

By Max Shachtman

# Behind the Stalin-Hitler Pact

## What It Is and What It Isn't

THE HITLER-STALIN pact is the most sensational news to come out of Moscow in many years.

Up to yesterday, it was the general belief that Stalin was moving heaven and earth in an earnest attempt to establish a "peace front" of the "democracies" against the "fascist aggressors," especially against Fascist Germany. Most people thought that Stalin's only complaint against statesmen like Chamberlain and Daladier was that they favored negotiations and pacts with Hitler instead of uniting with Russia in an uncompromising and militant front against the Nazis. The friends and supporters of the Stalin régime said this repeatedly, and in so many plain words.

### None So Stunned as Stalinists

Suddenly, right in the midst of the Anglo-French-Russian military discussions in Moscow, came the news that Hitler and Stalin had made a very important trade agreement. And before the surprise over this announcement reached its height, came the news that a "non-aggression" pact had been negotiated between the two countries. Forty-eight hours later, the Nazi Minister of Foreign Affairs and author of the Anti-Comintern Pact, had flown to Moscow where he was greeted with swastika flags, and the pact was promptly signed.

The newspapers which reported that the pact had "staggered" and "stunned" and "stupefied" most of the world did not exaggerate in the least. Most bewildered and shocked of all were the members and sympathizers of the Communist Party, whom the news hit over the head like a metal-studded club. On the day the report arrived, the *Daily Worker*, official voice in this country of Stalin and the Communist Party, was so taken aback that it refused to print the news or a single word of comment on it. The party leaders and spokesmen could not even be found for an interview. To this day, despite the official explanations given in the *Daily Worker* after it got word from Moscow, most party members do not yet know what to say or how to explain what happened.

### We Were Not Caught Off Guard

One organization, however, was not caught off guard and shocked by the news of the Stalin pact—the Socialist Workers Party, and the Fourth International with which it is affiliated, the so-called Trotskyist movement. This is simply a matter of fact and it is not stated in a boastful vein. Our movement foresaw the alliance and predicted it as early as a year ago.

In the *Socialist Appeal* of October 8, 1938, Leon Trotsky wrote: "We may now expect with certainty Soviet diplomacy to attempt rapprochement with Hitler at the cost of new retreats and capitulations which in their turn can only bring nearer the collapse of the Stalinist oligarchy."

In the same paper of March 17, 1939, the present writer said: "The democratic front on which all Stalinist policy hinged—the 'united front' of the democracies against the fascist aggressors and war-mongers—Stalin has dropped overboard without a splash. In its place is something so 'new' that it must have had a stunning effect upon the Stalinist parrots all over the world. Stalin holds out the olive branch to the fascist powers, to Germany primarily."

Our foresight was not a product of crystal-gazing but of Marxian political analysis. While others were taking people in, or being taken in by cleverly-inspired propaganda from Moscow, Berlin and London, we continued our critical examination of Soviet and international realities. "Outdated" Marxism has once again demonstrated its unrivaled superiority as social and political science! Our clear and timely predictions entitle us to an attentive hearing as we proceed to explain what the pact is and what it isn't.

If we first dispose of the latter, we shall have cleared away the pile of rubbish beneath which lies the true significance of the pact. And the best way to tackle the rubbish-clearing work is to deal with the arguments in favor of the Stalin pact given by Communist Party spokesmen who finally broke their embarrassed silence in the *Daily Worker*.

### The Stalinists Explain

"I think," said Mr. Earl Browder, secretary of the Communist Party, in an interview published in the *Daily Worker* of August 24, 1939, "that what strikes one the most forcefully in the newspaper discussion of the announcement of the negotiations for a non-aggression agreement between the Soviet Union and Germany, is the excitement with which this announcement was greeted; although its execution—it is now in the preliminary stages—is in the line of a long declared and established policy which every one who wanted to could be fully familiar with."

Nothing unusual! Nothing out of the ordinary! Nothing to be surprised at or get excited about! Browder was for it all the time because it corresponds to the "long declared and established policy" of the Soviet Union.

