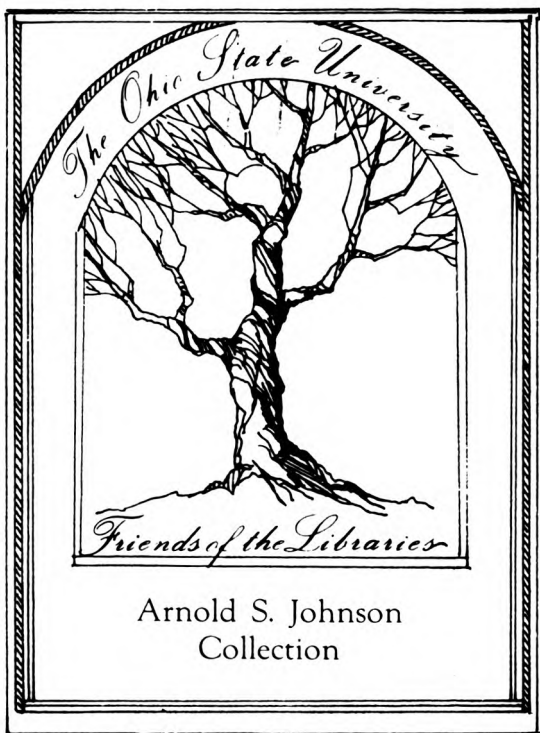


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Smash Hitler's Spring Offensive — Now!

BY WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

NEWS dispatches are pouring in from all quarters to the effect that Nazi Germany is now cooking up a great offensive for the spring. Obviously Hitler will exhaust every means to make this offensive decisive. He is bleeding all Europe to get materials to throw against his enemies. Gambler that he is, he will seek to score a knockout blow, to win the war before the United States can develop and throw its full strength into the struggle. The projected Nazi offensive will be directed against the U.S.S.R.; it may also take the form of an invasion of England; maybe a drive through the Near and Middle East; or it may go down through Spain into the North African area. A decisive success by the Nazis in any one of these directions might be fatal to the United Nations in the war. Should Hitler be able to weaken seriously the U.S.S.R. or to overrun England it would be a most serious disaster to the democratic cause, and it would also be a catastrophe should he succeed in capturing the Mediterranean zone and pushing through the Middle East, thereby establishing contact with the Japanese in the Far East.

The Danger of Hitler's Spring Offensive

From all this it should be perfectly clear that the great present-day task of the United States, as well as of the United Nations as a whole, is to take every step to defeat Hitler's planned spring offensive. All means must be exerted to prevent this offensive from taking shape, and to smash it when it comes. This means that we have to increase vastly our munitions aid to the U.S.S.R. and Great Britain, and also to adopt energetic measures to get a big American armed force into the European war zone as quickly as possible. The outcome of the war, the fate of world democracy, may well depend upon whether or not the United Nations wake up fully and quickly to the danger that now confronts them and crush Hitler's offensive in the egg.

Meanwhile, what about Japan? Obviously serious attention must also be paid to this brutal aggressor, who is now having such spectacular success in the Far East. This is one war, so Japan's victories are also Hitler's. Hong Kong is lost and so is Manila; the Philippines and Malaya have been overrun; Singapore has fallen; the Dutch East Indies and Burma are in peril; even Australia and India are threatened, and the struggle of the Chinese people has been made much more difficult. Japan's conquests in the Far East constitute a world menace. It is true that despite her big victories there are basic weaknesses in Japan's position. She has over a million soldiers tied up in her hopeless war in China, as well as several hundred thousand more immobilized along the Soviet frontiers; besides this, Japan's far-flung bases and

long lines of communications are highly vulnerable, her industrial system is relatively weak, and her whole economy has been undermined by the long Chinese war.

The Backbone of the Axis—Nazi Germany

Nevertheless, Japan is a tough customer, and the United States plus the British, Chinese, Dutch, Australians, Filipinos and other peoples fighting her, have a great task on hand to subdue her. But there is no room for panic over the Japanese advance, such as Hearst and other fifth columnists are now trying to create. If Japan has been able to make such spectacular headway this is due not so much to her own great strength, as to the incredible military stupidities committed by leading American and British officers at Pearl Harbor and Singapore. By a combination of gross complacency and general ignorance of the methods of modern warfare they handed Japan big victories on a silver platter. It would be wild folly to try to correct these costly mistakes by rushing into a bigger one; that is, by relaxing our present pressure against Hitler, by halting our aid to the U.S.S.R. and Great Britain in the European war zone, as Hitler and Hearst want us to do. That would be to invite an overwhelming disaster and might well cause the loss of the war.

