

Army on and behind the lines of the Eastern Front.

The opposition, therefore, retreated to the position of declaring that truth, righteousness, eternal justice, national honor, and the future interest on European bonds demand that whatever territorial decisions are made, at least the Polish government must be regarded as though it has been conceived brought forth, and reared by divine providence, and must be considered virtually sacrosanct. Those inclined to recall to the public mind the possibility that this Polish government is neither more respectable nor less phony than that period of the war in which it was put together in Paris by Chamberlain and Daladier, must be considered people of low, ignoble, and even realistic mentality. From this preposterous position the proponents of these arguments go on to declare that if anyone anywhere suggests any serious change in the structure of Polish leadership at this time, this must be considered a crime so heinous that it would justify "tearing up" the Teheran decisions.

I SWEAR I am not exaggerating. That is a fair summary of what the *Observer* said and of what some of their less clownish outspoken friends are trying to induce the enormously—and, if you like, excessively—long-suffering British public to believe. Yet I find among serious, authoritative, and thinking people here a very encouraging reaction to all this, which perhaps goes rather deeper than the Beaverbrook editorial I have quoted. They refuse to be-

lieve that the British government, within weeks of the mighty achievement of Teheran, should be incapable of solving this essentially minor difficulty—a difficulty which after all is not very different in kind from the difficulty which the British government and people have made at least an advance toward solving in the case of Yugoslavia. There, too, as you will recall, there was an effort made—for that matter it is still being made in some quarters—to endow the "Royal Yugoslav Government," which has lately flitted from South Kensington to Cairo, with the same odor of sacrosanctity with which it is now proposed to squirt the Polish emigres in London.

While it would be foolish to press too closely an analogy between the two situations, one point sticks out. That point is that in the case of Yugoslavia the real facts within Yugoslavia and above all the demands of the prosecution of the war led to the dropping of absurdities and got us at least several inches along the road to practical and sensible treatment. Nobody, I suppose, now seriously questions the judgment of those Allied military leaders who were responsible for the recognition of the new situation in Yugoslavia. One must, of course, expect that small group of propagandists who act as the London outlet for the grotesque, reactionary "center" established in Cairo under the leadership of former chiefs of the Polish anti-shackling of bogus "democrats" and financed by alarmed Alexandrine cotton brokers. Despite all efforts to the con-

trary, it was possible for Yugoslavia's military needs to be at least recognized if not by any means entirely met. This would not have been possible, and the results would have been disastrous, if the theory of the divine rights of a group of Serbian colonels to represent the peoples of Yugoslavia, had been maintained as a cornerstone of Allied policy. To this extent there is a close analogy with the Polish situation.

What is interesting is that the first anti-Soviet, anti-Teheran elements here should be driven to this last disreputable but also uncomfortable extremity. And so far as can be judged at the moment this claim on behalf of the Polish emigre government is the principal plank in the program of the opponents of the Teheran decisions. Naturally when inherent maggots eat this plank from under them, they will carpenter another, regardless of what low political swamps they are forced to wade through for the rotten timber, which is all that is left to them. But for the moment this is their plank, and they are evidently going to stamp up and down on it until it gives way under them.

The upshot of all this is that while it would be exaggerated to suppose that these mountebanks are capable of exercising decisive influence, it would be equally mistaken to suppose that the events of the last three weeks have not provided a warning and a call to vigilance which is perhaps salutary for people who imagined that Teheran could be achieved, secured and implemented without vigilance, without keen thinking, and without struggle.



WATCH ON THE POTOMAC by BRUCE MINTON

FDR CALLS ON THE PEOPLE

Washington.

Now that the President's recommendations to the reconvening Congress have had time to sink in, the immediate legislative perspectives—and more important, perhaps, the immediate pressures that must be applied to give the five-point program reality—are daily becoming clearer. It is generally acknowledged in Washington that not since Pearl Harbor has President Roosevelt so firmly and so unequivocally exerted his progressive leadership in domestic affairs. Even an unwilling Congress has been constrained to recognize that his demands cannot be wholly ignored. The response so far has been partial and grudging.

