

Russia, America & Ourselves

The War Within America

by IVOR MONTAGU

IT is idle to suppose that any nation can remain "outside the war"—this war now—simply by preserving formal neutrality. Indeed, in a sense, the formal "international" war is but a tactical sector of the all-pervading battle of humanity against Fascism. Whether or not U.S.A. is yet technically *in* the "shooting war," this battle in the major sense is already in America.

Stalin foresaw this. As early as his speech of July 3rd he predicted that the war for existence of the Soviet peoples would become merged with the fight of the American and British peoples for democratic liberties. In November, Stalin was able to note that the resulting coalition "is growing and will continue to grow for the benefit of our common cause of liberation."

The growth of this triple coalition is the dominating factor determining the outcome of the war as the final defeat of Fascism. Hitler, in initiating his "crusade," had not only hopes of playing on the class contradictions in Britain, he counted still more on neutralising or even enlisting the United States.

The transformation of the world situation effected by June 22 certainly brought him results within the U.S.A. Yet these have not sufficed to halt the growth of collaboration, the practical rallying of the resources and people of the United States in solidarity with the Soviet Union. Within four months—from the initial statements of the Administration in July (corresponding to the Churchill declaration of June 22nd), the dispatch of Harry Hopkins to Moscow on confidential mission, the joint Churchill-Roosevelt "Aid-Russia" telegram to Stalin sent from the Atlantic meeting, the Three Power Conference in Moscow arranging further supplies of tanks and airplanes, the loan under the Lease-Lend Act of a thousand million dollars, and now U.S. airplanes in action on the Soviet front, while U.S. ships are now licensed to journey to Soviet ports equipped with arms to discourage would-be interruptors—much has been done.

This march toward Hitler's doom is not achieved without active resistance

from his followers within U.S.A., without a spur to the frenzied ambition of promoters of Fascism within U.S.A., without a sharpening *domestically* of the universal conflict.

Hitler's aides within Britain have principally kept prudent rein on their tongues since June 22nd. Not so in U.S.A., where their loquacity reveals the hopes their master entertained.

(*Before*). "It's too bad all this talk of war between Germany and Russia seems to be nothing more than rumour so far." (Editorial in the *New York World Telegram*, June 20).

"But, boy, is this Russian business a break for us if news reports are true? Perhaps Hitler can take the wheatfields of the Ukraine. He needs them. Most military men believe he can grab the oil fields of what the old British Army called 'Mesopotamia.' He needs them also. And so might control a self-contained inland empire. But, speaking entirely selfishly, is that so bad for us?" (General Johnson, in the *Scripps-Howard Press*, June 21).

(*After*). "Let us hope that Occidental peace can still be made and Europe united against the expansion of Asiatic Communism." (W. R. Hearst, June 30).

"... the Russian affair is quite different; that can last and pay dividends. With the Ukraine in German hands and German development applied to it, the rest of Russia does not matter." Hitler may go presently, and Schacht may return, then "with such a Germany a basis for reasoned negotiation would present itself. A highly attractive picture that stirs up the wishbone no end." (Thos. F. Woodlock, prominent Catholic, in the *Wall Street Journal*, June 30).

The wishbone stirred to some purpose. Spencer Williams, on the Columbia Broadcasting System, declared that the Soviet people were "waiting and praying for Hitler to deliver them." "It will take a miracle bigger than any seen since the Bible was written to save the Reds from utter defeat in a very short time. The Reds are on their way to a debacle not paralleled in history" (Fletcher Pratt in the *New York Press*). "In my judg-

ment Hitler will be in control of Russia in 30 days" (Chief Red-Baiter, congressman Martin Dies, Chairman of the Committee on Un-American Activities, June 23rd).

The disappointment of these hyenas reoriented American politics. The masses mobilised for support of the Administration. C.I.O. and A.F.L. conventions went on record for "Aid to U.S.S.R."—the Transport workers, the Marine and Shipbuilding workers, the State and County Municipal workers (corresponding to British Civil Servants), the Mine Workers, the Electric, Radio and Machine workers, and hosts of others. But the mobilisation extended far beyond the ranks of labour. The famously conservative American Legion declared for "Aid to Russia." Catholic leaders breached the generally pro-Fascist Catholic "front" in America with assertions that "Hitler is the greatest enemy." A section of the Republican Party, with Willkie as spokesman, transformed its opposition to Roosevelt into pacemaking complaints that "the President does not go fast enough."

