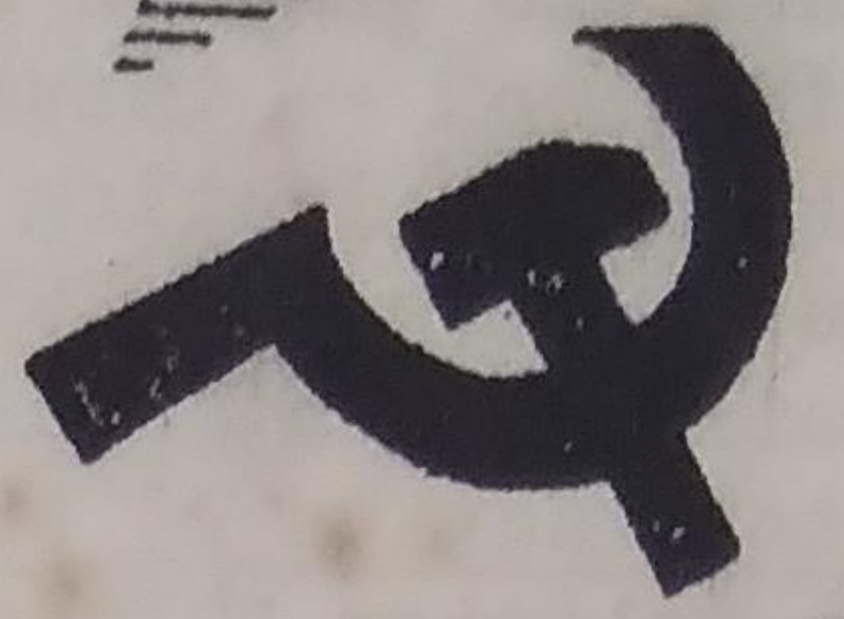


Workers  
of the  
World,  
UNITE!

# THE SPARK



ORGAN OF THE WORKERS' PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## THE PRESENT CRISIS

How closely reminiscent are these days of the July days in 1914! The feverish rearmament, the mobilisation of public opinion, the working up of the fury against the culprit, the "madman", the acute diplomatic activity in the Chancelleries of Europe, the roaring trade of the newspapers full of contradictions, bluff and lying propaganda, the flight of capital to safer shores, and that fluctuation from hope to anxiety and from anxiety back to hope again, fluctuation that grinds a man's nerves until his final resignation to the "inevitable".

And unfortunately war is inevitable. Even if the immediate danger blows over, as it has blown over several times before, even if 1938 comes to be recorded in future annals as still a year of peace (the wars in Spain and China are only "local wars", which do not count nowadays), even if this crisis drags on till 1939, war is still inevitable. For where is the only force that can save the world from another world-slaughter? Where is the Social Revolution that would destroy Capitalism-Imperialism, the only cause of war? Is there any sign of it on the horizon before the onrush of the second World War? No! The simple truth is that the Revolution seems further off today than it seemed before the catastrophe of 1914. The deception of the people has been more successful than it was in 1914, more complete. There will be no shocking betrayal by the Second International on the morrow of the outbreak of the next war. This evil has been wrought already both by the Second and the Third International long before the new World War begins.

Today it is these Internationals that spur on the workers to fight for "democracy", to defend the "fatherland", to save "civilisation". Today it is they who egg on the bourgeois Governments to rearm, to speed up the work of rearmament, to declare war for the sake of the defence of Czechoslovakia. The bourgeoisie have no difficulty in producing this patriotism, so very necessary for their war. The workers' parties and Trade Unions are actually doing it for them!

In 1914 it was the Kaiser, today it is Hitler. Then it was "poor Serbia", today it is "democratic" Czechoslovakia. In 1914-18 the oppressors the world over used the slogans of Liberation and Self-determination. The Tsar then posed as the Liberator of those Slavs who were oppressed under the yoke of the Austro-Hungarian dynasty; Wilhelm stood up as the Liberator of the Poles; Britain as the Liberator of innocent Belgium, and so on. Then came Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, proclaiming the right of self-determination -- the self-determination of the lions and tigers of Imperialism!

Today Hitler is the liberator of oppressed Germans; Mussolini is the abolisher of slavery and regenerator of civilisation; while the London "Times" with Neville Chamberlain behind it, the Paris "Le Matin" with Deladier behind it, are for a plebiscite, for self-determination.

In 1914 millions of people were taken in by these fine-sounding and truly democratic slogans. And now everything goes to show that the same thing is happening again,



bringing the same catastrophic results. For Imperialism, whether British and French, or German and Italian, the slogans of national liberation, of the right to self-determination, etc., are today, just as in 1914, only a means of deceiving the people, a sheer fraud. There cannot be national liberation, there cannot be self-determination, so long as Imperialism exists.

It is a monstrous cynicism when the semi-fascist London "Times" and Paris "Le Matin" come out with a slogan of self-determination in Czechoslovakia. These imperialist octopuses who grip in their tentacles hundreds of millions of colonial slaves and suck their life-blood -- these are hailed as upholders of justice and freedom! We know what their self-determination means: the self-determination of the Versailles Treaty, the right of the victors to divide the world between them, to transform all other national groups into their vassals, under their dominance for their exploitation. What we want is a real self-determination of the people in India, in South Africa, in Morocco, Algeria, everywhere in all colonies. Of course, when the "Times" champions the principle of self-determination, it means the same thing as when it champions freedom. It means the right of the robbers to divide, redivide and dispose of their booty as it suits and pleases them, the freedom to exploit. It does not mean the right of the people of India, the Colonies and semi-colonies, to freedom and self-determination.

And why self-determination in Czechoslovakia only? Why not also in Poland, Roumania, Yugoslavia, who oppress more than half of their respective populations, the national minorities? Why not self-determination all round, beginning with the Colonies?

But of course such slogans in the mouths of the bourgeoisie are a fraud. Whether British and French Imperialism peacefully settle the Czechoslovakian problem by ceding it to German Imperialism, or whether they decide to go to war, the fundamental factor remains the same. Namely, that Czechoslovakia is just a pawn in the struggle between the two Imperialist groups. When and if it suits them, they will suddenly become champions of the national independence and "sovereignty" of Czechoslovakia. And if and when it suits them, they will just as readily drop the right of Czechoslovakia to independence and sovereignty and proclaim the right to "self-determination". It is like a cattle deal between thieves. It is their Czechoslovakia, and not the Czechoslovakia of the Czech people, the workers and toilers.

Unless we keep this in mind, we cannot understand what is going on in and behind the scenes of this Czechoslovakian crisis. Czechoslovakia is merely a ball in the game that is being carried on among the Great Powers. And if war comes as an outcome of the present crisis, this war will not be on account of the upholding of democracy and sovereignty in Czechoslovakia, but it will be a war between two Imperialist groups. It will be an Imperialist war, no matter what slogans are used on one side and the other.

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It is quite true that these opposing groups do not want war. None of them wants war. Not even Hitler and Mussolini want war. We do not require for this assertion the testimony of Lansbury, the ex-Labour leader, nor of Ian Hamilton, the ex-Army leader, who have assured us of the peaceful intentions of Hitler. Naturally, Hitler does not want war, if he can get what he wants for Germany by "peaceful" means. So far he has used against British and French Imperialism the weapon which the bourgeoisie all over the world fear more than war. And that is the threat of a Revolution.

It was this threat of a Revolution in Germany that drove British Imperialism into the arms of Hitler in 1932. Since then it has given him every possible support economically, financially, politically. Annulment of reparations and war debts, the drawing up of short-term and long-term money agreements, favourable trade pacts, a Naval pact -- all this followed upon the threat of Revolution. Mussolini, watching Hitler's good fortune, then decided to make use of the same tactic, and did so with marked success. The threat of a Revolution in Italy proved more abhorrent to Baldwin than the threat in the Mediterranean Sea. A defeat of Italy by Britain would undoubtedly result in the fall of Fascism and in a Revolution. British Imperialism therefore preferred to face the loss of Abyssinia, the loss of strategic positions in the Red Sea (that vital Empire route), and loss of prestige, to the alternative of war and subsequent Revolution. The result of this successful tactic was the German-Italian axis and, later, the Anti-Comintern trio pact between Germany, Italy and Japan. Since then this tactic has been continually applied with more and more success. Conscription in Germany, militarisation of the Rhineland, the Anschluss with Austria, and the conquest of Spain -- all this Germany has achieved by "peaceful" means.

