

Text of William Z. Foster's Report to the National Committee of the Communist Party

Following is an abridged text of the report of William Z. Foster, National Chairman of the Communist Party, delivered to the meeting of the Communist Party National Committee on June 28.

Comrades:

Our National Committee is indeed meeting at a historic moment. After 23 years of plotting and scheming the capitalist reactionaries, captained by Hitler, have finally launched their armed attack against the Soviet Union. Nazi Germany, followed by its satellites, Italy, Finland, Rumania and Hungary, and with Japan standing in the offing, waiting to join in if an opportunity presents, has delivered an unprovoked assault upon the U. S. S. R. in flagrant violation of its non-aggression pact. It has thereby given final proof of the banditry of its imperialist rulers.

Without question this wanton aggression upon the peaceful, neutral U. S. S. R. will be repelled and smashed. This is not a rotten capitalist French or Polish government that Hitler is now attacking; it is the solidly united Soviet people. It is not a Laval or Blum that Hitler now faces, but a Stalin and a great Bolshevik Party. Nor will Hitler have a fifth column to do his dirty work behind the lines—in the big purge of a few years ago of the Trotskyite-Bukharinite-Zinovievite elements—the Soviet Government nipped Hitler's fifth column in the bud. Hitler, in declaring war against the Soviet Union, has signed his own death warrant. He and his Nazi barbarians are now marching to their doom.

Hitler's attack upon the Soviet Union changes the character of the world war, and thereby makes necessary changes in our Party's attitude toward that war. Previously the war had been a struggle between the rival imperialist power groupings, with wars also by them against China and the various smaller nations. We correctly did not take sides. Our slogan was to "Get out and stay out of the war." We opposed both imperialist camps, while at the same time we lent our support to the Chinese people and to the invaded nations. But now with Hitler's war against the Soviet Union, the whole situation is basically altered. This signifies a definite attempt of Hitler to fasten fascism upon the world. It is not only that the life of the first Socialist country is at stake—the democracy and national independence of every people is jeopardized, not the least that of the United States. A defeat of the Soviet Union, the greatest bulwark of world progress and freedom, would mean a fascist Europe and an enormous strengthening of reaction throughout the world. On the other hand, a victory of the Soviet Union—and this is surely going to take place—would mean a tremendous upsurge and strengthening of democracy in all countries.

Our Party, therefore, throws its full support in defense of the Soviet Union in its struggle against Hitler. Our crucial task is to develop all possible aid—moral, economic, military—for the Soviet Union, to insure the annihilation of Hitler and his Nazi barbarism. This means, besides developing every direct American support, that we must also help Great Britain and those other nations that are battling against Hitler. Whichever fights Hitler helps the U. S. S. R., helps to defend American democracy, helps to guard world freedom and civilization.

Our Party's central demand is that the United States Government give all aid to the Soviet and British peoples now fighting against Hitler. We work for the formation of an international front of the peoples and governments of Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union—a mighty combination that should adopt all measures necessary to militarily destroy Hitler, to smash the Nazi machine and to drive fascism from the face of the globe.

The great might of America must be thrown against Hitler. The Roosevelt Government should be called upon by the people to make good its promise of "all possible aid" to the U. S. S. R. The provisions of the Lend-Lease law must be extended to the Soviet Union; aid to Britain must be increased; help to the Chinese people must be intensified; the United States Government must adopt a resolute line against the Hitler tyranny.

The Communist Party will support every measure of the United States Government that is directed against Hitler and Hitlerism. At the same time we will reserve our Party's right of criticism. Certainly we will not support American capitalism's attempt to throw the burden of the costs of the war upon the toiling masses of our people, to set up a military dictatorship in this country, or to dominate Latin America. On the contrary, we will continue to oppose all such reactionary policies.

