

Today ~~TOMORROW~~ THE WORLD!

A professor of esthetics and medieval logic spells out a program for the "American Century." Who is this prodigal prophet who beckons the way to doom?

By JOSEPH STAROBIN

THE second secretaries of the State Department, the retired colonels awaiting a new war, the county seat newspaper editors, and the bipartisan small-bore politicians who make up our Congress are all agog. A new hypnotist has staked his tents in the Nightmare Alley of American politics. *Life* magazine spreads a plushy carpet before him, and the Town Meeting of the Air admits him as a matter of course into the super-Hooper fraternity. James Burnham was some time a-coming, but he has arrived—at the right place, at the right time. In his new book, *Struggle For the World*, he has struck the last Klondike, the great American industry of "fighting communism."*

Some of us humble folk who "remember him when" are not surprised at the success of this renegade from the American Left. The small fact that he writes from the half knowledge and the full spleen of the Judas has been concealed from his present audience. But his latest book cannot be understood without remembering that small fact.

The tall, cherubic professor of esthetics and medieval logic came out of his lonely seminars in the early days of the great crisis. He was one of a group of men who believed that their signatures to a petition for the candidacy of Foster and Ford in the 1932 campaign entitled them to undisputed leadership of the American working

class. It was a seed time for ambitious men.

My own recollection of Burnham is fragmentary but sharp. It was an evening back in the pit of the crisis, and we waited in the half light of the street-corner to accompany the professor to a student meeting. Thousands of young people took part in the student movement of that time, searching for real values with a genuine humility and a militancy, and very few of them turned out to be intellectual vagrants, like Burnham.

On that particular evening, the professor arrived in a powerful automobile. This detail is not especially significant in a country like ours, but there was something typical and fundamental in it. The professor drove a long, powerful black Buick—a predatory auto. In the shadows of the rear seat was a haughty lady, who silently tolerated her youthful company as we rode to the meeting. We were suddenly reminded of the hard fact that Burnham came from another world—the scion of a great railroading family. The flashback was plain: the brilliant son escapes the desert of entrenched Midwestern wealth to find an oasis in an Eastern college, where he quaffs deep of Aquinas. Then comes the Communist youth movement, through which he tours in his predatory Buick.

Later the professor drove further. He went through the sulphurous canyons of Trotskyism, gripping the wheel firmly; then to the plateau of the "managerial revolution," contemptuous of the Illinois coupon-clippers on

the one hand and the hewers of wood and drawers of water on the other. Now the prodigal returns.

The world of the railroad barons is in deep crisis. Burnham has no great respect for his own country where, he says, "the accomplished, confident technician is fused with the crude and semi-hesitant barbarian." But the barbarian attracts him and he proposes to give advice for the sake of those whom he despises. Giving advice is an intellectual exercise for the tourist in the high-powered Buick.

In time of crisis, he says, "the masses become subject to the influence of ideas, of world-shaking myths, of vast non-rational impulses." The professor will now supply the "myth of the twentieth century" for an America thickening to empire. Burnham still drives his predatory Buick, now powered by atomic energy, on to the fields of Armageddon.

ON PERUSING this book, you are struck immediately by the fact that Burnham does not believe in democracy, and that it is not for democracy that he proposes that our people organize all their energies to "crush communism" at home and throughout the world. Burnham is not writing as a convinced democrat who conceives his way of life and ideals to be endangered by what he considers to be a non-democratic system.

Burnham himself long ago left the democratic faith. In the very first pages of his book he dismisses the "abstract, empty rhetoric of democratic idealism,

* STRUGGLE FOR THE WORLD, by James Burnham. John Day. \$3.

as first established for us by Thomas Jefferson." He does not view the present world crisis as an opportunity to realize democratic hopes; for him the entire American heritage is a lag from the country's adolescence—"a medium of ideas suitable to the days when the country was in reality a province. . . ."

