

# Imperialist War and the Proletarian World Revolution

The Emergency Conference of the Fourth International, the world party of the socialist revolution, convenes at the turning point of the second imperialist war. The stage of probing for openings, of making preparations and of relative military inactivity has been left far behind. Germany has unloosed all the furies of hell in a major offensive to which the Allies are replying in kind with all their forces of destruction. From now on the life of Europe and all of mankind will be determined for a long time by the course of the imperialist war and by its economic and political consequences.

The Fourth International considers that now is the time to say openly and clearly how it views this war and its participants, how it evaluates the war policies of various labor organizations, and, most important, what is the way out to peace, freedom and plenty.

The Fourth International turns not to the governments who have draugoned the peoples into the slaughter, nor to the bourgeois politicians who bear the responsibility for these governments, nor to the labor bureaucracy which supports the warring bourgeoisie. The Fourth International

## THE GENERAL CAUSES OF THE PRESENT WAR

Technology is infinitely more powerful now than at the end of the war of 1914-1918, whereas mankind is much more poverty-stricken. The standard of living has declined in one country after another. On the threshold of the present war, agriculture was in worse condition than at the outbreak of the last war. The agricultural countries are ruined. In the industrial countries the middle classes are being ravaged economically and a permanent sub-class of unemployed—modern pariahs—has been formed. The domestic market has narrowed. The export of capital has been reduced. Imperialism has actually shattered the world market, breaking it up into spheres dominated by powerful individual countries. With the considerable increase in the population of the earth, the world trade of 109 states on our planet dropped almost one-fourth in the single decade prior to the present war. The turnover in foreign trade of some countries has been cut to one-half, one-third, and one-fourth.

The colonial countries are suffering from their own internal crises, and from the crises of the metropolitan centers. Backward nations which yesterday were still semi-free are today plunged into slavery (Abyssinia, Albania, China, . . .). Every imperialist country must have its own sources of raw materials, above all for war, that is, for a new struggle for raw materials. In order to enrich themselves further, the capitalists are destroying and laying waste everything created by the labor of centuries.

The world of decaying capitalism is over-crowded. The question of admitting a hundred extra refugees becomes a major problem for such a world power as the United States. In an era of aviation, telegraph, telephone, radio and television, travel from country to country is paralyzed by passports and visas. The period of the wasting away of foreign trade and the decline of domestic trade is at the same time the period of the monstrous intensification of chauvinism and especially of anti-semitism. In the epoch of its rise, capitalism took the Jewish people out of the ghetto and utilized them as an instrument in its commercial expansion. Today decaying capitalist society is striving to squeeze the Jewish people from all its pores; seventeen million individuals out of the two billion populating the globe, that is, less than one percent, can no longer find a place on our

## THE IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF THIS WAR

The immediate cause of the present war is the rivalry between the old wealthy colonial empires, Great Britain and France, and the belated imperialist plunderers, Germany and Italy.

The nineteenth century was the era of the incontestable hegemony of the oldest capitalist power, Great Britain. From 1815 to 1914—true enough, not without isolated military explosions—"British peace" reigned. The British fleet, mightiest in the world, played the role of policeman of the seas. This era, however, has receded into the past. As early as the end of the last century, Germany, armed with modern technology, began to move toward first place in Europe. On the other side of the ocean an even more powerful country arose, a former British colony. The most important economic contradiction which led to the war of 1914-1918 was the rivalry between Great Britain and Germany. As for the United States, its participation in the war was of a preventive character—Germany could not be permitted to subjugate the European continent.

The defeat hurled Germany back into complete impotence. Dismembered, encircled by enemies, bankrupted by indemnities, weakened by the convulsions of civil war, she appeared to be out of the running for a long time to come, if not forever. On the European continent, first violin turned up temporarily in the hands of France. For victorious England, the balance sheet of the war left in the last analysis liabilities: increasing independence of the dominions; colonial movements for independence; loss of naval hegemony; lessening of the importance of her navy through the development of aviation.

