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WAR ON THE U.S.S.R.?

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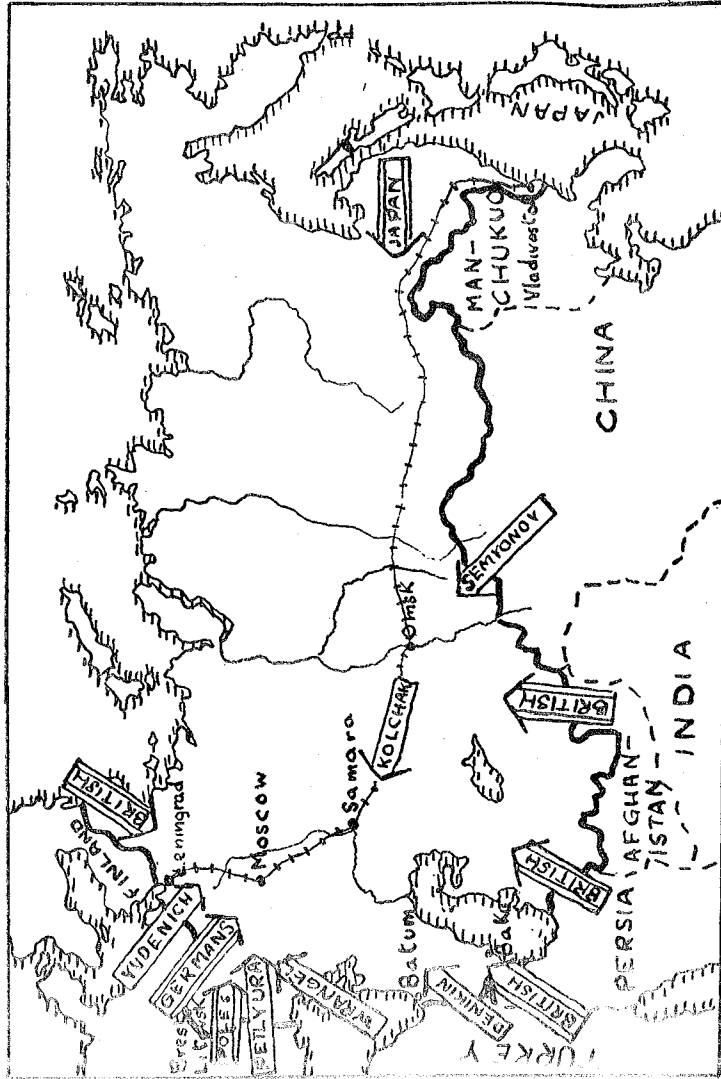
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War on the U.S.S.R.?



The British people find themselves to-day on the verge of a war with Socialist Russia. Every day the facts become clearer; the Government is sending arms and "volunteers" to Finland; Allied armies are massing in the Near East; the *Sunday Times* suggests that we bomb Baku; the whole Press joins in a terrific barrage of abuse of the Soviet Union. The truth is being rapidly laid bare; the British Government seems to be contemplating a full scale war against the Soviet Union. What has led up to this situation? Why is the war being planned by the Government? Who is responsible for such a war? Above all, who wants such a war and why? These are the problems that are now facing the British people; and the British people, remembering how they acted in the last war against the Soviet Union, how they by united action, forced the Government to call off their attack, will understand the answer to these problems and will not be led blindly into useless bloodshed and slaughter.

THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Intervention against Socialist Russia is a fact. That is the first thing we have to get clear. The relative positions of the Soviet Union and the capitalist section of the world are right back where they were in the first intervention period of 1918-20 . . . with one vital difference; the Soviet Union was then a young State just taking shape after the revolution, and to-day it stands as a proved Socialist State and among the strongest military powers.

THE POSITION IN 1917.

At the end of the first world war the capitalist system faced the greatest crisis of its history. A world-wide workers' movement was daily increasing in strength. The most advanced section of this movement was in Russia, led by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party. The 1917 revolution marked the peak of the peoples' struggle for freedom, and the establishment of the workers' and peasants' soviets in

Russia pointed the way by which other sections of the world could advance to Socialism. But capitalism lost no time in organising a counter-offensive.

