

OFF THE RECORD

By Dwight Macdonald

The Things They Don't Talk About

Already we are getting a pre-view of what is in store for the labor movement in the next war. They don't talk about these things much in political speeches, they don't print much about them in the papers, and so you very probably don't even know they are happening. You might think, for instance, that an army fighting for democracy would accept Negroes on equal terms with whites. You might think that when a nation goes off on a holy war for democracy, the rights of its workers at home would be scrupulously guarded. You might think that, in such an idealistic enterprise, business men would not be allowed to make money out of their fellow citizens' blood. But what happened last week in Congress when the Army Air Corps Expansion bill was passed shows that you would be wrong on all three counts. To itemize:

(1) The bill originally provided that at least one Army air school should train Negro pilots. "Much distressed," reports Time, "the Air Corps quietly went to work on Capitol Hill to get Negro training killed. . . ."

(2) The bill originally forbade the award of contracts for Army planes to all firms which had been convicted of violating the Wagner Act. The C.I.O. and the A.F.L. had joined forces to get this provision inserted. But as the bill was going through its final stages, the War Department "emphatically demanded" that this protection for labor be removed from the bill. It was.

(3) There is a lot of talk in Congress about "taking the profits out of war." Just what the honorable Congressmen mean was clearly enough shown when the Air Corps bill "limited" profits on all Army contracts to . . . 12%!

Those idealistic liberals who want us to act as policemen for the world seem to be forgetting—as they did in 1917—that to fight a war, whether for democracy or not, you must turn the nation over to those experts in death: the munitions makers and the War Department. The next war will be a crusade for democracy—somewhere else.

Tom Girdler, Dove of Peace

"The steel industry abhors war and reverently hopes for peace," Tom Girdler, of Republic Steel Corp. and the Memorial Day Massacre, recently told a gathering of mining engineers. "The impression prevails," he said sadly, "that the steel industry looks eagerly at profits from war. That is not true. War brings no genuine prosperity to the steel industry."

It would be interesting to get Girdler's definition of "genuine prosperity." In 1917 Bethlehem Steel earned \$54,000,000 and in 1918, \$57,000,000. U. S. Steel earned \$333,000,000 in 1916 and \$330,000,000 in 1917, declaring in the latter year an extra dividend of 18%. Coming down to the present, I see by the papers that the Navy Department has signed contracts for \$24,000,000

worth of armor plate with three steel companies—this being merely one of many such contracts involved in our current preparations to save the world again as we did so nobly in 1917.

In a certain sense, however, it is true that the steel barons don't want war. "We have seen the effects of war," said Tom Girdler, "as written in the social, economic and political upheavals since 1918. These stresses and strains have brought civilization near the cracking point. Another world war might well result in the complete collapse of civilization."

Neither Tom Girdler nor any other responsible member of the ruling class wants war now if it can be avoided in any possible way—short of giving up their profits, that is. As any one who has seen his gun thugs in action knows, Tom Girdler is no humanitarian. When he expresses fears lest the next war may mean "the complete collapse of civilization," he really means "the complete collapse of capitalism."

This is what is behind the concessions made by Chamberlain and Daladier to Hitler at the Munich Conference last fall. To quote the London correspondent of the N. Y. Times: "The real motive of 'appeasement' is the fear of a war that might crack the political, economic and social structure of this country beyond repair, whether Britain won the war or not. Mr. Chamberlain and his colleagues feel sure that the British Empire could survive a war with Germany at the cost of untold human misery, but they are not so sure that the men and the system that have ruled the country for so many years would still be ruling it when the war was over." Moral: the more militancy the workers show, the less chances of a war.

Business Is Business

Business men overwhelmingly approve of President Roosevelt's imperialistic foreign policy; and but you don't find them passing up any chances for profits. If a dictatorship wants munitions and can lay cash on the line, it gets them—and from the same business interests as support so enthusiastically the New Deal's war drive to save "democracy." Thus, the Department of Commerce has announced that the biggest foreign purchaser of American steel ingots and scrap iron in January of this year was Japan. In 1937 Italy got 63 per cent of its scrap iron imports from this country. Last year the United States supplied 88 per cent of Italy's scrap imports.