Now, you might explain away the reactions of the ruling circles in Paris, London and Washington by saying that they are merely pretending to be surprised. Good! But what about the masses of the people throughout the world? The Stalinist press kept assuring us that the "millions of workers, farmers and middle class people" understood and supported enthusiastically the Stalinist "peace policy" and would have nothing to do with Chamberlain and Daladier, the Munichers. Obviously, they must have "understood and supported" something entirely different, for it was the masses of the people who were most staggered of all by the news of the pact. That is why there were no spontaneous mass celebrations of the pact, but rather spontane-

ous mass condemnation of it and just as spontaneous mass resignations from the Communist Parties!

### They Sang a Different Tune

Secondly, if the pact was produced by "a long declared and established policy," why didn't the Stalinists openly and insistently demand a Hitler-Stalin pact in the past year or more? When they said that their policy was a "peace front" of England, France and the Soviet Union, they agitated at the top of their lungs for an agreement among these three Powers. They introduced resolutions favoring the alliance in every union, in every organization. Their spokesmen in the European parliaments clamored for it continuously. Why, then, didn't they introduce resolutions anywhere in favor of a Soviet-German pact? Why didn't they agitate for it openly? Why didn't they condemn Hitler for failing to negotiate such a pact?

And, above all, why did they denounce as slanderers the Trotskyists, or anybody who even hinted a year, or a month or as little as two weeks ago that Stalin and Hitler would come to terms?

"The reactionaries openly speculate that the Soviet Union may try to beat Chamberlain at his own game by joining hands with Hitler," wrote Mr. Browder in a book published just a short time ago. "But even those who hate the land of socialism cannot believe it, when they see the Soviet Union alone rounds up the traitorous agents of Hitler within its own land, and puts them beyond all possibility of doing any more of their wrecking, spying and diversions for fascism." (*Fighting for Peace*, pp. 183-184.)

On May 13, 1939, the *Daily Worker* quoted with editorial approval a dispatch which said: "Rapid spreading rumors of an impending German-Soviet reconciliation, circulating with obvious consent of the German government, tonight were regarded as a Nazi attempt to thwart a 'peace front'."

### "Dirty Insinuation" Changes Character

On March 13, 1939, Mr. Harry Gannes, *Daily Worker* columnist, wrote: "The press apologizers of the Munich treachery make the dirty insinuations that the Soviet Union is 'considering' rapprochement with the fascists." Eight days later, Gannes called a similar report "one of the slimmest examples of an extended vicious campaign."

Now, according to Browder, the "extended vicious campaign" plus the "dirty insinuations" of the Munich traitors plus the "open speculations of the reactionaries" equals nothing more or less than the "long declared and established policy" of Stalinism!

### The Soviet Union's Pre-Pact Policy

What really was the "long declared and established policy" of the Kremlin? It was expressed in unmistakable terms by the official representative of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations, Foreign Commissar Maxim Litvinov. In his speech at the League of Nations Assembly on September 21, 1938, only a year ago, Litvinov stated just what was and just what was not the "long declared and established policy" of his government. The reader will pardon us the long quotation, but he will surely feel repaid by the fact that it so damningly reveals the complete fraudulence and hypocrisy of the present Stalinist endorsement of the pact:

"There are inside and outside the League two tendencies, two conceptions of how best to preserve peace. There exists an opinion that when some State announces a foreign policy based on aggression, on the violation of other people's frontiers, on the violent annexation of other people's possessions, on the enslavement of other nations, on domination over entire continents, the League of Nations has not only the right, but also the duty of declaring, loudly and clearly, that it has been set up to preserve universal peace; that it will not permit the realization of such a program; and that it will fight that program by every means at its disposal. Within the framework of such declarations, individual Members of the League can and must constitute special groups for the joint defense of individual sectors of the threatened peace front.

"It is presumed that States which openly denounce the principles underlying the League Covenant and the Briand-Kellogg Pact, which extol aggression and ridicule international obligations, are inaccessible to persuasion or argument—save the argument of force—and that there is no room for bargaining or compromise with them. They can be restrained from carrying their evil designs into effect only by a demonstration of the force which they will encounter, should they make the attempt."

