

BRITAIN AND THE SOVIET UNION

R. Palme Dutt's cable on "the most titanic conflict in history." Why Hitler attacked at this time. The issues in Britain. The men of Munich and the men of progress.

London (by cable).

JUNE 22, 1941, opened a new world situation. The battle which is now being waged carries with it the fate of the peoples of all countries and of the international working class movement. This battle is being waged on military fronts where the most titanic conflict in history is now in progress, and in the struggles of peoples in countries enslaved by fascism. It also extends as a political struggle to all countries. The present conflict opens up on a world scale the basic line of division between fascists and the reactionary friends of fascism on the one side, and on the other side, the forces of freedom lined up with the Soviet Union. Nowhere is this issue sharper than in Britain, where avowed Munichites or secret supporters of fascism and leaders of world reaction have always had their center. But where the conflict of imperialist interests led to war between British and German imperialism, in this new situation a temporary agreement has been announced by the British government for collaboration with the Soviet Union. How far this collaboration will seriously be carried out and made effective and how far the reactionaries will succeed in sabotaging it and turning it in an opposite direction is the decisive issue at present in Britain. And its outcome will depend on the conscious and active role of the working class and the democratic movement.

Why did Hitler attack at this moment? From the spring of this year it was evident that the war had reached its most critical turning point. German imperialism had established its domination in western and central Europe. The last military front in Europe was eliminated with the British evacuation of Greece and the Balkans. It was evident that the imperialist struggle could only go forward as a full world war with the prospective entry of the United States and with the possible entry of Japan. But there was hesitation in all imperialist camps. They feared the growing revolt of the people and the growing strength of the Soviet Union. There was talk of the possibility of a compromise imperialist peace on the basis of the existing situation and the possibility of transforming the war into a war against the USSR. Symptomatic of this situation was the Hess episode on which the British government still maintains a complete official silence. Whether or not Hess brought with him an official overture from the Wilhelmstrasse to Downing Street, it is evident that his visit served very effectively the purpose of the feeler, which laid bare the deep division in the British ruling class. Hitler, encouraged by this division and the obvious sympathy of the reactionaries in Britain and the United States for his anti-Soviet aims, and driven by necessity for speedy

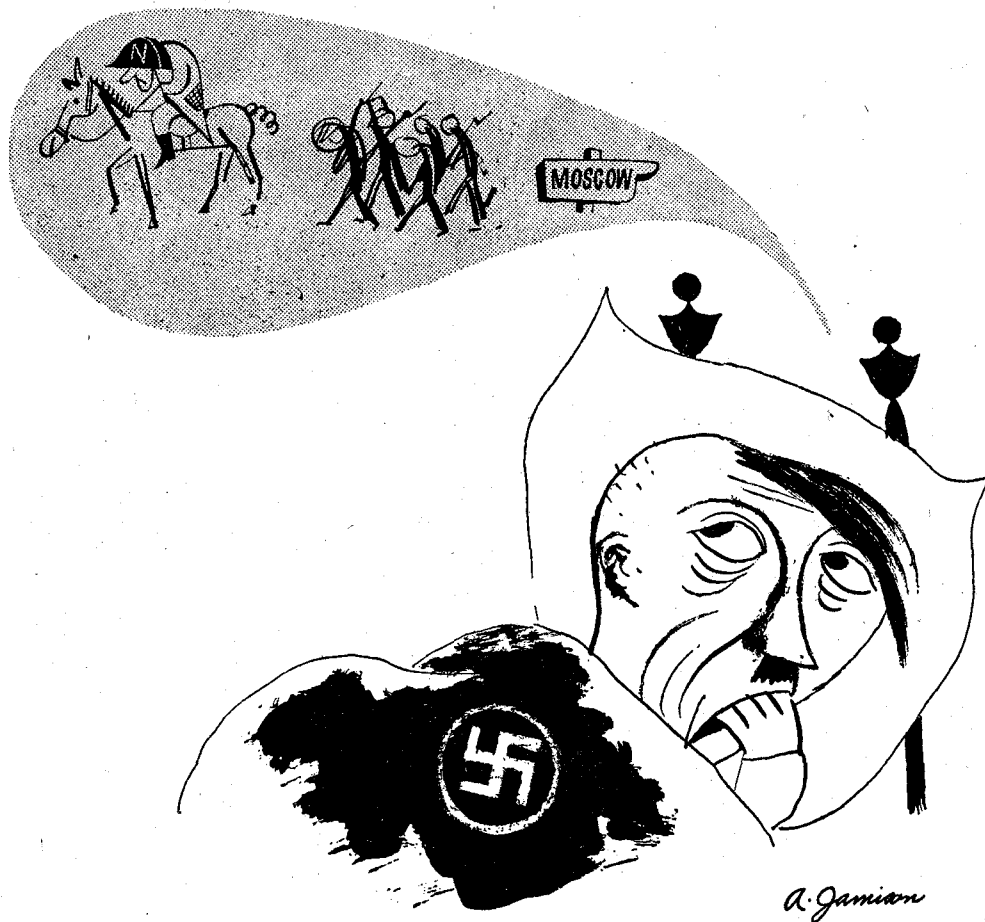
action in view of the advancing preparations of Anglo-American imperialism and his fear of the Soviet Union's growing strength and the fear of revolt among the conquered nations of Europe, entered on the supreme gamble—the assault against the Soviet Union. It is evident that decisive in Hitler's calculations is his confidence of division within the ruling classes of all the other imperialist countries and especially in Britain and the United States. But these calculations are not so easily realized. The British imperialists despite their hatred of the Soviet Union have found themselves compelled—in view of the disastrous situation to which their own policy has brought them after two years of war, in view of the slowness of effective American help, and since they were not ready to surrender the domination of Europe to Hitler—to agree to a temporary collaboration with the USSR.

