

ward social change which has been going on for the past generation. In this conflict the great mass of mankind is striving to be released from the domination of those forces which control their lives. We are told that no matter who wins the present war, Europe cannot be the same again. We are warned to be prepared for an entirely different social organization for the peoples of Europe, a type of social organization in which the great mass of mankind will no longer endeavor to solve its problems by the destructive processes of war, but rather in the spirit of cooperative endeavor, based on respect for human personality. If, then, this is the great issue involved, can the American people help solve this problem by engaging in destructive conflict? Is it true that we are witnessing a great struggle for social change, similar to that which released the serf from the bondage of his masters and raised the slave to the status of a free man? Is this the issue that we are facing today? Shall we go forward with the building of a great nation, or shall we plunge ourselves into the abyss of war and block the rising tide of social progress?

There is grave doubt in the minds of many as to the effect which will be had on the American economic, social, and political economy if we engage in war. Already the forces of reaction have taken decisive steps to curtail freedom of thought and the democratic process in these United States. Will our participation in the European war strengthen these forces and lead us into a destructive system of regimentation that will cancel all the social gains made in the past two generations? Unless these questions can be satisfactorily answered, America will make the greatest mistake in its history if it risks the venture of a European conflict. Why should we revert to a pattern of behavior which can only lead to despair and destruction, as the history of the last war has so fully demonstrated? War is not inevitable. The Founding Fathers of this great republic in their wisdom provided that decisions on great issues shall be made by the people themselves. The youth of America should rise and claim this great heritage. This is their country, the future belongs to them. There is no need for hopeless despair—the future of America depends on them, and today they have the great opportunity of helping the people of this great republic determine its future course. We are indeed at the crossroads of divergent paths of human destiny. In one direction we go down to regression—in the other direction we pass forward to a new way of life. The young people of America, if they will, can decide now the type of world in which they wish to live.

My hope is that the youth of America will unite in vigorous protest against the folly of war and demand a national policy which has the greatest meaning in terms of fruitful and useful living. The world of the future must be built for them. It cannot be founded in the trenches. It must rest on the aspirations of the human spirit for a full and abundant life.

DR. WALTER RAUTENSTRAUCH.

Negroes and the War

“To go, or not to go to war” is no problem for Negro Americans. A poll by the Chicago Council of the National Negro Congress makes this plain. Out of a total of one thousand Negroes questioned, a majority do not believe that the present war is being fought for democracy; they know from experience that the last war was not. Equally important, the poll reveals that a majority of those questioned (eight hundred out of one thousand) consider the present war as one for

“control of colonies, markets, raw materials, and profits, and for the continued and further enslavement of African, Indian, and Chinese peoples and peoples of small nations.” Again, the majority questioned answered that it was a mistake for Negroes to have participated in the World War. Negroes have not forgotten the lynching and discrimination which followed that war for “democracy.” The results of this poll, still being conducted, indicate a trend among Negroes throughout the country and reveal an important force against war.

I

Negation

Blinking in the paleolithic sun they stand,
Clear of mud and clad in vestigial scales,
The self-appointed guardians of morals and of men,
Of little nations, heaven, and God's word;
And from the heavy shelter of their brows
Explore the magic qualities of fire and sword.

No new-born Himalayas wrack the temperate earth,
The ferns are tamed to spore in quiet parlors,
And anthracite to keep them warm is dear
But cheap in shiploads on the ocean floors.

Death in old cities when the moon is bright
Whistles down from streamlined pterodactyls,
And sudden orchids blossom in the night,
That suck their flaming beauty out of lives.

While Caesars sunder nations from their earth,
Strip men of life, of love, and native hearth,
Whole peoples flee their tenemented tombs
To find one fatherland—a common sepulchre.

II

Affirmation

Yet be not dismayed that in our time
The years crawl backward into slimy change,
And worms upon the trees in Spring
Make all year Autumn for their harvesting.

Have we but come through darkness to new night?
Crawled from stone to stone? from cave to catacomb?
Outfought the sabertooth, and ice, and mastodon
But to perfect the breed of flying reptiles?

What skill and mathematics have combined
Mad men may rend—but not forever live
To splash their idiotic fingers
In spilled mudpies of men's brains.

We have survived more cataclysmic times
And will not now submerge our hopes and dreams
In the embalming fluids of Parliamentary terms,
But in the labyrinth with constant deeds and faith
Affirm our love of life and liberty—;
That when our sons and daughters carve our epitaphs the stones will say:
Deep in the ancient labyrinth these dialectic dead
Helped us, the free, unwind the golden thread.

ALEXANDER F. BERGMAN.

"We Need Not Be Pessimistic . . ."

Earl Browder speaks on the middle class and its stakes in the war. He foresees a socialist reorganization of Europe. And "an America of the people at last."

On June 12 Earl Browder and James Ford, Communist candidates for President and Vice President, spoke on the subject of "The Middle Class and the War Crisis" under the auspices of NEW MASSES. Below we publish Browder's speech. In subsequent issues we will present his answers to questions asked at the meeting, and Ford's address.—THE EDITORS.

