

The War Policy of U.S. Imperialism NEUTRALITY LAWS AND WAR Pacifism versus Revolutionary Policy

By JOHN WEST

A striking indication of the depth of the war crisis is the fact that, during these first weeks of the present session of Congress, the hearings and debate over "neutrality legislation" have received more newspaper space and headlines than any other Congressional news—more even than the potently vote-courting Bonus. Senator Nye is becoming a name for housewives and ward-healers to conjure with. Every day brings a juicy scandal from the files of the State Department or Morgan & Co. Carter Glass plays his favorite role of ancient Roman Senator denouncing the desecrators of the temple, and defends the honor of his war-time leader—who was besides, sir, a Southern gentleman—against Nye's infamous accusations. The resigning monarch of the House of Morgan smokes his big pipe, smiles jovially at reporters, and poses with his inquisitors for the cameramen.

"Neutrality" is hardly a new problem. Particularly in the United States have the conceptions of "neutrality," "neutrality policy" and "neutrality rights" had a long and checked career. Around these conceptions have revolved the leading ideas of American foreign policy as a whole. They deserve careful analysis.

"Neutrality" Part of War Policy

The first and essential prerequisite to an understanding of the concept of "neutrality" and any specific neutrality proposals or legislation is to realize that such a concept or such proposals and legislation are a fundamental part of the war policy of the United States (or of any other capitalist state which makes use of them.) This basic fact is no doubt obscured by the attitude toward neutrality and neutrality legislation taken by Roosevelt, Nye, the liberals, the Nation, the New Republic, the Daily Worker, the New Leader, and the Socialist Call. But it none the less remains a fact for all that; and it could not be otherwise.

The business of the state is to serve the interests of capital. These interests, from time to time, reach a point of such tremendous conflict that a temporary solution can be reached only through war. Modern war is a gigantic and involved undertaking, and must be systematically prepared for over a long period of years. The most obvious part of the preparation is the building of armaments. But there is more to it than this. Speeches, laws, and declarations about neutrality are one vastly important part of the preparation.

How else could they be understood? Undoubtedly, on any account, they have something to do with the problem of war. But we are told, they are efforts to maintain and secure peace—not at all part of the preparation for war. This, however, could be true only if peace were possible under capitalism. We know that it is not. We know that capitalism leads inevitably to war. We know that the program of every capitalist state is necessarily a war program. For the capitalist state to abandon a war program would be simply for it to abdicate, since only through war can it endure. Consequently, neutrality measures can be understood only as part of the war program of the capitalist state.

Who Believes Neutrality Means Peace?

Who is it that doubts this? Who believes that neutrality measures are part of a peace program? It is not Roosevelt. On Friday in his annual message he states that adequate neutrality legislation is the major task of the present session. On Monday he follows with his annual budget providing an increase of \$200 millions in the appropriation of the regular budget for military preparation—with no telling how much more will flow from relief funds. As Roosevelt knows, these are simply two sides of the same program. There is no contradiction whatever between them. It is not Hearst. He is a major champion of neutrality (in the form of "isolation.") And he also, quite naturally, is a major champion of big navies—in order, as he explains, to defend neutrality. It is not the American Liberty League, which, with all its howling for economy, never says a word about military expenditure and thoroughly concurs in the plan to have a "strong" neutrality program. It is not General Smedley Butler. In his speech to the American League at Cleveland he showed the delegates clearly enough—if they had wanted to listen—how neutral ity and a modern mechanized army and navy go hand in hand together. It is not Morgan. He and the Nye Committee collaborate harmoniously in the mutual effort to work out a satisfactory neutrality program for

this country. The New York Times, authentic voice of finance-capital, sums the matter up succinctly, Jan. 19th, in an article by Harold B. Hinton: "Neutrality, in the last analysis, must always present itself to this country as a problem in trade relations." Nor is the problem peculiarly American. Augur, the brilliant director of the Times' foreign service, somewhat grimly applies the lesson to England: "Britain will arm to the teeth not for war but for the defense of peace."