No, they do not want war, and they do not need to have war, if they can get what they want by "peaceful" means! Even Japan did not want war with China, if the other Imperialist powers and China herself would have permitted a "peaceful" swallowing of China.



The robber resorts to murder only if the victim resists.

Hitler wants Czechoslovakia by "peaceful" means. German Imperialism wants expansion over the Danube basin and the Balkans, expansion to the south, and further east to the Ukraine, peacefully if possible. But precisely because German Imperialism cannot get all this peacefully, it will have to resort to war, just as British, French, American Imperialism resorted to war to get what Imperialist needs demanded.

Up to now, the victors of Versailles have given in, have retreated step after step. But would it be correct to draw from this the conclusion that they will continue to retreat indefinitely? If Spain is swallowed up, why not Austria? If Austria, why not Czechoslovakia? And so forth. This argument is in line with the views of the "Observer" (organ of the Fascist Wing of the Tories) that no English Tommy's life is worth sacrificing for the sake of Czechoslovakia or Lithuania, Roumania or Poland. "So long as our Empire is not touched, we shall not fight", say the Garvins and the Rothermeres. But is this so? Are their views the same as those of the most powerful section of British Imperialism, namely, Finance Capital? If this is the case, though we doubt it, what will be the reaction, when it comes to a decision, of the other sections of British Imperialism? What will be the reaction of industry and trade, and especially of the increasingly influential section of the actual "traders in war", the armament industries? And lastly, how far will French Imperialism be able to follow this fatalistic line of waiting for the breaking up of the German-Italian axis, a break which must result from an enormous strengthening of one partner, Germany, out of all proportion to the other partners?

Faced with the choice between Scylla and Charybdis, the choice between giving up on the one hand the safeguarding positions acquired at Versailles and thus strengthening the enemy, and on the other hand the fear of a victory resulting in the downfall of Fascism in Germany and Italy with the dreadful prospect of a Revolution, it is true that British and French Imperialism chose the first of these two alternatives. But it may be just as true that, when finally faced with the German-Italian challenge for world-power, world-domination, British and French Imperialism may have to go to war, whether they like it or not.

So far the events of the last week or so seem to indicate that this stage has not been reached. The vacillation of the French Government, its acquiescence in Lord Runciman's mission to sell Czechoslovakia at a higher price, and in Neville Chamberlain's visit to Hitler, a visit that could have only one meaning, these things tend to indicate the opposite. But even if nothing happens to upset the calculations of Hitler, and even more so if they are not upset, the stage of the final challenge must arrive soon.

The weapon of Revolution, used as a kind of blackmail, cannot work indefinitely. There must come a time when the other party refuses to be intimidated and decides to take the risk of refusing. It has often been said that the bourgeoisie is not so foolish as to risk all and everything, that it is just as well aware as we are that a war will end in Revolution, which means the loss of everything. To a certain extent this is correct, as proved by the happenings of recent years. But we must not elevate this assertion to an absolute authority, which would enable us to rest assured that no war will come at all; that for fear of the Revolution the bourgeoisie will not resort to war. That is, of course, ridiculous.

The Russian Tsar knew by experience that a lost war means a Revolution. But in spite of this experience (1905) he plunged his country into the World War. Was it a mad gamble on the part of an adventurer, or was it a desperate step taken to save the Monarchy from Revolution? The French bourgeoisie also knew by experience that a lost war means a Revolution, but in spite of this experience (the Paris Commune, 1871) it plunged the country into the World War. It was lucky to win. All of them reckoned on winning. And Hitler will, like the Russian Tsar, plunge Germany into another World War to save German Capitalism from a Revolution, hoping to win this time. And British Imperialism, even while knowing that it is madness to go to war, that this time there will be no victors, will have no other alternative but to accept this madness.

This is not mere abstract reasoning. The 360 millions (these are the official figures -- the real amount may be double this) spent from the ordinary Budget by Britain on rearmament, the 45 million gas-masks now ready for distribution, the sand-bags, the Air Raids Precautions organisation, these are not little additional luxuries. They are harsh necessities.

This does not by itself prove that Britain reckons on Germany as the enemy. Let us therefore consider the reasons why Britain will sooner or later have to fight Germany.

1) The same Germany that challenged the World Supremacy in 1914 is here again. The advantage of industrial rationalisation, of efficiency and labour productivity over its rivals; the perfection of the war machine and the militarisation of the population on a



scale never before dreamt of; the Unification of Germany in a single entity (Bismarck's dream) instead of some thirty States of various sizes and conditions; the Anschluss with Austria; the great strides made by chemistry and industry on the way to economic self-sufficiency (petrol from coal, etc., etc.), in respect of fuel, wool, fats and food in general, the ease with which a totalitarian State is changed from a peace basis to a war basis -- all these factors taken together make the Germany of 1938-9 a more formidable enemy for Britain plus France than it was in 1914.

From these calculations we have excluded the Revolutionary factor, because the scope and extent of this factor in the rival Imperialist camps is immeasurable. All we know with certainty is that all the Capitalist powers are standing on feet of clay.

2) It was the challenge of Germany for world supremacy that forced Britain to abandon its balance of power policy and conclude an alliance with France and Russia before 1914. And it is this same challenge again that has forced Britain once more to abandon the balance of power policy pursued from 1919 to 1936, and to conclude again a military alliance with France. Such action is not taken in the political game out of tactical considerations, but as fundamental lines of policy. If the views of Garvin and Rothermere were the views of British Imperialism, there would not have been a military alliance with France, an alliance which commits Britain to the possibility of action not only on the Rhine.

3) The net of the French alliance with the Balkan and Danubian countries, with Poland, is today more useful than ever before. These "countries for sale" cannot remain neutral in the coming war, so that the loss of an ally is a double loss inasmuch as it is a gain for the other side. As in the case of Eastern satraps, prestige plays a great role in these countries. Every new concession to the German-Italian axis lowers the prestige of France and Britain in the Balkan and Danubian countries. The silent surrender of Austria definitely lowered the value of the French pacts with Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland. And now comes the "betrayal" of Czechoslovakia, the giving away of the whole or at first a part to Germany, the expression of panic with the partial mobilisation of Germany, the acquiescence of France in the Runciman mission, in the Chamberlain air-flight, which could not be explained otherwise than as a surrender and defeat of French-British diplomacy. The prestige, the value of the promises of France and Britain to these "countries for sale" in case of future war, will after the Czechoslovakian settlement be equal to zero, provided that this settlement is a peaceful one, provided that the Czechs, abandoned by France (and consequently by the USSR), will not fight. But this lowering of prestige, and every new concession by Britain-France to Germany-Italy, makes more imperative, more imminent and less avoidable the struggle for world power and supremacy between these two groups. A peaceful settlement in Czechoslovakia is merely a short postponement of the decisive combat.

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Our object in writing this article has been to prove that the present crisis is not at all a question of Czechoslovakia's independence, or of the right to national self-determination, or of democracy versus fascism, but is a struggle for power and position between rival Imperialist groups. We desired, moreover, to prove that this struggle, of which Czechoslovakia is only a phase, will sooner or later lead to war; and that this war, whether it is fought on the issue of Czechoslovakia or Switzerland or any other innocent "Belgium", under whatever slogan of "sacred rights", will be an Imperialist war. In fact, any war that we can visualise in Europe tomorrow, except a direct attack on the Soviet Union, would be an Imperialist war. Needless to add, that the British and French bourgeoisie has never given up hope, in spite of the mounting obstacles, of diverting Hitler's Colonial and Empire aspirations and Germany's military energies into a direct fight with the Workers' State, the USSR. The danger of such an eventuality has by no means disappeared, nor can it ever disappear so long as the USSR is surrounded by Imperialist States.

