

This is the

## **16 page special Art Section**

of the

**October 01 1935 (Vol. 17 No. 1) issue of**

## **New Masses**

This section was printed on high quality, low acid, high clay (glazed) paper. The reproductions of the art in it art of notably better quality than the usual printing of art in the pages of New Masses from the mid 1930s.

The paper used is quite distinct from the moderately high acid, coarse paper on which all of the New Masses of the mid 1930s are printed.

At the time I scanned those mid 1930's issues of New Masses (2016, 2017, 2018), eighty plus years after they were printed, the pages were brown, extra brown at the edges, fragile and to at least some extent brittle and crumbling.

This special art section was near pure white, and the paper almost supple. Yes, there were some minor degree signs of aging, but they were far far less prominent than the signs of aging of most of the paper of New Masses from that period.

The following pages are pages 17 thru page 32 of the October 1935 issue.

Page 17, entirely text, I scanned in 600 dpi single bit BW fashion.

The next 15 pages, all reproductions of art, I scanned at 600 dpi, 8 bit gray scale. Contrast and brightness settings were close to flat in all cases at the time of the scan, tho both were boosted just a very small amount. In the case of page 18, the William Gropper charcoal sketch, I also scanned that one image in 1200 dpi single bit BW mode, with careful choice of the threshold.

The rest of the October 01 1925 Issue ... pages 1 - 15 and pages 33 - 48 ... I present as a separate pdf file elsewhere.

---marty San Pablo CA December 2017

Martin H. Goodman MD  
Director, Riazanov Library digital archive projects

## ART SECTION

# Revolutionary Art Today

THOMAS S. WILLISON

THE modern painter who wishes to represent social reality and revolutionary struggle has far greater difficulties to overcome than the poet or novelist. These have always dealt with human beings, even when literature was most aestheticized and indifferent to social reality. The models of the self-absorbed literary artist have been writers like Proust and Joyce who, whatever their indifference or insensitiveness to large sections of society and to whole fields of human action, have a marvellously sure perception of individual feeling. The modern writer had to be attentive to the minutest variations of internal life; in his subjectivity, he was a delicate and refined observer. The great painters of the same time, men like Picasso and Matisse, on the other hand, have only the slightest interest in acting and feeling human beings. They convert the human subject into an abstruse arabesque or intense spot of color. Their human beings are faceless or expressionless, separated from each other, or bound together through deformations which negate their human character or their psychological richness; they are ultimately still-life, if the natural shapes are preserved. This reduction is not inherent in art, but in a certain style of art, a style that had an historical necessity, but not the eternal validity that is claimed for it. But even the more realistic contemporary artists have much the same character. Those who in opposition to abstract art call themselves objective painters are scrupulously objective about apples, pots, furniture, buildings, machines, mountains, nude bodies—essentially impersonal objects.

When an artist who has painted in this manner resolves to paint a momentous or moving reality, which today is the reality of class struggle and the decay of capitalism, he experiences the utmost difficulty in conceiving his new material. His whole practice of art has unfitted him for the representation of a large field, dense in meanings, with interacting, changing, differentiated human beings. He must create for the first time images of great occasions, continuities of action with gradations of feeling, the plastic equivalents of complex ideas and the realities of environment as acting on masses of people and yet as the creation of these same people. If art were simply a synthesis of form and a subject, one could say: the talented painter who has occupied himself so long with form has only to acquire the "right" content and add it to his form and he will have produced a successful art.

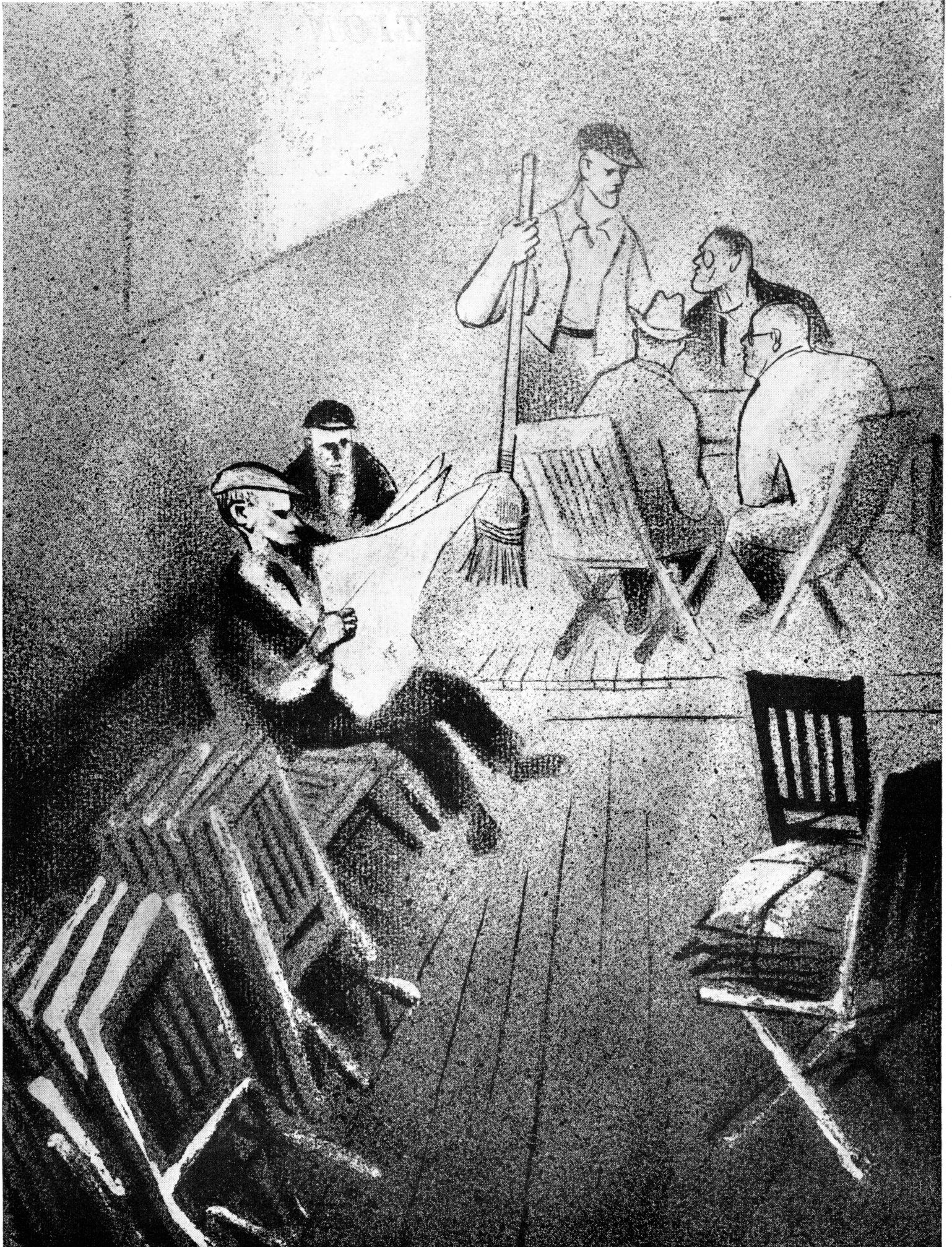
The artist who has gone beyond the stage of inserting into a painting, conceived entirely in terms of his original subject-matter and form, some detail that signifies, however vaguely or precisely, his new revolutionary sympathy, will seize first upon the most striking and common aspects of the world he wishes to render, just as an archaic artist draws an object in its simplest form and makes the few parts equally clear. He identifies the revolutionary struggle with the demonstration, the picket-line and the unemployed, or with obvious personifications of the capitalist class. This in itself is not a weakness; but we must confess that we still have no satisfactory, no "classic" representation of even these themes, which are so simple and so frequently attempted. In general they are rendered as spectacles; the appearance or composition of the scene predominates over its inner life, its psychological tensions and latent meanings. These do not presuppose qualities intrinsically foreign to painting; they are situations which may be realized concretely through painting, as we can judge from the dramatic and psychological values of older arts. The difficulty is not that the solutions hitherto achieved are static, but that their movement is mainly picturesque or formalistic, involving on the part of the spectator a merely complementary filling out of the suggested objects in the scene, a recognition of places and types of person, rather than an active penetration of a densely worked-out picture, with an inexhaustible richness of human relationships. But as little as one can penetrate a flat surface, so little can one penetrate a representation devoid of meanings. The purely formalistic study of older arts has blinded painters to the richness of significance in these works, a richness manifested in postures, gestures, expressions and formal devices, which are still legible, despite our ignorance of the original meaning and symbolism of the whole.

It must be pointed out, however, that the artist's experience as a "pure" painter is not altogether a hindrance in his new art. It is not merely that the old technique and developed sensitivity to colors and shapes and handling are still valid—to a certain degree these are conditioned by the underlying attitudes of the painter and may have to be changed. But there are intimate conditions of his former practice which survive in the new art in a transfigured and heightened way.

