

IS A THIRD WORLD WAR INEVITABLE?

Introduction

Each day it becomes more obvious that mankind must choose between the security of a peaceful society, which only conscious action can bring about, and the insecurity of militarism which is an inherent part of today's society, the 'civilisation' of the bomb and the dole queue.

There are many responses to the threat of war, from the 'Apocalypse Now' hysteria of those who allow emotion to overcome reason, to the view expressed by a politician like Mrs Thatcher who, when opening Britain's most advanced torpedo factory, said that such weapons of destruction would serve to defend 'the British way of life' (*Guardian*, 11 April 1981). Those who would have us march round in circles pleading with leaders to 'ban the bomb' and those who urge us to sit back in our armchairs and have faith in the wisdom of governments have in common an ignorance of the cause of war and social insecurity.

We must deal with causes, not just symptoms. Before we can banish the bomb, we must abolish its cause. The purpose of this pamphlet is to explain precisely what the cause of war is and whether it can be abolished.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain
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1. The weapons of war

In the world today, many people die or are wounded each day in military conflicts. There is a constant threat that there might be another world war, far more terrible than the last. It is not difficult to feel that we are sitting on a time bomb. The society we live in has not managed to feed and shelter all the earth's inhabitants, but it has provided about four tons (TNT equivalent) of nuclear explosives for every man, woman and child on the planet. Sigvard Eklund, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has estimated that there are now 50,000 nuclear warheads with a total force which is one million times as great as the bomb which was exploded over Hiroshima in 1945. The British government's military budget over 1981-82 was £12,274 million, that is £1.4 million per hour. The USA annual 'defence' budget is rapidly approaching 400 billion dollars, and total world spending on armaments is now more than \$1 million per minute, every minute of the day and night.

The vast stores of work and materials which these sums represent would clearly be enough to feed all the world's hungry. But the ingenuity of scientists is turned more and more towards inventing increasingly destructive and murderous weapons, as that is the main priority. The British government's *Medical Manual of Defence against Chemical Agents* says: 'In a future war, chemical agents may be dispersed . . . on to selected targets far removed from the fighting line such as cities, dockyards and factories.' Between 1950 and 1966, the US army carried out 80 tests using disease germs at various sites including the New York underground. The neutron bomb has been developed, to kill people while leaving property standing intact. In space, both the USA and Russia have hundreds of military satellites, and both are working to build laser Battle Stations. Russia has already successfully tested one killer satellite. Perhaps the most deadly development of all is the use of particle beams and shock energy which will destroy at the speed of light anything that comes in its way.

What really matters about all these horrific weapons is that there are now enough of them stockpiled across the world to kill every one of us several times over. Even if they were never used, it would be a senseless waste of resources. But there seems to be every possibility that some of them will be used on a large scale. The drive towards militarism is intensifying. As much as £8 million was spent in 1979 paying the padres of the British armed forces. The American army has been perfecting the use of binary nerve gas. The MX missile system being laid out in 20,000 square miles of the Nevada desert will be the biggest construction project in human history, even bigger than the Panama Canal or the Great Wall of China. Of 89 Russian space launches in 1980, 81 were for military purposes; and Richard Delauer, Defence Under-Secretary for Research and Engineering at the Pentagon, has said of Russia's preparations for space warfare: 'We expect a large, permanent, manned Soviet orbital space complex to be operational around 1990 . . . capable of effectively attacking ground, sea and air targets' (Times, 4 March 1982). The American Space Shuttle 'Columbia' is another example of modern space technology being turned to the purpose of war:

In the science fiction world of space warfare, the shuttle will be a kind of giant battleship capable of a range of activities. Senator John Glenn, America's first man in space and one of the most outspoken backers of the project, has talked in visionary terms of laser beam and particle weapons being deployed by the shuttle and its successors, which would be able to intercept intercontinental ballistic missiles heading for the US and its allies (*Guardian*, 15 April 1981).

So Star Wars ceases to be an American fantasy and starts to become horrific reality.