As was to be expected, the press almost unanimously misrepresented the President's program by singling out the fifth and last

demand for a national service act and by neglecting the President's explicit proposal that national service legislation be contingent on the passage of the four other points in his program. Lamentably, certain labor spokesmen fell for newspaper provocation. The President's speech, however, makes sense only if it is seen as a unit, adding up to more than a sum of its parts.

It is important to realize the President's awareness when he addressed Congress and the nation that he could count on no more than a quarter, or at best a third, of Congress for complete allegiance. He is by no means a free agent able to ignore the constant threats of retaliation from the reactionaries. Like Lincoln in 1862 and 1863, he must consider the consequences of any move he makes, he must weigh the chances.

It is all the more encouraging to find him deciding on boldness and firmness. There are those who run around the capitol muttering that the administration's present difficulties grow out of past failures and unfortunate compromises. True, the administration has made mistakes, some of them costly. But whatever the reason for former weaknesses—and they cannot all be blamed on Roosevelt, as some would have it—the President finds himself today in a difficult situation. Even so, he has refused to retreat.

By pointing the direction, he has called on the people to back him. Obviously, he expects and depends on a strong response. He has been fortunate in the support accorded him by such big business representatives as Donald Nelson, Charles E. Wilson,



Edward Stettinius. But it is the labor movement which has the strength, the numbers, and the organization to give political content to his program. Of course, it is always easier to yap at the administration and the President than to get Congress to do its job. Is it then the President's task as well to see that Congress doesn't welch? The question answers itself—the President is as strong as the backing he gets. Some liberals drearly review "history" and conclude that, after all, Roosevelt is to blame for all shortcomings. I. F. Stone of the *Nation* and *PM*, who has put up such a good fight for strengthening the war effort in all its phases, sings this funereal hymn in the *Nation*. Much that he complains of in the past is true enough. But to throw up one's hands in despair does not accomplish the job that needs to be done now.

WORSE, this wallowing in regrets and reproaches is capitalized by every enemy of national unity. Consider the roster of those who are wearing bleeding hearts on their sleeves in the "cause" of labor—Senators Reynolds, Nye, Wheeler, Johnson of Colorado, Langer, and the whole crew of defeatists who suddenly rise up to "defend" the unions they formerly sought to castrate and outlaw. That battling advocate of the working man (and the open shop), the magazine *Life*, appears with a full-page editorial full of grief

over labor's lot. And the advice given out by the Luce-mouthed gang? The caption of the editorial reads: "LABOR—Its leaders should wake up to the fact that their big trouble is the administration." The administration is Franklin D. Roosevelt, the editorial makes clear. He is the cause of strikes. Labor's weakness lies in its "blind support of a political machinery"—the Roosevelt government. The conclusion: "So maybe it is time for labor to wake up to the fact that there are two parties in this country."

As usual, *Life* gives the show away. The strategy of reaction is to drive a wedge between labor and the administration in the election year. The Woll-Hutcheson conspiracy in the AFL yodles this refrain; John L. Lewis throws his weight around; some leaders of the Railroad Brotherhoods threaten to show the administration where to head in; the Reuther boys and their opportunist friends in the CIO try to make the most of the chance to disrupt and weaken the leadership of Philip Murray.

The President's program must be seen and discussed as a whole, as it was presented. One proposal has already been won, or at least the Senate has compromised sufficiently to pass legislation permitting fairly adequate renegotiation of outstanding war contracts to continue. The remainder of the tax bill is unbelievably ridiculous and craven. So far, the fight for

realistic taxes has been lost—and the box score at the moment on the President's program is one and one, with the play on three major points still to be made.

