Whose Politics in Relief?

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"Blockade"

Reviewed by

JAMES DUCAN

Cartoons and Drawings by Gropper, Heliker, Hilton, Snow, Reinhardt, and Others

ON THE COVER

Mayor Hague

TURN TO PAGE 11

JUNE 28, 1938

FIFTEEN CENTS

New MASSES


HVGO
GELLERT

OUR foreign editor, Theodore Draper, arrived home from Europe this week, after visiting England, France, Geneva, Czechoslovakia, and Spain. An article by him on the outlook for the immediate future will appear in an early issue.

Richard Wright, author of *Uncle Tom's Children*, whose "Bright and Morning Star" in the NEW MASSES Literary Section (May 10, 1938) received so much enthusiastic comment, was at the ringside of the Joe Louis-Max Schmeling fight. His report will appear in the next issue. Readers will remember Wright's vivid description of the reaction of Chicago Negroes when Joe Louis knocked out Max Baer in October 1935.

The articles by A. B. Magil, announced last week, have already expanded to a series of three. Magil, who has taken as his springboard the five-volume *Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, will appraise the New Deal's history from 1933 to the present.

Those who have been observing the strategy of the Japanese army will be interested in the Soviet film, entitled *The Defense of Volochayevsk*, which will shortly be released. Directed by the Vassiliev brothers, who were responsible for *Chapayev*, the new film will show the young Red Army, in the early days of the Revolution, pushing the Japanese invaders out of Siberia. From advance reports, the film is breath-taking, a worthy successor to *Chapayev*.

There will be a program by poets of the Federal Writers Project over Station WQXR on Wednesday evening, June 29, at 9:45 p.m. Willard Maas, auxiliary editor of the July issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, which is a Writers Project number, S. Funaroff, co-editor with Willard Maas of the Federal Writers Literary Section of NEW MASSES, and Charlotte Wilder, well-known poet and sister of Thornton Wilder, will read poems from the July issue of *Poetry*.

What's What

A LETTER from a contributor this week enclosed a clipping, apparently from the question-and-answer column of some California paper, as follows:

"Recently I received a request from NEW MASSES for a contribution to help wipe out its deficit. Enclosed was a dime. Was that good mail-order practice?"

And the columnist answered:

"I saw that little job and thought at the time that it was the silliest piece of publicity I'd ever come on. Let's suppose NEW MASSES mailing consisted of ten thousand pieces, probably a moderate estimate. That would mean the man who handled the publication's appeal for funds put in $1,000 worth of dimes in order to attract donations. The first thought any sane person would get is this: If NEW MASSES had $1,000 to risk on such foolishness, then why should it be asking for gifts? Let us suppose this mailing was a knockout—that it brought in cash presents from 10 percent of the list. That would mean $900 wasted on the 90 percent who ignored the invitation. The 10 percent would have to cover that loss before the contributions began doing the publication any good. Whoever thought up that screwy scheme ought to be kicked out of his job."

Let's "suppose," as the column-conductor did, that NEW MASSES sent out ten thousand coin cards. That would, as he said, mean $1,000 invested in dimes. But evidently our friend (?) doesn't know NEW MASSES readers as well as the guy who thought up that scheme. For the return on the complete mailing to June 18 has been not 10 but 69.5 percent! And the average amount enclosed with each card was $1.03. The return was over 900 percent on the original investment. And to put our critic's mind more at rest, we might add that NEW MASSES didn't have any $1,000 to risk on such a venture. We sent out just a few to start with, and followed with more as the cards came back.

We're willing to submit the whole plan to any fair-minded jury of advertising experts—is a 69.5 percent return on a mailing, and a 900 percent return on the original cost, a good investment, some sort of a new high record in mail order returns, or should our columnist critic give up "supposing" answers to matters he doesn't know anything about?

Now, if you who still have the other 30.5 percent of those dimes loafing around the house will fill up the cards and send them along, we'll revise this answer to report a 98 or 100 percent return. We still need $2,150 to complete that $20,000 fund!

Between Ourselves

N. R., of Los Angeles, writes us:

"When answering your call for help and taking that trial sub, I firmly resolved not to read NEW MASSES but to give every issue to someone needing it.

"But I was weak. It was 'just for one little peek' when I tore off the wrapper once. After finishing the number, I 'firmly resolved' not to remove the wrapper again. But I did. And so the farce continued, from one broken pledge to another. Now—an addict.

"Yes, I did make one last desperate move for peace. I formulated an undispatched but nevertheless real 'dare' to you to make NEW MASSES so good that, by the time the trial sub expired, I would just *have* to take a year of it. Your reply to the challenge is turning out an irresistible job. Functioning just like mathematically precise robots—no hearts at all! You know damn well that a man with five meetings every week, not to mention all the 'musts' to be read, just can't afford the time for reading NEW MASSES. Send it to my home instead of to my office as before."

THIS WEEK

VOL. XXVIII, NO. 1

June 28, 1938

REVIEW AND COMMENT

Art work by Hugo Gellert (cover), John Heliker, David, Snow, Ned Hilton, William Gropper, Ad Reinhardt, Malman, Charles Martin, Freda Weinsweig.

Two weeks' notice is required for change of address. Notification direct to us rather than to the post office will give the best results.

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Who's Who

ENRIQUE GUTMANN is a former German journalist, now living in Mexico City. His article in this issue was translated from the German by Leonard E. Mins. . . . Anna Louise Strong, veteran journalist, is the author of *I Change Worlds* and *China's Millions*. . . . Harry Kapustin is a Philadelphia novelist and short-story writer. . . . Joseph Hastings is a New York businessman. . . . Arnold Shukotoff is a member of the English department at the College of the City of New York.

Ned Hilton's drawing on page 9 is one of the illustrations from James Dugan's article in the current issue of *Art Work*, the new publication of the United American Artists. Incidentally, *Art Work*, which is described as "a magazine for commercial artists, cartoonists, and fine artists," with its handsome format, coated stock, and spiral binding, does a remarkable job of covering a broad field and should prove itself an excellent organizer for this thriving new CIO union.

Flashbacks

LONG before Chamberlain began pulling Hitler's chestnuts out of the fire, the British Lion catspawed for Continental tyrants. On June 29, 1881, Johann Most, anarchist, was sentenced in England for libeling the Russian Czar. . . . For pardoning American anarchists Fielden, Neebe, and Schwab, June 26, 1893, Governor Altgeld of Illinois was denied a political career. Those he liberated were victims of the Haymarket frame-up. . . . After years of pressure from trade unionists the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics was established June 27, 1884. . . . The IWW was founded in Chicago, June 27, 1905. . . . Twenty years later, in the same city, the International Labor Defense began its career. . . . The current anti-Semitic purge in Germany recalls the blood purge of Roehm *et al*, June 30, 1934.

WHOSE POLITICS IN RELIEF?

There's Real Dirt Behind the "Smear Roosevelt" Campaign

MARGUERITE YOUNG

Washington

THERE'S a real story concerning politics in relief, but it will not be told by the anti-New Dealers who have been doing all the katzenjammering. For it has to do with their own scheme to use the WPA for factional objectives including less federal relief, and their own resort to the smear-and-scare tactics which they attribute to Roosevelt.

While the Senate was moving toward an official inquiry into the matter, I dropped in to speak to Sen. Burton K. Wheeler. The lanky Montanan had been on the air the night before. His chewy text had been, "There is not nor can there be any defense of playing politics with human misery.' He had bemoaned "a growing tendency on the part of the relief agencies to engage in politics," and said that "if" officials were using their posts "to destroy senators and congressmen who have voted funds for the unemployed," that was "indeed a breach of faith." Then he had removed his "if" by innuendo; he had upbraided commercial bosses for trying to "destroy the independence of their workers," and condemned "such practices on the part of government officials."

"Isn't it true, Senator Wheeler, that you yourself boss the WPA in your state by virtue of your patronage privileges?" I asked.

"No," Wheeler denied. "The WPA asked me to name an administrator, but I refused. They begged me. I would not. Finally I said I'd give them three names and they could choose one. They picked one—Ray Hart, a Republican. He came down here to see me, and I said to him, 'All I want you to do is a good job.' Hart took it, and what happened? He was kicked around and kicked around till he resigned."

One of two things evidently was wrong here. Either the memory that helped make Wheeler a celebrated cross-examiner was failing him, or he imagined I never read the *Congressional Record*. The *Record* last April reported a speech wherein Wheeler not only admitted but boasted about controlling a "political machine of the WPA" in Montana. Wheeler then said: "Most of the members of that machine are friends of mine. Most of them have been appointed . . . either on my recommendation or on a recommendation in

John Heliker

which I joined. . . . The head of that organization has the power of life or death . . . over many of those who are under him. He can say to them, 'You get in here and line up and work for the nomination of Wheeler for the U. S. Senate.' "

I must have looked a little astonished. The senator suddenly amended, "I guess Hart did make some mistakes, appointing Republicans and Protestants out there." Then he repeated, "I would not recommend anybody to succeed Hart."

"Why?" I asked. "If you're really interested in clean administration, why not recommend a good state administrator?"

"Because I know what it would be—an impossible task," Wheeler said. "I know that anybody who took the job would be kicked around and kicked around. I didn't and I don't want the responsibility of having any friend of mine administer WPA in my state, because he'd have an impossible job to do."

That such a canny man as Wheeler should make that April 14 speech, seeming to brag so indiscreetly, puzzled me till I consulted Representative Jerry J. O'Connell of Montana about it.

"Wheeler wasn't bragging," O'Connell explained. "He was threatening. It was a fair sample of how he hopes to intimidate Montana WPA workers while simultaneously he warns the country about 'politics in relief'."

That sounded strange. Wheeler is not running this fall.

"Precisely," O'Connell said. "But there's a declared Wheeler candidate in the Democratic primary. It is E. C. Burris, who was Wheeler's director of WPA employment in Montana, and who resigned to run against me for the Democratic nomination for Congress."

I caught on. O'Connell had got in Wheeler's hair by supporting New Deal labor and liberal bills as ardently and effectively as the senator opposed them. O'Connell had shone in the House progressive bloc as Wheeler had shone in the Senate's anti-New Deal coalition headed by Vice-President Garner and Republican Leader Vandenberg. O'Connell had fought at home and here for increased relief funds and for safeguards for WPA workers' freedom to organize and act independently, economically and politically. His record on this score is O'Connell's chief campaign argument.

"Ray Hart was in fact Wheeler's man," O'Connell told me, "and he was not only a Republican. He was a Billings department-store owner, an Associated Industries open-shopper, and a financial associate of Wheeler. The selection was denounced by labor up and down Montana. Hart nevertheless handed us, with Wheeler's approval, a complete Chamber of Commerce-Republican-Anaconda Copper Co. setup for WPA. He put one district under Tom Davis, a lawyer who, three days before taking office, had attacked the whole New Deal in a speech to the Great Falls Rotary Club. Another Hart-Wheeler district chief was W. E. Mitchell, fresh off the Anaconda payroll. Mitchell had been superintendent of the Anaconda zinc plant. The Havre WPA district was given over to Frank Gowan, a prominent Republican.

"Before long Hamilton Fish was speaking against the New Deal in Butte—and on Fish's platform sat practically the whole supervisory staff of the WPA. Imagine those militant Butte miners' reaction. The entire labor movement of the state went wild. The rank and file, employed and unemployed, built a terrific fire under Hart. That's why he lasted less than a year.

"By that time James E. Murray had been elected to the Senate from Montana. He rec-

ommended, for state administrator, a tavern owner who at least had no anti-labor record. Wheeler agreed, but with an understanding that the rest of the setup remain practically unchanged. So they kept Burris—who had pleaded for Hart in vain before the Anaconda Labor Council. And they kept C. W. Fowler, Wheeler's deputy administrator, who now actually runs the Montana WPA.

"For months, the Wheeler clique of WPA officials have been campaigning against me on the job. They used to meet in the WPA offices to lay plans. Now they gather in the offices of the United States Coal Commission, where Wheeler's appointees function similarly. One of the latter recently traveled through my district with candidate Burris to try to line up key people against me. A Wheeler WPA man tried—in vain—to get the Montana Council for Progressive Political Action to give its floor to candidate Burris.

"That's why Wheeler, still hoping to scare voters into line, made the April 14 boast. And with the long-distance threatening go direct reprisal and intimidation at home. I know of applicants who have been told by Wheeler's WPA men, 'We know you. You're a friend of O'Connell's. We're not doing anything for any friend of that ———.'"

The Montana situation is cited by Workers Alliance leaders here as an example of the chief point they wish remembered during the coming summer and fall din about politics in relief. The point was expressed by Herbert Benjamin, the Alliance's organizational secretary:

"The Senate investigation, like the press campaign, was inspired by politicians whose real gripe is that, although they still play their politics with WPA and relief, although they still resort to coercive means to suppress the democratic will, they can no longer get votes by these means alone."

I reminded Benjamin that those tactics worked in Kansas City. (NEW MASSES, issue of April 12, described how Tom Pendergast triumphed with the help of such pressures, as proved by affidavits.)

"But that happened," Benjamin said, "because the Pendergast machine previously had dispersed our organization. We anticipated the election result because we had been broken up by a statewide terror of jailings, firings, and beatings dating back to 1935."

"If Wheeler and Pendergast play this sort of politics with WPA," I asked, "won't many people suspect New Dealers of doing likewise?"

"The fact is," said Benjamin, "the New Deal does not need such methods, but rather exactly the opposite. The progressives do not need to suppress, but to stimulate a free popular choice. Is it necessary to apply corrupt methods, to invoke mechanical coercion, to get the support of people whose real needs your program seeks to meet? Particularly when the opposition offers not more relief, but none at all, as shown for the nth time by the latest Republican platform proposal to dump the relief job back on the states' shoulders, à la Hoover? That is the crux, and that is the sheer cheek, of the reactionaries' argument. They are trying to convince the country that we poor nincompoop unemployed—but for the devilish corrupt pressure applied by the New Deal spenders who gave us jobs—would vote to abolish those jobs. They seek, actually, to confuse and frighten us into abandoning the political independence we exercise through our own organizations."

The Alliance, as well as New Dealers, fought off the proposed Hatch amendment to the recovery bill. As President David Lasser of the Alliance put it, "That amendment would have illegalized political activity by any WPA 'employee.' We were quite willing to prohibit such activity by officials, but we were not going to let them prevent WPA workers from attending an Alliance or Labor's Non-Partisan League meeting and passing out a leaflet for a candidate supported by labor organizations."

Checkmated on the Hatch maneuver, afraid to take their stand directly by voting against the recovery bill, the Garner-Vandenberg crowd hit on a special investigation of politics in relief. Their press brimmed over with news-column squawks about "Senate refusal to bar relief in politics." The campaign spread to the reactionary professional and scientific press: the New York Medical Society's weekly yelped, "All over the country pump-priming is become primary-pumping."

Original backers of the investigation were anti-New Dealers Tydings of Maryland, Burke of Nebraska, and King of Utah. They took in a couple of New Dealers like Wagner of New York, who told me, "I agreed because I feel certain the WPA is being administered fairly and freely, and that anybody who looks into it will find that out."

A Senate committee reported the proposal favorably, but extended the field of inquiry to reach all agencies using federal money.

The Vandenberg-Garner crowd still howled. Said Burke: "We might as well forget the whole thing." And Hatch: "A poor substitute." And Vandenberg: "Valueless. . . . What we need is a policeman, not a coroner." What nettled them was the possible exposure of the tactics of those local anti-New Deal machines which, controlling state agencies using federal grants but ousted from WPA control, constitute the reactionaries' stoutest remaining prop. Typical example of this is Kentucky, where Roosevelt's Senate-leader, Barkley, is running in the hottest current race. Nor were the investigation-promoters crazy about the personnel of the committee which would make the investigation. It was a middle-of-the-road committee. Furthermore, it would have only $10,000 for this phase of campaign-expense inquiry.

David

The investigation-promoters were not through. As the Senate groggily cleared its desks, they accomplished two things. They hiked the investigating committee's funds to $80,000, and found two vacancies for their man Garner to fill by appointment. *Caudillo* Jack grinningly filled them—and filled them, in the phrase of the Scripps-Howard press, "with malice aforethought." He named two outstanding anti-New Deal factionalists. Garner chose Harrison of Mississippi, who has carried the ball for the reactionaries in many battles, from taxes to relief, and who had a personal grudge against the probable first candidate to be investigated, Barkley. For Barkley beat Harrison for the Senate leadership last year. And Garner chose Walsh of Massachusetts, anti-New Dealer who slept so soundly on the Walsh-Healey bill that labor is dropping his name from the title. The other three members of the committee are White of Maine, a Republican; O'Mahoney of Wyoming, who fought monopoly but also fought Supreme Court reform; and the chairman, Sheppard of Texas, a New Deal regular but no match, as a strategist, against Walsh alone, much less against Walsh and Harrison.

Hence the anti-New Deal press and politicians' suddenly renewed fervor for the investigation. The committee got together at once and issued a large public warning to government agencies to "keep their hands off" the elections. They announced that alleged misuse of funds would be investigated and publicized "without fear and without partisanship."

Roll back the fog of insinuations concocted by the investigation-promoters, and what, specifically, is visible? I went looking for charges beyond such things as the complaint that there's a WPA project in Maryland consisting of a road and yacht-dock on Senator Tydings' private estate. (Something anti-New Dealer Tydings will hardly emphasize in his fight against New Dealer David Lewis, especially when Lewis can point out that responsibility for such projects rests with the local Maryland agencies that originate and sponsor them and need not even inform Washington who the beneficiary is.) I was told that Republican Sen. Jim Davis says a local PWA official has "put 148 of his own relatives on the payroll" somewhere in Pennsylvania. I heard about the big paper-bag scandal in Kentucky—it seems Barkley's foe discovered federal-relief groceries going out in bags marked, "This paper bag contributed by friends of Alben W. Barkley." Harry Hopkins has sent people scurrying over Kentucky looking for a sample paper-bag, I'm told, but they haven't found any yet. The Kentucky stories written by Thomas Stokes of Scripps-Howard remain, in fact, the closest thing to specific charges yet produced—and I understand these stories just do not stand up under investigation, and that the WPA is prepared to answer them with affidavits.

