

NEW MASSES

MARCH 30, 1937



John Mackey

Why Britain Rearms

Consistent refusal to defend peace and consistent coddling of the fascists have led to enhancement of the war danger

By R. Palme Dutt

THE new arms program of the British National government has raised the question of war or peace in the sharpest form for the people of Britain. If this rearmament program is allowed to go through unchecked, it means the certainty of war. Astronomical figures of arms expenditure have now been made familiar to the public.

The figure of £400 million was announced in the first White Paper as the maximum figure of the projected arms loan. The new figure of £1500 million appeared in the second White Paper as the probable total of arms expenditure in the next five years. Later the chancellor of the Exchequer was announcing

that this figure of £1500 million might be indefinitely increased:

As conditions have changed to our disadvantage since we first contemplated this program, they may change again, and it may be that in the end we shall find that even £1,500,000,000 has not represented the total amount that this country has been compelled to spend in this respect.

What the figure will be next week or next year we will not venture to prophesy.

For in fact these figures are hypothetical and arbitrary—designed to impress and stagger opinion abroad, as well as at home, rather than to convey any exact measure. The real limit is not financial any longer at the present

frenzied pace of progress. The real limit is the rate at which the entire production of the country can be converted to the purposes of war production.

Britain is transforming its economy to a war basis no less than Nazi Germany. If Britain appears to have entered later into the intensive rearmament drive, this delay is not without its reasons. For this very delay means that Britain, having had the shrewdness to wait, now comes in to outstrip every other Power in the last lap and arrive with the most modernized up-to-date equipment, whereas a great part of German air equipment from the first years of Hitler is already out of date. And

the peak is still in front. The full effects of this process of intensive rearmament and militarization in the life of the people, social, economic, and political, will be increasingly felt as the program develops.

These figures are war figures. They have no meaning in relation to peace conditions. War loans are not raised in times of peace to be paid off in times of war. They are raised in times of war to be paid off in times of peace.

Canons of "sound finance" no longer apply in present conditions. Criticisms based on the canons of "sound finance," the outcries of the horrified economists, are lost in the empty air. Capitalism has given up hope of calculating for the future and is staking all in the bloody gamble of the present.

Every question of politics in the coming period in this country, every question of the life of the people, of the possibility of social advance, and of the future of the labor movement, no less than of war and peace, is going to be dominated henceforth by the government's arms plan.

The Coronation will be only the ceremonial trappings of this arms plan. After the Coronation, the National government will be reconstructed under the extreme reactionary, Neville Chamberlain, with the possible inclusion of Winston Churchill (for the divisions within the ruling class have diminished, as the issue between fascism and the popular forces throughout Europe grows sharper). Then, if the labor movement has fallen into the trap of national unity in the Coronation, the National government may very well spring an election, as after the Jubilee, in order to usher in the final war government.

It is also perfectly true that the development of the rearmament program will necessarily mean increasing measures of restriction on civil and industrial liberty (as the sedition act and the recent dismissals of the dockyard workers without charge or hearing have already given warning), the shackling of trade unionism, the advance to military conscription, and the advance to industrial conscription.

The cabinet has announced that it is "not at present contemplating the bringing in of a bill for compulsory military training." Taken in conjunction with the declaration of the cabinet minister, Lord Stanhope, last November that "the voluntary system was obviously in grave danger," and the subsequent cabinet statement that "voluntary methods had not yet been exhausted," it is sufficiently clear that the familiar footsteps of the path to conscription, as in 1914-16, are being repeated.

The arms commission report has already laid down that "the problems involved in formulating plans for the conscription of industry in war time will have to be faced and should be faced without delay."

On these grounds alone, the urgency of opposition to the National government's rearmament program is manifest.

But the British labor movement can carry this opposition through to success only if the fight is directed, not merely against the economics of the rearmament program, not merely

against its reactionary character, as a menace to the working class and to democracy, but first and foremost against the entire policy of the National government which is expressed in the rearmament program—a policy, not of peace, but of war, not of defense against fascism, but supporting fascism and Reaction and therefore leading to war.

Herein lies the crux of the issue.

The National government is not rearming as the only means to defend peace against the growing menace of war, the threat of Nazi rearmament, and the war offensive of fascism.

On the contrary, the National government is rearming precisely because it refuses to defend peace in common with the other Powers standing for peace, with France and the Soviet Union and the smaller states, because it is in reality supporting fascism and the war offensive of fascism, and therefore has to arm to ensure that the war offensive shall not turn against British imperialistic interests.

