

By Max Shachtman

# Behind the Stalin-Hitler Pact

## What It Is and What It Isn't

(Continued from Last Issue)

### A New Munich under the Stalin Imprint

Publicly, the Stalinist patriots from Moscow to New York and back again have shouted for a united military front of England, France and the Soviet Union against Germany and the Axis. Not with Germany, we repeat, but against her. They insisted that it was more than ever urgent, following the tragic Czechoslovakian experience, in order to save Poland. Now, as the clock starts striking the twelfth hour for Poland, Stalin declares publicly in Article IV of his pact with Hitler:

"Neither of the contracting parties will participate in any grouping of Powers which is either directly or indirectly aimed against the other party to this agreement."

Suppose Hitler invades Poland, and Poland then engages in armed, military struggle, either offensive or defensive, against Germany, Stalin has declared publicly and in advance in Article II of his pact with Hitler:

"In the event that either of the contracting parties [Germany, for example—M.S.] should be subjected to military action on the part of a third power [Poland, for example—M.S.], the other contracting party [Russia, in that case—M.S.] will not lend that power [Poland] support in any form."

Read over again, in the light of this pact, Litvinov's quoted attack on the Chamberlain conception. "It recommends that conversations and negotiations be carried on with him" (that is, with the "aggressor"); "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 the vital interests of one State be sacrificed to him; and that, if possible, no question of his activity be raised in the League of Nations."

Isn't that a perfect description of Stalin's Munich?

### The Polish Masses Were Betrayed

Now we Trotskyists, like revolutionary socialists everywhere, never agreed with the chauvinistic campaign of the Stalinists for the "defense of Poor Little Poland." Their agitation meant, in reality, the commission of two crimes: the recruiting of cannon-fodder for one gang of imperialist bandits (the slave-holding "democracies" of England and France) as against another, and the meek submission of the Polish workers, peasants and national minorities to the rule of the reactionary Polish autocracy. The primary and principal task of the Polish masses was and remains the overturn of the clique of Generals and Colonels who rule the land, who club down the workers, squeeze the peasants to the bone, keep the Ukrainian and other national minorities in an inferno of persecution and discrimination, and practice a vicious anti-Semitism which is second only to Hitler's. Counterparts of the ruling crew of "independent democrats" in Czechoslovakia last year, they are always prepared to sell their people into Nazi slavery if they can save their own precious skins or, better yet, if they are allowed to retain a little of their power and pelf under a Hitlerite "protectorate."

Yet, while we did not join in the Stalinist cattle-herding for war, we were not and are not indifferent to the fate of the Polish people or even of the Polish nation—and we mean the Polish nation, not the Polish Empire in which the old and upstart Polish aristocracy rules by military force over millions of people of other nationalities.

The hope for aid which the Polish masses threatened by Nazi subjection could rightfully and not vainly place in a revolutionary workers' government, if that existed in Russia today, was betrayed by the perfidious Bonapartist gang in the Kremlin when it capitulated to Hitler.

Stalin capitulated to Hitler? Exactly! And that brings us to the question of why Stalin felt obliged to sign the shameful pact.

### It Is Necessary to Dispel some Illusions

The confusion and bewilderment created among people by the twists and turns of Soviet policy can most easily be eliminated if they first rid themselves of some very popular illusions and misconceptions which the Stalinist press have been particularly zealous in sowing. The first one is that the Stalin régime is strong and popular among the masses, and getting stronger every day, both in its domestic and its international position. How great an illusion this is will be seen after a few moments reflection.

Once before, a government of the Soviet republic was forced to capitulate to German imperialism. That was in 1918, when Lenin urged the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with the Kaiser's government, and finally did sign it. Russia was compelled to swallow the humiliating "peace" treaty, to surrender vast territories to the enemy, because it was terribly weak and in no position to continue the war. The young republic was beset by numerous and powerful reactionary foes, at home and abroad. The masses were exhausted after four years of a devastating war.

### Acted Differently in Lenin's Day

But Lenin, who was an honest and upright revolutionist, did not attempt to deceive anyone. He did not call the defeat a victory for Russia or for peace; he did not call the capitulation a sign of Russian strength and power; he did not call upon the workers to acclaim the treaty. He said, We have won a breathing spell at a heavy cost. We will use it to strengthen our forces and the revolutionary forces abroad and when we are strong enough, the infamous treaty imposed upon us will be abrogated. Less than a year later, the thunderbolt of revolution struck the Kaiser's dynasty, and Soviet Russia kicked the foul treaty into the sewer where it belonged.

