Imperialism and Communism

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IT IS well known that people have sometimes talked prose without having the least idea what it is. This holds true not only of characters in French literature but also of professional politicians. Thus at the present time a regular epidemic of discussion is raging in certain sections of the capitalist press in the effort to find explanations for the acts of aggression which again threaten to rack the world with war. And they are being discovered in natural factors — territory, raw materials, growth of population. These are considered quite apart from the economic form of society and the political superstructure in which it finds expression. In this parlance, Germany, Italy, Japan are “nations without land.” The natural growth of the population of these states necessarily leads to a hunt for new land and more raw materials. Here, according to this view, lie the roots of the future war. It is fate, historical destiny. And the only salvation lies in a redivision of territory.

A plan of this sort was proposed by the late Frank H. Simonds in an article entitled “The ‘Haves’ and ‘Have-Not’” in The Fortnightly. The Economist published detailed tables showing the distribution of land and raw materials among the various countries in order to prove Great Britain’s right to the status quo. In France, the fascist proponents of a rapprochement with Germany at the expense of Soviet Ukraine are highly indignant over the vast territories of the Soviet Union and the comparative sparseness of its population. In Germany itself, imperialism is frankly proclaimed as the sacred right of “Aryans” suffocating for lack of “space” (“Volk ohne Raum”). Needless to say, the required “space” is sought in the Soviet Union, the government of which is moreover accused of continuing the foreign policy of the Tsars. In Italy and Japan analogous theories have become the creed of the ruling classes, which preach them ex professo. The basis of all these arguments — though most of their authors are unaware of the fact — is the so-called theory of “Geopolitik,” now particularly fashionable in fascist Germany. It is with this geopolitical “prose” that we shall commence our analysis.

1 London, June 1935.
2 London, October 26, 1935.
I. “GEOPOLITICS” IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

It need hardly be said that the forerunners of geopolitics, e.g. the English historian Buckle, were in their day on a far higher level scientifically than their contemporaries who adhered to theological conceptions of the historical process; they were able to explain much by material factors that could not be explained by heavenly illusions. In Germany this peculiar brand of geographic materialism, or rather geographical naturalism, was developed by the founders of so-called “political geography,” especially by Richthofen and above all Ratzel. The latter declared that the explanation of the historical process and of all politics lay in the size, position and frontiers of a given territory; in the form of the earth’s surface and the soil, with its vegetation, water resources, etc.; and, finally, in the relation of the territory in question to other parts of the earth’s surface. He maintained “that the attributes of the state are composed of those of the people and of the land” (“dass sich die Eigenschaften des Staates aus denen des Volkes und des Bodens zusammensetzen”). Before him, Richthofen had also introduced the race factor, in addition to factors of a geophysical order. The present-day school of “geopoliticians” (a name invented by the Swedish imperialist and political theorist R. Kjellén), who are grouped around the German magazine Zeitschrift für Geopolitik and its editor, Professor Haushofer, reiterate substantially the same ideas.

But while the views of Buckle (in so far as we are discussing the influence of climate, etc.) were progressive in their day, now, after the historical materialism of Marx, the writings of contemporary geopoliticians seem so much childish prattle (that is, logically; politically they are far from that).

In effect, geopolitics flatly denies all history. Relatively constant factors such as territory, soil, climate (and racial attributes which biological sociologists also consider as constant) cannot serve to explain historical and social changes. “Politics” does not grow out of the “land” at all, but first and foremost out of economic relations. The “land” undoubtedly influences the historical process; but it does so primarily through the process of labor and through economics, and these in their turn exercise a decisive influence on politics. The territory and the racial attributes of the British Isles have changed very little since the nineties of the last century, and they cannot possibly be made to
explain, let us say, Great Britain's rapid change from free trade to a high protective tariff. The existence of a foreign trade monopoly in the U. S. S. R. cannot be explained by the "Russian steppes" or by the so-called "Slavic soul." But Great Britain's change to a high protective tariff can very well be explained by the transition of her economic system to monopoly capitalism, with its trusts and syndicates; and the foreign trade monopoly in the U. S. S. R. can very easily be explained by the peculiarities of the socialist economic system, with its plan, and by the relationship of this system to the outside world. Arguments about space and territory per se remind one—if the adherents of these theories will excuse the remark—of people hunting for differential tariffs among crabs or for paper money on wheat fields.

