

The World War II and Socialist Russia

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A brief analysis of the situation in Europe as well as the world after the First World War and the successful October(November) Revolution in Russia is imperative to start any discussion on Second World War and Socialist USSR. Because the importance of the existences of the Socialist USSR in the world arena, the advent of fascism and developments connected with these during the Second World War cannot be understood without an idea of the background. But details of those developments is not possible here, let us be as brief as possible, more as glimpses of history than detailed descriptions of it.

“New Socialist Country’s work for World Peace”

The Russian revolution did not only liberate the workers and peasants from ruthless exploitation and deprivation, liberate the nations which were ruled by the Tsarist despotism, but also sent a cold wave through the spines of imperialism and capitalism throughout the world. It acted as an inspiration to the working masses in their revolutionary fights to get rid of the shackles’ of the exploiters throughout the world. It worked for the achievement of world peace avoiding war.

On November 7, 1917 when Russian Revolution became successful, till then Russia was a party of World War I. But the people wanted “Peace, Land and Bread”. It was impossible to carry on the war and solve the needs of the people. So on November 8 itself the first official Decree of the Soviet government was “to propose to all warring people to end war and ask their governments immediate negotiations for a just and democratic peace, without annexations or indemnities”. Peace was necessary for the new born Socialist state to get some time to organise its own forces from the impending attacks of the conglomerate of reactionaries of home and abroad! There was also a hope that such a peace would help the revolutionary forces of other parts of Europe. So the Decree called for “immediate negotiations for peace”. But neither the allies nor the Germans came forward for such negotiation at first. Rather they tried hard to destroy the Soviet government. Finally in the middle of December, 1917 formal delegates of Soviet Russia and those of Germany and its allies met at Brest-Litovsk and agreed for an immediate and indefinite ceasefire to pave the way for a peace treaty. But it was not a straight affair, peace negotiations went on in zigzags. There were differences of opinions within the Soviet leaders also. But Lenin could clarify that for the revolution to survive the “robbers’ peace” was necessary. Whereas the imperialist forces like France, Britain and the USA were forcing Russia to continue the war to throw the new Soviet people into a catastrophic situation. Finally in March, 1918 a treaty was signed between Soviet Russia on the one hand and Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Ottoman Empire on the other. It was really a robber peace. Soviet Russia had to lose 1.3 million square miles of important territories of which included the granary of Ukraine. Nearly 62 million of people were surrendered to Germany. But one thing was assured that Russia could get out of the World War and was in a position to defend its revolution from the attacks of reactionaries and also to develop the new Socialist economic and political structure. It was ratified on March 8, 1918 in the Party Congress.

But the imperialist forces were out there in the relentless attempt to defeat the revolution. Germany was defeated in the World War I. Then came the Versailles Treaty. It was really both humiliating and politically and economically extorting for Germany. The Conditionalties contained, among many other things, the following important clauses.

1. Germany not to be allowed to join League of Nations.
2. All colonies of Germany were distributed between France and Britain.
3. German army to be restricted to 100000 men. No Airforce, only six battleships and no submarine.
4. Germany would have to pay reparation for losses and damages which were later set as 132 billion gold marks.
5. Saar, the coalfields, and Alsasc -Lovvain was handed over to France.
6. Danzig was made a free port and so on.

Italy which joined the Allied forces at the fag end of war, also felt betrayed because it did not get anything from the Versailles Treaty except membership of the League of Nations.

The Versailles Treaty was signed on 28 June, 1919.

But on one point all those powers including Germany were united. That was to fight against new born Socialist State of Russia. From November 1917, it went on till 1922. First there was fomenting civil war within Russia, then invasions sometimes directly and after the World War I through indirect means, such as in 1920 Poles invaded with the help of France, in 1920-21, the Finns led by Baron Mannerheim with the help of both allied forces and Germany, Japan carried on its invasions until October, 1922 when it was expelled from Vladivostok in the east.

It became clear that all the leading capitalist countries, in spite of their internal contradictions, were united to destroy the Socialist state as their mortal enemy.