The Soviet republic, it may however be said, is much stronger today than it was in 1918. That is unquestionably true, in more than one sense. But the Stalin régime is much weaker.

The Lenin-Trotsky régime of 1917-1918 was then at the bottom of a rising curve in its history. It had a broad basis of enthusiastic mass support, which grew by leaps and bounds every month. It had the support abroad of a rapidly-increasing and very militant revolutionary movement. A year after the Bolshevik revolution, this régime faced a capitalist world in the throes of revolution, paralyzed, demoralized, disintegrating.

### Masses Hate the Stalin Regime

The Stalin régime enjoys only the bitter hatred of the Soviet masses. Its basis continues to narrow every day. It has the support of the upper-crust bureaucrats, the big-shot factory managers, the aristocrats of labor, the rich farmers, the police and army officialdom; all of them put together amount to a small percentage of the population, and even among them there is a mounting hostility to the supreme Kremlin oligarchy. Abroad, the official communist parties are dead or dying, undermined, disrupted or sent to their doom by the Stalin machine at the head of the Communist International. And the capitalist world, largely thanks to Stalinism's criminal policies, is far more sure of itself as it faces the working class in 1939 than it was in 1919.

In a word, scratch beneath the surface of the optimistic fairy tales told in the Stalinist press and you find that, under Stalin's rule, the Soviet Union is in an advanced state of degeneration. Stalin's clique is at once the product and the producer of this degeneration.

### Stalin Has Piled up a Record of Defeats

Now we are in a position to deal with the question: Which of the two partners in the Stalinist pact was the stronger, which is in the better position to gain from the pact?

It is a bitter truth for us to observe, but we must not refuse to see that in the past six years Hitler has not only consolidated but has vastly expanded his power. This was not accomplished because he is a genius, and he cannot continue indefinitely; but the fact of his successes cannot be ignored. He took power in Germany without meeting with the slightest resistance by the Social Democrats or the Stalinists (1933 marked Stalin's first capitulation to Hitler!). He denounced the Versailles Treaty limitations on German armaments in 1935, and nobody stopped him. He reintroduced conscription without opposition. He remilitarized the Rhineland and nobody stopped him. He won the Saar territory in a plebiscite. He succeeded in smashing to bits the whole labor and revolutionary movement. In March 1938 he annexed Austria without firing a shot. Six months later, Czechoslovakia was raked in. Another six months passed, and he took Memel, without a fight. He won his fight in Spain. By the time this appears, he may have Danzig and the Corridor, if not all of Poland.

Against this indubitable strengthening of the Nazi régime, Stalin has only defeats to record. He lost the German and Czechoslovakian Communist Parties—each with hundreds of thousands of members—in two Hitlerite blows. The Polish Communist Party he himself suppressed while he wooed the Polish Colonels. Ethiopia, despite Litvinov's tearful pleas to the League of Nations, fell to Mussolini, whose airplanes flew with Russian oil and whose soldiers fed on Russian wheat. His whole policy in Spain cracked up. Czechoslovakia, ditto. His policy in the Orient lost him the Chinese Eastern Railway and is ending with "ally" Chiang Kai-shek driven further and further into the interior. His big "Popular Front" in France breathed its last when it produced Daladier and Bonnet, voted into office by the Communist Party. The League of Nations, publicly blessed by Stalin himself as an obstacle to war, isn't even summoned to talk about the present crisis; and what would it say if it were summoned; and who would care what it did say? All of Stalin's foreign policies have proved bankrupt; all his foreign enterprises have suffered shipwreck.

### Wages Civil War against the Masses

At home, his position is no better. The last six years in particular have seen Stalin's rule in a state of almost uninterrupted crisis, each convulsion more violent than the one before it. The overwhelming majority of the people—the simple people, the small people, the toiling people—hate Stalin as bitterly as Czar Nicholas the Bloody was hated, and with just as good reason. How else explain the continual purges, the imprisonments, the exilings, the executions, the endless mass terror? What truly popular government has ever had to resort to anything like it outside a period of civil war? And that's exactly what Stalin is engaged in: a civil war of the bureaucratic caste against the masses of the people.

