FIFTEEN CENTS

New MASSES

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The C. I. O. Convention
DAVID RAMSEY

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Reviewed by
SAMUEL SILLEN

Cartoons by Gropper, Reinhardt, Richter, Del, Colin Allen, Others

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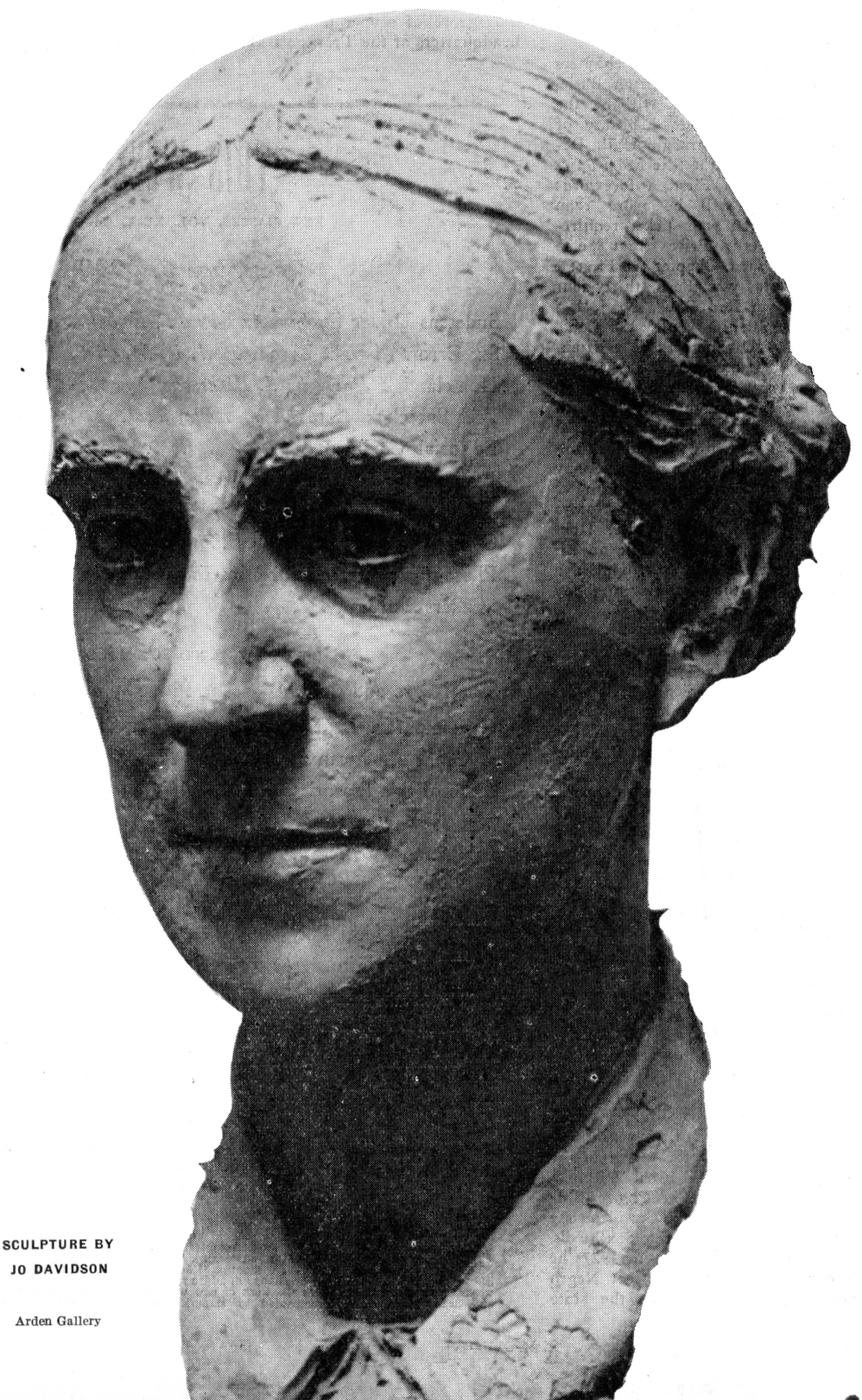
DEC. 6, 1938



SCULPTURE BY
JO DAVIDSON

Arden Gallery

Between Ourselves

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER has written an important article, "Norman Thomas—Defeatist," which will appear next week.

We will take phone reservations for the NEW MASSES ball until 5 o'clock Saturday afternoon. Readers who make such reservations will be charged $1.00 per ticket, which can be picked up at the box office.

In addition to Franchot Tone, Sylvia Sidney, Sam Jaffe, Elia Kazan, and Roman Bohnen have been signed by the Group Theater for Irwin Shaw's *Gentle People,* a performance of which will be sponsored by NEW MASSES on New Year's Eve. Any NEW MASSES readers or their friends who are getting groups together for this affair, or for our *Spirituals to Swing* concert on December 23, should let us know in advance so that tickets can be put aside for them. Call Tiba Garlin at NEW MASSES, CAledonia 5-3076.

We're going to need three chapters to tell you the story of Count Basie, whose great orchestra will be the feature of NEW MASSES' history of Negro music at Carnegie Hall, December 23, under the title *From Spirituals to Swing.* First, a foreword: Tiba Garlin will be more than pleased to take your ticket requirements right now. Prices from 83c to $3.30. Now then, Chapter the First:

Bill Basie was born thirty-four years ago in Red Bank, N. J. His mother taught him to play the piano, but little Bill wanted to be a drummer. He drummed and he drummed until one day he made his debut at a local dance. Another Negro youth about his own age also appeared at that dance and did a little drumming. The rival was named Sonny Greer and he drummed Bill under the table. Sonny Greer today plays with Duke Ellington; Wilder Hobson, in his celebrated article on Ellington in a 1935 *Fortune,* applied a few lines of Aldous Huxley to Sonny Greer's skinbeating:

"What songs, what gongs!

"What bursts of Bantu melody!"

Which may give you an idea of how good Sonny Greer is. Bill went back to the piano. He left Red Bank and found a job with Fats Waller in a musical comedy. James P. Johnson, the dean of Negro pianists, also appearing in NEW MASSES' concert (advt.), and Willie (The Lion) Smith became interested in the young pianist. Fats Waller taught Bill to play the organ after the shows in the old Lincoln Theater in Harlem; Bill would lie on the floor watching Fats Waller's feet, for forty-five minutes sometimes, just learning to pedal.

Bill Basie joined Gonzale White's vaudeville unit in 1926 and went west to the frontier of jazz—Kansas City, Mo., where every riverboat brought hot cargo from the cradle of jazz, New Orleans. On Eighteenth Street, on Tracy Avenue in Kansas City, Bill played blues. Sundays he played the organ in the Centennial Baptist Church. Within a year he joined Walter Page's Blue Devils, which toured inconspicuously for a brief time in the Southwest. Back in Kansas City in 1927 he joined one of the first great Negro hot orchestras—that of the late Benny Moten. There we will leave Bill Basie until next week's installment.

Again we should like to remind readers of the new plan we announced some weeks ago as part of the drive for new subscribers. In soliciting a $4.50 subscription, you need only ask for $1 for the first payment. Send the dollar to us and we will bill the subscriber for the remainder within a month.

Fred Ellis' heroic cartoon on the subject of CIO-AFL unity, which appeared in our Oct. 26, 1937, issue, has been made by Samuel Tafel into a large relief copper plaque for the headquarters of the Transport Workers Union in New York City. Mr. Tafel is a member of the union.

A conference of Connecticut writers to discuss current political, economic, and cultural problems, particularly as they apply to that state, and to give the writers a chance to meet each other and talk to representatives of Connecticut labor and cultural organizations, will be held in New Haven, Sunday, December 4, under the auspices of the League of American Writers. Members of the league's New York chapter have been invited to attend. Samuel Sillen and Ruth McKenney will represent NEW MASSES.

From Shaemas O'Sheel of Red Hook, N. Y., comes praise for Anatol Rapoport's article "The Jews in Austria" (NEW MASSES, November 8), as a "restrained, objective account" that makes the tragedy of these Jewish victims "more real to me than anything else I have read," and for Alter Brody's "War by Race Theory" (November 1 issue) which "shines with more historical light and strikes with more logical force, per paragraph, than you will find in a month's accumulation of dispatches in the newspapers and articles by 'experts' and 'authorities' in the magazines." However, O'Sheel feels that the author erroneously implies that the autonomy demands of the Bretons, Welsh, and Scots are unjustified, and that he is wrong in calling Ireland "independent" and implying that the alienated portion of Ireland comprises all of Ulster. . . ."

THIS WEEK

NEW MASSES, VOL. XXIX, No. 11

December 6, 1938

Art work by Ad Reinhardt, Colin Allen, William Gropper, Mischa Richter, A. Ajay, Del, Chet La More, Jabez, John Heliker, Robert Joyce.

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

JAN KUBAL is a democratic journalist still residing in Prague. . . . Henry Hart is on the board of the Book Union and the author of a novel, *The Great One.* . . . Louis B. Boudin is an authority on constitutional law and American history. . . . David Ramsey is educational director of the International Fur Workers Union. . . . Elliot Paul has written, in collaboration with Luis Quintanilla, Jay Allen, and Ernest Hemingway, a book on Spain entitled *All the Brave,* which will be published by Modern Age in January. Mr. Paul, who has contributed to NEW MASSES before, is also the author of *The Life and Death of a Spanish Town* and *Concert Pitch.* . . . William Rose Benét is a well known poet and a contributing editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature.* . . . Mark Marvin is editor of *Theatre Workshop.*

Flashbacks

AMERICAN writers, protesting to the last against a great attack on the cause of human liberty and justice, called a meeting in Concord, N. H., Dec. 2, 1859, the day on which John Brown was executed. Active as organizers of the meeting and as speakers at it were Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Bronson Alcott, who with many other intellectuals had helped raise money to finance Brown's anti-slavery work. "The bells are not rung," Alcott wrote that day in his journal. "The services are affecting and impressive; distinguished by modesty, simplicity, and earnestness; worthy alike of the occasion and of the man." . . . A few days later in England, Marx wrote to Engels, also referring to John Brown: "Things in America are becoming exciting. Matters must be going very badly for them with the slaves if the Southerners play so risky a game. The least volunteer *putsch* from the North could set everything ablaze. In any case, it seems that one way or another slavery is rapidly going to come to an end." . . . And may we remind NEW MASSES readers that one way or another Tom Mooney is going to be free, but since he is not yet, he might appreciate letters arriving at San Quentin on his birthday, December 8.

Sudetens Under the Swastika

Hunger and Terror March With the Nazi "Liberators"

JAN KUBAL

Prague.

