

# MR. BYRNES BEARING GIFTS

An Editorial by JOHN STUART

**I**N THE higher echelons of American diplomacy I don't think there is anyone who compares with Secretary Byrnes in acting technique. As a former student in the dramatic workshops of the House and Senate he has learned how to dignify rough-and-tumble politics through a honeyed inflection of voice. It is a voice that flows in a slow-rolling tremor and its modulations are in the most obnoxious tradition of pulpit oratory. With it he has more than once tried to sell the devil's own pitchfork to the unsuspecting.

I doubt whether in Paris the voice and the hamming will work. So apparently does Mr. Byrnes. From the American side there seems to be detailed and exhaustive preparation. Every foreseeable move has been studied; the maps carefully drawn; the trading prices established. The administration is not depending on Byrnes' mellifluous tenor to do the whole job of making the United States landlord over the European continent. And that is precisely his job at the Paris Conference. Of course, most everything the State Department delegation presents is heavily lacquered with moralisms. But when the lacquer is scraped away it is the old market-hungry, dollar-hungry, power-hungry business that comes to the surface.

It would be the summit of folly to believe that US intentions in Paris differ from US intentions in the Bronx. American policy is exactly the same for both places. Outwardly the forms and methods of combat vary. In the Security Council, Mr. Stettinius attempts to reach his objectives by corraling votes. Mr. Byrnes tries to get there by threats to sign separate peace treaties perhaps with Italy, perhaps with this state or that. When you are out to break up the wartime coalition and replace it by an Anglo-American bloc in which the dominant power is the United States, you use blasting devices that conform to the locale and size of the job.

In the first days of the Conference, American newspapers literally bubbled over about the Soviets' "conciliatory" attitude. American journalism by and large works on the assumption that if there is any conciliating to be done, the Russians will have to do it. Wash-

ington is invariably presumed to be fairminded, generous, completely gracious. That, unfortunately for the mythmakers, is something which a large part of the world refuses to believe. But it is worth recording because even on the psychological plane all the little or big missionaries of American imperialism are now engaged in establishing the nonsense that all peoples outside our borders are grasping, backward and intractable. If they want anything they must accommodate themselves to us, for our nobility of purpose can never be challenged.

Such is Mr. Byrnes' frame of mind, as it is no doubt that of President Truman. With that kind of superior attitude toward Europe's needs and interests—the rich uncle bestowing largess on his poor and unruly nephews—the peace is bound to be a prelude to war. It is a psychology that damages the American people abroad, and the truth is that in the past several months Europeans have come to dislike us heartily. The Pole, for example, cannot understand why, when his government is given, an American loan, the Americans also tell him how to run his country; tell him in effect not to vote for anyone who places Polish democracy above US imperialist interests.

**M**R. BYRNES may think he is endearing himself to all when he persistently attempts to put the Soviets on the spot. No doubt his political value does increase with the big-money boys. But there are many peoples who ask the common-sense question: if he is continually trying to back the Russians up against a wall, to put them on the spot, what guarantee is there that he will not attempt to do the same with them even though they are not Russians? Too many Europeans are not so certain that the get-rough-with Russia strategy will end there. And the consequence is that the prestige which Americans gained on the battlefield is fast ebbing and in its place there is a rising fear of our "noble" purposes.

Last week Mr. Byrnes proposed a twenty-five-year Four Power treaty to keep Germany disarmed. The *New York Times*, which always

sneezes twice when it looks as though Mr. Byrnes is reaching for a handkerchief, greeted this draft treaty as a revolutionary departure in American foreign policy. Mr. Byrnes himself hailed the proposal as one guaranteeing American participation in European affairs, as signifying the abandonment of past "isolationism," and as answering Europe's fears about its future security. When you carefully examine the draft treaty, however, you wonder what is in it that is not already in the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, which we and the British continually violate.

What Europe worries and wonders about now is not whether the United States will retreat into an isolationist shell. In point of fact the United States has not been out of Europe for the last thirty years. Her absence from the League of Nations meant merely that Washington was not involving itself in European currents in a direct sense. But Europe was not Geneva and the United States through economic and political penetration swung its weight around in European affairs as though she had a seat in the League. The issue, therefore, is not one of "isolation" but on what terms the United States will shape the European future, and Germany's in particular. Will it be one of cooperation on terms of equality with the other leading Allies? Will it be one of building up the tattered German ruling class, which in time will spawn another Hitler? Will it attempt to break the power of the Junkers and replace them with new, healthy forces from a unified German labor movement? If the United States has already made such a miserable mess of throttling the source of German aggression—as former Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau has charged repeatedly—why will the United States observe a long-range treaty any better?

In principle there can be no objection to political agreements which bind the Allies closer in keeping German and Japanese fascism from ever coming to the fore again. But Mr. Byrnes will have to prove that he means just that by fulfilling the Potsdam commitments *now*. Thus far the record of his and Mr. Truman's stewardship is nothing short of a grand betrayal.