While supporting the Roosevelt Administration in all blows that it may deliver against Hitler, we do not forget the imperialist character of the government nor its imperialist aims in this war. We do not forget that the reason the great capitalist powers started this war was to redivide the world amongst themselves to the profit of the great

monopolists. Nor do we forget that they would gladly use the USSR to pull their chestnuts out of the fire for them if they could. Therefore, we must be on guard against all reactionary maneuvers and policies by our government in its fight against Hitler. Only an aroused and militant labor movement, backbone of a great People's Front, can assure a determined anti-Hitler policy by our country.

We must work to make our government's policy a program of democratic struggle against Hitler and Hitlerism. The preservation and improvement of the people's living standards and democracy in this country are essential conditions for a successful fight against Hitlerism abroad. To this end our Party will support resolutely the workers' struggles for better wages, for the right to strike, for the organization of the unorganized, against excessive taxation, against profiteering monopolists, for the rights of the Negro people, against the persecution of the Communist Party—in short, our Party will fight to improve the economic standards and civil liberties of the people, as against those ruthless capitalist interests who would establish their own brand of Hitlerism in this country. Our Party will also demand the fullest economic political and cultural rights and national independence of the Latin American peoples and against all attempts at Yankee domination.

For a successful struggle against Hitler abroad and against reaction in this country, it is indispensable that the trade unions come forward and play to the full their role as the protectors of the interests of the great masses of the American people. The trade unions have, grown out of their swaddling clothes. During the past few years they have leaped up from a movement of some 3,000,000 members, mostly skilled workers in the lighter industries, to a gigantic and rapidly growing force of over 10,000,000 workers, entrenched in all the great basic industries. The trade unions, especially the CIO have become the backbone of American democracy. They should now function militantly as the leaders of the nation, as the foundation of a great anti-fascist People's Front, to include workers, farmers, small middle class, Negroes, youth, etc. They can steer the American people upon a progressive course in these perilous days. History imperatively thrusts this great task upon the unions. Unless organized labor now marches militantly against Hitler the whole chance for victory over fascism is dangerously jeopardized. The fight for a just and lasting peace will be vastly weakened. Without the trade unions becoming active, there can be no safeguard against the sure attempts of the imperialists to sell the USSR and other peoples down the river and to organize a new Munich at the expense of world democracy.

In the great problem of mobilizing the gigantic strength of the American people for militant struggle against Hitler the principal task confronting us is to show the masses how their most basic interests are at stake in this war. The defense of Socialism and the first Socialist Republic is of stupendous importance to the whole world, and this fact must be made clear to the American people; but our main approach has to be to convince these masses that their own most immediate interests are directly threatened. We must teach them that Hitler's attack upon the Soviet Union imperils the living standards of the working class, the farmers, the middle classes of the United States; that it is a dire threat to their hard-won liberties, and that its success would present the eventuality of a desperate war against Hitler in this hemisphere. The Hitler war against the USSR is thus both a bread and butter question for the American people and a menace to all their liberties. So we must present it to them, not merely, or chiefly, as a fight to defend the first Socialist country. The way to defend America is by helping the USSR smash Hitler. The only path to world peace is through the military destruction of fascism.

The greatest danger the masses confront in developing a great People's Front against fascism are the appeasers of Hitler, the Munichers. We know all too well the havoc created in the past by these elements, whose basic assumption is that the real danger is not Hitler, but the Soviet Union. This is the line of the most reactionary circles of imperialism, the policy of the notorious Tory Chamberlain and Social Democrat Blum, that built up Hitler, that defeated Republican Spain, that helps the Japanese imperialist enemy of the Chinese people, and that prevented the formation of the great international peace front proposed by the Soviet Union. It is the policy responsible for the present war and for the present world threat of fascism. Today this appeasement tendency, Munichism, is virulent and dangerous in our country, and it appears in many and devious forms.

