

# LETTER TO ATLANTA

DEAR EARL BROWDER:

It is two months since they took you to Atlanta, locked you in the penitentiary that once before was honored by another fearless American, one Gene Debs, a mid-westerner like yourself. Our hearts traveled with you and, upon your fiftieth birthday this week, we join with the millions here and all over the world, who send you their deepest love. You have just reached the prime of life and we pledge that we shall do everything within our power for your liberation.

We have been reading the messages sent you from all over America, from the disinherited of Mexico and Venezuela, from the dispossessed of our own South, from the working men in mine, shop and office. We know that there will be birthday parties in your honor in thousands of homes: strange parties and yet not so strange. The guest of honor will not be in the room, there will be no cake, no candles. Yet those who will come to honor you will know that steel and granite cannot take you from them.

They will honor you at a time when the authorities who sent you to prison seek to make of our America a vast penitentiary. The trumpets are blaring, the drums are rolling. The authorities are straining to whip the people into the frenzy of war: but those who do you honor will keep their heads in the tumult. You have taught them well. Your words, your counsel will be there. Your books, your pamphlets will continue to guide them through the storm. For all across the nation, millions are thinking the thoughts that you were first to enunciate so clearly, so ably, and they are coming to recognize what many of us have said: that you are in jail for thinking straight—and those who sent you to jail do not dare to admit that.

Many of them have come to know you for what you are—a plain, simple man like them. Your teachings have borne fruit, dear friend. They know you have earned the right to judge, the right to lead. They know that this is not the first time you have suffered for the truth, for the plain people of America. They know that the war-lords put you behind bars in the first world war: and you came through the ordeal to explain that war to millions. We know you are confident that once again the people will set you free.

Yes, many know you now who did not know you when you walked out of the prison after the last war. Many, many more will know you when you are freed this time. You, the Kansas bookkeeper who had a way of adding the figures up straight. We know that you totaled up the history of our times and the men who run the Big Business of this country could never forgive that crime. For they are swindling America of peace, robbing it of prosperity, stealing the dearly won rights obtained over a century and a half. And your books reveal the gigantic embezzlement.

It is fitting that your latest book, *The Way Out*, appears upon your birthday. Like thousands more, we have just finished reading it. It was as though we heard you speaking again, at one of the heartening meetings in Madison Square Garden, at all the places where laboring men and women came by the thousands to hear what you had to say. Those who read this latest book of yours understand more clearly than ever why your jailers could not brook your freedom in days like these. Nobody else in America has put the truth of our times down with such force and clarity: nobody else is so embarrassing to an administration that is wheedling, coaxing, bamboozling, coercing a people into a war they hate.

You have earned your passport to the leadership of the American people. That is the real passport charge which sent you to prison. Not the flimsy, tortured charge that ostensibly was the reason. You speak for millions, however, when you say, "There are some false passports which do great injury." And you tell of a man "who got his passport" to the Presidency by deceiving a whole people. That man is Franklin D. Roosevelt who promised to keep America out of war, and today the overwhelming majority of the people are coming to understand that he has violated his pledges—has broken faith. Yours was the first voice to warn them, the first counsel to guide them. Your book is the most damning, most penetrating analysis of these times that has been published. And we know it is for that—and for telling America what to do about it—that you are today in Atlanta Penitentiary.

You taught thousands how to interpret the politics of today. This book is a key to that interpretation. For you put the finger on those who are to blame: that ruling class which "has long outlived its history." You were first to warn America that these people were bringing "war, conscription, dictatorship." Today they see it coming full-tilt at them. You warned America to be on guard lest "catastrophe, famine, pestilence, and chaos" that are spreading rapidly over the face of the earth "draw closer to these shores." You warned that unless America remained neutral, it was bound to slide into one of the warring camps. For telling these truths they snatched you from your family, your friends, your people, put a mask over your face on the way to prison, and buried you within stone walls for four years.

Yet in a very real sense you have not been taken from the people. Your words, your precepts, your example of unflinching courage have taught them more than the authorities will ever dare admit.

It is all there in your book, all the hard, bitter truth that must be known. And all the heartening facts which help men bear the truth. Yes, dear Earl Browder, it is hard indeed that they have taken you away from the people for four, long years. But as you have pointed out, they have solved nothing by your imprisonment. The ideas for which you stand have taken root, they cannot be burned out by fire or destroyed by sword. You said at the anniversary meeting of John Reed, "They did not begin the job quickly enough." You showed how already the people have learned so much, that "there is such a growing opinion, knowledge, culture, understanding, intellectual power in the masses of America that the most powerful reactionary regime can never cut it out." You have contributed greatly to that culture and we deeply appreciate that.

So, dear friend, we pledge you on this day, your birthday, that we shall never falter in the march: that we shall carry on in your tradition, the tradition of Jefferson, Lincoln, John Brown, Debs, Reed. We shall yet make this land a land of riches for the millions instead of the few.

Yes, Earl Browder. The drums are rolling, the trumpets blaring, they think they are leading the American people to slaughter. We know you hear the clamor even there in Atlanta behind those thick walls. But we hope you hear too a song that rises within the turmoil and imperial cacophony. It is the song of the people and they are singing the words you taught them.

THE EDITORS.

May 27, 1941 NM

# NEW MASSES

ESTABLISHED 1911

## Editors

BARBARA GILES, A. B. MAGIL, RUTH MCKENNEY,  
BRUCE MINTON, JOSEPH NORTH, JOSEPH STAROBIN,  
JOHN STUART

Business Manager  
CARL BRISTEL

★

## Duel in the Near East

THE decision of the Vichy government to collaborate more closely with Germany is really a ratification of the decision which the French ruling class made last June, when, out of fear of its own people, it literally welcomed the German armies into Paris. Even if Vichy will now pay less for the German occupation, and even if some prisoners are released from the concentration camps, the plight of the French people has not changed. The nation is still divided. It is still in the grip of the conqueror. The problem of the French people remains the same.

