

**BATTLE
FOR
AMERICA**

1776-1861-1941

BY A. B. MAGIL



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1776 - 1861 - 1941

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To Margaret Rachel
for whose first cry I waited,
and while waiting
worked on this booklet

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BATTLE FOR AMERICA

Long, too long, America,

*Traveling roads all even and peaceful you learn'd from joys
and prosperity only,*

*But now, ah now, to learn from crises of anguish, advancing,
grappling with direst fate and recoiling not.*

WALT WHITMAN

The history of a nation's past is sometimes regarded as a cemetery in which noble monuments and shapely statuary mark the graves of issues and contentions long since dead. But for a people conscious of its responsibilities the past is the glowing core of its nationhood out of which it draws strength and knowledge and clarity in the new trials of the present and future. Today our country is in the midst of what President Roosevelt has called the toughest war of all time. And as he pointed out in his annual message to Congress on January 7, 1943, "We fight to retain a great past—and we fight to gain a greater future." This is a national war because there is at stake our existence as a nation, our freedom to work out our destiny. It is the fourth national war that our country has waged. The first, in 1775-83, created our nation; the second, the War of 1812, saved it from reconquest and consolidated the achievements of the Revolution and of Jeffersonian democracy; the third, in 1861-65, preserved our nation against a threat from within; the present national war, the greatest of them all, is being fought to preserve the gains of 167 years of national independence against a threat from without. In a very real sense Pearl Harbor was our modern Lexington and Fort Sumter.

In contrast, the Mexican War (which Abraham Lincoln, then a member of the House of Representatives, denounced), the Spanish-American War, and the first World

War were not national wars; far from involving the independence and freedom of our nation, they involved only the plunder and power of a reactionary minority—in the first case, the southern slavocracy, in the second and third, Wall Street finance-capital.

Our four national wars occurred in different historic epochs; and class alignments, specific problems and issues differed in each. Yet they all had certain problems and tasks in common. In all four, national political unity had to be built as the fulcrum of military activity, a national unity based on a coalition of classes, from the most conservative to the most radical, that stood for victory over the nation's enemies. In all four the national struggle has been interwoven with the social, but the conflicts among the collaborating classes have been subordinated to the overriding common interest: national survival. In all four, however, it was found that defense of the nation required changes of a social character and the enlistment of the energies, the initiative, the vision of the common man.

All four national wars have also been part of an international movement for larger freedom and democracy. And our own struggle has in each case been greatly aided from abroad: in the War of Independence, by the French alliance; in the War of 1812, by the general democratic sympathy; in the Civil War, by the protests of the workers and enlightened liberals of England, which prevented that country from entering the conflict on the side of the South, by the sympathetic activity of Russia, and by the response of solidarity from the people of Ireland, France and many other countries; in the present war, by the united nations and peoples of both hemispheres, headed by the world anti-Hitler coalition of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and China; and in all four by the countless thousands of brave men of foreign birth who fought for liberty under the American flag. In turn, our struggle has in each case strengthened the liberating forces of other countries.

Paralleling this solidarity of the peoples has been the internationalism of reaction: the aid given to our enemies by minorities in our own population—defeatists and traitors.

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The American Revolution had its origin in the basic economic conflict between the merchants, planters, artisans, and small farmers of the colonies and the imperial mercantile system of Britain. The objectives of British policy were bluntly stated by the royalist governor of Massachusetts, Sir Francis Bernard:

“The two great objects of Great Britain in regard to the American trade must be: (1) to oblige her American subjects to take from Great Britain only, all the manufactures and European goods which she can supply them with; (2) to regulate the foreign trade of the Americans so that the profits thereof may finally center in Great Britain, or be applied to the improvement of her empire.”¹

But capitalist development in the new world collided with colonial dependence on the old; American trade, nascent American industry, American land hunger, growing American culture and national consciousness strained at the none-too-maternal shackles placed upon them until they broke free. And what began as a limited constitutional struggle of British subjects for economic concessions within the empire grew into a torrential revolutionary war of the American nation for independence. This war could not have been started or won had there not been forged a broad unity of the nation that overcame tremendous odds and literally snatched victory out of the jaws of defeat.

It was the Stamp Act of 1765 that evoked the first cohesive effort on a national plane in the struggle against England. The Sugar Act of the previous year had hit at the New England traders; the Proclamation of 1763, by

banning westward expansion, had particularly affected Virginia, and blocked the westward movement of all classes. But the Stamp Act, by placing a tax on all legal documents, newspapers, pamphlets, calendars, playing cards and other items, bore down on almost all classes and all sections of the country. The Stamp Act became the synthesis and symbol of the colonists' grievances and the precipitant of national unity. It also brought upon the scene a new force: the independent action of the common people. Out of the Stamp Act agitation was born the Sons of Liberty, the organization of the democratic masses which became the bellows that fanned high the revolutionary flame. Their outstanding leader in the period prior to the War of Independence was that remarkable professional revolutionist and selfless patriot, Sam Adams of Boston.

The Sons of Liberty, varying in structure in the different colonies and not always operating as a formal organization, consisted mainly of artisans, mechanics and day laborers, who were led largely by militant merchants and lawyers. These masses were in part the beginnings of a working class, in part sections of the petty bourgeoisie. A working class in the modern sense, with its own clearly defined class physiognomy, did not yet exist, and the workers shared the outlook of the petty bourgeoisie. However, not only their immediate interests but their future as an independent class was bound up with the development of capitalism and the unfolding of bourgeois democracy, both of which required political independence. Today even a liberal historian like A. M. Schlesinger refers disdainfully to the Sons of Liberty as "the mob." But it was the aggressive tactics of these organized patriots that stirred up the colonies and helped prepare the first step toward national unification: the Stamp Act Congress in October, 1765. And throughout the ensuing ten years that blazed the path to the armed fight for independence, it was these little people, the unknown carpenters, joiners, smiths, sailors, calkers, rope

makers, small tradesmen, etc., who goaded on the wavering merchants and planters, thrust them aside when necessary, and drove forward the movement that eventually overthrew British rule. Their role has been admirably summed up by Professor Merrill Jensen:

"In Charleston, Philadelphia, New York and Boston the radical parties were the foundation of the revolutionary movement in their towns and colonies. It was they who provided the organization for uniting the dispersed farming population; which had not the means of organizing, but which was more than ready to act and which became the bulwark of the revolution once it had started. Located at the center of things, the town radicals were able to seize upon issues as they arose and to spread propaganda by means of circular letters, committees of correspondence, and provincial congresses. They brought to a focus forces that would otherwise have spent themselves in sporadic outbursts easily suppressed by the established order." ²

The Sons of Liberty were to our first Revolution what the Abolitionists and Radical Republicans were to the second: the prod in the conscience of America, the fire in the engine of freedom. Creating their own revolutionary law, they became the vanguard of a mighty host, the harbingers and forgers of national unity.

What were some of the problems of national unity in our first great crisis? First, the problem of securing collaboration of the classes that were adversely affected by the oppressive acts of the British Government. Necessarily excluded were those who sided with the Crown: certain of the wealthiest merchants and planters, the landed gentry of the northern seaboard, the clergy of the Anglican Church, and the host of officials and retainers of the British Government. But not everyone who favored resistance was prepared to go all the way. Most of the large merchants re-

tive national unity: the mobilization of the people. Merely with the vanguard organized in the Sons of Liberty and with patriotic merchants, planters and lawyers the fight could not be won. The masses had to be aroused, made conscious of their stake, brought into the main stream of resistance and attack. Through town meetings and demonstrations, through the organization of local militia, through the work of a remarkable group of journalists and pamphleteers, the greatest of whom was Tom Paine, and through the official declarations of colonial and intercolonial congresses, culminated by the glowing words of the Declaration of Independence, the common folk were stirred into action.