On the other hand, sections of big capital reacted according to pattern. The ultra-expansionist previous supporters of the President's foreign policy were bitterly chagrined. For them "aid Britain" was attractive while British capital stood alone, faced with the inescapable alternative, subordination to Hitler, or a resistance to Hitler dependent on U.S. aid for which the price was subordination to U.S.A. The fight of the Soviet Union made the difference. If Britain might be rescued, by expenditure of Soviet valour and sinews, *before* the stage of absolute dependence on U.S. aid, then "aid-Britain" was certainly a prospect far less pleasing. The pro-Hitlerites received reinforcements.

The American pro-Hitlerites — who are they? *Direct and blatant*—the "America First" group of capitalists. "I would a hundred times rather see my country ally herself . . . even with Germany, with all her faults." (Lindbergh in San Francisco, July 1st). Deprived by the new situation of any longer masquerading its pacifism in a guise seductive to the masses, its propaganda daily assumes a more directly Fascist character. From its platform, Lindbergh at Des Moines on September 11th, denounced "the Jews" for "hastening the U.S.A. to war out of hatred for Hitler." A series of investigations by John L. Spivak published in *New Masses*

have revealed "America First" as a powerful body receiving millions of dollars for propaganda from a wealthy clique (principally the rivals to Morgan-Lamont), partly directly from Fascist sources.

"Nazis, Coughlinites and anti-Semites have taken over the organisation lock, stock and barrel. To-day America First is a tight little Nazi organisation that follows the party line as laid down in Berlin. Some people of good intentions, but of little understanding, have been kept out in front as window-dressing. They are merely decoys." (Secretary of the Interior Ickes).

Next *the indirect*. The Republican ex-President Hoover and ex-Presidential candidate Landon, supported by the apostates from Rooseveltism, *New York Times* and Henry Luce's *Life* and *Time* group. Their line combines platonic love for Britain, an Ethel M. Dell "till-death-do-us-part" crush on the Finnish White Guards, mild chiding of Hitler, and every hindrance in the way of aid to U.S.S.R., the effective means of thwarting Hitler.

Finally, there is the confusion or apostasy of a section of American liberalism. J. T. Flynn, liberal, acts as New York head and front for "America First." The daughter of John Lewis, miners' leader, herself a C.I.O. official, serves on its "executive." Norman Thomas, perpetual "Socialist" candidate for President, lends it full support. In approving aid to U.S.S.R., the American Federation of Labour Executive Council snootily qualifies this with the remark that "even the *least* prospect of an alliance is unthinkable," since the Soviet organisation "does not conceal its enmity to democracy."

A view none the less formidable for its motley composition. Reinforced, as is the more circumspect mob in this country, by Fascist sympathisers dotted in stray points throughout the civil and military apparatus of the Administration. Such a fight as the Administration desires to wage, and is indeed actively and effectively maintaining, in the foreign field, can be maintained only by ruthless exposure of villainy and rescue of its dupes. Fascism can be fought only by an anti-Fascist fight. Dismissal of teachers, punitive sentences for "Communism," ceremonial burnings of subversive books, baiting of Negro recruits to the army, proceed without interruption. Earl Browder, Communist leader, is still held in gaol. A third investigating

commission has now designated Harry Bridges, Australian-born Pacific Coast labour leader ("For us there has been no change. We don't back-track to anyone in fighting Fascism. We were the pioneers in this fight . . .") for deportation, where two previous commissions had exonerated him.

On this front, the domestic, the Administration hesitates. The copperheads raise their heads to strike. So far the Administration has not been defeated in Congress on a single issue. But an attempt to send America's army trainees home, at this moment in history, after only one year's training, was defeated by only one vote! The House of Representatives majority that agreed revision of the Neutrality Act was only 18. La Guardia, supported by both Roosevelt and Willkie, was returned as Mayor of New York, in preference to a candidate supported by the "Bund," the "Christian Front" and "America First," by the smallest majority in the city's history. Danger signals.

No matter how much the Administration may seek to evade the issue (anti-Fascism) in the domestic field, there is one sector where the clash is inescapable, one sector where it is decisive—Production.

