

How Wars Come About

By MAX SHACHTMAN.

THE question of war is one of the most important in the life of the worker, especially to the young worker. It is the young worker who is the first to be drafted into the army or navy, the first one to be sent away to the battlefield, there to pump lead into the bodies of other workers before they can do the same thing to him. And in order to find some way in which to prevent the horrors of ever-recurring slaughters, it is necessary to look into the question and see how wars come about. When we have the basis of war, we may be better able to find a way in which to root it out of the life of society.

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The story is often told of the two boys who were fighting in the streets: a Jew and a Gentile. The Jewish lad was getting the worst of it, and the uproar arising out of the conflict brought his father to the window.

"Stop that fighting, Jake!" he cried. "No," replied his son. "He called me a Christ-killer."

"It makes no difference what he called you," countered his father, "you stop that fighting."

"He said that you were a dirty kike," pleaded the boy.

"I'll take care of that. You come right up here this minute."

"But father," finally said the youngster, "there is a nickel under my foot and I can't go away!"

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There is always that nickel lying somewhere near the field of battle. There is always, also, some fine slogans which are issued to hide the fact that the war is being fought over so mercenary a cause as money, oil fields, coal and iron ore mines, railway concessions or fields of investments. In the last war we had "the war to end all wars" and "the war to make the world safe for democracy." But with the passage of time, all the observant workers of the world have been disillusioned about the fine phrases which covered up the sordid realities.

A worker enters a factory and produces a certain commodity. He gets part of the value of it as wages and the rest is the rake-off which the boss takes in the form of profit. Since the

workers cannot buy back what they have produced, the time soon comes when there is too much on the market. Then the capitalist looks elsewhere on this earth to find a place where he can sell his surplus products or else to invest his non-functioning capital in some productive fields.

For this purpose every country has its squadrons of ambassadors, emissaries, consuls and agent who report regularly on the industrial and financial conditions of the countries in which they are stationed. Our investor soon finds a place to which he transfers his capital, usually by obtaining a concession or permit from the native government of the undeveloped country. If the native regime will not so readily give up what later amounts to its sovereignty, we simply overthrow it. This was done in the Carribean Islands, Haiti, San Domingo, Nicaragua, and Mexico, by the troops of the United States Government. This has been done also by every great power on the European continent in the territories over which they now hold sway.

We take the United States as our example and base. "We"—that is, our capitalists—look for new markets because they must have an outlet for their surplus, but the very same thing holds true of the capitalists of the various other big nations of the world. They also seek new fields to conquer. And inevitably, a conflict between two or more powerful groups arises.

Right there is the basis for all wars. Stripped of all veils and masks, of all beautiful slogans and phrases, of all lying excuses and false reasons.

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The United States today is an imperialist nation. Our colonies are to be found in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Our control is grazing the shores of Africa: Liberia, the negro "republic." And now our hegemony is beginning to include Hungary, Germany and even Europe. In the Far East, we are casting greedy eyes in the direction of the coal and iron ore fields of China. It is for the last juicy morsel that the United States is heading straight for a war with Japan. It is for this that all the yelping is going on in the press about the Japanese and the necessity of excluding them from the country.

In Persia, the killing of an American representative is immediately the excuse for the breaking off of diplomatic relationships and the threat to send down an American warship. It should not be forgot that there are highly valuable oil deposits in Persia for which the Standard Oil of America and the Royal Dutch Shell of Great Britain have both been angling for some time.

Such a trick has been pulled time and time again. What is to prevent the United States from, let us say, de-

claring war against Japan in a short time on the hollow pretext that some citizen was ill-treated or that the flag was insulted. What is to prevent the United States from getting into a war with England, another of our late allies, ostensibly over some innocent looking affair, but in reality because the rivalry between these two powers mounts with the passing of each day, because the investments of American capitalists come into daily conflict with the investments of British capital in such countries as Brazil, Argentina, Chile, other South American countries; in Canada, in Persia and other parts of the world.

There is only one force capable of stopping the onward rush of the approaching world war. That force is a revolutionary working class.

The revolutionary working class is that working class which will realize that the only way of stopping war is by the complete overthrow of the capitalist system which produces it regularly. The Russian workers and peasants knew this, felt it, and they overthrew both Czarism and the socialist supporters of capitalism, thus bringing the world war to a close. It was they who brought Russia out of the world slaughter, and later broke the backbone of German imperialism.

The Communists of the world are organized to fight the real war to end all wars, the war against capitalism. Pacifism makes a pretence at being opposed to imperialist wars, but is in reality the first to go along when war is declared. It stands for class peace, peace between the workers and their exploiters which is not peace but slavery. As against the wars of the imperialist profiteers in which the workers sacrifice their lives, the Communists advocate the workers' war against the bosses.

Slowly, painfully, the workers are learning that it is sometimes wise to take a leaf out of the book of capitalist tactics. Only good christians and fools turn the other cheek when he is slapped. The fighting miners of West Virginia learned the lesson of the struggle against oppression when they took up their rifles and went gunning for the thugs of the coal operators. The miners of Herrin, Ill., learned a similar instructive lesson. The same lesson will have to be learned by every single worker in the United States as well as elsewhere.

To the war of the capitalists we oppose the war of the proletarian revolution. If war should come, our only alternative will be to turn the energy, blood, sacrifice of the fighting soldier-workers into a war against their oppressors, the scheming plutocrats who refuse to yield their position and make way for a sane social order.

At the present time, the armies of capitalism are made up of misguided young workers. It is our duty to point out to these young workers their real place in the make-up of capi-

CURRENT FICTION

(The Week's Best Smeller, Entitled: "My, What An Odor!")

The Republican party reaffirms its stand for agreement among the nations to prevent war and preserve peace. As an important step in this direction we indorse the permanent court of international justice and favor the adherence of the United States to the tribunal recommended by President Coolidge."—Republican Platform.

Get in the Union in Your Trade!

The politician who before election is so anxious to "serve the people" usually does afterwards, on a plate to Capital.

CONTINUOUSLY AND ALL OVER

I don't like to repeat it—really. But no less an upright and honorable gentleman than Clarence True Wilson, corresponding secretary of the board of temperance and public morals of the Methodist Episcopal Church, says this about LaFollette:

"The only party and the only wet candidate running is Robert M. LaFollette. He has been continuously wet."

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talist society. We, the young Communists, set ourselves the goal of gaining these young workers for the cause of the revolutionary working class, as they were won in Russia, as they are being won in France and other countries.

On the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the world's greatest and most horrible murder feast, we proclaim the Communist watchword and call upon the workers to join us and fight against the oncoming slaughters of their class for the profits of their boss:

War Against War!
The proletarian revolution against imperialist wars!