Have the investigation-promoters even produced specific charges of a widespread practice of threatening jobs, taking jobs, or padding payrolls to further New Deal candidacies, or a kickback for campaign funds? The answer is no, not even charges. It's possible that such things may be found—it would be phenomenal if they were not, in an organization set up to handle over four million jobs. It would be phenomenal if, in so large an outfit, there were not, here and there, an enthusiastic foreman showing not too much concern with Washington's written and zealously pursued policies. But there is certainly every indication here, at this time, that Washington foresees a lean, hot summer for the investigators, so far as bona fide corruption is concerned. Not that it will look that way in the newspapers.

"Every reactionary candidate will make use of the investigation," predicted Senator Schwellenbach of Washington. He was a member of a committee that made a similar, smaller investigation in 1936, when the political weather was milder. He said, "Charges will come from nowhere, and the newspapers, wide open to every reactionary's plaint, will raise quite a rumpus before the committee gets to sifting the evidence. It happened to us, and will happen again."

So watch this business. It constitutes the heaviest campaign ammunition the anti-New Dealers possess. And remember that under current patronage rules, the character of each state's WPA officialdom is influenced by its United States Senators. And that, as Workers Alliance leader Benjamin emphasized, "Nobody knows better than we, the organized unemployed, that there's been reactionary politics in relief ever since Hoover made the phrase Wheeler repeated, about 'playing politics with human misery.' Our answer is to strengthen our own organization, and our political alliances with other labor and liberal groups, and maintain our own independence, economic and political. That's our politics in relief."

★

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF

TO TIDE them over hard times, officers and directors of General Motors Corp., in April, presented themselves with bonuses of common stock of that corporation with an aggregate market value of about $1,000,000, it has been revealed by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

William S. Knudsen, president of General Motors, took the biggest helping, 4,820 shares. Other bonuses were: Albert Bradley, Donaldson Brown, John T. Smith, and Charles E. Wilson, 3,410 shares each; Ormund E. Hunt and James D. Mooney, 2,842 shares each; H. E. Coyle, 2,500 shares; John J. Schumann Jr., 2,170 shares; Ronald K. Evans, 1,500 shares; Meyer L. Prentis, 1,182 shares; F. O. Tanner, 1,000 shares; A. C. Anderson, 750 shares; William A. Fisher, 500 shares; Lisle R. Beardslee, 59 shares.

SEVEN MEN AND TEN COMPANIES

A Visit to the Bootleg Coal Mines

BRUCE MINTON

Shenandoah, Pa.

ALMOST any place a man digs in Schuylkill County, he hits the hard rich veins of anthracite. Yet all this underground wealth is owned by seven men. And the rails that lead out of Schuylkill County to the great markets of the world are owned by ten companies. The seven men and the ten companies interlock and in turn are held in the firm grasp of three tightly organized trusts, controlled by Baker, Rockefeller, and Morgan.

Over the years, the seven men and the ten railroad companies and Messrs. Baker, Rockefeller, and Morgan have learned the trick of concealing profits. On their books, the coal producers show huge outlays for overhead—carrying charges, for example, on unworked mines bought up to make certain that no other company digs coal out of this ground. For if tonnage is increased, the retail price of coal drops.

Then too, the producers pay high freight rates. Even so, the ten railroad companies fail to keep out of the red, because they must always pay great sums of interest on watered bonds and stocks held by the producers. High freight rates preclude competition from independents (who do not own railroad bonds and therefore do not receive interest payments). Since the traffic is limited, the railroads claim they cannot reduce rates. What all this financial complication boils down to is a perfection of bookkeeping whereby everyone loses on paper and a steady stream of money continues to flow to the seven men, the ten companies, and eventually to Messrs. Baker, Rockefeller, and Morgan.

As a result the pits are closed and the breakers have grown silent. In the gray, harsh anthracite fields, the unemployed turn to work-relief. Without it, they can only sit looking out at the barren hills, at the earth no longer tillable because the owners have defiled it by strewing slag and rocks over the entire countryside. Men live in a graveyard of somber waste, on land that has been fouled so that it will not even yield so much as a garden crop of vegetables.

Here in this desolation, towns huddle together like medieval cities, and dingy hovels lean one against the other as if to keep warm. Joists have warped, and the rotting beams make it dangerous for more than two people at a time to stand on the porches of the larger houses. One-third of the dwellings lack toilets, and usually they are without running water. Two-storied wooden shacks shelter as many as twenty families; one room, with its uneven floor, tiny window, and damp walls, rents for fifteen dollars a month. Sometimes the houses sag as the ground, mined underneath years before, begins to settle. Or the foundations crumble as the wooden beams become infested with roaches. It is hard for a miner to keep his house clean. Constant scrubbing doesn't do it. No matter how persistently the boards are scoured a man turns inside himself in disgust at the smell of his own home.

The line of bootleg mines followed the crest of the cliff overlooking the narrow, slag-covered valley. As the miners straggled to work, the sun came up beyond the opposite ridge, stretching long shadows into the mist and silhouetting the crude frames above which cables passed into the mouths of the pits. Behind each frame squatted a ramshackle toolshed and the remains of a forlorn automobile, wheels off, body rusting. But the engine was still able to turn the drum, over which wound the cables that lowered and raised the coal-laden buggies from the bottom of the mine to the surface.

The Spanish fellow who had lost his job in the collieries three years ago did not at first want to let me visit his holding. The roof was beginning to crack, he said, and at any moment it could cave in. But finally he agreed to take me down. The shaft slipped precipitously into darkness, and it was hard going in the dim light of the alcohol torches that each of us carried. The ceiling rose four feet at the most from the floor. At the bottom it dipped lower, though the corridor widened out and connected with the shafts of other bootleggers. And here we came on my guide's co-workers, who had already started loading coal. They worked squatting in the gloom, or bent in two, with their shoulders scraping the ceiling.

Bootleg miners are highly skilled, but their work is risky. Already in this shaft the maple pillars that helped carry the weight of the ceiling had buckled. Along the roof ran a half-inch crack, into which someone had jammed a matchstick. "When the stick falls, the crack has widened," the Spanish fellow explained. "And that means look out."

At the slightest whisper of falling coal, my guide stopped suddenly and listened with worried intentness. "Two boys got killed here not long ago," he said. "They weren't very good miners like the rest who have worked in the collieries. They dug all wrong, and a rock fell from the top, right here—" he bent over and pointed to the middle of his back.

"It took four hours to take them out. They were all flat in the middle."

They had begun to rob the pillars in the shafts along the cliff. That is, they were hacking at the coal they had not taken before because it helped support the roof. They gave themselves another month of work in these holdings, but of course the whole thing could collapse at any moment. Still, the anthracite was rich and if they could remove it safely, they could make sufficient to tide them over the weeks, perhaps months, of unproductive digging that would go into the sinking of other shafts. They had just about made a living out of the little mines for the past two years.

In the flickering half-light, while boys loaded a buggy, the chief miners gathered together, squatting in the cool dampness for a brief talk about their work—and instead they spoke of Spain, how the war over there was really a battle for every worker in the whole world. They said, "You must not worry. Our side will win, no matter what. You will see, they'll win. It will take a long time, but it can only end that way. You can be sure of that."

They wanted to talk only of Spain because even at that moment men were dying to save millions of other workingmen. But at last they agreed to speak about themselves. "Is this bootlegging better than working for a company?" I asked. "After all, you are your own bosses."

"Look," one miner answered. "Every one of us, if we could get back into the mines, we'd quit here tomorrow. This is danger here all the time. We want to work in the mines, steady work with steady pay. But there is no work. What else are we to do?"

The question sighed round the dim circle of squatting men. "What else is a man going to do?" They were silent, and then a miner on the outside of the ring began to argue not with anyone present but with some imaginary adversary. "Should we try relief?" he asked bitterly. "It's hard enough to get on relief for those that have to now, without the rest of us coming along. . . . They should open up the mines. So many people in the cities can use coal, much more coal, but the price is too high. If there was more coal, the price would go down, and then there would be more coal used, and then they would need more miners to dig it. But then the price would go down and the big bosses would not make so much. That's the point. The bosses don't want to sell more coal."

They nodded, slowly. That was the point. That explained the unemployment throughout the anthracite district, and the bootlegging on property owned by the producers, digging out the coal without the owners' permission and without return to them. That explained the desperation in all the mean little towns throughout Schuylkill County and the need for relief. The miners who still worked and many of the unemployed are organized and the union is strong, but the union cannot keep the coal mines operating. Those who do get a few days' work a week can barely live on what they make. At the largest colliery in the district, I saw the miners paid off—their envelopes contained an average of $22 each and that amount covered their earnings over a two weeks' period. Forty percent of the miners aren't working at all. Bootlegging would stop quickly enough if the mines would employ the men.

Snow

"I think we should establish a camp in Alaska and keep them there if they are opposed to our form of government."—FRANK HAGUE.

The few great ones who own the land and the coal beneath the surface cannot worry about the welfare of the workers in the mine areas. Sentimentality would interfere with profits. They resent the program of work-relief that allows the idle miners to exist. Alleviation necessitates increased taxes, and though these taxes do not fall heavily on the shoulders of the monopolists, the principle of relief has been established and the principle has dangerous overtones.

They have chosen Judge Arthur H. James as their emissary. Judge James, Republican nominee for governor, has been designated as the crusader to make Pennsylvania safe for its rightful owners—Messrs. Baker, Rockefeller, and Morgan. The judge visited the anthracite region—a sort of homecoming for him, as he told the audience several times—because once the judge had been a miner. He left the pits with a good deal of haste, and studied law; with proper connections he soon entered politics, finally became a judge, and then candidate to rescue the state from the evils of New Dealism.

It was an historic sight when the cheerful judge stood in his slicker on the improvised platform in front of Shenandoah's main hotel. There was something reminiscent about the judge: his gestures, his cigar, his pleasant, heart-warming smile, his charming daughter, all recalled those vignettes of political deportment in the eighties, which the comic strip and Hollywood have popularized. But even more, his speech delivered in the slow drizzle stamped the judge as a rival of those great political campaigners of fifty years ago. Their platitudes were heard once more, and the judge's mission of making this gre-e-at nation even gre-e-ater seemed conceived in the spirit of the political handmaidens who, in the name of the common people, wrapped up and delivered this country to the monopolies.

Let the miners work the mines, Judge James thundered. In words that recalled a recent speech by Gov. Phil La Follette, he asked, "Can we afford to coddle the lazy?" He berated those who advocated a federal housing program, for, he added, we need to conserve our income in these troublous times, not fritter it away.

But before the questions that slowly formed in the minds of the listening miners could be asked, the judge had hurried away to the next town where he planned to make another speech of political clarification. Men like the judge seem always to avoid giving answers to all the simple questions. So many things like relief and housing are dismissed with a wave of the hand.

The unemployed, and the miners who receive $22 for two week's labor, and the bootleggers in their dangerous shafts can't warm up to Judge James, even if he was once a miner. They can't seem to understand how it is possible to cut relief. Each day their need increases. Each day their houses become more decrepit. Each day their hatred of the hand-to-mouth bootlegging grows heavier. They say, "Those of us who work the mines can hardly exist. Almost half of us cannot even find employment in the collieries. Bootlegging becomes more hazardous, and the markets are harder to reach. There is nothing else for a man to do. Relief lets us live."

Even the spring is sad in Schuylkill County. Life has been robbed of beauty and hope. To the miners, Judge James' concern with economy has little to commend it. They keep remembering the reality of their harsh existence. Some talk of government control of the mines,

"I think we should establish a camp in Alaska and keep them there if they are opposed to our form of government."—FRANK HAGUE.

of government operation of the closed collieries. If the companies can't keep the pits open, they argue, and if people need much more coal than they can afford, then why not let the government put men to work digging anthracite so that the increased supply will lower the price and raise consumption?

The United Mine Workers of America has long demanded nationalization of the mines. It takes time to achieve this program. Until then, the anthracite region has need of relief—more relief than at present—and a housing program. Until then, the miners will continue to bootleg. And the people of Schuylkill County add that they will also fight Judge James because, after all, he is the voice of the seven men, the ten railroad companies, and Messrs. Baker, Rockefeller, and Morgan.

★

AID FOR SPAIN

THE solidarity ship sent by the International Coordination Committee for Aid for Spain arrived in Valencia amidst the greatest enthusiasm of the population. The ship, which was loaded with hundreds of tons of sugar, soap, chocolate, beans, bacon, tinned meat, writing materials, and five million cigarettes, had been equipped by the Spanish Aid Committees of Argentina, Scotland, France, Switzerland, England, Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Holland.

A delegates' meeting representing 12,000 trade unionists in Puteaux (suburb of Paris) adopted a resolution in favor of the restoration of free trade with the Spanish republic. On May 29 a regional collection day for the wounded of the Spanish republican army was carried out in Marseilles, on the initiative of the Spanish Aid Committee. The district secretariat of the Union Populaire Italienne of the Alpes Maritimes Departement has commenced collections in order to send a motor lorry with food for the Garibaldi Brigade in Spain.

Collections were carried out in 149 schools in Berne, with a total of 54,000 children, in aid of distressed Spanish children. The collections brought in forty-six tons of food to the value of about sixty thousand francs, and about sixty thousand articles of clothing and underwear to the value of eighty-one thousand francs. Besides this, 24,400 francs were collected in cash.

The collecting campaign in aid of the Spanish children, carried on by the Swedish Women's Committee, which had raised 181,628 crowns by January 1, has since collected a further 15,000 crowns. Since June last year the committee has been maintaining two hundred Spanish children in two children's homes, and since March of this year it has been supplying food as well to 170 mothers and children in Denia. The committee of the Danish printers' trade-union has contributed five thousand crowns to the Spain Committee of the Matteotti Fund in Denmark.—INTERNATIONAL PRESS CORRESPONDENCE, *June 4.*

OIL, SWASTIKA, CEDILLO

Democratic Mexico Prepares Her Defense

ENRIQUE GUTMANN

IF ONE investigates the financial backgrounds of Italian fascism and German National Socialism, one finds that these "mass movements arisen from below" were brought up, fed, and fattened from above, and that the creators and promoters of the fascio and the swastika, who always are hidden behind the scenes of what is going on in the world at any moment, of course, are to be sought in the camp of the big money magnates and monopolists.

Among the monopolists of the world Sir Henri Deterding, chairman of the Royal Dutch-Shell trust, the biggest oil concern, occupies a peculiar position, not only as a factor in financial power, but chiefly as a capitalist political actor and wirepuller. Married to a Russian princess, whose relatives had owned extensive and rich oil fields in the Caucasus but had lost all these holdings in the Russian Revolution, Deterding became one of the worst Bolshevik-haters. He swore an oath to destroy Bolshevism, to exterminate Socialism in general, wherever it might raise its head. Today we know that Deterding's money played a prominent part in the Black Shirts' glorious "March on Rome" and throughout the whole rise of Hitlerism. Sir Henri Deterding, one of the principal financiers of German and Italian fascism, may be regarded today as the most powerful ally of Hitler and Mussolini.

For nearly three decades now Mexico has been going through a tremendous process of recasting its economic, social, and political foundations. This process, the historical course of which has been marked by revolution, rebellion, and putsch, could only be of service to the capitalist interests in Mexico so long as it resulted in the rebellious forces within the country tearing each other to pieces. It became dangerous only when the revolution had been led into orderly channels, when it was given a goal and a direction, when it became a program and thus obtained inner and outer impetus of far-reaching significance. This occurred when Gen. Lazáro Cárdenas took over the presidency of the United States of Mexico in 1934, setting up a six-year plan as the basis for the acts of his government and immediately proceeding to the realization of this plan, clearing all political and bureaucratic obstacles (Calles, Garrido Canabal, Morones, etc.) out of the way.

The astonishing successes of Cárdenas, who managed to draw all the forces willing to help build up the country into united, progressive action and who far outdid the prescriptions of the six-year plan during the very first stages of his administration, be it in the field of agrarian policy, education, or public health, the emancipation of the working class, or the struggle for the political and economic independence, domestic and foreign, of the republic—these successes naturally alarmed the eternal opponents of all progress. Sadly enough, they could no longer count upon the friendly help of the United States government, which in the past had so often been ready to interfere in Mexico's domestic affairs. So they had to look elsewhere for allies. Mexican reaction found these allies in the German Embassy and in the oil companies, headed by the biggest company, El Aguila, which is nothing but a subsidiary of Royal Dutch-Shell, i.e., one of Deterding's branch firms.

German National Socialism, the most expansive, most aggressive, and ablest in matters of secret propaganda and organization, was selected by the fascist international to "prepare the terrain" in Mexico, as it had already done in Eastern Europe, in Spain, in Brazil, and the rest of the world. The connections of the Calles group, and the close connections of Nicolas Rodriguez, the leader of the Gold Shirts, to the German Embassy in the Calle de Cordoba, which have existed ever since the establishment of the Calles administration, have received documentary proof long ago. But all too soon did Plutarco Elias Calles, upon whom such great hopes had rested at first, have to be thrown on the scrap-heap, with Hitler's *Mein Kampf* in his hand. Nicolas Rodriguez, on the other hand, was shoved to the background because of his "unpopularity." There was but one candidate left to serve, if worst came to worst, as a tool against the progress of the Mexican people. This candidate was Gen. Saturnino Cedillo, a personal friend of the President, Minister of Agriculture in Cárdenas' cabinet, an experienced old soldier, but at the same time a provincial satrap, a feudal ruler in the style of the Middle Ages, a protector of the clergy and persecutor of the Socialist teachers in "his state" of San Luis Potosi, which he had ruled despotically for the past eighteen years with the aid of sixty thousand armed peasants.

So "for lack of a prominent figure," Saturnino Cedillo was selected by Mexican and foreign reaction as the leader of the countermovement—under the most unfavorable circumstances imaginable. On the one side, the head of the government, in possession of all

"technical equipment," with a newly organized army largely behind him, and supported by all the workers and peasants of the country, enjoyed a national popularity such as hardly any President of Mexico had ever had in the past. On the other, a man who is known to be unable to speak or write correctly, who had a certain strength in only *one* of the twenty-eight states, but who did embody the desires of all reactionary forces: the *Cristeros* of Guanajuato, the *hacendados* of Laguna and Yucatan, the industrialists of Monterey, the oil men of Huasteca, brawling students, and a few discontented generals.

