

World Socialism

HOW NOT TO FIGHT WAR

By HERBERT ZAM

As the war danger increases the need for a clear policy to offer the working class to fight war becomes greater. We are witnessing, however, increased chaos and confusion on this question, rather than greater clarity. And nowhere is the confusion greater than in the Communist movement. Or rather no policy is more calculated to confuse the workers than the Communist policy. This is of great concern to all advanced workers, for the danger exists that the new Communist line on war will serve as a means of mobilizing the workers for war, not against it.

In the Communist Jewish Freiheit for May 19, a reader asks the following question and receives the following answer from the editor:

"2. Did Michael Gold write in the 'New Masses' that in case of a war between Japan, the United States and the Soviet Union, it would be the duty of American Communists to support the American Government against Japan?"

And the answer given is:

"If such a situation did occur where Japan should challenge the United States and the Soviet Union with the war danger and both countries would be duty-bound to help each other in case of an attack on the part of Japan, the duty of the American Communists would naturally be to support the United States in war against Japan, because that would mean support of the Soviet Union against an aggressive imperialism."

"3. In case of a war between Germany and France would it be an imperialist war only on the part of Hitler or on both sides?"

The answer:

"If Hitler should attack France, it would be, on his part, an imperialist attack, and if France would in that situation defend itself it would be a natural case of self-defense, which has nothing to do with imperialism, because imperialism means the grabbing of foreign land in the interests of capitalism at home. If, however, Germany should engage in a war with France like in the last war, because both countries want to grab something from a third, or from one another, then it would be an imperialist war."

Old Policies In New Shoes

This policy is of course not new. It is perhaps a little more honest and therefore a little more crude a formulation than is usually found, with the possible exception of Mike Gold's essays on war. Nevertheless it is a reminder that it is still the Communist policy.

The only difference between this policy and that of the social patriots in 1914 is that today the Communists try to make it sound "revolutionary," try to portray it as defense of the Soviet Union, and call upon Lenin as witness. If there is anything that Lenin continually emphasized it was that any war between imperialist countries is an imperialist war, regardless of the apparent causes, regardless of who is the "aggressor" and who the "defender" and regardless of the form of government of the countries. This is what distinguished Lenin's policy from all chauvinist and pacifist ones.

Of course the Communist policy is still suffering from internal contradictions on secondary questions. In most countries, for instance, the Communists still vote against war credits, are opposed to rearmament and conscription. This is a hang-over from the old line on war which will be eliminated as the new lines take on flesh and blood. Already certain signs of this development have appeared.

It's O. K. With Pollitt

Harry Pollitt, leader of the British Communists, in the May British Labor Monthly discusses the dangers of gas raids on London and the measures the government has initiated to guard against them, such as gas drills, bomb-proof shelters, etc. Pollitt says:

"Can the working class movement take up a separate line on this question? Of course, it can. It is a new question that calls for a working class policy. It is not a question of 'yes' or 'no'. It is a question of 'how' and 'when'."

workers must be the very best that can be produced, and must be distributed free of charge, that any bomb-proof shelters that are constructed shall be as effectively built for the workers as for the rich in the West End of London, that gas drill shall be freed from all military control and propaganda, and that the local Labor and Peace movements shall have the responsibility for ensuring the whole of these arrangements."

This, of course, is nothing else but objective support of war preparations. The argument may be made that these proposals are aimed at protecting the workers who will be innocent victims in the war. But such an argument

can be, and is being made for all war preparations. For, from any military standpoint, the best defense against air raids is not gas masks, etc., but a powerful air fleet. The best defence against raids on the coast is a powerful navy which can paralyze all raids. In other words, when war preparations of any kind are sanctioned by the working class, it surrenders the fight against militarism and against war. Pollitt's idea is only an entering wedge which all completes the new line of the Communists.

A Warning To Columnists

What happened to my column on the results of the French elections should be a warning to all columnists to stay within their assigned space. I hereby take the pledge.

(Ed. Note: The rest of the column, much to our regret, has been dropped because it ran over its allotted length.)



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