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—Drawn by Jan Matulka

NEW MASSES

1910—Fifth Year of the New Masses -- 1926 -- Twenty-First Year of the Masses—1930

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MICHAEL GOLD

NOTES OF THE MONTH

"What will you do in case the imperialist nations declare war against Soviet Russia?"

This was the question addressed to European and American writers recently by the poets, novelists, playwrights of Soviet Russia.

The answers were various. The proletarian writers said they would enlist in the Red Army, to defend the Socialist fatherland. Some bourgeois writers talked nobly and meaninglessly in pacifist generalities. Bernard Shaw seized the chance for a wise-crack: "In the last war they rotten-egged me; in this war they will hang me."

A liberal American magazine (the *Nation*, *New Republic* or *New Freeman*?) chided the Soviet authors and said the whole question was silly.

"How do you know there will be another World War? What about the Kellogg Pact? How can anyone know what he will do in advance of a concrete and complex situation? Why stir up trouble so soon? Why not wait until this improbable war arrives? Why squeal before you are hurt? Is it dignified, is it good tactics, is it this, is it that? How do you know? How do you know? How do you know? You are so crude, how do you know so surely? How do you know?"

How Do You Know?—

How do you know? Is tomorrow really Tuesday? Will the sun really rise again? How do you know? Mayn't a miracle happen occasionally? Surely the sun may rise in the west tomorrow, and the heavens rain herrings and boiled potatoes. How do you know?

How do you know anything? This is the essence of the "liberal" attitude, this impotent skepticism, this evasion of painful world realities. Liberalism is really a form of contemporary neuroticism. It is the philosophy of the lower middle class, the class that is being crowded out of its small shopkeeping livelihoods by the great mergers, the chain store movement, the rapid trustification of the capitalist world.

As D. H. Lawrence complained, they are being ground between the upper and nether millstones—between vigorous big Capitalism, and vigorous big Communism. And they can't make up their minds which world-future to accept—life will be so different in both.

This vacillation, this hysterical inability to choose, is decorated into a policy: How do you know?

When pressed to the wall, many of the liberals, intellectuals, etc. join the Fascist camp. It is difficult for them to forget that they once occupied a superior position above the workers; and so

they look hopefully to any movement that makes them glib assurances that they will always remain superior.

Yet even a Mussolini cannot cheat the iron laws of economics. The middle class that accepted him so gratefully as a buttress against the workers is beginning to see that he is just another Woodrow Wilson or Kerensky, despite his pose of a heroic tenor out of a Verdi opera. His star is setting; he will not survive the year, probably.

The Next War—

Let's not live in a fool's dream. Sanity is nothing more or less than the ability to digest the truth. The sanest statement one can make about the world today is that another immense universal war is on the way. Armaments are piling up with the rapidity of bacteria in a sick colon. Statesmen and financiers are as busy as blue flies around a carcass. There are a hundred better reasons for world war today than there were in 1914: there are capitalist rivalries in "God's plenty."

And there is Soviet Russia. As long as it exists, as long as it goes on with its demonstration that capitalism is the most anarchic, clumsy, costly, brutal, mediocre, and ineffective way of sustaining society, so long will the big businessmen want to crush it. They tried in the memorable past and forced Soviet Russia to defeat them on 17 battle fronts. They are still trying, in Roumania, Poland, Lithuania, Finland, and other venal border states supported by European gold and munitions.

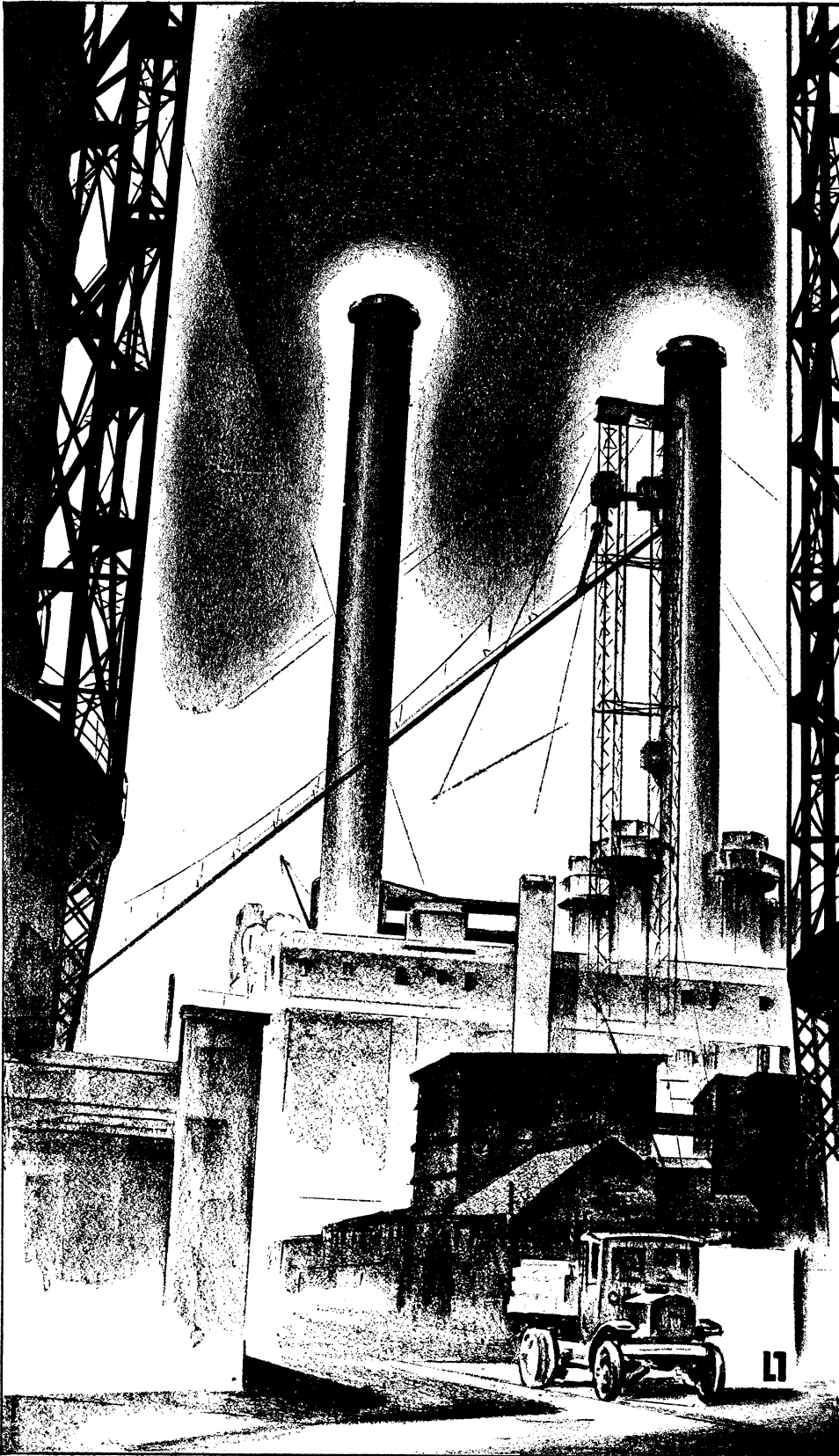
Every European nation has an elaborate spy-system in Soviet Russia. It has been proved dozens of times that Czarist assassin-organizations are being endowed by British and French money. Even here in New York, there is a regiment of the National Guard which is made up of Czarist Russians. In the armory one finds pictures of the Czar and Czarist flags and emblems. Even the most innocent liberal must know why these emigre Russians are drilling and maneuvering so busily. It is not just for the sake of "athletics."

The next war is on the way. It will come within the decade. One duty ought to be clear to everyone who has any hope in the future; we must defend Soviet Russia.

Shaw and Marx—

It was at his 70th birthday dinner that Bernard Shaw said proudly: "Marx made a man of me." Most liberal lightweights thought this some kind of Shavian joke, of course, but many others understood.

(Shaw is verging on his senility; yet he is a grand old ruin;



THE FACTORY

Louis Lozowick '24
Louis Lozowick

we have not seen his equal in the United States)

Marx made a man out of Shaw, yes! If the young music and drama critic of Fleet Street had not become infected with the social passion and insight of Marx he would have remained only another George Jean Nathan; or at best, another Oscar Wilde.

But Karl Marx made a man of him. A cryptic remark for the Theatre Guild liberals to understand; and for the art-colony-artists. But all it means is that Karl Marx taught that young playwright the class basis of society; the class basis of all human psychology; the dynamics of history; the interrelation of art and economics;

the grandeur and hope of the proletarian destiny; the comedy, tragedy and farce of capitalist society as seen with Marxian revolutionary eyesight; and many other lessons too numerous to set down, but which made a major writer of the young Shaw, instead of another Grub Street hack.

Karl Marx: father of Lenin, father of the Communist International, our great teacher; our leader; the Darwin who explained human history for the first time; the titanic general who marshalled millions of recruits for the proletarian army of the next hundred years.

Karl Marx: from whose statistical studies in the British Museum, and from whose revolutionary passion, humor and courage the history of the new Red Proletarian World will be dated.

If Shaw had only studied Marx and the Revolution a little more profoundly!

Marx's Pupils—

One sometimes despairs of the American intellectuals. There is a trickiness about many of them that is hard to understand. It may be a personal blindness, but I should like to have someone explain this to me: *what is the psychologic mechanism by which many American "liberal" intellectuals adopt the Marxian methodology while at the same time repudiating Marx?*

Charles Beard; Thorstein Veblen; John Dewey; Stuart Chase; one could name nearly every "liberal" economist philosopher of the past fifteen years and find that he is almost an intellectual thief. He has learned all he knows, directly and indirectly, at the feet of Marx; and then has gone out to make safe, sapless and non-revolutionary the work of the master. He has not dared even to acknowledge the master and teacher.

Is it the fatal bourgeois limitation? Or is it that same inner necessity for protective coloration that has made John Dewey one of the most ineffectual great men that America has produced? What is it? Why are there not at least a dozen American intellectuals of quality who will have the courage to go the full route on any idea?

What is there so dangerous as yet in America? After all, intellectuals are not being beheaded here, as they are by Chiang Kai-shek and the Socialists of China. John Dewey might expect, at worst, only a month or two in jail, here. But his "dangerous thoughts" have always been written in the foggy, fearful style of a man who awaits at any moment the tap on the shoulder of the Czar's secret police. And all his pupils and co-workers are like that.

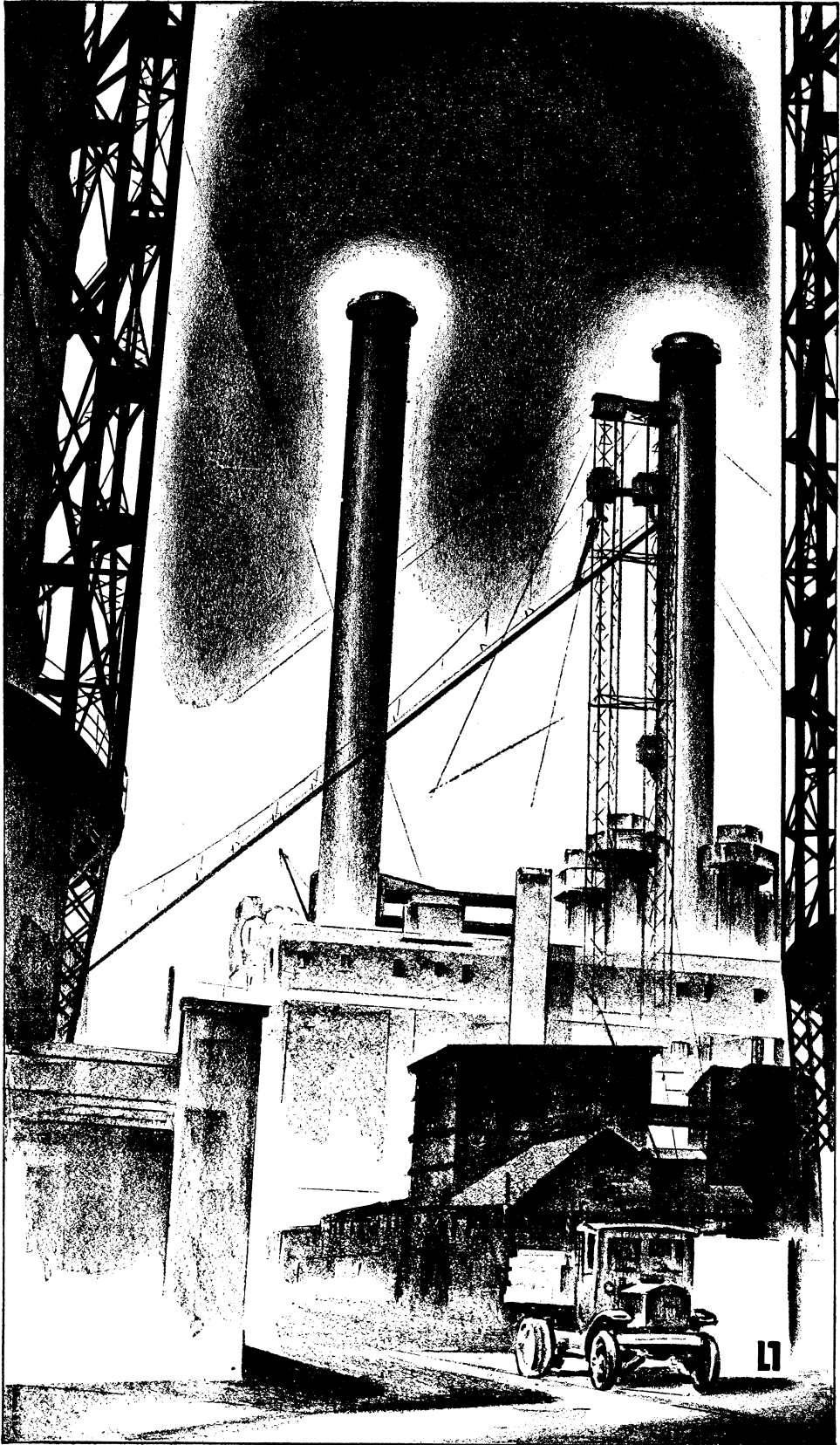
Maybe they are just trying to hold their bourgeois jobs. But this is a tragic explanation, also. As a simple-minded person, I give it up. Stuart Chase is an old friend of mine; maybe he will write in a letter and explain it all. Why aren't there a few intellectuals in this country with the directness and courage of, not a Lenin, let us say, but at least

of a Miguel de Unamuno?

Our intellectuals build a mighty scaffolding for their theses, most of the steel work of which has been taken from Marx. And then at the summit of their heaven-storming they place some picayune skepticism, evasion or suggestion such as that Al Smith be made President, or that there be a liberal political party in America, with Norman Thomas as its first congressman.

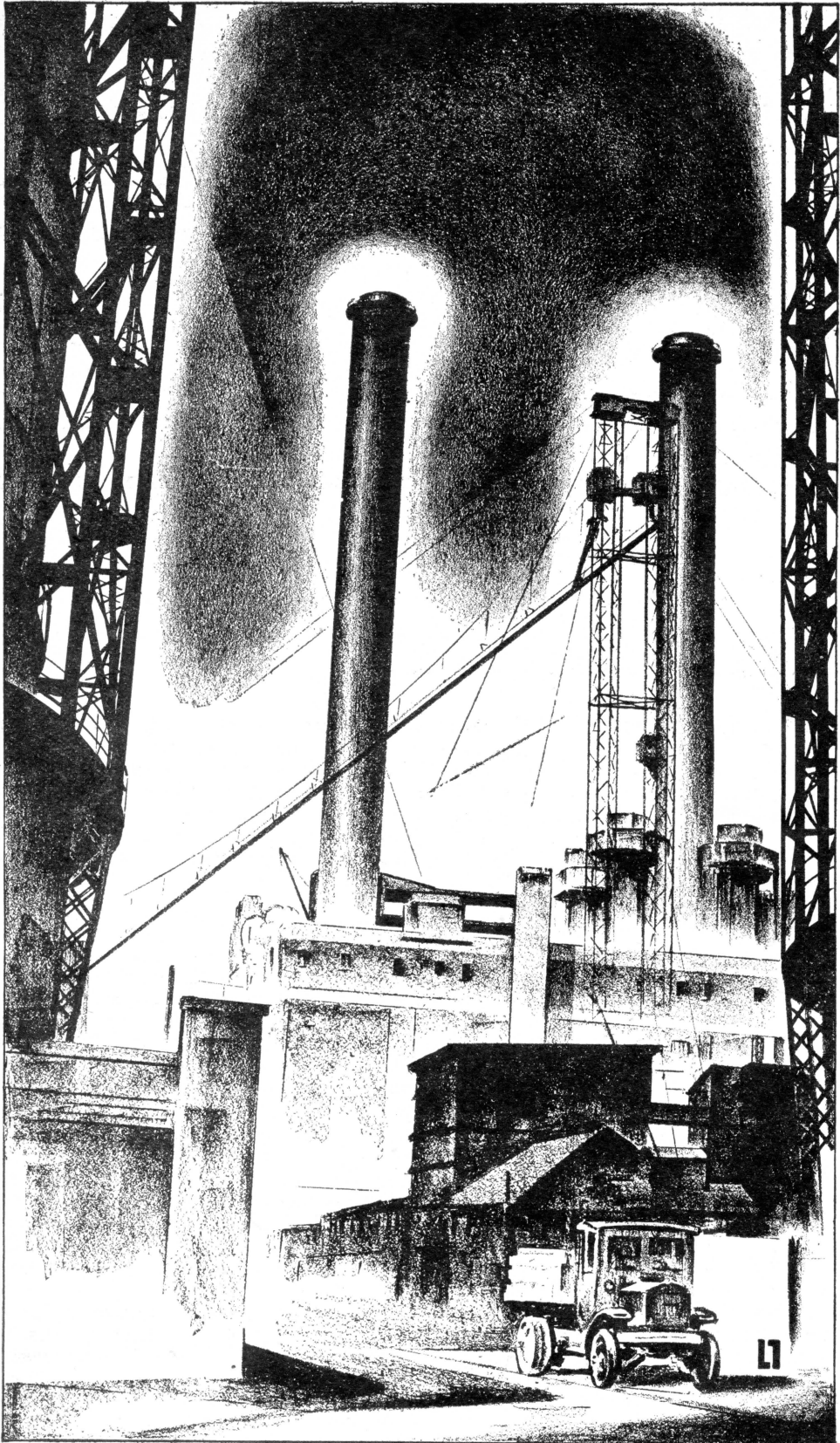
We Need The Intellectuals—

The Revolution is not a barbaric uprising of medieval peasants,



THE FACTORY

LOUIS LOZOWICK '29
Louis Lozowick



THE FACTORY

LOUIS LOZOWICK '29
Louis Lozowick

but a social revolution. Its aim is not only to overthrow a stupid and bloody ruling class, but to create a new world. It has already set up tremendous new syntheses in all the arts and sciences; and in the next fifty years, out of our turmoil and battling, a great beneficent culture of which we have only the first sketches now will arise and reign with unimaginable splendor over the human mind.

