialist traitors, the bourgeoisie succeeded in stifling this development,

in suppressing the democracy of the Spanish People's Front, in suffocating the democracy of the French People's Front in the germ, and in steadily giving the hollowed-out democracy that remained a fascist hue. The difference between "fascist" Germany and "democratic" France has been reduced to a minimum; the former contrast between fascism and democracy is being obliterated by the bourgeoisie itself and by its Socialist henchmen.

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The hatred of the masses for fascism was likewise a hatred for the aggressive imperialist warmongers. It is true that in the years immediately preceding the war a distinction had to be made between aggressive and non-aggressive states, between aggressive and non-aggressive imperialists. But this distinction was never of a moral character. No Marxist ever assumed for a moment that the British and French imperialists were any better, or more noble, or more humane, or more peaceable than the German imperialists. It was always perfectly clear that the oppressors of India and Africa were no less sinister and rapacious than the oppressors of Austria and Czechoslovakia. The distinction consisted solely in the fact that the British and French imperialists, having gorged themselves at Versailles, were in favor of maintaining the status quo, whereas the German imperialists were determined not to tolerate a status quo which was to their disfavor.

In his historic report at the Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin made it quite clear what value Communists attach to the "morals" of the British and French imperialists when he said:

"Far be it from me to moralize on the policy of non-intervention, to talk of treason, treachery and so on. It

would be naive to preach morals to people who recognize no human morality. Politics is politics, as the old, case-hardened bourgeois diplomats say. It must be remarked, however, that the big and dangerous political game started by the supporters of the policy of non-intervention may end in a serious fiasco for them." (Joseph Stalin, *From Socialism to Communism in the Soviet Union*, p. 15.)

The revolutionary workers had no illusions regarding the British and French imperialists, but they were determined to do their utmost to save the nations from the horrors of a new war. It was for this reason, and for no other, that they were prepared to cooperate with the temporarily non-aggressive imperialists in order to build up a solid dam of peace against the aggressive imperialists. Stalin had formulated this policy as far back as 1934 in his report to the Seventeenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. (B.), when he said:

"It is not for us, who have experienced the shame of the Brest-Litovsk Peace, to sing the praises of the Versailles Treaty. We merely do not agree to the world being flung into the abyss of a new war on account of this treaty. The same . . . must be said of the alleged new orientation taken by the U.S.S.R. We never had any orientation towards Germany, nor have we any orientation towards Poland and France. Our orientation in the past and our orientation at the present time is towards the U.S.S.R. and towards the U.S.S.R. alone. And if the interests of the U.S.S.R. demand rapprochement with one country or another which is not interested in disturbing peace, we take this step without hesitation." (Joseph Stalin, *Socialism Victorious*," p. 20.)

The British and French imperialists have never been one jot better than their German rivals. It was a fact, neverthe-

less, that the German imperialists had been the aggressors for several years, and that the British and French imperialists were not directly out for new conquests, but were solely concerned in holding on to what they had already seized. The revolutionary workers realized that it was necessary to resist the aggressor in order to protect peace. There could be no doubt that the German imperialists were not in a position to wage war against the peace front of all the non-aggressive states which the Soviet Union was trying to line up; on the contrary, they would have been obliged to give way to such a peace front. On these grounds a united front of all the workers against the fascist aggressors at that time was indispensable—but not for the sake of upholding the scandalous Versailles system. The revolutionary workers were simply of the opinion that a universal slaughter of the nations would be too heavy a price to pay for its abolition.

