

BALANCE SHEET OF COMINTERN WAR POSITION

By JAY LOVESTONE

Our examination of certain Pravda editorials, Pieck's report to the Seventh Congress, recent declarations and practices of the French, American and other sections of the CI reveals the following types of errors in the Comintern's position towards a "mixed war":

1. There is a tendency to consider the specific form of bourgeois state—the form of the capitalist dictatorship—as a factor in determining the Communist attitude to war. There is talk about defending the "democracies" against German Fascist attacks. Especially crude has been such propaganda by Czechoslovakia's official Communists. This practice can only play into the hands of the bourgeoisie in the so-called democratic republics momentarily in conflict with German imperialism.

2. The proposal—open and concealed—to make the attitude of the working class in any particular country dependent on the momentary military relations of the capitalist government in that country. Here we have the utterly fallacious theory that imperialist governments which, for one reason happen to be in a military pact with the U.S.S.R., will be waging—under the latter circumstances—a progressive war. This evaluation is a direct concession to social patriotism. If one is to conclude that the French imperialist government wages a progressive war merely because its armies are, for the moment, firing against the same trench lines as the Soviet's Red Army is, then he would likewise have to come to the conclusion that the Soviet Union's military association with the French imperialist army makes the U.S.S.R.'s war reactionary. This approach is inverted Trotskyism. The fact that the Soviets are momentarily on the side of France does not in the least make French capitalism less imperialist, does not lend a progressive character to the French war, does not endow the French ruling class with revolutionary objectives. Likewise, the fact that the U.S.S.R. is temporarily on the side of France does not make it imperialist, does not mean that the Soviet Union is waging a reactionary, an imperialist war.

3. Any move by a section of the CI towards a policy of even limited national defense in an imperialist country is injurious to the interests of the entire international proletariat. This is so re-

Correction of War Stand Necessary Now - Before It Is Too Late

gardless of the noble motive that may inspire such action, despite the fact that this policy of national defense on a limited scale is resorted to as a means of helping the U.S.S.R. Such means are suicidal. In a fundamental sense they are harmful to the most vital interests of the Soviet Union itself. Such means destroy the very basis of class organization and aspiration of the proletariat in the capitalist country in question. Hence such "aid" robs the Soviet proletariat of its only reliable ally in the revolutionary war the U.S.S.R. is waging.

4. The CI also makes a very serious mistake in its exaggeration of the vitality of bourgeois democracy in the present tense international situation. The very seriousness of the menace of war is itself a great stimulus to the setting up of a Fascist regime in those countries today subject to the bourgeois democratic form of rule. In order to wage their imperialist war most effectively, the French bourgeoisie, for instance, must have unquestionable political control. The best basis for such control is the fascist set-up. In the light of this, proposals for cleansing the French general staff of fascist officers, as a price or excuse for proletarian support

of the war, are idiotic and criminal.

5. By way of omission and commission the CI today maneuvers with a basic Leninist principle in its attitude and policy towards a mixed war. In the discussion preceding the Seventh World Congress, Comrade Bela Kun revealed as much when he said: "It would be un-Marxian to attempt to work out now in all details the tactics of the proletariat in the event of such a war—a war in which one or several capitalist countries fight together with the Soviet Union against a Fascist-led group of imperialist powers." (Communist International No. 15). At best, this is a lame excuse. It is not at all a question of details. It is the very essence and substance of the strategy to be pursued by Communists in the event of such a mixed war that Bela Kun wants us to dismiss, to dodge, to evade.

Particularly, because this is a new and complicated problem for the proletariat is it necessary now—while we still have a little time—to think our way through. How else can we Communists develop sound strategy! Why postpone till it will surely be too late? Would Comrade Kun perhaps tell the proletariat: "Don't worry, dear class comrades,

the great, the good and the wise Comrade Stalin will show you the light when the fateful hour of war strikes? We know—and Comrade Kun and his comrades certainly should and must know—better than to rely on such fatalistic, idol-worshipping, un-Marxian methods of solving the most burning questions confronting the world proletariat.

WHAT THE CONGRESS DID AND DIDN'T DO.

