

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)

It is said that Lenin's thesis that imperialism inevitably gives birth to wars should be considered obsolete since powerful peoples' forces have now grown up which are taking a stand in defence of peace, against a new world war. This is not correct.

The aim of the present movement for peace is to arouse the masses of the people for the struggle to preserve peace and to avert a new world war. Consequently, it does not pursue the aim of overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism. It limits itself to the democratic aims of the struggle to preserve peace. In this respect the present movement for the preservation of peace differs from the movement during the first world war to turn the imperialist war into a civil war, since this latter movement went farther and pursued socialist ends.

Under a certain confluence of circumstances, the struggle for peace may possibly develop in one place or another into a struggle for socialism. This, however, will no longer be the present peace movement but a movement for the overthrow of capitalism.

It is most probable that the present peace movement, as a movement for the preservation of peace, will, should it be successful, result in prevention of a *given* war, in its postponement, a temporary preservation of a *given* peace, to the resignation of a belligerent government and its replacement by another government, ready to preserve peace for the time being. This is good, of course. Even very good. But this, however, is still insufficient to eliminate altogether the inevitability of wars among capitalist countries. It is insufficient since with all these successes of the peace movement imperialism still remains and remains in power, and consequently the inevitability of wars also remains.

In order to eliminate the inevitability of wars imperialism must be destroyed."

This long quotation is very characteristic of Stalin's writings, dogmatic in tone but indirect in its incidence. The wars that he considers inevitable are those which will necessarily oppose rival capitalist states in spite of the Soviet peace movement. But having expounded this doctrine with a great wealth of historical and theoretical detail — the above is less than half of the relevant chapter — he ends with an enigmatic statement: "In order to eliminate the inevitability of wars imperialism must be destroyed".

Malenkov has succeeded Stalin as Stalin had succeeded Lenin. What has remained unchanged in its essential, however, is the doctrine of the Soviet state. It is the doctrine of a state which has no scruples whatever in declaring itself peace-loving and deploring international tension, in launching dove-adorned peace movements and in multiplying wordy trade talks. But it is at the same time the doctrine of a state

wedded to the idea of the inevitability of war, at least until the ultimate downfall of its capitalist rivals, obviously to be achieved only through its own military triumph. In the meanwhile it tolerates no political freedom within its own frontiers, it encourages every subversive party without, and it maintains the largest peace-time army known in the annals of mankind.

The second reason of the impotence of the United Nations lies in the powers its own Charter confers upon its chief members and in particular in the use the Soviet Union has made of these powers. In glaring contradiction to its pacific professions, but in full conformity with its real belligerent propensities, the U.S.S.R. has consistently refused to grant the international organization any authority over its own policies. That is why it made its membership contingent upon the express condition that it should not only remain absolutely unbound by any other major decision taken without its express consent, but even that no such decision intended to be binding on others could be legally taken against its dissent. That is why also it has on all occasions propounded doctrines of national sovereignty as exacting as any which the Fascists or Nazis maintained when they were openly flouting the very timid and modest authority of the League of Nations. This has, of course, in no way limited the powers the Kremlin exercises in Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and throughout all its other satellite states

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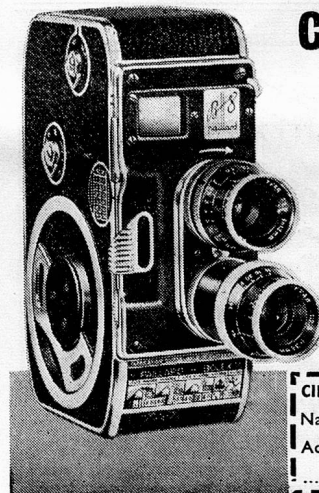
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which it has subjected to its own absolute rule. The theory of complete national sovereignty is made consistent with the practice of complete national subservience through the instrumentality of the Communist party. The leaders of this party never fail to take in Moscow the orders they execute in Warsaw and in the capitals of Russia's other so-called sovereign neighbours.

The third main cause of the weakness of the United Nations lies in the nature of the peace settlement it was set up to defend. That settlement, in so far as it may be said to have been achieved today, so grossly offends the sense of fairness of the whole free world that it would be found impossible to mobilize public opinion, to say nothing of military power, in favour of protecting it against aggression.

One recalls the protests raised in several of the Western countries when, in 1939, the map as drawn up in Versailles twenty years before was threatened by Hitler. "To die for Danzig!" was the indignant cry which widely expressed this protest. Still, Danzig was the symbol of the theories of self-determination and of free access to the sea which, according to the prevalent Wilsonian doctrine, were looked upon as necessary elements of international justice. But to die in order that the enslavement of millions of Poles, Czechs, Germans, Roumanians, Hungarians and other unwilling victims of Soviet imperialism might be perpetuated would be a prospect too abhorrent even to be contemplated.

Even if that were the only source of the impotence of the United Nations, it would in itself be sufficient to explain and to justify that impotence. Was not the Charter of 1945 adopted in the name of "the Peoples of the United Nations"? And is it not in its preamble stated that these peoples were "determined . . . to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights and men and women and of nations large and small . . ." My pen refuses to continue the quotation. The generosity of the sentiments expressed in this eloquent preamble is so totally incompatible with the task that would be demanded of the peoples of the United Nations were they to be called upon to preserve the present peace settlement, that I cannot bring myself to dwell upon it.

We now see with agonizing clarity why the United Nations has not succeeded, and why it could not, under the circumstances of our age, succeed, in achieving its main purpose of maintaining international peace.

To say this is, of course, not to propose the dissolution of the only existing general international institution. It is not because the United Nations fails to protect mankind against the scourge of war that the cause of peace would be furthered by its disappearance. It may well serve other laudable purposes. The future may show that it even, indirectly but none the less usefully, promoted the quest for peace which is our sole concern here.

Our duty was merely to point out why that quest could not be pursued to-day under the sole aegis of the United Nations and along the lines laid down in its ill-timed and therefore ill-fated Charter.

(To be continued.)

A SUMMER CRUISE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

A pleasurable contrast to the arctic weather we are enduring can be found in an imaginary and vicarious voyage through the Mediterranean and the enjoyment, by proxy, of the blue skies and the brilliant sunshine of a summer cruise on board a luxury steamer.

Such a cruise is described, in much detail, by Mr. Walter Bachmann, well-known to our readers, in an illustrated booklet printed for private circulation. It is the transcript of his diary and takes us, in the summer of 1954, to Spain, Malta, Turkey, Greece and North Africa. In these countries Mr. Bachmann and his party went ashore and visited many places of historic interest which are vividly described.

What impressed us most is the author's immense vitality. Advancing years have not impaired his zest of life or lessened his capacity for enjoyment. With an energy we envy he takes part in strenuous deck games and competitions. He missed none of the entertainments and excursions organised for the benefit of the passengers, much of it in tropical heat, and he takes late hours and increasing conviviality in his stride.

An expert in catering himself, Mr. Bachmann makes our mouths water with exciting menus of wonderful food and drink served on board ship and ashore.

As we came to the end of this enjoyable little book, we put another log on the fire and made sure of a hot water-bottle in our bed. J.J.F.S.

As exciting as the tempo of a Mazurka. As delicate as the movement of a waltz. As memorable as the grace and charm of the ballet.

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