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The Munich Betrayal

TONIGHT we are celebrating twenty-one years of the great socialist revolution, on that one-sixth of the earth—the Soviet Union.

The peoples of the Soviet Republics, demonstrating the swiftest and most profound progress in economy and culture ever witnessed in history, march forward to complete their classless socialist society. The rest of the world, where capitalism still rules, lives in the nightmare of crisis, one-fourth of the world already plunged into the bloody chaos of the new imperialist war, all the rest in feverish fear.

The fascist brigands of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis are rushing the capitalist world toward destruction. The ruling circles of the British and French bourgeoisie, abandoning all pretense of resistance, entered into alliance with fascism in the infamous Munich Pact. In the United States, the reactionary camp whose spokesman is Herbert Hoover has joined hands with the Munich gang.

Among all the nations of the world, only the Soviet Union stood firm and unwavering in the midst of the chaos, confusion and disintegration of the capitalist world. It alone stood firmly by its pledges and obligations on the side of world order and peace. And within the other nations, only the Communist Parties, steeled in the teachings of Lenin and Stalin, stood in monolithic opposition to the betrayal of Munich, while all others wavered, split, surrendered or even went over to the fascist side.

It is against this world background that the Soviet Union, on its twenty-first anniversary, stands out in heroic grandeur. It is in this setting that we in the United States should study

the lessons of the land of socialism, for the better solution of our own most pressing problems.

The Munich Pact was treacherous betrayal of the republic of Czechoslovakia. But it was also far more than that. It opened the flood-gates of reaction over Europe. It placed the fascist noose around the neck of the French people. It strengthened the arrogant Japanese aggression in the Far East. It threatens new blows against the heroic Spanish people. It restored the shaking power of Hitler and Mussolini over their own enslaved peoples. It delivered a shattering blow at the remaining fabric of world peace. It threatens the encirclement of the United States, while it works to undermine our remaining democracy from within.

The Munich betrayal was presented to the world as a great achievement of peace. But the unanswerable stamp of falsehood was engraved upon this unprecedented cynicism by the immediate decision of all governments to multiply their armaments as the first consequence of Munich.

Was it inevitable that the world should suffer from the plagues unloosed upon it by the Pact of Munich? No, it was not inevitable!

Was the democratic and peace-loving world confronted at Munich by overwhelming forces, before which it had no choice but to surrender? No, that is a brazen and cynical lie!

Was it possible to save Czechoslovakia and also to preserve peace? Yes, it was clearly and demonstrably possible!

Hitler Germany was unprepared for war. It lacked raw materials, food, finances. Its fortifications were incomplete. Its army was without sufficient trained men. Its very General Staff was in revolt against the idea of war at this time. The German people were stirring with revolt which threatened, in event of war, to overthrow the whole fascist regime.

Against Hitler was concentrated an overwhelming preponderance of forces, military, economic and moral, which abso-

lutely guaranteed his quick defeat. In the face of these forces, firmly united, Hitler would have had no choice but to retreat.

No one knew this fact better than Chamberlain and Daladier and the circles for whom they acted. They did not surrender because they were afraid of a victory for Hitler. They were above all afraid of a defeat for Hitler. They joined forces with Hitler precisely in order to guarantee his victory. They wanted above all to preserve Hitler, as a policeman against their own as well as against the German people. They preferred to betray peace and democracy, rather than preserve it in co-operation with the Soviet Union. They betrayed the national interests of their own lands, rather than protect these interests in an international peace front that included the Soviet Union.

Hitler was bold, not because he was strong, but because he had received in advance the assurance that Chamberlain and Daladier would break up and betray the front of the democratic peoples. All the fantastic negotiations, with the military and naval mobilizations, were but elaborate stage-settings, in order to present the greatest treason of history as an achievement of peace!