These are serious men, who know what they are talking about.

Chloroform for the Masses

No, it is not these who doubt that the neutrality policy of a capitalist state is part of its war program, who delude themselves with the myth that it is a "means for ensuring peace." It is, unfortunately, the masses—too trusting and too desperately eager to grasp at any straw labeled "peace"—who cherish such illusions. And the masses do so, above all, because they are deceived and confused by the horde of false "friends of peace" whose efforts spread the lies and distortions. From within and outside the working class, the pacifists and social-patriots carry forward betrayal. It is they who advise the masses: Support strong neutrality legislation, and strike a blow for peace. Which, translated, means: Support the war program of the imperialist state, and prepare for sacrifice in the coming war.

The neutrality proposals prominent at present can be divided into three major types:

"Freedom of the Seas"

(1) The traditional neutrality policy of the United States since its foundation has been the doctrine of "the freedom of the seas." The theory of this doctrine is that the U. S. wants peace; it wishes to avoid all "foreign entanglements"; it demands only that its nationals shall be left free to carry on trade over the high seas with any customers they may choose.

A year ago Secretary of State Hull made statements in part apparently abandoning this traditional doctrine. And there is no doubt that the publicity given its consequences in 1914-17 has made it fall into a certain public disfavor. Nevertheless it remains a cornerstone of U. S. policy. The Administration Neutrality Bill, when introduced, contained it in a modified form in the clause permitting, (i.e., demanding) "normal trade" with belligerents in all but actual war munitions. Great leeway is allowed for the definition of "normal trade," and no provision is made to shut off indirect shipment to belligerents through neutrals. It should also be remembered that increased trade with future belligerents begins in advance of actual hostilities, during the period of the rapid accumulation of war reserves—so that almost any amount of trade could in fact be defined as "normal." Even this, however, was not enough. Under the pressure of Borah and other "traditional" Senators, an amending clause has been inserted to guarantee continued full upholding of the freedom of the seas doctrine.

Profits, Trade and War

This doctrine is consistent and realistic. It is entirely false to believe that American capitalists want war. Like other capitalists, they want profits. They strongly prefer to gain profits peacefully, by "trade." They know that war is an expensive, hazardous undertaking, and besides they have moral scruples against it. So they ask, in all sincerity, only to carry on their trade in peace. Those nations can do the fighting, and the U. S. capitalists will stick to their profits. The comparative geographical isolation of the U. S. and its immense material resources give a semblance of plausibility to this idea, since the U. S. is not so immediately involved in international political disputes as are European nations.

But—such are the perversities of capitalist society—the laudable aim of the U. S. capitalists runs into a jam. Other nations, struggling for their political lives, cannot permit "freedom of the seas" without destroying themselves. They must have the "freedom," so far as possible, apply only to themselves, and not to their enemies. Nations fight wars in order to win them. Thus the warring nations are forced to

infringe the—entirely "reasonable"—rights of the honest neutral Uncle Sam, who asks only peace and freedom. This is naturally a severe moral—and, incidentally, financial—shock to U. S. capitalists. They can put up with it for a time, and to a certain point. But, after all, the honor of a great nation, and the profits and potential profits of its capitalists, can endure only so much. After all, economics is not everything. When honor is at stake, more vulgar considerations must go by the board.

So, with infinite regret, and a call on all classes for truly patriotic sacrifice, the war to defend the rights of the neutral and peace-loving United States is declared.

The Doctrine of "Isolation"

(2) The second neutrality policy now current, which has also a long history, is the program of "isolation." This is a favorite of liberals, the avowed theory of Senator Nye, and, in a somewhat different form, of Hearst. This doctrine says that "freedom of the seas" must be abandoned, since it got us into the last war and would get us into the next. The U. S. will have to isolate itself rigidly from any war situation, will have to remain in strict financial and economic quarantine, sacrificing the "war profits."