At present the most decisive sections of the British and American



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capitalist classes favor some degree of aid to the USSR against Hitler. This is reflected in the policies of the Churchill and Roosevelt Governments. It may be added, however, that the pressure of the masses is also a great factor in bringing about these governments' declarations that they will help the Soviet Union. But we must understand clearly that the many reactionary capitalist politicians and newspapers who are now talking about helping the USSR are not real friends of that country. For years they have plotted and schemed to destroy the first land of Socialism, and if they are now of a mind to work with it against Hitler it is only because, after a 20 months' war in which they have suffered one defeat after another at the hands of Hitler, they are eager to get any help possible against their dangerous capitalist rival, German imperialism. We may be sure too, that these same elements, if they see an opportunity, will not hesitate to betray the Soviet Union into the hands of the Hitlerite enemy. Especially will they aim to do this when the Red Army begins to wear down Hitler's army and starts marching on to victory. The Munich tendency is strong among such elements and we must be vigilantly on our guard against it. Already many of these people are cooling off in their former eager demands for war against Germany; others are saying that aid can be sent only to Great Britain, and many want to rest on their oars altogether and let the Red Army do the fighting for them.

But the most conscious and outspoken Munichers and appeasers are those who operate around the America First Committee. These, the Hoovers, Lindberghs, Coughlins, Hearsts, Wheelers and Norman Thomases, are the open spokesmen of the most reactionary sections of the capitalist class. They are the unblinking friends of Hitler, the uncompromising enemies of the Soviet Union. By denying aid to the USSR and sabotaging aid to Great Britain they strive to give the victory to Hitler. Their ultimate aim is the same as Hitler's—a general capitalist war against the USSR. This group flies the flag of isolationism and tries to prostitute to Hitler's cause the peace sentiments of the American masses.

Munichism and the appeasement of Hitler also finds support in Social Democratic ranks. Not only as in the case of Norman Thomas, who consorts openly with the most notorious fascists in this country, but also, as in the case of such people as Mr. Waldman, who, while pretending to favor giving aid to the Soviet Union, at the same time makes phony democratic demands upon that country as a condition for American aid. Waldman's line, which is the same as that of the political fossil, Kerensky, would make all aid to the USSR impossible, and it helps the appeasers of Hitler to poison the people's mind against the USSR.

All these open and concealed appeasers of Hitler and Hitlerism must be exposed and defeated. To do this is the main task before everyone who would aid the USSR and Great Britain in their fight to destroy Hitler. The American people must become convinced that their most basic economic and political interests can be conserved only by a joint struggle with the Soviet and British peoples against Nazi fascism. Only to the extent that the people understand this profoundly correct fact can we defeat the Munichers and really unite

circulated in millions of copies among the workers. Here my job is rather to present the main political line of our Party in the present new world situation. This line will be further concretized and applied to our various fields of work in the several sub-reports and in the discussion which will follow my report.

May I, however, make a few general observations? One thing our Party must be especially conscious of is the need to translate its political line into life as speedily and thoroughly as possible. If we are to help build up a great People's Front to mobilize the American nation for militant struggle against Hitler, we must bring our Party into action more quickly and thoroughly than ever before. Too often in Party Plenums we have spent our time hammering out the political line and have paid too little attention to the practical ways of putting this line into effect. Such a mistake we must not make this time. Here we must follow the great example of Lenin and Stalin. These brilliant leaders not only analyzed the situation confronting the people at a given time and formulated practical policies, but they were also masters of the ability to organize the Party to put its political decisions into effect.

Our discussion, therefore, should bear in mind the practical tasks that confront us. And let us remember that speed is of the essence. Our Party must work rapidly, as never before. Even as we sit here great battles are being fought upon the western borders of the USSR. Events will not wait for us. We must act promptly and decisively in putting our policy into effect.

Another matter I would like to suggest to the Plenum. This is that our reports and discussions turn chiefly upon the new situation confronting us. Our Party experiences during the struggle of the past months are vital and important and they should not be neglected. But our main task here at this Plenum, is to look carefully at the present situation and to consider the radical changes it requires in our work in the trade unions, the farmers' organizations, the youth movement, among the Negro people, during the coming local election—and in every field of Party work. Consequently all our slogans and all our methods of work must be re-examined here at this Plenum in the light of the present world situation, and we must go out from this Plenum with a program of action clearly in mind. Only if we do this can our Party make the necessary political turn and avoid disastrous sectarian errors of various kinds.

