

On the Record

By DOROTHY THOMPSON

Rebellion in Connecticut

The dilemma of Southbury, Conn., raises a question which is tremendously important to the position of democracy, here and everywhere else. It involves the whole issue of civil liberties, and the question of how democracy, in the modern world, can defend itself.

Without revealing the purpose for which he wished it, Wolfgang Jung, of Stamford, Conn., purchased some time ago, 178 acres of land in the German village of Southbury. The German-American Bund, it now develops, was the real purchaser, and the purpose is to erect on this land a German-American Bund camp. I wish to be scrupulously correct, so I do not call this a "Nazi" camp. Nevertheless, the government has publicly, through the foreign minister, and elsewhere, announced that it intends to retain the allegiance of German citizens everywhere in the world, and that it has the right to expect that all men and women of German blood wherever they may live, and whatever their citizenship may be, will collaborate to further the interests of the German Reich.

These German camps fly the Swastika flag, train their adherents in the Nazi ideology, and announce that their objective is to fight the Jews and Communism.

Now, this little village of Southbury, inhabited, I have no doubt, by no communists at all, but by self-respecting, law-abiding American citizens, doesn't want this German-American Bund camouflaged Nazi camp in its midst. These camps attract over week-ends—it has been demonstrated, in Long Island and New Jersey—hundreds and perhaps thousands of trippers. From that point of view, such a camp can be an economic asset to any nearby community. Communities, by and large, have been anxious—to take a somewhat parallel example—to get CCC camps established nearby. They mean that local merchants have an extended market. But the village of Southbury is queasy about this particular outfit. It held a town meeting on November 23, and voted 122 to 41 to try to keep them out. But they cannot be kept out in any direct way. So the village is driven to passing a zoning law, which will prohibit any activity on the camp site except private housing or farming, and therewith make the camp impossible.

Thus, the village of Southbury is forced to take a round-about way to prevent there being set up in its midst a training school for agitators of an alien ideology, and actual representatives of a foreign power. For make no mistake about it: The Nazi theology is strictly authoritarian, and the Pope of this new religion lives in Berlin, and not in Washington.

And it isn't only the Nazis. There's another religion which is recruiting zealots in this country, and it has a Pope, too. His name is Stalin and his residence is Moscow, and he has no interest whatsoever in the peace and prosperity of the United States of America.

The German-American Bund, of course, flies the American flag alongside the Swastika, which stands for precisely everything that the Constitution of the United States abhors, and the Communist camps and Communist meetings, fly the Red flag alongside these

has nothing to do with the measurement of a mind. Usefulness does.

Superiority, however, must not be confused with nobility. Rather, must it be associated with honor and confidence in one's own plan of life. The superior man advertises his wares in his every act. The mark of Sterling on a piece of silver needs no further sales talk.

same Stars and Stripes, and also deplore everything that America has ever stood for.

The Communist Party in the United States has not a vestige of democratic organization. The orders do not come from the workers who join it; the policy is not made in the United States; it is established by the party line, and that party line is laid down in Moscow. I once went to the trouble of mapping out in considerable detail just what that party line has been, over a period of years and who the personnel charged to carry it out have been. Most of the original personnel have been eliminated by prison or death, and the policy has been strictly geared to the exigencies of the foreign situation of Soviet Russia, from year to year. At the moment, the party line is the defense of Democracy against fascism, and yesterday an election was held in Moscow to "prove" Russia's democracy under the new constitution.

Elections of the same kind were held by carpet-baggers in the South in 1870. They are simon-pure hokum. The Communist Party believes now, as always, that so-called western democracy is merely a cloak for capitalism, which they are out to destroy, along with the democratic state, and they were a thousand times more sincere from 1918 to 1932 when they made that perfectly plain, and admitted that they were a conspiratorial organization out to overthrow the capitalist-democratic order by violence.

They are now out to overthrow it by seepage. They get their numbers into ever labor organization under false pretenses. They camouflage themselves under relief groups for Spain, and organizations against war and fascism. They deny their own communism, because the lie doesn't mean any more to a Communist than it does to a Nazi. It is perfectly justifiable, if it serves the cause. And if they don't wreck the labor unions of this country, and especially the C. I. O. it will be a wonder.

The problem of democracy is how to defend itself against this kind of thing, without thereby becoming just like the thing it is fighting. If this country were like Germany or Russia, the problem would be simple. After Baron von Neurath's recent speech, we would have deported every unnaturalized German from the United States, and we would long ago have deported every unnaturalized Russian. And we would suppress these organizations by force and put their officers into prison. If you don't believe it just try starting on German or Russian or Italian soil a League for the Defense of American Democracy.

But the very basis of American democracy is the Bill of Rights and freedom of speech, assemblage, and propaganda, in times of peace.

It is a fundamental American tenet that the people have the right to change the form of government under which they live and that individuals and organizations have the right to agitate for such a change, if they believe that the form they have is no longer compatible with their happiness and welfare. One doesn't have to quote radicals in support of this. It was made brilliantly clear by no other than Alexander Hamilton.

But that right does not, it seems to me, include gracious hospitality for agitators who take their orders from foreign powers, and attempt, under these foreign orders, to influence our domestic and foreign policy. Or does it? The chief aim of Communist agitation in this country at present is not to improve the status of American workers, but to see to it that in case of a world war this country is lined up on the side of Russia. The chief aim of Nazi agitation, carried on through its own nationals or blood-brothers, is to see that we remain rigidly iso-