

The SWP and the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) – On US Intervention and Material Aid

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Introduction: A Brief Summary of SWP Policy on Imperialist Material Aid

Like in the case of the present war, where the United States is intervening as an “ally” of Ukraine, in the Second Sino-Japanese War the United States entered the war in 1941 becoming the imperialist “ally” of China and started sending direct material aid to China in its war of national liberation against Japan. At the time a debate emerged between the SWP and the Fourth International on the one hand, and the WP (Workers’ Party) led by Shachtman on the other. The latter argued that US intervention in the war in 1941 changed qualitatively the nature character of the war from a war of national liberation to an inter-imperialist war, and that therefore revolutionaries should stop giving any support to the Chinese masses and argue instead for revolutionary defeatism in the US and Japan. The SWP polemized with the WP and continued giving active support to the Chinese masses at war with Japan while arguing for a class independent position in the struggle, and opposing US imperialist aims in the war. We have an Information Bulletin of the party with the Shachtman polemics and texts by Morrison and Morrow responding to it if comrades want to further explore this.

In 1944 however, the effect US intervention changed the relation of class forces in China as it started supporting the bourgeois reactionary side in the developing Chinese civil war. It became allied with counter-revolutionary forces. In response the SWP and the Fourth International changed their policy and raised “US Out of China” embracing fully the revolutionary defeatist position as the sole position to defend in the US, and actively opposing any kind of material aid being sent to China. The SWP could do this tactical shift without entering in any major political contradiction because it had been denouncing the real goals of US intervention since 1941, and because it had maintained all along a clear line of class independent from its own imperialist government. We have a lot to learn by analyzing and understanding the position of the SWP and the Fourth International in that war. If comrades are interested in the articles analyzing this shift we can also send them.

Regarding US material aid to China, the SWP did not raise any campaign to oppose it, but it did not “campaign” for it either, neither in 1937 when the war started, neither after 1941 demanding more and better military aid from the Roosevelt administration to China. This does not mean that it was in any way “neutral” in the war. In “Principles and Tactics In War” (1937), Rudolph Klement, analyzing and developing the 1934 Fourth International resolution *The War and the Fourth International*, stated that in wars of national liberation, the proletariat of imperialist countries whose government is “allied” to the progressive side in the war has a complicated task of “*combining revolutionary defeatism towards their own bourgeoisie with support of*

progressive wars.”¹ How to combine these tasks and methods is the truly difficult thing, as Klement affirms: “It will have to be left to the instinct and revolutionary perspicacity of the proletariat, which is well aware of its tasks, to make the right distinction in every concrete situation, to avoid injuring the military interests of the far-off ally of the proletariat out of narrow national class struggle considerations, no matter how revolutionary they seem, as well to avoid doing the dirty work for its “own” imperialism on the pretext of giving indirect aid to its allies. The only real and decisive aid that the workers can bring the latter is by seizing and holding the power.”

The SWP offers us a valuable example of how one of the most developed sections of the nascent Fourth International was able to carry out that combination of tasks and sophisticated politics during the Second Sino-Japanese War. From reading the SWP press and the way the party analyzed, denounced and exposed the aims of the US material aid we can draw some valuable lessons for today. This study could (and maybe should) be completed and supplemented with how they tackled the question of arms during the Spanish Revolution, which was a very different situation because the imperialist governments of France, Britain and the US had a “neutrality” policy by which they agreed not sell or sent arms to the loyalists, a policy against which the Trotskyists of the Fourth International openly campaigned demanding “Arms for the Spanish Workers”.²

During the first period of the war, between 1937 and 1941, the SWP did not campaign for arms or material aid for China. In general the SWP opposed “campaigning” to demand the US government to intervene in military conflicts and made a distinction between not opposing or rather favoring government material aid on the one hand, and mobilizing in the streets to demand it from the government on the other. That policy they applied it consistently, even when the USSR entered the war, and the defense of the Soviet State was at stake. As the Goldman article states: “*We favored material aid to the Loyalist government but, for the same reasons that actuated us in the case of Ethiopia, we refused to campaign for government aid but insisted on independent working-class action for aid to the Loyalist government...There is a difference between not raising any objection, when a capitalist government sends aid, and agitating for such aid. The key to the whole question consists in the understanding that we cannot rely on bourgeois governments to aid our cause. Neither can we take any responsibility for bourgeois governmental policy.*”³

During the war in China, the SWP did not simply “not oppose” US material aid in the sense of not saying or doing anything, that is to say in an abstentionist or neutral

¹ <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/backiss/vol1/no1/printact.html>

² Felix Morrow, “Arms for Spanish Workers,” *Socialist Appeal*, December 1936.

<https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/socialistappeal/pdf/v2n11-dec-1936-soc-ap-chi.pdf>

³ <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/goldman/1941/07/usaid.htm>

way. Since the beginning of the war, like it was the case with Ethiopia, it took the position of supporting China against Japan and mobilizing material aid to the Chinese resistance in two ways: 1) actively promoting worker's boycotts to Japan, and 2) collecting direct material aid for the Communist League of China and the working-class resistance through fund drives. Regarding the "workers' sanctions" it stated in 1937:

"The efforts of all revolutionists in China and abroad must be directed toward precisely this independent mobilization of the masses. Above all, the American workers must intervene directly in the struggle against Japanese imperialism. Cargoes destined for the Japanese military machine must be immobilized. That is the key task here. Let the slogan be raised for the seamen and longshoremen on the West Coast, particularly "Not a ship, not a ton of cargo for Japanese imperialism!" The powerful organizations of the maritime workers have it in their power in this country to strike a mortal blow at Japan's imperialist drive in China."⁴

The workers' sanction campaign was implemented for in January 1938, the *Socialist Appeal* printed a resolution from a CIO-affiliate union in Chicago that stated "*we support and actively extend a producers' boycott on Japanese war materials and Japanese goods in general, said boycott to be conducted by the trade unions, and to take the form of refusal to load, transport, unload or use as raw materials of manufacture any goods coming from or destined for Japan.*"⁵

Since the beginning of the war, the SWP differentiated its policy from the CP and Stalinism who was calling for US intervention in China against the war with Japan, that is putting forward once again popular front politics, instead of an independent class strategy to win the war:

"When the Stalinist party today calls upon the government at Washington to invoke the "Nine-Power Pact" they line themselves up with the drive toward the future war of American against Japanese imperialism. With this the working class has nothing in common. Against this the working class must pit all its forces or else again become cannon fodder "to make the world safe against the Mikado".