The world he now wishes to depict is too complex and many-sided to be photographed in cold blood. His view of it embraces such

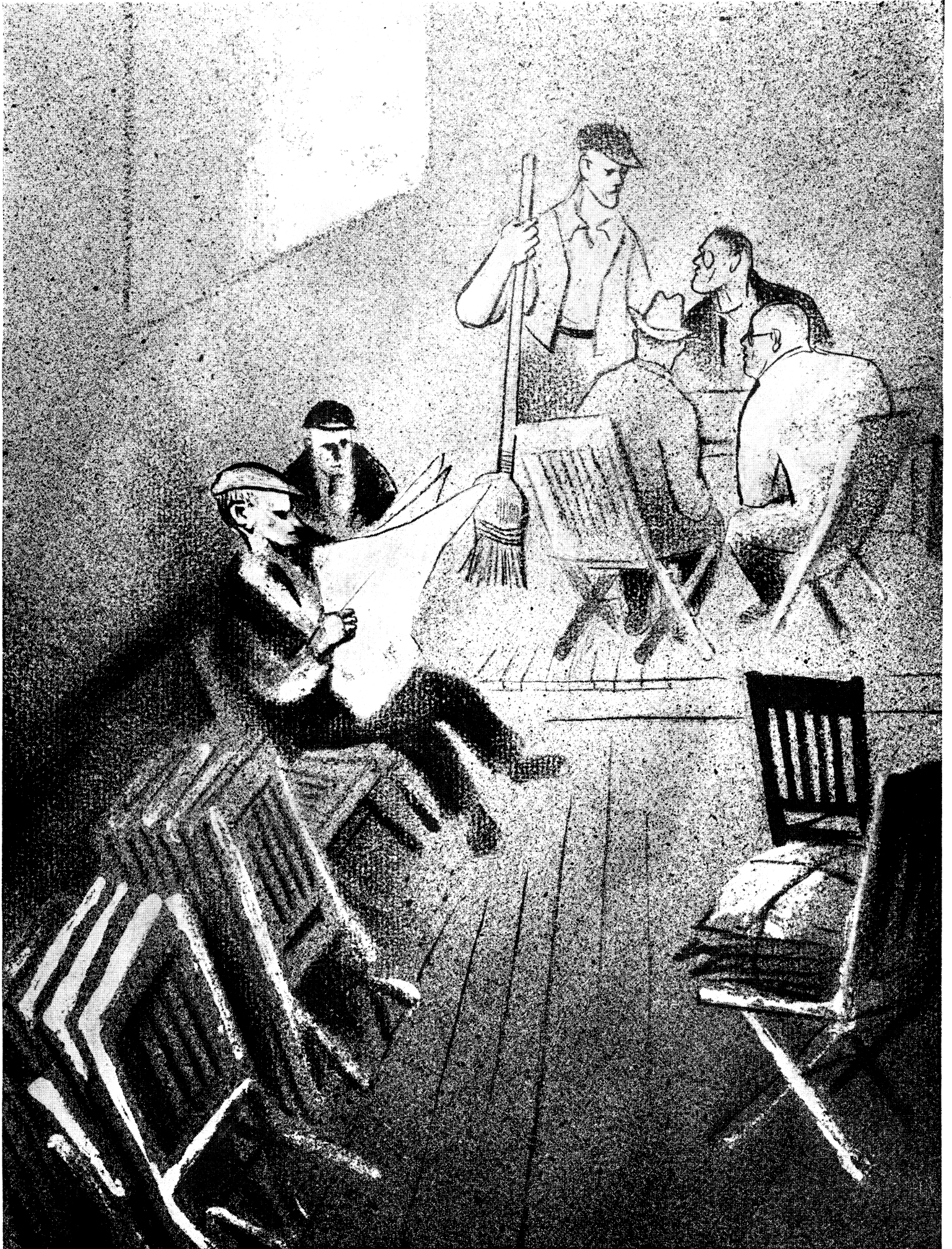
energies and interplay that his perception of the simplest event must embody more than meets the eye and no single scene by itself can be wholly adequate or the highest goal of his realistic imagination. He must develop, if he wishes to attain the desired intensity or comprehensiveness, formal devices which, while foreign to the snapshot appearance, are capable of widening and deepening the scope of the meanings in a representation. In this effort he maintains the tradition of conscious formal freedom established by the art of the last thirty years, but on a new plane and in a context which thoroughly transforms the original sense of this artistic independence. The revolutionary cartoon and mural exhibit this continuity of art to the highest degree; in their most realistic aspect they are much less realistic than the corresponding easel-pictures and often recall the creations of abstract art; but they are, in consequence, far more compact or extensive, pointed or thorough, in their realism.

The revolutionary artist does not find at hand an already digested material, a repertoire of traditional compositions of important subjects, like the old church pictures of the enthroned Christ, the baptism or crucifixion or the last judgment, from which he can proceed. He begins as an individual artist who must create his own themes as he created his abstractions or neutral compositions of objects. He has the whole responsibility of his conceptions. There are no formulas or prescribed rules of revolutionary painting. He is absolutely original and individual in creating this social art which binds him to a group. As a member of this group he shares a common experience and is stimulated and guided by general principles and practices which have crystallized in long struggles and constant discussion. But as an artist he requires now a courage and self-reliance of another order than his self-reliance as a pure artist. For whereas in the latter situation he judged his works in an absolutely sovereign spirit, admitting no judgment of a layman, his work now is addressed consciously to the masses as well as to artists. He does not merely desire the masses' respectful approval as a sign of his technical success; he desires their critical absorption of his work as a sign of its real effectiveness. In addressing himself consciously to a wider and more serious audience to whom the subjects of his art are their most vital experience and matters of life and death, he takes on a series of new responsibilities, practically unknown to artists in the past.



