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131 WEST 33rd STREET

NEW YORK, N. Y.

**STOP *The War Mongers!***

# KEEP AMERICA OUT OF WAR

*Appeal of the*

**INDEPENDENT LABOR LEAGUE  
OF AMERICA**

131 West 33rd Street,

New York, N. Y.

**PRICE 5c**

Sept. 3, 1939

## Labor Speaks:

**JOHN L. LEWIS, President of the Congress of Industrial Organizations:**

"Labor in America wants no war nor any part of war. Labor wants the right to work and live—not the privilege of dying by gunshot or poison gas to sustain the mental errors of current statesmen. . . . Patently an attempt is being made to create the illusion that when war breaks out in Europe, the United States in some mysterious fashion will forthwith be involved. Such a concept is, of course, a monumental deception and amounts to a betrayal of national interest. . . .

"In the face of the economic debacle in America, many of our statesmen are more concerned and agitated over the political quarrels of Europe. The country is being told of the statesmen and national leaders who are spending sleepless nights in worry over the situation in Europe. In every way, how much better it would be if the same statesmen would spend a few sleepless nights in devising a way for one-fourth of America's workers to get at a wage that would keep them alive? . . .

"[We] have no need to participate in the festering intrigues and ancient political quarrels of Europe. The destiny of our own country should be in the keeping of its own people, and it should not become a puppet to be pulled by strings from the war-lusting rulers of Europe. . . .

"Let those who will seek the votes of the workers of America be prepared to guarantee jobs for all workers and freedom from foreign wars."

**WILLIAM GREEN, President of the American Federation of Labor:**

"Labor thruout the length and breadth of the United States is opposed to sending another generation into the trenches of war. The working people of this country are firm in their desire to avoid entanglement in the intrigues of nations seeking aggrandizement of territories or protection of the gains of former aggression. . . .

"There must be no European entanglement and no involvement in European wars. We call upon our government to scrupulously avoid the commission of any overt act, to maintain a strictly neutral attitude and thus avoid the tragic and unhappy experience thru which our people passed during the World War."

# KEEP AMERICA OUT OF WAR

## Unite for Peace, Freedom and Socialism

*(The national convention of the Independent Labor League of America, held in New York City over the Labor Day week-end, issued this appeal to the people of America. —Editor.) 1939.*

**W**ORLD war has begun! The flames burning on the margins of Europe, in Ethiopia, in Spain, have eaten their way into the center and burst into general conflagration. As we meet in convention, big guns are blasting away old frontiers; bombs are destroying ancient and populous cities; and the madness of wholesale slaughter of man by man has begun on a scale unparalleled in human history.

The seeds sown by the last war and its brutal imperialist peace have begun to bear their new fruit. The Versailles structure has collapsed, and with it the League of Nations. The Socialist (Second) International died in the last war as a result of its own treachery to the cause of peace and socialism. The Communist (Third) International, built to replace it, pronounced its own death sentence on the eve of this second world

war by helping to prepare it, when its totalitarian one-man leader, Joseph Stalin, entered into a pact with Adolf Hitler, father of the "Anti-Comintern Axis." Indeed, the Stalin-Hitler pact served as the go-ahead signal for Germany's invasion of Poland and the opening of general war.

In the name of the peoples of all countries, in the name of the great mass of working men and farmers, in the name of all the millions who are called upon to make up the rank and file of all the armies and slaughter others like themselves with whom they have no quarrel, in the name of the teeming populations of the great cities, of the old men and women and children to whom war spells suffering and naught but suffering, in the name of all but the little handful of rulers and exploiters and profiteers who coin money from human blood, in the name of all the mass of mankind in all lands of the earth we declare: **THIS IS NOT OUR WAR!**

## What Kind of War Is This?

**W**HAT kind of war is this that the peoples of the world are called upon to wage on each other? What kind of war is this that powerful ruling groups in America will now call upon us to enter?

