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### A Long-Term Policy

THE editors of the *New Republic*, together with some Socialist Party spokesmen, have recently defended their isolationist advocacy by speculating (in print) that the Communist Party will itself soon abandon its energetic support of a policy of concerted action. The utter unsoundness of that speculation is of a single piece with their whole isolationist position. The policy of concerted action for peace is not a short-time or emergency policy merely; it is valid for a whole period, and for all circumstances of that period, whether in the fight to prevent war or the fight to end a war already under way. The immediate practical aspects of such a policy may change from time to time, as some forces swing over from one side to the other, and as war is broadened or narrowed, but the essence of the policy is valid so long as war is the main danger to the world.

In saying this, of course, there is no intention to deny the *emergency* phase of the fight for peace today. These are truly critical days, when millions of lives hang in the balance, and when the balance may be turned one way or the other, accordingly as the United States turns decisively toward isolation or toward international co-operation for peace. The time is short for the masses of the United States to come to a conclusion—if they really desire to exercise their full potentialities for world peace. Time is the essence of the problem, and haste is needed as never before in history.

It is necessary, however, to dissolve once and for all the fatally mistaken notion that international co-operation for peace is a make-shift policy, hurriedly concocted for an emer-

gency, which must at a moment's notice win full support of all its potential adherents or be dropped as a failure.

At this moment, the dangerous implications of such a short-sighted view are seen in the opinion, expressed by many shallow publicists, that the latest moves of the Chamberlain government at London, which take Britain another step away from concerted action for peace, and which strengthen the war-makers, become a signal of the bankruptcy of the policy of co-operation.

It is unfortunate that the short-sighted view seems to determine the practical course of the Washington administration, however much President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull may reiterate their sound and correct ideas in general terms. The administration had opened the door for the repeal or fundamental revision of the disastrous "Neutrality Act," when it consented to the House Foreign Relations Committee opening hearings on the various bills directed to that end. But it suddenly caused the cancellation of the hearings, when it learned of Chamberlain's latest pronouncement. It is clear that for all practical purposes the administration is conditioning all its moves upon the leadership of England. The theory of "parallel action," which is at variance with the theory of international co-operation, is the theory that the United States must under no circumstances take the lead. It is a cowardly and dangerous theory, which is paralyzing American action at the most crucial moment, and doing incalculable damage to the world.

American policy at this moment is thus subordinated, in the most humiliating form, to dictation from Downing Street, London. And one of the ironic jokes of history is this, that precisely those who are most pleased by this are the men who have been wailing loudest against the policy of concerted action, on the grounds that it would subordinate us to British interests! This paradox reveals that the isolationists do not fear taking policy from London so long as the reactionary

Chamberlain determines the policy, but they refuse to have agreement with London only if the Labor Party determines the policy.

That may be completely consistent for Hearst and Coughlin, for whom the British Labor Party is only another web of Stalin's "red network." But Norman Thomas, Frederick Libby and Oswald Garrison Villard swallow the identical conclusion with equal equanimity. They are no more disturbed by their alliance with Chamberlain abroad, than they are by their hook-up with the most reactionary circles at home.

Norman Thomas, especially, stands in an ambiguous position, for which he had offered the public not a word of explanation. He is National Chairman of the Socialist Party, affiliated with the Labor and Socialist International; his brother Socialists all over the world are fully committed to the policy of concerted action for peace, both as national parties and collectively through the Executive Committee of their International. But Thomas and his party in America fight for Chamberlain's line and against the line of the Labor Party, co-members with Thomas in the International. Thomas fights against the line of Blum, Socialist Premier of France, and against the line of the French Confederation of Labor, and for the line of the Right-wing Radicals who keep Blum's government paralyzed in relation to Spain. Thomas fights against the line of Negrin, Socialist Premier of Spain, and supports those elements who are trying to overthrow Negrin and his government. Thomas is in full and complete contradiction to the policy of every European Socialist Party and of the whole organized labor movement of Europe. But he remains in the same International with them, and offers not a single word of explanation to America. He fights against their official position—but in America he attributes this position only to the Communists and says he is against it because it is a "Russian"

policy. *He never explains that he is fighting against the position upon which the world Socialist and Communist movements are agreed.* He never explains that his policy is not only isolation for the United States government, but also isolation for United States Socialists from their brothers in other lands. If he would frankly withdraw from the Labor and Socialist International, this would at least remove some of the worst hypocrisy, even if it would leave him in error as deeply as before.

