
TWENTY-ONE YEARS OF STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

BY EARL BROWDER

THE Soviet Union stands out in world affairs today as the only firm support of peace against the fascist aggressors. This position is the consistent development of the entire history of the Soviet Union. On the occasion of the twenty-first anniversary of the rise of the Soviet power, which we observe on November 7, it is particularly appropriate to remind ourselves of this long and sustained struggle for peace, and to study again some of its main lessons.

It was in the midst of the World War, and in the first place as a struggle for peace, liberty and bread, that the Soviet Union was born. Its first utterance to the world was an appeal for peace—for peace without annexations and without indemnities.

Old Russia, of the barbarous tyranny of tsarism, had long been one of the chief forces threatening the world with war. Before the war it was the main support of reaction throughout the world. It was above all the position of tsarism in the line-up of the Allied powers that destroyed all their pretenses of representing democracy as against the despotism of the Central European Entente, which placed the brand of imperialist aggression equally upon both camps. Old Russia was the summation of every-

thing backward, everything despotic, everything oppressive, everything reactionary, in the pre-War world.

The World War brought indescribable catastrophe to the peoples of old Russia. Russian casualties were equal to those of all the rest of the world combined. Russian economy completely collapsed. And, finally, the ancient structure of tsarist autocracy broke and crumbled under the blows of a rising of the people in search of bread and peace.

Between March and November, of 1917, the peoples of Russia learned through their own bitter experience that only one party led the way, fearlessly and realistically, to the achievement of bread and peace—the Party of Lenin and Stalin, the Bolsheviks, the Communist Party. They learned that to gain the two most simple, most elementary, demands of life, it was not only necessary to smash the old tsarist autocracy, but that it was also necessary to go beyond the limitations of capitalism, to establish their Soviet government, and to step onto the path toward socialism. And the overwhelming majority of the people went forward with the Communists in a great people's movement for bread and peace.

Reactionary newspapers in America

today are trotting out their hired writers to cry: "Don't trust the Soviet Union in the defense of world democracy, because the Soviets betrayed democracy in 1918 at Brest-Litovsk!" Such conscienceless slanders are quite necessary for those who wish to defend Chamberlain in the most shameful betrayal ever attempted in the history of the modern world. Brest-Litovsk has its lessons for us today, but they point in the opposite direction to that of the defenders of Chamberlain's treason.

The first act of the Soviet government had been to repudiate the imperialist war aims of tsarism, and to appeal to the world for peace without annexations or indemnities. *But the Soviet power did not abandon the Allies*; it called for a general peace, to be negotiated on a non-imperialist basis; and in the meantime declared its readiness to maintain the front against German imperialism, until the German people overthrew it from within, *provided the Allies would give the necessary help and cooperation and also renounce annexations and indemnities.*

But the Allied powers abandoned the Soviet Union. They ignored its communications, and refused to deal with it. Instead of help and cooperation, they launched a war of their own against their former ally. They inspired and financed uprisings against the Soviet power by all the remnants of tsarism; they sent their own expeditionary forces into Russia from all directions to help overthrow the Soviets.

The new government of bread and peace for the people was invaded by both Germany and its own former allies. Under the leadership of Lenin, the Soviet power made a separate

peace with Germany at Brest-Litovsk, only after the betrayal of the Allies left this as the only alternative to destruction at the hands of both Germany and the Allies.

It was the Soviet's appeal for peace without annexations or indemnities, and the robber's peace forced upon her by Germany at Brest-Litovsk, that more than any other factor destroyed the war spirit of the German people, and led to the German revolution of 1918, which ended the war. True, the German revolution was soon crushed, but not before it had made its contribution to restoring world peace. Lenin's policy was justified a thousand times before the peoples of the whole world.

It is well for us to remember today, when Trotskyites and Bukharinites are desperately trying to use false Communist banners in the service of the fascist war-makers, that at the time of Brest-Litovsk it was Trotsky and Bukharin who tried to assassinate Lenin and to overthrow the Soviet power from within—then also at the behest of powers trying to overthrow the Soviets from without by military means.

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The World War came to an end largely as a result of the Russian and German Revolutions. But the Allied imperialists dictated the peace terms at Versailles on the example Germany had set at Brest-Litovsk, a peace of vengeance, of annexations and indemnities, only slightly tempered by the idealism of Woodrow Wilson, who was helpless in the hands of the tough realists of European imperialism. One of the few victories of Wilson was the establishment of the Republic of

Czechoslovakia. On the whole it was a robber's peace, unworkable, and containing the guarantee of new wars if not revised. It was so denounced by the Soviet Union, and by the Communist International.

The Soviet Union, having firmly established its power over most of the territory of the former tsarist empire, on the basis of a free federation of peoples, turned its attention to reconstruction, and the building of its new socialist society. At the same time, it began to develop its active peace policy in world affairs, upon the principle of self-determination of nations, of peaceful and orderly adjustment of international relations.

It was the Soviet Union, alone among great powers, which officially and formally placed on the order of the day the proposal for complete disarmament of the world as the only sure road to peace, as the only guarantee of the outlawing of war. But the Western democracies replied only by questioning the good faith of the proposal, although that good faith might have been quickly and thoroughly tested by a simple acceptance of the proposal. When complete disarmament was rejected, the Soviet Union proposed a program of partial and progressive disarmament, but again it was rebuffed.