This second world war is neither more nor less than the continuation of the first. It represents the same imperialist conflicts for territory, for markets, for spheres of influence and investment, continued anew after a brief breathing spell. It

represents an attempt by the defeated powers to revise the ruthless "peace" treaty of 1919 and write their own treaty in yet more ruthless terms. It represents an attempt on the part of the victorious powers to hold on to their blood gains. It shows beyond the shadow of a doubt that no "preventive war" ever prevents the next war, that no "wars to end war" do more than sow the seeds of future wars, that no ruthless peace can ever be ruthless enough to do more than prepare the next conflict, that so long as capitalism and imperialism endure, so long as profits are set above human life, the world will continue to stagger from wars to bigger wars, from bloodshed to greater bloodshed, from ruin to more universal ruin, till civilization even in the imperfect forms in which we know it, will give way to universal brutality and chaos. If we permit ourselves to be dragged into this war, if we permit it to be ended by the same ruling cliques who began it, unless the peoples of the world who have nothing to gain and everything to lose by war take the control of their destinies into their own hands and themselves determine the peace and create a system where not profit but human welfare is the aim and object of all production, unless and until the world's producers are willing and able to make the world theirs they have builded, war will continue in ever more bloody forms.

We must not let ourselves be blinded by fine phrases designed by "statesmen" to cover up their crimes against their own peoples and to sprinkle the reeking blood with the holy water of "noble" causes. We must not be deceived by the emphasis that will be placed upon the especially brutal and authoritarian form of the new regime

in countries like Germany. All governments, without exception, make war upon their own peoples to drive them into the trenches and to stifle their natural opposition to inhuman butchery of their own and their fellow-men. All governments, as soon as they prepare to enter into war, set up brutal, ruthless, authoritarian, military dictatorships to suppress opposition, to persecute dissent, to frame up, silence, jail and slaughter all who oppose the senseless participation in mass butchery. Germany but mirrors the regimes being established in France and England today, the regime that will be installed in America tomorrow if we can be driven into the war, the regime that the Roosevelt Administration, and the Coolidge-Hoover Administrations before him, have been secretly, now more and more openly, preparing. Germany started earlier and went farther because its whole course was set since Versailles on the rewriting of that treaty by force. In fact, the totalitarian regime in Germany, like growing totalitarianism everywhere, is nothing but a result of the last war, ironically called a war for democracy. Another war will not end it but extend it to include all governments that enter on either side.

The nature of modern capitalist war is such that it embraces, and must embrace, the entire population and all branches of agriculture and industry. It prescribes who must go to the front, who work at one thing or another, what must be produced and what sold and what said and what thought and what done. It brooks no opposition, permits no individual freedom, no human rights. Every thing, every life, every deed, is directed to the single aim of mass slaughter. In short, in

every country, **WAR TODAY IS TOTAL WAR.** If we would stop totalitarianism here at home, we must stop our own war-makers. If they have their way, totalitarianism is inevitable here.

It is in this light that we must examine all the hypocritical claims that this is a war not for markets, resources, colonies, spheres of influence, but for "ideals" and "ideology." We heard that before, and were driven into bloodshed under the sweet strains of "war to end war" and "war to make the world safe for democracy." We were "victorious." What were the results? Millions of dead and wounded and maimed, thousands of new millionaires, a long period of reaction, unemployment on a scale never known in history, unpaid debts, billion-dollar budgets and deficits, intolerable taxes, spreading totalitarianism in a world "safeguarded for democracy," and the blood-nourished seeds of new wars.

Are we to be asked to enter the present slaughter in the name of the defense of democracy? Poland is no less of a dictatorship than Germany. Or "self-determination"? Talk of "self-determination" with Germany throttling the peoples of Czecho-Slovakia under its iron heel and England and France holding scores of millions in subjection in their colonial empires! Against totalitarianism? But every country becomes totalitarian as soon as it undertakes to wage a modern war.