But although the relation of forces was still unfavorable two years ago, time might possibly bring some advantage, if it were correctly utilized. And it was utilized. Systematic propaganda, paid for from "secret" funds, was made for Cedillo in almost all of the big daily newspapers of the republic, most of which are still rightist in their tendency today. The refrain of this propaganda was that the only state in which order and contentment prevailed was San Luis Potosi, Cedillo's territory, that real constructive work was being done solely in the Ministry of Agriculture, and that, on the other hand, Cárdenas, with his radical policy of dividing the land among the peasants, handing over industries to workers' cooperatives, and nationalizing plants and institutions of public importance, was only steering a course for national impoverishment.

This propaganda had a certain degree of success, particularly among the petty bourgeoisie. It was powerfully aided when months of crisis set in in Mexico's economic life after the distribution of the cotton area in Torreon and the chicle fields in Yucatan, owing to an insufficient crop and an inadequately prepared organization. Now was the time for action. With the aid of German export firms, which are, of course, "nothing but" respectable representatives of highly respected machinery manufacturers, large quantities of arms were smuggled in through the oil ports, via the isthmus, via Campeche, and across the Guatemala border, and brought to San Luis Potosi. These arms included airplanes, machine guns, motor trucks, anti-aircraft guns, Thompson sub-machine guns, hand grenades, air bombs, and enormous quantities of explosives.

At about this time Cedillo resigned from his post as Minister of Agriculture and withdrew into so-called retirement, residing on his estate, "Palomas," and waiting for a favorable opportunity to strike. He had already been given German army instructors, flying instructors, chemists, and engineers to aid in preparing for the putsch. It was now "recommended" that this "staff" be permanently accompanied by political organizers, trained in the National Socialist Party of Germany.

At the beginning of this year the oil crisis, which had been latent for years, entered the acute stage. The companies refused to comply with the demands of their workers for an improvement of the economic and hygienic conditions of labor. The Mexican arbitration courts declared the trade unions' demands to be justified. The companies then entered into open rebellion against the Mexican government, not only refusing to comply with the arbitration award, but stopping all tax payments to the government. Their intentions were obvious. They wanted to bring about an economic catastrophe, cause the fall of the Cárdenas administration, and thus place a fascist regime in power. Sir Henri Deterding and the German Embassy were working at top speed.

But the progressive government of Mexico was on the alert. It had learned from the case of Spain: while the masses of the population were summoned to national unity and transfers and shifts of army units were made throughout the country, President Lazáro Cárdenas proclaimed the properties of all the oil companies on Mexican soil to be vested in the people.

The whole country was shaken to its foundations. Together with the class-consciousness of the proletariat, the patriotic feelings of nearly all the sections of the population were aroused. A tremendous united front was formed against foreign imperialism.

To be sure, the economic consequences were grave. Deterding and his allies made use of their world power, closing all oil markets, depreciating the Mexican peso, with the resultant onset of a crisis of confidence, which was to affect all trade with Mexico.

And now, precisely now, was the time to strike "militarily," before the country could recover from its momentary economic "depression."

The putsch was set for May 18. On May 16 the German Ambassador to Mexico, Baron Ruedt von Collenberg, left for a "vacation"; he went to San Francisco, where the German Consul-General, Manfred von Killinger, directs the American headquarters for Nazi espionage. The general representatives of the oil companies were holding an "executive session" in Tampico.

Early in the morning of May 18 Lazáro Cárdenas appeared in the capital of San Luis Potosi accompanied only by a little group of his closest associates. A double file of soldiers and loyal trade-unionists was hastily formed from the railroad station to the governor's palace to protect the President's entry. But his loyal adherents waited in vain. Surrounded by the few members of his staff, Cárdenas marched to the center of the city by a roundabout route, passing through many of the streets on foot and thus showing the whole world that he did not need any protection, "because he whose weapons are peace and conciliation has no enemy." The impression was overwhelming. The Cedillistas sneaked out of the city and fled to the mountains. The first battle had been lost; the putsch was bound to collapse. Don Saturnino realized this himself, for he concealed himself at once in the Sierra Huasteca, leaving his adherents to their distressing fate. Since the population of San Luis did not want to rise in arms, but rather welcomed the President as their liberator from long years of slavery, there was nothing left for Cedillo's few mercenaries to do but to surrender willingly or unwillingly. Now "mopping-up operations" are taking place.

National reaction and international fascism have suffered a signal defeat in Mexico. But it would be altogether false to assume that the danger of an overturn has been banished once and for all. On the contrary, it must be expected that the eternally discontented elements, the expropriated capitalists, the putschists and adventurers, together with their followers, will rally and reorganize their forces. Money and aid from the outside will always be available.

Lazáro Cárdenas knows this. He also knows that he has only two years of his term of office left. That is why he is making haste to foil the plans of the conspirators who want to disturb and block Mexico's development.

While the remnants of the rebels are being smoked out of their haunts bit by bit and put out of harm's way, while order is slowly being restored in the state of San Luis Potosi—in a wholly bloodless manner—the President is already undertaking a new tour of the country, which will take him throughout the North of Mexico. This is not a mere tour of inspection or for purposes of information, but a trip of historic significance on which the most important problems of the people are to be solved right on the spot.

Only two more years! But in these two years Mexico must be prepared politically and economically to a degree that will guarantee its success in resisting future attacks of fascism and its manifold accomplices.

FRANCO'S P.O.U.M.

How the Trotskyist POUM has worked directly with Franco's agents to carry on espionage, sabotage, and demoralization in loyalist Spain is a story spread through innumerable documents seized by the Spanish police in a series of raids on spy rings. Photostats of many of these documents, with a summary of the evidence, are contained in a pamphlet, *Trotskyism in the Service of Franco,* by Georges Soria, recently issued by International Publishers.

Even before the fascist uprising, as early as October 1935, "White Russian organizations and the Trotskyites of Paris and Berne," according to one of the letters seized, kept the Rightist leader, Gil Robles, "informed on the machinations of the Communists with regard to Spain." The "program of collaboration" in this espionage service embraced nine points, including reports on Spanish "cells" of the International Labor Defense, and on "People's Front movements in France that may have repercussions in Spain."

With the beginning of the war, Trotskyist activity extended to sabotage and attempted assassination. A Franco spy has described their work, in documents uncovered by the police when they broke up an extensive espionage organization last October. The evidence shows that POUM members of the group succeeded

The Isolationist Finally Gets Isolation

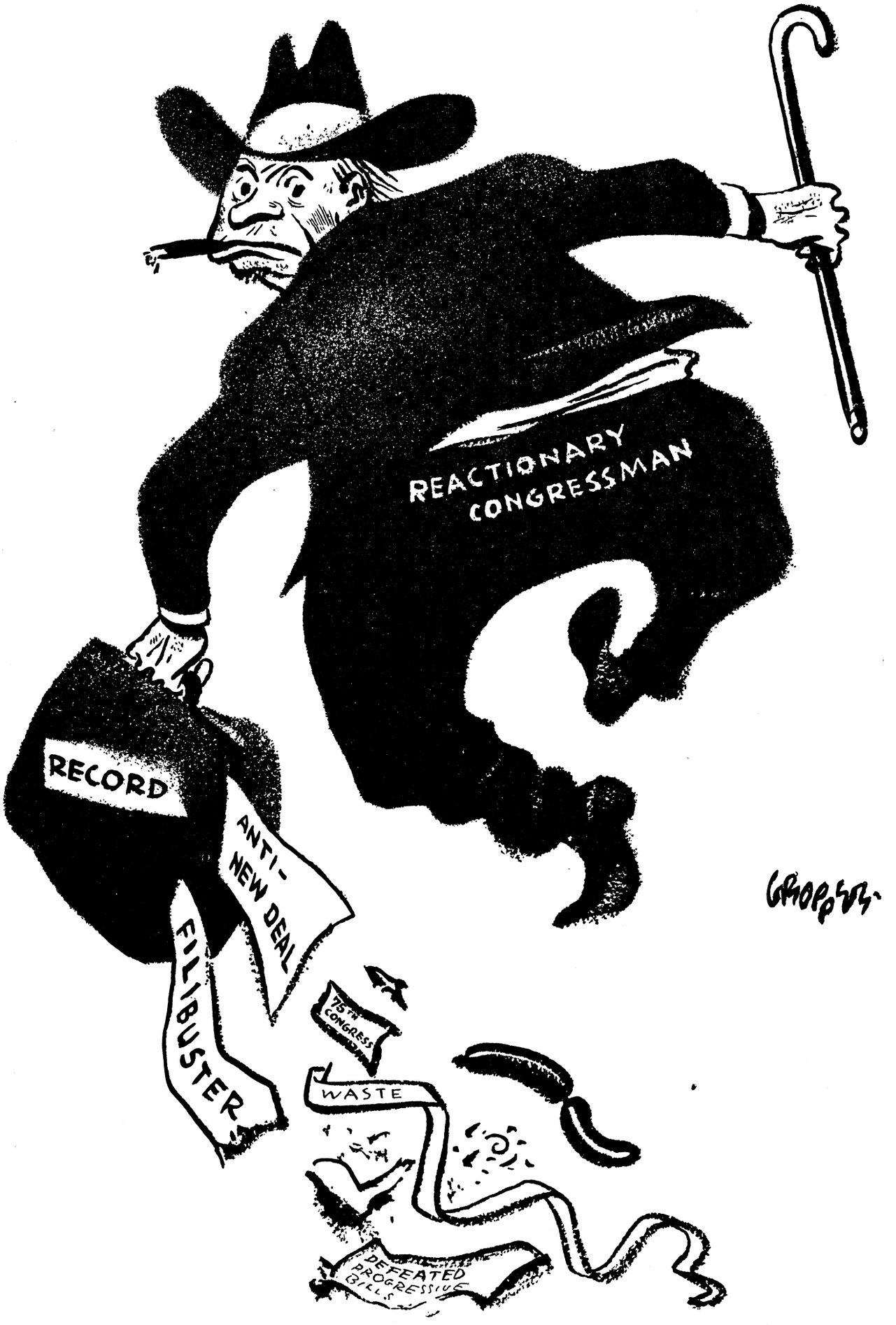
Ned Hilton

in putting loyalist artillery pieces out of action at decisive moments; that proposals were made to assassinate Commanders Walter and Modesto (of the army corps in which the Americans fought at Belchite); and that two members of the POUM were entrusted with the task of attempting to kill Minister of War Prieto with hand-grenades which were manufactured in a POUM workshop. This particular spy agency, of which the POUM was an important nucleus, had agents in vital centers of the army and navy.

A raid on the Peruvian embassy in Madrid turned up, among other documents, a message in code addressed "to the Generalissimo," reporting back on the satisfactory execution of an order to establish contact with POUM leaders. "If it is reinforced," one sentence reads, "the POUM here will become, as it is at Barcelona, a firm and effective support for our movement . . ."

One thing clearly established by the documents is that the POUM, in spite of its members' denials, is tied up with Trotsky's Fourth International. Evidence found in the flat of a POUM man, Gorssin, in Barcelona, proves that. And in the apartment of Andres Nin, Trotsky intimate and POUM leader, was discovered a letter addressed to the executive committee of the POUM, which reveals that Franco's wife provided "opportunities" for the group in its espionage activities.

Not until last September — four months after the Trotskyist-led uprising against the Barcelona government—did the administration first uncover a major spy ring in Madrid, involving leaders and organizations with more than five thousand active agents. And this espionage center was small compared to those in Valencia and Barcelona. Although the Madrid authorities took decisive steps against the POUM early in 1937, when it learned of the group's complicity in the work of the Fifth Column, it was only after the May putsch that a thorough cleanup of the traitors' strongholds was begun. Now the alliance of Trotskyism with democracy's worst enemies is being revealed to the world.



HOMEWARD BOUND

William Gropper

NEW MASSES
ESTABLISHED 1911

The Record of Congress

IN ALL the 150 years of the republic there is probably nothing that quite equals the record of the Seventy-fifth Congress. Elected in one of the greatest presidential landslides in history, this Congress apparently gave Roosevelt an impregnable majority in both houses, with seventy-five out of ninety-six senators and 333 out of 435 representatives belonging to the Democratic Party. It then proceeded to fly in the face of the popular electoral mandate and through two sessions and the greater part of the third tied the New Deal program into knots. And then in its final two months the Seventy-fifth Congress went so sharply into reverse as to fill with dismay the tory scribes and strategists who had been hailing the "independence" of Congress and crowing over what seemed like the imminent downfall of the New Deal.

A number of commentators have pointed out that only once before in our history, in Andrew Jackson's administration, has a second-term President regained control over a rebellious Congress. And Roosevelt's achievement is all the more remarkable in that he has done so in face of a steadily deepening economic crisis, which traditionally plays havoc with the fortunes of those in office. Various "theories" are being put forward from the tory side to explain this phenomenon, most of them variations of Vice President Garner's sage observation: "You can't beat four billion dollars." But as Raymond Clapper points out: "WPA rolls are less than 3,000,000 in a population of 130,000,000, of whom 27,000,000 voted for Mr. Roosevelt in 1936."

Neither the revolt of Congress—a revolt against the democratic verdict of the 1936 elections—nor its about-face in the last two months is particularly mysterious. The 1936 elections revealed a realignment of class forces of profound significance; traditional sectional groupings were broken down and the majority of the workers, farmers, urban middle classes, and Negroes rallied to Roosevelt as the practical alternative to the candidate of big-business reaction, Landon. That realignment was, however, only partially reflected in the new Congress since many reactionaries in the Democratic ranks, who politically were close to the Republicans and the Liberty League, found it expedient to cling firmly to Roosevelt's coat-tails in order to coast into office. As a result, though the Liberty League went into eclipse, the bi-partisan tory coalition which it represented emerged with new strength and aggressiveness in the first session of the Seventy-fifth Congress.

It was the failure to create within Congress and within the country an equally united and aggressive liberal coalition, largely because of the division in the labor movement and confusion and disunity among the progressives in Congress, that made it possible for the tories of both parties to assume the offensive and defeat or sabotage most of the New Deal program. From January 1937 until April of this year practically the only important constructive legislation that managed to get through Congress was the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act and the Farm Act. The Supreme Court reform plan and the first wages-and-hours bill were killed, the anti-lynching bill was filibustered to death, big business was given millions of dollars in tax relief via castration of the undistributed-profits and capital-gains levies, and the forces of reaction and fascism, led by Hearst and Father Coughlin, stampeded the House into defeating the administration's reorganiztion bill.

And then the tide turned. A new wages-and-hours bill, which seemed destined for an unmarked grave in the House Rules Committee, was blasted out by an unprecedented rush of representatives to sign the petition for its release. President Roosevelt, reversing the mistaken "economy" trend of the preceding months, launched his spending program, and followed this up with his message requesting an investigation of monopoly. And Congress, that same Congress which only a little over two months ago supposedly had the New Deal on the run, proceeded to pass the wages-and-hours bill, the $3,753,000,0000 relief-recovery bill and the legislation for the $500,000 monopoly investigation by overwhelming votes.

What caused so many erstwhile tory heroes to "change their minds"? Three factors were chiefly responsible:

1. United AF of L-CIO support of the wages-and-hours bill and the relief-recovery measure. This contrasted with the situation in the special session when the AF of L hierarchy knifed the first wages-and-hours bill.

2. The Democratic primary victories of Lister Hill of Alabama, running as an advocate of higher wages and of wage-hour legislation, and especially of Senator Pepper of Florida, who campaigned as a 100 percent New Dealer.

3. More aggressive leadership by President Roosevelt, who previously had been inclined to mark time.

Perhaps it is superfluous to point the moral. And yet if this victory for progress is not to be short-lived, much sober and difficult work needs to be done between now and November. Wall Street money, Wall Street pressure, Wall Street power to confuse and befuddle are being brought into full play. And there will be no lack of coat-tail hangers who will once more be filled with sudden ardor for the New Deal. The Communist Party has called for the creation of a democratic front, representing the unity of all progressive forces behind a single candidate for each elective office, under the general slogan of "Jobs, Security, Democracy, Peace." This seems to us the common-sense wisdom indicated by the Seventy-fifth Congress.

Hague's Bank Account

ANOTHER week of the Hague hearings has added to the record two important contributions to the fascist program and ideology which the mayor of Jersey City proposes for America: First, all native-born radicals should be sent to a concentration camp in Alaska; second, radicals have no rights. Hague blustered, shouted, and swaggered his way through the hearings, making many damaging admissions, such as that not only his own but public funds had gone to stir up Jersey City mobs, and that a whole retinue of newspapermen and editors supporting him did so from the comfortable vantage point of the public payroll. In addition, there came a dispatch from Germany, quoting warm praise of Hague in the Nazi press.

The Hague forces prepared for their counter-attack with demands for subpoenas for the files and complete records of a dozen organizations, ranging from the American Civil Liberties Union to the Steel Workers Organizing Committee—demands which the court sharply checked. It was during the arguments on the issuance of these subpoenas that a seemingly casual thrust of Morris L. Ernst, as counsel for the CIO, laid bare for a moment the vulnerability of Hague to that really decisive attack which must come. The subpoenas which Hague demanded, Mr. Ernst said, were no more justified—we quote from the New York *Times*—

> than if he subpoenaed "all of Mayor Hague's correspondence with—shall I say?—the bookies" or his "bank accounts."
>
> Mr. Matthews [Hague's lawyer] jumped to his feet with such a bitter denunciation of this statement, which he termed a "cowardly attack" on the mayor, that Judge Clark, who has frequently asked the mayor's lawyer to cease personalities, sharply "insisted" on his doing so.