Stalin has wiped out the whole Old Guard of the Russian Revolution, except Trotsky who has been sought by more than one G.P.U. assassin's bullet. The prisons, the God-forsaken corners of exile, the vast concentration camps are chock-full of Stalin's victims. There are more political prisoners in some provinces of the country today than there were in the whole empire under the Czar. All the liberties won by labor's blood and rifle in the revolution, have been abolished by the bureaucracy. The worker is tied to his job and cannot shift to another job or another city without being granted permission, duly recorded in the internal passport he is compelled to carry. The disparity between the wages of the low-paid worker and the salaries of

the upper crust is stupendous and on the rise. So is the disparity between the income and conditions of the poor peasants and the bosses of the "collective" farms. Science, art, and culture are prostituted to the power-interests of the narrowminded gang in power. Conditions in the non-Russian national republics—Ukrainian, Georgian, White Russian, Uzbekistan, etc.—are a replica of the relations that existed between the Czarist imperial Russians in Moscow and the national minorities at the periphery of the empire. The secret police (G.P.U.) and the army machine keep Stalin in power with the aid of jail-keys, pistols and bayonets.

Stalin rules and can rule only by means of terror. As the country moves closer to the monstrosity which he misnames "socialism" the purges and the terror increase in intensity. Everywhere about him, Stalin sees plots and conspiracies, real and alleged, against his domination. The reign of terror during which millions, literally millions, have either been deported, imprisoned or murdered, is Stalin's own confession to immense unpopularity. The rule by terror means that Stalin and the bureaucracy he personifies, are themselves terrified. What do they fear? War! The fear of war, in this case as in so many others, is the fear of mobilization. The fear of mobilization is the fear of arming the masses of people. The fear of arming the masses is the fear of revolution.

### Deserted Cause of Internationalism

The reasons behind the Stalinist pact cannot be fully understood, however, unless the reader grasps the fundamental standpoint of the Kremlin régime, and grasps, further, the fact that it is in irreconcilable opposition to the fundamental standpoint of the original Lenin-Trotsky régime which Stalin and Co. finally succeeded in overthrowing in the course of a running fight that began as early as 1923.

Lenin, Trotsky and the real Bolshevik party led the masses to victory in 1917 on the basis of the proposition that the Russian Revolution was only one part of an international working-class revolution. The Bolshevik leaders repeated a thousand times to the Russian and world masses that Red Russia could not establish socialism by itself, with its own forces, and unaided by the triumphant workers of other, more advanced countries. This was not only in conformity with Marxist theory, but with modern world realities. Russia might hold out for a time, and even lay the foundations of socialism, but it could not keep going for a long period of time without help from revolutionary states in the other lands. As for achieving a classless socialist society, with security and plenty for all, that was out of the question entirely if revolutionary Russia remained isolated in a capitalist world.

In 1924, however, when the European revolutionary wave subsided for a while, Stalin coined the theory of "socialism in a single country." Russia, he argued, could establish socialism by itself provided only there was no armed intervention from abroad.

### Consequences Have Been Disastrous

Now this theory, while totally unsuited to the interests of the Russian and international revolutions, was ideally suited to the interests of the growing Soviet bureaucracy. The officials—corrupted oldsters and upstart youngsters—had lost all faith in the power of the world working class to free itself from capitalist misrule—at least not for another hundred years! Meanwhile, they argued, let's hold on to what we have in Russia.

That sounded plausible to many people, especially those who had grown weary and discouraged and didn't see that new and stormier waves of revolution would break throughout the world in the years to come. Only, the officials really meant: Let's hold on to what WE have in Russia—and to what WE can get. As for the rest of the world, the task of the working class is confined primarily (later it became exclusively) to preventing foreign intervention. In other words, instead of concentrating on getting rid of their own capitalist despots at home, the workers in other countries were to be limited to acting as border patrols for the Soviet bureaucracy.

Leaving aside for the moment the theoretical aspects of the question, it suffices to point out that the practical results of this policy were disastrous both for the official Communist International and that section of the labor movement that followed it, and for the Soviet Union itself. All that a labor skate or capitalist political shyster had to do to get the unqualified support of the Communist movement for some shady enterprise or a downright sell-out, was to take a cheap oath in favor of "defending" the Soviet Union. As Stalinism went from bad to worse, and the Kremlin went in for super-clever diplomatic tie-ups with imperialist Powers, the official Communist International, from which every critical, honest revolutionist was expelled, was changed from a militant fighter against world capitalism into an anti-revolutionary instrument, a cheap pawn in the hands of Stalin's Foreign Office.

