

Capitalism Cannot Demobilize

Why Balbo Won't Seize Power in Italy

JOHN STRACHEY

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THE British Government has drawn blank. Captain Anthony Eden, Secretary for League of Nations Affairs, proposes October 31 as the date on which to settle the date on which sanctions are to come into operation.

So much for the fears of those who thought that the Communists were in danger of "supporting the government in the imposition of sanctions." The truth is and always has been that if there is to be any hope of the League playing any part in stopping Mussolini every ounce of working-class pressure upon the British government and every other capitalist government will be necessary.

This is what makes the recent Labor Party policy of supporting the government because they thought that it was determined to uphold the League so disastrous. It is only just over a month ago that The Daily Herald was saying that "irrespective of party, irrespective of domestic conflicts, the overwhelming majority of the nation is firmly behind the government in the stand that it has taken in this issue" (leading article, September 12). But the British government had not taken a stand on behalf of the League of Nations and it was a hundred miles from acting "irrespective of party or domestic conflicts." On the contrary, the national government was giving some tentative support to the idea of League action partly as a method of protecting its own imperialist interests, but mainly, as must now be clear even to The Daily Herald, precisely in order to trap the Labor Party as a preparation for "domestic conflict" with it. And head over heels the Labor Party leaders fell into the trap. Up they rushed to place themselves "firmly behind" the government's non-existent stand for peace.

It is true that the British government is perfectly sincere in wanting to prevent Mussolini from taking all Ethiopia—they are determined to have some for themselves. They may be and in the opinion of many well-informed observers probably are ready to fight an Anglo-Italian war if Mussolini proves unaccommodating, but here they are in a difficulty. They want to injure Mussolini, to weaken him, to compel him to obey them. But they want to do so without overthrowing him, for what might follow the fall of Mussolini? A spectre is still haunting Europe—and it is the same spectre—Communism.

At the back of everything else is the

British government's fear of producing Communism in Italy. In that connection an interesting rumor is going round London. Balbo, the Italian ex-minister and ex-the-most-powerful-man-in-Italy-after-Mussolini, was banished to the governorship of the Italian colony of Libya a few years back. Balbo visited France some weeks ago "to study French commercial aviation." While he was there the French government, foreseeing the trouble which Mussolini's Ethiopian adventure would cause them, but pledged to the hilt to support him, happened to ask Balbo if he thought he would be able to overthrow Mussolini and take power himself on a program of calling off the African war. Balbo replied that that was quite possible. The war was intensely unpopular with the entire Italian people. If he appeared in Italy and gave out that Mussolini was leading the nation to destruction he could, he thought, do the trick. Of course he must have suitable financial support from the French government; but he did not think that the price would be unduly high.

The French government began to feel that business might well result from the little talk, but Balbo, who evidently thinks ahead, continued thus: It would be possible (and not too expensive) for him to upset Mussolini and take power on the basis of calling off the war and demobilizing the Italian army, but what was he to do next? If he called off the war and demobilized the Italian army and air force and stopped the feverish armaments production, he would create between six and seven million unemployed in Italy and what was he going to do with them? Unless he at any rate fed them he would lose power in a working-class revolution as quickly as he had gained it. And feed them he could not, for Mussolini had cleared almost the last lira out of the Italian treasury.

It was useless for him to take power in circumstances which would mean that he would lose it again in a few months. He was only willing to do the job for the French on one condition—that the French government would give him the money to feed at least six million Italian unemployed for an indefinite period. If the French government would do that, then he was their man, but not otherwise.

It is said that the negotiation actually got to the point of the French treasury experts working out the cost of feeding six million Italian unemployed forever. But of course they found the thing utterly impossible.

That is the story which is going about. Nothing would be more rash than to assume that it was true—except perhaps to assume that it was necessarily untrue. (Experience shows that these rumors are very seldom quite true, but equally seldom have no foundation in fact.) In any case the mere fact that such things are being said in the foreign offices, the chancelleries and after the press conferences is significant. It shows several things. It shows the amount of confidence there is in the mutual loyalties of the fascist leaders. (In this connection the report in today's British Daily Worker of Balbo's unwillingness to send his troop back from Libya is worth noting.) And above all it reveals the basic dilemma of the fascist-capitalist states today.

