

(Merwin K.)  
**Hart on Democracy**

BY FREDA KIRCHWEY

IT WOULD be nice if one dared laugh at the meeting on "Americanism" (quotes mine) held the other day at the Union League Club in New York. It was funny; no one would deny it. But a lot of funny things are grim in their context, and the context of present events gave a sardonic complexion to the whole affair. At that meeting democracy was denounced in an address by Merwin K. Hart as a sort of alien "ism." Mr. Hart has made the discovery that the United States is a republic, not a democracy. It is not a recent discovery, for he expounded it at length in his book, "America, Look at Spain," published in 1939, and it is a stock contention of the Coughlinites and the Bundists and the assorted domestic fascists who are Mr. Hart's associates. More surprising is Mr. Hart's contention that democracy is a rather new heresy. In his speech he said that "Governor Lehman found it unnecessary to use the word a single time in his inaugural address in 1933 or 1935, but in his address of 1939 he used it twenty-five times and in his annual message to the Legislature last January he used it no less than thirty-three times!" (This sentence, incidentally, is lifted verbatim from his book on Spain.) The Governor's repetition of the word is not attributed by Mr. Hart to the straits in which democracy today finds itself. On the contrary, he "suspects" it was the Communist International which popularized the sinister word at its meeting in 1935. After that date democracy "became substituted almost entirely for the word 'republic.'" In any case, prior to the present European imbroglio, public men in America didn't talk about democracy. You may think you heard the word now and then, but if you did, it was probably from the lips of Communists or fellow-travelers; which recalls another discovery of this same social theorist, announced during the Spanish civil war. He then deplored the popular habit of calling Franco a fascist—a term Franco himself never for a moment disowned—and traced its use to a speech made by Dimitrov at a meeting of the Third International, probably the same meeting at which "democracy" was launched. In other words, fascism is not anything, really, but an epithet; no wonder Mr. Hart doesn't think much of the present struggle in Europe.

Mr. Hart links the term democracy with other menaces, such as aid to Britain and all sentiment in favor of stopping the dictators. I think I shall be doing the gentleman no injustice if I interpret this section of his speech as a slightly oblique expression of anti-Semitism. The war, according to Mr. Hart's remarkable exegesis, would never have been started by France and Britain were it not for some "irresponsible force" which blinded both to the fact that they were unprepared. What this

force was is suggested in other paragraphs. He points out that "lawfully or unlawfully" the United States has been flooded by 200,000 to 500,000 refugees. Certain South American countries, he says, "have been invaded likewise and by similar mysterious methods." And he thinks the force which drove France and Britain to declare war may be "the same force that is urging our own Administration on. Blinded by fury at the persecution of minorities in Germany, this force would be as willing to engulf us in this [war] . . . as it was willing to engulf Britain and France a year ago." Translate this innuendo into good honest Joe McWilliams dialect and it makes more sense: The Jews got Britain and France into the war, and they are trying to get the United States in, too, to avenge their injuries at the hands of Adolf Hitler.

The *New York Times* printed an editorial on Mr. Hart's speech. It said that his attack on democracy must have "surprised his Union League Club audience," and it deplored the effect of such an attack at a moment when we are making costly preparations to make sure that no enemy will be able to force a different kind of government upon us. The *Times* is very gentle. It doesn't think Mr. Hart meant to align himself with the enemies of democracy; it only believes that he ought "to have been more careful of his words." Somewhere, off in the distance, I can hear an echo of this same editorial. It appeared in 1930 or 1931 in a German newspaper, perhaps the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, perhaps the *Vossische Zeitung*. It urged the supporters of Adolf Hitler to think twice; it gently doubted the advisability of stamping out democratic processes. Of course it wasn't questioning anybody's motives; but one must regret expressions of contempt for established institutions which, while far from perfect, were after all . . .