It will be based on science; the Revolution has been destined to wipe out the last barbaric traces of religion and superstition. It will be based on art; the Revolution has been destined to suppress all the narrow, savage, dollar-hunting competitions and replace them with freedom, co-operation, and the great passions of art.

The Revolution needs the intellectuals for some of this heroic labor. There has been, in America, a prejudice among revolutionists against the intellectuals. It is in the air of the country. The Babbitts have always despised the artists, the writers, the non-commercialized scientists. But it is wrong for the class-conscious workers to mimic this prejudice. We certainly have a wider vista than the businessman. And in this vista the intellectual looms up as an important figure.

He is needed. The revolutionary movement needs trained economists, writers, actors, movie directors, engineers, specialists. Our pamphlets, newspapers and general propaganda have been dull and ineffective for years because of this hostility to the intellectual and his trained professional mind.

It is true that the intellectual brings into the movement many of his bourgeois hangovers and ideologies, which are dangerous. But they can be controlled. Careerist unscrupulous intellectuals like Lovestone do not last long in a proletarian movement. But the John Reeds win an immortal place for themselves in the great red heart of the workingclass.

The Intellectuals Need The Revolution—

It is as true that the intellectuals need the Revolution. Capitalist culture is in its decadence; the next world-war will mark its death-throes. Read the books of an Aldous Huxley, who is a kind of artist-scientist. It is like reading an account of the last days of Rome, written by one who despairingly knows himself to be a portion of the common gangrene. Read D. H. Lawrence, that genius born into the workingclass, who grew ashamed of his heritage, yet could not accept the dull mediocrity of the upper class, and so was torn by a conflict familiar to all social climbers. His books reveal a desperate groping in fog and nightmare. He knows he is living in a sick society, and can find only the most trivial remedies.

Read any of the best American writers: Dreiser, Anderson, Lewis, Mencken—there is desperation here. The literature of the middle-class, the mirror of its class mind, is a literature of defeatism and desperation.

The Revolution is the one hope for the white collar wage slave, be he newspaper reporter, engineer, school teacher, or office man. How long will it take him before he sees this?

The revolutionary movement in this country ought to help him see it soon. This rudderless white collar group is the raw-stuff of fascism, and as John Dos Passos has pointed out, it must be neutralized somehow; the best of it enlisted for positive achievement.

The intellectual has nothing to gain except wage-slavery in the triumph of a corporate America. He has a great spiritual and economic world to gain by the triumph of the working-class; this has been demonstrated amply by the young Eisensteins of Soviet Russia.

Mencken And The Gods—

I have just finished Mencken's *Treatise on the Gods*, (Knopf.) Without a doubt, this tough Baltimore Butcher will never weaken on his deathbed and call for the softsoap of a priest or rabbi to ease his passage to hell. He is a good old-fashioned god-killer, of the school of Voltaire and Nietzsche. It is a pleasure to read such honest atheist writing, in a land where few intellectuals have the guts to take a stand on any issue. Mencken has no "liberal" reservations about religion—he calls it what it is, "time's bloodiest fraud" and foul mental corruption.

He traces its roots down to the savage's fear of the natural forces. He proves that religion has ever been a charlatan's game played by exploiters who worked upon this old savage fear. He



William Gropper

Wall Street Panic

HOOVER: "For God's sake do something! Call the bankers, the senate, the church, the press . . .!"

is as simple and true as all that. The book is a fine popular history of religion. The writing is superb; prose that moves with the sure rhythm of a Rolls-Royce motor, never missing a beat of its power. Mencken is the great American pamphleteer; he is our Dean Swift.

He has been our greatest literary influence in the past decade.

If there is anything in his latest book that one gags at, it is the streak of bourgeois paste in him; this bland assumption that capitalism is so firm and inevitable, that it can never be changed. Mencken, despite his sophistication, is always repeating the old platitude: "you can't change human nature," when he approaches any social problem. He has as static a concept of human history as any Baptist; he believes that the human race has been damned before birth; and nothing can save it.

This accounts for several notes that mar his splendid atheist tract: one, his glib summary of the Jewish character, as silly a generalization as that of any professional white Southerner delivering his "expert" analysis of the Negro. Only a person who had never read the modern anthropologists would sum up any race and its characteristics so glibly. Mencken is either irresponsible or badly informed here.

His book winds up in defeatism; he has killed religion, but almost regrets its loss, for there is no hope real or unreal, to put in its place. And so he resigns himself bleakly to a life without meaning, and to a death without comfort.

This is his bourgeois individualism speaking. But Communists know that the world can be made a place so fair, so beautiful, so creatively passionate that all the childish heavens of the supernaturalists can safely be exchanged for this more concrete hope. Mencken destroys religion, to find life insignificant. Communism destroys religion, only to make life more significant. Atheism, without a social philosophy behind it, is nothing but the old tedious, meaningless iconoclasm of the bourgeois Bohemians—a gesture.



William Gropper

Wall Street Panic

HOOVER: "For God's sake do something! Call the bankers, the senate, the church, the press . . . !"

CHARLES YALE HARRISON

BERNARR MACFADDEN A Portrait

In St. Louis, a sharp-faced young man tacks a sign over a doorway. He has been orphan farm boy—a starved slavey in a small town hotel cleaning out cuspidors, shifting from town to town, an itinerant worker. The money-making fever has struck the Middle West, business men swagger down the main streets smoking fat cigars and the young man looks at the sign over the door with pride. It reads: *Bernarr MacFadden, Kinisitherapist, Teacher of Higher Physical Culture.*

A month after a snarling Senate had decided by one favorable vote to keep the impeached president, Andrew Johnson, in office, the infant MacFadden was born to a sickly young farmer's wife in a backwoods county in Missouri. His father, son of a dilapidated country gentleman, felt that even in his poverty it was incumbent upon him to indulge himself in whiskey and to follow the horse-races at the visiting county fairs. In an atmosphere of dismal domestic strife and in the misery of a two-room cabin stuffy with the odor of the nearby stable, the puny MacFadden struggled through his early childhood days. *Drunken sprints of his father . . . memories of bitter quarrels . . . the baffled bewilderment of children in the face of the hate between adults . . . a warped background to carry through life . . . a life that will later influence millions of Americans in a subtle, banal manner.*

A childhood flush with strange impressions . . . the Negro neighbors, the Baptist immersions in the river close at hand. The rich, melancholy spirituals:

*Jawdon water
Chilly col':
Chill-a de body,
But not de soul!*

the hysterical shrieks of the Negro women as they felt the cold water against blazing bodies . . . the little MacFadden standing on the bank of a Mississippi river receiving impressions—life-moulding impressions. In Chicago a doctor scrapes the skin off his arm and vaccinates the boy . . . *the frail lad cannot endure the strength of the serum . . . he grows ill, his body becomes hot and sticky, his eyes luminous with fever . . . "add a new foe," his biographer wrote long years afterwards, "add a new foe for him to fight, along with drunkenness and fear . . ."*

And then there was the distracted poverty-driven mother with the worry of keeping her child moving from town to town planning to leave the little boy at a boy's orphanage . . . the scene on the Mississippi pier, a boat was drawn alongside waiting for the passengers to come aboard . . . *a big dark man comes and tears him away from his mother . . . the mother's frightened face . . . the beating of a frightened heart . . . "sobs racking the little body" . . . the smoke of the river-boat disappearing around the bend in the water . . .*

The institution, the beatings, the huddled children at night in the dark dormitory . . . impressions that will form a life which later will talk to a hundred and twenty million Americans from newspapers, magazines, radio . . . frightened, childhood days beset with fears. At night when the "new" boy arrived a little voice whispered to him from an adjacent bed, "They never feed us nuthin'. No boy ever grew any bigger while they kept him in this place." . . . primitive emotions gripping the boy's heart, the longing for food, for the quiet of a home, for ease from the pains of a fevered body. The kind-hearted relatives who took him in to work in the smalltown hotel near Chicago . . . the slops to be emptied . . . the boots to be blackened . . . the wornout body at night . . . the fat, grotesque wife of the hotelowner who frightened the lad as he sat and watched the Chicago train pull out of the countrytown station and then the words from her mouth later, "Yer ma's dead . . . and then long afterwards as MacFadden sat in his large, sunny office on Broadway in New York he told his interviewer: "Memories of her would come back, and I would continue cheerlessly at my work in the hotel, sobbing, sobbing . . ." The writer repeated a verse and the publisher nodded his head in approval as his long, bunched up hair bobbed up and down giving his smallish body a ludicrous appearance;

*"Mother, come back from your echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart of yore . . .
Clasped to your heart in a loving embrace,
With your light lashes just sweeping my face.
Never hereafter to wake or to sleep.
Rock me to sleep mother, rock me to sleep."*

and in the crowded streets below newsboys sold a lurid pink newspaper which showed pictures of legs of publicity-avid chorus girls which lonely womenless men living in lonely roominghouses took home with them.

Years later in St. Louis the eager young man, ex-laundry worker, hangs out the kinisitherapist sign over the door. The effects of the strangled childhood weighs on his brain . . . *money . . . money . . . health . . . strength . . . half-formed ideas race through his head . . . words picked up out of books eagerly read in libraries . . . half-baked ideas being fashioned by the hysteria of an enormous frustration: The human body is the temple of God . . . Bernarr MacFadden kinisitherapist teacher of higher physical culture . . . I am the rebuilder, I am the guardian of the temple of the living God . . . I will be the apostle of physical culture in America . . . I will be like the thundering bearded prophet of the Old Testament who will hurl bolts of denunciation at the erring, wine-bibbing, Baal-worshipping Americans and bring them back to a sane, healthy life . . .*

New York. Obscure business ventures. The thirty years old MacFadden dreams at night of a magazine that will carry his message to millions of people. Borrowed money, reading proofs . . . and at last the publication sees the light of day.

The factories in the land are turning out palefaced laborers, slums are spreading, the east side in New York, the Red Hook section in Brooklyn; in Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, down by the waterfronts; new cities are springing up and with the factories comes sickness, headaches, patent medicines and now the kinisitherapist's magazine. It gives a message to the twelve-hour-a-day factory worker. It says: *"Weakness is crime . . . vigorous, pulsating health is within reach of all . . . the human body is the temple of God . . ."*

Farmers' wives buy the magazine in Iowa, Nebraska, Vermont. *"The body beautiful . . . the temple of God . . ."* pictures of posing athletes, first male and then female . . . *the piles of blue magazines mount higher on the newsstands in the land . . . Later cheap sex stories, confessions stories, sensational divorce cases are featured in the millions of magazines and newspapers which poured off of his presses but now the bushyhaired kinisitherapist is engrossed in the temple of God . . .*

* * *

MacFadden struggled with his magazine. With the first evidences of success came problems, attacks. Late at night he sat in his room writing feverishly. He answered a critic who calls him a body-lover:

"I accept the criticism, if it might so be termed, as a distinct compliment!

"I admit I love my body.

"I respect and reverence it."

The piles of blue health magazines mounted higher and higher on the newsstands. Pallid stenographers, pimply boys, tired wives read it, looked at the pictures. Anthony Comstock attacked the magazine. MacFadden wrote on and on:

"Beauty is supposed to be inherited.

"But few people realize that it can be cultivated . . .

A plain face can be made alive with an expressive personality."

America was becoming a nation of delicatessen eaters. Food came in packages, underweight. The frontier spirit was gone. Heterogeneous nations swarmed in the big cities, were crowded into slums, worked in factories. Girls went to work in offices, in mills, the soot of factorysmoke hung over the land. The health editor wrote for his growing tens of thousands of readers:

"Glorify God in your body . . . Know ye that ye are the temple of God . . . If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

Out of the Middle West he had come, kinsman to William Jennings Bryan and other long-haired ya-hoomen. Like his brethren, the Indian medicine-men of his boyhood MacFadden thundered his half-baked cure-all to the credulous of the nation. In place of snake oil he offered gaudier panaceas:

Fasting, whole-wheat bread, vegetarianism, kinisotherapy, special MacFadden muscle-developers, sets of books, charts, the devil White Bread, the ogre meat. Mountains of books poured from his press with chapters on asthma and hay fever; colds and catarrh; constipation; diabetes; digestive troubles; foot troubles; the truth about tobacco; tuberculosis; vitality supreme—step up, ladies and gentlemen, come close—. More books: *The Athlete's Quest* (a novel), virile powers of superb manhood, marriage a lifelong honeymoon, hydrophathy—

The MacFadden fortune prospered; other magazines are published with sexually-subversive stories for tired stenographers and work-dulled wives of workers. Sex stories, true stories, confession stories, love stories, health stories, all illustrated with suggestive cheap pictures.

In New York the leering lurid tabloid newspaper grew in size by means of beauty contests and photographs of actresses in lewd, ambiguous postures. It becomes the official organ for the MacFadden health creed; alongside of *double entendre* captions it thundered the message of the temple of God:

"Oh, what a gay senorita, she's here to shake her—castanets, and also her—tambourine. And New York will see her—dances during the next six months. A plain face can be made beautiful. The love-thief could not be located late last night. If any man defiles the temple of God—boy bootleg king held in death probe—him shall God destroy—Does virtue pay a MacFadden true story—orgy halted in magnate's love-nest—rock me to sleep mother, rock me to sleep. Like a broken butterfly, the toy of a rich man's wives; drugged bodies struggling. I admit I love my body. What good are breadlines if white bread is served to the poor outcasts. She's here to shake her—. Love-slayer sheik poor moths redhot mamma abode of shame a dapper insouciant youth dressed in the height of fashion and contemptuous of the girl's serious charge her own story temple of God."



MILL TOWN

Wm. Gropper

3 or 4 AMERICAN HEROES

By Horace Gregory

I

*Linger a little over whatever is
of lily fingered hair trigger wild Bill Hickok.
Anyway he died full of blood
holding a dead man's hand
a couple of black aces and
two dark eights.*

*He kept his poker face
(O dead pan Helen Wills and quick and delicately stepping
Big Bill Tilden remember him a little)
until the bullet came.*

*Now the long prairies rott
over him*

*no matter where
his bones or ashes lie.
The old barber shop boys on heavy sunny rainy
afternoons
sleep fancy dreams*

*seeing him walk
glorious hair*

*and dainty hips
dancing through air*

*like a fine lady,
try to remember what he said
or was it General Grant dead
of cancer in his throat
or the Chicago Fire*

*They were famous once
something to see
and hear.*

*Even today
somebody wants to be
famous*

for a long time.

II

*Scarface Al Capone Chicago Al,
a legend in Florida real estate,
a dream in high priced New York
Chicago Pittsburgh
Philadelphia hotels.
And when the guns roar down Chicago streets
Al Capone is nowhere.*

*He is a smile
smiling at somebody
in the latest style bird's eye maple Grand Rapids
bedroom suite*

*designed in Hollywood,
leaning across a table saying:
Waiter, some more of this and that.
He is the big boss*

*When he feels good
like god he is kind.*

*Look at his smile
smiling in a big boss way
like Hoover gazing*

*on a Spring Easter morning over the White House lawn,
hearing birds sing*

*smiling like Scarface Al
his eyes half shut in sunlight.*

*Big famous men,
famous as the Titanic speeding down
a million feet of water underseas
or the Johnstown flood,*



MILL TOWN

Wm. Gropper

*A Discussion***INTELLECTUALS IN AMERICA**● **Whom Can We Appeal To?**

The brave boys in blue of the New York police force have done their bit for prosperity in the last month by beating a young Negro to death (the police say he died of apoplexy and not from the beating) and then shooting a Mexican Communist dead at the young Negro's funeral for good measure. If they don't like this country let 'em go back where they came from.