One of the most important instrumentalities for this purpose were the various non-importation and non-consumption agreements directed at British goods. The first such mass boycott came out of the Stamp Act Congress of 1765; it is the original ancestor of that embargo policy which Communists and other progressives some one hundred and seventy years later urged against fascist aggressors.

When the Continental Congress in 1774 voted a nationwide non-importation agreement and a year later extended this to cover exports to Britain as well, it was decided to enforce the boycott through Committees of Safety set up by popular election in every community. These bodies, operating under the direction of the Committees of Correspondence, became the police power of the War of Independence, the great right arm that struck hard not only at violators of the boycott, but at traitors and spies. Out of the revolutionary bourgeois dictatorship administered by the Committees of Correspondence and the Committees of Safety was born American freedom.

The Negro masses made a magnificent contribution to the national war. The first man to give his life for American independence was an escaped slave, Crispus Attucks, shot down in the Boston Massacre in 1770. And black men

bled at Valley Forge and served in the American armed forces throughout the war, many distinguishing themselves for bravery. True, the Negroes were not fully accorded their rightful places in the national independence front; slavery imposed its limitations upon them even in the course of the revolution. Of this inconsistency in the revolutionary camp, the British took full advantage, promising the slaves freedom in return for service in the British armies. It is estimated that from 1775 to 1793, "some one hundred thousand slaves (*i.e.*, about one out of every five) *succeeded in escaping* from slavery, though very often meeting death or serfdom instead of liberty." ⁵ But while in the South intensified repression sought to stem this surge toward freedom, in the North the liberating character of the war manifested itself in the enactment of legislation in several states abolishing or limiting slavery. Outstanding leaders of the Revolution, like Jefferson and Franklin, opposed slavery, and Jefferson wrote into the original draft of the Declaration of Independence a condemnation of Negro bondage and the slave trade, a passage which was deleted at the insistence of other delegates.

As the struggle against Britain developed, the popular upsurge produced sharp conflicts between radicals and conservatives in practically every colony. The wealthy merchants and planters were torn between their opposition to the harassing measures of Parliament and their fear of the people. "I see, and I see it with fear and trembling," wrote the aristocratic Gouverneur Morris of New York in a letter on May 20, 1774, to a member of the Penn family, "that if the disputes with Britain continue, we shall be under the worst of all possible dominions. We shall be under the domination of a riotous mob. It is to the interest of all men, therefore, to seek for reunion with the parent state."⁶ Morris was evidently the spiritual ancestor of certain leaders of the National Association of Manufacturers, who today denounce the labor movement and President

Roosevelt and yearn for a negotiated peace with Hitler.?

Nevertheless, when the time came, Gouverneur Morris put his fears on a shelf, conquered his trembling, and cast in his lot with those who broke away from the parent state. After the war, he, like John Dickinson, became one of the pillars of the reactionary Federalist Party. Thus social stresses and strains, as in our own day, threatened at times to tear the arch of national unity apart, but despite everything, it held for the duration.

The keystone of the arch that extended from Sam Adams and Thomas Jefferson to John Dickinson and Gouverneur Morris was George Washington. The greatness of Washington cannot be grasped by dissecting his qualities, for, as in the case of Lincoln, the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. Washington earned the right to be called the father of our country. His achievement in whipping motley bands of raw recruits into a national army, his military skill, his unwavering devotion to the patriot cause, his rock-like character under the heaviest blows made the final victory more the fruit of his work than that of perhaps any other single individual. Valley Forge, where Washington shared the suffering of his ragged men, has become for all time a watchword of heroism, self-sacrifice and unconquerable fighting spirit. And Washington was more than military leader of the Revolution; he was the symbol of national unity and the national will to victory.

No people's war is free of treason, and our first War of Independence had perhaps more than its share. The Loyalists who supported England constituted a formidable minority, and they were entrenched in the economic life of the thirteen colonies. One cannot but admire the clearcut manner in which the founding fathers, after some preliminary hesitation, drew the line between these traitorous Loyalists and the patriots. The Lindberghs of that time, far from being given government jobs (as was the case for a time with our contemporary specimen), were driven

into exile, one hundred thousand of them, their property confiscated, their names made the objects of hatred.

Besides the Loyalists, open and concealed, the patriots also had to contend with treason in their own ranks. That of Benedict Arnold was the most flagrant, but by no means the only example. The offensive against these enemy agents strengthened the American cause. Concerning the unmasking of Arnold, Carl Van Doren writes in his definitive work on the operations of the fifth column in our independence fight:

"No event in the course of the whole Revolution did so much to intensify patriotic sentiment. . . . Arnold as traitor helped fix a powerful new image of the United States in the minds of its people." ⁸

The exposure of Arnold and other traitors and the ruthless treatment of the Loyalists are a cue for us today. A Laura Ingalls of the America First Committee is sent to jail after it has been shown that she received money and instructions from a secretary of the German embassy. But Laura Ingalls' other boss, General Robert E. Wood, former head of the America First Committee, is brought into government service. A George Hill is sentenced to prison for perjury, but Hill's employer and associate in relations with George Sylvester Viereck, convicted Nazi agent—Hamilton Fish—continues to serve in Congress. True, there has been progress in recent months, as indicated by the imprisonment of a number of seditionists and the indictment of others, but there have also been hesitation and muddling. One of the worst fascist propagandists and organizers, Gerald L. K. Smith, continues to spout treason unmolested. "Father" Charles E. Coughlin likewise enjoys a mysterious immunity. The patriots of 1776 were not nearly so tender with the Rev. Jonathan Boucher. And in contrast, the Department of Justice tries to deport Harry Bridges and to deprive of citizenship State Senator Stanley Nowak of Michigan.

OUR DEBT TO OTHER PEOPLES

What about the peoples of other countries? They responded warmly to America's fight for freedom. In England itself support was not lacking. And patriots of other lands, men like Lafayette, de Kalb, Rochambeau, Kosciusko, Pulaski came to America to aid the democratic cause. The German Baron von Steuben helped organize and drill the Continental Army; the Jew Haym Solomon contributed his skill in finance; the Scotchman John Paul Jones became the greatest naval hero of the war. The largest contribution in manpower was made by the Irish. Thomas H. Maginnis in his book, *The Irish Contribution to American Independence*, estimates that fully one-third of the officers and a large proportion of the soldiers were of Irish birth or parentage. When hostilities began, thousands of Irishmen flocked to this country, seeing their own cause in America's battle. "Probably in no part of Europe," writes Michael Kraus in his essay, *America and the Irish Revolutionary Movement in the Eighteenth Century*, "were the effects of the American Revolution felt more immediately nor more deeply than in Ireland."⁹

The Americans, on their part, expressed their solidarity with the Irish, the Second Continental Congress issuing on May 10, 1775, an address to the Irish people condemning the wrongs against Ireland. In other words, the founding fathers were themselves what today would be called in certain circles "foreign agitators."

The America of 1776, even as the America of today, needed allies in its fight for existence and sought them everywhere: in France, Spain, Holland, Germany, Italy. We were then what the Soviet Union is in our own time: a vanguard country, the most progressive in the world. Yet this did not deter those clearheaded realists, the American revolutionists, from seeking alliances with regimes of a different political character. France was a particularly likely

prospect. For, having lost her American colonial empire to Britain in the Seven Years' War, the France of Louis XVI was not at all averse to having Britain lose hers to the American people. From the standpoint of France that would weaken Britain and help restore the colonial balance of power. There were divisions in the French government about going to war with England, but Benjamin Franklin's skilful diplomacy and the news of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, *plus the sympathy of the French people for the American cause*, finally overcame these hesitations and France signed a formal alliance with the United States.