Senator Pepper of Florida (*New York Times*, Feb. 14) also puts this vital question squarely:

“The fulcrum of this war lies in Russia, no matter how ominous are the signs in other parts of the world. . . . Let the Russian front break, let the Russian army deteriorate, let the stream of Russian supplies be cut off, and the flood of Hitlerism will inundate every area of the earth. . . .

The Russian front," he said, "must be strengthened at almost any sacrifice."

The Senator drew another basic lesson from the fundamental nature of the Soviet-German front when he stated:

"When such an area [Russia] is so vital, therefore, it would seem essential that those who defend it, those who guide its gallant and heroic courses would be an intimate part of every council and conference dealing with the grand strategy of this struggle which embraces the globe. May we not ask, therefore, that more room be made for the Russians at the war table?"

In this question of where we should strike our main blows in the war, there are two basic propositions which we must constantly bear in mind. The first is that this is one indivisible war, not several separate wars. The Axis powers constitute one gang of imperialists who are out to dominate the world; they are united and have a common world strategy. They can be defeated only as a group. The second thing we have to remember is that Nazi Germany is the strongest element in the Axis combination. Controlling all of Central and Western Europe, Germany is the heart and backbone of the Axis. While fighting the Axis at all world points, therefore, the main blows necessarily have to be directed against its core, Nazi Germany. The Axis cannot be defeated until Germany is smashed, and no Axis power could long hold out after Germany had been defeated. However menacing Japan may be it cannot win the world war in the Pacific, certainly not immediately; but Germany might well win it quickly in

the European zone by a devastating blow that would knock out one or more of the democratic powers.

Both President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, in recent statements and speeches, have recognized that Germany is the most decisive enemy of the United Nations. Secretary of the Navy Knox put the question very well recently:

“The war in the Pacific, in Malaya, in Russia, in Libya—they are all one war, one bid for world mastery. Hitler hatched this conspiracy, but the enemy is one indivisible total enemy. Hitler wants us to throw all our growing strength into the Pacific, to stop supplying the British and the Russians. But this is what we propose not to do.”

The Time to Strike Hitler Is Now

There are lots of people who, impressed by the winter successes of the Red Army, unwisely believe that the U.S.S.R. now has Nazi Germany by the throat and that, therefore, no further real danger can come from that quarter. But this is the most fatal illusion we could fall victims to. It is true that the Red Army has dealt devastating blows to the Nazis. It has seriously weakened their armed forces; it has destroyed their myth of invincibility. At the recent Rio de Janeiro Conference of all American republics, Sumner Welles declared that the Red Army had destroyed over one-third of Hitler's air force and more than one-half of his tanks. The Red Army has relieved the terrific pressure upon England and saved that country from being conquered. Only its valiant fight has prevented the world from being overrun by the fascist barbarians. But, while recognizing all these brilliant Soviet

successes, we dare not underestimate the remaining vast strength of Nazi Germany. Hitler has behind him not only the industries of Germany, but of all Europe. We must pay close attention to Stalin's recent statement that Germany still has a big superiority in airplanes and tanks.

Therefore, we cannot help but be alarmed to learn that the United States is fulfilling only 50 per cent of the promised munitions to the U.S.S.R. Prime Minister Churchill also recently stated that England had likewise fallen short of its pledged supplies to the U.S.S.R. At best, the United States and Great Britain are getting only a small quantity of munitions to the Soviet Union, and to allow this to diminish is to make a desperate gamble with fate.

One of Hitler's major considerations in inciting Japan to make war against the United States was to divert the American attack away from himself. He wants to keep American munitions from going to Great Britain and the U.S.S.R., and to switch away the American fleet from the Atlantic Ocean. We must not fall into this deadly trap, whether through over-confidence in Red Army successes, or by becoming victims of Hearst's pro-Hitler campaign to get us to quit helping our allies in the crucial struggle in Europe and devote all attention to fighting "our own war in the Pacific." The winning of the war, the saving of our country and the rest of the world from fascist slavery, may well depend upon our not making this deadly mistake, upon our tremendously increasing our blows at this critical juncture of the war against the main enemy, Nazi Germany.