Well, that's class war. But isn't there anyone in this great and etc. city who feels that there ought to be rules even in class war? We used to be taught as kids, in that distant day when even intellectuals believed or pretended to believe in something, that mercy was one of the pillars of the shining edifice of civilization, that it was bad sportsmanship to jump on a man when he was down, that civilization was a system designed to keep the weak from being too often beaten up by the strong. Isn't there anyone in the United States who feels it sufficiently to his advantage "that civilization shall not vanish from the earth" (as Wilson was so fond of crooning in a sad musical voice) to make some protest in the face of the daily increasing barbarity of the attacks of the police and owners' mercenaries on working men whose main crime is hope for a better day for themselves and for the world?

I've used the word *civilization* three times and each time I found myself wincing as I tapped it out on the typewriter. The poor old idealistic catchwords have grown pretty rancid in the last fifteen years, but under the muck there's a core of sound meaning in some of them yet, and anyhow there's no other convenient way of expressing what I mean: the body of inherited repressions and carefully built up social instincts on which our spontaneous hatred of cruelty is based. I admit that civilized man likes cruelty about as much as he hates it, but anybody who's been in wartime fighting knows that he hates it too.

The most shocking thing about the Ohio prison fire was the small amount of protest it called forth. It's as if the carnage of the European War and the years following it and the rapid mechanization of life had entirely dulled the imaginative response (putting yourself in the other man's place) that's biologically at the bottom of feelings of mercy and compassion. Now we are in the midst of a wave of redbaiting and legal lynching again, and nobody so much as bats an eyelash.

The question is, whom can you appeal to?

Writing about it in the *New Masses*, mostly read by people who are convinced already, is like pouring coaloil on a fire that's already lit, it makes it flare up a little; but it's a waste of coaloil. And I don't think that the atrocity-psychology so easily generated in the last war against the Germans is a useful weapon for radicals. It's too damned dirty. It tends to produce counter-atrocities. Much better shut up about the brutality of the enemy.

The class you could appeal to would be the class that had the least stake in the game.

I think that such a class exists, though its members don't know it. In *Middletown*, that extraordinary useful survey of a middle-western town from the point of view of academic anthropology, the authors divide the American life they're studying into three groups: the Middle Class or Business Class, the Owning Class, and the Working Class. Naturally, the great majority of the Middle Class are mercenaries and dependents of the owners and even less open to feelings of humanity than the people on top. But there is a layer: engineers, scientists, independent manual craftsmen, writers, artists, actors, technicians of one sort or another, who insofar as they are good at their jobs are a necessary part of any industrial society. (In Russia this class held over, not half as much affected as people think by the revolution, and in spite of the confusion of its politics is now growing in numbers and power.) If you could once convince them of the fact that their jobs don't depend on capitalism they'd find that they could afford to be humane. The time to reach these people is now, when the series of stock market

crashes must have proved to the more intelligent that their much talked of participation in capital through stockholdings was just about the sort of participation a man playing roulette has in the funds of the gambling house whether he's winning or losing.

As a writer I belong to that class whether I like it or not, and I think most men who graduate from working with their hands into desk jobs eventually belong to it, no matter what their ideas are. You can call 'em intellectuals or liberals or petty bourgeoisie or any other dirty name but it won't change 'em any. What you've got to do is convince the technicians and white collar workers that they have nothing to lose and that they can at least afford to be neutral, and that every new atrocity like the Marion Massacre or the railroading of the organizers in Imperial Valley will make the world worse for them personally.

The most difficult thing you have to buck is the fact that along with the technical education that makes them valuable to the community they have taken in a subconscious political education that makes them servants of the owners. And the more education they have the deeper that psychology is ingrained. They should be made to realize that they have power and that by intelligent organization they could make themselves respected, that industry can't do without them any more than it can do without workers. At present even radicals of that group have much less real political development than any bunch of scissorbill hodcarriers that never heard of a union.

Still this is the weekly-magazinereading class that people appeal to when they talk about public opinion. Education and our professional deformation has made most of us too cowardly and too preoccupied with making a living and living respectably and raising children to want to make events, but through our technical training and our fair average of leisure we are the handlers of ideas. Ideas can't make events but they can color them. We can't affect the class war much but we might possibly make it more humane.

And you can't wait to be humane after a war is over, the last war proved that: you're down to plain savagery long before the war's over. And then it's this very class that howls the loudest. If the Russian technically trained classes had had any political ideas or any idea of what they wanted, the work of the Russian revolution would have been infinitely easier. It's the job of people of all the professions in the radical fringe of the middle class to try to influence this middle class, that most of them would rather not belong to, so that at least some of its weight shall be thrown on the side of what I've been calling civilization. It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it.

JOHN DOS PASSOS.

● **Keep Away From Blind Alleys!**

The murder of Steve Katovis, Alfred Levy and Gonzalo Gonzales by the Tammany bluecoats is not a sudden lapse of capitalist "civilization" into barbarism. Neither is the lynching of eighteen Negroes this year; nor the white terror which has railroaded hundreds of militant workers to jail; nor the Gastonia atrocities nor the attempt to assassinate by "due process of law" the six workers in Atlanta. Capitalism has always maintained itself by force and fraud. If we were taught as kids that "mercy was one of the pillars of the shining edifice of civilization," that was part of the fraud. Even while we were being taught that hokum about capitalist civilization, there was the Ludlow massacre, there was Lawrence, there was Bloody Butte, there was Frank Little, there was Bisbee, there were the Pennsylvania cossacks, there were armed company thugs terrorizing barbedwired company towns, there were lynchings throughout the South. The hands of American capitalism, like the hands of capitalism everywhere, have been dripping with blood from the beginning. The insane race for

profits takes its toll of workers lives all the time. During an armed truce among the capitalist rulers of the world, the workers are killed by twos, threes, dozens to maintain "law and order"; when the big boys chasing markets decide to shoot it out, it doesn't hurt their sense of mercy to kill off ten million workers for "democracy and civilization." The class war may be more violent at one time than another; but the capitalists govern by force and fraud; the workers are driven to resistance. This basic fact of capitalist civilization must be kept in mind all the time. Why be surprised that the Ohio prison fire, the Negro lynchings, the murder of militant workers calls forth no protest from the bourgeois press, from the vicars of Christ, from the school teachers? These are sensational episodes. What bourgeois paper "bats an eyelash" over the fact that 7,000,000 workers are without jobs, that those who have jobs are subjected to exploitation and oppression, that capitalist governments are preparing a world war whose horrors will be greater than those of the last? Mercy droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven; it droppeth on the tough hides of the capitalists and their servants and evokes no response. They are used to all this business. You gotta be tough. The Lingle murder reveals, what revolutionists have long known, that business, politics and crime work hand in hand. Any worker who has been on strike could tell stories of the "collective efforts" of politicians, bosses and gangsters.

Why shut up about the brutalities of the enemy? Can one shut up? The bourgeois press does. But the workers do not have to read the bourgeois press to know these atrocities. The lynching of every Negro leaves a burning memory in millions of Negroes; the workers of the entire world raged, demonstrated against the murder of Sacco-Vanzetti. The intellectuals, feeling these things are "too damned dirty," may prefer to forget; the worker cannot. Every time he marches in the streets asking for work or wages, the cop's club or Colt will remind him of it.

To whom should the worker appeal? There is no class that has the "least stake in the game." Engineers, scientists, writers, artists, actors, technicians have as much at stake as anyone else—more at stake than workers, who have "nothing but their chains to lose." If the imperialist war and the class struggle have revealed anything, they have revealed that the average intellectual can be as reactionary as Mussolini. A lot of engineers recently got out a collection of essays on capitalist civilization. What solution had they to offer? What but the most vulgar greed and commercialism reigned at the recent convention of the American Medical Association, which opposed State-controlled medicine and the free service of physicians to penniless patients in public hospitals? What can the workers expect from the portrait painters or actors or writers who live off the moneybags? You cannot convince them that their jobs do not depend on capitalism, because at present they do. Their jobs can depend on workers only if, as in the Soviet Union, the workers control those jobs. And it is not a matter of mere mechanical buying; the average professional man is nurtured in the ideology of the ruling class; he is the product of its culture, its churches, its books, its newspapers; he often believes the fraud of his masters, hence wholeheartedly approves their violence.

The workers can appeal to nobody. They can destroy this monstrous system, free themselves only by their own efforts. In their struggle for emancipation they have allies—poor farmers, oppressed races, impoverished intellectuals. There are writers and writers; each with his class bias. It is possible for a Dos Passos to see through the fraud and savagery of the ruling classes, to repudiate them, to go over heart and soul to the working classes who alone can fight the battle for a new world. To appeal anywhere else is a waste of time.

Sometimes the desire to "appeal" leads intellectuals into strange blind alleys. Theodore Dreiser, returning from a trip through this country, gives a four column interview to the *Evening Telegram*. He is shocked at what he has seen; he is pained by what he has



Phil Bard.

DON'T LOOK!

heard. He discovers that the moneybags rule this land of the free; they control its legislatures and courts, its executive mansions. He dismisses the literary people as a class: hell, they can't save the country. To whom does he appeal? To Ford and Morgan, to transfer Wall Street to Washington, to openly take over the power which they none too secretly now exercise. "Petit bourgeois" may be a "dirty name"; but Dreiser is no exception to his class, which often swings from a horror at Trust Rule to a prayer for fascist dictatorship.

It is true that intellectuals, technicians, white collar workers of a certain type can, under the pressure of economic depression, swing their support to the working class, and accept its leadership in the struggle. The revolutionary political party of the workers can and does utilize such people at certain times.

What can a writer who has realized the full meaning of the class struggle do? He must ally himself with the workingclass. He must not waste himself on seeking impossible middle roads. We are waiting for a book that will do for industry what *Three Soldiers* did for war. The writer of such a book must not conceal the atrocities of the enemy, no matter how "damned dirty" they are. On the contrary, he must use his talents to their utmost to expose them, to make as vivid as possible to the masses the full horror of the capitalist system, the full significance of the struggle against it, for a world to which the term "civilization" can be applied without wincing.

ROBERT EVANS.



Phil Bard.

DON'T LOOK!



BARD.

Phil Bard.

DON'T LOOK!

Fraternal Greetings To the Factory

By Regino Pedroso

*Concentrated tension of muscular strength.
With tongues of steel
the sledge-hammers practice on their anvils
strident poems of the literature of the vanguard*

*Metallic symphony of great machines;
ultramodern images of transmissions and gears;
soviet exaltation of the forges.*

*Oh, factory, iron ovary of production,
panting like a great throat grown weary!
fashionable theme now for geometrical cubisms
and metaphorical impressions:*

*You have a collective soul
made up of social struggles, of unrest, of hunger,
of weariness, of poor shattered bodies,
minds forged in the hatreds of social injustice
and smothered longings for vengeance.*

You move restlessly, suffer, are more than a theme for words . . .

*But I know your perennial pain.
I know your human needs.
I know how long centuries of parturition
have made in you an acrid conscience.*

*You speak to me of Marx, of Kuo Ming Tang, of Lenin;
and in the dazzling brilliance of a free Russia
lives your ardent hope of salvation;
you pulse with life, you dream,
you can do everything—
yet you keep on living in bitter slavery.*

*Thus you overwhelm me, and make my soul sad.
I grow skeptical, although at times
I burn with the heat of your words;
and you nod to my brother workers:
Good morning, comrades.*

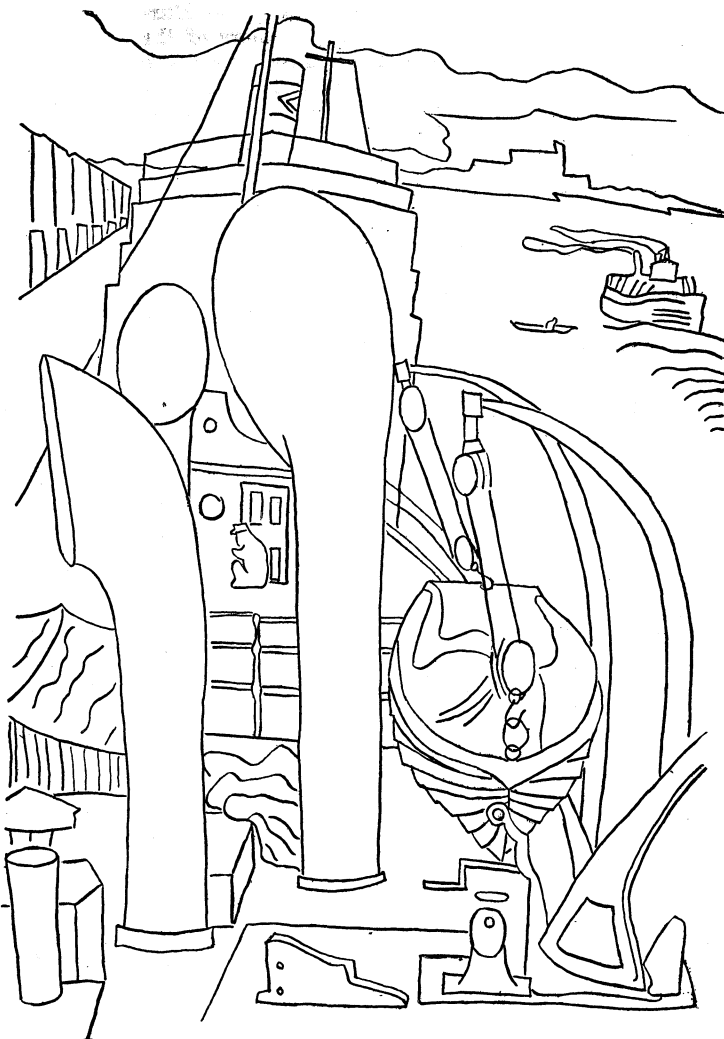
*They are your sons,
these workers,
sons of a hundred proletarian generations
through centuries of unanimous cries for justice.*

*They are your sons,
these poor who suffer, working, working
with the fertile force of muscles and nerves,
yet sterile in visions of liberating power.*

*They are your sons who dream—
while the links of your days bind them one by one—
that in their dark and smokey sky some morn will flame
the brightness of new dawns.*

*They are your sons who
year by year, offer in propitiation
the profits drawn from their human lives;
who cry in anguish to the creak of the winches
while you, as though they were mechanized things,
scarcely hear them.*

*Oh, factory, alive with creative fever;
milk-bag giving suck to both richness and poverty;
forge that every day makes your own chains
on the anvils of your hope!*



CENTRAL AMERICAN FRUIT STEAMER Douglas Brown

*Slave of Progress
that in your new and barbarous liturgy,
flings toward the future in a voice of iron
your tremendous psalm of what is to come.*

*I feel that you have nourished even me a little,
although I hated, without understanding,
your vast collective soul and your mechanical technology.*

*I hated you as a life-absorber;
hated your gears and your valves;
hated your immense rhythm because my own rhythm was
drowned in the hoarse vibration of your machines:*

Now I salute you with a cry of equal human pain!

*Do your crucibles smelt the new postulates?
Are you only an industrial word, factory?
Or are you a temple of love as well,
a temple of faith, of burning idealism,
and of communion of the races?*

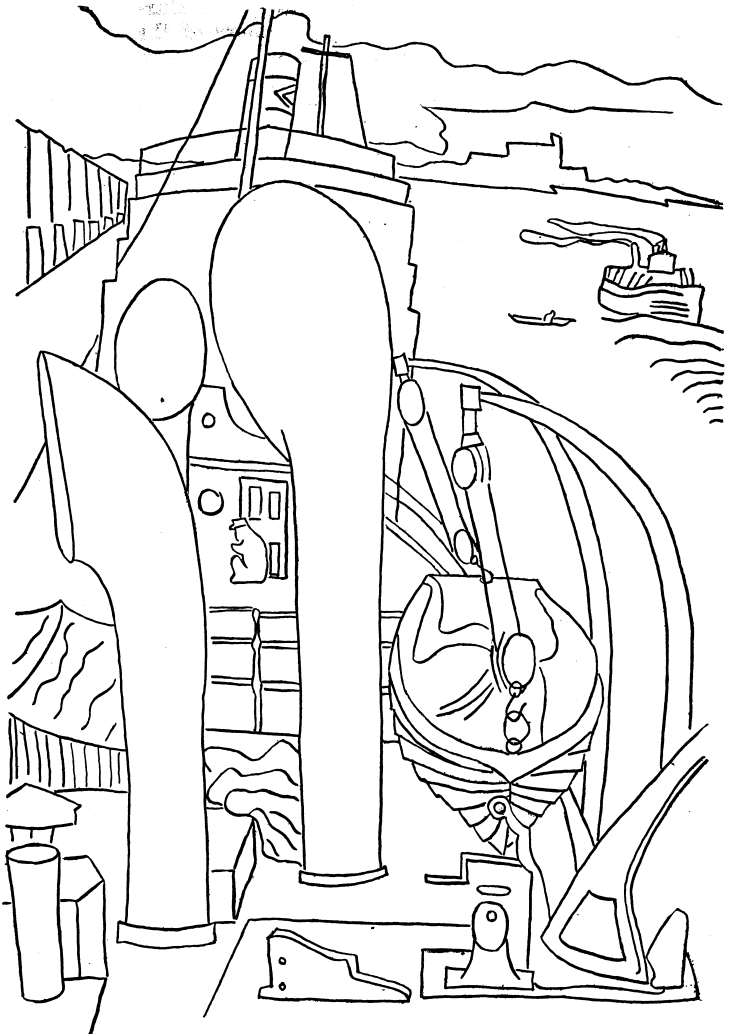
*Sometimes I doubt—
and yet again I breathe and burn and vibrate
with your immense hope;
and I hear in my heart the great truth of your apostles:*

You are the cosmic belly breeding tomorrow!

