

hence the speed-up in war-preparations. War is organised by the capitalist class whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of the working-class. The crisis is causing the rapid disintegration of the British Empire, and because the world is on the eve of war, attempts are being made to patch up Empire differences and present a united fighting force to the other nations. The capitalists must have wars because they destroy their home market by cutting down the workers' wages to the minimum, and must therefore fight for foreign markets or perish.

The Centenary Prepares War

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CHAPTER IV.

WAR CAN BE PREVENTED.

Forces Making for War.

War is inseparable from Capitalism. Imperialism, the present monopoly stage of Capitalism, is the stage in which ownership of banks and basic industries has become concentrated into the bands of gigantic trusts and combines, the stage in which the entire world is carved out by the Imperialist powers into spheres of influence. It gives rise to World Wars. The first of these Imperialist World Wars was fought by dominant British Imperialism against rising German Imperialism in 1914-18. The world is on the verge of the second such war now.

Imperialist wars, as we have seen, are planned by the ruling class, the monopoly capitalists, who own and use the organs of propaganda—the daily press, the wireless, to try to dazzle and hoodwink the vast majority of the people, whose interests are in fundamental antagonism to them, into supporting their war-policy.

The public halls, the schools and the universities are their property, and any movement which by written or spoken word organises opposition to any of their actions has pressure brought to bear against it.

Thus the Victorian Council against War which is organising an All-Australian Congress for November 10th and 12th, and which booked the St. Kilda Town Hall for that purpose more than 2 months ago, received notice five weeks before the Congress that the hall was cancelled. The Masonic Hall which was booked next was in its turn cancelled.

The Melbourne University Council against War has had similar pressure brought to bear against it. The capitalist press launched a campaign against it in August, and several reactionary students, professors and administrative persons within the University co-operated with it in its wilful mis-statements, ultimately refusing the Council recognition as an official University society.

The Capitalist minority also owns the government and makes and manipulates the laws. The streets for instance are always available for military processions, but an anti-war procession is made illegal unless the movement is sufficiently strong to enforce its rights. Thus on August 1st of this year, the Anti-War procession was made illegal in Sydney.

How does the Capitalist minority own the government?

"Meeting in Canberra for the first time since June, 1932, the Federal Loan Council decided to-day to raise at once a new internal loan of £15,000,000. The Commonwealth Bank Board agreed to underwrite the loan."—"Argus," Oct. 30, 1934).

Having underwritten the loan the Commonwealth Bank apportions to the various trading banks—e.g., the Commercial Bank, the Bank of N.S.W., the Bank of N.Z.—the share of the loan they shall each subscribe. These private trading banks are owned by capitalists who have bought up a controlling percentage of the banks' shares and the government loan comes therefore from the monopoly capitalists who regard it as a sound investment with worsened conditions and lower wages of the workers guaranteeing regular interest payment.

Meanwhile the future is mortgaged, more interest burdens are put upon the workers, and the elected puppets dance to the tune of big capital.

These are the forces making for war; and they are powerful forces. If the organs of propaganda fail the capitalists, if they fail to discredit the Anti-War Movement, if they fail to hoodwink the workers into fighting for capitalists profit, they have the law at their disposal: the Anti-War Movement can be made illegal, conscription can be made legal. If the law fails them, if the workers are prepared to organise against war despite illegality, the capitalists have at their disposal the most bloody and ruthless terrorism. Fascist bands are already being secretly organised in Australia for this purpose.

The fight against war is a fight against Fascism. Side by side with the accelerated war preparations is the acceleration of the drive towards Fascism.

Hitler made a spectacular bonfire of Anti-War and Anti-Capitalist literature in Germany; the Australian government moves more quietly in performing the same action: Anti-War and Anti-Capitalist literature is banned from entering Australia and if ordered by book-sellers, it is seized by the Customs' Department, forwarded to Canberra and if considered "seditious" is burned. Alan Hutt's "Condition of the Working Class in Britain" is an example of the type of book that is considered seditious. Based solely on Health Authority statistics, its accuracy cannot be questioned, but it is one of the most damning indictments of Capitalism that has ever been written. Hence it is not considered fit reading.

In Fascist countries strikes are illegal, and the workers' organisations, the Trade Unions, are broken up. The Capitalist press in Australia has already reached the stage of threatening such action:

"In the short-lived strike the Tramway Employees' Association allowed its policy to be framed by militant agitators whose avowed purpose was to attempt to gain something by subversive tactics.

"If this moral cowardice continues trade unionism will lose prestige

in the eyes of fair-minded men. In time public opinion may insist that it shall lose privileges which it abuses. The Australian community is long-suffering in industrial matters, but the breaking-point may come."—"Argus" leading article: Oct. 22, 1934).

In Hitler's unemployed labour camps, the conscripted youths do military drill, using brightly polished spades as rifles. Here again Australia is not far behind.

