

40 *The Four Hectic Days*

Summer of 1939. The disquieting news from abroad is creating tension here. The fruit of the Munich agreement, September 1938, is ripening. Austria and Czechoslovakia are firmly in the grip of the Nazis. Hitler is now pressing his claims on Poland. Even Chamberlain is alarmed. *Peace in Our Time* is clearly leading to war. London is now frankly trying to unite Europe against the Nazis. Eden is visiting the European capitals and avoiding Moscow. Second-rate French and English generals are in Moscow for military negotiations.

The Spanish Republic has gone down ingloriously. Thousands of stateless volunteers, many of them Jews, neglected, are undergoing hardships and indignities in French camps, and Paris is going out of its way to win the favor of Franco, the victor.

The famous ship *St. Louis*, hundreds of refugees aboard, their destination Palestine, vainly sailing around for weeks from port to port, is finally permitted to land in France. Other boats wander with their human cargo over the Mediterranean, highlighting the untenable situation of Eastern European Jewry.

The political climate in this country is not conducive to optimism either. There is little comprehension of what is brewing in Europe. Roosevelt's speech in Chicago a year earlier, October 1938, calling for the quarantine of an aggressor was received coldly if not with hostility, the CP being the most vociferous among the small groups lauding his stand. The Congressional elections in the same year showed a rising conservative tendency. The New Deal reforms are

stopped. The economic situation is not too good either. The quiet but painful recession, that began in that year, is still felt in the summer of 1939. In the semi-luxury industries, such as the garment and allied trades, conditions are most unfavorable.

The scheduled parade of the Christian Fronters through the heart of Manhattan, ostensibly against the Communists but really against the Jews, is stopped under the strong protest of Jewish bodies. But Jewish uneasiness is growing.

The CP and its press are still busy trying to erase the damaging effect of the purges in Russia. Spain has given them a new job, slandering all those exposing Stalin's meddling in Spanish affairs and the terror of his GPU there. But the major task is still the "forging of the unity of all democratic forces against fascist aggression," support of Roosevelt's progressive policies and his plan for strengthening American arms.

A 250-page collection of Browder's speeches for collective security and domestic unity, called *Fighting for Peace*, is widely distributed. In it Norman Thomas is severely criticized for his neutrality stand. In another booklet by Browder, *Social and National Security*, Chamberlain is indicted for the betrayal of Czechoslovakia. Russia is called "the front-line trench in defense of world peace," and Roosevelt, "the chief figure in the progressive or liberal camp."³⁴⁶

The booklet closes on a note of optimism: "The spirit of Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln has not departed from the American people. . . ."

On the Jewish sector, the Communists continue to insist on *Unity to Save European Jewry*, fighting anti-Semitism here, and buttressing and extending Jewish culture. The Soviet Union is faithfully presented as solving all intricate economic, social and national problems, the Jewish included. Appeasement of Hitler is condemned and neutrality decried as next to it.

Olgin has already begun Judaizing the Presidential elections of 1940. His first article labors to find a specific role for the Jews in the elections.³⁴⁷

RUMORS AND DENIALS; OMINOUS SIGNS FROM MOSCOW

As yet in early May, rumors were circulating of an impending rapprochement between Moscow and Berlin. As most of them ema-

nated from Berlin, the Communist press could, with righteous indignation, call them blatant Nazi propaganda.

In a front-page editorial, the *Freiheit* wrote: "We are not going to ask the *Forward* how long it is going to continue chewing the dirty lie of an "agreement" with Hitler when the facts have always shown that this is a lie. . . . It hurts them that the Soviet Union is for collective action against the fascists and Hitler."³⁴⁸

A similar press story the same month brought this acid comment from the *Freiheit*: "Their stubborn prophecy about an agreement between Moscow and Berlin did not come true . . . and it could not come true. . . . The whole world realizes now that the Soviet government is the best, most consistent and truest fighter against Hitler. . . . There is mourning on Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin and mourning on East Broadway *strasse* in New York."³⁴⁹

The first discordant note in the fiery anti-fascist barrage from Moscow was the article in the *Pravda*, June 29th, by Zhdanov. A member of the Politburo and Stalin's favorite, Zhdanov accused England and France of "not being serious" in their negotiations with Russia for an alliance against aggression. "They want others to take the chestnuts out of the fire for them," he said. But he was careful to add, "This is my personal opinion, though my friends do not agree with me."

