LEDGER OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY

By JAY LOVESTONE

ON THE occasion of the twentieth year in the life of the Soviet Union the question of its foreign policy assumes immeasureable importance for the workers of all lands. One need but look at the Spanish situation to realize how inextricably bound up are the problems and fate of the labor movement in the capitalist countries with the achievements and difficulties of the USSR. In fact, not since the defeat of the Red Army at the gates of Warsaw has Soviet foreign policy—Soviet relations and dealings with the rest of the world which is dominated by the bourgeoisie—played so vital a role in the entire international labor movement.

Under these circumstances it is highly appropriate to draw up a balance sheet of Soviet foreign policy. In what ways have the moves and maneuvers of Soviet foreign policy brought helpful results for the international working class movement? What have been its plusses? And what have been its minuses? In what way has Soviet foreign policy so erred that its consequences—regardless of the nobility of the intentions of its makers and executors—have been harmful to the best interests of the world labor movement and, therefore, of the victorious labor movement in the USSR as well?

The Plus Side of Ledger

1. First and foremost, we must register the indisputable fact that **Soviet foreign policy has been a consistently vigorous force for the preservation of world peace.** Here the USSR has very properly utilized even the smallest opportunities. No one will deny that had it not been for the energetic peace policy of the Soviets the world would long ago have been plunged into a war. Indeed, the very existence of the Soviet Union tends to paralyze the war plans of the imperialists who always see in the socialist republic an example that their proletarians might follow in the event of foreign struggle.

2. Without exception, the **Soviet Union in its foreign policy has been the champion of the oppressed colonial masses.** Today, China realizes that were it not for Soviet power Japan would have gone ahead much more aggressively with its encroachments. From the very day of the Bolsheviks' taking power, the Soviets have unhesitatingly befriended and aided colonial and semi-colonial peoples in their struggle for freedom from imperialist domination. Of course, the methods employed in Soviet foreign policy here vary in accordance with numerous complicated factors. But recently, Litvinoff had to battle against the representatives of these two "great democracies" (France and England) seeking to unseat Ethiopia at Geneva. In this way the USSR prevented (or at least delayed) France and Great Britain from recognizing the Italian plunder of Ethiopia. The USSR diplomats seek no concessions or privileges at the expense of other countries because the Soviet state is socialist and not capitalist in its socio-economic foundation.

3. **In no small measure is the Soviet Union's ability todate to protract its period of living at peace or continuing the truce with the rest of the world (capitalist) due to its sound foreign policy.** Through achieving this peace the USSR has had an opportunity to build up the country economically, to astound the world with its progress in socialist construction. Time and again Soviet foreign policy was subjected to the severest strain and its diplomats scored brilliant successes in avoiding open conflict. Thus the Soviets were able to use the delay in war as a breathing spell in which to march ahead and strengthen the USSR in more ways than one.

USSR Is Prepared

4. Unquestionably **the application of Soviet foreign policy has given the proletarian republic a chance to build a gigantic military machine.** The prowess of the Red Army everybody recognizes today. Military students are beginning to get an idea that Soviet armed force on the high seas will have to be reckoned with very seriously. In the air the Soviet Union is today prime. I venture to say that, should an imperialist power or collection of powers attack the USSR, the world will be very much surprised at the headway made by the Socialist republic in the realm of chemistry. It is this growing military prestige and power that enables the USSR to utilize more effectively the divisions among the imperialist countries and thus to dampen their ardor for an onslaught against the workers' fatherland. Had Soviet diplomacy not been successful in its dealings with the capitalist governments, the USSR would very likely have been thrown into a conflict prematurely, long before it was prepared to hit back and hit back hard in a military and economic sense.

5. Quite obviously the game of diplomacy is a game of give and take. **More and more the USSR is able to give less and less and secure more and more in its foreign relations.** One need but compare the treaties signed by the Soviets in the first years after the revolution with those being signed today. This improved situation is not due to the fact Stalin is a better Bolshevik than Lenin was. It is due almost solely to the fact that Soviet economic and military prowess have grown tremendously in recent years, grown to the point where Japan and Germany have to think more than twice before they attempt biting as well barking.

6. **In the main, Soviet foreign policy has served to stimulate working class international solidarity.** In this sense it has served as a force of mighty inspiration to the workers of all lands. The mounting prestige of the USSR in the realm of international politics reflects favorably on the affairs of the workers in every capitalist country. The growing influence of the Soviet Union in world affairs stimulates the development of the labor movement in the capitalist countries. It is for this reason that the Fascists in all countries go mad at the idea of the governments of their countries signing treaties of non-aggression and mutual assistance with the Soviet Union. The Fascist gangs tend to resent and reject such treaties of friendship because of the effect such treaties have on the great mass of the population. This is so despite the fact that from a strictly military point of view it may be in the immediate interest of a particular capitalist ruling class to enter into such a pact for a certain time.

7. Finally, **it is to the credit of the USSR that it has been able to correct itself in its foreign policy.** Undoubtedly errors have been made and will be made by Soviet Diplomacy and Soviet diplomats. However, the objective limits of the application or continuation of such errors are set by the very existence of the USSR itself. Once a particular foreign policy begins to endanger in any shape, manner or form, the Soviet Union, it is a lead pipe cinch that sooner rather than later it will be discarded. The recent changes in the Soviet Union's Spanish policy confirm this beyond challenge.