So monstrous was this treason, that neither Chamberlain nor Daladier dared to ask even their own Cabinets for their agreement until after Czechoslovakia had already surrendered under their threats. While the Cabinets were still officially on record in support of Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain and Daladier sent emissaries to rouse President Benes from his bed at two a.m. with an ultimatum, either he must surrender to Hitler within a few hours or else both England and France would also join Hitler and assist him in subjugating Czechoslovakia. President Benes sent a hurried telegram to his Ambassador in Paris, asking if this was really the decision of the French government, suspecting the truth that it really was not. He did not receive any answer to his inquiry, for the simple reason that M. Daladier and M. Bonnet had held up all telegrams from Prague,

cutting Benes off from all communication with even his own Ambassadors until he would surrender. After Benes surrendered, then the French Cabinet was allowed to vote on the question, and meekly endorsed the murder when confronted with the corpse.

Today everyone understands that the Munich Pact enormously worsened the conditions for world peace. But not everyone yet realizes that it brought the threat of fascism and war with tenfold imminence to the United States. Czechoslovakia was the front line defense also of our country. When it was betrayed, America's peace was also betrayed.

Chamberlain boasted as his greatest achievement his separate agreement with Hitler. But what was the meaning of that for the U.S.? It means that the British Navy is neutralized in the face of Hitler's plan for conquest of Latin-America, unless it means something much worse, that Chamberlain will work out a plan of active collaboration with Hitler. At one stroke the Atlantic Ocean is transformed into a broad highway for fascist aggression. It is already on the agenda, that the Munich Powers will politely ask the United States to take its place as an attachment to the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis.

The almost unanimous will of the American people is to resist the fascist conquest of the world. President Roosevelt has expressed that will, and there is no reason to doubt its sincerity. But there are the gravest reasons to doubt the effectiveness of all means adopted so far to realize it. Good intentions are no substitute for an active world policy, nor is naval and military expansion. Of what avail to double the navy, when we help Hitler to cancel its effect by aiding his attempt to conquer Spain, to gain naval bases on the west of Africa, when we provide Japan with the means to dismember China? What avails the utmost armaments, when we meekly follow Hitler's instructions to disrupt the peace forces of the world by refusing effec-

tive co-operation with the Soviet Union to organize world peace?

Fascism is spreading its plague, because many leaders of the capitalist democracies, and reactionary leaders of the Socialist and Labor International prefer to retreat and surrender rather than accept the proffered help of the Soviet Union.

There can be no serious proposal to resist fascist world conquest that does not include the active co-operation of the Soviet Union.

The United States and the Soviet Union, Washington and Moscow, have it in their power, by acting together, to organize the peace-loving peoples of the world to smash once and for all the threat of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis. It will not require an army of Americans to march into Berlin to do the job; the German people themselves will do all the fighting that is necessary in Berlin, once they know that the peoples of the U.S.A. with the U.S.S.R. have seriously taken up the task to organize the world to help them and halt their sadistic madmen rulers. It is true that we cannot trust the Daladier government of France for the slightest co-operation. But given a lead in the co-operation of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., the French people would quickly raise a government truly representative of the *Front Populaire* which we could trust.

It is true that we cannot trust the Chamberlain government in Britain for anything, steeped as it is in treason and betrayal. But given a lead from the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., the British people would quickly raise to power a government of the peace-coalition of all labor, liberal and progressive forces, which we could trust.

The agents of fascism among us cry out desperately against such a proposal, using the most fantastic arguments. Let us briefly examine them, for thereby we find the best arguments on the other side.

The reactionaries openly speculate that the Soviet Union

may try to beat Chamberlain at his own game by joining hands with Hitler. But even those who hate the land of socialism cannot believe it, when they see the Soviet Union alone rounds up the traitorous agents of Hitler within its own land, and puts them beyond all possibility of doing any more of their wrecking, spying and diversions for fascism. The clean-up of the Trotskyite-Bukharinite-Lovestoneite gangs in the Soviet Union was the final guarantee, for those who needed it, that the Soviet Union will never be surrendered to fascism.