Not long ago, a friend who had just returned from Pittsburgh told me of an interesting married couple there. The husband was president of a big firm of scrap iron dealers, and his best customer was the Japanese government. His wife was a leader in the Stalinist stooge outfit, the League for Peace and Democracy, and at the time was especially active in getting the women of Pittsburgh to boycott stockings made of Japanese silk.

"Turn Imperialist War Into Civil War"

-- V. I. Lenin

In 1915 Lenin and Zinoviev collaborated in writing a pamphlet, "Socialism and War," from which the excerpt below is taken. The great majority of the leaders of the international socialist movement had turned traitor to the workers and become rabid patriots, but Lenin and Zinoviev, in exile, with a small group of other loyal socialists, continued to oppose the war. Two years later, in 1917, Lenin returned to Russia and led the magnificent revolution of Russia's toiling people against their oppressors. Lenin died in 1924. Although Zinoviev worked as one of Lenin's closest collaborators in the leadership of the revolution, he was shot by Joseph Stalin in 1936 as a "fascist mad dog." Just as the Social Democratic organization in 1914-18 stood for support of the capitalist democracies against "Kaiserism" so its spiritual off-spring today, Stalinism, stands for patriotic support of capitalism under the slogan "Fight to Save Democracy from Fascism." Leninism stands for uncompromising struggle against capitalist war.

Social-chauvinism is adherence to the idea of "defending the fatherland" in the present war. From this idea follows repudiation of the class struggle in war time, voting for military appropriations, etc. In practice, the social chauvinists conduct an anti-proletarian bourgeois policy, because in practice they insist not on the "defense of the fatherland" in the sense of fighting against the oppression of a foreign nation, but upon the "right" of one or the other of the "great" nations to rob the colonies and oppress other peoples. The social-chauvinists follow the bourgeoisie in deceiving the people by saying that the war is conducted for the defense of the freedom and the existence of the nations; thus they put themselves on the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

BETRAYAL OF PAST

To the social-democrats belong those who justify and idealize the government and the bourgeoisie of one of the belligerent groups of nations, as well as those who, like Kautsky, recognize the equal right of the Socialists of all belligerent nations to "defend the fatherland." Social-chauvinism, being in practice a defense of the privileges, prerogatives, robberies and violence of "one's own" (or any other) imperialist bourgeoisie, is a total betrayal of all Socialist conviction and a violation of the decisions of the International Socialist Congress in Basle (1912, Ed.).

The war has undoubtedly created the acutest crises and has incredibly intensified the sufferings of the masses. The reactionary character



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of this war, the shameless lie of the bourgeoisie of all countries which covers its predatory aims with "national" ideology, all this inevitably creates, on the basis of an objective revolutionary situation, revolutionary sentiments in the masses. Our duty is to help make these sentiments conscious, to deepen them and give them form. The only correct expression of this task is the slogan "Turn the imperialist war into civil war." All consistent class struggle in time of war, all "mass action" earnestly conducted must inevitably lead to this. We cannot know whether in the first or in the second imperialist war between the great nations, whether during or after it, a strong revolutionary movement will flare up. Whatever the case may be, it is our absolute duty systematically and unflinchingly to work in that particular direction. . . .

DUTY OF REVOLUTIONISTS

A mass sentiment for peace often expresses the beginning of a protest, an indignation and a consciousness of the reactionary nature of the war. It is the duty of all Social-Democrats to take advantage of this sentiment. They will take the most ardent part in every movement and in every demonstration made on this basis, but they will not deceive the people by assuming that in the absence of a revolutionary movement it is possible to have peace without annexations, without oppression of nations, without robbery, without planting the seed of new wars among the present governments and the ruling classes. Such deception would only play into the hands of the secret diplomacy of the belligerent countries and their counter-revolutionary plans. Whoever wishes a durable and democratic peace must be for civil war against the governments and the-bourgeoisie.

Socialism and War, August, 1915.

"The Main Enemy Is in Your Own Country!"

