

WASHINGTON HELPS THE BERLIN-HELSINKI AXIS

The occupation of Finland by German troops and arms. Some interesting, if embarrassing questions for Messrs. Hull and Morgenthau to answer. Smoke and fire.

FINLAND is a long ways off from the Balkans geographically, and the times when that country dominated the headlines are now ancient history. Yet time and space are readily traversed in the Einsteinian physics of modern diplomacy. Our statesmen have assured us a number of times they intend no compromise with fascism, and Mr. Roosevelt has directed the freezing of funds belonging to countries occupied by German armies; simultaneously, we have been led to believe that Mr. Welles, the Under-Secretary of State, has been negotiating improved relations with a certain great power known as the Soviet Union. On both of these scores, it is worth asking some questions about Finland.

On September 26 of last year, the world was astounded by an official dispatch from Helsinki stating that "transit of German troops on leave and of German supplies is taking place between northern Norway and northern Finland subject to certain conditions and control measures." The dispatch went on to explain that "the arrangement was modeled after that between Sweden and Germany which became effective in July. . . ."

That the actions of the Swedish and Finnish governments were not analogous was apparent to the most naive political observer. In May (not in July as the Finnish dispatch stated) at the height of the Narvik campaign, under pressure of a Nazi ultimatum the Swedish government reluctantly consented to permit the movement of German supplies and German wounded to and from northern Norway. The Norwegian roads were inaccessible at that time of the year and the coastal route was under the guns of the British navy, then in Norwegian territorial waters. In case of a refusal it was universally admitted that Sweden faced the risk of Nazi occupation. Finland's case was radically different from Sweden's. Having wrung transit facilities from Sweden the Nazis had no need of Finnish communications. Besides the Norwegian campaign was over. Britain could not spare any ships for the blockade of the coastal Narvik route which Germany preferred. But the most pertinent fact of all was that there were no intimations of a German ultimatum. Germany could not then have afforded to antagonize the Soviet Union or throw Finland into Soviet arms by hostile pressure. The first and only intimation of the passage of German troops through Finland came from the Finnish government and there were ample grounds for suspecting that it took the initiative in the negotiations which led to the "passage" of these troops.

Another dispatch from Helsinki stated that "German troops landed at Vasa, Finnish port on the Gulf of Bothnia. The number of German troops landed was not known,

WHAT THE TROOPS MEAN

OUR article by Walter Broad had been in type for some time when the American press featured the *Pravda* dispatch reporting the arrival of some 12,000 fully armed German troops in Finnish ports. As our author indicates, these troop movements have been going on for some time and actually constitute an occupation of Finland.

The American press discusses these events in terms of Soviet-German relations. Some columnists speculate that the USSR is being outflanked in the north; some editors hold their breaths in the hope that Finland might become a scene of Soviet-German conflict. *NEW MASSES* has been pointing out to its readers the very real potentialities of worsening relations between the USSR and Germany in the Near East; but we would advise strongly against accepting the very simple interpretation of an imminent Soviet-German clash. Ribbentrop may again be circulating tales that Hitler would tackle the USSR in return for a truce with Churchill.

The chief immediate explanation for the Nazi troop arrivals seems to lie in the Finnish internal situation, as well as the relations between Finland and Sweden. In the past year, Finland has experienced a very acute political crisis—arising out of the problems of the disastrous adventure against the USSR. Last summer, the Society for Friendship with the Soviet Union made great gains in influence and membership. Even severe governmental repression was not able to stymie the growth in circulation of the left-wing press. Economic conditions are bad; there is no work for the loggers and paper mill workers; the farmers are suffering acutely while the news of reconstruction in the Karelo-Finnish Soviet Republic and the Baltic Soviet republics naturally makes a powerful impression. Moreover, the 280,000 people who were forcibly evacuated from their homes in the Karelian regions have been left stranded. The big landowners resist any thought of yielding their land. The aristocracy in Finland is Swedish, and has traditionally held the Karelians in contempt. Feeling itself insecure at home, the governing coalition has therefore steadily veered toward rapprochement with Germany; in part, that explains the arrival of Nazi troops. According to the Swedish Communist paper, *Ny Dag*, an effort is also being made to involve Sweden in a military alliance with Finland—under Hitler's auspices—the sort of alliance which the USSR strongly criticized when it was first proposed last spring. The most reactionary Swedish circles look favorably on the idea. But the main groups are wary, especially since in Sweden also, the working class, despite the Social-Democratic leadership, is stepping forth to demand friendly relations with the USSR.