Here, then, is the threat that throws Hague and his counsel into a panic—light on the mayor's bank account. That fabulous bank account out of which, a few years ago, Hague produced a $60,000 check to the Treasury Department for unpaid income taxes—$60,000 income tax on an official income of $8,000 a year. The magic bank account that affords the mayor a Waldorf-Astoria suite in New York, wafts him on luxury liners to Europe, and surrounds him with the atmosphere of practically unlimited wealth. Hague's incipient fascism must be fought to the last ditch, for his denial of civil liberties in Jersey City is certain to be copied by fascist-minded officials elsewhere; and the La Follette committee's long-overdue investigation, when it comes, will no doubt make this the main object of its probing. But the probing needle should also be directed to that most sensitive nerve of all, the pocketbook nerve. Where does Hague get his money? The complete answer to that question can scarcely fail to prepare for the boss of Jersey City the same sort of fate which finally overtook Boss Tweed.

Again Scottsboro

IN REFUSING the plea of Clarence Norris for a fair trial, the Supreme Court of Alabama has added the most incredible chapter in the seven-year history of outrages against the Scottsboro boys. Norris was tried in Decatur last July under circumstances which no fair-minded court of law would tolerate. Four of the Scottsboro boys were acquitted on the basis of the same perjured evidence which was used to condemn Norris to the electric chair. In spite of the fact that the Scottsboro boys were originally accused of participating equally in the same crime, the State Supreme Court now finds no "reversible errors" in the decision of the lower court. Meanwhile Ozie Powell, paralyzed on one side, is on an Alabama chain gang; Charlie Weems is stabbed in the face by a prison guard; Haywood Patterson and Andy Wright endure the cruelties of a Southern prison. This country has never witnessed a more brutal perversion of justice and common decency.

Norris will be murdered on August 1—unless all Americans whose sense of fair play has not been blunted will act at once. Telegrams and letters should be sent to Gov. Bibb Graves at Montgomery, Ala., demanding a stay of the death sentence. Funds should be sent at once to the Scottsboro Defense Committee at 112 East 19th St., New York City. Public meetings should be held throughout the country to protest the criminal decision of the Alabama reactionaries. It will be too late after August 1.

Spain Blockaded

RENEWED British pressure upon France for immediate closing of the Pyrenean frontier constitutes a graver danger to republican Spain than the fascist armies in the field. Since early April, the loyalists have been holding their own on the Central and Catalonian fronts and have been forcing the fascists to pay dearly for every inch gained in the Levante region. France cannot afford to capture many Castellons at so tremendous a cost in men and materials.

But the blockade of republican Spain is a cheap way out of the military dilemma. Under the circumstances, a really effective blockade is more effective than military victories. In this phase of the Spanish conflict, world opinion plays a decisive role. If a complete blockade is actually enforced, Spain will have suffered a defeat not in Madrid or Barcelona or Sagunto but in Paris, London, and Washington.

It has long been evident that the Chamberlain government is a fascist ally against republican Spain. From time to time, London has tried to force Paris into closing the Pyrenean frontier but, until now, not altogether successfully. For the fact remains that a blockade of Spain weakens France. If Chamberlain succeeds this time, we may expect grave days in French politics.

Write Your President!

WHILE Chamberlain intrigues to deliver democracy piecemeal into the hands of fascism, word comes from Washington that our Chamberlain-inspired Neutrality Act may be revised—next year, when the new Congress meets. By that time Chamberlain hopes to have Spain safely in Mussolini's and Hitler's bag and the Neutrality Act, having done its work, will be thrown into the discard—perhaps. This is the sorry epilogue to all the lofty attitudes, moral preachments, and "emphatic reprobation" that the various spokesmen of the State Department have indulged in at every new crime of the fascist aggressors. And what if the Chamberlain *Realpolitik,* so dear to the hearts of Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles and the pro-fascist clique in the State Department, succeeds in plunging the world into war before the next Congress meets? The time to put out a fire is before it spreads to the surrounding houses. The time to quarantine the aggressors is now.

First intimation of the plans for possible future revision of the Neutrality Act came in the form of a lengthy editorial in the June 15 issue of the New York *Times.* The *Times* states that "there is reason to believe that this criticism [of the Neutrality Act] will increase, and that an effort to appeal the law will be undertaken and will succeed in reaching its objective when Congress reconvenes. Certainly that result is greatly to be desired . . . because repeal of the law would at least permit the material resources of the United States to count on the side of international law and order."

That argument is sound, but it is sounder today than it will be if the United States waits until the forces of international lawlessness and fascist gangsterism have wrecked not only Spanish democracy but world peace. There is one disturbing feature in this *Times* editorial. It points out that American opinion has been overwhelmingly on the side of China as against Japan, Austria as against Germany, and Czechoslovakia as against Germany. But curiously enough, there is no mention of Spain. Has American opinion taken no stand on this question? The Gallup Poll shows that 75 percent of our people favor the Spanish loyalists. The *Times'* glaring omission gives the whole game away. Under the guise of advocating collective security, it is actually urging its well-known policy of "parallel action"—parallel action with Chamberlain in knifing Spanish democracy and capitulating to the Al Capones of fascism.

Is *this* the policy of the State Department? Are President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull acquiescing in this betrayal—a betrayal that jeopardizes the peace and security of the United States? Though Congress has adjourned, it is not yet too late to reverse this dangerous course. Under the Neutrality Act the President can lift the embargo against Spain at once. It is up to American public opinion to indicate its desires on this question in the most emphatic terms.

Martin as Disrupter

THE New York *Herald Tribune,* voice of the anti-union Liberty League, deigns to give organized labor a bit of advice. Now that Homer Martin, president of the United Automobile Workers, has torn up the union constitution and illegally suspended five international officers (four vice-presidents and the secretary-treasurer), the *Herald Tribune* declares, "Most Americans should—and will, we hope—find themselves lining up with Martin."

The support that reaction eagerly offers Martin is only fair repayment for services rendered. At a time when unity in the labor movement is most imperative, Martin disrupts one of the most important CIO affiliates. Immediately before the Michigan elections, when the support of Governor Murphy by all progressives is a political necessity, Martin chooses to throw the automobile union into turmoil and so limit its effective-

ness in progressive politics. With the automobile manufacturers anxious to cut wages, with unemployment mounting, Martin seeks to give the employers a free hand in their offensive to destroy completely the United Automobile Workers.

Factionalism has long cursed the automobile union. Behind Martin stands Jay Lovestone, renegade Communist, who utilizes Martin as a means by which to superimpose Lovestoneite chaos on the union he cannot rule. The Red-scare, slander, intrigue, high-handed edicts, illegal maneuvering failed to secure Martin's control; unity within the organization grew and Martin was forced to accept a twenty-point program ending factionalism. With Lovestone's approval, Martin proceeded to throw all semblance of legality overboard, and suspended the militants on the executive board.

Martin's usurpation of power has brought immediate and overwhelming condemnation from the rank and file. So much so that the Trotskyites—approving Martin's disruption—advise "explanations" of the suspensions. But that is just what the Lovestoneite-Trotskyist-Martin alliance can't give. The suspended officers demand an open and fair trial; it is significant that Martin is eager to postpone hearings.

John L. Lewis and the CIO patched up splits in the UAW before, but Martin refused to abide by agreements. It is now important that progressives, realizing the need for labor unity, support the rank and file, guided by the CIO, in restoring unity—this time permanently—in the organization Martin has sought to destroy.

Behind Nazi Jew-Baiting

THE recrudescence in Nazi Germany of the vilest forms of Jew-baiting and persecution seems to have mystified some news commentators in the capitalist press. Actually, there is little to be mystified about. This latest and cruelest anti-Semitic campaign, like most of its precedessors in Germany and elsewhere, is a maneuver to divert attention from something which the Nazi rulers are not too eager to have popular attention fixed upon. For things in Germany are not as rosy as Nazi propaganda would make them out to be.

Exports are declining; financial difficulties are increasing. According to the latest monthly statistics issued by the League of Nations, Germany in the first four months of this year has imported more than she has exported, "suffering a deficit of $15,000,000 in place of a surplus of $49,000,000 in the same period last year. The German position is thus worse by $64,000,000. In April, after the annexation of Austria, the trade deficit was $6,000,000 and was only $2,000,000 without Austria."

The seizure of Austria has not only increased the trade deficit (this, in a country which normally has an export surplus to help her finances), but also aggravated the already unsatisfactory food situation. Food is becoming more expensive and inferior in quality. Thus Austria, instead of helping Hitler solve Germany's economic problems, has made a solution more difficult than ever.

Furthermore, there has been unfavorable reaction to the failure in Czechoslovakia. After chauvinistic hopes had been artificially stimulated, this failure is producing clear signs of a general psychological letdown.

Then there is the Church opposition. That the Catholics are unhappy needs no elaboration. The same holds true of members of other religious groups. The latest (June 19) Berlin dispatch in the New York *Times,* for instance, points out that "the conflict between the Confessional Synods and the State Church authorities is rapidly heading to an impasse." In Prussia alone no fewer than one thousand pulpits are vacant because of removals or transfers of pastors to other parts of the Reich. "An equal number of Evangelical auxiliary pastors and persons remain unemployed because of the stand for a positive Christianity as opposed to Nazi mythology." This is only in Prussia. In the rest of the Reich, conditions are not much different.

All this is not conducive to happiness. And reports from most diverse sources indicate widespread discontent among the German people.

This explains the latest officially inspired anti-Semitic demonstration—a crude and detestable attempt to divert popular attention from the vital problems confronting them. It seems, however, that even this cure-all is beginning to be ineffectual. Too many people in Germany have become wise to the trick. Again, according to another Berlin dispatch in the New York *Times* (June 19) the "paroxysm of anti-Jewish excesses" elicited "the mute contempt of a large section of responsible public opinion." And further: "At no place in Berlin could one detect public expressions of approval for the work of the Jew-baiters, and it was especially observed that the attitude of the Sunday crowds on the Kurfürstendamm was distinctly one of unexpressed disapproval."

The Fight for Health

OPPONENTS of a national health program have frequently resorted to the argument that the American people will not put up with "medical regimentation." The absurdity of this moth-eaten subterfuge is exposed by the nationwide survey on the question recently conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion. The institute found that 68 percent of the lower-income group put off going to a doctor because of the cost. This is probably a moderate estimate, but even as it stands, the percentage is imposing. Equally striking was the answer to the question, "Do you think the government should be responsible for providing medical care for people who are unable to pay for it?" Eighty-one percent of the voters polled answered yes.

A subsequent survey indicates that most physicians believe some system of social responsibility for public health is necessary not only for the good of society but for the good of the profession itself. More than seven out of every ten doctors polled favor the principle of health insurance. More than eight in every ten think that the movement toward health insurance will show a rise in the next few years.

An entrenched minority in the medical profession flouted this overwhelming evidence of public opinion at the annual convention of the American Medical Association held in San Francisco last week. As Dr. John A. Kingsbury points out in the current issue of *Social Work Today,* the secretariat of the association "is the chief obstacle in the way of bringing health within the reach of all the people." It is significant, however, that the fight against the reactionary minority was waged with increased vigor and realism at this year's convention. The subject of health insurance was hotly debated throughout the sessions, and a group of eleven health associations presented a resolution criticizing the AMA for "opposing" the development of a health program.

Enlightened physicians may count on the full support of both the federal administration and organized labor. President Roosevelt has stated the principle that "Nothing can be more important to a state than its public health; the state's paramount concern should be the health of its people." This issue will receive attention at the National Health Conference called in Washington by the President for July 18-20. A forceful indication of labor's concern with the question was given last week by John L. Lewis, who declared that the CIO and its affiliated unions will take up a public-health program as a primary objective. The CIO report declares that "A fully expanded program of public assistance to handicapped and disabled persons with a full health service to all classes of workers will remove one of the greatest economic costs now imposed upon the masses and at the same time insure physical well-being for the nation." The fight for such a program should be pushed with all possible force in the fall elections.

THE PRESS TAKES NOTICE

The National Convention of the Communist Party Was News

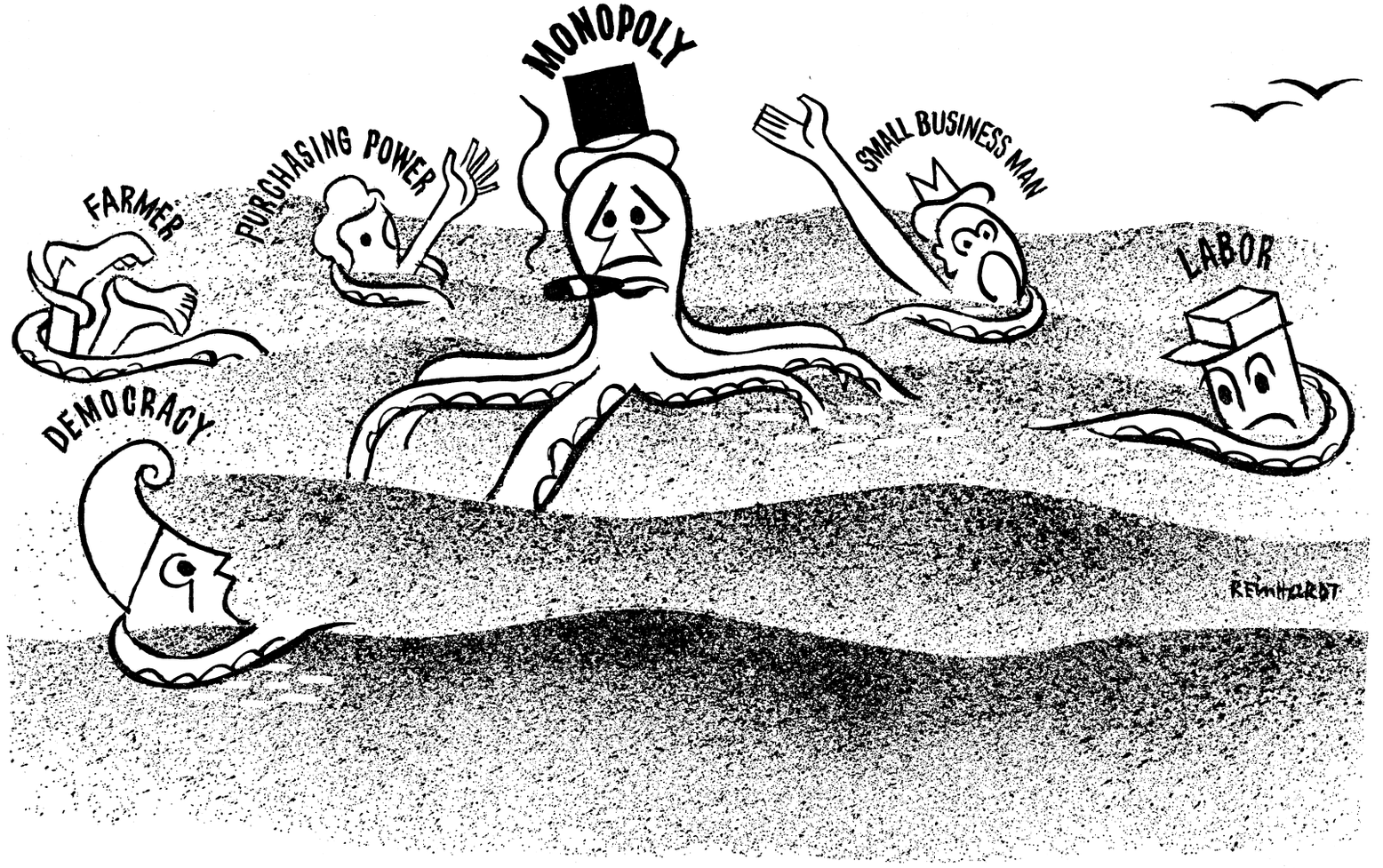
JOSEPH KELLEY

PRESS clippings on the tenth national convention of the Communist Party began to arrive at the party's national headquarters about a week ago. Since then a steady stream (already totaling four thousand notices) has poured in from all over America—from the city dailies and the country papers.

Unlike the Socialist Party's convention of about a month ago which received only two brief squibs in the New York press and less nationally, the Communist Party's meeting was considered by the press of national significance. The three leading wire services, AP, UP, and INS, carried more than two stories daily on the deliberations, reaching approximately 66,000,000 readers exclusive of New York. The New York dailies sent their own reporters to the convention and carried day-by-day and edition-by-edition accounts which reached three million additional readers. *Time* devoted seven columns in its National Affairs department to the Communist Party during the week and *Newsweek* carried a shorter story. The New York *Times* magazine section contained a long feature article while the delegates were still in town. The United Press sent out a "red letter" release a week in advance of the delegates' arrival. Both the National Broadcasting Co. and the Columbia Broadcasting System gave the convention a national radio hookup, National over fifty stations, Columbia over thirty-nine, reaching approximately 25,000,000 listeners.

What seemed most significant about the deluge was that, apart from headlines and comments by columnists and editorial writers, the reporting was factual and for the most part fairly accurate. While some distorted streamers appeared, like the one in the Erie, Pa., paper, reading COMMUNISTS IN SECRET MEET HEAR BROWDER, the body of the story usually corrected false impressions. The Erie paper's report went on to describe the "secret" meeting—which took place before four thousand people at Carnegie Hall, admission open to the press. The Springfield (Mo.) *Leader* followed a pattern—quite popular in small towns—of misleading readers by incorrect headlines. BROWDER SAYS "RED" GOAL SAME AS CATHOLICS', one headline stated, but on reading the item underneath it turned out that Browder had made clear that the preservation of democracy concerned Catholics and Communists alike, and provided ground for co-operation against reaction between both groups. The Yonkers paper could not resist a little "home-town-boy-makes-good" boasting, exulting in bold type: BEDLAM IN GARDEN OVER YONKERS MAN, 22,000 GREET EARL BROWDER 10 MINUTES AT CONVENTION.

Yet while the news stories of the convention by the working newspaper men and women brought the Communist Party to the attention of the American people more accurately, more completely than ever before, class



Ad Reinhardt

"Who—me? I'm just swimming along like the rest of these people."

antagonisms by no means disappeared. To some extent the news columns broke through the usual pattern of untruth, hostility, and sneers with which Communist activities are usually portrayed. On the other hand, just because 85 percent of the news accounts were straightforward, editors and columnists became more angry in their attacks that deliberately misrepresented and distorted the Communist position on vital issues.

