

FROM A CONVENTION NOTEBOOK

By JOSEPH NORTH

Henry Forbes, you died on the Anzio Bridgehead a few weeks ago. If you were alive today I know how avidly you would be awaiting the mail in your foxhole to learn what happened at the convention of your Party a few days ago. You are dead now, Hank, and yet to us you are not dead. Nor to the ten thousand of your comrades who are in the country's service today. You will never die, Hank, never, so long as the things you died for live on: and they lived and burned bright in the convention of your comrades. How can I tell you what happened there? It would require volumes. For what happened there is the synthesis of what is happening throughout the country, throughout the world today. The convention, as you know, was no thing in itself; it was part of the world upsurge of democracy. You could hear the bells tolling for Hitler as we waited here for word that the invasion had begun.

The world issues were clear at the convention, etched luminously by the light of Marxism. You know what I mean. The convention reflected the deep-felt aspirations of America's people, Hank, of men like yourself whether Communist, Democrat, or Republican. America will come to realize that soon, I'm certain. You, Hank, a boy of the sidewalks of New York, as Manhattanese as Al Smith or Walt Whitman, would have been inspired by the proceedings as we all were; inspired by the men and women who spoke your ideas, who talked United States. Browder and Foster and Minor and Gurley Flynn and Mother Bloor and Jim Ford and Ben Davis and Pete Cacchione. Yes, and by the many new names from all over America we do not know so well as yet. Your heart would have beat proudly if you had heard that little woman from Chelsea tell how they work in the neighborhoods, in the wards and in the precincts. Down to rock bottom. You would have felt, as all of us did, that America's Marxists had come a long way, had not only studied the books but studied the people, were part of them as you were part of them, Hank.

You would not have been surprised, I know, to learn that the Communist Party was dissolved, for you were among us living when the National Committee presented its proposals several months ago. Well, the convention unanimously accepted those proposals. Yes, the Party was

dissolved. Your comrades did willingly what fire and sword and prison could never do. They closed twenty-five years of their proud history in order to move on to the next and higher stage of action where they could use new forms to do the work the times demanded, and they founded the Communist Political Association. And you would have agreed completely, enthusiastically, as the delegates did here, unanimously. I know you would have cast your vote as did all the others here—more, you would have had a part in shaping the decisions, knowing you as I do. You would have seen the indubitable merit of the Association, the need to renounce all partisan advancement in this unprecedented era, for the sake of national and international harmony behind the goals of Teheran.

No, Hank, you didn't really die and though you weren't here, I saw your wife here and all your comrades who carried on in your name and in the name of the other Communists who will never come home again. My meager words cannot do justice to the convention, Hank, any more than can any writer describe fully what you did there on the Anzio beachhead. I know, Hank, if you were here you would have said, in that peculiar clipped New Yorkese of yours, "Nice going."

SATURDAY: Watching the delegates filing in, I wondered if any of the reporters seated at the press table were asking themselves a few timely questions: "So these are the Communists. Why, they look like anybody from Flatbush or Yonkers or Cleveland. Could be a cross-section of any crowd at the Stadium. Odd, I like what they're doing in every other country, why don't I like what they're doing here? After all, these are the same kinds of people who would be fighting under Tito in Yugoslavia, under de Gaulle in France, under Mao Tse Tung in China, under General Malinovsky in Russia. They're doing a damn good job everywhere else. Wonder why not here? They certainly look like a clean-cut bunch of people. Look like any other convention of Americans, perhaps somewhat more trim and younger as a whole. More Negroes here than in any other mixed convention I've ever covered. More women, too. For all I can tell, looks like a cross-section of Main Street. Probably as American as Tito's people are Yugoslav, or Malinov-

sky's Russian. Maybe I've been wrong?"

I wonder, too, what the representatives of the press think as they look up at the vast photograph of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin seated together at Teheran, which dominates the platform and the meeting hall. How much of the symbolism will they get? And what will they think of that service flag with 9,250 stamped on it below the blue star. And the gold star above it. I wonder if any of them realize that that means something like one out of every four Communist men are in service. And what do they think when the announcement is made that despite the great numbers of Communists at the fronts, their comrades back home have just brought 24,000 new members into their organization. That's something to think over: increased their party by a third despite the great number off to the frontlines.