No, we must intervene in our own way in support of the Chinese struggle against the Japanese imperialist invasion, without identifying ourselves or our action for a moment with the imperialist interests of "our own" government."⁶

Regarding material aid when the US government decided to intervene in the conflict starting 1941, it actually wrote regular articles in its press to analyze US military

⁴ Lo Se "Arm Chinese Mass, Only Hope", *Socialist Appeal*, August 28th 1937.

⁵ "Chicago Workers Aid China Fight; Urge Independent Labor Action", *Socialist Appeal*, January 1 1938.

⁶ Lo Se "Arm Chinese Mass, Only Hope", *Socialist Appeal*, August 28th 1937.

policy in Asia, with two editorial lines which showed, in its exposition of the goals of US aid, that neither the SWP neither US workers should be neutral in this war, but rather than the US government was not really aiding or aiding enough the Chinese masses and that thus it could not be trusted:

1) by the permanent denunciation of the real aims of US military intervention and warnings about the mid- and long-term goals of imperialism.

2) by relaying the criticism from the Chinese front about the insufficiency of the aid, to also show how in the U.S.- China military “alliance” against Japan, the Chinese people were never equal partners, that it was an inherently imperialist military alliance where imperialist powers decide alone the military policy according to their needs, and not according to the needs of the Chinese people to defend Japan.

That is to say that the party press showed in practice, by analyzing the actual military policy of the US government on the ground based on news and reports from the Chinese resistance, that US military aid intervention was *not* about helping the Chinese quickly win the war, but about using a prolonged war to weaken Japan and securing a series of strategic objectives in the region, in particular in India.

Regarding 1) the denunciation of the overall goals of US imperialism in the war the second Massini article exposes the hypocrisy of the partial continuation of business between the US and Japan during the war (ie the selective nature of economic sanctions and their enforcement) and concludes:

“It is not surprising that government officials don't want the American people to have this information. For it conclusively demonstrates what the capitalists are fighting for. Their basic perspective is to continue as exploiters of China, regardless of who wins the war. Naturally, they would prefer to have the United States win, for then American capitalism would be in the number one position as exploiter of China, with British and Japanese capitalists reduced to secondary positions.... Washington continues to talk about a "war for democracy" and struggle to the death against fascism and imperialism, but the activities of American capitalists are not determined or affected by such talk. The bosses understand that this talk is for consumption by the masses. As for themselves, their perspective is – as it was before the war and as it will be after the war – continued participation in the exploitation of the colonies.”⁷

Regarding 2) the Massini articles did something very smart: they abundantly quoted the criticisms from Lin Yutang against the insufficiency and delay of US military aid, indirectly legitimizing the demand for direct and unconditional military aid from the Chinese front, yet it framed these criticisms within a Marxist political analysis that exposed the “imperialist” nature of the alliance in the way the US military policy was

⁷ Massini, “US Bosses in Shanghai Still Do ‘Business As Usual’ with Japanese” (September 1942).

carried out, and how it was designed to diminish both the agency and confidence of the Chinese masses in resistance. It stated that the “complaints” from the Chinese front could be classified into two categories:

- “1. China is not getting the supplies which it was promised; delivery of these supplies to China is being "sabotaged."...
2. China is not being consulted or informed about the "grand strategy" of the United Nations in the war in the Far East.”⁸

Regarding the latter point, the lack consulate and equal partnership in the military alliance showed that the US government can only enter in relations of imperialist domination for its own benefit:

“For despite the war with Japan, China is still regarded as an "inferior," treated not as an equal among equals in the high councils of the "United Nations" - but as a semi-colonial country which is to be tolerated but not given a voice in deciding questions of important policy and strategy-, which is to be given a little material aid now and then but never in preference to the imperialist powers. For despite the war with Japan, China is still regarded as an "inferior," treated not as an equal among equals in the high councils of the "United Nations" - but as a semi-colonial country which is to be tolerated but not given a voice in deciding questions of important policy and strategy-, which is to be given a little material aid now and then but never in preference to the imperialist powers.”⁹

The fact that the US limited and delayed sending heavy military equipment, especially aircraft and air defense systems shows that imperialist aid is always designed to preserve military and technological superiority between imperialist and semicolonial countries, so that the latter can never acquire through those temporally military alliance enough material means to become truly independent and contest their dependence from imperialist powers:

“Their policy of keeping China from becoming too independently "strong," and thus perhaps becoming an inspiration for all the oppressed colonial peoples, is not the result of “blundering” but of their coldly calculated desire to run the war in such a way that the Chinese government will become and be forced to remain wholly subservient to the dictates of the imperialist "democracies.””¹⁰

An imperialist power will never give equal access to resources and technology to any partner in a war, especially not to a semi-colonial one, because it knows that all the military equipment sent or lent during a war, has the potential of being used eventually against it.

⁸ Massini, “US Bosses in Shanghai Still Do ‘Business As Usual’ with Japanese” (September 1942).

⁹ Massini, “US Bosses in Shanghai Still Do ‘Business As Usual’ with Japanese” (September 1942).

¹⁰ Massini, “US Bosses in Shanghai Still Do ‘Business As Usual’ with Japanese” (September 1942).

The most important thing of these articles is first that they clearly “favored” US military aid to the Chinese while exposing its real nature – without however proposing to campaign to send a different kind of aid; second is that they keep concluding that the only reliable solution to win the war lied in the independent mobilization of the working class in China and internationally:

“For China to place all its hopes on a change in American policy would be suicidal, for there can be no guarantee that the Willkie; Yarnell line toward China will ever become the official policy of the American government. Nor is there any basic difference between the "dollar imperialism" of Willkie and the cruder imperialism of Churchill.