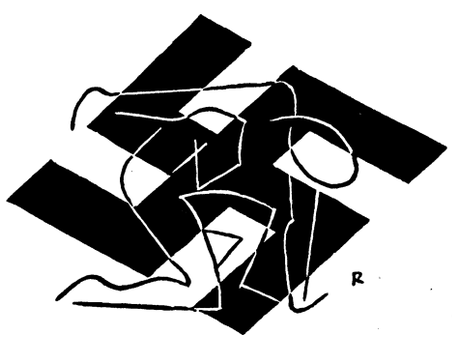
THE victory celebrations in the Sudeten district have faded away now; the festivities are over, and the Sudeten Germans are face to face with everyday drabness. These people, formerly calm and self-possessed, are now overwhelmed by a nervous uncertainty.

It is true that some 25 percent of the unemployed receive regular relief which amounts to 6 to 7.5 Reichsmarks per week, but 75 percent of the unemployed, those who have relatives still employed or own small mortgaged houses, are assigned to what is called the "public benefit." Under the Czechoslovak government the Nazis jeered at the food tickets given the unemployed by the Ministry of Social Welfare—which amounted to 10 crowns (1.24 RM) weekly. They termed these "Czech begging cards." But compare that with what the unemployed have received in exchange for the much ridiculed system. Each week now they are entitled to one loaf of bread weighing one and one-half pounds, one-quarter pound of margarine, one pound of legumes, and one pound of tinned fish. Altogether, this food is worth from 1.3 to 1.5 RM, but the quality is far worse. The seductive handing out of food by the Reich army is well over. During the "days of deliverance" a hot meat and vegetable dish was served, but now there is only watery gruel, which, colloquially, is called Heil Hitler Soup and which is mixed into the goats' food.

It is much the same with works projects. The newspapers are full of large-scale plans for construction. Early in the year, it is said, work is to be begun on highways, settlements, and agricultural projects. Great hopes have been aroused everywhere, but, for the present, many factories, especially those producing glass and textiles, must either begin operating on a part-time basis or close down altogether, owing to the shortage of raw materials. Thus, Sudeten industry is unable to compete with German Reich industry. This will become even more clearly evident when prices in the Sudeten territory are completely adjusted to price levels in the Reich. Adjustment will take place by degrees in order to soften the blow, but, nevertheless, prices have already gone up rapidly.

Henlein merchants were the first to raise prices. In consequence the Reich German authorities found themselves compelled to punish more and more Henleinists for their profiteering, a gesture, of course, made in order to silence the population. In Reichenberg, the new capital of the Sudeten region, many such shopkeepers were led through the street bearing placards which read, "I am a profiteer." Thereafter, though, the officially established maximum prices were evaded by various tricks. For example, outside one shop was the sign: "Best potatoes: 3 pfennigs per pound—sold out." A customer inquiring what the sign meant was told, "We can make arrangements with another place which delivers the potatoes to your door." Twenty pounds were ordered. An hour later the potatoes arrived, but the price, under these circumstances, was 2.4 RM—60 pfennigs for the potatoes, and 1.8 RM for transport.

Price increases in fat, meat, butter, eggs, and other staples range from 20 to 30 percent. To a very large extent, this is because of the closing—indeed, the strangulation—of the consumers' cooperatives, which had previously been extremely influential in regulating prices. The general increase is felt particularly in such regions as the brown-coal district of Northwestern Bohemia. There, as a result of the scarcity of loading carts and other apparatus, only three or four shifts worked during the course of a week. Now almost all of the cooperatives organized by the workers have been shut down, meaning, naturally, the loss of the most important economic lever the workers had. Some of the cooperatives, indeed, were plundered by SA hordes even before the entry of the German army. The remainder are now being liquidated, the stock being distributed to the phony Winter Help Fund, the salesmen dismissed, and the shops closed. The large cooperative, in Komotau, Self-Help, is already shut. The Reichenberg cooperative bakery is allowed to bake only three days a week, although the people in the shops have vigorously demanded cooperative bread. The largest Sudeten German cooperative, Forward, which had seventy-six branches, has been ordered liquidated by Henlein, and only a very few of the branches now remain open for business. The leading wholesale purchasing cooperative (GEC), which attended to the buying for most of the consumers' cooperatives, will be taken over by the Nazi central in Hamburg, but already that part of the personnel which sympathized with the workers and the anti-fascists has been dismissed, and a good many of them have been arrested.

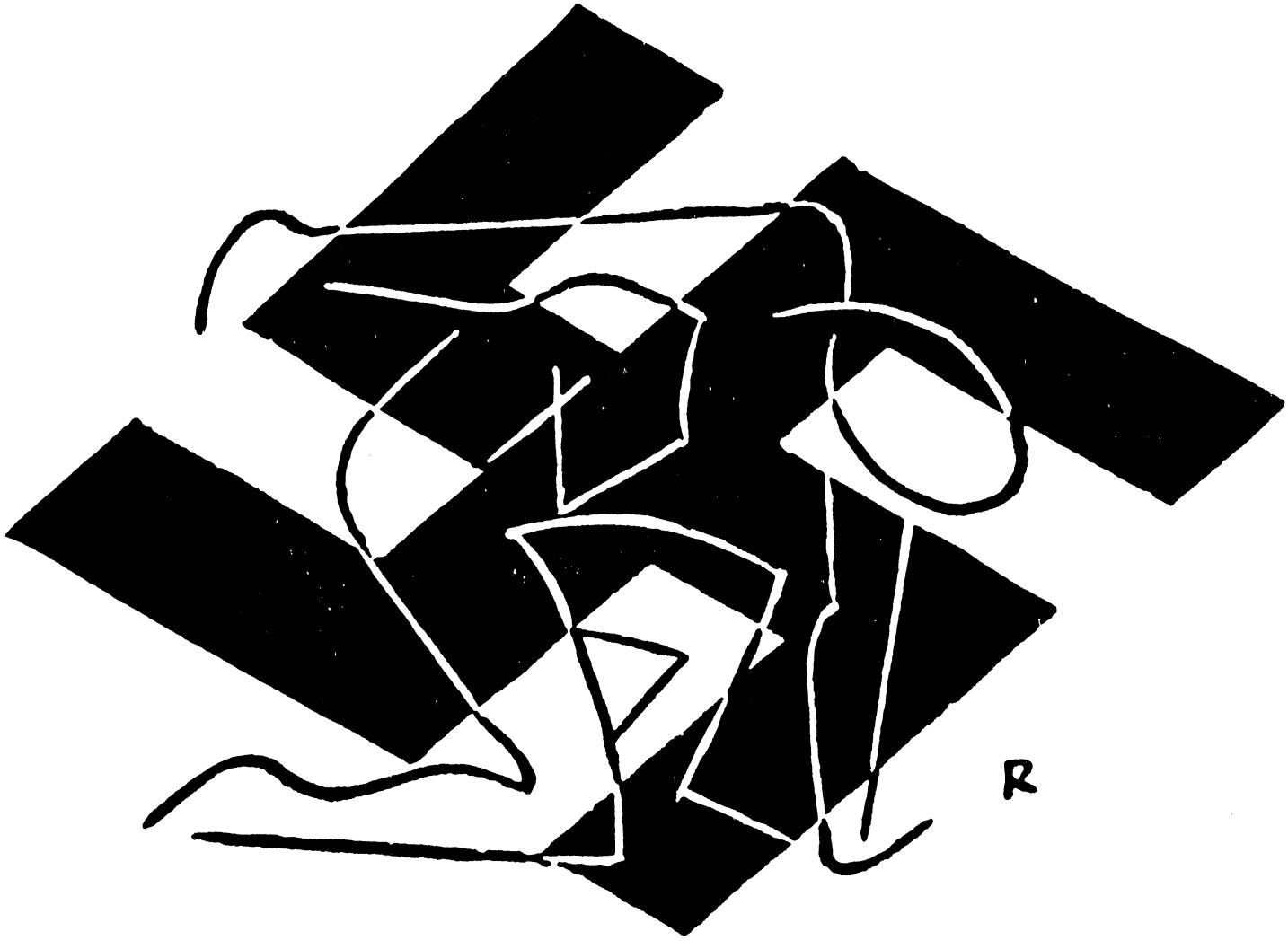


Ad Reinhardt

The number of democrats, Marxists, and Czechs that have been arrested already reaches the thousands. It is true that many of the people arrested in the beginning have been discharged, but the Gestapo officials, freshly arrived from the Reich, have started new proceedings, in the course of which hundreds of persons have been sent to concentration camps. Only a fraction of these people are in Sudeten German camps, which are located in Freiwaldau, Teschen, and Elboden; the majority are in Reich German camps in Saxony and Bayern. In recent weeks fifty-four persons have been arrested in Rothau; 18 in Bruch, a Czech mining town; twelve in Pyhanken—and most of them, it has been ascertained, were not people who would come within even the Nazi definition of those politically dangerous.

The death of Mr. Pfeiffer, publisher of the Rumburger *Zeitung,* a nationalistic German paper, has caused considerable comment and speculation. According to official reports, he met with an accident, and his death is held an enigma in many quarters. But the truth is that it was the "accident" of SS terrorists that killed him. Pfeiffer was known to be opposed to Henlein, and led the nationalist opposition against the Nazi leaders.

Already even the external appearance of Sudeten towns shows how the liberation looks



