

The Quest for Peace yesterday and today [Continuation]

Autor(en): **Rappard, William E.**

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THE QUEST FOR PEACE YESTERDAY AND TODAY.

Memorial Lecture given by Professor William E. Rappard, of the University of Geneva, Director, Graduate Institute of International Studies, at the David Davies Memorial Institute of International Studies, April, 1954.

(Continuation)

Why not?

The United Nations, as the League of Nations, was essentially conceived as an international organization of mutual guarantee. It was to protect its members against aggression by linking them together by the bonds of collective security.

This purpose could be achieved only if at least three principal conditions came to be realized. It was necessary, first, that all, or in any case a great majority, of its most powerful members were sincerely peace-loving, that is that they believed in the possibility and supreme desirability of avoiding war; secondly, that they were prepared to grant the grand alliance for peace which they sought to establish enough authority over their own national policies to enable it effectively to exercise its pacific functions; and, thirdly, that they should consider the peace terms resulting from the war as worth preserving, even at the cost of some national sacrifice.

Now, one cannot but recognize that none of these conditions obtain today. At least one of the principal members of the United Nations holds to the doctrine that war is inevitable. Quite consistently, therefore, that state has ever been adamant in its insistence that the grand alliance be constitutionally deprived of all authority to impose its will on any of its principal members. In this demand it was all the more successful as it enjoyed the active support of other great Powers, similarly insistent. Finally, in so far as the peace terms can today, nearly ten years after the end of the hostilities, be defined, they are far from being such as to command the loyalty of the vast majority of the nations united to defend them.

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Can any of these statements be seriously challenged?

The inevitability of war is a notion which permeates communist ideology in the first half of the twentieth century as thoroughly as the inevitability of a world revolution permeated that the leading communists of the second half of the nineteenth. In the final paragraph of the communist manifesto of 1848, Marx and Engels had proclaimed that their international party "openly declares that its plans can only be carried out by the violent subversion of the whole traditional social order. Let the ruling classes tremble at the prospect of a communist revolution".

When the first World War broke out in 1914, Lenin immediately interpreted it as the natural outcome of imperialist capitalism. Denouncing the national belligerency of the socialists of the day, he laid down the true line of conduct of all revolutionary proletarians as tending "to transform the present imperialist war into a general civil war". From then on, first in Switzerland where he had sought refuge and then in his native Russia, to which the German general staff had, for reasons of its own, allowed him to return in 1917, Lenin devoted all his efforts to win over to his views the Russian proletariat and the communist parties everywhere.

Lenin's success was complete, not only in the sphere of political action but also in that of revolutionary theory. Bukharin first, after him all the



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leading bolshevist intellectuals, Trotsky and Stalin in particular, much as they might differ on questions of tactics, all agreed on the political strategy of the Soviet state. Stalin, while never averse to launching peace movements or to proclaiming the possibility of the peaceful co-existence of capitalist and communist states when he deemed it opportune and conducive to the diplomatic interests of the latter, remained absolutely faithful to his conviction of the inevitability of war. He reverted to the topic in his last important essay, "Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.", published in September 1952. In the sixth chapter, entitled "The Question of the Inevitability of Wars Among Capitalist Countries", he writes as follows:

"Some comrades affirm that, in consequence of the development of international conditions after the second World War, wars among capitalist countries have ceased to be inevitable. They consider that the contradictions between the camp of socialism and the camp of capitalism are greater than the contradictions among the capitalist countries, that the U.S.A. has made other capitalist countries sufficiently subservient to itself to prevent them from going to war with one another and weakening one another, that forward-looking people of capitalism have learned enough from two world wars which inflicted serious damage on the whole capitalist world not to permit themselves again to draw the capitalist countries into war among themselves, that in view of all this, wars among capitalist countries have ceased to be inevitable.

These comrades are mistaken. They see the external appearances which glitter on the surface but they fail to see those profound forces which, though

at present operating imperceptibly, will nevertheless determine the course of events.

Outwardly everything appears to be 'all right'; The U.S.A. has placed Western Europe, Japan and other capitalist countries on a dole; Germany (Western), Britain, France, Italy and Japan, having fallen into the clutches of the U.S.A., are obediently carrying out the U.S. commands. But it would be wrong to think that this well-being can remain for ever and ever, that these countries will tolerate without end the domination and oppression of the U.S.A., that they will not seek to free themselves from American bondage and set out on a course of independent development.

When Hitler Germany declared war on the Soviet Union, the Anglo-French-American bloc not only failed to join with Hitler Germany, but, on the contrary, was obliged to enter into a coalition with the U.S.S.R. against Hitler Germany.

Consequently, the capitalist countries' struggle for markets and the desire to drown their competitors turned out in actuality to be stronger than the contradictions between the camp of capitalism and the camp of socialism.

The question is, what guarantee is there that Germany and Japan will not again rise to their feet, that they will not try to wrest themselves from American bondage and to live their own independent lives? I think there are no such guarantees.

But it follows from this that the inevitability of wars among the capitalist countries remains.

(to be continued)

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