But the moment peace collapsed, the old distinction between aggressive and non-aggressive imperialists disappeared—especially since all the imperialists were responsible for the collapse of peace. Judged from the military standpoint, Germany did attack Poland, it is true; but England and France attacked Germany. After the lightning collapse of the utterly rotten Polish state, the German Government made overtures of peace, but the British and French imperialists rejected them. Far be it from us to claim that the peace Hitler offered was an ideal one, but when the British today indignantly declare that no peace based on a forcible revision of the map is acceptable, it must be remembered that the Peace of Versailles was a peace of just this kind, that at that time the map of the world was revised solely by means of force. Or perhaps the British would like to claim that the old state of affairs in Eastern Europe, the barbaric Polish yoke under which millions

of Ukrainian, Byelo-Russians, Lithuanians and Germans languished, was more "moral" than the state of affairs today? The Ukrainians and Byelo-Russians have furnished a convincing answer to this question by voting for the Soviet Union.

The map of the world was forcibly revised by the Peace of Versailles. We Communists publicly branded this coercive peace, but we were of the opinion that a new slaughter of the nations would be too big a price to pay for a just and rational re-arrangement of frontiers. Still more are we of the opinion today that the attempt to restore the old Polish prison of nations by means of a holocaust of war is a monstrous crime, and that whoever makes such an attempt is without question an aggressor.

We therefore cannot avoid taking note of the tremendous change the international situation has undergone owing to the outbreak of the European war. From the standpoint both of home and foreign policy, the distinction between "fascist" and "democratic" states has lost all meaning: in home policy, we are witnessing the steady disappearance of all difference between bourgeois democracy and fascism; in foreign policy, we find that the former non-aggressive states have resorted to military aggression all along the line. Consequently, when the British imperialists suddenly begin to preach an "anti-fascist" war, it is clear that this newly-hatched "anti-fascism" of the reactionary bourgeoisie has nothing in common with the anti-fascism of the workers, in fact is its very opposite.

The bourgeois trick of giving a reactionary twist to the political slogans of the working class is nothing new; the Nazi leaders were the first to develop this trick to perfection when, before their accession to power in 1933, they adopted the guise of passionate anti-capitalists, began to employ socialist phraseology and to exploit the vague yearning of the masses for

socialism to establish the dictatorship of the most reactionary sections of German finance capital. The "anti-fascism" of the British imperialists corresponds in every particular to the "socialism" of the German imperialists. Chamberlain and Churchill are as much "anti-fascists" as Krupp and Vögeler are "socialists."

* * *

To get an idea of what the "anti-fascism" of the British imperialists is really worth, it should be recalled that it was only the loving kindness of these British imperialists that enabled fascism to develop in Europe. It was the British imperialists who helped fascism in Italy over every dangerous reef, their purpose for many years being to play off fascist Italy against France. It was the British imperialists who fostered the bloodiest counter-revolution in Hungary, Portugal, Greece and other countries, and who everywhere extended financial aid and sympathy to the murderers of the workers. It was the British imperialists who erected in Eastern Europe a "sanitary cordon" of reactionary states against socialism, states in which tortures, shootings, punitive expeditions against workers and peasants, brutality and corruption were, so to speak, the normal thing.

It was the British imperialists who set German imperialism on its feet again, and who helped "Hitlerism" out of every difficulty. It was the British imperialists who made it possible for "Hitlerism" to carry out its huge armament program, to march into the demilitarized Rhine zone, to conquer Austria, to dismember and annex Czechoslovakia, and to intervene in Spain. It was the British imperialists who stood by "Hitlerism" in its hour of deepest crisis, when Chamberlain appeared like a guardian angel with a protecting umbrella, and when, in Munich, Chamberlain and Daladier turned the imminent

bankruptcy of the German rulers into a brilliant victory.

It was the British imperialists who, in conjunction with their own Léon Blums, strangled the anti-fascist war in Spain and paved the way for a gruesome fascist dictatorship. It was the British imperialists who intrigued in every way against the People's Front in France, and who entrusted their Léon Blum and his accomplices with the task of destroying the popular anti-fascist movement. It was the British imperialists who systematically frustrated the formation of a European peace front and who thwarted every attempt to resist German imperialist aggression.