Through inertia England still attempted to play the leading role on the world arena in the first few years after victory. Her conflicts with the United States began to assume an obviously threatening character. It seemed as though the next war would flare up between the two Anglo-Saxon aspirants to world domination. England, however, soon had to convince herself that her specific economic weight was inadequate for combat with the colossus across the ocean. Her agreement with the United States on naval

**This Manifesto of the Fourth International was adopted at the Emergency Conference, at which ten national sections were represented (see story, page 1), and which was held on May 19-26 'somewhere in the Western Hemisphere.'**

**News and documents of the Conference were withheld from publication until participating delegates could make their way back to the countries from which they came.**

**Although more than a month has passed since the Manifesto was adopted, a month in**

**which events undreamed of by most of the world have come to pass, the Manifesto successfully stands the test of these events, predicting their broad outlines. For it is an estimate, not merely of immediate events, but of this whole epoch of war and revolution.**

**Symbol of the future is the fact that our Manifesto is the first to be issued by any of the international organizations of the labor movement, estimating the character of the events we are witnessing and—most decisive—it will**

**remain the only one providing a bold program for leading the international working class out of this chaos into a world of peace and socialism.**

**This Manifesto includes an all-sided analysis of the world situation. But it is far more than that. It is a call to action to save the human race from extinction.**

**Every advanced worker in the labor movement must be given the opportunity to read this great document!**

turns to the working men and women, the soldiers and sailors, the ruined peasants and the enslaved colonial peoples. The Fourth International has no ties whatsoever with the oppressors, the exploiters, the imperialists. It is the world party of the toilers, the oppressed, and the exploited. This Manifesto is addressed to them.

planet! Amid the vast expanses of land and the marvels of technology, which has also conquered the skies for man as well as the earth, the bourgeoisie has managed to convert our planet into a foul prison.

On November 1, 1914, at the beginning of the last imperialist war, Lenin wrote: "Imperialism has placed the fate of European culture at stake. After this war, if a series of successful revolutions do not occur, more wars will follow—the fairy tale of a 'war to end all wars' is a hollow and pernicious fairy tale." . . . Workers, call this prediction to mind! The present war—the second imperialist war—is not an accident; it does not result from the will of this or that dictator. It was predicted long ago. It derived its origin inexorably from the contradictions of international capitalist interests. Contrary to the official fables designed to drug the people, the chief cause of war as of all other social evils—unemployment, the high cost of living, fascism, colonial oppression—is the private ownership of the means of production together with the bourgeois state which rests on this foundation.

With the present level of technology and skill of the workers it is quite possible to create adequate conditions for the material and spiritual development of all mankind. It would be necessary only to organize the economic life within each country and over our entire planet correctly, scientifically, and rationally, according to a general plan. So long, however, as the main productive forces of society are held by trusts, i.e., isolated capitalist cliques, and so long as the national state remains a pliant tool in the hands of these cliques, the struggle for markets, for sources of raw materials, for domination of the world must inevitably assume a more and more destructive character. State power and domination of economy can be torn from the hands of these rapacious imperialist cliques only by the revolutionary working class. That is the meaning of Lenin's warning that without "a series of successful revolutions" a new imperialist war would inevitably follow. The different predictions and promises which were made have been submitted to the test of events. The fairy tale of the "war to end all wars" has been proved a lie. Lenin's prediction has become tragic truth.

equality signified formal renunciation of naval hegemony, already lost in actuality. Her replacement of free trade by tariff walls signified open admission of the defeat of British industry on the world market. Her renunciation of the policy of "splendid isolation" drew in its wake the introduction of compulsory military service. Thus all the sacred traditions were dusted away.

A similar lack of correspondence between her economic weight and her world position is characteristic of France too, but on a smaller scale. Her hegemony in Europe rested on a temporary conjuncture of circumstances created by the annihilation of Germany and the artificial combinations of the Versailles Treaty. The size of her population and the economic foundation supporting this hegemony were far too inadequate. When the hypnosis of victory wore off, the real relationship of forces surged to the surface. France proved to be much weaker than she had appeared not only to her friends but to her enemies. Seeking cover, she became in essence Great Britain's latest dominion.

