

By Max Shachtman

Behind the Stalin-Hitler Pact

What It Is and What It Isn't

(Concluded from Last Issue)

Workers Traded for "Alliances"

In Lenin's time, the Soviet government made more than one diplomatic or commercial agreement with capitalist countries. That was unavoidable then, and remains unavoidable so long as a workers' government is surrounded by a hostile world. But if Lenin made a diplomatic agreement with Germany or France, he did not compel the revolutionary movement in those countries to stop fighting its own capitalist class and government.

Stalin changed all that. While he was seeking an alliance with England, France and the United States, especially in the past four years, the Communist Parties in those countries tried with might and main to make an alliance with the home capitalist government and urged the labor movement as a whole to follow suit. Where the Communists had once been the champions of labor's independence and militancy, Stalin converted them into the champions of labor's subordination and docility to capitalism.

In practise, therefore, especially in recent years, "socialism in one country" meant that Stalin traded off Communist Party support to any government, no matter how reactionary, no matter how many millions of colonial slaves it oppressed, so long as it promised to be an "ally" in protecting the Soviet bureaucracy.

In practise, also, Stalin's Russian nationalism meant putting the fate of the Russian Revolution into the hands of cynical imperialist diplomats who pretended for a moment to be friendly, instead of where it belongs—into the hands of the Russian and international working class.

In practise, this working class was confused, demoralized, and driven under the yoke of its enemies.

Stalin's Reactionary Dual Policy

Thus, the interests of the ruling bureaucracy in Russia have come into ever sharper and finally irreconcilable conflict with the interests of the Russian masses, of the Soviet Union itself, and of the international working class. To maintain its increasingly precarious position, this bureaucracy is ready to sacrifice the interests of the Soviet people and of the labor movement throughout the world. And that is how it came to sign the pact with Hitler.

It may be said that the negotiations for the pact with Hitler must have been going on secretly for a long time. That is undoubtedly true. The former head of the Military Intelligence Service of the Soviets in Western Europe, Walter Krivitsky, revealed the fact that some time ago Stalin sent a special emissary, Kandelaki, to Berlin to press Hitler for an alliance. Then how is one to explain the public efforts, made during this same period, to form an alliance with the "democratic" Powers, France and England?

The explanation reveals the reactionary dual policy that Stalin has been pursuing. It has already been pointed out that Stalin fears war. But he fears especially such a war as the Soviet Union and its bureaucracy are involved in, for that would in all likelihood spell his doom.

It would, however, be wrong to jump to the conclusion that Stalin is a real prop of peace. The same reasons that dictate his yearning for peace for Russia, dictate a policy of war-mongering in all the other important countries of the world!

The Practice of "Appeasing" Hitler

The Soviet Union is immediately and directly threatened on two sides: by Japan on the East and by Germany on the West. Neither the Japanese rulers nor Hitler have ever made a secret of their ambition to carve up the Soviet land. By herself, Japan is not so serious a menace to Russia, especially now, when so much of her strength is exerted in maintaining conquered Chinese territory. The principal Soviet enemy thus becomes Hitler. It has therefore been Stalin's policy at bottom, since the Nazis came to power in 1933, to "appease" Hitler, to come to terms with him, to make an alliance with him. Russia would then be in a position to deal comparatively easily with Japan in the East.

If this basic point is borne in mind, much that was obscure in Stalinist policy becomes clear. It will be easier, for example, to understand why the Stalinist press in France, instead of solidarizing itself with the despairing young Jew Herschel Grynszpan who sought to protest Hitlerite anti-Semitism by shooting Von Rath, denounced him as a Nazi or Trotskyist spy! To understand the shameful silence from Soviet officialdom on the occasion of Hitler's barbarous pogroms against the Jews. To understand why Jewish refugees could find no haven in the Soviet Union. To understand what Walter Duranty meant when he cabled the *New York Times* that after all, Stalin has killed off as many Jews as Hitler did. To understand why Litvinov was purged (how could a sensitive "Aryan" like von Ribbentrop shake hands with a Jewish Foreign Commissar?). And perhaps even to understand why the leader of the Spanish Communist Party, General Miaja, joined the notorious Madrid Defense Junta which graciously handed over power to Franco's Hitler-supported troops!

Policy Breeds Contradictions

The concentration on making a deal with Hitler has frequently been interrupted, so to say, for two reasons: one, by the hope of making an alliance with the "democracies" to squeeze Hitler into a corner and prevent him from assaulting Russia; and two, by the hope that the negotiations with the "democracies" would frighten Hitler into speeding up an agreement with Stalin.