What mysterious event has suddenly transformed these stubborn patrons of "Hitlerism," these mortal enemies of every popular anti-fascist movement, into fiery and indignant enemies of "Hitlerism," into militant "anti-fascists"? Chamberlain has repeatedly hinted that it was all due to a "broken pledge," which could only be expiated in the blood of nations.

It must have been a "broken pledge" of a very unusual kind to have wounded the moral sentiment of the British imperialists so deeply as to lead them to risk a war of incalculable consequences in the name of political "honesty." They never used to be so upset by "broken pledges"; they themselves broke the pledge they gave to guarantee the independence of Austria; they hailed the outrageous violation by the French Government of the pledge it had given to Czechoslovakia as a political master-stroke; they regarded the pledges broken by the Nazi leaders at least twice a year with the utmost equanimity. What, then, could have happened so suddenly to disturb their equanimity so profoundly as to make them issue the battlecry that an "honest" government must be installed in Germany?

To understand the nature of this "broken pledge," it should

be recalled that the Nazi leaders had for years preached the most extreme "anti-Communism," that they had claimed that it was their historic mission to fight Bolshevism, and that the reactionary bourgeoisie expected them to launch a crusade against the Soviet Union. For years Germany was governed by the trend that was most clearly represented by the Baltic adventurer, Alfred Rosenberg, the trend which, with British aid, was preparing for war on the Land of Socialism, and which indulged in fantastic dreams of conquering the Ukraine and converting the Black Sea into German waters.

The British and French imperialists, who had always been working for a "Holy Alliance" of capitalist states against the Soviet Union, who had attempted by force of arms to prevent the rise of the Soviet power, who had given political, financial and military aid in turn to Denikin, Kolchak, Wrangel and Pilsudski, considered that there was every chance of continuing the intervention against the Soviet Union with the help of German troops. They not only hoped to destroy socialism by such a war, but also to enfeeble their imperialist rival, Germany, and in the course of events to dictate a British peace to both states.

The policy of "non-intervention," that big and dangerous game of the British imperialists, is only to be understood from this angle. The systematic strengthening of German imperialism, the attempts to oust the Soviet Union from the diplomatic field of Europe, the recurrent plans to unite Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy in a Four-Power Alliance, the attempt to provoke open conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union over the Spanish and Czechoslovak questions, and, lastly, the Munich conspiracy, with all its attendant circumstances, were all solely intended to serve this cardinal aim of British imperialism.

Hardly had the Munich agreement been reached, when, in mysterious unanimity, the capitalist press of England, France and the United States began to play up the "Ukrainian question." The rumor was systematically spread that a German invasion of the Ukraine was imminent. A troop of British and American journalists flocked to Carpatho-Ukraine, where they interviewed all the old ghosts of the Ukrainian counter-revolution and feverishly prepared world public opinion for war-like events. Bonnet, the French Foreign Minister, hastened to assure the Foreign Commissioner of the Chamber that the Franco-Soviet pact would not be put into effect if a strong "autonomist movement" were to arise in the Ukraine. Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, was demonstratively refused a reception in France and he was gently urged to go to Berchtesgaden and come to an understanding with Hitler. The London *Times*, the leading organ of British imperialism, declared on March 16, 1939, in elegiac tones:

"There is no doubt that after Munich, the leaders of the French Government believed and hoped that *Germany would continue her eastward drive*, and, as the price of French complacence, leave this country in peace."

The negotiations between Hitler and Beck were eagerly commented on in the British and French press, and the newspapers announced with ill-concealed satisfaction that Poland had consented to make considerable concessions. On January 7, 1939, the *Times* had complacently reported that:

"It is understood that the general line of action favored by the German Government is *an extension within Europe of the anti-Comintern Pact* in a more concrete form. It is therefore likely that Herr Hitler inquired of Colonel

Beck what the Polish attitude would be towards such a policy, and expressed the hope that the *Polish Government would not confine themselves to a passive role. . . . Practical steps are already being undertaken by Germany, particularly in the Carpatho-Ukraine, and it may be expected that the political groundwork will be busily pushed south-eastward in the coming weeks and months.*"

Hence the British imperialists cherished the hope that Poland would accede to Hitler's demands and "not confine herself to a passive role" in the expected war on the Soviet Union. But the British imperialists did not rest content with mere hoping; they hastened to give concrete form to their support of German "anti-Communism."

