

The Military Collapse in May

THE REVOLUTION
IS ON.

By M. W. Fodor. . . . Introduction by Dorothy Thompson. . . . 239 pp. . . . Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company . . . \$2.75.

Reviewed by
JOSEPH BARNES

DRIVING last spring along the narrow roads of Belgium and northern France, Mr. Fodor was an eyewitness of the lightning war. All the way from Brussels through Paris and Tours and Bordeaux to Hendaye on the Spanish frontier, he did what reporters call leg work on the strangely foreshortened military campaign which conquered France. He tells his story of it as he saw it, and it is a clear, sad, absorbing story.

Mr. Fodor is more than a leg man. For years before the fall of France, he watched the preliminary skirmishes, political and military, in Central Europe. So his report on what happened is also a diagnosis of how and why it happened. The lightning war was one campaign, he believes, in a still-unended revolution. His account of this is both challenging and challengeable. It cut deeper than most of the other stories of this war brought back by those who have watched it. It is still readable reporting, but a revo-

lution is harder to report with authority than a campaign.

Chief blame for the military collapse in May, Mr. Fodor places on treason on the Meuse, on the terror spread by the Nazi Fifth Column among soldiers and civilians, and on the whole Nazi arsenal for the "war of nerves." But he adds to this list bad strategy. If the English had held the extended Maginot line, from Dunkerque to Givet, instead of pouring troops into unprepared positions in Belgium, he believes the gap at Sedan might have been closed, the advance stalemated.

The gap, instead of closing, widened. The British fell back, the refugees swarmed onto the roads, the airplanes and motorcycles ripped the line of retreat to ribbons. To the idea of total war in Reichswahr textbooks was added a new military concept: total defeat, on the roads of France. It is small wonder that Mr. Fodor's book turns from his reporter's narrative of what he saw to an attempt to explain what lay behind the collapse, why an army, a government, a society went to pieces.

Here his answers are more confusing. In a quickly written survey of this history of revolution since 1789, he concludes that the Russian, the German and the Italian regimes are all products of a slow and tortuous struggle for the social and economic enfranchisement of what he calls the "Fourth Estate," the lowest strata of industrial societies. He sees all three as essentially socialist states, and predicts that they

will clash with each other only when their national interests conflict. Their military success he explains as the result of shifts in the balance of power between classes; at the same time, he believes that minority action on programs of violence has condemned each of the three totalitarian countries to militarism, slave labor and imperialist struggle.

As Miss Thompson suggests in her introduction, Mr. Fodor takes the proletarian slogans of Dr. Ley more seriously than many German industrialists. Although he criticizes the role of finance in Western democracies, he makes no effort to explain the strange tenderness for National-Socialist techniques which is on the record of many powerful business groups in Berlin, in Vichy and in other capitals. This gives the Nazis a revolutionary authenticity which many other observers are reluctant to admit. German soldiers may eat with their officers, as Mr. Fodor reports, but there are few workers yet in the seats of the mighty in Berlin, in Rome or in Vichy.

Mr. Fodor has written this book quickly and with passion. It is often more tract than history book, and his chapters on the Soviet Union and on South America and Western Hemisphere defense are less reporting than rewrite jobs. But his own story of the chapter in our history which began with the bombs being dropped on Brussels at dawn on May 10 is worth a book and worth the reading.

In the Nazi list of names of 2300 prisoners to be liquidated after England's surrender, he was the only Hungarian (at that time correspondent of Chicago daily news)
"Magyarország" 1965 Aug 8 (p. 11.)



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