The real and important significance of the "collaboration" lies in its many-sided effects on the war as a whole. To begin with, even if she does not formally adhere to the tripartite alliance, France has become a major power in the European Axis. Italian imperialism has been largely displaced, while General Franco is rapidly losing some of the bargaining advantages he has held in the past. All during the fall and winter a certain struggle was taking place among the three Mediterranean powers—France, Italy, and Spain—over the question of which was to complement Germany's dominant position on the continent. Mussolini was greatly weakened by the loss of Ethiopia and all of East Africa, and by his very poor showing in Albania and Libya. Spain continued her delicate balance, relying on British sea power for supplies but under the shadow of German land power nevertheless. Hitler was in a position to wait, to bide his time, for in the final analysis, Admiral Darlan was even a stronger pal than Pierre Laval. Of course, Hitler kept an eye on the Anglo-American flirtations in Vichy, but with the conclusion of the Balkan campaign, he knew that France would have to make up her mind. That has now happened. No formal changes have taken place in German-Italian relations and Mussolini will even get a slice of Dalmatia while an Italian Duke takes over the crown of unhappy Croatia. But in actual fact, France has become the real partner to Germany. Economically, the integration of French and German industry will go forward at an accelerated rate. Strategically, Hitler can now penetrate the Near East via Syria, and retains the opportunity of coming down the west coast of Africa as far south as Dakar.

In the second place, France's decision represents a considerable defeat for the Anglo-

American bloc, and a real setback for the President's diplomacy. It will be remembered that when the former Ambassador William Bullitt returned from France last summer, he assured us that Marshal Petain was not a fascist, nor should France be criticized too sharply for the armistice. While the British sought to impress General Weygand with their military successes in Ethiopia and Libya, the White House went into a most lyrical interlude in the hope of persuading the French ruling class to reconsider its decision of last June and carry the war on again, on Britain's side, from North Africa.

In the American press, Petain was treated as something of a cross between patriarch and saint. Official emissaries like Robert Murphy, the counsellor of the American embassy at Vichy, were dispatched to North Africa while Admiral Leahy was shipped over to Vichy itself; unofficial emissaries like Colonel Donovan and Jay Allen were delegated to determine how things were going. The policy of shipping food to France, it is obvious now, had nothing to do with humanitarian motives: it was simply a form of bribery and not a very successful bribery at that. Mr. Roosevelt is now compelled to cover up his fiasco, and he conceals it from the American people by pronouncements to France, which smell strongly of sour grapes. The press obliges by fulminating against the same Petain whom only yesterday they treated with such consideration. And William Bullitt probably sulks somewhere in the fashionable resorts.

The United States may pick up bits and scraps of the French empire within reach, such as the St. Pierre and Miquelon islands off Newfoundland (by arrangement with Canada, of course) and the island of Martinique in the Caribbean. But the body of the French empire remains in the German orbit—unless otherwise determined by force of arms. An active struggle now sets in for the islands like the Azores, the Canary and the Madeira group which flank the passages from Europe to South America. The minor powers like Spain and Portugal to whom these islands belong face the prospect of yielding



Borger

to the major imperialisms. More and more the war assumes the character of a struggle of vast continental blocs, neither of which can get at the other easily, and neither of which, despite feverish efforts, can find any basis for cooperation.

## Military Perspectives

THUS the war has moved into the Near East and last week, German planes and technicians were reported in Syria, while the Royal Air Force was already carrying out counter-bombardments of Syrian ports and airdromes. It is too early to estimate the military perspectives. Because of Turkey's firm insistence on neutrality, supported by the Soviet Union, Hitler has been compelled to swing below Turkey along an extended line of communications which are especially vulnerable to British sea power. The British have taken the initiative in Iraq; they are the older and more entrenched imperialism in this region although, of course, the resistance of the Arab peoples is therefore directed against them. The Nazis hope to gain control of Syria, and move down the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates to the Persian gulf. At the same time, they will undoubtedly begin their pincer movement through Palestine and from Libya for the Suez Canal. Politically, the most important issues hang on the outcome of the fighting. Should Hitler win, he may try to force a reconsideration of his peace terms this autumn; as Churchill indicated in his last speech, the loss of this region would be among "the heaviest blows" Britain could sustain. On the other hand, it is on the Near Eastern issues—as well as the North Atlantic—that Mr. Roosevelt will try desperately to get into the war, in the hope of keeping it going into next year. Intense diplomatic activity is therefore inextricably combined with military developments this summer.

## Palestine

ONE of the most damnable aspects of the new theater of the war is the plight of the 400,000 Jewish settlers in Palestine. By its supine reliance on British imperialism, and by its discrimination against the Arab workers in the Jewish labor unions, the Zionist leadership has brought the whole project of a National Homeland face to face with a truly terrible dilemma. On the one hand Britain will certainly be making every effort to win Arab support, even by concessions at the expense of the Jewish settlers; on the other hand, the Jewish colonization lies in the direct path of the Nazi offensive toward Suez. Thus the Jews have been brought to a horrible impasse, an impasse which represents a most scorching indictment of the whole theory and practice of Zionism. The only alternative would have been cooperation with the Arabs for a bi-national state, in opposition to imperialism. That was made difficult by the Zionist leadership itself, and is probably now just too late to achieve.