

considerably reduced in number. At a time when *America's 60 Families* is an article of popular consumption and "Wall Street is the enemy!" a true slogan in the immediate struggle for democracy, it is very important that the concept "middle classes" be carefully defined so as to distinguish between those middle groups upon which the working class may count as potential allies either in the struggle for better economic conditions or for the preservation of democracy, and those which must be considered definitely on the other side in either of these struggles or both.

It is particularly important that we have no illusions on the score of the "little businessman." Whatever the real value of his stake in the capitalist system, the little businessman can no more be counted on to become an ally of the working class either in the improving of living conditions generally or the preservation of democracy than big business itself. *Business is business*—whether big or little—as Mr. Roosevelt's recent experience with "little business" has amply demonstrated. Indeed, if anything, little business may be expected to be more reactionary than big business—at least in intention. If it is not always so in action, it is not because of its more progressive attitude but because of its lack of power to do otherwise.

In practice we must, of course, take account of both intentions and power. But it would be a dangerous mistake for the working class to assume that the impotence of little business to do evil is equivalent to a desire to do good. It is this basic error on the part of the German working class under the leadership of Revisionist Socialists that has made the ultimate disaster of Hitlerism possible. For, let there be no mistake about it, fascism does not mean merely big business and its hired retainers. Whatever its origin, fascism, and particularly its Nazi brand, ultimately rests on the broad shoulders of the propertied middle class and its professional retainers; and it would be disastrous for us to lose sight of this all-important fact.

Nor is the situation basically different in this country, as the various vigilante and citizen committees amply demonstrate. Those do not consist entirely of hired retainers of big business, even though the initiative may be theirs. Notwithstanding the life and death struggle, economically, between big business and little business, the latter is completely under the intellectual domination of the former, furnishing the *volunteers* which are the really dangerous element in the vigilante and citizens' committee movement—the precursor of American fascism.

Nor can we ever hope to convert the little businessman—the mass of him—to a different attitude toward the labor movement, by showing him the utter worthlessness of his stake in capitalism and the great value of what he is offered in exchange therefor. His psychology makes him absolutely imper-

vious to that kind of argument, even if he were intelligent enough to understand what it's all about. Psychologically, *business is business*—and since logic is ultimately *psychologic*, that places definite limitations on the capacity of those engaged in business to follow certain lines of argument. And in this respect little business is, by and large, in a much worse position than big business—at least, than that portion of big business which lives on income and has no direct share in business management.

It is true, of course, that in the actual conduct of business the small businessman feels himself crowded by big business. But that does not necessarily lead him to the conclusion that he would be better off in a non-business world. Quite the contrary: it makes him tenacious in his fight for his business world, and the most that we can expect of him is an attempt to curb big business in the push which is crowding him out. That may, on occasion, align him on the side of democracy. But these occasions will be few and far between. And when the seductions of fascism come, with their promise of curbing big business and protecting little business, there can be no doubt as to which side he will be on.

It is much to be desired that in its next official pronouncement—and it ought to come as soon as possible—the Communist Party should take occasion to make its position on this point so clear that there can be no possible misunderstanding.

LOUIS B. BOUDIN.

## Hitler's Road to War

THE HOUSE THAT HITLER BUILT, by Stephen H. Roberts. Harper Bros. \$3.

IT is difficult to characterize this book as a whole because some portions are extremely shrewd and hard-headed and others are embarrassingly innocent and superficial. The best sections deal with Hitlerism and

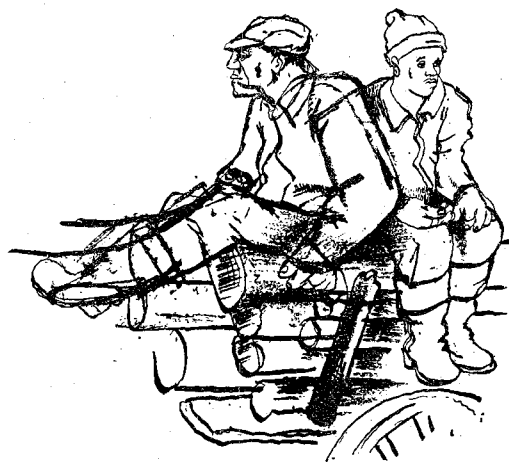
world affairs, that is to say, Hitlerism and war. The feeble parts—and this means practically four-fifths of the book—relate to the internal structure of German fascism, to Hitler as a personality, and to Hitlerism as a movement. No absolute dichotomy is implied here, but there is no escaping the remarkable unevenness of the book.