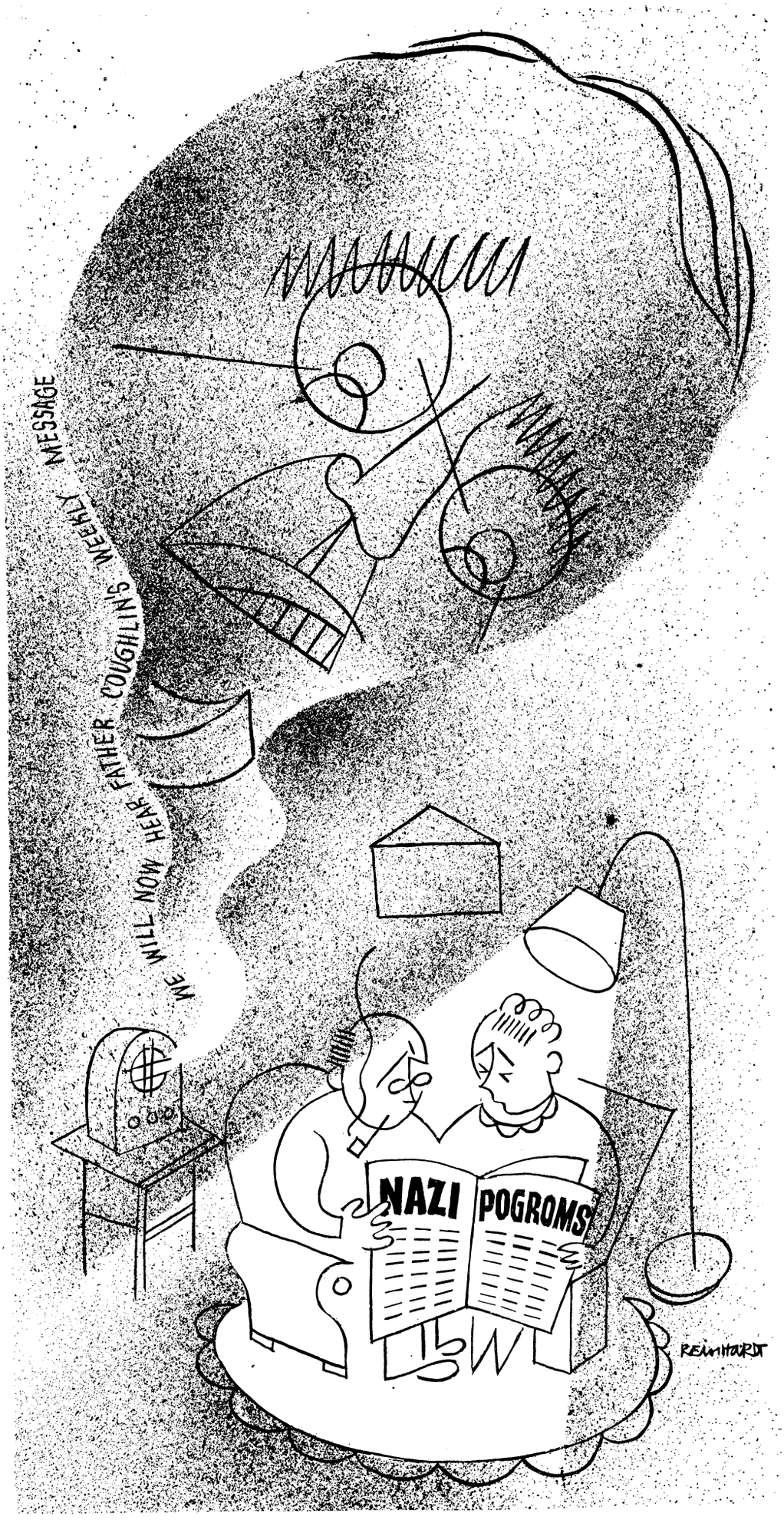
Ad Reinhardt

in actual fact. Where once there was an attractive display of goods in a shop window, there is now nothing more than a picture of Hitler. Czech and Jewish shops must be boycotted and the boycott signs are prominently placed. The towns swarm with uniforms. Everywhere there are recruiting stations for the various military organizations: SA, SS, National Socialist Aviator and Motor Corps, SA cavalry, etc. Even a Sudeten German marine brigade (!) will be formed. On every corner stand Nazis soliciting money for various organizations, and no one passing by is unmolested by them. Strong, permanent garrisons have marched in everywhere. The people go their way silently. If one engages a Henlein official in conversation, the answer is almost always the same: "We didn't want *this;* we merely wanted self-determination; life was easier in Czechoslovakia."

The merchants and peasants who had hoped to be free from Czechoslovakian tax burdens are especially disillusioned. They have already received from the new tax officials strict orders to pay their back taxes to the last penny by the end of the year. The people certainly imagined the "liberation" in terms very different from these.

In Sudeten territory there is gayety only in those hotels and restaurants where Nazi leaders congregate. In the Hotel Imperial in the capital city of Reichenberg, for example, the orchestra plays day and night, wine flows freely, and about one thousand elaborate meals, on richly decorated plates, are served to the Nazi officialdom gathered there, the party men from the Old Reich who are making a good thing of the new acquisition.

But there is, of course, a very different picture if one visits those sacrificed by the "liberation," the refugees whose camps are situated in the interior of Czechoslovakia. Their misery increases from day to day. The Prague government has declared itself unable to help them after the dictates of Munich and the terrible economic consequences those dictates brought. Even today it is still not clear how the money of the Lord Mayor's Fund, generously collected by the English people, is going to be used. The refugees themselves hope that guarantees will be given them for the really impartial distribution of this money; they want it distributed without distinction as to the nationality or political convictions of their fellows. At the very least, blankets, warm underclothing, and some ready cash for provisions must be given them, in order that, so far as they are endangered, they can leave the country as quickly as possible. Already, well known reactionaries have banished individual refugees and have had them conveyed to the border, and it is thanks only to the humanity and democratic conviction of the gendarmerie that some of these have been set free before reaching the border. But those of them who are ignorant of the Czech language will, like wild animals, be hunted throughout the country. Prague, Ostrov, and other large cities are closed to them because



Ad Reinhardt

It Can't Happen Here

of overcrowding and the ban on settlements by the authorities.

By now there have been countless suicides, many more, certainly, than have been reported. One could repeat a thousand tales like that of Frau Bertha Schmiedt, a widow, who was sent back to Sudeten territory and committed suicide by hanging herself, and whose daughter, recognizing her own plight and knowing she would have to face it without her mother, tried to drown herself, only to be stopped by Nazis standing nearby. These people know that there is no time to lose. Either they are admitted into the democratic countries or they face the various choices the Nazis put before them, all of which, in the final analysis, spell death.

And the Czech people. Today I was in a church of the Bohemian Brethren in Prague, where a service was being held on the occasion of the three-hundredth anniversary of the Battle of the White Mountain, when the Czechs lost their independence and came under the rule of the Hapsburgs. The minister compared that enslavement with the present one. He said that the Czechs never had any good fortune when they adapted themselves to foreign dictators. This nation, he said, was only good and strong as long as it remained true to the ideals of liberty, democracy, and humanity which were taught them by Wycliffe, Hus, Zizka, and others, and in whose spirit Masaryk and Benes founded the republic. The women wept as the national anthem was played, and the faces of many in the congregation showed that they were determined to stand by the spirit of democratic humanism regardless of what befell them. This is the real opinion of the nation and not the way of writing of a certain section of the press following the behest of Berlin. The whole nation is filled with a deep longing for national unity in the spirit of democracy, which ultimately will break the fetters of a foreign rule.

★

Rebel Spain's Nazi Trade

How the Third Reich is reaping economic benefits from its support of Franco is told by the news bulletin *France Monde* (Paris), in a recent dispatch from Toulouse:

The largest tire manufacturing concern in Germany, the Kontinental AG, announces that it is going to enlarge its factory at Torrelavega, near Santander in rebel Spain. Production will, as a result, be increased by 25 percent. . . .

Krupp has bought up the Ollargon mines in the province of Biscay, and the Brothers Pach are in control of the Lesaca Company mines in Irun. The Berrobi mines are also in German hands, and another German financial group is negotiating for these in Somorrostro. A new German arms plant is being constructed in Lasarte.

Germany is getting deliveries of iron and steel from the Basque metal industry, some firms contracting to send sixty thousand tons a year.

Besides this, large quantities of sugar, oil, fats, skins, and even cereals are being exported, shipped for the most part to Hamburg.

Six Errors of Max Lerner

A Marxist Answers

A. B. MAGIL

In the November 16 issue of the *New Republic* Max Lerner, former editor of the *Nation* and now professor of government at Williams College, breaks a lance with the left in an article entitled "Six Errors of Marxism." This article, with its rather pretentious title, in a sense does Mr. Lerner an injustice. It may create the impression, first, that he has undertaken a careful and detailed examination of Marxism, and, second, that he has joined the ranks of its enemies. Actually neither is true. The article is merely a brief section from Mr. Lerner's new book, *It Is Later Than You Think*,* a book which is not by any means directed against Marxism and which contains much that is admirable. Mr. Lerner is, it should be noted, a friendly critic, one who, moreover, believes that Marxism "is still, for all its shortcomings, the most useful and illuminating body of social thought in our world." And far from having undertaken a serious study of Marxism, Mr. Lerner, as his article demonstrates, has unfortunately contented himself with a few superficial generalizations that reveal inadequate knowledge and slipshod thinking. Marxists would certainly welcome greater intellectual rigor and circumspection in their critics.

The six alleged errors of Marxism which Mr. Lerner lists are: "the underestimate of the strength of capitalism"; "the overestimate of the revolutionary character of the proletariat"; "the underestimate of the strength of the middle class and the misreckoning of its direction"; "the underestimate of the strength of the nationalist idea"; "the faulty theory of human nature in politics"; and "the misreckoning on proletarian dictatorship."

Mr. Lerner discusses these "errors" in the form of categorical statements and bothers little about presenting supporting evidence. He repeatedly uses vague terms which he fails to define and ambiguous approximations in a discussion in which precision of language and thought is essential. It is never clear, for example, whether the alleged errors are inherent in Marxism or have been committed by individual Communist Parties in the course of applying principles which are basically correct. The distinction is important.

Mr. Lerner writes that "the Marxists today will admit to having made major errors of analysis since the Russian Revolution. Most of them will refuse to call them that, but errors of emphasis and calculation they are none the less."

The second of these statements revises the first. Marxists have from the beginning made errors of emphasis and calculation and admit as much. Marx and Engels, for example, in their early years overrated the speed of the maturing of the forces of the proletarian revolution. That was an error of emphasis and calculation. But such an error, I submit, is *not* the same as a major error of analysis. Again, the distinction is important. History is demonstrating that Marx and Engels were completely right in their basic analysis of the nature of capitalist society and of its future development.

Let us consider the first "error," "the underestimate of the strength of capitalism."

> Marxian theory [Mr. Lerner writes], influenced by the immense prestige of Lenin after the revolution and by the fact that Lenin's thinking was largely shaped by the World War and the events preceding it, has thought of imperialism as the last stage of capitalism. Out of it, presumably, grew widespread warfare, depression, revolution. The World War seemed to fulfill this analysis. Yet, as far as capitalism was concerned, the World War may have scotched the snake but did not kill it. Capitalism has shown an amazing tenacity since.

Mr. Lerner then discusses the forms that this "amazing tenacity" has assumed in various countries. But it becomes evident that the point he is trying to make involves a confusion of terms. If by "strength of capitalism" he means the essential stability of the system and its potentialities for further expansion, then capitalism is a very weak system indeed. Weak, first, in the general historical sense: already at the end of the nineteenth century capitalism in a whole series of countries had completed the material foundations for Socialism and the teeming productive forces were being increasingly maimed and constricted on the procrustean bed of the capitalist system of production. Capitalism is weak, secondly, in the specific historical sense: the World War marked the beginning of the *general crisis* of capitalism—the permanent arteriosclerosis of the entire system—which should not be confused with the cyclical economic crises. It is this, the epoch of the absolute decline of the system, that has produced "widespread warfare, depression, revolution"—and fascism, the most concentrated expression of capitalist decay. And where fascism gains power, let us remember, this is not merely due to weakness and division within the democratic camp, but, as Stalin has pointed out, is also a symptom of the weakness of the capitalist class, which finds itself unable to rule by the old methods of bourgeois democracy and resorts to terrorist dictatorship at home and aggression abroad.

*This book will be reviewed in an early issue. —The Editors.

