

took place ^{after} ~~before~~ Pearl Harbour-) the latter is supposed to have said that if Germany were defeated, no single nation in Europe would be able to stem the onrush of World Communism. Now, in the light of postwar developments, how dangerously accurate appears to have proved that prophecy, though it fell from the lips of an evil genius.

I shall always remember the only encounter I ever had with members of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain. It took place during a railroad journey from London to Edinburgh in 1938, just after the Munich Agreement.

Four or five people, who looked more like civil servants than anything else, got into my compartment at a depot up the line. They began talking politics and poking fun at Mr Chamberlain. After a while one of them turned to me and asked, with a strong Scottish accent, whether I possessed a political mind.

I replied that it really did not matter whether I had one or not, but that every Tom Dick and Harry had to think about politics because of the dangers latent in the international situation.

Though my observation was not in the least provocative, it brought forth from my questioner one of the most bitter diatribes against the established order of things that I had ever heard delivered in the English language; a diatribe, however, which, despite its passion, was interspersed by certain exceedingly shrewd observations upon current political developments at that time. Sifting facts from rhetoric this is what he said:-

Nothing Mr Chamberlain had done could prevent a second conflagration. The Munich Agreement had been engineered not to save peace for its own sake, but simply to prevent the Capitalist system from committing suicide. Mr Chamberlain was well aware that nothing would suffice to further the interests of World Revolution more than another war. Nevertheless there would be a fresh crisis soon- a fatal one-- in which the Soviet Union would play a decisive part, and which would be immediately followed by hostilities.

It was fallacious to think that just because Russia had been ignored at Munich, she no longer exercised a powerful influence on World affairs.

I ventured to ask him where the Communist Party of Great Britain would stand if war did break out.

"That," he replied, "would entirely depend upon existing circumstances at the time. But in all probability whatever we British Communists were to do and say in such an eventuality would simply be in order to hide our true intentions. It is only on the rarest occasions that our public expressions reflect our party line. Remember it is scarcely ever good politics to speak the truth, but it is very often excellent politics to pretend to."

Those final words of his left a very great and lasting impression on my mind, for they explained the subsequent gyrations of the Communist Party of Great Britain, ^{and} why it often seemed to be quite out of step with Moscow.

To-day those words explain a good deal more, because they