

WHY THIS IS OUR WAR

History takes another sharp turn. Transformations in the character of the war. New tactics and new values. How to defend our country by helping the USSR. An editorial.

THAT famous locomotive of history has taken another sudden turn. And as in 1939, there may be a few who find themselves flung off and sprawling by the roadside because they lost their grip in rounding the bend. We live in dynamic times, when the processes of history mature so rapidly that we must be prepared for cataclysmic changes that overnight transform values, meanings, relationships. Actually, what appears to be sudden is merely the explosive emergence of forces that have been in gestation over months and years. Last week NEW MASSES devoted almost its entire issue to a discussion of the momentous turning point signaled by the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union. Since then, the implications of that attack have become clearer. Throughout the country the common folk have begun to sense them. In their hearts indignation mingles with hope—hope that at last the hideous might of Hitlerism has met its master and that the fight to free the world from this scourge has begun in earnest. In Chicago the Cook County CIO Council adopted a resolution calling for “cooperation and support to the Soviet Union by our government.” In New York, Local 16 of the AFL Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union, which is under conservative leadership, urged support for “all nations attacked by Hitler fascism, including the Soviet Union.” In the Northwest the Washington Commonwealth Federation spoke up for aid to the USSR. Among the Jewish people there has been such unanimity of feeling that even bitterly anti-Soviet Yiddish newspapers have been compelled to adapt themselves to the prevailing mood. On street corners, at meetings, in homes throughout the country Americans of all nationalities, deeply stirred, have found their sympathies suddenly catapulted to a country whom their press and radio had depicted in the most hateful terms as an ally of fascism.

In this new vast shift in world affairs all of us are faced with the necessity of reexamining our position. For if we are to work with and not against history, if we are to lift from the minds of men the blighting shadow of fascism, we must grasp the essential meaning of the new situation and make our acts conform to the changed reality. It is impossible at this time to give definitive answers to all the problems that emerge, but the central fact that must be understood is that *the attack of German fascism on the USSR has changed the character of the war.* And one need not apologize for saying that

when the character of the war changes, programs, slogans, and tactics must also change. While basic principles and ultimate goals remain the same, they must now be approached by a different road because the old road has disappeared under the impact of the Soviet-Nazi war.

For nearly two years NEW MASSES opposed the war that began in September 1939 and all American support for one side in that conflict. But our opposition was not to war as such—we are not pacifists and know that only socialism can bring lasting peace—nor was it based on the isolationist illusion that what happens in Europe or Asia does not affect the American people. We opposed the war because, like its predecessor in 1914-18, it represented nothing more than a struggle between two imperialist groups for a new redivision of plunder and empire. A victory for either side in such a war could result not in the liberation of enslaved peoples, but in their further subjugation by one or the other set of imperialist masters under fascist controls. We therefore called on the American people to oppose the designs of the government and to join with the English people and the peoples under the fascist heel in working for a different alternative: a democratic people's peace which would mean a defeat for both contending imperialist groups. We emphasized that in this struggle the common people of all countries had a powerful ally in the Soviet Union, which had striven to prevent the war and when that proved impossible, had negotiated the non-aggression pact with Germany in order to safeguard its neutrality and limit the spread of the conflict. At the same time NEW MASSES opposed not only the policy of the government, but also the reactionary non-interventionists at the head of the America First Committee. We pointed out the spurious character of the peace talk of the latter group, and exposed their pro-fascist, imperialist aims.

Looking back today, we believe that our policy of the past two years has been fully vindicated. We are proud of the part we played in helping clarify the issues and nourishing all that was best in American life. In our struggle against fascism, just as in our solidarity with the peoples of Great Britain and Germany, there is an unbroken continuity even though the forms and tactics of this activity now require change. For the policy of the past two years no longer corresponds to the actual world situation that has been created by the Nazi assault on the

USSR. For the first time a country has become involved which seeks no loot, which has no capitalist class that can profit by exploiting the wealth of other nations. For the first time a country is fighting—a great federation of 193,000,000 free peoples—whose victory will mean not the replacement of one fascist cabal by another, but the true liberation of the peoples of Europe and the ending of the fascist threat to the common folk of England and the Americas. And for the first time this new development expresses not the conflict between two imperialist bandits, but *the direct assault of fascist imperialism on the people—on the people everywhere.* By that assault Hitler has faced all peoples with the necessity of *uniting their forces to wipe Hitlerism and fascism from the face of the earth. Only in this way can a genuine people's peace be achieved.*

For those who may be unable to see why the invasion of the Soviet Union changes the character of the war, let us put the matter this way. Suppose our government had previously adopted the policy we urged of strict neutrality in the European war and collaboration with the USSR for peace. This would have aligned the two greatest powers of the world whose joint efforts would have decisively affected the course of the war and perhaps made possible a people's peace. But even had Germany won, she would still have been faced with the combination of the Soviet Union and the United States. Today, with the invasion of the USSR, there is no longer the question of another Yugoslavia or Greece, but of the possible destruction of a power approximately equal to that of the United States. Moreover, since Siberia is separated from the American-owned Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska by only a narrow strip of water, a Nazi victory over the USSR would bring the fascist threat to the very shores of our own country. It is clear that with the Soviet Union and Britain conquered, the United States would indeed be left alone in a world under Nazi domination. Here, then, is conclusive evidence that the character of the war has been fundamentally altered.

