WATCH FRANCE

A veteran of France's 1940 describes his reaction to the Soviet-Nazi war. "At last Hitler has a war on three fronts." How the French people feel.

Somewhere in unoccupied France (via Lisbon).

DEAR FRIENDS: I just turned off the radio. It has come. I have heard just one sentence. "The German army has crossed the Soviet border." That's all. That's enough.

We knew it was bound to happen—we have known it for the past twenty years. Now it's here. When I heard the news, I was overcome by a feeling of my own uselessness—not to be there, not to be able to help, to strike. At once I realized my childishness. We all can help, and strike, right where we are. From now on, we all are mobilized "for the duration."

You too must be sitting at your radio set now, as I am, and so are millions of people all over the world. I think of our German and Italian comrades. How elated they must feel, and how conscious of their responsibility. I think of those who have no radios, no newspapers, and will learn the news by grapevine, from the chance remark of a guard. Thanks to Petain, we begin to understand how they feel, we who still are free cautiously to live and silently to hate.

At last Hitler has a war on three fronts. The third front are we, the French, Belgian, Dutch, Scandinavian, Czech, Hungarian, and Balkan peoples, the Italians and the Germans. From this all important front, there will be no communiques, almost no news—for the time being. I'll do my best to keep you informed about my sector, the French one. Should I be silent for a while, don't let it disturb you. Who knew about the activities of the Bolsheviks a short time before the Revolution, when our late President of the Republic, the fascist Gaston Doumergue, came back from a mission in Russia and declared that all the Russians were solidly behind the czar?

It is too early to tell specifically what the French people will do. What I can try to describe are the promises and the achievements of the Petain government in its first year of dictatorship. Today I don't feel like writing a formal account of what is happening here. After all, these days we have an anniversary to think about, the anniversary of the betrayal of France.

A little over a year ago my unit, which had fought in the North, along the Belgian border, reached Paris. The city was already half evacuated. A steady stream of refugees was rolling southward. After a month of futile efforts to repulse the Stukas and the Nazi tanks with our 1914 rifles, we saw no basic difference between Paris and any other terrain we had to defend and eventually to flee. The bridges over the Seine were just bridges to be blown up, the trees along the avenues just trees to hide under in case of a sudden air raid.

Some shops were still open, but they had been emptied by the fleeing civilians. We

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walked around in search of food: we were hungry.

As I was going down a deserted street, I met a worker in blue overalls. We had never seen each other before, but as a rule workers and soldiers do not need a formal introduction.

"Have you heard the news?" he asked.

He was excited and breathing heavily as if he had run for a long time.

"What news?" I asked.

He tried to catch his breath.

"Russia," he managed to say.

"What about Russia?"

"Russia is with us!"

"Russia fiddlesticks!" I aswered. "Ask me something else."

He seemed hurt.

"We've just learned it," he said. "Don't you believe me? Just wait and see."

For a moment I fought against a sweeping feeling of animal joy. Nonsense, sheer nonsense, I reasoned with myself. Why should the Soviet Union defend the French fascists against the German fascists?

"Nothing doing," I said finally.

"But listen," he pleaded. "Our boss had a phone call from an officer friend who works at the Invalides, the seat of the Military Governor of Paris. He said it's official." He saw that I was shaken, and hastily added, "I'm an old man, and sick too, too old and sick for their army. But now—give me a machine gun, give me anything, I'll fight. You just watch the workers."

The report about Soviet entrance into the war was false. But the working people of France knew that the USSR was indeed with them. And now it is known even to the most doubtful.

A few weeks later, Marshal Petain became Chief of State. Still a soldier, I heard him outline his program over the radio.

"We shall create an organized France," he said, "where the discipline of the subordinates will correspond to the authority of the chiefs, amidst equality for all. In every field we shall endeavor to form an elite and entrust them with leadership without taking into account anything but their capacities and their merits. Work is the supreme resource of our fatherland. It must be sacred. International capitalism and international socialism, which exploited and degraded it, both belong to the pre-war period. In our misled society, money, too often the servant and the tool of falsehood, was a means of domination. In a reconstructed France, money will be the reward of effort."