2. The present crisis

Apart from the threat of world-wide devastation, there are a number of localised wars going on right now. Chemical weapons have been used recently in Afghanistan and in South-East Asia. Military conflicts are taking place in El Salvador, Northern Ireland, Iran, Eritrea and Angola, to name but a few. There has not been a single day since 1945 without a major war, taking place somewhere. Korea, Cyprus, Algeria, Biafra, Vietnam, Pakistan and India, the Sahara, Chad: each has its separate history of human misery.

But today there is a growing danger of open conflict between two of the 'superpowers'. Afghanistan, Poland, the Middle East: any of these could act as flashpoints in the constant tension between imperialist interests, those of Russia and America in particular.

In 1980, the Early Warning System of the North American Air Defence Command was put on red alert twice, due to false alarms indicating Russian attack. Aircraft carrying nuclear missiles took off, to be called back at the last moment. The latest Pentagon war strategy envisages a large build-up in the American forces for a protracted 'conventional' war in several parts of the globe. The theory of 'Mutually Assured Destruction' (MAD), in which each side aims missiles at the enemy cities and is deterred from attack through fear of retaliation, has now been abandoned. The new official American policy is based on 'Presidential Directive 59' which involves aiming at enemy weapons and includes the possibility of a so-called 'limited' nuclear conflict in Europe.

We are being encouraged to accept the idea that a third world war is inevitable. The Home Office recently issued war plans to local authorities announcing that Britain would be put on a 48-hour war alert:

Changes in strategic thinking mean that we must be prepared for the possibility of hostilities occurring at short notice . . . for planning purposes it should be assumed that there may be as little as seven days warning of attack. (*Guardian*, 20 March 1981)

The Chinese Senior Vice-Premier Deng Xia-Oping has said: 'A third world war is inevitable', and added that it was necessary to 'adopt measures and policies to postpone this outbreak' (*Guardian*, 2 September 1980); while Chairman Hua Guo-Feng said: 'A key objective of our foreign policy is to *delay* the outbreak of war and secure a long period of peace' (our emphasis).

Official reports talk of a 'post-attack period', as if whether anything could be done to prevent an attack is irrelevant. The Cambridgeshire County War Plan for example lays down that the Territorial Army will protect key installations and take action against 'subversive persons'. Emergency powers would be enacted. Ministers would go to the seventeen regional government centres. Home Office circular No. ES 8/1976, which has been issued to certain chief executives of Councils, is particularly morbid:

When radiological conditions permitted movement, district and borough London controllers should assume that one of the priority tasks for their staff, in areas where survivors were to continue residing, would be to collect and cremate or inter human remains in mass graves. Once the initial clearance of corpses has been completed, there would be still a problem of several weeks, and perhaps months, of an above average rate of dying from disease and radiation effects. Nevertheless, a return to the pre-attack formalities should be the objective in the longer term.

This encouragement to accept nuclear war as something which, like a coming rainstorm, cannot be avoided but must simply be prepared for, has had its effect. In 1980 a Gallup Poll showed that

39 per cent of people 'expected' a nuclear war in their lifetime. To help people cope with the war when it breaks out, the government has put on sale a fifty pence booklet called *Protect and Survive*. It contains 'advice' about crawling under stairs to seek shelter from nuclear bombs. Its casual tone is quite chilling:

If a death occurs while you are confined in the fall-out room, place the body in another room and confine it as securely as possible. Attach an identification.

3. The cause of wars in the modern world

War is not natural. It is artificially produced by human beings as an integral part of a particular social system. In the world today there is constant economic competition between nations. When the rivalry becomes too intense, the next step is often military conflict. Why does it come about?

Capitalism

Society today is organised on the basis of capitalism. This applies to Russia and China just as much as to America and Europe. The capitalist system of society has three major features.