THE ARGUMENT will be made that the imperialists of Britain and the United States continue to seek their former objectives. Three things need to be said on this score: first, if the British and American governments strike energetically at Germany, they willy-nilly are helping the Soviet Union and their own peoples exterminate Hitlerism. Every British

bomb dropped on German military objectives furthers this end. Secondly, by their offers of aid to the USSR the British and American governments are abandoning their former anti-Soviet policy. They are thereby beginning to adopt the course long advocated by the British People's Convention and by progressives in this country. And finally, the peoples of Britain and the United States have the duty to take advantage of this exceptional situation, in which their governments are necessarily on the same side with the people's government of the USSR, to compel their rulers to undertake without delay the closest collaboration with the Soviet Union in order to assure a smashing defeat of German fascism. Such a defeat would likewise frustrate the aims of the most reactionary Wall Street and London imperialists. What is required is *the creation of the broadest people's front directed against Hitlerism at home and abroad, part of an international front of all the peoples fighting the monstrous juggernaut of Nazism.*

Marxists judge each war concretely in its fullest historical context. During the nineteenth century Marx and Engels always supported one side as against the other in the wars of Europe and in our own Civil War. Their position in every situation was dictated by the interests of the working class, by consideration of what course would promote the advance of mankind. Thus in the Franco-Prussian war they at first supported Bismarck Germany, despite the reactionary character of the regime, because they viewed this phase of the war as a struggle for national unification against the efforts of Napoleon III to dismember a Germany still suffering from semi-feudal separatism. The founders of scientific Communism warned, however, of the possibility that the war might take a reactionary turn. When after the battle of Sedan and the fall of the French monarchy Bismarck continued the war in order to annex Alsace-Lorraine and subjugate the French people, Marx and Engels opposed Germany.

It was only with the rise of imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century, when capitalism, ceasing to be a progressive force, entered the parasitic monopoly stage, that wars among the great powers assumed a completely reactionary form. That is why the genuine Marxists in Russia, Germany and other countries, and especially the Russian Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin, opposed the war of 1914-18 as imperialist on both sides. But Lenin did not entirely exclude the possibility, remote though it was, that the first imperialist war might be transformed into a national war, that is, a progressive struggle for national liberation and independence. In an article written in 1915 he pointed out that "in a condition of great exhaustion of the 'great' powers in the present war or under conditions of a victory of the revolution in Russia, national wars, and indeed victorious ones, are fully possible." In another article written in the same year he pointed out that if all countries interested in maintaining in-

ternational treaties had declared war on Germany and genuinely fought for no other purpose than the liberation of Belgium, "the sympathy of the Socialists would naturally be on the side of Germany's enemies." He added, however, that in the war that was then raging Belgium was a mere pretext in a conflict for purely imperialist objectives. In the same way the invasion of Poland in 1939 was a pretext in a war precipitated by the rivalry and intrigue of two imperialist blocs. But if in 1914-18 it was theoretically possible for the character of the war to be changed, how much truer is that today when the enormous weight of the land of socialism is thrown into the scales? Clearly, whatever the motives of British and American imperialism, the involvement of the Soviet Union has introduced a powerful magnetic force which can draw around itself the peoples on both sides of the conflict in an all-out struggle for their own national salvation. And the magnificent efforts of the Chinese people to drive out Hitler's axis partner, the Japanese invader, now become more directly linked to the world struggle against fascism.

DOES THE FACT of the USSR's involvement mean that its previous policy was mistaken, as so many anti-Soviet commentators hasten to point out? On the contrary, the Soviet Union has been forced into the war under conditions that are infinitely more favorable for itself than they would have been two years ago, lacking any British and French guarantees. Testimony to the correctness of Soviet policy has come inferentially from no less an anti-Sovieteer than Dorothy Thompson. In her column on June 25 discussing the Hess episode and its relation to the Nazi attack on the USSR she wrote: "It is my belief that Hitler was making a tremendous gamble on Britain getting out of the war, as a result of this development [the Nazi attack]. *Were the same political brains ruling England that ruled it up until two years ago, exactly that would have happened.*" (Our emphasis.) What Miss Thompson is here unwittingly admitting is that the Soviet government was fully justified in believing that the Chamberlain government, under the cloak of friendly overtures, was actually seeking to involve it singlehanded in war against Germany. And hence she is also admitting that the USSR was fully justified in taking steps to protect itself against that stratagem by negotiating the non-aggression pact with Germany.