For whether Balbo said all this to the French government or not, the basic dilemma of fascist capitalism today is precisely this: *fascist capitalism cannot demobilize*. The fascist-capitalist state is one vast war-making machine. It can only exist by preparing for war. It can only hold the minds of its dupes among the population by ceaseless war propaganda. It can only hold its rotten economic system together by ever-increasing armament building. Finally there comes the stage which Mussolini reached. Then the mobilization of millions of men becomes an economic and social necessity. Once that moment has come the fascists must have war and no one can call that war off without destroying the fascist regime.

Capitalism in its ultimate fascist stage cannot demobilize. It must plunge on over mountains of human bodies to its destruction. The other capitalist governments such as those of Britain and France, which have not yet got to this stage, half-understand this. Thus even though the war-making fascists are injuring them, they are half-afraid to strike back, for today every capitalist empire, whether fascist or not, is at one and the same time a deadly rival to every other and an ally of every other, for they each and all face not only each other but the peril of internal collapse and revolution, which if it starts anywhere may spread everywhere. They are like two weakened boxers tottering in a final clinch. They still strike at each other, but fear nothing more than the collapse of their antagonist, lest they fall with him.

These dispatches by John Strachey are appearing weekly in THE NEW MASSES.

Are Jews Communists?

JAMES WATERMAN WISE

JEWES are not Communists, is the burden of a panic-stricken statement issued jointly by Dr. Cyrus Adler, president of the American Jewish Committee, Alfred M. Cohen, president of the B'nai B'rith, and B. C. Vladeck, chairman of the Jewish Labor Committee. Purporting to answer Hitler's most recent anti-Semitic decrees and appealing to "the American sense of justice and fair play," these gentlemen hysterically deny that Communism is Jewish and frenziedly repudiate Jews who are Communists. Their statement, concocted out of fear for themselves, libels against Soviet Russia and lies about the Jewish people, is nothing less than an offer of their services to the fascists of America in return for personal immunity and private safety.

Behind such high-flown phrases as "that complete and unequivocal loyalty to the country of one's citizenship is a basic principle of Jewish life," lies a poorly-veiled invitation to potential Nazis of America to coordinate and pogromize Jews who will not accept the American Liberty League and the Chamber of Commerce as the architects of America's future. Like the handful of Jewish bankers in Germany, who, despite exile, anguish and annihilation of the masses of German Jewry, have "noticed nothing untoward since the advent of Hitler," these gentlemen are seeking to barter their people's security and honor for a mess of fascist pottage.

Let us analyze their statement. Discounting the introductory reproof of Hitlerism and the concluding panegyric of themselves, it falls into two parts. The first attempts to show that the Jews of Germany and of other countries were not and are not Communists; the second, that Communism and the Soviet Union are themselves foes of Jews and Judaism. As to the facts and figures—investigation will disprove the proud boast that Jews have played no part in Communist parties of various countries. This article must go to press too immediately to make possible the correction of each statistical misstatement, but refutation of a single paragraph will indicate the falsity of its entire structure.

Of Soviet Russia, it says: "Among the thirty-six commissars who constitute the Soviet government, only two are Jews. Neither the president of the Council of Commissars, Rykov; the president of the U.S.S.R., Kalinin; the general secretary of the Communist Party, Stalin; the president of the Third International, Dimitrov; nor the founder of the Communist Party, Lenin, are Jews." Not a word of the many and major figures who since 1917 have helped direct the policies and shape the course of the Soviet Union! Is it possible that the heads of the American Jewish Committee, the B'nai B'rith and

Jewish Labor Committee have never heard of Litvinov, of Yaraslovsky, of Kaganovitch, of Radek, of Bela Kun? Or do they hope to confound the fascist lie that all Communists are Jews by the equally preposterous lie that no Communists are Jews?