If the United States, jointly with the other democratic

powers, is to win this war one of the greatest lessons we must learn is that we will have to fight on the offensive. We must not stand around on the defensive, waiting for the rattlesnake, Nazi Germany, to strike. It is not enough to try to build ships faster than Hitler can sink them, nor to heap up vast defensive armaments in various parts of the world. Our country, and the United Nations as a whole, absolutely must militantly take the offensive. A defensive strategy means to prolong the war indefinitely, to needlessly shed seas of blood. One of the very greatest assets of the Axis powers is that they have so long held the offensive. This has enabled them to strike at the weakest spots in their enemies' line, when and where they pleased. By the same token, one of the most basic weaknesses of the democratic countries is that they have been on the defensive. This has contributed to great disasters for them. Look at France; she sat placidly behind her Maginot Line, lost in foolish over-confidence, until she was overwhelmed by the Nazi attackers, who chose the strategic moment to strike. And now Great Britain is making a similar mistake, by keeping her huge, highly-equipped army idle in her home island, waiting for Hitler to attack it when and how he sees fit.

Open a New European Front Against Hitler

Obviously the United Nations must break completely with the defensive policy that has been so disastrous to the democratic cause. In this war a militant policy of the offensive is in itself worth millions of soldiers. On this vital question we should learn from the U.S.S.R. The Red Army leaders thoroughly appreciate the importance of

seizing the initiative, of holding the offensive. For almost six months the Red Army and the Soviet nation withstood from the German Army the mightiest blow ever delivered against any people in all history. They suffered huge losses in manpower, in material and in territory. They faced an organized system of barbarous atrocities against their civilian population such as the modern world has never known.

Nevertheless, the Red Army was able, despite all its losses and in the midst of terrible winter weather, to go over onto a great offensive all along the two-thousand-mile Eastern Front. For the first time in the ten years since Japan invaded Manchuria, a fascist aggressor power was forced to fight on the defensive. To the amazement and admiration of the world, the Red Army is now slashing into Hitler's army, striking when and where it (not he) decides, in a fierce effort to destroy the Nazis' manpower and material and thereby weaken or make impossible Hitler's planned spring offensive. The development of the great Soviet offensive, after the terrific assault of the German Army, is unquestionably one of the greatest (if it is not the very greatest) military achievement in all the long annals of war.

The offensive of the Red Army is probably the central turning point in the World War. It should be made the beginning of a great offensive by the United Nations generally. Certainly there is every reason why our country should conduct all its war effort in this militant sense. In the Pacific, together with our allies, we should strike aggressively against Japan's exposed bases and its extended and undefendable lines of communications even though

our air, naval and military strength is not yet at its maximum. The success of the American Navy's sudden attack upon the Gilbert and Marshall Islands is a striking example of this effectiveness of offensive tactics. But, above all, it is necessary for us and our allies to go over to the offensive in the European zone of war. Hitler's projected spring offensive must be broken up at all costs before it can get well under way. This is the supreme need today of the democratic powers in this war.

To develop a general offensive against Hitler, the creation of a new European front by Great Britain and the United States is imperative. The A.E.F. recently landed in Ireland should be the forerunner of a great army of millions of American soldiers. The United States should pour men and munitions into the European zone in unprecedented quantities. The situation demands that such a force, together with Great Britain's big, highly-trained and thoroughly-equipped army, should build a Western front and take Hitler in the rear. Hitler must be crushed in the deadly pincers of a two-front war. The Anglo-American forces, supported by the rebellious peoples of the occupied countries, should and could march eastward, while the conquering Red Army storms on westward, until the two armies meet and shake hands, somewhere in Germany, over the dead body of the Nazi regime.

Complacency—Our Number One Internal Enemy

In order that the United States develop the determination to take the offensive it is absolutely necessary that we free ourselves from our present gross habits of over-confidence. This complacency is our number one internal

enemy. We simply must get rid of the widely prevalent notion that we cannot lose the war; that we will win as a matter of course. We must stop drugging ourselves with easy assurances that we are the richest and most efficient people, that our industrial system is the strongest on earth, and that therefore the Axis powers cannot possibly stand against us. We must stop boasting of our own greatness and quit underestimating the enemy. Where such illusions can lead to we saw all too clearly at Pearl Harbor, where our Army and Navy officials completely underestimated the audacity and villainy of Japan, with resultant disaster. Similar criminal negligence, based also on stupid complacency, led to the destruction of the great steamer, the Normandie.