If, however, by "strength of capitalism" Mr. Lerner means its ability to survive, then he is in error in thinking that Marxists have assigned any particular life span to capitalism. Lenin described imperialism as the last stage of capitalism, but since he was a scientist, not a soothsayer, he did not predict how long this stage would last. On the contrary, he pointed out that no situation was absolutely hopeless for the ruling classes, that unless the oppressed masses struck the death blow at the proper time, capitalism with all its chaos and decay could endure indefinitely. What makes its ultimate downfall inevitable, however, is that it is inevitable that the working class will sooner or later acquire sufficient self-organization, clearsightedness, and authority among the non-proletarian masses to defeat capitalist resistance and lead humanity to Socialism. ("What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all," wrote Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto,* "are its own gravediggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.") This is quite the opposite of the comfortable theory of the revisionists of Marxism—whom Mr. Lerner seems to admire—that capitalism would collapse automatically of its own weight. Thus, while the weakness of capitalism is today absolute, its ability to survive is relative, depending on the concrete relation of class forces at any given period.

This question is closely connected with the second in Mr. Lerner's catalogue of "errors," "the overestimate of the revolutionary character of the proletariat." Here the word "character" is a bit ambiguous. Historically the proletariat is the revolutionary class in contemporary society, just as the bourgeoisie was the revolutionary class in feudal society. This does not mean that at all times and in every country the working class is ready for revolution. But its basic class drive is at all times, consciously or unconsciously, toward the abolition of the conditions of capitalist society. When both objective conditions and the proletariat's own consciousness of its needs and aims are sufficiently mature, as was the case in Russia in 1917, the successful revolution takes place. Mr. Lerner, despite the fact that he subscribes to some form of collective organization of society, apparently denies both the historically revolutionary character of the working class and its revolutionary potentialities.

> That a large number of the workers will defend themselves against attack has been shown in the resistance to the murderous Dollfuss coup in Austria in 1934 and in the resistance of the Spanish workers to Franco. But this is different from saying that the workers can in capitalist democracies be counted on to take the offensive in the overthrow of the capitalist regime and the establishment of Socialism. Nor can they even be counted on to be neutral at the critical moment. What generally happens is that in the confusion of the struggle between left and right enough of the workers cling to the stereotypes of their time (which are stereotypes of the right) to split the left forces to a degree fatal to a revolutionary offensive.

And he concludes this section, referring apparently to the countries outside of Russia: "It was mainly because of the lack of revolutionary readiness in the proletariat that 1917 proved one of the turning points in world history that did not turn."

The only examples that Mr. Lerner cites to support his thesis, Austria and Spain, speak against, rather than for, his argument. In loyalist Spain, for example, the workers have not merely resisted Franco, but, in alliance with the peasants and the city middle classes, have created a new type of democratic republic in which reactionary finance-capital has been ousted from its major positions. This is not Socialism, nor will it of itself necessarily lead to Socialism. But certain it is that in loyalist Spain the forces of the new order have been greatly strengthened and the forces of the old correspondingly weakened. To see capitalism and Socialism as two fixed, static categories, and to fail to see the transitional forms from capitalism to the Socialist revolution is to miss the essential dynamics of the contemporary world.

As for the defeat of the working class in Western Europe after the war, in attributing it to "lack of revolutionary readiness" Mr. Lerner expresses one of those half-truths that cast more shadow than light. The fact is that he greatly oversimplifies history. If by "lack of revolutionary readiness" he means that the German workers in 1918 were insufficiently experienced to see through and defeat the stratagems of false leaders, he is right. If he means a lack of readiness to struggle for a clean sweep of the old system, he is wrong. In Germany and Austria in 1918, and in Italy in 1919-20, it was cowardice and treachery on the part of the leadership of the Social Democratic Parties, plus the inexperience of the Communist Parties, that led to the defeat of the workers. In specific situations individual Communist Parties may have overestimated the revolutionary temper of the masses, but this is not an error of Marxism.

The third charge of Mr. Lerner's indictment—"the underestimate of the strength of the middle class and the misreckoning of its direction":

> Marx had originally seen the middle class as crushed between the millstones of the capitalists and the workers, as a dwindling group. Actually, the elaboration of capitalism has made it a growing group. Marx was right about the dwindling of the small entrepreneur and the tradesman; but the new middle class is that of the corporate bureaucracy, the white-collar workers and professionals, the army of the distributive occupations. . . . Political movement to the left fills them not with hope but with fear.

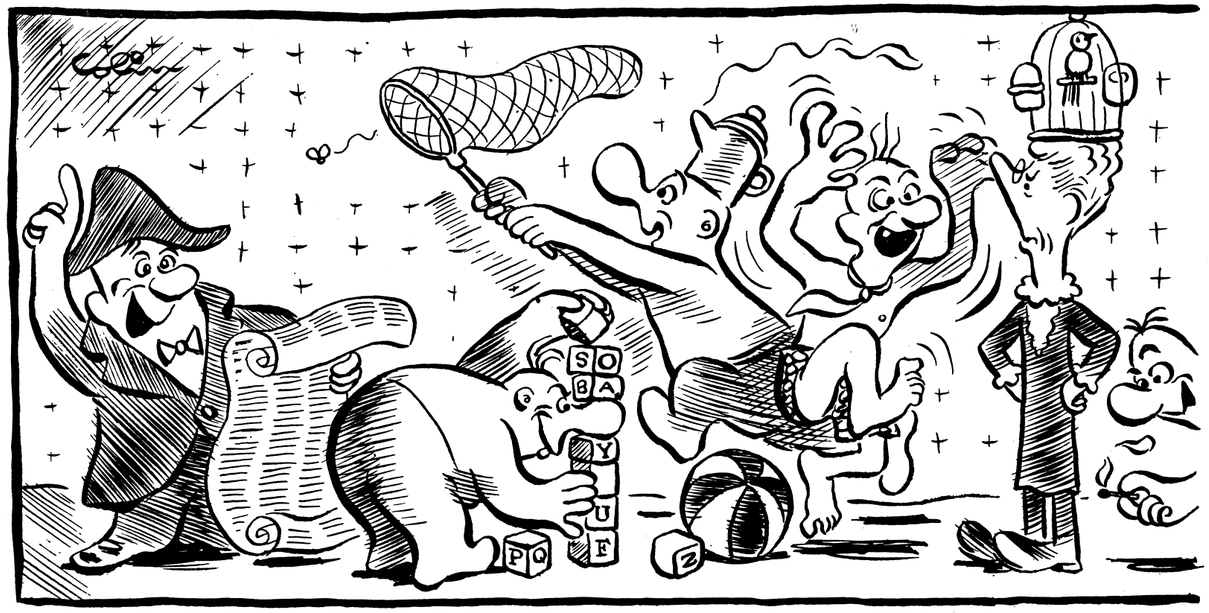
The fact is that more than ninety years ago, when the process was still in its infancy, the *Communist Manifesto* foresaw not only the decline of the independent small producers and tradesmen, but their increasing replacement "in manufactures, agriculture, and commerce by managers, superintendents, and foremen." But in considering this new middle class, it is essential to distinguish between its upper and lower layers. The vast majority of the more than ten million salaried employees and professionals in the United States have their economic ties with the working class. If many of them still tend to echo reactionary ideas, this is by no means an inevitable expression of their class position. In the past few years increasing numbers of white-collar workers and professionals have joined trade unions and other progressive organizations, and this inevitably affects their thinking.

Nor can sweeping generalizations be made concerning the political behavior of the middle class. The middle classes, both old and new, are not homogeneous or united and respond to conflicting economic pressures. Sections of them identify themselves completely with big business; others can be won as allies of the workers and poor farmers in the democratic struggle, while a third group can at least be induced to take up a more or less neutral position. The job is one of enlightenment and organization. The history of the past shows that the middle classes as a whole are not foredoomed to be the dupes of reaction. In 1848 the shopkeepers and merchants of Paris assisted the capitalists in suppressing the working-class revolution. In 1871 the majority of these middle-class elements rallied to the Commune—the first dictatorship of the proletariat—because it protected their interests against predatory capital. In Spain and France in our own day we have seen the middle classes and the peasants join hands with the Socialist and Communist workers to form the People's Front against fascism. And I have no doubt that there are many middle-class people in France today who are filled with fear not by "political movement to the left," but by Daladier's movement to the right.

The fourth "error," "the underestimate of the strength of the nationalist idea," Mr. Lerner declares, "has been a weakness of Marxism since the beginning. . . . The Marxians made the mistake of taking what is probably the most powerful emotional force in modern history and handing it over to the enemy." It is gratifying to find Mr. Lerner concerned about this question in view of the fact that only a few months ago the *Nation* ridiculed the action of the Tenth Convention of the Communist Party in championing the democratic traditions of the American people. It is true that the Communist Party of the United States, and possibly other Communist Parties, made the sectarian mistake of neglecting the national sentiments and progressive traditions of our people. This mistake has been recognized and corrected in recent years. But Mr. Lerner is again wrong in attributing the error to Marxism. Marx and Engels and their followers fought against reactionary chauvinism, which deludes the people into abandoning their own *national* and *international* interests in favor of those of their oppressors. There is, however, no conflict between genuine nationalism and internationalism, but, on the contrary, they are closely interwoven. Marx and Engels supported the progressive patriotism of the North in our own Civil War, and linked the success of our second bourgeois revolution with the interests of the international working class. ("From the commencement of the titanic American strife," declared the letter of the International Workingmen's Association (First International) congratulating Lincoln on his reelection in 1864—a letter written by Marx—"the workingmen of Europe felt instinctively that the Star Spangled Banner carried the destiny of their class.")

As for Lenin and Stalin, they made one of their greatest and most original contributions to Marxist science in their writings on the national question. Both opposed a negative attitude toward national sentiments and traditions. Only a few months after the outbreak of the World War, while waging the most determined fight against reactionary chauvinism and urging the people of all countries to work for the defeat of their own imperialist governments, Lenin wrote:

> Are we enlightened Great-Russian proletarians impervious to the feeling of national pride? Certainly not! We love our language and our motherland; we, more than any other group, are working to raise its laboring masses (i.e., nine-tenths of its population) to the level of intelligent democrats and Socialists. We, more than anybody, are grieved to see and feel to what violence, oppression, and mockery our beautiful motherland is being subjected by the czarist hangmen, the nobles and the capi-



Colin Allen

"Mr. Dies is ready to hear the next witness."

talists. We are proud of the fact that those acts of violence met with resistance in our midst, in the midst of the Great-Russians; that we have given the world Radishchev, the Decembrists, the déclassé revolutionists of the seventies; that in 1905 the Great-Russian working class created a powerful revolutionary party of the masses; that at the same time the Great-Russian *muzhik* began to grow democratic, began to overthrow the priest and the landlord.

And in his famous *Letter to American Workers* Lenin wrote:

The American people has a revolutionary tradition adopted by the best representatives of the American proletariat, who gave repeated expression to their full solidarity with us, the Bolsheviks. This tradition is the war of liberation against the English in the eighteenth and the Civil War in the nineteenth centuries.

The fifth criticism that Mr. Lerner makes, Marxism's "faulty theory of human nature in politics," is particularly difficult to discuss, since here his terminology is even more ambiguous than usual.