America was a weak country as compared to France, and the aims of the French king were certainly not those of the American patriots. But the forces of history were moving through the action of democratic America, and these outweighed everything else and shaped the character of the war. In 1916 Lenin, in distinguishing between a progressive national war and a reactionary imperialist conflict, cited the American experience:

“England and France were engaged in a seven years' war for colonies, *i.e.*, they waged an imperialist war (which is as possible on the basis of slavery, or of primitive capitalism, as on the basis of highly developed modern capitalism). France was defeated and lost part of her colonies. Several years later the North American states started a war for national liberation against England alone. Out of enmity toward England, *i.e.*, in conformity with their own imperialist interests, France and Spain, which still held parts of what are now the United States, concluded friendly treaties with the states that had risen against England. The French forces together with the American defeated the English. Here we have a war for national liberation in which imperialist rivalry is a contributory element of no great importance, which is the opposite of what we have in

the war of 1914-16 (in which the national element in the Austro-Serbian war is of no great importance compared with the all-determining imperialist rivalry)." 10

By "a contributory element of no great importance" Lenin meant that France's imperialist motives were of no great importance in determining the character of the war. However, French military and financial assistance proved one of the decisive factors in winning America's fight for independence. And in turn the American Revolution provided an impetus to the French: six years after the Treaty of Paris ended our struggle, the people of Paris stormed the Bastille. Despite the calculations of Louis and his class, by helping to free America France helped free herself.

The independence won at such sacrifice had to be given bone and muscle in the years that followed. Most liberal historians have seen only the social side of the conflict between Federalists and Anti-Federalists that arose during the constitutional convention and continued for over twenty-five years. But there was something else at issue besides basic attitudes toward democracy and the popular welfare. The differences between the party of Hamilton and the party of Jefferson were in fact *a continuation under new conditions of the struggle for national independence.*

The Federalists represented those wealthy merchant capitalist interests that prior to 1776 had repeatedly sought to come to terms with Britain; during the war most of them either secretly sympathized with the British or entered the fight reluctantly under pressure of the democratic masses. With the war over, these wealthy merchants once more began to operate largely with British capital and credit and sought political accommodation with the former enemy. This course found ready support among the majority of the Federalist leaders. In addition, fear of democracy at home drove the Federalists toward alignment with the bulwark of reaction abroad. As a result, they adopted policies in

both domestic and foreign affairs that had the effect of maintaining a status of semi-colonial dependence on Britain. Hence the Jay Treaty with England in 1794, which evoked stormy protest demonstrations in this country—"the most humiliating treaty to which an American has ever put his signature."¹¹ Hence the treasonable negotiations between Federalist leaders and British agents during Jefferson's administration. And hence the secessionist conspiracies in New England which reached their climax with the Hartford convention in 1814.

In their struggle to defend and buttress their hard-won independence the American people again had as their ally France—this time free, republican France. It was, in fact, the French Revolution and Tom Paine's magnificent defense of it in his reply to Edmund Burke, *The Rights of Man*, that brought to a boil the simmering conflict between the hosts of Hamilton and of Jefferson. To an extraordinary degree American political life became divided between the friends of Britain and the friends of France, the former consisting of the wealthy and privileged classes, the latter of the overwhelming majority of the common people. Actually, this conflict between two internationalisms was the form under which the *national* struggle for a strong and free America took place. "I still hope the French revolution will issue happily," wrote Jefferson to Edward Rutledge on August 29, 1791. "I feel that the permanence of our own leans in some degree on that, and that a failure there would be a powerful argument to prove that there must be a failure here."¹² And earlier, on February 4, 1791, in a letter to George Mason: "I consider the establishment and success of their [the French] government as necessary to stay up our own, and to prevent it from falling back to that kind of half-way house, the English constitution."¹³

Just so, in a later time, did another great American, Earl Browder, leader of the Communist Party, urge collaboration with the most advanced country of our own epoch, the

Soviet Union, as necessary for the defense of America. For this he, like Jefferson, was reviled as a "foreign agent"; but today his proposal is national policy.

Though Washington was strongly influenced by Hamilton's ideas, in regard to France he was closer to the position of Jefferson. In a letter on January 3, 1793, in which Jefferson chided William Short, chargé d'affaires at Paris, for his hostility to the Jacobin phase of the French Revolution, he wrote that one of Short's dispatches "induced him [Washington] to break silence and to notice the extreme acrimony of your expressions. He added that he had been informed the sentiments you had expressed *in your conversations* were equally offensive to our allies, and that you should consider yourself the representative of your country and that what you say might be imputed to your constituents. He added that he considered *France as the sheet anchor of this country and its friendship as a first object.*"¹⁴ [Emphasis in the original.—A.B.M.]

It is also significant that while Jefferson ardently supported revolutionary France in her war against the European coalition led by Britain, he turned against France when, under Napoleon, this became a war of conquest and national oppression. That conflict developed from progressive to reactionary, the reverse of the present war in which our country is engaged. Jefferson, the two hundredth anniversary of whose birth is being observed this year, lived too soon to be called by the Martin Dieses of his day an agent of Moscow, but not too late to be branded an agent of Paris. But his work was full of the seed of history and it bore rich fruit: the War of 1812 ended the foreign threat to America's existence and ended too the party of neo-Loyalism and appeasement, the Federalists.

THE CIVIL WAR

The American nation, sprung from the womb of the War of Independence, saved from early extinction by the

democratic life-force of the common people under Jefferson, on the threshold of young manhood faced death from the devouring cancer of slavery. Today a far more malignant growth, fascism, threatens all nations with a common grave and compels us once more, as in 1861, to turn to the grim surgery of war for a new birth of freedom.

In 1861, as in 1776, the defeat of our country's enemies was made possible by achieving, despite widespread disruption and sabotage, a very large measure of common action of those classes whose interests lay with the development of capitalism and therefore with the preservation of the Union.* There were, however, many obstacles in the way. And in their bold attempt to destroy our nation and establish a slave republic astride the two oceans, the Southern dictators counted heavily on a national disunity which they themselves had skilfully nurtured. Class alignments were such that the slave system was able to fasten its grip on the Federal government in the very period in which, economically, capitalism and free labor were sealing its doom.†

The South itself was a house divided and in turmoil—yet a house with a cunning and ruthless master. Of the 8,000,000 white people in the slaveholding states in 1860, only 384,000, or less than 5 per cent, owned slaves, and only a fraction of these were large slave owners. Except for the merchants, lawyers, clergymen, journalists, teach-

* Karl Marx, who wrote the most penetrating contemporary comments on the Civil War, pointed out that a victory for the South, with the establishment of an independent slave republic controlling all contested territory, would inevitably have drawn into its economic orbit the majority of the free states and eventually forced them to join the Confederacy. (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Civil War in the United States*, p. 80.)

† Of the \$3,736,000,000 of wealth produced in this country in 1859, over \$2,818,000,000, or 75 per cent, came from the farms and factories of the North. In 1857 the North had more than twice as much wealth in real and personal property as the South, \$10,957,000,000 as against \$5,202,000,000. (Ernest L. Bogart, *Economic History of the American People*, pp. 443, 469.)

ers, etc., most of whom were part of the slaveholders' retinue, the rest of the white population consisted of independent farmers who lived in the upland regions, "poor white" farmers, agricultural laborers, artisans and city workers, all of whom owned no slaves and were in frequent conflict with those who did. In the decade before the Civil War there were sharp political contests in a number of Southern states between the democratic forces and the oligarchy, and the latter were by no means always victorious. On the eve of the Civil War there is every reason to believe that a majority of the Southern people were opposed to secession. One of the leading Virginia secessionists, Edmund Ruffin, wrote in his diary on April 2, 1861, that it was "communicated privately by members of each delegation [to the Confederate constitutional convention] that it was supposed people of every state except South Carolina were indisposed to the disruption of the Union—and that if the question of reconstruction of the former Union was referred to the popular vote, that there was probability of its being approved." 15

The most powerful anti-slavery force in the South was, of course, the slaves themselves, who numbered nearly 4,000,000 in 1860. The lightning of slave revolt struck more and more frequently throughout the South as the inevitable conflict neared; in addition, thousands of Negroes found their way via the Underground Railroad to freedom in the North. Clearly, the entire social structure of the South, far from being the harmonious and integrated unit presented in history books, romantic novels and Hollywood films, was actually a smoldering volcano on whose peak teetered a desperate and decadent ruling class. And like the fascist dictators today, this ruling class could not wage war against free America without at the same time by force and fraud waging war on its own people.