Zhdanov had obviously not acted without Stalin's permission. His doubts were aired in public as a trial balloon for a possible alliance with Hitler. (Stalin was then negotiating with both sides, with the Allies openly and with Hitler secretly.) Still, European public opinion was lulled by semi-official statements in London that Zhdanov's piece aimed only to bring England and France "closer to the Russian viewpoint," to wrest from them more favorable terms for Moscow.³⁵⁰

More dismaying news followed Zhdanov's article. Negotiations had been started in Berlin for the extension of Soviet-German trade. But Harold Denny cabled from Moscow that it was unlikely that the Soviets intended to go any further than the possibility of extending trade with Germany.³⁵¹

Whether these negotiations were a part of a normal trade policy or were meaningful politically was a question troubling even Communists. Still, the anti-fascist tenor of the Soviet press was reassuring.

THE BLOWS COME ONE AFTER THE OTHER

Events were spinning fast that August. The free city of Danzig was seized by Hitler. A general Nazi attack on Poland was imminent. Uppermost in everyone's mind was the question, "Who will come to the aid of Poland?" The Communists here were convinced that the Red Army would be the first, followed in all likelihood by a French attack on Germany from the West.

Olgin was ill, and the managing editor was on vacation. Melech Epstein, though politically distrusted, was in editorial charge of the paper. Directly involved, he may be permitted to inject his own part in the four hectic days that followed, retracing each successive step.

In a feature article on Poland, Epstein stated that it was "impossible to believe that Paris and Moscow will stand idly by, just as it is impossible to imagine that London will be able to remain neutral when France and the Soviet Union come to the aid of Poland." *352

But 24 hours later, Monday, August 21st, the wires carried the news that a trade agreement had been concluded between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Amidst the rumors of secret negotiations between the two capitals, the timing of this agreement could only cause grave foreboding. The *Pravda* editorial, cabled the day before, about the strict business character of the negotiations, was not entirely convincing.

Doubts were creeping into the *Freiheit* editorial rooms, affecting even those who until now had been serenely confident that the rumors were Nazi fabrications. Having to write the editorial, Epstein phoned Sam Don, the political commissar of the *Daily Worker*, to find out what his paper was going to say. His answer was typical for this unimaginative bureaucrat, "Let's keep quiet and wait until we hear from Moscow." As Epstein insisted upon an immediate explanation for the readers, a conference was hastily called for 3 PM of the same day, at the office of Jack Stachel, executive secretary of the CEC of the party.

Browder was on vacation, Foster and Bittelman were out of town too. About seven or eight members of the political committee, Don and Harry Gannes, foreign editor of the *Daily Worker*, and Epstein were there. No draft of a statement had been prepared for the meet-

ing, only an article by Gannes, who was quick to sense a shift in the political wind from Moscow.

After Gannes had finished, there was hesitancy in the room, everyone waiting for the other to speak. Epstein broke the silence. Opposing Gannes, he expressed the belief—shattered the next day—that the trade agreement did not affect the general anti-fascist position of the Soviet Union, and that the Red Army would certainly come to the aid of Poland when attacked by Hitler. Stachel immediately responded by saying that Epstein's viewpoint was "fundamentally rejected." This was the signal for the rest to assail his position; by this time more people had come in. Frankest among them was the Comintern man, a slightly built man in his middle 40's with a pale face and a scholarly bearing. "Why must the Soviet Union keep fighting the Nazis all the time," he said. "Let England and France do it from now on." His remark ended the meeting. On the way out, he approached Epstein, put a hand on his shoulder, and said apologetically, "I fully understand the difficulties of you comrades of the *Freiheit*, but what can we do?" Epstein went back to his office with a heavy heart.

The conference left things hanging in the air. The *Daily Worker*, in the next issue, handled the embarrassing news by printing Gannes' piece on the front page instead of the straight story. His subtitle read: "Plot of Anglo-French-Rome-Berlin Munichmen Hit by Soviet Trade Pact." The Associated Press was called the chief news spokesman of American reaction for writing that the pact came like a bombshell. The Trotskyites came in for their share of blame.