We cannot now foretell the outcome of the war that has just begun. But one thing is certain: its first result will be totalitarianism everywhere. And this time, so deeply rooted and universal that no country will be able ever again to dismantle its authoritarian machinery short of

an uprising of its own people against its own military, war-making machine.

And another thing is certain: that any war thus fought and any "peace" treaty written by those who wrote the last one, can only sow the seeds of fresh unemployment, fresh economic, cultural and social decay, and fresh and yet more bloody wars. If German imperialism had won the last war, the result would have been no different. Whichever gang of war-makers wins, the results are inevitably the same. For this reason, too, we declare in answer to all hypocritical slogans: **THIS WAR IS NOT OUR WAR!**

To the great mass of our fellow-countrymen, to the working men and farmers, to the tens of millions of young men who would be driven into the slaughter to kill men against whom they have no quarrel and die under false slogans for causes that are not theirs, we say in no uncertain terms that our very first duty to ourselves and our fellow-Americans is to keep America out of this war.

## The Enemy Is At Home

**O**UR convention, in session with the European war just getting under way, received an appeal from the Socialist Workers and Peasants Party of France at the very moment when the French Premier, Daladier, was establishing his military dictatorship, clamping down a censorship, driving his people into war. A portion of that appeal from French labor we want to transmit to the American workers and to all Ameri-

cans who have nothing to gain by this country's entrance into war. The appeal declares:

"Others have crossed the Atlantic to ask the American workers to agree to sacrifice their lives for one or the other imperialist block. We, on the contrary, say to you: Fight your own exploiters! Stop them from preparing war and placing the burden on your shoulders! Stop them from lowering your standard of living! Do not surrender, under any pretext, at any price, your independence, your freedom of action, your trade-union rights. Neither of the two imperialist blocks now trying to redivide the world is worthy of the sacrifice of your lives, your bread, your liberties. Conserve all your strength in behalf of your own cause, for our common working-class aims.

"By carrying on your own class struggle against your chief enemy **IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY**, you will be extending the greatest help to the workers of the so-called 'democratic' countries, as well as to the workers of the fascist countries, to build their organizations for the overthrow of this regime of poverty, dictatorship and filth!"

This appeal comes to us endorsed by the Independent Labor Party of Great Britain, the Spanish Workers Party (P.O.U.M.), and militant socialist organizations in Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Poland, Czecho-Slovakia and half a dozen other European countries, and by organizations in many colonial lands.

At the very moment these words were being transmitted to us, John McGovern, Independent Labor Party member in the British Parliament, was echoing the same thought in these words:

"I cannot follow our Prime Minister. I have no faith in him or his system as an instrument for fighting Hitler. I put my faith in the German people as the only instrument for putting an end to Hitler and Hitlerism"!

From the depths of the Nazi hell comes the same call to international solidarity against the war in the appeal sent by the Independent Socialists of Germany to the Independent Labor Party of Great Britain:

"Hitler begins war with Poland against the will of large masses of the population. German workers do not want this war; German peasants do not want it.

"Altho we love our native country, we have nothing in common with the present regime. This war is not our war; this fight is not our fight. And we ask you not to forget in the midst of death and destruction the ideals for which we died under torture."

This is the authentic voice of international solidarity, reaching the hand of brotherhood across bloody frontiers and great oceans, reestablishing the unity of the great mass of mankind who have nothing to gain and all to lose by war, laying the foundations for a new international unity to replace that shattered by the treachery and corruption of the old Socialist (Second) and Communist (Third or Stalinist) Internationals, laying the foundations for a unity of the men and women who labor in all lands, which unity alone can put an end to the war that has just begun, which alone can dictate its own terms for a just and enduring peace, which alone can put an end to the endless cycle of imperialist wars and the bloody profit system which engenders them.