The problem of bringing this people—the classes whose future was bound up with capitalism—into common action

with their brothers of the North was primarily a problem of liberating the slaves and of weakening the oligarchy's grip on the white population through the military defeat of the South. The reaction of the Southern white masses to the experiences of the war is described as follows by Charles and Mary Beard:

"Indeed, recent historians, such as Frank L. Owsley and A. B. Moore, are inclined to attribute the final collapse of the Confederacy not so much to a failure of material goods as to a lack of support from state authorities, to evasions of the draft, and to discouragement among the masses; above and beyond everything, to the growing conviction among the southern farmers of the uplands that the Confederate government was a slave owners' agency of power given to class favoritism, that the conflict was 'a rich man's war and a poor man's fight,' all the more poignantly evident when the draft laws exempted first the owners of at least twenty and then fifteen Negroes from military service on the ground of supervisory requirements."¹⁶

In the North the social structure was both more complex and more fluid. The well-to-do merchant of the Revolution had become a merchant prince. His consort was the banker, and together they divided with the shipping and railroad magnates the economic empire of the North. Manufacturing, which, except for the home variety, had been almost non-existent in the early years of the republic, began to grow under the stimulus of the War of 1812, and its development was particularly rapid in the two decades prior to the Civil War. This was undoubtedly a major factor in bringing the conflict to a head. Yet on the eve of the Civil War large-scale manufacturing was still in its infancy and the industrialist was only on the threshold of dominance. The large merchants and bankers controlled

the economy of the North. It is this which largely explains the vacillations and shabby compromises that marked the conduct of the North up to the very outbreak of the war. For the Northern merchants, whose center was New York, had powerful economic ties with the Southern oligarchy, buying from them cotton, tobacco and other products—especially cotton—and selling them manufactured goods, much of it imported from England. Acting as brokers for Southern cotton, the merchants became the political brokers for the cotton kings. It was the alliance with the Northern Democratic Party, the political proxy of the commercial bourgeoisie, that enabled the slavocrats to capture control of the Federal government for twenty years and wring the repeated concessions that extended their power.

In their attitude toward the slaveholders the Northern merchants and bankers reproduced, on a larger scale the attitude of the wealthy American merchants toward Britain in the years that led up to the War of Independence. In our own time we have seen a similar policy assume global proportions, with the brokers of Munich exacting an even more terrible tribute from mankind. Recent history seems to be anticipated as one reads the story of how the nineteenth-century Astors and Belmonts alternately resisted the encroachments of the slave power and yielded, collaborating in the blackmail of the country much after the Chamberlain fashion of a later day.¹⁷ Yet each of these disreputable compromises produced its counteraction in the North, bringing nearer the breaking-point. This dialectic process was brilliantly summed up by Marx in an article in the October 11, 1861, issue of the *New York Daily Tribune*:

“The successive compromise measures mark the successive degrees of the encroachment by which the Union became more and more transformed into the slave of the slaveowner. Each of these compromise measures denotes a new encroachment of the South, a

new concession of the North. At the same time none of the successive victories of the South was carried out but after a hot contest with an antagonistic force in the North, appearing under different party names with different watchwords and under different colors. If the positive and final result of each single contest told in favor of the South, the attentive observer of history could not but see that every new advance of the slave power was a step forward to its ultimate defeat." 18

THE ANTI-SLAVERY FORCES

What was this "antagonistic force in the North" which hotly contested the advance of the slave power? It was the force of the agrarian West and the rising industrial capitalism of the East—two aspects of the growing capitalist development of the country. Anticipating by thirty years the work of Professor F. J. Turner, Marx was the first to point out the decisive role in the struggle against slavery played by the small farmers of the Northwest:

"A closer study of this American business," he wrote to Engels on July 1, 1861, "has shown me that the conflict between South and North—after the latter has abased itself for the past fifty years by one concession after another—was finally . . . brought to a head by the weight thrown into the scales by the extraordinary development of the northwestern states. The population there, richly mixed with fresh German and English elements, and, in addition, self-working farmers for the most part, was naturally not so easily intimidated as the gentlemen of Wall Street and the Quakers of Boston." 19

It was these independent farmers of the Northwest that became the yeast in the compound of forces which organized the Republican Party. Their rising strength was shown when the seven Northwestern states gave Abraham Lin-

coln, himself a son of the Western frontier, 43.4 per cent of his total vote. The majority of these Western farmers were hostile to slavery, but were concerned rather with preventing its spread to the territories than with exterminating it in the areas where it already existed.

With them stood the industrialists, as distinct from the merchants. On the eve of the Civil War this new industrial bourgeoisie was just beginning to feel its oats. A young giant, it required for sustenance domination of the home market, economic and political unification of the country. Unlike the commercial plutocracy, it could not surrender to the slaveholders and live; unlike the petty-bourgeois farmers, it could not divide power with them without itself becoming a torso. And already in the 'fifties this giant was moving with stormy tread to the irrepressible conflict that was destined to overthrow the slave system and raise the industrialists to undisputed power. The political spokesmen of the industrial capitalists were the Radical Republicans, whose leaders were men like Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, Senator Benjamin Wade of Ohio, and Representative Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania. Stevens in particular was the embodiment of the bourgeois revolution, a torrent of a man, one of the commanding figures of American democracy.²⁰

With the spread of industry the working class, which had been only rudimentary in the period of the first Revolution began to assume distinct form. Up until the Civil War, however, the working class and the trade union movement grew slowly because of the influence of slavery, the restricted development of industry and the presence of an expanding frontier. As late as 1852 Marx was writing to Joseph Weydemeyer, who had emigrated to the United States, that "bourgeois society in the United States has not yet developed far enough to make the class struggle obvious."²¹ The antagonism between capital and labor began, in fact, to be submerged in the more elementary conflict

between capitalism and the slave system. The unfettering of capitalism through the destruction of slavery therefore became the precondition for the development of the working class and the opening of the path to the fulfilment of its historic mission: the socialist transformation of society.

The workers were instinctively hostile to slavery and were active in the struggle against it. Of the Abolitionist movement in the early years when William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* was challenging reaction and complacency, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a leading Abolitionist, wrote that it "was not . . . strongest in the more educated classes, but was predominantly a people's movement, based on the simplest human instincts and far stronger for a time in the factories and shoe shops than in the pulpits or colleges." ²² However, partly as a result of the hostility of some Abolitionist leaders toward the workers' own demands, partly from lack of understanding of the historic significance of the struggle against slavery, a strong tendency developed among the trade union leaders to adopt a narrow attitude toward the problem. They often minimized the oppression and degradation of chattel-slavery, declaring it was no worse than wage-slavery, and contenting themselves with formal endorsements of emancipation.

Drawn from all classes, but primarily from the urban and rural middle classes and the working class, the Abolitionists played a special role in the stormy conflict between two economic and social systems. Like the Sons of Liberty in the fight for independence from England, they were the pioneers, the stirrers-up and goaders-on who spoke with the tongue of history. In the cause of emancipation these courageous men and women faced harsh abuse, social ostracism, death itself; and their martyrs, John Brown of Kansas and Elijah Lovejoy of Illinois, nourished with their blood the sapling that grew into a great oak of freedom.