But however ridiculous geopolitics is from the point of view of logic, it nevertheless plays a very active reactionary rôle in practice. It supplies an excuse for bellicose fascism, a justification for war and imperialism; it preaches new conquests and wars of intervention. The essence of the matter lies here, not in the quasimoralistic poetized sophistry with which imperialists often veil their prose.

II. "PERPETUUM MOBILE" IN WARS

In his article which I have already mentioned the late Mr. Simonds, after sharply (and to a great extent correctly) criticizing the League of Nations, draws the conclusion that foreign territory and raw materials are indispensable to Germany, Italy and Japan; that any attempt to persuade these countries to the contrary would be absurd; and that the League of Nations must adopt the rule of economic parity and make an equitable distribution of the world's resources of territory and raw materials. This will avert a world tragedy.

Indeed? But what will come of this plan objectively, that is, apart from the subjective intentions of its authors? Let us analyze this plan of the new "levellers."

First. Who are to be the subjects of this deal? Alas! These do not include such countries as Egypt or China or India. Nor do they include any of the small independent states like Czechoslovakia. The subjects of the deal are to be the biggest capitalist powers.

Second. Who are to be the objects of the deal? Apparently the U. S. S. R. and a number of small independent countries such as
Lithuania (for the author of the scheme seeks to justify German fascist aspirations), China (for Japan's policy is similarly "justified") and the colonies (Italy's policy also finds "justification" in this scheme). Thus in effect it is proposed: (1) to cut up the U. S. S. R.; (2) to destroy the independence of small countries, such as Ethiopia; (3) to partition China; (4) to divide up the colonies again, like so much small coin thrown in to complete a bargain. In other words, the entire plan is aimed against: (a) the workers (the U. S. S. R.); (b) the masses in densely populated China (i.e., the semi-colonies); (c) the colonial masses. Cui prodest? The biggest capitalist powers. Such is the scheme's "justice" and "morality."

Third. Let us assume that by some miracle or other the idea has been carried into effect. The great capitalist powers have divided up the spoils among themselves (the others, as we have seen, are quantités négligeables) on a "basic principle" of super-aristocratic world "parity." But what will happen the day after? That is the question.

It is not hard to answer. The mere fact that in different countries there are different levels of productive power, different quantities of skilled labor power, will lead to different results in the struggle for the world market. No amount of "autarchy" will save a country from having resort to this world market, the more so as the capitalist system will inevitably lead to overproduction. The search for new markets and spheres for capital investment will necessitate new re-divisions of land and resources. And since tariff barriers, trusts, armies and fleets will not disappear, the war song will break out afresh. Thus what is proposed is nothing more nor less than the continuing reproduction of wars, a perpetuum mobile of annihilating catastrophes. The picture is truly horrifying.

Fourth. Aside from all this, the plan recalls the verse about Roland's horse:

Wunderschön war diese Stute,
Leider aber war sie tot.

It is just another Utopia. The more powerful groups of capitalists wielding state power will not surrender their colonies for the benefit of their poorer relatives. If Germany, Japan and Italy cannot be persuaded to abandon their expansionist policy, then there is just as little expectation of philanthropy on the part of
Great Britain, the United States or France. As regards the workers of the U. S. S. R., they can see absolutely no reason for surrendering their common property to their bitterest class antagonists.

Fifth. Capitalist states might ask themselves whether this levelling scheme does not have in it the germs of what Japanese diplomats would call "dangerous thoughts." For mankind is divided not only horizontally into states, but also vertically into classes. (By the way, this idea of a redivision, and of a blow at the maxim "Beati possidentes," calls to mind the whole class which is made up of the "possidentes." Here, however, it is not a question of re-dividing the factories and distributing the machines among the workers, but of common ownership of the means of production. And this is the course which history will take.)