On The Minus Side

In general three types of errors have been made or have occurred in Soviet foreign policy. These are:

1. **On certain occasions Soviet diplomats have resorted to forms and procedure which have tended to confuse and hurt the proletarian movements in the capitalist countries.** Typical of this category of mistakes are some of the declarations made by Soviet diplomats in their dealings with Italy a few years ago. A crass example of this type of error is to be found in the now notorious Stalin-Laval declaration in regard to the appropriateness of France having a powerful army. As a spokesman of the Soviet government it was perfectly proper for Stalin to issue such a statement. But Stalin is also and above all known as the leader and driving force of the Communist International. For a comrade in the latter capacity such statements are impermissible and can only sow confusion and calamity in the ranks of the workers in the particular capitalist country involved. This is precisely what has happened in France.

2. **In the initial stages of its foreign policy in regard to Spain the Soviet Union broke one of its time-honored and most commendable practices when it agreed to enter into an arrangement whereby a group of big powers would determine the fate of a smaller or weaker country.** In this fashion, the U.S.S.R. not only failed to render practical aid to the Spanish government forces, not only failed to put obstacles in the path of the "great democracies" of France and England aiding the Spanish Fascists by acts of omission and commission, but objectively aided the Hitler and Mussolini bandits to cover up with the cloak of the International Neutrality Commission their armed aid to the Spanish Fascists—in violation of the most elementary principles of even capitalist international law. This policy was leading the U.S.S.R. to outright disaster. It tended to set precedents which could only facilitate ruin for the U.S.S.R., the smaller countries, and colonial and semi-colonial people at the hands of the big imperialist powers in the future.

To the credit of the Soviet Union it must be said that it soon saw the costly error of this phase of its foreign policy. Much to the chagrin of "Comrade" Premier Blum and the French capitalist class whom he represents in the League of Nations, much to the embarrassment and irritation of Mr. Eden, Litvinoff prevented the dirty deal cooked up by "democratic" France and England for the unseating of Ethiopia and for the appointment of a committee of representatives of big powers to consider revisions in the structure of the League itself. More than that. In the so-called London neutrality commission on Spain the spokesmen for the U.S.S.R. have recently ripped the veil of hypocrisy off the whole filthy mess and have courageously told the world that it would be guided by the facts instead of the fancies and empty promises of the Hitler and Mussolini regimes.

This correction of error has had an exhilirating effect on the workers of other lands. It was primarily responsible for the British Labor Party's recent beginning of a change of policy towards the heroic proletarian struggle in Spain. This turn by the U.S.S.R. in its diplomacy, in its foreign policy towards Spain will go a long way to expose the damnable role played by "Comrade" Blum in initiating and maintaining the blockade against the Spanish workers and peasants.

Foreign Policy and the Comintern

3. **But the most serious and persistent errors of Soviet foreign policy are to be found in the transference of tactics from this field to the field of Comintern strategy.** To us it is axiomatic that the interests of the Soviet proletariat and those of the proletariat of the rest of the world are identical and cannot under any circumstances conflict with each other. However, it is equally axiomatic to us that the tactics employed by the working class of the capitalist world for the maintenance and extension of its interests must necessarily be different from the tactics employed by the proletariat in the Soviet world for the maintenance and extension of its interests. The reasons for this identity of interests and differentiation of methods and tactics employed in their defense are: **common goal, common enemy but different level of the class struggle.** In the U.S.S.R. the workers have already won power. They control gigantic military and economic resources. In the capitalist world we still have numerous tasks to achieve before we reach this stage of the class struggle.

Let us examine this point a bit more concretely. For example, it was perfectly correct for the Soviet Union to enter into a pact of mutual assistance and non-aggression with France and to invite Germany, Japan and all other imperialist powers to join them in this setup. Lenin pursued a similar course in his Rappalo arrangements with Germany and in his offer of a military alliance to French, British, and American imperialism in the first days after the Bolsheviks took power. But this did not, in the least, mean that the Comintern sections of these countries involved in such a lineup with the Soviet Union would have to resort to class peace or class collaboration policies with their respective bourgeois ruling classes. That is why it was correct for the French CP to declare immediately after the Stalin-Laval declaration that **"The Communists have no confidence whatsoever in the peace policy of the bourgeoisie. In view of the fact that the army is being used against the working class in France and to oppress the colonial people, and in view of the possibility that it might be used against the Soviet Union, the Communist Party will continue to fight against the two-year period of military service and will refuse to vote war credits."**

But precisely for the same reason was it wrong for the French Communist Party leader Thorez a little later to speak of "French imperialism, willy-nilly, . . . carrying on an historically progressive war . . ." and for the French C.P. to go into social-chauvinist rhapsodies in behalf of the so-called French republican army and the defense of the French "fatherland."

C.I. Policy Distorted

As a result of this transference of tactics from the realm of Soviet diplomacy to the field of the international class struggle in which the Comintern plays its role, the entire policy of the CI is today distorted. In fact, the Comintern's break with principle in the application of the People's Front policy and its dropping of the Leninist position on the question of imperialist war are traceable primarily to this transference of tactics and strategy from the field of Soviet foreign policy and diplomacy to the field of international communist strategy and tactics. Crass and painful confirmation of our indictment on this score can be had especially in an examination of the declaration on war and peace and the ensuing proletarian tasks made by Dimitroff a few months ago. And if one looks into the present policies of the Communist Party of China towards Chiang Kai-shek he will find that not only are old errors being repeated there but that new and even much worse ones are now being perpetrated there due to the reasons herewith traced.

There is no doubt that the Soviet Union is facing an extremely difficult international situation. There is no doubt that in its foreign policy as well as in its other policies the U.S.S.R. deserves and must get the unstinted support of the labor movement of every country. But such support which is essential to the basic interests of the entire international working class cannot be effective unless the above—mentioned errors are corrected and their recurrence made impossible. Only then will the victories of Soviet foreign policy be of still greater aid to the victory of the world revolution.

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