That section of Earl Browder's report dealing with the relation of Communists to religious groups and particularly to Catholics, wherein he offered the hand of brotherhood to all who opposed reaction, fascism, and special privilege, seemed to comfound the editors the most. One inspired writer pointed out that Browder's offer must be pure hypocrisy since the convention failed to open with a "Divine invocation." Others, more "objective," expressed doubts as to the sincerity of the Communist Party. The resolve of Communists to defend democracy and the Constitution, the desire to build a strong democratic front, the outstretched hand offered to Protestants, Jews, and Catholics alike, seemed in the eyes of some editors "a sinister mask concealing an ulterior purpose." Because, along with James Oneal, Old Guard Socialist who Red-baits in the *New Leader,* the editors denied that democracy has reached its highest expression in the Soviet Union, the editors considered the Communist Party's ultimate goal of establishing a Socialist order incompatible with democracy. To the editors, democracy is threatened by any attempt to broaden its base, by progressive legislation proposed by the New Deal, by collective security in defense of peace, by regulation of monopolies, by Socialism which is death to special privilege and injustice.

★

DISTURBING BUSINESS

I NOTICED the other day that Mr. Sloan, of New York, said that the adoption of the measure [wages-and-hours bill] would lead to unemployment, to the disturbance of business. What unemployment? Mr. Sloan says that paying workingmen twenty-five cents an hour will lead to unemployment, to the disturbance of business, and that putting a ceiling of forty-four hours will lead to unemployment. . . . Mr. Sloan, who enjoys a salary of several hundred thousand dollars a year, who enjoys a large income above his salary, thinks twenty-five cents an hour may disturb business. My opinion is that these vast salaries are far more calculated to disturb the whole economic situation. I am firmly of the belief that these men who enjoy these great salaries and huge incomes would do well for their own sake and for the sake of their country not to complain of $11 a week for the maintenance of a family.—SEN. WILLIAM BORAH *of Idaho, during Senate discussion of the wages-and-hours bill.*

CHINESE DRAMA GOES TO WAR

The Actors and Playwrights Do Their Bit

ANNA LOUISE STRONG

THE best dramatic acting I saw anywhere in China last winter was in an open-air village theater on the Shansi front. To this backward rural region, two good dramatic companies came to the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army. To celebrate the conclusion of a military conference of division commanders and to honor two guests from Hankow—Professor Li Kum-po and myself—Commander-in-Chief Chu Teh arranged a meeting for the soldiers encamped in the neighborhood. After a brief exchange of greetings between the guests and commanders, the evening was given over to drama put on by the companies: a group of Shanghai players visiting the Northern battlefronts and the Northwest Front Service Troupe organized by the famous woman writer, Ting Ling, for continuous service with the Eighth Route's propaganda section.

Five in the afternoon saw a pale sun sinking over a dust-colored landscape, which even three months of zero weather had not yet softened with snow. The dirt-colored walls of the village houses, broken and worn down at corners, seemed crumbling back into the earth from which they were made. Fortunately there was no wind to raise the choking dust-storm of North China; the air was cold and still. Yet a powdery mist arose from hundreds of feet going toward the village temple; it clung long in the still air, slowly settling, making a haze across the setting sun.

Seven or eight hundred soldiers in padded uniforms of blue-gray cotton found space to stand in the temple enclosure under a darkening sky. On three sides of the open space rose curved Chinese roofs glowing with many colors from the pale sun's last light. Most of the audience stood, but a few of the more venturesome had climbed the roofs to perch precariously on the slopes. The only other seat was one long bench fronting the stage, reserved for Chu Teh, Ho Lung, Liu Peh-chung, and the invited guests.

The dark box of the stage filled the fourth side of the temple enclosure, rising like a house from which one side had been torn so that we could see into its second story through an opening only partly draped by a crude curtain. There was no stage entrance; to reach the floor of the stage the actors had to pass before the audience and climb by a rough ladder to the platform some seven feet above the ground. They all did this together at the beginning of the program; then they disappeared into the dark interior and hid behind furniture and side-curtains till their entrance in the play. Since an exit from the stage via the audience would have distracted attention during the performance, none of the actors left until the show was over; all waited in that dark box behind the scenery for the many hours of the entertainment; then all came to the front of the stage together and climbed down amid applause.

Under these crude conditions the two dramatic troupes put on performances which held their audience spell-bound for many hours. The sun went down and the winter stars shone on the village drama; kerosene lamps were brought to light the stage. Till after ten on a bitter January night, the blue-gray soldiers stood watching, laughing, applauding. The dramas showed aspects of the war against Japan; they were portrayals of life as those soldiers knew it.

Chinese drama has gone to war. Not only has the war stirred Chinese writers to new, heroic subjects. War has smashed former centers of dramatic and literary culture—Shanghai, Peiping—and forcibly scattered writers and dramatists across China. Authors and actors move across the country; they seek refuge in interior provinces; they seek subjects at battlefronts. Art is forced back to the people. A new culture of the inner provinces begins.

For the past two decades Chinese culture has faced outward, toward Europe. The renaissance movement of 1919 turned the attention of Chinese youth toward Western writers and broke the dominant influence of old Chinese classics. Chinese boys and girls came to the coastal cities for education; wealthier students crossed the seas to America and Europe. They became merchants, bankers, *compradors,* interpreters—channels through which foreign goods and foreign ideas entered China. Writers and dramatists copied foreign writers.

The shattering by war of centers and channels of culture which for two decades dominated China has forced Chinese youth to seek new ones. Shanghai is physically destroyed; Peiping and Tientsin are culturally dead. Universities have moved inland, installing themselves in mud huts of the back country and speedily building new dormitories and laboratories. Writers, dramatists, and actors have also moved inland. In Hankow, where the arrival of large numbers of Chinese journalists rendered jobless by the destruction of the big newspapers on the coast has created a surplus

of newspaper writers, there have sprung up "wall posters," hand-written newspapers posted in prominent places and containing digests of news and feature stories on the war. Two or three writers or journalists plan the poster; its actual writing is entrusted to a scholar of good penmanship, which is itself one of the arts in China. In a light, even humorous style, they discuss "how to help the wounded," "how to discover traitors," and other immediate problems. Crowds gather around these posters to look at the cartoons and pictures and to listen while the educated members of the crowd read the wall poster aloud to the others.

Even more popular than the wall posters are the troupes of actors touring the country. These range from professional troupes to half-trained student propagandists who recite patriotic poems. Most of the groups are amateur, with a few professional leaders. Some of them are temporary groups of students, performing during vacations, like the twenty-seven students I met from Central China College (Wuchang) who used their mid-winter vacation to tour five nearby counties. Others are relatively permanent, for the duration of the war.

In Hankow, for instance, I met a group of thirteen students who had walked nearly a thousand miles, zig-zagging back and forth, from Shanghai inland, putting on patriotic dramas in towns and villages. They told me they had organized on their own initiative, collected money from friends to the amount of some $30 (gold) which they spent for costumes, and then registered with the People's Association for Resisting Japan.

The most unusual of the actors' groups now touring China is a troupe of Shanghai children, aged nine to nineteen. When war destroyed their homes, they were driven with their parents into refugee camps but refused to stay there. "We will not be refugees burdening our country; we will help the campaign of resistance," wrote fifteen-year-old Tsu on the banner which they now carry across China. They organized the Children's Dramatic Club, and began reciting pieces and singing songs they had learned in school. Then famous playwrights and actors gave them free lessons. When the Japanese took Shanghai, the children made their way to Hankow, putting on performances all the way. Once they narrowly missed a battle, but Chinese soldiers sent them another way. On another occasion the boats on which they were traveling were commandeered by the military, and they walked many miles carrying their stage equipment. By the time they reached Hankow they had a repertory of nine wartime plays, all written by well-known playwrights for amateur production.

All these wartime programs follow a common pattern: opening speeches by the local authorities followed by a program of several one-act plays and chanted poems. Often the traveling players teach the latest patriotic songs to their audiences. Much of the work is crude. Some of the dramas are so simple and consist so much of pantomime that teachers from nearby villages are able to take them back to their pupils and perform them, with considerable improvisation, in village schools.

One such play I saw portrayed Old Man China, or Hwang-ti, surrounded by a host of blue-clad daughters. An evil neighbor entered with many flourishing gestures of attack, and seizing one of the daughters, dragged her from the stage, revealing the inscription "Manchuria" on her back. There followed the seizure of other daughters — Jehol, Chahar. Before all daughters were seized, the son of the family, labeled Chinese Army, came to defend his sisters. He overpowered the evil neighbor, and thereupon the previously captured daughters smiled through the door at the rear of the stage in token that they would soon return.

Crude as these amateur performances are, they furnish the vehicle for which the best Chinese authors are today writing. Poets, dramatists, even novelists, are enlisted in the Chinese war for independence, seeking to arouse 450,000,000 people by their plays and stories. In poetry a new form called "poems to be declaimed" has replaced both the classic and the romantic tradition. Poets themselves go out to villages, declaiming their poetry, sometimes to musical accompaniment. Mo Motien, formerly well known for romantic verse, now writes this declamatory type of poetry, and a less-known younger poet, Kao Lan, has published a whole book called *Poems to be Declaimed.* In drama the prevailing form is the one-act play of great simplicity, suitable for performance on village streets or on temple platforms, and therefore with a minimum of scene changes. Tien Han, leading left dramatist, has written two short plays which are very popular with dramatic troupes: *Defense of Lukouchiao* and *Final Victory.* The nine plays put on by the Children's Dramatic Club included *Final Victory* and also *Arrest the Traitors, Lay Down Your Whip, Japanese Mustache, Aid Our Mobile Units, At the Crossroads, Solidarity, On the Firing Line,* and *Dream of Peiping.*

The dramatic performance which I saw at Eighth Route Army headquarters illustrated both types of present-day popular entertainment. Ting Ling's group goes in especially for "big-drum singing," the chanted ballad accompanied by drum and stringed instrument. In this ancient Peiping style, popular in Chinese tea-houses, her Northwest Front Service Group declaimed at sundown in the village theater *The Battle of Pingsingkwan,* the first victory gained by a Chinese army against Japan. At this famous Northern pass on the Great Wall, a detachment of the Eighth Route Army, under the brilliant young strategist Lin Piao, fell upon eight thousand Japanese as they were passing along a narrow road between mountains, broke and routed their column, killing three thousand men and capturing scores of truckloads of uniforms and ammunition.

Even more applauded, however, was the troupe of Shanghai players, student amateurs with a few professional leaders. Instead of the chanted ballad, they put on realistic one-act dramas featuring the battle around Shanghai: *The Lone Battalion* and *On the Banks of the Whangpoo.* The latter play was a dramatization of the heroism of wharf coolies, who swam out at night to attach bombs to Japanese warships. It opens with an aged coolie on a Shanghai dock, warming his shivering half-naked body by drinking himself half-drunk. Three plain-clothes men prepare to arrest him for loitering, but he shows his passport and explains his purpose. A younger coolie arrives, serious and worried; he has recently married and hates to die when he has just succeeded in getting such a nice girl. Everyone laughs at his hesitancy. The two coolies plunge into the water. A distant explosion is heard and the older coolie returns, saying that his companion is captured. Machine-gun fire causes the guards and older coolie to withdraw and the Japanese enter with the younger coolie, tie him to a pillar, and torture him to make him betray his comrades. He groans in agony but does not tell. Reinforcements of Chinese guards return and save him.

This wartime melodrama was full of comedy. The older coolie, especially, was a comic character, full of rough jests about life and especially about the dynamite charge fastened to his body, which was visible against his naked skin when his rags flapped in the breeze. Neither of the coolies was shown as a romantic hero; one of them drinks and jests, the other is afraid to start and moans under torture. Yet both of them do their job. The acting was superb; the Chinese seem to be born mimics. The realism was highly significant. The Shanghai troupe clearly conveyed the message, so encouraging to the audience, that ordinary men, plain wharf coolies of Shanghai, have in them the stuff of heroes.

During their visit to the Eighth Route Army, this Shanghai troupe created another drama, in a casual manner which shows how many of these dramas are born. A friendly critic suggested that Shanghai life was a little remote from the Shansi peasants, and it might be well to supplement it with dramas showing rural fighting. All night they worked on a new play, *Defense of the Village,* and presented it—in Shansi dialect—to a large audience of peasants the following evening.

Defense of the Village showed an old peasant discussing with his daughter-in-law the approach of the Japanese. Shall they remain to make peace with the invader, or organize in the hills to fight? The old man decides that the Japanese cannot kill everyone, and that if he is quiet and law-abiding, they will probably show him mercy. He denounces his son and a neighbor, who are forming a band of "farmer fighters" in the hills; peasants, he says, should submit to those in power. Cannily he hides his valuables in the courtyard and prepares to await the storm. A Japanese officer enters with a local Chinese traitor, drags the young woman into the bedroom, shoots her when he fails to subdue her, and rushing out, shoots the old

man also for the startled protest he has made. The son returns with the band of farmer fighters to kill the Japanese officer and the traitor. The old man, dying, tells his son that he was wrong to rely on Japanese mercy and that resistance is the only way.

Such are the simple, direct plots of today's Chinese dramas. When the present war began and fighting spread on a large scale throughout China, more and more leading writers began to put their pens at the service of the war. Literature became simple and full of incident, dealing not so much with Japan's imperialist policies, but showing the Japanese quite concretely as robbers and murderers, burning houses, raping women. Its theme is "defend your homes" rather than "resist imperialism." It is full of heroic deeds of Chinese soldiers and of the suffering of Chinese people.

Chinese writers are too active today to spend much thought on the theory of their writing. When I asked Ting Ling to tell me the latest tendencies of Chinese literature, she answered: "I don't know a thing about literary tendencies; I've been six months at the front. But I have a clear opinion about the duty of the writer. He has only one task today: to help save the country. We must not lose ourselves in theories of literature; we must simply write to arouse the masses."

So completely was Ting Ling absorbed in the present struggle that she would not even discuss her own past. Some six years ago this talented writer, together with her husband, disappeared into the jails of Chiang Kai-shek. Her husband was killed almost at once—it was said by torture. Ting Ling herself was for years reported dead.

During our talk in the Shansi hills I said to her, "Will you pardon a personal question? Last time I heard of you, you were dead. How did you come alive?"

She hesitated a moment and then answered, "Since we are now in a united front with the Chinese government, and with all Chinese except traitors, I would rather not discuss my prison experiences."

Then quickly she dismissed all personal questions and turned to the work of the Front Service Dramatic Group. "We have played in the past few months to eighty thousand people, mostly peasants but also many soldiers. From the standpoint of art our playing is backward, but the peasants like to see us, because we show their own life. We live like common soldiers, our food is not plentiful, and our transport is chiefly our own feet. We put on dramas, make public speeches, draw cartoons on the village walls, and teach the peasants to sing. We must teach at least two songs to every village.

"Our life, you see, is rather hard, but our audiences have smiling faces when we come, even in the midst of all this danger and death. So we are happy too." Thus Ting Ling expressed the feeling of today's writers and actors in China who are working to arouse their fellow-countrymen and to win the war. Two days later she and her troupe were again in motion, somewhere along the Shansi front.

A CIGARETTE

A Short Story

HARRY KAPUSTIN

PAUL didn't know how he had made it from the garage at B and Allegheny to the stand at Front and Walnut in sixteen minutes, including time out for gas and oil. Boy, he was a hero. The traffic on Delaware Avenue was as thick as Beerbelly's head.

When he backed in it was no trouble at all. Where were the other trucks? They couldn't be out on jobs already. Something cockeyed here.

He walked into the office and there was Beerbelly, his boss. He was dead to the world. His head was lying on the desk and he wasn't snoring. So he wasn't just sleeping. His belly was swimming up and down. So he wasn't dead.

He was drunk, but how! Get me a scale and I'll weigh this guy's load. When Paul got to within a foot and a half of him the stench was marvelous.

Beerbelly's arm was on the order book.

To wake him up wouldn't be so good.

To let him sleep wouldn't be so hot either.

The telephone bell saved Paul. It buzzed off right in Beerbelly's ear for minutes. Without moving anything except two fingers and certainly without opening an eye, Beerbelly knocked the receiver off the hook and listened.

"Yeh," he muttered. "This is Philadelphia Drayage Co. What's the job?" He listened for a while and muttered, "Have a truck over right 'way. 'Bye."

Then he hung up the receiver, sat up, and opened one eye. He saw it was Paul and belched.

"That's a fine good-morning," said Paul.

Beerbelly ignored this.

"Ninety bales of wool for the docks," said Beerbelly, "down to Jones Brothers Line. By sailing time of the *S. S. Boston.*"

"I don't know if I can do that by ten o'clock. Where's Joe?"

"He didn't show up today," said Beerbelly.

"Funny," said Paul. "I passed his house last night and I saw him by the window readin' the paper. He ain't sick. Where's the other two trucks?"

"Norristown," said Beerbelly.

"Well give me some money for a loader or go out and get me one," said Paul. "I ain't gonna rupture myself for no muckin' bales."

"I'm gonna load with you," said Beerbelly. "I'm gonna be your helper." He started to fumble around under the desk and finally brought out an old rusty hook.

"Hey, you're breaking some spider's heart," said Paul.

"Let's go," ordered Beerbelly. "Less fancy talk. I'm your boss."

"You mean you pay me wages, that's what you mean," said Paul.

By the time Beerbelly got to the curb he was asleep already. "Go on down there by yourself. I'll send you down a helper from around the corner."

"Make sure you do," said Paul. The old punk sure was funny. He was drunk, but not drunk enough to work.

Paul gave the cranks a couple of good shoves and jumped into the cab. He turned down Letitia Street and bucked traffic for a block, but saved ninety seconds. He'd need them ninety seconds. He backed up double on the pavement so that they could run the bales right up on the truck.

He jumped out and squeezed by his truck into the place.

It was a gloomy, dark, old place. A couple of million pounds of wool came and went out of here every month. "And do you know how much help they got here?" asked Paul of an imaginary man. "One guy. One guy. Long on wool and short on help."

Paul kept on looking down the hundred-yard aisle for the shipper. Three fifty-watt lamps were practically making daylight out of the place, so Paul was so blinded by them that he couldn't see the shipper crawling down from the top of a bin.

"It's getting cold in here," he said when the shipper came up to him.

"Yeh," said the shipper, "the coal didn't come in yet."