THE FIRST WAR OF INTERVENTION.

The Soviet Union had withdrawn from the war and only desired peace in which to undertake the process of socialist reconstruction. But the capitalist press raised the cry of military intervention against the new Government. Troops were landed in Murmansk. A campaign was started in Siberia. A French army began to attack from the South.

The solidarity of the working class in the Allied countries prevented the success of the invading armies. The troops were withdrawn; the Soviet Union was not destroyed, and the first stage in the new turn the struggle had taken ended in victory.

The second stage was that of compelling the small surrounding countries by financial pressure to wage war on the Soviet Union with assistance of British, French, and American money. But this attempt also was defeated.

Consequently the Soviet Union has enjoyed twenty years of uneasy peace in which to build up her new economy. But always she had had to guard against the jealousy of her capitalist neighbours.

PRESENT FOREIGN POLICY OF THE U.S.S.R.

What then, to maintain the integrity of its borders, should be the attitude of the Soviet Union to the rest of the world?

Stalin, in March, 1939, gave as the tasks of the Soviet Union in the sphere of foreign policy :

- “ 1. To continue the policy of peace and of strengthening business relations with all countries;
2. To be cautious and not allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by warmongers who are accustomed to have others pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them.
3. To strengthen the might of our Red Army and Red Navy to the utmost,
4. To strengthen the international bonds of friendship with the working people of all countries, who are interested in peace and friendship between nations.”

In pursuing this policy the Soviet Union never contemplated passive inaction. It could never mean that the Soviet Union was to sit back and wait until the capitalist world had solved its internal difficulties to a sufficient extent to launch an attack.

And now the long controversy on the likelihood of capitalist war on the Soviet Union is out of date. The attack has begun.

HOW IS INTERVENTION BEING CARRIED OUT?

THE NORTHERN FRONT.

On the Northern Front Intervention is well under way. Three days only after the Finnish war broke out the League met to organise a capitalist front against the U.S.S.R. By the end of January 700 planes were already in Finland, among them two hundred British Blenheim bombers and Gladiator fighters, some of which had been earmarked for home defence. Collections of money for supplies have poured in and the Bankers have stumped up as they never did for Spain. The official Swedish Fund stands at £400,000; the Swedish bankers and business men's fund at £3,500,000.

But a far more dangerous augury for the future is the sending of men. Already ten thousand “volunteers” have been enlisted in Sweden and many are already in Finland — some released specially from the army. Fascist pilots from Italy and Franco Spain are fighting, as Ciano has told us, for the same cause as they fought for in Spain. Troops have also gone from Italy, Denmark and France.

And now the British Government has followed suit. The recruiting office in London has been officially recognised and an Order in Council has been rushed through to allow volunteers to go to Finland. Unless this is stopped it must lead to war. Even the *Evening Standard* sounds the warning: “For once we allow and countenance volunteers, we may soon be encouraging them and recruiting them, and when we have done this we shall feel responsible for their fate and we shall be compelled to support them. And the end of it may be that we shall be driven to sending regular troops into Finland.” Already two hundred men are leav-

ing, the advance guard of the first five thousand and this is only the beginning.

"I hope that many more will follow; there cannot be too many."
(News Chronicle, Feb. 12th)

If the imperialists are to drag out the war in Finland the *Standard's* warning may well come true.

THE NEAR EAST.

But Finland is not the only point of intervention. A separate attack is developing in the Near East, and the general tactic is one of working on the two fronts together and gripping Russia in a pincers movement. On the other jaw of the pincers movement events have not moved so fast, but the war that is threatened will be far more extensive. Turkey has been bought into the Allied camp to the tune of £90,000,000 (£15,000,000 in gold). General Weygand is stationed in Syria at the head of an enormous army. The Australians are stationed at Suez. The purpose of these men is clear. The Paris "Temps" wrote recently, "We see the truly strategic importance of the area around the Black Sea where the entire deposits of European oil lie. If the region of the Caucasus escapes from the authority of the Moscow government, these two powers, Germany and the Soviet Union would be deprived of their essential fuel."

Scrutator in the *Sunday Times* says, "In such a war the attack might come from our side in the air. Air raids on Baku, from some advanced point in Mosul, would if successful go near to ending the war and certainly would be far less a risky operation than an attack on the Siegfried Line."

