

# Detroit's Mrs. Dilling

*The author of "The Red Network" has nothing on this self-elected champion of Americanism*

By Carolyn Corbin

**B**LANCHE WINTERS likes to describe herself as "just a little war widow." I had the pleasure of making her acquaintance after receiving a frenzied letter from "The Young Americans, Inc.," warning that there was no time to lose, that "Communism is an established fact in America, no longer a nightmarish possibility. . . . For the past four years the Communist agents have centered their recruiting activities among our schools and colleges, with this result: they proudly assert in their official publications that over a *million and a half* youth were subverted to the cause of communism last year. Is it a wonder when they spend annually over \$6,000,000 in the United States on subversive programs, that they own 300 newspapers and magazines, have gained control of 122 national labor unions, with 610 affiliated organizations of which 36 are Communist youth organizations?"

The letter ended with an appeal for funds to aid the organization to "publish a complete set of pamphlets setting forth the evils and the fallacy of the communistic doctrine, which appears under many sugar-coated forms not readily recognizable by the pupils." The letterhead, with its decoration of American flags, advertised an anti-Communist lending library. I might have paid no further attention to the letter, thinking it too obviously foolish for anyone to take seriously, had I not found an acquaintance who was preparing to answer the call for funds.

When I walked into the office of "The Young Americans, Inc.," in the Hotel Barlum, Blanche Winters, herself, met me at the door and with patriotic enthusiasm dragged me to a chair. "You're just the type we want," she exclaimed. "We're against communism. It's just about time you girls stopped playing bridge long enough to realize that your world is toppling around you." From that time on it was Blanche's show.

The office is an ex-Western Union office. Blanche receives her visitors in front of the counter, while in back several anæmic youths work with patriotic fervor, never even looking up when Blanche shoots off her most violent verbal fireworks. On the counter is spread an array of Liberty League pamphlets, and on the few spaces on the walls not taken up by the stars and stripes are pictures of blond youths in uniforms.

"Do you realize, young lady," stormed the little war widow, "that 99 percent of our congressmen are Communists?"

"My goodness, no, I didn't realize that," I replied.

"You didn't! Well, where have you been

all this time? What did you think the depression was?"

She told me about "The Young Americans, Inc." and said that they have 80,000 youth organized in Michigan alone to fight communism. "And such nice young people they are, too," she said with tears in her voice. She showed me pictures of their summer camp at Walled Lake, which fortunately looked like rather small quarters for 80,000 fervent youngsters. I asked what their activities are and how they carry out their crusade against the Demon Communism. She replied that there were many activities, but the most recent one, and the one that appealed to her most, occurred in Lansing. Her small eyes behind pince-nez glasses closed to slits as she said: "There is a minister in Lansing who had been preaching"—a pause while her face became red and I thought she would at least say anarchy—"pacifism," she hissed. "Well, some of my boys at Michigan State College listened to him preach, and they took him out and gave him the best ducking in the lake you ever saw." She beamed all over.

I asked her how the organization was financed, as she had just told me that there were no dues, and she said that the Board of Commerce had been financing it for six years. "Have you had any support from any of the wealthy people in Detroit?" I inquired.

"We're just beginning to get some now," she replied, "because we're putting on a big campaign. Heinrich Pickert [Detroit's super-reactionary police chief] has given us his support, and so has Mr. Brucker [Republican ex-governor of Michigan who defeated the late Senator Couzens in the primaries and was defeated by Prentiss Brown on November third]." The list went on to include many of the first families of the automobile city. Alvin Macauley, the president of Packard, had contributed generously, according to Mrs. Winters. I asked about Henry B. Joy, who used to be president of Packard, and who, since his retirement, has occupied himself by writing frequent letters to everyone he knows, warning them of liberal movements and dangerous pacifists. She had had an interview with Mrs. Joy [perennial candidate for the presidency of the D.A.R.] in her "lovely, refined living room."

It wasn't until she launched the conversation into communism and art that Blanche really cut loose. A good half hour was taken

up with how she, with the aid of the Board of Commerce, was going to get those Diego Rivera ["Dago I call them—ha ha"] murals off the walls of the art museum if she has to take them off herself.

"Do you know that there are twenty-nine Communist camps around Washington, D. C., and thirteen surrounding Detroit?" I said that I hadn't known that before. "You're a funny girl, you don't seem to know anything. Well, every one of those camps is a nudist camp."

The stream of invective had been going on so long that I started to get dizzy. All I can remember of the last half of the interview are snatches to the effect that the school board is "communistic" because it won't do anything about the radical high school teachers, which puts it up to her and the Board of Commerce to deal with them; that Mr. Hearst owns a magnificent chain of newspapers, but is not as smart as Blanche because he couldn't see in 1932 that Roosevelt was a dangerous radical; and that "Mind you, I'm not a member of the Black Legion myself, because I can do more without a hood than they can with all their regalia, but they do a fine work." A few minutes later she added: "I stand for everything that is conservative." She produced a stack of the NEW MASSES, one, with a picture of Lenin, whom she neatly disposed of as "Block-head No. 1." "Now look at this so-called literature," and she produced an armful of pamphlets. Here's all about Soviet China, and here is one that shows what they do to your soul under communism. The Reds don't even let you have a soul. They take a knife and cut it right out." I looked at the gray-bound pamphlet in question and found that it was *Soul Surgery*, published by the Oxford Group.