"What you mean is the heater never arrived," said Paul.

"Well," said the shipper, "this place suits them. A bale comes in weighing three hundred and fifty and comes out weighing three fifty three and a half. Only a man comes in here a man and walks out of here as soft as a bag of hamburger. Well, how are you doin', Paul?"

"Not so good, Jim. My kid is in the hospital."

"That's not so good."

"No."

"Where's your helper?" asked Jim.

"I'm waitin' for him. Got a cigarette? I'll go out and take a drag. Thanks. You know, I only had ham and eggs and buckwheat cakes this morning for breakfast. They was all out of country sausage. It's disgustin'."

Jim smiled. "You're a comedian," he said. "But if it's Joe you're waitin' for, you'll wait.

I saw him this morning and he borrowed ferry fare to go over to Camden and see if there's anything doin' over at RCA or Campbells. Beerbelly laid him off. Didn't he tell you?"

"No, he didn't tell me," said Paul angrily. "Beerbelly just said he didn't show up."

"Well, that's so," said Jim.

"Yeh," said Paul, "that's so."

He went outside and smoked the cigarette slowly.

When it was down to the last half-inch, he went inside again.

"Hey, Jim," he called, "can I use the phone?"

"The Keystone," said Jim. "It's unlimited." Paul called Beerbelly's number.

"Hello," said Beerbelly.

"Where's my helper?" demanded Paul.

"I couldn't get anybody," said Beerbelly and hung up.

Paul hung up.

Jim came over to him, looking at his watch. "Listen, kid," he said, "if that ninety bales don't make that boat I'll go out on my ear. My boss is just itchin' for me to fall down on him like that."

"Two men can't load ninety bales in an hour," said Paul. "You want to die young?"

"That's just it, I ain't so young," said Jim.

Paul scratched his head. "I got a good mind to leave the truck here and go up to the union and report Beerbelly. Not only for this. He's got a record longer than Al Capone's."

"Listen, kid," said Jim, "not here, not today."

Somebody was calling into the place: "Need a loader here?"

"Sure," said Jim. "Sure. Come in, boy."

The tall, strong-looking Negro took his hook out of his belt. Jim put the two wooden horses out and the smooth board over them and he and the big man took turns running the bales up on the truck and helping Paul pile them.

"I think we'll make it in one load," he said in a quiet tone.

The tall, strong Negro was steaming sweat, and smiling.

Jim gave Paul the bills of lading and started to pay the helper.

"I'll pay half," said Paul. He started to fumble in his pockets.

"No," said Jim. "It's my funeral. The boss would fire me if he heard of this. I'll pay."

"Don't tell me you is payin' for your boss," said the Negro. "Is your boss broke? Ain't these bales of wool worth nothin'?"

Paul and Jim didn't say anything. Jim handed seventy-five cents to the Negro.

"Somehow I ain't that hungry," said the Negro. He wouldn't take the money.

At that moment the three men couldn't say anything. Jim shook hands with the Negro and Paul took his left hand.

"How about a cigarette?" asked the Negro.

Malman

"Poor Fenningsworth—snatched from us in his prime by the cruel hand of the SEC."

★

THAT FAMOUS "BLACKLIST"

BEHIND those roaring headlines about "Lewis' Blacklist" (New York *Times*) and those dramatic reports that the CIO leader last week plumped himself into the House and "used Speaker Bankhead's office as a conference room in which to apply pressure to a group of House members" (Washington *Post*) stand two simple questions:

1. Shall *Uncle Sam* cease passing out dizzying sums to law-breakers now getting them and now cutting wages and now refusing even to discuss it with unions—or shall *Uncle Sam* go on subsidizing wage-cutters with one hand while using the other to hold a floor under wages during this depression?

2. Shall the above issue, or any other important issue, be decided by fourteen out of 435 congressmen—fourteen who do not even tell how each lines up in a secret vote?

What Lewis is after, what the local spokesmen for literally millions of union men have asked for in wires and letters to Congress since last February, is an amendment to the Walsh-Healey act. The amendment would refuse the right to bid on government contracts to employers whom the National Labor Relations Board finds guilty of breaking the collective-bargaining law.

Since February, an undercover struggle, loaded with the excitement and suspense of a mystery thriller, had been going on. On one side, Republican and Democratic reactionaries headed by Senator King of Utah and a couple of congressmen—backed by employers. On the other, CIO General Counsel Lee Pressman and Gardner Jackson of Labor's Non-Partisan League—backed by Lewis, a reluctantly acquiescent Bill Green, and the whole labor movement, as shown by hundreds of wires and letters from locals. The Senate passed the amendment. The House Rules Committee stopped it. Lewis' blood began to boil. He asked, openly, for a conference. It was Speaker Bankhead, not Lewis, who set the time and place. It was Bankhead, not Lewis, who suggested calling in the Rules Committee members. We are informed that President Roosevelt twice had telephoned a House leader asking for action. Nevertheless, the fourteen, next day, by secret vote again blocked the amendment. That's why the two questions given above stand near the top of progressive labor's campaign agenda.

Readers' Forum

More on the Shaw Controversy

Robert Forsythe was to have reviewed George Bernard Shaw's *On the Rocks* in this issue, but was unable to do so. His review will appear next week. Meanwhile we present below two letters addressed to Mr. Forsythe, bearing on his comment on Shaw in our issue of June 7. Both the writers are familiar with the text of *On the Rocks,* and one has witnessed the premiere.—THE EDITORS.

DEAR MR. FORSYTHE: In your June 7 column, you asked the question, "Is Shaw a fascist?" and you gave us an idea that he had too much brains to be one. Well, have you read *On the Rocks,* published in this country about four years ago, and now to be produced next week by the Federal Theatre Project, after having been kicked around for various reasons by one of the Shuberts and the Theatre Guild?

I reviewed that play in my "Books on Review" column appearing in the Durham (N. C.) *Herald-Sun* papers back in those days, and declared that Shaw was either so muddled he didn't know where his next idea was coming from or he was an out-and-out fascist. But even in those days I didn't throw the label of fascist out at the first provocation. I ran into the play again a few months ago when the Federal Theatre's department of information assigned me the task of publicizing the show. I worked on it for a month or so, preparing my production book, reading the play, studying the preface, etc. That was a few months ago. I was fired later for participating in a demonstration supervisors were not supposed to participate in, and being a supervisor—all was over. And I forgot all about *On the Rocks.* Now the Federal Theatre is definitely producing it, after changing its mind about it a half-dozen times, and you have written a piece about Mr. Shaw.

Read that play, Mr. Forsythe, and you'll change the tone of your magic profile. There's a striking character in *On the Rocks* by the name of Old Hipney, a veteran labor-leader, a thinly disguised Shaw. Both Hipney and Shaw have lost faith in the effectiveness of the democratic form of government. It simply doesn't get anything done. In the end, Hipney comes out and says that something has to be done for the depression, and if it will take a Mussolini or Hitler to do it, he's all for it. He explains it a little more vividly than that—what the country needs is for some Hitler or Mussolini to take both labor and capital, workers and employers, by "the scruffs of their necks" and get some cooperation out of them! I'm sorry I can't give you the exact quote at this time, but check it yourself. That's downright fascism if anything is, especially when he tags it Hitler and Mussolini. In the ending we have a pseudo-optimist line, "If England will arise . . ." I hope when you review *On the Rocks,* you'll come right out and answer your own question.

ANTHONY BUTTITTA.

New York City.

DEAR MR. FORSYTHE: Having just witnessed the American premiere of George Bernard Shaw's *On the Rocks,* I am compelled to write you this letter for two purposes: first, to protest against the English brand of National Socialism (Nazism pure and simple) dished out by Shaw; and second, to tell you that your denial of the fascist leanings of Mr. Shaw as contained in your recent article in NEW MASSES, is utterly refuted in this play.

In *Heartbreak House,* Shaw warned of the day when England's ship of state would crash "on the rocks." In this WPA production, we are shown the eventuation of the catastrophe; and Shaw's description of the crisis and its solution runs so parallel to Hitler's Nazi ideologies that one ceases to wonder why, at one time, Shaw praised Hitler. That was not a slip of the tongue. It was the slip of Mr. Shaw himself which landed him *on the rocks* of fascism.

What are the elements of the "Socialist" program which Shaw offers through his theatrical mouthpiece, Prime Minister Chavender? (1) Condemnation of democracy; and specifically, a plan to abolish Parliament. (2) Substitution of the dictatorship of "a strong man," backed by the armed force of the police. (3) A program of "nationalization" of land, banks, industry (everything except women) irrespective of classes, by a government which would represent all classes.

It matters not that Shaw differentiates his "strong man" as one possessing a "conscience." Shaw's attack upon democracy is unmistakable. He ridicules the people, says they know nothing about governing and are so blind they will even run to "Jew-baiting."

Shaw's totalitarian concepts of relationships "above classes" are revealed not only in his ministerial program designed to fit all classes, of a benevolent dictator who will serve labor, capital, and the middle-classes; but in the marriage of the viscount to the Prime Minister's daughter and the marriage of the Marxist girl, Aloysia, to the Prime Minister's son. Thus, by a theatrical gesture, Mr. Shaw abolishes class interests. Thus, by waving the wand of dramaturgy, Communism succumbs to nature (sex), and liberalism weds nobility.

In the finale, we are treated to a piece of "revolutionary" hokum as the unemployed, marching, smashing windows, sing: "England arise!" Again, instead of a clearcut proletarian slogan of "workers arise," we get the Shavian brand of national socialism.

It is utterly beyond the point that Prime Minister Chavender attempts to take a progressive position against the candidly fascist Foreign Secretary. So did Hitler and Mussolini in their arch demagogy fool the people with progressive slogans of "Socialism" and "revolution." It does not matter that the Prime Minister declaims against the "shirts" of all colors. (Shaw does a little Red-baiting of his own by including "red shirts.") The fact remains, as Dimitrov pointed out, that fascism attempts to sneak in as anti-fascism when it cannot batter its way in.

Shaw's understanding of Socialism, democracy, dictatorship, and imperialism is utterly puerile at times in this play. What sort of solution does he present for imperialism? The Cingalese bourgeois, because he is called "nigger," denounces with feverish nationalism everything "white" and leaves, threatening to revolt from English imperialism and transform England into a colony of an imperialistic Indian empire. Here Shaw shows himself to be completely blind to the identity of interest and the growing unity of the English and Indian masses against their common oppressors, the bourgeoisie.

Shaw presents the picture of the British working class, hopelessly divided against itself, incapable of unified action, incapable of producing a collective political leadership. Old Hipney stigmatizes the "labor leader" as the most degenerate element of decadent politics, failing to distinguish between progressive and reactionary labor leaders. So, too, did Mussolini and Hitler stigmatize the "labor leader" without differentiation. It is positively amazing on how many points (in *On the Rocks*) Shaw echoes Hitler-Mussolini viewpoints.

In the finale, there is a gag-line when the Prime Minister's secretary, witnessing the brutal dispersion of the unemployed, cries, "Oh God, I must join them," and she runs out and joins them. The audience laughs. This is neither bad acting nor poor direction; it flows logically from the consistent vein of contempt for the proletariat which runs through the play. Even the most magnificent ideas of the working class are put into the schoolgirl mouth of Aloysia so that they convey naive politics rather than the profound ideas born of a hundred years of class struggle throughout the world.

It is a sad spectacle to behold this great master of the social drama floundering on the rocks and grabbing hold of fascist straws to save himself.

EUGENE KONECKY.

New York City.

Cedillo's Allies

TO NEW MASSES: The following excerpts from a letter from a friend may interest you. He warns us not to magnify the legend that Cedillo is of any importance, or that his revolt represents any real danger to the government. He adds:

"The revolt was over before it really got started, chiefly because Cárdenas acted with admirable decision to nip the business in the bud. It is fairly clear that Cedillo would not of his own volition have picked this precise moment for his coup; Cárdenas forced him out into the open where the whole country could plainly see how ridiculously unimpressive he was and where his movement could be promptly disbanded and destroyed. There has been practically no bloodshed, nor was it necessary. *And the fascists have been given an excellent lesson in how a democracy, determined to defend itself, can be capable of dealing with its enemies and their conspiracies.*

"Cedillo himself is an ignorant militarist who made his reputation and gained his rank during the revolution by blowing up trains. He started as an agrarian leader in San Luis Potosi and was allowed possession of the state in return for his support of the Obregon revolt against Carranza in 1920. Since that time, he has had eighteen years in which to grow fat and rich and to maintain his curious title of "agrarista" by accumulating *haciendas* of his own and keeping his immediate followers contented with small land distributions while the majority of the peasants of the state were left as landless as before the revolution. As he was one of the last of the old-style revolutionary 'warlords,' even he was bright enough to see that the new lease on life of the popular revolution during the past three years would sooner or later overtake him in San Luis Potosi and bring his feudal domination of the state to an end. The only way to maintain his own position was to control the federal government before he was crushed by the onward march of Mexican progress. For that purpose he allied himself, first, with the feudal land barons of the state and the Catholic Church and, later, *with the fascist emissaries of Germany and Italy* and the foreign imperialists, chiefly the oil companies. But he never had a real chance to win out and even his employers considered him a pretty comic figure. His only importance was as a symbol of a Mexico that is rapidly passing and of which he was one of the last representatives. The revolt itself, although Cedillo has not yet been captured, was over more than a week ago. [The letter is dated June 11.]

"This should not be taken to mean that all danger of reactionary revolt has been removed with the easy defeat of Cedillo. The main fire of anything done in defense of Mexico in the States should be concentrated on the oil companies, as it is their boycott of Mexican oil and their attempt to suffocate the country's economic life that are chiefly responsible for creating the conditions in which the weed of revolt can flourish. And give the newspaper correspondents hell, particularly the gentleman who represents the lofty New York *Times.* If they are not actually in the pay of the oil companies, then they are the most enthusiastic crowd of volunteers I have ever seen."

JOSEPH FREEMAN.

Accord, N. Y.

REVIEW AND COMMENT

Thumbs Up and Down

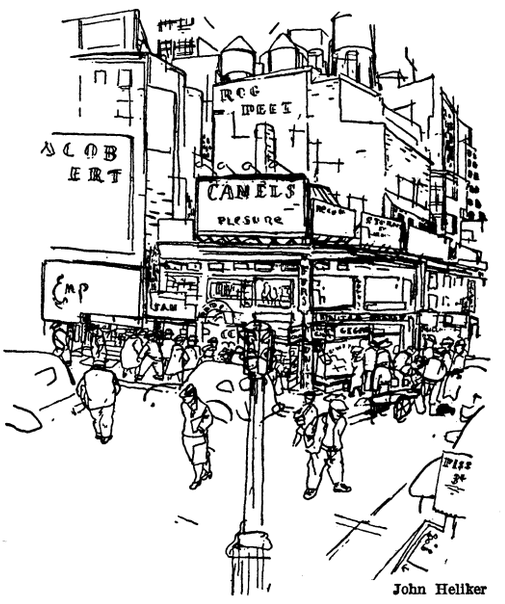
IN AN essay on "Newspaper Criticisms and American Fiction," Frank Norris registered astonishment at the amount of "commendatory palaver" shoveled out by the professional reviewers of his day. Written over thirty-five years ago, the comment is as appropriate as Louis Kronenberger's "Are Reviewers Too Polite?" which appeared a few weeks back in the *Saturday Review of Literature*. The benevolent cliché was even at that time the first refuge of the tender-minded reviewer, and Norris found it difficult to calculate the number of third-rate authors who were regularly informed that they had just written "a thrilling story palpitating with life . . . one of the very best novels that have appeared in a long time . . . not a dull page in the book."

Norris was inclined to trace the fragrant-bouquet tradition to the fact that "it is easier to write favorable than unfavorable reviews." There is, of course, another factor which no first-year student would ignore today: that books are commodities which are intended, like asparagus and vanishing cream, to be sold over the counter. The publisher pays heavily for advertisements, as you need not be told if you read the reviews in the Sunday book section of the New York *Times*. If you get into the habit of panning poor books, your bourgeois editor gets an earful from the big boys downstairs. You won't hear about it; you just won't get any more books. It's an open secret that the average big-time reviewer is a horribly repressed soul. Just see what happens when he gets a chance to toss his inhibitions out the window: read his review of any International Publishers book.

But the brickbat tradition is by no means dead, even though on most papers it is restrained by the heavy hand of the business office. In a sprightly treatise on *The Charlatanry of the Learned* (1715) a German Diogenes named Johann Burkhard Mencken noted the practice of "a certain class of bad writers who, as soon as they see that an author of great name has published something remarkable, hurl themselves upon it, and although the encounter might be too much even for Achilles, beat it and tear it to pieces." Some of our contemporary remorseless gripes no doubt hope that in the end they will gain reputation and glory in the world of letters. My attention was recently directed by Joshua Kunitz to a story of Turgenev's in which a critic learns that his success depends on the greatness of the writers he knocks.

The keepers of the grudging spirit are always with us. Sometimes their motives are personal, sometimes political. There are the frustrated novelists and the natural sadists. And there are those, of course, who are congenitally incapable of responding warmly. You can pick your own favorite examples; I have mine. A few weeks ago the *Nation* printed a beautiful example of self-hoisting in Louis Hacker's review of Matthew Josephson's *The Politicos* (yes, it's the same Hacker who once splintered his wooden sword against a book of Earl Browder's). Just to be impartial, we might add a recent review in the *New Republic* by Otis Ferguson of Albert Maltz's splendid "Season of Celebration," one of the novellas in *The Flying Yorkshireman*. Mr. Ferguson, who often writes faster than he reads, inanely brought up the name of Horatio Alger, and then coyly, not to say vulgarly, referred to "inverted schmaltz."

I hasten to make clear that NEW MASSES is not contemplating a holier-than-thou campaign. We once held an open field day for authors, and, as you may recall, they told our reviewers plenty. But while we would be the last to boast that our performance unfailingly echoes our intention, we do have a definite feeling about this business of commendatory palaver and remorseless griping. Perhaps it's our instinct for exploring the unity of opposites; perhaps it's our habitual and equal distaste for yea-saying and nay-saying. At any rate, we recoil from the alternatives presented by most contemporary critics.