Already the government inspired press is working out the plans for the attack. The Turkish government, conforming to the aggressive attitude of the allies, has put into force a national defence law. If the struggle to maintain Finland as an outpost fails, then war in the Near East will be a reality.

THE FIRST WAR OF INTERVENTION

Twenty years ago British soldiers were trying to lay down their arms, in spite of the efforts of the Churchills and the Curzons to make them attack the Soviet Union. To-day their sons are taking up arms under rather similar circumstances. The plans for the destruction of Bolshevism, which failed in 1918-20 are being revived. The battle fronts of Yudenitch and Ironside are being recreated. It is interesting therefore to recall how the first war of intervention worked out.

The first war of intervention began half as an attempt to rebuild the eastern front against Germany, and only half as a crusade against Bolshevism. It was only when the Allies failed to draw the Soviet government back into the war that they concentrated on the overthrow of the system. At the same time they tolerated the German troops in the Baltic, and the German agents in the Ukraine. At certain times the two parties in the imperialist war were not very far off the armistice which would enable them to act jointly against the common danger of Bolshevism. Just as at the present, the lay-out was complicated; each side wanted to beat its imperialist rival **and** the socialist republic.

Let us try to answer three questions: what were the Allied plans in the First War of Intervention? Why did they fail? How do they compare with those outlined in the interventionist newspapers, and proposed by interventionist statesmen to-day?

THE GENERAL PLAN

In 1918-20 the Allies operated with four distinct forces.

1. They armed, subsidised and encouraged the old supporters of Tsarism—the white generals and their armies. The most important of these were Admiral **Kolchak**, Generals **Denikin**, **Yudenitch**, **Wrangel**, and **Miller**.

2. They armed, subsidised, and where necessary created "progressive" governments of a pseudo-socialist viewpoint. Such were for example, the "North-Western Provisional Government" set up by General **Marsh** in the record time of 45 minutes, and the puppet government at

Archangel. The most notable of these "governments" was the Menshevik state of **Georgia**, which held out, under the protection of the British force in northern Persia and the Caucasus, for some years. It survived long enough to be praised by a Labour Delegation (which investigated the "threat from Russia") as a grand country. Then the Bolsheviks rose in Georgia, the Red Army marched in, and the Mensheviks left for Paris. We may incidentally note two points: puppet governments were a speciality of the British. And the men who consented to become the servants of foreign invaders called themselves socialists and even revolutionaries, and held views very like those of certain leaders of the Labour Party. Winston Churchill has written an interesting essay about one of them, Boris Savinkov, in *Great Contemporaries*.

3. They armed, subsidised, and again where necessary created "nationalist" governments in the border states of Soviet Russia. Such were the governments of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Transcaucasia, and the various gang-leaders who called themselves "the Ukraine".

4. Lastly the Allied governments employed their own troops, and the troops of defeated Germany in the war. This last fact is noted by the "Times" of October 27th, 1919:

"The allies at the time of the armistice endeavoured to make use of this (the German Baltic) army of occupation as a protection for Western Europe against the Bolsheviks and did not stipulate for an immediate evacuation, as there were then no local forces considered capable of making headway against Bolshevik aggression."

THE TACTICAL METHODS

Soldiers of fourteen nations, boasted Churchill, fought on Soviet soil. There were Czechs, Italians, Greeks, Serbs, Americans, Rumanians and Japanese. The operations, with which we are concerned however were mainly undertaken by the British.

Forces under Generals Maynard and Ironside

operated from Murmansk and Archangel.

A force under General **Malleson** occupied Baku and held down the oil area.

General **Dunsterville** stood in Northern Persia (Iran) which was of course "neutral."

A British force marched on Merv in Turkestan, to guard the back-door to India.

The Hants. and Middlesex regiments were stationed in Omsk.

The British Navy did "all that could be done in the way of shelling positions and covering the advance" of the Whites in the Gulf of Finland.

In other words: British troops operated on the Northern Front, in the Caucasus, in Central Asia, and in Siberia. The Black Sea area was divided into spheres of influence between the British and the French, who were given the job of operating through Bessarabia, the Ukraine and the Crimea. (A copy of the agreement between British and French is printed as an appendix to Louis Fischer's "Soviets in World Affairs.")