That policy—Stalin's—therefore calls for no futile attempts to persuade or negotiate with the aggressor—like Germany—but favors "the argument of force." Litvinov then continues:

"There is, however, another conception, which recommends as the height of human wisdom under cover of imaginary pacifism that the aggressor be treated with consideration, and his vanity be not wounded. It recommends that conversations and negotiations be carried on with him, that he be assured that no collective action will be undertaken against him, and no groups or blocs formed against him—even though he himself enters into aggressive blocs with other aggressors—that compromise agreements be concluded with him, and breaches of those very agreements overlooked; that his demands, even the most illegal, be fulfilled; that journeys be undertaken, if necessary, to receive his dictates and ultimatums; that the vital interests of one State or another be sacrificed to him; and that, if possible, no question of his activity be raised at the League of Nations—because the aggressor does not like that, takes offense, sulks. Unfortunately, this is just the policy that so far has been pursued towards the aggressors; and it has had as its consequence three wars, and threatens to bring down on us a fourth. Four nations have already been sacrificed, and a fifth is next on the list." (*Against Aggression*, pp. 121-122.)

This second policy, presumably, was the policy of Chamberlain and Daladier, Halifax and Bonnet—the Munichers. It was precisely contrary to the "long declared and established policy" of Stalin, Litvinov and Browder. But

it is precisely identical with the policy that resulted in the Stalinist pact! And the arguments made in its defense differ in no important particular from the self-justifying speeches made by Chamberlain after Munich.

### How the Pact Aids "Peace"

"It is a great contribution to the cause of world peace," Browder says now. It helps the cause of democracy and the Democratic Front. It helps Poland! Let us see.

A year ago, when Chamberlain claimed that the Munich Pact was a "great contribution to the cause of world peace," Browder effectively replied: "The direct lie was given to all protestations that the Munich Pact was an achievement for peace when, directly afterward, all governments announced vast expansions of their armed forces as their first response." (*Fighting for Peace*, p. 203.)

What happened directly after the Stalin-Hitler pact? Not only vast expansions of the armed forces of all governments, but mobilization of troops and marching orders on a scale unknown since the World War broke out in 1914. Measured by Browder's own yardstick of a year ago, the Moscow-Berlin pact is exactly the opposite of a contribution to the cause of peace.

Furthermore, if the pact is of such decisive aid to Poland, why did the Stalinists denounce Chamberlain and Co. for acting in substantially the same way a year ago, when Czechoslovakia was on the chopping block? And why didn't Stalin conclude a pact with Hitler a year ago, and "save" imperiled Czechoslovakia in the same way he is now "saving" Poland? If Stalin was able to "force" his pact on Hitler in 1939 because the Führer is so weak and terrified at the might of the Soviet Union, why didn't he "force" a similar pact on Hitler in 1938, when the Nazis were still weaker, before they had swallowed up Czechoslovakia? This argument, too, will not stand up for a minute.

### The "Escape Clause" Escapes

But what about the "escape clause"? Doesn't that guarantee that the Soviet Union will denounce the pact and come to the aid of Poland if Germany commits an act of aggression? "It must be stressed," said the very first editorial statement of the *Daily Worker* on the pact, on August 23, 1939, "that in each and every non-aggression pact which the Soviet Union concludes there is a basic clause of Soviet peace policy which provides that in the event one of the parties to the pact invades or commits an act of aggression against a third nation, that the other party (the Soviet Union) is not bound to the treaty, is free to act in defense of peace."

That is more or less true. In the 1932 Treaty of Non-Aggression between Russia and Finland, Article 2 provides:

"2. Should either High Contracting Party resort to aggression against a third Power, the other High Contracting Party may denounce the present Treaty without notice."

In the Russo-Latvian treaty of 1932, it is provided that "Each of the High Contracting Parties shall be entitled to denounce the Treaty by giving notice six months before the expiry of this period, or without giving notice if the other Contracting Party commits an aggression upon any third State."

Similar explicit "escape clauses" are contained in a number of other treaties signed by the Soviet Union, as in the case of Poland, Estonia and France.

BUT NO SUCH CLAUSE, OR ANYTHING LIKE IT, IS CONTAINED IN THE SEVEN ARTICLES OF THE STALIN-HITLER PACT!