WILLIAM GROPPER

Union Hall



WILLIAM GROPPER

Union Hall



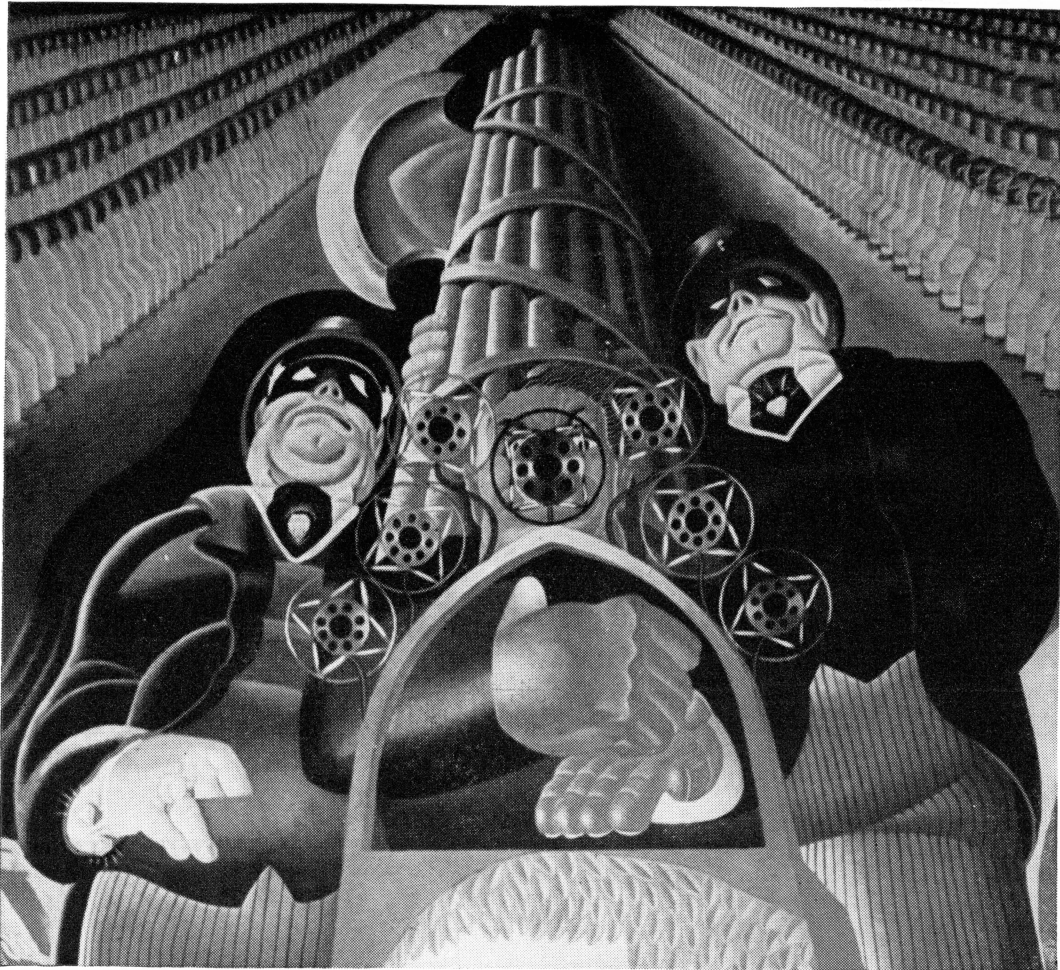
PEGGY BACON

*Pity the Blind*



SELMA FREEMAN

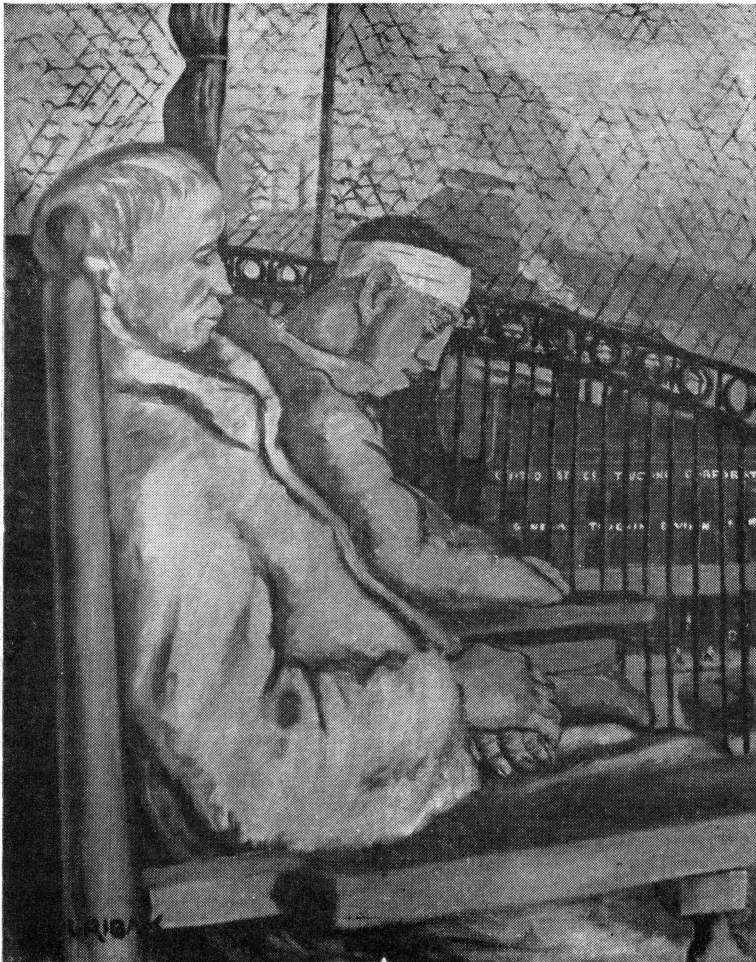
*Strike Talk*

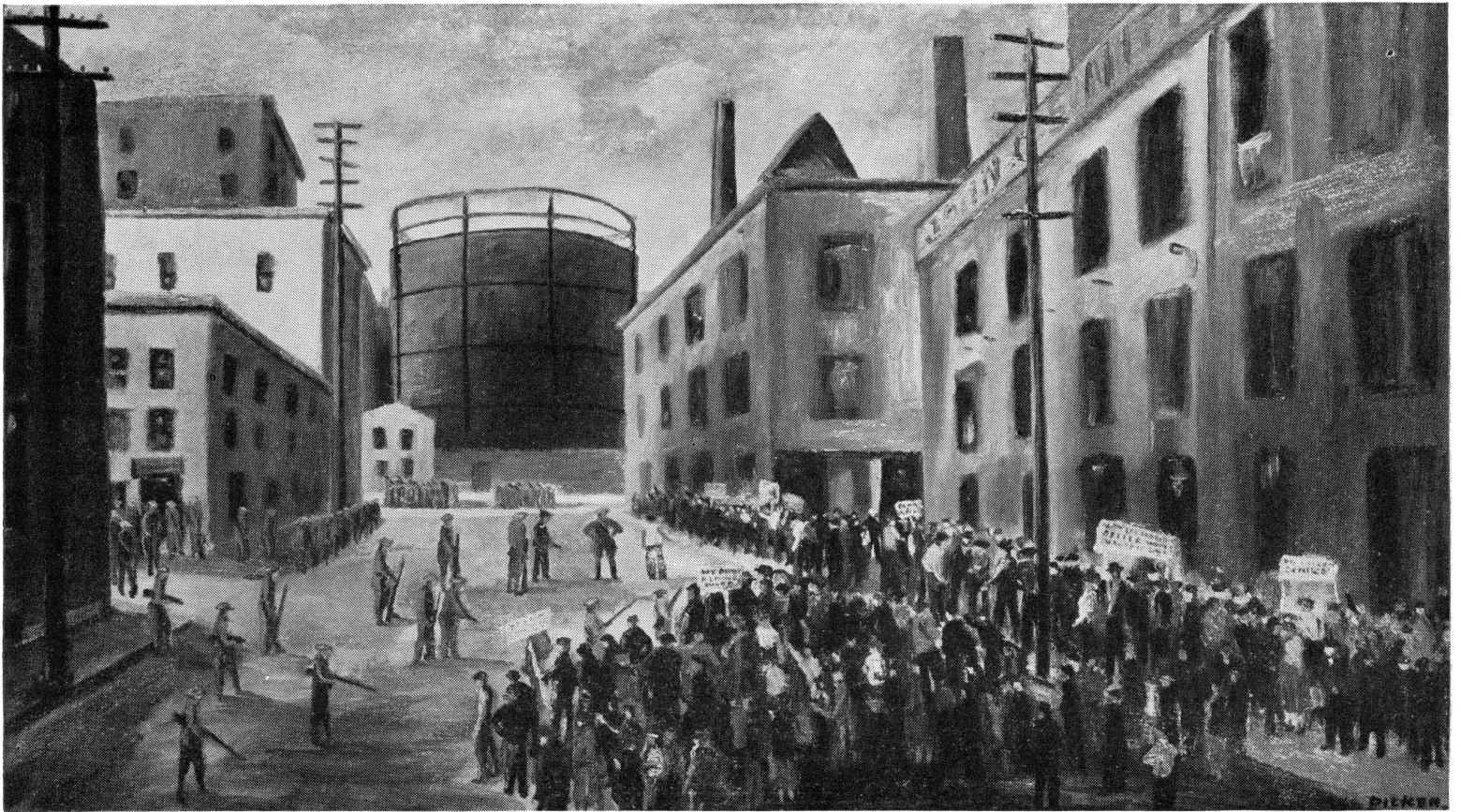


Left  
**GILBERT WILSON**  
*Robber Barons*

Left below  
**LOUIS RIBAK**  
*Industrial Victims*

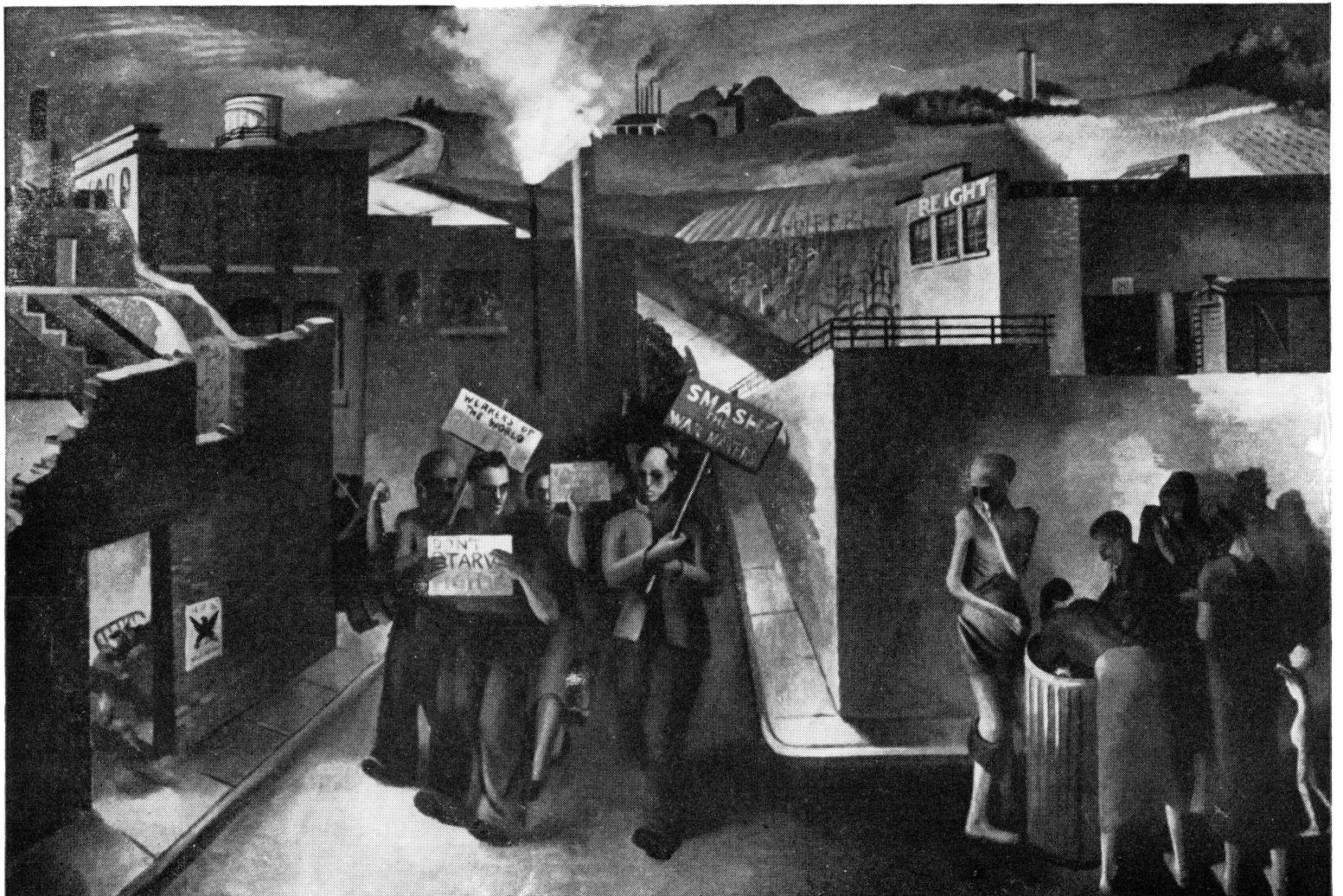
Right below  
**WILLIAM SIEGEL**  
*Symbols of Fascism*