While they lulled the masses into believing that they were working for a European peace front, they sent to Germany, not a minor official of the Foreign Office, but Mr. Montagu Norman himself, the Director of the Bank of England. The negotiations between Norman and Hjalmar Schacht, the agent of German finance capital, was reported by the *Times* with the significant remark that the two gentlemen must have discussed the question of German expansion eastwards, and added that this expansion might in the future create an extensive field for foreign capital and for economic collaboration between Germany and England.

At that time the British imperialists were not the least indignant at Germany's demands on Poland. On the contrary, they fully concurred in these demands and regarded Germany's prospective military expansion in Eastern Europe solely from the standpoint of the "extensive field for foreign capital" it might create. In a word, they were prepared to finance a war by Germany on the Soviet Union. Accordingly, Poland was given a hint as plain as a pikestaff. The *Daily*

Telegraph, the unofficial organ of the British Foreign Office, wrote on January 11, 1939:

"It seems to have been assumed at Berchtesgaden that Germany's Eastern European plans, *with the good will of Poland*, could be realized by strong diplomatic action. . . . Herr Hitler in any event, it is supposed, would 'protect his rear' through the *conclusion of an air pact with Britain and France*. . . .

"It appears to be Herr Hitler's intention to extend German influence—political as well as economic—to *the boundaries of the Soviet Union*, but not across the Polish territory. *Latvia and Estonia* in the north and *Rumania* in the south would afford points of *contact with Russia* without touching Polish territory. . . .

"If Poland in 1920 had not taken the Vilna district from Lithuania, that country would have been Germany's most convenient point of contact with the Soviet Union."

Thus the British imperialists had made up their minds to sacrifice the Baltic states, on the one hand, and Rumania, on the other, to serve as vantage grounds for further German expansion, at the same time making it clear to the Poles that they also had the Vilna region in mind for this purpose. German imperialism was submitted the following plan on a silver platter: "We will conclude an air pact with you, we will let you have money, we will let you take the Baltic States and Rumania, and we will compel Poland to help you in every way. You, on your part, must establish 'contact' as soon as possible with the Soviet Union and advance towards her boundaries in the north and the south." Such was the "peace plan" of the British imperialists! Such was the "peace front" of these inveterate warmongers! Such was the meaning of the

“policy of non-interference” for which Chamberlain, Daladier, Greenwood and Blum were working!

The “broken pledge” of which they accuse Hitler is nothing but the collapse of their war plans against the Soviet Union. Germany did not establish “contact” with the Soviet Union in the form the British warmongers wished, but in the form of a pact of non-aggression. That is the “broken pledge” with which Chamberlain is trying to justify his war! That trend in Germany which shrank—and with good reason—from a war against the mighty socialist Soviet power and regarded peace with the Soviet Union as a vital necessity for Germany, gained the upper hand. That was the immediate cause which goaded Chamberlain to launch a European war!

The howl of rage of the Western imperialists and of their Socialist lackeys betrays the truth of this so-called “anti-fascist” war. The savage charges they hurl at the German rulers contain the ever-recurring reproach that they have “betrayed anti-Communism.” These remarkable “democrats and anti-fascists” howl in chorus that Hitler has betrayed the anti-Comintern pact, that he has opened the door to Bolshevism in Europe, that he has destroyed the sanitary cordon around socialism.