"Concrete proposals to find employment for youths will be submitted to the Premiers' Conference to-morrow by the Commonwealth Government. They include the transfer of large numbers of workless from industrial centres to gold mining and agricultural and pastoral districts, where they will be specially trained."—"Herald," Oct. 29).

Gigantic strides towards Fascism are threatened in Australia in the near future. The pretense of party government is being rapidly dispensed with. Scullin, "Labour leader," has promised to co-operate with Lyons, Nationalist leader. Terrific onslaughts on the conditions of the workers are threatened.

"It may be that a shortening of hours in some occupations is justified. A survey of Australia's national income, still affected by the low world price of primary exports, may demand adjustments of wages in some industries. The question of boys' and youths' wages, which have been, generally speaking, far too high in Australia, may have to be reconsidered."—"Argus" leading article: Oct. 30, 1934).

Forces Opposed to War.

The forces organising the drive towards Fascism and war are powerful though they must weaken with the decay of the system they uphold.

What of the forces that are opposed to war? Rapidly in some countries and more slowly in others, but everywhere irresistibly these forces are being mustered. Labour politicians who tell the workers that the prevention of war can be safely left to them receive less support. In some places quickly and in others slowly the workers are learning that it is only by their mass rank-and-file organisations that war can be prevented. And again, sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly, the "white-collar" employees, the small business and professional men threatened with bankruptcy, the students threatened with unemployment, the intellectuals struggling from cultural sterility towards a cultural renaissance—all these are learning that their interests lie with the organised workers, that monopoly capital spells the ruin even of them.

In France the united front against war and Fascism has grown with tremendous rapidity. The French Socialist Party, by a majority of more than 4,000 to 400, has accepted the invitation of the Communist Party to form a united front against Fascism and war. On February 12, 1934, at the time of the threatened Fascist *coup* in France, 75 per cent. of the workers of Paris

marched through the streets in solid opposition to Fascism and war. In the provinces the same thing occurred. In the face of such opposition the Fascists were temporarily paralysed.

All over the world the united front is being built up, the rank-and-file of the workers learning that *theirs* is the responsibility to prevent war. The Austrian Socialists and Communists have signed a united front pact; so have the Italian Socialists and Communists; in Spain the united front is being welded together. What of Australia?

The movement here is lagging behind—an action that is criminal in view of the fact that Australia is a strategic point in one of the three biggest military units in the world.

Slowly, however, the united front is being built up, Labour Party workers weaning themselves from the comfortable illusion that everything can be left to the leaders; clerks, small business men, etc., no longer deceived by reiterated reports of returning prosperity, and all joining in the united front movement against war and Fascism.

Here in Australia, the Labour Party leaders and the trade union bureaucrats have not accepted the invitation of the Communist Party to join in a united front; but already the rank-and-file of the workers are moving towards this unity. Individual union officials and Labour leaders also are joining up with the movement against war. As more and more of these workers join the movement, the pressure from below will force the leaders to accept the united front action which alone can be effective in combating war-preparations.

Delegates from Trade Unions representing many basic war industries have already been elected for the All-Australian Congress against War to be held at Port Melbourne on November 10th and 12th. The Australian Railways Union, the Wonthaggi branch of the Miners' Federation, the Hospital Employees' Union, branches of the Australian Engineers' Union, will all be represented at the Congress, where elected delegates will openly express their determination to struggle against war. Delegates from the Maribyrnong munition works will also be present to express the opposition to war-preparations felt by the men working there.

The importance of this opposition to war in the basic war industries cannot be exaggerated. It is the workers who make and transport and fire the guns, and it is therefore the workers who can prevent the operation of the war machine. A comparison of the present position with the position that existed in 1914-18 shows their immensely increased strength. During the last war every soldier at the front was dependent on 5 workers behind the lines for food, clothes, munitions, etc.; now, however, owing to the rapid mechanisation of the army, each soldier is dependent on 12 workers behind the lines. If the industrial workers organise to prevent Capitalism plunging the world into another war, therefore, *they must win.*

The organised opposition of the industrial workers is growing. A new wave of strikes and struggles has started in Australia. The victory of the Wonthaggi miners was a momentous event; and since then the workers of Lysaghts, the cane-cutters in Queensland, the Bendigo engineers, the Dunlop engineers, and the Melbourne tram-men have all struck for better conditions. The metal workers are demanding increased pay, no juvenile labour and also more rank-and-file control of disputes. The naval ratings on the "Moresby," a sloop of the Australian navy, refused to work when ordered to do so at Darwin. The sloop has been engaged on secret service work along the Australian coast, work which is of an urgent character from the point of view of the Defence Department. Insufficient rest periods allowed to the ratings culminated in their refusal to work at Darwin. It is reported that aboard the "Canberra" and the "Australia" there is considerable support for the "Moresby" men.