The neutrality bills now before Congress are on the whole a hybrid of this second type and the first.

The doctrine of "isolation" is a vicious and fatal myth. In terms of historical actuality, isolation for the U. S. is simply a direct impossibility. What could it possibly mean? Even if—which is also impossible—foreign commerce to warring nations could be cut off entirely, it is necessary to remember that U. S. economic enterprise is not at all confined at any time to the geographical boundaries of the nation. American capital owns or is invested in industries of all kinds throughout the world—automobile and airplane plants, oil wells and refineries, transportation and communication systems, mines, plantations, public utilities, railroads, to mention only a few. What would happen to these under the rule of "isolation"? Would U. S. capitalists sit back quietly and allow the warring nations to take them over? Would such industries also (and how?) be "forbidden" to trade with the belligerents?

Life-Blood of Imperialism

But what an absurdity to suppose that even commerce could be shut down. In an imperialist nation, foreign investment and trade (however small a percentage of total turnover they may represent) are essential to the functioning of capitalist economy. Without it, imperialism collapses. No class can allow

the system which supports its social position to collapse without a struggle. Uncontrollable forces would wedge through any conceivable isolationist scheme. Anyone who doubts this need only glance over recent monthly foreign trade reports during the period of operation of the temporary isolationist neutrality legislation adopted last summer.

What then is the function of isolationist neutrality propaganda? It too has a basic part to play in the war program of U.S. imperialism. The U. S. does not need to enter the coming war at the outset. The probable strategy will be to wait until the opponents are to some extent exhausted, and then to step in holding the decisive position (through a "preventive" war against Japan is not excluded).

Consequently, the rulers of the U. S. can afford the luxury of a more indirect long term preparation for the war than is possible to the hard-pressed European nations. Preparation for war means not merely building armaments, collecting reserves of material, and organizing industry. It also means, especially in the present era, the psychological and moral preparation of the masses for war. The masses must be led to see the war as "just" to accomplish this, they must be systematically deceived as to the true nature and cause of war. In such deception in this country, the doctrine of isolation plays a great part, creating the grossest pacifist illusions. By its falsification of the real position of the U. S., it hinders the development of the genuine fight against war, and directs the energy of those seeking peace into the harmless chase after a will-o'-the-wisp.

(3) The third current doctrine of neutrality is the American counterpart of the theory of "sanctions." Secretary Hull has flirted with this from time to time, but its foremost supporter in this country is the Communist party together with the organizations under its influence. This is the doctrine of Litvinov, applied by the C.I. sections within capitalist nations in the same way that Litvinov applies it as spokesman for the Soviet State.

The basic pre-requisites of neutrality legislation according to this theory, as given by the Daily Worker, Jan. 2, are: "(1) Recognition of world collective action to maintain peace; (2) branding of an aggressor; (3) lifting of arms embargo against the victim of aggression, tightening it against an AGGRESSOR; (4) arms embargoes to be extended not only to financial aid to an aggressor, but to include the MOST VITAL war materials of today—oil, cotton, copper, iron, and such other raw materials in which American supplies are decisive."

The "Aggressor" and Status Quo

This type of neutrality legislation is the most openly of all an integral part of a war program. Since the question of who is the "aggressor" is purely juridical and moral in character—all capitalist nations being equally involved in the international system which inevitably breeds wars—such a doctrine is merely a formulation of one possible way in which nations to whom on the whole, maintenance of the status quo is desirable, can plan to secure such maintenance. This applies above all to the Stalinist bureaucracy. The status quo is also, on the whole, desired by British and French imperialism, but they find acceptance of the extreme theory of sanctions too risky. They advocate it therefore in a diluted form.