The *Times* has no excuse to soft-pedal the activities of Merwin K. Hart. He is as consistent a fascist as American reaction has developed. He supported Franco openly and proudly. He went to Spain during the civil war to "investigate" the situation in rebel territory and reported that peace and plenty reigned. The bombing of Guernica had been disproved by a (Franco) government inquiry on the spot, and the massacre of Badajoz had also never occurred. All the terror was on the other side; he had not been in Loyalist Spain, but he had been told about conditions there. After the Loyalist defeat he wrote Franco's agent in the United States offering to convert his pro-rebel organization into a permanent committee to promote closer relations between Franco Spain and the United States.

But Hart's affection for fascism is not limited to Spain. He heads various organizations clustering around his *New York State Economic Council*, and every one is devoted to some phase of reactionary propaganda. He has collaborated actively with Mr. Dies in dredging up evidences of subversive activities on the left. On the

right, however, he has consorted with all the anti-democratic, anti-Semitic, anti-labor, anti-government organizations and individuals that clutter our street corners and public halls. Our most prominent native Streichers are Hart's active collaborators and friends. Allen Zoll, Van Horn Moseley, John E. Kelly, James True, John B. Trevor, not to mention the redoubtable Joe McWilliams, have all at one time or another been associated publicly with Hart. He has worked with the Christian Front and the Mobilizers, with the American Coalition and the American Patriots. At a luncheon sponsored by the Economic Council, Fritz Kuhn and James Wheeler-Hill, secretary of the Bund, were invited guests. Hart's record was detailed at some length in an article by James Wechsler in *The Nation* for January 27, 1940; it is worth rereading.

This is the man whose views on democracy, the *Times* thinks, must have surprised his Union League Club audience. Since they have been proclaimed by the speaker in act and word for years past they can surprise only those who choose to be surprised. Certainly there is no evidence that the Union League Club audience reacted as the *Times* assumes it did. According to the news account of the meeting published in the columns of the *Times* itself, Mr. Hart's "audience heard him in grim silence. Many came up to shake his hand afterward."

## China's New Victories

ATTENTION in this country has been focused so closely on the Japanese threat to Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies that China's recent remarkable successes against the invader have been all but ignored. With the closing of the Burma road and the route through Indo-China many observers wrote China off as another lost cause. If these routes remain closed, China's position must ultimately become desperate. But the really significant fact at the moment is that in spite of tremendous handicaps China has been striking back at the invader with unprecedented success.

It is true that the Chinese victories have all been local in scope. Most of them have been achieved by guerrillas operating on the Japanese flanks and behind the Japanese lines. Successes of this type have been won throughout the war, but there has never been a period when such local successes have been more widespread. And in several instances important positions held by Japan since early in the war have been recaptured. The most extensive engagements have occurred in southern Shansi, where the Eighth Route Army, intact despite a score of full-dress Japanese offensives to drive it out of the province, has recaptured the strategically important mountain pass of Niantzekwan. This pass is the only gateway to Shansi province from Hopei, and it dominates valuable

coal mines, which the Chinese are reported to have flooded. Several thousand Japanese were killed, and the Chinese succeeded in capturing a number of heavy guns and other supplies. The railway linking Taiyuan, capital of Shansi, with Peiping has been cut in a dozen places in a fortnight of fighting. Following up their success, the Chinese within the past few days have recaptured Lichuanchen and Chingcheng, repulsing Japanese counter-attacks with heavy losses to the enemy. The Japanese admit that the reverses have disarranged their plans for an autumn offensive in northern Shansi.

Another rather notable victory was achieved late in August when Taierchwang, site of China's first great triumph over Japan, was reoccupied. All the railway lines in North China have been subject to constant guerrilla attack in recent weeks and have been kept more or less continuously out of operation. Chinese mobile units have once more been in evidence in the vicinity of Peiping, forcing the Japanese to close the city gates. Guerrillas have also been active outside of Canton.

In Central China mobile units have penetrated several times into the important city of Anking, capital of Anhwei province. The Japanese garrison of the city is reported to be seriously weakened by disease. Nearby, in northern Honan, the Chinese entered Chih sien, inflicting heavy casualties, tearing up fifteen kilometers of road-bed, and destroying thirteen bridges.