The keystone of economic stabilization in this period is the subsidy program. The Senate Banking and Currency Committee reported out the Bankhead bill which bans subsidies. As has been repeatedly proved, the cost of food cannot be held in check without subsidies in adequate amounts. Labor recognizes this need; yet the pressure today on the Hill is insufficient. OPA Administrator Chester Bowles has frequently remarked off the record that even with subsidies, he will do well to maintain prices at their present levels, let alone try to roll them back to September 1942 levels where they are theoretically supposed to be fixed. Unless subsidies are applied at once and liberally, the present price index on food will continue to rise, with disastrous results to the home front, and to the detriment of the efficiency, productive capacity, and morale of the farmer, worker, and consumer.

The President separated cost of food legislation from general stabilization of the economy. Yet the cost of food program is really only one part of the larger question. Stabilization is first of all a problem of integrating wages and prices for the worker, income and prices for the middle class consumer, receipts for farm products and prices for the farmer. If a ceiling is rigidly enforced on food, on rents, and on the other principal items affecting the cost of living, if the farmer is guaranteed a floor under the sale price of his products (which is not yet sufficiently provided in proposed legislation), then the most pressing problem still unresolved is that of wages.

THE Little Steel formula, it must again be repeated, sought to establish a relationship between wages and prices as of September 1942. Labor abided by the formula—wages were to all intents and purposes frozen at 1942 levels—but prices continued to rise. Philip Murray told the Senate Sub-Committee on Education and Labor that the price index has expanded almost fifty percent since 1941, instead of the 23.4 percent acknowledged by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Real wages have fallen, penalizing the workers, endangering their health, undermining their morale, impairing their productive capacity. Any stabilization legislation must take into account the facts of life; the present mechanical application of the Little Steel formula's fifteen percent rule continues a premise which reality no longer supports. The formula must be made to work. But this is possible only if stabilization is geared to the situation as it exists today. Any stabilization legislation to have meaning must readjust the base point at which wages are fixed, bringing wages in line with prevailing prices.

Having achieved the first four of the President's proposals, then—and only then—can national service legislation be properly discussed. The President asks for legislation to prevent strikes and to achieve total mobilization for the war. Labor endorses both aims. But until the first four points of the President's program are realized, there is more than a reasonable doubt that national service legislation will eliminate the frictions disrupting the home front. Once the first four planks are won, the cause of recent strike threats will disappear. Unionists insist that bills seeking to penalize labor, to weaken the unions, to place labor at a disadvantage, must be resisted uncompromisingly. Yet it should be apparent that those who mouth slogans about national service legislation being "fascism" are completely off the beam. They reject the President's leadership and his resolve to win the anti-fascist war whatever the sacrifice; they reject total mobilization for the war, and actually accuse the President of turning into his opposite. The use of clichés—supplied by the defeatists and fascists themselves—serves no purpose except to confuse and disrupt.

The President took the position in his speech, which, incidentally, I. F. Stone overlooked, that no doubt the nation has made mistakes in the past, but now it is imperative to jog ourselves out of complacency. The war is far from won. This is no time to clamor for reconversion, for higher prices and profits. We must wake

up to the tasks ahead. Those who have given some thought to a national service law based on a proper understanding of total war stress that when the time comes to consider such legislation, any bill must assure labor its basic rights. Moreover, such legislation should facilitate far greater utilization of small producers than is the case at present. It should enforce inspection of plants to guarantee full and efficient utilization of all available labor. It should provide for the transfer of technicians, of skilled workers and managers from more efficient to less efficient plants. It should insist on a far larger role for labor-management committees. It should give greater attention to community facilities in war production centers, to housing, sanitation, recreation, medical care, transportation, and similar necessities. It should reexamine production programs and even at this late date provide for the transfer of contracts wherever possible to less crowded areas. It should undo the harm already done when Congress froze farm labor to the job and exempted it from the draft; by making national service all-embracing, manpower can be allocated according to need, not according to the selfish, profit-conscious desires of a few large landholders.