but whatever the number it was reported they would be followed by others later." Strangely enough the German soldiers supposedly on leave from northern Norway were landing in Finnish ports and proceeding inland instead of embarking from them on the way home to Germany. Since then there have been continual reports from Scandinavia which indicated the Reichswehr had made quite a habit of "passing" through Finland. It seemed also that the Nazis made a habit of stopping on the way in such strategic places as Vasa, Rovaniemi, Ivalo, Tornea, and other places of recent fame where they were stationed in permanent barracks. These reports were lent more than a semblance of truth by an official statement of the Finnish government (*New York Times*, Sept. 29, 1940): "After the first seven shiploads of uniformed German soldiers debarked at Vasa to proceed north into Norway in virtue of the Finnish-German transit agreement, the Finnish government issued a decree proclaiming Abo, Vasa, Kemi, Uleaborg, and Tornea as prohibited areas, access to which henceforth will be possible only with special police permits." The dispatch points out that "the coastline from Abo to Tornea completely covers the Finnish side of the Gulf of Bothnia," and adds disingenuously that "Abo is forty miles from Hangoe, now an important Russian naval base."

It has remained for Ludwig Lore and the *New York Post*, both certainly no friends of the Soviet Union and no enemies of Finnish "democracy," to call public attention to the present plight of little Finland. Said Ludwig Lore in his *Post* column recently.

