

Betrayal in the Present War Crisis

By JOHN WEST

(This is a chapter from the pamphlet "War and the Workers" by John West)

In the face of the developing war crisis, the forces for the betrayal of the workers in the struggle against war are maturing rapidly. From all sides, in all countries, the liberals, the pacifists, the reformists, the social-patriots, under the cover of what look like anti-war and pro-peace campaigns, are in actuality preparing for sell out to the war-makers, are making ready to turn over the masses to the imperialists.

Again, as before the last war, we find the old ways and methods and slogans of betrayal. But the old methods are not enough. New appearances must be added: the masses cannot be deceived again in precisely the old ways. It therefore becomes of crucial importance to analyze the new and special forms of betrayal, which are appearing in the present crisis.

1. «Good» and «Bad» Capitalist Powers

The most fatally dangerous doctrine, a doctrine which has been systematically propagated during recent years by liberals and by both the Socialist and Communist parties throughout the world, is the theory that a basic distinction must be drawn between the comparatively "good" capitalist nations, the "peace-loving" nations—Great Britain, France, and the United States, on the one hand; and, on the other, the altogether "wicked" capitalist nations—Italy and especially Germany.

This theory reasons as follows: Fascism, especially Hitlerism, means war. Therefore, the fight against war is the fight against Fascism, and especially against Hitlerism, the worst form of Fascism. The success of Fascism means the destruction of all democratic rights. The destruction of democratic rights means the crushing of the organizations of the working class, and thus defeat for the revolutionary movement. But Fascism, especially Hitlerism, can succeed only by war, and, since Fascism means war, will inevitably undertake war.

What then follows? What follows is the betrayal of the working class of France, England and the United States. For, on the basis of the above chain of reasoning, to support the democratic nations in a war against Hitler is to defend democratic rights against Fascism; and thereby the revolution. The wheel completes its circle. Defense of the national state—that is, defense of the imperialist bourgeoisie of England, France and the United States—becomes, through this theory, a revolutionary duty!

The mortal fallacy in this position is easy enough to understand when once examined from the point of view of Marxism. The statement, "Fascism means war" is incomplete. It is not Fascism that means war. Rather is it the continued existence of capitalism that

means both Fascism and war. Fascism means war only in the sense that it marks outwardly a great intensification of the inner conflicts of capitalism, and is thus an indication of the more rapid drive of the whole capitalist system toward the highest expression of these conflicts—imperialist war. But in the linked chain of causes that make war an inevitable concomitant of the continued existence of capitalism, the democratic nations have as integral a part as the Fascist nations. From the point of view of the working class, there can be no "good," no "peace-loving" capitalist states. Every capitalist state, democratic as well as Fascist, represents one or another form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie over the working class, and is thus the implacable enemy of the working class. To defend the democratic rights of the working class is one thing. But this has nothing in common with the defense of the "democratic" capitalist state. The former is a primary duty of every working class party; the latter is the occupation of traitors. The latter will be put forward as the only way to protect the working class against war and Fascism; in practice, it will give the working class both war and Fascism, for the bourgeoisie of the democratic countries will not overcome the necessity for a resort to Fascism during the decline of capitalism merely by success in the next war. Indeed, the outbreak of war will in all probability be the signal for setting up Fascist governments in the "democratic" countries.

The business of the working class within any country is never under any circumstances to defend "the government"—that is, the political executive of the class enemy—but always to fight for its overthrow. To Fascism as to war there is only one answer: the workers' revolution.

2. Defense of the Soviet Union

A closely similar preparation for betrayal has gone on under cover of the slogan, "Defend the Soviet Union!"

As has already been indicated, the defense of the Soviet Union is one of the primary tasks of the working class in the coming war. But, to a Marxist, what does defense of the Soviet Union mean? The essence can be summed up quickly. It means: "Extend the October revolution." It means to strengthen the economic and political organizations of the world proletariat, to carry the class struggle on a world basis to ever higher levels, to drive toward workers' power. It means to put all faith in the working class. It means to

achieve victory in the capitalist nations. And it means these things quite openly and realistically. For these are the only possible defense of the Soviet Union.