Firstly, all the vital resources that people need for survival are in the hands of a minority. The industrial plant, factories, offices, farms and productive machinery generally are owned and controlled by a small minority. The Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth reported in 1979 that the richest one per cent in Britain own more accumulated wealth than the poorest 80 per cent. Only seven per cent of the adult population own any stocks and shares, and one hundredth of the population own over 80 per cent of privately held shares.

Secondly, the overwhelming majority of people, who are not in the category of being substantial wealth owners, are forced to live by working for those who are. They do this in return for wages or salaries which are supposed to meet daily living costs but no more.

Thirdly, practically all wealth produced in the world today takes the form of commodities, that is goods and services which are made in order to be sold on the market with a view to profit. The source of profit is the exploitation of the wage and salary earners (the working class). Workers are paid wages and salaries which are less than the value of what they produce, the surplus value going to the employers (the capitalist class) in the form of rent, interest and profit.

This society of class division exists across the world, regardless of what country you happen to be in. Doctors, engineers and designers who have to earn money to live with in this way are part of the process of production and are just as much members of the working class as those workers (miners, machine operators, railwaymen) whose role in producing goods and services is more direct and more clearly observable.

Competition

The fundamental principle of this social system is competition. There is a constant struggle between workers and capitalists, employees and employers, over how much shall be paid to workers as wages and how much shall remain to capitalists as profits. Strikes and lockouts are the outward manifestations of this class struggle.

Different types of property owners receive profits in different forms: dividends go to shareholders, rents to landlords, interest to moneylenders. There is a certain amount of rivalry between these different sectional interests. But, above all, there is rivalry between different groups of capitalist enterprises, who all seek to sell their commodities to the same people in the same world market. In order to complete the process of taking their profits, the capitalists need workers to exploit and they also need mineral resources, trade routes to transport goods along and areas of domination with markets of people to sell their goods to. It is competition over these things which drives nations towards war.

Other theories about war

Not everyone would agree that war is caused in this way. Some people would say that wars arise from conflicting ideas such as religion. Yet countries with identical and strongly held religious

beliefs have often declared war on one another. Cromwell's Dutch Wars were fought between devout Protestants and the present conflict between Iraq and Iran involves Moslem countries.

Others cite language differences as a cause, but what then of the English, Spanish and American civil wars?

It is also often said that wars result from differences between political systems. Yet in the First World War the Tsarist autocracy of Russia was allied to the capitalist 'democracies' of Britain and France, and in the Second World War Stalin and Churchill were allies after 1941.

Or is it scarcity that sends one country to war against another? It is true that millions of people go short of the essentials of life and in some parts of the world mass death by starvation is the result. But this does not drive governments to war. Scarcity is not caused by a basic shortage of resources with which to give everyone a decent life. Capitalism creates *artificial* shortage by aiming never to produce greater quantities of goods than it can sell at a profit. When, through its anarchic organisation, it sometimes fails to fulfil this aim and produces so-called 'gluts' or 'surpluses', it provides us with a good pointer to what the true productive capacity of modern technology could be. According to the 1980 *World Bank Report*, for example, 'present output of grain alone could supply every man, woman and child with more than 3000 calories and 65 grams of protein per day.' Again, the *Scientific American* magazine (September 1976) declared that present resources, if properly used, could feed as much as twelve times the present world population. At the moment the OPEC countries are complaining of an 'oil glut' which threatens to bring down petrol prices. In addition 'surplus' food (wine lakes, butter mountains, etc.) is being stockpiled all the time and often ends up being destroyed.

'Natural human aggression' is frequently cited as a cause of war. Yet, if it were, governments would not have to use conscription to push people into killing one another. People like the Botswana Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, the Xingu Indians of South America or the Tasaday in the Philippines form communities that are not yet caught up in the net of the capitalist system. They do not know war. They are peaceful and cooperative and the weapons they have are used for hunting food which is shared. Dr R. Rogers, researching into early societies, has said: 'I do not think aggression is innate. I think that aggression is something that man learns. Aggression comes as soon as you get possessions' (*Guardian*, 17 December 1980).

None of the above reasons often given for war stands up to examination, although they have sometimes been used by governments to encourage people to go to war. Wars are caused by the essentially competitive nature of capitalism.