It is precisely because the National government has supported and is supporting fascism in Europe, has facilitated and assisted German rearmament, has protected the German-Italian intervention in Spain, has refused to stand by collective peace with the Franco-Soviet pact, that it has now to arm overwhelmingly in order to make sure that the consequent extending fascist aggression shall not turn in the direction of vital British imperialist interests, but shall be deflected to other directions, to the states in central and eastern Europe which Britain is prepared to sacrifice.

This is the secret of the National government's policy.

And this is why the fight against the rearmament program can only be the fight for the defeat of the National government and its

entire policy, which is leading to the certainty of ever greater war.

German rearmament would never have reached its present level without the direct support, diplomatic, financial, and material, of the British ruling class.

For the same British ruling class to turn round and make German rearmament the excuse for British rearmament is a two-faced juggling which should deceive no one.

The ever-extending war aggression of fascism could have been checked from the outset, had Britain taken its stand with France and the Soviet Union in an Anglo-French-Soviet pact, which would have rallied all the smaller states, instead of handing them over, demoralized and panic-stricken, to the domination of fascism.

The same deliberate refusal of the policy of peace and choice of the policy of war continues.

In the rearmament debate, Chamberlain admitted that the problem would be "simple," and the present scale of rearmament unnecessary, if they only had to consider how to defeat an aggressor A "with perhaps B and C with whom this country might be in alliance," but that they "were not in alliance with other Powers on whom they might rely."

Yet nothing but the National government's own will prevents such a firm collective stand with France, the Soviet Union, and the smaller states for the maintenance of peace against the war offensive of fascism.

The rearmament program is the inevitable sequel and counterpart of the whole reactionary and pro-fascist policy of the National government. The National government has preferred the support of fascism and Reaction to the support of collective peace. Therefore it has chosen the path of war.



Joe Bartlett

"Another guy caught nibbling at a cannon."

While working-class and popular opinion is hardening against the arms plan, it is incredible but true that reactionary dominant forces in the leadership of the Labor Party and of the trade unions are moving to coöperation with the National government and its rearmament program.

It is true the Labor Party voted against the arms loan bill. That is something. But the grounds of opposition given in the Labor amendment were so miscellaneous, confused, and weak—running even to the criticism that the government was failing to “coördinate the defense forces”—that at the end, Sir John Simon, replying for the government, was able to claim that on essentials “there was really no deep dispute between the government and the opposition front bench.”

Recently there was published the significant statement of the Secretary of the Labor Party that it was incompatible to call for arms for Spanish Democracy and to be “opposed to the defense of our own country.” And now comes the even more direct statement of the powerful secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, Mr. R. Marchbanks, in the current *Railway Review*. Our friend, Mr. Marchbanks, says:

In my judgment it is Labor's solemn duty to define, not in general terms but precisely, for the nation's guidance, the grounds upon which large-scale rearmament has become necessary.

He demands, as the basis for support, “clear and binding assurances” from the government with regard to its foreign policy:

Labor is not going to put into the government's hands the vast power this program represents without clear and binding assurances about the foreign policy that British arms will support.

What more “assurances” do they want?

The official Labor criticism of the National government's rearmament program complains that the foreign policy behind the program is “ambiguous,” “evasive,” and “unclear.”

Unfortunately, the real policy of the National government is only too clear. If Ethiopia and the Far East have not opened the eyes of these doubters, how can they miss the lesson of Spain today? The Anglo-Italian agreement of January 2 opened the way for and protected the dispatch of 80,000 Italian troops to Spain. We have still to learn—maybe only after a lapse of years—the full text and secret understandings of that famous “gentlemen's agreement.”

But when we do learn the truth, it will be no surprise to find that Britain, in return for guarantees to British interests in the Mediterranean, gave Mussolini a free hand for the support of Franco in Spain.

Not only the sequence of events, but also the shameless behavior of the British Chairman, Lord Plymouth, on the Non-Intervention Committee, and the advocacy of the “control” plan to hand over the loyalist coasts of Spain to Italian and German warships, strongly point to this conclusion.

But more is involved than Spain.

In return for what price was Germany in-



Lithograph by J. Vogel

Portrait of a Militarist

duced to yield precedence in the armed occupation of Spain to Italy?

The answer is only too clear.

German preparations are primarily directed elsewhere, to the states of eastern and south-eastern Europe, and above all—with increasing openness—to Czechoslovakia.