Adapted from the Spanish by

LANGSTON HUGHES.

NEW MASSES



CENTRAL AMERICAN FRUIT STEAMER

Douglas Brown

COME AND BEHOLD ALL THIS!

(A letter from a Soviet peasant written to Albert Rhys Williams, U. S. A.)

1.

To the devil with grandfather old ways!
The little farms are too much useless bother.
In one big-field-artel.
Electricity and steam
Will harvest, mow and forge
The tractor plow and reap and thresh
And into the Co-op we carry all of it.

2.

I sat by the river—I went down the bank,
I threw my little ring into the water, the river grew murky.
Sink, sink, little ring! Be covered with water weeds!
I will say to my mother the bit of gold has flown far away,
It is not suitable for a young communist girl to wear a ring on
her hand.
I agreed with my lover not to go to church to be married.
I asked my sweet to play on the harmonica.
Come on girls! Come on women!
Let's choose our delegates!

—Two new popular songs the Russian peasants are singing.

Hail dear friend Albert Davidovich:

First, of all I and my wife and my sons send to you greetings from our souls. Since the month of June, when I met your brother David Davidovich at a *vetcherinka* at the Boorenkov's, I have had no news from you—not the least little bit. We here in Dor are all alive and healthy.

Our village choir, which you heard at the beginning five years ago, is singing better all the time. We sing all the old folk-songs, both the sad weeping ones and the merry dancing ones. Some only the old folks remember, so I am writing down the words and the notes. But it is very difficult as the only education I got was three years in a village school. We gave a concert again in the House of the Peasants in Moscow and there was much praise in the papers. For we sing the folk-songs, not as they do in the theatres, but as we peasants do at work and on holidays. And everybody liked this music breathing of the fields and forests, the far away and long ago. We also sing the new revolutionary songs and ditties and those about the new collectives. Some day maybe we shall come even to your America and your people will hear and see singing and dancing such as they never saw or heard before.

But that won't be soon, I fear, because there is so much to keep us all busy in our own U.S.S.R. The changes taking place in our own country since you left us are tremendous. So tremendous that I find it difficult even to explain to you, Albert Davidovich, how far we have progressed in all departments of our new life since you left us. Especially in political and social affairs we are going ahead I might say at double tempo, by forced marches. The eagerness to learn is greater than ever before and so the liquidation of illiteracy and superstition among us is fast advancing. The new life is completely crowding out the old. Most important of all is the radical change of all our extremely primitive and "grandfather" methods of agriculture. The conversion of our little individual plots of land into great peasant "Collectives" or into vast state farms of the most advanced type. This, in my opinion, is all that is necessary for the widest development and flowering of our national welfare. Throughout the U.S.S.R. goes on an intense propaganda of ideas and methods of collective labor aiming at the combination of all the means of production into completely socialized units, making it possible to put into operation all the present day scientific and technical processes (which it would be impossible to do in agriculture carried on in small divisions). And to the surprise of everybody, our peasantry did not stand up and fight for their obsolete forms of individual farming.

Right now, in our little Volost, which you know so well, is going on a continuous collectivization and we all, with all our might, are going over to the socially planned economy. Naturally, not everywhere does this basic revolution proceed quietly and smoothly.

On the one hand is always the immoral ignorance and darkness of our poorest peasantry, on the other hand there has been at times, the opposition of the kulaks. But even such instances, in comparison with the vastness of this movement, were not so many. And in our Volost almost nothing of the kind has occurred. But it would be extremely strange if there were none at all. For you will remember the stories I told you about what occurred here twenty years ago. How vainly I tried to persuade our villagers to begin the sowing of clover and the rotation of crops. Now there is not a single mujik among us who could imagine how we could carry on farming in the old way. But then the women wept, the men cursed and the Orthodox called me Antichrist and many wanted to kill me.

It is not surprising then that against this tremendous reform in agriculture there should be loud protests and outcries, and the malicious villainy of the kulak goes sometimes to the length of destruction of property and even of murder. Such things naturally are severely dealt with.

Unfortunately the agitation of the kulaks has had very bad results in reducing the number of our live-stock. But this we consider as temporary. With all means of production and the land in the hands of the toiling people we shall be able to put through this great revolution in the use of the land. And with the new method of farming we hope in the not distant future to increase production to limits unprecedented in our hitherto pitifully backward country. All the strength of the Soviet Union is being poured into the education and organization of the peasants on the new lines. Everybody is ceaselessly busy and the work is coming to the boiling point. Agronomists and experts are laying out plans for the new collectives, the new dwellings and barns and cattle



I. Klein

BIG BUSINESS: And now, my little lady, will you tell this kind audience whether Tom Mooney is guilty or not?

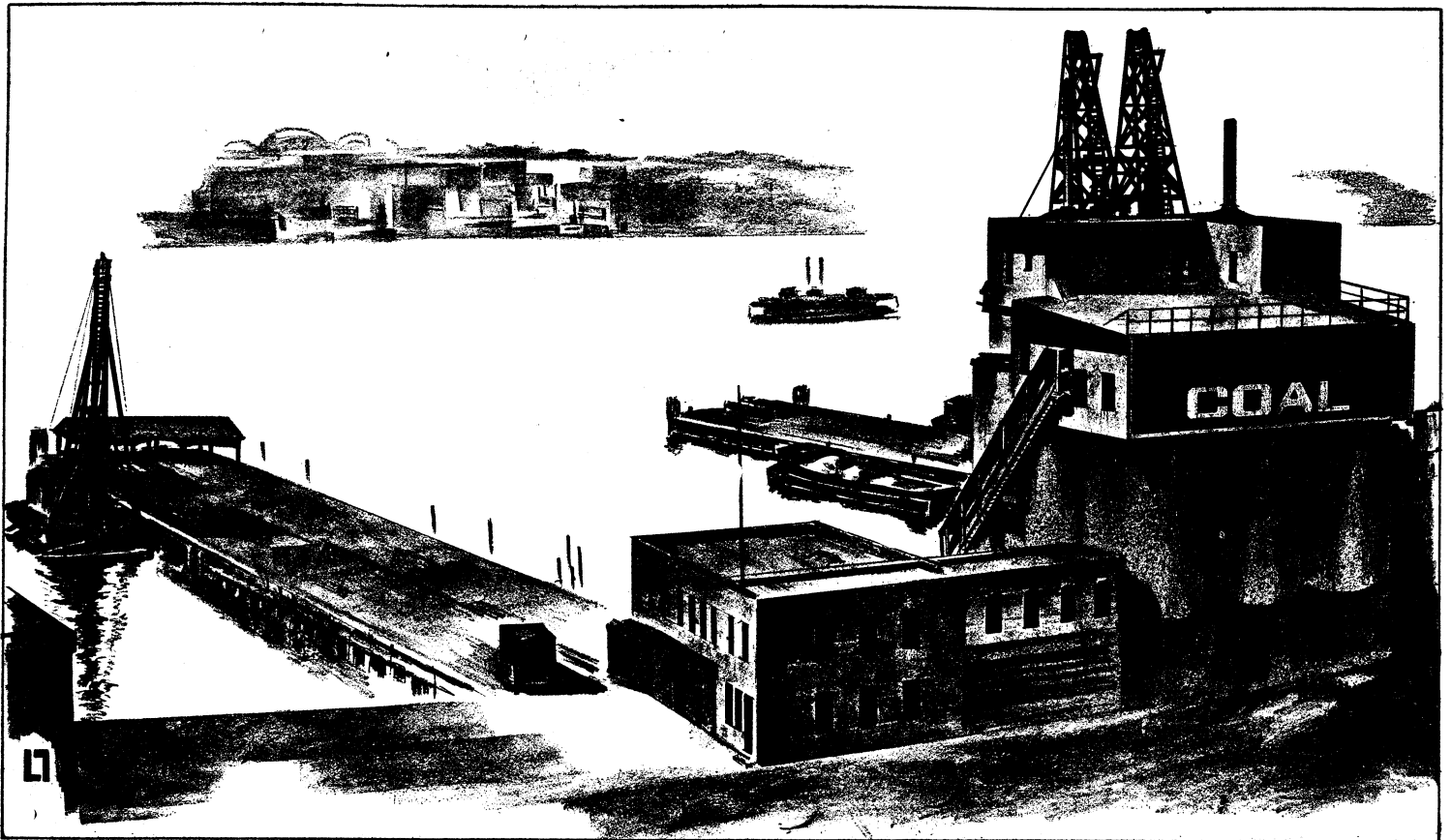
JUSTICE: Of course he is, Poppa, guilty as hell!



I. Klein

BIG BUSINESS: And now, my little lady, will you tell this kind audience whether Tom Mooney is guilty or not?

JUSTICE: Of course he is, Poppa, guilty as hell!



NEW JERSEY SCENERY

Louis Lozowick

yards. New and enthusiastic groups of leaders and technicians are studying and training themselves in the new methods. Our Soviet power, in all its undertakings, is guided by the wise maxim of not "pouring new wine into old bottles, lest it be spoiled or all run out."

I, with my own husbandry, have joined the neighboring village of Dor on the hill across the river. This community as you know is very poor. We have called our collective by the name of "Freedom" and we firmly believe and hope that our united free toil will lead all our peasants out into the road of universal high material prosperity and many-sided intellectual development. We know very well that at first we must work with all our might for the establishment of the new way. We have the strength, the knowledge and the will—the rest will come of itself.

But come and behold all this with your own eyes. If you are not coming soon I pray you write me a letter—a long one like this. Your last one was printed in our paper *The New Red Soil*. Write me I beseech you about what is going on in your own country across the ocean in America. What sort of agricultural collectives do you have? And how do they repair the broken down tractors? What songs are your peasants singing? Does America know about the Five-Year Plan and the grandiose construction going on in our agriculture? And why does America delay so long in recognizing the legal rights of our country of peasants and workers? We are no menace to anyone and have no desire to wage war. We want only to live in peace with all peoples, to build and develop our economy on a stronger and juster basis.

At present our weather stands snowless and the winter has been warm. All signs point to a dry year. Consequently we are getting ready for a dry planting and a more intensive cultivation of potatoes, oats, and other grains. Our new house is completely furnished. Instead of a little old *izba*, it is a real house with nine windows letting in the light. You can have a separate room without us interfering with you and without you bothering us. Come and be our guest and stay as long as you like.

Meantime *dosvedania*. Once again to you Albert Davidovich and to Lucita Georgievna and to your brother David Davidovitch, I and all our family send hearty greetings. From our souls we wish you good health and a long sweet life.

*Saltikov Volost,
Dor Village,*

PETER GLEBOVICH YARKOV.

Bronitz Ooyezd, Moscow Gubernaya, USSR. January 27, 1930.

IRON WORKERS

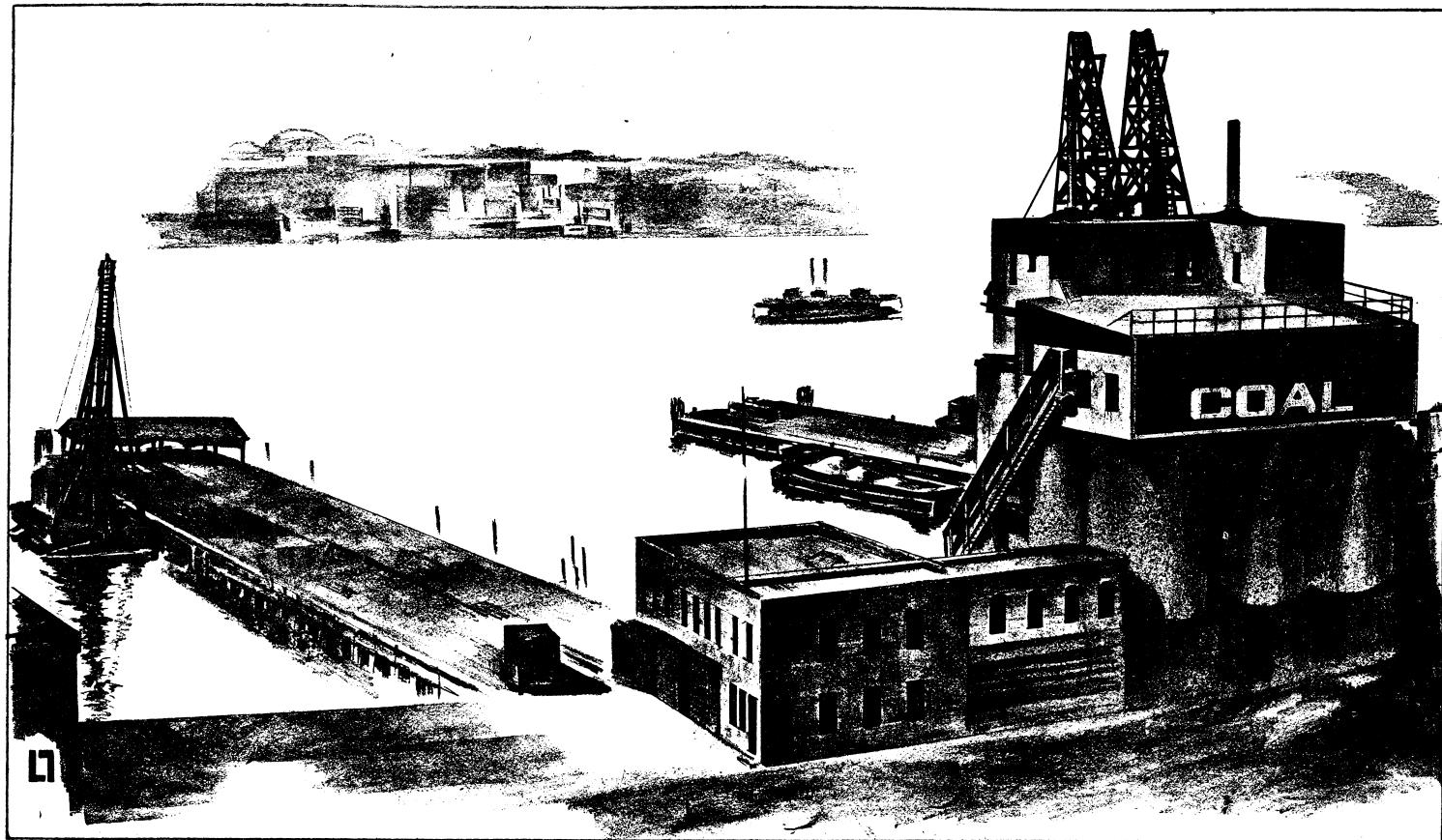
By BILL COOPER

It's a lousy job and the nastiest in the line. Jimmie and I have been doing the overhead red-leading for half an hour. We are putting the finishing touches on the underside of an immense and pretentious marquise. Precariously perched atop fifteen foot ladders we see the swells going in and out of the hotel over whose front we have erected a three ton steel canopy. The paint runs down our gloves and spreads over our sleeves dripping down to our faces and bodies and sometimes to the sidewalk. The paint is dark crimson like blood. We are gory looking and I cannot help thinking that it is our blood spread for the comfort of those useless bastards passing beneath us. They stare at us arrogantly, and as a drop falls to the sidewalk they become indignant.