Now, what is the reply of the working class to the Czechoslovakian crisis of today or to the world-slaughter of tomorrow? A vain question! There is today no other reply than that dictated by their respective bourgeoisie. In 1914 we had at least the threat of the Basle Manifesto, independent thinking, a directive for the worker. Today we have not even such a threat. We witness the meek following of any bourgeois manoeuvre, the slavish following of imperialistic propaganda. When their Imperialist press takes up a stronger, a menacing attitude, they repeat like parrots: "If we have to fight, let us fight it out now, and by Jove....." When Chamberlain goes to Hitler to bargain away Czechoslovakia, they repeat the babble of their Imperialist press: "We must try out every possible avenue of peace". They are a prey to every wind raised by the bourgeoisie, to every manoeuvre.



How long it is since they were shouting: "No more! Never again! We will not give our lives; we are not going to give you our children for the sake of your fat war-profits". But today they are preparing the weapons that will tear their limbs apart, choke their lungs, kill or maim their little ones. Who doubts today that the untold sufferings and miseries of the last war will look small in comparison with those now in store for the next?

While we have not the least doubt that the coming World War, started by the Imperialist Governments, will not end as a war between Governments; while we have no doubt that the people will settle the accounts with their Governments, that the war will end in civil wars which will do away with the Capitalist system and the idiocy of war, we must nevertheless ask the question: Is it really necessary to go again through years of misery and suffering, in order to learn in the trenches, on the battlefields, in blood and mire, that the enemy is not somewhere in the opposite trenches, but that the enemy is here at home? In the answer to this question lies the tragedy of the last twenty years. Misled and betrayed by their leaders, the workers forgot the lessons and discarded the weapon, the weapon of the class struggle, that could have saved them and the majority of mankind from this madness.

It is useless to go on talking of the past. We must turn our face to the present, when the working class everywhere is chained to the bourgeoisie, and there is no sign that it will refuse to plunge into war. The more urgent therefore is the duty of every Revolutionary to raise his voice today against this madness of war and at this eleventh hour call upon the workers to resist war. Not by collaboration with the bourgeoisie, not by "National unity", not by false "patriotic" slogans, not by the "League of Nations" and Peace Congresses under the patronage of the Archbishop of Canterbury, but by means of the Class Struggle, by means of irreconcilable Revolutionary struggle against their bourgeoisie, and their Governments carried on by independent actions of the working class.

But should this call be too late, should a war break out, the policy of the Revolutionary is also quite clear. Acceleration and sharpening of the class struggle, working and speaking for the defeat of one's "own" Government, for Revolutionary defeatism. Only the policy of Revolutionary defeatism in all the Capitalist countries -- our enemy is in our own country -- a policy that makes use of every difficulty in which a military or political defeat places "our" Imperialistic Government, can pave the way for the transformation of the Imperialist War into a Civil War, can pave the way for the overthrow of Imperialism-Capitalism.

This was the policy of Marx and Engels, of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, of Lenin and Trotsky. This is today the policy of the Fourth International.

Every Revolutionary, every worker, must rally round the banner of the Fourth International, for Socialism and Peace!

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T R O T S K Y ' S   S E C R E T A R Y

M U R D E R E D   B Y   G . P . U . ?

(Reprinted from "The New Leader")

Two months ago we reported the alleged kidnapping from Paris of Rudolf Klement, a German, formerly secretary to Trotsky and recently secretary of the "Fourth International" in Paris, by G.P.U. (Stalin) agents.

Subsequently a letter was received by the "Fourth Internationalists" in Paris, posted from Perpignan and supposed to have been written from Klement. Its contents indicated that it was a forgery.

Now two of Klement's friends, M. Pierre David and M. Jean Roux, have identified a headless and legless body found in the Seine, near Meulen, last week, as that of Klement.

If the identification proves to be true, the presumption is strong that Klement has been murdered by G.P.U. agents.

Previous to his disappearance from Paris, Klement's wallet containing political documents was stolen from him. In the letter which he is supposed to have written from Perpignan, there were references extracted from these political documents.

That the Perpignan letter was a forgery is indicated by certain incidental points. The forged letter aimed at implicating Trotsky in "direct collaboration with Gestapo" (the German Fascist secret police). This is, of course, what the G.P.U. seek to do.

The evidence is strong that G.P.U. agents stole Klement's wallet, kidnapped him, and forged the letter. Now it appears that they have also murdered him.

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The experience of the U.S.S.R. is enough to prove that an economy that has been freed from the shackles of capitalism can be planned for the benefit of society as a whole. In spite of the appalling industrial backwardness that was inherited by the Bolsheviks, and in spite of the crudity of many of the efforts that have been made to overcome that backwardness, the planned economy of the Workers' State has made enormous advances at a time when world capitalism was steadily declining. But it must not be supposed that this economic planning represents a planning of socialist society, in the sense of being directed by a clear conception of what that society will ultimately look like. The object of the planned economy of the U.S.S.R. is to meet as rapidly and completely as possible the most pressing needs of the people, and for that reason it must necessarily comprise a succession of short term plans. That is, each new plan must be determined not by what is conceived to be the ultimate goal of socialist society, but by the extent to which previous plans have succeeded, and by the relative urgency of needs that still remain unsatisfied, or by the emergence of new needs that have been made possible by the richer life conferred on the masses by socialist economy. Planning must, in short, follow the natural growth of socialist society. But we can neither plan nor foresee that growth, because we have no evidence to show what humanity will be like when it has shaken off the last of its fetters.

It has often been argued that revolutionary propaganda would be much more effective if we would only consent to paint a picture of the world as it will be without capitalism to describe clearly the kind of society at which we are aiming. And recently "The New Internationalist" has opened its columns to a debate between Max Eastman and James Burnham on this subject. Eastman has come to the conclusion, after long meditation, that it is time for Marxists to abandon their traditional attitude to this problem. We must, he believes, give up our faith in the "obscurantist" philosophy of dialectical materialism and begin to act like sensible people. He would like us to prepare some blueprints of the society at which we are aiming, instead of allowing it to develop in its own way. And in support of his contention he points to the failure of the "Russian experiment".

Eastman argues that the bureaucratic degeneration of the U.S.S.R. is a direct consequence of the Bolsheviks' failure to plan the future society, and of certain weaknesses of human nature. His criticism is analogous to Marxist criticism of the Anarchists. Just as we criticise Anarchists for their belief that all that is required for the establishment of the classless society is the smashing of the bourgeois state, and point out the necessity for a proletarian state during the transition to the classless society, so he complains that we are guilty of a serious error when we refuse to draw up detailed plans for the society towards which the proletarian dictatorship will move. Lacking such plans, we are at the mercy of every wind of human caprice and frailty that blows, and must sooner or later suffer shipwreck.

Let us see what this criticism implies. It implies, in the first place, that we know exactly what human nature is, that the characteristics shown by the oppressed masses are their true characteristics, and not something imposed on them by the conditions under which they live and work. It implies, therefore, that we must plan the new society for people who are "by nature" depraved, brutal, greedy, selfish and stupid. That is to say, the new society must provide an adequate apparatus for the repression of people who show those characteristics in exaggerated form, just as bourgeois society does. It implies, finally, that no matter what the economic basis of the new society may be, the structure of that society will not be essentially different from the society of today, in the sense that one part of the population will lord it over another part.

The answer to all this is that we do not know what human nature is. To assume that the character of the oppressed masses is the true character of humanity is equivalent to assuming that the true shape of the human foot is revealed in the distorted and misshapen structures that used to be the pride of Chinese women of the upper class. If you squeeze a foot into a shoe that is too small for it, there results something that is still a foot, but it is certainly not natural, and it is incapable of performing the work of a natural foot. And in the same way, if the bourgeois state squeezes a worker by depriving him of the primary necessities of life, by scaring him with the threat of unemployment, by bombarding him all the time with class propaganda, there results something that is still human, but who will be so bold as to claim that the true man stands fully revealed in this slave?

It is the firm conviction of Marxists that the revolutionary emancipation of humanity will result in the gradual release of forces that are still undreamed of. It will be a gradual process, because the slave who loses his chains does not immediately cease to be a slave. Some of the deeper distortions of his nature may even remain with him till the end of his life. It is only when a new generation arises, without experience of



slavery, without even knowing people who were once slaves, that the latent possibilities of the classless society will begin to be certainly known. So how can we plan for that society before we have even acquired the necessary political power?

