

FIVE CENTS

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THE BULLETIN

THE SECOND "BATTLE OF FRANCE"

WHAT PATH FOR THE ITALIAN MASSES

—J. C. HUNTER

ECHOES OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

—ARTHUR BURKE

CANNON'S "STRUGGLE FOR A PROLETARIAN PARTY"

—GEORGE MARLEN

THE TROTSKY SCHOOL OF FALSIFICATION

WHAT TROTSKY TAUGHT ABOUT HITLERISM

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CONTENTS

| | <u>PAGE</u> |
|--|-------------|
| The Second "Battle of France" | 1 |
| What Path For The Italian Masses | 20 |
| Echoes Of The Spanish Civil War | 29 |
| Cannon's "Struggle For A Pro- letarian Party" | 33 |

THE TROTSKY SCHOOL OF FAISIFICATION

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| What Trotsky Taught About Hitlerism | 38 |
|-------------------------------------|----|

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I) AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

THE amazingly swift withdrawal of the Nazis from France is paralleled only by their rapid entry into the country in May-June 1940. Significantly, the surface military features of both situations present an essential similarity, with the direction of movement and the disposition of actors on the stage reversed as history passes from the first act to the second. All the fantasy, ludicrousness and atmosphere of unreality which marked the military picture of the "war" in France in 1940 is repeated in 1944. It will be well to recall what happened in France in May-June 1940 lest the continuity of history be lost in portraying events separated from their total context.

The second "Battle of France" (1944) is recorded in screaming headlines. So was the first (1940) — until the noise died down and the bourgeois press was compelled in spite of itself to sound a somewhat different note. Thus, the New York Herald Tribune, which along with all the other papers had roared that the 1940 "battle of France" was the greatest of all military struggles in history, was constrained less than two months after this alleged "battle" was finished, to make the melancholy observation that:

"It now seems quite clear that there never was a battle of France, a battle for Paris, or whatever it was called in the days before the country's collapse." (July 23, 1940. Our emphasis)

For eight months after the declaration of war on September 3, 1939, the huge French forces had been sitting idle. This was the period of the notorious "Sitzkrieg," which was also referred to fairly frankly in the press as the "Phoney War." Then, when the Nazis suddenly moved to the West, there was no resistance from the French and British forces facing them. The large and powerful French and British airforce was kept on the ground, the

French artillery, long famous for power and number, was absent. The French tanks, among the best in the world, were not to be seen. Prodigious fortresses like Sedan and Verdun were occupied by the Nazis without a fight, while small and isolated groups of soldiers who made an effort to resist the Nazis were prevented from doing so by French officers, sometimes at the point of a gun, sometimes by being treacherously herded into railway cars and shipped directly into the hands of the Nazis. The northern "Allied" army of one million men was separated by the British and French commanders from the bulk of the French army to the south, opening a path for the Nazis who sent a small force of lightly-armed troops, estimated at 50 to 60 thousand, into France. The British hastily withdrew from the continent at Dunkirk, enacting an "epic" and leaving to the Nazis supplies reported sufficient to equip forty divisions. Without a struggle, the huge French army of some five million men was pronounced "defeated," and the "war" in France was over. The subsequent reports, bellying the blood-and-thunder yarns of previous days, were characterized by phrases like the following, taken, by way of example, from the above-quoted Herald Tribune dispatch: "They never saw any real fighting... there is no evidence of battle... they surrendered without a fight."

In a word, the "Battle of France" of 1940 was a continuation of what was openly referred to during the "Sitzkrieg" as the Phoney War, only it was disguised by a terrific verbal barrage which made up for the utter lack of real military barrages. The ruling gangs of the several "democracies," acting in collaboration with the Fascists, opened the gates of France for the Nazi forces to enter and act as the spearhead in plunging the French masses into the abyss of fascist dictatorship. The purpose of this maneuver was first, to crush the French masses who had shown signs of profound

discontent and turbulence, carrying French capitalism ever closer to a perilous crisis; secondly, to control the French workers in the rear of Hitler's army as a preliminary to his attack on the Soviet Union, third to put the French toilers and French industry at the service of Hitler's war machine. The European masses had to be crushed before Hitler could launch his assault on the Soviet Union, and of all sections of the proletariat on the continent, the French was at that moment the most dangerous.

In 1940 in France the Nazis were brought in under the cover of a sham war with the "democratic" powers feigning resistance while actually opening the path for the fascists. In 1944, with the Nazis withdrawing and the "democratic" powers reoccupying France the problem confronts the workers of ascertaining whether or not the former policy of inter-imperialist collaboration disguised as "war" is continuing. It is necessary, therefore, to review the specific features of the events of the summer of 1944 in France.

2) A GREAT MILITARY "SECRET"

Judging by the reports of the correspondents, there are probably few things about which the Nazis had more information than the Anglo-American preparations for the landing in Northwest France which occurred on June 6, 1944. It was shown that for weeks the Nazi air patrols had been surveying in great detail the huge activity on the southern coast of England. Neither the "Allied" preparations nor the Nazi scouting activities was in any way a military secret. On May 18, 1944, Drew Middleton reported to The New York Times on this situation:

"The Germans, who have been making widespread reconnaissance flights over Britain, claim through Jean Paquis, their Paris 'mouth-piece,' that Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower has massed fifty divisions and 80,000 air-borne troops in Southern England for the invasion."

The Nazis, it is seen, were not in the least bashful about letting the

"enemy" know how much they had learned.

In addition to the air patrols, the Nazis were said to have maintained a numerous naval patrol, augmented by Radar devices, the last word in military detection. Hanson W. Baldwin of The New York Times gave an account of the Nazis' observation force off the Channel coast of France:

"The offshore naval patrols are conducted by the German Navy, chiefly with the use of small craft and auxiliaries. There the Germans have converted trawlers, armed merchantmen, E-boats (motor torpedo boats) more than 100 feet long, of eighty tons displacement and with high speed R-boats, somewhat bigger craft with slower speed but greater gun power; Seibel ferries of the type used in the Mediterranean; minesweepers, and other types of vessels. Radar also gives warning of the approach of an enemy." (The New York Times, May 5, 1944)

Finally, it should be remembered that the Nazis were in France for four years, which gave them plenty of time to organize themselves in every way.

3) THE NAZI HANDS-OFF POLICY

It is striking to observe, therefore, that with all their knowledge of the landing preparations, the Nazis definitely pursued a hands-off policy and allowed them to continue in peace. Reports reveal that the Nazis failed to attack the invasion ports of southern England during the preparatory period:

"The failure of the enemy to loose his bombers on such ports in the last six weeks has been one of the minor mysteries of the war." (The New York Times, May 17, 1944)

As in every other situation embracing the "democracies" and the "Axis," the Normandy affair, even before it was launched, already showed "mysteries."

The American Army Air Chief, General Arnold, publicly commented on the fact that the huge operation presented a perfect target for aerial attack, yet he did not see a single German airplane:

"When he saw the terrific congestion in the English ports, the thousands of ships that plied the Channel, the hundreds of ships standing by off the coast, it suddenly occurred to me that I hadn't seen a German airplane."

"Says Germans Missed Chance

"Yet, here was a target, the like of which no enemy aviation ever had seen before — an aviator's dream!" General Arnold exclaimed. (The New York Times, July 4, 1944)

Other interesting details appear, all indicating a Nazi policy to facilitate the "Allied" landing on the French coast. A cable dispatch from London stated that for six months before "D-Day" several thousand flights had been made by American photo-reconnaissance planes over Normandy but had been ignored by the Luftwaffe:

"Tactical photo-reconnaissance aircraft of the United States Ninth Air Force have completed 4,000 individual sorties without losing one plane to the Luftwaffe in the past six months, Col. George W. Peck, 29-year-old commander of the group, said today." (The New York Times, June 24, 1944)

Of course, the Luftwaffe's peculiar disregard for the American reconnaissance planes at the time when the world was told "D-Day" was approaching, was another of those "mysteries" of the "Second World War":

"Colonel Peck admitted being mystified as to why the Nazi pilots pass up his men." (Ibid.)

A few hours before the great armada of transports unloaded men and supplies on the beaches of Normandy, the "Allies" sent out a "Pre H-Hour Mission." The task of this mission was to patrol the Channel, escort the ships and protect the minesweepers. A

reporter on one of the patrol torpedo boats said that the minesweepers reached the French coast:

"One of our missions was to protect Allied minesweepers which cleared a wide channel straight to the enemy shore for troop transports and supply ships." (New York Herald Tribune, June 7, 1944. Our emphasis)

And what happened? The squadron of "Pre-H-Hour Mission" boats hung around for many hours, close to the shore, but for some queer reason was not molested by the Nazi patrols of which Hanson W. Baldwin had written only a month before: The patrol-boat reporter continued:

"From time to time we were within two or three miles off the French shore, but our naval units encountered no enemy opposition whatsoever.

"That is the outstanding fact I brought back with me. Altogether my squadron of PT-boats was in the Channel for about twenty hours." (Ibid.)

In a real conflict, the approach of an enemy force would have stirred the defensive forces into motion. On the Normandy coast there was no alarm. In an actual war such a situation would have been the acme of absurdity, but in a phoney war any absurd feature from the military aspect, can be disposed of by a label, "Mystery."

A highly important point to note in all this is that the Anglo-American preparations for the landing were taking place right under the Nazis' noses, virtually in full view. The immediate preliminaries for the landing brought "Allied" minesweepers and torpedo boats in force right off the French coast for almost an entire day, showing the Nazis in advance precisely where the landings were to take place. As a matter of fact, in the weeks before the actual landing, the Nazis gave plenty of evidence that they know exactly where it would occur. Reports referred to the Germans "...whose propaganda in France has insisted that the

main Allied attacks would be between Cherbourg and Havre." (The New York Times, June 7, 1944)

4) "SURPRISE!"

THE much publicized knowledge that the Nazis had of the landing preparations and the utter impossibility of concealing such a huge undertaking made it an accepted fact that it was absolutely out of the question to effect a surprise on the northwest coast of France. Thus, The New York Times through its reporter G. H. Archambault on May 6, 1944, published the general opinion of the situation:

"When the Allies land on the European continent it is conceded now they cannot possibly take the Germans by surprise."

Utterly no stock was taken in any surprise element prior to the actual landing, for the Nazis' knowledge of the impending affair as well as their efficient observation forces were well publicized and it would have been ludicrous for anyone to pretend that thousands of ships and planes could approach the French coast without the Nazis knowing it.

When the landing on the Normandy coast occurred, however, a most remarkable circumstance arose. The capitalist spokesmen pretended that the Nazis had been surprised! In the lead in spreading this nursery tale was, of course, Churchill. "Churchill Elated by Foe's Surprise," blared a New York Times headline on June 7, 1944. These people actually tried to create the impression that over 4,000 ships and thousands of planes had set out from England without the Nazis — who kept up a constant watch — being aware of it!

Why wore the bourgeois fabulists compelled to invent stories that the Nazis were surprised? Because there was about to unfold — in reverse order, this time — the military fantasy which had occurred in France in May-June 1940 when the "Allied" rulers opened the path for the Nazis to enter France. The stage directions on June 6, 1944 called for the Nazis to open

the path for the "Allied" entrance.

There was an unmistakeable failure on the part of the Nazis to resist the invasion, and this had to be explained away by the "Allied" leaders. Here is a sample of the problem the high spokesmen faced and the way they solved it:

"Considering the vast amount of equipment used to effect landings — around 4,000 vessels — and the obviously large number of troops of various arms participating in the epic operation, the President as well as military officials are amazed at the record low of casualties and general losses. They account for it by the fact that the Germans were taken completely by surprise." (Daily News, June 7, 1944. Our emphasis)

On all sides reports of the following type came in: "We have steamed for hours, thousands of vessels are converging on the French coast, and nothing yet has happened." (H.W. Baldwin, The New York Times, June 9, 1944) Pilots returning from the landing coast made "...reports emphasizing the lack of German resistance." (World-Telegram, June 6, 1944) Further, "There was an unexpected lack of opposition to our first landings," reports the New York Post of June 6, 1944. In a word, the task which in a real war would have been fulfilled at all costs, namely a determined fight to prevent an invading force from ever setting foot on the coast, was not at all attempted by the Nazis. It was this peculiarity which the authorities and the newspapermen had to make plausible in appearance. Sometimes they managed to look like fools in their efforts. Thus the eminent Hanson W. Baldwin contrived to forget in his second sentence what he had written in the first. He reports in one breath: "The enemy cannot fail to know something is up. The armada is too large. All of it, practically, has sailed from port in daylight." And in the next breath, he declares: "It looks as if we have surprised the enemy." (The New York Times, June 9, 1944) Incidentally, this is the same gentleman,

who in his May 5th dispatch which we quoted above gave a lengthy description of the formidable observation, scouting and reconnaissance forces which the Nazis lined up on the French coast. But — "We Surprised Nazis, Churchill Tells House" — and all the phonographs had to repeat the official fraud faithfully.

With the technical means at the disposal of the military authorities today, it is absolutely impossible to approach the coast of France (or any coast of a modern power) without it being immediately known. This holds even for small naval forces, while the armada sent over by the Anglo-Americans was evidently gigantic. Not only was its movement across the Channel utterly incapable of concealment, but also the preparations on the English shores, which required weeks, could by no means in existence be hidden from the Nazis. Moreover, coastal guns can be aimed and approaching ships sunk without their even being actually sighted. From the capitalist papers, however, one would conjure up a fantastic picture of the Nazis sitting on the coast apparently with opera glasses purchased from Woolworth's and looking through the wrong end, to the bargain, so that "naturally" the vast British and American fleets of transports "took them by surprise." All previous information showing that the Nazis were paying meticulous attention to the goings-on in the Channel had to be studiously "forgotten" by the Churchills and their host of flunkies.

5) ANOTHER "EXPLANATION" —
THE ALLEGED "SOFTENING" OF THE
FRENCH COAST

FOR those who were not to be properly impressed by the tall tale about the Nazis being "surprised," the capitalist mouthpieces had another line of argument to explain away why the Nazis did not resist the landing. On June 10, 1944, the editors of The New York Times dropped for a moment the "surprise" theme and took up one of a more blood-and-thunder variety.

"Our progress so far has been

made possible, above all, by our mastery of the air. By it we were able to rain destruction upon rocket-gun emplacements and shore batteries months before a ship left the British ports."

