

Lenin's Words Blast Zam's 'R-r-revolutionary' Attack on Soviet Diplomacy

By THEODORE REPARD

ARTICLE II

On the surface, the attacks and slander against the Communist and Soviet policies on peace and war have been directed against the Franco-Soviet pact, sanctions and oil. It would be a mistake, however, to look no further.

We need to expose to the light of day certain basic and false ideas, certain presuppositions which lurk behind the criticisms of some of our "left" critics.

It may amaze some of us but it is the plain and unvarnished truth that certain "left" Socialists advocate that the Soviet Union should have no diplomatic relations whatsoever with capitalist powers. In a previous article, we showed that this is what Norman Thomas actually believed about Soviet trade.

Zam Takes the Lead

As is to be expected, the most terrible howling and breast-beating on this question is the work of Herbert Zam. Through his column in the Socialist Call, week in and week out, he abuses the Soviet policy in the most inflammatory language as "betrayal" and worse.

Once it is granted that the Soviet Union must not dirty itself by having diplomatic relations with imperialist powers, it follows that the Franco-Soviet pact violates all the principles of Communism. The only question involved, for these people, is whether any particular action requires some sort of relationship between the Soviet Union and the capitalist nations. If the answer is yes, as it is in the case of the Franco-Soviet pact or the League of Nations or sanctions, Zam immediately manipulates his thumb downward.

It's as simple as all that.

Advises Break

For example, on Oct. 26, Zam unconditionally advised the Soviet Union to drop its "association with imperialists" in the following way:

"If it is true that the labor movement should preserve its independence of imperialist entanglements, it must be said with equal emphasis that in the eyes of the working class the position of the Soviet Union is not strengthened but, on the contrary, weakened, by its association with imperialists."

According to this view, there is no difference at all between a working class which has already won

and consolidated state power and a working class which is still fighting for state power. Zam sees no difference at all between the position of the workers in the Soviet Union and the workers, let us say, of France.

Paraded as Leninism

This viewpoint is offered as real honest-to-goodness Leninist policy whereas we Communists have suddenly becoming followers of Kautsky. But a worse caricature of Leninism it would be hard to find. It was Lenin who taught us that that working class of the Soviet Union, by virtue of the fact that it had already achieved Soviet Power, can and must utilize new forms and methods of struggle, different than those open to the workers in non-Soviet lands. The workers' state can deal as a state with the imperialist powers, utilizing their antagonisms and their differences for peace and for socialist construction. This course is not open to workers who have not won state power.

Long before that, back in July, Zam dared to go even further. He denounced all "maneuvers" with imperialist powers, thus at one swoop outlawing all "maneuvers" by which the working class can utilize the antagonisms amongst their enemies. This is how he put it:

More R-r-revolutionary Phrases

"This is all the more reason for the revolutionary Socialists here and in other countries to continue their efforts for a truly revolutionary policy, based only on the interests of the proletariat and independent of all diplomatic maneuvers."

Notice how "left" and "revolutionary" it sounds. In comparison, we Communists are supposed to be quite pale. Of course we stand "for a truly revolutionary policy based only on the interests of the proletariat" but we believe that "diplomatic maneuvers" may be very useful in the hands of the working class in the Soviet Union. In fact, we see no contradiction between the two. To assert the one is not to deny the other. But as Engels said of Proudhon, the louder Zam cackles, the smaller the egg.

Still hammering away at the same point, but now in an even more unprincipled way, here is Zam on Sept. 14:

Variation On the Theme

"Once and for all, it should be

Connected with the controversy over sanctions, the Soviet peace policy has come in for unprincipled attack by some awfully "left" Socialists. . . . They have very little use for Soviet diplomacy. . . . To prove the point, the redder than the rose foreign "expert" of the Socialist Call likes to refer to Lenin. . . . That's to show how scarlet he is and how pale we are. . . . Well, what did Lenin actually say about Soviet diplomacy? . . . What did Lenin say about maneuvering with imperialist powers? . . . Here's the record! . . .

made clear that the defense of the Soviet Union is a task for the international proletariat, through its own organizations and not through the imperialist governments."

And it is this same man who charges us with forgetting everything else but the defense of the Soviet Union! Yet here we are telling the workers they need do nothing at all. Their imperialist governments will do all the work.

It is almost unbelievable that anyone should sink to such gross misrepresentation. Certainly every Socialist worker knows that we Communists believe that the working class and the working class alone can defend the Soviet Union from imperialist attacks. Does this mean that we cannot take advantage of the differences among our foes, that we must lump them all in the same sack and beat them all with the same stick?

Socialist Call Echoes Zam

The editors of the Socialist Call may not go as far as Zam but their own view was revealed, in a more subtle way, in the issue of Dec. 7, which reported the Browder-Thomas debate. They published a picture of Comrade Browder before the microphone with an upper caption reading, "Magic of 'Diplomacy'" and the bottom line reading:

"Norman Thomas (left) seems slightly bored as Earl Browder went into the ramifications of 'international diplomacy' to explain Soviet shipments of oil to Italy."