We can predict that agricultural and industrial technique will enable the citizens of the future society to satisfy any and all of their needs, but we who are victims of a slave society cannot pretend to know what those needs will be. We know that if they wish to dispense with clothing and to live in glass-roofed, air-conditioned cities (a blueprint offered by one of the authors of "Britain Without Capitalists") they will be able to do so, but we cannot predict that they will want to do so. The planning of the new society must be left to its future citizens, who will be far better equipped for the job than we are. Ours is the grimmer and much harder task of laying the foundations for that society by smashing the old one and preventing it from being rebuilt until the new one begins to take shape.

This does not mean that we are absolutely in the dark as to the measures we shall take in the days immediately following the seizure of power. We know, for example, that in South Africa we can at once solve the Bantu land problem; we can put an end to soil erosion; we can within a few years increase enormously the productivity of the land and the quality of the cattle; we can completely abolish such diseases as tuberculosis and syphilis; we can begin at once to clear away slums and build real houses for the workers to live in, and unlike the liberal bourgeoisie, who think they have performed a miracle when they have demolished a single slum, we know that we can complete this task; and we can at once put into operation plans for educating all those who at present are compelled to remain illiterate and ignorant. In short, our plans for socialism are determined by the present needs of the oppressed masses, which we can begin to satisfy the moment the political power is in our hands. There is nothing utopian about them.

At first sight Eastman's error looks harmless enough. Why, it may be asked, should he be denied the right to have his own conception of the shape of things to come? It can harm nobody if he should prove to be wrong, still less if he should be right. In point of fact, a theoretical error is never quite harmless. It is true if a shoemaker has a wrong idea of how cattle should be fed, that will not affect his skill in handling leather. But if a farmer entertains the same idea, the shoemaker may find that the leather is useless. And in the same way a revolutionary whose theory is unsound may delay or endanger the revolution. It is because Eastman's error is likely to have such consequences that we are bound to expose it.

The first consequence is that it diverts the attention of potential revolutionaries from the materialist explanation of history, by offering an alternative that is fatally easy to swallow. If human nature is responsible for the degeneration of the U.S.S.R., then there is no need to explain that calamity in terms of economic forces and class interests. We must accept it as an inevitable consequence of any and every revolution, and in preparing for the revolution we must therefore keep this supposedly inevitable degeneration in mind, and devise plans for confining it within the narrowest possible limits. But that means that we shall be devoting far too much energy to preparing for an event that may not occur, and not nearly enough to preparing for the most important and the most difficult of our tasks -- the revolutionary overthrow of existing society.

For it cannot be too strongly emphasised that the degeneration which the U.S.S.R. has suffered is not the inevitable fate of any workers' state that may be established in the future. The same "obscurantist" doctrine of dialectical materialism which enabled the Bolshevik party to guide the revolutionary forces of Russia towards the October revolution enables us to explain the present condition of the U.S.S.R. as a consequence of industrial backwardness, of the exhaustion that followed years of imperialist war and civil war, of the failure of the proletariat in other countries to come to the aid of their Russian comrades, and of the danger involved in the imperialist domination of five-sixths of the world's area. In short, it was not for lack of blueprints that the Soviet Union fell a victim to the Stalinist bureaucracy, but because world forces prevented the free development of socialist society. And if that is so, the first and most obvious duty of revolutionaries is not to devise elaborate precautions against bureaucratic degeneration, but to aim directly at the smashing of those world forces. Any theory that tends to divert revolutionaries from that goal is a crime.

But, you may say, revolutions are made by the masses. It is understandable that professional revolutionaries, whose job it is to steer the mass revolt, must be free from theoretical errors, but surely the proletariat is more likely to act decisively if someone has painted a rosy picture of the new society towards which its efforts are leading. Actually this plausible argument is utterly false. What we might call the technique of the distant goal has been fully exploited by the bourgeoisie to its own great advantage. And the use of a similar technique for revolutionary purposes will serve the interests of



the ruling class and not those of the oppressed. In South Africa, for example, the apparatus of religion serves to keep the eyes of the masses focussed on a distant and unattainable goal, thereby preventing them from seeing what advantages they could gain by immediate and direct action against their oppressors. And at the same time the infinite width of the gulf that separates them from the goal discourages any efforts to make even a little bit of their dream come true. The result is passive submission to the blows that are rained upon them by their slave-drivers.

To paint a picture of the classless society as one man or a group of men would like to see it, is to offer the masses a bait they will never attempt to seize, because, like heaven, it is not immediately and directly attainable. The true spur to revolutionary action is not some far-off elysium in which there will be no tears and no sufferings, but the unbearable misery that capitalism imposes on the masses, and the possibility of here and now abolishing the primary source of that misery. A blueprint of the classless society will look so different from the world of actual experience that it will be pushed aside as being only another pleasant dream.

It is no accident that the most active designers of the classless society should be the Stalinists, whose counter-revolutionary role we have again and again demonstrated. It was a group of Stalinists who wrote a book entitled "Britain Without Capitalists". We are not prepared to state that any one of the blueprints contained in that volume is inherently foolish, because we simply do not know what will happen after the revolution, but we can state quite definitely that no converts to revolutionary socialism will be gained by the picture of glass-roofed and air-conditioned cities whose inhabitants will need no clothes. The worker who contemplates that picture may like it, but it will appear to him to be so far beyond his reach that he will be unwilling to take even the first step towards its translation into practice. But what is more likely to happen is that the moral prejudices that have been so carefully planted in him by the bourgeoisie will cause him to see it as just another proof of the sinful depravity of the Bolsheviks. In either case the blueprint fulfils a counter-revolutionary purpose.

There remains a final question. Why should Max Eastman, who is not a Stalinist, and whose considerable abilities we have no desire to minimise, have fallen into such an obvious trap? The answer (and it applies not only to him but to a whole army of intellectuals) is, quite simply, that he shrinks from the toil and bloodshed of the revolution. To put it bluntly, he does not feel the lash of the slave-driver's whip on his own shoulders, and therefore he is not driven towards revolution. At the same time he is clear-sighted enough to realise that capitalism is doomed and that the future society must be based on communal ownership of the means of production. So what does he do in this dilemma? He hunts up excuses for not going all the way with the Marxists. Eastman's particular excuse is that the doctrine of dialectical materialism, which forms the theoretical basis of Marxism, is an obscurantist doctrine that needs radical revision. Reading it literally and pedantically, he fails to find any clear meaning in it, and besides he finds that Marxists do not in fact use it as a guide to action.

It is true that, if it is read literally, and particularly if it is read in conjunction with the philosophy of Hegel, from which its terminology is derived, the doctrine is obscure and difficult to comprehend. But its true significance can be understood readily enough if one observes the results it produces in the hands of a competent Marxist. Read the political writings of Marx or Lenin, and you will realise that the plain meaning of the doctrine is that historical movements are the product of a single force but of the constantly varying interaction of a wide range of forces. The correctness of Marx's judgments and predictions is due not to his having struck to a rigid formula of "thesis, antithesis, synthesis", but to the fact that he took all the interacting forces into account. If we understand the doctrine in the light of the manner in which Marx and Lenin handled it, its alleged obscurity at once disappears.

Eastman's error springs from the fact that he assumes that Marxists understand dialectical materialism as he does, that is, that they do not understand it at all. But because they accept it while he rejects it, he feels himself free to conclude that for them it is not a scientific faith but a religious dogma. And having reached this conclusion he can attribute all the failures of the Russian Revolution to the "religious" dogmatism of the Bolsheviks, and can proceed to plan a new society fit for Max Eastman to live in.