THE MILITARY OPERATIONS

What was the military plan of campaign? At first it was ambitious. The British force advanced south from Murmansk. The legion of Czech war-prisoners, which occupied the Trans-Siberian railroad, and the forces of Admiral Kolchak advanced due west to meet the forces of Denikin, who came from the Caucasus and Kuban areas, around Tsaritsyn. The Ukrainians held the South East, the Baltic and Finnish Governments in the west were to threaten Leningrad. Between these forces the Soviet Republic was to be crushed out of existence. This was in the summer of 1918, and the plan failed. It was once again tried in 1919: Petyura in the Ukraine, supported by the French expeditionary force, Denikin advancing North, Yudenitch and the Estonians threatened Leningrad. But once again the Bolsheviks beat back the attackers. It was tried, with reduced forces, a last time in 1920: The Poles

attacked from the West, General Wrangel from the South (Kolchak had been defeated and executed; Denikin had disappeared, the threat from the Baltic was easier). Again it failed. And this last failure meant the virtual end of Intervention. The Japanese hung on for another two years in and around Vladivostok, but in 1922 they evacuated the Soviet Far East.

Analysing the war, Lenin distinguished two stages of military action: "The first stage, and the one that was naturally most accessible and easy for the Entente was to destroy Soviet Russia by means of its own troops"—and the White Guard troops. The second stage Lenin described as follows:

"There is not a single country, there is not a single corner of the globe left where British, French, and American finance capital is not virtually in complete control. On this was based their new attempt which was to compel the small states surrounding Russia, many of which had emancipated themselves and secured the possibility of declaring their independence only during the period of war—Poland, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, the Ukraine, etc.—to wage war on Russia with the assistance of British, French and American money.

REASONS FOR FAILURE

There are two reasons why these plans failed: The strength of the Soviet Government in Russia, and the solidarity of the workers of the capitalist world with the Soviets. The Allied experts estimated, if we are to believe Lloyd George, at the beginning of 1919, that 100,000—150,000 troops sent to Russia would stiffen the Whiteguards sufficiently to defeat the Bolsheviks. Quite possibly they might have done so—but no country could risk sending any such number of soldiers to Russia, because the soldiers simply mutinied.

THE POSITION NOW DIFFERENT.

There is a moral in this story of the First War of Inter-

vention and the interventionists have learnt it. They are to-day fighting a U.S.S.R. which is immeasurably stronger than the weak Soviet Republic of 1918-20. They have lost the disruptive forces within the Soviet Union. There are no Kolchaks and Denikins. They have lost the Baltic states and the Ukraine. In spite of the Press barrage they have, at any rate, not gained any confidence in their policy, and know that they will find the workers of all countries in favour of the socialist power.

In these unfavourable circumstances two modifications must be made in the old plan. First, the grandiose schemes for conquering all Russia must be reconsidered; second, new forces must be found to replace the allies of 1918-1920, who have since, one by one, gone the way of all White Guards: the Poles, the Georgians, the Denikins and Petlyuras; and above all—interventionist troops must be sent to Russia not in thousands but in tens and hundreds of thousands. If in 1919 the generals demanded 100,000 men against an exhausted and untested regime, how many more are required to-day? **THE WAR AGAINST RUSSIA WILL BE A LARGE-SCALE WAR.** There will be no playing with Intervention. Churchill and Ironside, the men who demanded a full scale anti-Soviet war in 1920 are here to see that the mistake of the past is not made again.

Once again too, the border states are mobilised. Whatever the nature of the Finnish war, from the interventionist point of view Finland is, to paraphrase Hore-Belisha's expression about Norway—"A pistol pointed at the heart of Leningrad." There seems no reluctance on the part of Marshal Mannerheim and his generals to join in an anti-Soviet war; what the member of the Schutzcorps told Sir E. D. Simon in 1938 remains true: "... The civil guard is still essential to protect Finland from Russia and from communism, which for us are the same thing."