To Stalinism, however, and to the cynical Austro-Marxists, defense of the Soviet Union means: support the program of national Bolshevism; no word of criticism of Stalin and his bureaucratic associates; put all faith in diplomatic deals with bourgeois powers, in military alliances with France and Czechoslovakia, in maneuvering in the League of Nations; reduce the working class parties to branches of the foreign office of the Soviet state. And it means: do not carry on genuinely revolution-

ary activities within your own country, because this would upset "peace"; permit the working class of Germany and Austria to be crushed under Fascism rather than risk one ounce of cement at Dneprostroy or one tractor at Stalin-grad. And, lastly, it means: support the war policy of your democratic government, and offer the working class to the coming imperialist war in all nations where the bourgeoisie finds its imperialist aims best served by a temporary alliance with the Soviet bureaucracy.

Naturally, Marxists do not maintain that the Soviet Union should not, whenever possible, utilize the antagonisms and contradictions among the imperialist powers to its own advantage. This was the tactic of Lenin. But this tactic can only be understood as subordinate to the strategy of the world revolution, and this strategy can base itself only on the international working class. Stalin's "maneuverings" with imperialist powers are the direct contrary of Lenin's. For Stalin "maneuvers" in such a way as to subordinate the working class to the capitalist powers, not to advance its interests. The Franco-Soviet pact is the most striking example of such subordination—whereby the French working class is turned over hand and foot to the French bourgeoisie, so long as the Pact formally endures—but this is only one aspect of the consistent and continuous policy of Stalinism. Lenin, to prevent the capitalist powers from attacking the Soviet Union, placed his full reliance on the only possible force which could in actuality defend the Soviet Union: on the working class of the various capitalist powers. If the working class and its party were sufficiently strengthened in a given country, Lenin reasoned, the government of that country would not dare to attack the Soviet Union, since it would realize that such an

attack would only pave the way for its own overthrow. Stalin, with his eyes focused on national Russian socialism, asks only for "peace" elsewhere, to let him build at home. He places his reliance, thus, not on the international working class, but on the "friendly" capitalist governments, on any agreements or treaties or pacts he can come to with them. But to secure such friendship, he must direct the Communist parties in the various nations not toward revolutionary struggle against their governments at home (which would endanger the government's "friendship" for Stalin), but toward putting pressure on the home governments to line up with the Soviet Union; and, then, to essential support of the home government so long as it stays or pretends to stay lined up. This necessarily weakens and destroys the revolutionary struggle, which is always against the home government; and thus, in the end, disrupts the only possible defense of the Soviet Union itself, which must be a defense against and an attack on the international bourgeoisie and all their political instruments—the capitalist governments, never a collaboration with them.

We shall see the workers of France, England and the United States rallied to the flag by the leaders of the Communist Party. "Defend the Soviet Union! Enlist in the army, and—fight against war and Hitlerism! Defend the Soviet Union!"

This policy of betrayal has, also, been systematically developed over a period of many years. The recent Congress of the Communist International made it official for the sections of the C.I.; and the Dan-Zyromski-Bauer resolution on war advances it within world social democracy. Unlike the situation at the beginning of the last war, the betrayers this time wish to be fully ready beforehand.

3. Sanctions

A special and profoundly important feature of betrayal in the present war crisis revolves around the question of "sanctions." The Covenant of the League of Nations provides that when a nation has been declared an aggressor against a member state, certain financial, economic, and even military measures shall be—following an elaborate procedure—invoked by the other League member states against the aggressor nation. These measures are called "sanctions," and the term "sanctions" is being extended to include measures which might be taken by nations on their own initiative (e.g., closing of the Suez Canal by Great Britain) as well as measures taken collectively by the League members.

This extension of the use of the word "sanctions" is significant. It indicates a new and ingenious method for turning opposition to war into support of war. All that is necessary is to call the war an "application of sanctions." Then it becomes the duty of all "friends of peace" to support it.

This, indeed, is the real meaning of the doctrine of sanctions. League sanctions are, of course, nothing else than sanctions undertaken by the leading member states of the League. The League, as we have seen, is only the instrument of its dominant members. Support of

League sanctions, therefore, is exactly the same as support of sanctions applied by individual nations—e.g., by Great Britain or France.

But sanctions are war measures. They include withdrawal of financial credit, embargoes on trade, various forms of boycott. To enforce them genuinely would require a blockade of the country against whom the sanctions were invoked. The probable, the almost certain outcome of such a blockade, as history has so often proved, is war—since the blockaded nation cannot accept such a measure peacefully without surrendering political sovereignty.