Young Bob Thompson comes into the hall. Bob, whom I first met in Spain, badly wounded, pale with malaria, who returned home to get going for Uncle Sam once again before he was twenty-seven. This time to the opposite side of the world, to Buna. And once again operating "above and beyond the call of duty," this young Communist taught his comrades what giving at maximum means. The Distinguished Service Cross. This is a Communist, gentlemen of the press. A pretty typical lad from Oregon. Tito's Communists are okay, but Browder's . . . ? Well, take another look at Bob Thompson. I never could get him to talk about himself and what he did at Buna. If his commanding officer hadn't told the world, I suppose it would never have got past Bob's lips. D.S.C. Distinguished Service. . . .

AND now Browder. What an ovation: it is also his birthday and the delegates arise to welcome him in a stormy, but affectionate greeting. There is something overwhelming in the love and confidence his associates show for him, this plain man from Kansas. He seems less tired than in many months, and his face lights up frequently. The rapt attention paid every word as he speaks forcibly, lucidly. . . .

He tells how the Teheran agreement is already operating, how it had begun to reap results in Yugoslavia, in France, in Italy, in Poland. "I have full confidence that the complete agreement of Teheran will be executed," he says. And why. "It

Preamble

The following is the preamble to the new constitution of the Communist Political Association:

The Communist Political Association is a non-party organization of Americans which, basing itself upon the working class, carries forward the traditions of Washington, Jefferson, Paine, Jackson, and Lincoln, under the changed conditions of modern industrial society.

It seeks effective application of democratic principles to the solution of the problems of today, as an advanced sector of the democratic majority of the American people.

It upholds the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and its Bill of Rights, and the achievements of American democracy, against all the enemies of popular liberties.

It is shaped by the needs of the nation at war, being formed in the midst of the greatest struggle of all history; it recognizes that victory for the free peoples over fascism will open up new and more favorable conditions for progress; it looks to the family of free nations, led by the great coalition of democratic capitalist and socialist states, to inaugurate an era of world peace, expanding production and economic well-being, and the liberation and equality of all peoples regardless of race, creed, or color.

It adheres to the principles of scientific socialism, Marxism, the heritage of the best thought of humanity and of a hundred years' experience of the labor movement, principles which have proved to be indispensable to the national existence and independence of every nation; it looks forward to a future in which, by democratic choice of the American people, our own country will solve the problems arising out of the contradiction between the social character of production and its private ownership, incorporating the lessons of the most fruitful achievements of all mankind in a form and manner consistent with American tradition and character.

For the advancement of these aims, the Communist Political Association establishes the basic laws of its organization in the following constitution.

is obviously essential to the national interest of each of the contracting great powers."

But he warns that the transformation of the concord into full reality will not come about automatically. "It does not relieve us of our worries and tasks. On the contrary, it demands a maximum of national and individual effort, materially and intellectually, to realize it. Teheran has many enemies to overcome in America."

Undeniable. I had heard Americans talking in my travels across the country early last fall—just before the Moscow agreements prior to the Teheran Conference: I heard them again here. This convention is America in microcosm: in sharp focus, and in essence. With this difference: the delegates are fortified by Marxist science, hence they have succeeded in capturing the gist of America's thinking, have collated its ideas, sifted its wishes and its prejudices, evaluated the plus and the minus. America is not prepared for socialism. Right? Then the solution of today's and tomorrow's problems must be found under the existing system. Teheran provides the key to that solution. Though the majority of Americans I had talked to yearned for a world accord like that achieved in the old Persian capital, still I

had run into altogether too much skepticism and doubt. I had, in my journey, talked for two hours with the publisher of a large California win-the-war daily who had said wearily: "We'll stick together till the war is won. Then comes the deluge. . . ." I remember the Great Lakes sailor who said to me: "We'll play ball with the capitalists until Hitler is smashed. Then watch the fur fly." And I cannot forget the pilot with the drawn, thin face, home from the fronts, who said on the Twentieth Century Limited: "I'll tell you what I'm fighting for, mister. For number one, and don't you forget it. I'm fighting so that America will rule the world. It's dog-eat-dog since the beginning of time and it will always be that way. I want my country to be top dog." True, these were paragraphs in a minority report: they reflected the circulation of propaganda for such journals as Hearst's, of such ideas as John L. Lewis', and the pilot told me that Westbrook Pegler was his favorite writer. There is no doubt that the majority seek the way of life outlined at Teheran, but a minority in America who seek to scuttle it indubitably cast an evil spell on many essentially fine people.