-- Karl Liebknecht

Karl Liebknecht together with Rosa Luxemburg were leaders of the valiant band of revolutionary internationalists in the German Spartakusbund. During the World War they fought against the capitalist slaughter and tried to organize the working class for socialist revolution. They were murdered by Noske and Scheidemann, former socialists who had turned traitor to the workers and supported the German capitalist class during the war. It was Karl Liebknecht who penned the immortal phrase "The main enemy is in your own country!"

But to learn and not forget applies also, and above all, to the heroic struggle against the war which our Italian comrades waged and are still waging. They fight with their press, with meetings, with street corner gatherings. They fight with revolutionary strength and courage, opposing their bodies and their lives to the raging impact of the waves of nationalism whipped up by the government. Their struggle is worthy of our enthusiastic felicitations. Let their spirit be our model. May it become the pattern for the International . . .

The absurd watchword, "see it through," was disastrous; it can lead only deeper into the maelstrom of destruction. International proletarian class struggle against the international imperialist mangling of the people is the command of the hour.

The main enemy of the German people is in Germany: German imperialism, the German war party, German secret diplomacy. The German people must wage a political struggle against this enemy in its own country, in conjunction with the struggle of the proletarians of other countries against their own imperialists . . .

The enemies of the working class rely upon the forgetfulness of the masses; take heed, that their reliance may be groundless! They speculate on the forbearance of the masses—but we raise the stormy cry:

How much longer are the imperialist gamblers going to abuse the patience of the people? Enough of butchery! Down with the war-mongers on both sides of the border!

The slaughter of the people must end!

Proletarians of all countries! Follow the heroic example of your Italian brothers! Unite for the international class war against the conspiracy of secret diplomacy, against imperialism, against the war, for a socialist peace!

The main enemy is in your own country!

(From a leaflet issued on the occasion of Italy's entrance into the World War in 1915.)

Trotsky Interviewed by the London Daily Herald

Only The Revolution Can Put An End To War!

Germans Masses Will Find a Way

Is not the world too afraid of Hitler?

The democratic governments look upon Hitler, who succeeded in "liquidating" the social question, with admiration and fear. The working class, which during one and a half centuries, periodically shook the civilized countries of Europe by its revolts, is suddenly reduced to complete silence in Italy and Germany. Messrs. the official politicians attribute this "success" to the internal, quasi-mystical properties of Fascism and National Socialism. In reality the strength of Hitler is not in himself, nor in his contemptible philosophy, but in the terrible deception of the working masses, in their confusion and in their lassitude.

During many decades the proletariat of Germany built up a trade union organization and a Social Democratic party. Absent of the strong Social Democracy appeared later a powerful Communist party. And all these organizations, which rose upon the shoulders of the proletariat, were in the critical moment a zero, and crumbled away before the offensive of Hitler. They did not find in themselves the courage to call the masses to struggle, as they themselves were completely degenerated, bourgeoisified and had lost the habit of thinking about struggle.

The masses pass through such catastrophes heavily and slowly. It is incorrect to say that the German proletariat has reconciled itself with Hitler! But it no longer believes in the old parties, in the old slogans, and at the same time it has not yet found a new way. This and only this explains the strong-arm omnipotence of fascism. It will continue until the masses have dressed their wounds, have regenerated themselves and once more lifted their heads. I think we can expect that in not a long time.

A Struggle for World Domination

The fear Great Britain and France has for Hitler and Mussolini explains itself by the fact that the world position of these two colony-holding countries, as has already been said, no longer corresponds with their economic specific weight. The war can bring nothing to them, but can take a great deal from them. It is natural that they attempt to postpone the moment of a new partitioning of the world and that they toss a bone, as Spain and Czechoslovakia, to Mussolini and Hitler. The struggle is for colonial pos-

sessions, for the domination of the world. The attempt to represent this brawl of interests and appetites as a struggle between "democracy" and "fascism" can only dupe the working class. Chamberlain will give all the democracies in the world (there are not many left) for a tenth part of India.

The strength of Hitler (at the same time also his weakness) consists in the fact that, under the pressure of the helpless position of German capitalism, he is ready to resort to the more extreme means, using blackmail and bluff in passing, at the risk of leading to war. Hitler has fully realized the fear of the old colony-holders before any disturbance and has played on this fear, if not with a very great heart, at least with indubitable success.