The *Freiheit* had a small news item in a corner, and the editorial was a sort of last ditch marshalling of evidence to show that Moscow could be counted on to play its role in defense of Polish independence, that the trade agreement was just what the *Pravda* said it was, and that Poland itself, by recalling its troops from the Russian border, understood this too. But Epstein was no longer convinced of his own words. This was the last piece he did in the *Freiheit*.

THE IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENED; THE SHOCK

The big blow fell the same day, Tuesday, August 23rd. The morning papers flashed the sensational news from Moscow and Berlin

that Von Ribbentrop, Hitler's foreign minister, was coming to Moscow on Wednesday to conclude a non-aggression pact. The *Daily Worker* gave the news a single column headline, dated London. Underneath followed a Tass cable stating, "After the . . . Soviet-German trade and credit agreement, there arose the problem of improving the political relations between Germany and the Soviet Union. . . . An exchange of views . . . showed that both parties desire to relieve the tension . . . to eliminate the war menace and to conclude a non-aggression pact. . . . Consequently, Von Ribbentrop will arrive in Moscow . . . for the corresponding negotiations."

The Tass cable, couched in a matter-of-fact tone, hid more than it revealed. Ribbentrop had come not to *negotiate* but to *conclude* negotiations, imparting a sinister design to the deal. The *Daily Worker* tried to cushion the shock by "covering" the news with a piece by Gannes. Like a man on a trapeze, Gannes swung from one position to the other. Piling all the blame on the "Munichmen," he predicted with feigned smugness that in the pact "the camp of peace and democracy will become strengthened. . . . The Polish people will be further encouraged to resist both the threats of fascist aggression and the underhand conspiracy of the Munichers. . . ." *353

The party building on 12th and 13th streets was hushed. Party functionaries avoided talking to each other. The worst sufferers were the switchboard operators. They were swamped with telephone calls all day long by worried Communists unable to credit their own eyes. The day was hot, but inside the building was hotter. Groups of harassed people kept coming to the two party papers, on their lips the same insistent question, "Is it possible?"

The political committee was again hurriedly called in, and the word was passed around that a non-aggression pact did not really mean any change in the position of the Soviet Union as a bulwark against fascism. Browder, recalled from his vacation, came back the same day. Reporters kept clamoring for an interview. He had to agree at last. The interview was set for 3 PM.

At the appointed time, Browder's room on the ninth floor was jammed with reporters and party officers. The latter came to give him a sympathetic audience. Browder tried to assume an air of confidence. Uneasily, he rocked back and forth in his swivel chair, smoking cigarette after cigarette.

Browder denied that anything unusual had occurred. Pressed in-

cessantly by Joseph Shaplen of the *New York Times*, he told the press that the non-aggression pact would contain the usual escape clause, and that the Red Army would definitely enter the situation if Poland was invaded by Hitler. Browder ended the interview with the promise to meet the press a week later to prove that events would bear him out. But when the week had passed he refused to see them.

It was obvious that Browder was stalling for time. The Ribbentrop mission was a complete surprise to him. His vacillation only heightened the uncertainty and the excitement among the party people present.

The non-aggression and friendship pact, the most consequential document since the Versailles Peace Treaty, was signed the same Wednesday in Moscow by Ribbentrop and V. Molotov; Stalin, pipe in mouth, benevolently looking on. The papers that carried Browder's interview had on the front page the text of the pact—with no mention of an escape clause. The *Daily Worker* suppressed the dispatch of the United Press entirely, and the *Freiheit* reduced it to a small news item in a corner. But the Communists read the official communiques in other papers; so did everybody else.

The reaction was volcanic. Jewish Communists were met by their shopmates with the Nazi salute and a "Heil Hitler!" There were fist fights in the garment center. Many people had their relatives in Poland and in the Baltic states threatened by Hitler; they felt that Stalin had let them down. Hundreds of Communists again came running to the party offices, on every face a look of shock and simple disbelief. They begged for some explanation, and not getting any drifted off like shadows.

To check the mounting horror and confusion in the party offices, a meeting was called of party editors and heads of auxiliaries for the next day, Thursday. Not Browder, but Bittelman was put forward for the delicate job of justifying the pact. Browder needed time to regain his composure. He also wanted to wait for a clear cue from Moscow. About 40 people were present. Stachel presided. Everyone was supplied with pencil and paper to jot down Bittelman's ideas. He spoke for two full hours, recounting the past and present sins of British imperialism. Clearly, the British could not be trusted. Entirely omitting the defense of Poland, Bittelman's

most significant directive was *The Main Fire Against the Chamberlain's*. It was a shrewd move to veil the real issue.