The U. S. also wants for the time being, the status quo. But the U. S. does not so imperiously need to take dangerous steps to gain this end, nor does the U. S. isolationist tradition make a "sanctions" doctrine easy to come out with openly. However, even the present proposed neutrality legislation, nominally applying equally to all belligerents, contains something of the "sanctions against an aggressor" idea: in effect it works out to aid one or the other side, just as "freedom of the seas" in the last war acted in part as sanctions against Germany. Later on the need of U. S. imperialism to smooth the way for the declaration of war may require more openly sanctioned legislation or declarations. Roosevelt's annual message, with its attack on autocratic war-making dictatorships foreshadowed such a possibility, which would make it easy for a moral mobilization of the nation in a war against the "aggressor", against fascism, tyranny and militarism.

An examination in the concrete of proposed forms of neutrality legislation only serves to establish more unquestionably what is clear enough in general to begin with: Neutrality legislation of any sort whatever on the part of a capitalist state is and can be nothing else than one aspect of its war program. Different types of neutrality legislation are only different theories of what best serves the long-run interests of the basic war program. What, then, are we to conclude? We can and must conclude that advocacy and support of neutrality legislation is necessarily advocacy and support of the war program of the imperialist state. Such advocacy and support within the working class, therefore, is a form of betrayal on the question of war. It must be exposed, fought against, and eliminated.

There is only one struggle against the revolutionary struggle against the system that breeds war, the struggle for world socialism. Let us put an end to the deadly myth that the war makers—the capitalist states—are going to be the ones to do away with that through which alone they endure. The struggle against war is nothing other than the class struggle for workers' power.

Danger in Scottsboro

AN EDITORIAL

THE Scottsboro cases are in court again. At no time since their original trial has the mass movement of protest on behalf of the nine innocent boys been at a lower ebb. At no time has the need for such a movement been greater, as the energetic attempts of trial Judge Callahan to rush the first case through to a conviction indicates.

To frustrate and expose these efforts of the prosecution and to back up the legal defense, a broad campaign of counter-pressure is imperatively necessary.

The new "Scottsboro Defense Committee" has called a meeting in New York City for January 26. This will be held, however, after the trial is over!

During the month preceding the trial, when such protests are most effective, the I.L.D. did not call a single mass meeting or demonstration in New York City specifically in support of the boys. The only such meeting held was that of January 8, called by the New York branch of the Non-Partisan Labor Defense. Conditions in the rest of the country appear to be the same.

The Committee has just published a pamphlet, "The Scottsboro Case." This pamphlet asks readers to send the Committee money. Money for defense is a good thing. Why not also ask readers to send a letter of protest to Gov. Bibb Graves of Alabama or to Lt.-Gov. Tom Knight, the vindictive prosecutor? Why not ask readers to get their organizations to adopt resolutions? Why not call for mass meetings and demonstrations throughout the country?

The pamphlet contains a four-page chronological outline of the formal developments in the case and 19 pages of Judge J. E. Horton's decision, when he set aside the second conviction of Patterson on the grounds that it was contrary to the evidence. The introduction to this material, signed by the Committee, states:

"In our judgment no one who reads Judge Horton's temperate and fair statement of the evidence can fail to conclude that the Scottsboro boys are wholly innocent of the charge of rape."

Let us not recall that when Horton issued his decision in June, 1933 the I.L.D. stated that his motive was to make it easier to kill the boys. Let us not even stop to ask why the Committee now goes out of its way to praise the judge for his "fairness" in deciding not to join a lynch party.

Let us simply ask this: how is that the jury which heard all the evidence which Judge Horton heard, concluded that the boys were "guilty"? Apparently there are exceptions to the "no one who reads" rule laid down by the Committee. And the main exception seems to be Alabama juries! With them, at least, evidence does not decide.

The "Scottsboro Defense Committee," in all its news releases, statements, etc., gives only one reason for supporting the boys: that they are innocent.

But they will never be acquitted if the fight is made simply on a legal basis.

The only sure fortress of the Scottsboro boys is the masses. Only a militant campaign of mass protest can force court and jury and the class forces behind them to heed the laws and to heed the evidence. That is the lesson of hundreds of labor cases. It is the lesson of five years of Scottsboro itself.