However, the above paper's own military expert had reported in the directly opposite vein that "...there have been no widespread bombings of German gun positions or coastal fortifications." (Hanson W. Baldwin, The New York Times, May 26, 1944) This was written only eleven days before the landing! What, then, remains of Mr. Baldwin's colleagues' "explanation" that "months before" the "Allies" were able to "rain destruction" on the Nazis' "shore batteries"? Let us go into the matter somewhat further. Certain bombings on the French coast were reported. It is significant to observe where these bombings were concentrated. The New York Times three days before the landings referred to:

"The Calais-Boulogne area of the French coast, the most battered section of Hitler's Atlantic Wall and daily target of Allied air attack for almost fifty days...(The New York Times, June 4, 1944. Our emphasis)

Let us put two and two together. There were no widespread bombings of Nazi gun positions or coastal fortifications, but there was reportedly a concentrated bombing in the Calais-Boulogne area. The remarkable point is this: the Calais-Boulogne area is NOT where the landings took place. The landings occurred in the Havre-Cherbourg area. In other words, in the face of a general lack of widespread coastal bombing the one coastal area which reportedly was heavily bombed was off at a tangent! Such was the "softening" of the landing area of the coast of France — a manifest bluff.

The capitalist "explainers" had plenty to talk away. The masses, believing that there has been in progress a real war between the "Allies" and the "Axis" — a story supported by every political party in existence, from the Republican and Democratic to

the "Communist," Socialist and Trotskyite — expected reports of frightful carnage. Indeed, there was logic to these expectations, for in a real war—like that in 1914-1918, for example — an attempted landing on the German-held coast, whether successful or defeated, would have brought on a frightful clash of arms and would have entailed an appalling expenditure of lives on both sides. In the present "war," involving the biggest capitalist powers, the compulsions of logic are the last thing to count on.

Let us review some details of the queer behavior of the Nazis in the face of the "Allied" landings in France. That behavior throws light upon the basic imperialist policy. And without the understanding that what happened in June 1944 was the result of imperialist policy, there is left only the bourgeois fakery of "surprise," "softening up," etc., etc., as the explanation of this epochal situation; in a word, there is left nothing but confusion and darkness.

6) THE MYSTERIOUS ABSENCE OF THE LUFTWAFFE

ONE of the remarkable features of the June 1944 affair was the virtually total absence of the Luftwaffe during the voyage of the immense armada, on the scene of the landings, and after the "Allied" troops rolled into France.

From many quarters reports came in that the Nazis had concentrated a considerable airforce in the West. "The Luftwaffe is believed to have 1,500 to 2,000 fighters in the West and perhaps 500 bombers, and can still deliver a considerable sting." (The New York Times, June 7, 1944) Other reports gave even higher estimates. The newspaper PM of June 6, 1944 states that the Luftwaffe had "about 3,500 planes of first-line calibre on the western front."

Nevertheless, throughout the whole operation, the Nazis held firmly to their policy of no interference. On the day of the landing the reports stated, "So far there has been no ene-

my air opposition at all. The invasion fleet came over to the shores of northwestern France unmolested." (The New York Times, June 7, 1944. Our emphasis) As the records indicate, not only "so far," but even subsequently the Luftwaffe was practically out of the picture.

On the whole, the officials did not try to create the impression that the Nazis had no airforce in the West. On the contrary, they were constrained to admit that even the glaring fact that the absence of the Luftwaffe from the scene on "D-Day" did not mean there was no Luftwaffe:

"A British military aide, Brig. Gen. Horace D. Sewell, commented that 'Absence of opposition from the Luftwaffe in the early stages of the landing operations does not mean they lack planes with which to counter-attack.'" (The New York Times, June 8, 1944)

From many sources the same story was repeated. Harold Denny in The New York Times reported "...our advancing sea convoys and assaulting troops gained the beaches virtually unhampered by the Luftwaffe." (June 7, 1944) A particularly significant item refers to the failure of the Nazis to use their reserve airforce:

"First was the Nazi failure to attack in force with planes, submarines and E. boats the invasion armada of more than 4000 ships, before it sailed and while it was crossing the Channel. Second, was the Nazi failure to use their reserve air force against us on the beaches and since." (World-Telegram, June 12, 1944)

By no means should it be imagined that the Luftwaffe had been withdrawn from France. Far from it. While keeping his planes away from the official invasion conducted by the alleged enemies of Nazi Germany, Hitler sent his bombers to rain death and devastation upon the towns which had been seized by rebellious French masses. The aroused masses were greatly confused and misled politically but they quite

clearly grasped that Fascism must be destroyed. A U.P. dispatch dated July 17, 1944 from London stated:

"A French communique said today that German bombers in 'considerable force' had raided the French towns of Nantua, Lacluse and Oyonnax, liberated by patriots, after German and Vichy security forces had failed to dislodge French fighters in a series of ground attacks. The communique said, however, the French still held the towns."

This surely is a plain sign that the Nazi air force had not been withdrawn from France but was used freely by Hitler against any threat of an uprising.

There are other signs that the Luftwaffe was there, but was ordered by the Nazi chiefs not to interfere in the "Allied" landings. It was stated that on the day of the landing the "Allies" sent a "bluff invasion fleet" some miles northeast of Normandy. The Luftwaffe which stayed away from the path of the actual landing, immediately appeared as if by magic:

"The German Air Force, absent from the Normandy invasion, went into the air to attack a 'diversion' fleet that the Allies sent on D-Day into the Calais-Boulogne area, Comdr. Anthony Kimmins, British naval intelligence officer, said yesterday." (The New York Times, June 27, 1944. Our emphasis)

Significantly, the "bluff fleet" was not seriously attacked, as suggested by Kimmins himself:

"The ships that went on the 'bluff' invasion did not suffer much damage, he said. He added: 'I think the men had a very good time. They just made a lot of noise.'" (Ibid)

That this Luftwaffe "attack" was a consciously cooked-up fraud on the part of the Nazi commanders is crystal clear for the location of the real landing was accurately reported by the German radio as soon as it occurred:

"The German radio placed the

scene of the landings in Normandy, along a stretch of more than 100 miles of beaches from LeHavre to Cherbourg, and said the Allied aim was to seize those two major ports and the airdromes of the Normandy peninsula for an offensive of gigantic scope." (New York Post, June 6, 1944)

While some 4,000 vessels moving into the Havre-Cherbourg area were disregarded the Nazi pilots were sent off on a wild goose chase to make an attack of such a character that the "victims" were virtually unaffected. Naturally, the Nazi commanders had to make it look as if they were seriously resisting the landing. Diverting their pilots off on a chase was undoubtedly motivated by the need to provide the lower ranks of the air force with "busywork."

7) THE STRANGE ABSENCE OF THE NAZI NAVAL FORCE

ALTHOUGH the Nazi surface fleet is a midget compared with the combined Anglo-American sea power, the Nazi submarine force had been described as of considerable strength. But just as with the Luftwaffe, the Nazi submarine fleet as well as surface craft stayed away from the Channel waters on "D-Day." Secretary of the Navy Forrestal admitted that the Nazis put up no resistance in the air, on the sea, or under the sea:

"He said it was 'significant' that none of the expected enemy counter-blows materialized during our initial crossing of the channel.

"It was expected that the German air force, light surface and submarine fleets would launch their heaviest attacks in an attempt to frustrate our offensive effort at sea," he declared. "When they didn't, they lost one of the great opportunities of the war."

The same story was substantiated by Admiral King:

"Admiral Ernest J. King, making his first public report today on his inspection of the European in-

vasion operations, declared that it had been 'a puzzle to everyone' why the Germans had not attempted to block the Allies by either air or sea. (The New York Times, June 22, 1944. Our emphasis)

Neither the capitalist press nor the opportunist press within the working class ever dabbled with the "mysteries" of the "Second World War." But the more the June 1944 affair is investigated the more obvious it becomes that all the stories about the supposed feverish preparations by the Nazis to thwart the invasion are plain lies. When The New York Times of May 17, 1944, less than three weeks before "D-Day," shrieked in its headline "Germans Mass Sea Power, Push Aerial Invasion Vigil" it was disseminating sheer fiction. As was seen later, hardly a Nazi plane or ship interfered in the invasion. Tom Yarbrough, A.P. correspondent, was on the British destroyer *Cottesmore* in the very front of the huge transport fleet that was carrying men and materiel to Normandy. He reported:

"It is still almost incredible, though, that this force of men and ships spent 12 hours within easy shooting distance of Hitler's Europe and did not encounter a single German plane or ship." (World-Telegram, June 7, 1944)

8) THE "ATLANTIC WALL"

[N dealing with the so-called "Atlantic Wall" which the Nazis are supposed to have built on the coast of France, it is first necessary to call to mind Baldwin's report that "there have been no widespread bombings of German gun positions or coastal fortifications" and the report that the one area where concentrated bombings were made was around Calais where the landings did not occur. It remains to show, therefore, what this alleged "Atlantic Wall" consisted of on the day of the landing, for obviously on that day the "Wall"—whatever it was — was still there.

The essence of defenses — and of an offensive mechanism, too, for that

matter — is fire-power; the amount of projectile, fire and destruction that can be hurled against an opposing army. From this standpoint, the Nazi "Atlantic Wall" as the capitalist press itself showed, falls into the same category as the Nazi "resistance" to the landings, a myth. The impression the imperialists gave in previous periods to still the Second Front clamor was that the "Atlantic Wall" was a frightfully formidable military organization, miles deep, with a mass of guns capable of hurling unbelievable destruction at anyone approaching the shores. But when the actual landing took place, it turned out that —

"A curious and fortunate feature of the fighting on this front (Normandy) is the scarcity of German artillery." (The New York Times, July 6, 1944)

What Nazi artillery there was, was largely second-hand, captured on the Russian front. "A considerable amount of the enemy artillery that our forces have overrun is captured Russian guns." (Ibid.) These Russian guns were reportedly not too well supplied with ammunition even for peacetime duty, let alone in a situation of invasion (The New York Times, July 17, 1944).

In short, the press had to report that the Nazi artillery made no showing:

"German artillery has been ridiculously weak." (New York Post, June 13, 1944)

It should be recalled that not only is Germany an enormous producer of artillery, but that the Nazis had the productive forces of France, itself one of the foremost artillery manufacturing centers in the world, as well as the factories of most of Europe, including Czechoslovakia, a prime producer of artillery and other basic war materials. However, on the "Atlantic Wall," that much-advertised Hitlerian creation, the situation was vividly described in a letter dated July 2, 1944, found on a dead Nazi soldier.

"We are exposed to American fire

helplessly; we have no Luftwaffe, no mortars and no artillery." (The New York Times, July 15, 1944)

It is striking that even such elementary devices as minefields were absent from the much-vaunted "Atlantic Wall":

"The trick minefields they were supposed to have did not exist, and although they were reported to have expected the landing on this particular spot, we met only mediocre troops." (New York Post, June 13, 1944)

The usual contradictory stories were told concerning the strength of the Nazi military machine in Normandy to baffle the reader and prevent him from knowing what was what. One correspondent would say the Hitler machine was "the greatest armored force the enemy has gathered in Western Europe since 1940." (The New York Times, July 2, 1944) Another correspondent in the same newspaper several days previously had written the very opposite — "the German army facing the Allies in Normandy is a lesser vehicle than the military machine that awed Europe in 1940 and 1941." (The New York Times, June 27, 1944)

Such was the "mysterious" picture of the much-advertised "invasion"; no Luftwaffe attempts to break up the concentration of forces in British ports, no air or sea interference with the transportation across the Channel, no Nazi submarine fleet, scarcity of artillery, and no "Atlantic Wall."

9) A POLYGLOT CROWD TO "DEFEAT" THE INVASION

In line with their long-established tone, the capitalist newspapers painted a lurid canvas of the forthcoming veritable flood of Nazi reinforcements that were about to pour into Normandy to halt the invasion. Hanson W. Baldwin in line with this propaganda was spreading stories that Hitler had sent some of his best forces to France, Belgium and Holland. One idea pervaded the mind of the Nazis, according to Baldwin, namely, to defeat an invasion:

"For more than a year German strategy has been plain. Adolf Hitler has made every possible effort to strengthen his forces in the west. Some of his best generals and his best troops were assigned to France and the Low Countries; the German strength in these countries was increased from about thirty-two to more than sixty divisions, partly at the expense of other areas. Since Stalingrad, Germany has been pinning her hopes for a limited victory upon one event and one alone: the repulse of the Allied invasion of the west." (The New York Times, June 28, 1944)

The air was thick with stories that the Nazis were rushing reinforcements to Normandy, allegedly withdrawing divisions from the Russian front where Stalin's army was advancing:

"Since Anglo-American landing in Normandy the Germans have been moving troops from the east to the west. The dispositions of German troops have changed materially on all fronts." (The New York Times, July 12, 1944)

In the new setting Hitler was said to have turned a resolute face to the West and decided that defeating the invasion was his major task:

"Evidence is accumulating to support the theory that Adolf Hitler has decided to stake everything on a decision in the west.

"This is regarded here as the strategy of desperation for it means that the Nazis are prepared to gamble on defeating the Allies in the west and still having time to swing back the main forces of the Wehrmacht against Russia before disaster overtakes them in the east." (The New York Times, July 12, 1944)

Since, however, everybody saw that Stalin's armies were uninterruptedly sweeping toward the German border, the absurdity of withdrawing Nazi troops from the East struck one between the eyes. The press could offer no other explanation in the face of its assertions of movement of the Nazi

divisions from Russia to Normandy than to say it was a "mystery:"

"A Very Great Mystery

"So one can only guess why Hitler throws his surplus strength to the west even at the danger of allowing the Red forces to draw nearer and nearer to the Reich." (The New York Times, July 30, 1944)

Let us now examine the forces which Hitler detailed for the supposed purpose of stopping the "Allies." The astounding fact emerging out of the whirlpool of words of the reporters is that the vast majority of "German" prisoners gathered in Normandy were non-German. This was revealed by an American Colonel at a press conference.

"While all the German officers captured in the fighting on the Cherbourg peninsula were '100 per cent German professional soldiers,' a 'vast majority of the regular troops was made up of Russians, Poles, Czechs and some Frenchmen...'" (Herald Tribune, July 11, 1944. Our emphasis)

The Nazi army was a polyglot multitude composed of people seized in the Nazi-occupied territories. Among them were children:

"Many of the captured enemy troops are not Germans. One was a 13-year-old Russian boy, who was in the Twenty-first Panzer Division. Wearing a uniform several sizes too big for him, he said he had been pressed into the German Army last year and sent to France after training.

"There were Belgians, Italians, Russians, Poles, French and even Mongolians who were captured on the Russian front." (The New York Times, June 10, 1944)

Other dispatches mentioned Alsations and even Jews, who are inelligible for military duty in Germany:

"Refugees said that even German Jews, who at their forced labor in Cherbourg had to carry cards saying they were 'not fit to be German

soldiers,' were put into uniform." (The New York Times, June 22, 1944)

Such was the evidence which was accumulating to "prove" that "Adolf Hitler has decided to stake everything on a decision in the west"! So great was this crowd of mixed nationalities, all victims of Hitler terror, all harboring a bitter hatred toward their Nazi oppressors, that when German soldiers were taken prisoner, a correspondent was impelled to remark there were real Germans!