It was left to the Soviet Union to take the first steps to bring the democratic republic of Germany back into the family of nations through the treaty of friendship signed at Rapallo. If this example had been followed by the Western democracies, the ground for the later rise of the Nazi barbarism would have been cut away, and the path would have been opened to a

real world appeasement. For years, the Soviet Union stood forth as the only and true friend of the German people and their democratic republic.

Then as the world crisis sharpened all international and social tensions, as fascism and fascist aggression began to take hold of the world, the Soviet Union accepted the invitation—the first it had ever received—to enter the League of Nations.

Within the League of Nations the Soviet Union has consistently fought to strengthen that body and all forms of international collaboration for peace. Every step that has been taken to weaken and dismember the League has been opposed by it. Every step to carry out the League principles has found the Soviet Union in the front ranks in full and energetic support. The voice of the Soviet Union in the councils of the League has come to represent the conscience of the world—the only consistent and unchanging champion of peace through international collaboration.

Upon the basis of the League, the Soviet Union has consistently pressed upon its neighbors the establishment of Pacts of Non-Aggression, and has signed such pacts with most of them; the only exceptions are those aggressive nations which have refused.

Upon the basis of the League, and with League approval, the Soviet Union entered into a Pact of Mutual Defense with France and with Czechoslovakia. The terms of this Pact were offered to all other European nations, a guarantee that it was not directed against any other nation.

The Soviet Union was among the first to sign the Kellogg-Briand Pact, outlawing resort to war as an instru-

ment of national policy, and has been among the most consistent upholders of the principles of this treaty, which has been subscribed to by most of the nations of the world.

The Soviet Union is the only great power which voluntarily renounced all privileges at the expense of weaker nations (as China) acquired through unequal treaties.

During all its history, not one nation, large or small, has ever had reason to fear any aggression from the Soviet Union, and not one effort at world peace and appeasement has failed to find staunch support from the Soviet Union.

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From the beginning of systematic aggressions by Germany, Italy and Japan, which have brought chaos into international relations and threaten the whole world with catastrophe, it has been the Soviet Union alone which has consistently lived up to its obligations in letter and spirit. In the councils of the League of Nations, Ethiopia and China and Spain heard only the voice of Litvinov raised consistently in their behalf. Only the Soviet Union has seriously helped China protect her national integrity, although the League has established that this is the duty of all nations. Only the Soviet Union helped the Spanish Republic, when the Western democracies turned their backs to pretend not to see the fascist invasion. And now only the Soviet Union stood steadfastly by Czechoslovakia, while its supposed "protectors" joined the bandit Hitler to force that democratic nation to commit suicide—in the name of "peace."

The record is complete.

A few months ago, the well-known Dorothy Thompson—and Congressman Dies should be warned not to class her with Shirley Temple—wrote the following significant words:

"If it becomes clear that Russia is the only country on earth that will defend small democracies while great democracies are prepared to bargain them away, then heaven help the great democracies!"

This cry of despair comes from a spokesman for the reactionary camp in the United States. Dorothy Thompson was the darling of Park Avenue and Wall Street. She is reputed to be the best-paid newspaper writer in America. Doubtless she was worth the money to her employers, because she seemed really to believe what she wrote in their behalf; that is a very rare thing, indeed, these days. It will be interesting to watch what conclusions Miss Thompson draws from the necessity finally to file her appeal to heaven. Will she speak up for the Soviet Union, the only power that stood firm for the "small democracies" or will she continue as spokesman for the forces of the "Anti-Communist Alliance" in America? Whatever she has or has not learned, one thing is sure; the American people have learned a deep political lesson in the latest events. America wants world peace; but there is only one other government in the world that can be depended upon to work with America to that end, and that is the Soviet Union.

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What is the reason that England and France betrayed Czechoslovakia, while the Soviet Union stood firm in her support? Is there some deep dif-

ference in the interests, the sympathies, or the desires of the peoples of the three countries?

No, there is not the slightest doubt that the overwhelming majority of Englishmen and Frenchmen agreed with the people of the Soviet Union, that Czechoslovakia must be supported to the end, as the frontline defenses of all peoples of Europe. But the people were betrayed by their governments. The governments did not consult the wishes of the people, but only the wishes of their capitalists and aristocrats, who are not so secretly in league with Hitler.

But the government in the Soviet Union could not betray the people to the capitalists and aristocrats, because the Soviet Union has no such animals.

The people of the Soviet Union own and control their country, from top to bottom, including their economy and their government; they have socialism. The Western democracies were betrayed, because they were either in possession of, or surrendered to, their capitalists, their economic royalists. Democracy can be protected only in uncompromising struggle against all the powers of monopoly capital.

Profound and epoch-making is this lesson for the world and for the American people. We must study it ever more deeply. We must make it fully understood by the millions of the American workers, farmers, and middle classes who want peace, and who want our country to be in the forefront in the organization of peace.

“The international proletarian ties between the working class of the U.S.S.R. and the working class in bourgeois countries must be increased and strengthened; the political assistance of the working class in the bourgeois countries for the working class of our country must be organized in the event of military attack on our country; and also every assistance of the working class of our country for the working class in bourgeois countries must be organized. . . .”—Joseph Stalin, *A Letter to Ivanov*.