Now the agents of fascism are complaining that the Soviet Union is really very weak, and cannot be depended upon to withstand a serious attack by Hitler. Therefore, they argue, don't depend upon the Soviet Union. They even trotted out Charles Lindbergh to testify how weak is the Soviet air force and how mighty is Hitler's. But think it over for a moment, even those of you who refuse to believe the contrary evidence of Communists and friends of the Soviet Union. If it were true that the Soviet Union is weak, perhaps the news might reach Adolph Hitler. And if Hitler heard it—and believed it—he might be tempted to seize those broad rich Ukrainian wheat fields, the thought of which has obsessed him for so many years. Hitler has always moved first against the points of least resistance; today he is much more busy in Latin America than in preparing to cross the Ukrainian border much closer at hand. Can it be that Hitler has also heard about Soviet weakness? If so, his actions prove that he, at least, does not believe these fairy tales. No, Hitler knows that once he crosses the Soviet border he has engaged in a struggle the outcome of which he seriously doubts. There could be no more conclusive testimony than this to the strength of the Red Army, Navy and Air Fleet, and of the socialist economy and culture which it defends.

What remains of the reactionary arguments against collaboration with the Soviet Union? Their big card is the Dies Committee canard, that the Soviet Union is trying to foment

revolution within the U.S., preparing to overthrow our democratic institutions. But this is a lie out of whole cloth, which even the most conservative American citizen need not be disturbed by. The Soviet Union relies entirely for its influence in bringing socialism to the rest of the world upon the effectiveness of its own example of what socialism means for the people. Since our most conservative citizens are deeply convinced that American capitalism is much better than socialism, then they cannot believe that the example of the Soviet Union will be very convincing. If they really believe in capitalism as they say, they should be the first to laugh the Dies Committee out of existence. And surely such a far-fetched charge could not be sufficient reason to refuse the co-operation of a great power, one of the strongest in the world, in preserving world peace.

As for the Communists in the U.S., we believe that socialism is the better system; we believe that the example of socialism in the U.S.S.R. will finally convince the entire world to follow a similar path. We are so firmly convinced of this fact, far from being impatient to force socialism upon an unwilling people, we pledge our firm support to maintain the will of the majority of the people, democratically ascertained; and so long as this majority will is to maintain the present system, we submit ourselves to that decision. We do this all the more willingly, since we know that the building of socialism is a difficult task which requires the free co-operation of the overwhelming majority of the people, something which cannot be forced but can only come from deep conviction.

But socialism or Communism is not being forced upon the world anywhere. The Soviet Union has never uttered an aggressive word against any of its neighbors, not to mention that in its whole twenty-one years it has never committed an aggressive act. There is no people anywhere which has any fear, or any reason to fear, aggression from the Soviet Union. On the contrary, there is no government which has more scrupulously

respected its international agreements, or which is more ready to maintain by all means international order and peace.

Nor is the issue of socialism or Communism being forced upon an unwilling public by the Communist Party of the U.S.A. We openly proclaim that we subordinate our own special program for the reorganization of society to the will of the majority of democratic and progressive people, and devote all our energies to realize the will of the majority, to defend democracy at all costs.

The majority of the people, the workers, farmers and city middle classes, want to maintain democracy, a rising standard of living, and peace. Above all, they want to halt the march of Hitler toward conquest of the world. They want guarantees that no Hitler shall come to power in the United States. They want a world in which a democratic America can freely develop without fear of aggression.

But all these things are in danger, they are threatened, from abroad and from within. Powerful minorities, the reactionaries with monopoly capital supporting them, are dragging America with the rest of the world toward fascism and war.

That is the real and pressing danger, because the majority of the people are not strongly organized as yet, their unity is threatened by demagoguery, false issues, race prejudice and the thousand pressures of the reactionaries who control the industries, the press and much of our social and political institutions.

The big problem of the day is to firmly weld the unity of the progressive majority of the people in a single democratic front, to maintain our advances and to cancel the gains of reaction in the elections which resulted from insufficient unity.

The working class is the largest section of the people in the United States, and only a united working class can strengthen and extend the united front of the people against reaction, fascism and war.