"Comparatively few prisoners were being captured today. Some slipped in during the darkness of last night while others hid out and were found when their positions were overrun. Among them were real Germans of a machine gun battalion who were tough fighters and had an arrogant air after capture." (The New York Times, June 24, 1944)

Among the real Germans some were aged, others were children, and still others were women!

"German women have been manning coastal defense guns in France, it was revealed today as preparations were made to accomodate 250 of them in a prisoner of war enclosure here!" (New York World Telegram, June 12, 1944)

This, then, was the "army" the Nazis had brought into France to "defend" their "Atlantic Wall" — Poles, Czechs, Italians, Belgians, French, Red Army men captured on the Russian front, German Jews and — after careful search — some real Germans! This sham "army" in some dispatches was portrayed as the veteran Nazi army. "Veteran Nazi Troops on Beaches Beaten by Seasick, Untried Men." (The New York Times, June 8, 1944) With such swindling headlines the capitalist propagandists try to make their readers imagine that the "fight"—a patently cooked-up show — is a titanic military struggle.

10) NO SIGN OF BATTLE

THOSE who are taken in by the capitalist, Stalinist, Socialist

and Trotskyist propaganda that the "democracies" and the "Axis" are engaged in a real struggle, might venture to argue: If this be a phoney war, how explain the great casualties? Do not casualties denote a fight? The answer is that great casualties occurred only in Russia where Hitler's invasion and Stalin's resistance comprised a real war. There the loss in life was indeed extremely heavy on both sides. As to the casualties in Normandy, strikingly enough, in the process of occupying the beaches the casualties were caused not so much by the token resistance of the polyglot Nazi forces as by the weather! In a news feature headed "Weather Chief Cause of Casualties" it was stated:

"Bad weather was probably the chief cause of the Americans' relatively heavy loss in men in breaking into some three miles of beaches running each way from here." (The New York Times, June 9, 1944)

This was one of the accounts concerning the casualties in the first three days of the invasion. Let us glance at the casualties at sea as the transports continued arriving in Normandy. Two weeks after "D-Day" the Channel waters were lashed by a very strong gale. It was estimated that the gale had done more injury to the ships than the Nazi war machine: "Last week's gale probably did more damage to Allied convoys than all enemy action thus far, an Associated Press report from Allied Headquarters suggested." (The New York Times, June 27, 1944)

On the whole reports indicated that there was very little fighting, or none at all. For example, Bayeux, presumably a fortified town, was given up by the Nazis without even a pretense of a fight:

"For some mysterious reason the Germans fled Bayeux without a fight. There's not a sign of battle." (The New York Times, June 18, 1944)

In the Bay of the Seine an occurrence tinged with profound "mystery" took place. There the Nazis made the unloading on the beaches very comfort-

able for the "Allied" soldiers by calling off the "war" during daytime; whether they fought at night can be left to the imagination; no correspondent gave any clue.

"This correspondent was aboard the John E. Ward, an American Liberty ship which delivered British reconnaissance and all equipment to France. Not a man or a piece of equipment was lost although some of the heavy trucks, tanks and jeeps took a rough battering as they crashed against the ship's side while being lowered to barges.

"During the early days of the invasion barges were scarce and there was considerable delay in unloading, but that problem has been overcome. The Germans virtually call off the war during the day in the Bay of the Seine and unloading can go on uninterrupted." (Gene Currihan, The New York Times, June 20, 1944. Our emphasis)

To the masses who saw the picture of the "Second World War" through the distorted lenses of capitalist lies it seemed inevitable that the penetration of the "Atlantic Wall" would be accomplished through the most savage fighting entailing enormous sacrifice in blood. The very opposite of that false expectation occurred. The A. P. correspondent on board the British destroyer Cottesmore, after observing the landings for twelve hours, wrote:

"From where we sat — about a mile and a half off shore — it seemed too easy and too smooth to be true. The men of this ship, through several tense and expectant months, had come to refer to this thing (the invasion) as the blood bath, and not altogether facetiously.

"But it was not a blood bath at all." (World-Telegram, June 7, 1944)

Some correspondents registered astonishment at the lack of Nazi resistance. H. R. Knickerbocker wrote in a dispatch from Normandy two weeks after the landings:

"It is now almost bewildering to real-

ize that the Germans have not at all reacted the way we thought they would. They are not throwing the kitchen stove at us.' (PM, June 20, 1944)

From many indications the Nazis offered virtually no resistance at all, not only during the landings but even many weeks later when the "Allied" troops were well inside Brittany and moving toward Paris— "Our troops in Brittany and in their push toward Paris have obviously met little resistance." (Hanson W. Baldwin, The New York Times, August 13, 1944)

It would seem logical, from the noise of the newspapers, that as the "Allied" troops were marching further into France, the "war" would take on an appearance of reality. The very opposite took place: "It is a paradox, but the deeper we get into France, the less real this war seems." (Harold Denny, The New York Times, August 14, 1944)

But the capitalist press never told facts without a heavy admixture of brazen lies to befog those facts. So, in spite of a vast amount of evidence running through the dispatches to the effect that the Nazis had offered a feigned resistance, editors suddenly conjured up "heavily defended beaches." (The New York Times, June 20, 1944)

There was some pretense of fighting, no doubt, else the sham character of the "war" would have been too obvious. It was officially announced, however, that casualties were light, and on sea "surprisingly small — very small." The whole invasion had a totally different aspect from the flaming inferno which the imagination of the capitalist writers had pictured before "D-Day."

"It was more like maneuvers than a historic invasion and a big disappointment to the PT crews, who were spoiling for a fight.

"It's more like the Poughkeepsie regatta than an invasion," said Ralph Gaetter, a quartermaster from Malden, Mass." (The New York Times, June 7, 1944)

11) THE SO-CALLED "BATTLE OF CHERBOURG"

THE capitalist press and the newspapers of the opportunists within the working class generally overlooked the mysterious aspects of the invasion and boldly predicted a fierce Nazi resistance as the American troops sped across the Carentan Peninsula toward the port of Cherbourg. It was said that the Nazis had attached great importance to ports and would defend Cherbourg to the death. "Cherbourg, it was suggested, may turn into a minor Stalingrad." (The New York Times, June 18, 1944) But as the American troops approached Cherbourg, a new "mystery" developed — the whereabouts of the Nazi army which, it was widely believed, would attempt to stem the American forces: "Our advance today was opposed in so few places that it became a mystery where the German Army was." (The New York Times, June 21, 1944)

The defense of Cherbourg, one of the finest harbors in Europe, said to be heavily fortified, was left to a garrison, many soldiers of which were Russians and Poles (The New York Times, June 22, 1944).

The air was tense with expectancy as the American troops rushed up to the outer forts of Cherbourg. Every moment, it was thought, a hurricane of fierce struggle and death would burst over the town and the besieging forces. But then something strange happened. The Nazi command withdrew the troops who had allegedly been manning certain of the defenses. A United Press correspondent with the American troops at Cherbourg pointed out:

"Already the Americans are within the outer rim of Cherbourg fortress — prepared positions where the enemy is expected to make a final bitter stand on order of the High Command to fight to the last.

"But strangely enough, some positions were unmanned when our troops approached them." (Daily News, June 21, 1944)

The Nazi command never attempted

to send reinforcements to relieve Cherbourg. The line of the Nazis to hand over the fortress to the Americans, and quickly at that, was so definite that it became more or less obvious to the garrison. Another United Press correspondent with the American forces at Cherbourg wrote:

"German prisoners indicate a general belief among the men of the enemy garrison that they have been abandoned to their fate. It is doubtful if the German command ever intended to reinforce the city even if it had been able to." (The New York Times, June 22, 1944. Our emphasis)

From all indications the policy the Nazis were carrying out was one of not resisting the invasion, and, evidently, of making every conceivable effort to facilitate matters for the "Allies" short of openly declaring the whole spectacle a show.

From the point of view of a real defense of Cherbourg, a besieging force would have paid heavily in an open attack upon the hills protecting the fortress city. In the report of the questioning of the Nazi General von Schlieben when he became, formally, a prisoner of war, it came out plainly that there had been no defense:

"He declined to comment when the American general asked him why he had not resisted on the outer rings of hills admirably suited to defense." (The New York Times, June 28, 1944. Our emphasis.)

One of the common practices in the "war" of the "democracies" and the "Axis" has been to leave virtually undamaged certain important harbor installations. The Nazis, of course, had more than sufficient time to wreck the harbor of Cherbourg. But they didn't. The capitalist press, to cover up the Nazi policy, said that the task was beyond the means of the Nazis in Cherbourg:

"Reports from the harbor area indicate that while the Germans had ample time to destroy the harbor in-

stallations they apparently did not have sufficient man-power or material to wreck Cherbourg's great break-water or to block the two wide channels leading into the outer harbor." (The New York Times, June 28, 1944)

This brings to mind other situations where the press was even more brazen, as for instance in the case of the Caen Canal. When the Nazis left the lock gates undamaged the British information services declared that the Nazis had simply "forgotten" to blow up the gates:

"The Germans left the sea-mouth of the Caen Canal in such a rush that they forgot to blow the lock gates although they were already charged with explosives, British information services said yesterday." (The New York Times, June 18, 1944)

The "rush" reason, also, was given by the press for the strange tactic the Nazis followed in leaving the mines unprepared for explosion in Cherbourg and in not laying booby traps.

"Thousands of Americans are alive today because the Germans pulled out of Cherbourg so hastily they didn't lay booby traps or pull the pins from mines they had laid.

"They could have killed half our Army, the way our kids have been picking up things in Cherbourg if they had booby-trapped the place," one officer said." (Daily News, July 3, 1944)

Quite characteristic of the "Second World War," only now in an order reversed from that of May-June 1940, important bridges were left intact, but now by the Nazis. In his statement on the invasion Churchill said: "We have captured various bridges which are important and which have not been blown up by the enemy." (World-Telegram, June 6, 1944) Doubtless the policy of the Nazis was to leave Cherbourg as undamaged as possible.

Totally conflicting stories were printed by the press regarding the "Allied" bombing of Cherbourg. On the one hand it was said that Cherbourg

was blasted by American artillery and bombers; on the other hand we read that American artillery and planes did not bomb the city. Here is the first story:

"Hundreds of field guns and hundreds of bombers were pounding Cherbourg while yard by yard the infantry moved through one of the most elaborate defensive systems of western Europe." (The New York Times, June 22, 1944)

And here is the opposite tale in the same paper, on the same day and in an adjoining column:

"Thus far we have left the city itself alone. Probably out of humanitarian considerations and our desire to have the city and port as nearly intact as possible, our artillery has not bombarded the town except for three shells thrown at the edge of the city Sunday night to show that they could. Similarly, our aircraft have ignored its inviting targets." (Ibid.)

12) THE LANDING IN SOUTHERN FRANCE

On August 15, 1944 the "Allies" staged their landing on the shores of Southern France from Marseilles to Nice, an action involving reportedly some 1500 ships and a great multitude of airplanes.

This landing repeated the fantastic pattern of the Normandy affair, only carried to the uttermost extreme. Of course, as in the case of the landing in Normandy, the preliminaries to the move in the South were also a great "secret." Thus, on June 11, 1944 The New York Times carried a dispatch which "quoted Berlin military experts as believing that a landing was imminent in southern France in support of the Allied thrust into the Cherbourg peninsula."

Immediately prior to the actual landing the Nazis revealed their knowledge of big convoys passing into the Mediterranean:

"The German radio asserting that

large Allied convoys were streaming through the Strait of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean, speculated tonight that landings in the south of Europe were imminent." (The New York Times, August 15, 1944)

When the invasion was already a fact, it was shown that advance information on it had amounted virtually to common gossip in France:

"The invasion of southern France was perhaps the worst-kept secret of the war.

"Thousands of Frenchmen and Americans knew it was coming. Correspondents in Normandy and Brittany were constantly asked about it by both Frenchmen and GI's." (The New York Times, August 16, 1944)

In the cafes of Algiers even the date of the future landing in southern France was passed about openly:

"Algiers followed the news of the Allied landing in the south of France with keen interest today but with little surprise. The imminence of the blow had been common knowledge for several weeks, and even the date had been more or less accurately discussed in the cafes." (The New York Times, August 16, 1944)

It goes without saying that what was talked about so openly was known by the Nazis, though we do not mean to imply that Hitler and his crew have to fish in the streets for information, for they undoubtedly have solid, official sources.

So much for the "secrecy" angle.

The writers of the bourgeois press, however, were given a theme to cover up the lack of Nazi resistance. This alibi was "surprise." It was used after June 6 in connection with the landing in the north and was repeated mechanically after August 15:

"Germans Caught Unaware by New Thrust From South" (Headline, The New York Times, August 16, 1944)

The text, by Herbert L. Matthews,

is even stronger:

"The Germans were caught completely by surprise." (Ibid. Our emphasis)

What else can a bourgeois reporter say in "explanation" when he has to report stuff like the following:

"An American army numbering many thousands is well into southern France this afternoon and going fast. It has struck virtually without opposition and with amazingly small casualties."

"Everybody was set for a hard costly fight but we were shadow-boxing. Only two shells were fired at the task force in the center in which I landed. Not a single German plane came. On the beaches, except for a little sporadic machine-gun and mortar fire there was no opposition."

"They have been moving inland all day and, thus far, without opposition."

"A mystery was why the Germans had not put up a fight." (Ibid.)

As Matthews, a highly experienced reporter, moved on with the American forces, the weirdness of the total lack of war brought some recollections to mind, thoughts of an earlier phase in the "Second World War." After viewing the sham war in southern France for a couple of days, Matthews was impelled to write that:

"It was beginning to seem like a phoney war." (The New York Times, August 18, 1944)

The adventures of Matthews — or rather lack of adventure — were entirely typical of all other observers and participants. Only one point was lacking in the reports of the bourgeois correspondents: the truth that the phoney war in France in 1944 was only a continuation of the phoney war which began with the Chamberlain-Daladier sham declaration of war in September 1939.

As in the case of the alleged "Atlantic Wall," the claim was made that the Nazis actually had defenses built on the beaches of southern France, though from the utter silence which greeted the landing one would imagine the Nazis had never heard of France.

"No one could explain the Germans' reaction. Their shore batteries were there, but they were not fired. Pillboxes were there, too, and we had expected a murderous enfilading fire, but it did not materialize. Everybody is astounded..." (The New York Times, August 17, 1944)

"Anything but real war" — such was the impression of this particular observer:

"Another assault company came by, its leading craft jauntily flying American flags. It was like a naval review or a rehearsal for a parade — anything but real war — for it was already 7:20 and there was not a sign of enemy reaction." (Ibid.)