(Continued in Next Issue)



### SUBSCRIPTION DRIVE GATHERS SPEED

The drive for new and renewed subscriptions to the Socialist Appeal in conjunction with the War Referendum Campaign now being carried on by the Socialist Workers Party and the Young People's Socialist League (Fourth Internationalists), gathered speed in the past week. Thirty-seven new subscriptions and fourteen renewals reached the Business Office. The subscription record to date is as follows:

	New	Renew
Los Angeles	6	1
San Francisco	4	1
New Haven	2	2
Washington, D.C.	3	2
Chicago	7	
Kansas	3	
Detroit	4	
St. Paul	14	2
Minneapolis	13	4
St. Louis	4	
Newark	8	
New York City	27	7
Toledo	5	
Cleveland	2	
Akron	6	
San Diego	1	
Newcastle	1	
Lynn	1	
Boston	3	2
Texas	1	
Philadelphia	3	2
Miscellaneous	3	2
Total	119	29

A new order of ten copies regularly has been placed by John

Patrick of San Pedro, and Comrade Patrick expects to be able to increase this quota shortly.

In the past week Los Angeles, St. Paul and Minneapolis did the best work in obtaining new and renewed subscriptions, and at the same time are making effective distribution of their bundle quotas.

### NEW ORDERS SHOW INTENSIFIED ACTIVITY

The new Literature Agent in Los Angeles, Harry Baker, appears to have gotten the Los Angeles comrades working in a more coordinated fashion than ever before.

Several cities ordered extra bundles of the war issues of the Socialist Appeal, as well as increasing in some instances their regular bundle orders. Reading, Penn., increased its bundle order from 5 to 15. Rochester from 25 to 50. St. Louis placed a special order for 200 copies for sale at Communist Party meetings. Flint placed an extra order of 30 copies for the Labor Day Picnic, and from far-off Denver, Colorado came a telegram asking for 100 extra copies of the war edition to be rushed.

As we go to press extra orders for the tri-weekly are coming in steadily. It is expected that New York, particularly, will endeavor to make a special drive for mass circulation of the tri-weekly.

## WORKERS' FORUM

### WHO WINS THE JUDAS CROWN?

Editor: Stalin and Hitler sign a non-aggression pact and both are branded as betrayers. According to the I.N.S., "Japanese circles accused Germany of breaking faith with Japan. . . There is no denying that Germany has infringed the anti-Comintern pact and broken faith with Japan." Indignant charges of betrayal are hurled at Stalin from London and Paris. That arch-betrayer of the naive Czechoslovak Republic, Chamberlain, was "highly disturbed to learn that while these discussions (between Britain and Russia) were proceeding on a basis of mutual trust, the Soviets were secretly negotiating a pact with Germany."

Above this morass the British Prime Minister poses as a beacon of Christian virtue and morality. He promises the last drop of workers' blood for the preservation of "principles" and "British obligations to Poland." The British Government's case is so obviously honorable that the British Labor Party can unanimously vote it full dictatorial powers, including power to conduct secret trials. Yet, for fear Germany might misinterpret the honorable and principled intention of her potential enemy, the British embassy in Berlin finds it expedient to burn all its official documents, according to the London Daily Express.

Question of the hour: Who is the world's leading Judas? Chamberlain, Stalin or Hitler? We would give the prize to Stalin. It must be counted among the glories of his Peoples Front line that it enabled him to betray both the British Empire and the world proletariat in one fell swoop, to say nothing of the democracies and international Jewry, and the generals whom he shot for advocating collaboration with Germany. But Hitler may yet win the Judas crown by double-crossing Stalin to take the Ukraine.

In the meantime, we see the utter moral decay of the capitalist world. Within the realm of a dying property system, in face of the unemployment of human and material resources and the stagnation of the productive apparatus, the ruling class has no answer but war and fascism. Only the working class can build a new economy that will run and a new morality that will stand up. Only the working class can end secret diplomacy; only the working class can end war by seizing state power and building worldwide socialism.

Fraternally,  
HAROLD CLENDENAN  
Columbiaville, Mich.

### FORCE LYNN PARTY TO MEET ON "DEAD" CORNER

Editor: The regular weekly Thursday night street meetings of the Lynn branch of the Socialist Workers Party, formerly held throughout the summer in Lenahan Square, on the corners of Willow St. and Central Ave., have been moved, per order of the police, to the dead and isolated corner of State and Market Sts.

It is perhaps a coincidence that the action of the police followed upon the indignation expressed in the local press at the holding of these meetings in a square named after one of the town's world war heroes. Thus do they honor the memory of those who gave their lives "that the world might be made safe for Democracy."

Comradely  
JOHN TRAVIS

**A REQUEST**  
All available copies of Vol. 3 No. 9 of this year's Appeal are needed for purposes of binding.  
We would appreciate it if Appeal readers would send in as many copies of this issue as they may have available.

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