The leaders of the Second International are impressing on the bourgeoisie that it should now be clear that Social-Democratic anti-Communism is far more reliable than National-Socialist anti-Communism, and that the hatred of the Social-Democrats for the Soviet Union has stood the test far better than that of the National-Socialists. With indecent haste they have snatched up the bedraggled banner of the bankrupt anti-Comintern pact and have taken the lead in the hue and cry against the Communists, of the jingo campaign against the Soviet Union.

"Shoot the Communists as traitors to the country!" yells Lèon Blum. "Communism must be driven not only out of Europe, but out of Asia as well!" thunders Desmoulin, Blum's accomplice. But the most frantic of all is that wretched survival which, under the name of the "Central Committee of the German Social-Democratic Party," has found asylum in the servants' quarters of British imperialism. These time-servers, for whom treachery to the working class has long become a profession, have issued the war cry: "Hitlerism" must be overthrow in order to convert Germany into a bulwark against socialism and to launch a war on the Soviet Union. The *Neue Vorwaerts*, which appears under the patronage of the French authorities, wrote on October 1:

"It is Hitler himself who has called forth this expansion westward [the establishment of socialism in the Western Ukraine and Western Byelo-Russia—*E.F.*]. It is in the logic of things that any future regime in Germany that deliberately rejects the Hitler policy will not regard itself as an ally of this Russian expansion westward, but as a barrier to this expansion. . . . That means that the need to check Russian expansion westward and prevent the spread of Bolshevism in Germany dictates the overthrow of Hitler. . . . The existence of a Communist Party in liberated Germany will be just as impossible as it is in France today. . . ."

The *Neue Vorwaerts* was even more explicit on October 15, when, with cool impudence, Friedrich Stampfer wrote:

"Today, however, Germany again directly borders on the gigantic empire of Russia, with its incalculable potentialities of development. It may be that within a year or two it will be the earnest wish of England and France

to have the new German Republic remain armed, and that the German Social-Democrats will be inclined to subscribe to that wish in the interests of their own country and of the whole of Europe.”

These quotations could be supplemented by a hundred others of a like tenor, but they will suffice to expose the true meaning of this so-called “anti-fascist” war. Chamberlain has proclaimed that the aim of the war is to “overthrow Hitlerism,” and his Social-Democratic servants are constantly making it clear what that means in practice. “Hitlerism” is to be overthrown because it was incapable of realizing the war plans against the Soviet Union, because it was obliged to pay heed to the superior might of the socialist state.

According to the plan of the British imperialists and of their Social-Democratic lickspittles, a reactionary government is to be set up in Germany that will obey the wishes of British and French big capital, revive the principles of the anti-Comintern pact, outdo the Gestapo in its persecution of the Communists, and involve the German people in a war with Soviet Russia. In its wisdom, the so-called “Central Committee” of the German Social-Democratic Party had claimed even before the outbreak of the war that the German working class was less reliable than the “proud Rhenish manufacturers,” and that in the future the German people must not be allowed to have any say in the policy of the government.

Hence, “Hitlerism” is to be overthrown, not because it is too reactionary, but because it is not reactionary enough, because it has not done enough to “annihilate” Communism, because it has not succeeded in driving the German people into a war with the Soviet Union.

The “anti-fascism” of the warmongers is revealed as anti-Communism of the purest water. At a time when the French

Socialist Party did not yet dare to proclaim itself an instrument of persecution of the "internal enemy," to proclaim itself the death battalion of French capitalism, and still concealed its true character, Jules Moch, Socialist Member of the Chamber, declared at the Montrouge Congress of the French Socialist Party that any anti-Communist coalition was bound to turn into an anti-Marxist coalition very soon. "That is the way it always begins!" he added. "And the way it always ends is that the anti-Marxist coalition becomes a driving force of fascism." The anti-Communist, anti-Marxist coalition of the French Socialists with Daladier, Reynaud and de la Rocque did in fact very soon become a driving force of reaction, which in no way differs from fascist reaction. The anti-Communist, anti-Marxist coalition of the Second International with the British and French imperialists has led to a war in which the people are shedding their blood for the sake of moribund capitalism.