Other reports also spoke of the existence of strong defenses on the southern sector, but all consistently emphasized the total or practically total lack of response to the landing. The Associated Press correspondent aboard a low-flying bomber remarked that:

"...no one aboard the plane from which I watched the assault saw a single shot fired or any sign of activity as the gliders landed.

"Pilots who carried parachute troops over also reported they encountered no fire and all planes apparently returned safely." (The New York Times, August 16, 1944)

This correspondent was able to get a fairly wide view of the scene of the landing; everywhere the picture was the same:

"I watched the landings from a B-25 Mitchell bomber 1,000 feet above the beaches. As far as twenty miles inland there was a consistent lack of any sign of struggle to

mark the entire rugged landscape.*
(Ibid.)

A North American Newspaper Alliance correspondent, also aboard a plane, reported:

"No opposition of any kind was encountered by the carrier air armada so far as I could see." (The New York Times, August 16, 1944)

As in northern France, the Luftwaffe was nowhere to be seen:

"The German Air Force made no attempt to hinder the vast operations, in which American heavy bombers joined medium and light bombers and fighter-bombers in attacking beach defenses, troop concentrations, bridges and other installations." (A. C. Sedgwick, The New York Times, August 17, 1944)

And a United Press dispatch declared:

"Swarms of heavy and medium bombers cruised far into southern France today to blast bridges, highways and military installations without once seeing a German plane." (The New York Times, August 17, 1944)

Finally some troops of the Nazi Army were discovered somewhere in southern France. Concerning their character Herbert L. Matthews reported in the same vein as in the case of the northern landings. The "Nazi" army in southern France was the same kind of pretense as in the north, a polyglot crew thrown together merely for a show :

"The units are 'limited employment' troops, at least 40 per cent of whom are from the east, mostly Russians. In addition, there are many Poles, Czechs and Austrians.

"Their morale is low and so is their combat efficiency. The proportion who have given up as soon as they could is extraordinarily high." (The New York Times, August 19, 1944)

At the time of the landing in

southern France, there appeared a report which showed clearly that the country was scheduled to be put in the hands of the "Allies," at least for the time being. "Nazis to Abandon France, Foe Says," stated a headline in The New York Times of August 19, 1944. The body of the report carried the significant information that:

"A Berlin broadcast quoted a German War Ministry official statement today as saying: 'We must be prepared for a German withdrawal from France.'"

On this prophetic note the southern landing phase of the second "Battle of France" came to an end.

13) "TO MAKE IT LOOK GOOD"

THE remainder of the story of the re-occupation of France follows the lines of the foregoing portions. The sham war of 1940 was simply re-enacted in 1944 in reverse gear and to avoid wearisome repetition we shall give only a few brief acts staged by the directors behind the scenes.

"Impregnable Belgian Fort Falls Without a Shot," declares a headline of September 13, 1944. The Associated Press dispatch following deals with Fort Eben Emael and relates that:

"A battalion of American infantry last night made a cautious approach to this great fort, quarried in solid rock. To the Yanks' amazement, there was no resistance. Without a shot being fired, they marched in."

The queer history of the Maginot Line in the Phoney War of 1939 to date is told in an interesting report in The New York Times of September 19, 1944. Built prodigiously strong for the kind of terrific war the imperialists wage when they actually are at war, the Maginot Line was destined to be involved in this epoch in a sham war amongst the imperialists and without a shot being fired from it was handed back and forth more like a football than a fortress:

"In 1940, according to one report,

French soldiers manning the fort were ordered by Marshal Henri-Philippe Pétain to abandon it. The Germans also abandoned it without a fight, and this is a bit difficult to understand.

"It is a massive affair of reinforced concrete and steel — sinking deep into a rocky hillside and probably could hold out against either artillery or aerial bombing for a long time if occupied by determined men. Surely the taking of it could be made a very long and costly job."

What is possibly the climax of the ludicrous features necessarily attending a phoney war is the ignominious tale of the Nazi General Erich Elster whose 20,000 fully armed soldiers were marched off as prisoners by 24 American infantrymen. Gen. Elster, a good actor, wanted to arrange a mock battle — he obviously is a deep student of the recent military history of the "Western Front" — so that the farce would not be too obvious. The American Lt. S. W. Magill told the story of Gen. Elster's demand that the U. S. forces "send two battalions to the village of Decize for a token battle, to make it look good." These last words — "to make it look good" — point to the real "strategical" source of the military hocus pocus that since 1939 has been passing under the guise of the "Second World War."

14) A TURNING POINT IN HISTORY

THE reoccupation of France by the "Allies" is a milestone in the development of the strategy of world imperialism and necessitates an accounting of the development of events leading to the present and the prospect of future developments.

The Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939 and the rapid occupation of Norway, Holland, Belgium and France in 1940, and the Balkans in 1941 marked the unfolding of a policy on which world imperialism as a whole was in agreement. It was because of the unity of purpose of world imperialism that the line of the dominant imperialist gangs was to open the path for Hitler's forces in all spheres. The

purpose of the imperialists had two aspects: one, to safeguard capitalist rule through the establishment of fascism, especially in France whose proletariat was potentially the chief threat. This was not only an end in itself, but a preliminary to the second aspect of the imperialists' policy which was to hurl the Nazi Army on the Soviet Union in order to bring that vast area back into the capitalist order of things, to undo finally the economic achievements of the October Revolution and to re-establish capitalism once more on a world-wide basis. The fascization of France by bringing in the Nazis and the placing of all Europe under the heel of Hitler were an absolute necessity to world imperialism not only as a political safeguard to the rear of Hitler's army, but also as a means of directly placing Europe's enormous economic resources at Hitler's services.

The two fundamental aspects of imperialist policy at the start of the so-called "Second World War" were thus organically linked, for the spearhead both of the drive to round out fascist rule in Europe and to destroy the Soviet Union was the Nazi regime. The basic collaboration of all the big capitalist powers in this endeavor was clouded by a pretense of war behind which Hitler was given a free hand to carry out the common purpose. The basic pattern was: amongst the imperialists, a sham war; against the Soviet Union, a real war.

The general forward movement of Hitler's forces continued until Stalingrad. This epoch-making struggle, ending in a signal defeat of the Nazi Army, marked a turning point in the trend of events up to that time. The Nazis began a withdrawal from Russia indicating their inability to carry out the imperialist line to destroy the Soviet Union. Since then the basic movement has been the withdrawal of the Nazi forces from one area after another occupied both in the real war against Russia and in the sham war amongst the imperialists.

In that aspect of the imperialists' scheme involving the spread of

fascism with Hitler as the spearhead there was complete success up to Stalingrad. Everywhere, the masses, deceived by the capitalist spokesmen and by the Stalinist, Socialist and Trotskyist leaders into expecting a real war to keep out the Nazis, were caught unawares and utterly paralyzed when the fascist avalanche descended upon them. Most outstanding was the case of France in 1940 where overnight the gates were thrown open from within by the "democratic" rulers, and the Nazis swooped down on the unsuspecting toilers. Throughout Europe this process was repeated in an unbroken series up to Stalingrad.

The other aspect of the imperialists' plot, however, ended in failure. The Nazi Army was unable to defeat the Soviet Union. Since the scheme to hurl the Nazi Army on the Soviet Union was a pivotal point in the line of the imperialists, an especial significance attaches to the failure of the Nazis in the task assigned to them in the East. The plan to destroy the Soviet Union hinged on the spread of the Nazi force over Europe, and conversely, the drive for fascization was organically linked with the success of the Nazi attack on Russia. These two aspects of imperialist policy could not unfold independently of each other.

If the fascization scheme had failed, say through a proletarian upheaval in France or Germany, the attack on the Soviet Union would have been relegated to the realm of capitalist pipedreams. The collapse through proletarian revolution of the drive for fascization prior to 1941 would have meant the general collapse of world capitalism with the result that the project of an assault on the Soviet Union would have been made forever impossible.

The victory of Stalin's Army over the Nazi forces, however, does not place the same verdict on the imperialist schemes as would have resulted from the revolutionary overthrow of fascism. Stalin's military victories have a very unique character in so far as the destiny of the masses is concerned. Stalin's political line is

counter-revolutionary, a prop to imperialism. The combination of this understanding and the initial enormous defeats of Stalin's Army led us to the conclusion that the Nazis would succeed in smashing the Soviet Union in the 1941 attack. This estimate was wrong in its military aspect, but the basic evaluation of the undermining role of Stalinism was correct. Stalin won a military victory at colossal cost to the Soviet masses and to the economic mechanism of the Soviet Union, but because of Stalin's reactionary political line the inveterate and historical foe of the Soviet Union, namely, world imperialism, still stands. This proves with the utmost clarity the Marxist principle that it is the political line which is decisive for the working class. The frightful sacrifices of the Soviet masses are being negated by the reactionary policies of Stalin who works in every way to prevent proletarian revolution which he fears will sweep from the capitalist countries into the Soviet Union and overthrow the usurping bureaucracy. Stalin's sabotage of proletarian revolution makes the masses a pawn in the imperialists' schemes; it fortifies imperialism and leaves the Soviet Union open to subsequent attack.

Since, despite the failure of the Nazis in the Soviet Union, world imperialism still stands, the path is still open for the capitalist rulers to continue with their machinations. To what extent this path is open, however, remains for history to reveal. There is no question that the failure of Hitler in Russia has weakened world imperialism, though the latter is far from being in its death-throes. Without doubt the imperialists are even now scheming — perhaps they have already settled on a plan — to make good their setback. That the capitalists know their system is in danger of proletarian revolution goes without saying. Even the blind can see the chaos in Europe, the complete dislocation of economy even in such a relatively stable country as the United States, the ceaseless ferment in Asia.

What are the signs that world imperialism is embarking on a new maneu-

ver to settle its old problems as well as the new ones arising out of the failure of the Nazis in the Soviet Union?

Outstanding above everything else is the rapid withdrawal of the Nazis from the occupied territories. Today the British and American armies are standing on the German border and even have one small toe inside Germany. Have the imperialists decided that the Nazi spearhead is irreparably broken? If this should be the actual judgement of the "democratic" rulers, it would signify that they consider Hitler's regime to be on its last legs and have decided to catch the falling sceptre before the German proletariat gets its hands on it. The actual condition of Hitler's regime and the strength of German capitalism in general can be truly determined only by the imperialist rulers who have huge information sources at their service. Others can only draw deductions from the guarded and fragmentary reports which the imperialists allow to be published. That at this moment Hitler's regime is weaker than in 1939 is a deduction which is indisputable. Precisely how much weaker, whether or not it is in danger of revolutionary overthrow, only the gentry at the helm of power know.

If on the other hand, the rulers judge the Hitler regime to be strong enough to be used again, then the path is open for them to elaborate further schemes involving Hitler as a central force. In such a case, the present withdrawal of the Nazis from the various occupied territories would mean only a breathing spell during which the imperialists will contrive to re-fortify and prime the Nazi power for future work. If such is the situation, the promises to occupy Germany and remove the Nazi regime will prove a gross deception. Let it not be forgotten that, as we have clearly shown, the "Allied" occupation of France in 1944, to take the outstanding example

we have presented, continued the old pattern of sham war. The bulk of the Nazi Army was not and is not on the so-called Western Front, but is kept elsewhere. To what extent it has been weakened by its failure in the Soviet Union remains to be seen. However the matter may stand, the actions of the imperialists will provide the conclusive answer.

The interests of the workers demand a clear break with the bourgeois oppressors and with the opportunists in the camp of the proletariat. If the imperialists have decided that the Hitler regime faces its last days and plan to occupy Germany, their policy will be to prevent the masses from coming to power, to continue capitalist oppression under a new form of rule. If the understanding of the imperialists is that the Hitler regime can be used now as it was in France in 1940, then the danger facing the toilers is a new Hitlerite bloodbath, even more horrible than the previous one.

To be free of all the political deceivers is the prerequisite to a real struggle for the liberation of the toilers. On the issue of the "Second World War," a primary form of deception which has paralyzed the masses is the concealment of the fact that amongst the imperialists there is collaboration, not war. In regard to the situation in the Soviet Union, the greatest danger for the masses is to accept at face value the Stalinist boasts of victory which hide the fact that Stalin's counter-revolutionary political line fortifies world imperialism, the basic class foe of the nationalized property in the Soviet Union and of the toiling masses the world over. The capitalist system and the Stalinist regime both can be destroyed only by the victory of a genuine Marxist understanding amongst the advanced sections of the toilers which will free the road to the successful proletarian revolution.

October 1944

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THE CASE OF HOLLAND, BELGIUM
AND FRANCE

WHAT PATH
FOR THE ITALIAN MASSES

THE REBIRTH OF AN OLD ILLUSION

THE "Allied" entrance into Italy has raised to life among the Italian masses one of the most potent of all the illusions that plague the toilers, namely, the popular dreams about democracy under capitalism. The snare of bourgeois-democracy, centuries old, is none-the-less deadly for its age. At many sharp turns in history this chimera played a leading role in laying the groundwork for the most violent repressions of the toilers. The years after the World War established a long record of savage attacks on the masses of Germany, Austria, France, England, the United States, to mention only the most important centers, all perpetrated under the cover of "Democracy." Indeed, the gigantic slaughter of the imperialist war of 1914-1918 itself was sanctified under the name of a fight for the "Democracy" of the capitalists.

In Italy today there is an additional and most significant circumstance which lends especial force to the fatal poison spread by the "democratic" bourgeois rulers. This factor is Stalinism which is the chief power within the Italian working class. Stalinism, in order to prevent proletarian revolution and thus safeguard reaction both in the capitalist countries and in the Soviet Union, has shunted the masses onto an ultra-rightist path. The chief feature of the present Stalinist counter-revolutionary line in Italy, as in other countries, is the spreading of confidence in the treacherous "democratic" rule of the bourgeoisie. This ultra-rightist line, known a few years ago as Popular Frontism, has already left its murderous mark on the Spanish toilers who were sold into the clutches of Fascism by the "democratic" gangs headed by the Stalinist bureaucrats.

The bloc of the Stalinists, Socialists and Liberals in Italy — a real political bloc, despite various

clique and factional bickerings — is agreed upon one basic point, to keep the toilers enslaved to the capitalists. The "democratic" slogans issued by the political rogues gallery headed by Stalin's flunkay, Ercoli-Togliatti, must be thoroughly examined and understood by the workers; this is an absolute necessity in the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed masses of Italy. No less important is a clear grasp of the support given to the demagoguery of the Stalinist-led coalition in Italy by those opportunist political tendencies which pose as anti-Stalinist while acting as a Left cover for Stalinism.

WORKERS DEMOCRACY
VERSUS CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY

THERE are many regimes which call themselves "Democratic," but the great Marxist leaders basing their conclusion on centuries of historical experience, have named but one regime as genuinely democratic — for the toilers.