Working-class unity, unity within each industry, unity on

a national scale, international unity—this is the need of the hour, without which all human values are threatened with destruction.

The enemies of unity must be identified, isolated and defeated. There are some trade union leaders at the head of the A. F. of L. who for their own selfish or reactionary reasons deliberately maneuver to maintain and extend the divisions between the parts of the labor movement. There are those Socialist Party leaders who openly boast of their splitting activities which bring victories to the worst reactionaries. There are the little groups of fascist agents, the Trotskyites and Lovestoneites, whose intrigues, provocations and disruptions have but one aim, to break up the unity of the workers and of the democratic front. One and all, their influence among the masses must be broken by systematically exposing their crimes against unity of the people and the working class. Without a daily and resolute struggle against these agents of the enemy, it is impossible to bring unity, and therefore impossible to defeat fascism and war.

The heroic Spanish people have shown how to weld unity, even in the midst of a bloody war of fascist invasion, and how fascism can be halted by that unity, even against overwhelming odds.

The glorious Chinese people have shown how to weld unity, even under the blows of invasion of the most modern military machine and when deserted by almost all their friends.

Only the Soviet Union has remained true to its obligations to help its neighbors when they are set upon by thieves and robbers. Only the Soviet Union has consistently helped the Spanish and Chinese peoples, to the extent of its abilities, to resist the aggressors. Thereby the Soviet Union has given the highest service to peace and democracy, and to the interests of the American people also.

It is to the eternal shame of the United States that we per-

mitted ourselves to be tricked into helping Hitler and Mussolini invade Spain by our outrageous embargo against the Spanish republic. From thus sowing the wind in Spain, we are now about to reap the whirlwind of fascism in Latin America. Let the voice of the majority of Americans be raised together, in our own national interest as well as that of all progressive mankind, to demand: Lift the embargo from the Spanish republic! American food surplus to feed the Spanish people! An embargo against Hitler Germany.

It is a criminal stupidity, which almost seems to justify the fascist contempt for democracy, that the United States has furnished and continues to furnish the economic means whereby Japan makes war on China and closes the door of that great continent to America. If democracy is to survive, it must abandon such stupidity. The boycott of Japanese goods must be made one hundred per cent! Stop all trade with Japan!

In a world dark with crisis, reaction, fascism and war, the one flaming beacon light is the Soviet Union. Its socialist industry already towers above all other lands except the United States. Its collective agriculture leads the world in production, and spreads well-being over the countryside. It is the only spot on the globe where material progress and cultural advance proceed steadily and embrace the great mass of the people. It is the only land that has no internal fascist menace. It is the only nation in which national unity is a reality, in which class divisions and exploitation no longer divide mankind. It is the one land of opportunity and happiness for the youth and equality for women. It is the only country where the brotherhood of man has ceased to be merely an aspiration and become a living reality, where more than a hundred nationalities live in peace and fraternity. These history-making achievements are the product of the leadership of the Party of Lenin and Stalin.

We in America, in our own small way, are building the same

kind of a Party in the Communist Party of the United States, and in the Young Communist League. And small as we still are, the enemies of the people have already felt the force of the political blows of our policy and cry out against us; while our friends have learned not only to trust our good intentions, but have learned that we are essential factors in achieving the common victory. Approaching the 100,000 mark in Party membership, we are inviting into our ranks now that additional 100,000 men and women already about us, who believe in and support our work, and only need their Party card to be full-fledged disciples of Lenin and Stalin.

Last week, on November 7, the deep and strong friendship of the American people for the peoples of the Soviet Union was appropriately expressed in a message of greetings to the President of the Soviet Union from the President of the United States.

That friendship must ripen into an active collaboration to halt the advance of fascism, and to preserve democracy and peace.

In this common task is united the interests of the American people together with that of the peoples of all lands. In this task is the interests of the working class of the world.

Address delivered on the 21st Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, at Madison Square Garden, November 14, 1938.