Professor Roberts, a member of the history faculty at the University of Sydney, Australia, enjoyed unusual coöperation by the Nazi authorities, even at the party headquarters, the Brown House in Munich, during his stay in the country from November 1935 to March 1937. Despite this, he left Germany anything but an admirer of the present rulers or their regime. He left convinced that "the success or failure of Hitlerism brings war in its train." If the book has a message, that is its message. The basic dilemma of Hitlerism, as Professor Roberts views it, is this: "If he [Hitler] persists in the policies he has enunciated, he plunges Europe into war; if he abandons them, he can no longer maintain his position within Germany."

Coming down to cases, he saw, more than a year ago, that "the Austrian and Czech borderlands form the central axis of European affairs" and that "in these frontierlands we have the real danger zone in Europe." Practically without qualification, he dismisses Hitler's use of the "Soviet threat" as the exploitation of a "bogy" and an example of Hitler's "eastern imperialism." But it is entirely characteristic of the book that the section on Soviet-German relations should conclude with blather about a future rapprochement between two countries because "a dictator may easily change his policy, even in the most unlikely directions."

It seems that when Professor Roberts left Germany, some sort of showdown between the army leaders and the Nazi party was in the air. "The most significant feature of present-day Germany," he wrote, is "a noticeable move . . . towards the army." He felt that the army influence grew markedly stronger throughout 1937, and he did not think it far-fetched "to imagine a Germany in which the army, retaining the Führer as a willing figurehead, will take control of the land." To his credit, then, Professor Roberts did foresee some kind of change in the relationship between the two forces. Unfortunately, his estimation of the relative strength of the two was wrong: he expected the army men to get the upper hand. If we may judge from the rest of the book, this misjudgment was due to wishful thinking, typical of the conservative Englishman, worried by Hitlerism but committed to its "appeasement."

Thus, Hitler is described as "primarily a dreamer, a visionary." He sees no evil, hears no evil, speaks no evil. "All the brutal sides of his movement pass him by. The killings, the repressions, the imprisonments do not belong to the world of his imagination." Despite this romancing, the "blood purge" of June 30, 1934 is described as a cold-blooded orgy in which men were shot while working at their



John Helliker

desks, dragged away from their homes to a waiting car and pumped with lead, hurried to an old cadet school and plugged, one after the other, against the red brick-walls of the central courtyard. Hitler himself supervised the shooting of Röhm and personally issued directions for publishing news of the murder-hunt in the press and over the radio.

But there are at least two Nazis who share Professor Roberts's displeasure. One is Goebbels, the propaganda minister, who "dislikes England," wants an understanding with Italy, and "is diabolically clever and frankly Machiavellian in his views of mankind and the methods he would employ"—apparently the only really bad character in the lot. The other is Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi philosopher-in-chief, who has ideas of world domination, an indiscretion to a patriotic Englishman.

The same bias appears in somewhat more objective form in the pages on the German army and navy. The section on the army is an uninterrupted eulogy of its strength and efficiency. It is even suggested that the German army will one day, perhaps soon, be able to overwhelm the joint forces of France, Czechoslovakia, and the U.S.S.R. But the German navy is another matter. In a comforting way, Professor Roberts writes: "On the whole, there seems no reason for alarm at Germany's new navy. Indeed, Hitler's moderation in this regard is very reassuring, because it shows that he has no thought of an aggressive world strategy of the kind the Kaiser desired."

The clue to a large measure of the faults and contradictions in this book is to be found in this last sentence. It represents sheer wishful thinking. Hitler has repeatedly emphasized his hope for world dominion, most recently in the Reichstag speech on February 20 when he reiterated the Nazi demand for colonies.

This book leaves much to be desired, though I cannot remember any attempt at so comprehensive a survey of the Hitler movement. Compared to Robert A. Brady's *The Spirit and Structure of German Fascism*, it lacks realism and penetration, especially in respect to the economic basis of the regime. Professor Roberts knows that Hitlerism means war, but readers had still better consult Professor Brady to find out why.

THEODORE DRAPER.

## Transition to Socialism

TONIA, by Yuri Herman. Translated from the Russian by Stephen Carry. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50.

IN this novel, Yuri Herman, the twenty-eight-year-old Soviet author, traces the psychological unfoldment of Antonina (Tonia) Nikodimovna Staroselska—a charming and exquisitely feminine girl of his own generation—against the background of the tumultuously heroic decade of Soviet transition from

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