"The dictatorship of the proletariat alone is able to liberate mankind from the yoke of capital, from the lies, the sham and hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy which is democracy for the rich; it alone is able to establish democracy for the poor, i.e., to make the benefits of democracy really accessible to the workers and the poorest peasants, whereas at the present time (even in the most democratic-bourgeois-republic) the benefits of democracy are really inaccessible to the overwhelming majority of the toilers." (Selected Works, V. I. Lenin. Vol. VII, p. 220. Emphasis in original.)

The experience of the Russian Revolution provides an added lesson and commentary on this problem. A bureaucratic proletarian dictatorship such as developed in Russia leads to disaster for the toilers. A proletarian regime at whose top there rules a hardened crust of privileged bureaucrats

who have all power in their clutches will inevitably, like the Stalinist machine, become a center of counter-revolution. The workers of Italy must establish a revolutionary dictatorship of their class based on genuine workers democracy. To achieve liberation the workers must seize and retain power in their own hands. Power must not be given to any gang of bourgeois democrats or "liberals" and not even to so-called "workers bureaucrats" who issue grandiose phrases about democracy while secretly centralizing all power in their own claws.

In every revolutionary situation occurring since the October Revolution the opportunists prevented the working class from establishing its dictatorship. Mussolini was able to keep the Italian masses shackled in fascist chains only because Stalin's Comintern, Social Democracy and other opportunist forces held back the international proletariat from fighting for its liberation.

The historical avenue towards freedom is the overthrow of Italian capitalism and the establishment of a "democracy for the poor" through a government of workers and peasants councils founded on genuine elections and democratic procedure. Any other avenue, even that of the most democratic bourgeois republic, will only lead toward the suppression of the workers and an iron dictatorship of the capitalist class.

THE "LIBERAL" BETRAYERS ON THE SCENE

THE early signs indicating a gathering proletarian storm in Italy aroused the various reactionary tendencies to repeat for the thousandth and first time their crime of diverting the proletariat from its path toward socialism. As could be expected, the Stalin gang is in the lead to snare the masses in a bourgeois-democratic trap to prevent them from struggling for a proletarian State. The Socialists and Liberals are giving full backing to this policy. Realizing that the situation is critical and the masses must be drugged with strong opiates to keep them within the bounds of

capitalism, the bourgeois "liberals," echoed by the whole opportunist gamut, sing for a Constituent Assembly which is painted as an institution that can serve the interests of the toiling masses.

Since in Italy, the entire problem of "democracy" is tied up in the very first instance with the question of the kind of regime the masses themselves are to choose, the Constituent Assembly is a very convenient device for all the demagogues. The Constituent Assembly is presented by the bourgeoisie and the opportunists as the definitive historical institution by which the masses are to decide their social destiny. Luigi Sturzo's* line is a fairly typical case of juggling with the idea of a Constituent Assembly. Sturzo throws the question of deciding on the future regime in Italy into the lap of a Constituent Assembly:

"The question of the monarchy has been set aside until such a time as a Constituent Assembly can be called, and rightly so, because neither a committee of the various parties nor a government set up by them can decide on the future form of the Italian government; only direct legal representatives of the people have such a right." (The New Leader, July 8, 1944, p. 6)

Sturzo generously grants the Constituent Assembly the right to establish the fundamental laws of Italy to be embodied in a Constitution:

"The Constitution must be decided upon by the people through representatives to a Constitutional Assembly or to a series of assemblies endowed by the Constitution itself with the power to make amendments." (Ibid.)

This yarn about the "direct legal representatives of the people" is a favorite one with the advocates of a Constituent Assembly, for the latter is supposed to be based on universal suffrage and therefore to represent the "whole people." In actuality, how-
Founder of the Italian Christian Democratic Party

ever, the Constituent Assembly is a bourgeois-parliamentary institution in which, as Lenin once put it, the sheep are supposed to lie happily side by side with the wolves, but experience shows without exception that the sheep end up inside the belly of the wolves.

At the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 the definitive Marxist stamp was put upon the Constituent Assembly, sharply contrasting it with the dictatorship of the proletariat:

"The Soviets are the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Constituent Assembly is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. To unite and reconcile the dictatorship of the working class with that of the bourgeoisie is impossible." (Theses and Statutes of the Third International, July-August 1920, p. 64)

The Constituent Assembly is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie —from this understanding flows the whole Marxist tactic with regard to it. It is the task of Marxists to expose the entire idea of a Constituent Assembly, that parliamentary figleaf of the putrid, corrupt democracy which the capitalists establish for themselves while pretending it is for the masses. Marxists must drive out every illusion that the workers have about the Constituent Assembly, must destroy every false hope peddled by the capitalists and must replace all illusions by a correct understanding of the class nature of the Constituent Assembly. To pursue any other policy means to fall in line with and foster confusion among the masses. To present the Constituent Assembly, a form of bourgeois dictatorship, as being in the interests of the toilers means to work for the capitalists.

A GREAT HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE AND ITS LESSONS

THE above-quoted thesis of the Second Congress of the Communist International may sound strange to workers who are not familiar with the whole affair of the Constituent Assembly in the Russian Revolution. The

first thought that may come to mind is that it was precisely the Bolsheviks who were the most militant advocates during the pre-October days of the slogan of convening a Constituent Assembly. And this thought is true to fact. The transformation in the Bolshevik line from the pre-October days in which the Bolsheviks were in the vanguard in calling for a Constituent Assembly to the days when the term "Constituent" became an epithet in Bolshevik terminology must be carefully considered and its lessons learned. If this valuable experience is not assimilated, it will be an easy matter for the opportunists to pretend that the slogan for a Constituent Assembly was one of the chief slogans of the Bolsheviks, and to foist this slogan on the Italian workers by concealing the real story of the Constituent Assembly in the Russian Revolution.

That the great Marxist leaders at various times had mistaken ideas on important problems and were compelled by the course of events to change their line is news only to those workers who have had their mind completely poisoned by the demagogy of the Stalinist system wherein it is pretended that the founders of Marxism never made a mistake — to lend weight to the myth of the infallibility of Stalin & Co.

In 1905 in his book Two Tactics of the Social-Democracy, Lenin established for Russia the line of placing in power a Left bourgeois regime which he called the "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." Lenin's expectation was that this bourgeois-democratic regime would serve the interests of the masses and would clear the path for the next step, a socialist, proletarian revolution. An organic part of this 1905 program was the slogan All Power to a Constituent Assembly.

On the very first page of the first chapter of Two Tactics, Lenin (using 1905 terminology in which he called himself a Social Democrat) presented his program on the Constituent Assembly:

"The revolutionary proletariat, in

so far as it is guided by Social-Democracy, demands the complete transfer of power to the constituent assembly, and for this purpose strives to obtain not only universal suffrage and complete freedom to conduct agitation, but also the immediate overthrow of the tsarist government and its replacement by a provisional revolutionary government." (Selected Works, Vol. III, p. 44. My emphasis - J.C.H.)

In 1917 this old program was refuted by facts. The "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" which Lenin put forth hypothetically never materialized in life. The revolution brought into existence an imperialist government, the Provisional Government, and Soviets which, under the leadership of the opportunists, were subservient to the imperialists. The next development was a proletarian dictatorship of Bolshevik-led Soviets. The middle ground government which Lenin posed in 1905, a government which would be neither imperialist nor proletarian proved to be an illusion which Lenin had to eradicate from his own mind and from that of the Party leaders and ranks.

A hang-over of the false 1905 program was the slogan for a Constituent Assembly. The idea of All Power to such an institution was, of course, soon dropped by Lenin after his return to Russia in 1917. However, Lenin at that time did not see far enough ahead to drop completely even the idea of a Constituent Assembly. History had to take its course before such clarity was established. Meanwhile Lenin embarked on a great struggle within his own Party to eliminate this program of 1905 and to substitute the program later summarized in the above-quoted declaration of the Second Congress of the Communist International and whose slogan is All Power to the Soviets.

The harmful effects of the false 1905 program were not easily overcome within the Bolshevik Party during the year 1917 and early 1918 or even within Lenin himself. The correct understanding came only gradually.

The 1920 thesis of the Communist International states that it is impossible to unite and reconcile the dictatorship of the working class (Soviets) with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (Constituent Assembly). But before the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks had exactly the opposite line. The pre-October Bolshevik propaganda spoke of the possibility of a "combined type" of state, a Soviet plus a Constituent Assembly regime. Shortly before the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin wrote:

"During the transition from the old to the new, temporary 'combined types' (as Rabochy Put has correctly pointed out) are possible -- for instance, a Soviet Republic together with a Constituent Assembly." (Collected Works, Vol. XXI, Book 2, p. 90)

During 1917 the Bolshevik line was gradually transformed and did not reach final clarity until the events were completed. For most of the year 1917 the Bolsheviks, due to lack of understanding on this problem, did not clearly differentiate the Soviets from a Constituent Assembly, at times even using the terms interchangeably.

It was the actual convening of the Russian Constituent Assembly in January 1918 which gave the finishing touches to the Bolshevik understanding of this institution. Concrete experience proved that the Constituent Assembly was a body representing, not what the bourgeoisie glibly called the "whole people," but finance imperialism. The Constituent Assembly in its first and only session refused to give its sanction to the seizure of power by the Soviets; it fought against giving land to the peasantry, against peace, against the most elementary democratic rights of the masses. The Constituent Assembly became the chief watchword of the White Guards, their ideological "democratic" front against the Soviet power of the toilers, against the dictatorship of the proletariat. In complete contradiction to what the Bolsheviks themselves had given the masses to understand concerning the Constituent Assembly prior to

October, Lenin at a later time was compelled by experience to write:

"The word 'Constituent' is a term of abuse among us, not only among the educated Communists, but also among the peasants. They know from practical experience that the Constituent Assembly and the White Guards are one and the same, that the latter inevitably come after the former." (Selected Works, Vol. IX, p. 233)

The Bolsheviks themselves, formerly the chief champions of the slogan of convening the Constituent Assembly, were forced to disperse it on the very first day of its existence.

As could be expected, such contradictory actions placed the Bolsheviks in a serious dilemma before the eyes of the masses. The Bolsheviks had to pay for their failure to foresee that the Constituent Assembly would represent, and could only represent, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Within the Bolshevik Party itself there was a sharp, though relatively brief crisis, for some of the leaders were unable to revise their years of thinking in favor of the Constituent Assembly. It was amongst the broad masses, however, that the difficulties of the Bolsheviks were greatest. The Bolsheviks unwittingly had helped to imbue the toilers with illusions about the Constituent Assembly. In their pre-October propaganda, the Bolsheviks had assigned to the Constituent Assembly the right to give legal sanction to the Soviet power, to determine the conditions of peace and to draw up the final laws of the division of the land amongst the peasants. The faith of the masses was wrapped around the Constituent Assembly. When the Bolsheviks themselves dispersed the Constituent Assembly many toilers simply could not comprehend such an action. This gave the White Guardists and their agents, the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, a rich opportunity to arouse wide sentiment against the Bolsheviks as "usurpers," "dictators," and "haters" of Democracy. In reply to Lenin's post-October exhortations that the Constituent Assembly is a

dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, the Menshevik Kautsky was able to write with biting sarcasm and great effect:

"It is only a pity that this knowledge was arrived at after one had been left a minority in the Constituent Assembly." (K. Kautsky, The Dictatorship of the Proletariat, p. 59)

And Lenin had to take note that --

"The question of the Constituent Assembly and its dispersal by the Bolsheviks is the crux of Kautsky's entire pamphlet." (Selected Works, Vol. VII, p. 152)

No sooner did the Bolsheviks disperse the Constituent Assembly, than the White Guards and their lackeys became ardent champions of this bourgeois institution. With the slogan of Constituent Assembly as their demagogic front, the enemies of the toilers were able to alienate many workers from the Bolsheviks, prolonging the Civil War and causing vast death and destruction.

How did it happen that the Bolsheviks who stood head and shoulders above all others in political principle and tactical skill made such a profound error on the question of the Constituent Assembly? The answer is that even the greatest leaders of the masses were not perfect, though it is the practice of the opportunists to fetterize these leaders, to pretend they were infallible, to conceal those matters wherein they were correct and to peddle their errors as everlasting truths. It must be remembered that the pre-1917 program of Lenin and his followers stood for a bourgeois-democratic republic as the inevitable and necessary preliminary to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin in those days called not for the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, but for the illusory bourgeois-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry. Life completely repudiated this old Bolshevik program. The slogan For a Constituent Assembly was part of the old program of the Bolsheviks, a program which in its fun-

DEMOCRACY AND OPPORTUNISM

THE spreading of this "Constituent Assembly" narcotic is not confined to the "liberals," the Stalinists and Social Democrats. People who present a front of opposition to the Stalinist Socialist-Liberal Coalition, such as the Shachtmanites also lend support to that anti-workingclass poison.

The sham "Marxists" raise the question of the Constituent Assembly entirely differently. The crisis in Italy gives these people an unusual chance to throw the workers back politically to the period prior to the Bolshevik Revolution when the problem of the Constituent Assembly had not yet been altogether clarified and the Bolsheviks themselves had an incorrect conception of this bourgeois-democratic institution. The favorite trick of the opportunists is to put themselves in the light of raising the question of the Constituent Assembly the way the Bolsheviks raised it prior to October. Naturally, the opportunists conceal the fact that the Bolsheviks had to reverse their pre-October conceptions of the Constituent Assembly.

Max Shachtman, in an article "Problems of the Italian Revolt," takes as his springboard the increasing striving of the Italian masses for the elementary democratic rights, the right to vote, freedom of the press and assembly, the right to organize, etc. From this he passes to the question of political regime. In what ways will the struggle for elementary democratic rights become related to the question of political regime, asks Shachtman, speculating about future developments in Italy. Shachtman states what he thinks will be the likeliest tendency:

"It is quite possible, however, and even probable, that the struggle will first take the form of a demand for a national, popularly-elected, plenipotentiary Parliament, a variety of a Constituent Assembly." (The New International, September 1943, p. 237)

What is the Shachtman line in such an

damental elements Lenin discarded immediately upon his arrival in Russia in 1917. Unfortunately, Lenin did not discard the old program all in one stroke. The process of learning by experience, always an expensive way of learning, was a gradual one. The false notions about the Constituent Assembly lingered on up to and even a little after the October Revolution, inescapably resulting in harm. Prior to the October Revolution Lenin imagined that the Constituent Assembly could serve to satisfy, at least in some measure, the democratic needs of the masses. But after October, as we have shown, Lenin posed the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only regime which could fulfill this function. This change in line represented part of Lenin's adoption of the principle of the Permanent Revolution, for, the concept that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the only regime which can satisfy the democratic needs of the masses is the very essence of this principle. All those who advocate some other kind of regime as being in the interests of the democratic strivings of the toilers are betraying the principle of the Permanent Revolution. The experience of the Russian Revolution and of the post-1918 events in which throughout Europe the Constituent Assembly was used by the bourgeoisie to divert the masses from the dictatorship of the proletariat has lifted this entire problem out of the realm of theory and made it a settled question.

