

Change the World!

By MICHAEL GOLD

WELL, who would have thought it?

The main obstacle to the united front, it seems, is that the Communists have become so goshdarn respectable and conservative that the ultra-revolutionary Socialists can't associate with them.

This is the line taken by Herbert Zam, a theoretician of the Socialist Call, in a lengthy article in which he discusses the recent Browder-Thomas debate in Madison Square Garden.

"The Communists have forgotten all about revolution and are concentrating on defending democracy against fascism and supporting capitalist governments in good wars," he charges.

"Defense of democracy against fascism," what a terrible thing that is! But don't the Socialists also want to defend democracy against fascism at this moment? Is it not the chief revolutionary task of the hour? If not, what is? A Socialist revolution in America?

"Supporting capitalist governments in good wars," is another of Zam's weighty charges. If the Soviet Union is attacked and has temporary allies among the capitalist nations, through a split in the imperialist interests, we must still be on the side of the Soviet Union, is what Communists say.

And will not the young Socialists in the next war take this stand, also? Will they not defend the Soviet Union as loyally as Communists, whatever the peculiar circumstances?

Let me tell Mr. Zam that they will. Even if he tries to hold them back. When the Soviets were invaded in 1917, during the war, about a thousand young anti-war Socialists formed a Red Guard here in New York, to go across and fight for the Soviet Union. It was a spontaneous movement. All over the world seamen refused to handle war cargoes for the White Guards. There were many strikes and demonstrations; all this in war time. It will happen again. Whatever leaders may say or do, the mass of working people know instinctively that they must defend the Soviet Union; its fate is their fate.

Socialists Will Fight

THE first immediate revolutionary task of Socialists, Communists, and all class-conscious workers today is to fight fascism, crush it forever. If this is wrong, tell us, Mr. Zam. In the face of a new World War, we must all stand on sleepless watch that the imperialist jugglers do not make a deal among themselves, and try to solve their difficulties by a joint attack on the Soviet Union. This is the second task.

But if fascist Germany and Japan unite against the Soviet Union, Mr. Zam wants American Socialists to stand idly by, and to adopt the neutral policy of the Borahs, Hearsts and J. David Sterns.

Will they do it? Anyone who went through the last World War simply knows that Socialists won't.

If the line-up is such, they will fight in the American army, if it is allied to the Soviet Union. They will not give up their Socialism or anti-militarism in the army, either, anymore than the French Socialists or Communists have.

Mr. Zam wants the Soviet Union to refuse allies among the imperialists. It should be pure and isolated, evidently; commit a "glorious suicide." Thanks, Mr. Zam, for the advice; but we would rather have the Soviets live. You call that "empty and unprincipled," which is what you said of Earl Browder, but you are not empty, Herbert Zam, but full of a strange poison, the hatred of Communists. Your "principles" are merely the familiar Trotskyite sabotage, now finding a new field in the young United Front. The French Socialist Party at its recent convention finally had to expel its Trotskyites.

Oil Again

THOSE oil sanctions still trouble the comrades of the Socialist Call. Why does the Soviet Union still sell oil to Mussolini? Why doesn't it take a pure and isolated stand, cut itself off from Geneva and the League of Nations, commit another glorious and futile suicide?

In one breath, these militant Socialists are ultra-left, super-pure, 100 per cent revolutionary, refusing to recognize the necessity of any practical compromises. In the next breath, on another page of the Call, they inform us they can't make the United Front with the Communists, because certain forces in the labor unions don't like Communists (the Kantorovich article). Here they yield to the "red scare" and cater to the extreme right wing in the labor movement; here they are no longer "pure" leftists.

Well, the time has passed for noble gestures of any sort; we are faced with enormous life-and-death decisions.

The answer to all these rather mean suspicions that the Soviets are more interested in selling a little oil, than in world peace, has been this Standard Oil deal with Italy.

Earl Browder said in the debate that the Soviet Union was staying in the League and not refusing to sell oil so as to be a factor in forcing a world boycott through.

A dispatch in the New York Times from Rome (Dec. 5th) confirms this. "Rumania and perhaps Russia are now expected to refuse to have anything to do with the proposed League oil embargo unless all countries of the world (including America) have entered in it," says the dispatch.

This is the way the revolutionary battle has to be fought on the diplomatic front. It is not an easy fight to make, and sometimes has left the Soviets open to the slanderers. But Norman Thomas is no Trotskyite slanderer, and in all fairness, he ought to study this whole tortuous problem anew. He is not helping Socialism by spreading these lurid suspicions that the Soviet Union has suddenly gone capitalist.