We are for the victory of China over Japan because China is a semi-colonial country fighting for national independence against an imperialist power. As genuine supporters of China we must warn the Chinese people that their salvation lies only in themselves and their true allies, the colonial peoples and the revolutionary workers of all countries.”¹¹

Klement explained that in that “combination” of tasks to the proletariat of “allied” countries has to carry out :“ *the methods of revolutionary defeatism remain unaltered: revolutionary propaganda, irreconcilable opposition to the regime, the class struggle from its purely economic up to its highest political form (the armed uprising), fraternisation of the troops, transformation of the war into the civil war.*”¹² In the case of the SWP, the party consistently sustained a line of class independence from the Roosevelt government. Refusing to cultivate any illusions that this government could be an ally of working people anywhere in times of war was key, for in 1944 the SWP had to change its policy in relation to China: it went from combining the tasks of revolutionary defeatism towards the US government and the material and political support to the progressive war in China, to a full revolutionary defeatist program in the war.

This does not mean that during the prelude and course of imperialist war, the SWP did not carry out campaigns which included demands to the Roosevelt administration. Quite the opposite, it did it with its critical support to the Ludlow Amendment campaign in 1938 (which was proposing to amend the US constitutions to the US government would have to get approval by popular referendum before embarking in any war), or with the incredibly valuable *Proletarian Military Policy* adopted in 1940, which in fact raised demands on the US government to give full training and control to workers and unions of the war business to set the basis to change the imperialist war into a civil war:

¹¹ Morrow, “The Allies Attitude to China’s War” (December 1942).

¹² <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/backiss/vol1/no1/printact.html>

“The revolutionary strategy can only be to take this militarism as a reality and counterpose a class program of the proletariat to the program of the imperialists at every point. We fight against sending the worker-soldiers into battle without proper training and equipment. We oppose the military direction of worker-soldiers by bourgeois officers who have no regard for their treatment, their protection and their lives. We demand federal funds for the military training of workers and worker-officers under the control of the trade unions. Military appropriations? Yes—but only for the establishment and equipment of worker training camps! Compulsory military training of workers? Yes—but only under the control of the trade unions!”¹³

In both cases, the SWP carried out these campaigns with the transitional method, that is to say using the campaigns echoed by the masses or initiating its own to inject its own program of opposition to imperialist war with transitional demands, and calling for independent mobilization of the working class.

¹³ <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/icl-spartacists/prs2-pmp/swp-pmp.html>

The SWP Propaganda Around US Material Aid and the Support for China

1. Lo Se, “Arm Chinese Mass, Only Hope” (August 1937)

Socialist Appeal, August 28th 1937

When Japanese imperialism moved into North China six weeks ago, Gen. Sun Cheh-yuan, the Nanking Government's representative in Peiping, unconditionally accepted all the conditions posed by the invaders. He agreed to the withdrawal of all Chinese forces from the Peiping Tiencin area forced some of the units under his command to evacuate their positions. The Nanking Government, as its ambassador in London admitted on July 26, acceded to this settlement, hiding its capitulation behind a refusal to accord "formal" recognition to any local arrangement.

The resistance of the 29th army soldiers to the orders of their own commanders and the revolt of the supposedly pro-Japanese Chinese militia at Tungchow, AhoWever, convinced the Japanese imperialists that they could not reliably depend on any Chinese - forces. So they moved in with -linen, planes and tanks and took --ever Peiping and Tientsin themselves. Abandoned by Nanking and by their own officers, the soldiers of the 29th army put up stn heroic but futile resistance. They were smashed by the enemy in a week.

Japan Refuses Partial Surrender

When ten days ago Japan, pursuing its advantage, struck in full force at Shangai and in the Yangtze Delta, Chiang Kai-shek again left the door wide open to a settlement, reaffirming his readiness. to come to terms with Tokyo so long as it would agree to recognize the nominal sovereignty of the Nanking regime. But Japanese imperialism soon signified its unwillingness to accept another partial surrender along the lines of those which enabled the Nanking regime to give up Manchuria and Jehol and half of Chahar. It proceeded with the attack on Shanghai. It dispatched loaded transports southward and is distributing its entire fleet along the China coast preparatory to the proclamation of a blockade. Japanese planes are systematically bombing Nanking and points far inland in an attempt to destroy military and aviation bases. At Shanghai a decisive battle .its being waged in an attempt to impose the will of Japanese imperialism once and for all on the Chinese bourgeoisie.

Here Chiang Kai-shek has been compelled to make a stand against the invaders in defense the right of the Chinese bourgeoisie to exploit the Chinese masses. But all the channels for an agreement with Tokyo remain open. The Japanese demonstratively

withdrew their diplomatic representative from Nanking, but the Chinese ambassador remains at Tokyo and Nanking has not yet asked the Japanese ambassador, now stationed in Shanghai, to leave. Nanking has refrained from taking any irrevocable steps, such as the open rupture of economic and diplomatic relations or a genuine mobilization for war. To the representatives of the Powers at Shanghai, Nanking's spokesmen have repeatedly proclaimed their readiness to negotiate for peace, if only Japan will desist from its attack.

Tokyo's Calculations

Tokyo's calculations are clear. It has openly declared that negotiations are out of the question until a defeat has been inflicted on the Nanking government. It must inflict that defeat quickly and decisively, or else it is lost. Temporizing in long and slow negotiations is no longer possible for Japanese imperialism. Nanking's hopes are no less clear. It was ready to surrender North China, and it is still ready to do so. Resistance to the Japanese is being offered at the Yanktze Delta to the extent necessary to draw terms from Japan or to encourage Anglo-American intervention, at least in the form of pressure for the conclusion of a truce.

These hopes are slim. Convinced that the internal crisis in the Soviet Union and the complete preoccupation of the Great Powers with the crisis in Europe, leaves it for the moment with a free hand, Japanese imperialism is obviously driving forward this time toward the complete subjugation of China. In any case this much is clear—if the resistance is left up to the Chinese bourgeoisie alone, all past experience teaches that the end will only be a new capitulation, a new betrayal. Nanking, despite the advance guarantees of the Stalinists of the abandonment of all revolutionary activity, will never dare arouse the masses and arm them. It knows only too well that such measures dictate its own ruin. Yet the armed masses, fighting in their own interests and under their own banner, for the land and for an end to all exploitation, are the only force capable of waging a consistent and victorious struggle against the Japanese imperialists, just as in Spain today only the armed workers and peasants, flying the banners of revolution, can guarantee the final victory over the Fascist.

Mobilize the Masses

The efforts of all revolutionists in China and abroad must be directed toward precisely this independent mobilization of the masses. Above all, the American workers must intervene directly in the struggle against Japanese imperialism. Cargoes destined for the Japanese military machine must be immobilized. That is the key task here. Let the slogan be raised for the seamen and longshoremen on the West Coast, particularly "Not a ship, not a ton of cargo for Japanese imperialism!" The powerful organizations of the maritime workers have it in their power in this country to strike a mortal blow at Japan's imperialist drive in China.