It is absolutely essential that the revolutionary workers today learn the lessons of this costly experience of the Russian proletariat. Never again must the workers be maneuvered into a position wherein, having given comfort and support to the fraudulent idea of a Constituent Assembly, they are compelled to extricate themselves from this self-imposed dilemma at great sacrifice. The line of the revolutionary workers must be a clear and consistent one. The Constituent Assembly is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie — on this question this must be the leading note of the propaganda of the revolutionary workers at all times, for to teach anything else is to deceive and betray the masses.

eventuality? Is it to expose this bourgeois-democratic deception in light of past experience, to warn the workers in advance that a Constituent Assembly is a trap which will bind the workers in chains and leave them helpless for the ensuing slaughter which the capitalists are preparing? Or is the Shachtman line to swim along with the bourgeois-democratic tide, to foster it and spread its pernicious influence? Judge from Shachtman's own words:

"The attitude of the revolutionists toward such a demand would obviously depend upon the circumstances under which it arose and the relationship of class forces. Certainly, they cannot rule out in advance support to such a demand. In fact, it is quite possible that revolutionists may encounter a situation in which they would champion such a demand." (Ibid. My emphasis - J.C.H.)

When all the window-dressing ("depend upon the circumstances," "relationship of class forces," "may encounter a situation") is eliminated, the fact stands out that should the Liberal-Stalinist-Socialist rumpus for a Constituent Assembly in Italy become very noisy, the Shachtmanites will fall in with it and "champion such a demand."

Characteristic of a certain brand of "Marxist," Shachtman leans upon the pre-October line of the Bolsheviks on the problem of a Constituent Assembly. Let us cite his words directly as a highly interesting specimen of how a subtle deception can be made to appear as a most forthright description of history:

"The Russian Bolsheviks, however, showed that the struggle for the Soviet power, far from being contradicted by the demand for the convocation of the Constituent Assembly which they directed against Kerensky and his reformist props, was facilitated by this demand. The Bourgeoisie and the Mensheviks and S.R.'s refused to call the Constituent Assembly together, sabotaged it. It was finally convened by the

Soviets, after they had taken power under Bolshevik leadership. Once convened, it proved to be superfluous and even a hindrance to the democratic Soviet power. The struggle for it, however, was anything but superfluous." (Ibid.)

All this sounds like "something everybody knows." And like so many of these "common knowledge" affairs, it contains a whole series of falsifications.

Shachtman diplomatically slurs over the problem of how it happened that to begin with the Bolsheviks were raising the demand for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, a purely capitalist institution. Shachtman, the "historian," conceals the fact that this demand arose in the old 1903-1905 program of the Bolsheviks which stood for All Power to the Constituent Assembly, a bourgeois-democratic program which Lenin had to discard on his arrival in Russia in April 1917. It was part of Lenin's line at the period when he opposed the principle of the Permanent Revolution (proletarian dictatorship, the only regime capable of satisfying the democratic needs of the masses). In a very fundamental sense the Bolsheviks in 1917 were "stuck with" this demand for a Constituent Assembly and outgrew it only later.

There is, however, a much more subtle and important deception concealed in the above-quoted statement by Shachtman. He cites the opposition of the Russian bourgeoisie and the Menshevik and S. R. parties to the convocation of a Constituent Assembly during 1917. This is a complex point which is a favorite one with the Shachtman brand of "revolutionist." It is a fact that the Russian bourgeoisie and the opportunists in 1917 were hedging on the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. The bourgeoisie and the opportunists also had to learn by experience. During the year 1917 they imagined that the Constituent Assembly would give a forward development to the revolution, that the most Left peasants would dominate it and that the whole thing would fall in with the

Bolshevik tide. This illusion among the bourgeoisie and their resultant reluctance to convoke the Constituent Assembly lent a certain force of exposure of the bourgeoisie to the Bolsheviks' very militant and sincere campaign for the Constituent Assembly. The bourgeoisie looked like liars before the eyes of the masses. But this was a wholly fortuitous circumstance peculiar to the Russian situation of 1917; it was a case in which history did not repeat itself. In the Russian Revolution all classes and all parties had a wrong position, each from the view of its own class interests, on the problem of the Constituent Assembly. But since then the international bourgeoisie have learned from this experience. They saw that the Constituent Assembly was only to their advantage and against the masses. After the Bolshevik Revolution, throughout Europe the bourgeoisie time after time convoked Constituent Assemblies. In Germany, in Austria, in Poland, to mention the most important places, the bourgeoisie convened Constituent Assemblies and used them to cut the ground from under the movement for Soviet power. The Constituent Assemblies gave the capitalists a "legitimate" front of "democracy," a "republic" which could make millions of rosy promises to the workers. It served in the highest degree to take advantage of the bourgeois-democratic illusions of the masses and prepared the way for the later bloody repressions and eventually for the fascist regime. The bourgeoisie no longer fear the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. For anyone to promulgate a tactic based on the assumption that the 1917 fear of the bourgeoisie still exists is to lead the workers into a trap. Mechanical references to 1917, a la Shachtman, are a distortion of history, not a correct drawing of historical lessons. Above all it must be kept in mind that all those who justify support to the demand for a Constitutional Assembly by reference to the Bolshevik line in 1917 are pointing to a period in which the Bolsheviks did not correctly understand that this institution represents a disguised dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and consequently spread many illusions about it, finally com-

ing in conflict in 1918 with all they had said before on this subject.

The sophistry of the opportunists permeates everything they touch. The democratic demands of the masses are wholly justified, cries Shachtman. In itself this is absolutely true; but what is his reply to these demands? Shachtman helps to shunt the Italian workers into a trap, an illusion, the bourgeois-democratic Constituent Assembly. Shachtman adds his mite to the clamor for an institution which history has already proved is only a prelude to the most vigorous repression of the masses. The correct line for the Italian workers is a consistent fight for Soviet power, for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat which alone can fulfill the democratic needs of the masses if developed along the true lines of workers democracy, not bureaucratic lines as was the case in the Soviet Union. At certain times the overwhelming majority of the toilers will not agree with the slogan of Soviet Power. This is no excuse, however, to fall in with the bourgeois-democratic illusions of the masses, to help foist upon them the bourgeois Constitutional Assembly which can only prepare fascist repressions. When the masses are against the correct program, it is necessary to swim against the current, to explain to the masses. The unbroken record of defeats of the workers throughout the world after the October Revolution has been due to the lack of a correct program and leadership, not to any lack of revolutionary workers willing to follow the Marxist line. The victory or defeat of the workers in Italy will depend fundamentally on the existence of a genuine Marxist policy.

SOME PREDICTIONS CONCERNING THE TROTSKYITES

MANY years of experience have proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Trotsky tendency of which Shachtman is a part is one which follows in the trail of the Stalinists, duplicating their policy in various forms and under a number of disguises. For many years now, the predominant note of the Stalinist bureaucrats has

been an openly ultra-rightist one. During this period, the chief trend of the Trotskyites has been a half-concealed ultra-rightist one.

When the Stalinists in France were howling for a Popular Front government, Trotsky went them one better and called for a government of Blum-Cachin, of the Social Democratic and Stalinist betrayers. In Spain, the Trotskyites gave "critical" support to the sabotaging Popular Front Government which sold the workers to Franco.

The Trotsky line in Italy already shows an unmistakable ultra-rightist trend. It is a line of subtle support to the traps of bourgeois-democracy, falling in with the Stalinist ultra-rightist policies. The Trotskyites' "Left" coloration only serves to conceal the basically Stalinist character of their line.

As the crisis in Italy unfolds, the opportunist policies of the Trotskyites will become more pronounced. They will aid in the general betrayal of the masses, particularly at the

most crucial point. Thus it was in Spain, where during the first period of the Popular Front Government, the Trotskyites were advancing most of their calls for support to the Azana Caballero-Hernandez gang. When the defeat of the workers became assured, the chief note of the Trotskyite propaganda became one of condemnation of the Spanish bourgeois democracy which was intended to make their followers forget the fundamental line of support to the Stalinist-Social-Democratic-Liberal counter-revolution. So will their line be in Italy. Should the workers be overwhelmingly crushed in the course of some great upheaval in the future, the Trotskyites will raise a tremendous "critical" noise and will try to come out of the situation with the appearance of raging lions of Marxism. But the thinking and remembering revolutionary workers will not fail to record that from the start the Trotskyites in Italy aided in preparing the bourgeois blows against the toilers.

J. C. Hunter

FURTHER MATERIAL on the question of the Constituent Assembly will be found in these articles in THE BULLETIN --

INDIA - Vol. 5, No. 3.

THE R.W.L. ON BOYCOTTING A PARLIAMENT - Vol 5, No. 4.

THE R.W.L.'S REPLY TO CRITICISM - Vol. 5, No. 6.

The above articles contain concrete exposure of the opportunist line of the Shachtmanites, as well as proof of the reactionary position of the Cannonites and Oehlerites.

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ECHOES OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

In the Spanish Civil War of July 1936-March 1939 the Stalinist line of "democracy versus fascism" was the fraud that predominated amongst the Spanish toilers and led them to destruction. This Rightist Stalinist trap was carefully elaborated at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in July 1935. The Stalinists gave currency to the deception that in the present period the burning issue for the working class is the struggle between the two forms of capitalist rule: democracy and fascism. As an innovation the Stalinists introduced the term People's Front to signify a government that allegedly would fight fascism. The People's Front in actuality was nothing more than the new Stalinist version of the moth-eaten bourgeois-socialist coalition government, used in certain critical situations to stem the rising proletarian tide and prepare the way for the consolidation of bourgeois reaction. The earlier form of the People's Front was the "workers government" trap, a coalition of socialists and Stalinists in 1923 to betray the German revolution.

The betrayal in Spain followed the precise form laid down by the counter-revolutionary Stalinist plotters. Drugged with the idea of "Winning the war first" and defending capitalist democracy the workers were misled into supporting the Stalinist-concocted People's Front government which paralyzed the toilers politically, sabotaged their struggle militarily and paved the way for the victory of the fascists.

What line did the Trotskyite leaders pursue in this situation? This is what the Trotskyite workers must determine and weigh accordingly.

From June 1936 through the most critical period of the Spanish Civil War, the Trotskyite organization in the United States was buried in the Socialist Party allegedly endeavoring to revolutionize that petty-bourgeois agency of imperialism. The Socialist Party was, of course, supporting the Stalinist People's Front Government

and stuffing the minds of its followers with poisonous illusions about defending democracy as a lesser evil than fascism.

When the Trotskyites emerged from the Socialist Party in January 1938 they publicly proclaimed as their own policy: Material aid to and political criticism of the Spanish Popular Front Government.

The "political criticism" of the Trotsky leaders was especially directed towards the fake Stalinist-Social-Democratic thesis of the Spanish war as one of capitalist democracy against fascism. Here are some samples from the Trotskyite press during the course of the Civil War:

"The fraud of bourgeois democracy stands completely exposed in the era of declining capitalism as the precursor of fascism and war. Policies built upon the preservation of bourgeois democracy not only cannot bar fascism and stave off war— They actually pave the way for these twin evils." (Socialist Appeal, March 19, 1938, p. 4)

On March 26, 1938 the Trotsky leaders ran an editorial on the ignominious end of Karl Kautsky. The Trotskyite editor took occasion solemnly to remind the workers of the horrible result that comes from supporting bourgeois democracy:

"Let the workers learn from his Kautsky's) example the clear and unmistakable lesson that in the era of the decline of capitalism the system of bourgeois democracy, if it is not overthrown by the workers and replaced by the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, leads not to socialism — but to fascism. And that those who support or preach support to bourgeois democracy as essential to the fight against fascism are false leaders who prepare only the defeat of the working class and its perpetual enslavement." (Socialist Appeal, March 26, 1938, p. 4)

Finally, in a balance sheet of the Spanish events drawn in October 1938, the Trotsky leaders emphasized the principle lesson of these events.

"We must resolve that these workers and peasants have not died in vain. Their sacrifice, heavy and terrible as it is, can yet be turned toward victory if — and only if — it can be made to teach the workers its lesson, which is at the same time the lesson of every great event of our time. Bourgeois democracy cannot, will not stand against fascism. Support of bourgeois democracy paves the way for fascism." (Socialist Appeal, Oct. 8, 1938, p. 4. Emphasis in original.)

THE REAL TROTSKY LINE

DURING the course of the Spanish war our tendency accused the Trotsky leaders of supporting the Stalinist line and specifically of supporting the Stalinist fraud of the Spanish War as one involving capitalist democracy or fascism. We ignored the surface declamations of the Trotsky writers quoted above as so much dust deliberately thrown into the eyes of their followers to hide the real pro-Stalinist nature of their line. Here is how we characterized the Trotsky line in an issue of THE BULLETIN on the Spanish situation published in May 1938:

"Is it an accident, is it a wonder that the Trotskyites gave support to bourgeois democracy against the interests of Leninism? In their internal bulletin for October 1937, on 'The Spanish Question,' Trotsky wrote: 'In the Spanish Civil War the question involves democracy or fascism.'

"Trotsky cast overboard Lenin's fundamental thesis that the present period is that of imperialist war and proletarian revolution. By shifting the historical perspective from the question of class struggle — proletarian revolution against capitalism — to the question of the fight among the Spanish capitalists regarding the form of the bour-

geois State, Trotsky once again has given aid and comfort to the Stalinist bureaucracy since the thesis 'democracy versus Fascism' is the very core of the ultra-Rightist line of the Seventh Congress of Stalin's Comintern. To the extent of their influence the Trotskyites insured an almost unrestricted play of the Stalinist-Socialist-Azanist forces." (P. 19.)

During this period, many Trotskyite workers characterized our accusation as ridiculous and absurd. As evidence they pointed to the mountain of exposure appearing in their press against the Stalinist thesis of the Spanish war as being one of democracy against fascism.

Many years later, after the smoke of the Spanish Civil War had disappeared, the Cannonite leaders finally made an important admission. This admission was that their line in Spain was predicated on a characterization of that conflict as one between capitalist democracy and fascism and that they supported the capitalist democracy. Referring to the Spanish Civil War and, of course, calling themselves "revolutionary Marxists," the Cannonite leaders declared:

"In that struggle, by the way, the revolutionary Marxists were in favor of giving material support to the Spanish Loyalists because we recognized it to be a struggle between fascism and capitalist democracy and between the two we prefer the latter." (The Militant, May 24, 1941, p. 6. My emphasis - A. B.)