In calling this lesson to the attention of the Committee, we must admit that we feel uncertain of its reception. The New York Times reports, obviously after an interview with Leibowitz, that the defense is going to test the theory of winning this case by keeping radicals out of the picture.

The boys were arrested, charged, tried and convicted before a radical or a liberal or a Yankee intervened in their behalf. The cry of "Reds" is a prosecution trick. The intention of Leibowitz, which he has carried out successfully for three years thanks to the I.L.D., is to run everybody out of the case except reactionaries, and to see that the mass campaign stays at its present low ebb or sinks even lower.

Before one asks whether the Committee will be able to stop his plans, one must ask whether the Committee intends to. The Committee states that it has retained Leibowitz and his reactionary Huntsville, Ala., associate, Clarence Watts. Then is not Leibowitz's strategy the strategy of the Committee? Then how can the Committee organize a mass protest campaign?

Before it is too late and dire consequences result, we call upon the Scottsboro Defense Committee to reconsider its policy. The Scottsboro boys are in grave danger. Only a broadly organized, aggressive movement of mass protest can save them. The only victory is freedom. Leibowitz's policy will never get it.

Morgan Coined Gold Out of Workers Blood

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the profits out of war. Besides Wall Street can still be consoled with the comment by the New York Times on these investigations, that the "financial sensations have all been exploded, with little or no damage."

It is to be expected that the bankers like these investigations about as much as they love like the New Deal. But for Roosevelt this is one way of applying pressure for his specific aims. In his recent messages to Congress the neutrality policy stood out prominently. Yet his budget message proposed to set aside about a billion dollars for the 1936 armament expenditures.

A Sham Opposition

It is one thing to investigate the bankers, but it is something entirely different to take steps toward a change of the system that makes Wall Street possible. The Wilson administration also had its period of "opposition" to the bankers. On the whole much in the present situation is reminiscent of those days; and where in the decisive moments the real and the important pressure was applied has been shown very clearly by the records of the Department of State, brought out in the hearings of the Nye committee.

At a very early stage of the world war the Wilson administration was committed to a policy of strict neutrality, according to the records of the committee. When the question of loans to the allied powers by the American bankers was first broached, W. Jennings Bryan, who was then Secretary of State, formulated an adverse opinion set down in a letter of January 20, 1915, saying that, "money is the worst form of contraband because it commands everything else." Wil-

son expressed the wish that such loans should not be made. Shortly thereafter, Robert Lansing, as Councillor of the Department of State, authorized the bankers to extend credits, advising them, however, not to submit the question to the government for a formal opinion. Purchases of munitions and other war material by the allied powers increased in volume at a rapid pace. From then on began the real intervention of American finance capital, and especially of the House of Morgan.

Morgan Turns on the Heat

Apparently following the advice of Lansing the House of Morgan carried on secret negotiations for a \$100,000,000 loan to the allied powers. But the task of changing the government policy against loans still remained, and an opportunity to do so soon came. In August 1915 there was a crisis of exchange. The pound sterling rate declined. Previously the House of Morgan had supported sterling, a policy it now suddenly abandoned it and for obvious reasons. Bankers, including governors of Federal Reserve Districts, quickly made their presentation to the Department of State. In the language of the Nye committee, they "turned the heat on." They visualized the danger that the decline of sterling would wipe out all profits on goods sold even before it was actually delivered. Robert Lansing, now Secretary of State, wrote his famous letter to Wilson—a letter never included in Lansing's Memoirs. He estimated that for the year 1915, excess exports over imports would reach the stupendous sum of two and a half billion dollars. The pre-war average had been about half a billion. "It is estimated that the

European banks have about three and one-half billions of dollars in gold in their vaults," said Lansing. He insisted it would be disastrous to withdraw any considerable amount, and if the European countries cannot find the means to pay they would have to stop buying, thus causing a proportionate shrinkage of American export trade. "The result," said Lansing, "would be restriction of outputs, industrial depression, idle capital and idle labor, numerous failures, financial demoralization and general unrest. . . . It would therefore be necessary, according to Lansing, to adopt a policy of extending loans.