Organisation means strength; mere anti-war sentiment will avail nothing. Even if we recognise the capitalist basis of war and resolve to have nothing to do with it, *and let it rest at that*, war will come; and it will come with a terrific burst of propaganda and will bring conscription with it, and willingly or unwillingly we will be drafted into military or industrial armies. The only way to defeat the organised forces making for war is to oppose them by equally well-organised forces—forces that must be successful because they hold the instruments of warfare, the factories, the ships, the mines, the railways in their own hands.

The only way for the anti-war movement to grow in effective strength, therefore, is for every anti-war worker to build a council on his job, whether it is on a warship, in a university, in a factory or workshop, in a suburb or country town, in an army unit or in an unemployed camp.

These councils must expose every move towards war made by the ruling class, whether it is in the building up of armaments or in the establishment of strategic military bases, or in the formation of military alliances. Against every war preparation these councils must wage a campaign, thus increasing their own organisational strength and forcing the capitalist rulers to retreat.

This policy is being carried out by the Australian Movement against War in Anti-War Week to be held from November 4th to November 12th. During this week the Centenary war-preparations will be at their height, and therefore anti-war activity exposing these preparations and organising against them will also be at its height. As Melbourne is the main scene of Centenary humbug, it will also be the centre of anti-war activity, delegates from all over Victoria and Australia coming to the National Congress that will be held at Port Melbourne Town Hall on 10th and 12th of November.

During Anti-War Week various activities will be carried out. What are instances of these activities?

On November 11th, the climax of the Centenary celebrations will be

reached with the dedication of the Shrine. The object of this official ceremony is to sanctify the wars of the British armies.

The Victorian Council against War does not sanctify Capitalist wars whether they are past, present or in process of preparation. Its attitude to the Shrine and to those who fought in the last war is expressed in the inscription written on a wreath placed by the Council on the Shrine last Anzac Day.

"With the deepest sympathy of the Victorian Council against War for the brave men of the world, and of Australia in particular, who were slaughtered during the world-war of 1914-18. In memory of them we pledge ourselves to do our utmost to prevent the imperialist war which now threatens, and which any moment may be forced upon the overburdened masses of the world. We pledge ourselves to oppose with all our strength the present struggle of the Imperialist Powers for a redistribution of the world's markets."

The ruling class uses the memory of the Anzacs to try to mobilise another generation for a similar useless slaughter; we use it to try to make the war what the Anzacs wished it to be—"a war to end war."

The wreath placed on the Shrine by the Victorian Council against War was removed by order of the authorities, and its message was reported in the capitalist press to be "offensive to the spirit of Anzac."

The Anti-War Movement will celebrate Armistice Day by holding a mass meeting on the Yarra Bank, and there returned soldiers and nurses who are members of the Victorian Council against War will explain the sordid basis of the ceremony the people witnessed in the morning—the capitalist profit that is the driving motive behind the mock reverence and glittering display.

On November 7th, the Victorian Council against War will celebrate the 17th anniversary of the Soviet Union.

An anti-war movement that recognises capitalism, with its destruction of home markets and its fight for foreign ones, as the root-cause of war, is logically compelled to accept the one Socialist country in the world, with its inexhaustible home market, as the greatest existing factor for peace.

Seventeen years ago, the Soviet Union withdrew itself from the World War and began its struggle for peace. Since that time its fight for peace has not stopped, and has now become such a strong force that even the Capitalist governments and the Capitalist press are compelled to admit its existence.

On November 7th, the anti-war movement will demonstrate its united front with the Soviet Union in the struggle for peace by rallying to celebrate its 17th birthday.

The All-Australian Congress against War and Fascism to be held on November 10th and 12th will be the culmination of the activities of anti-war week.

At this congress, the V.C.A.W., like the Centenary Council, will have a guest from overseas. Our guest however will be a very different type from the oil-kings, the field-marshal and the secretaries for war who have come here as official guests of the capitalist class.

Our guest is a man from the concentration camps of Hitler, a man who would still be there if it were not for the accident that he happened to be born in Czecho-Slovakia, and was therefore escorted to the frontier by the Hitler police and set free.

Egon Kisch, famous working-class writer, was imprisoned in a German concentration camp because of his writings exposing Hitler Fascism and showing the need for organisation against his capitalist war-preparations.

Since being expelled from Germany, Egon Kisch has been working for the World Committee against War in Paris, and this Committee has sent him to take part in the Australian Congress against War.

The value of his presence at our Congress cannot be exaggerated. He has had first-hand experience of the mighty anti-Fascist forces in Germany—the very forces which we may shortly be called upon to fight; he comes directly from the organising centre of the World Anti-War Movement. He comes as the expression of the international unity of the Anti-War Movement. And he comes at a time when the patriotic fervour the war-makers have worked so hard to rouse will be at its height: on November 10th, when the Army, Navy and Air Pageant will be held at Flemington; on November 11th, when the memory of the Anzacs will be desecrated at the Shrine by those who wish to rouse in our generation a desire to make just such another "service and sacrifice."