In Austria the visit of von Neurath was used to stage a Nazi demonstration. Yugoslavia is being brought under German economic control. In Rumania the Hitler-controlled Iron Guard is threatening the government. In Poland the totalitarian dictatorship of Smigly-Rydz has been proclaimed.

Czechoslovakia is to be isolated. The Nazi movement of Henlein is to be used to provoke internal disorder, in order then, on the Spanish model, to advance to German military intervention, supposedly against the “Communist menace.”

The Little Entente is to be put out of action by Nazi domination in Yugoslavia and Rumania.

France is to be paralyzed, as over Spain, by the influence of Britain, and by the diversion of the Italian occupation of Spain. Already the Foreign Minister, Yvon Delbos, has given an alarming confession of weakness in his speech in the Chamber:

The treaties of mutual assistance concluded by France do not envisage events like the Spanish war as an occasion to bring them into operation, since they apply only to unprovoked territorial aggression.

Meanwhile, Britain will call for “non-intervention” and no doubt set up a committee with Germany and Italy to supervise its execution.

Has the free hand awarded by the National government to Italy in Spain been accompanied by a free hand to Germany in central Europe?

The statements of the National government leaders themselves point to this conclusion.

At the very same time as introducing the arms plan Baldwin once again proclaimed the aim of peace in western Europe by a western-European pact.

Recently the House of Lords debated British foreign policy. One noble lord after another demanded the cancellation of the Franco-Soviet pact, and urged a free hand for Nazi aggression. Lord Arnold was especially explicit:

Because of the Franco-Soviet pact, Germany might feel compelled on the advice of her military staff to attack in the West, and then Great Britain, because of her commitments to France, might be brought into war with Germany.

It should be made clear to Czechoslovakia and other countries in Eastern Europe that British help would not be forthcoming in the event of hostilities breaking out in that area.

Lord Mount Temple, apostle of the Anglo-Nazi alliance, declared that “nine-tenths of the British people abhorred the Franco-Soviet pact.”

Lord Plymouth replied for the government. Did he repudiate these statements? On the contrary, he laid down the policy:

Our armaments might and would be used in defiance of *France and Belgium* against unprovoked aggression. . . . The peace of *western Europe* could best be safeguarded by a treaty of mutual guarantee.

Who can fail to see from all this the real direction of the government's policy behind its rearmament program? There is no room to complain of “ambiguity.” The National government is using and will continue to use all its power, based on its gigantic rearmament, to support the cause of Reaction and fascism in Europe, while seeking to protect only the most urgent British imperialist interests.

The National government, if it has its way, will continue the method of Ethiopia and Spain, and sacrifice, one by one, the democratic states of Europe to the fascist offensive.

Then, when fascism straddles across Europe and the remaining democratic people of Europe outside the Soviet Union have been laid low, the National government will come into the field with its completed rearmament program, face to face with Hitler's empire.

Either it will call on the people of Britain to fight fascism in a bloody and terrible war—no longer to save democracy in Europe which it has sacrificed—but for the glorious ideal of the British right to exploit the Cameroons.

Or, alternatively, it will use the threat of its armed might to divert Hitler elsewhere, and drive him to the supreme attack against the Soviet Union, standing behind him in the background, and ready, in case of need, to intervene with its battalions on the side of Germany and Japan and the counter-revolution.

Such are the inspiring perspectives of the National government's policy and its rearmament program. Of what use, in the face of these realities of the government's policy, to ask for “assurances?” As well might the sheep ask for “assurances” from the wolf.

The only way to end this policy is to end the National government.

The Bad Penny

*We might have known that a certain poison pen
could be wielded better behind the Franco lines*

By Robert Forsythe

JUST when all seemed lost, William P. Carney of the *New York Times* appeared in the camp of General Franco and the tide turned. Mr. Carney, you will remember, is the correspondent who has never yet been able to bear the thought that Franco didn't walk into Madrid in November when the doors were open. In fact, he was heartily chagrined at the action of the loyalist censor in keeping him from informing the world of the great possibilities of the occasion. When Franco didn't come in, Carney went out. From Paris he unburdened his saddened heart, and has been busily catching up with the fascist commander ever since to learn just what went wrong.

The result of his pilgrimage appeared in the *Times* of March 16. It seems that General Franco didn't enter Madrid on that historic day because he wanted to save the city a fate worse than republicanism.