At the time this admission was made, the Cannon-Shachtman leadership of the Socialist Workers Party had split and Shachtman had his own group, the Workers Party. Sometime later, however, Shachtman, in the course of some polemic, admitted that he had the same line as Cannon:

"Not as an analogy, but as an illustration of what we mean, we can take the period of the civil war in Spain. We, as well as the Cannon-

ites, supported bourgeois democracy as a lesser evil in comparison with fascism." (The New International, April 1944, p. 102. My emphasis - A. B.)

This, then, was the true Cannon-Shachtman policy in Spain, confirming the accusation we levelled at them in May 1938. But what of all the Trotskyite talk during the Spanish Civil War about support of democracy paving the way for fascism, against Stalinism, People's Frontism, etc.? This talk now stands clearly revealed as a pure fraud specifically designed to conceal the true Trotskyite line which was that of support to Stalinism and concretely to its Rightist fraud of supporting capitalist democracy against fascism. This, the real line of the Trotskyite leaders was kept hidden from the Trotskyite followers. During the Spanish Civil War the Trotsky leaders did not and could not dare openly and publicly to reveal their real line. Had they done so they would have been easily exposed as lickspittles of the Stalinist bureaucracy, politically working hand-in-glove with that treacherous force to betray the Spanish workers to fascism.

In that period one had first to unravel the line of "military aid and political criticism" of the People's Front Government to show its reactionary pro-Stalinist core from the statement made by Trotsky in an Internal Bulletin. Under the cloud of their "political criticism" the Trotsky leaders blinded their followers and gave the false impression that they were fighting against the Stalinist line of "democracy versus fascism."

WHAT THE TROTSKYITES DEFENDED

AN investigation of the character of the Spanish capitalist democracy existing during the Civil War indicates why the Trotsky leaders attempted to conceal their support of it. The truth is that this democracy was a myth, a fig leaf concealing the murderous capitalist essence. Here is how the Trotsky writers themselves analyzed the Spanish "democracy" to which they gave disguised support:

"The economic foundations of reaction were left untouched, in land, industry, finance, the Church, the army, the State. The lower courts were hives of reaction; the labor press is filled, from February to July (1936), with accounts of fascists caught red-handed and let free, and workers held on flimsy charges. On the day the counter-revolution broke out, the prisons of Barcelona and Madrid were filled with thousands of political prisoners — workers, especially from the C.N.T., but also many from the U.G.T. The administrative bureaucracy was so rotten with reaction that it fell apart on July 18. The whole diplomatic and consular corps, with a handful of exceptions, went over to the fascists." (F. Morrow, The Civil War in Spain, pp. 37-38)

A rigid press censorship was imposed, workers' demonstrations were expressly forbidden by the dictatorial Republican rule, unless authorized. These facts were detailed by Felix Morrow in the pamphlet quoted just above. (p. 38)

The talk about Spanish democracy was "a monstrous hoax," they admitted (Socialist Appeal, July 23, 1938), and the People's Front Government was actually a military dictatorship, yet in the words of Shachtman, they "supported bourgeois democracy as a lesser evil in comparison with fascism":

"The People's Front spokesmen declare that they are fighting for nothing more than democracy. But while they have suppressed the embryonic Soviets of the workers and peasants, they have at the same time reduced the old Cortes (Chamber of Deputies) to an empty shell, and are now ruling Loyalist Spain as a military dictatorship." (Ibid., p. 3)

The notorious anti-sedition decree of the "democratic" Loyalist government, declared the Trotsky spokesmen, were even more brazen than Hitler or Mussolini's juridical procedure:

"Applicable to any worker who agi-

tated for better conditions, to strikers, to any governmental criticism in a newspaper, to almost any statement, act or attitude other than adoration of the regime, this decree was not only unprecedented in a democracy, it was more brazen than Hitler or Mussolini's juridical procedure." (F. Morrow, Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain, p 117)

It is crystal clear that the bourgeois-Stalinist-Socialist talk about the Spanish Loyalist Government being "democratic" was a brazen lie. It is easy to see why the Trotsky leaders in the period did not come out openly and proclaim their line to be one of supporting the bourgeois "democracy."

The central lie about Spanish "democracy" was the story that it was fighting fascism. During the Civil War, the Trotskyites themselves admitted that the People's Front Government was sabotaging the struggle of the workers and peasants and turning them over to Franco:

"Fearing the revolution more than Franco, the government was directly sabotaging the Aragon and Levante

fronts held by the C.N.T. Fearing the revolution more than Franco, the government was giving fascist agents (Asensio, Villalba, etc. etc.) the opportunity to betray Loyalist fortresses to Franco (Badajoz, Irun, Malaga)." (Ibid., p. 87)

Thus we see that there was neither democracy in the People's Front government nor a fight of this non-existent democracy against fascism. Today, the fascist butcher Franco and his gang of cutthroats trample on the prostrate body of the heroic Spanish workers. Under the bloody heel of fascism, the Spanish toilers are being subjected to systematic starvation and unprecedented tortures. What policy brought this debacle about? The policy of class collaboration expressed in the line of supporting the bourgeois democracy in its sham struggle against fascism. Who in the workers movement was responsible for foisting support of this counter-revolutionary line onto the revolutionary anti-Stalinist workers? The Trotsky leaders, Cannon and Shachtman.

A. B.

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CANNON'S "STRUGGLE FOR A PROLETARIAN PARTY"

(Continued from May 1944 Issue)

DU E to Trotsky's authoritative intervention in 1933, Shachtman relinquished his pursuit of gathering the reins of leadership into his own hands and bowed to Cannon. The factional jamboree was ended at once and the status quo ante bellum was largely restored. The only discordant note was now struck by Abern. Although the open fight against Cannon had been terminated, Abern and his allies, sullenly and assiduously kept whetting a factional stiletto and waiting for a propitious moment to plunge it into Cannon's back, after the fashion Cannon himself had practiced in the Stalinist Party.

Abern had been the organizational brain of Cannon's caucus in the American Section of Stalin's "Comintern." During the struggle against the Lovestone bandits, Abern sharpened his wits and after the Cannon caucus had been expelled, turned his factional skill against his own boss. Abern's fight in the early years caused Cannon deep anxiety because it was conducted on practically naked organizational grounds, very seldom screened with ideological curtains. The Abernites in whispers accused the Cannon leadership of political dishonesty and almost-Stalinist practices. After the "reconciliation" of their "ally" Shachtman with Cannon, the Abernites included Shachtman's name in their denunciations of the regime. The Abernites, forming a rotten, unprincipled clique, as was shown not only by Cannon, but even by their former and present ally, Shachtman, and invariably standing on the same political ground as Cannon-Shachtman, were invulnerable organizationally and could never be thrown overboard because they dutifully carried out the Trotsky policy and the assigned tasks. Of all his factional enemies, Cannon detested Abern most, and precisely because this rebellious colleague would not bother to clothe his anti-Cannon machinations with some diverting ideological cloak, but waged an undisguised faction fight to curb Cannon. The latter, naturally, prefers to have these scrimmages adorn-

ed with "political" differences so as to make them look like a fight for principles. In his book Cannon speaks of "Abernism" as of a disease which afflicted the supposedly healthy body of the Trotsky group:

"The Abern group is a permanent family clique whose uninterrupted existence and perfidious practices are known to all the older members of the party. For more than ten years it has waged a now open, now concealed, but never interrupted factional struggle against the party leadership. At one time or another in the past, most of the leading comrades have differed and formed temporary factional groupings in the struggle for conflicting political views. Upon the settlement of the disputes, peace was made and good collaboration resumed; the opponents quite often became the best of friends, bearing no grudges. But Abern, without a platform, without once bringing forward any independent political position, never became reconciled, never ceased his inexplicably consistent factional struggle." (The Struggle for a Proletarian Party, p. 35)

After the establishment of the Cannon-Shachtman "friendship" the American Trotsky group proceeded to the next stage of its development.

Up to 1933, the Trotsky leaders openly attached their followers to the Stalinized "Comintern," on the pretext that this organization — in actuality a center of world counter-revolution — was a Communist movement whose leadership was merely confused and in need of correction. The then line of Trotsky and Co. was Support to the Comintern and Correct It. The Nazi victory in Germany in 1933, brought about primarily by the treachery of Stalinism, made it tactically impossible for Trotsky to call openly for support of the Stalinist outfits, even under the old cover of "criticism." A continuation of the line of thinly disguised support to Stalinism would have resulted

in Trotsky's losing his hold on the anti-Stalin, radical workers. Hence some time after Hitler's victory, Trotsky began to spread it about that he was for a new International.

In America, Cannon and Shachtman, began to cast about for some new forces with which to combine and proclaim themselves a new Marxist party. The Musteite American Workers Party served as the decorative addition which would justify renaming the Trotsky group a Party. In December 1934, Cannon and Shachtman, together with Muste, formed what they called the Workers Party.

There followed a hectic period of venomous intrigues involving all the leading personalities of the newly-formed Trotskyist Workers Party. The Musteite leadership, awakened to the fact that they had lost by the deal with Cannon-Shachtman, sought to break the Cannon-Shachtman grip on the organization. Too weak for the task, they cast about for allies. Abern thought he saw an opportunity to use his factional dagger and formed a secret united front with Muste. The Abern-Muste bloc approached the Oehler caucus which rejected Trotsky's social democratic orientation but clung to the Workers Party in the hope of securing more caucus members before splitting off. The factional cat-and-dog fight broke out and continued unabated for some months in 1935-36. In the course of the fight the Cannon-Shachtman leadership rid itself of the Oehlerites, split the Musteites and reduced the Abernites to impotence. At the Workers Party convention the Cannon-Shachtman faction consolidated its power, with Cannon emerging as the supreme boss, next only to Trotsky in the international Trotskyist organization.

The next phase in the development of Cannon's "proletarian party" began with its entry into the Socialist Party in June 1936. The ideological aspect of this move represented a monstrous and deliberate cover-up by Cannon-Shachtman of the reactionary nature of the Socialist Party and a shameless reversal of their original evaluation of the Detroit Convention

of the Socialist Party. Superficially, Cannon's relations with Shachtman now ripened into a very close friendship. Simultaneously Shachtman cultivated the amity of an ambitious liberal professor, Burnham, who very rapidly learned how to adjust a revolutionary mask to his opportunist face. Extremely circumspect and cautious, Burnham left intact the bridge over which he went to the Trotskyites so that he could at any moment liquidate his "revolutionary" career and devote himself to less subtle efforts of perpetuating capitalist slavery. Shachtman, as well as Cannon and Trotsky, was fully aware of Burnham's guarded dissociation from the basic Marxian doctrines. But since their own acceptance of Marxist fundamentals was a mere pretense to cover up their support to the Stalinist bureaucracy and for a while now to the Second International, they welcomed the company of the sly professor. They elevated him to a high position from where he could disseminate not only the confusion and deceptions fabricated by Trotsky, but also the poison manufactured by the capitalist colleges. Cannon made friendly overtures to this liberal humbug, seeking to win him completely to the Cannon circle. But Burnham was stubborn. He refused to burn his bourgeois bridges behind him.

Cannon relates an incident which makes it amply clear what sort of intellectual adventurer Burnham was. Naturally, Cannon does not indicate the real moral of his tale, namely, that this type of swindler could, with the aid of Cannon-Shachtman, find a careerist hunting ground in the Trotsky movement and even become one of its leaders. In the course of Burnham's complaints of organizational inefficiency in the Trotskyist party, Cannon made a proposal:

"I proposed to him at that time, in the most friendly spirit, that he help us remedy the undoubted weakness. I proposed concretely that he make an end of the two-for-a-nickel business of instructing college students who have no intention of connecting themselves with the labor movement, and devote his

energies and talents entirely to the party. After 'thinking it over' for a day or so he rejected the proposal. The reason he gave was somewhat astounding: he said he was not fully convinced of the wisdom of devoting his life to a cause which might not be victorious in his life-time! Naturally, I could not give him any guarantees." (The Struggle for a Proletarian Party, p. 25)

Burnham quite outspokenly indicated that he was determined not to exchange his job with the bourgeoisie for a doubtful place in Trotsky's retinue. Cannon knew that even a diseaseridden pseudo-Marxist in the Comintern would never have given such a brazen reply. Did Cannon inform the Trotskyite rank-and-file of that conversation? Only when Burnham himself turned openly against Cannon. Just as the leaders of other opportunist parties, every Trotsky leader has stored away much dirt about his colleagues and at the outburst of a factional feud displays choice morsels before the dumfounded ranks. But while there is peace in the bureaucratic family, the Trotsky leaders keep the dirty linen concealed. This is what they mean by "collective leadership."

Burnham was greatly pampered by the Trotsky leaders. Cannon himself relates how Burnham was pushed into the upper circles:

"He became a member of the National Committee without having served any apprenticeship in the class struggle. He was appointed one of the editors of our theoretical journal. All the recognition and the 'honors' of a prominent leader of the party were freely accorded to him." (Ibid., p. 20)

As a matter of truth, the Trotsky leaders imposed Burnham upon the rank-and-file who were never consulted in the matter. Note, "He was appointed one of the editors of our theoretical journal." This intellectual self-seeker, bureaucratically lifted over the heads of the Trotsky workers, "has always been handled with silk gloves and

given all kinds of liberties that were denied to others." (Ibid., p. 22)

It was not the workers who handled Burnham with silk gloves but Trotsky, Cannon and Shachtman.

When Cannon deposited his "proletarian party" in the Socialist Party, he turned over the political guidance of the Trotsky group to his two copilots, Burnham and Shachtman, himself departing to California for work in "the field."

"During the entire period of our work in the Socialist Party, that is, for a whole year, I was, as is known, absent from the center, in California. The administration and political direction of our faction in the S.P. was in the hands of the present minority, primarily of Burnham and Shachtman." (Ibid., p. 54)

The basic political job which the Trotsky group carried on in the Socialist Party (1936-1937) was the rendering of "critical" support to the Spanish counter-revolutionary bourgeois democracy which, by the admission of the Trotsky leaders themselves, paved the way for the fascist regime.* The line administered by Burnham and Shachtman and, naturally by Cannon — a line which immensely strengthened reaction in bourgeois-democratic countries and bolstered fascism in Europe — was, however, not of their own making. It was laid down by Stalin's lackey Dimitrov at the Seventh Congress of the "Comintern" in 1935 and was epitomized in the treacherous phrase "democracy vs. fascism" in contrast to the Marxist formula of Proletarian revolution against capitalism. This Stalinist line was handed down to Cannon, Shachtman and Burnham by Trotsky and was accepted without a murmur.