These were zigzags in development of Socialist Russia. In 1922, in Geneva there was an international conference to discuss economic reconstruction of Europe and the new state was invited for the first time to such a conference. The Soviet proposal was to limit armaments. The Chief of the Soviet delegates Georges Chicherin asserted, "The forces, directed towards restoring world economy will be strangled as long as above Europe and above the world hangs the threat of new wars," But instead of paying any heed to this proposal the allied powers persisted in their attempt to pass the whole burden of post-war economic restoration on Germany and Russia. It was direct insult as well as assault. So, the response was to slip away from the Genoa conference and the famous Rapallo Treaty was signed on 16 April, 1922 between Socialist Russia and Germany. By this treaty friendly relations on the basis of equality was established and each cancelled the others debts.

So much is enough to understand how did the new born socialist country worked for peace not only for itself but also for the world. It is also easily understandable that imperialist powers did never want peace, they only wanted to share the booty and more powerful the imperialist power at that stage the more it could gobble up, the defeated powers were pushed to the corner.

Had the victor powers followed the Soviet example there might not have been the Second World War. But that is a wishful proposition, no imperialist power can do that. Imperialism means war. Moreover they were mortally afraid of the new socialist country.

Rise of Fascism

Like 'Socialism', 'Capitalism', 'feudalism', 'communism', 'Brahminism' etc the word 'fascism' has its own origin. But unlike the above mentioned, this connotation did not develop from a concrete social system, but it forced a system according to it. The word come from the Latin word 'fasces' which meant a bundle of rods tied around an axe, and a symbol of authority of civic magistrates in ancient Rome. Mussolini in Italy adopted this symbol for his party as an expression of absolute authority over the people. Without going in to the details of how Benitto Mussolini, who was once editor of the *Avanti*, the organ of the Socialist Party, turned into a founder of the fascist party, let us concentrate the ideology of the party, Mussolini formed a party, named "*Il Popolo Italia*" [The People of Italy] with an organ with the same name and its avowed principle according to Mussolini was "a movement to strike against the backwardness of the Right and the destructiveness of the left. On June 6, 1919, *Fasci of Combat*' was published with its basic call to regain the lost pride of Italy robbed by the Versailles Treaty. At the same time the call for the so-called "development" of economy and assurance of solving the problem of unemployment rallied a large section of unemployed youth behind Mussolini. Thus a chauvinistic war mongering state serving the most aggressive section of the capitalist class was developed. It carried on reforms in all walks of life, education and culture. On the one hand big industries like FIAT gave all its support to Mussolini and on the other hand people were forced to bow down to the all pervasive authority of the state and its leader Mussolini. To ensure the obedience, a private army, Black Shirts, were raised by the fascists in addition to the armed forces of the state.

But all these could not make the fascists to become a real threat until the rise of Hitler in Germany. Now let us go through a brief history of that rise. Adolf Hitler joined the *Deutsche Arbeiter Partei* (German Workers Party) in 1919 as a frontline propagandist and orator. In 1920, the name of the party was changed is *National Socialists Deutsche Arbeiter Partei* (German National Socialist workers Party, in short NAZI. It was opposed to the Weimer Republic in Germany and the Versailles Treaty. But it had to take a time is become powerful enough to challenge the German Political frame work as well as threat to world peace. In 1928 it could gather only 12 seats in the parliament called Reichstag which had more than 600 seats. It had almost the same ideological and political views as the fascists in Italy.

Till 1928, the outside world could not guess that very soon it would become a real threat. For example, we find in July 13, 1928 in the Report in Meeting of the Active of the Leningrad organisation of the CPSU (B) on the “Results of the July Plenum of the CC, CPSU(B)” Comrade Stalin in the section Major Problem of Sixth Congress of the Comintern said, “At the time of the Fifth Congress (of the Comintern – another) very little was said about the Anglo-American contradiction as the Principal one. It was even the custom at that time to speak of an Anglo-American alliance. On the other hand quite a lot was said about contradiction between Britain and France, between America and Japan, between the victor and the vanquished. The difference between that period and present period is that of the contradiction of the capitalist camp, that between American capitalism and British capitalism has become the principal one. (J.V.Stalin works, volume 11, p-207, Foreign Language publishing Home Moomcows, 1954)