But this juggling of names and figures is insignificant compared to the deliberate falsification concerning the status of Russian Jewry and the attitude of the Soviet government toward its Jewish population. Consider the following incredible assertion: "After the revolution the Soviet government declared fully half of the total Jewish population in Russia as declassed." What baser perversion of truth could Hitler himself have fashioned? What fouler libel could be devised by Goebels' Angriff or Streicher's Stuermer?

The facts are too well-known—even to the gentlemen who have issued this statement—to be rehearsed. They include the black slavery in which Russian Jewry sorrowed and suffered under the Czars. They include the swift and unconditional Jewish emancipation which was among the first acts of the Bolshevik Party when it came into power. They include a systematic and unrelenting campaign against anti-semitism throughout the length and breadth of the Soviet Union, which has today made Russia freer of the virus of Jew-hatred than any nation in the world. They include the colossal achievement of the Soviet government in rehabilitating economically, politically and socially the declassed Jews to whom these gentlemen refer. Let Messrs. Adler and Cohen and Vladeck consult the files of their own organizations. Let them refer to the work of the Ort and the Agrojoint and the Joint Distribution Committee. Let them make public the facts as to hundreds of thousands of Jews living in agricultural colonies in the Crimea and the Ukraine, and the even larger numbers who are sharing in the industrial development of Soviet Russia. Then let them dare speak of "declassed Jews" and "hindrances to the development of the Revolution."

EVEN more dangerous than these half-truths and untruths are the implications and the insinuations of such a document. First among them is the apologetic mood and the propitiatory attitude into which it inevitably throws the Jew. To frame excuses for the political affiliations of one's co-racialists is to invite a status of political inferiority for oneself. Jews who deny that some or many Jews are Communists, are jockeying themselves into the position of citizens on toleration, justifying their citizenship by yielding their fundamental civic right to hold any political viewpoint that seems just and wise to them as individuals.

And repudiations which begin with Com-

munist will surely widen their range as economic and political pressure on minorities gains in intensity. Will not the gentlemen who today disclaim Jewish Communists, tomorrow disclaim Jewish Socialists? And on the morrow Jewish New Dealers and Utopians and Technocrats and even Republicans? Until ultimately these super-patriots will deem worthy Americans only such Jews as have wormed their way into fascist organizations and vigilante groups?

Equally repugnant is the inescapable deduction that what is done to Communists in Germany and elsewhere is a matter of indifference to American Jews. "Go as far as you like," it says in effect to German Nazis and their would-be imitators here, "in wreaking vengeance and destruction upon Communists whether Jewish or Gentile. But please remember that we wealthy and powerful Jews are as ardent enemies of Communism as yourselves. And let us make common cause against this common foe."

This, at a time when Jews and Communists are being tortured indiscriminately in concentration camps, when Communists in and out of Germany are heroically and desperately fighting the Jewish battle against Hitlerism, when the bond of common struggle and suffering should in decency make it unthinkable to weaken a single arm or blunt a single weapon, far less stab one's allies in the back!

That the authors of this piece of perfidy do not represent the masses of American Jews, will be made abundantly clear. They do not speak even for their own constituents. Had the majority of members in the B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Labor Committee been consulted, no such statement could have been issued. Even in the American Jewish Committee there are individuals capable of detecting the unwisdom and the ignominy of this self-betrayal. But verbal and formal repudiations of this joint statement are not enough. To counteract its poison and to preclude its repetition, Jews must take active and positive measures.

There must be a widening and strengthening of the united front against fascism in every guise and form. Such a united front will exclude none; whether he be Jew or Gentile, American or foreign-born, white or black, Communist or Socialist or radical or independent. It will recognize that the struggle against fascism cuts infinitely deeper than these differences. It will include all those exploited and endangered millions who today struggle against fascism or seek to prevent its coming. And, if by taking full and honorable part in the forging of this united front, the Jews of America write themselves down as Communists in the eyes of Messrs. Adler, Cohen and Vladeck, so be it.