When the Stalinist party today calls upon the government at Washington to invoke the "Nine-Power Pact" they line themselves up with the drive toward the future war of American against Japanese imperialism. With this the working class has nothing

in common. Against this the working class must pit all its forces or else again become cannon fodder "to make the world safe against the Mikado".

No, we must intervene in our own way in support of the Chinese struggle against the Japanese imperialist invasion, without identifying ourselves or our action for a moment with the imperialist interests of "our own" government. Working class action in the post-war years paralyzed the inter-allied intervention against the October Revolution. Lack of working class action and resort to fruitless and treacherous appeals to the "democratic" Powers and the League of Nations delivered Ethiopia into the maw of the Italian Fascists and is helping to strangle the struggle of the workers and peasants of Spain in their struggle against Fascism. Our forces are gigantic, if only we will have faith in them, boldly raise our own banners and act without and against the class enemy!

In China the revolutionists, united today under the banner of the Fourth International in the Communist League of China, will participate to the fullest extent in the direct struggle against Japanese imperialism. They will strive to mobilize the workers in their own party and under their own banner, and to arouse the peasants in the vast hinterland for the real struggle against imperialism and its agents, the struggle for the land.

2. Anthony Massini “Character of China’s War. China is Fighting Against Imperialist Domination” (April 1942)

From *The Militant*, [Vol. 6 No. 17](#), 25 April 1942, p. 7.
Transcribed & marked up by [Einde O’Callaghan](#) for the Encyclopaedia of Trotskyism On-Line (ETOL).

The current (April) issue of the magazine, Fourth International, contains a complete and detailed Marxist analysis of the questions raised in Myra Ward Beech’s letter on China. We recommend that all readers of *The Militant* who are interested in this very important question read that article, entitled Why We Defend China by John G. Wright. Here we make only a few remarks on the question.

China’s war is the struggle of a semi-colonial country for its national independence. China’s main enemy today is Japan, the imperialist invader; Japan today is the chief obstacle to the right of the Chinese nation to rule itself. The victory of China over Japan in this war would be a powerful blow against the whole imperialist world and an inspiration to all the oppressed peoples to throw off their chains of imperialist slavery. For this reason Marxists consider China’s war as progressive and have supported it since the beginning of the Japanese invasion.

Our support of China’s war has nothing in common with political support of Chiang Kai-shek, or the Kuomintang, which he leads, or the Chinese capitalist class whose interests he represents. On the contrary, we have supported China in spite of and against the reactionary policies of Chiang Kai-shek’s regime.

Question of Material Aid and Alliances

We unceasingly criticized and exposed the reactionary policies which drowned the 1925–27 Chinese revolution in blood, established a military dictatorship over the people, demoralized the masses and thus opened wide the doors for Japanese invasion and still obstruct the successful prosecution of the war against Japan.

It is clear therefore that our position in support of China’s war was not arrived at because of the slightest confidence in Chiang or his policies.

We do not oppose acceptance by China of aid from Anglo-American imperialism; we do not oppose an alliance of China with one imperialist power against another – neither of these in and of themselves would change thy situation so as to warrant a change in the policy of the Marxists, for neither of these by themselves could transform the character of China’s War against Japan. What we oppose is any subordination of China’s war for freedom to the aims and strategy of imperialist allies of China.

To determine the correct position toward China's war today, it is therefore necessary for those who supported China's war before December 7 only to look at what has happened since then and to ask: Has China or China's war come under the control of China's imperialist allies, has China's war become subordinated to the strategy and aims of those allies? If it has, then Marxists can no longer support China. If it hasn't then Marxists, while remaining aware of future dangers, must continue to support China.

What has happened since December 7 and the extension of the world war to the Pacific? The struggle for national liberation in the most important colonial and semi-colonial countries in the Southwest Pacific has become stronger and bolder, rather than weaker. The grip of Britain on India, for example, has been loosened. London and Washington now find it necessary to make overtures and promises to the Indian nationalist movement: and the answers they receive from the native capitalists are not the subdued and respectful ones they used to be.

China Bolder Now

Similarly, the grip of Washington and London has been loosened on China. The Chinese regime feels freer than ever before to resist dictation of China's military struggle by the United States and Britain. Even less than on December 6 do the wishes and desires of Roosevelt and Churchill today determine the course of China's war. The Chinese government is demanding more, not less.

Win. P. Simms, Scripps-Howard Foreign Ed., told on Apr. 18 of "the rising demand on the part of the Chinese, Indians and others for a Pacific Charter." He reports:

"In the East, observed Ta Knius Pao, one of Chungking's leading newspapers, 'many nations are of a colonial or quasi-colonial status. The Roosevelt-Churchill declaration (Atlantic Charter) is applicable to independent nations which were overrun by the Axis powers. It has made no provisions concerning the postwar positions of such countries as India and Burma.'

"The spirit of the proposed Pacific Charter," paper said, "should aim at the liberation of Korea, the Liuchu Islands and Formosa from Japanese domination and the freedom from Allied control of India, the Dutch East Indies, Malaya, Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines. China, it added, 'is certainly not helping one imperialism fight against another imperialism.'"

One can hardly imagine such statements coming from the Chinese capitalists five months ago. And one can easily imagine what Washington and London think when they hear such things. There is no question but that China's hand in the war has been strengthened, that it is more independent of Anglo-American control than ever before.

What Chiang's Role Is an Argument For

In other words, it is completely false to reduce the question of China's war to the reactionary policies of Chiang Kai-shek. We condemn Chiang's intervention in India because it was a blow at China's struggle, because its effect was to alienate the sympathy

of India's masses for China's war. It is another example of how the Chinese capitalists hamper the struggle for independence.

But this is no argument against supporting China's progressive war – it is only an argument against placing any confidence in Chiang, it is only an argument for the continuation of the political struggle against Chiang by the Chinese masses, while they continue to direct their fire at the main enemy of Chinese national existence, Japan.

Problem of Ethiopia

The situation of Ethiopia is not at all like the situation in China today. It is more like the situation in India, because Ethiopia is today a colony of Britain.