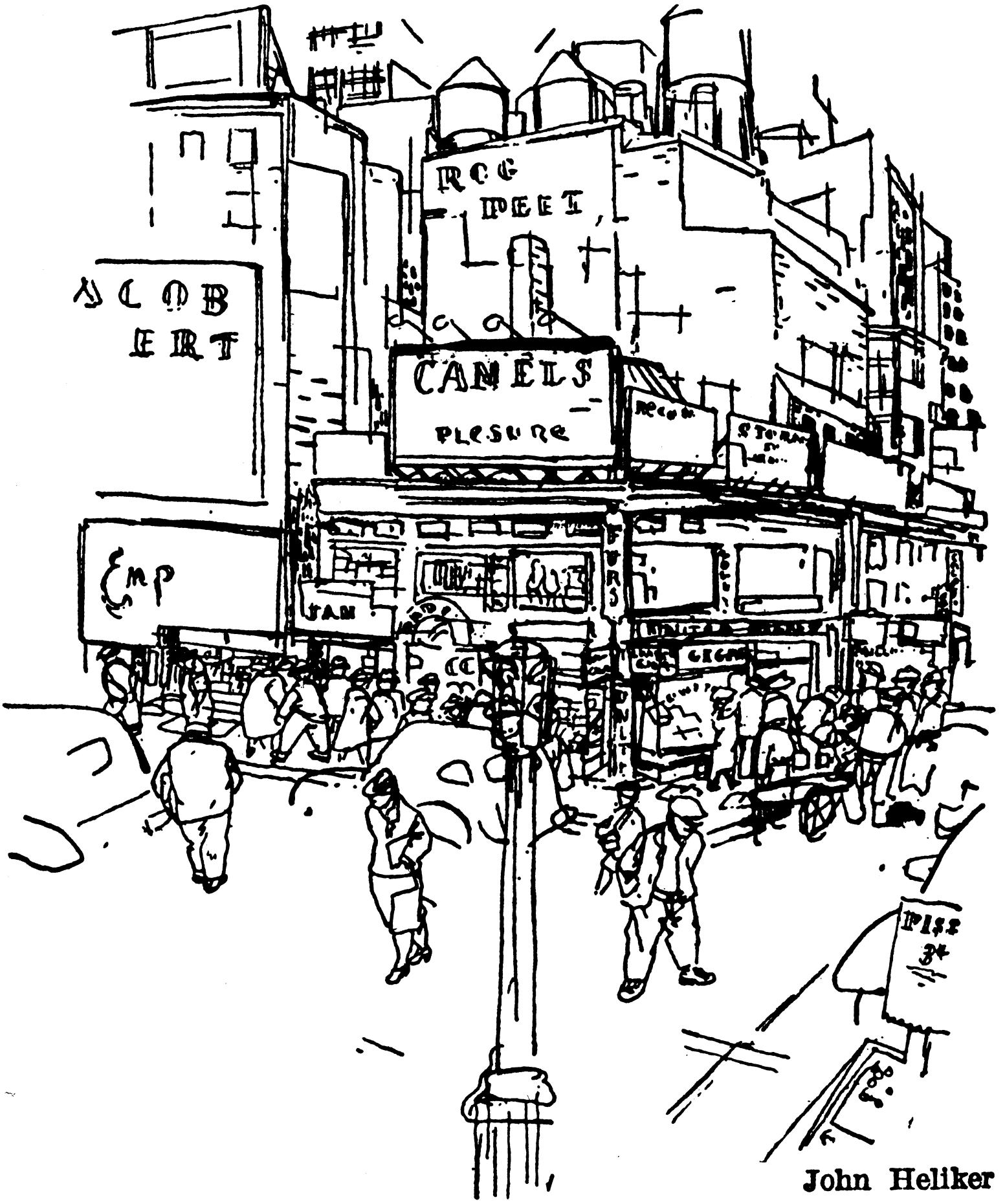


John Heliker

NEW MASSES reviews naturally tend to emphasize the positive qualities of left-wing books. It is altogether possible that we are sometimes too indulgent, but on the whole this tendency is a just one, I think. For these books receive little or no attention in the bourgeois press. Usually they are met with undisguised hostility. Nor is it merely a matter of counter-statement. As Marxists, our criteria of judgment are defined differently from those normally applied in *Scribner's* or in *Herald Tribune Books*. We make no bones about the fact that we encourage certain types of books rather than others. We deliberately call our readers' attention to values which most critics ignore. We try, very modestly to be sure, to assist in the creation of a literature which will more truly express the direction of our time.

There is a danger, of course, that left-wing criticism will develop its own brand of "commendatory palaver." Indeed, it is undeniable that there has been considerable sinning in this respect. But I am just as confident that hostile writers have exaggerated the fault as I am afraid that some friendly readers have come to believe in their testimony. They have complained because we sacrificed *their* standards of criticism; that is inevitable. What we have to be concerned about is the sacrifice of our own standards. If we indiscriminately praise books which are written by people on our own side of the fence, even our justified praise will carry no weight. Nothing is gained thereby except a hopeless confusion of values. You can't raise back-slapping to a principle without condemning criticism.

It is natural for the Marxist critic to publicize and to admire a pro-loyalist book on Spain. It is not likely that he will have many good things to say about an anti-loyalist book. But this does not mean, certainly, that every pro-loyalist book is equally good. The fact that a novelist mechanically mentions Spain a few times does not mean that he has written a good book. If our conception of the unity of form and content means anything, we must be all the more careful to judge our esthetic experience critically. For in a poor book the favorable reference to Spain may have the opposite effect from what it was intended to produce. The Marxist cannot for a moment tolerate a conception of criticism which would reduce the problem of evaluation to a simple formula: For us: ergo, An Important Contribution; against us: ergo, A Snare and a Delusion. Such simple categories are entirely alien to the spirit and method of dialectical



John Heliker

materialism. Understanding is imperiled by their application.

Fortunately, we don't suffer quite so much from the remorseless gripes. Most of the seventh-heaven purists and sourdoughs have departed. They never will be missed. Heywood Broun has painted a memorable scene of their notion shop in negations: "With a stein on the table and a picture of Trotsky on the wall the not very good fellows get together in the card room, and the only game which the house committee permits is solitaire." There are some critics for whom the reading of a book is about as exciting and social a pastime as solitaire. I am always ready to cancel my subscription when I read a reviewer who "regrets" that this volume of poems "though competent, is not as good as Donne at his best." It is hardly more pleasant to read the kind of reviewer who takes the attitude that every novelist spends two years writing a book so that a reviewer can write an extended essay on "The Banality of Contemporary Fiction." What this country needs, in addition to Socialism, is critics who will respond passionately to books. For the purists and the pedants a place is reserved in heaven; let them hasten thither. They will soon be joined by the indiscriminate yea-sayers.

It is perhaps time to declare another open field day—for readers this time. The authors have us buffaloed. The reviews, after all, are intended for the reader, and, if one may dare utter anything so unorthodox, for readers who read the books. It would be interesting to know how many false steers you think we have given you. How many "masterpieces" turned out to be duds? How many "duds" turned out to be masterpieces when you didn't take our advice and read them? Do we overwhelm you with "commendatory palaver" or have you already tagged us as remorseless gripes? Here's your chance to get even. Take it.

SAMUEL SILLEN.

Rockefeller's Rival

THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THE WORLD, *by Glyn Roberts. Covici-Friede. $3.*

THE most powerful man in the world hates and tries to destroy the nation which is the embodiment of the most powerful idea in the world! Ralph Fox saw the dramatic possibilities in this situation when he undertook a biography of Sir Henri Deterding, colossus of oil, who outsmarted Rockefeller but was bested by Lenin and Stalin. Fox was killed by Franco's artillery outside Madrid and the task was assumed by another English Marxist, Glyn Roberts. It emerges as the complete story of the life, ideas, and policies of a man who has exerted a tremendous influence over much of the history of this century.

The story of oil is, in a sense, the laboratory proof of Marx's law of motion of capitalism. The inevitable tendency of modern capitalism is toward monopoly, and of all commodities oil lends itself most readily to monopolistic control. Rockefeller and Deterding were able to recognize this trend and exploit it to their own ends. Each set about methodically to "rationalize" the oil industry, which meant for them strangling and crushing all competition until there should remain only their own giant combines.

The tendency towards monopoly is self-accelerating. As Deterding early realized: "We had no other alternative but to expand, expand, expand." So the two octopi—the Standard Oil of the Rockefellers and the Royal Dutch-Shell interests of Deterding—were brought into worldwide rivalry for hegemony in oil. Deterding won because he was more energetic, ruthless, and an able manipulator—and also, incidentally, because his own objectives fitted in perfectly with those of the dominant imperialist power, Great Britain. In the course of the struggle—and here again the logic of Marxism is inexorable—wars were spewed up, millions throughout the world were impoverished, and fascism emerged.

Deterding's drive for supremacy has brought him control over most of the important oil sources. Only one has eluded him—the world's richest oilfield, Baku in the Caucasus. Deterding early realized that it was geographically and strategically the focal point in his world plan and that its control would give him monopolistic supremacy. But he was to be denied by the Russian Revolution. The Bolshevik seizure of Baku in 1917 meant not only the confiscation of Deterding's vast holdings there but also the frustration of a lifelong dream. Intrigues, industrious financing of White Russian interventions, even shallow offers of conciliation were unavailing. Baku remained beyond Deterding's grasp. From that point on, he has been perhaps the world's most implacable enemy of the Soviet Union, and as Mr. Roberts shows conclusively, the genius or the principal backer of every important anti-Soviet activity in the last eighteen years. It is only logical, therefore, that he is today a leading financial supporter of both Hitler and Franco and a warm admirer of Mussolini. And if his past performances mean anything, he is a moving spirit behind the recent abortive rebellion of Cedillo in Mexico, where the Deterding holdings have been tremendous.

Deterding's career has been rich and spectacular. Born in 1866 into a poor Dutch family, he had already, in his late twenties, advanced from a humble bank clerk to a position of influence in the thriving Royal Dutch Co., and at the age of thirty-four, had become its managing director. He proceeded immediately to absorb several small Dutch concerns in the Far East. Then came an audacious stroke which startled the world. In 1903, with dramatic suddenness, Deterding effected a merger of the Royal Dutch with the Shell and the Asiatic Petroleum, then the second and third largest oil-producing and distributing companies in the world. It was an astounding personal accomplishment — Deterding emerged, at thirty-seven, as the head of a truly

international trust and a leading factor in British industrial life.

The next twenty years witnessed the active penetration of the Deterding interests into almost every corner of the earth. It is a vivid story of political machinations and the use of international adventurers, "men of mystery," and the highly geared machinery of the British Foreign Office. The picture is lurid, almost fantastic—yet Mr. Roberts only reports the facts, faithfully.

Deterding played a vital part in winning the World War. His own interests were irretrievably tied to Britain, and he actively devoted his boundless resources and capacities to her cause. Oil proved vital to the cardinal necessity of military mobility on the Western front. Deterding assured its continuous supply. Even more spectacular was his dramatic coup that made up England's sad deficiencies in TNT, the vital element in high explosives. In a single night, he got huge gangs of workmen to dismantle an entire plant in Holland and transport it, with the help of the British Admiralty, to England, where it was reassembled. In a few weeks the plant was turning out TNT in adequate quantities.

The years since the war have seen a steady growth of Deterding's wealth and power. The lines of his personal development during that period have already been indicated. His ideology, even his personal life, have become channelized into a militant defense of a collapsing capitalism. His second wife was the daughter of a White Russian. He is today married to a Nazi, and they spend most of their time on a magnificent estate in Germany, whose present regime he extols and supports so vigorously. At seventy-two, his ferocious energy finds outlet principally in a continuous barrage of letters to the British press, in which he variously praises the unlamented Gomez of Venezuela, exalts Il Duce and Der Führer, bitterly attacks the Soviet Union, asks that youth be "disciplined," is perturbed about democracy, and wants to see all "idlers" shot.

As Mr. Roberts says, the future of the world will be in the hands of the Deterdings and their kind or the Ralph Foxes and their kind. "The Deterdings, the big-business men and their agents in the political field, are powerful because, and only because, our ignorance or cynicism or stupidity or apathy give them power. Their power has no relation whatsoever to their inherent ability or right

Charles Martin

Charles Martin

to rule. Already the world is in the hands of forces they do not understand and cannot control. . . . Can we afford to leave our world in such hands any longer?"

The general level of the writing is excellent, despite its occasional repetitiousness and a too-frequent and sometimes annoying use of American slang. It is throughout a skillful and highly important biography of a man who, as much as any contemporary, has been at once a catalytic agent and a product of our momentous era.

JOSEPH HASTINGS.

Journey Down Tobacco Road

SOUTHWAYS, *by Erskine Caldwell. Viking Press. $2.50.*

IN THIS new volume of short stories, Caldwell continues to portray "the physically and spiritually worn out" Negroes and poor whites of the South. The volume is closer in spirit, content, and effectiveness to *You Have Seen Their Faces* (Caldwell's and Margaret Bourke-White's recent photographic case history of Southern life) than to *Kneel to the Rising Sun,* an earlier volume of stories.

The latter was an angry book. Like etching acid, it bit cleanly and unerringly into the basic relationships of Southern life. In grotesque images and violent incidents, it described the revolting subjugation of the Negro, the bestiality of the white boss, and the poverty, degradation, and outrageous submissiveness of the poor white. In the brilliant title story of the volume, Caldwell showed smoldering Negro resentment burst into militancy, and, through a series of overpowering incidents, presented the need for unity of Negro and white.

Southways makes you feel sorrow and despair, rather than anger. Like *You Have Seen Their Faces,* it suggests the longing of a downtrodden people for the simple, good things of life, and describes the physical and psychological pain they experience in having that longing constantly thwarted. Caldwell's sense of the grotesque comes into play in several stories—with humorous effect, in the story of the corpse who hated flies during his lifetime and would not permit himself to be buried until he had been given a swatter and destroyed the fly in his coffin; with mordant effect, in the stories of the white tenant farmer who finds a Negro in his well and tries to do him out of several ketch-hounds for the favor of getting him out, and of another poor white who, crazed by hunger, determines to cut slices of his paralyzed legs for food. Other stories deal with more homely incidents of Southern life. "Man and Woman" sentimentally describes a homeless couple walking to visit the grave of their dead child and suffering indignities from people who throw them snacks of food. "Wild Flower," the most effective of these homely tales, portrays the death in a field of a pregnant mother who has been evicted from her sharecropper hovel.

Southways, it is evident, has more of the local color of *You Have Seen Their Faces* than of the caustic social criticism of *Kneel to the Rising Sun.* Though it displays a rich insight into the milieu, mores, and the physical details of Southern living, and though Caldwell has developed a more dynamic control of setting, the volume lacks power. In *You Have Seen Their Faces,* Caldwell told us:

> The tenant farmers are holding themselves back now, but if they can't get tenant farming changed so there will be a decent living coming to them, there's no telling what will happen.

At another point he noted:

> There has been talk, from one end of the South to the other, of joining with other tenant farmers to take collective action against the institution of sharecropping.

Nevertheless, the materials which motivated Caldwell to make these assertions are not present in *Southways.* Caldwell, it appears, has not taken completely to heart and mind a warning which he himself gave when he wrote, "The American mind is by this time so accustomed to weeping over lost causes that there is likelihood of the sharecropper becoming just another figure in a sentimentalizing nation."

ARNOLD SHUKOTOFF.

The Rise of John L. Lewis

SIT DOWN WITH JOHN L. LEWIS, *by C. L. Sulzberger. Random House. $1.50.*

WHAT on the surface appears to be the miraculous rise of organized labor to prominence in American life has resulted in an addition to the nation's mythology. For the attempt to "explain" the success of the CIO, without a thorough understanding of the labor movement both before and after 1933, has led to rationalizations purporting to bring "order" to events.

In consequence, commentators who have gone to the trouble of listing chronologically the milestones in labor history search for some *deus ex machina.* The logic of their method leads them to fasten on John L. Lewis. C. L. Sulzberger in his *Sit Down with John L. Lewis,* looking for a "hero" as the key to recent labor development, interprets the past solely as the product of John L. Lewis' eagerness to win power for the working class, and sees the future as dependent on Lewis' decisions.

The result is not good history. Sulzberger's biography makes fresh reading because it is written with vivacious enjoyment and because the author is captivated by Lewis' expansive power. Certainly there has never been a more vital personality among labor leaders. Sulzberger portrays Lewis as one of the truly

dominant figures of our generation—and no one will deny that Lewis plays a most significant role in the American scene. But Sulzberger is not content to write the biography of the mine leader affected by the desire for unionization which originated in the working class. To him, the CIO, its growth as well as its strategy, is completely Lewis' creation.

This is not only a distortion; it is unfair to Lewis himself. There is no attempt to deny Lewis' contribution to labor's growth when he is appraised in relation to the forces that motivated and taught him. History is not molded by one man alone, no matter what his stature, though often leaders express decisively the desires of the masses.

Yet *Sit Down with John L. Lewis* is a warm book that makes the mine leader live and that presents him convincingly. The book serves the important service of arousing the reader's admiration for Lewis, painted as an ogre by the press. It explains in simple terms the main objectives of the CIO, and it shows the CIO as one of the main forces fighting for the preservation of democracy. It is successful in its attempt to introduce a much-discussed and much-libeled leader to the public. But by portraying Lewis as the only instigator of all CIO action, Sulzberger has found a too-easy answer to the question of why the CIO has prospered.

BRUCE MINTON.

Winner Take Nothing

BEGIN NO DAY, *by Wellington Roe. G. P. Putnam's Sons. $2.50.*

IN A prefatory note to this novel, Wellington Roe tells us that Middle River, the story's locale and quite obviously intended as Danbury, Conn., is "any small industrial city in America. The forces and evils portrayed therein exist in industry, regardless of whether it makes hats or battleships." Since Roe consciously assigns such universality to his novel, the reader is justified in assuming that the author wants us to believe that his workers, his foremen, his capitalists, his union leaders, and his Communists all have their prototypes throughout American industry and that the

Freda Weinsweig

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events in this novel can happen, indeed are happening, in most comparable situations.

