

The Hungarian Events

By JAMES S. ALLEN

We are all deeply shaken by events in Hungary. The use of Soviet troops in fierce internal struggle confronts us with a painful and difficult question. Was this military intervention necessary? The Daily Worker editorial of Nov. 5 recognizes the shift toward counter-revolution in Hungary, citing Nagy's attempt to withdraw the country from the Warsaw Pact and his call for UN intervention. But it argues, without saying so explicitly, that military intervention was unjustified. (Joseph Clark says so explicitly in his column of Nov. 7.)

I would like to examine in some detail the arguments of the editorial in order to present another view of the matter, I hope objectively. Let us begin by analyzing, phrase by phrase, the paragraph in which the Daily Worker renders its judgment:

"The action of the Soviet troops in Hungary does not advance but retards the development of socialism because socialism cannot be imposed on a country by force."

It is true that socialism cannot be imposed upon a country by force, against the will of the people, although in Hungary after World War II force was used to prevent the return to power of the old ruling classes and Nazi collaborators. But it is also true that, in the face of a counter-revolutionary attempt, force has to be used to safeguard socialism. That is the question in Hungary today.

OBVIOUSLY, the Budapest government proved unequal to the task either of rapid socialist reform or of decisive action against counter-revolution. The involvement of Soviet troops in Budapest during the first phase of the popular upheaval was ill-advised, as events showed. Some tragic misunderstanding, or a provocation, led to the shooting in Parliament Square, although first-hand accounts from Budapest had reported an atmosphere of fraternity between the Soviet soldiers and the people.

Utmost confusion resulted, which reactionary elements were quick to exploit, arousing the inflamed populace to armed action. But at this point, the Soviet troops were disengaged from the fighting, and withdrawn from the city. The Soviet government promised to negotiate for the withdrawal of all its troops from Hungary as soon as order was restored.

Events moved rapidly in a counter-revolutionary direction: the rapid and basic concessions of the weak Nagy Cabinet to reaction, the hunting down and murder of thousands of Communists and public personalities, the anti-Semitic outrages, book burning, the opening of the Austrian frontier to Horthy emigres and foreign interventionists, including our own "knights of liberation" like Leo Cherne.

IT SEEMS undeniable that a counter-revolutionary government would have been installed if Soviet troops had remained passive, once they had been withdrawn from Budapest. There followed the deliberate military intervention during the week-end of Nov. 2-4. Preceding this action, the Soviet government in a special declaration of great import made known its intention to meet with the Warsaw Pact nations in order to place on a new and equal basis all relations among them, military, economic, and political. It later reiterated its intention of withdrawing its troops from the Hungarian cities once the counter-revolution had been suppressed.

The attempted counter-revolution in Hungary; and not the intervention of Soviet troops, as

the Daily Worker holds, is the threat to socialism in that country as well as throughout Eastern Europe. The decision for Soviet armed intervention, as difficult and painful as it was, proved necessary to safeguard socialism.

The Daily Worker says:

Soviet military intervention "does not help but damages the relation between Socialist states."

As a general proposition, this is true. But it is also true that counter-revolution in one socialist state endangers all socialist states. Without a socialist base, there can be no socialist states, and the question of relations among non-existent socialist states would be entirely academic.

Relations between the Soviet Union and Hungary have been greatly impaired, and they will have to be rebuilt on a new foundation of generous aid and free socialist relationships if the deep wound is to be healed. But the socialist world as a whole could not afford a reactionary restoration in Hungary, which would have endangered their own systems and their own national security. This was recognized by the Socialist states of Eastern Europe, including Poland and Yugoslavia, and also by China, all supporting the Soviet action. The representatives of Poland as well as of Yugoslavia, which is not a member of the Warsaw Pact, stood with the other socialist states in the UN against the Western interventionist resolutions.

The Soviet Union acted in the common interest of all the socialist states by putting down counter-revolution in Hungary, thereby safeguarding the base for relations among them, and not damaging these relations, as the Daily Worker holds:

THE DAILY WORKER says:

Soviet intervention "does not strengthen but weakens the influence of the Soviet Union itself which has been playing a major role toward ending the cold war and establishing peaceful coexistence."

On what basis does the Daily Worker propose to end the cold war and build peaceful coexistence? Surely, not at the price of the "liberation" of Eastern Europe as proposed by Dulles. That price was almost paid in Hungary.

By preventing the precipitous disruption of the Warsaw Pact by the tottering Nagy regime, the Soviet Union averted the immediate danger of military intervention by the NATO powers. The victory of counter-revolution in Hungary would have encouraged all reactionary aggressive forces, thereby raising the danger of a third world war. By its action in Hungary, the Soviet Union threw a damper on the resurgent dreams of "liberating" Eastern Europe, thereby bridling the forces making for war.

The cold war can be ended and world peace maintained only on the basis of coexistence between capitalist and socialist states. These aims cannot be attained on the basis of "coexistence" between states no longer socialist and rampant imperialist powers, which would mean war. By its action in Hungary, the Soviet Union made that very clear, thereby safeguarding the prospects for peaceful coexistence in the present era, and not weakening such prospects, as the Daily Worker holds.

