

What To Do About War

Japanese Libertarian Federation

1931

Editor's Note: The following article, "What To Do About War?", was published in the Japanese Libertarian Federation paper, *Jiyu Rengo Shinbun*, No. 64, in November 1931, when Japan was in the process of occupying Manchuria. The invasion of Manchuria also marked renewed suppression of the Japanese anarchist movement, which was effectively destroyed by 1937. The article was originally published in *Esperanto* to make it accessible in an international audience. The translation is by John Crump, reprinted in *Anarchist Opposition to War* (Seattle: Charlantan Stew, 1995).

The Japanese militarists have mobilized their army to China on the pretext "For the peace of the Orient" or "To defend the Japanese people in China." They always use, whenever a state crisis occurs, such beautiful expressions as "For Our fatherland" or "For justice" and try to stir up the people's patriotism. But what is the fatherland? For whom does it exist? Never forget that all states exist only for the wealthy. It is the same with war. War brings injury or death to the young men of the poor, and hunger and cold to their aged parents and young brothers and sisters. But to the wealthy it brings enormous riches and honour.

The true cause of the mobilization to China is none other than the ambition of the Japanese capitalist class and military to conquer Manchuria. Japan has its own Monroe doctrine. Japanese capitalism cannot develop, or even survive, without Manchuria. That is why its government is inclined to risk anything so as not to lose its many privileges in China. Therefore it has approved the enormous expense of the mobilization, despite the fact that it is experiencing a deficit in the current year's income of the state treasury. American capital has flowed into China in larger and larger amounts. This represents an enormous menace to the Japanese capitalist class. In other words, now Japan is forced to oppose American capital in China. In fact, this is the direct cause of the mobilization.

From another point of view, we can see that this incident is a drama written by the Japanese military as a militaristic demonstration to all pacifists, cosmopolitans and socialists within Japan, and to other countries in general, and China in particular. Even we Japanese have been surprised at the rapid mobilization. How were they able to make preparations so rapidly? It is clear that the mobilization was totally prepared for long ago. That is the drama. Did we say drama? In this

way the military have engineered the opportunity to demonstrate and establish their strength, which has been weakened of late by disarmament and pacifist public opinion. Of course, a secret agreement had been reached between the military and the capitalists, because they both belong to the ruling class.

In this situation, what must we do? The Communists say “Defend and come to the aid of the Chinese revolution!” But who will benefit in China when Japanese power is totally eliminated from that country? It will be none other than the newly rising Chinese bourgeoisie and the capitalists of other countries. We must keenly observe and criticize all that takes place. In the face of war, we must not make the mistake which our comrade Kropotkin and others made during the World War. Of course, we opposed the mobilization. But we found that merely one-sided opposition is a very feeble response. The sole method to eradicate war from our world is for us, acting as the popular masses, to reject it in all countries simultaneously. We must cease military production, refuse military service and disobey the officers. Complete international unity of the anarchists would signal our victory, not only economically but in the war against war.

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From Robert Graham (Ed.), *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas; Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)*.

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