GEORGE PICKEN

Strike



JOE JONES

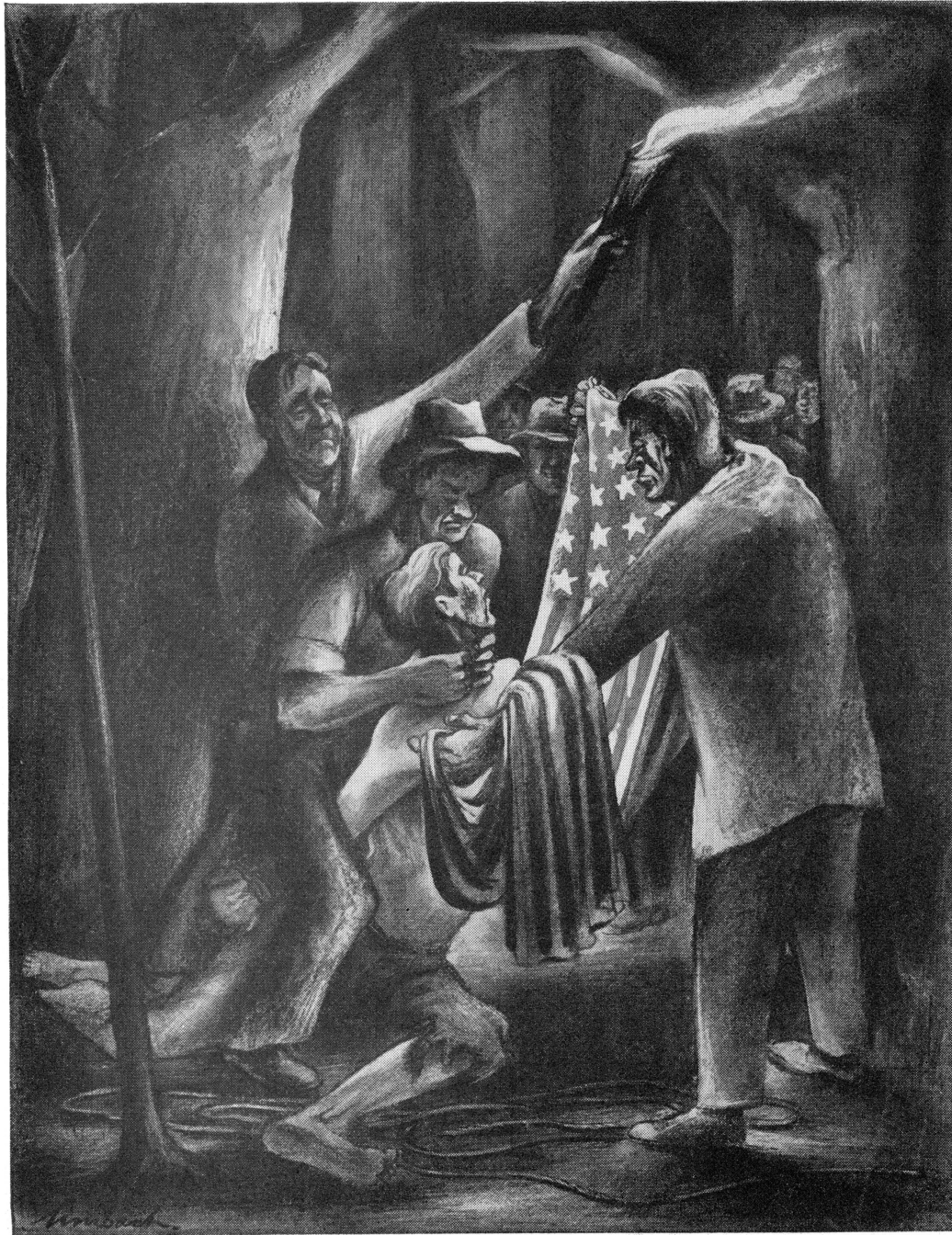
Demonstration



ARNOLD BLANCH

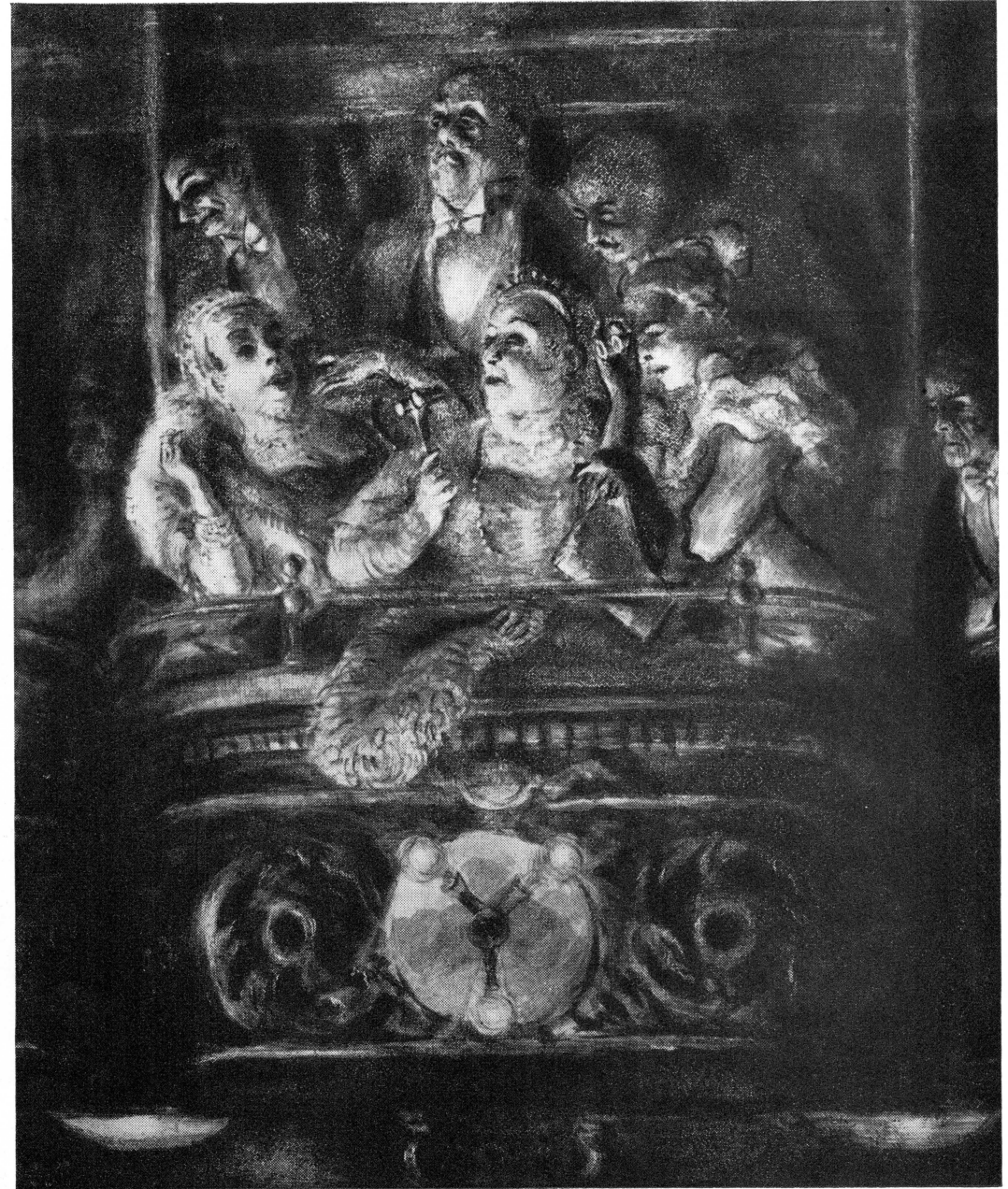
*The Third Mortgage*





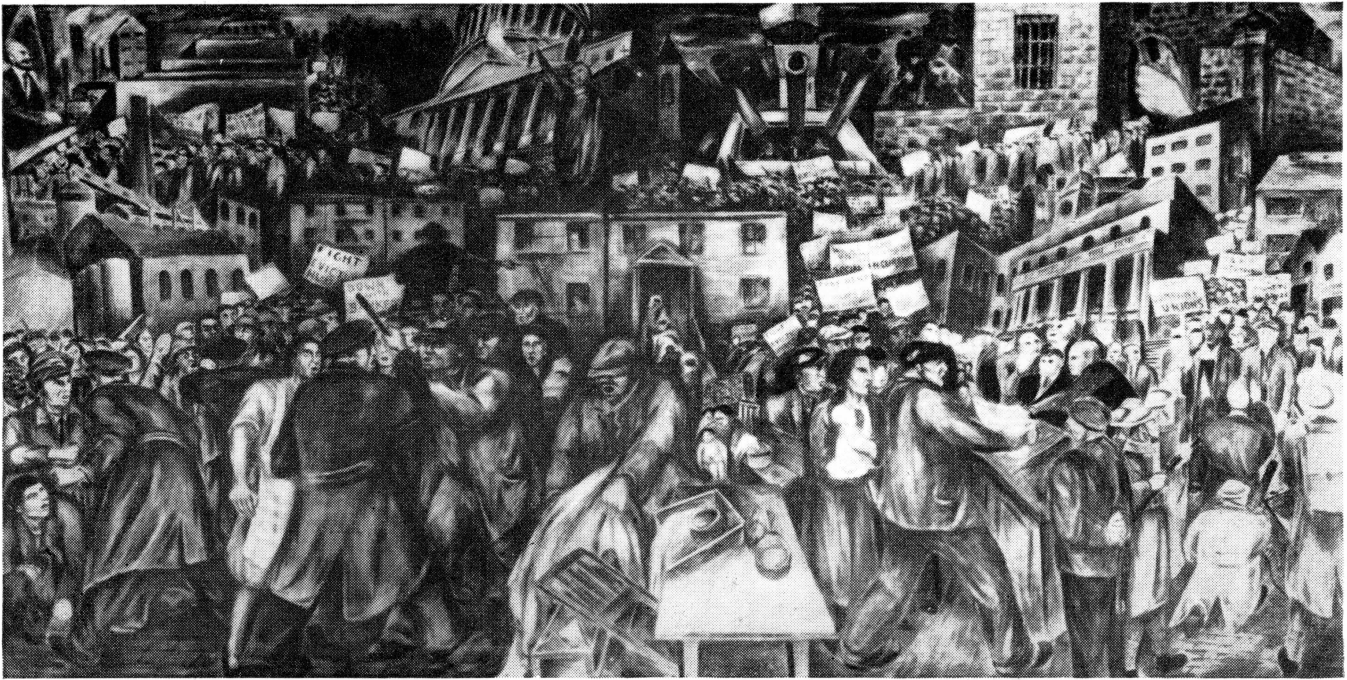
RUSSELL LIMBACH

*"Kiss that Flag"*