The spoils of war

Nations compete over:

- (i) mineral resources;
- (ii) trade routes;
- (iii) areas of domination.

In the nineteenth century France and Germany fought many battles over the coal and steel of Alsace-Lorraine. The more recent conflicts in Vietnam, Korea and Cambodia have had as a principal cause the tin, rubber, petroleum and copper of South-East Asia. The minerals of Afghanistan encouraged the Russian invasion of 1980 as it had previously led to the British invasion in 1897. Recently John Nott, Minister of Defence, defending the Rapid Deployment Force, said: 'We have crucial minerals and in fact our oil supplies to defend' (*Weekend World*, ITV, 8 March 1981). Caspar Weinberger, the US Defence Secretary, has said that his country is making enormous increases in its efforts 'to safeguard the oilfields of South-West Asia and the Arabian Gulf - areas that are of vital concern to Japan' (*Guardian*, 29 April 1981). This policy

was confirmed by a statement from the American Embassy in North Yemen which justified its intention to do nothing to stop the present government there falling in favour of a 'Communist' regime by declaring: 'We feel that if North Yemen moves left, the Saudis will be so terrified they will move even closer to us. North Yemen has no oil. Saudi has. It's as simple as that' (*Sunday Times*, 13 December, 1981).

Battles over trade routes too have been a recurrent feature of capitalism. In 1956 Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt to regain control of the Suez Canal. The invading countries considered it a vital passage for transporting their commodities. The war between Iraq and Iran over the Hormuz Straits has the same kind of cause. The US government is at present trying to persuade the Japanese government to increase its military expenditure on the grounds that the USA 'helps to protect the vital sea lanes upon which Japan depends for its global trade' (*Guardian*, 29 April 1980).

In struggles over areas of domination, previous centuries saw Britain, France and Spain at open war with one another for territory in the New World, India, South-East Asia and Africa. The two world wars of the present century were caused because Germany, Japan and Italy - all latecomers to industrialism - needed to expand in order to develop, but to do so they had to trespass on territories dominated by Britain, France, Russia and America. Since then, the major powers have generally - though not always - gone about the business of keeping control of what goes on in the world in ways much more devious than open conquest. 'Friendly governments' in secure control of their populations, national territory and mineral resources are far more useful than resentful subject peoples. Friendly governments mean for the major powers not only control of raw materials and trade routes but also the freedom to set up military bases, naval ports, early warning sites, refuelling depots and airfields. They mean the right to fly across a country's airspace and to sail in its territorial waters. For these reasons, there is hardly a small nation left in the world where the major powers have not interfered, either openly or secretly, to ensure that client regimes are set up and maintained. Many of these regimes are ruthless dictatorships. The major powers provide armaments for 'defence' and technical advisers to keep an eye on their use. Hand in hand with this trade in armaments go general trade and 'cultural' exchange, which is largely a one-way process. And smaller nations not only become part of the sphere of influence of the major powers but they find themselves perpetually in debt to their 'benefactors'. Egypt, for example, after accepting 'aid' from Russia, has now been pulled more under the influence of Britain and America, so that Britain has been providing spare parts for Egypt's Russian-made tanks and is beginning to sell new tanks to re-equip the Egyptian army.

The threat now

In the present crisis of world capitalism the drive towards militarism and the tension leading to war are more pronounced than at any time since the last world war ended. The system of producing goods to be sold at a profit goes through a constant unavoidable cycle of boom-slump-boom-slump as the level of production rises beyond what the market will bear, cuts back, builds up and again reaches a point where acceptable rates of profit cannot be realised, producing what, for capitalism, is 'over-production'. The cycle has reached the stage where money capital cannot find profitable investment in further production and where much of what has been produced cannot be sold at a profit: For this reason, in many parts of the world, food is being destroyed, ploughed back into the ground and poured down old mineshafts. In this country we are told to pull in our belts and cut down on 'luxuries' such as bottles of wine, while in France there are 'lakes' of it that cannot be used because the wine cannot be sold at a profit. This situation makes the competition between companies and States over their share of market demand more frantic than ever.