I have just found an old copy of a provincial daily which carried this speech, and remembered the farm on which a few of my comrades and I first heard it. It was at night, we were alone with the old farmer and his wife. The farmer seemed to respect Petain. "He's an old man," he said, "and a soldier. He must know and he won't lie." We, the soldiers, were skeptical: we had seen too many of our officers desert us and run away. "There's no use arguing," said the old woman, "in a year or so, we'll see."

She was right. Today we see.

"We shall create an organized France," Petain told us. Never was France plunged into such a state of anarchy as she is today. Only if organization means bureacracy, is France organized. Despite the scarcity of paper, heaps, tons, waterfalls of circulars, orders, counter-orders, explanatory notes, inquiries, instructions, rectified instructions, re-rectified instructions, daily pour from the Vichy hotels turned into ministries. No one knows what they mean because no one cares.

Petain promised "equality for all." Well, if you are rich you can buy whatever delicacy you like and even never notice that there is such a thing as restrictions. But if you are poor, be content with half a pound of meat a week, with a pound of sugar a month. If your artistocratic ancestors fought, back in 1792, in the ranks of the Prussians and the Austrians against the armies of the Republic, and if you happen to be a Gentile, you may learn and teach, and work in whatever field you want to. But if your family which helped to build France for ten generations is Jewish, you may as well stand on the next street corner and beg. However, it is still better to be a rich Jew than a poor Christian. "Equality for all!"

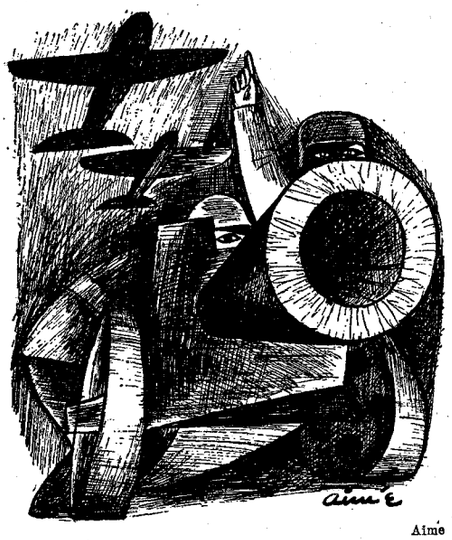
"In every field, we shall endeavor to form an elite," the Marshal boasted. You know, of course, that Professors Jean Perrin, the Nobel Prize winner, Paul Langevin, and dozens of others were dismissed. Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe* is banned by the censor. Georges Duhamel's last novel is not going to be printed. In schools they teach sports

and morale. Only one elite has spontaneously formed itself around Vichy—the elite of rats.

He said, "Work must be sacred." For hundreds of thousands of men it is so sacred that they still are without jobs. The unemployed who refuse any occupation, anywhere, at any price, are deprived of relief. Those who do work still get pre-war wages and pay wartime taxes. If they protest or revolt, they are sent to concentration camps, sentenced to jail. Work may be sacred in Vichy, France, but the workers are not.

Petain was going to make away with "international capitalism." His first Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paul Baudoin, is on ten boards of directors of corporations located in China, New Caledonia, Jibuti, and Indo-China. Joseph Barthelemy, the present Minister of Justice, is a director of Portuguese railways. General Weygand was a member of the board of the British-controlled Suez Canal Company. François Pietri, the Vichy ambassador to Franco, is a director of the Asturienne des Mines, a Spanish mining concern.