The leaders of the organized Abolitionist movement were for the most part Northern white intellectuals and fugitive

or free Negroes; among the latter the foremost was the immortal Frederick Douglass.²³ The movement, for all its greatness and heroism, was not free of sectarian tendencies that impaired its effectiveness. Besides the lack of sympathy toward labor on the part of some—not all—of its leaders, there were those who made the mistake of repudiating political action. Another error was the tendency to regard emancipation in abstract ethical terms and to separate it from its socio-economic context and from the national interests of the American people; this caused certain Abolitionist leaders to become advocates of disunion: they took the position that if the slave states chose to secede, it would be good riddance. Yet, with all its shortcomings, the positive contribution of the Abolitionist movement was enormous. No finer tribute was paid this heroic vanguard than Abraham Lincoln's statement: "I have been only an instrument. The logic and moral power of Garrison and the anti-slavery people of the country and the army have done all." ²⁴

With class tensions more highly developed and with the commercial bourgeoisie repeatedly siding with the slaveholders, the problem of welding the diverse forces of the North into a single phalanx moving to the defense of the nation was far more difficult than it had been in the War of Independence. Out of the shifting alignments of the 'forties and 'fifties and out of the bloody struggle over Kansas there was born the Republican Party, representing a coalition of farmers and industrialists, supported by the workers. Its platform opposed the further spread of slavery. In the sense that it did not stand for the abolition of human bondage the new alignment was also an expression of bourgeois compromise, but a compromise whose content was radically different from those of the past. Under pressure of the twin forces of industrial capitalism in the East and small-farmer economy in the West a new power had arisen, determined to bar the way to further advance by the

slavocracy. Moreover, this new form of compromise was a dynamic phenomenon and served as a transition to the revolutionary struggle for the total destruction of the slave system. The Republican Party thus became the chief instrument for unifying the patriotic forces of the country.

Resistance to the arrogant lust of the slaveholders also began to manifest itself in the Democratic Party. This was an expression of the duality of the commercial bourgeoisie, which had ties in both camps, and of the pressure of the Democratic voters. When the party's Northern and Southern wings parted company in the 1860 election, it made possible the victory of the Republican Party.*

With the industrialists, farmers and workers of the North opposed to further yielding to the slave owners, the chief problem of national unity was the attitude of the mercantile interests. These men of wealth and complacent power had their own idea of how to preserve the Union: let the South have its way. And they denounced the Republicans and Abolitionists as subverters of the Union for interfering with their plans. The great majority of the tycoons of trade and finance bitterly opposed Lincoln's election, and even when secession began, they continued to defend the South's right to disrupt the Union. They constituted the "peace" party—as did the Chamberlains and Lindberghs of a later day. The extent to which some of the merchants were deep in the toils of treason was evidenced by the fact that a group of them, together with Fernando Wood, the corrupt pro-slavery Mayor of New York, plotted to have New York

* An erroneous emphasis is often placed on the fact that Abraham Lincoln was a minority President since he received only 40 per cent of the vote. But the fact is that the *national* forces in the election were by no means in the minority even though they were still disunited. Both Stephen A. Douglas, candidate of the Northern Democrats, and John C. Bell, standard-bearer of the Constitutional Union Party, were against secession, and their votes, together with Lincoln's, amounted to 82 per cent of the total.

secede from the Union and set itself up as a free port.

With the firing on Fort Sumter, however, mercantile Big Business had to choose. Its deeper economic interests, anchored in the capitalist system, made the choice of the Union side inevitable. Yet the long years of intimate economic, political and personal relations with the slaveholders made equally inevitable the recrudescence of appeasement and defeatism as difficulties developed in the war. This was particularly true when the war developed from its constitutional phase into a revolutionary struggle for the liberation of the slaves. However, the firing on Fort Sumter did, as in the case of the bombing of Pearl Harbor eighty years later, create temporarily a unity of all classes throughout the North and a united national will that manifested itself in a great patriotic upsurge among the masses.

Another problem of national unity and of the fight for victory was the mobilization of the civilian population. As in the War of Independence, the press (this time daily as well as weekly) and pamphlets played an important role. Such publications as the *New York Daily Tribune*, to which Marx contributed, and *Harper's Weekly* did much to enlighten and arouse the people. And the great literary figures, men like Emerson, Whitman, Bryant, Lowell and Whittier, participated actively in the struggle against slavery.

LINCOLN'S ROLE

Abraham Lincoln was steadfast in his opposition to any further territorial encroachment of the slave power. To his managers at the Chicago convention of the Republican Party in 1860 he wrote: "Entertain no proposition for a compromise in regard to the extension of slavery."²⁵ After his election he said: "There is one point . . . I can never surrender—that which was the main issue of the Presidential canvass and decided at the late election, concerning the extension of slavery in the territories."²⁶ Lincoln, however, did not at first favor the immediate emancipation of the

slaves nor grasp its organic relation to the winning of the war and the preservation of the Union. During the first two years his approach to the problem of winning the war was that of the *political and military defensive*. In few wars can one trace so clear a correlation between basic political attitudes and the conduct of military affairs. There is no doubt that the "Save the Union" slogan which Lincoln issued at the outset represented the broadest platform on which a united effort could have been achieved. It embodied the national character of the war, expressed the common stake of the various classes that opposed secession, and also served as a means of appealing over the heads of the slaveholders to the people of the South.

But not all who stood on this ground were agreed on how the Union was to be saved. To a majority of the merchants, bankers and loyal slaveholders of the border states, saving the Union meant restoration of the *status quo ante*. But this was a national struggle that was closely bound up with the social: since the threat to the country's existence came from a class whose power stemmed from a backward, pre-capitalist mode of production, the war could be successfully waged only as a social revolution; a social revolution that would uproot slavery and raise to unchallenged dominance the industrial bourgeoisie.

It was the Radical Republicans, the Abolitionists (who quickly sloughed off the sectarian disunionism that had afflicted some of them before the war), and the most advanced sections of the working class, especially the Marxists, who best understood that social change coincided with national need. Toward this understanding the Western farmers also moved rapidly as the war developed. The militant anti-secession forces quickly gained the upper hand in Congress, where a new powerful revolutionary instrument came into being, the Committee on the Conduct of the War. It was dominated by the Radical Republicans and was destined to be what the Committees of Safety had been in the

War of Independence. It is the fashion among American historians to depict this committee as a collection of "extremists" who harassed Lincoln needlessly and would with the best intentions have paved the way to hell for the Union cause. Professor Edward Channing, for example, writes that the committee "interfered most sadly with the carrying on of military enterprises and no doubt caused the loss of thousands of lives and the expenditure of millions of dollars that might otherwise have been saved." ²⁷ The truth happens to be the reverse. The Committee on the Conduct of the War interfered with treason and compromise, it saved life and money by insisting on aggressive measures, political and military, and its work contributed incalculably to victory. Even T. Harry Williams, in his recently published book, *Lincoln and the Radicals*, a Copperhead tract which libels everything best in the Civil War, concedes the rightness of the Radical Republican position when he states: "Against Lincoln and his conservative program the Jacobins [the Radicals] waged a winning battle. Both logic and time aided their cause. For Lincoln proposed the impossible—to conduct the war for the preservation of the *status quo* which had produced the war."²⁸

It is also frequently argued that Lincoln could not have freed the slaves sooner because the country would not have supported him. This argument hardly accords with the facts and overlooks the social roots of Lincoln's wavering. Abraham Lincoln was of that petty-bourgeois agrarian class which, desiring control of its own land and its own economic life, actively opposed the invasion of the Western soil by the Southern slaveholders. This class had formed the backbone of the democracy of Jefferson and Jackson and it played, as already noted, a major role in the struggle against slavery. But the reins of history were already passing from its hands into those of the industrial bourgeoisie. Unlike the latter, the economic and social horizons of the independent Western farmers were regional rather than na-

tional; they were at first content to limit rather than exterminate slavery. And it was the outlook of this class that Lincoln predominantly expressed as President.