Obviously, the editors of the Socialist Call have no use for Soviet diplomacy either.

Does Not Gain by Repetition

It is somewhat tiresome to follow Zam in all his tricky formulations of the same general idea. The examples which we have quoted should be sufficient to give his position. He repeats the same notion

almost every week in one form or another.

There is one thing which puts Zam's attacks in a class by themselves. Hearst attacks Soviet diplomacy and sanctions because he is a fascist and Soviet diplomacy is a weapon against fascism. But Zam is not Hearst. When he attacks Soviet diplomacy and sanctions he invokes the name of Lenin. No less!

Thus we find Zam writing:

"The policy of Stalin-Thores is a direct descendant of Kautsky and a direct repudiation of Lenin."

Attacks Dimitroff

This in the same article in which he denounces all "diplomatic maneuvers" by the Soviet Union!

In his article in the current issue of the American Socialist Quarterly, Zam attacks Dimitroff for following Kautsky, not Lenin!

Well, we can let Lenin speak for himself. Is the utilization of "diplomatic maneuvers" a direct repudiation of Lenin? There is only one way to prove the contrary and that is to go directly to Lenin himself. We will quote rather extensively from Lenin because no one has answered these questions so decisively and so sharply.

We hope that every Socialist worker will compare these statements by Lenin and the moonshine peddled by Zam—in the name of Lenin!

In November, 1922, at the fourth session of the All-Soviet Central Executive Committee, Lenin delivered a very important programmatic speech, one of the last he uttered. He started out by dealing with the question of Soviet diplomacy. This is what he said:

Lenin's Words

"Comrades! Permit me to utter a few words of greeting. Above all, our first greetings must naturally be for the Red Army. . . . 'At the same time, I must not

forget to mention, if I do not wish to be guilty of unseemly boasting, that here not only the heroism and power of our army have played a part, but also the whole international situation, and our diplomacy.

"There was a time when Japan and the United States signed an agreement supporting Kolchak. This lies so far back that many of us perhaps do not even recollect it. And yet such a situation did once exist. And if we attained a point where such agreements have become an impossibility, and where Japan's military power has not prevented her from evacuating the occupied districts, and from actually fulfilling this action, it is thanks to our diplomacy.

"In the near future, our diplomacy will again be confronted by a task of enormous importance, a task involving important interests for us. I am thinking of the conference on the Near East convened by England at Lausanne on Nov. 13 of this year. I am fully convinced that our diplomacy will be able to maintain its authority equally well on this occasion, and will effectively defend the interests of the allied republics and of the R. S. F. S. R. (Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic). In any case we shall make it our endeavor to reveal to the masses what are the real obstacles, and in what degree these run counter not only to the justifiable desire and endeavors of our state, but of all states interested in the question of the Straits."

What may we learn from this statement?

Use of Diplomacy

(1) Diplomacy, in certain circumstances, may play a highly important and even decisive role because it may determine the relationship of forces between you and your immediate foe. In this case, Soviet diplomacy forced Japanese imperialism to withdraw FROM AN INVASION WHICH HAD ALREADY BEGUN!

(2) Even a conference on the Near East problem, convened by an imperialist power, may be of great importance. Conferences are sometimes important precisely because there are imperialist powers present amongst which the Soviet Union may maneuver for their collective and separate defeat

(3) The Soviet diplomats try to rally around them all states which, for the time being, have similar interests. In this case, Lenin stated that the Soviet government would try to "reveal to the masses" the obstacles set up by the large imperialist powers not only against the Soviet Union but against "all states interested in the question of the Straits." The Straits in question were the Dardanelles.

The Anglo-French Proposal

Another example of Lenin's position. In May, 1918, as Comrade Ercoli recalls, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party rejected a proposal for a military agreement made to the Soviet Republic by the Anglo-French allies. But it was rejected not on grounds of principle but of simple political expediency because they did not believe that such an agreement would be useful at that time. Lenin wrote on this occasion:

"Without renouncing in general military agreements with one of the imperialist coalitions against the other in cases where such an agreement, without violating the basis of Soviet Power, could reinforce the position of the latter and paralyze the attack of any imperialist power against it, we at the present moment cannot accept a military agreement with the Anglo-French coalition."

Finally, here is a passage from Lenin's "Left Wing Communism," written in 1920

"It is possible to conquer this most powerful enemy (world capitalism) only by exerting our efforts to the utmost and by NECESSARILY, thoroughly, carefully, attentively and skillfully taking advantage of every 'fissure,' however small, in the ranks of our enemies, of every antagonism of interests among the bourgeoisie of the various countries, among the various groups and types of bourgeoisie in the various countries; by taking advantage of every possibility, however small, of gaining an ally among the masses, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional."

Plain enough!

When Zam mentions Lenin, it is not at all like the devil quoting Scripture. We assume that the devil knows his Scripture and quotes correctly.