Let it be remembered that it was the Soviet Union which repeatedly sought an alliance of peoples and governments to halt fascist aggression. And it was the governments of Britain and France—and for that matter, the United States—that rebuffed these efforts, only to cry "doublecross" when faced with the disastrous consequences of their own treachery. Had that alliance been effectuated in time, it would probably have prevented the war; had war come nevertheless, it would from the outset have had a progressive character on the part of the collective security bloc and

the defeat of Hitlerism would have been a much simpler task than it is today. By frustrating the schemes of the appeasers, the USSR gained almost two years of precious time. During this period its own economic and military might has greatly increased and its strategic position improved through the extension of its borders, while the crisis of German fascism, despite one military victory after another, has deepened. And now when the long-awaited attack has been launched, it has come in a situation in which the British and American governments, instead of being able to isolate the Soviet Union, are compelled, because of their inability to resolve their imperialist differences with Germany, to offer assistance to the USSR. Thus, when the radio commentator, Johannes Steel, concedes that the Soviet policy in the Baltics was justified after all, he indicates that it was he and such liberal magazines as the *Nation* and the *New Republic* that erred when they hailed the white guard Finnish regime as a genuine democracy. No less did they err in their estimate of other aspects of Soviet policy and of the strength of the Red Army.

THE NEW DEVELOPMENT in the war has created considerable differences and indecision in the circles of big business. The American Municeers—the leaders of the America First Committee, gentlemen like Herbert Hoover and Gen. Hugh Johnson, sections of the Catholic hierarchy, and newspapers like the Hearst and Scripps-Howard press, the *New York Daily News* and *Chicago Tribune*—have not failed to discover that well-known specter of Communism and to shout themselves hoarse that the United States must do nothing to aid the Soviet Union. By which they mean, of course, that this country must do nothing to prevent a Hitler triumph. These big business appeasers and their "Socialist" satellites of the Norman Thomas stripe would sell the American people and the peoples of Europe down the river to Nazism in the hope of establishing a partnership with Germany for the fascist domination of the world. The real objective of this crowd is revealed by Thomas F. Woodlock, prominent Catholic layman and Franco supporter, in the *Wall Street Journal* of June 30. He writes:

It [the Nazi attack] may portend the breaking of the Hitler "spell" under which Germany has lain for nearly a decade, and the sweeping out of the whole Hitler crew, with a man like Schacht and the army in the seat of power. With such a Germany there could be a basis of reasonable negotiation. No one knows better than the army chiefs the hollowness of the German "conquests" in western Europe—unless it be Schacht himself. But 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 nor does western Europe, once the Hitler nightmare has vanished and the New Order goes up in smoke. . . . A highly attractive picture, and it stirs up the wish-bone no end!

This offer of the Ukraine and readiness

July 8, 1941 NM

ПРОТИВ ОАДИКИ



to come to terms with the Nazis (whether it involves the elimination of the individual Hitler is a detail) is, of course, only the first installment. Did not Gen. Robert E. Wood, chairman of the America First Committee, in an interview with the newspaper *PM* several weeks ago, intimate that his group would not object to Hitler's taking over the whole of Latin America below the bulge of Brazil?

The Nazi invasion of the USSR has also caused certain reactionaries, who previously were ardent interventionists, to adopt a position virtually identical with that of the appeasers. The veteran tory journalist, Mark Sullivan, for example, has attacked President Roosevelt's promise of aid to the Soviet Union as a mistake. He urges, in the spirit of Hoover, that assistance be confined to Britain. Another attitude, representing the major Wall Street trend, seeks to utilize the new situation for the purpose of mutually exhausting the USSR and Germany in order to secure the dominance of American imperialism. This point of view has been stated with a brutality and cynicism worthy of Hitler himself by Heptisax, the Sunday commentator of the New York *Herald Tribune*. He rejoices at the thought that "the bear [the USSR] is outclassed and is in for a thorough licking" (Heptisax is due for an unpleasant surprise in this respect). On the theory that the Soviet Union is weak, he therefore urges American material aid to "enable her to make a Russo-German, or rather Nazi-Communist, war of mutual destruction thoroughgoing." This aid, however, should be cut off "if the Nazi juggernaut crumbles up." In other words Heptisax opposes the defeat of German fascism.

The position of Heptisax (in a less candid form it is also the position of the New York *Times* and the capitalist groups for which it speaks) is in essence oblique appeasement of Hitlerism. The *Times* goes so far as to declare that the slogan of "Help Russia" (which is, in effect, the slogan issued by President Roosevelt) should be dropped, that attention be concentrated on stopping Hitler and that this can best be done by redoubling aid to Britain. All the talk about the physical difficulty of sending assistance to the USSR serves the same end. This policy, if allowed to prevail, would have the effect of immobilizing the people and the government in face of the greatest peril to our nation. By posing one front against another this attitude actually divides the forces fighting Hitlerism. There is, however, only one war and aid to both the British and Soviet peoples is essential if fascism is to be defeated.