The first hope, illusory and utopian from the beginning,

was completely shattered at Munich. The "democratic" imperialists showed that they would much rather give Hitler free rein in his drive to the East, that is, against Russia, than they would make an alliance with Russia to smash Hitler and Mussolini. Especially when they reflected that after Fascism cracked up in Germany and Italy, revolutions would break out and spread rapidly to France, England and God knows where else!

Stalin therefore had to come to terms with Hitler. And Hitler chose the moment for springing the announcement of the pact which would give him the best position in starting his next conquest, Poland.

But though he capitulated to Hitler, it does not follow that Stalin would object violently to having another World War explode, with the "democracies" fighting the "fascist aggressors" and the Soviet Union staying out of the war as long as possible. Quite the contrary! Stalin continues to drive in just that direction. Although he has made his peace with Hitler for a short time, as we shall see later on, he continues to instigate a war in which he will not participate. As said above, while he is a "pacifist-out-of-fear" at home, he is a warmonger abroad.

That explains the seemingly contradictory statements of the various Communist Parties on the subject of the Hitler-Stalin pact which have proved so puzzling to many. The American, British and French Communist Parties, while enthusiastically endorsing Stalin's appeasement policy towards Hitler, demand in the same breath that Chamberlain, Daladier and Roosevelt "resist the aggressor"—that is, go to war against Hitler. The two confusing and apparently conflicting positions form a harmonious unit, however, once we understand the basic consideration of the desperate Soviet bureaucracy:

Keep ourselves in the saddle, preserve ourselves by hook or crook, and everything else—the labor movement, the Communist International, the colonial peoples, the twaddle about "democracy" and "peace"—can go hang!

Hitler Gave Away Nothing

Will the bureaucracy succeed in keeping itself in the Soviet saddle? Not the slightest hesitation need be felt in replying categorically: NO! The only point to be resolved is this: the abominable Stalinist clique will be crushed at a later stage by Hitlerism, in which case, a new era of reaction will open up from which the world may not emerge for a long, long time; or it will be swept into the discard by a resurrected revolutionary movement of workers and peasants inside the Soviet Union itself. All our hopes and all our energies must be directed towards the latter solution of the mortal crisis the Russian Revolution is experiencing.

Will Hitler really attack the Soviet Union? Whoever examines the situation intelligently must reply, Yes! The feeble Stalinist arguments that the "pact has weakened the Axis" are so much nonsense, and dangerous nonsense at that.

What Stalin gave away in the pact we have already seen. What did Hitler abandon? His designs upon Russia, especially on the granary of the Ukraine and the mineral riches of the Urals? Not for a moment! His idea of immediately attacking the Soviet Union? He didn't have to give up that idea, for the simple reason that he did not contemplate such an attack at this time. His objective, for the time being, is more modest—the conquest of Poland—and Stalin gave him invaluable aid in achieving his goal.

He did abandon Japan, of that there is no doubt. And the Stalinist press presents this as a tremendous victory. But it is, as usual, only duping itself and its followers. Hitler abandoned a very much weakened Japan, which had already served his purposes for the current stage of developments. Hitler abandoned Japan for the time being, and only for the time being, in exchange for a much solidier ally.

Hitler Understands Stalinism

And he did abandon the so-called "Anti-Comintern Pact." Small consolation! The "fight against the Communist International" was as much a fraud with Hitler as the "fight for democracy" was with Stalin. HITLER HAS KNOWN FOR YEARS THAT STALIN HIMSELF LIQUIDATED THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL. Hitler has known for years that the Stalin-controlled International is about as revolutionary, as much a threat to capitalist society, as the Salvation Army. The Hitlerites know what Stalinism represents; they know where the real threat of working-class revolution comes from.

The Berlin correspondent of the *New York Times*, Otto D. Tolischus, who knows what the Nazis are thinking, wrote an extremely significant comment on Hitlerite reactions to the pact. Speaking of the "revolutionary" change that has taken place in Soviet affairs, he said on August 27, 1939: "Such a revolution within Bolshevism is precisely what the Germans assume as a basis for their calculations. Stalin, they hold, has turned Right and international Bolshevism has become national Bolshevism, which eliminates the menace of an international Communism backed by Moscow. If that is true, the dead Marshal Tukhachevsky has triumphed over George Dimitroff with the paradoxical result that the Communist parties in various other countries have been left high and dry. However, according to the German view, they have been regarded in Moscow as 'Trotskyists' anyhow, as revealed during the Spanish conflict, which is regarded here as a turning point in Bolshevik developments. They are, therefore, expected to adopt Leon Trotsky as their leader and perhaps even to start a revolutionary campaign against 'Stalinism' within Russia which would complete the revolutionary circle."