To win these people to the side of the

future is the aim of this convention. We need to provide them with a goal, an affirmation. This morning I glanced through Browder's new book just distributed to the delegates and I liked particularly this paragraph: "Old guide posts are fallen, or twisted to point crazily in all directions. Old maps are found no longer to correspond to the realities. The world is riding through a furious storm, and the rule-of-thumb technique of navigation helps but little if at all. Humanity must find some fixed star to guide its action."

And it will come as no surprise to any informed American that Mr. Browder saw that star rise in the firmament above Teheran. "The Conference . . ." he writes, "gives the world its needed point of orientation." That point of orientation must be accepted by the overwhelming majority of the people, consciously, actively, so that they will strengthen their Commander-in-Chief who affixed his signature to it for us, for the 140,000,000.

I WOULD like to quote, for the benefit of such Americans as those with whom I spoke and who feared the future, some excerpts of Browder's report, and perhaps they will be impelled to study the position of the Communist convention further and change their opinion:

"The policy of Teheran thus sharply defined in actual political events, may be generalized as a process of giving to Europe a unified Anglo-Soviet-American leadership to dissolve the old contradictory orientations toward one or the other of the three great powers. It is a policy of releasing the democratic people's revolution, the sweeping away of absolutism and feudal remnants, the mobilization of the united people's forces for their own liberation. It includes the postponement of final decisions on the economic and political system for each country until after liberation, when each will be free to determine its own destiny without any outside intervention whatever. It requires support to groupings and leaders within each country entirely upon the basis of their effective contribution to the war against the common enemy, and not at all upon ideological considerations or any desire to predetermine that country's postwar destiny.

"For the full effectiveness of this policy within each country, a broad coalition of all democratic forces is required, within which the recourse to armed struggle to settle disputes is abolished, and all relations are determined through free discussion, free political association, and universal suffrage. Such a democratic national coalition within each country must include all who will fight the Nazis and submit to a common discipline, under the general world alliance of the Anglo-Soviet-American alliance, without any discrimination on the basis of conflicting ideologies or past prejudices.

"Such is the policy of Teheran, the only

road to quick and complete victory and a lasting and prosperous peace."

Space doesn't permit me to go into detail here on Browder's economic and political proposals for the country. Suffice it to say that his Association's program not only calls for maximum national and international unity, but presents specific proposals to achieve these ends—a platform that looks toward an economy of abundance, an economy that would keep the American industrial machine functioning in peacetime at top wartime levels. The ninety billion dollars of war goods being bought annually by the government today must be replaced by a similar amount of peacetime goods to be absorbed by greatly increased foreign and domestic markets. Needless to say, this is to be achieved under the existing economic setup—"private enterprise"—a term, Browder explains, which is synonymous with capitalism. And a term at which the Communists will certainly not cavil. But essential to the achievement of these high aims is the creation of an unprecedented national unity in which capital, labor, and all the classes will function as a team for the common goal of advancing our national economy. This requires compromise on all sides—a give-and-take spirit which will surmount class differences, avoid class collisions. For specific details I refer every reader to Browder's new book *Teheran, Our Path in War and Peace*, which elaborates the arguments presented at this convention.

Think these things over, Mr. Publisher, Great Lakes sailor, and pilot. Think deep, think fast. For history is moving at airplane speed and we need clear thinking today. And remember this: (Browder said it some time ago): "No greater love hath a man for his country than he who is willing to lay down his prejudices for it."