THE CONSEQUENT CONDITIONS within which this supreme assault of world imperialist reaction against the citadel of socialism takes place, is a tribute to and a powerful indication of the success of the entire preceding policy of the USSR. The armed conflict which has now broken out has long threatened. On this score there have been no illusions. Every proclamation of every leader of the Soviet Union has given warning of it. The strength and diplomacy of the Soviet Union have de-

layed its outbreak for nearly two decades from the ending of the first interventionist wars. They have delayed its outbreak for eight years from the coming of Hitler to power, during which the strength of the USSR has grown, the crisis of imperialism has deepened, and the forces of the working people have had time to rally. The success of the non-aggression pact of 1939 delayed this outbreak for two years after the launching of the imperialist war in Europe.

The reactionaries all over the world, and not least in Britain and the United States, who have continuously striven since the coming of Hitler to power to promote the Soviet-Nazi conflict as their supreme aim, have obtained their immediate objectives. But they have obtained it under conditions which they did not anticipate. They were not able to achieve their Munich plan. They were not able to achieve the Chamberlain-Daladier plan through the Finnish expedition. They have got their Soviet-Nazi conflict before the world counter-revolutionary front has yet been able to be formed, and the deepening of imperialist antagonisms and the severity of the crisis to which the frenzy of their policies have reduced their own peoples now make its formation more difficult, and when in consequence the people have the greatest opportunity to prevent this formation.

The declaration of collaboration between



The Week in London

London (by cable).

THE significant highlights in the last few days from the London end are these: Following the dispatch of the British military-economic mission to Moscow and Sir Stafford Cripps' return there, R. H. Potts, president of the National Union of Railwaymen—one of the three most powerful unions in Britain—in a message to the People's Convention supporting their stand for British-Soviet unity, called for the immediate dispatch by the Trades Union Congress of a delegation to Moscow and an invitation to a similar Russian delegation to visit Britain. He declared "Solidarity with our Russian comrades" essential.

Shop stewards of one of the leading aircraft factories in the London area called on Soviet Ambassador Maisky, assuring him of their desire and determination that nothing and nobody be allowed to impede the fullest cooperation of Britain in Russia's fight.

The executive committee of the South Wales Miners Federation passed a resolution declaring: "The influences at work in this country who are hostile to the Soviet Union should be warned that they will not be allowed to impede full cooperation with Russia in bringing about the defeat of Nazism and fascism wherever they may be found."

Meantime, in the streets of London, there were huge demonstrations—by far larger than any held since the outbreak of the war—demanding absolute fulfillment of the pledge of full unity with Russia, and removal of all elements hostile to such unity.