It is probable true that the slaves could not have been liberated immediately after the firing on Fort Sumter without alienating the powerful commercial bourgeoisie and shattering the newly forged national unity at a time when the majority of the people were not yet awakened to the fundamental issues of the conflict. But within a few months the defeats of the North and the clear indications from the Confederacy itself of the uncompromising nature of the war created the opportunity for radical action. Had Lincoln seized the weapon of slave labor out of the hands of the country's enemies and through emancipation converted it into powerful artillery of the Union cause, the great majority of the nation, including a section of the big merchants, would undoubtedly have gone along with him. ". . . From the first," wrote Frederick Douglass in his autobiography. "I reproached the North that they fought the rebels with only one hand, when they might strike effectually with two—that they fought with their soft white hand, while they kept their black iron hand chained and helpless behind them—that they fought the effect, while they protected the cause, and that the Union cause would never prosper till the war assumed an anti-slavery attitude, and the Negro was enlisted on the loyal side."²⁹ The fact that even men like General Lewis Case, Secretary of State under Buchanan, and the prominent Catholic publicist, Dr. Orestes Brownson, both of whom had for years been leading appeasers, had by the fall of 1861 come around to the view that emancipation was indispensable for victory shows the crystallization of public sentiment. On this point, too, T. Harry Williams gives significant evidence. Concerning General Fremont's order of August 20, 1861, freeing the slaves of all rebels in Missouri—an order subsequently rescinded by Lincoln—he writes: "The popular outburst endorsing this

action [Fremont's order] was tremendous and instantaneous."³⁰

Not the people, but *the pressure of the commercial and banking interests and of the loyal slaveholders of the border states*—some of whom merely wore the mask of loyalty—plus the limitations of Lincoln's own class-conditioned understanding of the issues, imposed on him, despite his own abhorrence of slavery, the hesitations, legalistic caution, and defensive strategy of the first two years. Of the influence of the loyal slaveholders Marx wrote in November, 1861:

“. . . Tender regard for the interests, prejudices and sensibilities, of these ambiguous allies has smitten the Union government with incurable weakness since the beginning of the war, driven it to half measures, forced it to dissemble away the principles of the war and to spare the foe's most vulnerable spot, the root of the *evil—slavery itself.*”³¹

Lincoln's qualms at striking a decisive blow at what he himself later called “the lever of their [the Southern states'] power” were an integral part of his whole approach to the problem of victory. Concerning his original proposal for gradual, compensated emancipation, he wrote to Horace Greeley on March 24, 1862: “If I were to suggest anything, it would be that as the North are already for the measure, we should urge it *persuasively*, and not *menacingly*, upon the South.”³² In other words, nearly a year after the firing on Fort Sumter, Lincoln was still seeking to *conciliate* rather than crush the slavocracy. And it was this attitude which he shared, of course, with many others in high places, that determined the military conduct of the war. McClellan, the man who knew everything about war except how to wage it, was the embodiment of the policy of conciliation.

Grant, on the other hand, following his hard-won victory at Shiloh shortly after Lincoln wrote his letter to Greeley, came to the conclusion that the war could be won only by conquering the South. So long as Lincoln clung to conciliation, he clung to McClellan. It is no accident that the final scuttling of that prototype of General Maxime Weygand took place only six weeks after the issuing of the preliminary announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation. And a half year after the freeing of the slaves came the turning of the tide: Gettysburg and Vicksburg.

There was, however, a profound difference between the Lincoln policy and that of McClellan even when they seemed to coincide. The former sought to conciliate the South into accepting the North's terms, the latter to conciliate the North into accepting the South's terms. When Lincoln finally understood that North and South were irreconcilable, he smashed slavery and launched the revolutionary war to beat the South into submission; McClellan became the advocate of "negotiated peace," the plumed knight of national betrayal and defeat. Because Abraham Lincoln was close to the people, because he was fast in their hearts and they in his, he was able to draw strength from them, burn out of himself the dross of indecision and compromise, and to grow with his terrible ordeal. And in taking at last the course that alone could save the nation, he walked the steep path to majesty and greatness.

Marx foresaw the change in Lincoln's policy. "In my opinion," he wrote to Engels on August 7, 1862, "all this will take another turn. In the end the North will make war seriously, adopt revolutionary methods and throw over the domination of the border slave statesmen. A single Negro regiment would have a remarkable effect on Southern nerves." And he added: "The Northwest and New England [that is, the farmers and the industrial bourgeoisie] wish to and will force the government to give up the diplomatic method of conducting war which it has used hitherto. . . ." ¹⁸³

EMANCIPATION AND THE OFFENSIVE

With the Emancipation Proclamation, that *magna carta* of American democracy second only to the Declaration of Independence, came—not all at once, but steadily none the less—the unfolding of that offensive strategy which culminated in Sherman's march through Georgia and Grant's drive on Richmond. The change that came over Lincoln was no less fundamental: only a half year after the Emancipation Proclamation he was so elated with a letter from General Sherman, urging a policy of ruthless annihilation of everyone and everything that stood in the way of victory that he wanted to publish and distribute it throughout the country. The bridges to the past were burned and the liberation of the slaves proved decisive. Some 200,000 Negroes, most of them newly freed, were recruited into the Union army, and they fought with a courage that won frequent expressions of admiration from white officers.³⁴ The generations of slave revolts, of sabotage and flight found their consummation in the great national war in which the Negro masses fought for their own liberation and, together with their white brothers, saved the American nation.

Today the descendants of those whom Lincoln freed join with their white comrades on the battlefield and on the production line in a new, vaster national and international conflict that will decide the fate of America and the world. Though many of the restrictions under which black men and women fought and labored for victory in the Civil War have been removed, and the Negro people have emerged as an independent force in the social and political life of the country, continued discrimination in the armed forces, in industry, in all phases of civilian life limits the participation of these 13,000,000 Americans and thereby weakens our whole war effort. Much still needs to be done to root out these vestiges of the slave era and fulfil the democratic promise of the Civil War and the present people's war.

The national unity fused by the firing on Fort Sumter proved less solid than it appeared. Blaming the government for the consequences of the defensive and legalistic approach which they themselves had advocated, the reactionary appeasers and their political representatives, the so-called Peace Democrats (the America First of that day) took advantage of every shortcoming and difficulty to incite the people against the war and against Abraham Lincoln. And from the position of a limited, constitutional war, they eventually, particularly after the Emancipation Proclamation, slid down to the morass of an unlimited negotiated peace—surrender to the slavocracy. All this has for us a familiar ring. The defeatists in Congress and newspapers like the *New York Daily News*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the Hearst press, like their political forebears, try to make capital out of every difficulty and attempt to sow distrust toward the government, to weaken national unity, and to disrupt the United Nations.

To deal with treason and defeatism Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus, defying a ruling of Chief Justice Taney of Dred Scott ill-fame that this was unconstitutional. Lincoln thus established the principle that the enemies of the country have no right to the protection of the Constitution—a principle which could stand reaffirmation today in regard to the Christian Front, the Ku Klux Klan, and the whole kit and caboodle of fifth columnists. There were of course, as there are now, certain misguided liberals who echoed the Copperhead clamor that Lincoln was destroying civil liberties. But in defending the arrest of one of the worst of the Copperheads, Clement L. Vallandigham—to whom President Roosevelt once compared Charles A. Lindbergh—Lincoln wrote: "Under cover of 'liberty of speech,' 'liberty of the press,' and 'habeas corpus,' they [the secessionists] hoped to keep on foot amongst us a most efficient corps of spies, informers, suppliers, and aiders and abettors of their cause in a thousand ways." ⁸⁵ And he asked: "Must I

shoot a simple-minded soldier boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert?"⁸⁶ What shall be said today of certain publications with millions of circulation *that are trying to induce the entire nation to desert?*

Pressing the offensive against the fifth column was the Committee on the Conduct of the War, which became the scourge of spies, traitors and appeasers. It was this committee that expressed the temper of Congress and the country; and despite his frequent conflicts with the committee, Lincoln came increasingly to share that temper too. Fortunately, the Copperheads had no counterpart of the Dies Committee to further their aims. Such a body would have been unthinkable in the Civil War Congress.