Counsel for the Workers

Should the "democracies" of the U.S.S.R. unite to crush Hitler?

I do not feel that it is my mission to give counsel to imperialist governments, even if they call themselves democratic, nor to the Bonapartist clique of the Kremlin, even if it calls itself socialist. I can only give counsel to the workers. My counsel to them is not to believe for a single instant that the war of the two imperialist camps can bring anything else but oppression and reaction in

both camps. It will be the war of the slave-owners who cover themselves with various masks: "democracy," "civilization," on the one hand, "race," "honor," on the other. Only the overthrow of all slave-owners can open for all an end to war and once an epoch of true civilization.

Does Hitler represent a great danger for the democracies?

The "democracies" themselves represent a much greater danger for themselves. The regime of bourgeois democracy appeared on the basis of liberal capitalism, that is to say free competition. That epoch is now far in the past. The present monopoly capitalism which has decomposed and degraded the petty and middle bourgeoisie, has thus undermined the ground under bourgeois democracy. Fascism is the product of this development. It does not come at all "from without." In Italy and Germany fascism conquered without foreign intervention. Bourgeois democracy is dead not only in Europe but also in America.

Capitalism Cannot Be Saved

If it is not liquidated in time by socialist revolution, fascism will inevitably conquer in France, England and the United States, with the aid of Mussolini and Hitler, or without this aid. But fascism is only a respite. Capitalism is condemned. Nothing will save it from collapse. The

more resolute and audacious will be the policy of the proletariat the less the socialist revolution will provoke sacrifice, the sooner mankind will enter upon a new road.

My opinion about the civil war in Spain? I have expressed myself on this subject in the press many times.

The Spanish revolution was socialist in its essence: the workers attempted several times to overthrow the bourgeoisie, to seize the factories; the peasants wanted to take the land. The "people's front," led by the Stalinists, strangled the socialist revolution in the name of an outlived bourgeois democracy. Hence the disappointment, the hopelessness, the discouragement of the worker and peasant masses, the demoralization of the Republican army and, as a result, the military collapse.

"Democracies" Aided Franco

To invoke the treacherous policy of England and France explains nothing. Of course the "democratic" imperialists were with the Spanish reaction with all their hearts and helped Franco as much as possible. It was so and will always be so. The British were naturally on the side of the Spanish bourgeoisie, which passed entirely to the side of Franco. Only, in the beginning Chamberlain did not believe in the victory of Franco and feared to compromise himself by a pre-

mature revelation of his sympathies. France, as ever, executed the will of the French bourgeoisie. The Soviet government played the role of hangman toward the revolutionary Spanish workers, in order to demonstrate its trustworthiness and loyalty to London and Paris.

The fundamental cause of the defeat of a powerful and heroic revolution is the treacherous anti-socialist policy of the so-called "people's front." If the peasants had seized the land and the workers the factories, Franco never would have been able to wrest this victory from their hands!

Can the regime of Franco maintain itself?

Of course not for a thousand years, as the boasting National Socialism of Germany promises. But Franco will maintain himself for a certain time thanks to the same conditions as Hitler. After great efforts and sacrifices, after terrible defeats, in spite of these sacrifices, the Spanish working masses must be disappointed to the bottom of their hearts in the old leading parties: socialists, anarchists, "communists," who by their common forces, under the banner of the "people's front," strangled the socialist revolution. The Spanish workers will now pass inevitably through a period of discouragement, before they begin slowly and stubbornly to look for a new road. The period during which the masses

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MEN AND WOMEN OF LABOR

Out of the Past

BY EMANUEL GARRETT

EUGENE V. DEBS

(Nov. 5, 1885—Oct. 20, 1926)

"I hate; I loathe; I despise Junkerdom. I have no earthly use for the Junkers of Germany, and not one particle more for the Junkers of the United States."

Gene Debs was speaking. The day was June 16, 1918. The place, Canton, Ohio.

The United States had declared war upon Germany a few weeks earlier. The great majority of leading socialists, even those who had in April approved a Declaration by the Socialist Party convention against the war (the St. Louis Declaration) had turned avid war patriots. Charles Edward Russell, William Walling, and scores of others. The entire "peace" movement, had collapsed in an orgy of jingoism.

