

The Socialist Party of Great Britain and the War

In this, our first issue of the Socialist Standard since the declaration of war, we have the opportunity of reaffirming the socialist attitude that we have consistently maintained since the formation of the party, including the war of 1914-1918. With the increasing international tension of recent years we have again and again pressed home the undeniable truth that as long as the world is organized on a capitalist economic basis the never-ceasing rivalries will continue to produce conflicts ranging from mere diplomatic crises to gigantic armed struggles spreading over the oceans and continents of the world. The Socialist Party of Great Britain reaffirms that the interest of the world working class—on whom the untold misery and suffering of war inevitably falls—lies in abolishing the capitalist economic system.

The present conflict is represented in certain quarters as one between "freedom" and "tyranny" and for the rights of small nations.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is fully aware of the sufferings of German workers under Nazi rule, and wholeheartedly supports the efforts of workers everywhere to secure democratic rights against the powers of suppression, but the history of the past decades shows the futility of war as a means of safeguarding democracy. After the last Great War—described as the war to end war, and as a war to make the world safe for democracy—the retention of capitalism resulted in the building up of new tyrannies and terrorisms through the inability of the capitalist states to solve the problems created by the system of private ownership of the means of production and distribution and the competitive scramble for raw materials, markets and control of trade routes. So little did the last war achieve its alleged purpose that the man who was prominently associated with the Allied victory and the claim that that war would be the last—Mr Lloyd George—now has to confess that even this war may not be the last war. Writing in the *Sunday Express*, September 10th, Mr Lloyd George says:

"It is only just over 20 years ago that France and Britain signed the armistice with Germany which brought to an end the bloodiest war in history. They are now fighting essentially the same struggle again.

Germany is again the aggressor. Once more it is a fight for international right—the recognition of the equal right of nations, weak as well as strong, to lead their own independent lives so long as they do not interfere with the rights of their neighbours. This conflict has gone on periodically since the dawn of history. It will go on for many centuries to come unless and until mankind accepts that principle as one of the irrefragable commandments of humanity."

The Socialist Party of Great Britain calls on the workers of the world to refuse to accept this prospect, and calls upon them to recognise that only Socialism will end war.

Among those who support the present war is the British Labour Party, who long ago declared that the peace treaties of the last war contained the germs of a future war. At one time the Labour Party, in its "Labour Speakers' Handbook" 1922, declared that the

"unjust territorial arrangements" of the Peace Treaties must be rectified including the return of Danzig and other Polish territory to Germany and the return of other Polish territory to Russia in accordance with the principle of "self-determination".

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds that neither the doctrine of "self-determination", which the Labour Party then claimed had been violated by the Peace Treaties, nor the German claim for a new carving-up of Europe, nor any other policy for settling minority problems and international rivalries within the framework of capitalism, is capable of bringing peace and democracy to the peoples of the world. Another war would be followed by new treaties forced on the vanquished by the victors, and by preparations for further wars, new dictatorships and terrorism.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain therefore pledges itself to continue its work for Socialism, and reiterates the call it issued on the outbreak of war in 1914:

"Having no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to our fellow-workers of all lands the expression of our goodwill and socialist fraternity, and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism."

The Executive Committee
Socialist Party of Great Britain
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