Unlike the Soviet treaty with Finland, France, Latvia, Poland or Estonia, so far as the Stalin pact is concerned Hitler can "commit an aggression upon any third State" to his heart's content—objections from the Kremlin there will be none. And this brings us right to the heart of the pact:

### A Free Hand to Hitler

In exchange for a Hitlerite promise not to attack the Soviet Union, Stalin has given Hitler a free hand in Poland! Poland has been ruthlessly sacrificed to the brutal imperialistic ambitions of Nazi Germany in the hope of saving the hides of the Kremlin autocrats.

There cannot be the slightest doubt on this score. If there is, the following considerations should dispel it completely:

Why was the pact signed just at this moment—just when Hitler has declared in the most insolent manner that he demands the absorption of Poland into Nazidom, just when France and England threatened to take armed action against Germany? Was it just a "routine" non-aggression pact, such as Moscow signs every day in the week, so to say? But it so happens that a non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union has been in existence for 13 years, signed in 1926 by Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann and Soviet Ambassador Nikolai Krestinsky. This pact is still formally in force. It has never been denounced by Stalin. It has never been denounced by Hitler at any time in his six years of power, as he did denounce the German-Polish pact, for example, a short time ago. Why was it necessary to have another "non-aggression pact" at this particular time?

In order to deliver a demonstrative blow against Poland! In order to explode, as publicly, as sensationally, as thoroughly as possible, any Polish hope that a Hitlerite invasion would encounter not only the Polish army, but the joint, armed resistance of England and France on the one side, and the Soviet Union on the other.

(To be continued in next issue)

## THE NEGRO QUESTION

By J. R. JOHNSON

### Negroes and the Hitler-Stalin Pact

The Stalin-Hitler pact has come as a tremendous shock to the workers everywhere. And to the Negro workers not least. The Stalinists instilled into the masses of the people everywhere within the last five years the hope that Stalin and Russia would lead all peoples in the struggle for democracy, freedom and peace. The Hitler-Stalin agreement has blown all that ballyhoo sky-high. Stalin and the Stalinists are seen today for what they really are. Not internationalists, not concerned with leading the working class in every country against their oppressors, but in reality mere horse-traders with the imperialist nations. Most abominable crime of all, they turn the working class movement today in one direction, tomorrow in another, ready to bargain for the sake of their own skin.

Yet in all the confusion, the Negro people among all others have been quickest to realize the fraud and hypocrisy that is Stalinism. The Negroes remember that all through the Ethiopian struggle, Stalin continued to sell oil to Italy. They know that by no sort of reasoning and by no amount of eloquence from Litvinov at Geneva, could this oil-selling be passed off as support of Ethiopia against aggression. Already Stalin had shown, to all who wanted to see, that all this talk about the Soviet Union being the leader of the democratic movements against the fascists was a lie and nothing more.

### Who Oppresses the Negro?

Negroes know that the democratic imperialisms, which were supposed to be the leaders in the struggle for democracy, peace and freedom are the greatest oppressors of Negroes in the world. Great Britain controls and squeezes the life out of some sixty-million Negroes in Africa, France grinds the life out of another forty-million. Belgium is engaged in the daily torture of another twelve million. America has long set an example to the whole of the civilized world for brutal treatment of Negroes, and fascist methods had been rampant in the southern states long before Adolf Hitler or Benito Mussolini were born. Yet Stalin, Browder and Ford summoned Negroes in all parts of the world to join Britain, France, America, and Belgium in the "democratic front", to fight against fascist aggression. Ford called his book "The Negro and the Democratic Front". When anyone, white or Negro, pointed out that this, for the Negroes, was suicide, that it was the Negroes' business to form a united front with all workers and farmers, yellow, brown, and white, to struggle against all the imperialists in all countries and not to take sides, the Stalinists had one word for him—"Trotskyist!"

James Ford had spent many years of his life in the Communist Party, repeating the slogan of "Turn the Imperialist War into a Civil War", and calling upon all the workers to fight against capitalism everywhere, now he suddenly discovered that it was the duty and interest of the Negroes in the democratic countries to support their "own" government.