The marshal also wanted to destroy "international socialism." If he meant by that the French section of the Socialist International, he could have spared himself the trouble. The rank and file is gone—for good. Some of the leaders now temporarily sit behind prison bars: many of them have been released already. Those who prefer German fascism are the best friends of Vichy. Paul Faure, Secretary General of the French Socialist Party, has been appointed a member of Petain's National Council, along with the avowed fascists, Colonel de la Rocque and Jacques Doriot, and a brilliant selection of an elite of rats. Gaillard, the former managing editor of the Socialist *Populaire;* Charles Spinasse, a minister in Leon Blum's Popular Front government, and a score of other leading Socialists put out a new daily paper, *L'Effort.* In an editorial titled, "What are we?" Spinasse, instead of giving the obvious answer, writes: "Enemies of the Communist Party since its inception, we have always defended against it the rights of the human personality, asserted against it that the workers have nothing to expect from violence and misery, that a free society cannot be based on pseudo-scientific materialism. We have not participated in the enterprise of perversion of the social work which was accomplished in 1936. . . ." And when the war broke out, he adds, he and his colleagues "thought only of defending our soil . . . while trying to seize every opportunity to begin peace negotiations with Germany."



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You know that Petain never had in mind to destroy these "socialists." Who he really meant were the Communists, but he preferred not to name them as if by not mentioning the name, he would charm the Party out of existence. In this field, too, he failed. There are, it is true, some 30,000 anti-fascists in French concentration camps today, the martial courts still heap years of jail sentences on the unbending shoulders of French Communists; underground printing shops are being raided, and illegal leaflets seized. In Paris, they even removed from the Grevin museum of wax works the figure of Maurice Thorez, general secretary of the Communist Party, probably because they were unable to arrest the original. The repression was going on for a year under Daladier and Paul Reynaud, and for another year under the marshal. With what results? Today the French people are "nervous and anxious because unfortunately many of them believe everything that is said and whispered even without pausing to think it over, many believe that what they hear every day over the clandestine or dissident radio is the absolute truth." I didn't say that; Admiral Darlan did, a few weeks ago, over the radio, and in the next sentence, he attacked the Communists—this time by name. As for Petain, in his last broadcast, he did not command, or boast. He tried lamely to defend his policy. "I need your faith," he said. "Believe me," he pleaded, "the moment has not yet come for you to take refuge in bitterness or to abandon yourself to despair. You have been neither sold out nor betrayed nor abandoned. Those who tell you so lie to you and throw you into the arms of Communism." What a language for a Chief of State, a marshal!

"Money . . . was a means of domination. In a reconstructed France, money will be the reward of effort," Petain asserted a year ago. Unless by "effort" he meant the new Socialist daily, he forgot all about his promise. On March 27 of this year, the 200 strongest shareholders of the Bank of France—the only ones admitted to vote and who, for that reason, gave birth to the expression "The 200 Families"—met and learned that the yearly dividend had been maintained at 320 francs, just as in the past years. The Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas, the largest French banking house, earned in 1940 only 15,000,000 francs, against 21,000,000 the year before, but maintained the thirty-five francs dividend per share. L'Union Parisienne, the bank connected with the armaments firm of Schneider-Creusot, made the same profits in 1940 as in 1939, and paid the usual 6.5 percent dividend. The Catholic Credit Industriel et Commercial earned over 9,000,000 francs, paid a 20 percent dividend, and decided to double its capital by offering a new share to the holder of every old one. The Vichy government interfered with big business only to the extent of reducing from 3.25 percent to .25 percent the tax on capital newly invested in corporations, and cutting by one-half the tax on the benefits resulting from the gratuitous transfer of shares, should it follow the consolidation of two or more companies.

Money is no longer "a means of domination." It is just a coincidence if Petain's Minister of Industrial Production is a ranking employee of our steel trust, the Comite des Forges; if his Minister of National Equipment is the nephew of the president of the French Bankers Association; if the two men put in charge of the steel industry are former managers of Schneider-Creusot. The dictator of electric current distribution is a director of eight electricity trusts; the president of the Organization Committee for Liquid Fuels is the managing director of the French oil trust—combination of Standard Oil and Royal Dutch under the high patronage of the Rothschild bank.