Thus it follows that sanctions must be either ineffectual—a kind of large-scale bluff—or they must lead to war.

If they are ineffectual, support of them is certainly no aid to peace (or to Ethiopia). If they lead to war, support of them—no matter with what verbal reservations—means nothing else than support of war undertaken by the imperialist government applying the sanctions. In both cases, support of sanctions to be applied by capitalist governments (whether or not these are League members) is in effect support of these governments themselves. This means that such support necessarily leads to a betrayal of the revolutionary struggle

against war, and the revolutionary defense of Ethiopia, which is always a struggle against the capitalist governments and the bourgeoisie whose governments they are.

It does no good to say, as the social democrats and the Stalinists say, that we should support League and governmental sanctions, but at the same time "point out that the League and British and French imperialism are acting only in their own imperialist interests in applying them"; we are temporarily able to "use" the French and British governments to serve the interests of the working class, because their interests momentarily, though from "diametrically opposite causes," coincide. This is the reasoning of a Stalin or a Blum, but not of a Marxist. The Marxist knows that we can never "use" capitalist governments for the interests of the working class, because what these governments are instruments to be "used" for the interests of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, we must always fight inexorably against the governments, and their acts. The Marxist knows that advocacy of governmental sanctions in any form necessarily binds the working class to the state and the class enemy, necessarily weakens the class position of the workers and thus the workers' struggle for power, and necessarily prepares for turning the workers over to the sanction-applying government when the sanctions find their natural outcome in war. If we support sanctions, and the sanctions lead to war, then we have already by supporting the sanctions supported the war. It takes more than verbal reservations to crawl out of the inescapable logic of cause and effect.

The disastrous consequences of support of sanctions are already apparent. In Great Britain a year ago, the masses were turning rapidly away from the National Government. Then the British Labor Party and the British Communist Party came out strongly for sanctions; that is, came out for the policy of British finance-capital and the National Government. This has, naturally, fatally obscured the class issue. No longer is there any clear line between the working class parties and the Conservatives on the war crisis. The Labor Party and the Communist Party have done for Baldwin what he could not do for himself: they have brought about "national unity" on the war issue. Baldwin of course understands this; and consequently

4. Neutrality

Careful notice should be given to a form of betrayal closely related to betrayal on the question of sanctions. This is a particular danger in the United States. In the United States, which is not a League member, the betrayers call, not for sanctions—which are formally irrelevant to League outsiders—but for "neutrality legislation." In the present crisis, this demand is only an American form of the demand for sanctions, combined with the worst type of ordinary pacifism.

In the United States all the rotten reformist organizations, from World Peaceways and the League against War and Fascism to the Socialist and Communist parties, are joining in this call for "mandatory" neutrality legislation to be passed by the next Congress, and are "demanding" a "strong neu-

trality policy" on the part of the U. S. government. What does this mean in the concrete? It means, in the first place, to spread among the people of the United States all the fatal pacifist illusions about U. S. isolation. As we have seen, the United States is necessarily linked up economically, socially, and politically with the rest of the world. Its pretended isolation is a complete myth. As we have also seen, the U. S. will inevitably be involved in the coming war, and will in fact play a leading and decisive part in the coming war. Not to point this out honestly and straightforwardly, and instead to pretend that some form of neutrality legislation will succeed or even aid in isolating the U. S. in the world struggle is to deceive and disorient the masses, to disarm them ideolo-

gically, to turn them aside from the genuine struggle against war, and to teach them to put reliance in exactly those forces which are preparing war—namely, the imperialist government of the United States and U. S. finance-capital, which that government represents.

Thus, as always, pacifism in the form of demands for neutrality legislation in actuality aids the war makers. It strengthens the hand of the U. S. government, strengthens its hold over the people. Since the policy of the government, like that of every imperialist government, is and must be a war policy, these demands are in reality doing their part in carrying out the war policy. The capitalists and the government officials are not slow to take advantage of the opportunity. Hearst and Roosevelt alike point out—just as does Baldwin in England—that to preserve a "strong neutrality and peace policy" the U. S. must build up its "national defense." That is to say, they use the agitation for neutrality legislation as a basis for expanding the armed forces of U. S. imperialism, to build new and more powerful battleships and airplanes, and to mechanize still further the already highly "modernized" U. S. army.