* * *

The causes and aims of the war are therefore quite obvious. That the treaty of England and France with Poland was not the cause, was admitted by Chamberlain himself when he declared in the House of Commons on October 3 that while Poland was the immediate cause of the war, it was nevertheless not the underlying cause.

It did not require this statement to make it clear that for England and France the treaty with Poland was only a pretext for entering the war. We have cited documents to show that after the Munich conspiracy England and France not only demonstratively displayed their indifference to Poland's fate, but that they went even further and demanded that Poland should "not confine herself to a passive role" in

a war of Germany on the Soviet Union. Only when it became clear to them that Germany was not prepared to attack the Soviet Union did England conclude a treaty of alliance with Poland post-haste in order to drive her into war with Germany. In this war, England and France cold-bloodedly left their Polish vassal in the lurch, and then cynically declared that Poland had performed her mission in facilitating the Anglo-French attack in the West. Up to the last minute the Western imperialists hoped that Germany in her advance through Poland would yet come into conflict with the Soviet Union; and they could scarcely conceal their disappointment when this conflict did not come about.

The Spanish Republic had defended itself for nearly three years against overwhelming odds; but the Polish state collapsed in a fortnight—and by that fact alone proved that it was rotten to the core. Notwithstanding this, the Socialist leaders, who by their policy of “non-intervention” had helped to strangle Spain’s fight for freedom, are calling upon the British and French workers to lay down their lives for the restoration of the Polish state. The very people who officially recognized the sanguinary reactionary regime in Spain consider it an intolerable thing that socialism has advanced into Western Ukraine and Byelo-Russia, and that Vilna, which had been stolen by Pilsudski, has been reunited with Lithuania.

They, who had nothing to offer the Negrin Government but the treachery of men like Besteiro and Casado, are calling upon the workers to shed their blood in behalf of a Polish capitalist and landlord government, to go to war in order to make it once more possible for a gang of thieves, robbers and cowards to massacre the workers, to send punitive expeditions against the peasants, to oppress other peoples, and, by the knout, rum and illiteracy, to display the superiority of “West-

ern civilization" over socialism. They want to restore a state which even an inveterate imperialist like Lloyd George has characterized in the following words:

"Drunk with the new wine of liberty supplied to her by the Allies, she fancied herself once more the resistless mistress of Central Europe. Self-determination did not suit her ambitions. She coveted Galicia, the Ukraine, Lithuania and parts of White Russia. A vote of the inhabitants would have emphatically repudiated her dominion."

These inhabitants have now had the opportunity to vote—and by an overwhelming majority they have cast their votes for freedom, for brotherhood with the free peoples of the Soviet Union. The leaders of the Second International, on the other hand, deny that the masses are able to decide their own fate, and continue to preach an "anti-fascist" war in the interests of the "proud Polish landlords," of the Krapulinskis and Wasclapskis, who have been cast on to the dungheap of history.

Thus the treaty with Poland was not the reason for the war, but only a result of the British and French war plans.

The real reason for the war was revealed by Daladier on October 10, when he said that it must finally be realized that: "The time for conquests, the time when conquests could bring prosperity, has gone by." What he meant to say was that as long as England and France were out for conquest, for the seizure of other countries and the enslavement of other peoples, nobody had any right to object, for such conquests made for the "prosperity" of The City and the "upper ten." As long as England and France encouraged the Polish gentry and their other willing tools in their aims of conquest,

that was nothing but "justice and civilization." As long as England and France plunder and oppress millions of people in their colonies, that is nothing but a species of "freedom and humanity." But as soon as other imperialists claim a share in the booty, that is a blow at the harmony of the continents, or, in the poetical words of M. Daladier, the prelude to a state of affairs "in which nations are dealt with without regard for their traditions, their wishes, or their needs."

