

Opponents of Communist Stand on Sanctions Are Refuted by Events

By THEODORE REPARD

ARTICLE I

There is a famous little story about a king who wanted the most beautiful suit of clothes in all his kingdom. Suit after suit was brought to him and he rejected them all. Finally, however, one courtier presented him with a style which he considered exquisite. The whole court resounded with the news. The king has found the most beautiful suit in the kingdom!

Next day, the king went walking with his nice new suit. He was very proud of it. Suddenly a little boy ran across his path. The boy yelled: "Look! The king is naked!" And so he was.

This little story is not without its significance if we relate it to the whole controversy over sanctions and the Soviet peace policy. The most rabid slanderer of the Soviet Union's peace policy, the Communist International and, of course, the Communist Party of the United States has revealed himself in his true "clothes."

Zam Discards Principles

We refer to Herbert Zam, the foreign "expert" of the Socialist Call. He now stands completely devoid of principles, bankrupt of consistent policy. Events have stripped him bare on every important point he has tackled.

We intend to trace this record of blunders and boomerangs insofar as they concern the question of sanctions. After all, that has been his chief source of poison for the wells of friendly and comradely feeling between Communists and Socialists. And now events have repudiated him on every point. Twist and turn as he may, there is no denying it.

It was Zam who howled the loudest and screamed the longest that sanctions meant the betrayal of the principles of Communism because they inevitably lead to war. Hence, by supporting sanctions, he charged that the Communists were bringing on an imperialist war!

Feared Italo-British Conflict

He went at it persistently and violently. Back on Sept. 21, Zam wrote:

"Should Socialists support any move for the application of sanctions by the League of Nations against Italy? Again we must answer in the negative. Sanctions mean war. If Socialists are opposed to war, they cannot sup-

port measures which will lead to war, and thus share responsibility for war."

A little later on, he plainly indicates what kind of war he expects. It turns out that England and Italy are going to do the fighting:

"Does any one really believe that Ethiopian independence will be preserved through a war between England and Italy? Such a war will merely determine, among other things, whether England or Italy will annex Ethiopia."

Thomas Echoes Theme

A week later, Norman Thomas repeated the same theme. He was not so bald about it as Zam had been but nevertheless the idea was plainly stated.

"Under these circumstances it is impossible to have much enthusiasm for the League or for League sanctions," Thomas wrote on Sept. 28. "The peace of the world will not be served by another war of rival empires, whatever the pretext."

Some time later, on Nov. 23, Thomas was still carrying on about "the obvious danger that sanctions may lead directly to war rather than avert it."

Took Mussolini's Word

It cannot be denied that the whole basis of the attack on sanctions by certain "left" Socialists rested on Mussolini's own smoke-screen: "Sanctions mean war." This position might be very wrong, it might be very disastrous if taken seriously by the working class, but at least it was clear. We knew where this group stood.

And that can no longer be said because they have shifted their ground to such an extent that there is nothing left of their position but a mockery.

What were we Communists saying at the same time? Let us see whose estimates have run true to form.

Daily Worker Position

From the very first, every article in the Daily Worker reflected the fundamental proposition that sanctions are one of the weapons in the hands of the workers against imperialism, against British and French imperialism together with Italian imperialism. We recognized that at one stage of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, there arose a cer-

For months, a fierce debate has raged on the question of sanctions. . . . Certain "left" Socialists criticized the Communists bitterly for supporting sanctions. . . . They said it meant war. . . . Abuse and slander was flung at the Soviet peace policy and Soviet diplomacy. . . . Recently developments have put the position of our critics to the acid test of life itself. . . . How do their most recent statements square with their past attacks? . . .

tain tension between England and Italy. This tension did not baffle us. We stated that sanctions were merely a threat which British imperialism was temporarily using in order to induce Mussolini to divide the spoils of Ethiopia. Comrade Harry Gannes on Oct. 3—in an article written the day the war started—predicted a deal between Mussolini and Sir Samuel Hoare which would be trotted out at the first opportune moment. Sanctions would then return to plague England and France.

Of course, events have confirmed every aspect of our analysis. But what have events done to Zam and to those who followed him, no matter how warily?

Zam cannot now avoid recognizing that there is no war between Italy and England even remotely on the horizon. Instead the masses confronted and defeated one of the most vicious plunder pacts ever arranged. Zam would be the laughing stock of his most affectionate admirers if he didn't take these things into account.

What to Do?