This contempt for democracy extends to everyone who disagrees with Burnham and can be called (entirely on his own say-so) a Communist or a "dupe" of the Communists. What we have here is an intellectualized J. Edgar Hoover, a mind that works like that of the most menial aide of the Thomas-Rankin committee. Thus he expresses hatred for Henry Wallace, for Claude Pepper, for every individual and organization that is, or is falsely called, Communist. This hatred extends to Franklin D. Roosevelt, and we learn that the late President's entire war effort and postwar strategy was a great mistake. We were "disoriented" by defeating the Axis, and it was most regrettable that we had to do so in the company of the Soviet Union. Our purpose, it seems, should have been to keep the Russians out of the war in Asia, to invade the Balkans and to convert the "disorienting" war against fascism as quickly as possible into war with Russia. All this is, of course, quite unoriginal. At the outset the Nazi generals and the Japanese admirals had the same hopes. Churchill developed them as the war continued. It is characteristic, however, of the fundamentally anti-democratic basis of Burnham's thought that he attacks Roosevelt in this fashion.

It is also significant that though we read chapter after chapter damning Russia and communism, expecting at some point a cogent defense of capitalism and some perspective of a society worth defending and building in competition with communism, Burnham has no such prescriptions. He does not offer our generation anything except a brute struggle for power, an atomic war in which "both of the present antagonists may, it is true, be destroyed. But one of them must be."

The bulk of Burnham's argument revolves around the nature and aims of the Soviet Union, and the Communist movements in the rest of the world. Burnham asserts that Soviet society is a dictatorship based on deception and terror, that its economic centralization makes genuine productive achievement impossible, that it is "socially totalitarian," a denial of liberty, etc. Every

Communist Party member is alleged to be a Moscow agent. Every activity, whether in defense of a lynched Negro in Alabama or in support of a wage demand in Malaya, is alleged to be part of the Soviet struggle for world domination.

But is it all true? the simple citizen must ask himself, after absorbing the formidable impact of Burnham's repetition. Where is the evidence? Who is the authority?

It turns out that all the evidence about Russia is derived in plentiful footnotes from Krivitsky, Manya Gordon, Kravchenko, W. H. Chamberlin, Gouzenko and similar "experts." The testimony of the Webbs, of Jerome Davis, of Frederick L. Schuman is entirely ignored. The simple fact about Soviet production—that it accomplished miracles enough to withstand Hitler's organized might—is entirely omitted. Ridiculous assertions that living standards and productive levels are lower today in the Soviet Union than they were in 1913 are passed off as gospel truth.

America is supposed to organize itself for a gigantic conflict, which Burnham asserts has already begun. We cannot escape, he says; we are like characters in a Greek tragedy. And all of this is premised on sheer lies about Russia which Burnham retails on the say-so of a generation of discredited turn-coats, petty liars, the disgruntled flotsam of a decomposed world that went to manure with the end of the Czar.

There is a fantastic insouciance here, a typical fascist bit of deceit. Burnham quotes Burnham's own friends and that is sufficient proof for which a world holocaust is to be fought through by all of humanity to an uncertain but disastrous conclusion!

BUT something more is involved here. To a certain extent, the Communist movements outside of the Soviet Union share the blame for letting the Burnhams get away with their distortions. Too often we have left it to a few observers like Edward Hallett Carr (his recent book, *The*

*"Az én földem
első érett kalászából
fontam ezt a koszorút..."*



In the new democratic Hungary land was distributed among landless peasants. "This wreath is of the first ripened wheat of my own land; it belongs to those who gave not only freedom but also bread to the people." Peasant at a mass meeting at Miskolc. Drawing by Hugo Gellert.

Soviet Impact on the Western World, is one of the best antidotes for Burnham) to point out a few simple facts.

The most important of these are the profound changes which have taken place in the international Communist movement since the late Twenties. New experiences have resulted in new tactics. I would even say that the accumulated effect of tactical changes has produced new principles, and an extension and development of old principles to new circumstances. Some of us have been reluctant to examine the nature and implication of these changes. The Burnhams quote us documents from the mid-Twenties which envisaged the whole world repeating the exact experiences of the Russian people, but in actual fact, as Lenin thought probable,* no such mechanical repetition of the Soviet experience has taken place.