All is very much not well with production—the imperative basis for American foreign policy. Leon Henderson (Office of Production Administration and Civilian Supply Price Controller) declares that U.S.A. is giving 1 hour out of 8 for military production to-day, while Hitler is using 5 out of 8. He talks of big jumps scheduled, so that in 1942 "by January we ought to be up to 1½ hours out of every 8, by June up to at least 2 out of 8 for defence"! So far civil car production is reduced only by 25 per cent! Defence appropriations so far total 50 thousand million dollars, but contracts so far issued only 25 thousand million, production so far only 9. The July plane production figure was given as 1465—Roosevelt had estimated as necessary 50,000 per year.

In this situation the wealthy business

interests turn round and blame the strikers—a slander that is commonly peddled across the Atlantic and fills the British Press.

What are the facts regarding the strike situation? As even the American Federation of Labour points out, the workers are confronted with a situation in which more production is being extracted from their labour, more profit extracted from their increased production, the cost of living is rising. Wage demands in such circumstances are inescapable.

The scale of profit-making continues fantastic. The *National City Bank bulletin* calculates in respect to 350 companies that, after deduction of all taxes, their profits show a rise for the first half of 1941 of 20 per cent. over the first half of 1940, 23 leading iron and steel companies show profits up 100 per cent., 27 machinery companies up 24.2 per cent., 9 motor car companies up 21.1 per cent. General Motors show 53,579,568 dollars profit for the second quarter of 1941 (compared with 46,546,999 for the first quarter) after payment of all taxes and salting away of 20 millions for contingency reserves. The railways (where employees are now demanding wage increases, and have made a strike vote to support them, larger than any in the history of the brotherhoods, and where no wage increase has been received since 1937) made 433,538,408 dollars profit in the first 6 months of 1941 (compared with 245,523,110 for the same period of 1940).

And price rises? Here are recent calculations: *Clothing* 20 per cent. *Meats* 15-30 per cent. *Woollen goods* (wholesale) 30 per cent. *Cotton goods* 35 per cent.—13 million surplus bales held in stock as a reserve. The American Federation of Labour conservatively estimates the rise since 1940 as 10 per cent. for food (25 per cent. for main foods), 13-17 per cent. for wholesale prices.

The Labour Research Association Economic Notes calculates a 49 per cent. rise in wholesale prices since August, 1939, and adds "a much steeper rise is indicated." Leon Henderson, Office of Production Administration and Civilian Supply Price Controller, acknowledges: "The price level has risen more than the labour rate level since this programme started," and more specifically estimates the price rise in twelve months of "basic commodities" as 17 per cent., of food-stuffs as 24 per cent., of rents as 20 to 30 per cent., with the higher incidence

* The verdict, by a Judge Sears, is awarded because the accused "has been a member of or affiliated with (*sic*) the Communist Party." Bridges denied ever having been a member, but the Judge held it proved since: "He has consistently favoured non-discrimination against Union men because of Communist membership and excoriated as Red baiters as he called them, those who took an opposite view."

for the poorer and cheaper dwellings.

Yet the Department of Labour announced that the time lost by strikes had been 12 per cent. below the average for the past 5 years. The Under Secretary for War, Patterson, announced that on a defence building programme of 1½ thousand million dollars, including the building of 48 new factories and 50 new towns for employees in 300 days—a job of 62 million working days—less than .07 per cent. of time was lost through labour disputes.

Indeed, the American Federation of Labour journal *American Federationist* is able to quote official figures of industrial accidents (17,000 killed, 93,000 permanently disabled, 1½ million minor injuries resulting in loss of 200 million working hours, 25 million working days) demonstrating conclusively that elementary precautions against them taken by the employers would alone save more time than has been lost in all the strikes of the past year.

The main responsibility for the chaos and inadequacy of production rests squarely on the shoulders of the owners of the means of production, whom the Administration has left undisturbed in their empire over essential tools and materials. It rests on the absurd "dollar-a-year" self-control racket, of trusts by their own representatives, which has largely broken down already. The following is a list of the essential war materials now in short supply—aluminum, copper, tin, iron, steel, brass, nickel, rubber, silk, cork — virtually all essential war materials. During the last war, Eugene C. Grace, President of Bethlehem Steel, observed: "Patriotism is a beautiful thing but it must not be permitted to interfere with business." This is still the slogan of business. At the present time two companies only are manufacturing 4-motor bombers. They are turning out about 50 a month. Roosevelt said 500 a month was necessary. This, however, would require 40 million lbs. of aluminum, more than the entire U.S. output for 1940. In evidence during the summer the C.I.O. representatives urged the development of aluminium deposits in Arkansas, capable of producing 1,000 million lbs. per year. This the Mellon interests of Alcoa (Aluminium Company of America) opposed, refusing to expand production—as Secretary of the Interior Ickes testified before the Truman Senatorial Committee, in order to maintain the price of aluminium. Before