III. WHAT IS IMPERIALISM?

So we may put the question as follows: Is the present tendency to violent expansion now being displayed so strikingly in Japan, Germany and Italy a purely natural function of land and race, or is it a function of the social-economic system?

The question can be most easily considered by taking the example of Japan. The density of population in Japan is great. There is little land per capita. Emigration has always been very considerable. The German professor, Paul Berkenkopf, in his recent work "Sibirien als Zukunftsland der Industrie," uses the very fact of overpopulation ("Druck der japanischen Übervölkerung") to explain Japanese imperialist expansion, assuming, however, that this expansion will proceed primarily in the direction of Australia and the Philippines. And thus it would seem that here as nowhere else the bare laws of geopolitics are the determining factor. But in that case how can we explain the crisis of overproduction? And how can we explain the paradox that this strange profusion of products is constantly impelling Japan's ruling classes to more intensive expansion? What becomes, then, of all the primitive argumentation that where there is little land, nothing to eat, and too many people, ergo, new territory is needed? It simply goes to pieces. Obviously the matter is not at all so simple. In reality, it is a bastard form of fin de siècle monopoly capitalism coupled with considerable survivals of feudal barbarism: savage exploitation of the workers and peasants, land-hunger on the part of the latter, exorbitantly high rents, poverty,
and consequently low purchasing power of the masses—all leading to the paradox of plenty and poverty, overproduction and the quest for new territories. And are not these things peculiar to capitalism as a whole? Is not the hunt for markets, coupled with over-production and under-consumption, a characteristic feature of the special capitalist “mode of production?”

Or take Germany. We hear the chorus that it is absolutely essential for her to steal new territory from the U. S. S. R., since she, Germany, is starved for raw materials. We shall not speak here about the German war industry, which has swelled to gigantic proportions, which swallows up vast quantities of raw materials, and which does not in any way “grow” out of the properties of the German “soil.” Nor shall we talk about the stocks of raw materials for war at the expense of consumption, nor about the sabotage on the part of the peasants. We only put the following elementary question: Why should not Germany buy raw materials from the U. S. S. R.? Does the latter want a high price? No, on the contrary. Many persons have shouted at the top of their voices that the U. S. S. R. is practising dumping—so favorable to the purchaser are the prices at which the U.S.S.R. has sold raw material. But German monopoly capital wants to have monopoly ownership of Ukrainian raw materials for military-economic autarchy, which in its turn is a weapon for further world struggle. “Territory,” “space” (fascist philosophers have raised the category of “space” five heads higher than that of “time”) do not produce any policy by themselves. It is definite social-historical conditions that lead to wars.

Mr. Simonds quoted Signor Mussolini’s dictum: “For us Italians the choice is between foreign expansion and domestic explosion.” And he added: “And that is why Italy and Germany, like Japan, are preparing for war.” About Germany he spoke still more clearly: either a war of conquest, or communism.

Let us assume that this is so. But what does it signify? It simply signifies that communism can live without wars, whereas the other social form, capitalism, through the mouths of its own politicians and ideologists, declares: Better a war of conquest than communism. This only serves to corroborate the proposition that a war of conquest is a function of the social order, that it is not a non-historical category connected directly with geophysical and biological factors.

The structure of modern capitalism must be analyzed scientifi-
cally, soberly and without prejudice. The Italian fascists claim that there is no capitalism in Italy, but a special kind of order which is neither capitalism nor socialism. Herr Hitler's followers declare that in their country they have national socialism. Mr. Araki and the other ideologists of Japanese aggression speak about the "imperial path," about Japan's peculiar traditions and her celestial mission: God himself points out definite strategic and tactical plans to Mr. Araki. Camouflage and juggling with words constitute one of the distinguishing features of profound social decadence. But fact remains fact. In none of the above-mentioned countries has one hair fallen from the head of the finance-capital oligarchy. Herr Fried in his book, "Das Ende des Kapitalismus," painted a very graphic picture of this oligarchy. But Hitler's régime has left it in complete immunity; these oligarchs have only been converted (in words) into "leaders of industry" on the basis of "public service." If we recall that fascism's most outstanding philosopher, Spengler, considered the Hohenzollern Officers' Corps and the Prussian Government officials as the epitome of "socialism" there is really no need for surprise. Has it not been said that "man was given a tongue to hide his thoughts?"