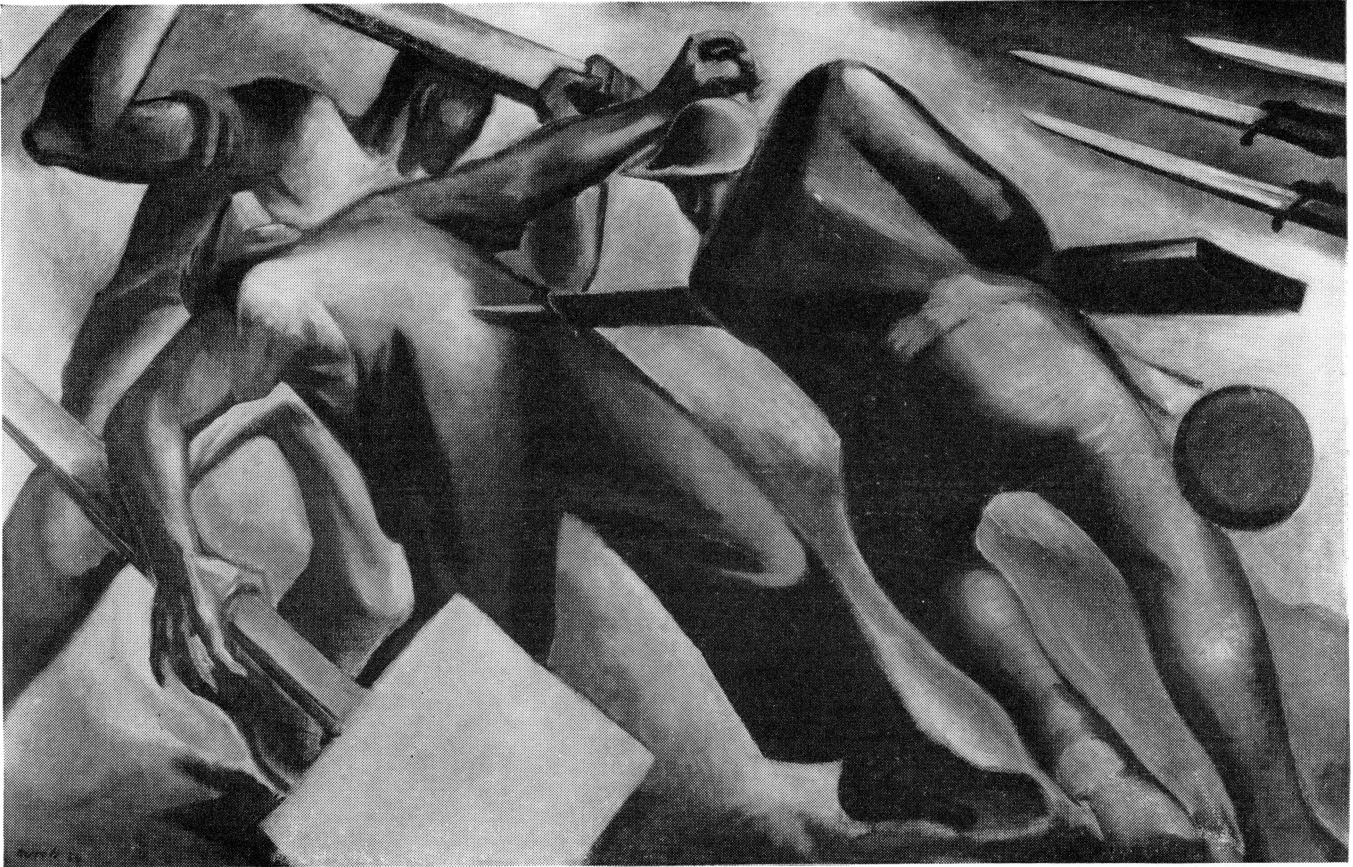
REGINALD MARSH

*A Box at the Metropolitan*



Above  
**JOSEPH VOGEL**  
 America

left  
**GILBERT ROCKE**  
 The New Com:rade



JACOB BURCK

The New Deal



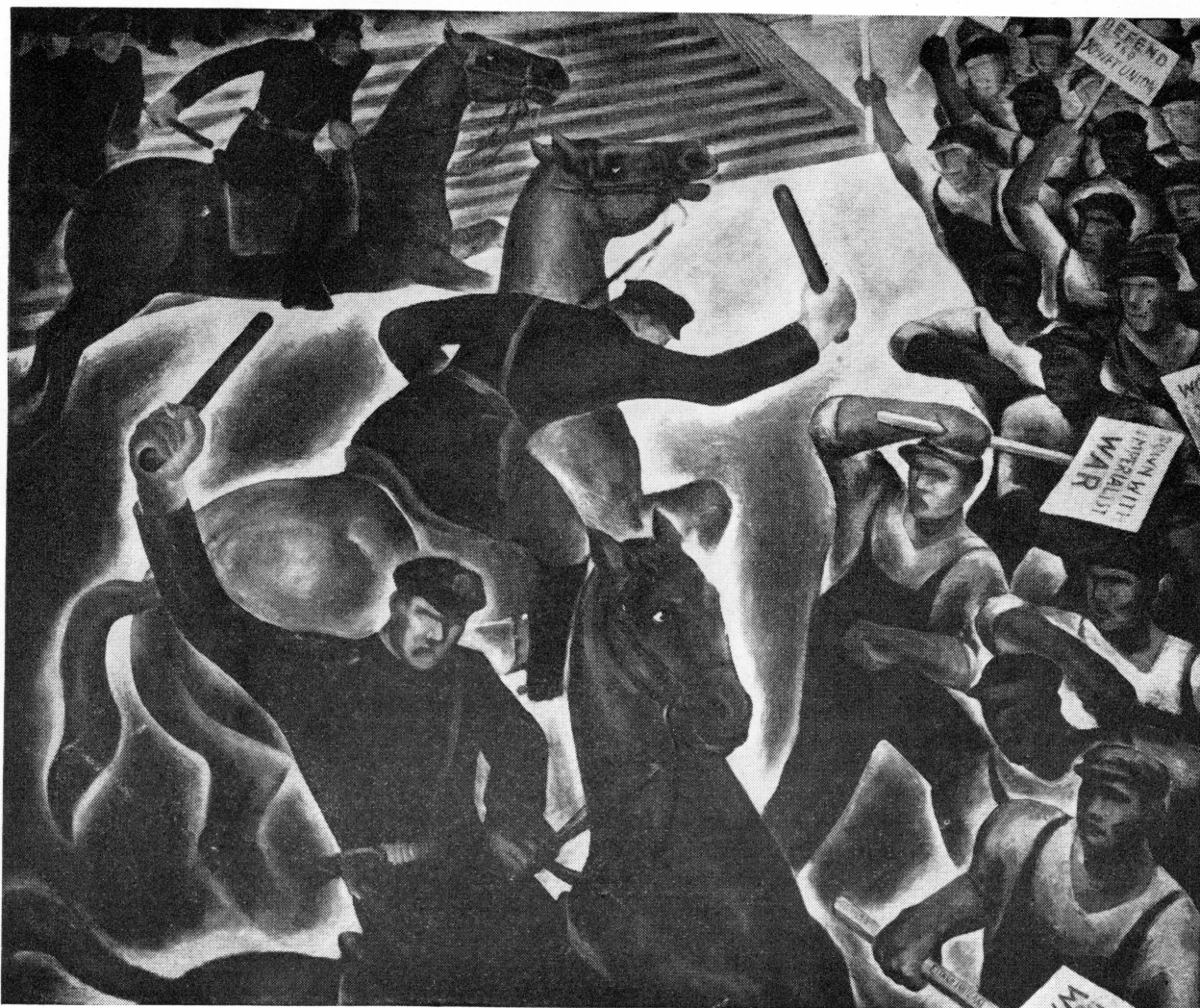
LIL ADELMAN

"Free Speech"