Germany's regeneration on the basis of her first rate technology and organizational abilities was inevitable. It came sooner than was thought possible, in large measure thanks to England's support of Germany against the US-SR, against the excessive pretensions of France and, more remotely, against the United States. Such international combinations proved successful for capitalist England more than once in the past so long as she remained the strongest power. In her senility she proved incapable of dealing with those spirits she had herself evoked.

Armed with a technology, more modern, of greater flexibility, and of higher productive capacity, Germany once again began to squeeze England out of very important markets, particularly southeastern Europe and Latin America. In contrast to the nineteenth century, when the competition between capitalist countries developed on an expanding world market, the economic arena of struggle today is narrowing down so that nothing remains open to the imperialists except tearing pieces of the world market away from each other.

The initiative for the new re-division of the world this time as in 1914 belonged naturally to German imperialism. Caught off guard the British government first attempted to buy its way out of war by concessions at the expense of others (Austria, Czecho-Slovakia). But this policy was short-lived. "Friendship" with Great Britain was only a brief tactical phase for Hitler. London had already conceded Hitler more than he had calculated on getting. The

Munich agreement through which Chamberlain hoped to seal a long time friendship with Germany led, on the contrary, to a hastening of the break. Hitler could expect nothing more from London—further expansion of Germany would strike at the life lines of Great Britain herself. Thus the "new era of peace" proclaimed by Chamberlain in October, 1938 led within a few months to the most terrible of all wars.

## THE ROLE OF UNITED STATES IMPERIALISM

While Great Britain has exerted every effort since the first months of the war to seize blockaded Germany's vacated positions in the world market, the United States has almost automatically been driving Great Britain out. Two-thirds of the world's gold is concentrated in the American vaults. The remaining third is flowing to the same place. England's role as banker for the world is a thing of the past. Nor are matters in other spheres much better. While Great Britain's navy and merchant marine are suffering great losses, the American shipyards are building ships on a colossal scale which will secure the predominance of the American fleet over the British and the Japanese. The United States is obviously preparing to adopt the *two power standard* (a navy stronger than the combined fleets of the next two strongest powers). The new program for the air fleet envisages securing the superiority of the United States over all the rest of the world.

However, the industrial, financial and military strength of the United States, the foremost capitalist power in the world, does not at all insure the blossoming of American economic life, but on the contrary, invests the crisis of her social system with an especially malignant and convulsive character. Gold in the billions cannot be made use of nor can the millions of unemployed! In the theses of the Fourth International, "War and the Fourth International," published six years ago, it was predicted: "Capitalism in the United States is running head on into those problems which impelled Germany in 1914 upon the road of war. . . . For Germany it was a question of 'organizing' Europe. For the United States it is a question of 'organizing' the world. History is taking mankind directly into the volcanic eruption of American imperialism."

The "New Deal" and the "Good Neighbor" policy were the final attempts to postpone the climax by ameliorating the social crisis through concessions and agreements. After the bankruptcy of this policy, which swallowed up tens of billions, nothing else remained for American imperialism but to resort to the method of the mailed fist. Under one or another pretext and slogan the United States will intervene in the tremendous clash in order to maintain its world dominion. The order and the time of the struggle between American capitalism and its enemies is not yet known—perhaps even by Washington. War with Japan would be a struggle for "living room" in the Pacific ocean. War in the Atlantic, even if directed immediately against Germany, would be a struggle for the heritage of Great Britain.

The potential victory of Germany over the Allies hangs like a nightmare over Washington. With the European continent and the resources of its colonies as her base, with all the European munition factories and shipyards at her disposal, Germany especially in combination with Japan in the Orient would constitute a mortal danger for American imperialism. The present titanic battles on the fields of Europe are in this sense preparatory episodes in the struggle between Germany and America. France and England are only fortified positions of American capitalism, extended beyond the Atlantic. If the frontiers of England are located on the Rhine, as one of the British premiers put it, then the American imperialists might well say that the frontiers of the United States are on the Thames. In its feverish preparation of public opinion for the coming war, Washington does not spare noble indignation over the fate of Finland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium. . . . With the occupation of Denmark the question of Greenland arose unexpectedly as being "geologically" a part of the Western hemisphere and containing by happy chance deposits of cryolite, indispensable in the production of aluminum. Nor does Washington overlook enslaved China, the helpless Philippines, the orphaned Dutch Indies, and open sea routes. Thus philanthropic sympathies for oppressed nations and even considerations of geology are driving the United States into war.