Marxian psychology was archaic even when Marx wrote it; it was a metaphysician's psychology. . . . Briefly, its error is to see men as too rational in their public conduct, and to assign to their public conduct too large an area of their lives. . . . Actually, however, men's interest or attention-span on political and economic matters is shorter than we like to think. And when men do act in public affairs, they are as irrational as in their private lives—as insecure, fear-ridden, hunger-driven, hatred-obsessed, animal-like.

I can only try to guess what Mr. Lerner is driving at—the last sentence sounds almost Spenglerian. Does Mr. Lerner mean to say that the actions of a Chamberlain or a Daladier are irrational—curious how these actions happen to accord with the class interests of the dominant capitalist groups!—and that world affairs are largely governed by animal impulse? This is the kind of mystical nonsense that the Nazis are peddling, and it would be unfortunate if liberals should, even in the name of Sigmund Freud, unwittingly provide a sounding board for such doctrine.

Marx and Engels did not deal with problems of psychology as such or with the proportion of rational and irrational elements in human behavior. All that they maintained was that men's social conduct, both private and public, is an expression of the whole mode of social existence, whose *general character* is determined primarily—though not solely—by economic factors. Any school of psychology which ignores that—and there isn't a trace of metaphysics in it—ignores science. In a letter to J. Bloch, in 1890, Engels wrote:

According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is *ultimately* the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. . . . The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc.—forms of law—and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their *form*. . . .

In the second place, however, history makes itself in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each again has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant—the historical event.

Particularly in their historical works did Marx and Engels pay the most scrupulous attention to the role of the individual in history; exponents of historical materialism, they opposed the mechanistic vulgarization of their method that has come to be known as economic determinism. The general attitude of the founders of Marxism toward psychological problems is also indicated in their occasional comments on literary questions. They criticized those writers who created fictional characters as mere pegs on which to hang social ideas; in their letters to Lassalle concerning a play he had written, they contrasted Shakespeare and Schiller to the advantage of the former, despite Schiller's espousal of progressive ideas, and urged Lassalle to "Shakespeareianize" his writing.

And finally we come to the last of Marxism's sins, "the misreckoning on proletarian dictatorship":

The complete and ruthless power, even though temporarily, of the proletariat in its march toward a classless state is a root-idea of Marxism. But the question arises, how long this dictatorship will last, and what form it will take.

Mr. Lerner then proceeds to state *his own belief* that "the need for a proletarian dictatorship must be minimized, its time-span shortened, and channels found for the expression of political opposition in the Socialist states of the future." It is clear that the misreckoning is Mr. Lerner's: the proletarian dictatorship as it is fails to satisfy his own conception of what it should be. But since it is entirely in accord with what he himself concedes is "a root-idea of Marxism," whose is the error?

Space will not permit replying to Mr. Lerner's specific strictures against the proletarian dictatorship of the Soviet Union. In this matter, as in others, he is an eclectic who wants to have his cake and eat it too—a Socialist USSR based on capitalist democracy. I am moved to ask, moreover, whether in the face of Nazi aggression and in the light of the revelations of the Moscow trials, the proletarian dictatorship, which is the broadest type of democracy for the masses of the people and a dictatorship only against the exploiting enemies of democracy, is less necessary today than it was ten or twenty years ago. Can liberals who support the Soviet peace policy afford to argue for the weakening of that very power which enables the USSR to be such a tremendous factor in the worldwide struggle for democracy and peace?

Mr. Lerner began his article with the statement:

Marxians have always bridled at any suggestion of revisionism. Eduard Bernstein was ostracized for demanding a streamlined Marxian theory in the 1890's, and every theorist who has followed him in the call for modernization has met a similar fate.

What Mr. Lerner does not say is that history has revised the revisionists. The disciples of Bernstein, the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party, led the German people onto the path which ended in the catastrophe of fascism. The disciples of Marx and Engels, the Bolsheviks, led the Russian people to freedom and Socialism. Which Marxism was streamlined, which was in accord with the realities of the modern world?

Marx and Engels, in the words of Lenin, "substituted science for dreaming." That is the secret of their superiority over all other thinkers and of the invincibility of their teachings. Marxism is no dead body of canonical law, no petrified dogma, but living science whose basic principles, the theory of surplus value, the theory of the class struggle, and the theory of dialectical materialism, constitute the means of its own further development. Lenin and Stalin in our own day have advanced this science beyond the discoveries of Marx and Engels, and it is enriched daily in the work of the Communist Parties of all countries. For Marxism is, above all, a key to action—truth in the service of freedom. There is no grander product of man's ascent from darkness.

★

Homeland

Tonight the river churns beneath the bridge.
We stand, our elbows on the rail,
Watching the white foam curl,
And listen to its sound: a restless strain
Like the wash of an angry whisper
In a silent swollen brain.

A tug-whistle blows.
We shiver a bit, search the sky for rain,
Talk of the lamp-post lights
Trembling yellow in the water,
The speed of the distant electric train.
We share a cigarette
(To forget hot meals)
Twist the stubs with regret
Beneath worn heels.

There must be more like us tonight, I think,
Who know how it feels:
Walking across bridges,
Crouching in tin shacks.
There must be more who know the feeling
Of waiting and hating . . .

Wind steals up and down the legs of our pants
Like a feeble indecisive hand.
So we drift slowly: two wasted workers,
Dying with love for our native land.

J. RICKSECKER.

Free Speech in England

"Oh, Yes, of Course, Quite"

HENRY HART

WHEN it is 2 o'clock in the afternoon in New York City it is 7 o'clock in the evening in London.

At 2 o'clock on a recent afternoon Miss Hazel Harrison, teacher of European history in Miss Thornton's finishing school, concluded her analysis of the causes of the French Revolution with these memorable words:

"I have never been able to escape from the thought that if only the court of Louis XVI, the corruption and immorality of which were the chief causes of that terrible upheaval, had been wise enough to have had a Hyde Park, where the lowliest person can freely say whatever is on his mind, the *ancien régime* might still be with us. Hyde Park is the safety valve of the British empire. I am a great believer in the *conservative* value of free speech."

There was a titter of derision from the precocious eighteen-year-old daughter of one of America's more realistic bankers.

At that very moment in one of the alcoves of the Carlton Club in London two young men in their early thirties were slowly and implacably consuming a few inadequately chilled Martinis.

"Do you remember Larry Matthews, the second son of Brigadier General Matthews?" asked one of these fine young men, who was known as the Rt. Hon. John Stanley Purves Smith Hopestay.

"Haven't thought of him for years, not since he—um—left England," replied his companion, who was known as the Rt. Hon. Charles Henry Flunkett Flunkett-Thring.

These two young men looked very much alike. They were an inch less than six feet tall, blond, blue-eyed, rather bloodless and long-nosed. Both of them. They were thought to be very much alike. They were. It was said that Hopestay's alleged father was Flunkett-Thring's actual father and vice versa. This rumor always reminded people of the remark of the Duchess of Wortland. "Yes, very probably," she had said of the rumored parentage of these two young men. "It was what we used to call the Edwardian arrangement for our peccadillos, designed with an eye to minimum expense, freedom from blackmail, and maximum secrecy and good form."

The presence together of the young men on an evening when their wives were also dining *à deux* was sometimes regarded as a neo-Edwardian arrangement for the same general purposes though employing a slightly different pattern of behavior.

"What makes you mention Larry Matthews?" asked Flunkett-Thring, who had quite a responsible post in the Home Office.

"Oh nothing, rehly," answered Hopestay, who supervised the investments of all the members and cadets of his family. "I happened to see him on the street the other day."

"Down and out I suppose."

"Quite."

The waiter placed the fourth set of warm Martinis on the small table between the two young men and withdrew.

"Terrible sight, rehly," said Hopestay. "Unshaven, bulges under the eyes, and all that." He lifted his Martini and blew gently upon it as though he were transferring a kiss across its rippling surface. Flunkett-Thring nodded with his raised glass and they drank them down.

"He shouldn't have gone outside his class," Flunkett-Thring said.

They smiled briefly in recognition of their own wisdom.

"Still has cheek," said Hopestay in a gossipy tone. "Sent me a note here at the club. Said if I or you or any of the others ever heard of anything he was using another name and gave me his address. Using his mother's name of Leach or Beach. Can't remember which."

"Léach," said Flunkett-Thring.

The waiter approached and announced that the dinner which Hopestay had ordered was ready to be served.

"I hope you'll like it," said Hopestay. "It's an unusual curry from one of the family's own recipes."

In the hall they encountered Sir Thickfinger Maxwell, KCMG, the home secretary himself. He was a straight-backed, red-jowled political boa constrictor in his early sixties.

"Evening, my boy," he said to Flunkett-Thring. And noticing Hopestay, he exclaimed: "Ah there, One-of-the-largest-fortunes-in-the-empire."

The two young men laughed perfunctorily. Sir Thickfinger placed his arm about Flunkett-Thring's shoulder and said: "The best man I have, the best man the Home Office has."

"I've just been telling Hopestay how hard we work so he can keep his fortune intact," said Flunkett-Thring.

"And quite right, too," said Sir Thickfinger. "These are difficult days for us all. Our burdens are sometimes almost too heavy."

He reached for his pocket handkerchief and the young men hastened up the stairs to the dining-room before Sir Thickfinger could squeeze out a tear.

Over the soup Flunkett-Thring surprised his friend by saying: "You know, I think I might have something for Larry Matthews."

A quick, thin wave of jealousy passed over Hopestay's face under the disguise of mild interest.

"Have you ever listened to the jabbering in Hyde Park?" Flunkett-Thring asked.

"Oh, you know," Hopestay answered.

"Of course. Well, the Home Office sometimes takes a hand in it."

"I thought you never interfered, say what they like, advertise democracy under the monarchy sort of thing," Hopestay said, considerably relieved. He felt convinced the motivation to do Matthews a good turn lay entirely in the line of duty.

"Oh quite."

The soup plates were taken off and the to-do over the curry began. When the twittering subsided Flunkett-Thring asked:

"Was Matthews' appearance really blotto—looks twenty years older, last shilling gone, and the rest?"

"Quite."

"Drinking everything he gets his hands on?"

"Wouldn't be surprised."

"Didn't he go on the stage in America after the blowup?"

"Something of that sort."

"Gift for masquerade? I mean, change his make-up, act a lot of parts?"

"Well rehly!" exclaimed Hopestay in order to declare that he wasn't an authority on Larry Matthews. "I dare say," he added.

"Sorry old boy, only one more question," said Flunkett-Thring. "Do you think he's sufficiently gone to finish himself off in a year or two, drink or whatever?"

"Look here, Flunkey, get on with it whatever it is."

"Nothing much rehly. As I said, the Home Office takes a hand, sub rosa of course, in the Hyde Park gabble. Dress up our own speakers. Attack the king, capitalism, religion, and whatnot. But propose solutions we approve of. You know. Also send hecklers. Also fellows who ask the genuine Reds sympathetic questions but then confuse everybody as to what to do about it. Twig? All very sub rosa of course."

