



Ad Reinhardt

Concerted Action or Isolation

WHICH IS THE PATH TO PEACE?

By Earl Browder

COMING out of Spain on February 9, I picked up the *New Republic* of February 2 at Brentano's in Paris. There I found published my article in reply to Mr. Bruce Bliven, written on his invitation in the latter part of December. I was mildly surprised to find that my polemic with Mr. Bliven had been transformed into a debate with Dr. Charles A. Beard. On second thought, however, it seemed only natural that Mr. Bliven should call for help in the controversy, considering that the very essence of his position consists of raising doubt and uncertainty to the level of a principle.

But my surprise at discovering myself thus unceremoniously thrust into an unannounced debate with Dr. Beard was as nothing compared with the astonishment caused by reading what Dr. Beard had to say. I had thought myself inured to all possible surprises, but Dr. Beard carried my education in disillusionment to a higher stage.

This is not because Dr. Beard ascribes to me a bloodthirsty ambition to help President Roosevelt throw America and the world into a general war of mutual extermination. We have long grown used to such a charge; it is old stuff; it is the common stock-in-trade of all isolationists, which they share with the open apologists of fascism. It is a complete

begging of the question, of course. All our isolationists, while ostensibly taking up a rational discussion as to which path gives more prospects of maintaining world peace and stopping the current wars, invariably avoid such a discussion in reality as though it were something indecent; they proceed in their arguments upon the *assumption* that everyone who disagrees with them wants war. They do not even seem to be embarrassed when this dishonest little trick is exposed. So far have the isolationists departed from rational discussion that it is difficult for them to speak or write except in terms of hysterical denunciation of their opponents and a wild appeal to irrational prejudices. Dr. Beard, unfortunately, shows himself no exception in this respect, although we might have expected something better from him.

Dr. Beard, however—and this is the astonishing part—proceeds from the usual isolationist attitude to grounds far beyond any taken by Mr. Bliven, or by any other responsible writer in the liberal or radical press. He proceeds upon such *assumptions*, he poses his questions in such a form, as to admit the validity of all the basic arguments of the fascists.

Tacitly, but nonetheless effectively, Dr. Beard's position is one of *ideological disarmament*

in face of the offensive of fascism. He reveals himself as contemptuous of democracy, skeptical of the desirability of peace, and opposed to any struggle against fascism. He does not defend isolation as the path to peace; he merely declares there is no such path.

Nothing that has ever been written in favor of concerted action as the path to peace is quite so conclusively in its favor, as are Dr. Beard's arguments supposedly against it.

Let us examine a few samples: Dr. Beard says:

It is highly probable that Great Britain could tear Hitler away from the Rome-Berlin axis by handing back to Germany the vast African colonies. . . . Does Great Britain want peace on such terms? Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Browder may know. I may be permitted to have doubts.

Here as in a drop of water is reflected the "cosmos" of isolationism. It *assumes* that there is no way to peace except surrender to the fascist demands. If Mr. Roosevelt or myself have any hopes of peace, we are called upon to substantiate these hopes by "inside information" that Hitler is going to be given what he wants, or else our hopes are discredited. It is inferred that it is not only unreasonable, but also unjust, to hold any other view. This may be anything else, it may even be the basis for a partnership with

Hitler, but it is not in any sense or degree the basis for any struggle against fascism and war.

To follow Beard's thought another step:

I find in history no justification whatever for assuming as truth that Italy, Germany, and Japan would surrender unconditionally to a grand quarantine if the quarantine could be arranged. On the contrary, I suspect that they would strike back. . . .

Here is a clear acceptance of the fascist bid for world rulership. The quarantine is rejected because the fascists might resist it. Since the fascist powers are in a "war frenzy," a spirit of "world power or downfall," therefore the United States must simply keep out of their way at all costs, allow them to seize the rest of the world piecemeal, and trust in God as to what will happen when they get around to us and can handle us alone. How we can keep out of the way in a world where elbow room is at a premium, and where the United States holds half of the world's wealth that the fascists covet, does not concern Dr. Beard. Since the fascist powers do not invade our territory first, that is sufficient basis for an isolationist policy.