ANTON REFREGIER

War Makers

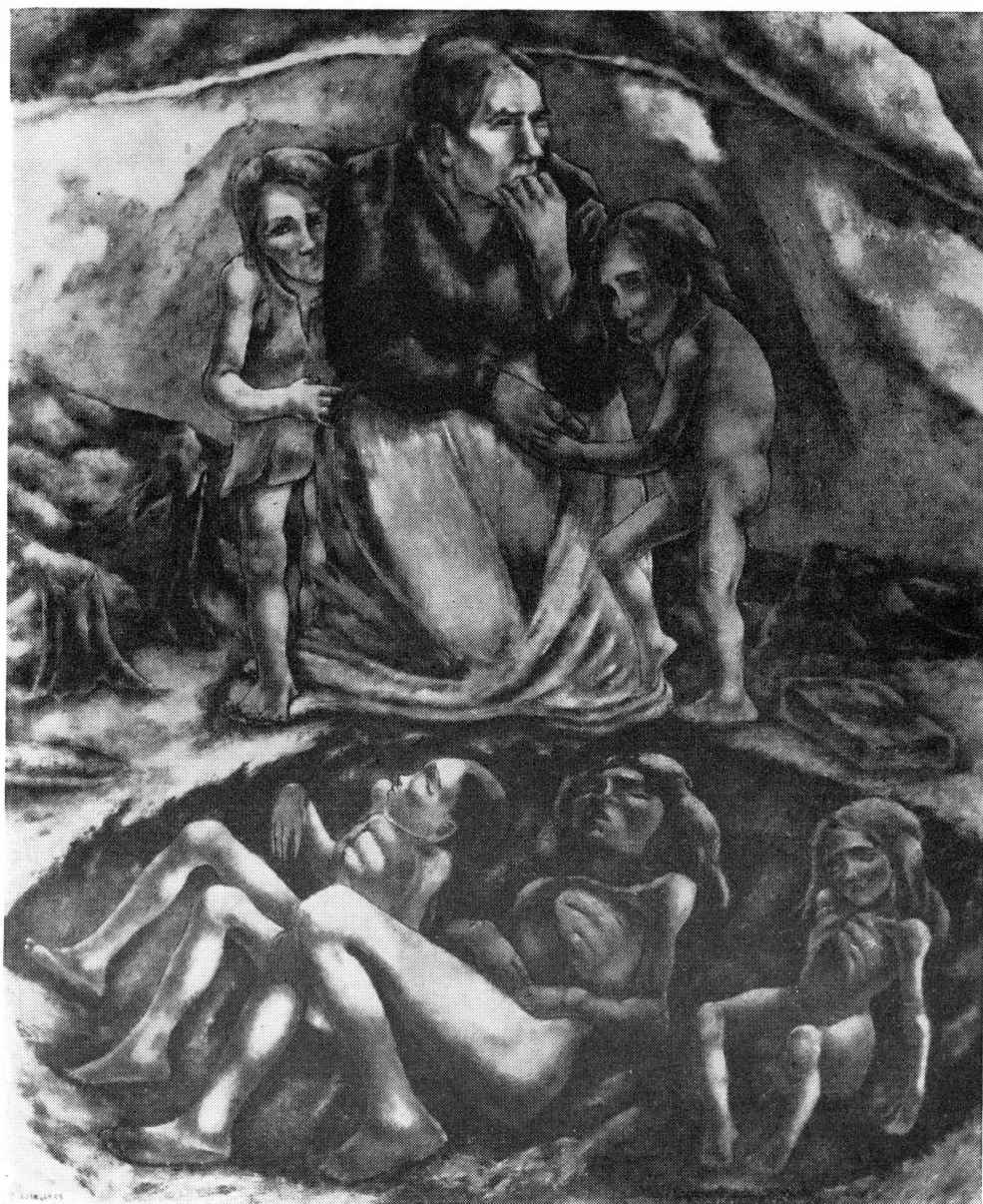


EITARO ISHIGAKI

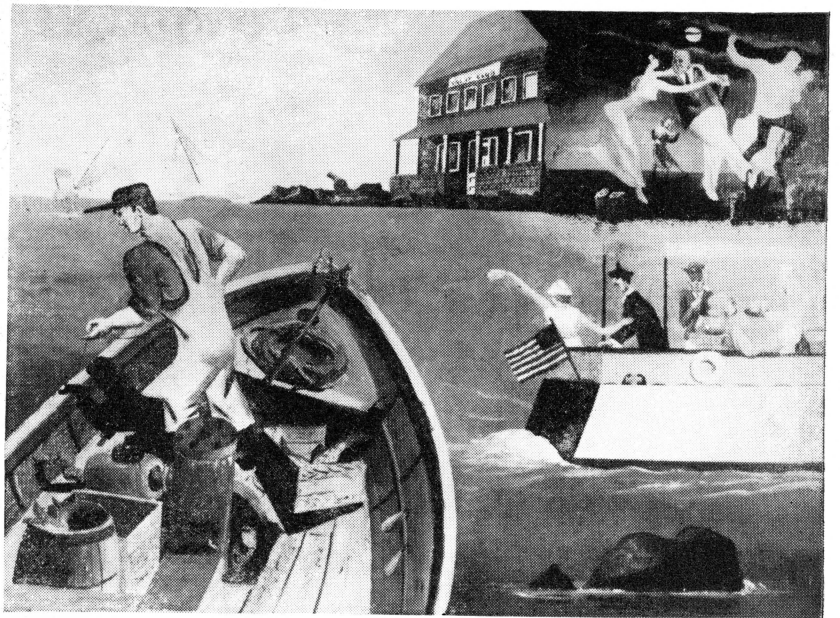
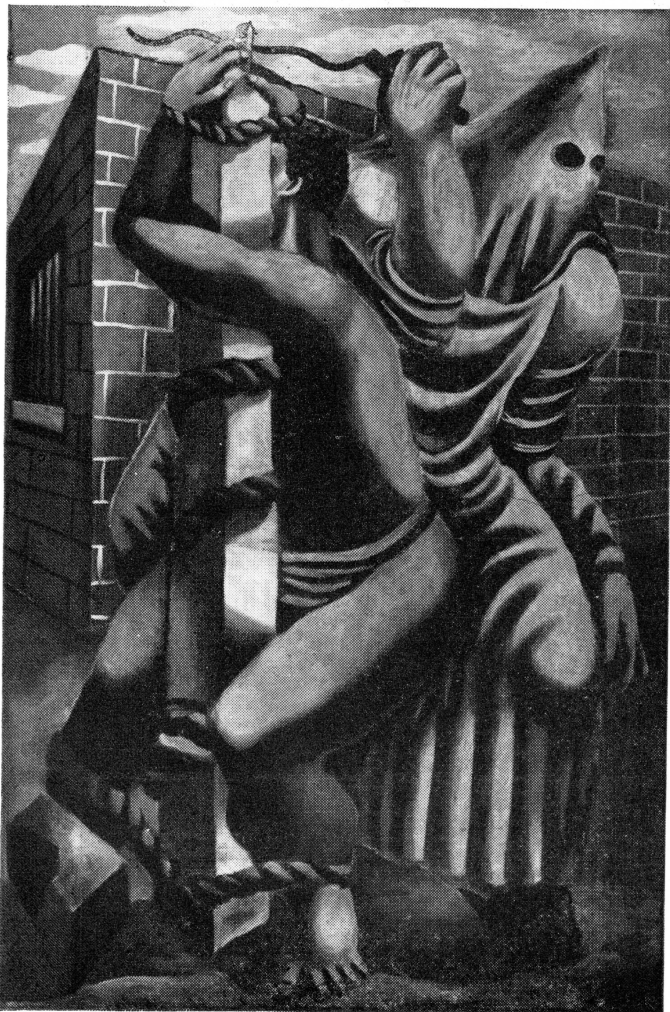
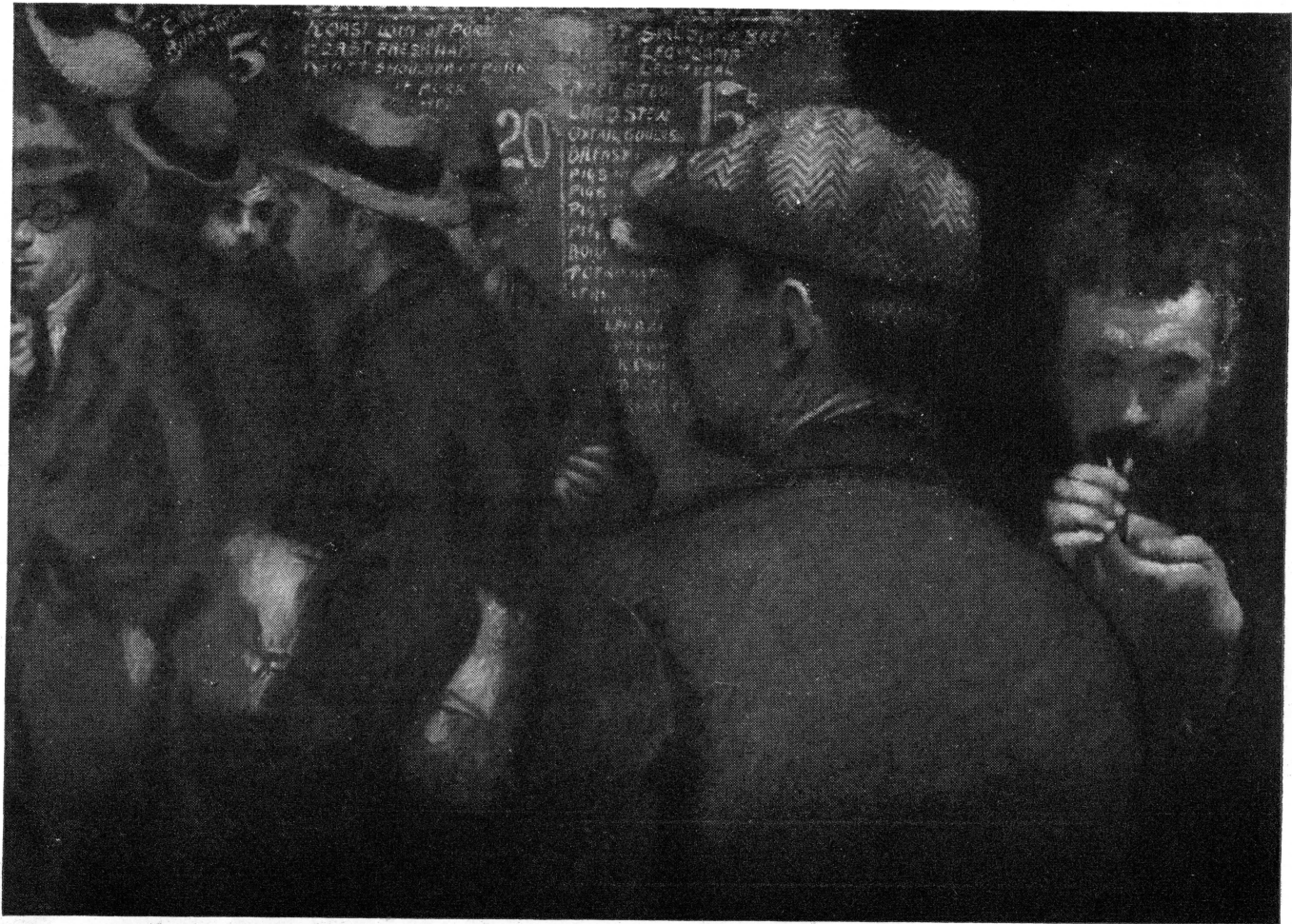
American Cossacks