The mood in the room varied. The majority used their pencils diligently. Only a few, too upset to hide their disgust, did not touch them.*³⁵⁴

DEFENSE OF POLAND STILL ON PARTY'S LIST

As the true plans of Moscow were revealed only piecemeal, the party, disregarding Bittelman's "main fire," moved cautiously, groping its way to a course not as yet fully charted. At a special national conference in Chicago, September 1-4, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the party, Poland was not yet deserted; indeed, the conference advanced the slogans, *Help Those who Help Poland* and *Embargo Japan and Germany*.^{*355} The Nazi armies were already in the fourth day of their invasion of Poland. The conference also addressed an open letter to Roosevelt urging upon him the further unity of American progressives, and calling him "the expression of the progressive trend in American life." The letter was given a big spread on the front page of the *Daily Worker*.^{*356}

The party papers participated in the enormous sympathy felt in America for Poland. The *Daily Worker* paid glowing tribute to the heroic Polish people, demanded that England and France give more military aid to Poland, and even called, though lamely, for American assistance to Poland. As late as September 11th, a front page editorial stated, "The heroic resistance in Warsaw calls forth the deepest admiration and warm heartfelt sympathy of humanity everywhere. . . . The American people should be increasing every support to the Polish people. . . . Above all, the trade unions should speak out condemning this wanton fascist attack on Poland. . . ."

The *Freiheit*, trying to appease an infuriated Jewish opinion, was particularly outspoken in its denunciation of the Nazi invasion, sharing in the general Jewish apprehension over the fate of three million Polish Jews. "It is a war similar to the previous ones in Manchuria, Ethiopia, Spain and China," its editorial said, "in the sense that it is not difficult to point a finger to the aggressor. . . . Still, the American people, because of their stubborn pro-fascists and isolationists, their Hoover people, Hamilton Fish's and Norman Thomas', have to remain passive onlookers. The heart of the

American people goes out to the attacked and heroic Polish people. . . ." ^{*357} The paper hinted that Nazi money was behind the efforts of the isolationists.

Browder's long speech at the Madison Square Garden meeting, September 11th, reflected this careful waiting-to-hear-from-Moscow attitude. Calling London and Paris "so-called democratic governments," who failed "to rise above their conflicting imperialist ambitions," a bow to Bittelman's *Main Fire Against the Chamberlain's*, his "main fire" was actually leveled against the fascists, the "immediate instigators and perpetrators of war. . . ." ^{*358}

Unhappily for Browder, the following afternoon, September 12th, new directives arrived from Moscow. They were contained in a cable to the party press quoting a piece that was to appear in the *Pravda*. This was the usual device by which Moscow issued political instructions. The quoted opinion placed the Allies and Nazi Germany on the same level, and was in fact an order to treat them as two imperialist camps fighting for a redivision of the world.

Browder's Garden speech was already set up in the *Daily Worker*, and it was too late for drastic changes. It was also unthinkable to let the speech pass once the Kremlin's voice had been heard. The serious dilemma was resolved by a hurried interview between Browder and Harry Gannes, both the interview and the speech appearing in the same issue, September 13th, the former on the front page, the latter on an inside page-and-a-half.⁺⁹² The interview was a remarkable exercise in mental acrobatics. Gannes began with the remark that "Browder contributed some highly important clarifications of significant positions in his now-famous speech." The "important clarifications" were that Browder had now put the Allies and the fascists on the same footing, and had severely censured Roosevelt and his policies.

The *Freiheit*, having to translate the long speech, had the advantage of time and opportunity to change its contents.

MOLOTOV SIGNALS THE NEW COURSE

The tenderness for Polish independence did not last long. On September 18th, a cable from Moscow transmitted the full text of Molotov's radio address announcing to the world that "The Red Army (in Poland) will cover itself with new deeds of heroism and

glory," and that it was "liberating our brother Byelorussian and our brother Ukrainian." In the same issue, the headline of another Moscow cable read: "Oppressed Peoples Greet Red Army as Liberators from Menace of Fascist Invasion." "The Red Army," it announced, "is being met with joy by Poles, Byelorussians, Ukrainians and other minorities." The *Freiheit* added the word "Jews."