Till then fascism in Italy could not create much impact and in Germany Nazism with its Idea of “Herevolk” (master race) could not gain enough ground. So “fascism” was seen only as a method of suppressing people for the imperialist countries to prepare for wars. That is why in the above mentioned Report Stalin said, “It is impossible to strengthen the rear of imperialism without suppressing the workers. And that is what fascism is for. (Ibid, P.210)

Soviet Development

By the end of 1920's Soviet Union had two great developments which were unique in the history of the social development. They started Collectivisation of agriculture and five year plan (piatiletka)

Enemies started propaganda that peasants are being forced to collective farming under state repression. They tried to feed the world with a few instances. But they did, and still do not, recognise that there were subversions by the kulaks and in certain areas to local people resorted to stray actions against them. Nowhere in the world had so many people risen up for a cause to build up a new economic structure for a new society. Thus in the USSR “new man” was born, who did not live only for themselves but for society as a whole. In the words of Anna Louis strong, who had passed a few years in the prison in the USSR and has written much later a book “Stalin Era”, commented about the collective family that “changed the history of farming for the world”(P 38, Stalin Era)

We are avoiding to present statistical details because this article is meant for and directed towards a different issue. There are necessary only to know the reality at that time.

The same is true for the “Five Year Plan” Nowhere in the world such a gigantic effort of developing the economy as well as society as a whole took place in such a democratic manner where every worker or every peasant could say that it was not “a plan” from the kremlin it was also “a plan” by them. The First Five Year Plan was successful when the world economy was reeling under the “Great Depression”. How much successful it was? Let us not listen from the Soviet propagandists but from a British Capitalist, GarbhonJarvic on October 1932 : “Now I want it clearly understood that I am neither Communist nor a Bolshevik, Iam definitely a capitalist and an Individualist,... Russia is forging ahead while all too many of our factories and shipyards lie idle, and approximately 3 million of our people desperately seek work. Jokes have been made about the five-year plan and its failure has been predicated. You may take it as beyond question that under the five year plan much more has been accomplished than was really anticipated... Don't underrate the Russians and their plans and don't make the mistake of believing that the Soviet Government must crash... Russia today is a country with a soul and an ideal, Russia is a country of amazing activity. I believe that the Russian objective is sound.... And perhaps most important of all, these youngsters and these workers in Russia have one thing which is too sadly lacking in the capitalist countries today, and that is – hope!”

But there is no straight line of development of history there are zigzags. Fascism did not rest where it was and the USSR could not get the opportunity to develop socialism in a peaceful atmosphere. The Second World War changed the whole scenario.

Fangs of Fascism were Out

In Italy and Germany fascism was gaining ground. Though Germany had signed Rapallo Treaty, Nazis were most inimical towards the Communists and the USSR. Till 1928 they were a weak force, with an aggressive policy. On August 1929, they attacked the head quarter of the German Communist Party (KPD). The chauvinistic idea of “Herenvolk” (master race) created a mass hysteria of war mongering and anti

Communist anti-Jewish mindset among the people. Once grabbing the power Hitler went on rampaging against all opposition, especially the Communists and carried on programs against Jews. The European powers like Britain and France started appeasing it hoping that fascists would direct their attacks on the Socialist Russia. So even in September, 1938, when Germany wanted incorporation of Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia as its own territory, the British and French imperialist actually presented that territory in a platter through the Munich Pact. The Czech government was refrained from any resistance even if the USSR wanted to help it. The Munich Pact was signed on September 27, 1938 between the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, French Prime Minister Edward Daladier, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini and Italian Foreign Minister Gelcazzo Cieno. And before ink dried the German forces annexed Sudetenland on October 1, 1938. In fact, this policy of appeasement was pursued by Britain and France to avoid war immediately with the understanding that it will act as turning the focus of attack on the USSR. But that was not to be. They actually did not listen to the warning by comrade Stalin in January, 1934 (more than four years before the Munich Pact) that “..fascism has now become the most fashionable commodity among the war-mongering bourgeois politicians. I am not referring to fascism in general, but, primarily to fascism of the German type which is wrongly called national-socialism - wrongly because the most searching examination will fail to reveal even an atom of socialism in it.