Nevertheless, he has to square events with what he has been peddling for two months. Like the king in our story, he has been showing off his new, shiny anti-sanctions clothes. A certain number of people have even been led to believe that it was the most beautifully revolutionary suit in the world. Now he was faced with the stark necessity of hiding his complete theoretical nakedness. What to do?

Zam returned to the firing-line last week. Again he takes up the question of sanctions; after, to be sure, raising a smoke screen about Soviet alliances. He tries to wipe out the past by simply forgetting what he has been writing since the

question gained prominence. Here is the "new" Zam:

"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."

Some Questions

We have a few questions for the "new" Zam.

Does this mean that you were cock-eyed wrong for the last two months? We should not have to tell you that imperialist powers which have such irreconcilable differences between them that they are on the verge of war do not peacefully and mildly divide the spoils. If sanctions mean war, how can they mean joint exploitation? Not at the same time, anyhow!

As a matter of fact, Zam was wrong both ways. When he predicted war, it turned out that we were faced with a plunder pact. When he weeps about the plunder pact, it turns out that the anger and resentment of the masses, especially the British toilers, together with the unwavering opposition of the Soviet Union, smashed the whole robber deal. In order to attack sanctions, Zam almost gloats over the Hoare-Laval deal. No rallying the workers to struggle against it. Only a back-handed attempt to slide out of his unenviable plight as a rotten prophet and a worse apologist for his own mistakes.

Zam "Forgetful"

It is significant that Zam does

not even tackle the problem how it happened that Mussolini, Laval and Hoare succeeded in cementing a united front AGAINST sanctions just when they completed their deal. Of course there was a connection between the "sudden" turn-about of British and French imperialism on sanctions and the robber agreement. Effective economic sanctions mean the end of Mussolini's invasion and he does not recognize friends who do not know that much.

For Zam the question does not exist. Of course not! Otherwise, he would have to openly confess that he had been writing drivel, dangerous drivel, bitter anti-Communist drivel only a very short time ago.

It must also be recorded that Norman Thomas does not now tackle the question squarely even in his latest column in the Socialist Call of Dec. 28 in the section headed, "The Robbers and Sanctions." Here is the kernel:

"There was enough decency in Europe to frustrate the infamous British-French Pact for the betrayal of Ethiopia. Even its authors had to disown it in Geneva, in London and in Paris. There may have been a case for undertaking them earlier if at all; there never was a case of threatening Mussolini with sanctions and then offering to give him more than he had conquered."

Thus, Comrade Thomas virtually confesses his inability to understand what has been taking place. He tells us that the French and British robbers had no "case" for coming to an agreement with Mussolini after they threatened him with sanctions. He still does not see that they threatened him with sanctions precisely because they wanted to come to an agreement with him.

Connected with this sad record on sanctions is Zam's unscrupulous misrepresentation of the Communist position on the question. Zam ends his article in last week's Call as follows:

"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 insisted upon independent working class action against Italy, were a thousand times right?"

What colossal cheek!

What Zam Foresaw

Did you "foresee" that Great Britain, France and Italy would get together against Ethiopia? What was all the noise about an imperialist war then? If you foresaw the deal, did you also "foresee" that British and French imperialism would be absolutely opposed to "sanctions?" You can't have them both at the same time.

Notice that Zam says "we . . . insisted upon independent working class action against Italy." No, it was not your International, the Labor and Socialist (Second) International, which issued a call for independent labor action as the primary, fundamental task of the working class. The L. S. I. wanted to place "the force of the workers' opinion and power of the working class organizations in the service of the League of Nations for the defense of peace and legal rights." It was the Communist International which replied that it would be absurd to believe that the League of Nations will do everything possible to ensure peace and that consequently the masses of people may calmly adopt an attitude of passive waiting."

It was the Communist International which stated:

Comintern Stand

"But even if the League of Nations is regarded as an instrument which might to a certain extent hinder the outburst of war, this does not mean that the policy of the League of Nations can act as a substitute for the struggle of the proletariat."

"On the contrary, the independent joint mass action of the workers and all sincere friends of peace is essential to induce the League also to take effective measures of some kind against war and the war danger."

What could be plainer? But Zam and his friends never came out in support of the only methods by which independent labor action could be effective: unity of action. Slander against the Soviet Union, not support of the Soviet Union. Slander against the Communist International, not support of the call for independent labor action issued by the Communist International.

This is the only consistency he knows.

[This article will be concluded in tomorrow's Daily Worker.]