In January, 1938, the Afro-American of Baltimore supported the criminal and unwarranted invasion of China by Japan. This was, of course, a very stupid thing to do. But it was an honest stupidity. Many Negroes are bitter against the apparently never-ending domination of the white race. They therefore clutch at the idea of Japan being the leader of the colored races and, as such, driving the whites out of the East. They are wrong. What is wanted in the East is not a strong Japan, that is to say a strong imperialist nation, but a strong China. A free, and independent China will drive out Japanese, British and Americans and be one of the great leaders of oppressed peoples all over the world. This mistake however, of supporting Japan is, as we have said, an honest mistake. But James Ford, in his justified criticism of this mistake went on to say the following:

"You say that you do not approve of Japan's alliance with Hitler and Mussolini, the Negro peoples' worst enemies. You may not approve. But the alliance is an undeniable fact."

Now there are 120,000,000 people in Africa today who could tell Ford that Hitler is not their worst enemy for Hitler does not rule over one of them. Their worst enemies are the British, French and Belgians, these democratic imperialists who are sitting on their backs. But James Ford says no word about this. Instead he goes on: "Hitler applauds the lynching of Negroes in America!"

This is undoubtedly very bad of Hitler, but surely that is no reason why the Negroes should join these American democrats who lynch them, to go to fight against Hitler who merely applauds. But Ford, aping his master Browder (who of course is merely the ape of Stalin), gets quite eloquent on the evils of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo military alliance. He says:

"And who is so blind to this that he cannot see in the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo military alliance a mortal enemy of the democratic forces of the world?"

He ends his letter by once more shouting at Hitler.

"My earnest opinion is that we would make a tragic error in giving our support to any member of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo alliance!"

Now Stalin, pursuing the interests of himself and his bureaucrats and not caring two damns about white workers, black workers or any sort of workers, except insofar as he could use them for his own policy, signs this pact with Hitler, and by his trade agreement promises to let Hitler have the supplies that are so necessary for Germany, that strengthen Germany enormously, and enable Hitler at once to precipitate a new and most dangerous crisis. Comrade Earl Browder says that this pact is a pact of peace and that it helps the workers in every country in their fight against fascism. And comrade Ford, as ready to sell out the Negro people, as any Democratic or Republican Negro boss, immediately forgets what a crime it was to make an alliance or give support to "any member" of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis and hails this pact as "a great step forward for promoting peace and democratic government!"

This he does in a statement published in the *Daily Worker* of Aug. 31, 1939 and submitted to the Amsterdam News. In our press, meetings and pamphlets, etc., we submit the monstrous deception, that Stalin and the Stalinists have practiced on the international working-class movement, to a searching analysis, and in this column we shall analyze specifically the reaction of the Negro people and the Negro press. In the next issue we shall begin a series of articles relating to the Negro and the war. Meanwhile, however, we shall merely ask the Negro people this: Are they to carry on a policy of consistent struggle against all imperialisms, fascist or democratic, in common with the oppressed workers and colonial peoples of all the world, or are they to follow James Ford, Earl Browder and Stalin, jumping like a cat on hot bricks from one side to the other, and being merely the pawn in the hands of the most unscrupulous and shameless hypocrites and betrayers that the working class movement has ever harbored within its bosom? To ask the question is to answer it. Down with the Stalinist lies and contradictions. For a policy of the united front of workers black and white against Ford's death-traps of a democratic front or a Stalin-Hitler front.

### WINDOW DRESSERS PLY THEIR TRADE

"LONDON—In the event of war there is a probability of immediate Socialist participation in the government despite the doubts in progressive circles of the wisdom of such a step. They consider that if British experience in the early stages of the war is not favorable, the alternative of a Socialist leadership might be nationally advan-

tageous."—The Nation, September 2, 1939.

In plain English: keep the Socialist window-dressing for the moment when—the masses, tiring of naked capitalist rule—the Labor Party flunkies of the capitalists will be most useful.

Dr. Daniel Luttinger wishes to announce that he will continue to care for the patients of his brother, the late Dr. Paul Luttinger at his office, 1684 Grand Concourse, Bronx, New York.