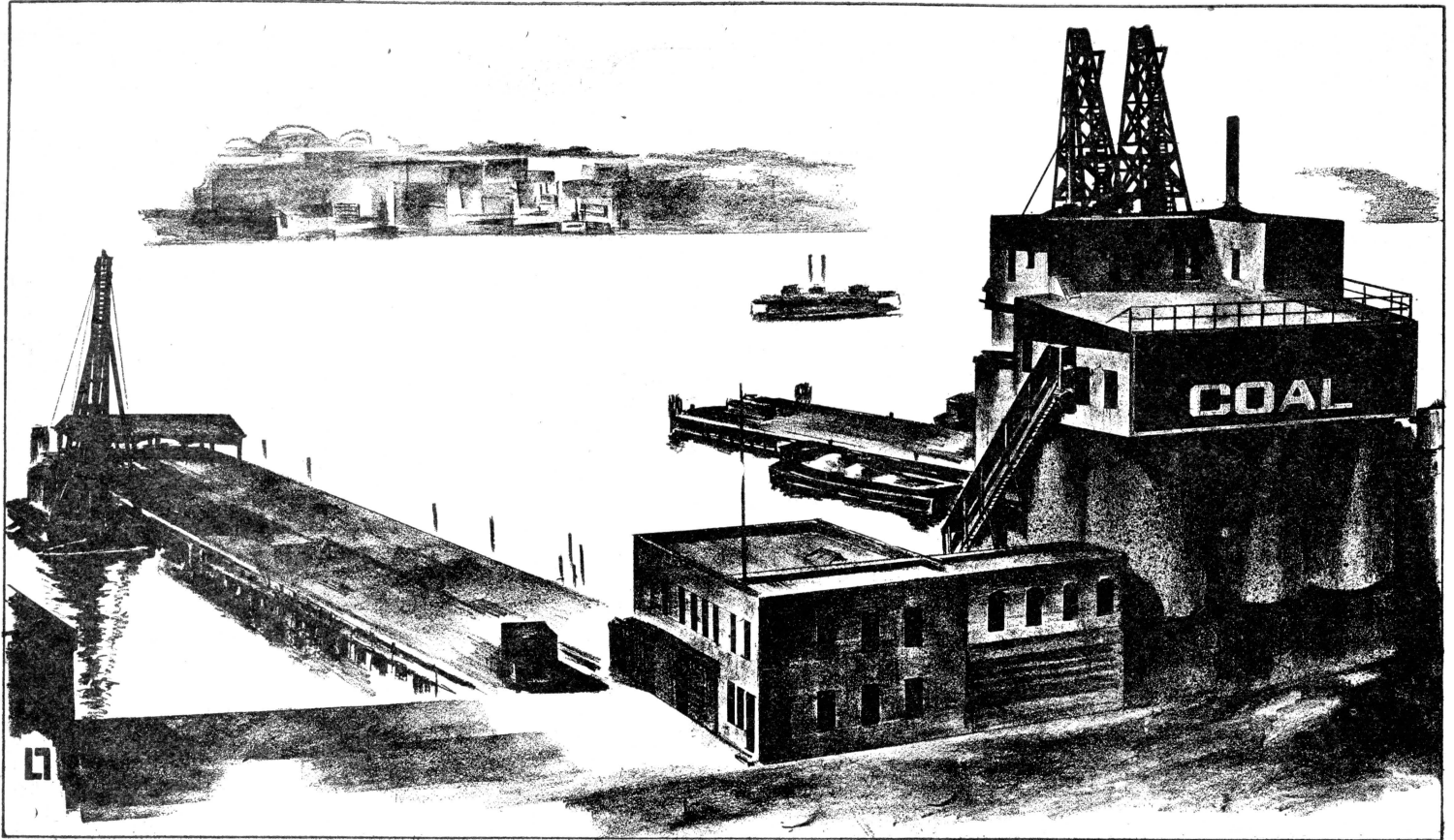
A great drop falls on Jimmie's forehead and runs down past his eye which has shut just in time. He rubs at it with his sleeve making a horrible smear on his features. Then laughter from the sidewalk. Two young fashion-plates are amused while Jimmie has almost lost his right eye and now will have his face aflame for hours. He has cleared his sight and become aware of them.

His face burns with rage as he reaches for the bucket. He will stop those lousy . . . "Easy Jimmie" I warn him "that won't help now." He controls his anger but his jaw is set in painted ridges. The smiles of the young swells change to astonishment and then fear. They look around. The nearest cop is at the corner half a block away. They sneak into the doorway with worried backward glances.

I wonder what is going on behind Jimmie's ominously set face. He knows, as I do, that they live as they laughed. That as easily as he could end the laughter with a splash of paint, so easily could he cut a tie rod and drop the marquise and smash the whole lot of them straight to hell.



LOUIS LOZOWICK '19



Louis Lozowick 19

MOVIES

H. A. POTAMKIN & S. BRODY

The Big House, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Astor Theatre, New York.

Numbered Men, First National-Vitaphone, Winter Garden, New York.

The movie is symptomatic of America at its lowest level. It expresses the social mind at that level. The lowest level of the social mind, the least critical level, is the dominant stratum. Dominant as it is, it defends itself by evasions, by the shifting of the burden of guilt. These two films inspired by the social turbulence of prison-breaks are expressions of this shifting of the charge.

We have here two films, the first a product of one of the best American factories, the other of one of the worst: shop-competence, incompetence. But the minds revealed are identical. Both are frivolous even facetious. The burden of the guilt has been shifted by shifting the emphasis of the story. In *The Big House* society is accused by the warden, who points to the overcrowded cells as a foreboding; by the genial guard, who warns against putting the boy, whose crime is running down someone with his auto, with the two hardened criminals, and by the machine-gun murderer, who revolts at the food, provoking the entire convictbody into an outburst and himself into solitary confinement. In the first two instances, the charges are only remarks, they do not get into the woof of the film, informing it, giving it meaning. As in *All Quiet*, the director has not sought to make the entire film the vehicle of the attack, but restricted the attack to some verbal statements. Dialogue cannot carry the mood, the film as a whole is the vehicle. The accusations therefore remain incidents—passing and unemphatic. Whatever suggestion of social guilt they contain is dissipated by the events of the story, and their treatment.

We are not made to experience the accusations: the overcrowding, the bad food. The bad food doesn't argue in itself, as did the maggotty meat of *Potemkin*. It does not explain the outburst. The camera does not expose its filth. There was no attempt to construct an unavoidable mood, because there was no wish to construct it, and no ability. The film lacks *temper*, it is another American jest.

The film, concentrating as it does the major action in the prison, might have been a powerful experience. But the predilection for the comic spirit at once lightens the intensity. The concentration of the theme is severed by moving the action for a period out of the prison into the street, the girl's bookshop and home. The film should have been contained in the close environment of the prison, unrelieved by whimsicality or horseplay or the soft tone of the letter informing the murderer of his mother's death. The film should have been *intensive*, gray, cumulative. Its model might well have been *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. We should have felt the slow process of festering, monotonous, oppressive, bursting in the riot—just as the mob-explosion released the accumulation within the dungeon at Rouen. The film, as an art, is a progressive medium moving toward intensiveness. It is a process, not simply a story. But to create a process in the movie requires awareness of the process of society, and the mind of the movie—the American movie—does not possess awareness.

Numbered Men is an incompetent *Big House*. The idyllic flavor is at once imparted: the farmer's dame who serves the road-gang doughnuts, the loyal girl who has taken a job at the farmhouse to be near her lover, wrongly imprisoned. The typical formula is carried out: one of the prisoners is advised his wife is dead—this serves as an impetus to escape (as in *The Big House*); there is a killer here too who boasts, like the murderer in the Metro film, of his prowess (*The Hairy Ape* motif)—the difference is that in the Metro film we are made to like the whimsical brute whereas in the Vitaphone masterpiece he is the nemesis. He is, in fact, the instrument whereby the guilt is shifted from society. Indeed,



BOURGEOIS ART

Adolph Dehn.

there is nothing we can hold against society, save the incarceration of the innocent boy. This blemish is eradicated when another prisoner confesses to the crime, sacrificing himself to an extended sentence. So are problems solved. The prison itself is more idyllic than *The Big House*. In the latter the warden complains of 3000 men brooding in idleness, though we never get to feel it. In *Numbered Men* there is a big sunny room where a convict, if he is good, may play the harmonica or read *The American Mercury*. The moment of the riot is brief. It isn't a riot, it's a dash. The prisoners hunt for the runaway to preserve the honor system. Some fifteen years ago Fox produced *The Honor System*, a more exciting film on the theme. It was a popular motif in those days. In 1905 Vitagraph manufactured *Escaped from Sing-Sing*. . . and a quarter-century later we find the film-factories issuing stuff that shows no advance in point-of-view. The mind of the movie is even more callow now.

Callowness has more than orthographic resemblance to callousness. The society that is callow in its cinema is callous in its attitude toward imprisoned men. The audience that is amused by the spectacle of men being marked and numbered is the society that kills Sacco and Vanzetti, imprisons for life Mooney and Billings, railroads the leaders of the workers in New York, North Carolina, Georgia and California. It is that society which produces *The Big House* and *Numbered Men*; another society produces *In Old Siberia*, that poignant lyrical Soviet film of the plight of the political prisoners in Czarist Russia. As the days go on, the American movie will get farther and farther away from the film exposing the social evils. Once it was possible to have *The Jungle* filmed, pictures of Czarist oppressions and anti-semitism, movies condemning the exploitation of the poor farmer in the everglades of Florida. American society becomes more concentrated, more protective. The movie becomes more concentrated, more symptomatic. A counter-process is at work, the revolutionary threat. This intensifies the instinct for self-preservation in the mind of the dominant class. The movie reveals the intensification. All elements of vital criticism are eliminated, but there is one criticism that is ever-present, the film itself. It is the business of the critic to present in full this evidence of which the movie speaks.

HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN.

● "About the Sea and About the Fishermen"

Drifters—Directed by John Grierson. 55th Street Playhouse, New York.

Drifters is a film of sincere intentions and feeble cinematic craftsmanship. A case in which a very willing spirit succumbed to a weak and inexperienced flesh, because good intentions do not necessarily make good films.

It is "a film of the actual," as its director has it, and like all



BOURGEOIS ART

Adolph Dehn.



films of this class, presents special problems both in point of structure and thematic treatment.

In the acted studio film, the scenario must determine everything—the theme and its interpretation (selection of actors), the action-treatment and the specific plastic material (Pudovkin), the tonal values as determined by lighting, etc. The production, in other words, is created out of the whole cloth, the scenario being, in its final form, the closest approximation to the completed film that words and diagrams can possibly make it. Thus it became clear that the ideological approach, the “slant,” is integrally interwoven into the structure and technical treatment of the story. This is what some gentlemen refer to as “propaganda,” conveniently forgetting that a definite viewpoint, independent of the material is inescapable in any film, be it made in Hollywood or in Turkestan. In this type of film the scenario is in every respect primary, the actual filming being the complementary offshoot.

In the documentary film the scenario must serve the purpose of *organizing* already existing material so that the film will progress according to a preconceived idea which will act as a guide and lend character to the whole. Any other method will result in a mere compilation of scenes having logical sequence but devoid of the cumulative effect which is the first essential in a film. Until the Russians showed us the way, this was (and in America *still is*) the way reality was filmed. That is why we have learned to look upon the documentary as an unimportant item in film-making while the Russians have, with films like *Shanghai Document* and *Turksib*, raised it to the highest level of cinema achievement.

In *Drifters* we have an example of a film in which the director has approached his material without organizing it in such a way as to convey a particular idea or evoke a desired reaction from the onlooker. The effect is left to chance and the power of the filmed material itself to create an impression. This is the way of the “nature study” film. It is true that here and there we find in *Drifters* an attempt to compose certain effects by the juxtaposition of pieces (montage), but to use montage methods to create isolated effects rather than to impart to the film a unified and appropriate rhythm, is to abuse a method which is the recognized cornerstone of film art.

A few months ago, Grierson wrote about his film:

“Men at their labor are the salt of the earth; the sea is a bigger actor than Jannings or Nikitin or any of them, and if you can tell me a story more plainly dramatic than the gathering of the ships for the herring season, the going out, the shooting at evening, the long drift in the night, the hauling of nets by infinite agony of shoulder muscle in the teeth of a storm, the drive home against a head sea, and (for finale) the frenzy of a market in which said agonies are sold at ten shillings a thousand, and iced, salted and barrelled for an unwitting world—if you can tell me a story with better crescendo in energies, images, atmospherics and all that make up the sum and substance of cinema, I promise you I shall make a film of it when I can.”

Such a summary is, for many reasons, flabby and not altogether adaptable to cinematic purposes. But even the weak guiding-idea contained in it might have resulted in a more powerful film if a scenario had been mounted accordingly. Instead, *Drifters* is at all times at a respectable distance from its subject. There is not a single facial close-up of the exploited fishermen in the whole film; and there can be no “intimacies” where the close-up is not used. It is the essence of intimacy in the motion picture. There is an interesting storm, and a threatening whale, but very little of the “agonies” that Grierson writes about. The approach remains mechanical and detached. A film *around* fishermen, but never *about* them.

I believe that *Drifters* lacks “propaganda.” Propaganda about the underpaid and exploited Shetlands fishermen. Propaganda against child labor in the fishing industry. Propaganda against the class responsible for the misery of impoverished proletarian fishermen. The class struggle is an even greater actor than the sea, Mr. Grierson; and the driving mate is fiercer than all the man-eating whales in the world.

No doubt, the making of a film about subjects so externally devoid of heroics and clash as the daily lives of Gloucester fishermen is no easy task. But for one who claims to be an humble pupil in the school of the Soviet kino, there can be no possible excuse.

SAMUEL BRODY.

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My Thirty Years' War, by Margaret Anderson. Covici-Friede. \$4.00
Portrait of the Artist as American, by Matthew Josephson. Harcourt Brace. \$3.00.

We may be grateful for anything at all that gives us a survey of American literature from 1850 to 1930. We are just beginning to realize the importance of an American background.

Here we have two books which together with the files of the *Masses*, the *Liberator* and the *New Masses* give us a fairly complete history of what has happened since Margaret Fuller started the *Dial* right up to the present moment. One is a success story, as good as any that has ever appeared in the *American Magazine* or the *Saturday Evening Post*. The other is a hard luck story. Yet the two authors, Margaret Anderson and Matthew Josephson have a good deal in common. Both are rattling good journalists and both are on the look-out for ecstasy. In the big hunt for ecstasy Matthew Josephson found Henry James; and Margaret Anderson walked right straight into the arms of Jane Heap, James Joyce and A. E. Orage.

We'll start with the first success story or *How The Little Girl Made Good*.

One day, about thirty years ago, Margaret Anderson had a row with her parents. Ten years later she packed her grip and bounded into Chicago. She didn't come to Chicago for money; papa back home had plenty of that,—no, she wanted ecstasy and a good look at lots and lots of celebrities. When Margaret Anderson landed in Chi. celebrities seemed to be growing on trees, the streets were full of them. Floyd Dell was there and Sherwood Anderson. John Cowper Powys was on deck, always ready to lecture on culture and even Theodore Dreiser was running around loose.

Margaret Anderson saw them all. If any of them happened to be dropping in for a visit from New York or Paris, Margaret Anderson was there, on the spot, sitting in the front row. She got herself a job as book reviewer on a catholic weekly. Her good looks, her taste in smart clothes and her irresistible, irrepressible energy gave her everything she went after. Well, she had a fine look at her celebrities. It was only natural that she should think of rounding all of them up in a magazine and like a female Barnum, promote a stupendous, marvelous, one and original three ring circus called *The Little Review*.

About the time the *Little Review* opened for business, Miss Anderson ran into Emma Goldman. Emma Goldman had fire. That was something Margaret Anderson liked. She'd even get worked up over rotten social conditions, provided she didn't have to take on any troublesome responsibilities or do any heavy thinking. She took to Emma Goldman as a Christian Scientist takes to Mary Baker Eddy. Then along came Jane Heap.

Together Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap refined the art of celebrity hunting into capturing personalities. They could smell out a personality a mile off; they could feel one about to show up around the corner. They went west with the *Little Review* as far as California and then wheeled right about face and stormed New York. And finally crossed the Atlantic to enter Paris where the *Little Review* died in 1928.

You may already know the story of revolt that made the *Little Review* possible, but Margaret Anderson doesn't tell you. How widespread social restlessness produced the original *Masses* in 1910 may be guessed at by even the most timid of Rand School lecturers. The *Little Review* is evidence of the same restlessness, deflected as it were, into a grand program of ecstasy. Margaret Anderson

knows no more about the social forces at work behind the *Little Review* than a super salesman of Ford cars knows about gasoline engines. Shrewd Yankee Ezra Pound sold *Ulysses* to Jane Heap. Margaret Anderson super saleswoman deluxe sold the idea of the *Little Review* to a handful of Wall Street millionaires and the American illuminati. That's the story. Margaret Anderson shouting hooray for Mussolini, Georgette Le Blanc and A. E. Orage, goes down into history.

The hard luck story of the American artist is told at length by Matthew Josephson. A good deal of the story at even greater length has already been retailed by Thomas Beer, Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford & Co. Josephson leans heavily on secondary sources for his material, but he has whipped it into shape and tied it up in a neat package. He sits down and has a long cry over the misfortunes of the American artist from Hawthorne down to the little gang of expatriates sobbing over the American bar in a Paris cafe.

Josephson is working on the theory that every honest to goodness American artist is an exile and Henry James is his hero. He starts off with the decline and betrayal of the Transcendentalists and the break up of New England culture. The story of how Margaret Fuller, Emerson, Bronson, Alcott and Thoreau were wiped out by the rising tide of Nineteenth Century industrialism is well told and dramatic. His background for action is very nearly perfect, including a keen sketch of Edgar Poe. It is when he begins to weep over the fate of Melville, Whitman, Henry James, Whistler and Lafcadio Hearn that you smell a rat. Why these sobs and tears over Melville and James?

As a matter of fact it would be far easier to show that Henry James was suffering from the disease of being a rich man's son, rather than an American. With the exception of Lafcadio Hearn, Mark Twain, Whitman and Bierce, the artists that Josephson breaks his heart over were definitely well-to-do, upper middle class products. Every artist, no matter who he is or what he is, has an impulse to run away from himself. If he can afford it, he goes in for travel. Dante was an exile. Chaucer, the most English of English poets spent half his life away from home. Josephson nearly breaks his neck distorting facts to prove that a desire to run away from home is an American characteristic.