Having laid such a sure foundation, Dr. Beard then draws a deep breath and plunges into the deep water of surrender to fascism. He says:

Could a quarantine maintain indefinitely the *status quo* of populations, resources, and empire throughout the world? If this were desirable, it scarcely seems possible. . . . There are likely to be profound changes in the distribution of population, resources, and imperial possessions in the future as in the past.

In these words Dr. Beard proclaims the futility of any effort to prevent a general war. He leaves open for argument whether war may not even be "desirable." He only wants to keep the United States out of it—at least until we are fighting for a bigger share in the distribution of the world as the fascists are. He rejects as utopian all idea of international readjustments except through war. He thereby abandons in advance all hopes of restraining the war-making powers.

Coming to the question of democracy, Dr. Beard here also abandons the field to fascism. He wipes out all effective distinction between the democratic and fascist powers (as for the Soviet Union, it is mentioned only in passing). He ridicules any reliance upon the democratic powers. He proceeds to sneer at the labor movement of France, England, and America, as inevitably only an appendage to the imperialist circles. He says that all efforts to save democracy can only lead to war—"and the probabilities are that we should then have universal fascism rather than universal democracy." His conclusion is that the more determined is the effort to save democracy, the more certain is it that the very effort will bring the victory of fascism. Democracy is doomed, it has no vitality, and it has no value worth trying to salvage.

In short, for Dr. Beard all roads lead to the inevitable victory of fascism throughout Europe and Asia, and by inference also in the

United States in the last analysis. He only hopes that, perhaps, if we keep real quiet and don't talk too loud, the fascists may overlook us for a few years.

From all of which, there is only one practical conclusion, one line of advice for action: Don't do anything, don't say anything, don't try to stop the threatening war, don't try to maintain democracy—everything you do will only bring the catastrophe all the quicker. Fascism and war are inevitable under any circumstances, but if we sit very quiet, do nothing, say nothing, we might be overlooked for a little while. Let us be thankful for even such a short breathing space before we go to our inevitable doom.

Such are the pitiful depths to which the logic of isolationism has led Dr. Beard. It is indeed a tragedy to see a man, whose life contained so many fearless words and deeds against reaction, come forward in the twilight of that life and in the midst of the world's greatest crisis, with advice of such complete and cowardly surrender.

Dr. Beard proceeds to cover up his surrender with "theoretical" considerations. He rebukes the advocates of concerted action for peace for their supposed "assumption that politics—democratic theory—can be separated from economics." Now if anyone makes such an assumption, it is of course a fatal error, and Dr. Beard has scored a heavy blow. But who assumed this, when, where, how? Dr. Beard is silent on these questions. He merely *assumes* that we are guilty of such an assumption, and lets it go at that.

But this diversion of Dr. Beard, to call upon economics to help him dispose of politics he does not like, is not a naïve gesture. He is hinting, what he dared not say openly, that the defense of democracy is useless or impossible until there has been established full democratic control of the national economy in each country. He has used the statement of an abstract truth to cover up a concrete falsehood of the worst sort. In the name of a perfect democracy, he rejects the struggle for a democracy because it cannot be perfect and entire from the beginning of the struggle.

Dr. Beard is thus operating with a logic that deals only in absolutes. It has no room for a democracy that is in process of becoming, for the struggle to realize democracy. It is a formal, static, mechanical logic, which leads only to doubt, skepticism, passivity, and surrender. It is connected with economics itself only formally. It in no way expresses the *economic urgency of the masses*, which throws them necessarily into *struggle for democracy and peace*.

It is the economic needs of the masses which is the living connection between politics and economics. It is this to which Dr. Beard is completely blind. This blindness is not something new for Dr. Beard. In his historical studies, with all their merits, he has always displayed a lack of understanding of the mass struggle for democracy, an underestimation of its achievements, a cynicism as to its value, a blindness with regard to the mass forces that

make for historical progress and which unite politics and economics. This long-standing weakness has now brought Dr. Beard to full capitulation to that reaction which he tried to oppose during most of his active life.