In two world wars and numerous local ones, workers have been persuaded to identify with their masters' cause in the mistaken belief that they were fighting for a higher 'national' interest. But

the 'national interest' was and always is the capitalist interest. Workers have nothing to gain from fighting the battles of a class whose interests are opposed to their own.

4. Campaigns for peace

The first logical step in deciding how a problem can be solved is to examine its cause. So it is with war. Yet none of the various movements against war which have been organised over the past two centuries have approached the problem in this way. They have all tried to combat war by drawing attention to its effects rather than by attempting to understand its cause. None have clearly seen that it is rooted in the way society is organised.

Non-political movements

The first anti-war campaign was the Peace Society formed in the early nineteenth century after the Napoleonic Wars in which six million people died. It is still in existence, hundreds of wars and millions of deaths later.

After the First World War (the 'war to end wars') the League of Nations was set up to keep the peace between rival states. When in 1937, despite the League of Nations, war was again on the international agenda, the joint No More War movement and Peace Pledge Union claimed 120,000 members pledged to reject all wars and refuse military service. Its support soon fell away in the rising tide of militarism and nationalist feeling that preceded World War Two.

After the second bout of world slaughter the United Nations Organisation was established aiming to 'cut the causes of war at their roots'. But the wars continue. Since 1945 about 130 wars have taken place in the world and have caused about 20 million people to lose their lives. The United Nations continues to organise peace conferences and at a recent one in Geneva (the latest in a series started in 1868) it took the step of provisionally agreeing in principle that land mines should not be attached to graves, children's toys or religious objects.

Today, in the 1980s, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) is expanding its membership at a rapid rate. It makes an emotional appeal to people's understandable fears of the effects of a nuclear war. Since it was founded in 1958, CND has seen the number of nuclear weapons in the world multiply hundreds, perhaps thousands of times over, but it has consistently refused to discuss what actually causes war, dismissing that vital question as being too political. Its members campaign against particular tools of war, nuclear ones. But as long as there are economic rivalries for wars to be fought over, wars will take place and, whatever the tools, death and destruction will be the result. It is ironic that *The War Game*, a film about the effects of nuclear weapons which is often used by CND to recruit members; contains footage of the 1945 bombing of Dresden where 'conventional' weapons were used and where more people (132,000) were killed than the 70,000 dead at Nagasaki.

CND claims to be a 'broad church' and it is, but it is one of conformity to the patriotic and nationalist prejudices which support the status quo. A recent advertisement for CND in the Guardian made this clear:

We are the first to admit that there are risks in disarmament . . . Nor do we propose total disarmament for Britain. Without nuclear weapons Britain would still be mightily armed. *We* are now spending more on conventional weapons than ever before in peace time. (Our emphasis.)

And many members of CND, for all their moralising against war, strongly feel that under certain circumstances it is justifiable to kill people in cold blood. One of its leading figures, historian E.P. Thompson, admitted, in a recent interview, to fighting and killing people in the Second World War. He had no regrets about it and said: 'The last war was very necessary' (*Sunday Times*, 2 November 1980).

When people really start to escape from the fears and prejudices that plague well-intentioned bodies such as CND, it will not be just a matter of 'ban the bomb'; it will be the end of all wars and of the economic rivalries between national ruling classes that cause them.