This opened a new Communist offensive. The previous blushing for and inept defense of the Stalin-Hitler pact gave way to a new strategy: the pact was not an alliance with Hitler, but a mighty step to stop him; the Red Army's occupation of Poland was not a betrayal, but an act of liberation, bringing freedom to all oppressed nationalities, including the Polish masses themselves. Overnight, Poland became a decayed country which had no right to exist.*³⁵⁹ This new motif became the be-all and end-all of the Communist counterattack.

In a few weeks, and without any discussion in its press or ranks, the party reverted to a neo-Third Period course. The first move was a declaration by the political committee stretching out a friendly hand to all isolationist and pacifist groups: "(Our) task is to overcome all artificial division among the peace forces . . . and to bring them together in a United Front." *³⁶⁰

Next came the new thesis in Browder's lengthy speech in Philadelphia, September 29th: "It is an imperialist war, and both sides are equally guilty. The Soviet Union acts for peace, and the pact with Germany stopped Nazi advance." The American monopoly capital was trying "to get the maximum profits out of the European war," and "when profits can no longer be made from Europe (it) will have to be squeezed out of the blood of American boys. . . ." *³⁶¹

As to the measures against the Communist Party—Browder and several other key Communists were indicted for passport violations—he wound up with this admonition: "But we warn these gentlemen that if they think they can outlaw the CP and then proceed with their planned attacks against the labor movement and the dragging of America into this imperialist war . . . they are making a great historical mistake." Nevertheless, a year later, the party announced its formal withdrawal from the Communist International, a precautionary measure against prosecution under the Voorhis Act.

Stop the Imperialist War, became the Communist cry.

"HITLERISM IS A MATTER OF TASTE"—IZVESTIA

It was becoming manifestly clear that the non-aggression pact contained secret clauses for a division of the spoils, and that as a part of the bargain Moscow was involving its parties abroad in a campaign to weaken the Allies by denying them any anti-fascist motive and demanding an immediate "people's peace." Such a peace would secure for Stalin his new conquests without involvement in a world war.

This part of the bargain was revealed in the cynical editorial of the *Izvestia*, October 9th, attacking England and France for refusing to accept Hitler's new terms (after the partition of Poland—M.E.) "as a real and practical basis . . . for an earlier conclusion of peace." Remarking that the struggle against Hitlerism had been advanced by the Allies as the chief aim of the war, the *Izvestia* declared, "Everyone is entitled to express his attitude toward one or another ideology, defend it or reject it, but extermination of a people for the reason that someone does not like certain views of an ideology is senseless and an absurd cruelty. It throws back to the dark medieval age of devastating religious wars. . . ."

"One may respect or hate Hitlerism just as any other system of political views. This is a matter of *taste* (italics M.E.). But to undertake war for the 'annihilation' of Hitlerism means to commit criminal folly in politics." *³⁶²

Neither the *Freiheit* nor the *Daily Worker* dared to print the full *Izvestia* editorial. The phrase "Hitlerism is a matter of taste" was omitted by both papers. It was too dangerous.

(Three weeks later, Molotov, addressing the Supreme Soviet, also dwelt on the senselessness and cruelty of an ideological war against Nazi Germany. Molotov repeated the two paragraphs in the *Izvestia* word for word, but he was careful to change "a matter of taste" to "a matter of political views.") *³⁶³

A short while later, another embarrassing cable arrived from Moscow, Stalin's reply to Ribbentrop's congratulations on his 60th birthday. Stalin wrote, "The friendship of the German and Soviet Russian people is cemented by blood . . . and has every reason to be lasting." *³⁶⁴

The voice of the Great Stalin could not be suppressed. So these words were lumped together with his other acknowledgments under

a neutral title, at the lower end of the page. But the general press was not so reticent; it commented widely on Stalin's phrase.