But even more than this is involved in the so-called "neutrality legislation." The substance of such legislation, if actually put into effect, can only be sanctions as the U. S. can apply them—various forms of financial and economic restrictions, boycotts, etc. As in the case of sanctions proper, therefore, the neutrality acts would be in effect war acts, and the same conclusions must be drawn with respect to them as we have already come to in analyzing sanctions. Realizing this is enough to expose the pseudo-Marxists in the U. S. who so bravely denounce the policy of sanctions in other countries (Great Britain, France); and then in the next breath advocate them (under the title of "neutrality legislation") for this country.

Here, as in any other phase of the struggle against imperialist war, the fight for U. S. "neutrality" must be a working class fight, using the methods and means of the working class. It is only the working class, operating as an independent force, which can be counted on—certainly we cannot expect imperialism itself to put an end to imperialism, which is what we do when we call on an imperialist government to avoid imperialist war. The fight must be not for a "government policy of neutrality," but always a fight against the government.

Question Box

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CIALIST revolution! Then the slogan about "confiscating the LAND-OWNERS' land" (repeated by Trotsky in 1915, after the January conference of 1912) is incorrect; then we must speak, not of the "revolutionary labor" but of a "revolutionary SOCIALIST government" (Lenin, Collected Works, Volume XVII, International Publishers' edition, pp. 362-8; capitalized words are emphasized in the original.)

Even the Lovestonites will admit that the Russian revolution was SOCIALIST in character.

The Monkey Strike

By BILL HAYWOOD

(Editor's Note: "Big Bill" Haywood, picturesque founder and leader of the Industrial Workers of the World, is the author of the imaginative tale printed below. Haywood, who died in 1928 in Moscow, where he had lived in exile for almost ten years after his escape from a prison sentence for criminal syndicalism was the leader of countless strike struggles in the pre-war days in the United States. During one of these organizing campaigns which ended in a bitterly fought out struggle to organize the agricultural laborers in California, the fruit growers imported Japanese laborers to offset the growing strength of the I.W.W. among the white workers only to find the Japanese forming cooperatives against them. This Bill Haywood reduces the bosses' stratagem to the absurd in the following story.)

The fruitgrowers were again compelled to employ migratory white labor, until a wonderful idea developed at one of the conventions of the Fruitgrowers' Association. One of the delegates got up and suggested that it would be possible to train monkeys to pick and pack fruit. This was decided upon without hesitation, and steps were taken at once to get a lot of monkey fruit-pickers.

The chimpanzee breed was decided upon as the most intelligent. Splendid little houses, all nicely painted were built and equipped for monkeys. They were actually fed and taught what they were to do.

When the fruit got ripe, the owners brought their friends from

the city to see how ingeniously they were solving the labor problem.

The monkeys were restless in their houses, the air was aromatic with the ripened fruit. When they were turned loose, they hurriedly climbed the trees. But instead of doing as they had been taught—to bring the fruit down and put it into a box, the mischievous little rascals would dart about, selecting the choicest fruit, take a bite or two, throw the rest away, and go after more.

Before the day was gone, and the monkeys with paunches full had gone back to their houses, much damage was done. The wise fruitgrowers had to seek another method. The next day each monkey

had a muzzle put on. They went up into the trees rapidly enough, but none of them would pick any fruit. They were busily engaged in trying to rid themselves of the frightful contrivance that prevented them from eating and enjoying themselves.

The fruitgrowers were in an awful predicament with so many monkeys to feed which would do no work in return. They appealed to the Governor of the State, who regretfully replied that as the offenders were not men, they were not amenable to the law. If they were I.W.W.'s he could have them imprisoned and perhaps have them shot, but over monkeys he had no jurisdiction.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, who had never interested itself on behalf of the I.W.W. or the Japanese, learning that the monkeys were being neglected, threatened to prosecute the fruitgrowers if the little animals were not properly taken care of.

The chimpanzees came to be disliked as much as the I.W.W. Some of the fruitgrowers owned cotton plantations in Imperial Valley on which they had trouble in getting white and black wage slaves sufficiently docile for the work of picking cotton. It occurred to them that the monkeys could be made to pick cotton, and there would be no trouble about them trying to

eat it.