“In this connection the victory of fascism in Germany must be regarded not only as a symptom of the weakness of the working class and a result of the betrayals of the working class by Social Democracy, which paved the way for fascism; it must also be regarded as sign of the weakness of the bourgeoisie, a sign that the bourgeoisie is no longer able to rule by the old methods of parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy, and as a consequence, is compelled to accept that it is no longer able to find a way out of the present situation on the basis of a peaceful foreign policy and, as a consequence, is compelled to resort to a policy of war” (J.V. Stalin, Problem of Leninism, Report to XVII Congress of CPSU(B), P682, Peking, 1976)

Actually imperialist forces like Britain and France, were not at all interested for peace, They did not oppose when Italy attacked and seized Abyssinia in 1935, when in 1936 Italy and Germany organised military intervention in Spain, when in 1937 Japan after seizing Manchuria involved North and Central China, occupied Peking, Tientsin and Shanghai, when in the beginning of 1938 Germany seized Austria. Britain and France wanted to overlook these, the USA wanted Japan to wipe out the communists. All of them together intended that the Axis powers developed by Germany, Italy and Japan be satisfied with their hold on the USSR and certain parts of China and deserts of Africa. The Munich Pact was in essence a Pact in that direction. It was connivance with the aggressor powers. The Socialist Soviet Union had time and again asked for a “Collective security” against the aggressors to Britain and France only to be rejected by them by taking up the so-called position of non-intervention, a position of “neutrality”. They took a non-interventionist position on Spanish Civil war (1936-1939) while Germany was openly backing Fascist Franco to oust the Republican Government and the Comintern formed the “International Brigade” to help the Republicans. Thus all efforts of the socialist USSR to stop the aggressors from their advance and to establish peace was thwarted by Britain and France, even though in those countries as well as in the USA all progressive forces wanted to ally with the USSR to stop war.

In March, 1939 Germany started Preparation for attack on Poland. The USSR once again wanted an alliance and made it clear that its forces would come in help of Poland. In May, 1939, the attempts were made to negotiate an alliance and preparation to help Poland. But Britain and France first took a delaying tactics, finally backed out and Poland rejected Soviet help.

It became clear that the imperialist powers were trying to direct the Axis power against socialist USSR. So, finding no other alternative, but to prepare to resist Fascists on the basis of its own strength, the USSR made an agreement, known as Non-aggression Pact, more popularly Molotov-Ribbentrop pact on 23 August, 1939.

Very soon on September 1, 1939, Hitler obliged the appeasers by attacking Poland and the World War II formally started. Actually, Italy, Spain and Japan were not only dissatisfied, but also opposed the Pact. It was such a diplomatic manoeuvre that the so-called allied forces, the Tory backers of Hitler led by Chamberlain in London were caught on the wrong foot.

It is not possible to describe in details the events that followed. But the time between Sept 1, 1939 and 22 June 1941 when Hitler attacked the USSR, on the one hand the Axis powers were gaining control of large parts of Europe, Africa and Atlantic parts of Europe through one after another blitz which the allied forces could not withstand. But the USSR with its neutrality carried on a chess game which blocked advance of Germany in a number of fronts. This has been aptly described by Anna Louis Strong in her book "*Stalin Era*". She said, "Hitler saw that the USSR, as a neutral, was the immediate barrier in his path to world rule. In the twenty-two months of the Non-Aggression Pact, the USSR had three times blocked the Nazi advance. The Soviet march to Poland had checked for a year Hitler's advance to East; the Soviet return to Bessarabia had pulled him back from invading Britain; and Moscow's power politics in the Balkans and Baltic delayed him at the Dardanelles".

So on June 22, 1941 Fascist forces attacked the USSR.