By refusing to understand dialectical materialism, Eastman has fallen into the very common error of mistaking effect for cause. He has been struck by the disgusting regularity with which Soviet scientists, industrial managers and even artists used to appeal, meaninglessly, to dialectical principles in justification of their work, and he has jumped to the conclusion that much of their bad work was due to their blind, religious acceptance of a doctrine that to them was devoid of concrete meaning, but which they had to



accept because it was the official philosophy of the U.S.S.R. Actually their acceptance of this doctrine was not a cause but an effect. It was just because their work was bad, for reasons unknown to them perhaps, that they found it necessary to justify it in the eyes of the party by pretending that it was carried out in accordance with "dialectical" principles. To the true Marxist there is no mystery even in this nauseating prostitution of Marxism.

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THE POLICY OF "DIVIDE AND RULE"

The policy of dividing up the subjects of a State into different entities according to race, religion, or other artificial differences involving apparently antagonistic interests, is not a new one, nor has it originated in this country. Napoleon in his conquests employed it with marked success. All the imperialist powers have been and are still pursuing it throughout the world. Take, as one outstanding example, the persecution of Jews in Germany.

The greatest empire in the world, Great Britain, has pursued this policy with the most marvellous results. It has been able to keep its empire intact, precisely because it split up the inhabitants of the colonies into antagonistic groups. In Britain, Scotland and Ireland, where the inhabitants are of the same colour and speak the same language, the ruling class divided them according to religion, Protestants versus Catholics.

In India, that vast rich country, whose wealth fills the coffers of Great Britain, and which is the chief economic pillar of the British Empire, the rulers perpetuated and intensified the caste divisions. It is a well known fact today that one of the great obstacles in the road towards the independence of India is this caste prejudice. The Indians find it difficult in India to form an all-embracing National movement, even along bourgeois lines, because of the caste prejudices which have been deliberately fostered by the British conquerors, in order that they may remain the rulers of the country and exploit its wealth. They realised, however, that hostility between castes was not sufficient, that by itself it would not serve the desired purpose. So they further divided the people. They preserved a section of well-paid princes, established a huge array of civil servants, organised an Indian Army strictly supervised by trusted Britishers, set up Indian magistrates, with attendant clerks, provided medical officers of health, etc., etc. These by their salaries and prestige are purposely bought over to assist in the task of keeping India a British colony and the Indian worker a slave producing surplus value for British capitalists.

Added to the great host of Indian civil servants is the Indian capitalist class, which is allowed by Great Britain to share with her in the surplus value produced by the Indian workers. Although their share is a small one compared with what Britain gets, nevertheless it enables them to remain compact as a class, separate from the workers and peasants. This class serves as a check on any real movement that aims at complete independence of India from British domination. For in order that any such movement should succeed, it would have to be led by a Revolutionary Party having its basis, its roots in the working class. It would have to call upon the working class to free itself from the yoke of capitalism-imperialism. It would have to arm the workers and peasants, and would thus threaten the very existence of the Indian bourgeois class. The immediate result would be that this bourgeois class would form an alliance with the British capitalists and fight against their own kindred. For, although the Indian bourgeoisie may scream loudly for independence, they mean a different kind of independence from that of the workers and poor peasants. What they want is freedom to exploit their own workers. They want to get at least the lion's share, if not the whole, of the surplus value produced by the Indian worker and poor peasant. But, in order to attain this, the bourgeois class will need the assistance of their enemy, the working class. They will have to arouse the workers to political consciousness. They will have to show them that imperialism is their enemy. That of course is true, but it is only a part of the truth. There is therefore a danger that the workers, in this process of learning, may discover the whole truth, namely, that capitalism-imperialism is their enemy; but this is the last thing the Indian capitalist class want the workers to learn. That is why the Indian capitalist class serves as a check upon the struggle for Indian independence.

In South Africa, with its black and white population, this same vicious policy of "divide and rule" has been vigorously and victoriously pursued with the most disastrous



results. The people being of different colours and speaking many different languages, it has therefore been very easy to set one section against another. The main line of division is between black and white, and in order to perpetuate this dividing line the ruling class has proclaimed the thesis that the white man is fundamentally different from the black man, that he has a superior brain, that he must therefore fill all the high posts in the country, since he alone is capable of governing it, and that South Africa is, in short, "a white man's country". The ruling whites have proclaimed this so loudly and continually and have acted upon it so consistently and thoroughly, that they not only believe it, but remain permanently blind to the contradictory facts that are always staring them in the face. When Smuts was asked in America what was the population of South Africa and calmly replied, "Two millions", he was speaking quite naturally and simply, from the point of view of the majority of white South Africans. To him the only part of the population of South Africa worth reckoning up were the two million whites. The six and a half million blacks were not full human beings to be included in the South African population figures; they were beasts of burden, very useful creatures, and no doubt of a higher order than the ox and the ass, for they certainly have the human gift of speech. This attitude of mind is still prevalent among South African whites and is responsible for many evils.

If people accept the idea that a black man is an essentially inferior type of human being, fundamentally different from the ordinary white man, they excuse a great deal of ill-treatment and even abominable brutality directed against this alleged inferior. The newspapers record many cases where a white man has shot a Native, and his plea was that he thought he was shooting a monkey or a baboon. In one case a white farmer shot a woman with a baby on her back, and his excuse was that he thought the woman was a bull! He pleaded that there was a wild bull in the vicinity and that when he saw the woman he thought it was the bull! Such brutal "accidents" often happen, and the perpetrators get away with light sentences -- at most a few months in jail. A black man, on the other hand, goes to jail for slapping a white woman once on the face with his open hand. Not only is he condemned to months of imprisonment with hard labour, but he also receives cuts, even though it is clearly proved in court that he had justifiable provocation. The circumstances in which the black man committed this "great crime" are lost sight of. What our "impartial courts" see and are concerned about, is that a Black man lifted up his hand against a White Woman! The press reports of such occurrences do not stir up the public conscience of South Africa; they are taken as a matter of course by both black and white. Differentiation in the treatment of similar actions committed by offenders of the different races is regarded as normal. Society understands it, considering it just and proper that there should be one code for the blacks and another for the whites.

South African society, therefore, remains undisturbed even when glaring wrongs are inflicted on the black races by the whites. That is why the community raised no cry of shame, showed no disgust, when Parliament recently passed the three abominable Acts reducing the Native people to a status of serfdom. There must, however, be no mistake as to the motive behind these laws. The rulers were not actuated by sadistic feeling against the Native. Their purpose was not to inflict upon this "inferior" being the suffering of humiliation. They acted for definite economic reasons. It was in their economic interest to pass the laws. If the economic interest of the rulers demanded, as in their opinion it did, the oppression of the Native people, then without the least qualm they proceeded to oppress them. We would not expect any protest or shout of "Shame!" from those few people who understood what was the purpose of the Acts and in whose interest they were passed. But the bulk of the whites of South Africa, who do not stand to gain by these laws, but on the contrary to lose (though they do not know it), should out of common decency have been revolted by this downright cruelty inflicted upon their fellow-South Africans, the Natives. But no! Differential treatment of the Natives is expected, for after all they are different from other people! Slavery for blacks is not the same thing as slavery for whites!

This is not a plea that the white community should show more sympathy towards the black people. We are not humanitarians. We leave it to the idle rich white women to form societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals. Likewise we leave it to the Joint Councils, and the Institute of Race Relations, and the well fed Ministers and Bishops, to form societies for the prevention of cruelty to Natives. Just as the women believe that these animals they protect exist for the purpose of satisfying the needs of mankind, so do the members of the well meaning societies believe that the Natives exist for the purpose of serving the white man, only he must not be too hard upon them! As we have already said, we are not humanitarians. We have referred to these facts merely to show the pernicious results that follow from the assumption that the black man is an inferior being fundamentally different from the white man.