In 1935 we supported Ethiopia's war against Italy as the war of a backward country for independence from an imperialist power. We said it was correct for the Ethiopians to accept aid from the British in order to drive the Italian conquerors out of their land. We warned the Ethiopian people then, as we warn the Chinese masses today, to be on guard against their imperialist "allies," We predicted the Ethiopian people would have to fight the British who would try to take over. That Britain was not fighting for Ethiopian independence was shown two months ago, when Britain forced the signing of a British-Ethiopian treaty which gives Britain control of the police, courts, military forces, railroad, etc.

In other words, Ethiopia has been reduced to the status of a British colony; and under such conditions the only kind of war in which Marxists could support Ethiopia would be a war against Britain, Ethiopia's main enemy today.

3. Anthony Massini “US Bosses in Shanghai Still Do ‘Business As Usual’ With Japanese”

The Militant, September 5th 1942

State Department Tried to Suppress Information

American and British business in Japanese-held Shanghai are collaborating in the most friendly fashion with Japanese imperialism, and “business as usual” goes on “to an extent inconceivable to anyone who hasn't been there.” This information— together with the fact that the U. Sr State Department and the British Foreign Office suppressed the story — was revealed on August 28 by the *N. Y. Post* reporter, Edward Hunter, after he had interviewed a number of American repatriates arriving here on the S.S. Gripsholm. Chinese officials have charged that American and British business interests are carrying on the same practices in Hong Kong, also captured by the Japanese.

According to Hunter, “*Department stores, liquor stores, haberdasheries, textile mills all operate 'normally' with American or British owners or managers, and Japanese supervisors, in charge. 'In the American-owned telephone system, the electric plants and street-car system the American executives and engineers are at their desks, again with Jap supervisors. . . The police still have American and British inspectors and sergeants, but the heads of the service have been displaced by Japanese. The ousted officials have been given comfortable pensions...*”

The American and British “*communities of Shanghai take easily to collaboration,*” Hunter continues. “*Many, years of cocktails and dancing atop luxurious hotel roofs, while Chinese fought and died within sight and earshot, have made them oblivious to the fact that this concerns theme.*”

Attitude of State Department

“Business as usual” goes on with the full knowledge and evident approval of the United States and British governments. Hunter was told, “*No disapproval has been expressed by the American consular authorities, or their home offices back in the U. S., for example, to impress on them that by helping to make life normal for the Japs in an important military center, they are aiding and abetting an enemy.*”

It was the opinion of one of the informants of Hunter—who was obviously trying to cover up for his friends still in Shanghai —that “*If the State Department were to announce that such activities were forbidden, the overwhelming majority would give them up. But with the State Department seeming to follow an appeasement line itself in these matters, they feel that they are doing the only thing possible.*”

But the only thing that the State Department disapproves is letting out the truth about what is going on. Passengers on the Gripsholm "*are still bewildered by the behavior of the State Department and the British Foreign Office at Lourenco Marques, where the vessel first docked. Strict instructions were issued that they keep quiet.*"

It is not surprising that government officials don't want the American people to have this information. For it conclusively demonstrates what the capitalists are fighting for. Their basic perspective is to continue as exploiters of China, regardless of who wins the war. Naturally, they would prefer to have the United States win, for then American capitalism would be in the number one position as exploiter of China, with British and Japanese capitalists reduced to secondary positions. But even if the United States loses, they figure on remaining members of the consortium of foreign powers which has sucked China dry for so many years. That is why they continue to do "business as usual"—with the permission of the Japanese forces, who realize that their own economic base is too limited to permit them by themselves to organize the exploitation of China and the Far East.

Washington continues to talk about a "war for democracy" and struggle to the death against fascism and imperialism, but the activities of American capitalists are not determined or affected by such talk. The bosses understand that this talk is for consumption by the masses. As for themselves, their perspective is – as it was before the war and as it will be after the war – continued participation in the exploitation of the colonies.

How China Is Treated

Directly paralleling the imperialist outlook of American and British big business firms in Shanghai and Hongkong is the treatment accorded China by the American and British governments.

For despite the war with Japan, China is still regarded as an "inferior," treated not as an equal among equals in the high councils of the "United Nations" - but as a semi-colonial country which is to be tolerated but not given a voice in deciding questions of important policy and strategy-, which is to be given a little material aid now and then but never in preference to the imperialist powers.

Although the Chinese have been handed many compliments and promises in recent months, they are thoroughly dissatisfied with the attitude and policy of Washington and London, which they know have not undergone any real change since Pearl Harbor. The Chinese, case has been voiced in this country through its unofficial spokesman, Lin Yutang.

China's complaints, as expressed in a letter by Lin Yutang to the *N. Y. Times* of July 19, fall into two main categories:

1. China is not getting the supplies which it was promised; delivery of these supplies to China is being "sabotaged."

The letter says: *“The English and the American public must realize that China is no longer satisfied with bouquets such as those so graciously thrown out to the Chinese nation on the fifth anniversary (of the Sino-Japanese war). The only bouquet that China will appreciate now is to stop that policy of sabotaging supplies to China, wherever it originates.”*

Where the "Sabotage" Originates

Although Lin Yutang diplomatically does not mention names, he implies where the "policy of sabotage" originates: *"The greater part of the transport planes sent to China were held up and diverted before they reached China. The few bombers that did reach China and participated in the recent bombing of Hankow were taken out again and diverted to Egypt..."*

“Unless an immediate order be given to divert planes from India to China, instead of diverting planes from China to India, it will be too late to send American planes to China before the Chengde battle is over... The transport planes diverted to India must be immediately diverted back to China... ”

“There must be an assurance that supplies to China can get through India before there is any use of asking for and sending more help from the United States....”

Diverted to Egypt, to India—obviously this is a charge that the 'sabotage' of supplies to China can be laid at the doors of the British. But who will believe that the British took such steps without the advance knowledge and approval of the United States officials in charge of supplies?

2. China is not being consulted or informed about the "grand strategy" of the United Nations in the war in the Far East. *"Any Allied strategy affecting China's own vital interests must be planned in consultation with China"* Lin Yutang warns.

"The Mysterious Secrets"

"China must be let into the mysterious secrets of the 'Allied grand strategy' before efficient cooperation on the part of China can bring the most useful results. Chiang Kai-shek must not be kept guessing what the Allied strategists are or are not going to do. There has been exasperating waste of China's strength."