In the characteristic manner of secret diplomacy Wilson answered: ". . . we should say that 'parties will take no action either for or against such a transaction,' but that this should be orally conveyed, so far as we are concerned, and not put in writing."

The policy on war loans thus changed. The House of Morgan floated not a mere \$100,000,000 but loans totalling in excess of one billion dollars. Morgan "turned the heat on" the munition manufacturers inducing them to subscribe heavily. The House of Morgan became the sole purchasing agency for the allied powers, placing orders to the tune of a total of three billion dollars for which it received the handsome commission of \$30,000,000. Contracts for war materials were let to a total of 888 firms in which Morgan had what he described to the committee hearings as a "negligible interest." As one example of this there is the United States Steel Corporation, organized by the elder Morgan, who received a promotion fee of \$125,000,000 in cash and common stocks. This alone would suggest the degree of interest held by the House of Morgan in U. S. Steel.

Still after this change of policy on war loans and after the initial heavy deliveries of war materials to the allied powers, Wilson man-

aged to put Congress on record against what he called the intolerable attitude of Britain's interference with the freedom of the seas. Wilson's intervention for peace at that particular time, has been characterized by Senator Clark, of the Nye committee, as an effort to "draft terms definitely to the advantage of the Allies, terms which Germany was sure to refuse, thereby opening the way for our entrance into the war on the Allies' side." Nevertheless in the presidential elections of 1916 Wilson could roll up a plurality vote on the slogan: "He kept us out of war." In reality the way had already been opened for America's entrance into the war on the side of the Allies.

Lousing Gives Game Away

In March, 1917, Wilson proposed his fateful declaration of war, proclaimed to be the result of the loss of "lives of peaceful and innocent people," in the unrestricted submarine warfare that Germany put into effect. But in the voluminous documentation, the state correspondence and the correspondence of the international bankers, nothing of importance is said about the unrestricted submarine warfare, except insofar as its results could be used as a cover for the deliberately planned policy of entry into the war.

In this respect the cable addressed by Ambassador Page from London to the State Department, under date of March 5, 1917, is most revealing. In terse language it states the real cause for America's entrance into the war. Ambassador Page stated that the international condition was "most alarming to the American financial and industrial outlook." Page complained that the allied powers could not make shipments in gold to pay for purchases in the United States and said that: "The almost immediate danger, therefore, is that Franco-American and Anglo-American exchange will be so disturbed that orders by all the allied governments will be reduced to the lowest minimum, and there will be almost a

cessation of transatlantic trade." He felt that the pressure of this approaching crisis had gone beyond the ability of the Morgan financial agency—meaning that it was time for the U. S. government to intervene directly.

Page's Letter

"If we should go to war with Germany," said Ambassador Page, "the greatest help we could give the Allies would be such a credit." Further on in the same cable he added: "Perhaps our going to war is the only way in which our prominent trade position can be maintained and a panic averted. . . . A few weeks later the United States declared war on Germany; and when it was over 120,000 American soldiers had lost their lives while another 182,700 were wounded. But according to testimony of Charles A. Beard, in his "American Leviathan," the American corporations, which became the merchants of death; filled their coffers with gold. These corporations made profits of thirty-eight billion dollars, over and above all deductions, including excess profit taxes. For them America's entrance into the war became an exceedingly lucrative business.

Thus the real causes of America's entrance into the world war are revealed. While the House of Morgan became the principal object in the investigations now about to be concluded, we do not, of course, face the problem of one individual, or some individuals, as the actual instigators of war. On the contrary. What we face is the system that inevitably produces wars; and a class, the bourgeoisie, the representatives of finance capital and of the industrial corporations, in collusion with their agents in governmental positions, that engineer the plans and preparations for war. To the working class this is the real enemy.

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