During recent months the Japanese have been continually on the defensive except on the coast in the extreme south, where landings have been made against Chinese opposition. Japan's one offensive weapon has been aerial bombardment. Within the fortnight air attacks on the Chinese capital at Chungking have been resumed in the obvious hope of terrorizing China into surrender. Early this month it was estimated that more than 7,000 demolition and 2,500 incendiary bombs had been dropped in some forty air raids on the capital during 1940. Despite this terrible punishment, air-raid precautions have kept the number of deaths to around 1,250—many less than were suffered in several single raids earlier in the war. Other cities have also experienced heavy raids in the past few weeks. But China has demonstrated, even more conclusively than Barcelona or London, the futility of air raids as a means of destroying the morale of the civilian population. This demonstration is particularly significant because their lack of effective defenses and their flimsy construction make Chinese cities far more vulnerable to air attacks than Western cities.

The one great threat to China at the moment is, of course, an attack in the southwest through Indo-China. Such an attack would strike at the heart of free China and might offset years of valiant resistance. China is doing what it can to protect itself. But it desperately needs aid from the democracies of the West, which have so shamefully let it down in recent months.

## Nazis in the New World

IN A recent statement Dr. Albert Degner, secretary of the Board of Trade for German-American Commerce, attempted to reassure Americans about Nazi aims in Latin America. After the war, he said, Germany would offer "tremendous trade possibilities" to our southern neighbors, but it had not the slightest intention of destroying United States trade or threatening our interests.

It is instructive after reading these soothing sentiments to turn to an article by Hans W. Aust in a recent issue of the *Deutsche Volkswirt*, the most authoritative German economic weekly. There we learn that with all the preoccupations of the war Germany has not forgotten Latin America. Eager to assist the southern republics to defend themselves from "capitalist maneuvers to exploit them," young Germans are studying Spanish and Portuguese and the history, geography, and economic problems of the lands below the Rio Grande.

One conclusion reached, apparently, is that Latin American countries stand in need of a helping hand with rearmament. The *Deutsche Volkswirt* writes:

Among the things which Germany has to offer to those who trade with it, armaments will play a very specific role. Germany's overwhelming military successes have unequivocally proved German technical superiority. Its potential industrial capacity for the supply of ammunition is virtually unlimited, and it is in a position to meet any special requirements in this field. Therefore this part of the business will probably assume considerably greater proportions than hitherto, since every army in the world will desire to examine its equipment on the basis of the latest war experiences.

In addition to this alluring prospect, the *Deutsche Volkswirt* holds out hopes of a large influx of free-spending "tourists." "Many Germans," it says, "have a burning desire to get acquainted with the beautiful countries of South and Central America, and since, after the war, it will no longer be necessary to economize on foreign exchange, they will no longer be compelled to eat in the cheapest restaurants." We seem to remember that in the years before the war many young Germans acted on a "burning desire" to explore the beauties of the fjords, but it was Norway that burst into flames.

The combination of German arms and German tourists with well-lined purses is not likely to prove a mixture conducive to the peace and prosperity of this hemisphere. Moreover, the *Deutsche Volkswirt* gives us hints of the kind of propaganda that is already being assiduously spread through Latin America.

It is equally important for the Latin American states to know that Germany is willing and able to cooperate unselfishly in the further opening up of these regions. Previous experience has taught us that this willingness

is by no means equally present among other modern industrial powers. Their chief aim so far has been to control industry and plantations. Thus the major part of the proceeds did not remain in the country of their origin but flowed into the pockets of foreign companies and their stockholders. . . . Germany, which abhors and fights these methods, offers sincere aid to Latin America. . . . German industry merely wants to participate and would leave the leadership to those who represent Latin American interests. It would be satisfied with supplying the machinery, building the plants, and *with the role of adviser to the Latin American managers.*

The ability of Nazis propaganda to be all things to all men is an old story. To the governing classes of Europe it talked anti-communism; to the working classes it spoke of the evils of capitalism; and now, in Latin America, it seizes on the potent appeal of the struggle against "Yankee imperialism." We have no doubt that if Latin America heeds this siren call it will learn that Nazi methods of exploitation are more strangling than anything the "Northern Colossus" has yet contrived.

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