# BLACKSHIRTS UNDER TOGAS

***In Italy, on the eve of elections for the Constituent Assembly, the most arrant pro-fascist forces masquerade as "defenders of democracy."***

**By S. SLOBODSKOY**

*Moscow (by cable).*

RECENTLY the Italian government adopted a decision to convoke a Constituent Assembly, elections for which are to take place on June 2. True, the law governing the Constituent Assembly and the method chosen for deciding the fate of the monarchy by means of a referendum restrict the Assembly's sovereignty and powers. They also bear the impress of compromise forced upon the Italian democrats by internal and external reactionary and conservative forces. Nevertheless, the Assembly should at last provide the Italian people with the opportunity of finding a way out of their present crisis.

Until now Italy's internal state of affairs has prevented the people from extirpating the remnants of fascism and of introducing necessary reforms. Forces which at one time called fascism into being still control, mainly with outside assistance, key economic and political positions; and they still hope to bridle the Italian people once more.

Recently the London *Economist* wrote that the heads of the largest Italian corporations were still "incredibly wealthy" and that at the present time they were "in one way or another mostly associated with the Liberal Party in Italy." "This perhaps explains," surmises the *Economist*, "why their contacts with the Allied authorities are so much better than those of other Italians." The possessions and privileges of the big landowners who formed the bulwark of the fascist regime have remained intact. The higher Italian aristocracy, far from having suffered any damage after the liberation of Italy, have become a valuable support of the present reaction. Today they serve as important links between the forces of Italian and international reaction. Generals who tied their fate to that of the fascist regime still occupy their posts. And to this day, organizers of fascist pogroms as well as war criminals are to be found in the ranks of the army and police force. They display their hatred of democracy by ruffian attacks on workers, organizations and parties of the Left.

Among those who inspire the pro-fascist reaction are many members of the higher clergy. At one time, prompted by instructions from the Vatican as well as by their own convictions, they collaborated very closely with Mussolini. In particular there is Cardinal Schuster, Archbishop of Milan. About this Prince of the Church, the Swiss newspaper, *Neue Zuercher Zeitung*, stated in its issue of March 2, 1944, that before the war "Milanese didn't know who actually was secretary of the provincial Fascist party organization—[the incumbent at that time] or Cardinal Schuster." Under the leadership of former pillars of fascism of this type are thousands of priests, nuns and numerous religious brotherhoods and secular organizations. For example, Scorza, the former secretary of the Fascist party and the bloodiest of butchers, found refuge in a Catholic monastery.

It is true that among the Italian clergy there are those who have taken an active part in the national liberation movement and stand for collaboration with the democratic parties. But there were also clergymen who were members of fascist organizations. These spied on other Italians and molded the minds of the young people to suit their ends. They are today the most dangerous instruments of pro-fascist reaction. The Catholic Church, carrying out instructions from the Vatican, takes them all to its loving bosom with unexampled benevolence and forgiveness. Heads of the reactionary camp utilize them in a crusade against "godless Marxism."

In Italy the common banner of all reactionary pro-fascist forces today is monarchism and clericalism; but even the most arrant fascists as a rule don the toga of "democrats," "liberals," of ardent "champions of freedom" and "enemies of tyranny." They form the legal groups which operate under such labels as the Constitutional Democratic Party, the Party of Christian Reconstruction, the Democratic Party, the Liberal-Democratic Concentration, the Democratic Center and so forth. The

political influence and the mass base of these groups are meager. They recruit their supporters mainly from among the propertied classes and to a large extent from among the elements tainted with collaboration. These isolated reactionary cliques and some of their foreign protectors are trying to repeat the fascist experiment of 1919 and 1922. Their aim is to create a wide mass movement which would ostensibly be "independent" and champion the "common people" while in reality it would be a weapon in the hands of the anti-popular forces.

There is no lack of organizers for such a movement. Among them are many fascists who have been cleared out of government offices, as well as those who still remain. There are unprincipled politicians, venal journalists, lawyers, shady businessmen, adventurers and political werewolves who served Mussolini for twenty years and are now naturally anxious about their fate and careers. They are bound together by their common fear of the masses. They are ready to commit any crime against the interests of Italy. They constitute the real Fifth Column.

Nor can one close his eyes to the fact that in Italy today—an Italy encountering enormous economic and political difficulties—there are elements which are trapped by the fascist demagoguery as adapted to the new setup. In addition to avowed and tacit advocates of fascism there are social groups which, although disillusioned about fascism, have not yet by any means shaken off fascist ideology. These people have lost their bearings and are unable to find their way in the labyrinth of political parties.

There is also a large number of people whose accustomed way of life has been rudely intruded upon by war and economic ruin. They are the unemployed, the ex-servicemen, the returned prisoners of war, minor office employees—all of whom have suffered as a result of the high cost of living.

Certain political leaders and groups in the anti-fascist camp also serve as