Seen with a somewhat distorted vision, the report is nonetheless substantially correct.

Both Stalin and Hitler Fear Revolutionists

It is not the discredited pawn of Stalinist diplomacy, the Communist International, that Fascism fears. As the banner-bearer of the working-class revolution, of the revolution for socialism, it sees the "Trotskyists"—the Fourth International. And it is right, for the Fourth International is the mortal, implacable foe of Fascism, of imperialism in general, of capitalist oppression and as their foe it shall triumph!

That is why the Socialist Workers Party summons every militant worker who is conscious of his class interests, who is imbued with the real spirit of internationalism, to rally to its great banner and to fight in the great cause. Our call is addressed in particular to the rank and file of the Communist Party and the Young Communist League and their sympathizers.

The Soviet Union is not relieved of the threat of attack; that threat is aggravated. Hitler had a non-aggression pact with Poland not so long ago. But as soon as he had that country well encircled, he denounced the pact on one pre-emptive or another and prepared to absorb the country into Greater Germany. Stalin's policy facilitates the coming attack upon Russia because, by giving Hitler a free hand through Poland, he grants him a highly important strategic base of operations against the Soviet Union. Tomorrow or the next day, Hitler will seek to repay Stalin for the pact in even more ringing coin than he is repaying Poland. Every worker, every Communist worker, must understand that.

Every worker must be also clearly aware now of the monstrous crime that was perpetrated by Stalin in his series of "trials" and purges. How many thousands of revolutionists did he send to their deaths in the last few years on the charge of being "Trotskyist agents of Hitler"! We called the trials frame-ups, and now, by signing the pact with Hitler, Stalin draws the black pencil of emphasis under our charge. While he was framing up and assassinating all opponents, all critics—past, present or potential—with the accusation of "Hitlerite agents" he was busily engaged in becoming the principal agent of Hitler! The Moscow Trials, the horrible purges, the nightmare of terror—these were all part of the preparations for an alliance with Adolph Hitler and his bandits.

Together with Ribbentrop, Molotov and Stalin signed the death-warrant of the Communist Parties. Stalin long ago drained the revolutionary blood out of them. Now he is smashing them bodily. Their organizational disintegration is taking place at a terrific rate before our very eyes.

The Road of Struggle Is Open!

Where will those sincere and devoted workers go who are now abandoning the Communist Parties by the thousands in England, France and the United States?

We know where the bureaucrats will go. They will remain the paid lackeys and scribblers of the Kremlin despot, or they will become full-fledged servants of their own imperialist overlords.

But the Communist workers? Will they go over to capitalism? Will they become the dupes of that fantastic fraud known in capitalist society as "democracy"? Will they abandon the class struggle entirely, and become docile serfs of the rulers of industry and finance, willing cannon-fodder of the coming war?

The Stalinist party is through, and nobody will mourn at its burial. Nobody will try to defend the Stalinist pact in a serious trade union, in a Jewish organization, or for that matter wherever intelligent workers are assembled. What then?

We say: there is a need, greater than ever today, to struggle against reaction, against the capitalist offensive, for socialism and freedom, for peace and plenty. There is a road to struggle, too. That road was broadly marked out by the great teachers of the working-class movement, Marx and Lenin. That road the workers must take if they are to survive as human beings. If they are to rise to new heights of human dignity.

That road is the revolutionary struggle for socialism!

Our Road Leads to Socialism!

All the professional "democrats" and the "social democrats" and the "liberal intellectuals" who only yesterday approved the Moscow frame-ups or covered them up, and who presented Stalin as a noble, worthy ally of the Great Democracies, are turning tail now and scurrying off like rats. Now they no longer declare that "Soviet democracy" and bourgeois democracy are practically the same thing and make natural allies; now they expound the new wisdom that "communism" and "fascism" are the same thing and make natural allies.

Their conclusion? Their road? On to a new War to Make the World Safe for Democracy? On to the trenches! Long live the divine goal of modern humanity—the battlefield graveyard!

Our road was never theirs. Our road leads to the great socialist society. Our methods are the methods of militant and uncompromising class struggle against all exploitation and iniquity. Stalin has succeeded only in—discrediting Stalinism. The banner of revolutionary struggle, of the Fourth International, continues to fly without a shameful spot upon it.

On to the victory of socialism and freedom!