In other words, it is a sacred "tradition" of the Hindus to be slaves of England; of the inhabitants of Indo-China to languish in French prisons! Who would presume to violate such "traditions of nations"! Who would be so malicious as to doubt that it was the heartfelt "wish" of the Ukrainians and Byelo-Russians themselves to be crushed beneath the jackboot of the Polish gentry! Or who would be so presumptuous as to question that it really is a "need" of the Arabs to learn the explosive power of British bombs, and a "need" of the Moroccans to march to death in the interests of their French colonial masters!

No, this is not a war for freedom of the nations; it is a war to determine how many millions are to be oppressed by the British and French imperialists and how many by the German imperialists, or whether the death sentence over "natives" is to be pronounced in English, in French or in German. But it may well be that in this war the nations may finally grow tired of the disgraceful "tradition" of imperialism and rise up in a real war of freedom—a war against *all* exploiters and *all* oppressors.

This, therefore, is not a war on behalf of Poland, or of freedom, but on behalf of the British and French imperialist "tradition" of prospering on the sweat and blood of oppressed nations and defeating the claims of the German imperialists

to a share of the booty of the British and French colonial rulers.

But—the British and French imperialists declare—this is a war for the “overthrow of Hitlerism”! We have already explained the true meaning of this cry and have shown that “Hitlerism” is to be overthrown only to be replaced by a no less reactionary regime, by a regime that would pull the chestnuts out of the fire for England and maneuver the German people into a war on the Soviet Union. And already voices are being raised, more and more, in France and England claiming that even this is too little, that not only must the present regime be overthrown, but the whole German nation must be clamped in irons like a criminal.

Ever more frequently do we hear the demand for a second and even more drastic Versailles Treaty, for the dismemberment of the German Reich, the placing of the German people under tutelage, and the establishment of an Anglo-French military dictatorship for the maintenance of “order” in Europe. The German Social-Democrats want to keep the revolutionary workers in concentration camps, and only to take over themselves the post of prison governor. Many a British and French jingo is dreaming of abolishing the Gestapo and running Germany on the lines of a huge Anglo-French jail. And all this is being passed off as an “anti-fascist” war!

The imperialist and Social-Democratic warmongers in France have yet another “argument.” They say that “Hitlerism” must be fought in order to put an end to a state of affairs which necessitated a mobilization every six months. The hollowness of this argument is obvious. It is like saying that it is better to die right away than to run the risk of catching a sore throat six months hence. It is like committing

suicide from fear of dying. The reply of the masses will be: Better a bad peace than a "good" war; better to work persistently for peace than to plunge neck and crop into war.

And, one asks, were these mobilizations to which the war-mongers refer really intended as measures for the protection of peace? They were nothing but a lie and a swindle, intended to conceal the insolent game of the imperialists from the masses. While Chamberlain and Daladier were in the autumn of 1938 issuing orders for mobilization, in Munich they were betraying the cause of peace and trying to egg on Germany with the bait of Czechoslovakia to go to war against the Soviet Union. All these mobilizations would have been superfluous if England and France had decided to join forces with the Soviet Union for the protection of peace and to stifle every aggression in the bud, instead of secretly encouraging it. Peace, it is true, does not drop from the skies, it must be striven for—but nothing is more frivolous than to justify the war on the grounds that peace was in danger anyhow.

Lastly, the British and French imperialists have the cool impudence to justify their war on the grounds that it is essential if a just and lasting peace is to be assured. They have had over twenty years in which to lay the foundation for a just and lasting peace, and in these twenty years they have done nothing but pile up explosive material for a new war everywhere. At Versailles they patched together a system that carried within it the germs of war from its very inception. They launched the war of intervention against the young Soviet state. They incited Poland to war against the Soviet Union. They waged war in Morocco and in Syria, and were responsible for the war between Greece and Turkey. They tormented the German people so long, that finally, in their desperation, large numbers of them fell victim to the dema-

gogy of the Nazis. They denied to the German Republic what they willingly acceded to Nazi Germany. They destroyed their own handiwork, the League of Nations, and sabotaged collective security in order to replace it by the policy of so-called "non-intervention," the policy of fomenting war. Their glorious "peace system" has given rise to war after war—war in Asia Minor, war in Morocco, war in the Far East, war in Ethiopia, war in Spain, and, finally, the present war in Europe.