Fifteen years of history have clarified these underlying changes in Communist theory. Today, there are Communist movements in Europe which visualize a transition to Socialism not necessarily via the dictatorship of the proletariat. Obviously, the shape of socialism in each European country is likely to be different from that of the Soviet Union. In an era when democracy is under mortal attack from fascism, Communists are proving again what was always true in the first place: that communism is rooted in democracy, though it further develops democracy as well. In the political and moral sense, communism, although it means a different and richer level of democracy, is an outgrowth and extension of the great democratic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Soviet experience shook the world, and all democracy owes an incalculable debt to the Soviet revolution; but in the long eye-down of history, it will not minimize the Soviet experience to say that it may not prove to be the detailed pattern for humanity's advance to socialism. Only as we establish these truths in our own minds, and proclaim them to all peo-

* "We think that the independent elaboration of Marx's theory is especially necessary for Russian socialists since this theory provides only the general guiding principles which in detail must be applied in England in a manner different from that applied in France, in France in a manner different from that applied in Germany, and in Germany in a manner different from that applied in Russia." V. I. Lenin, *Marx-Engels-Marxism*.

ples beyond refutation, can we finally demolish the Burnhamian thesis.

Certainly in the United States, which occupies a particular place in the world democratic tradition, the Communist movement derives and should derive its main roots from our special conditions. If we were to apply Marxism in this country systematically, taking into account the democratic past, the high productive levels which should make a transition to socialism relatively easy (whether it will be easy will not depend on the people alone), the Burnham thesis, which tries to revolve all struggles for progress exclusively around the interests of the Soviet Union, would be more effectively destroyed.

It is necessary to affirm clearly that communism is not totalitarian. It is the American tradition extended to our times and problems, and given new content. The one-party state is not a matter of principle. And we propose a development for our own country which will give us leadership on some planes of historical achievement, while the Russian people will have it on others.

We face a fundamental necessity to apply Marxism to the American reality, utilizing all possibilities for peaceful change by constitutional process, building upon our productive levels and determining our attitude toward other classes and all problems of state power from the stages already reached in this country. It is essential for us to make clear the road we wish to follow to American socialism, throwing upon the small, monopolist minority the responsibility for making necessary any different or harsher road.

ONE final point about Burnham's book. Many reviewers, like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., share admiration for the anti-Soviet nonsense in it, for the policy of getting tough with the world, now embodied in the Truman Doctrine, and for the apparent brute strength of the argumentation. And yet these same reviewers are repelled on the grounds that the good professor is exaggerating. He overstates his case. He overplays his hand. This is not a minor defect in Burnham; it is a central feature revealing that the book is not a serious study of America's international position but a tour de force, an exercise of a completely irresponsible individual.

Why does the advice of a world battle to crush communism become so

preposterous even to those who share its assumptions? Why is it that the Truman Doctrine is accepted so reluctantly in the United States, and partisans like James Reston in the *New York Times* complain that the same Congressman who passes it does not understand its assumptions and will not for long tolerate its unfolding consequences?

Honest Americans glimpse that it is too late to conquer the world; it is only possible to live together with the rest of the world and not on the ruins of a world which we would ruin further. The honest minds of our country realize that the new type of democracies arising in Europe and Asia are not the outer rim of a new system of conquest; they are the vanguard of a new system of states based for the first time on a real self-determination, on a liquidation of the forces which brought the old world to chaos. Deep down in America's conscience there is a realization that in order for our country to live in any kind of democracy and prosperity we must recognize an anti-fascist world order, not seek to establish a fascist world order of our own.

Of course, this consciousness is not enough to mold policy; the dangerous thing about the Truman Doctrine is not that it will succeed, but that it will be seriously tried. The attempt to try it will cause enough destruction both abroad and at home so that the inevitable return to a genuine policy in the interests of our people will be extraordinarily difficult.