SUNDAY: Well, the Wilhelmstrasse lost no time in disparaging the convention: Dr. Goebbels' men were on the air within twenty-four hours after the gavel fell here, in Riverside Plaza Hall, to tell the world that it was all a dirty Communist trick to help Roosevelt. Indeed the Berlin broadcasters found nothing at all to like in the proceedings, even though the Communist Party closed twenty-five years of its history and voted unanimously to dissolve itself. The Nazi reaction was a tell-tale commentary on the significance of the convention. I attended a press conference where the United Press representative asked Mr. Browder for comment on Berlin's broadcast. Mr. Browder said he was not at all surprised—was, in fact, awaiting Hitler's reaction—but he could already predict what it was. He had read the Hearst editorials on the convention yesterday. Yes, the convention was bad for fascism. How bad, we'll leave for the historians to tell.

One unforgettable picture of the convention came Sunday night: the Latin

American session. The men from Chile and Colombia who crossed the Andes and made the long trek here as fraternal delegates to report on the status of their homelands. Young and old men, they are senators and congressmen of their lands, leaders of the trade union movements. And the heart-warming response to them in Earl Browder's extemporaneous speech, which is published elsewhere in this issue. I cannot forget how the South Americans advanced on Browder, after his address, giving him the *embrazos* in true Latin American fashion, hugging him and pounding his back, expressing their affection for this *Norteamericano* who has always been a friend of their peoples.

It is truly hard to tell this story: so much is packed in the proceedings, so much of the stuff of our times. Of yesterday, of today, of tomorrow. It is truly tridimensional, containing within itself the essence of the past, the present, the future. Those twenty-five founders of the Party who came from the mine and steel coun-

try, from the farms and the big cities as guests of honor. Pat Cush who was at Homestead. Dan Slinger, the miner. Mother Bloor. What a rich tradition they spoke. And there is something majestic in Bob Minor's report on the Party's history this quarter century. He brings to mind all the things we have lived through, and as he speaks I recall vividly the happenings of the past ten or twelve years I witnessed. The great Hunger Marches: that tremendous struggle for social insurance. The unceasing fight for Negro rights: the Scottsboro case, the boys "who shall not die," and I recall how in '32 Berlin workers marched with banners saying "Free the Scottsboro boys." The unflagging campaign for industrial unionism through the years, which has borne fruit until today we see fourteen million organized trade unionists in America. The unforgettable speeches of Browder's, up and down the land, in the thirties, pleading for collective security, for that community of nations and particularly for the alliance with the Soviet



"Anna Damon," by Lydia Gibson.

They Shall Be Accused

WITH the war entering its decisive stages, the question of the punishment of fascist war criminals leaves the theoretical sphere and becomes a practical problem. The Russians in the Kharkov trial, and the French National Committee in the trial of Pucheu have already taken the first steps. In the next months all the Allies will be confronted with that problem on an ever increasing scale. It may therefore be timely to recall the criminal record of certain fascist personalities whose names are not found in the headlines but who nevertheless belong on any leading list of war criminals.

Here are the names and brief dossiers of two of the worst of Hitler's hangmen. They are all so-called *Volksdeutsche*, members of German minority groups outside the old borders of Germany or Germans living in Austria.

The first is Dr. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Gestapo chieftain and successor of Heydrich, who was executed by Czech patriots in the summer of 1942. Kaltenbrunner is an Austrian, born in 1903 in the town of Ried, Upper Austria. He studied law at Prague where he received his Ph.D. in 1926. He also studied law in Vienna. He served as Assistant Judge in Linz—one of the early strongholds of Nazism in Austria. There, Kaltenbrunner joined the Nazi party and the Elite Guard. By 1933 he had

worked his way to the leadership of the SS Standarte 37 (Elite Guard regiment), and shortly after became leader of SS Division Number 8. During the Schuschnigg regime, Kaltenbrunner was imprisoned for a year but had a merry time behind bars. Shortly before the Anschluss in 1938, Kaltenbrunner, on Hitler's order, became Austrian state secretary of security of Austria. Later transferred to Poland, Kaltenbrunner "excelled" in the extermination of Jews. He ordered the execution of thousands of hostages in order to deter Poles from forming guerrilla units. Kaltenbrunner was also sent by Himmler to tour various occupied countries where he decreed the shooting and burning of countless numbers of unarmed inhabitants. He has already been condemned to death by the Czechoslovak and the Polish underground. Twice his quarters were blown up, but he somehow managed to escape.