There is, across my street, a poster that Vichy has put out to publicize its Treasury Bonds. Every morning, when I see it, I cannot help thinking that it is the most accurate picture of Petain France I have ever come across. It shows a church, a cemetery, a monument to the dead of the first world war, and a few old houses. To be complete, it only lacks a concentration camp.

I know, you want me to tell you about our underground activities? You must realize how it is. What is really important and interesting cannot be told. As for the rest—the stickers and chalkings on the walls, the leaflets, etc.—you certainly know all about it. Don't worry on our account. We're O.K. Think of the worker in blue overalls whom, a year ago, I met in the streets of Paris, and who said to me, because he thought the Soviet Union was going to war: "Give me a machine gun, give me anything. I'll fight. You just watch the workers."

So long, dear friends, and don't forget to watch the French workers.

As ever,

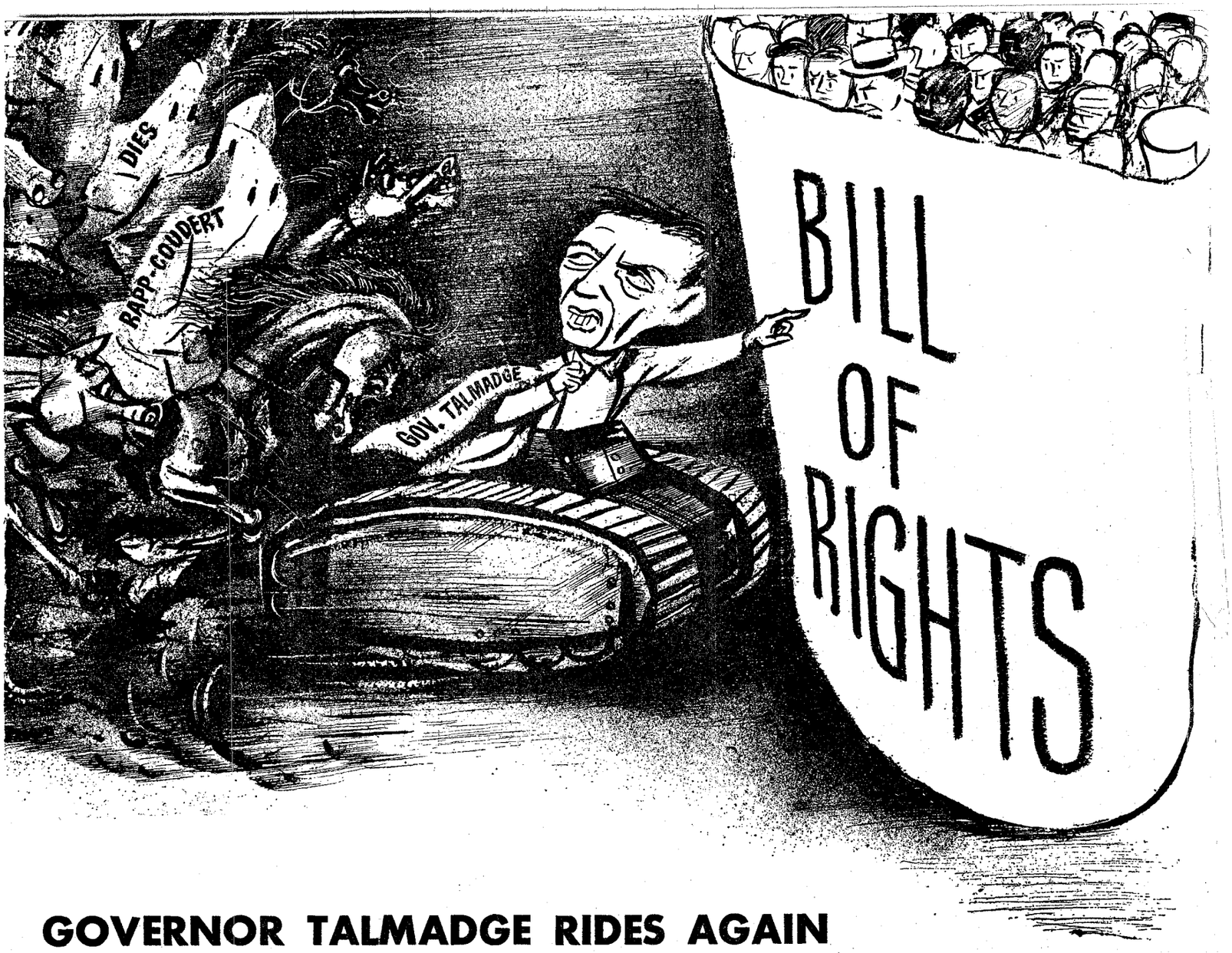
PAUL S.