The same kind of camouflage is observable in another form even in capitalistic countries with democratic régimes. Not so long ago, for example, Mr. Thomas Nixon Carver, an indiscreet Pindar of "prosperity," proclaimed *urbi et orbi* that in the United States every worker is a capitalist. The subsequent spread of the crisis and of so-called "technical unemployment" have given a tragic refutation of this capitalist optimism.

What is in fact the real state of affairs? And why does this real state of affairs give rise to imperialist wars?

Since the eighties of the last century, as a result of the triumph of large-scale production and the centralization of capital, the form of capitalism has changed. From the previous stage of industrial capitalism, with its freedom of competition, its individualism, its principle of *laissez faire, laissez passer*, it entered the stage of monopoly capitalism (trusts, intergrowth of banking capital and industrial capital, monopoly prices). The partition of the world led to accentuated competition; to the policy of dumping (the losses incurred were compensated for by high monopoly prices in the home market); and to the system of a high protective tariff. In its turn, protectionism intensified the export of capital (in place of commodity exports, now hampered by tariff barriers).
The monopolistic possession of markets, raw materials and spheres of capital investment, together with the whole system of monopoly exploitation, tariffs, etc., based on the already accomplished partition of the so-called "free lands" (which meant putting an end to the principle of the Open Door), led capitalist competition on the world market to acquire more and more clearly the character of forcible pressure (Machtpolitik). The diminished possibilities of "peaceful penetration" were remedied by the brutal policy of armed force.

Accordingly, the state power of capital, its "interference" in economic life, acquires increased significance. We witness the militarization of the economic system and an extreme intensification of the tendency to economic autarchy, which is also important militarily and politically in determining the Machtposition in the arena of world struggle. Here the inner motive is represented by the interests of profit, which on the one hand maintain the purchasing power of the working masses at an extremely low level (even in Ricardo's day it was a well-known fact that profit stands in inverse proportion to wages), and which on the other hand continually force commodities and capital beyond the bounds of the given state, compelling a constant search for fresh markets, fresh sources of raw materials and fresh spheres for capital investment. The greater the contradiction between the productive forces of capitalism and the mass impoverishment which is immanent in this system, the more intensive grows world competition, the more acute becomes the problem of war.

Imperialist war is an expression of the expansionist policy of monopoly capitalism. Such is the specific, historically limited, significance of imperialist wars. On the one hand, monopoly capitalism acts as a check on the development of the productive forces (the decay of capitalism); on the other, it leads to catastrophes of the most devastating kind.

Thus not every sort of war, not even every predatory war, is an imperialist war. Slave-owning forms of society waged wars for slaves; feudal lords fought for land; merchants and traders fought for markets and for exploitation through trade and plunder ("Handel und Piraterie," as Goethe called it); and so forth. Imperialism wages wars to extend the domination of one country's finance capital, for the monopoly profits of trusts and banks. Its wars are universal (for the whole world is already divided up); its wars confront all mankind with the dilemma: either death or socialism. Hic Rhodus! Hic salta!
IV. IMPERIALISM AND THE U. S. S. R.

From the above it will be clear how senseless it is to talk about the "imperialism" of the U. S. S. R., as is done con amore by fascist theoreticians and by "researchers" of the type of Herr von Kleinow. A phrase like "the imperialism of the U. S. S. R." is a contradiction in terms, like "dry water" or "square circles."

But it may be asked: Will not the U. S. S. R. pursue an aggressive policy, not in favor of finance capital, but against it? Will it not fight for the expansion of socialism? Here again let us begin with an example.