The second, Karl Hermann Frank, is the man on whom rests the responsibility for the mass slaughter of Czechs after Heydrich's assassination. Frank once boasted that he put to death about 8,500 hostages. He is one of the leaders of Henlein's Sudeten German party which acted as Hitler's fifth column in Czechoslovakia. He has only one eye, the other having been lost in a brawl many years ago. He was once bookseller and member of the Czechoslovak parliament.

Union, to block the encroachments of fascism, which could have crushed Hitler before this war broke out. But the Communists were not recriminating. This is no time for it. It's registered and they go on from here.

Go on from here. . . . This is the Party they are unanimously voting to dissolve. Actually, the conclusions here were to have been expected. There is little new in them, as Earl Browder said. The general propositions were sketched at the conference of the National Committee in January: they were discussed extensively throughout the land at innumerable meetings, and in fullest democratic spirit the proposals were ratified. These delegates were chosen to pronounce the ratification of the membership and elect their leaders.

I like this discussion over the new constitution: its draft has gone through the mill, every club has discussed each clause, weighed its merits. And now here, on the convention floor the delegates continue

their scrutiny doggedly arguing their points. In fact, several delegates have their doubts over the wisdom of some phases of the dues payments clause, finally sent back to the Resolutions Committee for further consideration. It is but one instance of the full democracy which characterized the convention and the proceedings prior to it: the discussions from the top down to the nuclei of the organization, the clubs.

MONDAY: No trained observer could fail to notice the degree of unity the delegates reflect: the overwhelming majority of the Party members had realized the need to dissolve their Party and the need to form the new type of organization they founded. They saw this as the convention of the Common Denominator: the affirmation of our country's and all mankind's, community. They sought out the imperative of our time: the association of all anti-fascists, all democrats, all patriots. This is implicit in the choice of the name

for their new organization: the Communist Political Association. In dissolving the Party, as party in our traditional American sense of running candidates for office and seeking partisan aims, the Communists renounced all goals of partisan advancement for themselves. The members of their new, non-party organization will participate in political life as independents, at the side of their progressive associates in the present established party organizations. They will not commit themselves to any party label, but will judge all issues and men on their merits.

Yes, the convention has truly succeeded in synthesizing the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of Americans. That is the peculiar essence of the discussion and the decisions: it is all in the total spirit of national unity. The interests of all classes were considered: I am struck by this in listening to the resolutions, particularly those on "National Unity for Victory, Security, and a Durable Peace" and "On Reconversion." I feel that any intelligent American—miner or big businessman—say, Eric Johnston—will ultimately understand and agree with these proceedings. For the yardstick was, "Are you for or against the concord of Teheran? Are you for or against our national interest?" Not, "Are you a merchant or a miner, a capitalist, or a clerk?"

I have already mentioned the exemplary unity of the convention: I would like to cite its further manifestation in the unanimous election of the Association's leadership. A National Committee of sixty was chosen with Mr. Browder as president. The eleven vice presidents, headed by William Z. Foster, include Robert Minor, James W. Ford, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Eugene Dennis, Robert Thompson, Gilbert Green, Roy Hudson, Benjamin J. Davis, Jr., Morris Childs, and William Schneiderman. John Williamson was elected secretary and Charles Krumbein, treasurer; men and women of tested caliber, tried in the crucible of the Party's experience, trusted by the membership. These are the leaders who share the bold vision of their president, Earl Browder. They dare to point the paths through the uncharted future, an era never before envisioned by any man. They dare, because as American patriots, they are also Marxist thinkers, men and women who apply their scientific training to the events of their times, and who act fearlessly out of the synthesis of their theory and their practice.

These are but a few, and necessarily sketchy, observations on the convention: further articles are necessary to discuss the full program of the Communist Political Association. The cause of victory in this war, and of democracy, was advanced at these sessions. And millions of Hank Forbes' buddies at the fronts will feel the results.