We desire to spare the horrors of modern warfare to a great city [says the general], most of whose inhabitants have been compelled to remain in it against their wishes. We did not want inoffensive non-combatants, belonging to no Marxist party, to feel the agony of hunger. For military reasons it was desirable to leave a way out open, so that fighting would not have to occur in the city streets, and the destruction of Madrid could be avoided.

Never in the history of warfare has there been a more magnanimous gesture than this. It is true, of course, that after failing to accept Mr. Carney's invitation to enter, General Franco's German and Italian raiders bombed the city constantly for months, but this was undoubtedly only his kindly way of asking why the inhabitants didn't get out. The present struggle to cut the Valencia road is also evidently misunderstood by the loyalists. What it obviously is intended to be is a mere widening process whereby it will be easier for the Madrileños to leave their native hearths.

Furthermore, the general did not want "inoffensive non-combatants, belonging to no Marxist party, to suffer the agony of hunger." To make certain of this, the fascist raiders were careful to confine their bombing and machine-gun raking to those sections of the city where the members of Marxist parties were suffering the pangs of hunger. They specialized on food lines, and nothing more fully shows the kindly nature of Señor Franco than his insistence that only those most accustomed to hunger could be held worthy as well of cold steel.

Madrid is doomed, says General Franco, and its fall will be an irremediable blow to

the Leftist forces. Just when the general would know when to enter did not appear in the interview, but obviously it would be only when he was convinced that no stone would be overturned in the capital city, no hair harmed of a patriotic citizen's head. The sensible thing would be to have Mr. Carney again stationed in Madrid giving the signals, but there is little likelihood that he will be invited, even as the distinguished and unprejudiced representative of a great newspaper. The fall of the city will liberate "hundreds of thousands of souls who have had to submit to Red tyranny against their will." The task of holding hundreds of thousands of unwilling souls in Madrid all those months while that road to safety was so wide open, is a triumph which will have to be accredited to the loyalist forces. They were making a great bluff, as is well known, of urging citizens to seek safety, but whenever the hundreds of thousands who were being forced to submit to Red tyranny showed an inclination to depart, the members of Miaja's army would leave the trenches to protest.

"You don't want to go off and leave the old home town," they would say pleadingly to the tyrannized multitude which, overcome by the subtlety of such subversive psychology, would return to their bomb-proof cellars and give thanks that General Franco was only destroying the city out of a deep-seated desire to avoid harming it.

Through Mr. Carney, General Franco was commiserating with the loyalist leaders for

defending Madrid. "One of the Red general staff's greatest blunders," General Franco responded. "Because of its geographic and strategic position, Madrid, an open city, is doomed to surrender finally. . . . The Reds have always found themselves at a disadvantage when they have met the disciplined Nationalist forces on the open battlefield."

The only decent thing for the loyalists to have done would have been to come out and be annihilated like men. General Franco is always being exasperated by the stupidity of the enemy. The war would have been over in no time at all if the loyalists had only adopted a sporting attitude.

But these are minor matters in the greater problem of William P. Carney. There is a rather well-founded suspicion that William is not touched with luck. No matter how often he goes to high mass, he still can't pray the proper army into the proper city at the proper moment. As a reporter, he is subject to lapses which would get him in bad around a precinct station house. Just as he gets all lined up on the sidewalk to welcome the invading fascist army, it stops outside to tie a shoelace, and Carney is left with a dispatch on his hands relating the joy of the citizens on the arrival of their saviors. He no sooner got to Salamanca and heard the happy news of the imminent fall of Madrid than the loyalist militia started knocking the spots off the Italians around Guadalajara. Mr. Carney is going to wake up some morning to find that the Moors have made a white chalk mark on his gate meaning keep away from this jinx. What the Italians say after they get done running will also probably be something.

But the *New York Times* is a brave newspaper, and what little William P. Carney costs it in salary and traveling expenses can be discounted in advance against the possibility that there will be a happy after-life awaiting the editorial staff in a good Catholic heaven. General Franco has promised William that the Spain of the future, the Franco Spain, will be a totalitarian state but "with many original characteristics rather than a marked similarity to the Portuguese, German, or Italian government."

General Franco concludes with some very happily chosen words: "This is a resurrection of a nation opposing foreign invasion with patriotism. Administrative measures already taken and yet to be taken by the Nationalist government are directed solely toward the establishment of a regime of ample social justice in Spain."

Badajoz papers please copy.



Aimé

*"I feel so much better now that
Mr. Carney of the 'Times' is
safe with General Franco."*