the Committee Ickes declared: "When the story of this war comes to be written, if it has to be written that it was lost, it may be because of the recalcitrance of the Alcoa." Senator La Follette (May 19) declared: "Because of the monopoly practices of this corporation, because of its determination that there should be no competition, because of its policy of high prices and low production and no competition, additional unnecessary dislocations of our economy are present to-day in our defence programme." Now after months of delay and hard campaigning for it by the C.I.O., it has been agreed at last to open two aluminium production centres in Arkansas. One is to be assigned to control by Alcoa!

The tale could be expanded without end. Before a Senate Committee, Rear-Admiral Farley testified that manufacturers refused to fit guns for 28 destroyers, although offered the necessary tools, until the Vinson Act limiting their profit to 8 per cent. was repealed. Admiral Towers testified to an order for 300 guns being similarly refused because of a statutory reduction of the profit from 12 to 8 per cent.

Another feature is the continued restriction of orders to the few elect. According to the O.P.M. research bureau report, 6 firms (including General Motors, Dupont, and Morgan's Bethlehem Steel) had received 31.5 per cent. of all Army and Navy contracts to May. 56 firms had received 75 per cent. of such contracts. As the corresponding example, cite the National Small Business Man's Association report that while 73 per cent. of 94 small plants capable of fulfilling orders in Illinois applied for contracts, these were granted only to ½ of those applying.

A figure estimated variously at between 3 and 6 millions remain unemployed.

The secret of the present labour and production situation in the U.S.A. is—Provocation.* Labour's attitude is clear. John Murray, C.I.O. President, defined it in his report to the annual convention on November 17:

"The workers have been, are now, and always will be opposed to Hitlerism.

* How, in the light of the figures on price increases given above, can the Mediation Board offer of 7½ per cent. increase to the Railway Brotherhoods, who claimed 30 per cent., their wages having remained fixed since 1937, be understood as other than provocation?

It must be defeated and destroyed. Democracy can survive in no other way.

"Toward this end the Congress of Industrial Organisations offers its complete support to President Roosevelt's policy of furnishing through our Government all possible economic and material aid to Britain, the Soviet Union and China, which are nations now carrying on the struggle to rid the world of Nazism, the enemy of mankind."

But the workers, eager to increase production, are confronted by the employers, at the least indifferent to the peril constituted by Fascism, at the worst actively bent on sabotaging the defence effort, in any case busily engaged in raising prices in defiance of the President's pleas and ruthlessly determined upon extracting the last cent of profit and the last inch of concession from the workers. While in this situation both A.F.L. and C.I.O. leaders. Bridges among them, call for workers staying on the job during mediation and negotiation, there are others less concerned to avoid responding to the provocation.

"When John L. Lewis ordered the miners to stop work, he did not act in their best interests, or in the interests of the whole labour movement . . . John L. Lewis introduced confusion and delay by resorting to strike before fully exhausting all possibilities for a peaceful settlement . . . Lewis, who has aligned himself with Hoover, Landon and Lindbergh, who has given comfort to the appeasers and the "America First" friends of Hitlerism, has now played into the hands of those reactionaries who would provoke labour into rash action and who would use such actions as an excuse to attack all labour." (*New Masses*, November 4th, 1941).

The employers seek to confront Roosevelt with the dilemma of the French People's Front. As Murray said in the speech above-quoted, the defence agencies are "serious failures," "the whole picture of the defence programme has become one of chaotic administrative disorder," and labour, from which the sacrifices are demanded, is given little voice in its organisation, while the defence agencies remain dominated by the company executives who are anxious to rob or sabotage or both. The employer-provocateurs seek to force Roosevelt to acquiesce in this position of pillage, isolate him as a "Red" if he moves against them, and oblige him to

accept anti-strike legislation that, by hamstringing his own supporters, will deliver him into their hands to be later repudiated and cast away.