(The End)

WORKERS' FORUM

Spanish Civil War Veteran Appeals To C. P. Members

Dear Editor:

I am sending this letter to you and to the editors of other labor periodicals because I want to present my case, which I believe is typical of many in the labor movement today, before as wide an audience as possible. I hope in this way to help crystallize the discontent which is now widespread among the rank and file of the Communist Party, and so help in bringing these people into the struggle which now must be waged with utmost intensity against the second imperialist world war.

Up until May, when I resigned from the Communist Party, I had been a Stalinist sympathizer for five years and a party member for two, including one year in Spain with the Fifteenth International Brigade. For a long time I had tried to regard the "Democratic Front" policy as merely a temporary tactic. But my experiences in Spain convinced me that this policy resulted from something far deeper and more organic than mere tactical considerations.

Bureaucratic Control

In Spain I suffered with the rest of the rank and file from the arbitrary and dictatorial attitude of the Communist Party bureaucracy toward the ranks. I discovered that most of the officers, both military and political, were appointed from above with no interests in view except those of the Communist Party bureaucracy—and seldom for their military ability. The democratic and revolutionary way of the ranks electing their own officers was never so much as considered by these bureaucrats. Like the rest of the rank and file I suffered from the never-explained annoyance of censored mail in which objects of value, food, cigarettes, or clothing seemed to be the chief objectives of the Communist Party censors. This was not of great importance to me, but I could not help observing the disheartening effect it had upon the morale of many of my comrades in arms, especially in view of the privileges which were enjoyed by the officers as a whole.

Upon my return from Spain, I found out that Miaja, the general who shot down my fellow soldiers in the streets of Madrid in March of this year was, as I had suspected, a member of the Communist Party. He has not yet been expelled. I learned too that Stalin had been selling oil and grain to Italy throughout the entire war. These goods, particularly oil, were forwarded to General Franco for the use of the fascist army in Spain.

Read Marx
Disturbed by these terrible contradictions I went to the works of Marx and Lenin for clarification and guidance, and read what the Communist Party seems to have completely forgotten—the corroding effect of reformism on the working class and the inevitability of war under capitalism. How do these facts fit into People's Frontism and Collective Security? These policies were clearly opposed to the basic teachings

of Marx and Lenin. So in May I mailed my Party book back to 13th Street.

Now the complete reversal of the entire line of the Third International as a result of the Hitler-Stalin pact and the unanimous acclaim given this pact by the Browders without the slightest consultation or discussion with the ranks prior to the pact, show for even the blind to see that the Comintern is nothing more than an instrument of Stalin's foreign policy with no reason for existence except the justification of anything Stalin does. Remember in the *Daily Worker*, especially in Harry Gannes' column, the heated denials that a Soviet-Nazi pact was so much as contemplated. But after a day of stunned silence on the part of the *Daily Worker* this same Harry Gannes was applauding the pact just as enthusiastically as he had hissed it a few days before.

Browder first attempted to justify the Stalin-Hitler pact on the basis of an "escape clause" which turned out to be non-existent. Then the non-existence of an "escape clause" was applauded as "strengthening" the pact. And now a few days after the signing of the pact as a "blow for peace" where is the goddess of peace? Flat on her back. Shipments of cotton and gasoline—from the Soviet Union are now arriving in Nazi Germany as a result of Stalin's signature.

Comrades in the Communist Party, now you can see the whole rottenness of the Stalin bureaucracy. It is time to leave this party and to build a new revolutionary force.

Veterans of the Spanish Civil War, can't you see that the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade is an outfit controlled by the Stalinists? It's time to form your own organization, free from ex-commissars and Albacete generals. An independent Spanish Civil War Veterans' Organization will enable us to help lead the workers of the United States in the struggle against imperialist war.

The blood of our comrades stains the hands of Stalin. It is time to end the last vestige of his influence in the labor movement.

Sept. 6, 1939

PETER STURGBON

BY THEIR OWN WORDS

SHALL YOU KNOW THEM

Dear Editor:

I would like to call to the attention of the Appeal readers the following quote from Molotov's speech on the Stalin-Hitler Pact (printed in the *Daily Worker*, Sept. 2, page 3):

"Only the instigators of a general European war can be displeased by this state of affairs [the Stalin-Hitler Pact], those who under the mask of pacifism would like to ignite a general conflagration in Europe."

Those who have been the loudest proponents for the past three years of a war of the "democracies" to fight the "fascist aggressors" ("under the mask of pacifism") have been... the Stalinist parties. We wonder if these parties understand that Molotov—and Stalin—now call them "instigators of a general European war"?

Fraternal
J.H.N.
Rochester, N.Y.

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