But there is yet another aspect of the evil policy of dividing in order to rule. Though the white races in South Africa constitute what is known as the dominant group,



only a small proportion of white men are in the ruling class. The majority of the whites are working people. They live by selling their labour power to the capitalists. They are the ruled and not the ruling class. Their interests are diametrically opposed to those of their colour who own the means of production. Their interests are the same as those of the black man, almost all of whom belong to the working class. Though they do not yet realise it, the black and white workers belong to the same class and are bound by their common interests and common suffering. Unfortunately they still in their ignorance stand apart in different camps, antagonistic to each other. Organised white labour either excludes Natives from the trade unions or, where they allow them, just barely tolerate them. In the North some prominent trade unionists have openly declared that they are in favour of a fixed minimum wage for white workers and a lower minimum wage for the black workers. This indicates the general attitude of the white workers towards the black workers. The white workers do not realise that by adopting this policy they are cutting their own throats, playing into the hands of the employers. As farm labourers they have to compete with the Natives, who because of their lower standards of living undercut them, with resulting miserable conditions. In the towns the unskilled white labourers are faced with the same situation and have not yet learnt its lessons. Their leaders are still suggesting a different minimum wage for black and white as the solution of the difficulty. The rulers of this country may well pat themselves on the back for the wonderful success they have had in setting white workers against black workers. The dividing method has worked even beyond expectation.

How do the Native people react to the policy of "divide and rule"? It must be remembered that the whites who settled in the country found among the Natives a much lower culture and a lower stage of civilisation than their own. The white Government of the country did nothing to educate and raise the cultural level of the Natives to that of the whites. On the contrary, it has been and still is the policy of the Government to retard the progress of the Native people. They have legally closed to Natives the avenues of employment in practically all skilled work. They make it very difficult for Native students to secure training for any profession that will enable them to earn an independent living without being closely connected with the Government. They may be trained as teachers or ministers of religion, or to become clerks in the offices of the Bhunga -- a Government body. But they cannot get permission to go overseas for education unless they are recommended by a "reliable" institution and are proceeding overseas to join a "reliable" institution there. On the whole, the Native's lot is to do the rough work of the country or to perform menial jobs in the service of the white man. In urban areas they must reside in locations or compounds and are there carefully guarded from any "contamination" by "foreign" ideas, such as communism or even democracy. When they are not actually serving the white man, they are segregated in the reserves, their freedom of movement being severely restricted.

This differentiation affects the whole of life. The school curriculum for the black child differs from that of the white child, even as the labour conditions of the black worker differ from those of the white worker. The inevitable result is that the Native people begin to regard themselves as a separate entity, not as an integral part of the whole population of the country. They have become so used to the inferior position into which they have been thrust, that with few exceptions they accept it as a matter of course. It is not unusual to find Native intellectuals arguing to prove that blacks are not inferior to whites. In support of their argument they often quote instances of black students who compared favourably with white students in the public examinations. But the very fact that they find it necessary to prove this shows that there is a doubt in the minds of some. How well the capitalists have done their job of dividing the people in order the more easily and more completely to exploit them!

The rulers of the country, however, are not satisfied with dividing the population into black and white camps. They have further divided the black camp into three main groups, Coloured, Indian and Native. They draw distinct lines between these. The people of the first group have been comparatively pampered. In theory they have been but little affected by racial legislation. They have not been singled out for differential legislation as the other two groups have been. They have, in fact, been promised by no less an authority than the Prime Minister himself, that they would be absorbed into the ranks of the white population. They would then have the same status as the whites. In employment the Coloured have been regarded as more civilised than the Natives and have therefore received preference where the work is of a light kind. They have been admitted to semi-skilled and even, in some cases, to skilled work. Their wages are higher. The Coloured man, moreover, has the vote in the Cape, though the numbers eligible are restricted by the high property qualification. All these "privileges" tend and are intended to separate him from the other oppressed nationalities.



The Indian also has no vote except in the Cape. He is subject to special disabilities. He is encouraged to keep to his own kind and not to unite with those of other races. Did not the last Agent General for India in his farewell speech advise the Indians in South Africa not to join hands with the Natives and make common cause with them? Are not the Indians from time to time reminded that their interests are guarded by their representative, the Indian Agent General, and that, if they have any grievances, they should voice them through this appointed channel?

By far the largest of these three groups, the Native population, was divided into many sections by its tribal system. The needs of Capitalism, however, encroached upon tribal grouping, by its constantly increasing demands for workers. Working together in mines or other industries, the workers gradually come to regard themselves as workers, they become class-conscious. The ruling classes try hard to block this process. They to preserve tribalism in the territories by supporting and upholding the chiefs. And in the mines the Native workers are apportioned and accommodated according to their respective tribes. These efforts of the rulers to keep the black workers divided have been largely successful over a considerable period, but this success cannot possibly be permanent. The conditions of service inevitably bring the workers together in spite of artificial barriers set up by their employers. The line of division between the interests of the capitalists and those of the wage-earners is too clear and sharp to be long hidden or disguised. Every now and then the workers of all colours and nationalities experience bitter disappointment, are conscious of being intolerably oppressed. Every such experience deepens class-consciousness, teaches the workers that their interests are the interests of the whole working class, that they form one class facing one common enemy, the owning and ruling class.

Workers of South Africa! You are all bound together by the same bonds of oppression. Forget your different colours, your various races and nationalities! You are all alike workers, exploited by the same oppressor, the capitalist!

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE! UNITE! UNITE!!!

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WAR AGAIN?

The reactions of various so-called left-wing schools of thought to the events of the past week are particularly revealing. To any revolutionary socialist, the passive role of the Soviet Union in the recent cynical, international robber-play and counter-play is clearly understandable. That it should have been the spread of socialism, the activity of the masses in every European country, the ferment and upsurge of the international working class under the lead of a genuine, marxist revolutionary party that would have thrown the gangs of imperialist robbers into confusion and helplessness, would be historically correct and proper. And in this activity the Soviet Union should have been in the lead, influencing, assisting, encouraging the workers of the world in their independent struggle against oppression and exploitation. But that could not be. Playing the game of international diplomacy, of capitalist diplomacy, the Soviet Union is now beginning to see the results of the class-conciliationist policies of the bureaucracy. Its bureaucracy has relied for its allies on capitalist countries, on bourgeois governments, at the deliberate sacrifice, or rather betrayal, of the working class in those countries. Preaching national defence in countries such as France, with which the bureaucracy had concluded non-aggression or mutual defence pacts, the whole weight, influence and prestige of the October Revolution and the Soviet Union has been forced in the direction of diverting the working class of those countries into class-collaboration, support of capitalist democracy and capitalist institutions, and into the final betrayal -- national defence.

Forgotten is the ABC of Marxism! Gone is the very basis of the class struggle! Instead, we are asked to accept the role of "Friends of the Soviet Union", supporters of "Progressive" movements and champions of "peace". These ideas, the traditional liberal deceptions, have had the effect of chaining the international working class to the wheels of capitalism, of rallying them to the support of their own bourgeoisie, so that when the war in Europe breaks, each country will present a united, single front against the enemy. And the class struggle will be "suspended", while imperialism once more leads the world into death and destruction.

The ordinary worker is bewildered and afraid of the war. That is a general reaction particularly to the manoeuvrings of the last two weeks. Except for Stalinists, who in



every "democratic" country howl for action on the part of the capitalist governments and busily protest their "patriotism", the worker and petty bourgeois are anxious and see no way out. And there is no way out except through the growth of an independent workers' movement, a movement which refuses to have anything to do with the international trickeries of its enemies, whether within or outside its country. For the workers have no fatherland. The land they live in is not theirs, the riches and wealth belong to their employers, to the capitalists. The war that is coming is no war of theirs. They have nothing to gain in defending the possessions and riches of their employers; they have everything to lose. And in the diplomatic twistings, the imperialist arguments, the endless conferences and League of Nations meetings, we are not interested. These activities are not for our benefit. Even if "our" government is successful in gaining its point, this success is not for us but for the owning class. They are working for their benefit. Let us work for ours before we too are swept into the jaws of death.

The abolition of war is today an empty phrase. War cannot be abolished unless we know its causes and reasons. To attack a disease it is necessary to know its cause. And the cause of war is the imperialist struggle for markets to be exploited, for territory, for raw material and resources. And unless we remove that cause we cannot even pretend to deal seriously with war. Capitalism and imperialism, growing out of the "holy" economic basis of private profit, cause the struggle for markets which must inevitably end with war. And in the sense that the struggle for private profit nationally and internationally persists both in times of "peace" and war, in that sense war is a continuation of politics by other means. Instead of price cutting to retain or obtain a market, instead of Trade Treaties and pacts, international capitalism substitutes more direct methods of settling these questions. They are settled by force, by war. For it is on force that the ruling class maintains itself, and it is by force that it settles its own disputes whether with another capitalist power or with its own working class.