What Josephson is actually looking for is a kind of ecstatic nirvana where every artist has an opportunity to write like Henry James. So as to prove the supremacy of Henry James, and the horrible fate of the Americans who stayed at home during the rise of the machine age, Josephson ignores the best of Walt Whitman and Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. He weeps and wails for 288 pages. Then in his final chapter, he seems to change his mind. He says it is vain "to weep or gibber" and talks about Humanism in such vague terms that you don't know whether he's referring to the Humanism of Erasmus and the Renaissance or Mr. Irving Babbitt at Harvard. You are convinced that he has no idea what he's talking about and that he's simply written a good Sunday Feature story. Not as well done as Mr. Brooks or Mr. Mumford would do the job, but an efficient piece of work. Margaret Anderson and Matthew Josephson should get together and shake hands. Both books are loaded with a good supply of unconscious humor and if you have the ability to read between the lines as well as gathering the information that is handed out, you have an excellent survey of literature as it is known in America.

HORACE GREGORY.

ROBERT EVANS

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

Only Saps Work, by Courtenay Terrett. Vanguard Press. \$2.00.

Last Summer a young Mexican toughguy slaughtered a family of five and filched a few lousy pesos. He gave the cops a merry chase before they finally landed him in the hoosegow. At the trial this gay caballero—Romero Carrasco was the name—faced his judges and delivered an oration which might be summarized somewhat as follows: It is true, Senores, I have committed murder. But why do you treat me as an outcast? I have bumped off only five people; the filthy lucre I lifted wouldn't fill the fist of a baby. Look at our generals and governors. They have mowed down thousands of peons and pocketed millions of pesos; they grabbed the best lands. Yet they are honored and feted national heroes while I who have imitated their conduct on a petty scale am treated as a monster of iniquity.

Romero Carrasco's reflections on the nature of crime, politics and justice created quite a stir, especially when the clerical press took a dig at the anticlerical bourgeois government by saying the young mankiller was right about the generals and governors. But Carrasco's reflections were, after all, immature. He failed to realize he was the victim of a backward civilization. In a colonial, agricultural country like Mexico crime is still in the "handicraft" stage. It cannot compare with the United States, for instance, where crime is organized on a business basis, and where politicians do not snub assassins.

Reading Courtenay Terrett's brilliant study of rackets and racketeering one realizes that capitalism, in its monopoly stage, has obliterated old fashioned distinctions between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" business. Where the "best people" patronize bootleggers and sometimes dope peddlers, an Arnold Rothstein or a Paul Vaccarelli, far from being treated as an outcast, can hobnob with the best of them: an Al Capone can control local governments, journalists, police chieftains; a Dion O'Bannion can have his funeral attended by senators and judges.

As a liberal journalist, Courtenay Terrett adopts a casual ironic attitude toward his fascinating material. He shows that the racketeer is an integral part of business, of politics, and of corrupt trade unionism; but he will not say directly, in unmistakable words, that the racket and the gang are part and parcel of capitalist civilization in America. Yet the facts gathered in this book—a book very much worth reading and pondering over—eloquently reveal just that. Tammany Hall, the political tool of New York industry and finance, has always used the gangster to maintain its power, and in return Tammany police chiefs and Tammany judges have protected the gangster. In Chicago politics the gangster plays a role which nobody even tries to conceal; and Terrett reveals that the Ford Motor Company and General Motors have not disdained this typical American alliance. What is worse, the racket is not confined to bootlegging, warehouses, gambling; it operates in the labor field. Employers use gangsters to break strikes; corrupt A. F. of L. officials have used gangsters to eliminate Communists from the unions, to terrorize workers who have

lost their illusions about Green and Woll and Sigman and Schlesinger. The true story of Arnold Rothstein would show the Racketeers Progress through the homes of "society" people, politicians, reactionary labor officials, factory bosses, police chieftains, with crime, local politics, corrupt trade unionism, and brutal industrialism caught in the vicious circle. An "independent producer" like Vaccarelli, who organizes thugging, murder, and extortion on a large scale, works for political machines

and runs labor unions, is treated like a hero; he is praised by the *New York Times*, banquets in his honor are attended by judges, and the A. F. of L. honors him.

There is nothing illogical about this. American capitalism has thrived on force and fraud. The coal companies have their private armies of thugs to terrorize the miners. The steel trust has its spies and assassins, too. There appears to be no limit to what industrial organizations can do to maintain their profits and their power. If bootlegging is a racket, what is the oil trust? Is it "morally" more reprehensible to violate the 18th amendment than to violate the Sherman Anti-Trust Law? If the Al Capone boys are racketeers, what are the power trust magnates? Vaccarelli bumps off rivals; Tammany police chiefs order the clubbing of workers who demand work or wages; the power trust crushes competitors, gouges the public. What is the difference? It is all one big racket. The Soviet Union, for instance, building a different civilization, shoots grafters and racketeers. There is some point to that. A Russian racketeer is an anti-social being; his purposes are diametrically opposed to the purposes of the workers and peasants state; his logical end is "the highest measure of social protection." Here, under capitalism, where the gangster serves the politicians, the boss, the trade union bureaucrat, it is logical for the ruling class to hail the successful gang chief as an equal, for loot is the common aim of the gang chief and the boss and the corrupt labor leader. They are all three natural and inevitable products of a civilization based on the "rights of private property," i.e. the "right" of the ruling classes to rob and exploit the masses. They will all exist as long as capitalism exists.

The Five Year Plan

Soviet Economic Development and American Business: Results of the First Year Under the Five-Year Plan and Further Prospects. by Saul G. Bron, Horace Liveright. \$1.50.

American economy is the same old brand, modified and brought up-to-date, that was lauded by Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill. Soviet economy is socialized. For the first time in the history of Western industrialism a great nation is handling its economic system on a unit plan, applying Western industrial technique to the Soviet use economy.

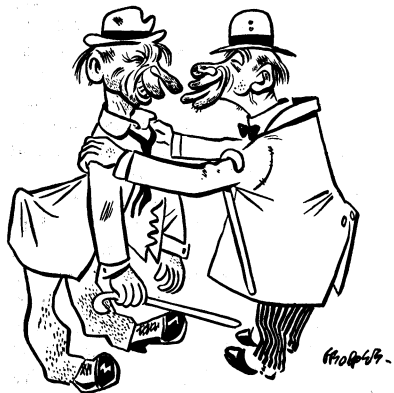
In launching the five-year plan, the directors of Soviet economic policy declared that: "The great task set by the five-year plan for the development of the productive forces of the Soviet Union . . . is that of attaining and surpassing the economic level of the advanced capitalist combines in the approaching historical periods."

The technical difference between Western capitalist economy and Soviet economy is that the former is chaotic and the latter is planned. The author of *Soviet Economic Development* cites the electrification plan of 1920 as the beginning of economic planning in the Soviet Union. This electrification plan meant "a virtual electrical revolution, calling as it did for a great network of power plants throughout the country." The plan was met with scepticism even in Soviet government circles.

State Planning Commission control figures made their appearance in 1925. They were little more than tentative estimates, but they covered most of the important branches of Soviet economy.

A tentative five-year plan was drawn up in 1927. Its authors under-estimated the productive capacity of Soviet economy and the recuperative power of Russia under Soviet direction. The federal budget for the fiscal year 1928-1929 was set at 5,884 million rubles whereas the actual budget for that year surpassed 8,000 million rubles. The 1927 plan called for an increase of 10.50% in the output of large scale state industry in 1928-1929 over the preceding year. Actually the gain was more than twice as much—23.4%.

The Soviet five-year economic plan launched in 1928-1929 covered the whole of the Soviet Union and "pre-supposed a rate of industrial development unequalled in any Western nation." It

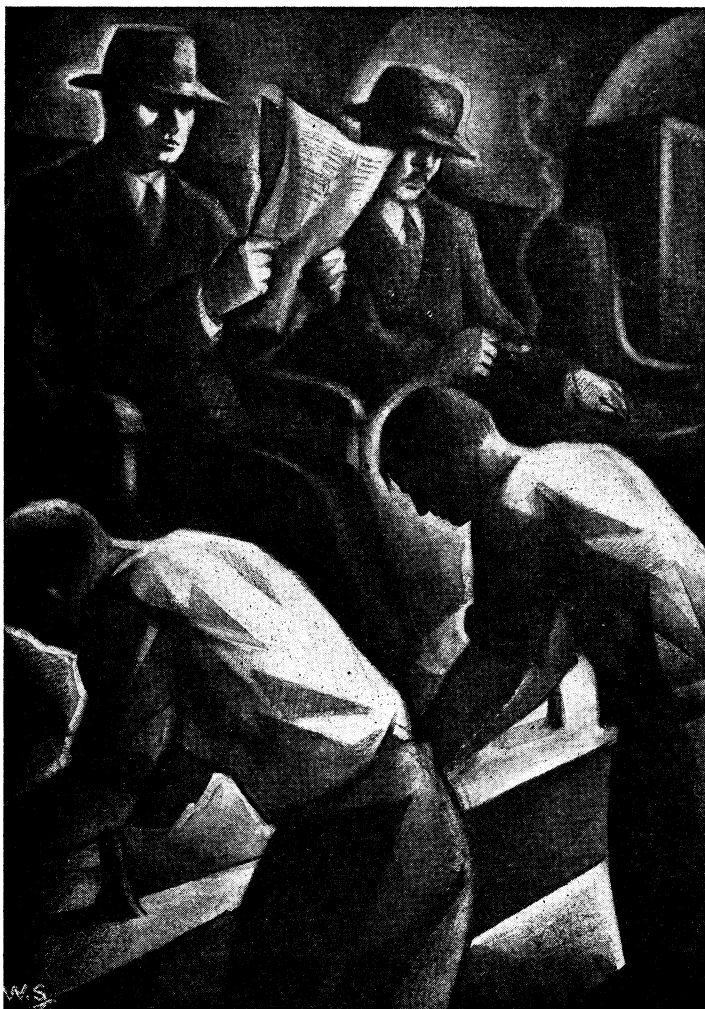


William Gropper

"Come closer Scotty me darlin', ya smell like a dry congressman!"



William Gropper
**"Come closer Scotty me darlin', ya
smell like a dry congressman!"**



"NIGGER HEAVEN"

William Siegel

involved an increase in capitalization of 82%; in operating capital of 130%; in national income of 103%; of capital investments in national economy of 238%; of output in electric power, 331%. In addition, it proposed reduction of hours, increase of wages, lowered prices, and a rising standard of living for the entire working population.

If the five-year plan succeeds and if the tempo of industrialization which its presupposes can be maintained, within an astonishingly brief historic period the Soviet Union will be the center of European industrial power and will be one of the two great industrial areas of the world. Is such a result probable?

Saul Bron has written the *Soviet Economic Development* with the purpose of answering this question. He takes the five-year plan program and compares it with actual achievement during the first year.

Agricultural production is behind the plan. In the hands of 25 million individual farmers Soviet agricultural economy did not respond to economic planning as effectively as the planners had expected. However, the socialization of agriculture which is a part of the five-year plan, has proceeded more rapidly than the plan anticipated.

Industrial advance has exceeded the plan. The plan called for an increase in industrial productivity for the first year of 21.4%; the actual increase was 23.4%. So successful has the plan been in the industrial field that the revised schedule of 1929-1930 calls for a gain in industrial productivity of 32.1%. During the first year of the plan industrial productivity increased 21% for consumers' goods and 26% for production goods. In other words the planners are throwing the emphasis in favor of the upbuilding of the productive mechanism rather than the turning out of goods for immediate consumption. Machinery production during the first year of the plan made a gain of 34%.

Under the plan the 7-hour day has already been introduced for about half a million workers. The continuous work week has been

introduced. Machines are kept going constantly. Each worker works four consecutive days and then has one free day. Socialist competition has been introduced between various industrial units that vie with one another for increased production and lowered costs.

Behind all the barrage of villification, the emphasis on religious persecution and the other published attacks by capitalist nations against the Soviet Union, there is steadily growing a great fear in Western Europe that Soviet economy will actually prove more efficient than capitalist economy, and therefore will inevitably supplant it. It is too soon yet to base this prediction on actual figures but the statistical tables presented in *Soviet Economic Development* give a very encouraging picture of a rising socialist economy which is already outdistancing neighbor capitalist economies in its tempo of growth.

Incidentally, Mr. Bron agrees that American business men will be able to sell more machinery in Russia as the process of industrialization is continued.

SCOTT NEARING.

Political Economy

Outline of Political Economy, by I. Lapidus and K. Ostroviyanov, International Publishers. \$3.25.

Here is a book that goes far toward exploding the idea, current among many workers and students, that economic books are necessarily dull and heavy affairs. *Political Economy* throbs like a metropolis with contemporary life. At the same time, the book is characterized by the calm, objective scrutiny of scientists at work in their laboratory. A fascinating but not strange combination, for basically science and art are one, and evidently the authors know this. At any rate, they have proven themselves competent scientists of the first order, and also excellent journalists.

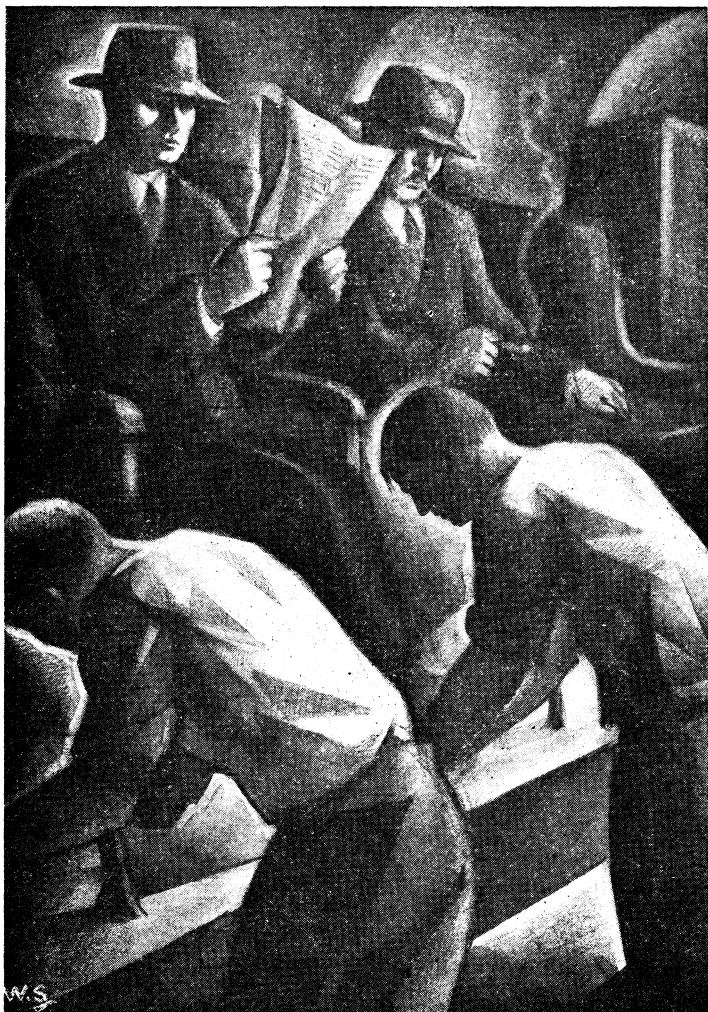
With telling strokes and penetrating analyses, Lapidus and Ostroviyanov set forth the fundamental character and dynamics of two conflicting economic systems of production and social relations. The contrast is sharp, inescapable—capitalism in its imperialist stage of decadence; the Soviet Union, a young giant struggling to maturity. Utilizing Marxian theory as a tool of analysis, the authors place the two economic systems alternately under the microscope. The vital processes of each are revealed—living, moving before the reader's eye.

The longer the reader gazes into the microscope, the further he pushes his analysis, the more the logic and sweep of what he sees takes hold of him. Capitalism, based on exploitation of labor, is doomed. Rotten at core, and torn assunder by crises, imperialist rivalries, wars, colonial revolts, and an intensifying class struggle, it is being driven on and on by the laws of its nature, to its final crashes and doom. Meanwhile, within this chaos the forces of a new society are seen generating, gaining momentum, with the organized working class struggling on relentlessly as marshaller of these forces and conscious leader from out of chaos into a new world. With the same critical thoroughness, the reader's eye is trained on the Soviet Union, capitalism's most highly developed antithesis. Here, under worker's control, transition to a socialist society is seen to be already well advanced. Planned economy is replacing the blind forces of capitalist economy, and a system of human relations is developing worthy of the name. However, the transition is not yet complete. Various difficulties and contradictions remain to be overcome. Capitalist elements are still operating to some extent, although on a constantly diminishing scale, in agriculture and trade and, (to a far less degree), in industry. Also the country is just beginning to conquer its technical backwardness, an inheritance from the old regime. But there is no mistaking the essential soundness and healthy vigor of this young Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

In their dialectical analysis of Soviet economics in this stage of transition, Lapidus and Ostroviyanov have made their greatest contribution. This is the first time such a thorough analysis has been presented. It is significant that the book was originally undertaken to meet the demand of Soviet worker-and-peasant students for a clearer understanding of many daily problems with which they have to grapple in building a new society.

MYRA PAGE.