As is well known, the Empire of the Tsars formerly occupied present territory of the Soviet Union, plus Poland, plus Finland, etc. It possessed even more territory and more "natural wealth" than does the U. S. S. R. But it was continually engaged in wars of conquest. On the eve of 1914 it dreamed of seizing Constantinople and the Dardanelles and of subjugating all Turkey, of seizing the whole of Galicia from Austria-Hungary, of dealing Germany a blow and of concluding a trade agreement with her on onerous terms; and so on. What, under Tsarism, drove not only the landlords but also the bourgeoisie (even before they had a share in the government) to these adventures? First and foremost, the weakness of the home market. The peasant was fleeced to the skin by the landlord, the worker's wages were meagre. Hence the policy which the Tsar's minister Vyshnegradsky characterized in the words: "We'll go hungry but we'll export." Hence the Far Eastern adventure — and the "Russo-Japanese War," during which, by the way, all sections of Russian society except the landlord aristocracy desired the Tsarist Government's defeat. Hence, too, Russia's participation in the World War, with a frenzied imperialist program (here the grain exporters played the biggest part).

Now let us take the U. S. S. R. One does not need to be a genius to observe that in the U. S. S. R. the demand is not less but greater than the supply. In our country we have a tremendously strong home market. Despite the enormous scale of production there is a shortage of commodities, there are still too few goods on sale.

The socialist system contains within itself much greater possibilities for productive forces to develop, for labor to increase its productivity and for technique to progress. But in the Soviet Union, be it noted, this cannot result either in unemployment
or in overproduction. Our national economy is conducted not with a view to profits for a capitalist class, but to satisfy the requirements of the masses. This means that when production of necessary articles is increased their consumption is proportionately raised, and not lowered into the sea like Brazilian coffee. If completely superfluous articles are produced—a highly improbable contingency—corrections can be made in the production process itself. Under planned economy it is easy to redistribute the productive forces; they can be transferred to new sectors, engendering new requirements and supplying the masses with new lines of production. There will never be any threat of unemployment, and a universal rise in labor productivity will only lead to a growth of plenty, shorten the working day, and leave more scope for cultural development.

Thus the motive inherent in the very nature of the capitalist system, which begets surplus value and prevents its realization—the motive which is most glaringly manifested in the era of imperialism and impels the ruling classes to war—is reduced in a socialist society to absolute nonsense.

This was why beggarly Tsarist Russia, where the “upper ten thousand” of landlords and bourgeois lived in splendor while the masses starved, pursued a policy of wars of conquest. And that is why the U. S. S. R., which is rapidly growing rich in the sense that well-being is spreading throughout the entire mass of the people while social wealth is concentrated in the hands of the socialist state, pursues an exactly opposite policy, the policy of peace. The U. S. S. R. is not interested in conquests in any direction whatever. But it is interested, very deeply and lastingly interested, in peace. What, then, remains of the celebrated argument that the U. S. S. R. “is continuing the policy of the Tsars?”

There is another piece of geopolitical sophistry in circulation which goes more or less as follows. Fact remains fact: in 1914 Russia was in conflict with Japan in the Far East; in 1914–18 she was in conflict with Germany; the same thing is happening again, mutatis mutandis, and the fundamental geophysical laws are again breaking their way through all obstacles.

What is the reply to this piece of sophistry?

First, even the facts themselves are distorted. For example, in 1914 and the years following Japan was in league with Russia against Germany; now Japan is in league with Germany against
the U. S. S. R. The Japanese Samurai have even been proclaimed oriental Prussians of Aryan extraction.

Second, the question must be stated more clearly. What, in effect, is under discussion? What we are discussing is not the mere fact of a conflict (for a conflict presupposes at least two parties — our object in this case not being to analyze the inner struggles of a Hamlet), but the policy of one party and the policy of another. After this logical dissection the question becomes perfectly clear. In Japan power is in the hands of approximately the same classes as before, and Japan is continuing its policy of imperialist aggression, heading for war. The U. S. S. R. is not Tsarist Russia and the radical change of the country’s economic system demands an exactly opposite policy, the policy of peace. Nevertheless war may break out, for the situation is not determined by the one-sided will to peace of the Soviets. War may be forced upon us. Contiguity of frontiers and territory certainly have an influence here, but not directly, and the war guilt will lie not with “the land” but with Japanese imperialism.