"A little dangerous but necessary I suppose," said Hopestay.

"We think so. Been doing it for years."

"But Larry Matthews! He's not one of us anymore. He might blab."

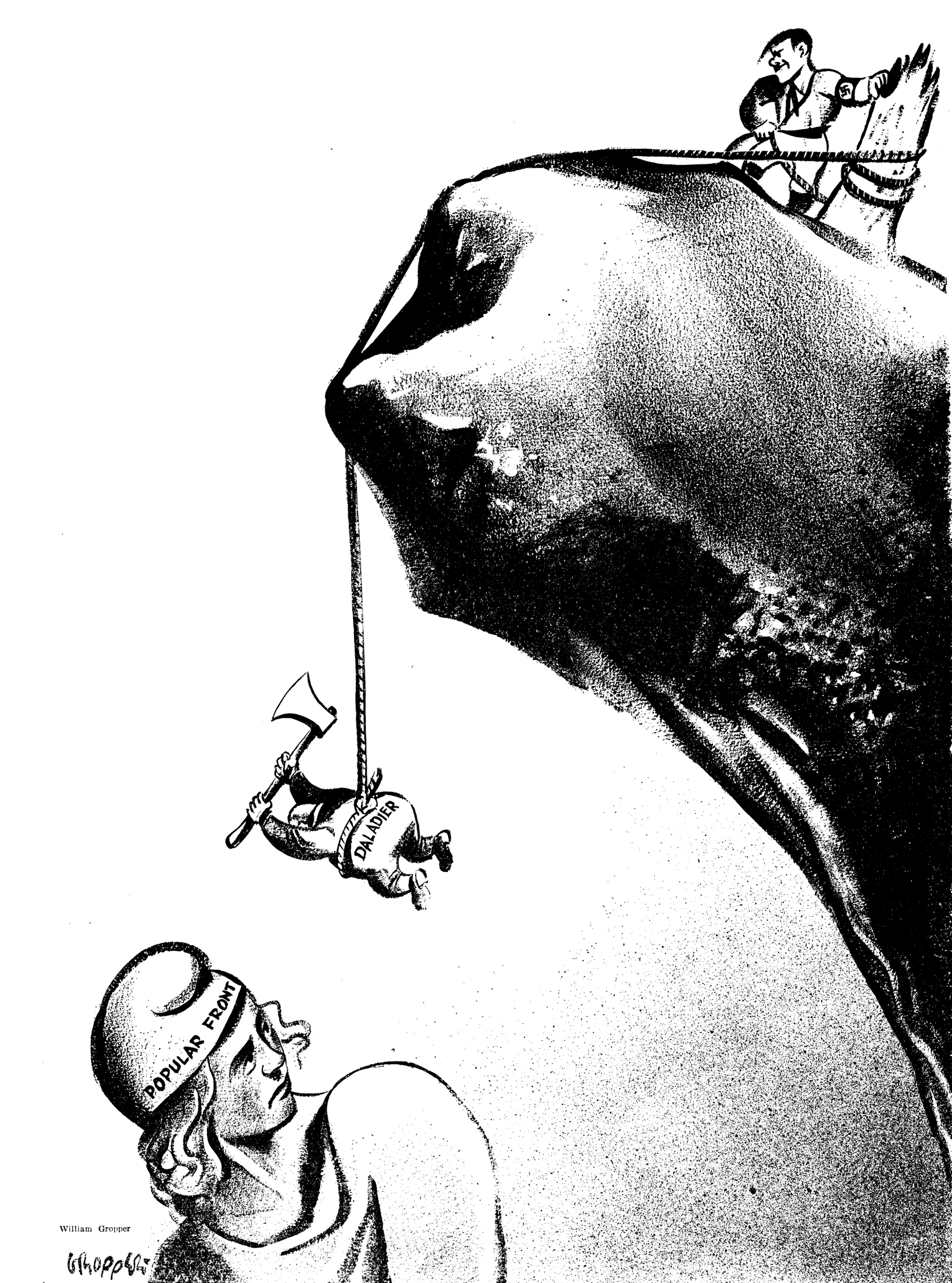
"My *dear* fellow!" said Flunkett-Thring with disdain.

"Oh, yes, of course, quite," said Hopestay, emitting two small sounds of embarrassed laughter because he had seemed to infer that even this contingency had not long since been foreseen by the Home Office.

★

Tell It to Dies!

WE BELIEVE that [the film] *Just Around the Corner* will convince you that there's nothing wrong with this country that Shirley Temple can't cure.—FROM A TELEGRAM *sent by the publicity office of Loew's Capitol Theater (Washington, D. C.), inviting the press to the film's première.*



William Gropper

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The Crisis in France

BY THE time this issue of NEW MASSES is off the press, the first great test of strength between the Daladier government and the forces of French democracy—the general strike—will be history. Whatever the outcome of this first showdown, it is clear that France today is in the grip of a profound social and political crisis which is likely to have momentous consequences for Europe and the entire world. Once more, as in the stormy days of February 1934, France stands at the parting of the ways. What is being decided is whether France will continue on the path of Munich, or surrender to fascism at home and abroad, or follow the path of the People's Front, of the anti-fascist struggle and militant democracy.

And again, as in February 1934, it is Daladier who heads the government, playing for the second time a discreditable role. In 1934, when the fascist leagues attempted a *coup d'état*, Daladier, despite the fact that he had a majority in the Chamber of Deputies, meekly resigned. It was the spontaneous united front of the Socialist and Communist workers and the great general strike of Feb. 12, 1934, that saved the republic. Today French reaction and foreign fascism operate directly through Daladier. But between February 1934 and November 1938 there has arisen the anti-fascist People's Front, and there has come the unification and growth of the trade unions. The Daladier who, despite the fact that he has a majority neither in the Chamber nor in the country, has today found the intransigeance which he lacked in 1934—the intransigeance of France's two hundred ruling families and of their ally, Hitler—faces, however, not a few thousand putschists, but five million disciplined trade unionists, supported by growing numbers of the middle classes and farmers. The Popular Front, pronounced dead so many times, has been reborn in this new great battle for democracy and peace.

Even before the general strike, Daladier had already suffered defeat in the first task which French reaction and Hitler had set him: isolation of the Communist Party. On the contrary, his decree laws and his anti-Communist campaign have had the effect of drawing the Socialist and Communist Parties and important sections of the premier's own Radical Socialist Party more closely together. Daladier then attempted to isolate the workers from the middle classes by charging that the general strike threatened a "dictatorship of a proletarian minority." But the fact is that his decree laws have aroused the opposition not only of the workers, but of the veterans, whose pensions are being cut, and of the small business men and professionals whose taxes are being raised, and these groups are increasingly joining with labor against the common danger.

In the midst of the crisis, the Franco-German declaration and the Chamberlain-Halifax visit to Paris have proved decidedly anti-climactic. Both were intended to enlist public support for further betrayals in the spirit of Munich; they have had the effect of intensifying opposition to Daladier. Two months after Munich, two months after the great demonstrations for the "peace-makers," Chamberlain and Daladier, the Munich policy is being repudiated by the aroused people of France and Britain.

When the Chamber convenes, Daladier will face his second test of strength. Originally called for November 15, the government postponed the session until December 6. Now there is no longer any certainty that it will be held that day, and Daladier would undoubtedly prefer to rule indefinitely without parliamentary encumbrances. The French premier is, however, clinging to the tail of a social whirlwind. It seems hardly possible that he can hold on for long.

The World's Anger Rises

AS THE persecution of Jews and Catholics in Nazi Germany continues, the worldwide protest rises in intensity and determination, and begins to take on organizational form. The Nazis, reassured by the Chamberlain-Daladier surrender at Munich, are making it clearer every day that they aim at nothing less than the complete extermination, economically and socially, of the Jews; at the complete suppression of the Catholics. In every country where the voice of humanity is not silenced by fascist police, the people have been giving voice to the growing realization that Hitlerism and democracy, Hitlerism and freedom, cannot continue to exist together in the same world.

Nowhere has the protest been stronger, or the unity of all progressive forces to oppose the Nazi barbarism greater, than in the United States. Countless meetings have been held, chief among them the great gathering at Madison Square Garden; civic bodies, labor organizations, groups of educational, scientific, religious, intellectual leaders have spoken. This tremendous groundswell of opinion has supported and will continue to support the strongest measures that the government can take against the Nazis. President Roosevelt's summoning home of our ambassador from Berlin met with instantaneous approval; his evident determination not to send an ambassador back to the Nazis expresses the minimum scale of action. When the Nazi atrocities can within a few days bring together for resistance such a body of distinguished persons as is represented in the newly organized Provisional Council Against Anti-Semitism, can unite every race, religion, and political grouping in an anti-Nazi front, the President need have no doubt of popular support on this central question.

The great and insistent demand for a more consistent foreign policy has been given an enormous impetus. The boycott of Nazi-made goods is gaining in scope, with such large additions of strength as the declaration of the retail merchants of the entire state of Montana that they will no longer deal in the products of Hitler Germany. Far transcending the boycott in the importance of the blow it would give to world fascism is the proposal now being urged more strongly than ever, for a complete break in trade relations with the Nazis—an embargo. No terrific dislocation of our economy would be entailed, and the setback to Nazi aggression would have enormous significance. An embargo on trade with the Nazis, and the immediate summoning of a world conference on the refugee problem—these two actions would implement the unquestionable desire of the great mass of the American people for decisive action against the growing threat of fascism. That such a conference on the refugees could not exclude the Soviet Union without stultifying itself is obvious.

The Lima Conference

THE eighth international conference of Pan-American states will convene at Lima on December 9. Twenty-one Latin American countries will meet with representatives of the United States to discuss the economic and peace problems of the Western Hemisphere. No Pan-American conference has ever been faced with such crucial questions. The fascist aggressors, encouraged by Chamberlain and Daladier at

Munich, have intensified their campaign of economic, political, and military penetration of Latin America. Peace on this hemisphere is directly and immediately threatened by fascist propaganda and economic invasion. Utilizing the German minorities in the various South American countries, and making demagogic attacks against American imperialism, Hitler has gotten a foothold in many of our neighbor nations.

At the Lima conference, the United States will have an unparalleled opportunity to give leadership to the peace forces of the world. Lima can be the American answer to Munich. The retreat of the democratic nations can be halted by an unmistakable demonstration of American solidarity against fascist aggression.

The main economic issue at the conference will center around the Hull idea of reciprocal trade treaties as opposed to the Nazi program of barter and compensation currency. Since the 1936 conference at Buenos Aires, we have signed reciprocal treaties with only ten Latin American nations; Germany has aski-mark arrangements with twelve. Fascist political groups force trade arrangements with Germany, Italy, and Japan, while sabotaging the American economic position. For example, the recent "recession" in Chile brought a drop of over 60 percent in American imports; German imports fell only 24 percent. The fascist-dominated chamber of commerce in Colombia has successfully combated every attempt to stimulate Colombian industries. The Japanese flood the market with goods "made in USA," a flagrant abuse which they seek to cover up by naming one of their manufacturing centers Usa. England is forcing the consumption of German electrical and heavy machinery in Argentina.