In this situation, the rôle for labour is to cut all knots by itself taking the lead in the defence programme, and enlisting nation-wide support for *this* offensive. This is exactly what it is doing, against all obstacles. Murray, C.I.O. President, put forward a plan of industrial councils to mobilise the entire national apparatus for defence; shelved. The aluminium workers put forward a plan to stretch that bottleneck; the United Automobile Workers, to substitute tanks and planes for private cars, the Steel Workers Organising Committee, to step up steel production; turned down. George Addes, secretary of the A.U.A.W., at a C.I.O. conference on "Priorities' Unemployment," reported that only 35 per cent. capacity was being used in automatic machine tool and die production (in 34 plants 337 of 1,577 machines were not in use at all); he put forward a plan for use of full capacity; ignored. The S.W.O.C. wrote the Vice-President, of Curtiss-Wright that 24 per cent of propellers produced at the company's two plants in Pittsburgh—a scrap total of 400—500 a week—were being scrapped owing to "inefficiencies and mismanagement that the Union can assist in correcting." Nothing done.

But none the less, something is being done. The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers' Union (C.I.O.) is organising conferences on an Emergency Programme against lay-offs. 1,500 delegates, including C.I.O. and A.F.L. managements, mayors and other representatives of more than 500 communities in 11 mid-west states, took part. By U.E. initiative, functioning "Defence Committees" of local mayors, employers and workers' representatives have been set up in New Jersey, Brooklyn, Indianapolis, and Dayton, Ohio. Headway, even against the Press, that big business can mobilise, is being made in public opinion to such an extent that Willkie ("determined-to-be-President") has sensed it popular to come out for "participation of real representatives of labour," and not anti-strike legislation, as the cure for the production chaos. The counter offensive against Fascism sweeps forward, within as well as without. Fascist obstruction and provocation will be overcome. America will do its share.

Joint Production Committees

by LEN POWELL

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FORMATION of Joint Production Committees in every factory with the fullest facilities for the Shop Stewards taking full part and accepting joint responsibility for seeing plans are discussed with all the workers and then carried out." *

This was one of the practical proposals accepted at the National Production Conference convened by the Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards National Council on October 19th last, and held in the Stoll Theatre, London.

The idea of Joint Production Committees had arisen some two or three months prior to the National Conference and had originally been discussed at the various district Engineering Shop Stewards' Conferences up and down the country. A more positive approach to the extremely bad position of production in the factories had become urgently necessary. The previous 18 months had seen numberless deputations of infuriated shop stewards, with shocking reports of managerial and ministerial inefficiencies prevalent in their factories, waiting upon Lord Beaverbrook, Ernest Bevin, and Members of Parliament. Whilst these and other Ministers often went to the factories and even held enquiries, practically nothing at all was done to better armament production. This lesson was learnt by the workers and new methods grew up.†

Engineering workers recognise that their Shop Stewards, whom they elect, are extremely well equipped to grapple with the impediments to maximum production prevalent in the armaments industry. Their skill as workmen and the experience gained by them in carrying

out the duties of stewards, i.e., negotiating with the managements on proper piece-work prices and timing of operations, wages, welfare, dilution, indeed all issues affecting workshop and workpeople's conditions, mean that they can make a real contribution on behalf of the workers towards increased production.

Shop Stewards, representing the point of view of their members, together with charge hands and foremen meeting regularly with the managements, can bring forward the best and quickest methods for doing jobs, which means that where managements are capable and responsive, much more production results. On the reverse side of the picture, the propositions made and acted upon by the men on the job will make it possible to save production hours and turn out a better job than can be planned by the so-called "practical experts" who in many factories to-day are there often because of whom they know instead of what they know.

Let me give some examples of the results of applying the policy of Joint Production Committees, which I will place under three categories, i.e. (1) Successful and showing increases in production; (2) Committees set up but really only on paper as the management refuses to do anything to make them successful; (3) Complete opposition on the part of the management to the workers having a say in production.

CATEGORY 1. LONDON ENGINEERING FIRM

"Works are open for minimum of 57½ hours per week, no week-end work, men have agreed to discipline themselves to a minimum of 55 hours per week. Men have also agreed to voluntarily cut the dinner-time clocking-in grace by 2 mins., also to cut time allowed for washing from 5 mins. to 3 mins. We have an agreement whereby we elect our own charge-hand; this step alone has made for better flow of work through shop. Every co-operation with management—we have monthly production meetings. . . . Our aim is to double output by November. Pro-

* "Arms and the Men" p. 6. (Published by the Shop Stewards National Council. 2d.)

† In some instances Joint Production Committees were already an accomplished fact, and consequently a number of delegates were able to enrich the discussion at the Stoll Theatre with varying experiences of these Committees.