

World Socialism

COMMUNIST FRANKNESS ON WAR

—By HERBERT ZAM—

This column hereby extends a vote of thanks to Mike Gold, Daily Worker columnist, for his very frank statement on the true attitude of the communists to war. In the issue of December 2, his column was

devoted entirely to answering the arguments of "Mr. Zam". In the same issue, incidentally, there appeared the first of a series of articles "rebuking" Norman Thomas because he dared criticize the sale of oil by the Soviet Union to Italy for use against the Ethiopians. Evidently these issues can't be gotten around. Mike Gold declares:

"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." (Emphasis mine—H.Z.)

So the charge we made is not a "Trotskyite slander." From the pen of Mike Gold, we now have the admission that communists will support a war conducted by American capitalists, if the United States happens to be on the same side as the Soviet Union in that war.

Not For Socialists

Gold may speak for communists, but when he presumes to speak for the Socialists, he is taking a little too much for granted. Those "Socialists" for whom he can speak, those who in 1917 were willing to support a "war for democracy" the Spargos, the Wallings, the Bohns, the Stokes, are not in our ranks. But those Socialists who in 1917 adopted the ringing St. Louis declaration against the war will again show that they cannot be manoeuvred into supporting an imperialist war, no matter under what pretext it is being fought.

If Gold thinks he can frighten anyone into the communist camp by shouting that we are allies of Borah, Hearst, etc., he is mightily mistaken. This effort will be as fruitless as the "social fascist" era was.

Of course no Socialist, no class-conscious worker will be neutral as between the Soviet Union and an imperialist country, any more than we are neutral as between Ethiopia and fascist Italy. But the sympathy of the workers will have to be expressed through the independent action of the labor movement — demonstrations, strikes, collections of money — not through solidarity with the American capitalist government, not through "fighting in the American army" voluntarily. As workers we are not neutral and our partiality will be expressed. But knowing that if the American government declares war, it will only be in the interests of American imperialism, we will fight against any such declaration.

No Difference to Gold

Gold has the colossal gall to draw a parallel between his present position and the action of Socialists who, after the Russian Revolution tried to organize a group to fight in the Red Army on the side of the Soviet Union. He sees no difference between voluntarily fighting in a workers' army, and voluntarily fighting in a capitalist army; between supporting a workers' government which is defending itself against imperialists, and supporting a

capitalist government which is carrying on an imperialist war.

We recall the last war very well. But we do not recall Lenin and Trotsky, the leaders of the Soviet Government, advising the American workers to "fight in the American army" after November 1917, when the American army was (apparently) fighting on the side of the Soviet Union.

The communists have constantly been parading as the super-friends of the Soviet Union, as its only friends, in fact. They are the only ones, they claim, who have faith in the Soviet Union. Now let us see how much faith they really have in the Soviet Union, in the international proletariat. In answer to our criticism of the Franco-Soviet pact, Gold declares:

"Mr. Zam wants the Soviet Union to refuse allies among the imperialists. It should be pure and isolated, evidently; commit a glorious suicide." (My emphasis—H.Z.)

This is the extent of the faith they have in the Soviet Union. If it doesn't make alliances among the imperialists, then it is committing a glorious suicide. If the Soviet Union depends on the international working class movement instead of on the imperialists, is that, committing suicide? We see things a little differently. We believe that the road to suicide is precisely the one Gold and his friends want the Soviet Union to follow. The Soviet Union must rely on alliances, not with imperialists, but with international labor. That is why the "third period" was such a dangerous one for the Soviet Union—it tended to destroy the bond between the Soviet Union and the world labor movement. Now a similar danger threatens, this time from the extreme right, rather than from the extreme left. A policy which is orientated toward imperialist alliances rather than toward labor alliances is bound to isolate the Soviet Union once more from the world's toilers. Gold and his friends, who think they are doing the Soviet Union a great favor, are in fact doing it the greatest of disfavours.

An Object Lesson

Right now, before our very eyes, we are presented with an object lesson of the folly of depending upon imperialists for safety, for preserving peace, or for protecting the small countries against imperialist aggression. The "friends" of Ethiopia, French and British imperialism, have cooked up as pretty a deal as has ever been witnessed, aimed at dismembering Ethiopia and turning half of it over to fascist Italy. But it is not only France and England which will be held responsible for this deal. It is all who solidarized themselves with the imperialist policy of sanctions by capitalist governments to punish imperialist aggression.

Is it not evident now that we who would have nothing to do with the policies of British and French imperialism, who refused to solidarize ourselves with their actions, who maintained that they could never protect Ethiopia against Italian aggression, who foresaw that at a favorable moment they would throw Ethiopia to the wolves, who refused upon independent action against action against Italy, who