The Socialist Party was an inconvenient place for the Trotsky leaders to burst open their factional abscess. Every high-ranking leader of the Trot-

* See "Echoes of the Spanish War" in this issue of THE BULLETIN, p. 28

sky group sensed that the stay in the Socialist Party would soon be cut short, judging by the experience of the Trotsky group in France, and every one of them was feverishly preparing to further his own particular aim. Abern put his forces on the alert. Shachtman quite successfully marshaled many leading people for his cause, securing above all the aid of Burnham who by now had become a popular and influential force among the Trotskyite workers. Cannon consolidated the core of his old supporters, added many new ones from "the field," and, despite the "astounding reason" Burnham had given him two years earlier, renewed his effort to win that circumspect opportunist with an offer of the highest administrative post in the future "proletarian party":

"After my return from California in the summer of 1937, when we were proceeding to form our party again after our expulsion from the S.P., I again raised with Burnham the question of his taking the post of national secretary. Again I received a negative reply." (*Ibid.*, p. 25)

The Trotskyite workers were kept in the dark concerning all the deals and attempted deals of their leaders.

Cannon knew that Burnham's decision was final. Like Muste before him, Burnham fully grasped that to continue with the Trotskyites would lead to no profitable end. He only awaited the occasion to part company with them in a spectacular way so as to clear himself in the eyes of his bourgeois employers of any suspicion of Marxism. The emergence of the Trotsky group from the Socialist Party and the ripening of the Cannon-Shachtman rivalry provided that occasion.

The anti-Cannon forces coming out of the Socialist Party with the Trotsky group in the Fall of 1937, emboldened by their growing strength, especially among the youth, looked with hopeful anticipation to the future.

At its Chicago convention, December 1937-January 1938, the Trotsky

group was renamed the Socialist Workers Party. The Political Committee of the "proletarian party," in appearance a coalition of all the cliques, in actuality remained in the hands of Burnham and Shachtman who were supported by four Abernites. Cannon found himself in a minority of one. But this was not at all perturbing to Cannon who controlled the National Committee which stood as a check over the Political Committee. Barring unforeseen events, it was certain that he would reestablish very soon his majority in the Political Committee. He had two more powerful weapons. First, he was the originator of the Cannon caucus in the Stalin party, the founder and head of the Trotsky group in America and in consequence was almost a tradition among the anti-Stalin revolutionary workers. It was obvious not only to him but to his factional foes that if matters came to a showdown this tradition would play a major role. He would succeed in enlisting the sympathy and support of the rank-and-file who were not familiar with the opportunist history of the "proletarian party." This would eliminate the need of crude bureaucratic methods such as had been employed against the anti-French-turners in 1934-1935 and would lend a democratic flavor to his fight. The second weapon was the unlimited and invaluable backing of Trotsky, whose legendary figure even in the anti-Cannon circles was looked upon with reverence.

Burnham, Shachtman and Abern, the last two virtual master-minds at evaluating the factional situation, were not deceived by the external appearance of their control of the Political Committee. In their document The War and Bureaucratic Conservatism they wrote:

"The P.C. is in reality a fiction, or at best a semi-fiction. Its authority is strictly limited: here it may act, but into this territory it may not venture. Over the P.C. looms the N.C. (which, formally, is as it should be); and over the N.C. looms the final authority—the Cannon clique." (*Ibid.*, p. 286)

They were aware of Cannon's trumps

and had little doubt that he would play them to the fullest extent when the time arrived. Shachtman and Abern, and probably all the other anti-Cannon intriguers, understood that they could never win against the weight of Trotsky's prestige. Shachtman must have realized that if Trotsky continued tipping the factional scales in favor of Cannon, there would be no other path left open to the anti-Cannon forces except to sever all organizational bonds with Cannon and Trotsky. The break had to be made, of course, with some "ideological dispute."

Early in 1939 some internal factional machination later termed by Cannon and Shachtman the "auto crisis" served as the strategic starting point for the rumpus which resulted in the 1940 split in the S.W.P. Cannon used this, amongst other things, as ammunition in eliminating the Shachtman majority of the Political Committee.

The Burnham-Shachtman-Abern opposition was greatly handicapped in its factional intrigue against Cannon by the fact that the latter's bureaucratic methods were very skillfully hidden from the rank-and-file. In the document "The War and Bureaucratic Conservatism" the leaders of the opposition mention three basic factors which screened the bureaucratic essence of the regime of the "proletarian party."

"The first is that Cannon, upon all occasions without exception, accepts the politics of Trotsky, accepts them immediately and without question." (Ibid., p. 274)

In so far as accepting Trotsky's politics without question is concerned, Shachtman speaks as an expert. Shachtman himself from 1928 up to 1939 upon all occasions without exception accepted Trotsky's politics with a noisy affirmation and disseminated all of Trotsky's lies, exactly as did Cannon.

Shachtman continues:

"The second chief factor which hides the true role of the Cannon group is Cannon's undoubted organizational skill -- as it has sometimes been called, his 'organizational flexibility.'" (Ibid., p. 278)

The most embarrassing fact the op-

position leaders had to admit was their opportunist line of covering up the very bureaucratism which they were now supposedly out to combat:

"The third chief factor which has obscured the role of Cannon is the cover which has been provided for him by other N.C. members, in particular by members of the present opposition." (Ibid., p. 279)

Since it was an open secret even among the new-comers among the ranks that for a number of years both Burnham and Shachtman had collaborated with Cannon in virtually all of the bureaucratic enterprises and had presented a facade of unity, the two now in opposition felt constrained to do penance:

"Certain members of the present opposition, in particular Burnham and Shachtman, do not pretend to be free from having shared responsibility in several of Cannon's bureaucratic actions, and from having themselves acted bureaucratically." (Ibid., p. 281)

This was said in order to absolve the leaders of the opposition in the eyes of their own followers. The impression Burnham and Shachtman sought to create was that they had sharply and irrevocably broken with bureaucratic practices by breaking with Cannon. Such an impression lent an air of honesty to their hypocritical attack upon the Cannon regime and to the developing rift with Trotsky who stood firmly behind that regime. Following this admission they could paint the bureaucratism of the Cannon leadership in lavish detail.

The eruption of factionalism came to a head at the July 1939 convention held in New York. After secret preparations, Shachtman made a lunge to capture the National Committee but Cannon's forces smashed his attempt.

Cannon followed his victory won at the July Convention with the reorganization of the Political Committee at the October 1939 Plenum by reducing the opposition to four members (Burnham, Shachtman, Abern, Bern) and securing a majority for his caucus.
(TO BE CONTINUED) G. M.

THE TROTSKY SCHOOL OF FALSIFICATION

WHAT TROTSKY TAUGHT
ABOUT
HITLERISM

THE Trotsky leaders never tire of repeating the story that their program was confirmed in the German crisis which marked the accession of the Nazis to power on January 30, 1933. In an article "How Trotsky Taught Labor to Fight Against Hitlerism," The Militant of February 12, 1944 turns to this favorite theme. In this particular article, The Militant prints statements by Trotsky written prior to the accession of Hitler to power and dealing with the rising Hitler movement. The Militant claims that Trotsky's predictions and program stood the test of history:

"The eleven years of Hitler's rule which led to the most terrible war in history and the Nazi assault upon the USSR have tested and confirmed the truth of Trotsky's predictions and his program. That program holds with full force today."
(P. 3. Emphasis in original)

Let us check this story of The Militant in the order presented; first, Trotsky's predictions on the fascist menace, secondly, the program he laid down on this question, and thirdly whether that program holds today.

TROTSKY'S PREDICTIONS

IN the years prior to, and at the time of Hitler's accession to power, it was the common practice of the Stalinists and Social Democrats to spread the disastrous illusion that the fascist movement in Germany could not travel the path to supreme domination that the Mussolini movement did in Italy. This comforting opium was summed up in the catch-phrase well-known at that time: "Germany is not Italy." Did Trotsky differentiate himself in his predictions from those who spread these lies? A study of Trotsky's predictions on this matter shows he repeated them to the letter. Here

is a statement of his written a month after Hitler took power:

"It would be patently stupid to believe that the subsequent evolution of Germany will go the Italian road; that Hitler will strengthen his domination step by step without serious resistance." (L. Trotsky, The Militant, April 8, 1933)

Actually Germany did evolve along the Italian road, and Hitler did strengthen his domination without meeting serious resistance due to the complete paralysis of the German proletariat induced by its opportunist leadership. A little more than a month after Trotsky's reassuring statement, the Trotsky leaders acknowledged that "German fascism slavishly follows the Italian example." (The Militant, May 20, 1933) And when on June 24, 1933, The Militant subjected the thesis that "Germany is not Italy" to severe criticism, attributing this line to the Social Democratic and Stalinist leaders, it kept mum on Trotsky's own misleading prediction on this score.

After Hitler assumed the Chancellorship, Trotsky went so far as to state that it was impossible for the German bourgeoisie to give the actual power to the Nazis:

"There is no way of getting around without the Nazis. But it is likewise impossible to give over to them the actual power; today, the threat on the part of the proletariat is not so acute that the higher-ups should consciously provoke a civil war with problematic outcome." (L. Trotsky, The Militant, February 24, 1933. My emphasis - A. B.)

This patently false prediction of Trotsky's and his participation in the "Germany is not Italy" campaign is dishonestly omitted in The Militant's re-

view of Trotsky's line in the German situation. It would be evidently absurd to write how history has "confirmed the truth of Trotsky's predictions" and include the false and misleading predictions of Trotsky which we quoted. Obviously the prime concern of The Militant is simply to sanctify Trotsky as an infallible prophet who gave correct leadership to the workers. Necessarily along these lines, facts must be hurried and fiction advanced as truth.

TROTSKY'S PROGRAM

THE prospect which Trotsky gave the advanced workers prior to 1933 was that the Stalinist party must be corrected and set on the Marxist path. The hopes of Trotsky's followers were wrapped around this view. Trotsky repudiated any talk of the workers taking the independent path of a new international directed against the Stalinized Third International. After his exile from the Soviet Union, Trotsky declared:

"All talk of my planning a 4th International is sheer nonsense. The Social Democratic International, just as the Communist International have deep historical roots. No intermediary (2 $\frac{1}{2}$) or additional (IV) International will be needed. There is no room for them." (Bulletin of the Opposition, #1-2, p. 29)

Such was Trotsky's program -- which The Militant boasts "holds with full force today."

Stalin and his bureaucrats, facing the danger of a revolution in Germany, which they feared would spread into the Soviet Union and destroy the usurper's power, made every effort to paralyze the German toilers. Their fear was obvious to the bourgeois correspondents in Moscow. Duranty, under the cover of phrases attributing to the counter-revolutionary Stalin a desire to "build Socialism," wrote in plain words about Stalin's fear of revolution:

"In Moscow, writes Mr. Duranty, there is one menace which is feared above all others, and it is the out-

break of a revolution in Germany or elsewhere in Europe. This is a far cry from the time when Lenin staged the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, not because he was interested in Russia but because he wished to set Western Europe on fire. Today Stalin does not want to set anything on fire. He wants to be let alone to build Socialism in Russia. He is afraid of revolution abroad, even if it comes without soviet aid." (The New York Times, Editorial, November 23, 1932. My emphasis-A.B.)

Trotsky's program, on the other hand, deceived the workers into expecting aid against fascism from the Stalin-dominated Soviet Union:

"In their struggle against Fascism the German workers will naturally seek support in the Soviet Union, AND THEY WILL FIND IT." (L. Trotsky, The Militant, July 16, 1932, p. 2. My capitals - A. B.)

When the Nazis took power, the kind of "aid" the German workers got from the Soviet Union was shown by the fact that the leaders of the Soviet Union maintained a dead silence in the vital and strategic days after January 30, 1933. In fact, as Duranty reported, the Soviet press actually avoided the subject of the Hitler Government: "It is significant that not a single word of comment on the Hitler cabinet has appeared in the Soviet Press." (The New York Times, February 2, 1933) The sub-headline over this dispatch read: "Soviet is silent on Hitler government but seems not to view it as an entire evil."

This was the "support" which the German workers received from the Stalin-controlled Soviet Union!

THE PROGRAM TODAY

WHEN Hitler came to power, and the criminality of the Stalinists became apparent to many anti-Stalinist workers the tendency toward creating a new party could no longer be restrained. In the Fall of 1933 Trotsky issued a call for a Fourth International. Thus, the program of "re-

forming" the Stalinist gangsters was self-evidently not confirmed but refuted. Therefore, when the Trotsky leaders say in the February 2, 1944 issue of The Militant that Trotsky's program in Germany "holds in full force today" they are deliberately lying and distorting both their own line today and Trotsky's pre-Hitler line. While on one hand, the Trotsky leaders say their program of 1933 is still correct today, on the other, there stands the fact that they have officially dropped the line of "correcting" the Stalinist party and repudiating a Fourth International.

A key point of Trotsky's program was his proposal of a united front between Social Democracy and Stalinism. Only through the agency of such a united front, argued Trotsky, could the German workers be enabled to prevent the victory of fascism. In actuality the imperialist Social Democracy is irrevocably tied to the German bourgeois state of which fascism is one form. With its espousal of chauvinism in 1914 and support of the world imperialist war it broke forever with the interests of the proletariat. After the imperialist war Social Democracy saved German and world capitalism from collapse by assuming power in the bourgeois state and beheading the movement of the revolutionary proletariat. Its politics led inescapably to the victory of fascism.

The Stalinist bureaucracy, to safeguard its privileges and power usurped from the Soviet masses, had to prevent the development of the international proletariat towards revolution which would lead unavoidably to the overthrow not only of imperialism but of all forms of oppression includ-

ing Stalinist bureaucratism. A united front between the counter-revolutionary Stalinist leaders and the treacherous imperialist hirelings of Social Democracy could not possibly prevent the victory of fascism. History records the formation of such united fronts as the Stalinist-Social Democratic coalition governments in Saxony and Thuringia formed in October 1923 in Germany which broke the back of the German revolution. A united front between Stalinism and Social Democracy was formed in France and Spain in 1936. The result was disruption of proletarian revolution and the victory of bourgeois reaction. The unity between counter-revolutionary forces can be based only on a counter-revolutionary program. This was the case with every single united front formed by Stalinism and Social Democracy. Yet the Trotsky leaders picture Trotsky's line for the united front between counter-revolutionary Stalinism and counter-revolutionary Social Democracy in Germany as a true road to victory over Hitler. And what is more they declare that program holds with full force today.

A characteristic of opportunist politics is the brazenness with which a counter-revolutionary policy is palmed off as correct and in the interests of the workers. When opportunists issue a prediction which is refuted by events, their line is not to re-examine the misleading predictions and point out wherein and why history refuted them, but to cover them and even to proclaim them confirmed.

A. Burke

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S P A I N

A comprehensive exposure of the reactionary policies of the pseudo-Leninist organizations, the Stalinists and Trotskyists, and their work in aiding to betray the toilers.