GEORGES SCHREIBER  
*Family Affair*



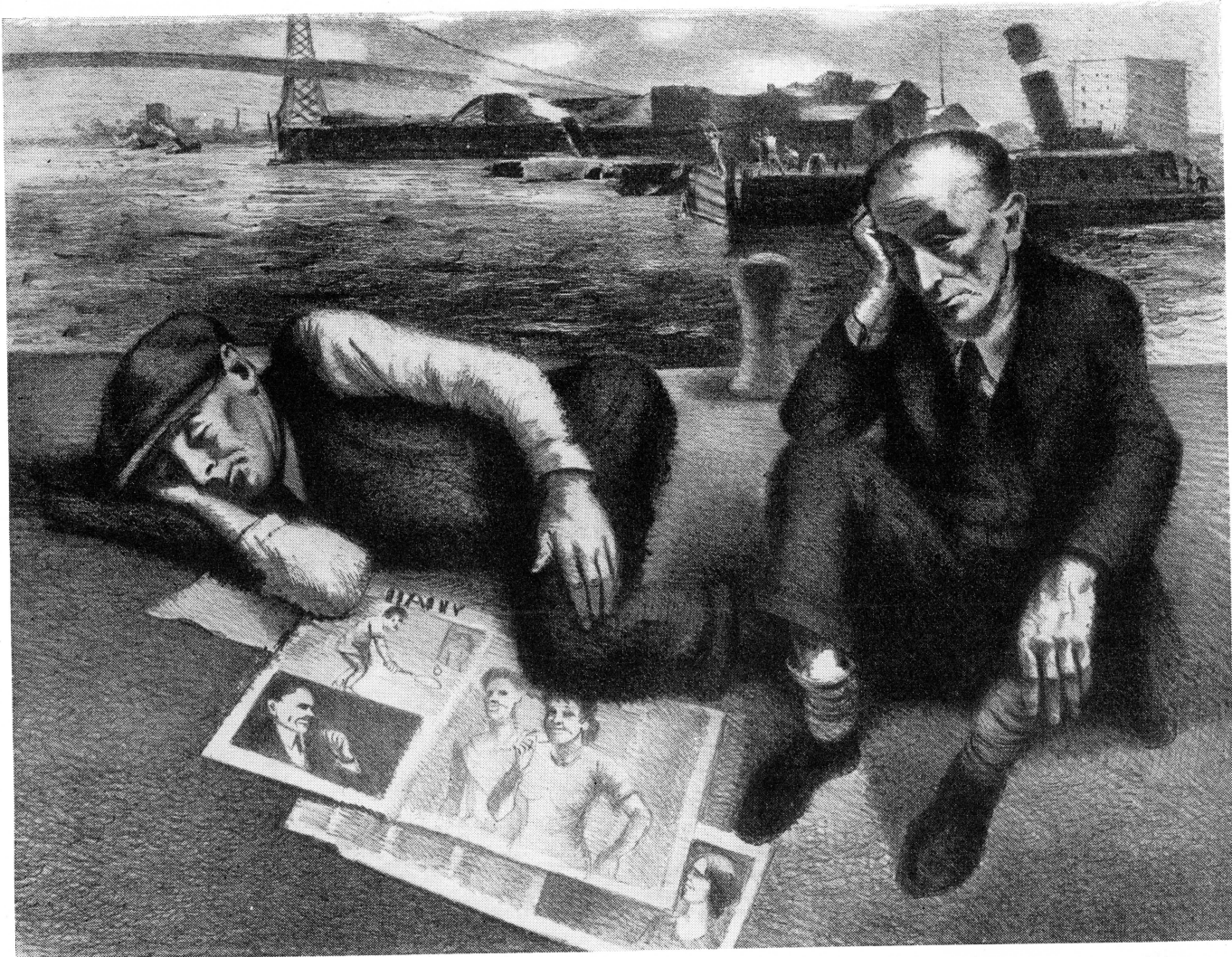
GEORGE BIDDLE  
*Starvation*



Top: **RAPHAEL SOYER**  
*Bowery Nocturne*

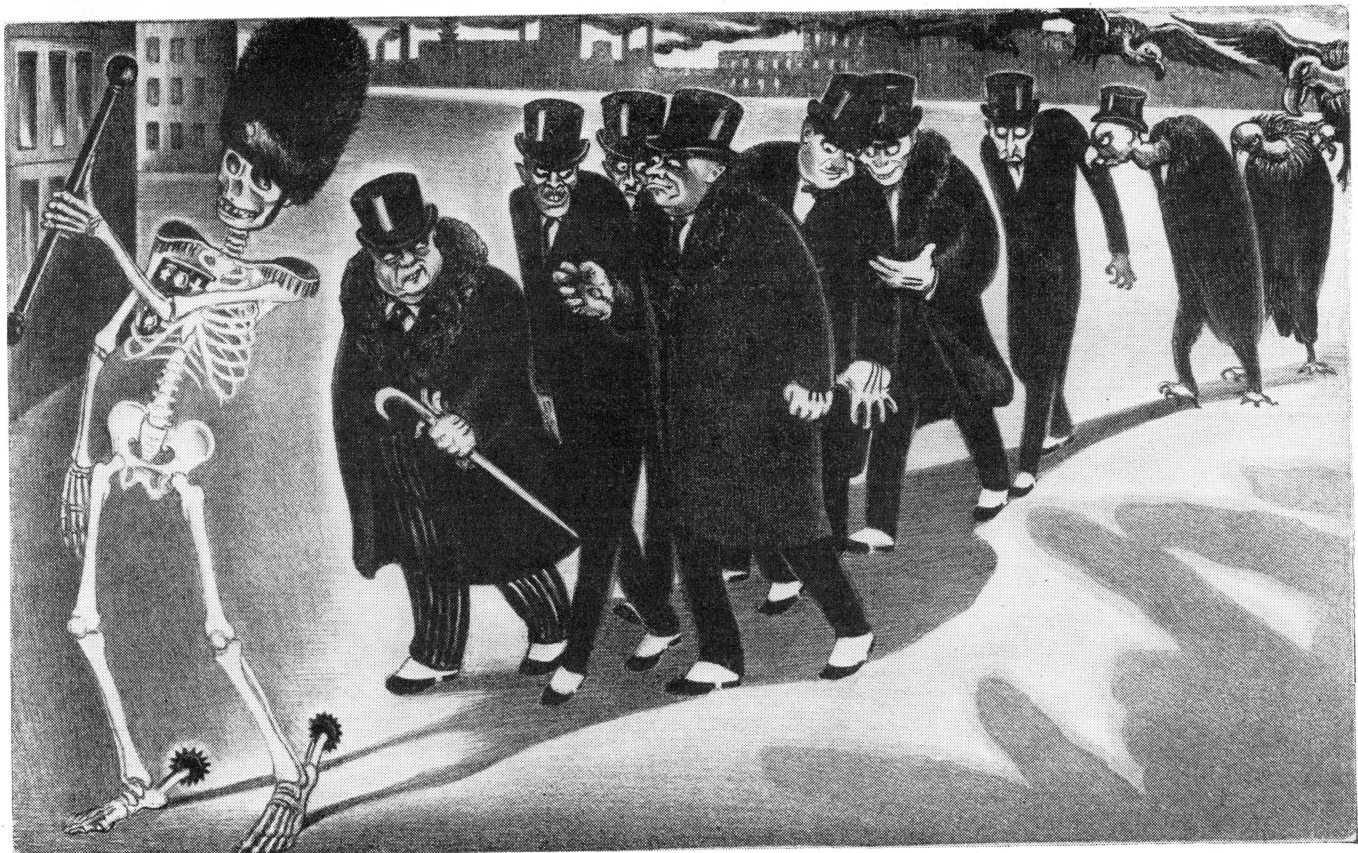
Above: **JIM GUY**  
*Two Classes*

Left: **LUIS ARENAL**  
*Ku Klux Klan*



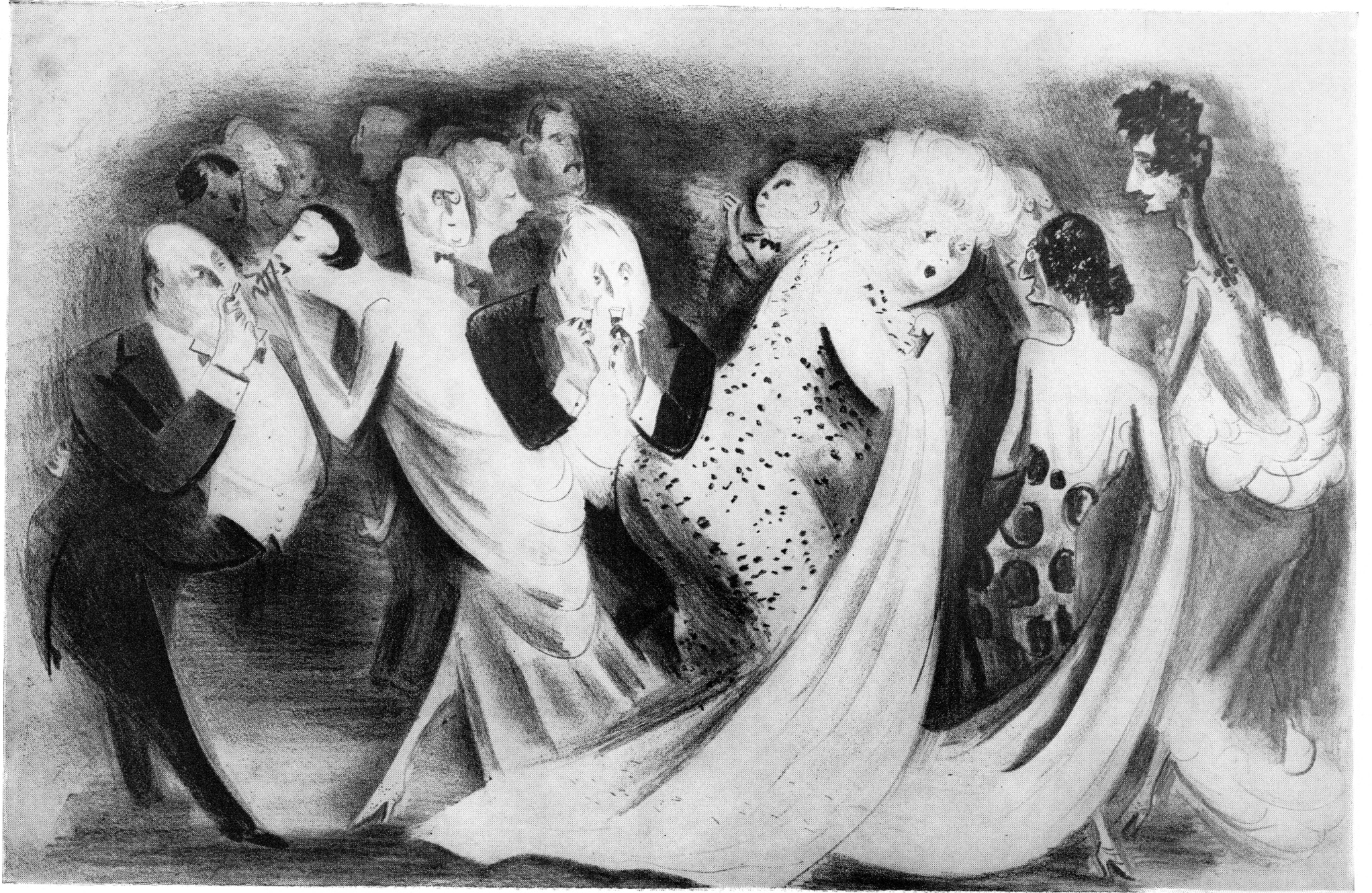