Dr. Beard closes his remarkable essay on how to keep peace by collaborating with fascism, on a "high moral note." He thinks that "anybody who feels hot with morals and is affected with delicate sensibilities can find enough to do at home." While I yield nothing to Dr. Beard in moral heat against the miseries in America, I must protest against his attempt to use it to reduce our heat against the crimes being committed in Spain and China.

When I arrived in Barcelona last week, I visited many of the thirty-five apartment houses blown to bits by high-power bombs from Italian planes, dropped the day before, a sunny Sunday morning. I saw dismembered and mutilated babies and mothers being removed from the wreckage. In my mind rose the question, how long will it be before similar bombs drop on New York, Chicago, San Francisco, with similar results "at home" to our women and children—perhaps to my own family too. When I read the horrible dispatches from China, I see behind the grim statistics the faces of my many Chinese friends, most of them now corpses from the effect of Japanese bombs and machine guns.

What reason have we to assume that America is immune to this madness that is sweeping the world? What reason have we to think we can shut ourselves away from it all, and with impunity wash our hands of the fate of our brothers in other lands?

When I see these things, I do indeed become "hot with morals," to use Dr. Beard's derisive phrase. And I cannot forgive Dr. Beard for that derision. It is a shameful and unworthy thing. As for me, I cannot rest until I know that I and the people which gave me birth, the American people, are doing everything in our power to stop these crimes in Spain and China, to make them unprofitable, and to make their recurrence impossible. That several thousand American boys are giving their lives in Spain to help do this job makes me proud of our people, and very humble that we are not doing more. Fascism must be stopped in those places where it first strikes. The Spanish and Chinese peoples are fighting the battles of all mankind. We must come to their help. We must stop all direct and indirect aid to the fascists. We must end once and for all the farce of "non-intervention." If we fail in this duty, then we deserve no better fate for ourselves, and I am sure we will get our deserts. There is no way forward for America, or for the world, except we find the way together, through concerted action for democracy and peace.

S.S. Aquitania, February 13, 1938.

(This is the first of a series of articles by Earl Browder, general secretary of the Communist Party.)

The Sacrifice of Austria

HOW FAR WILL BRITISH ACQUIESCENCE GO?

By R. Palme Dutt

LONDON, February 19. (By Cable.)

“WHEN the territory of the Reich contains all Germans,” wrote Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, “and if the Reich avows itself unable to support them, from that necessity of relations will arise its moral right to acquire foreign territory. The plough will then give place to the sword and the tears of war will prepare a harvest of the future world.”

Today this issue has been brought a stage closer by Hitler's military coup in Austria. Hitler's mailed fist has descended on the Austrian people. All Europe is asking what will follow. This is the first direct military conquest of another state by Nazi Germany. All the previous successive coups, the repudiation of the military and naval clauses of Versailles, the introduction of conscription, and the armed occupation of the Rhineland, were carried out within Germany. Now the power of the German armies has been directly used to annex a neighboring state.

In 1934 when Hitler made his first attempt to conquer Austria by the murder of Dollfuss, two Italian divisions were dispatched to the Brenner Pass. The British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, declared in the House of Commons on July 30, 1934 that the British government “fully recognized the right of Austria to demand that there should be no interference with her internal affairs,” and the British-French-Italian declaration of February 1934 was reaffirmed, that the three governments take a common view as to the necessity of maintaining Austria's independence and integrity in accordance with the relevant treaties.

Today Hitler's coup has met with complete passivity and acquiescence from the democratic powers under the domination of Britain. When the British Foreign Secretary Eden was questioned in the House of Commons as to the previous pledges with regard to “the integrity and independence of Austria,” he replied that “My recollection is that what I stated was that His Majesty's government desired in Central Europe as elsewhere peace and good understanding.” Questioned further as to Czechoslovakia, he extended an open invitation to further German expansion by refusing to recognize any obligation and declaring only that “this country has always had the friendliest feelings towards the Czechoslovak nation and is fully aware of the treaties which bind Czechoslovakia to other great powers.”