How the Socialist USSR defeated the Fascists

"War is politics by other means". Politics needs an ideology. The Socialist Soviet Union fought the war on its own politics which was based on its ideology of Communism- the ideology of proletariat. We have already discussed in relation to this policy of collectivisation and its Five-Year Plans and how deeply entrenched was the democracy of the people in the Soviet Union. It was a socialist country where "new men" had emerged who did not live for themselves but live for the society as whole, for well being of world proletariat. They knew very well that they would have to defend socialism not for themselves, but for the world proletariat who at that time had gained one thing to lose that was the only socialist state in the world. So, not only the soviet people but also the international proletariat stood up against fascism for a determined fight to finish the dark forces in the world.

The anti-Communists serving imperialist ideology at that time went on criticizing Soviet Union and Stalin for the Non-Aggression Pact without a reference to the pros and cons of events. Now a days it has become a fashion among some of the people who proclaim themselves as Marxist-Leninists do the same in unison with the propagandists of imperialism who remained silent for a long period after June, 1941.

One thing must be said here fascism was not a phenomenon in Germany and Italy and their allies, there were fascists in other countries who acted as "fifth columns" of Hitler. In Sweden, Norway, France etc there were people within the ruling classes and well known politicians who acted as agents of Hitler. It was done in a planned way by the fascists because it is a known strategy that the easiest way to seize it from within. So Soviet Union had to look after two completely different things at a time. One was to use the industries developed during the Five Year Plans to produce materials for war and another was to keep a vigil so that traitors cannot make way. Both were not easy tasks. For the first, certain changes of policy in plans were to be made, planning from the Centre was given preference instead of planning from both centre and the most peripheral places and people. But second was more challenging: There were leaders, most reputed leaders like Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bakayer etc. who conspired and were tried openly before Soviet and foreign press, foreign diplomats and government offices. There are many accounts of these trials. Only people who hate socialism from the core of their heart raise questions about them. There is no scope to detail out the trial procedure and outcome, and the remarks of the foreign paper agencies, foreign civil libertarians, diplomats, who were present there.

In July, 1937, Marshal Tukachersky along with seven other commanders were brought to trial, a secret trial in order to keep military secrets undivulged, and found they were being paid by Hitler.

Yes, there were a few convictions of innocent citizen even leaders. But the situation through which Soviet Union was passing was an extraordinary situation. Moreover it was found that one GPU chief was brought to trial for arresting innocents. But it is clear that Soviet Govt. was against any trial of innocent people.

However, the whole exercise created one condition that German could not find any 'fifth column' in the USSR.

Now let us come to real story of war of the whole people carried by the Socialist Soviet Union. Attacking Soviet Union Hitler declared that it was "The greatest military march in history". There were not empty words. Nine million men were in active battle over entire 1800 mile of western border of Soviet Union. The

tactics was called blitzkrieg, to storm into the enemy forces with superior artillery armaments and air raids and after breaking the resistance spreading with tanks to take control over the civilian people. Hitler used it successfully in European theatre. In Russia, too, it was aimed at taking over Leningrad in the north, Moscow at the Centre and in the South Kiev and Odessa. Once these cities are seized whole of the USSR would be in the hands of Germany was the idea of that blitzkrieg.

Not only Germany and its generals, but also the powers opposing the German Axis forces, thought that whole of the USSR would be under Germany within a month. They were thinking as the bourgeois military strategists think. They had no imagination about how socialism had changed the people of Russia. Stalin knew it so well. In the first radio speech he declared that – “There are no invincible army and never have been”. He called upon the people to give fascist forces a taste of “war of the whole people”, which will be the counter- strategy to fight the enemy forces.

Weeks went on, then months, Germans found that they are being lured in the deep but having no rear. In the European theatre, the German army used to cut off the enemies rear here the opposite started. In Soviet Union every factory, every farm, every school, every office became a front. Those who were not directly involved in war were producing armaments and food and other necessities for the war and for the people. When German forces overran a place they found what the bourgeois military strategists called “Scorched earth” meaning everything was burnt or destroyed before retreating. But actually now it did not happen so. Peasants retreated harvesting their crops, may be a bit early, and also with their farm machinery and started production in faraway places in the east. Workers took away all the machineries including nuts and bolts to start another factory in an eastern area selected by the authority.