So all monkeys were shipped to the new location. Strange to say, they could pick cotton and at a speed that made their owners happy. Here was the solution of the labor problem as far as picking cotton was concerned. But their satisfaction was short-lived.

One day, while all the monkeys were at work, chattering while they gathered the white balls of cotton, a gentle breeze wafted a white tuft from a monkey's hand. It amused him to see it floating through the air. He tossed up another bit, and another. The other monkeys, catching the spirit of the fun, began to do the same. At first little bits and then handfuls, till the air was full of fleecy cotton. It looked as though the first snowstorm had struck southern California.

The overseers were alarmed. There was no way to stop the monkeys in their eager playfulness, which, before they had tired themselves out, had almost destroyed the entire crop of that particular plantation.

In some peculiar manner the monkeys on the other plantations learned of the fun, and their pranks caused the same disastrous result.

The fruit and cotton growers were at their wits' end. They knew not what to do with the monkeys, until deportation was finally decided on, and the chimpanzees were shipped back to the forests of Africa, where they now gather to-

THEATRE REVIEW

WINTERSET (The Bridge of Sighs). By Maxwell Anderson, at Martin Beck Theater.

"Winter-set," by Maxwell Anderson, is a continuation in verse of his play, "Goods of the Lightning," the drama of Sacco-Vanzetti, Judge Thayer, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the electric chair. The story of the play is the story of the fears left behind when the current of the Public Utilities of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts turned into corpses the idealistic and revolutionary Sacco and Vanzetti.

Mio, the son of the fish peddler, haunted by the innocence and death of his father, comes to New York looking for a witness, Garth, discovered by a professor of jurisprudence as never having been brought into the trial. Mio, a philosophic person, meets Garth's sister Mirianne, at a spontaneous festa, where a cop, objecting to the festivities, attempts to slug Mio. All the characters, including Judge Gaunt, who sentenced the fish-peddler, parade under the shadow of

gether and the eldest, with a grin on his face, hanging by his tail, tells the younger generation how they won the strike in California.

the bridge. Judge Gaunt makes a point of law to the cop, who ignores his advice. Trock, who with his pal, Shadow, has just come out of jail, where both served a short sentence, fears that the knowledge of his murder of the cashier—known to Shadow, and Garth, the uncalled witness—will eventually send him to the chair, since there is talk of a new trial. He silences Garth with threats and attempts to get rid of his pal, Shadow, by shooting him and throwing him into the river.

At an informal meeting between the Judge, Trock and Mio, Shadow stumbles through the door, accuses Trock of being an assassin and a murderer. Garth, in fear of his own life, assists Trock in finally getting rid of Shadow. Through all this, Judge Gaunt, pontif, presides with his wisdom of the objectivity of the State. Mio taunts him! The State had taken his father's life! The Judge, coming out of the semi-coma which has caused him to wander about, says that there could not be a reversal of decision, a reversal would mean that the forces of law and order would lose prestige, and would endanger the Commonwealth.

In the presence of two cops, Mio

accuses Trock as the actual murderer of the Dedham cashier, but is laughed at when Mirianne, who is the sister of the witness, Garth, refuses to back up Mio's statement, for fear that Trock's thugs will then rub out the last living witness, her brother. Eventually they are both killed by Trock's gang.

This play can be understood in the light of a realistic fantasy. Certainly the verse patterns, the high philosophic plane in which the play dwells, the elements of time which fuses all the characters into "poems," their sudden meeting, prearranged by the author and in no sense from a series of normal accidents, gives it a fantastic touch.

What is left when the poetry and philosophy dries on their lips, is, that in the minds of all those who participated in the murder of the cashier, the electrocution by the State of Massachusetts, the son who is haunted by his father's death, the criminals who fear to be found out, the Judge who is restless, unsatisfied with his smug theories of the objectivity of the State, is, that classes exist, that nothing muffled by the State is objective justice, that the very idealism which seems to guide the shrewd patter of the Judge comes from an association with the ethics of the Democratic State and is, therefore, class justice. They are all bound within themselves with fear-philosophy and vengeance.

SPEAKER:

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EDITOR OF THE NEW MILITANT

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