Chick Vail, the protagonist, is the only credible character. An ambitious young interne, he is snatched away from his work by the death of his father, a prosperous manufacturer, and is forced to assume the presidency of the Vail & Boughton Hat Co. The elder Vail, we are told, had been something of an idealist, always playing ball with the AF of L craft unions and maintaining a personal interest in the welfare of his workers. He refused to renege on his principles even when the depression put a serious dent in the firm's income; Vail & Boughton, when Chick takes over, is a white elephant, $50,000 in the red, creditors on the doorstep, and the men's-hat market as inelastic as ever.

Faced with the problem of reorganization, Chick is forced—against his better instincts, Roe assures us—to cut wages, stagger work, and speed up production. Simultaneously the CIO is organizing the Middle River hatters, and both the new union and the Manufacturers Association are anxious for a show of strength. Inevitably, Chick is caught between the two, used as a catspaw by the other manufacturers, misunderstood and mistreated by his workers, ruined by the strike that follows. The story ends in grief all around; Vail & Boughton is forced to close, and the workers fail to make the gains they expected. Chick is unable to continue either in his chosen profession or in the work circumstances forced on him.

Chick Vail—although he fails—is a sort of ideal boss to Wellington Roe. He fights excesses on both sides, but is not a hypocrite in recognizing his class interests. As such he is reasonably understandable. But since this is a novel about capital and labor, Roe had to give us his ideal worker, a counterpart to Vail. The ideal worker is Tim O'Dowd, head foreman in the plant, and he is, as even his name would imply, something out of a *Saturday Evening Post* story. He talks in a rich Irish brogue about the scoundrels who are Chick's competitors in Middle River, and he wishes that all bosses were like Chick and all workers like himself. He is painfully learned, reads Shakespeare, Spinoza, and Tolstoy, and, when the plant is struck, sides with Chick Vail. In the end he is stoned and blinded by Alice Vail, who, by a fantastically incredible series of circumstances, involving drunkenness, Lesbianism, and Communism, finds herself picketing her brother's factory.

I find it difficult to believe that Roe intended to write a story that would illustrate the billboard platitudes of the National Association of Manufacturers, for which he seems to have a fairly healthy contempt, yet that is the only thing one can conclude from this novel. Roe's concept of American industry is one in which, despite good intentions in most quarters, everything fails because of mutual misunderstanding. The elder Vail's benignity almost bankrupted the firm; Chick's generous sanity ruined his life; Tim's high-minded scabbing helped neither his boss nor the workers whose best interests he thought he represented; and the workers, by their naive estimates, defeat themselves. Everything fails, including the novel, because of the inadeqacy of the analysis, and Wellington Roe is left as pitifully stranded as any of his characters.

RICHARD H. ROVERE.

MAGAZINES

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY: A MARXIAN QUARTERLY. *Vol. II, No. 3. 35 cents. 30 East 20th St., New York City.*

THE summer issue of *Science and Society* maintains the high level of scholarship and pertinence reached by preceding issues. The articles and reviews, which deal with history, science, literature, and politics, are uncompromisingly Marxian in scope and direction. They are timely and readable too. Earlier complaints that the magazine is hard going and too difficult for the layman are no longer justified. Scientists and professional men who write for *Science and Society* are learning to express difficult matters in literary English free from needless technicalities.

Dr. Sigerist's article in the present number, a rapid, panoramic narrative of the historical interplay of science and democracy, should be of the greatest interest not only to specialists but to the general public. The same is true of Georges Friedmann's discussion of the "Revolt Against Formalism in the Soviet Union." Having studied cultural movements in the Soviet Union for several years at first hand, M. Friedmann is in a position to portray the reaction against mechanism and schematization in sociology, art, and literature.

Maurice Dobb, the English economist, defends several aspects of Marx's theory of value which have been attacked in recent times by well-known bourgeois economists. The article is supplemented by a communication, "On the Computation of the Rate of Surplus Value," in America, in which Varga's computations are brought up to date. The communication by Professor Getzels on "William Dean Howells and Socialism" throws a new light on this novelist and helps to recover the Marxian heritage in America.

A notable contribution is the second installment of the letters of Engels to Americans from 1885 to 1893, edited and translated by Leonard E. Mins. Engels' judgments on America, which he visited in 1888, were at once penetrating and prophetic. At a time when the frontier was stunting the growth of the labor movement, Engels' grasp of the historical forces led him to the conclusion that only when the Western lands had been completely grabbed up by speculators would "the time come, with *peaceful* development, for a third party." The immediate goal of the labor movement, he said, was "the conquest of political power by and for the workers. If we agree on that, the difference of opinion regarding the ways and means of struggle to be employed therein can scarcely lead to differences of principle among sincere people who have their wits about them." Engels was overjoyed with the entrance of the masses of the native-born workers into the movement in America. The workers, he knew, would not be spared blunders; "the confusion of trade unions, Socialists, Knights of Labor," etc., he wrote, "will persist for some time to come, and they will learn only by their own mistakes. But the main thing is that they have started moving, that things are going ahead generally, that the spell is broken; and they will go fast, too, faster than anywhere else, even though on a singular road, which seems, from the theoretical standpoint, to be an almost insane road." And he cautioned Socialist theorists in America to join the labor movement lest they dwindle down to a dogmatic sect.

Among the reviews and communications, the pieces by Robert S. Lynd on Arnold's *Folklore of Capitalism* and by Granville Hicks on Earl Browder's *The People's Front,* are particularly striking.

MOVIES

WHERE we have been searching, through the progressive press, the trade unions, by word-of-mouth, and by protest wire, for means to remove the shameful neutrality legislation which lets fascism murder Spain, we have in Walter Wanger's film, *Blockade,* released nationally this week, the biggest opportunity to finish the job. John Howard Lawson's screenplay will haunt the American people.

Within a melodramatic spy plot, Lawson tells the human story of pastures trembling under the guns of Hitler, a city in plaster and rubble after a visit of Mussolini's bombing squadrons, women and children starving in a blockaded town, and the unflagging courage of the Spanish peasant, typified by the hero, Marco, as he fights the fascist invasion.

To be sure the picture is not that explicit. The words, "fascist," "loyalist," or even "Spain," are not mentioned. The republican uniform has been disguised; there is no topical reference whatsoever. *Blockade* has been submitted to Franco-Italian agents in Naples; it has caused international interest from its conception. Mr. Wanger has complained to Secretary Hull that his sound stages were overrun with fascist spies during production. The public-relations men of fascist barbarism realize how damaging a film about their crimes can be. It is put squarely up to the civilized world to see that *Blockade* is used decisively against them.

Marco, played by Henry Fonda, is a forward-looking peasant with the countryman's fierce love of land. As the picture opens he takes a handful of earth and speaks of it to Luis, his indolent neighbor:

> Life comes out of it. It gives us bread and wine; the secret of life is hidden in the ground. Man must learn the secret and use it wisely. People have wasted the richness of the earth—I'll show them—I'll make my farm the showplace of the whole province!

The distant guns sound first like thunder. Soon a stream of refugees pour across the countryside. Marco rallies the stragglers and, like the farmers at Concord Bridge, they stem the invaders until an army can be formed. Marco becomes involved with Norma, an English spy, played by Madeleine Carroll. She is in the power of André, leader of the spy ring, who is operating from within the people's army. She is given the task of betraying a food ship which is attempting to get through to the blockaded city of Castlemare. In Castlemare, the information of the food ship is radioed by a nest of a spies to a pirate submarine lurking offshore. After she has delivered her message she walks through the starving city with Reginald Denny, who plays an English reporter. They see babies crying for milk, hear the radio announcement of further

limiting of food rations. They stop before a demented woman who sits upon a heap of stones which formerly was her home. The woman does not turn her head; she does not speak. Her children are buried in the ruins.

The reporter speaks:

I come from Tipton-on-Thames. It's a little place, you wouldn't have heard of it. But you ought to see it on a drowsy summer afternoon, the smell of gardens, people in the fields. . . . I keep seeing this happen to my own people—hunger and machine guns, a bomb dropping on the little schoolhouse. . . . I saw that happen. . . . I saw a bomb drop on a few hundred little children. . . .

The sights are too much for Norma. She runs to loyalist headquarters and exposes the spy ring. The food ship comes through safely when Marco provides a dummy ship for the submarine to torpedo. The spies are rooted out and the commandant wishes to reward Marco. He says:

You have served your country well, lieutenant—I'll arrange for you to go on leave as soon as possible.

MARCO:

Leave? *(he shakes his head bitterly)* You go on leave to find peace—away from the front—but where would you find it? The front is everywhere. Our country has been turned into a battlefield—there's no safety for old people and children—women can't keep their families safe in their houses—they can't be safe in their own fields—the churches and schools and hospitals are targets! *(his voice almost breaking, torn by his own emotion)* It's not war—war is between soldiers—this is murder . . . we've got to stop it! Stop the murder of innocent people! The world can stop it! Where is the conscience of the world?

FADE OUT

The picture is, of course, without the direct references to the Spanish situation that would make it complete and unmistakably clear. What is does most magnificently is tell the universal story of innocent people victimized by the fascist war machine. There are many shots of lowly Catholics, praying for food; scenes of soldiers storing works of art underground, away from the air raiders. The details, the faces of suffering people, children begging pennies in cafes—the misery upon which fascism's triumphal arch rests—are here for each to see. This is what the American people have not been told on the radio and in the press; something that has waited for the film to tell.

Henry Fonda and Madeleine Carroll convey the basic emotions of the story with conviction. Reginald Denny, as the soft-headed, big-hearted newspaperman, is welcome back after years of neglect. William Dieterle, who gave us *Pasteur* and *Zola,* has again grasped a great theme with masterly hands. His direction brings out the fierce sympathy of the onlooker for the heroic people whom the democratic world has robbed of a chance to fight back. Werner Janssen's music, Rudolph Mate's photography, and the costumes of Ali Hubert, must also be mentioned for their contributions to the reality of *Blockade.*

Blockade is a great anti-war picture, but it is not a shirking pacifist protest. Marco does not run—he fights. He organizes the defense of the province in the first panicky days. He

has a mature realization of the enemy's tactics, and, accordingly, works diligently and realistically in ferreting out Fifth Column spies. Full of pessimistic illusions about war, unable to distinguish one side from another, Norma comes to realize that here is something worth fighting for, that peace can only come through a victory of the people. *Blockade* is a militant picture; partisan and true.

Men of the Sea, newest Soviet film at the Cameo, is burdened with too much undigested episode and a generally loose script. This first film of the Soviet navy in the interventionist days of 1919 is, however, a stirring and handsome picture. The story picks up the period after the uprising of the revolutionary sailors at Kronstadt and follows them into their first days of disciplined fighting against the English allies of counter-revolution.

After the first flush of revolt, the revolutionary seamen were afflicted with too much democracy. As the enemy fleet steamed toward them, they sat in committee, deciding in a fine parliamentary way to defy Commander Rostovtsev. Then Commissar Vikhoriev took charge in the name of the central committee of the Communist Party and gave the sailors a lesson in Bolshevik democracy, which meant taking reasonable orders immediately in the face of the attack. They defeated the enemy fleet, took a land fort betrayed by traitors, and saved Red Petrograd from penetration from the Baltic.

There can be no argument that the picture bogs down on the side of too much propaganda. As always, the lessons are organically a part of the picture, bound in with humor and telling character sketches. What slows up *Men of the Sea* is the literalness of the playwrights, who have paid too much footage to the historical details, which could have been organized more succinctly. This passion for minutiae also accounts for the fact that some of the most thrilling sea battles ever filmed do not count heavily enough in the general effect. In Hollywood they would take spectacular shots like these and accent them enough to carry an entire picture. But *Men of the Sea* errs on the side of ambition. The modesty and intimacy of *Lonely White Sails* may have been the right touch for this story. However, it is all here, and if the spectator will be his own film cutter, he will discover the picture to be another superior historical film of the revolution.

JAMES DUGAN.

THEATER

THE mobile tractor-drawn units of the Federal Theatre, one for each of the boroughs of New York City, served close to two million amusement-hungry Americans last year. They are again at the old stands: Silver Lake Park in Staten Island's Tompkinsville, St. Mary's Park in the Bronx, and a score of

The SUB SELLER

Over the horizon comes the Fourth of July, and while you're studying the ads to see where you'll spend the holiday, let me remind you that a fine avocation on a week-end vacation is getting new subs for New Masses. You can't hike, swim or pitch horseshoes every minute, so between firecrackers bag a few bucks from new friends who haven't yet discovered America's *indispensable* weekly.

Keep in the Whirl

I don't know where some people get the idea that the world stands still through the summer because they do. Last year at this time Blum resigned, Soviet fliers zoomed over the Pole, Japan moved in on China, and Justice Black's appointment roused Hearst to a new fever pitch. July 1938 promises to be no rest period.

Here's Hitler in a frenzy because Czechoslovakia had the guts to call his bluff. English labor is raging against Chamberlain's double-crossing and its own reactionary leaders. The U. S. is going into the toughest election campaign in years. Don't blame me if you can't catch on to things as they are when you take up Life again in the Fall. I've warned you before to cover the summer with a sub to NM.

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J. S. has just renewed her Trial Sub for year, and this is how she feels about NM: *"I have been reading your magazine for the past three months—until then I did not know a New Masses existed—and permit me to say that I have found it so alive, so vitally interesting, so informative that I promise as long as New Masses is a publication, I shall be one of your subscribers."*

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other locations from Corlears Park on the Lower East Side of Manhattan to Owl's Head Park in distant Bay Ridge.

The audience is the thing at the Caravan Theatre. Youngsters who have been doped into a mental stupor by the synthetic pap of the movies are aroused to cheers by this return of minstrelsy to the masses. Hardworking mothers, men from factories and wharves, family groups from grandmother to the brat on sister's arm now spend evenings out of doors learning that the theater is not dead.

Critics were escorted last week to two openings of the new season, a robust *Treasure Island* in Tompkinsville and a Bronx combination of Chekhov and a variety show. Even these glassy-eyed dictators of Broadway's taste were infected by the genuine quality of the audience's reactions, the craving for folk entertainment. Here was a mighty popular plea for an expansion of the Federal Theatre. Not only do these caravans stop the gap of unemployment in the theater; they partially fill the demands of a limitless audience.

I say "partially" because such a people's theater requires plays suited to the popular taste, plays which reflect the lives, the aspirations, the victories, and the frustrations of these people. The most successful of past Caravan productions was the wistful *Midsummer Night's Dream.* This season's *Treasure Island* is another popular piece, especially with the children. Other plays of the present repertory do not, however, evoke that response. They are just shows. If the Caravan will fall into line with the Living Newspaper, it will become an even more potent influence for social betterment. CHARLES DEXTER.

MUSIC

SWING is either coming up in the world or it's already so moribund that monuments are being erected over its grave. I incline to the latter view myself, although I realize that if swing is dead, it's a pretty lively ghost that jittered for hours at the recent festival on Randall's Island (May 29) and again at Benny Goodman's own festival—with the not insignificant addition of Count Basie—at Madison Square Garden, June 12.

However, those of us who cling to the notion that swing today is a "survival"—the ghost of a once lively art—have some new ammunition in the form of two extraordinary new publications: one a set of records featuring the current King of Swing, Benny Goodman, in a performance of a classic masterpiece, the Mozart Clarinet Quintet (Victor, $6.50); the other a book* based on the life of one of the greatest *Ur*-swingsters, Bix Beiderbecke.

*YOUNG MAN WITH A HORN, *by Dorothy Baker, Houghton Mifflin Co., $2.50.*

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Goodman has contributed little to the development of swing (according to my way of thinking), but if he has been too highly praised as a swingster, he has never received full appreciation for another facet of his talent, that of a supreme virtuoso of the clarinet. His playing Mozart with one of the finest contemporary string quartets, the Budapest four, is neither a joke nor a stunt, but a perfectly logical outlet for a skill that can never find complete expression in jazz alone. Some critics have spoken of his self-consciousness, his lack of sensitivity in phrasing, and the like, but they are speaking purely on the basis of preconceived notions, not on the evidence of the recorded performance. I grant that in delicacy of nuance and phrasing Goodman does not quite approach the superb artistry of say a Szigeti or a Leon Goossens, but I have never heard a performance on discs or off of the Mozart Quintet comparable to this. Marvelously recorded, this set is Mozart, the Budapest Quartet, and Goodman at their best. It's far and away the best phonographic edition of the work, but in addition to that it's one of the finest recorded examples of exquisite clarinet playing and a perfectly balanced clarinet-strings ensemble we've ever had.

Swing today doesn't offer enough to satisfy a musician like Goodman, and he turns to Mozart. It was different in the early days of the art, before even the term "swing" had come into use. The hot jazzists were creators of a new and exciting musical medium, and they gave themselves body and soul to their work with the fervor of a sixteenth-century *maestro da cappella.* It is extraordinary that their lives and fanatical spirit should be caught on paper for the first time by a woman, writing under a literary-prize fellowship. I don't know where Dorothy Baker got her vast knowledge of jazz and its ablest practitioners, but she knows her stuff and, unlike most of the others who have written about jazz music and musicians, she has a penetrating insight into the minds of the men and a rare skill for putting her findings on paper in clean, clipped, everyday prose.

The rise and fall of her hot trumpeter, Rick Martin, is based somewhat on the exploits and —despite her denial—the life of Biederbecke, but he might have been any one of a dozen leading figures of the early days of jazz. The actual events of his life are of little importance, his affair with Amy a little unreal, but for that matter everything in such men's lives was a little unreal in comparison with the flaming life they found in their music. Rick and his colleagues were alive only when they were playing together, got in the groove and went to town. The terrible ecstacy they knew then made everyday life flat and tasteless. They drank or drugged themselves to death. But they were great when they had it. Some well-worn discs are all that's left of them and their meteoric flight across the musical skies, the discs that only a few fanatical connoisseurs still cherish and now this book that reveals for the first time how and why they clicked.

ROY GREGG.

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***Also in next week's issue:* RICHARD WRIGHT, *author of "Uncle Tom's Children" and of "Bright and Morning Star," will cover the* LOUIS-SCHMELING FIGHT**

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