I went back to see Mrs. Winters after six days had elapsed. I wanted to find out what kind of a response she had had to her appeal for funds. I was met with even more enthusiasm than before and treated like a real convert. She said that she had sent out fifty letters and so far had received \$1500, which she didn't think was very good.

She had just come from a tea that she had given at the Book-Cadillac for the women who were the heads of the leading "conservative" organizations in town; the D.A.R., the League of Catholic Women, the Daughters of Isabella, etc. According to Blanche, they are going to form a Women's Auxiliary and send a lobbyist to Lansing and see that the right kind of legislation goes through. She thinks the wealthy Catholics are going to be very important in the fight against un-Americanism, and she likes Father Coughlin, too.



Scott Johnston

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## A Time for Stiffening

THOSE who have tried to draw analogies between the Russian Revolution and the war in Spain have missed the best one of all. It was a regular thing, from 1918 until at least 1921, to open almost any American capitalist paper and read about the final victory of the counter-revolution. For variety, that final victory was sometimes just around the corner. Nothing of the sort happened, of course. These prophecies of doom were invariably based upon the real difficulties encountered by the Russian people during long years of bitter struggle; but (and this is more to the point) they were equally based upon a total disregard for their tremendous powers of recuperation and improvement. So long as the vast masses of people were solidly behind the revolution, so long as crises arose only because the power of the masses was not yet sufficiently channelized and coördinated, such reports were put to shame by events.

The true relationship of forces in Spain today is likewise and persistently confused by inspired reports, generally from London, of imminent collapse of the loyalist cause. Every time the government forces give up a position, the end of the war is announced. Until now, these reports about Spain in 1936-7 have been no more trustworthy than the reports about Russia in 1918-21. The basic reason behind this consistent failure to gauge the situation correctly is the failure to see that every temporary reversal inspires the popular forces to greater endeavors against those causes which made the reversals possible, so that they shall not be repeated. This was true after the loyalist withdrawal at Toledo. It will be true of the reversal at Malaga, also.

London has been the regular source of venomous "inside" information against the People's Front cause in Spain. Soon after the reversal at Malaga, from London came the information that the "leftists" were "cracking," that the Soviet Union was "abandoning" the Spanish people, and that a "ban" on "volunteers" was at last decided despite the refusal of Portugal to participate in any such international action. The date-line is the essence of the matter. The Baldwin government has been and today remains the chief obstacle to successful international action against fascist intervention in Spain. The chief obstacle to British befuddlement of the issues has been the Soviet spokesman in the Non-Intervention Committee. Portugal is a virtual colony of British imperialism. The "news" reports from London are of a piece with British policy in the Spanish situation: they are calculated to deceive, and to cover a pro-fascist orientation.

Immediately after the Malaga reversal, a unified command was established for the whole central front for the first time. The loyalists withstood a savage rebel offensive

against the Madrid-Valencia road and then took the offensive against the rebels for the first time. The negotiations between the two great trade union federations, C.N.T. and U.G.T., for unification are hastening toward a favorable conclusion.

The greatest reversal of all would be any weakening, any lessening of ardor and vigor on the part of all the friends and supporters of the Spanish people. This war would have been a short one had the fascist powers not intervened. So long as the masses in the democratic countries are not powerful enough to exert sufficient pressure to put a stop to German and Italian invasion of Spain, the war will drag out. It has truly been said that the Spanish government forces have already beaten the Spanish fascists; now, they are fighting against the whole fascist international, against Italian and German mercenaries.

Far from wavering, this is the time to stiffen and extend the ranks of those in this country who are giving material and moral support to the Spanish people. Our covenant with Spain for the complete liberation of Spain is not fulfilled until the war is over—and won. The North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, 381 Fourth Ave., N. Y., is still collecting food, clothing, money, and medical supplies for Spain. The American Society for Technical Aid to Spanish Democracy, 245 Fifth Ave., N. Y., is still calling for volunteers of engineers, technicians, metal, and electrical workers to Spain.

We have a covenant with Spain which nothing but victory for democracy can fulfill.

## Cue in New Jersey

THE C.I.O. is just now beginning in earnest its drive for unionization in New Jersey. But plans and objectives for a widespread campaign among the 375,000 industrial workers of the state have been in readiness for some time. Duly impressed by these plans, and fearful of a powerfully organized labor movement in his state, Republican Governor Hoffman has made the first move in his effort to protect New Jersey's open shoppers by threatening "bloodshed" if workers affiliated with the C.I.O. attempt militant strike action, specifically if the sit-down tactic is employed.

"A labor union," says Standard Oil puppet Hoffman, "has no more right to take possession of a factory than a band of gangsters has to take possession of a bank." The governor ought to know about gangsters: within the boundaries of his state, and unhampered by gubernatorial action of any kind, exist (to mention a few): the white-slave traffic and prostitution industry of Atlantic City, the foul-smelling Jersey City regime of Mayor Hague, the friendly haven of gangsters and other criminals hiding from the court warrants of other states. At present Hoffman extends his protection to the Parkers, wanted for a kidnaping trial in New York. And not so long ago, there was the little matter of the Hauptmann trial, in the course of which the governor acquired a reputation of the sort that will remain unsavory in the annals of his state for many a gubernatorial generation.

But this time the governor's threat of bloodshed was a bit premature: New Jersey labor is forewarned and against official violence. And the forces defending civil liberties have been placed on guard far in advance of actual industrial conflict. So unveiled a threat is an acknowledgment on the part of New Jersey industrialists of the effectiveness of the C.I.O. drive elsewhere. And it is New Jersey labor's cue for full steam ahead.