NICOLAI CIKOVSKY

East River



MABEL DWIGHT

Merchants of Death



ADOLF DEHN

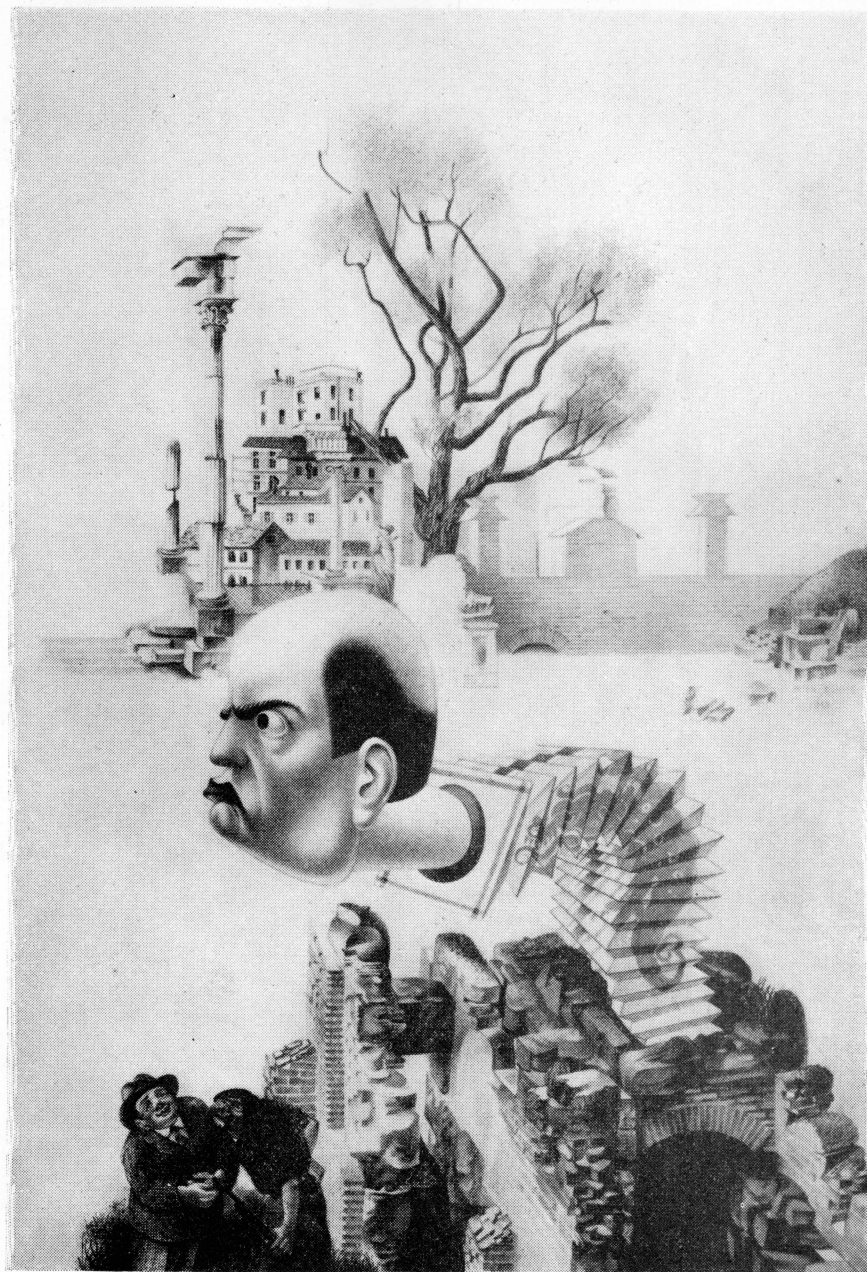
*Impasse*





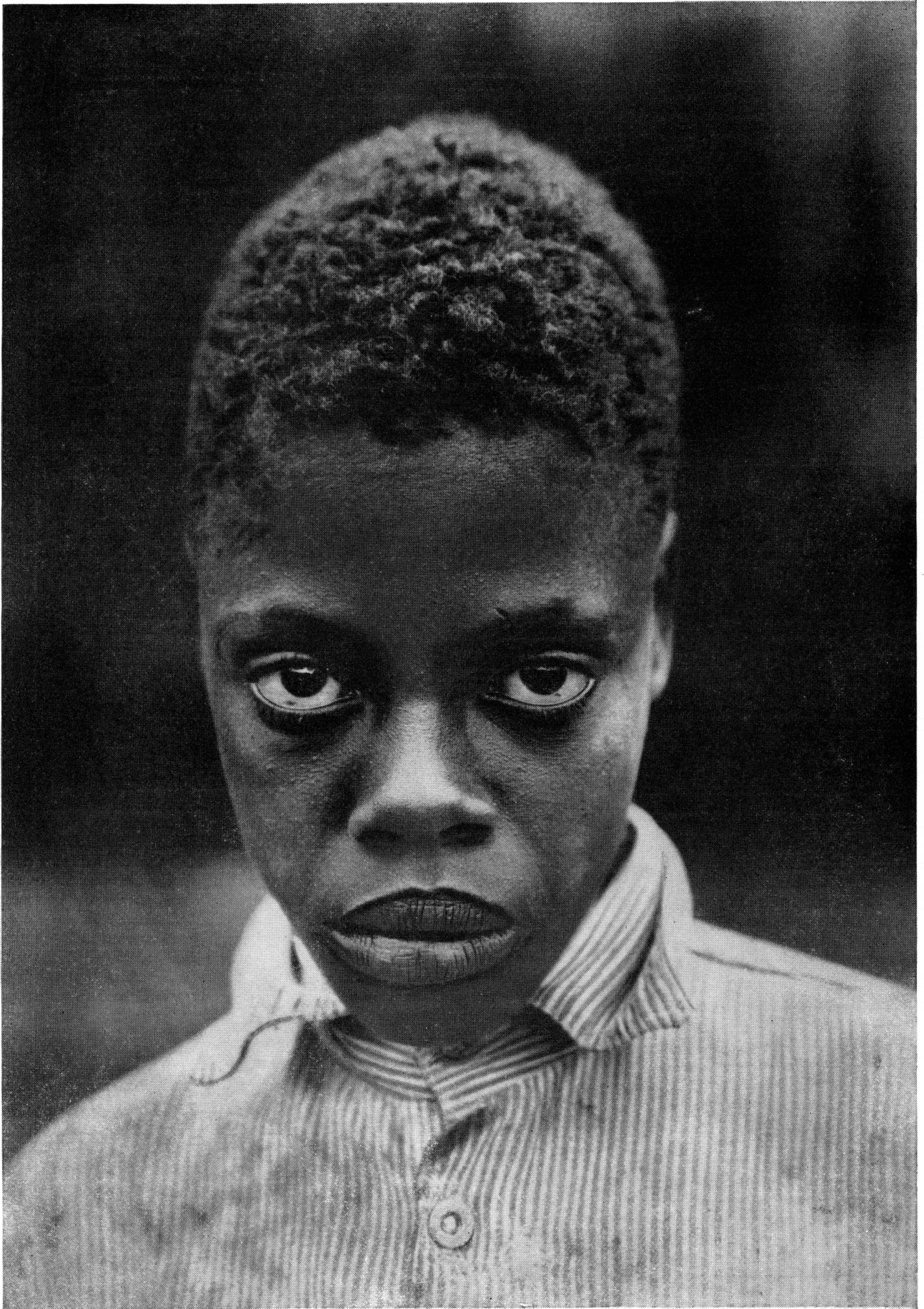
MITCHELL SIPORIN

Haymarket



PETER BLUME

Fascism and Ruins



MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE

*A Young American*