We call upon our fellow-countrymen in the ranks of labor, upon the farmers, the young men and women and mothers and children and all those for whom war spells endless misery, to answer this heroic appeal in the spirit in which it was sent. We venture to pledge ourselves and our organization to devote all our strength and activities to the single overwhelming purpose of keeping America out of war. We know that we can best serve the cause of peace here and abroad by strengthening the struggle against our own ruling war-makers and aiding the workers of Germany and Poland, of France and England, in their struggle against the rulers who have plunged them into this war. Tomorrow, if Stalin succeeds in driving his own people into war on the side of either imperialist block (already he is aiding Germany), we must give solidarity and support to the Russian people against their own war-makers also.

## How to Keep America Out of War

**I**N 1914, we were a people unversed in the ways of modern diplomacy and full of illusions about our own democracy. We did not sense until too late the power of our own money kings to plunge us into war and fancied that there was no danger of our involvement. When we elected a president because "he kept us out of war," he had already made the commitments for our entrance. We believed every cock-and-bull story about the noble nature of that war.

Today, we know better. No man today is so blind that he does not see the danger of our involvement. Rather, the chief danger now is that of fatalism and passivity, the belief that we cannot stop the war profiteers and money kings, and the officials who serve them, from bringing us into the war. But we who have nothing to gain by war are the overwhelming majority of the nation and we can stop it if we are determined to do so and organized and united for the purpose. It is true that there are powerful interests eager to involve us. But they can, they must be stopped!

We cannot put any trust in the present Administration. President Roosevelt has secretly, then more and more openly, committed us as far as he has been able, to the side of Anglo-French imperialism, has arranged secret naval and military conversations with the British and French admirals and generals. The accident of a falling plane in California revealed the presence of a French aviation mission here, kept secret from Congress and the American people. This is "democracy" when war is being prepared. We must act now to tie the hands of the President, and any other President, Republican or Democratic, who may succeed him in 1940, and to restrict his arbitrary power to involve us in war. We must take out of the hands of the President the power to make commitments behind the back of Congress and the people: **NOT MORE POWER TO THE EXECUTIVE BUT LESS IS THE ROAD TO SAFETY!**

We must strengthen the present neutrality legislation by extending the mandatory embargo on arms and munitions to an embargo on all

materials of war and by restoring the cash-and-carry provisions for all other trade with belligerents. We must put every obstacle in the way of economic entanglement in the European conflict.

Nor can we leave to Congress the chance to determine our fate behind our backs. We must pass the LaFollette-Ludlow war-referendum amendment giving the people themselves the right to vote on whether or not to declare war. If we cannot vote on this question, involving our very lives, then what does our democracy amount to in an hour when a handful of big bankers and their political instruments can plunge us into war.

We must organize all opponents of war in the already existing and powerful federation of peace societies, labor and youth organizations, known as the Keep America Out of War Congress.

The organized labor movement must become the backbone of this movement to keep America out of war.

We of the Independent Labor League of America appeal to all progressive working men and women who understand that in the end war can be abolished only by international solidarity and the establishment of socialism, to join our organization, and we pledge ourselves to work for the unity of all those who are against war and for socialism in this country and thruout the world.

Working men and women of America, let our watchword be: **THIS IS NOT OUR WAR!**

**STRETCH THE HAND OF BROTHERHOOD TO THE WORKERS OF GERMANY AND POLAND, ENGLAND AND FRANCE,**

ACROSS ALL FRONTIERS, TO ALL  
LANDS!

DOWN WITH WAR, THE WAR-MON-  
GERS AND THE WAR-MAKING IM-  
PERIALIST PROFIT SYSTEM!

DOWN WITH TOTALITARIANISM AND  
MILITARY DICTATORSHIP!

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM AND SOCIAL-  
ISM!

KEEP AMERICA OUT OF WAR!  
FOR A WARLESS WORLD!

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To aid in building a powerful labor move-  
ment  
For a democratic Socialist society

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