

Justice in France

by William Z. Foster

THE people of France, finally liberated after four years of Nazi slavery, are now proceeding to punish the French quislings. In many places numbers of such elements have been arrested, and here and there a scattering of them have been executed. At Grenoble, a half-dozen members of the Nazi-organized French militia, after a trial, were shot. Eric Severeid, CBS correspondent, who witnessed the execution of these traitors, appears to be quite shocked (PM, Sept. 5), especially because, just before the execution a radio announcement was made in the name of the National Committee of Liberation criticizing the court for allowing four of the fascists to escape with prison sentences. "Many Americans present were horrified by a mob which seemed medieval," says Mr. Severeid, concerning the crowd who witnessed the execution.



The French fascist traitors now being punished little deserve the mawkish sentimentality of Mr. Severeid and of the advocates of a forgive-and-forget policy towards the fascists who will be sure to join him in his protests. The French collaborationists, such as those shot at Grenoble, are not soldiers, entitled to leniency under the laws of nations; they are traitors and murderers. They sold out France's national independence and they are entirely at one with the Nazi butchers who have cynically murdered millions of unarmed people from Cherbourg to Lublin to Stalingrad.

On the heads of these collaborationist traitors rest equal guilt for the thousands of hostages slaughtered by the Nazi Gestapo in France. They helped to overwhelm their native land with terror, misery and slavery. If these people could have had their way, not only France, but the entire world would have been enslaved in the worst system of oppression ever known during the whole his-

tory of mankind. They are monstrous criminals, and the most elementary justice demands that they pay for their crimes with their lives.

PLEAS FOR 'MERCY'

Mr. Severeid's pleas for mercy for the criminally guilty French collaborationists is in line with the appeals that we will eventually hear to spare the lives of Hitler, Goebbels, Goering, Himmler and the other criminal top leaders of the Nazis.

The French people are very much in a mind to mete out stern justice to the fascist betrayers of their country, including, let us hope, the big industrialist and landowner collaborationists, for whom the Lavals, Petains, Dorlots and Pucheu are but fronts. But there is no danger that the people will commit the "excesses" that Mr. Severeid seems to fear. At most, they will punish only a fraction of those criminally guilty. The danger is not that they will punish too many and too severely, but too few and too lightly.

In all mass upheavals in history the people, despite the slanders of reactionaries to the contrary, have always erred on the side of leniency in squaring accounts with their tyrants and betrayers.

SOUND POLICY

But the question of meting out justice to the fascist collaborators in France, while important, is but the lesser side of the matter. Looming much bigger in political importance is the general question of the policy to be followed towards fascism during and after this war. Is fascism going to be really cleaned out, or are there going to be roots of it left to

sprout again at the first opportunity? If fascism is to be destroyed, then the fascist leaders, tools, and backers, guilty of treason and murderous atrocities, must be dealt with rigorously. These people, although defeated in the war, do not intend to fold up and forget their reactionary aims. On the contrary, they are openly telling us that after they have lost the war they are going to continue their activities underground. Such elements do not appreciate mercy, but consider it as only so much weakness. Their whole movement must be broken up, and a major part of this process is to punish the traitors and war guilty ruthlessly.

In its successful battle against fascism, the democratic world is narrowly averting the most terrible disaster ever to befall mankind. And the elements responsible for this dreadful threat, accompanied as it has been by the most terrifying mass slaughter in all history, must not be allowed to escape the consequences of their crimes. They must be made to pay in full for their past criminal actions, and their movement must be so completely liquidated that it will never again be a menace to humanity.

It was a wise decision taken by Secretaries Hull, Molotov and Eden in Moscow, when they referred the punishment of the war criminals primarily to the peoples who have been outraged by these fascists. It is to be hoped and expected, therefore, that the people of France will not flinch, nor be turned aside by sentimentalists, American or otherwise, in fulfilling their stern duty of punishing the French fascist traitors and of making their movement harmless for the future.

Worth Repeating

DAYTON DAILY NEWS in an editorial last week commenting on the radio speeches of GOP Governors Green, Warren and Baldwin: None of the Governors, for instance, mentioned the war save as to say they were all for what the soldiers wanted. To mention the war is to call attention to a highly successful enterprise led by the man they are out to beat. And none of the Governors, least of all Col. McCormick's Governor Green of Illinois, mention the peace and the peace order to follow the war.