True, the United States has great potential military strength, but wars are won with actual weapons, not with future potentialities; and in real war forces we are still relatively weak. We must realize clearly that we are in a life-and-death struggle with powerful and resolute foes; that our national independence is at stake, and that only if we develop an all-out and relentless struggle can we and our allies emerge victoriously from the present momentous World War. Such an indomitable fighting spirit is indispensable if our country is to secure the great advantage of fighting on the offensive.

Nowhere do we need more urgently to fight against complacency and overconfidence and to develop the spirit of the offensive, than in the field of production. Here especially are we doping ourselves with glittering statistics about our industrial prowess. The threatening menace of Nazi Germany in Europe and of Japan in the Far East

should be warning signals to us that we must plunge into war production as never before. President Roosevelt's 60,000 airplanes, 45,000 tanks and 8,000,000 tons of shipping can be produced, but only after intelligent and strenuous effort on our part. The United States can meet all the munitions demands being made upon it by our allies, but only with resolute production action. The government must take a more decisive part in production and organized labor must, along the lines of the Murray Plan, be given a real voice in industry. The job of war production cannot be left simply to the employers, with their widespread profiteering, resistance to plant expansion, and opposition to converting their industries onto a war basis.

More Democracy Will Strengthen Our Nation's War Effort

Also we must be on guard to preserve our basic liberties. Here, too, there can be no room for complacency. Hitler can be defeated only by democratic countries, and there are many sinister forces in the United States—the Hoovers, Lindberghs, Dieses, Hearsts, Coughlins, Norman Thomases, etc., who are eagerly seeking to exploit the war situation in order to push our country along the road toward fascism. To prosecute the war successfully the government has to adopt various centralizing measures, as we have already seen. But the reactionaries try to distort these necessary government controls and disciplines into dangerous attacks upon the people's rights. The United States can and must emerge from this war more democratic than when it went in; but it will do this only if the

people, especially the trade unions, are on the alert to defend and expand our democratic institutions.

A great and vital task in strengthening American democracy and in winning the war is to secure the freedom of Earl Browder. America should not tolerate the unspeakable outrage of this great anti-fascist fighter being kept in jail. Browder's brilliant abilities are urgently needed by the American people in this war crisis. In unmistakable terms the people should demand his release. Browder's imprisonment is a threat against all American democracy, to our whole fight against Hitlerism.

Labor's Tasks and Duties in the War

In these crucial days, with the basic need of the United States and its allies to go over to the offensive in order to smash the Axis powers, organized labor bears a heavy share of responsibility. Labor's fullest possible participation in the war effort is needed—to consolidate national unity, to help strengthen the government's anti-Hitler policy, to change our present complacency into fighting militancy, to speed up production, to develop civilian defense, to buttress our democracy, to fight the insidious fifth column, to protect the health and efficiency of the workers. To help accomplish these ends, the C.I.O., A. F. of L. and Railroad Brotherhoods should demand full representation in the President's Cabinet, in all government war boards, in the management of industry, in the civilian defense set-up, etc.

And for this organized labor must unite its own ranks. Joint action between the great national labor groups is no

longer just a trade union question. Now it is a fundamental national issue of the whole people; a basic measure necessary for winning the war. Labor everywhere should hail the recent formation of the A. F. of L.-C.I.O. Victory Labor Board, with President Roosevelt as chairman, give it their heartiest support, and utilize it to develop an all-labor war program and to mobilize the trade unions to the utmost for aggressive struggle to destroy Hitler and all his works. In every state and city the trade unions of both federations should be working in close collaboration for the winning of the war.

Nor is the Communist Party, despite its far lesser numerical strength, without its heavy duties in these critical times. These duties and responsibilities we fully recognize and accept. Our party has pledged its all to winning the war against Hitler, and it will fulfill this pledge to the uttermost. The place for all militant workers is in the ranks of the party of which Earl Browder is the head; the fighting party of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.



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