As proof, Lin Yutang refers to the Burmese campaign, in which China wanted to participate so that it might keep the vital Burma Road open, but which it was not permitted to do because the British authorities in Burma refused to supply oil to China's mechanized forces or to let them cross the border until it was too late.

These should not be misconstrued as signs that the American and British imperialists want Japan to win the war in China. The imperialist allies of China want Japan defeated but they want it done in such a way that their own position in China will not be endangered.

They do not look with favor on the growing spirit of national self-confidence which has been manifest since Pearl Harbor not only in India but also in China. Their policy of keeping China from becoming too independently "strong," and thus perhaps becoming an inspiration for all the oppressed colonial peoples, is not the result of "blundering" but of their coldly calculated desire to run the war in such a way that the Chinese government will become and be forced to remain wholly subservient to the dictates of the imperialist "democracies."

What the imperialists contemplate for China after this "War for democracy" is over is revealed not only by the news from Shanghai and the complaints from China, but also by an anniversary which was "observed" last week.

August 29 marked the one hundredth anniversary since the Treaty of Nanking, which ended the "Opium War" the British had launched for the purpose of opening China to foreign trade and exploitation. Five ports were opened to foreign trade by this treaty, and out of it too came the system of extra-territorial "rights" in these ports, under which, the *N. Y. Times* admits, "*foreigners (Americans included) have now enjoyed for a full century special rights in China which have been humiliating to that "country and destructive to its sovereignty."*

On many occasions the Chinese people have demanded an end to extra-territoriality. Since December 7, 1941, these demands have increased. The United States and Britain have promised that they will "negotiate" the question after the war.

The point is that the areas where these "rights" were employed are no longer in the hands of either China or the "democracies." But the British and American governments refuse, even while the Japanese hold these areas, to give up their imperialist privileges in them. What an instructive commentary this is on the Allied claims that they are fighting for the independence in China!

4. Felix Morrow, "The Allies Attitude to China's War"

The Militant, December 26th 1942

A sharp protest against U. S. government treatment, of China was voiced on Dec. 17 by Lin Yutang, Chinese publicist and "unofficial" spokesman for Chungking.

The protest, in the form of a signed article in the Dec. 17 issue of P. M., charged that China was not being sent the supplies promised by Washington. Lin Yutang's article was noteworthy as the first time he had directly blamed Washington for depriving China of promised supplies. In several previous statements he had indicated that the main blame fell upon the British government, which held up in India supplies earmarked by Washington for transportation to China via Indian airports.

The Chinese author charged that "*the American public is not permitted to know*" the facts about this "*incredible situation.*" He recalled Wendell Willkie's words on returning to this country: "*If I were to tell, you how few bombers China has received from us you simply would not believe me.*"

WASHINGTON CONSENT

As a typical instance, Lin Yutang cited the situation of air transport from India. At the beginning of the year China was supposed to get 100 transport planes to take the place of the lost Burma Road. Instead China was assigned 40 planes. But when they arrived in India, the British seized 25 of them. "*The diversion of the 25 transport planes had the consent of Washington, leaving China 15 planes to ferry in supplies.*"

Only later, "*after negotiations,*" were the other 25 planes restored to China. But, limited to these 40 planes, "*the monthly supplies now going in are probably 1% of the carriage of the Burma Road traffic at its peak, and are less than what a small 2500-ton steamer could carry in one trip.*"

"*And now,*" concludes Lin Yutang on this point, "*instead of gradually adding to the transport planes, the Services of Supply in Washington have made a ruling... that where supplies already given cannot be adequately transported to the country of destination, no more supplies need be allocated.*" That is, until China finds ways and means of getting its earmarked supplies out of India into China, it will get no more supplies.

"A DOUBLE BLOCKADE"

Supplies for China must "*run a double blockade,*" says Lin Yutang, "*one bureaucratic blockade in Washington, and another bureaucratic blockade in India. The diversion of the transport planes referred to above was only one instance among*

many. Lend-lease supplies for China are confiscated on the way without previous consent or even notification of the Chungking government."

Promises made were not kept, says Lin Yutang. After Burma fell, "*President Roosevelt made an announcement that America would find the means to give China help. That help has not arrived.*"

The main cause of this situation, declared the Chinese spokesman, is that American and British officialdom still attempt to treat China as a backward country, as a mere colony. Lin Yutang says:

"The origins of this policy have nothing to do with help to other fronts. They have nothing to do with current American production. They have to do essentially with a nineteenth-century conception of China and the refusal to accept China as an equal partner in the War.. The elderly men over 50 who are directing (American - British) policy . . . assume that they are going to run this war their own Way and the Chinaman is going to like it. In other words, we are dealing with an outdated nineteenth-century tycoon psychology."

Lin Yutang finds it necessary, for diplomatic reasons, to call it "*outdated nineteenth-century*" imperialist outlook, but he makes it clear enough that, if it originated in the nineteenth century, it is still very much alive in official Washington and London today.

ANSWERING AN ALIBI

Answering, such alibis as that of Secretary of the Navy Knox--who said that first Hitler must be defeated, then Japan—Lin Yutang pointedly shows that there is a Pacific front being supplied but not the one held by China against Japan:

"It must be fully realized that the 'defeat-Hitler-first-idea' has nothing to do with American failure to regard the China front as the primary front in the Pacific. The defeat-Hitler-first idea did not prevent sending help to the Solomon Islands and Should not prevent help to China. The fact is, what China asked was so little, so ridiculously little, that it could not affect the war against Hitler one way or the other; but even that little was not given to China."

China's great land front against Japan is the logical front for the main effort to defeat Japan. So logical, indeed, that, as Lin Yutang says: "*No one pretends that the war in Guadalcanal is the correct way to begin the offensive against Japan, gradually overcoming the 21,000 islands in the Southern Pacific.*" Nevertheless, this island-hopping strategy is absorbing practically all of the supplies being sent to the Pacific, while China's great land front gets only the tiny trickle described by Lin Yutang.

WHAT CHINESE WANT

The basic difference in conception of Pacific strategy outlined by Lin Yutang was confirmed by *Time* magazine (Nov. 23) as follows:

"In Washington it is well known that Chiang Kai-shek and other Chinese strategists have long looked at U. S. Pacific strategy with dismay. Instead of costly

naval attacks on island fingers, the Chinese have repeatedly suggested land and air attacks from the continent of Asia. But China has received few planes, and little other equipment. The Chinese watch the U.S. expend men and equipment in the Solomons and grow unhappier."

