

# I

## Collective Security

MR. BRUCE BLIVEN has confirmed, in his article of December 1, what I had suspected, that the *New Republic's* advocacy of isolation as the proper approach to foreign affairs by the United States has behind it, at least as one factor, a disturbed conscience in relation to 1917. But I am afraid that he has not studied well what the Communists have to say, either about the last World War or about the one now threatening. Clearly, he does not "understand our language." Allow me, therefore, to make an attempt to put the Communist position as nearly as possible in the language of Mr. Bliven himself, in an effort to break down this linguistic barrier.

Can world peace be maintained? That is the first question toward which we must establish an attitude. If we mean world peace in any absolute sense, then of course the question is meaningless, for right now there are two major wars going on which already have resulted in millions of casualties. The question then must be, can we prevent the two present wars from extending to engulf the whole world?

The answer to this question must begin with that basic fact that the overwhelming mass of the population of all countries, and the governments of most of them, are afraid of war and desire peace. As President Roosevelt expressed it:

The peace, the freedom and the security of 90 per cent of the population of the world is being jeopardized by the remaining 10 per cent who are threatening a breakdown of all international order and law.

We can dot the "i" by saying that from which Roosevelt is restrained by diplomatic considerations: Peace is being destroyed by Hitler, Mussolini and the Mikado.

Our question is now clearer. Can the fifty to sixty effective governments of the world, with the ardent desire for peace of at least 90 per cent of the world's population behind them, find among themselves sufficient forces for peace to restrain the three war-making powers who may control the remaining 10 per cent of the population but certainly do not command its affection?

Clearly, in this relation of forces, there does exist the possibility of preventing the spread of war, and of extinguishing the wars going on, *provided* the peace-loving 90 per cent can arrive at a concerted program of action, at least to a degree in some relation to that of the concerted action of the Triple Alliance of the "anti-Communist" bloc of fascist states.

What degree of concerted action is necessary? Considering the economic resources of the war-makers, it would clearly be sufficient to bring them quickly to a halt if the United States, France, Britain and the Soviet Union should jointly declare an embargo upon all economic transactions with the aggressors, to be ended when three conditions were met: (1) the withdrawal of all their armed forces into their own territories; (2) the stoppage of all supplies being sent to support civil war in another country; (3) the enforcing of a substantial measure of disarmament.

Considering the military resources of the war-makers, their aggressions would be more quickly stopped, if the peace bloc of powers should, while the aggressions continued, open their markets to the victims of aggression for all their needs, and facilitate their purchases with credits.

Considering the political resources of the war-makers, they would be quickly isolated if the small nations now falling under their sway once knew that the democratic powers, abandoning their "scuttle and run" policy, were making a firm stand for peace; they would be undermined at home, and their own oppressed population encouraged to reassert themselves, if

the peace bloc made a joint declaration of willingness to give full aid and co-operation to any democratic and peaceful government that might succeed the fascist dictatorships.

What are the possibilities that such a policy could be adopted by the four great powers I have named? For the United States, such a policy is clearly indicated as the only possible means of implementing Roosevelt's speech in Chicago on October 5. Clearly, then, in our country the task is to organize effective support behind the President's policy of the 27,000,000 who voted for him in 1936. If that can be done, the United States will uphold its end. It certainly can be done—unless the great masses are also afflicted with the Hamlet-like paralysis that has gripped the minds of the *New Republic's* editors under the hypnosis of fascism, which I cannot believe. As for France, the joy with which Roosevelt's speech was received by the people in that country is sufficient indication that any government which refused a direct proposal from the United States for this policy would be swept out of office in a week and be replaced by a government which would gladly give its adherence. As for the Soviet Union, it has been urging precisely such a policy for years, and would gladly assume its full share of the responsibility.

There remains Britain. I fully share the doubts of Mr. Bliven about the good faith of the Chamberlain government in the defense of peace. I am also full of doubts about the Labor Party leadership which has found it so easy to go along with Mr. Chamberlain in his, to say the least, equivocal course. But I have great faith in the British working class, which has, more than once, over the heads of its own leaders, called a sharp halt to reactionary adventures of the British government. I am sure that a clear call from the United States, France and the Soviet Union will bring the great British people into line for this policy, under a new government if necessary.

This, in brief and simple outline, is the Communist con-

ception of a correct and effective peace policy for the United States.

If such a program is adopted, whose interests would be served thereby? Surely it would be in the interests of every nation that wants peace; of the small nations that tremble today under the imminent threat of destruction; of the workers of every land; and of every honest democrat.

But Mr. Bliven says no, this is a peculiar "Russian" program, "not framed in American terms or the American interest." We will not quarrel with Mr. Bliven as to how the policy could be best "framed in American terms"; we are willing to leave that to the President, if Mr. Bliven can agree upon such an eminent authority. But we do have a sharp quarrel with him when he says that world peace is a special "Russian" interest, which may be contrary to the interests of America. *Peace is a common interest* of the Soviet Union and the United States, and, as the two most powerful and peace-loving nations, especially of them.

