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SOCIALISTS AND WORLD WAR III

Who has not been confronted with the argument that the Socialists are not "realistic?" People who say this, and they are legion, sooner or later trot out the moth-eaten adages about "choosing the lesser of two evils" or about "half a loaf being better than no bread." From this they proceed to false analogies which are supposed to show that, as the Socialists are in a small minority, they might as well give up and concentrate on something "practical."

Let us have a look at their arguments, as they apply to World War III.

It is urged that Socialists are faced with either lining up with one of the two major blocs of power today, or, if they refuse to do so, are condemned to mere theorizing and political sterility. Today, in 1948, the two blocs are the American Imperialists with Britain as a junior partner, and the Russian colossus. As the clash of interests between the two becomes sharper day by day, their respective protagonists become more vocal.

This time, instead of "Fascism" vs. "Democracy", we are asked to choose between "Communism" vs "Democracy." The propaganda lines, on both sides, follow faithfully those indulged in prior to the 1939 war. Defenders of the "democratic" nations point with horror to murder, terror, suppression, fake elections etc. on the part of their former allies. Defenders of the Russian rulers, with equal indignation, show that their opponent's "democracy" permits lynching of negroes, exclusion of negroes from ballots, poll taxes, chaining and forced labor of Australian aborigines, persecution of Communists" in South Africa, etc.

CAPITALIST WAR MONGERING

Facts which have been known for over a decade about the G. P. U., slave labor and low living standards in Russia are splashed across the pages of the daily press. The process is almost a replica of that followed in the case of German concentration camps. First, the facts are published in obscure magazines with a limited circulation — they are denied by official sources. Then, very slowly, they spread amongst the trade unions. They are still denied and pooh-poohed. Then, as the clash of interests sharpen, a stream of "exposures" appears. Beating their chests with righteous indignation, governments produce white books, introduce Royal Commissions, and start a campaign of "red baiting."

The current Congressional Investigations and the Russian school teachers are two excellent examples.

On the side of the Russian ruling class the process differs but little. In order that the Russian workers may be convinced of the fact that they are living in a "socialist paradise," a process of deliberate isolation from the rest of the world has been going on for over 20 years. However, during the war, this was partly suspended but now has been resumed. From all accounts it would seem obvious that the Russian worker has little idea how his counterpart in the U. S. or England lives. But then, the majority of U. S. and English wage plugs have also little idea how the Russian worker lives — so the difference, if any, is slight.

ANTI-RUSSIAN "LEFT"

In order to get the working class lined up with their masters, the ordinary stream of propaganda is also supplemented by a rather ingenious appeal to working-class aspirations: "Russian State Capitalism is the GREATEST menace to Socialism. The fundamental liberties of the workers, however imperfectly they may exist under private capitalism, are completly absent in Russia. THEREFORE, even if you hate American Capitalism, it isn't as bad as the Russian brand. It is the lesser evil. Therefore, your utmost energies must be directed toward exposing the Russian ruling class and their agents." By this line of reasoning, which is becoming more and more common, it is intended to convince the so-called "left" that anti-Stalinism is, in reality, the same thing as the fight for Socialism.

Here, indeed, is a great danger. Through the propaganda of the Socialist Movement, and through the influence of the facts about Russia, many workers have lost a large part of their illusions on the subject. What is easier then to catch them on the rebound? Admiration for Stalin and Co. is cleverly turned into hatred — and this hatred, in turn, is used to bolster up a phoney case for the support of U. S. - Anglo Imperialism. The same principle which was formulated by Koestler in the recent slaughter ("We are fighting a total lie in the name of a half truth") is to be applied to the next holocaust.

PRO-RUSSIAN "LEFT"

On the other side, workers will be urged to support Russia in the name of "Socialism" or a "worker's state" — against the "obvious imperialists."

Those who fell for "a war against Fascism," are now falling for either "a war against Communism" or even "a war against brutal State Capitalism." The trap is baited differently — it will shut with the same effect.

WHAT CAN SOCIALISTS DO?

What can the Socialists do? Very, very little. Very little because they are in a tiny minority. Very little because they realize that those in control of the political machinery all over the world will continue to act as they always have acted, i. e., with the purpose of perpetuating their class rule. *As long as the majority of workers are content to put up with Capitalism, no one can save them from the consequences of Capitalism. When they no longer put up with it, then they will save themselves.*

This, indeed, is a gloomy outlook and therefore many are reluctant to accept it. Feverishly they turn hither and thither to find some means of escape, some short cut. In the false promises of "action" (anything from "turning an imperialist war into a civil war" to "individual resistance" will serve) they find the opiate which will lull them to sleep and give them the illusion that they, as a minority, can act without the rest of the workers. That is the easy way, full of phoney symbols and false glamor. If the minorities do anything else but pass flamboyant resolutions, if they really act, by open resistance, their first action is their last one. They are thrown into jail or butchered.

THE SOCIALIST METHOD

Ours is the hard way. Day in, day out, we hammer home the same truths: Attack the cause — then you'll abolish the effects. If the workers are slow to learn by experience, if our propaganda does not spread quickly, we can do nothing. Our position may be expressed in this story. A man begins to climb a tower. We tell him: "Stop climbing — you'll get to the top and you'll fall down." He refuses to listen, continues to climb. He gets to the top. He falls down. Half way to the ground, he screams: "Hey, you, what shall I do?"

This story and the moral are good