In the political sphere, the fascist advance offers a parallel menace. Powerful Nazi parties or groups exist in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru. El Salvador has recognized Manchukuo and Franco; Peru and Guatemala, the Burgos government.

On the other hand, Mr. Hull goes to this conference with his reciprocal trade program enormously enhanced. He increased the possibilities of inter-American cooperation by acquiescing to the Mexican demand to arbitrate, under the Gondra pact, the American expropriated agricultural properties. The negotiation of the Anglo-American trade treaty, on the eve of the conference, has increased American prestige. The Latin American Labor Conference held in Mexico last September marked the emergence of labor as a force in New World international affairs. President Roosevelt recognized this in effect when he appointed Kathryn Lewis, daughter of John L., as a member of the American delegation. Moreover, political democracies in South America have been winning victories, of which the most significant is the triumph of the Popular Front in Chile. And Mexico, recognized everywhere as the leader of Latin American progress, goes to Lima with an impressive record of courageous action against exploitation.

One important step must be taken by the conference if it is to solidify the American anti-fascist front. It must help republican Spain. For a Franco victory would make Spain a central depot for Nazi penetration into this hemisphere. A victory for loyalist Spain is a victory for American peace and American economic security.

Arms and Foreign Policy

THE Lima conference has also served to focus attention on the American defense program. President Roosevelt's proclamation of "continental solidarity" and this nation's acceptance of responsibility for the defense of all of North, Central, and South America against foreign aggression envisions a greatly expanded armaments program. Speculation as to the extent and character of the contemplated expenditures has produced a large crop of rumors and wild guesses. And inevitably it has brought progressives up against the none too easy task of determining what their own attitude should be.

First, it must be emphasized that the whole problem of armaments and defense against aggression cannot be divorced from questions of foreign policy. The tendency in administration circles to discuss these two separately only serves to confuse rather than clarify. The blunt truth must be faced that had the United States taken the initiative in organizing the peace forces of the world long before the Munich betrayal, we and every other democratic country would not now be under the necessity of piling up armaments against the increased threat of the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis. And another blunt truth must also be faced: so long as we continue to deny arms to the legitimate government of Spain, we encourage the fascist designs on Latin America and tend to nullify all efforts at continental solidarity.

This brings us to the question of how our increased armaments are going to be used in the future. Progressives, facing the realities of the post-Munich world, cannot oppose any necessary expansion in our defense program, provided—*it serves to implement a positive peace policy of economic and political action against the aggressors and of assistance to their victims.* This means that President Roosevelt will have to clip the wings of the pro-fascist cabal in the State Department and of men like Ambassador Kennedy. It means lifting the embargo against Spain and the provision of liberal credits to enable the loyalists to purchase our surplus agricultural products. It means a trade embargo against Germany, Japan, and Italy. It means collaboration with the Soviet government and with the peace-loving peoples of all countries to isolate the fascist warmakers and their accomplices in the capitalist democracies.

Only in this way can there be assurance that armaments expenditures will truly further the ends of peace.

No Time to Retreat

THE New Deal made a dangerous retreat last week when Harry Hopkins ordered 450,000 WPA workers cut from the relief-work rolls. With winter settling down, production going up gradually but employment lagging far behind, the WPA cuts will spell decreased purchasing power, hunger, cold, misery.

The feeble excuses offered in Washington for the new cuts hardly bear examination. Under the provisions of the 1938 Relief Act, President Roosevelt can make the appropriations granted by the last Congress stretch until March 1, 1939, which means cuts, or he can use up the money by February 1, and apply for fresh funds from the new Congress in order to maintain the present program. The WPA cuts send the tories out rejoicing—and give the friends of the New Deal a slap in the face. These slashes hit not only the unemployed, but farmers and small business and professional people, who are bound to feel the effects of this reduction in purchasing power. This short-sighted retrenchment tends, in fact, to jeopardize the whole Roosevelt recovery program.

Mayor LaGuardia offers leadership for a fight against the new WPA cuts. Charging that the slash in the relief rolls increases rather than decreases necessary relief expenditures, New York's mayor has appealed to Washington to rescind the order. The Workers Alliance is in the battle too, with a detailed program for maintenance and expansion of the present WPA relief program. Progressives everywhere should wire their congressmen, protesting the blow to relief and recovery. With the tory forces in Congress getting set for the charge against New Deal legislation, this is no time to retreat.

The Sour Milk-Trust

THE slickest monopoly control in American agriculture is the network of highly integrated companies and distributors' associations in the milk industry. Standing between the real producers—the thousands upon thousands of independent dairy farm-

ers—and the consumers, the milk trust preys on both by taking for itself upwards of 70 percent of the gross on milk sales.

But the public, through federal anti-trust agencies, is catching up with the monopolies. For two years hundreds of government investigators have been gathering evidence of unfair and unlawful practices, and have based on the evidence an indictment made public in Chicago recently. Thirty-four corporations and sixty-three individuals were charged with two specific violations. The first is a conspiracy to fix prices and regulate the supply of milk in and around the city of Chicago, and the second indictment charges a nationwide effort to control the sale and supply of ice cream freezers, which enable smaller institutions—schools, hospitals, individuals, etc.—to make ice cream.

For many years now the profit-seeking of the milk trust has, in a very real way, affected the well-being of the American people. Milk consumption has been far below what is both desirable and possible. Smashing the milk trust by encouraging the federal prosecution of the case against large producers and distributors will pay the dividends in health to the consumer and will help the independent dairyman to get a fair return on his labor.

Baron Tells It to Dies

SHOULD you care to make a list of the petty finks, traitors, and sniveling loudmouths who live in the camp of reaction—not the big boys like Hearst and Girdler, but the mean little people who do their dirty work—you would find a pretty fair roster in the witnesses of the Dies committee. We are not startled at the identity of their latest recruit—Sam Baron, who held the floor last week with a farrago of fascist lies about the Spanish loyalists. Baron was an alternate member of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party and a prominent word-painter in the *Socialist Call*. On a recent trip to Spain he had allied himself with the Fifth Column traitors who were convicted in the POUM trial; now he shouts "his falsehood, half-truth, and lack of accurate information" (to quote a statement of the Socialist Party) through the Dies pipeline into the front pages of the tory press.

The Socialist Party has repudiated Baron. But what it needs to do is to repudiate itself, since the falsehoods and half-truths that Baron told Dies are essentially the same as those that appeared under his byline in many issues of the *Socialist Call*. The Baron exhibition is, in fact, the logical consequence of the Socialist Party's attitude toward Spain and all progressive movements.

And as the stoolpigeon Baron joins the van of the pilgrimage to Mr. Dies' mecca of fascists, it will be well to remember what the Communist Party has said, is saying, and will say: Trotskyites and renegades are the chief aides of fascism. Sooner or later they show themselves openly as such. In Spain the Barons betray the republic; in America they tell it to Dies.

The Truth About Coughlin

IN THE dispute between Father Coughlin and those radio stations which have refused to carry his anti-Semitic incitements it is important not to be confused by the false issue of "censorship" and "freedom of speech" which the Royal Oak führer is raising. That issue is no more involved in this case than it is in the taboo on obscenity over the air waves or in public print. Station WMCA of New York, which took the initiative in barring Father Coughlin unless he submitted his speech in advance for approval, has cited the following statement recently made by Frank R. McNinch, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission:

> Should there ever be an attempt here by any one to so debase radio as to use it as an instrument of racial or religious persecution, the Communications Commission would employ every resource it has to prevent any such shocking offense. President Roosevelt would, of course, support us to the limit in such a stand.

That Coughlin's speech, despite his demagogic denials, falls into the category of racial and religious incitement cannot be doubted. The Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League has revealed the character of his "facts" concerning the role of Jews in the Russian Revolution—"facts" which the radio priest himself admits have been taken from Nazi sources. The anti-Semitism of Father Coughlin is, of course, not a new phenomenon. It was first exposed nearly four years ago by A. B. Magil in his pamphlet, *The Truth About Father Coughlin*. What is new is the brazenness with which Coughlin is now peddling his made-in-Germany wares. There is hardly an issue of his weekly publication, *Social Justice*, that does not contain some Jew-baiting material. The activities of this fascist priest are a menace to the millions of American Catholics who know only too well the evil consequences of fomenting religious bigotry. We wonder how long his ecclesiastical superior, Archbishop Edward Mooney, will remain silent while Coughlin uses his official imprimatur to sanctify ideas which have been condemned by Pope Pius XI.

Whatever the Catholic hierarchy may or may not do, the American public is under no obligation to tolerate these radio rantings. The demand should be made that not only individual radio stations but the FCC act to bar this type of poisonous, un-American propaganda.

Facing Problem No. 1

THE South made history last week when more than fifteen hundred Negro and white delegates, representing almost every progressive section of Southern life, met in Birmingham to decide what to do about the nation's number-one economic problem. The Southern Conference for Human Welfare, attended by prominent national leaders and outstanding Southern liberal public officials, representatives of almost all trade unions, farm organizations, Negro groups, Southern educational institutions, the Communist Party, and church organizations, issued an inspiring challenge to the reactionary bourbonism which has so long held sway.

The conference was fully aware that the South is a number-one problem in democracy as well as in economic conditions. The progressive decisions which it took and the fraternal association of Negro and white delegates were indications that the hardened barriers of racial prejudice are at last giving way in the South to a realization that the common needs of both races must be met by a common resistance to the forces despoiling both. The conference, which was attended by delegates from AFL and CIO unions and the Railroad Brotherhoods, also marked the fact that a Southern labor movement is in the South to stay and that this labor movement not only seeks unity of all trade-union bodies, but unity of Negro and white workers as well.

Aghast at what the destruction of democracy in Nazi Germany had let loose, the delegates to this Southern Conference became more firmly resolved that this should not happen in the United States. To protect what democratic rights they already have, they knew that they must build American democracy even stronger. Resolutions calling for abolition of the poll tax, for uniform registration laws by federal and state governments—the right to vote for the majority of the Southern people, Negro and white—was their answer to the advance of reaction. And it was fitting that the conference chose as the first recipient of its Thomas Jefferson Medal, Justice Hugo Black of the United States Supreme Court.

The conference, which set up a permanent all-Southern organization, with Dr. Frank Porter Graham, president of the University of North Carolina, as chairman, marks the opening of a new, hopeful epoch in the South. The forces of Southern progressivism have become articulate and the battle to reclaim the South for democracy has now acquired courageous leadership.

Justice Black's Insurgency

The Second of Three Articles

LOUIS B. BOUDIN

THE ostensible reason for the attack on Justice Black, as exemplified by Marquis W. Childs' article in *Harpers* magazine of last May, is that Justice Black is deficient in "legal craftsmanship." In my last article I have shown, from a review of the history of the Supreme Court during the first one hundred years of its existence, that "legal craftsmanship" does not seem to be conducive to the making of a great judge, or at least is not a prerequisite.