This is the essential background of all diplomatic, military, and economic moves of the past few days. The first popular reaction to the Premier's pledge of full aid to Russia, declares Jack Owen of Manchester, one of the leading trade union militants in northern war industries, was one of grim enthusiasm. "To any suggestion," said Owen in a conversation with your correspondent, "that that pledge might in some way be sabotaged by hostile forces, the reply invariably was 'just let them try.'"

The general reaction at the moment in "political circles" is to confirm the opinion that the Premier's broadcast was in a sense a recognition of the potential strength of such hostile elements here—and perhaps above all in certain British official missions abroad—and the necessity for quickly giving an authoritative line from the present dominant section of the British Cabinet.

It was noted that even after the Premier's broadcast there were some elements in Parliament who seemed quite openly to be making immediate reservations on the subject of unity with Russia. William Hickey, well informed columnist of the *Daily Express*, has drawn sharp attention to the attitude of certain organs of the Catholic press here, which at this very moment are actually conducting a campaign against an alliance with the Soviet Union and—incredible as it may seem—for "counter-revolution" in the Soviet Union.

Equally distasteful and disturbing to many is the fact that certain allied governments in Britain are taking advantage of the Premier's own statement to broadcast to "their own people" exhortations "against Communism." Nobody here considers it necessary or would dream of asking that they should broadcast statements in favor of Communism. But it is felt that at such a moment statements of the present kind can only play into the hands of Hitler by creating divisions among the enslaved peoples and must, it is thought, be acutely embarrassing to the British Foreign Office.

A somewhat uncertain but important indication of the attitude being adopted here in official circles—as distinct from the elements mentioned—is that statements obviously intended to undermine confidence in the Red Army, and the enormous publicity at first given to the German communiques in the British press, have in the last few days tended to fade out of the majority of the newspapers.

The *Economist*, important liberal City organ, in its current issue draws especial attention to the danger of Nazi propaganda making headway among "men of property and men of religion" everywhere, and especially refers to the potentially dangerous effects of such propaganda upon American big businessmen.

CLAUDE COCKBURN.

Great Britain and the Soviet Union opens the way to real and effective collaboration of the two peoples for the defeat of fascism. But there is no room for delusions. The reactionary pro-fascist, anti-Soviet forces in Britain continue powerful and active. For the moment they are careful to hide their faces and there is plenty of fine sentiment expressed in favor of close association. But what concrete steps are being taken? This is the urgent practical question. British Toryism does not so easily change its spots. The reactionaries seek in every way to limit collaboration with the Soviet Union, to leave the Soviet Union to fight alone, while they temporize with missions and similar procedures prepare the way, if a turn in the situation develops, for an agreement with Hitler on the basis of the common fight against the Soviet Union. This determines the present line of fight. In Britain the Communist Party on June 22 issued a declaration for: (1) Immediate military and diplomatic agreement between Britain and the Soviet Union; (2) the removal of all pro-fascist and anti-Soviet reactionaries from places of power in the government, diplomatic services, or military command; (3) the placing of Hess on trial and the publication of all the secret negotiations; (4) a people's government which can be trusted to defend the interest of the people and maintain close alliance with the Soviet Union; (5) a people's victory over fascism and a people's peace; (6) international unity of all working people in the fight for freedom against fascism and reaction.

It is necessary to be prepared for the most rapid changes not only in the situation of the war, but also in the political and international situation. Only the united international front of all peoples in unity with the Soviet Union can secure the most rapid defeat of the forces of fascism. The working class and democratic movement can hold and check the movements of the reactionaries. They can compel the establishment of effective collaboration with the Soviet Union. Such common action seriously undertaken in the military and diplomatic fields can lead to the speedy defeat of fascism and the liberation of the peoples of Europe. These aims can be achieved. But they can only be achieved if the working class organizations fulfill their responsibilities of leadership.

The people of the Soviet Union are fighting for the future interests of humanity. Their cause is the cause of the common people all over the world. We enter this conflict with no underestimation of the seriousness of the issues or the magnitude of the forces which are being let loose by the representatives of barbarism against the cause of the working people and of socialism. But we enter this conflict with complete confidence in the final inevitable victory of the cause of the people and of socialism, whatever vicissitudes through which we may have to pass, and with the determination to do all in our power by every means to hasten that victory.

R. PALME DUTT.