It is exceedingly unfortunate that this spirit of evasion characterized the Seventh Congress deliberations and decisions—especially of the problems flowing out of a mixed war. That is why the various sections have been making the crassest opportunist errors in this field since the Congress closed. Add to this the failure of the Congress to repudiate unreservedly the errors being perpetrated for months by various Communist Parties, under ECCI instruction and we have an almost perfect setting for a major disaster befalling not only the Communist but the entire labor movement.

The Seventh Congress resolution on the war question abounds in sound pledges to "strive for the transformation

of the imperialist war into civil war against the fascist instigators of war, against the bourgeoisie, for the overthrow of capitalism." This is fine in general. The resolution, however, is far more defective than the report of Comrade Ercoli. In view of what the French and other Communist Parties have been doing before and since the Congress, we consider it a costly mistake for the resolution to omit the following declaration of policy by Comrade Ercoli in his report:

"To those who demanded the cessation of the Communist struggle on the basis of the pacts with the Soviet Union, the Communist Parties replied: No, gentlemen. You have concluded a conditional and limited pact with the ruling working class of the Soviet Union. But you have not signed any pact with the working class of our country. We have no guarantee that your class army will not be sent against the working class and against the colonial peoples, or that you will not force the poor population to pay the expense of the army and not the rich; we have no control over the expenditure decreed by the reactionary General Staff, nor have we any guarantee that you will keep the pact. This does not mean that we take no interest in the pact. We shall defend the pact as an instrument in the struggle for peace, and stigmatise every attempt to violate the obligations which it imposes." (Inprecor, Vol. 15, No. 39, p. 1023).

Organically bound up with this error of omission is the following extremely serious positive mistake in the Congress war resolution: "If any weak state is attacked by one or more big imperialist powers which want to destroy its national independence and national unity or to dismember it, as in the historic instance of the partition of Poland, a war conducted by the national bourgeoisie of such a country to repel this attack assumes the character of a war of liberation in which the working class and the Communists of the country cannot abstain from intervening. It is the task of the Communists of such a country, while carrying on an irreconcilable struggle to safeguard the economic and political positions of the workers, toiling peasants and national minorities, to be, at the same time, in the front ranks of the fighters for national independence

(Continued on Page 3)

AN UNANSWERED LETTER

The following letter, addressed to the Communist Party, has gone unanswered. However, believing that we have a contribution to make in the discussion on the 7th Congress, we will print in the next issue of Workers Age, the speech which Comrade Jay Lovestone would have made at the Madison Square Garden meeting.

Earl Browder, General Secretary
Communist Party, U.S.A.
50 East 13 Street
New York City.

October 1, 1935.

Dear Comrade Browder:

Comrade Dimitroff, in his summary remarks to the 7th World Congress of the Communist International, declared:

"We want the workers who belong to the Second International and the Amsterdam International and those workers who belong to other political organizations to discuss these resolutions with us; to bring us their practical proposals and supplementary proposals, to try to think of the best methods of applica-

tion and to join us hand in hand to carry them out in practice."

We are prepared to aid in carrying out Comrade Dimitroff's proposal. We hope you will do the same. Therefore, in immediate application of the above, we propose that you grant us a speaker from the platform at your Madison Square Garden meeting (October 3) at which you will report on the 7th Congress of the CI.

No doubt you are aware of the fact that we have a number of valuable suggestions and criticisms in regard to the deliberations and decisions of the 7th Congress. A comradely, frank, constructive discussion of the Communist Party and Communist Party (Opposition) viewpoints is the best guarantee for the realization of sound revolutionary theory and practise.

We hope to hear favorably from you without delay in view of the shortness of time at hand before the meeting.

With Communist greetings,

Jay Lovestone, Secretary,
COMMUNIST PARTY U.S.A. (OPPOSITION)

The Comintern War Position

(Continued from Page 1)

and to wage the war of liberation to a finish, without allowing 'their' bourgeoisie to strike a bargain with the attacking powers at the expense of the interests of their country."