Thomas may reply that his brothers abroad carry out their professed policy of international co-operation very poorly or even not at all. That is an entirely different issue. To the extent that they do execute their declared policy they are working for international unity and for peace, and the problem is to secure the execution of an established policy; but the more Thomas carries out his policy, the more is international unity disrupted and the cause of peace damaged, and the problem with Thomas is therefore to change his policy.

Roosevelt and Hull must be sharply criticized for allowing the reactionary maneuvers of Chamberlain to determine American policy. We must call upon them to have the courage of their own convictions. If Chamberlain, in control of British policy, does not agree with them, all the more reason for implementing their declared convictions together with those powers which do agree, without delay. The United States, which is in the most advantageous position of any nation, must assume the leadership, the responsibility which we inherit from our privileged position.

It is precisely against American leadership in the struggle for peace that the isolationists fight frenziedly, hysterically. Whenever this idea is broached, they immediately begin to tell us that the Americans are such nincompoops, so constitutionally inferior, such utter incompetents, that we cannot engage in

a leading role in international affairs without being cheated out of our pants. They picture Uncle Sam as the country bumpkin who went to town once in 1917, bought a gold brick, and now must be kept strictly at home on the farm in order to keep him from giving the old homestead away to the first sharper he meets.

Of course, this caricature of Uncle Sam is tempered by the assurance that if our brains are mush, at least our hearts are pure gold. If Europe has a monopoly upon intelligence, then America, they assure us, has a monopoly on virtue. But to keep our virtue, we must remain strictly at home behind our garden walls. We may continue to help the war-makers, but at all costs we must not help their victims or we are irretrievably lost. Such is the isolationist estimate of American character and intelligence.

If there was any truth in this gross caricature, then it might occur to even the most empty-headed of such a moron nation that perhaps we are predestined to fall victims to the devilish clever men of other lands, isolation or no. In such a case, the quicker we get some of those brains on our side the better, if we are really convinced we have no brains of our own.

As for me, speaking as an American whose line can be traced back to 1680 in Virginia, and speaking also for the latest naturalized citizen, I would like to denounce this whole picture as a vile slander upon our people. It may be accurate for some of the degenerate sons and daughters of our "sixty families," who furnish most of the money for isolationist propaganda, but it has not the remotest resemblance to the American workers and farmers, and those middle classes who have not been corrupted by monopoly capital. Americans do not claim any monopoly upon virtue, and we hotly resent any idea that we are excluded from our share of intelligence. We can take care of ourselves, and hold up our end, anywhere and every-

where, provided we learn how to take care of our own reactionaries—and muddleheads—right here in America itself.

America must step forward. Litvinov, for the Soviet Union, after waiting long for an initiative from elsewhere, called for an international conference. If Roosevelt and Hull, for reasons of “practical politics”—that reason which produces so many impractical results—or reasons of prestige, cannot directly respond to that initiative, then let them take the initiative themselves. And if we want something practical to result, let the United States clear its own record a bit to win more international respect, by canceling the infamous “Neutrality Act,” and adopting the O’Connell Peace Act, on the basis of which real co-operation is possible.

There are still some people who argue: Concerted action was possible several years ago, as a practical measure, but now with so many great powers out of the League and others showing their contempt for it, this has become a utopian project. That is the same thing as saying that concerted action for peace is practical so long as there is no immediate danger of war. When war approaches as a serious prospect, they say, concerted action becomes impractical. That is of a piece with the logic which assures us a certain remedy is very good so long as we are not sick, but as soon as we fall ill, it is dangerous to take it. It is precisely now, when every action or inaction is fraught with many dangers, that the peace-seeking peoples of the world must find the way to act together or face the consequence of going down together in a chaos of fascism and war.

To the degree that war spreads, to that degree does the policy of concerted action among the peace-seeking peoples become all the more important and necessary. This is a long-time policy, which must direct the fight for peace over a protracted period. It is the only road for the prevention of war, and it is the only road for the ending of war already begun.

Concerted action must begin at home, by the concerted voice and action of all our fighters for peace. President Roosevelt has indicated the correct policy in his speeches, but he still lacks the courage or the support necessary to put it into effect. Let us see that he does not fail for want of support.

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