The Austin-Wadsworth bill—mislabelled "national service legislation"—fulfills none of these requirements. It aims merely to freeze chaos. Yet if properly conceived, national service legislation can advance the war effort—but only *after* the

rest of the President's program becomes a reality.

It would be pleasant to conclude with an assurance that in due course, the President's leadership will be translated into legislation. But Congress remains pretty much unreconstructed after its three-weeks Christmas recess. Still, the election year is here, and despite everything that has been said and written to the contrary, this fact can be of great advantage. Legislators are never more conscious of public pressure than when they must soon return to solicit the votes on which their jobs depend.

The reactionary lobbyists are buzzing around in droves, as the President complained. They swarm over the Hill, pestering the senators up for reelection and most of the representatives. They cajole, flatter, offer inducements, and above all, threaten. The insurance lobby, the big packers, the food processors, the large landholders and certain of the industrialists, the NAM, the meat trust—all these special interests and countless more bustle and bluster, and insist that Congress toe the line—their line. The consumers, the labor movement, the small farmers who cast the majority votes, are occasionally heard from, but not in sufficient volume or at all times. The President has asked for support. His program is geared to the demands of the war, to complete and speedy victory. From here it seems that it is now up to the people to respond with everything they've got.



FRONT LINES

by COLONEL T.

NEARER ESTONIA

THE German flank position in the fighting space between Lakes Ilmen and Peipus is fast crumbling. By cutting the Tosno-Narva and Dno-Vitebsk railroads the Soviet High Command has created a situation wherein all the German escape lines from this fighting space converge on Pskov. Only the comparatively small group of German troops retreating west from Volosovo toward Narva can avoid the Pskov bottleneck by backing up into the Estonian SSR through the defile between Lake Peipus and the Gulf of Finland.

But all the German troops fighting in the double pocket between Volosovo and Batetskaya (the "Luga pocket") and between Batetskaya and Novosokolniki (the "Staraya Russa-Kholm-Dno pocket") can be supplied, reinforced or evacuated *only through Pskov*. Should the railroad bridge over the Velikaya at that spot be blown up or damaged by a bomb—the entire German Ilmen-Peipus group will be left without

communications with its rear.

General Govorov's left flank, coordinated with General Meretskov's right flank, has completely cleared the great trunk line from Leningrad to Moscow. The repair of the bridge across the Volkhov near Chudovo (captured on January 29) will probably take a couple of weeks. After that a powerful artery of supply will start pumping reserves, materiel and supplies into the Leningrad base. Look at the map and you will see that the arrow of the Moscow-Leningrad line points straight at Viipuri (Viborg) through the restored Mannerheim Line. Remember also that the storming of the Mannerheim Line began in early February, four years ago.

The fascist Finnish government in Helsinki cannot hear gunfire across the Gulf of Finland anymore. The silence must sound ghastly to those gentlemen. The gulf (in the literal sense) between fascist Finland and its Hitlerite "white hope" is widening. And, speaking of widening gulfs—because

of the advance of the Soviet right flank along the Gulf of Finland, the Baltic Fleet, instead of being cooped up around Kronstadt in the arm of the gulf, which is only fifteen miles wide, can now maneuver in a part of the gulf which is thirty-five miles wide, which makes quite a difference.

The weather on the entire Eastern Front appears to be unusually mild and even the roads around Leningrad are covered with deep mud and slush. This is a disadvantage for the Soviet offensive, but for the Baltic Fleet it is a godsend because it probably can move without icebreakers.

In the center of the front General Rokossovsky has made important advances during the week, slashing close to the railroad running obliquely through the Pripet Marshes from Starushky to Bobruisk. In coordination with Rokossovsky, General Vatutin's extreme right flank has penetrated into the marshes to within fifty miles of the central junction of Luninets. Thus Rokossovsky and Vatutin have pressed Field