Two examples can be given here. The dam on river Dnieper was the result of a long political struggle as well as struggle for building up a dam which was technologically a marvel for the USSR. The engineers and workers finished it before time. But those same engineers and workers did destroy the same dam which had so much sentiments connected with their lives to stop the advance of the enemy and remained in the rear of the enemy to carry on guerrilla attacks.

Kharkov Tractor Industries started producing tankers. But when German forces advanced, most of the workers left with all the machineries to the east and only a few remained to assemble the last of tankers which moved from factory to the enemy front and then stayed back to resist them.

Such actions of people all over the country is possible when they find that they themselves have developed a society of their choice, a social order of their choice and that is Socialism. In building that society they found that they have a leader who is leading them from the front—be it peace or war. By November, 1941 Germany took over Ukraine plundered Kiev; they were besieging Leningrad and encircling Moscow from three sides. All experts felt the war was lost to Germany. But Soviet people and their leader Stalin were made of other material. Soviet government with foreign embassies were removed to distant east for safety and security. Everyone thought that Stalin had also left Moscow. Hitler announced that Moscow had already been taken over by the German Army. But to the surprise of the whole world on November 7, 1941, Stalin reviewed the troops in the Red Square. The people were confident that their leader was defending Moscow along with them. Finally, instead of taking over Moscow German army had to retreat miles and miles away by the winter. It gave such a confidence to the people that in Leningrad even after German army entered the city fight went on for every stretch of street. Even the great composer, Shostkorich was acting as air warden and while fighting composed his Seventh Symphony. It was the symphony of struggle, it was the symphony of victory, it was the symphony of sacrifice.

Same was true for Stalingrad. They fought for every block, every street, every house, even for the control of the ruins. They roared “Every pile of bricks can be made a fortress if there is courage enough” Stalin wired them, “Every hillock can be regained if there is a courage” For one hundred eighty two days i.e, six months the people of Stalingrad fought.

Socialism had created a people who could force Hitler for a battle of attrition instead of his tactics of blitzkrieg.

By the summer 1944 German forces were driven back from the frontiers of Soviet Union. Then, it was a fight for advance to Germany and liberating countries from the clutches of fascism in its forward March.

How The World took the Fight against Fascism by the USSR

True, at the beginning Britain and the USA (by that time, France was seized by Germany) felt the resistance of the USSR would collapse within a month or so. But as the war went on the situation changed. On the fourth week, Britain under the Prime Ministership of Winston Churchill signed alliance with USSR. After some time the USA under Franklin Roosevelt followed suit. Not only the ruling powers, but in Europe the underground resistance that were trying to get organised in the countries taken over by Germany also delighted people and starting fighting with more courage. In India the peoples' conscious-ness and opposition to fascism was strengthened as the CPI changed its policy to taking up fascism as the main danger. In Vietnam the Communists started to fight against French fascists and aligned with the resisting democratic forces. A World wide front against fascism was built up.

Lesson To be Drawn

First Thing we must understand from the fight against fascism by Socialist Soviet Union is that Soviet Union tried for peace after the World War I. But the imperialist forces were opposed to it. Victors were busy in dividing the booty among themselves, the vanquished were utilising Soviet peace effort for their own interest of preparation for another war.

But when the World War II broke out the appeasers failed to put up any resistance, They tried to get rid by directing the fascist Axis Powers against Socialist Soviet Union and Communists all over the world.

The Brest-Livstoky Treaty, the Rapallo treaty and Non-Aggression Pact were made by the USSR, not by choice, but by the circumstances the imperialist powers threw them into.

And time has proved the Socialist USSR as real leader of world to defeat the fascists. But after World War II, imperialists again reverted back to their war policies of containment of Communism. We must understand imperialists are imperialists, even though they might be allies in fighting fascism.

Socialism alone can unleash the power of people as a whole against the enemies of people, against fascists, against imperialists and against all sorts of reactionaries.

Let us stand up to fight for
Socialism raising high the banner of Marxism-Leninism and Mao's Thought!
