Can Stalinism Learn?

Recent Events Reveal Full Bankruptcy of C.I.

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

"A growing tendency in Soviet press and official circles," reads a Moscow Associated Press dispatch of September 22, "was to emphasize belief in the essential sameness of all imperialist powers, whether active aggressors or collaborators with aggressors. Some diplomatic observers reached the conclusion that Moscow . . . would use it—the capitulation of Czechoslovakia—as a groundwork for a new, vigorous campaign against all imperialist governments."

A Costly Lesson

If this prediction is true, it is all to the good. But it is hard to believe, alas, that those who are dictating Soviet foreign policy have really learned that elementary lesson. And, if they have learned it, at what a cost! What shall we think of those brought up on the teachings of Marxism, more or less closely associated for years with the author of "Imperialism" (Lenin), what shall we think of men who boast such a training and profess such a theory, yet have to "discover" or rediscover the connection between imperialism and war and the essential complicity of all imperialist powers, whether "sated" or "hungry," in the preparation of war? It is as if a group of physicists should solemnly enter a laboratory where a Bunsen flame is burning and decide to thrust the hand of some "subject" into the flame to see whether fire still burns or whether "conditions have changed" since the last time somebody tried it.

What now has been gained from the years spent in the whooping it up for the "great democracies?" In the liquidation of the Communist International as a revolutionary force? In the "abolition" of the class struggle? In the voting of war credits? In the betrayal of the colonial peoples? In the attempt to preach the "unity of the nation?" In the false distinction between the "fat" powers that are trying to hold on to what they got from the last war and the "lean" powers that are trying to "revise" that division of the spoils? In the pretense that the workers can rely on their rulers, who are "good," all except "sixty" or "two hundred families" of them?

The Communist International glorified Poland, concealed the fact that it was a naked military dictatorship, proclaimed it a "small nation" which should be defended by the "great democracies," dissolved its Communist Party and murdered ("purged") all of its leaders. Now Poland sends its ultimatum to Czechoslovakia and demands its share of the spoils.

It glorified the British Empire, ruthless ruler of one-fifth of the earth, as the leader of the "great democracies." It proposed unity of these great democracies after England and France had surrendered Ethiopia to Italy, Spain to Mussolini and Hitler. It continued its campaign for "collective security" after Austria was gobbled up, and even as late as yesterday—I have not yet seen today's Daily Worker—after Czechoslovakia was thrown into Hitler's waiting arms.

It would seem in all logic and decency—if those things still have any weight—that the Daily Worker would cease at last to urge the "union of the great democracies against the aggressor," and return to the policy of the union of the working class against their rulers in all lands. It would seem too that the Daily Worker would "rediscover" at last that bourgeois "democracy" is but a less drastic form of capitalist dictatorship than is fascism, that capitalist "democracy" in its declining days is the breeding-ground of fascism, that only proletarian democracy (workers rule) can lead out of class dictatorship to a classless society. And rediscover that the ruling class of England and France and the United States prefer Hitler and Mussolini to "chaos" (their name for proletarian rule) and will give Hitler and Mussolini what they need to maintain themselves in power.

It would seem too that the Stalinists would now "discover" that capitalism today is inseparable from imperialism, that imperialism leads inevitably to war, that only the abolition of capitalism will "keep war from the world," that a struggle against war is inseparable from a struggle against one's own ruling class and one's own imperialism.

"Buried" Truth

The "line" of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International and all the subsequent monstrosities that were peddled in its name, have been buried, along with Ethiopia, the Spanish revolution, Austria and Czechoslovakia. And now the Associated Press assures us that in Moscow Stalin has rediscovered a "buried" truth, the truth he sought to bury deep under the filth of slander of those who continued the class struggle, under the corpses of "purged" revolutionists!

Unfortunately, the Stalinists have gone too far in betrayal, too far in the perversion and vilification of the doctrines they once professed. The Associated Press dispatch is too good to be true. Tomorrow's Daily Worker, foreboding tells me, will contain no acknowledgment of error, will mark no change of heart or line. It will only mark a new twist in the Talmudic justification and elaboration of a line which was bankrupt and obviously reactionary before the first "test" of it was made.