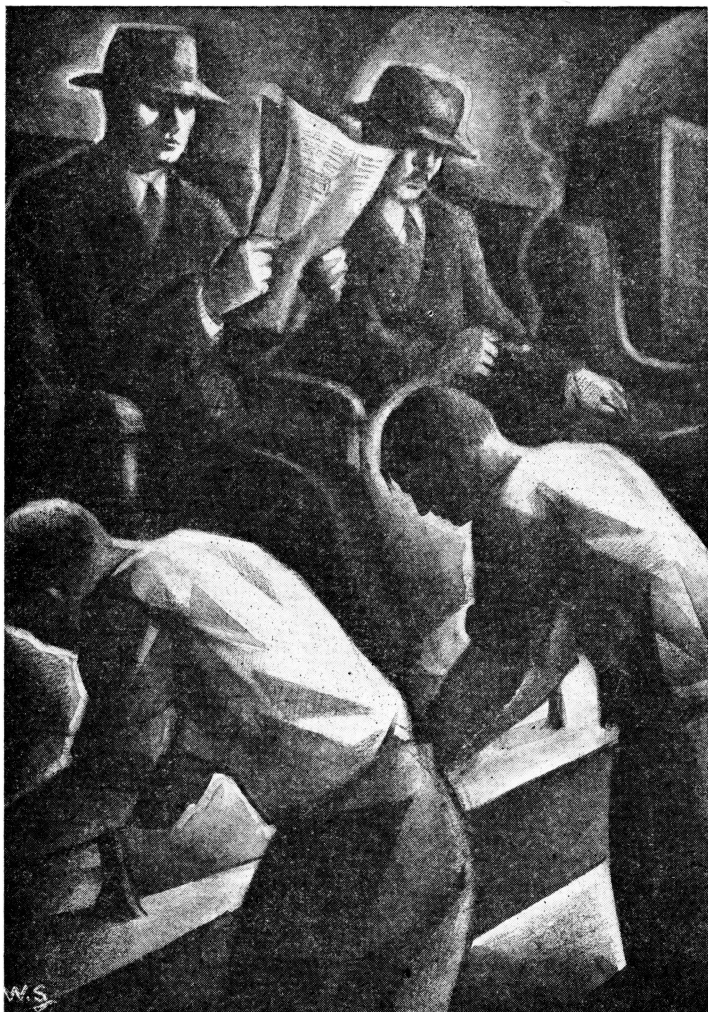
AUGUST, 1930



"NIGGER HEAVEN"

William Siegel

AUGUST, 1930



"NIGGER HEAVEN"

William Siegel

American Criticism

The New Ground of Criticism, by V. F. Calverton, University of Washington Chapbooks. \$0.65.

American criticism is today in a state of chaos unparalleled in the history of our critical writing. So very obvious has this condition become that it is no longer cause for comment. No one denies it, and of the very few who are at all aware of its rather serious implications, still fewer know what ought to be done about it.

When Professor Norma Foerster wrote, with ponderous indignation, of "the chaos into which our criticism has fallen," and of "the absence of standards in our literature and our thinking about literature," he had in mind a ground for criticism acceptable only to polite fascists. And yet, his position was sound enough in so far as it urged the need for standards. The question is, which standards?

The disciples of Professors More, Babbitt and Foerster, politically right-wing, yearn with pathetic fervor for an aristocratic, religious classicism so incompatible with modern life, that it is difficult to take them seriously. The liberals, politically centrist, who more than any other group are responsible for the "chaos," are content with either apologies or lamentations. Mr. Calverton, politically left-wing, is one of the tragically few who are in search of standards expressive of the age. In this little pamphlet he suggests a ground for criticism on which a person of weight can place his feet solidly, without fear of sinking into a morass of academic or romantic absurdities.

The critic, engaged in the business of interpreting and evaluating a work of literature, should draw upon his knowledge of cultural and social phenomena and his understanding of human character and motives, to analyze the nature of the work in terms of "race, time and environment"—the very elements rejected by the superior Mr. J. E. Spingarn. On this basis the work is interpreted as a tile in the mosaic of intellectual history.

I believe that it is the business of the critic also to discuss the purely aesthetic or technical qualities which make it, after all, a unique work of art, and I happen to know that Calverton believes this, too. Unfortunately, he neglects to mention this phase of the critic's craft, probably because of his missionary zeal.

Mr. Calverton's essay is not fool-proof. His paragraph on Poe, for instance, is open to serious objections. When he professes, furthermore, to have discovered the substitution of a social for an individualistic attitude in contemporary literature, he seems to me to be anticipating the event rather than recording it. In spite of these and other flaws, however, I regard *The New Ground of Criticism* as a significant and timely statement of the aims of a critical movement which must gather strength and influence in the near future. Mr. Calverton is one of the handful who are already clearing the ground and preparing to lead the "new" critics out of the wilderness of Foerstes and Fadimans.

BERNARD SMITH.

Ardent Debunking

The New Humanism, by Leon Samson. Ives, Washburn. \$3.00

"Humanism" has suddenly become a popular shibboleth. A pseudo-emancipated liberal religious movement and an ultra-reactionary literary movement have both recently characterized their doctrines as humanistic and now one who professes to be an historical materialist applies the designation to his philosophy. It is doubtful whether historical materialism needs this polite mask nor will historical materialists endorse many of the author's interpretations of their teachings.

The author modestly purports to offer in this book "a new orientation in the psychology of instinct, a new approach to the problem of the soul, a new concept of culture and a new philosophy of art." The pages are hot with vehement polemics and ardent debunking. But debunking is not radicalism. Fundamentalists also engage in furious debunking campaigns on the supposed errors of modern science and Samson joins their ranks in some of his arguments. He defends the reactionary concepts of the social evolutionists against the modern anthropologists, speciously distorting the views of the latter by classing Boas and G. Elliot Smith as diffusionists of one school although Boas is Smith's most vigorous



CONSTRUCTION JOB—BALTIMORE

Aaron Sopher

critic. He contends against the behaviorists that man possesses a subconscious communist soul—a weird doctrine for an historical materialist. There are many excellent challenges and discerning judgments in the book but far too many flatulent bellowings against the supposed intellectual giants of the present which end in whippers of assent to the doctrines of bourgeois scientists of yesterday. Some readers will enjoy his style as brilliant and audacious while others will regard it as bombastic and meretricious. Lest those who cannot fathom the contents of the book develop inferiority complexes, let them be reminded of the old witticism that when one cannot see the bottom of a river it may not be due to the fact that the river is deep—it may be muddy.

BENNETT STEVENS.

Russian Poetry

Popular Poetry in Soviet Russia, By George Z. Patrick—University of California Press. \$2.50.

Only as a thesis for a Ph.D., or for financial reasons has the Soviet Union any value to our liberal literati. No liberal has yet given an objective interpretation of conditions in present-day Russia, for his circumstances and his secret sympathies are such as to preclude an objective analysis of a society that would ultimately destroy the values most dear to his heart.

Thus, George Z. Patrick, in the preface to his book *Popular Poetry in Soviet Russia*, is moved deeply by the Russian poets, "speaking from heart to heart." But (and there is always a "but") to everything under Sovietiana), "as tillers of the soil and as factory workers these poets know little of science, philosophy, or the fine arts. They are uneducated men straight from the people, whose observation is first hand. They have no subtlety of phrase, no artistic perfection. . . ."

However, for those who are able to read between the lines, the book has some value. Though "the poems by the most outstanding proletarian and peasant poets" have been badly chosen and poorly translated, they give one a glimpse of what is actually taking place in Russia.

To those who prefer the talmudical quibblings of a Waldo Frank, or the vaudeville antics of a Mencken, the Russian workers have given their answer in the following lines (Mayakovski, "The Left March"):

Turn about and march!
There is no room for bickering!
Quiet, ye orators!
Your turn Comrade Mauser!
We shall no longer abide
By the laws of Adam and Eve!
The jade of history to death
We will drive!

LEON DENNEN.

NEW MASSES



CONSTRUCTION JOB—BALTIMORE

Aaron Sopher

BOOKS ABROAD

Russie, by Henri Barbusse. Ernest Flammarion, Paris.

No one in the field of literature has done as much as Barbusse to popularize and propagate the aims and achievements of the Russian Revolution. This is not only so because Barbusse is better equipped than anyone else for this task, but especially because of a clear political and social outlook coupled with a firm intellectual discipline sadly lacking in other writers whose efforts we know.

Barbusse has done more than approach the Soviet Union as an observer. He has thoroughly assimilated its historical significance, its social character. He writes about it like one who has always been of it, and not as the student of an "experiment." Therein lies the fundamental difference between Barbusse and the clan of petty-bourgeois writers on Russia like Dreiser. It is, in fact, like comparing John Reed with Villard or Dewey. But such comparisons are made only to show class attitudes rather than differences in literary treatment of a great historical event.

In *Russie*, Barbusse has achieved something that no statistics, no graphs, no tables could do. In a series of unrelated chapters, he has given us a panoramic view of the dynamic onrush of life and things in the Soviet Union. The book is like a swiftly turning revolving-stage, with surprises and the unexpected striking us in each short chapter. The drama of land and wheat. The oldest man in the world. The mountain house. Proletarian literature. The seven hour day. The soviet film. Conversation with Gorki. A visit to Clara Zetkin.

The chapter on proletarian literature is something that no revolutionary writer should miss. Nowhere has this question been so well discussed. Our own recent controversies on this problem make this an important part of the book for study and debate.

Barbusse has in this book devoted some space to the question of foreign writers who enjoy popularity in the Soviet Union.

"Here is a people which dominates all others by the new vital conception, the social architectural plan of which it is the worker, that is, which dominates all others in thought; here is a people which has changed the face of history and which proposes to change the face of the earth, which is the founder and will be the ancestor of a historical period; which, moreover, in the domain of arts and letters, is already achieving things worthy of its greatness,—and upon this superb torrential deluge, which is all health and logic, one sees floating mediocre works of exported origin and silhouettes of foreign authors whose very names we are ashamed to mention!"

Barbusse ascribes the popularity in Russia of decadents like Proust, Giraudour and Cocteau, to the unquenchable thirst for knowledge of the Soviet masses, and adds that they will learn to classify methodically the results of their investigation of foreign cultures.

Russie is a richly documented work, written in a style resembling the structural beauty of constructivist architecture.

Here is hoping for an early and adequate translation.

SAMUEL BRODY.

Volksbuch 1930, Neuer Deutscher Verlag, Berlin. 3 Marks.

A worker's yearbook richly illustrated with photographs and reproductions from Rivera, Masereel, Steinlein, Grosz, Daumier, Zille, Paul, Heine, Legrand, Kollwitz and others; poetry and prose by Johannes Becher, Kurt Tucholsky, Gorky, Lidin, Barbusse, Inber, etc. The yearbook is particularly full of informative material, numerous articles (reprints, translations and original contributions) on every phase of the worker's relation to contemporary life—social, political, economic, cultural. Even America is not forgotten: Goldschmidt writes on Unemployment Banquet (W.I.R.), Kisch on Hollywood, Ruhle on Chicago and Boston (Haymarket Trial and Sacco and Vanzetti).

LOUIS LOZOWICK.

SPECIAL India- NUMBER OF THE A-J-Z

(Workers' illustrated weekly)

APPEARS MIDDLE OF JULY

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WORKERS' ART

A monthly department for reports and discussion of Workers' Cultural Activities.

Workers Theatre in California

Dear Comrades:

On the Pacific coast we are also trying to promote proletarian cultural activities. We are, of course, only beginning.

A few months ago we organized the Rebel Players of Los Angeles. This group now has approximately 30 good members, all of them seriously interested in the presentation of real working-class drama and proletarian art.

We gave our first performance about a month ago. It was a huge success morally if not financially. However, now that we are better known, we hope to make our next affair both a financial as well as a moral success. The proceeds will go to the W.I.R.—they need all they can get.

Our next play is to be *Gods of the Lightning* and will probably be presented after the Sacco-Vanzetti memorial meeting.

We have some exceptionally good talent in our group but our weakness at the present time is the lack of directors. We hope eventually to develop a group of them.

We are very much interested in the coming conference of dramatic groups being called by the cultural department of the W.I.R. and have already discussed and presented tentative proposals.

Another difficulty is the lack of suitable plays. We have had a few of them suggested to us: the one-acter *Money and Hoboken Blues* by Michael Gold; *Mr. God Is Not In* by Harbor Allen; *Hal-lelujah, I'm a Bum!* and *Wharf Nigger* by Paul Peters, parts of which appeared in the *New Masses*. We would like to get copies of all of them. Tell us how this can be done.

Needless to say we are also interested in the *New Masses* which we think is the only proletarian cultural magazine for working class groups. Our interest in proletarian cultural activities, you see, goes beyond the field of dramatics. We believe also that it is a part of our job to secure subscriptions when we can. We are doing it.

We will keep you informed of our activities in the future. Meanwhile we ask that other groups correspond with us. We will also appreciate any suggestions you feel will be of help.

Fraternally,

V. CUTLER, secretary
REBEL PLAYERS of Los Angeles.

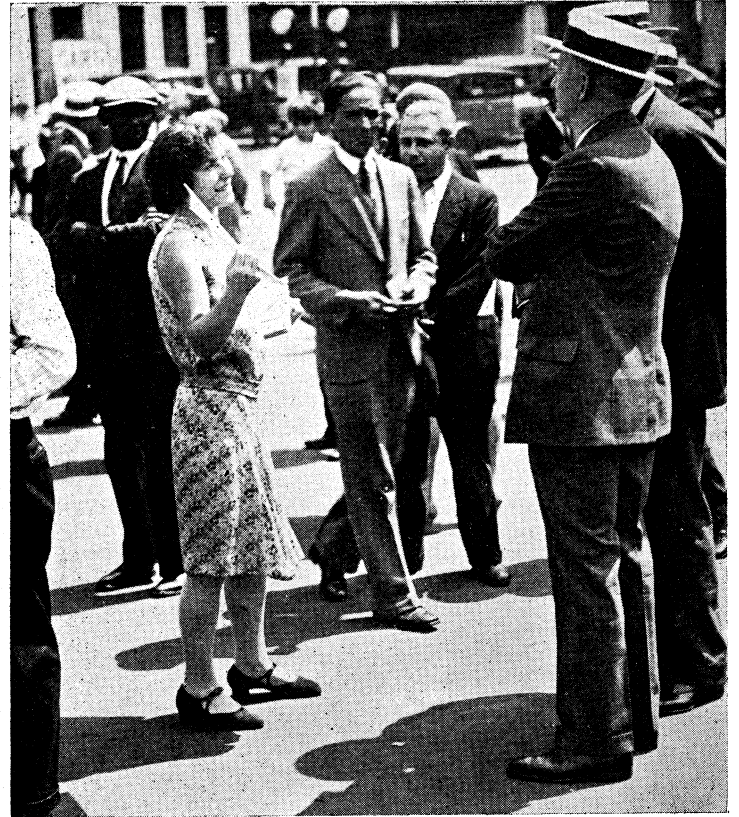
529 North Cummings St.
Los Angeles, Calif.

International Tribune

Comrades:

The International Tribune, Berlin, follows upon the reports in the *New Masses* of Ed. Falkowski and Heinz Luedecke, which have brought many important letters to it from the U. S. A., with this summary of its work:

Although new, it has made close connections with groups and individuals in the U.S.S.R., France, Holland, Lettland, Czecho-Slovakia, Bulgaria and Germany, and beginnings toward such in Japan, Mexico, India, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Denmark. From these lands it receives literary materials, reports, periodicals, etc. and stimulates, in its turn, debates, discussions, theatrical productions, and the exchange of materials for publication among the various lands. A central archive is being established which will begin operations in the fall. Recognizing the *New Masses* as the effectual medium for contact with the revolutionary groups of the U. S. A., the International Tribune would like to establish such an exchange-relationship through the *New Masses* in America. Everywhere there is an ardent interest in the revolutionary literature of America. It is the Tribune's intention to provide the revolutionary periodicals of the various countries with American material. The Tribune is planning an American number for the



Frances Strauss, staff member of the *New Masses*, could not sell a copy of the last issue to Police Commissioner Mulrooney. The International Newsreel photo service headed the picture: "A Communist Magazine?—Not for the Police Commissioner! Despite the enveigling smile of this young news vendor, Police Commissioner Mulrooney is not to be trapped into buying a copy of the Red Magazine she is selling at the funeral for Gonzales, the Mexican Red who was shot by a police officer . . . The Commissioner is standing at the right with folded arms. No sale."

But the Commissioner saw a good many copies sold to the workers attending the funeral and many more copies given away to the unemployed.

Bulgarian periodical, *Nowiss*, for example, and is counting on the help of the *New Masses*. To balance the exchange, the Tribune urges the American friends to occupy themselves more extensively with the revolutionary literature of Europe, not solely of the larger lands, but also of such smaller states as the Balkan, the Baltic, Czecho-Slovakia, etc. These possess many revolutionary writers and artists of whom the world knows too little. The Tribune accepts as a part of its task this propagation of the revolutionary movement in the smaller lands, some of which are under fascist domination . . . Membership in the International Tribune is cost-free, the obligations consist in doing as much as one is best able . . . The Tribune would like to be allowed some space in future numbers of the *New Masses* to inform America as to the progress it is making.