Finally, there is one other argument with which the opponents of the U. S. S. R. try to discredit Soviet foreign policy. It is trotted out regularly by Herr Hitler and his ideological agents. It runs, roughly speaking, as follows: National Socialism is based on “nationality” (“Volkstum,” “Volksgemeinschaft”); its business is with the domestic, internal affairs of Germany; National Socialism is national socialism, and is not super- or supra-national. Accordingly it never meddles in “other folks’ affairs,” but speaks exclusively pro domo sua. Conversely, Sovietism — bolshevism, communism — has a super- and supra-national orientation; it is an international force, dreaming of world domination; it is the spiritus rector of all sedition and unrest.

Clearly this argument is intimately connected with our theme.

First of all, a few words about the Germany of Herr Hitler. The German fascists, it is true, are idolaters of the fetish of so-called “race purity;” they even castrate those who are not pure Aryans and imprison people for the “crime” of sexual intercourse with non-Aryan men and women. They propagate economico-national autarchy, as a vessel containing the holy and precious body and blood of the “Nordic Aryan race.” But it would be a childish absurdity to suppose that this leads to a policy of “non-interference.” Quite the contrary. Fascist action is most energetic in all foreign countries. And this is easy to understand, for
their very "national narrowness" is nothing more nor less than the clenching of the military-economic and ideological fist. Their orientation is towards world hegemony, entailing the crushing and enslavement of all other nations. No, to be sure, they are not internationalists. But they are potential nationalistic oppressors of all other nations (those of "low degree"). It is precisely from this point of view that the Nazis meddle in the internal affairs of all other states. It is worth knowing, for instance, that even in the case of the United States the Nazis count on the millions of citizens of German blood to act against the Anglo-Saxon and other elements. In fact, it is to fear of a German revolt that Herr Colin Ross ascribes the unfavorable attitude of Americans towards National Socialism. Setting out from the premise that "present-day America is tired and old, amazingly old" ("das heutige Amerika ist müde und alt, erstaunlich alt") the author threatens a national upheaval of millions of "self-knowing" Germans. Approximately the same arguments ("salvation" of the Ukraine or of the Volga Germans) are employed by Herr Rosenberg in his appeals for war against the U. S. R. It is thus quite futile for the Nazis to pose as offended children, occupied in the washing of purely domestic linen. That argument is mendacious.

However, revenons à nos moutons. Do we believe in the worldwide triumph of socialism? Of course we do. Moreover, we know for sure that this will undoubtedly come, as a result of the inner contradictions of capitalism, through the victory of the historically progressive forces within it. We know that our diagnosis and prognosis are scientific and exact. But does this mean that the U. S. R. should interfere in the affairs of other states or pursue a policy of conquest? Of course not. For the best "propaganda" of all is the very fact of the existence and uninterrupted development of the new economic relations and the new culture. It would be sheer stupidity to interrupt this process.

Hence it follows that not only from the economic but also from the purely political standpoint — not only from the standpoint of the U. S. R. proper but also from that of the ultimate worldwide victory of socialism — it is utterly senseless to think of a policy of war being adopted by the proletarian state. And as regards the "last days" and the "world rule of communism," history will settle this question. "Que les destinées s'accomplissent!"

However, in the interests of full scientific clarity we cannot leave unanswered one further argument against the Marxist presentation of the question concerning the destinies of society. It is set forth in an article in The Round Table (No. 99) entitled "Economics and War." The author asserts that Marxism is wrong, because:

If, as its disciples hold, the existing economic system leads inherently to the class war, which of its nature cuts across national boundaries, then surely it cannot also lead inherently to the war between nations, in which all classes are ranged side by side against their fellows of another country. . . . For experience amply proves that war is the great opportunity of the forces of the Left to overthrow the established régime. The calculating communist, far more than the calculating capitalist, ought to foment war.