Mr. Bliven bases his peculiar argument, apparently, upon the opinion that America can *purchase* peace, can *buy off* the aggressor nations with concessions and by granting them a free hand elsewhere. He expresses a deep conviction that any resistance, even purely economic, would lead the United States directly into war. But if the United States *does not dare*, from such fear, to take even economic measures, what reason have we to believe this will insure us from the war danger? It was exactly the conviction that the Nanking government *would not dare* to resist that led Tokyo into the present adventure in China. A continuance of isolation policies by the United States will surely convince the arrogant militarists of Tokyo that now is the time for them to take over the Philippines, Hawaii, Guam and Alaska, as guarantees against the future, when the United States *might dare*. From that it would not be a large step to recall how much more successful are Japanese

than Americans in cultivating the beautiful and rich lands of California.

Upon what basis does Mr. Bliven assume that this danger is remote but the danger of a Japanese attack against the Soviet Union is immediate? Is he relying upon the affinity between two capitalist nations, as against the land of socialism? But Japan knows quite well that the land of socialism is fully armed and ready, a tough nut upon which she might break her teeth. She went into China, *expanding along the line of least resistance*. A continuance of the same line leads her not to Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and Chita, but rather to Manila, Honolulu and Nome.

At the present moment in world affairs, America needs the co-operation of the Soviet Union for her own protection from warlike aggression far more pressingly than the Soviet Union needs America for the same purpose. For the Soviet Union is fully prepared to defend itself, is fully united, and has just cleaned house of the last remnants of those who would cooperate with the enemy. But America, rich and full of potential booty, is still considered by the world to be in a pacifist funk, is torn by a constitutional crisis and sharp class struggles, and contains powerful forces that would welcome Japanese aggression for their own fascist ends.

Mr. Bliven says the program of concerted action for peace proposes "to engage in a bluffing game with the fascist powers." He particularly ascribes to the Communists the idea that "the fascists will be outbluffed and will give way." Nothing could be farther from the truth.

It is my conviction that the fascist dictatorships can be halted only by superior force. But with concerted economic action by the great powers to embargo the aggressors and supply their victims, the superior military force that will halt fascism and bring about its downfall is already in action *in Spain and China*. These two heroic peoples are fighting bravely

and steadfastly, and making a good showing *despite* their abandonment by Britain, France and the United States. If we help them, they will do the military job for us, though I hope many thousands more of our best American boys will go to Spain to help the Lincoln Battalion uphold the honor of our people. If we continue to desert them to their fate, as Mr. Bliven advocates, we will have no one to blame but ourselves when we have to take up the full military burden under more unfavorable conditions.

Finally, what is the value of Mr. Bliven's argument that any participation by the United States in a concerted effort for peace would create the danger of extreme reaction, even fascism, coming to power in America precisely as a result of such effort? In my opinion, the truth is exactly the opposite. Only the courageous implementing of the policy laid down by President Roosevelt in Chicago can save our country, and all the capitalist world, from unparalleled reaction and catastrophe.

The greatest threat against domestic progress today, the greatest strength of reaction, lie precisely in the fact, correctly pointed out by Mr. Bliven, that the 27,000,000 who voted for President Roosevelt are not fully united in support of his peace policy. This is true, even though Mr. Bliven underestimates grossly the breadth of this support. All the more reason why all progressives, democrats and lovers of peace, all anti-fascists, should do everything possible to build and strengthen that support, and not to tear it down with doubts, fears and hesitations which cover a complete absence of policy, a happy-go-lucky drifting with no guidance but faith in America's lucky star.

If President Roosevelt's policy goes by default, through lack of popular support, if the progressive camp continues to be divided by the paralysis of fear, then I foresee the grave

danger that the worst reactionary forces in American public life, playing upon the very real dangers that face the American people, will exploit those fears and the absence of a united progressive policy, with demagogic slogans of "preparedness, more preparedness" and "no entangling alliances" and "America for herself alone" and so on, to stampede the people along the path of reaction, militarism and war.

When our country was in its infancy as an independent nation, when it was relatively weak and surrounded by a hostile world, when it was looked upon by older nations as the source of "revolutionary infection," as the capitalist world today looks upon the Soviet Union—in those days we were not afraid to have a positive policy for peace. We had great leaders then, men with faith that the masses of the people would support them.

When in 1793, France, a new republic such as Spain today, was attacked and blockaded, Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State under Washington, wrote to James Madison:

The idea seems to gain credit that the naval powers combining against France will prohibit supplies, even of provisions, to that country.... I should hope that Congress... would instantly exclude from our ports all the manufactures, produce, vessels, and subjects of the nations committing this aggression, during the continuance of the aggression, and till full satisfaction is made for it.

About the same time Jefferson wrote to Morris, Minister to France, the following:

We received information that a National Assembly had met, with full power to transact the affairs of the nation, and soon afterwards the Minister of France here presented an application for three million livres, to be laid out in provisions to be sent to France.... We had no hesitation to comply with the application... and we shall... omit no opportunity of convincing that nation how cordially we wish to serve them... placing our commerce with that nation and its dependencies on the freest and most encouraging footing possible.

What America needs today, what the world needs, is a foreign policy based upon these lines of Thomas Jefferson. Such a policy has been proposed by President Roosevelt. The whole country must be rallied to support it, and to demand its energetic application in life.

*New Republic*, February 2, 1938.