Lin Yutang demands a campaign to wrest Burma from Japan and thus re-open the Burma Road to provide supplies for a full-scale offensive by China. But, he says: *"The dual command of the last Burma Campaign must not be repeated; bitter memories still rankle in Chinese breasts. The failure of the last Burma campaign was the failure 'to solve the problem of command ... There are certain grim facts that cannot be aired about, but must-be taken into consideration in the planning of the next command."*

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN

Apparently Lin Yutang is referring to the refusal of the British, last Spring, to permit large numbers of Chinese troops to enter Burma to fight the Japanese. Lin Yutang himself told the story in a letter to the *N. Y. Times* on July 19.

"China wanted to defend Burma at all costs, but was not permitted to do so," declared the letter, which reported that *"the Chinese mechanized units"*—apparently all that China had—were immobilized at Kunming during the Burma fighting while the Chinese vainly sought British agreement to let them into Burma. In the end, the British authorities refused to provide the Chinese mechanized units with oil to operate with in Burma.

Why didn't the British permit the Chinese troops into Burma? Lin Yutang does not say. We can give the answer. The British sent as many Indian troops as they could transport—why not Chinese? The reason is obvious. The Indians came as vassals of British imperialism, the Chinese would come as representatives of Free, China. Every Chinese soldier would be proof to the Burmese and the Indians that there are peoples of Asia who are freeing themselves.

A victory for Chinese troops in Burma would have been understood everywhere as a victory for the colonial peoples and not for British imperialism. That is why the anti-British masses of India are wholeheartedly pro-Chinese. That is also why the British preferred to lose Burma to Japan, with the hope of winning it back later, than to let China hold Burma against Japan.

Lin Yutang now makes it plain that China has no more faith in British conduct of a new Burma campaign than it had in the previous campaign. He proposes, as a solution, *"There must be a unified Allied command for a Burma campaign, and there is no question that, in view of the recent memories, sincere Chinese cooperation is only possible with an American Commander-in Chief."*

THE WILLKIE POLICY

This "solution" evades the plain fact that American military strategists today appear to see eye to eye with the British in the Pacific, as is indicated by the con-

centration on island-hopping. Lin Yutang attempts to explain this away: "*The Pacific war pattern is the result of drift and not of policy.*" Once Washington really turns its attention to solving the grand strategy of the Pacific war, he appears to believe, then the United States will adopt the policy toward the Chinese land front advocated by the group around Wendell Willkie.

One authoritative figure who has backed this policy is the retired Admiral H. E. Yarnell, in a letter to the *N. Y. Times* of Nov. 14, Defending Willkie against pro-administration critics, the admiral wrote on Pacific strategy,:

"Vast reserves of trained Chinese manpower are ready and willing to wear down and destroy Japan's land armies in Asia as soon as they are given the weapons with which to do so. Chinese bases are available 'for the effective bombing of Japanese war' industries and shipping.

"In the war against Japan the main effort must come from the mainland of Asia, which means China. . .

"The naval operations in the Pacific are contributory, of course to her final defeat. But a campaign from that direction alone is a long and costly affair, with success doubtful. The early defeat of Japan hinges mainly on operations from China."

Admiral Yarnell and those who agree with him are, however, not in charge of the government and American production. The dominant policy in official circles remains that condemned by Lin Yutang.

For China to place all its hopes on a change in American policy would be suicidal, for there can be no guarantee that the Willkie; Yarnell line toward China will ever become the official policy of the American government. Nor is there any basic difference between the "dollar imperialism" of Willkie and the cruder imperialism of Churchill.

We are for the victory of China over Japan because China is a semi-colonial country fighting for national independence against an imperialist power. As genuine supporters of China we must warn the Chinese people that their salvation lies only in themselves and their true allies, the colonial peoples and the revolutionary workers of all countries.

5. Question Statement On Lend-Lease Aid to China

The Militant, February 20th 1943.

Roosevelt's statement on Jan. 8 that "today we are flying as much lend-lease material as 'ever traversed the Burma road" was questioned by, Madame Wellington Koo, wife of the Chinese Ambassador to Great Britain, in a speech at Philadelphia on 'Feb. I.

"President Roosevelt has said that as much is being flown into China as ever went over the Burma road," Mine. Koo declared. "What he did not say was that, of all the lend-lease materials, China gets only 2%, the rest going to England and Russia.

"What he did. not say was that, of this pitiful 2%, only half ever got to Burma and that, of this, only half again ever got into China."

At the time when the greatest amount of material was being carried over the Burma road, it was purchased through Chinese financing; a very small percentage was actually lend-lease aid.

Madame Koo went on to explain that China is on the verge of "economic collapse" because of the pitiful assistance from the 'United States. She, declared that China needs food as well as guns, and gave examples of serious inflation there.

For a person connected with diplomatic circles to question the President's statement, and to suggest that his statement might be covering up how little aid is actually being sent to China, is indeed unusual, and must be regarded as an indication of how strongly the Chinese feel about the "'pitiful" trickle of materials to their country.

The day after her speech, Madame Koo told the press:

"I realized my statement might give implications which were never intended and perhaps the word "collapse" was ill-advised.

"What I desired then, and still desire, is to impress on the American public the serious economic threat to the Chinese people and the necessity of relieving the economic siege or Japanese blockade by some radical method before Chinese strength is further sapped."

It is significant, however, that in her retraction, Madame Koo did not withdraw the part of her speech dealing with Roosevelt's statement.

SWP on Favoring Imperialist Material Aid vs Campaigning for It

6. “Shall We Campaign for U.S. Government Aid to the USSR?” – Albert Goldman (July 1941)

The Militant, 19 July 1941.

It is to be expected that many people who accept our fundamental principle of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union should be anxious in some way or other to translate that principle into action. Once the principled question of the necessity of defending the Soviet Union is accepted, we are still left with the problem of HOW to defend the Soviet Union. What shall we in this country do to defend the Soviet Union? These questions are uppermost in the minds of many members and sympathizers of our party.