All other methods of abolishing war are useless. Only by the abolition of capitalism, of the causes of war, can war be abolished. And the struggle for workers' power, for Socialism, is the struggle against war, against capitalism. Naturally the simple issue, the real cause of war, is obscured by liberalism and Stalinism. We have heard about disarmament as a cure for war. This idea is as sensible as the idea that machine-guns and sawn-off shotguns cause American gang-fights. We have heard foolish gossip about the League of Nations. After its role in Abyssinia, China, Spain and Austria, no one but an imbecile can believe it to be anything except what it is -- an instrument created by the Allies after the last war in order to assist in preserving their robber gains. It was and is a "thieves' kitchen". Religion, sunspots, human nature, vanity, the spirit of aggression, historical enmities, nationality -- all these have in their time been given as the causes of war. And the remedies? Prayer, goodwill, negotiation, compromise, Esperanto, sport, understanding, and chain-letters! Of course if the cause of war were known, if the working class consciously realised that its enemy is within, then indeed the days of capitalism would be numbered. For the cause of capitalist war is capitalism: and its cure -- the overthrow of capitalism and its protective institutions.

And so long as capitalism exists, so long will war and the threat of war be with us. There can be no peace between nations, between peoples, until the very causes of nationalism and artificial boundaries are eliminated. But to the Stalinists there is "temporary" peace and permanent peace. In the "Guardian" of the 16th September, there is a leading article urging that peace be "forced" on Fascist powers. To force peace on somebody is in itself a curious idea: and it becomes particularly funny when we read that Britain, France and Russia should do the forcing. The Stalinists deal with the situation not from the point of view of the working classes but from the viewpoint of their oppressors -- including the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union. Here is what they say:

"The only positive policy for peace in the existing situation is to face the Fascist aggressors with superior force and to make it clear that it will be used against them if they disturb the peace. In such temporary peace the people of Germany, Italy and Japan and of the British and French Empires can work for permanent peace. Only socialism can ensure permanent peace".  
(The emphasis is in the original).

Words are helpless in the face of this piece of insanity. The closing sentence, the only mention of socialism in the whole article, is put in mechanically like a priest telling his beads. The assumption is that the capitalist powers of the world, the so-called "democracies", should threaten the Fascist powers with force and so establish "temporary peace", in order that the working classes may be given an opportunity to work for "permanent peace", i.e., for Socialism; in other words, in order that the working classes may be given an opportunity to overthrow their capitalist "democratic" governments. Even classic reformism never suggested that capitalism should deliberately give



the working class the opportunity to work for the destruction of capitalism.

This gem of Stalinism cannot be explained as simplicity. It is sheer political bankruptcy. The drooling in the mental ward of a hospital is intelligent conversation compared with it. But according to the tenets of Stalinism it is logical. For once they discarded the theory of the independent role of the working class in the class struggle, once they have thrown overboard the bases of Marx and Lenin while attempting at the same time to exploit the prestige of 1917, then there is no other course open for them except deception and insanities. They play the game of their masters: they participate in the intrigues and machinations of international capitalism: they put themselves on the same basis as crooks and rogues of international finance. And once they are on that level they cannot escape. They have betrayed their trust. Their role is that of an enemy of the working class.

A plague on your intrigues! That is what the working class has to say. We, the workers, shall carry on for the establishment of Socialism and take every advantage of the difficulties of capitalism. For these difficulties are the contradictions inherent in the system. You, Messrs. Capitalists, must go to war. You must have depressions and crises. And so long as capitalism exists we shall suffer. The only road is the road of workers' power, of international socialism. That is our aim, and for that we shall work during war or "peace".

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#### A LETTER

(The following letter was sent by the "Spark" in answer to enquiries dealing with matters of such general interest that we feel its publication in these pages will be welcome to our readers. Ed.)

....."You will remember that there has been a great deal of talk in Government circles about the limitation of livestock in the Reserves. Year in year out the Magistrates and the Bhunga have been harping on this question, and each year with greater intensity than before. During the last session of the Native Representative Council, and also of the Bhunga, this question was raised, and the Chief Magistrate of the Transkei gave a warning that if the Natives did not cut down the number of their cattle, the Government would do it for them. Judging from your letter, the threat is being fulfilled.

The pretext for this limitation crusade is that the Territories are overstocked, and this results in soil erosion. This is quite true, but it is equally true that the Territories are over-populated. Is the Government going to suggest the limitation of the number of Natives in the Territories? The problem of overstocking is the problem of over-population, and this in turn is the problem of insufficiency of land. This is the crux of the matter, and any "solution" that does not touch this fundamental problem -- the land problem -- is sheer hypocrisy and can solve nothing.

There are about a million Natives in the Transkei and they have about 800,000 morgen of land among them. Every Native in the Transkei is necessarily a small peasant. He must have a piece of land to plough in order to provide food of a sort for his family, yet "in 1928-1929, eleven thousand married hut-owners had no arable plots".

Giving evidence before the Native Economic Commission, Mr. S. Butler, then head of the Tsolo School of Agriculture, stated that the number of oxen that the Natives in the Transkei had was far below their needs, and to make up the deficiency they were forced to use calves and cows for ploughing purposes. The staple diet of Natives in the Transkei is mealies and milk. Mr. Butler showed that the cows in the Transkei did not produce sufficient milk for all the people in the Transkei.

This last may be attributed to the fact that the Natives keep scrub cattle which do not produce much milk, but the Government has made very, very weak attempts to help the Natives to stock better cattle. The Government is not prepared to finance the scheme, and the bulk of the people, who of course have no money, will never be able to have the Friesland cows. Only the well-to-do can afford these expensive cows, and the Government takes every opportunity of showing these cattle to tourists as an example of what the Government is doing for the Natives.

All this goes to show that the problem is not overstocking, but insufficiency of land.



But before we go into this question of land, there is another question: What is the Government doing to ensure reasonable prices for the cattle the people are forced to sell? And the answer is: Nothing. There used to be a meat market in East London, where people could sell their cattle direct to butchers, but this does not exist any more, so far as I know. In any case, this market did not even begin to solve the problem for the bulk of the Transkeian Natives, because to make the thing pay, one had to sell a large number of cattle at the same time. It would be absolutely ridiculous to rail three or four head of cattle to be sold in East London. What little you would make would be swallowed by the cost of transportation.

The Government will do nothing to ensure reasonable prices for the cattle which they will force the people to sell. The cattle-dealers, who already make large profits, will make still larger ones.

Now, seeing that the problem boils down to more land for the Natives, why does the Government not give us more land? And this brings us to another question: Is the Government really worried about the misery of the Bantu in the Reserves? Whether they have scrub cattle or no cattle at all? What is the aim of the Government with respect to the Natives in the Reserves?

The Reserves are for the Government nothing but a reservoir of cheap Native labour for the mines and for the farms, and the misery in the Reserves is fostered towards this end. Do you think that if the Natives had sufficient land and sleek fat cattle, they would go to the mines and to the farms to look for work? Of course not. And that is why the Government will not give Natives sufficient land to plough and to graze their cattle. But even this was not enough to drive them out to find work elsewhere, and so additional pressure in the form of the Poll-Tax was put on the Native to force him out of the Reserves to work on the mines and on the farms at a miserable wage. This is the whole story in a few words: "Starve the Native out of the Reserves, so that he is forced to go to the mines and farms to look for work and take any wage that is offered him".

But some will say that the Bhunga is doing something for the Natives. Do you think that if the Bhunga meant to do anything for the Natives, there would be Native demonstrators going without jobs, when the Territories need them so badly? Do you think that the abundance of water in the Transkei would be allowed to go to waste, instead of having it conserved for irrigation purposes? No, the Bhunga is not meant to help us. It is only an institution of parasitic bureaucrats for which we pay dearly, as you know, and which is used to suck us dry "in the name of the Native people of the Transkei".