DEMOCRATIC FRONT AND LABOR UNITY DISCARDED

By the middle of October, the break with the Democratic era was nearly complete. The resolution of the political committee on October 13th bristled with the familiar revolutionary vocabulary of the early 30's, dressed up to suit the new situation. "The working class . . . must at all cost prevent the British and French ruling classes, aided by the reactionary monopolists of all countries, from transforming the present war . . . into a counterrevolutionary imperialist war against the Soviet Union." *365

Democratic unity was thrown overboard in its entirety, though not in so many words: "The present war between two imperialist groups has *basically altered all international relations and is profoundly changing the class and political alignments within each capitalist nation.* . . . (italics in text) It is imperative for the American working class and toiling people to pursue an independent policy. . . .

"The slogans of anti-fascism no longer give the main direction to the struggle of the working class . . . as they formerly did. . . .

"United fronts are impossible with these tendencies and groups in the labor movement which follow the treacherous policy of Social Democracy, support the imperialist war, seek to drag America into it, incite against the Soviet Union and hamper the struggle of the working class against imperialism, capitalism and intensified capitalist reaction and exploitation. . . ." *366

The resolution ended with "under the banner of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. . . ." Jefferson, Paine and Lincoln were dropped, casualties of the Stalin-Hitler pact.

COMMUNISTS FIGHT ROOSEVELT IN 1940

To complete the cycle of its new isolation, the party furiously opposed Roosevelt's nomination for a third term in 1940. All the sinister plotting hitherto ascribed to the Republican candidates were now laid at Roosevelt's door. He was now the chief warmonger, and in conspiracy with Wall Street against the workers.

In a joint statement by Browder and Foster, headlined "Communist Party Places Roosevelt and Wilkie in the Same Reactionary Camp," the President was accused of "busily dismantling the New Deal, . . . bidding energetically for the support of the economic royalists . . . to prove to them that he can carry out their program much more effectively than their own direct representatives. . . ." *367

Trying to divert labor votes from Roosevelt, the CP nominated its own ticket, Browder for President and James Ford as his running mate. It was an act of near-suicide, bound to cause ill feeling toward the party among sections of labor and liberals, who had been wooed so persistently. Moreover, as the election campaign grew in intensity, it became unmistakable that most of the Communist brickbats were reserved for Roosevelt. (The party at that time had another daily at its disposal, though not an official one, the *People's World*, in San Francisco, with a circulation of five to six thousand.) "The Fascist Axis in Roosevelt's Foreign Policy," was the title of an article by Foster.*368 And because the Communist ticket was taken off the ballot in several states, the party press kept repeating the insulting question, "Does Roosevelt want a Hitler election?" *369

In this campaign, as throughout its drive for neutrality and a People's Peace, the Communist press spoke in the name of the people: "The masses will not permit . . ." "The masses will express their anger . . ." "The people demand . . ." And the more isolated the CP became from the masses of the people, the louder its papers spoke in their name.

This method was copied from the Soviet press. But there no one could challenge them on "the will of the people." Here, for a small party to have the masses in the vest pocket on every issue was ridiculous. Nevertheless, their press clung to it; it was comforting to believe that Communists were genuine spokesmen for the people, regardless of the latter's lack of understanding. At the same time, the Soviet press was provided with a chance to quote an American paper as evidence that the masses were against the policies of the "ruling circles."

ROOSEVELT IS ANTI-JEWISH, INVEIGHS FREIHEIT

P. Novick, an expert in the technique of the spill-over, by which decent people are arbitrarily linked with one or two bad characters

to stain them, strung together the names of Chamberlain and Daladier, the "Munichmen," with that of Roosevelt. Secretary of State Cordell Hull approved the Munich pact—so said Novick—and Roosevelt was Hull's boss. As one who helped to bring about the Munich pact was an enemy of the Jewish people, it followed that Roosevelt, as a "Munichman," was anti-Jewish. Things equal to the same things are equal to each other. He cited another example: The Department of Justice did not proceed against the Coughlin's, and Roosevelt was boss of the Attorney General. . . .^{*370}

The Jewish Communists were fighting Roosevelt's third term with predictions of the dire consequences to the Jews of American participation in the war. This was the burden of the arguments directed at the Jews by the *Freiheit*, in its Yiddish and English columns, in special pamphlets, over the radio, and in a brochure by Rabbi Moses Miller. The Jews were extolled as a peace-loving people, and the war was pictured as a boon to anti-Semitism and racial discrimination.