THE DAILY WORKER says:

Soviet military intervention "does not combat but plays into the hands of the hypocritical reactionaries in London, Paris and Washington as they drive to rob the people of the Middle East and elsewhere of their national independence."

Certainly, hypocritical reactionaries in London, Paris and Washington exploited the tragic

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Hungarian events to try to cover up the imperialist aggression against Egypt. They tried to restore the rift between the United States and its Allies over Suez at the expense of the peoples of the Middle East, Egypt at a moment when they thought the Soviet Union would be immobilized by a crisis in Eastern Europe.

Does it follow from this that the Soviet Union should have permitted the counter-revolution to run its course in Hungary? If it had, all the speculations and adventures of the hypocritical reactionaries would have been justified. The Soviet Union could not have played the decisive role it did in the Egyptian crisis if it remained indecisive in Hungary, in its own front yard.

The action in Hungary was a complement of the action with respect to Egypt, for the Soviet Union had to fight essentially the same reactionary and aggressive forces in both situations. Its military action in Hungary and its warning of determined action against aggression in Egypt forced an imperialist back-down in both places.

One has only to read the dispatches from London and Paris to understand the decisive role played by the firm Soviet notes to the British, French and Israeli governments who were forced, under threat of Soviet action, to agree to the cease-fire and to promise withdrawal of their forces. The entire Arab-Asian bloc in the UN showed their appreciation of the connection between the Hungarian and Egyptian crises when they refused to go along with the pro-

posed Western interventionist motions on Hungary.

Soviet action in Hungary did not "rob" Hungary of its independence, thereby weakening all independence aspirations, as the Daily Worker implies. The Soviet Union safeguarded the base upon which Hungary's independence as a socialist nation could be built, and by simultaneous action on Egypt strengthened the national liberation movements everywhere.

ACCORDINGLY, it seems to me, in coming to its judgment of the Hungarian events, the Daily Worker failed to appreciate all aspects of the situation, and therefore gave a one-sided, incomplete and basically erroneous estimate.

Why does the Daily make this serious mistake? The same editorial gives the answer. In trying to explain the turn of events in Hungary, the editors place first and major responsibility upon "the grave distortions of socialist principles introduced by the Soviet Communist leadership and the Rakosi group in Hungary." They place second in order of importance and emphasis "the continuous attempts by reactionaries in Hungary, openly supported and encouraged by Washington, to overthrow socialism." I think that this approach has been the source of the Daily Worker difficulties over these many months.

Of course, the mistakes are grave and we must learn their lessons thoroughly. The distortion of socialist relations between Hungary and the USSR over the previous period, together with the forced tempo of socialization, which the Hungarian people

were not prepared either materially or politically to sustain, have contributed to the crisis. The rigid Rakosi leadership resisting until it was too late the imperative popular demands for socialist reform, bears a heavy responsibility.

But the Daily Worker is standing on its head when it puts the mistakes first and the threat of counter-revolutionary overthrow second. That threat was there from the beginning, greatly intensified by the cold war. It was against this threat that socialism had to be built and consolidated. The threat did not rise because of the mistakes; the mistakes were made in the process of safeguarding socialism against its enemies, within and external. Counter-revolution sought to exploit these mistakes for its own purposes; socialism tries to overcome these mistakes in order to defend itself more effectively against enemy classes while assuring its own progress.

Without seeing imperialist obstruction and intervention as the main threat, the mistakes cannot be properly assessed nor can they be placed in perspective. If they are seen upside down, then criticism of socialism becomes first on the order of business. To criticize becomes guiding principle. It may become an obsession which beclouds one's views of the world, and deprives one of the power of objective analysis of events. Criticism for the sake of criticism becomes anarchy, even total immobility in face of the tasks that have to be done.

Thus, if the Daily Worker had put first things first it would have searched out and exposed

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every effort of U.S. reactionaries to turn the scales in Hungary and all Eastern Europe. Many such signs were reported in the general press which this paper did not even note (such as the full-page ad in the metropolitan press on Nov. 1, by the Cherne-Donovan interventionist group). It would have crusaded against Western imperialist intervention in both Hungary and Egypt. Seeing the main task as safeguarding socialism from reactionary intervention, it could have discussed the mistakes of the socialist world more deeply and with perspective.

IT SEEMS to me that the heartberaking events should lead the editors of the Daily Worker to take a critical second look at their entire line of policy. What happened in Hungary should reveal clearly how lame is the effort to sustain a position which is untenable from the socialist viewpoint.

Hungary has shown how the general, abstract idea of democracy can be made to serve the purposes of counter-revolution. The "free world" broadcasters talked no end about democracy while urging their listeners in Hungary to overthrow the socialist government.

General, abstract ideas of justice, democracy, right and wrong, without regard to social systems and the real struggles of our time, offer no guide for thought or action, but only confusion. This is an old story, ever repeated, and one the Daily Worker cannot afford to forget or obscure.

The editors should not so soon have forgotten the experience of Spain, where fascist intervention upset the Republic as preface to World War II. When they have their feet firmly planted on the ground, a reversal I fervently hope the lessons of Hungary will affect, they will again see clearly the basic facts of contemporary history.