Other allies are more difficult. With the elimination of Poland and the Baltic states there remain as voluntary or involuntary interventionist powers mainly the Scandinavian states, Rumania, Turkey and Iran. How far are they likely to become involved? (Even in 1918-20 not all the

little states who made war on Russia did so of their own accord. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania would much have preferred making peace to fighting on.)

THE MILITARY PLAN THIS TIME

Military action — if we follow, for a moment, the articles and speeches of the interventionists—Hore Belisha, the Daily Telegraph, Figaro, Temps, Sunday Times, etc.—is proposed on three fronts: The Northern, The South Western, and the South Eastern.

In the North, "Le Temps" suggests an expeditionary force to Petsamo and Murmansk. Hore Belisha to Northern Norway. In any case, action there could have only two purposes—to cut the U.S.S.R. off from the Baltic and White Sea and to cripple Leningrad. In both cases the Scandinavian states would be drawn in.

In the South, matters have gone beyond simple speculation. The existence of the Anglo-French Army under Wavell and Weygand is admitted, and this is said variously to be for use in the Balkans, in the Caucasus, or in both. Presumably, if war with U.S.S.R. were to come it would close around the Black Sea from the East through Rumania and Bessarabia, and from the East through Turkey and Northern Iran. The allied fleet would as the *Sunday Times* suggests, bomb the Black Sea ports, notably Batum. The fact that Iran is neutral would be no bar; for as the *Telegraph's* near eastern correspondent explained, in a now famous despatch, it might be necessary to discover conditions in international law which permitted the allies to have troopson Neutralsoil (as General Dunsterville had in 1919). Presumably, too, there would be some division of labour in this pincer movement round the Black Sea like the one between the British and French in 1919.

In the South the interventionist action has two aims: to do as much damage as possible or to occupy the rich areas in the Ukraine and Don area, and above all to seize the Baku petrol. This would, of course, be of inestimable value for the winning of the war against Germany, but even other considerations apart, it has always been one of the

safest bets in international politics that the British would make a bee-line for the Baku oil, whatever else happened. (As General Malleon did in 1919, shooting the 26 commissars in the process). Perhaps they might go further and penetrate Turkestan to guard India against whatever it is that threatens her. (As they did in 1919 when they occupied Merv).

Oil, at any rate, will dominate the interventionist plans in the south. When respectable publicists like Scrutator talk calmly of bombing Baku (which is still in a neutral state) and Le Temps writes "If this region of the Caucasus escaped from the authority of the Moscow Government Germany and the Soviet Union would be deprived of their essential fuel," matters have developed quite far.

Now you will note the similarity of the plans for 1940 with those for 1918-20; the drive from the North, the double drive from the South—this time with far stronger and better equipped forces than the allies had at their disposal in the Near East in 1919. The attempt to drag neutral states—Scandinavia, Iran into the war—one victim, Finland, is already in it. The same Press campaign of lies. The same talk about the defence of western civilisation.

Once again we note the dual policy of intervention—half aimed at helping the allies to win the war against Germany, but, as in 1918-20, developing inexorably towards a full-dress war against socialism.

WHAT ABOUT GERMANY?

But dare the imperialists start a full-scale war against the Soviet Union while they are still confronted by a rival as powerful as Germany? The prospect is not one of their own choosing but the situation in which they find themselves is driving them into such a war of necessity.

THE STALEMATE.

At present, for all Churchill's optimistic speeches the war against Germany is not progressing as it should. On the Siegfried line the position is one of complete stalemate.

Without an overwhelming superiority of men and arms neither side can advance. Neither side possesses such superiority. The blockade is quite ineffective.

"The point at which the enemy's war effort will be damagingly enfeebled (by the blockade) is nowhere in sight." (The Economist, January 20th, 1940).

"We have to realise that our problem is now greater than Germany's Our 'assurance of victory' has been based far too much on ability to strangle Germany's economic life out of her. If she can expand to the East while holding us in the West, all of our calculations have gone astray."

(The Economist, February 17th, 1940).

"SPREAD THE WAR . . ."

With no chance of starving Germany of food or war materials and no front on which to achieve military victory, Britain and France cannot win this war. And so Churchill shouts to the world that the war will spread to the North, spread to the South. New fronts must be found; fronts where there can be some chance of military victory; fronts which will cut Germany off from her sources of supply. As in the last war, the war in the Near East will serve two roles. The formation of a new thrust against Germany and the opening of the capitalist offensive against Russia.