The American armed forces, however, could intervene successfully only so long as France and the British Isles remain solid bases of support. Should France be occupied and German troops appear on the Thames, the relationship of forces would shift drastically to the disadvantage of the United States. Washington is forced by these considerations to speed up all the tempos but likewise to ponder the question: Has the opportune moment not been missed?

Against the official position of the White House are launched the noisy protests of American isolationism which

is itself only another variety of the very same imperialism. The section of the capitalists whose interests are bound up primarily with the American continent, Australia, and the Far East calculate that in the event of the defeat of the Allies, the United States would automatically gain a monopoly for its own benefit not only of Latin America but also of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. As for China, the Dutch Indies and the Orient in general, it is the conviction of the entire ruling class of the United States, that war with Japan is in any case inevitable in the near future. Under the guise of isolationism and pacifism, an influential section of the bourgeoisie is working out a program for American continental expansion and preparing for the struggle with Japan. War against Germany for the domination of the world, according to this plan, is only deferred. As for petty-bourgeois pacifists such as Norman Thomas and his fraternity, they are only choir boys in one of the imperialist clans.

Our struggle against United States intervention into the war has nothing in common with isolationism and pacifism. We tell the workers openly that the imperialist government cannot fail to drag this country into war. The dispute within the ruling class involves only the question, when to enter the war and against whom to level the fire first. To count upon holding the United States to neutrality by means of newspaper articles and pacifist resolutions is like trying to hold back the tide with a broom. The real struggle against war means the class struggle against imperialism and a merciless exposure of petty-bourgeois pacifism. Only revolution could prevent the American bourgeoisie from intervening in the second imperialist war or beginning the third imperialist war. All other methods are either charlatanism or stupidity or a combination of both.

### The Defense of the "Fatherland"

Almost a hundred years ago when the national state still represented a relatively progressive factor, the Communist Manifesto proclaimed that the proletarians have no fatherland. Their only goal is the creation of the toilers' fatherland embracing the whole world. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the bourgeois state with its armies and tariff walls became the worst brake on the development of productive forces which demand a much more extensive arena. A socialist who comes out today for the defense of the "fatherland" is playing the same reactionary role which was played by the peasants of the Vendee who rushed to the defense of the feudal regime, that is, of their own chains.

In recent years and even months, the world has observed with astonishment how easily states vanish from the map of Europe: Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Albania, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium. . . . The political map has been reshaped with equal speed in no other epoch save that of the Napoleonic wars. At that time it was a question of outlived feudal states which had to give way before the bourgeois national state. Today it is a question of outlived bourgeois states which must give way before the socialist federation of the peoples. The chain breaks as always at its weakest link. The struggle of the imperialist bandits leaves as little room for independent small states as does the vicious competition of trusts and cartels for small independent manufacturers and merchants.

Because of its strategic position Germany considers it more profitable to attack its main enemies through the small and neutral countries. Great Britain and France on the contrary deem it more profitable to cover themselves with the neutrality of the small states and let Germany drive them through her blows into the camp of the "democratic" Allies. The gist of the matter is not altered by this difference in strategic methods. Between the cog-wheels of the great imperialist countries the small satellites are being ground to dust. The "defense" of the huge fatherlands requires the overthrow of a dozen small and middle-sized ones.

But even with regard to the large states what is involved for the bourgeoisie is not at all a question of defending the fatherland but rather markets, foreign concessions, sources of raw materials and spheres of influence. The bourgeoisie never defends the fatherland for the sake of the fatherland. They defend private property, privileges, profits. Whenever these sacred values are threatened, the bourgeoisie immediately takes to the road of defeatism. That was the way of the Russian bourgeoisie, whose sons after the October revolution fought and are once again ready to fight in every