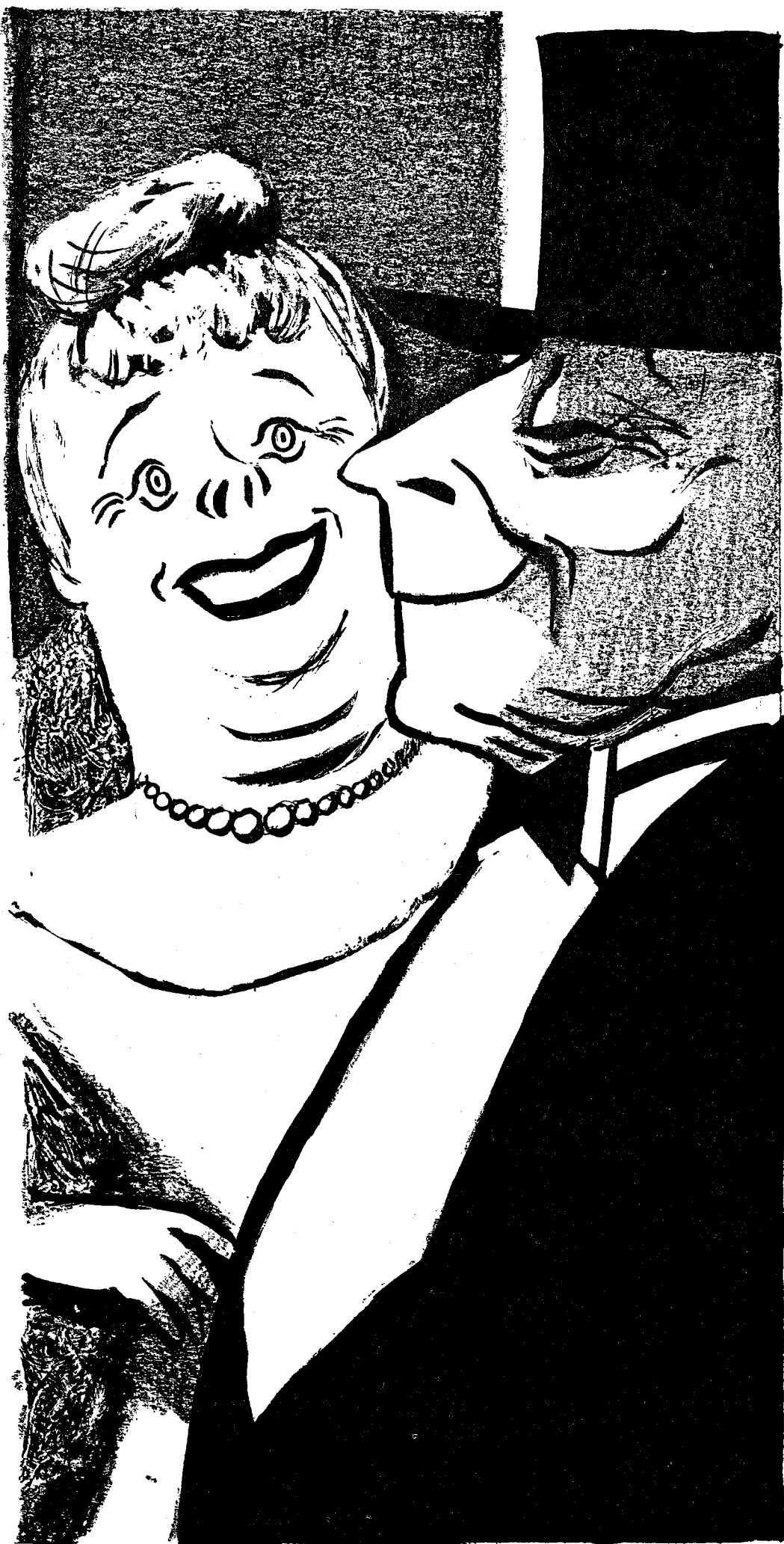
. . . it takes more than arms and physical endurance to resist the new aggressor who is slowly but persistently robbing the Finnish people of their hardwon freedom. It began when the Finnish government, yielding to Nazi threats, permitted German troops to pass through its land to Norway. Today, sailors returning from the ice free port of Petsamo report that the great Arctic highway which leads to that city from Rovaniemi, the northernmost railway station in Finland, is always crowded with German troops. German troops are stationed in Ivalo, the largest city in that district, and in the great winter sport hotel in Rovaniemi German officers are living a carefree life as they wait for developments on the northern front. The Finns themselves who live in that area are suffering real want. It is almost impossible to buy food anywhere. In Petsamo ships leaving for the United States are examined by German army inspectors. Passenger lists must be submitted to Nazi officials for approval. All over northern Finland the roads have German signposts.

Why the Finnish government, which was willing to sacrifice the lives of tens of thousands of Finnish workers and peasants to

resist Soviet requests for minor rectifications of the Soviet-Finnish frontiers, is so easily resigned to the occupation of its entire country by the Nazis, Mr. Lore does not satisfactorily explain. However, Lore is not under any official obligation to explain that fact. But the occupation of Finland by the German army poses a ticklish problem for Secretary Hull which the latter may have overlooked in his anxiety to cultivate good relations with the Soviet Union. Since the outbreak of the war, the whole world (including the Soviet Union) knows that it has become the established practice of Washington to freeze the American funds of all governments that under military or diplomatic duress permit themselves to be occupied by the Nazis. This was done in the case of Belgium, Denmark, France, Rumania, and more recently in the case of Bulgaria and Hungary. When the Cvetkovitch government of Yugoslavia signed a treaty providing merely for the passage of German supplies and *ruling out the passage of German troops*, the Treasury Department regarded this treaty as sufficient grounds for freezing Yugoslav funds in America, and it was only when the Cvetkovitch government was overthrown that the order was rescinded. In the light of its rigid adherence to this principle the policy of this government toward the "passage" of German troops through Finland takes on overtones that are far from subtle. Not only have Finnish funds in this country not been frozen, but on the contrary as recently as March 18 another five-million-dollar credit was added to the \$30,000,000 previously advanced to Finland. The public facts are that either the Finnish government was forced by Germany to submit to the occupation of Finland by German troops, or it did so willingly. If it was forced to this action as Mr. Lore and the Finnish government insist, then it is in the same class with Belgium, Denmark, France, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria. If it did so willingly, then it is far more culpable than these other governments. Or does Washington want it to be inferred from the exception that it is making in the case of Finland that it is inclined to be sympathetic when a government is a willing tool of the Nazis, and particularly in view of its erstwhile difficulties with the Soviet Union?