Political movements

All the main political parties competing to run the capitalist system embody the same support for war when it comes to it, including the Labour Party. At the moment the Labour Party is trying to catch votes by making promises on nuclear weapons which it is unlikely to be able to keep if elected to office. It has usually adopted an anti-militarist stance when out of government, so that the impression many people have is of a party striving for peace. Yet it was the first post-war Labour government that developed the British atomic bomb and also sent troops to fight in Malaya and Korea. The 1964-70 Wilson government gave general support to the war in Vietnam. At the time of the notorious My Lai massacre there, George Brown, then deputy leader of the party, had this to say: 'The Americans should stop weeping and get on with the Vietnam war' (*Evening Standard*, 21 November 1969). Present party leader Michael Foot was a member of the 1974-79 Labour government which spent £1 billion on the new Chevaline warhead reconstruction of Polaris. What it amounts to is that any government of capitalism has to defend the markets of its country's owning class. Denis Healey, as Labour defence spokesman, explained this in the House of Commons on 25 January 1966:

While the government attaches the highest importance to making progress in the field of arms control and disarmament, we must also take what practical steps we can to ensure that this country does not fail to secure its rightful share of this valuable commercial market, (*Hansard*, Column 64.)

He was defending the sale of arms by British manufacturers to foreign countries.

The Communist Party, like Labour, also claims to favour the cause of peace. But when the Second World War broke out, it gave wholehearted support to British participation. When the Russian government made its pact with Hitler, it withdrew this support and said it was against the continuance of the war. Then, when Stalin broke with Hitler in 1941 and joined with Britain, it again became a zealous advocate of prosecuting the war. In 1945, when the atom bomb was dropped on Japan, the organ of the Communist Party, the *Dairy Worker*, commented: 'The employment of the new weapon on a substantial scale should expedite the surrender of Japan. Valuable lives in the Allied Nations will have been saved by the new discovery' (7 August 1945).

The parties of the Trotskyist left have always been keen supporters of CND's peace campaigns. Yet, when wars have broken out, they have never been slow to support one side against another. In the Vietnam War they all took the side of North Vietnam against the USA even though the North Vietnamese Communist Party had murdered thousands of Trotskyists during one of its political purges.

Peace and democracy

What emerges is that despite the energies which the peace campaigners have channelled into trying to get governments to put an end to wars, these same campaigners have usually supported wars and gone to fight in them when their own country has been involved. Often this has been through simple patriotism. But it has also, especially in the case of World War Two, been due to the mistaken notion that wars must be fought to defend democracy against dictatorship.

On 2 September 1939 the liberal newspaper, *The Manchester Guardian*, (now *The Guardian*) which has recently given much space to support for CND, summed up this feeling:

We are now at war and there is no further room for argument . . . nothing can give us more confidence than the manner in which in these last days parliament has represented the spirit of the people. It has been the great justification of the democratic principle and of the liberty and freedom for which we have taken up arms.

Of course, Hitler's regime was less democratic than Britain's. But, contrary to official explanations at the time, this was not what the war was fought over. Indeed Winston Churchill wrote in the *Times* in 1938: 'Were England to suffer a national disaster I should pray to god to send a man of the strength of mind and will of an Adolf Hitler' (quoted in S. Leight, *World Without Wages*, London, 1982). The war was started because Germany, like Italy and Japan, posed an economic threat to the world domination of the old imperial powers such as Britain and France. When Japan took over Manchuria in 1931 and Italy invaded Abyssinia in 1935, the old power structure was threatened. The German invasion of Poland was the final blow. It became imperative for Britain and France to enter the fray - for economic, not democratic reasons. If it was democracy the British government was worried about, why did it not invade Germany in 1933 when Hitler began the establishment of his dictatorship and the persecution of the Jews?

The only political party in this country to oppose the so called 'war for democracy' was the Socialist Party of Great Britain. In September 1939 it said the following:

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is fully aware of the sufferings of German workers under Nazi rule, and wholeheartedly supports the efforts of workers everywhere to secure democratic rights against the powers of suppression. But the history of the past decades shows the futility of war as a means of safeguarding democracy. After the last Great War - described as the war to end war and as a war to make the world safe for democracy - the retention of capitalism resulted in the building up of new tyrannies and terrorisms . . . Having no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to our fellow-workers of all lands the expression of our goodwill and socialist fraternity and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism . . . only Socialism will end war.