The Munich plan of sending Germany against the U.S.S.R. in the East ended in a fiasco. The plan of smashing Germany first and organising a crusade against the U.S.S.R. afterwards is far more utopian. If the imperialists are to defeat their rival Germany, and halt the advance of Socialism, they must draw out the war in Finland; they must open a new theatre of war in the Near East—a war which will involve the Soviet Union. This is what underlies the diplomatic activity and the massing of troops in the Near East and the Press campaign against the Soviet Union.

ACTION BY THE PEOPLE

To-day we are confronted with a situation similar to that in 1919. But then intervention was stopped by the

unrest among the troops sent to attack the new Soviet Republic, and the action of the working class in the capitalist countries. Lloyd George, British Prime Minister, says in Vol 1 of "The Truth about the Peace Treaties":—

"Canada has decided to withdraw her troops, because the Canadian soldiers would not agree to stay and fight against the Russians. Similar trouble had also occurred among the other Allied troops and he felt certain, that if the British tried to send any more troops there, there would be mutiny."

But at home resistance to intervention was even more marked. The revolution of October, 1917, aroused wide sympathy throughout the labour movement, though this was given no sort of encouragement by the leaders of the Labour Party. At the Labour Party Conference of July, 1918, Kerensky was produced to plead for intervention in the name of democracy. But this could not for long hide the true nature of the events in Russia. Throughout 1919 the movement against intervention grew. At the Labour Party Conference of 1919, in spite of a report from the Executive of the Party, opposing any form of direct action against intervention, a resolution was passed by 1,893,000 to 935,000 against intervention. In the words of Mr. H. Morrison, who might benefit to-day from reading his speech on this occasion: "They must realise that the present war against Russia on the part of this country, France, and the other imperialist powers, was not a war against Bolshevism or against Lenin, but against the international organisation of socialism. It was a war against the organisation of the Trade Union movement itself"

HANDS OFF RUSSIA MOVEMENT.

On November 7th, the second anniversary of the revolution, a national "Hands Off Russia" Committee was formed, including all sections of the Labour Movement. In the spring of 1920, the unprovoked invasion of the Soviet Union by the Poles, egged on by the British and French Governments, made the issue more critical. On May 10th, the very day on which King George V. sent congratulations to Marshal Pilsudski on the capture of Kiev, the dockers loading the "Jolly George," a ship carrying arms to Poland, struck work. This single action

was the starting point of a mighty campaign against intervention. Within a week the Dockers' Union had imposed a ban on the loading of all munitions for use against the Soviet Union—the people of England were making their voice heard!

In the meantime the Poles were in retreat. The Red cavalry under Budyenny were at the gates of Warsaw. The British Government realised that immediate action was needed to save Eastern Europe from Socialism. On August 3rd, Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, sent a note to the Soviet Government threatening war if the Red troops were not withdrawn.

Thus two years only after the armistice, the British people were faced with even more destruction, even less purposeful than that of 1914. This was a call to action for the entire Labour movement. On August 8th mass demonstrations were organised against the proposed war throughout the country, and achieved a success unparalleled in the British Labour Movement. The next day a Council of Action was set up with full power to call a general strike if the war plans were not dropped. This threat was too much for the British Government. There was no war.

The events of 1918-20 proved that war against the Soviet Union, however much our rulers might desire it, was an action which the people would not tolerate. To-day the same cry goes out: "We must defend Western civilisation against Bolshevik order." But war against the Soviet Union will only mean endless destruction, slaughter and misery for the peoples of Europe. If it is stopped in time, it can only be stopped as in 1920, by the working classes in the capitalist countries, and by their allies the youth and the students.

As in 1918 the leaders of the Labour Party are pleading for intervention "For Democracy." But as in 1918, it is the rank and file, not the leaders that matter. We must rally the students and the working people of Britain behind the slogan:

NO VOLUNTEERS FOR FINLAND
HANDS OFF RUSSIA!

FOSTER & JAGG, ST. ANDREW'S HILL, CAMBRIDGE