It is clear that the American people will have to combat these big business obstructionists in the most determined fashion. They are the forces that led the fight against the Roosevelt administration and the New Deal reforms before the outbreak of the war. And through their positions of influence in the OPM, the State and War Departments, and other government agencies, they are seeking once more to prevent the administration from taking that path which alone can safeguard

Rep. Sabath on Aid to the USSR

NEW MASSES has invited a number of prominent individuals to comment on the Soviet-Nazi war and on the question of aid to the USSR in order to defeat Hitlerism. In this issue we publish the first of these statements, from Rep. Adolph J. Sabath of Illinois, who is chairman of the House Rules Committee. Months before the Nazi attack Mr. Sabath urged American-Soviet collaboration in a speech in the House. Additional statements will appear in future issues. In publishing them, NEW MASSES does not necessarily agree with all that is said. Whatever differences there may be, however, we feel that the most important thing at this time is to unite all those who wish the defeat of Hitlerism behind a program of full assistance to the Soviet Union, Britain, and all peoples fighting Nazism.—The Editors.

IT is my candid belief that for our own defense we must give all possible assistance to Britain and China, and to all countries fighting Hitler's aggression, including Russia. I feel that we must approve President Roosevelt's stand to give all aid we are in a position to give to Russia, which does not signify that we approve Communism.

There are some who still refuse to recognize the Nazi danger, but any well informed man will not deny that great danger after all of Hitler's conquest. For several years the Nazis, by their shrewd propaganda, conducted in this country a campaign against Communism to hide their own activities, as they had done in other countries. There are still some who refuse to see and understand the real meaning of this fact.

On March 18, 1938, in a speech on the floor of the House, I made clear the aims and ambitions of Hitler and Nazism. I stated that Britain had waited too long, and was blind to the aims of Hitler, which statement was borne out by subsequent events. So far, Hitler has accomplished everything that he so brazenly said he would. It is regrettable that notwithstanding that fact, there are people who still refuse to believe that it is his aim to destroy democracy everywhere, and that America is next in line if he succeeds in defeating Britain and Russia.

This being the case, for our own self-preservation, we must give all possible assistance to Britain and aid to Russia, to enable them to stop his conquests. Only by his defeat will we be saved from being attacked.

ADOLPH J. SABATH.

the liberties of the people. In this situation the clear voice of the Communist Party points the way. "Through their organized efforts," declares the manifesto unanimously adopted at the recent meeting of its national committee, "the American people must make the policy of the American government a genuine policy of friendship and collaboration with the Soviet Union, a policy that gives *all aid to the Soviet and British peoples*. The American people must throw in the full weight of their might and power to defeat German fascism." At the same time the manifesto declares that the people "must not fail to speak out plainly against every tendency of the American government to conciliate the enemies of the nation—to appease the appeasers."

All aid to the USSR and Britain, which is in the interests of the overwhelming majority of the American people, must also have its domestic counterpart. The economic royalists who are today obstructing the development of a truly anti-Hitler foreign policy are likewise seeking to force the government to employ Hitler methods against the people at home. An effective fight against Hitlerism requires the defense of the right to strike, improvement of the people's living standards, government action to curb profiteering and prevent monopoly sabotage such as has been revealed in the case of the aluminum trust. It requires the cessation of every form of discrimination against the Negro people, a halt to anti-Semitism and attacks on the foreign-

born. And an effective fight against Hitlerism requires an end to the assault on civil liberties, particularly the persecution of Communists and other progressives by the FBI, the Dies committee and the Rapp-Coudert committee. The imprisonment of America's foremost anti-fascist, Earl Browder, stands as a towering indictment of the past character of the government's war effort. His release now would be a blow at Hitler and his American friends and a powerful aid to our own struggle against the fascist menace.

Our country moves to great decisions. We cannot delay because time fights on the side of the enemy. Whether the Roosevelt administration accedes to the wishes of the most reactionary monopolists or lives up to its anti-fascist pronouncements and its pledges of aid to the Soviet Union depends in great part on how quickly and effectively the American people and especially organized labor leap into the breach and weld a solid front of action against Hitlerism. The trade unions must be the mainspring of this movement. All aid to the Soviet Union and Britain, all aid to China must for all of us become the deepest purpose of our lives. We the people can win this battle for the future. We have the power to move mountains, to destroy fascism. *Let us act.*

This editorial statement does not, of course, profess to deal with all the problems that arise. New Masses would welcome questions and discussion from its readers.