Here is ambiguity run amuck. Here is a policy that can be twisted at will for any purpose by anybody. It would be interesting to learn in which instance one can today—1935 and after—speak of a war for national liberation on the continent of Europe. Is it Czecho-Slovakia with its oppressed national minorities running into several millions within its own borders? Is it Roumania? Jugo-Slavia? Perhaps it's the Poland of Pilsudski? What does the CI mean by a "weak state"? Against a powerful coalition of, let us say England France and the United States, even Japan might prove a "weak state." Certainly it is entirely conceivable that even the war-provoking Hitler Germany might be so isolated against a combination of powers as to become a "weak state" on the field of battle.

More than that. No so-called "weak state" is, in the realms of the "real-politik" of today, really an independent, distant force. Every small country on the European continent is today part of one or another constellation of big imperialist powers. Hence, every one of these "weak states" is helplessly and hopelessly bound up with the giant imperialist robbers. It would indeed do no harm to the leaders of the CI if they were to refresh their memories a bit. Let them recall how Lenin estimated the role of Serbia in 1914. In itself, the war of Serbia against Austria was certainly a war for national liberation. Yet, Lenin rejected national defense even for Serbia because he realized that the Serbian case was part of a whole international situation, that it could not be torn apart and isolated from the general imperialist conflict, that Serbia was an instrument of one band of imperialist robbers in conflict with another.

Of course, in the case of a genuine war of liberation, the Communists must do much more than "intervene", as the resolution asks. In such an event, the Communists must utilize this war of na-

tional liberation for the purpose of the proletariat winning power. Only thus can we insure the victory of the social revolution as well as the struggle for national liberation.

OPPORTUNISM IN PARTY ACTIONS

The above citation throws wide open the gates for the weirdest opportunist deviations and class-collaborationist practices. We need but cite some of the activities of the various sections of the CI to reveal the dangers growing out of the above false position. When Comrade Browder spoke in behalf of the ECCI at the funeral services of Barbusse he saw fit not to utter a word of criticism against French imperialism now feverishly preparing for war. Instead, Browder's keynote was: "He (Barbusse) saw Fascism which swallowed country after country. GRIMACING AT THE BORDERS OF FRANCE, arrogantly showing its face within France and preparing to attack the democratic institutions inherited from past revolutions.." (Our emphasis).

It appears that the opportunist excesses know no bounds. For instance, we find the Daily Worker of September 18th issuing the following dangerous slogans amongst others in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict: "For the closing of the Suez Canal to Italian troops and arms shipments." "For united action of all nations to prevent war on Ethiopia."** Such calls to action are calls to suicide. Such calls to action spell the end of all independent working class struggles against Italian imperialism. They play right into the hands of British imperialism, they identify the tactics of the Communist Parties with the policies of the imperialist governments that are contesting Italy's attempt to swallow Abyssinia because they have their own rapacious designs on this country. This campaign for the British Government's and the League of Nations program of sanctions against Italy by the Communist Party of Great Britain and the British Labor Party and Trade Union Congress can lead to nothing else but lining up the proletariat with the biggest bourgeois powers in as sordid an imperialist

conflict as was ever conceived or fought. The fact that the Soviet Government—as a government in relation with others—very justifiable seeks to establish the principle of sanctions against aggressors and initiators of war doesn't mean that the Communist Parties outside of the U.S.S.R. must cooperate with or render active support to these bourgeois governments in the application of such measures, must submerge themselves to these imperialist pirate cliques.

Only to the extent that they are tied up with the demands and interests of the U.S.S.R. can we at all endorse proposals of the League of Nations. However, even here we cannot emphasize too strongly that under no circumstances must Communists limit themselves merely to a repetition of slogans and demands put forward by the U.S.S.R. in the League of Nations. The diplomatic relations of the Soviet Union with the bourgeois governments is one thing, but the practices of the Communist Parties must be actions of a totally different character. They must be actions directed against every imperialist government, actions based on the revolutionary class struggle. The weapons and tactics employed in the class struggle by the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries, by the Communist Parties which haven't yet won power, must necessarily be different from those resorted to by a Communist Party already in power (CPSU). We have no diplomatic relations with our capitalist governments. Towards these governments we can and must have only unrelenting hostility. Our first and last duty remains only to defend the exploited and oppressed whose mortal foe in every bourgeois land is the employing class government.