The Moral Courage to Stand Erect

Gene Debs rose that day in Canton to pillory the jailers, the bosses, the traitors who were hounding worker militants, and socialist fighters. His tall figure towering from the platform, his arm outstretched, his finger pointed accusingly at boss injustice, Gene Debs affirmed his solidarity with all the persecuted anti-war fighters. Bitterly he denounced the turncoats, and those who howled for working class blood. Passionately, he made his own sympathies known:

"They who are animated with the unconquerable spirit of the socialist revolution, they who have the moral courage to stand erect, to assert their convictions, to stand by them, to go to jail or to hell for them—they are writing their names in this crucial hour, they are writing their names in fadeless letters in the history of mankind."

The government swooped down on him. The boss press was furious. The Terre Haute Tribune wrote that Debs was suspected of being "in a plan with the Trotsky group to spread Bolshevism in this country."

Debs was arrested. Debs was tried. Debs was sentenced—to ten years imprisonment for the crime of speaking his mind. Wilson denied him an amnesty. And so Debs entered the jail on April 18, 1919. "I enter the prison doors a flaming revolutionist—my head is erect, my spirit untamed, and my soul unconquerable." Later, Debs wrote his "Prison Creed":

"While there is a lower class I am in it; While there is a criminal element I am of it; While there is a soul in prison I am not free." In 1921, the war-time hysteria abating, Harding released him, without restoration of his citizenship rights.

A Life Devoted to Socialism

Debs' loyalty to the socialist cause in the face of war was the crowning act of a life richer in its devotion to the working-class than any other American. When Debs, the leader of American socialism, walked through the gates of the jail, he had behind him years of ceaseless socialist labor.

Born into a family of ten children, Debs had gone to work in his youth on the railroads.

Joining the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, he before long rose to the position of national secretary. Disgusted, however, with the conservative methods of the Brotherhood, realizing the need of new, more militant tactics, Debs quit the Brotherhood, and organized the American Railway Union. In April, 1894 the A. R. U. won an important victory from the Great Northern Railway, after an eighteen day strike.

When shortly afterwards the Pullman workers struck, they turned to the A.R.U. for aid. The A.R.U. declared a boycott against the Pullman Company, and Debs lent his services to the leadership of the strike. A sweeping injunction was handed down by the courts against the strike; an injunction more severe in its provisions than any previously issued. President Cleveland sent federal troops to smash the strike. Troops and injunction together did smash the strike. Debs, who had defied injunction, was tried for contempt of court, and sent to jail for six months.

In jail he read; in jail he became a socialist. Debs, leaving the jail, was no longer a mere trade unionist. Debs was a socialist; he understood the need of working class political action. He worked at first with Daniel De Leon, and then in 1904 he helped found the Socialist Party.

Five times, Debs ran as socialist candidate for President. His "Red Special," in the campaign of 1908, became famous as he toured the country, thundering his denunciations of capitalism. In 1912, he polled 901,062 votes. In 1920, while in jail, he polled 919,799 votes.

Hardly a worker, conscious of his being a worker, failed to go to hear Debs. Debs was the idol of the American worker—in Terre Haute, Indiana, and in New York. Mothers, fathers, children, came to hear Debs not only because he was a great orator; they came also because they loved this relentless fighter in freedom's cause.

A Citizen of the World

Great events pressed. And Debs did not try to avoid them. From his jail cell, Debs criticized the S. P. for watering its revolutionary aims. From his cell, he defended the Russian revolution from attack despite incidental criticisms he himself made. "Behold," he had written of the Revolution, "its sublime majesty, catch its holy spirit and join in its thrilling, inspiring appeal to the oppressed of every land to use their might, shake off their fetters and proclaim their freedom to the world."

In the history of American labor, Debs stands as its greatest figure. He was great because he did not have the feeling of nation; he was a worker, a socialist, and only that. While "socialists" voted war credits in Germany, and others turned to the selling of liberty bonds—for American or German, or French, "democracy," Debs cried out: "I have no country to fight for; my country is the earth; I am a citizen of the world."



Leon Trotsky Addressing the Red Army of the Russian Revolution