If, despite treason and defeatism, despite corruption and profiteering, despite fantastic military incompetence and the misguided policies of the first two years, Abraham Lincoln was able to lead the country to victory, it was in no small measure due to the aid given by the peoples of other lands. In the ranks of the Union army the contribution of German immigrants was particularly notable. These included participants in the German revolution of 1848, among whom were Communist followers of Marx and Engels like Friedrich Anneke and Joseph Weydemeyer. Lincoln did not hesitate to accept the aid of Communists and he commissioned Weydemeyer a colonel and appointed him commandant of St. Louis. In other words, long before there was a single Communist in Russia, Communists in America fought to save this nation and strengthen its democracy. Needless to say, Lincoln's attorney general would have been laughed out of court if he had attempted to "prove"—as did a successor some eighty years later—that these Communists were seeking to overthrow our government by force and violence.

Among European powers Russia alone adopted a sympathetic attitude toward the Union cause; in 1863 two Russian fleets were anchored in New York and San Fran-

cisco harbors, ready to act should England enter the war on the side of the Confederacy. Just as France in the eighteenth century, after her defeat by Britain, sought to weaken that power through alliance with her revolting colonies, so Russia in the nineteenth century, having lost to England and France in the Crimean War, struck at them by countering their interventionist efforts in behalf of the South. As in the case of Louis XVI's France, liberal influences, which in 1861 secured the emancipation of the serfs, were also a factor in determining the Tsar's policy. Lincoln and Secretary of State Seward shrewdly utilized the antagonisms among the European powers in order to help immobilize those who were hostile to the United States.

But far more potent than Tsarist Russia in preventing intervention were the efforts of the English workers. Despite their acute sufferings as a result of the Northern blockade, which forced British textile factories to close for lack of Southern cotton, the workers organized tremendous protests against all attempts of the Palmerston-Russell government to provoke war with the United States or to recognize the independence of the Confederacy. And a major role in this movement was played by Karl Marx, who was then living in London. In his Inaugural Address at the founding of the International Workingmen's Association (First International) in September, 1864, Marx declared:

"... It was not the wisdom of the ruling classes, but the heroic resistance to their criminal folly by the working classes of England that saved the West of Europe from plunging headlong into an infamous crusade for the perpetuation and propagation of slavery on the other side of the Atlantic."⁸⁷

Earlier Lincoln himself, in a letter to the workers of Manchester replying to an address they had sent him, paid tribute to the sacrifices of Europe's workingmen as "an instance of sublime Christian heroism which has not been

surpassed in any age or in any country." ⁸⁸ Today the workers of all anti-Axis nations are once more making heroic sacrifices for the sake of the war against the deadliest despotism that ever threatened mankind. Their international solidarity, rising around the struggles in Ethiopia, Spain and China and lifted higher by the magnificent example of the Red Army and the people of the Soviet Union, has become a mighty liberating tide that will overwhelm fascism.

Besides the workers, the English Liberals, men like John Bright, Richard Cobden, and the cabinet member Thomas Milner-Gibson, who were, significantly enough, representatives of the *industrial* bourgeoisie, sympathized with the North and ranged themselves against a pro-slavery war. Gladstone, who at that time had one foot in the Tory and one in the Liberal camp, played an ambiguous role, exerting himself against intervention during the *Trent* affair,* but later asserting in a speech that "Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South . . . have made a nation." ⁸⁹

The American workers proved worthy of their English brothers. Trade unions recruited volunteers, and union men, as well as the great body of unorganized workers, shed their blood for freedom. Theirs was not an independent role, for they were still weak organizationally and inexperienced politically; the workers made their contribution to victory under the political leadership of the industrialists. Yet coming events were already being foreshadowed: the great expansion of manufacturing during the war swelled the ranks of the working class, stimulated the growth of the trade unions and sharpened the antagonisms between capi-

* On November 8, 1861, Captain John Wilkes, commander of the American warship *San Jacinto*, stopped the British mail steamer *Trent*, which was about to pass through the Bahama Channel, and removed two Confederate commissioners, Mason and Slidell, and their secretaries. The British government threatened to go to war unless the men were released, and the Tory press launched a provocative campaign. The incident was closed when Secretary of State Seward on December 26 agreed to release the Confederate agents.

tal and labor. For the sake of the common fight, however, the workers subordinated their own grievances, just as is the case today. As Schlueter points out, "notwithstanding the most outrageous provocation on the part of the ruling class and the government during the Civil War, they [the workers] never wavered in exalting the cause of the Union over their own cause and their class interests."⁴⁰ Schlueter formulates the working class attitude rather narrowly. The preservation of the Union and the annihilation of slavery were, as Marx and Engels so clearly perceived, the workers' own cause, and only through its triumph could their class interests be advanced. For the workers of America, as for those of Europe, "the star-spangled banner carried the destiny of their class."⁴¹

OUR NATIONAL WAR TODAY

Today again the star-spangled banner carries the destiny of the working class and of the whole American people. Together with the flags of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, China and the other United Nations it carries the destiny of mankind. We are engaged in a struggle of unprecedented magnitude in which separate interests are submerged in the common fate of all and the convulsion of war shakes the oceans and the continents that are the human home. Defeat in this war would mean the end of the national and social achievements of the democratic bourgeois revolution in all countries, the destruction of the trade unions, and a descent into a new dark age from which all future advance toward socialism would be incalculably more difficult and painful. Victory would mean, as in every people's war of the past, a powerful unleashing of the forces of democracy. The downfall of fascism in Europe and Asia will send a great liberating impulse through every part of the globe; it will create the conditions for fulfilling the guarantees of the Atlantic Charter and the pledges of Vice President Wallace and Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles that discrimination

because of race, color or creed will be abolished and an equality of peoples established.

And in the very course of the war it has become increasingly clear that the prevailing discrimination and denial of national rights are the allies of Hitler in his war to enslave all nations, even the mightiest. The "black iron hand" of which Frederick Douglass spoke is still partly chained, and this situation hurts not only the Negro people but the cause of America and the United Nations. The same is true of India, Puerto Rico, Burma, the Netherlands East Indies, and other colonies. The price of their bondage is the threat of enslavement of the capitalist great powers; it is being paid in the coin of military defeat and of many thousands of British, Australian, Dutch, and American lives—and the accounting is not yet over. Today millions have awakened to the fact that the issues of Negro rights and self-determination for all peoples intimately concern their own interests, directly affect the outcome of the war and the nature of the peace. They are beginning to understand with Wendell Willkie that "nothing of importance can be won in peace which has not already been won in the war itself" ⁴² and to accept the dictum of Karl Marx that no nation which oppresses another can be free—a dictum to which this grim total war has given a new urgency.

The present national war differs from those of the past in that it occurs, not in the epoch of capitalist ascendancy, which saw the birth of unified nation-states, but in the epoch of imperialism, out of whose loins has sprung the fascist monster that threatens the existence of so many nations and states. This war differs, secondly, in that it occurs at a time when over a vast territory of what was backward Russia 200,000,000 people have already taken the leap into the epoch of socialism, opening a new continent of democratic advance. And, finally, this is no longer a war affecting the life of one or a few nations, but a vast international conflict in which highly developed bourgeois-democratic states,

colonial and semi-colonial countries (India, China) and the Socialist Republics of the Soviet Union are joined in common struggle to preserve and extend national independence.