I am not now going to deal with our Party's various campaigns. Other comrades to follow will take care of that task. I will mention one, however, the fight to release Comrade Browder. All of us miss him enormously at this historic Plenum. And all of us also must admit that not enough has been done to secure his release. Especially has the campaign been sluggish in the trade unions. We have seen the spectacle that, while trade union movements all over Latin America have been militantly demanding the release of Comrade Browder, very few of such organizations or their leaders have spoken out for him in this country. This is intolerable and it indicates serious inactivity by the militants in the unions. We must realize now that with the turn in the world situation the masses will be increasingly demanding the release of Browder and that the issue must be more systematically raised in the unions.

Just one more point before I close. This is that we must not underestimate the strength and mass influence of our Party in the present situation. Although our Party is small and has been passing

through a period of considerable persecution, it nevertheless has broad mass contacts. The way the capitalist press has grabbed for our recent Party statements proves this. These contacts have been potentially enormously widened by the mass indignation at Hitler's attack upon the Soviet Union. We must be acutely conscious of this broadened perspective for Party work and for the building of our Party. Especially is the time now opportune for extending the circulation of the Daily and Sunday Worker.

We must break sharply with the methods of work which were adapted to the past period. Now we must proceed boldly to develop the broadest united front and People's Front activities. We must be prepared to work with all elements, even those openly critical of our Party, who are willing to fight against Hitler. This will require real flexibility on our part. Our greatest enemy is sectarianism, and against this we must be vigilantly on guard on all fronts. We must especially avoid short-cut slogans, radical sounding appeals, in our eagerness to defend the Soviet Union and to fight Hitler. We must know how to work out practical slogans calculated to really mobilize the masses, rather than merely to give forth revolutionary sounds. Our manifesto lays the basis for such policies and our Party membership should not only circulate it among the masses, but also study it carefully themselves.

The day the Hitler war against the Soviet Union began our Political Bureau promptly met and adopted a statement. This was duly published in the Daily Worker, and you are all acquainted with it. It was only a preliminary statement and it did not try to solve all problems; but it sufficed to give our Party's line in support of the Soviet Union in its fight against Hitler. The Manifesto which will be read to you upon the conclusion of my report is a more rounded-out statement of our Party's policy. We ask you to endorse these two documents, and we are certain that you will do so with the same wonderful spirit of unity that characterizes our Party and the whole world Communist movement.

Comrades, in conclusion, let me press upon you again the necessity of our Party's extending itself to the utmost in carrying out the policies that we are formulating at this Plenum. The fascists, the most reactionary section of capitalism, have dared to attack the first Socialist Republic and thereby delivered deadly assault upon popular liberties throughout the world. The thing we have expected for years and fought to prevent has finally come to pass. The main answer to this insolent and barbarous attack will be made by the Soviet Red Army, and successfully. Hitler will shatter his forces upon the solid rock of the unity and Socialist spirit of the Soviet people. Nor will the masses of the American people, like those of Great Britain and other countries, be amiss in the common fight against the fascist threat to world freedom, progress and civilization. The German people, too, will play their part and will deal the final blow to Hitlerism. But the struggle will be a hard one. Not all battles will be victorious, and the appeasers of Hitler will try tirelessly to sow defeatism in our people's ranks. We may be sure, however, that no matter how severe the battle, the steed and unified Soviet people will not waver, and neither should we. Now, as never before, our Party must show its Bolshevik qualities, its political maturity. The fight against Hitler must be pushed to the very end. Barbarous fascism must and will be eliminated from the face of the earth.

Heavy Tank of the Red Army Forces



One of the Red Army's heavy tanks is shown as it passes workers' apartments in Moscow on its way to the city's Red Square to be paraded in the November, 1940 march on the anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution. The tank shown above has the name "Stalin" painted on its side in Russian characters.