DIFFERENTIATION FROM SOCIAL-DEMOCRACY

We of the Communist Opposition must spare no effort to end this confusion, hesitation or deviation in the Comintern's anti-war policy. In order to be able to hasten the CI's adoption of a fully correct policy against all imperialist wars, we must not confuse the

(Continued on Page 4)

THE COMINTERN WAR POSITION

(Continued from Page 3)

Comintern's deviations and mistakes with the entirely false principles and policies of the Social-Democratic movement the world-over. Such confusion can only hamper our struggle against the Comintern's errors and will only lead to our playing into the hands of the rankest reformists and enemies of the U.S.S.R. Under no conditions must we allow ourselves, in our criticism of the Comintern's deviations, to be inspired or influenced by the anti-Soviet viewpoint of Trotsky or the pacifist position of Norman Thomas which is equally steeped in hostility to the U.S.S.R. Therefore, we draw the following significant distinctions between the limitedly false war position of the CI, and the entirely unlimitedly, false war position of the Labor and Socialist International.

1. The CI's errors are limited only to the field of a mixed war; the LSI's

errors pervade all types of wars today. The record of the British Labor Party in India, of Social-Democracy in Czechoslovakia, the declarations of Norman Thomas before a Senate Commission in the United States, tell a most unsavory tale here.

2. With the CI, beginnings of dangers towards national defense practices are strictly limited, may be resorted to for a time as a means of helping the U.S.S.R. False and harmful as the recourse to such tactics of helping the U.S.S.R. are, their motive is totally different from that of the motive animating international Social-Democracy. The latter is definitely committed to the policy of defending the capitalist national "fatherland" and national interests in every case and under all circumstances.

3. Even in this deviation, the CI's approach, the Comintern's viewpoint is international, while the attitude of the LSI is thoroughly nationalist, dyed-in-the-wool social chauvinist.

4. The CI is guilty of attempting a distortion, for a brief period, of sound principle; the LSI is definitely committed to a completely false principle in the entire question of imperialist war. With the LSI the war position is false as a whole system.

munists should never substitute analogy for analysis. "August Fourth" has a definite historical connotation, class substance; it symbolizes the complete betrayal of international labor; it means the defense by the proletariat, in every capitalist country, of the national interests of their own bourgeoisie. For the Second International "August Fourth" came as a cumulative consequence of years of putrid opportunism, of decades of desertion of the principles of Marxism. No one is justified in saying that the CI—even with its present dangerous deviation in the field of mixed war—is face to face with such a situation.

The beginnings of a false course by the CI in this fundamental question must be overcome. We of the ICO who have waged a successful struggle against ultra-leftism and its resulting ravages, who have helped smash the CI's sectarian course, and who have for years shown in theory and practice what the CI's strategical course must be if the masses are to be won for the proletarian revolution, must energetically and mercilessly fight against the Comintern's costly errors in new fields. Aided by the lessons of the class war itself, by experience, by our growing influence amongst the members of the Communist Parties and the labor organizations in general, we are bound to be victorious in this most vital struggle in behalf of Communism, in behalf of Leninist principles. This fight of ours is not only most urgent and worthwhile. We can and must fight it to the point of victory, for a unified, healthy Communist movement—the first decisive prerequisite for the victory of our whole class.

The Soviet Union And Sanctions

"Of course," says an editorial in the Crisis for October 1935, "close students of Soviet Russia discovered long ago that the great idealism of the so-called Communist nation was in reality hard-boiled opportunism, an opportunism as shameless as that of any nation not professing the high idealism preached from the Kremlin. Therefore it is recording only one more inconsistency and not one more surprise to set down that the Soviets are raking in good capitalist profits

HOW TO FIGHT THE CI'S DEVIATIONS

That is why it is impermissible to fight the present CI war deviations with blanket charges of "August Fourth". The very existence of the U.S.S.R. as the base of the world revolution, as a class state constructing socialism, makes such an accusation unjustifiable. Com-