This war poses new problems. Take war production, for example. Its role has become qualitatively different from what it was in the past. In the War of Independence it was possible for our country to achieve victory with meager supplies of arms, partly imported from France and partly manufactured here in primitive improvised arsenals. In the Civil War it sufficed to expand our skeleton munitions industry and supplement it by the conversion of a few shops and factories. In both conflicts the provision of war supplies required only a fraction of the country's manpower, economic resources and capital. Today, on the other hand, the major part of our industrial activity, extended to its uttermost limits, must be turned to the manufacture of arms, while the production of food and essential civilian goods must likewise be geared to the needs of total war. This necessarily converts the civilian rear into a major front requiring the mobilization of the entire nation.

The new role of production also underlines the fact that this is the first national war in which the decisive class force is the workers. In 1776 the urban and rural middle classes provided the national impetus; in 1861, the industrialists and farmers; today it is the working class that is decisive in production, the dynamo that drives forward national unity and the battle for victory. And the trade unions, with their 11,000,000 membership, constitute a powerful instrument, not of labor alone, but of the whole nation in the war for survival and liberation. The strength of the working class also stems from the fact that it has a vanguard, the Communist Party, which existed only in embryo in 1861-65.

Politically, there is still a big lag in the influence of the American working class. It has no representatives in the Cabinet and very few in Congress or state legislatures, where the enemies of the people—the Dieses, Reynoldses, Smiths,

Hoffmans and Coxes—are represented over-generously. This situation injures not labor alone, but the nation and the entire war effort. Doubtless, the lack of labor representation is one of the reasons that we have no counterpart in the present Congress of the Committee on the Conduct of the War.* The House Tolan Committee and the Senate's Truman and Murray (Small Business) Committees are approaches to it, but their scope is much more limited. Extension and activization of labor-management production committees and greater participation of labor in all directing agencies of the war economy can under a system of centralized control and planning do for production what the Committees of Safety and the Committee on the Conduct of the War did for the war as a whole in 1776 and 1861.

And out of the rich record of the liberation struggles of the past rise important signposts for our world battle today. One of them is national unity. When President Roosevelt told the country in his January 6, 1942, message at the opening of Congress that the nation was more united than ever in its history, he spoke the literal truth. This unity embraces all classes and groups, including the dominant sections of the capitalist class. Yet it is also true that within a few weeks the Civil War experience began to be repeated; the forces of disruption and defeatism were on the move again, openly or covertly undermining the war effort.

Appeasement today has its roots in monopoly capital, specifically in its most reactionary, most bitterly anti-labor and anti-Soviet sections. The tendency of monopoly capital in the United States and Britain to come to terms with fascist monopoly capital in Germany, Italy, and Japan at the expense of the common people, of democracy and socialism, was checked when the dominant American and British capitalist groups discovered that the only terms were sur-

* Recent proposals have come from Copperhead quarters for the creation of such a committee on reactionary lines; this would be a caricature of the Civil War committee.

render of all their positions, including control of the economic and political life of their own countries. The recognition of this state of affairs helped make possible the national front of all classes in the common struggle for national survival.

Yet while it is important to differentiate between the anti-Axis majority of big business and the pro-fascist, defeatist minority, it is also true that the latter wield great influence and infect many pro-war capitalists with the passivity, business-as-usual and labor-hating-as-usual which stand in the way of an all-out effort. The last convention of the National Association of Manufacturers is an alarming example. And the appeaser capitalists are also able to exercise disproportionate influence in political affairs through the McCormick, Hearst, Patterson and Scripps-Howard press and through the Hoovers and Martin Dieses in both major parties.

In the total war we are waging today we need, in order to win, far greater unity of action than prevailed in 1776, 1812 and 1861, and the work of even a relatively small number of defeatists and saboteurs may be sufficient to block the victorious advance of this country and its allies.

A second signpost rising out of 1776 and 1861 points to the strengthening of our bonds with the peoples and governments allied to us. All the more necessary is this in view of the global character of the Axis menace and of the war to destroy it. As the American patriots welcomed the French alliance in 1778, so we today welcome the alliance of the United Nations, led by the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and China, and including the peoples under the fascist boot. So far this alliance has been extremely one-sided, with the U.S.S.R. and China, together with the heroic peoples of the conquered countries, bearing the brunt of the fighting and the devastation wrought by Hitler's and Tojo's hordes. To realize the full military potentialities of this coalition and to lay the basis for a future

order of peace and security the powerful forces of the United States and Britain must be thrown into action against the main bastion of Axis despotism, Nazi Germany.

And, finally, those strenuous years in which our country was born and in which it was saved write large for us today the urgency of an offensive strategy, political and military. The events in North Africa demonstrate how wrong policy impedes military action. The American-British offensive so auspiciously begun quickly bogged down in the morass of Darlanism, while confusion and consternation swept through the peoples of the conquered countries and of all the United Nations. The North African policy, like its blood brothers, the appeasement of Vichy and Madrid and the continued tolerance toward Helsinki, inevitably blunts the sharp sword of offensive action. Now, after the historic conference between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill at Casablanca, it is to be hoped that clarity will swiftly come, and with it the leap from the bridgeheads of Africa and Britain to the continent of Europe. The successes of the two Soviet winter offensives of 1941-42 and 1942-43 and of the guerrilla warfare in Yugoslavia are a guarantee that a two-front attack, from the West or South as well as the East, will sound the doom of Hitlerism.

It is not from the founding fathers and not from the Lincoln of 1863-65 that the advocates of a war of slow attrition, of waiting till every shoelace is tied, can take any comfort. Consider the situation of the thirteen American colonies, compelled to improvise an army and a government, to fight with insufficient forces and the most paltry arms, yet daring to challenge the greatest power in the world. The American patriots knew that victory would not come of itself, but had to be wrested from the enemy by waging war boldly and taking great risks. Because his troops were few, ill-trained and ill-equipped, Washington often found it necessary to retreat and pursue delaying tactics; yet, like the Red Army today, he would seize the first opportunity to take

the offensive. After being driven out of New York and through New Jersey into Pennsylvania in November and December of 1776, Washington crossed the Delaware during the night and took the foe by surprise, scoring his brilliant victories at Trenton and Princeton. The following year, only three weeks after his defeat at Brandywine and the loss of Philadelphia, Washington struck at Germantown and very nearly succeeded in a bold plan to annihilate or capture the entire British army. The American patriots also used guerrilla warfare with deadly effectiveness.

There is an illuminating passage in the journal of Arthur Lee, one of the American commissioners sent with Benjamin Franklin to France to negotiate an alliance. He records on October 25, 1777, a conversation he had with Franklin in which the latter discussed the war and the reasons for the successes already achieved. He quotes Franklin as saying: "The enemy was everywhere resisted, repulsed or besieged. On the ocean, in the Channel, in their very ports their ships were taken and their commerce obstructed. The greatest revolution the world ever saw is likely to be effected in a few years; and the power that has for centuries made all Europe tremble, assisted by 20,000 German mercenaries . . . will be effectively humbled by those whom she insulted and injured, because she conceived they had neither spirit nor power to resist or revenge it." 43

There in the words of Franklin is the unconquerable spirit of the offensive, the glowing thread uniting Yorktown to Appomattox to the invasion of Europe that can crush the Nazi military machine in 1943. A new world is fighting its way to life—a world without Hitlerism. This kind of world alone can guarantee that "government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." But before it can be born, we and all the United Nations, like the Soviet Union and China, will have to give to the utmost of blood, sweat and treasure. In this great national crisis, as in those of the past, the American

people are finding within themselves the strength to overcome all difficulties. Ours is a grand, imperishable heritage. Those great-hearted men and women who, though a handful, defied the foremost power in Europe and built in blood and sacrifice a nation out of a scattering of colonies; their grandchildren who, though hemmed in by treason, rescued the nation from the bondage of the slave system and made America strong—they live in us today and proclaim the future that shall be ours.

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