The State Department has presumably been attempting to improve relations with the Soviet Union. In March, on the occasion of the news of the Soviet-Turkish non-aggression pact Under-Secretary of State Welles went so far as to dignify the Soviet Union with the title of a "great power." This must have been very flattering to a little state two and a half times the size of the United States, with one and a half times its population. But perhaps it would have been even more effective if the State Department had explained why we so resolutely opposed Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia and Greece, but are willing to cooperate and finance Nazi occupation of Finland.

WALTER BROAD.



"We're not going to Europe this season, but we're planning to send our help."

Michaels

TIME TO TAKE STOCK

Labor can point to proud accomplishments in the past few months. The strength of the people. What future struggles will demand. An editorial article.

WHEN the coal miners reentered the bituminous mines, the first phase of the "all-out" war against the labor movement came to an end. The attack had been thrown back, and more, the unions could point to impressive victories. No one, of course, dreams that the Battle for America is over. But for the moment there is a partial lull while labor consolidates its gains, and the enemy prepares for the next assault.

It is well, at this time, to take stock—because the strength of the people is determined by the organized power of the working class. In our developed capitalist economy, the unions of necessity are the mainstay not alone of the working class but also of the people as a whole—the small farmers and little business men, the professionals and intellectuals. When labor advances, the people—all of us who make up the majority—are reinforced in the main fight against further involvement in the ugly, predatory war.

The newspapers called the workers' recent struggles a "strike wave." They cried out in anguish against what they deemed a "plot to stall defense." But as usual they concealed the reasons for labor's resistance, though they knew full well that strikes do not take place unless they are provoked. Underlying every stoppage in industry was the same cause: the greed of management, whetted by enormous profits, hungry for more. They would push the workers ever harder, speed them up, lengthen hours; they would keep wages at the same levels though prices were climbing.

The owners harbored no illusions. Obviously, the working class must be robbed of organizations through which it could effectively resist. The hope was that the cry of "emergency" would persuade labor to capitulate. Or that the blackmail shriek of "Red" would frighten the unions into line. If not, there was terror and brutality to crush them, legislation to cripple them, and "public opinion" manufactured by the press to overwhelm them. The campaign was plotted well.

Labor proved too strong.

TO THE annual CIO convention last November came the ambassador of the profiteers, coached by the White House. Sacrifice is good, said the smilingly baleful Sidney Hillman; collaboration, capitulation must be labor's role. But Social Democracy's treachery failed to beguile; the unionists turned away from the emissary of defeatism. The great in industry and finance, and their shrewd ally in the White House, then realized that they could not rely on words alone. They brought Sidney Hillman back to Washington, lavishing new titles upon him, instructing him in his task of "softening up" the labor movement prior to the attack. As head of the Advisory Defense

Board, later as co-director in the Office of Production Management, Hillman strained to sell the unions to the corporations, to cheat those organizations which mistakenly came to him for protection, to line up the few who had no stomach for resistance and who saw personal advantage in becoming administration satellites. The executive councilmen of the American Federation of Labor, remembering the old fox Gompers, cringed and doffed their hats, eager to hire themselves out as flunkies. More often than not, their unions refused to follow their command. Sidney Hillman's army of retreat proved to be no more than a squad of noisy sycophants promising pie in the sky as the workers' reward for eating dirt now. Temporarily, Hillman, the barker who could not fill the tent, was pushed into the background. That was the enemy's first rebuff.