There can be no solution of this problem, no answer to your questions, so long as we live under a system based on the exploitation of man by man. Only under Socialism, in a system that will be concerned with serving the needs of the people, and not with making profits, can we hope for a solution of the land problem; that is, for a society in which there will be a scientific distribution and use of land, a society whose motto will be: "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need".

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THE CABINET CRISIS

While the attention of the bewildered public was being drawn by the hysterical press to the Nazi Congress at Nuremberg, and the man in the street was breathlessly awaiting the speech of the lunatic, a little drama was being enacted in the Union Government. Two rebellious ministers "of the Crown" were being kicked out, and the lost sheep, Fourie, was being brought back to the fold. The backveld may once more sleep in peace, for the Cabinet now contains nobody who pays even lip-service to the dangerous doctrine that the Natives are human beings. And Hertzog can lean back and smile, for he has stolen some of the thunder of the Malanites, and given the United Party another lease of life.

The first thing to be noted about the Cabinet crisis is that the departure of Hofmeyr and Sturrock is correctly described not as a resignation but as a dismissal. In his speech in parliament on September 9th, Hofmeyr tried to convey the impression that he was resigning because of an irreconcilable difference of principle between himself and Hertzog. He had no objection to Fourie being brought back into the Cabinet, but he objected to his being brought back as one of the nominated Senators who are supposed to be selected on the ground of their acquaintance with "the reasonable wants and wishes of the coloured races in South Africa". This nomination he described as "nothing less than a prostitution of the constitution".



"There was, however, even more in it than that. The whole question of the relationship between white and black was involved. Were the non-Europeans simply going to be pawns in the Europeans' political game? asked Mr. Hofmeyr. If that were so, one safeguard of the rights of the non-Europeans might go today, and another would go tomorrow. To that he would never give his assent". (Cape Times. 10/9/38).

The debates of the Union parliament are not lacking in choice examples of hypocrisy, but this surely must be one of the choicest. There is not a single word that rings true. The nomination of Fourie, says Hofmeyr, is a "prostitution of the constitution". That could be true only if there were any real sense in which the constitution safeguarded the rights of the non-Europeans. But it needs only a very casual reading of the South Africa Act to convince one that as far as the non-Europeans are concerned, the primary object of the constitution is not to safeguard their rights but to prevent them from ever having any rights. So how can the nomination of Fourie be said to prostitute the constitution, when it is so obviously in line with the spirit of the constitution? The real meaning of Hofmeyr's complaint is not that the constitution has been violated, or that the rights of the non-Europeans are threatened, but that Hertzog has been too crude in revealing his contempt for the Coloured and Bantu peoples. Hofmeyr still thinks it is necessary to use diplomacy (that is, duplicity) in handling the non-European races, whereas Hertzog, having "solved" the Native problem, no longer bothers to hide the truth.

Just as his concern for the constitution is utterly fraudulent, so Hofmeyr's alarm about the rights of the non-Europeans is easily shown to be a lying pretence. The political and economic rights of the Bantu, such as they were, were completely abolished by the last government, of which Hofmeyr was a member. It is true that he made speeches against Hertzog's Native policy, but he remained in the Cabinet. He remained in the government that took away the Cape Native franchise, that deceived the Bantu by fraudulent promises of land, that devised the iniquitous plans, incorporated in the Native Laws Amendment Act, for the economic enslavement of the Bantu. If his principles had meant anything at all, he would have resigned before the first reading of the Natives Representation Bill. When therefore, having easily swallowed three large camels, he now strains at a gnat, his performance is supremely ridiculous. It is no wonder that Hertzog referred contemptuously to his newly-developed tenderness of conscience.

Hofmeyr did not resign because of his "principles", for his previous conduct shows that he has none. He did not resign because he thought the interests of the Coloured people would suffer if they were represented in the Senate by Fourie rather than Thompson, for he knows perfectly well that the Senate is a legislative luxury that has no value, whether instrumental or ornamental. He resigned because Hertzog had no more use for him, and ordered him to go. Fourie's nomination to the Senate was merely Hertzog's device for enabling him to make a dignified exit.

Diplomatic tradition requires that on such occasions a Prime Minister conceals the true nature of his disagreement with the dismissed colleague, and makes it appear to the public that they are still the best of personal friends. But on this occasion the old savage Hertzog flung tradition to the winds, and not only kicked out Hofmeyr and Sturrock but kicked them again after they were out, greatly to the distress of the "Cape Argus". In its leading article on September 13th the Argus complains of "the coolness, almost acidity, of the Prime Minister's farewell to colleagues who more than any others carried the Rand for the party at the general election", and adds wistfully: "A little warmth, a gesture of real regret, would have done a world of good". To whom, we may ask, would it have done a world of good? To the oppressed workers in whose interest Hofmeyr ostensibly resigned? Not at all. The Argus makes it quite clear. It would have been good for the United Party, for it would have helped to retain the allegiance of "many thousands of adherents of the Liberal wing" who regard Hofmeyr as their natural leader. In other words, it would have made it all the easier for the government to pursue its infamous policy of oppressing the non-European population, and it would have made it easier for the "liberals" to stay in the party and fight for their share of the spoils that are yet to be divided.

This is the real crux of the matter. The "liberal" wing of the old South African Party, representing in the main secondary industry and the petty bourgeoisie, got the worst of the bargain when the United Party was formed. Their freedom to exploit the Bantu population has been seriously curtailed by the Native Laws Amendment Act. To form a new party and through it to fight openly for their interests would be not only futile; it would be suicidal. The only way in which they can save a few scraps of the booty for themselves is to remain in the United Party, and through it to exercise some control over the administration of the Native Laws Amendment Act. For it must be remembered that although the act is on the statute book, the actual details of its working have to be decided by the Cabinet. If the industrialists have a representative in the government,



they can still hope to avoid a total loss; they can still press their claims. Even if they have no such representative, they may still be able to salvage something from the wreckage if they remain in the ruling party. But if they left the party, nothing could be more certain than that the act would be administered entirely for the benefit of the farmers and the Chamber of Mines. The attitude of the "liberals" would therefore have been more correctly expressed by the Argus if, instead of hypocritical phrases about a "gesture of real regret", it had been written: "Couldn't the old geyser have given us at least a few crumbs?"

But Hertzog has no need either to give a few crumbs to the industrialists or to make a gesture of real or pretended regret. In fact it would suit him very much better if he could kick all the "liberals" not only out of the government but out of the party as well. For his Native policy serves the interests of the "purified" Nationalist Party as well as of the agrarian section of his own party, and it is mainly the presence of the "liberals" that prevents the Malanites from joining him. However, the "liberals" have no intention of giving him that satisfaction; they know too well where their own interests lie. And it was therefore with great relief that the Argus was able to announce in bold headlines (Sept. 10th) that the United Party was "secure". "Until a day or two ago," it wrote, "lively fears were entertained by a number of members that a split might occur, and there were actually gloomy speculations in the Lobby on the possibility of another general election taking place in the not very distant future." Those "gloomy speculations" were dispelled by Hofmeyr's decision to remain in the party. The intellectual genius of the party, former Rhodes Scholar, former Principal of the University of the Witwatersrand, had "saved" the United Party by an act whose illogocality could hardly escape the notice of a schoolboy. He resigned from the government because his "conscience" would not allow him to remain. But that same "conscience" raised no objections to his continuing membership of the party whose policy was being administered by that same government. What a marvellous thing it must be to have such a powerful intellect!

We have said nothing about Sturrock's statement or about Hertzog's replies. But it is unnecessary to deal with them, because the lessons of the crisis are already sufficiently clear. It proves once more that there is no limit to the ferocity and mendacity of the ruling class in its struggles for the right to exploit the workers. And this applies to the Hofmeyrs just as much as to the Hertzogs. It proves once more that the "liberals" who utter honeyed words about "safeguarding" the rights of the oppressed are no less dangerous to the workers than the ferocious wolves who do not hesitate to bare their fangs. It proves, in short, that the workers have nothing to hope from the "goodwill" of the ruling class. There is only one way to remedy their ills, and that is for the workers to kick out the Hertzogs, the Hofmeyrs, the Malans, and the whole tribe of exploiters. And there will be no need on that occasion to bother about the niceties of political etiquette.

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