Should our party begin a campaign for U.S. government aid to the Soviet Union under the Lease-Lend Act? The Stalinists are making that demand the basis for their agitation. Should we join them in that demand? The answer is, emphatically – No!

There have been situations in the past where a similar problem presented itself to the revolutionary movement – the problem of asking a capitalist government to help a cause in which the working class in general and our party in particular were interested.

The Example of Ethiopia

When Italian imperialism sent its-troops to conquer Ethiopia, a wave of indignation swept through the working masses throughout, the world. All class-conscious workers were for the defense of Ethiopia. The imperialist, democracies were not at all enthusiastic about, Mussolini’s efforts to conquer Ethiopia but they decided to remain “neutral,” that is, to offer indirect help to Italian imperialism.

The question at that time arose as to whether or not we should raise a demand for government sanctions against the Italian effort to subjugate the Ethiopians. We definitely opposed such a demand and raised the counter-slogan of working-class sanctions.

Our position was based on the following reasons: First, we. cannot rely on any capitalist government to fulfill progressive tasks; Second: we cannot make a demand for government sanctions because the very nature of such a demand would have a tendency

to compel us to support the government, in all imperialist war which might result from the exercise of sanctions; Third: it is essential for us to stress independent working-class action.

The Example of Loyalist Spain

During the struggle between the Loyalist government and the fascists in Spain the same problem was posed. Again we took the position of independent working-class activity in defense of Loyalist Spain. We favored material aid to the Loyalist government but, for the same reasons that actuated us in the case of Ethiopia, we refused to campaign for government aid but insisted on independent working-class action for aid to the Loyalist government.

We were, of course, opposed to any government embargo on shipments to the Loyalist government. The embargo represented a hostile act by Roosevelt which prevented the Loyalist government from purchasing arms. We carried on a campaign against the embargo.

Nor would we have *opposed*, the sending of aid by any capitalist government to the Loyalist army. There is a difference between not raising any objection, when a capitalist government sends aid, and *agitating* for such aid. The key to the whole question consists in the understanding that we cannot rely on bourgeois governments to aid our cause. Neither can we take any responsibility for bourgeois governmental policy.

And if the above reasons made it impermissible for us to agitate in favor of governmental aid in the case of Ethiopia and Loyalist Spain, they certainly make it impermissible to carry on a campaign on behalf of U.S. government aid to the Soviet Union.

Class Defense versus Class-Collaboration

The United States is involved in the imperialist conflict. It is not officially neutral as it claimed to be in the case of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia or of the civil war in Spain. It is a non-belligerent ally of Great Britain. When Hitler ordered the Nazi army to attack the Soviet Union, the Roosevelt government condemned the attack. It has promised aid to the Soviet government because it is interested in the defeat of Hitler. In all probability the Roosevelt government will send aid to Stalin, not because it is interested in a victory for the Soviet Union but because it wants the defeat of Hitler.

It must be remembered that, while it is necessary to defend the Soviet Union, it is also necessary to be in opposition to the imperialist war of the U.S. government. In fact, the real defense of the Soviet Union – the class defense – demands a relentless opposition to all the imperialists in this war. We must therefore be a thousand times more careful

about doing anything which would tend to bring us into a partnership with the Roosevelt government and weaken our opposition to its imperialist war.

Were we to agitate for aid to the Soviet Union by the Roosevelt government, would we then not be compelled to favor convoys to guarantee the arrival of the material shipped to the Soviet Union? Should we then not demand that the waters to Vladivostock be kept open by the U.S. government against Japan? Opposed as we are to the imperialist war, it is absolutely essential not to take a single step which would tend to weaken our position in the eyes of the masses.

To leave the ground of independent working-class action in favor of a working-class cause is to jeopardize the cause itself.

Soviet Government Can Ask Aid

Nothing that we say with reference to the impermissibility on the part of a revolutionary party to agitate for government aid to the Soviet Union applies to the Soviet government itself. Just as it is permissible for the Soviet government to enter into military agreements with capitalist states, when necessary, so is it proper for the Soviet government to ask for aid from a capitalist state. We have not the slightest objection to having the Soviet government ask for aid or having the United States government grant aid.

Our duty is to organize the working masses to defend the Soviet Union.

This brings up the question of the advisability of attempting to organize certain practical actions to defend the Soviet Union. By that is meant such actions as a section of the workers did organize on behalf of the anti-fascist struggle in the Spanish civil war. Shall we try to raise funds or send workers to fight in the ranks of the Red Army? These questions are not principled ones. The answer to them depends on practical considerations.

In the Spanish civil war the Loyalist government needed men and material. It had money but the capitalist democratic governments refused to sell it armament material. A campaign for men and materials to fight the fascists in Spain was something that was perfectly plausible to the workers and was therefore perfectly in order.

But in the case of the Soviet Union the situation is quite different. The Soviet Union certainly has plenty of men; it has vast quantities of material; those materials it lacks it can, unlike Loyalist Spain, obtain in England and the United States.

The Best Method to Defend the USSR

Analyzing the situation from all angles, we come to the conclusion that the most effective method available to revolutionary Marxists in the United States for the defense

of the Soviet Union is the method of political support, of explanation, clarification and propaganda.

That the Soviet Union is a Workers' State despite Stalinist degeneration. That every worker should defend it. That victory for the Soviet Union is victory for the socialist future of humanity. To win the workers of the world to these positions would be infinitely more important than any capitalist "aid" for the Soviet Union.

And to win the workers, it is necessary to answer a thousand different questions which trouble the minds of the workers, thanks to the confusion spread by the enemies of the Soviet Union and by the Stalinist falsifiers.

We must tirelessly explain that the program of Soviet victory is not dependent on capitalist "aid" but on the efforts of the Soviet and world working class. The revolutionary propaganda methods employed by Lenin and Trotsky against imperialist intervention in 1918–1921 can wreak far more havoc upon the Nazi armies than could be done by any capitalist aid. Revival of the democratically elected Soviets, and release of all pro-Soviet political prisoners and their restoration to their rightful place in industry and the army, would strengthen the Soviet Union immeasurably.

That the defense of the Soviet Union is not to be placed in the hands of capitalist governments; that only the workers can or will really defend the Soviet Union, and that they can defend it in the last analysis only through taking power away from all the imperialists and establishing Workers' Governments – this is our way of defending the Soviet Union. We dedicate ourselves to win the working class to that glorious task.