I regret to say that the author errs on every point. War "between nations" (or rather between capitalist states) formally unites classes, but only to aggravate class antagonisms still further later on and speed up the revolutionary process. So it was in Germany and Austria, so it was in Russia, where the revolutionary party was able to carry things through to the end. It is precisely for this reason that war enables "the forces of the Left" to "overthrow the established régime." But they are able to do so for the further reason that they rally the masses against war. It is as the force of peace, the only consistent force of peace, that they are victorious — not as the fictitious and silly-clever "calculating communist" imagined by The Round Table. As regards the capitalists, they are driven on by the blind, supra-rational, elemental forces of an unorganized society. One of the characteristic features of this society is that people get results quite different from those intended: thus none of the capitalists wanted the crisis, but the crisis is the result of their actions. This is the so-called law of the heterogeneity of aims, characteristic of irrational (capitalist) society and non-existent in rational, organized (socialist) society. Thus, the peace policy of the socialist state is not just a passing "juncture" for it, not a temporary zigzag in policy, not an opportunist compromise. It expresses the very essence of the socialist system.

We are not obliged to think for the capitalists. But, contrary to The Round Table's advice, we stand and will continue to stand for peace, peace and yet again peace. And precisely for this reason we shall conquer in a war if the imperialists force one on us.
Now it will be easy to answer the question as to whether wars between proletarian states will be possible — wars for markets, for raw materials, for spheres of capital investment — and whether wars will be possible under communism, i.e., in the subsequent stage of mankind’s evolution, after it has already taken to socialism.

Basic actuating motives are represented by definite interests. The world economic system of the capitalist régime is broken up into “national” economic units with conflicting interests (we put the word “national” in quotation marks, for the term includes bourgeois states composing many nationalities). The most acute form of conflict in which this clash of interests finds expression is war between these states. War is a special form of capitalist competition, peculiar to the capitalist world as such. The question of relations between proletarian states is altogether different.

Logically: there is no clash of real interests between proletarian states whatsoever; on the contrary, their real interest is in maximum cooperation. From the very start this real interest is realized as the actuating motive of all activity, for it is commensurate with the whole system of rationally organized labor with the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat.

Genetically: the very process of the struggle waged by the proletarian states for their existence will knit them together in a still closer bond. There can be no doubt that after a certain stage of development tremendously powerful centripetal tendencies will be revealed — tendencies toward a state union of proletarian republics.

Empirically: the experience of the U. S. S. R. fully confirms these considerations. Tsarist Russia collapsed as an integral whole, and in those parts where the bourgeoisie remained in power (Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland) it has split apart and now forms mutually antagonistic elements (cf. Poland versus Lithuania). On the other hand, in those places where the workers were victorious they have joined the Union of proletarian republics, united by a single economic plan and a centralized government, but organized in a federation. The constituent nations have full rights, and their various cultures, national in form and socialist in content, are flourishing now as never before. This, of
course, is far from being an accident; it is a manifestation of the most profound historical law, linked with a new social structure.

With the further flowering of proletarian states throughout the entire world war will become unnecessary. War will be impossible in a system of unified communist society, where there are no classes and even — horribile dictu — no coercive state power nor armies. This society will really “turn swords into ploughshares” and release gigantic masses of energy for national creative work for the benefit of all mankind. If even the first historical phases of socialist development in our country have already produced such brilliant creative results as the Stakhanov movement, and the heroic feats accomplished by our youth in all fields of culture, then what abundant sources of social wealth will pour forth in the splendid fraternal society of communism!

This, it will be said, is utopian. But we know very well that Aristotle was no fool, that he was one of the greatest men of all times. Yet he held that society was inconceivable without slaves. Not so long ago the planters of the southern states held that Negroes are innate slaves. So today the bourgeois and their little “Aristotles” hold that society would be as inconceivable without war as without wage slavery, and that the U. S. S. R. is a lapsus historiae. Let them think so. Qui vivra verra.