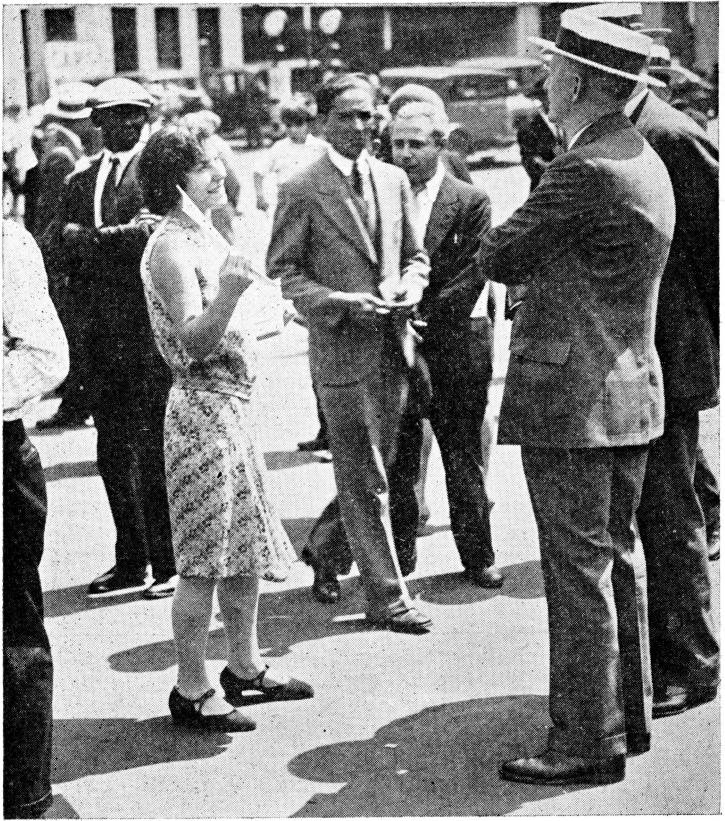
SLATAN DUDOW

Berlin-Spandau—Weinbergsweg 12B, Germany.

WORKERS FILMS

Numerous letters have come in asking for information about workers' films. As yet no further report can be made beyond what is contained in my statement as secretary of the John Reed Club in the previous number of the *New Masses*. When developments have reached the point where a definite move for a film group is to be inaugurated—and that may be some time in the fall—the *New Masses* and the *Daily Worker* will carry detailed notices to that effect. In the meantime I shall be glad to receive the names and addresses of interested parties, who will be notified at the right moment. All mail should be addressed to me, care of *New Masses*.

HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN,



Frances Strauss, staff member of the *New Masses*, could not sell a copy of the last issue to Police Commissioner Mulrooney. The International Newsreel photo service headed the picture: "A Communist Magazine?—Not for the Police Commissioner! Despite the enveigling smile of this young newsvendor, Police Commissioner Mulrooney is not to be trapped into buying a copy of the Red Magazine she is selling at the funeral for Gonzales, the Mexican Red who was shot by a police officer . . . The Commissioner is standing at the right with folded arms. No sale."

But the Commissioner saw a good many copies *sold* to the workers attending the funeral and many more copies given away to the unemployed.

Literature & Revolution

From Upton Sinclair

Dear Mike:

The discussion with Comrade Neets concerning *Mountain City* appears to have become a debate on my favorite subject of art versus propaganda, form versus content. So, let me say a word about it.

Between Neets and me it is in the family, as it were. He is aware of the faults in my books because they are so near to him. Thornton Wilder is safer because he writes about ladies in ancient Greece and bishops in sixteenth-century Peru. I venture to guess that if Wilder should ever write a novel about American industry, Comrade Neets would certainly discover that he does not admire Wilder's art so much after all!

Let me add that I am not unaware of the faults in my books. My critics attend to that for me! In part these faults come from excess of zeal. There are so many books I should like to write, and so many things I should like to do. My wife fusses at me, to go back and work over a manuscript some more; but meantime I have thought of something that seems to me so much more interesting and important.

However, I will try to do better.

Sincerely,

UPTON SINCLAIR.

T'hell With Grammar!

The last few numbers of *New Masses* are very lively good stuff. And it is better all the time. But you are nutty to take Wilder so seriously. What is the matter with all your correspondents, why do they read him? I don't, I read one book and that was enough. His characters and most assuredly his style are plainly diluted. Why don't you go to the originals. If Neets is going to talk about good writing he'd do much better to drag in Joyce or Proust who also had something to say, than Wilder. I read *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and recognized all the hack characters of the ages, but reading the reviews of *The Woman of Andros* I was dumbfounded to see the reviewers all join hands and quote in their innocence the last few lines of that work, apparently unconscious that it is startlingly derived. (I don't mean consciously so) from *The Dead*, a story by James Joyce in *Dubliners*, and the last lines of the *Woman of Andros* are almost an exact dilution of the last line of *The Dead*. Your reviewers fall into exactly the same errors that the "bourgeois" reviewers fall into, namely paying attention to the popularity of the moment, and knowing apparently nothing of sources. Unfortunately the main sources of Wilder, Anatole France, and Cabell seem to me almost less worth studying than Wilder. But that's according to one's taste. I seriously doubt the importance of Wilder's style even considered as style. Word prettiness, even grammar did not enter into it. Balzac and Stendhal had that barb directed against them constantly. Their grammar was faulty, their word structure was slipshod. Perhaps. But they hit the bull's eye when it came to power and significant form which is much more to the point than grammar. Grammar won't make anyone and it won't break anyone. It will get you nowhere. Trust to grammar and you might as well set out in a leaky butter tub. Why is Balzac still read? And Stendhal? They are read more than Flaubert, a master of style, simply because they were more powerful at the business of organizing the novel and more alert about their own times. Read Balzac and see how little we call modern is really so very modern. He saw all the ins and outs of his day, and the fellow who can do that today is going to be an important writer. He will have technique too, but it won't depend on his grammar. No writing to be enduring can depart too far from the language of the streets. Chaucer, wise guy, knew that.

Yours,

JO HERBST.

Rowenna, Pa.

NOTE:—This closes the discussion on literary style and revolution. Our advice to New Masses authors: Write!—M.G.

BY

MICHAEL GOLD



Every one knew Mary Sugar Bum. Some of the most sodden bums made love to her. They bought her a five-cent hooker of rotgut whisky and took her into an alley while she cursed them and bargained for more whisky. We children watched this frequent drama.



O Workers' Revolution, you brought hope to me, a lonely, suicidal boy. You are the true Messiah. You will destroy the East Side when you come, and build there a garden for the human spirit.

A Book of East Side
Memoirs

J E W S WITHOUT MONEY

"Communist though he may be, and thoroughly committed to an economic perspective on poverty and slums, Gold cannot help imbuing his study of the East Side with the warmth, the passionate emotionalism and the violent hatreds and loves he experienced as a boy on its dank streets. He writes so understandingly and sympathetically of its old men and women, its skinny kids, its rabbis, its schlemiels, its prostitutes, its daily life, one senses almost a nostalgia in him for some fundamental quality of living he seems to have experienced there."—William Soskin in *N. Y. Evening Post*.

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With a Year's Subscription to the New Masses (\$1.50) Both for \$2.00.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Humanists & Fairies

Dear Mike Gold:

I think there is a connection between the recent outburst of Humanism and the present flowering of fairy literature which our esteemed critics have failed to note. The exponents of the former differ from the latter only to a small extent: they are not out and out homo's, perhaps because they haven't even that much guts. Refined, empty, gentle, sad, deprived of the masculine experiences enjoyed by most men, secluded, timid, they nurse a mad jealousy that goes deep down into their spleen. This point of jealousy is what I want to stress. Around them are virile business men, tough, ready to fight at the throw of a hat, men of swift action. The Humanists would like to get next to these men . . . some are still trying . . . but even business men who know anything about literature have a disgust for these gasping fishes. The truth, I'm sure, is that what Humanists openly denounce in writing, they secretly envy. A word like sonovabitch and a good healthy spit into the gutter knocks these men over, but I'm sure they would exchange their whole unhealthy stale lives to be able to swear resoundingly and to spit like a man.

Fairy literature as we have it now has been the making of the Humanists. It gave them their chance. It wedged its way into a small public's favor so that Humanism, greatly similar and now with few obstacles in its way, swept through the opened channel like a spurt of long imprisoned foul air under pressure.

All of this is a sad spectacle, but you can't do anything about it. Give it a chance to run its course; it already is on its last lap. And connect the phenomenon with present day life. It's tough going for the weak, who as a result escape to metaphysics or Paris, and indulge in beautiful, sweetly written exercises, the purpose of which is to exploit the dictionary instead of environment. This kind of stuff is another disease of capitalism, and if it itches, just a little bed bug poison will offer relief.

Yours,

New York, N. Y. JOSEPH VOGEL.

From A Brakeman

New Masses:

Like most proletarians who go from grade school into overalls, I have gone along cursing the forces of oppression from the standpoint of the repressed, aloof individual. I now see that this only perpetuates the long standing inhumanities practiced by the high hats who are in the saddle.

I worked around the East, South and West as a switchman and railroad brakeman in times past. A complaining spine necessitated a change to office work. Previously I belonged to the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. Parlor labor leaders pointed to the railroadman and the eight

hour day to show the wonderful leadership of the A. F. of L. Yet at that time brakemen were working from twelve to sixteen hours—nursing hot boxes over a 150 to 250 miles of rails. That organization was lifeless. The day of the privileged clannish trade union is past.

In the telegraph office in Wall Street where I now work the atmosphere is charged with intimidation and efficiency. When an operator sits at a machine that is too fast for fingers to keep up with the routine supervisor may be seen peeking from behind a pillar, pad in hand, recording such infractions of routine as "idle" or "talking." Talking is punished by a few days suspension—lack of speed by eternal refusal of an increase in wages.

The sustained nerve tension on these young boys and girls, most of them in their teens and all hell bent on bread winning, is fierce. The group neurotic condition varies from mild nervous breakdowns to confinement in a psychopathic hospital.

I've seen the "benefits" of our present social organization. Got a good dose of them too. Now the *New Masses* comes along to take me a step further. OK. Go to it. I'm with you.

Sincerely,

New York City. C. ROBILLARD.

A Little Acid, Please

Dear Friends:

The *New Masses* was never as good as in the last few issues. And some of the young fellows you are uncovering speak well for your future. Let's have more of Phil Bard, Gilbert Lewis and Langston Hughes. Looks like I will have to subscribe for the next twenty years.

But let me also throw a posie at Bill Gropper, Klein and Art Young. I laugh with those fellows when I see their names on the cover. They remind me of that great Negro comedian Bert Williams. He could make me laugh by walking out on the stage.

Satirize this cockeyed world we live in. Yours for a little acid on our laughter.

Sincerely,

San Francisco, Cal. ALLAN DAVIS.

William Gropper—is now at work on two stories in drawings: *The Story of A Mill Worker*, founded on the Gastonia strike and *Alay Oop!*, a circus burlesque. Both will appear this fall. The drawing "Mill Town" in this issue, is from his picture story of Gastonia.

Douglas Brown—is a chemical engineer, graduate of Harvard. He was hired by Edison thru the famous questionnaire and is a member of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers. He has been drawing and painting for two years around New Orleans. This is his first published work.



Harry Alan Potamkin—was born in Philadelphia in 1900. Studied in two universities, graduating from one after fluctuations between the social sciences and belles lettres. For five years directed the Children's Play Village, an enterprise in educative play. Began public life in *The Liberator*, while still in college, with a diatribe in doggerel against Woodrow Wilson. Has since published here and abroad verse, stories, and criticism of "the popular show": theatre, movie, mechanical music, etc. Correspondent in New York for *Close Up*, *Experimental Cinema*, etc. Secretary of the John Reed Club.

In This Issue

John Dos Passos—is at work on another novel and writing articles in leading publications on the new wave of Fishy Red hysteria.

Horace Gregory—poet and critic, is author of *Chelsea Rooming House*, a book of verse to be published in September.

Charles Yale Harrison—author of *Generals Die In Bed*, just published, contributes to this issue from his second novel to appear this winter.

Regino Pedrosa—is a young Cuban poet of Chinese-Negro descent, at present living in Havana. He is a worker in an iron foundry. We are indebted to Langston Hughes, for his discovery and for the translations of his work. Another of his poems will appear in the next issue.

Phil Bard—19 year old New York artist, made his first appearance in the last issue of *New Masses*.

Samuel Brody—has written on motion pictures for *Monde*, *Close-Up*, *Daily Worker* and other publications.

Myra Page—is author of the recently published pamphlet, *Southern Cotton Mills And Labor*.

I. Klein—has just completed a story in cartoons and is now at work on a series of satirical drawings to appear in coming issues of *New Masses*.

NEW MASSES



Harry Alan Potamkin—was born in Philadelphia in 1900. Studied in two universities, graduating from one after fluctuations between the social sciences and belles lettres. For five years directed the Children's Play Village, an enterprise in educative play. Began public life in *The Liberator*, while still in college, with a diatribe in doggerel against Woodrow Wilson. Has since published here and abroad verse, stories, and criticism of "the popular show": theatre, movie, mechanical music, etc. Correspondent in New York for *Close Up*, *Experimental Cinema*, etc. Secretary of the John Reed Club.

From Andreas Latzko

Dear Comrade Potamkin:

A very good friend of mine, Mrs. Herminia zur Muhlen of Frankfurt, sent me the last issue of *New Masses* containing your criticism of Remarque's and Sheriff's movies in which you make reference to my book *Men In War*. I was very pleased and I thank you.

You will be interested perhaps in knowing that although the book has been translated into 19 languages it has to date remained quite unknown in Germany and Austria. During the war it was forbidden; after the war: unwished-for, like everything honest which reminded them of the nightmare.

Although written in German it was for a long time quite unobtainable for the German reader because of its price in Swiss francs. *Men In War* is the only war book, which in the new fashion of war books, did not rise from the dead. All my attempts to find a new German publisher to bring out the book have miscarried; just as the attempts to obtain at least some reviews in German newspapers at this time have failed. Judging from the difficulties which the book has faced until now, I am tempted to believe, that the only reason for all this is that the book is too pacifistic.

Since you had an unbiased interest in my work and came to the same conclusion in your review, you can imagine that I was sincerely pleased.

You do however mention my book as if it were quite generally known. I wish it were so. Certainly it is not known to those reading German, the language in which it was written. Although *Men In War* was published in English by Cassell in London and by Liveright in New York, and has lately been reissued in a cheap edition by the National Library, it has from 1917 until today, reached but a very few English speaking people.

I add this information about my book to my gratefulness for your kind words about it.

With best wishes to yourself and the *New Masses*.

Sincerely,

ANDREAS LATZKO.

Salzburg, Austria.

Wanted: John Reed Data

The John Reed Club plans to observe the 10th anniversary of the death of John Reed in October. The plans include a special issue of *New Masses*, articles in various publications, a pamphlet on the life of John Reed, an art exhibit, etc. For the purpose, the Club appeals to the readers of *New Masses* for any items concerning John Reed: photographs, letters, stories concerning Reed, etc. All items will be handled carefully and returned promptly.

Address the Secretary John Reed Club, care of *New Masses*.

In the "Sunny South"

Editor *New Masses*:

New persecutions of workers, in the South especially, have forced the John Reed Club to further action. The Club has now sponsored an Emergency Committee for Southern Political Prisoners, with Theodore Dreiser as Chairman and John Dos Passos, treasurer.

Weekly new outrages call for emergency measures. An example, is the case of Stephen Graham, now facing deportation as a result of a meeting between Negro and white workers.

Originally, he was charged with "inciting the Negro population to insurrection against the white population." After two trials, he was acquitted. He was then rearrested, charged with "advocating the violent overthrow of the government" and now faces deportation.

In every section of the South, workers attempting to organize, must contend with feudal conditions.

In her pamphlet *Southern Cotton Mills and Labor*, Myra Page tells of her reception in a southern mill town:

"The second week I was on the hill, the local sheriff frightened our household by paying me a visit."

"Mr. Wheeler, the super, sent me down here to be sure you ain't doin' no harm. We're keerful of strangers. You ain't here to

stir up labor troubles, or a-spyin' for them nothern mill owners? You know, Hutchins Company owns this here town and nobody kin set foot inside without its permission. I'm the town sheriff, and Hutchins mill pays my salary—I quote his own words—' to see no-one stays home sick who should be at work, and nobody comits murder or adultery, and that no labor agitators git in!'"

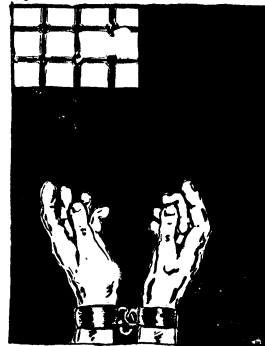
Under these conditions the brutal outrages against workers are repeated thruout the South.

The Emergency Committee For Political Prisoners will co-operate with the International Labor Defense in securing bail for imprisoned workers and relief for their families. On this committee, headed by Dreiser and Dos Passos, are Sherwood Anderson, Waldo Frank, Alfred Kreymborg, Lola Ridge, Boardman Robinson, Upton Sinclair, Louis Untermeyer, Carl Van Doren, Edmund Wilson and others.

Contributions and all communications should be addressed to John Dos Passos, Room 430, 80 E. 11 St., New York, N. Y.

JOHN REED CLUB PRESS COMMITTEE,

Joseph Pass, Sec'y.



Official Organ of the
International Labor Defense

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