Undoubtedly Britain played the decisive role in making Hitler's coup possible. When Schuschnigg was summoned to Berchtesgaden, he appealed to Britain and France. The French general staff took an extremely serious view of the situation and is understood to have

urged a stand, pointing out that the German conquest of Austria would not only cut off Czechoslovakia but place the iron and steel resources of the Alpine Montana at the disposal of the Reich, in addition to those of Bilbao already conquered. The British ambassador in Paris communicated with London. The instructions came back from the British cabinet to refuse to join in any joint action urging Schuschnigg not to go, and to refuse to join in any joint action to stop the German drive. Thereby Austria's fate was sealed so far as the great powers are concerned, although the resistance of the Austrian people is still to be reckoned with.

What underlies this change from the situation of 1934? Undoubtedly it reflects the worsening of the international situation and the cumulative outcome of the continuous abdication of the democratic powers. The victory of the extremist war elements in the German crisis of February 4 has had its speedy sequel and has for the moment justified the estimate made by these elements of what Germany could with impunity attempt in the immediate situation. It reflects at the same time the relative weakening of Italy through the difficulties in Spain, in Ethiopia, and in its economic situation.

The surrender of Italy in Austria means certainly that compensation has been promised to Italy in the shape of stronger support in Spain. The coup in Austria is therefore the counterpart of an intensified fascist offensive in Spain, the outcome of which is no less momentous for the future of peace in Europe. Heavy supplies of bombing airplanes are being poured from Italy into Spain at the same time that the British government is making a great show of new negotiations with Italy for the withdrawal of volunteers, and even proposing a new loan to Italy. The battle for democracy and peace is more than ever a single battle throughout Europe.

But this extreme intensifying of fascism's offensive does not therefore mean that fascism is advancing along an inevitable course from strength to strength. On the contrary, this sharpening of the fight is in part also the reflection of the strengthening of the democratic forces, especially in Spain. The victories of the Spanish people's army at the close of the last year and the opening of this year, and the prospect of the collapse of Franco, have faced fascism and reaction with new and critical problems. They saw correctly that from this point might come the turning of the tide, the collapse of the myth of fascist invincibility, and the sweep forward of the cause of the people's front through Europe. Hence the at-

tack on the people's front in France, an attack directed by British finance immediately following the fall of Teruel. Hence the eagerness of Britain to find a basis of agreement to extend new loans and credits to Germany and Italy. Hence the crisis of February 4 in Germany.

The conservative elements among the general and the industrialists were for a more cautious war policy, for the retreat from Spain, and for weakening the bonds of the triple pact. In order to reach close understanding with Britain, the extremist elements sought to solve the situation by an intensified offensive while bullying and intimidating Britain into acceptance and support. The latter policy won. The coup in Austria and the intensified offensive in Spain have followed.

In this situation, Britain, rather than face the possibility of the victory of the democratic forces in Spain and Europe, has deliberately opened the gates to Nazi expansion and domination of the continent of Europe. Well might the old liberal minister of wartime days, Lord Crewe, ask in the House of Lords what the war of 1914 was fought for. It is universally recognized that if Hitler's conquest of Austria is allowed to go through, it will not stop there. In his interview with Schuschnigg Hitler declared that he regarded himself as the ruler of the eighty million Germans in Europe. The same methods as in Austria are intended to carry forward German domination, without open war but in fact by military power, into Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Holland, and Belgium—and then? “*When the territory of the Reich contains all Germans . . . the plough will then give place to the sword, and the tears of war will prepare a harvest of the future world,*” with its base established in central Europe and across the Pyrenees.

Fascism calculates to isolate France once again. The same technique is to be employed. Alsace-Lorraine provides the pretext. The object of the offensive is proclaimed not at France but at the people's front, “Marxism.” The allies of Hitler within the gates, Flandin and Tardieu and Doriot, have already declared their willingness to coöperate and shown it in the conspiracy of the Hooded Men. It is noticeable that in the last few weeks the Nazi press has begun an active offensive campaign over Alsace-Lorraine.

How far will British acquiescence go? Formerly Britain drew the line at the west over France and Belgium. This is no longer so certain. Belgium has already been thrown over. British reaction would probably gladly coöperate with the Nazis to overthrow the people's