Through all these twenty years their one concern has been to defeat the consistent peace policy of the Soviet Union and to hatch war plots against the Land of Socialism, until these plots returned like a boomerang on the heads of their own people. To the very last they sabotaged the establishment of a European peace front, for they were obsessed by the idea of fomenting a war between Germany and the Soviet Union.

And these saboteurs of peace, these despicable warmongers, have the effrontery to palm themselves off once more on the masses as saviors of peace. No, these bloodstained and shameless imperialists have now proved once and for all that they are incapable of ensuring peace to the nations, and can only stumble forward from war to war, from disaster to disaster. Capitalism, rotten to the core, exudes poison like a corpse; it cannot bring peace, it can only bring one war after another!

The facts will destroy the false claims of the imperialists. And the facts cry to the people in clear and unmistakable terms that the imperialist robbers of England, France and Germany are all equally to blame for this war, and that they will wage war after war as long as they are in power.

There is only one state in the world that has worked consistently and untiringly for peace and has proved time and again that, in spite of its adversaries, it is able to lay the foundations of a just and lasting peace of the nations. That

state is the Soviet Union, the land of socialism victorious. Within the frontiers of the Soviet Union the victory of socialism has removed the causes of war—the exploitation of man by man and the oppression of one nation by another.

Over sixty nations live together in peace and friendship in the Soviet Union; never can war arise among them, for nobody exploits them and nobody oppresses them. And nobody dare raise a hand against any of these nations, for the moment anyone did all sixty nations would rise as one man and confront the aggressor with all the power of this huge state. These sixty nations know that if ever the government calls them to arms, it will not be in behalf of alien interests, or to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for others, but only in defense of the interests of the workers and peasants, of all the working people.

And when they do march, they are received as liberators wherever they go, as fraternal allies in the just war of the oppressed against the oppressors, of the tortured masses against their capitalist torturers. It was thus that they came to the aid of the working people of the Western Ukraine and Western Byelo-Russia in their just struggle against the Polish lords, and brought them into the highroad of the only true democracy—socialist democracy. They called a halt to the furies of imperialist war, and gave the masses the opportunity of making their free decision to join the great league of brotherhood, the league of peace—the Soviet Union.

Sooner or later, every capitalist “peace system” has come to a dismal end, for peace and capitalism are incompatible. Only socialism can bring about a just and lasting peace.

The imperialists on one side claim that they are waging an “anti-fascist” war, and the imperialists on the other side that they are waging an “anti-capitalist” war. But as a matter of

fact both are waging a war for colonies, for sources of raw material, for markets of cheap labor, a war for supremacy, a war on the masses and their most faithful champions, the Communists.

The imperialists claim that they are waging a war for the "freedom of the nations." But as a matter of fact the war is being waged to determine how many nations shall bear the yoke of British and French imperialism, and how many the yoke of German imperialism.

The imperialists claim that they are waging a war for the "liberation of the German people." But as a matter of fact they are waging a war to determine what reactionary regime should rule in Germany, and who should be the governors of the German concentration camps.

The imperialists claim that they are waging a war for the establishment of a "just and lasting peace." But as a matter of fact the war is being waged to determine which side shall dictate a new coercive peace—the effect of which will only be to generate new wars.

This war is an imperialist war, an unjust war, a war that is rending Europe and threatening to plunge all the nations of the capitalist world into an abyss of blood and misery.

The working class can have only one aim in this war, and that is to wage a relentless struggle against the bourgeoisie in order to put an end to the imperialist war and to bring peace to the nations at last by emancipating them from the yoke of capitalism.

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