Here lies the real danger of the Burnham plans; they are hypnotic and narcotic, but not feasible or practical or capable of being realized. Their purpose is not to solve our problems, as they claim, but to induce a trance, a state in which national reason is suspended and the voluntary use of the nation's faculties is made impossible.

The Burnham book exhilarates the *Time-Life-Fortune* crowd, which lives in a perpetual jag and thinks the rest of the country has nothing more important to do. Burnham's book is the opium of the people, and what the country needs is a political pure food and drug act to limit the use of this opium to a small section of conspicuous wastrels. The rest of us have to go about the mundane business of rescuing the country and the world from the effects of the opiates which the Burnhams have too long and too frightfully imposed upon us.

What I Saw In Spain

"He knew I was hiding something but the decision to search me seemed difficult for him to make."

By ESTELLE MANNING

This is the second and concluding piece in this series. Miss Manning's first article appeared last week.

Paris (by mail).

IT WAS an ancient third-class train that left Madrid early in the evening for Valencia. It rumbled laboriously through the suburbs, gradually picked up speed as the city faded into the distance. A warm spring sunset came and went and big red cinders fell from the engine to the tracks. The train jolted and stopped, then started up again and passed over narrow bridges that were being repaired. It waited for a noisy troop train to pass. No one waved to the soldiers.

Soon all the light left the sky, and the passengers pulled their thin coats and shawls tightly around their shoulders as the air grew chill. A few took out their baskets of bread and cheese and wine and spread the food on their laps for dinner. It was a long trip ahead—all night and part of the next day—and most had brought enough bread for the morning meal.

The *Fallas*, Valencia's annual fiesta, was to open the next day and the train was almost full. Most of the people were going to the *Fallas* not to celebrate but to sell what meager goods they had been able to accumulate during the previous months.

The train pulled into Aranjuez. Outside there were shouts, curses and farewells as swarms of shabbily-dressed people clambered aboard. They stacked their paper suitcases, wicker baskets and boxes in the aisles and sat on them. For the first five minutes they were quiet, arranging themselves for the trip.

Later in the evening as I stood on the platform between the cars watching the moon come up, I saw a young

man coming very swiftly toward me through the car in front. He looked at me briefly as he came out onto the platform, started to say something, looked over his shoulder and then darted up the ladder onto the top of the train. His face showed a trace of fear, but there was a grim determination in his movements. I wondered what the trouble was, and what it was he had almost said to me.

A few minutes later, the conductor, also moving very fast through the train, came out onto the platform. "Did you see a young man?" he said.

I remembered the look on the youth's face. "No," I said.

The train began to slow down for another station, and as I leaned over and looked back down the tracks I saw someone drop from one of the rear cars and disappear into the trees.

In the station the conductor jumped off and conferred with a group of soldiers there. He pointed back in the direction from which we had come, and the soldiers started off at a run, their heavy guns slapping their backs. We were then close to the mountains, and I wondered if the young man was one of the guerrillas of that area.

At Alcazar, people were waiting four and five deep, all heavy with baggage. The children were wide-eyed, pale with excitement. It was too crowded to sit in the aisle, but a few more managed somehow to get in and hunched against their packages. Next to me were two old women. They had beautiful, stern faces, brown as the earth; tired, grim, beautiful faces.

And on the seat next to me was a black-haired woman of about forty—it was hard to tell—with deep creases in her face. A fat man with a beret standing nearby began to tease her about being fat, too. They would make a good pair, he said. The coach grew warm with so many bodies and soon the car was alive with fast, low talk. The platform between the coaches filled. Some climbed to the roof and sat there in the cold night, singing, trying to keep warm.

AT ALICANTE, hundreds more tried to come aboard. They pounded on the doors of the coach. The man in the beret appointed himself custodian of the door. "Let us in," they shouted. "We have the right. Open the door!"

"It's not that you don't have the