The new Communist tactics did not go unchallenged. The Jewish press was quick to charge that the attacks against Roosevelt were aimed to help Wendel Wilkie, supported by the isolationists. Roosevelt held the affection of the majority of the Jews, and this charge hit the Jewish Communists in a vulnerable spot, compelling them to divert a part of their ammunition against the Republican nominee. The press also resented the Communist scare campaign. Nevertheless, the Communist Party had its Presidential candidate make a special radio appeal to the Jewish voters over WOR, on November 3rd.

Roosevelt was hurt but little by the Communist campaign against him. Their own vote—the Communist ticket was not on the ballot in all states—was too negligible to be published.

The *Freiheit* was sullen. Its weekly review of the Jewish press was headlined, "The Meanest Press in the Meanest Campaign."^{*371}

The party conducted an intensive drive to have John L. Lewis, anti-Roosevelt and isolationist, renominated as president of the CIO in 1940. The entire Left in the CIO was mobilized for that purpose. Michael Quill led the Communist-Left forces at the CIO convention in Atlantic City, October of that year. Sidney Hillman was the strategist for the pro-Roosevelt delegates. His blunt speech

against the Communists decided the outcome.^{*372} Lewis was compelled to honor his promise not to run, and Philip Murray, who favored Roosevelt, was elected president.

The party was defeated in its efforts to block Roosevelt's endorsement by the American Labor Party in New York, despite its hold on many of the ALP clubs. It also lost its fight against Roosevelt in the non-Partisan League in New Jersey and in similar places. The pro-Roosevelt sentiment among organized workers proved overwhelming.

THE ELECTION FAILURE; THE PEACE VIGIL

Browder's trial, January 1940, and his four-year prison term, a rather stiff sentence for a passport violation, gave the CP a martyr of its own. The special campaign in the 14th Congressional District, on the East Side, coming up at that time, seemed to the party a rare opportunity to rally masses of people behind Browder, thus to demonstrate their opposition to the "warmongering monopolists." The district had a majority of foreign-born, including many Jews. Browder's candidacy for Congress was declared high priority, and the campaign was cast as a significant action to keep America out of the war and preserve democratic rights. The party papers were almost entirely given over to the anti-war issues and to extolling Browder's virtues, the *Freiheit* adding a Jewish angle: why Jews should note for Browder.

The returns were sadly disappointing, though the *Freiheit* cheerfully pointed to Browder's two per cent gain over the Communist percentage in a previous election.^{*373} The rest of the Jewish papers punctured this claim by showing that Browder's 3,000 votes compared very poorly with the 7,000 votes of the Communist candidate for City Council in the same district in 1938. And though the total vote in the special election was far below that of 1938, still the bare fact that the vote for the Communist leader about to go to jail was cut over 56 per cent was a significant barometer of the sentiment of the people.

The party tried hard to link its drive for America's neutrality with the pacifist and neutralist tendencies prevailing among sections of the population. And to give these tendencies organizational expression, a new front body was created, the American Peace Mobi-

lization, an offshoot of the League for Peace and Democracy. It was formed at a "congress" in Chicago at the end of August 1940, and, true to form, a few non-Communists were placed at its head. Though its slogan was *Keep America Out of the Imperialist War*, the new body actively intervened in behalf of Earl Browder and Harry Bridges, the Pacific Coast longshoreman leader on trial for deportation. As the country was steadily moving toward increasing aid to the Allies, the APM, at a conference in Washington, January 25, 1941, set up a Peace Vigil—mass picketing—in front of the White House to protest the proposed Lend-Lease and the program of national defense. The pickets were not molested by the police, to the chagrin of the Communists, and whatever nuisance value they possessed was offset by the clear imprint of the Stalin-Hitler pact.

By mere coincidence, the Peace Vigil was stopped a day before Hitler's attack on Russia. The *Daily Worker*, in announcing this decision, called it "a job well done. . . . After a thousand hours of continuous day and night picketing, the Perpetual Peace Vigil will end today in a great sidewalk demonstration before the White House." Frederick N. Field, national secretary of the APM, gave the following reason: "The objective of dramatically presenting to the national administration the people's loathing of war and their opposition to Roosevelt's thrust to the shooting stage has been brilliantly attained. . . . The APM plans new action." *374

The "new action" never came off.