Export Commodity

ON June 23 Martin Dies of Texas (elected to the House by benefit of poll tax and recently repudiated by a thumping majority of voters when he ran for the US Senate) declared:

"In my judgment, Hitler will be in control of Russia within thirty days."

The thirty days are more than up. The wishful prophecies of Dies are no better than those of Goebbels. Despite the blockade, isn't there some way to export the Texas fuehrer to a land where his talents will be more appreciated?



GOVERNOR TALMADGE RIDES AGAIN

Why the Georgia fuehrer fired two of the state's leading educators. Rapp-Coudertism of the South. How the Southern politician achieved power. His ambitions.

WE GEORGIA newspapermen were a little sore as we filed into Governor Talmadge's office one January day in 1936. An important columnist from the North—Ward Morehouse of the New York *Sun,* I believe it was—had been given an exclusive interview and there was a rumor in the dingy old statehouse that an important hint about the governor's political plans had been dropped in the course of his talk with the outsider.

As we filed to our places that day the governor seemed to sense our resentment. Instantly his mood was confidential. Up North, he said, the papers liked to speculate. You had to throw them a little bit and let them spin it out into columns. "Hell, Leo," he said to the Atlanta *Constitution's* man, "you know how it was when we went up North together. Why they don't know nothin' about conditions down here." As he spoke he eyed young Randolph Hearst shrewdly. Hearst was apprenticed out to his father's Atlanta *Georgian* and made the statehouse rounds in company with a pathetic little alcoholic who was the *Georgian's* regular reporter.

"Sure," the governor said, "up North the responsible folks are mad a-plenty at Roosevelt's wild spending. But they don't know the first thing about the one question that can set this Southern country on fire. . . ."

An aged Negro man clad in a white jacket entered the room and quietly began clearing away coca-cola bottles and glasses. There was silence until the old man had carried his tray from the room. Then the *Georgian's* reporter anticipated the governor's thought with a query: "You mean the question of the 'hewers of wood and the drawers of water,' don't you, governor?" The little man at the big desk did not answer. He smiled wisely and regarded the door by which the old man had left.

Last week, again the governor of Georgia, this nervous, moody little man with an unruly forelock not unlike that of a nervous, moody little man in Germany, condemned two men to loss of their livelihood. The two men on trial in the musty Georgia House of Representatives chamber were two of Georgia's best known educators, Dr. Walter Cocking, dean of the College of Education of the University of Georgia, and Dr. Marvin S. Pittman, president of Georgia State Teachers College. The charge against Dr. Cocking was threefold: he had been "interested in" the Rosenwald Fund, which contributes to Negro education in the South; he had read a book entitled *Brown America* by Edwin Embree of the Rosenwald Fund, and he had subscribed to the publications of the Interracial Commission, a Southern organization with headquarters in Atlanta. The charge against Dr. Pittman was simpler. He had "permitted" Negro students from Tuskegee University to eat sandwiches along with white students on the campus of Georgia State Teachers College.

In this grotesque drama of his own creation Eugene Talmadge was also a principal actor. He sat on a front bench in the House of Rep-