With the turn of the year, came the full force of the offensive. At Lackawanna, the Bethlehem Steel Corp. felt out the working class. And labor's strong resistance won concessions for the unionists. At the International Harvester plants in Chicago and in the surrounding cities, management trotted out the Chicago Plan, whereby high AFL spokesmen expected to split the strike "in the name of labor." Police violence, a Federation-sponsored "back to work movement" did not bring the desired confusion and union collapse. True, in the end, the workers did not gain a complete triumph, but they could still point to partial gains instead of retreat.

In the crowded weeks thereafter, workers learned profoundly. They learned, during the strike of New York transport workers, that the tricky ruse of forcing arbitration on terms determined in advance by management could be defeated. Because the transport workers pressed their strike until the corporations granted arbitration on proper terms—on the premise of higher wages, not of cuts in pay—labor all over the country perceived the full danger of compulsory arbitration and how to balk it. Then, as the Allis-Chalmers strike in Milwaukee lengthened into weeks, the administration for its part tried a new approach—ordering the men back into the plants while the dispute was "mediated." The strike would end before management had agreed to meet demands, workers would enter mediation defeated before the negotiating began. By repudiating the OPM order, the Allis-Chalmers workers took the most significant step of the period: they defied the presidential appointees of the Defense Mediation Board to decree the ending of a strike. Had the workers abided by the edict, the employers could thenceforward have clamored that any strike precipitated a "defense emergency," and thereupon the national government could step in to

terminate the walkout. With such a precedent, it was only a matter of choosing the time before strikes would have been forbidden altogether. The unions, unable to strike, would have been condemned to inaction and disintegration.

At Bethlehem, the police organized scabs to smash through picket lines, protecting them with an armed phalanx, beating and gassing and shooting into the ranks of the strikers. For a brief and ominous interval, the workers' lines wavered and broke, but they quickly reformed and against staggering odds, the steel union won an agreement even from the great Bethlehem Co. Back in 1937, Bethlehem with the other Little Steel corporations, turned back the steel workers' organizational drive. In 1941, Bethlehem was forced to raise wages, to bargain collectively—in writing, at Johnstown, which effectively negated the company's resolve never to put an agreement on paper. Victory at Bethlehem precluded a ten-cent wage rise granted by the United States Steel Corp. Other steel companies fell in line.

Then the great fortress of the open shop, the Ford Motor Co., whose vast domain was supposedly safe from unionism, fell before the workers. At Dearborn, in April, a great myth passed into oblivion—the myth that any corporation in all America is immune from organization, that any citadel is proof against the unified drive of labor intent on spreading the protection that organization brings.

The mighty gave way. Their cry of "defense" was answered with the question, "Defense for Whom?" The Red scare in no important labor action intimidated the rank and file. New York transport workers shrugged off the label. The Allis-Chalmers strikers, accused of questioning the authority of government, stood firm. Despite renewed government persecution of Harry Bridges as a "subversive influence," the convention of longshoremen and warehousemen reelected him as their president; even the few reactionary leaders in command of isolated locals here and there were constrained to go along with the majority to uphold the great militant leader of the Pacific Coast. Teachers in New York with indomitable courage defied the name callers. Professionals took the same course as their fellows in basic industry.

The President cajoled. Administrative bodies dragged out forgotten statutes, proclaimed new repressions, instituted still more investigations, and the workers scorned them. The owners attempted to set Negro against white at the Ford plant. But the unions forged solidarity between white and black; provocation designed to foment race rioting brought firmer unity. In every strike, the conflict itself advanced the cause of the Negro because only