MR. CHAIRMAN and friends: When Joe North two weeks ago asked me to speak at a NEW MASSES meeting about the middle class and the world crisis, I immediately accepted the invitation and set frantically to work preparing a speech. But in the last couple of days in reading the newspapers, I became more and more dissatisfied with my speech and this afternoon I stuck the speech into a drawer of my desk and decided that instead of making a speech I would come down and talk a little bit.

America has the strongest class divisions in the world and it is least conscious of them. But whatever our lack of consciousness of the class nature of our society, the middle class and the working classes alike are going to realize that the world that we have known in the past is disappearing before our eyes. It is destroying itself. The news from Europe is so shocking that even those of us who could foresee the awful consequences of the logical development of the imperialist world system find ourselves somewhat benumbed by the rapid succession of the blows of the old world tumbling about our ears.

In America we are now being invited to join that mad game in Europe. The invitations, which a few weeks ago were still coming only from the less experienced, already come from the chief executive of the nation. President Roosevelt's speech the night before last from Charlottesville practically was a declaration putting the US into the world war. What it lacked in that respect was due to the formality needed by the constitutional provision that war must be declared by Congress.

The middle classes of America together with the working class masses have displayed a stubborn lack of enthusiasm for this war. I have been through two war periods myself. I was quite a youngster at the time of the Spanish-American war but I can remember it quite clearly. I was not quite so young during the last world war. And I can remember that much more clearly. In the previous wars, regardless of the manipulations behind the scenes that threw the country into the war, the ruling classes succeeded in rousing great mass enthusiasm for the war. There is no such enthusiasm in America for this war. And in order to slip this country, step by step, into the war, they have had to resort to the most foul deceptions. Each step leading America

into the war was offered to the country as one of the means of staying out of the war. And even today they are trying to wring the last drop of profit out of this deception with the promise that America won't have to go to war.

War today is what they call a "total" war. There isn't such a thing as halfway in or halfway out. America's middle classes, as well as working class, may just as well make up their minds to that, if they don't want to be thrown head over heels into the war. If you don't want America to go through the dreadful experience that Europe is now enduring, you had better wake up and understand what is going on. Either this country is going to be all in or all out and we would be better off if we stayed all out.

The war is being sold to the middle class on a promise that through entering the war we are going to preserve our way of life. The middle class is supposed to have found a comfortable way worthy of preservation. But the entrance of the US into this war, no matter what the outcome in terms of the victory of one side or another, is inevitably going to wipe out forever that old "comfortable" middle class way of life. That is finished by this war and if America gets into it, it is finished for the American middle class too. If the middle class wants to preserve a while longer its way of life, it better wake up to the fact that there is only one way it can be done: Keep out of this war.

This war is the death struggle of the capitalist system. If America is so deeply involved in the death struggle of European imperialism that it cannot avoid jumping into the middle of it, participating in it, America will be taking the hard way, the most painful way to the future.

We need not be pessimistic about the future of the world at all. It is a painful thing to have to go through this period in which the dominant social and economic system is dissolving about us. It is a very destructive experience. But however destructive it may be, it cannot destroy the human race. It cannot destroy its intellectual achievements, it cannot destroy the tenacity, the determination and courage of the masses and that greatest of achievements, the knowledge that a better world is possible and the knowledge of how to bring about that better world.

The war in Europe has definitely placed on the historical order of the day the socialist revolution. There is no other road whereby peace can be restored to Europe and the life of the peoples of Europe preserved. Peace can be brought to Europe only through the dethroning of the ruling classes of each and every belligerent country without exception. War-devastated Europe can be rebuilt only

if the yoke of capitalist profitmaking is removed from the neck of the European laboring people, and their creative ability is released; and the only way this is possible is through a socialist reorganization of Europe.

American capitalism is supposed to be stronger than that of Europe. It has achieved a higher development, so much so that America is practically equal in its productive forces to the rest of the capitalist world. American capitalist spokesmen and ideologists were of the opinion that the fate of this country is not necessarily and immediately tied up with the fate of the European systems. They used to tell us that the American way of life was superior and more stable than that of Europe. But these very same spokesmen are the ones today who come to us and tell us that the only way the American way of life can be preserved is by throwing America into the bloody imperialist mess in Europe. I would warn the gentlemen who give this message to America that they are accomplishing more in a few weeks than the Communist Party has been able to accomplish in twenty years in convincing the American people that we have got to think about a new social system for America. Because, if it is true that the only way to preserve the existing system in our country is through participation in this war, the American people, wanting no part in the war, are going to look for a system that will enable America to stay at peace.

Well, I should not object when the gentlemen of the bourgeoisie take over the tasks of the Communist Party in convincing the people that we have to have socialism in order to have peace. But I also know that these same gentlemen of the capitalist class, no matter how big a majority of the American people want peace, are going to carry us into war against the will of the people if they are permitted to do it.

Regardless of how big a majority of the American people would determine, as they will determine, that they want peace, even if it is necessary to establish socialism in America, if this is the only way we can have peace—these ruling class gentlemen will no more permit the people to make democratic decisions on socialism than they are now permitting a democratic decision on the question of war. They are going to give you no opportunity to vote on this question under the formal democracy of the American Constitution. They are first going to present you with an accomplished fact. And everyone who votes "no" is already being notified in advance that he is a traitor to his country. We are going to have a Hitler plebiscite on this question.

As a matter of fact in the last few weeks we have traveled so fast on the road of fascism in the US that it won't take us long to