

## "Treason in High Places"

SO RUNS the headline over a story of the betrayal of France and Belgium.

But treason, to be worthy of the name, is always in high places. The second lieutenant who sells a gun plan to the enemy, the diplomat's secretary who reveals a secret code, the town loafer who for a drink discloses the whereabouts of a munition dump—these are not traitors; these are like prostitutes, beneath moral censure.

To be a traitor one must be able to aid and abet the enemy in such a way as to turn the scales of war



in his favor. To do so one must be in a position of trust; one must be an integral part of the State.

The story of how the Belgians and the French—to say nothing of the Czechs and the Poles—were sold "down the river" by their leaders will be a fruitful subject of investigation for years to come. Enterprising reporters have already ferreted out facts to indicate wholesale connivance with the Nazi gangsters, and sufficient has been learned to warrant the widely held conviction that in each of the defeated countries monopolists and their military agents planned the handing over of their respective peoples to the tender mercy of Herr Hitler.

It is known, for instance, that the "Petain government" contains men who before the war advocated nazification of France. Laval sponsored with Hoare of Britain the proposal to divide up Ethiopia with Mussolini; as cold-blooded a proposition for the exploitation of a people as ever was hatched in any chancellery. Laval is a sample of the kind of politician who since 1918 has ruled Europe for the benefit of predatory interests.

Things move so fast that we are prone to forget what happened only yesterday. What was the significance of the "popular front" movements which only a few years ago swept across Europe? They were essentially a revolt against the conditions of the masses. How long is it since Alfonso of Spain was dethroned, and the dictator Rivera driven out? And what did the Spaniards want, the Spaniards whom Franco, with the aid of England and the avowedly Fascist powers, suppressed? Was it not

some land and a chance to make a living?

People who are forced to live on less than they produce, or are deprived of the opportunity to produce, are wont to become extremely wroth. And people who profit by these conditions fear the ire of the exasperated masses. The technique of suppression which Hitler taught the world has certain disadvantages; yet these are outweighed by the prolongation of the power of exploitation which the technique promises. So, in every European country the controlling interests eyed Hitler's method with envy. But their people were not prepared to accept a program of slavery which to Germany after Versailles was a promise and a hope.

How to bridge the gap between the forms of political freedom and complete economic slavery was the problem. In the past few months the problem has been solved for them by the military defeat of their countries; perhaps a temporary solution, but to a monopolist it is sufficient unto the day.

In every European country now under Hitler's hoof there were powerful groups—not the noisy bund boys—who for purely selfish reasons quietly looked for his coming. These were the real fifth columnists. These were the traitors who prepared the way for him. True, many would have preferred to adopt his technique without his aid; witness the attempts to totalitarianize their countries and to negotiate deals with Hitler in the past few years. When his army started marching it met little resistance because the ruling classes in these countries were really for his program.

Of course, Hitler may double-cross the traitors. Or, he may use them as managing vassals if it suits his purpose. That is a future story. But the items trickling through the press indicate clearly the pattern of treachery in high places which made his easy conquest possible: predatory groups who saw in his coming an opportunity to stem the rising tide of revolt against exploitation and poverty.