The Socialist Party's opposition to the war was doubly vindicated, firstly when the Defence of the Realm Act muzzled much political opinion in Britain, and then when, in one of the most hypocritical moves of all, the 'democratic' British government became an ally of Stalin's vicious Russian dictatorship. One of the results of this alliance was that after the war the Russian tyranny brought under its power a large chunk of Europe.

Because wars in the modern world are not fought over the 'democratic principle', they do not necessarily lead to the removal of dictatorship and the establishment of democracy. Above all they do not lead to lasting peace. They are fought, as a third world war would be fought, over the interests of the ruling classes of the countries that participate and they end when one side has gained - temporarily at least - the advantage of being able to produce, transport and profitably sell its goods at the expense of the other.

5. A solution to war

War is only one of the many social problems that face us today. There are also problems like unemployment, pollution, day-to-day violence, the relative poverty of most people and the absolute poverty of many.

Unemployment is an inevitable feature of the capitalist system. Many people who for years said they would never become unemployed are now being made redundant. Employment is based on profit for the employer, and when the market is glutted and the profit ceases to flow, employment is naturally turned into unemployment.

Pollution of the environment could often be avoided if it were not for competing companies trying to cut their costs. Research into cleaner energy sources is held back by the barrier of the profit motive.

The relative poverty of nine-tenths of the world's population is the natural result of the extreme prosperity of the small property-holding class of capitalists, while the fact that in 1981 about 30 million people actually starved to death (that equals approximately one death per second or one Hiroshima -120,000 dead - every three days) is due not to there not being enough food to go round but to there not being a market (i.e. people with money in their pockets) for the food that is or could be produced.

All this can be changed. It is artificial, man-made, a mere stage in the development of human society. The next stage, if we are to remove the threat of a nuclear war, must be Socialism.

Getting socialism

Socialism will be one world-wide community without national boundaries. It will mean the common ownership and democratic control of all resources by humanity as a whole. All the world's factories, mines, farms, offices, schools, docks, transport, means of communication: all will belong to the community at large and not to boards of directors, government officials or all-powerful dictators. It will be a true democracy, in which the sole aim of all production will be to satisfy human needs. It will be production not for the profit of a few, but for direct use by everyone. There will be no more government over people - only democratic administration of things, And in this people will consciously participate.

The seeds of this revolution in social relationships have already been sown. As more people come to realise the contradictions of capitalist social organisation, they will combine to overcome them. This will not be by their asking for more pay or for this or that reform but by their politically uniting to take control of the whole of production itself. Socialists are not happy with a few more crumbs - they want the whole bakery. Such a change will bring social organisation up to the level of technology and the productive forces that already exist in the world. Just as the early capitalists had to take political action to get rid of the old privileges of the feudal system before they could be free to develop their own system of profit, trade and commerce, so the working class of the world must get rid of the privileges of today's capitalist class in order to be free to develop a new system based on free access and democratic control. This new system, socialism, does not exist in any part of the world, and neither could it exist in just one part. The urgent task for workers everywhere is to unite in their own interests and establish World Socialism.

Is violence necessary?

Achieving a socialist society will be a complete social change - a revolution. For many people the word 'revolution' conjures up the image of violent armed struggles, as in the capitalist

revolutions of the past. In these, one minority (the rising capitalist class) was overthrowing another minority (the feudal aristocracy) using peasants and workers as soldiers on both sides. In the most recent major capitalist revolutions, in Lenin's Russia and Mao's China, Marxist slogans were used. One result of this has been that many political activists, calling themselves socialists, have taken the capitalist revolutions in such countries as the model for what they see as a future socialist revolution. They have planned to lead the working class in violent uprisings aimed at overthrowing the state by force.

But socialists are emphatically opposed to all those who advocate violent minority uprisings. A regime which is set up by minority violence can only be maintained by violence or the threat of it. A socialist society can only be established by the clear will of the great majority. Wherever parliaments of one sort or another exist, delegates will be elected with a simple instruction: to abolish the minority ownership and control of the means of wealth production and distribution so that they no longer belong to a class but to the community as a whole.

In the event of a minority trying to violently disrupt the plans of the majority, socialist society would have to defend itself. Socialists are not pacifists but simply do not advocate violence unless it is absolutely necessary to defend the democratic will of a socialist majority. The socialist revolution will be the outcome of majority socialist understanding combined with democratic political action.

How will socialism work?

Socialism will mean the end of war. There will be no more trade routes, markets, property or profit to fight over. If everyone owns everything or, to put it another way, if nobody owns anything, then there is nothing to fight over. With production for use, to meet human needs, the era of real peace and harmony will have come. Workers face the same problems today in Japan as in the USA, in Russia as in China, in Germany as in France. As they extend their hands across the seas and lands to one another, the artificial boundaries which have been drawn by their masters in the quest for profits and lucrative trading zones will be ignored.

If the whole community owns a factory in common, then we own in common all the produce of that factory and of each other's labours, so that we can take freely from what that factory produces. Socialism does not need barter, money or any other kind of exchange. All will be the common heritage of all and each can enjoy free access to the common store of all that can be produced.

In socialist society we shall all have the security of working freely for society at whatever we choose to do, according to democratically organised production and distribution. The principle of social organisation will be one of equality, of voluntary cooperation based on understanding and democratic participation. The original Marxist maxim: 'From each according to ability, to each according to need', will for the first time really apply. There will be no more division into employer and employee or social discrimination based on sex, race or age. There will be free access to all information and majority decision-making in all departments of life. There will be no more need for coercive bodies such as police or armed forces, or for bankers, stockbrokers, salesmen or other wasteful features of the money system. This will liberate millions of people, who will be able to do more socially useful and personally satisfying work. The conflict between the individual and society, the war in which we all engage now in our daily lives, will give way to a harmony of interests between the two. But this can only happen when the individual and society both share the same aim, when all wealth created is commonly owned and therefore benefits both the individual and society equally. The real difference between socialism and present-day society must lie in the people themselves. Socialism depends for its establishment on people deciding to take full democratic control over their own lives.

Human beings will relate to one another not as economic categories but as social equals. They will pool their resources and talents to provide the best possible goods and services for all. There will be no second-class 'cheap' goods for people who cannot 'afford' anything better. With no price system, only the very best will be created. Free, voluntary work for the community will take the place of employment (and enforced unemployment). The economic and social frustrations which cause people to seek outlets in violence and scapegoats in racism will become a thing of the past. The kind of problem we will face in socialism will be how best to transport goods to centres of distribution in order to meet needs and how to improve communications and production in the common interest. Some goods will need a complex world division of labour, others may be regionally produced, perhaps on a small scale. The individual will enjoy the security of being integrated with society at large. Schools and other educational institutions will no longer be concerned with training wage and salary workers for the needs of trade and commerce. Educational facilities will be available to all throughout life, as an integral part of the production process. Finally, the framework of a world community will allow cultural diversity to be maintained. All this is possible, and much more besides. It is there for the taking. It will be the start of a new era of conscious control and free creation whose products and results we can hardly imagine. It depends on the political organisation of a majority of workers determined to establish a socialist society and not to waste their time trying to modify and reform present-day capitalist society. Already, workers, cooperating in their millions, run society from top to bottom and produce great stores of wealth. But this wealth is then taken from them as the private property of a few companies, shareholders or state officials. This contradiction between immense productive forces and an outdated social set-up must be resolved.

It follows from what we have said in this chapter that this contradiction and the problems that face workers throughout the world, including war, are not inevitable. What will happen is up to the majority of people to decide. At the moment the barrel of the gun is pointing at us and we have our fingers on the trigger. Whether we fire the gun or whether we throw it away depends on what kind of society we choose to live in. For socialists the only answer to the threat of social destruction is social innovation. And that means a completely new way of organising society based not on the dictatorship of an owning class but on the common ownership of the earth's resources. So long as human beings are characterised by the ability to plan their actions and think with reason, there is no inevitability about a third world war. Tomorrow's history will result from what we think and do today.