> But [says Mr. Childs] of the hundreds of cases coming before them in a single term, only a very few involve large constitutional issues. Most of them—the run-of-the-mine cases—are concerned with intricate points of law, bearing on taxation, patents, complex business details. It is here that craftsmanship is of the first importance; and it is precisely here that Justice Black, in the opinion of his colleagues, has failed.

Only a person utterly unfamiliar with the actual business of the United States Supreme Court could have made the above statements, and they give an utterly perverted view of the actual situation. I shall have occasion in a later article to discuss in some detail just what is really involved in the cases on "taxation, patents, complex business details," and how far Justice Black has failed or succeeded in dealing with these matters. In this article I want to give a general picture of the work of the Supreme Court.

In order to understand the work of the Supreme Court we must bear in mind the transformation which the court has undergone in the 150 years of its existence. It is safe to say that the Supreme Court today is as far removed from the Supreme Court envisaged by the framers of the Constitution as is the electoral college. The electoral college was meant to be the body that would do the electing. It has become a board to officially announce the results of a popular election. The Supreme Court was intended to be a real court, and it has turned out to be a super-legislature. But this transformation did not take place suddenly. And as the character of the court was being changed from a court of law to a super-legislature, the importance of "legal craftsmanship" as a qualification for membership was receding to the background and the quality of statesmanship was coming to the fore. In a sense, this was always true—as the survey of the first one hundred years of the court's existence given in my last article amply demonstrates. But it is more so today, because the business of the Supreme Court—the run-of-the-mine cases to which Mr. Childs refers—has changed radically within the last fifty years. If Mr. Childs had really been interested in the business of the Supreme Court, instead of in spreading unfounded rumors as to what Justice Black's colleagues think of him, he could easily have found the facts discussed at great length by Prof. Felix Frankfurter, now the leading lawyers' candidate for the succession to Justice Cardozo, in a book written by him in collaboration with James M. Landis, now dean of the Harvard Law School, which appeared in 1927 under the title *The Business of the Supreme Court.* Before giving the conclusions of these experts and some of the statistics upon which they are based, it is perhaps well to give a brief sketch of the history of the Supreme Court as a court.

When the Supreme Court was first organized, the judges were doing both trial and appellate work, the judges "riding circuit," as it was then called, and hearing actual controversies between litigants. This continued during the first one hundred years of the court's existence; even though during the last third of that period problems of statesmanship were constantly crowding the ordinary judicial work of the court, owing to the use which the court came to make of the power to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional—a power which was asserted as early as 1803 but never exercised until 1857. In 1891 the federal courts were reorganized in two respects, both of which tended to emphasize the importance of statesmanship as against legal craftsmanship as a qualification in a Supreme Court justice. One of these was the abolition of the trial work of the Supreme Court judges. The other was a considerable limitation of their appellate work, by the creation of the Circuit Court of Appeals as an intermediary court between the trial courts and the Supreme Court. The right of appeal to the Supreme Court was further limited by an act of Congress passed in 1916, and even more drastically limited by the present Judicial Code which was adopted in 1925. These limitations changed not only the quantity of business coming before the Supreme Court, but its quality—*practically eliminating from the Supreme Court docket the kind of cases in which legal craftsmanship plays an important role.* Let's hear what Professors Frankfurter and Landis have to say on this subject:

> In 1825, circuit riding was a feasible duty to impose upon justices who rendered twenty-six opinions during the year; of these almost half were in suits between individuals involving applications of recognized principles of the common law. . . . Notable are the changes wrought in the volume as well as in the variety of litigation fifty years later. . . . But the issues in litigation remained predominantly common law topics and federal specialties like admiralty, bankruptcy, patents, claims against the government, and legislation concerning the public domain. . . . For the next fifty years the court's business is comparable in volume to that of 1875, but the complexion of the litigation progressively changes. The content of the reports for the 1925 Term is radically different from the reports for the 1875 Term. *The reader finds himself in a different world of ideas.* . . . Nearly half of the opinions relate to control of economic enterprise, taxation and interstate adjustments. *Common law controversies are in process of atrophy.* Of these there were eighty-one in the 1875 Term and only eleven in the 1925 Term—a shrinkage from 43 percent to 5 percent. Of the federal specialties there were forty-eight cases during the 1925 Term. But the Judiciary Act of 1925 was passed to relieve the court from these sources of jurisdiction. . . . *The Supreme Court has ceased to be a common law court.* . . . The issues which normally come before the Supreme Court are not the ordinary legal questions in the multitudinous lawsuits of *Smith v. Jones* before other courts.

But the statistics collated by Frankfurter and Landis and summarized in the above quotation do not tell the whole story. Not only do ordinary legal questions which are the daily fare of other courts come but rarely before the United States Supreme Court—they are utterly unimportant when they get there. In a recent article in the *Harvard Law Review* Professor Frankfurter gives some statistics of the business of the Supreme Court during the five years from Oct. 1, 1932, to Oct. 1, 1937, which show that the eleven cases involving common law questions which came before the court in 1925 still represent the general average of that class of business as far as the number of cases is concerned—the number ranging between six and fifteen and aggregating fifty-three for the five-year period.

During the last year included in Professor Frankfurter's study the Supreme Court had before it thirteen cases of this class—somewhat above the average. I have taken the trouble to examine these thirteen cases and found the following: In only one of these cases was there a division of opinion among the judges, and the two judges who did not agree with the majority did not write any dissenting opinion—showing the unimportance of the legal question involved. But of the other 154 cases decided during that Term nineteen were decided by a divided court, and in four others there were what is known as concurring opinions—which means that while the judges agreed as to the result they were not in agreement as to the legal reasoning whereby the result was reached, and the minority considered the question important enough to require a statement of their position. But even more important is the nature of the opinions rendered in the thirteen common law cases: Most of them were disposed of in very brief, almost perfunctory, statements; and an examination of the nature of the questions involved shows that such treatment was quite adequate. Only two or three of these cases involved legal questions of some importance, and only one presented a really nice question. It is unquestionably true,

as stated by Frankfurter and Landis, that the Supreme Court has ceased to be a court of common law. Let me add: *The Supreme Court has also ceased to be a court of justice.*

This brings me to another aspect of the problem of the Supreme Court, which must be considered in connection with the Black insurgency and future appointments to that court. The really important business of the Supreme Court consists in deciding what the government may do. One-half of its important business consists in deciding what *the states* may or may not do. The growing importance of this branch of the Supreme Court's business is illustrated by the statistics of decisions under the Fourteenth Amendment. The Fourteenth Amendment was adopted in 1868 and is now seventy years old. During these seventy years the Supreme Court has used it as a means of invalidating 232 state laws. But these invalidations are not spread evenly over that period. The engine was slow in starting, but has been working with constantly accelerating speed. The first decision of the Supreme Court in which a state law was invalidated under the Fourteenth Amendment was rendered in 1877—nine years after the adoption of the amendment. The next *fifteen* years brought only *four* more invalidations. But the next *ten* years brought *thirteen* such decisions. In the following ten years the number doubled, and now these decisions come to about a dozen every year.

These cases are decided under the provision of the Fourteenth Amendment which reads: "No state shall deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law." But only a very few of the 232 cases invalidating state action have to do with *life* or personal or civil *liberty,* and those few have occurred during the past ten years. The vast bulk of these adjudications came under the head of protection of property, or of "liberty of contract" which is the same thing. Until very recently, this was held to be the only function of the due process clause, and the few decisions protecting personal rights which have occurred in the last few years are in the nature of a departure from earlier decisions. The difference in the attitude of the Supreme Court on the subject is exemplified by the famous Leo Frank case in 1915, in which the Supreme Court refused to intercede, and the later case of *Moore v. Dempsey,* in which the court did interfere under similar circumstances. And the result of the decisions in the Scottsboro cases, as well as the decisions in the Mooney case, clearly show that if the Supreme Court does not make any further progress along this line, very little indeed has been gained. This opens up the entire question of the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment and its interpretation by the Supreme Court. I have shown elsewhere that the Supreme Court has perverted the Fourteenth Amendment from its original purpose in two ways: On the one hand it has used it for the control of the economic life of the states, a purpose wholly foreign to the intent of its framers; and, on the other hand, it has failed to apply it for the purpose which it was intended to accomplish—*the protection of personal and civil rights.*

But here we are confronted with another aspect of constitutional law of which the general public is utterly ignorant, and which is directly involved in the Black insurgency. The focal point of the attack on Justice Black is contained in the following paragraph of Mr. Childs' article:

> What really startled the members of the court was Justice Black's most conspicuous dissent thus far in his lonely career. In a life insurance case, where a Connecticut company was subject to a special tax by the State of California, Justice Black declared in his dissenting opinion that the word person in the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment did not include corporations. For fifty years the Supreme Court has held that corporations were entitled to the same rights as persons under the due process clause. To be sure, it has been a hotly debated issue. And it is conceivable that there are justices on the court aware of the abuses committed under "due process" who would like to see this legal loophole plugged. But they would not join Justice Black in such a complete about-face. For under the traditions of the game such a radical change must be approached gradually and by intimation. A polemic, however vigorous, is not enough to change the course of fifty years; it violates a fundamental canon of juridical craftsmanship.

This waives the all-important question of the place of precedent in our constitutional law. Our common law jurisprudence consists of an accumulation of precedents, and it is considered more important for a judge to follow precedent than to decide in accordance with justice or correct legal principle. The underlying theory is that it is more important that the law be settled than that individual cases be correctly decided. If the courts did not deviate from this rule—which is known technically as the rule of *stare decisis*—it would lead to a static condition of the law, which would be intolerable in a developing society. Whenever, therefore, change becomes necessary—usually long after it has become *very necessary*—the judges resort to what is known as "distinguishing" cases; making a change while pretending to stick to the old law. It is claimed that this has worked well in our system of jurisprudence, and we won't go into a discussion as to whether the claim is correct. Suffice it to say that the entire precedent-theory is utterly absurd when applied to our constitutional law, since the right to declare laws unconstitutional proceeds upon the theory that the unconstitutional law is utterly void. No one claims that the Constitution gives the Supreme Court the right to de-

Mischa Richter

"If you're sure you can't make the payment, we'll send a friendly sheriff who will smilingly arrange to sell your car and furniture at a happy, carefree auction."

clare acts of Congress unconstitutional. Ever since *Marbury v. Madison,* the courts therefore pretend to follow Marshall's argument in that case, that they were not supervising the acts of the legislature, but merely disregarding a law which is practically non-existent, since the legislature which enacted it had no power to do so. It follows logically that when the same question arises again, the judges who originally differed on the constitutionality of any particular law would continue to differ. But in practice that has not been the case. In practice, the minority submits to the majority, *and all succeeding judges considered themselves bound by these decisions: As a result the Constitution has been practically laid aside, and only prior decisions are considered.*

The Supreme Court said fifty years ago that the word person in the Fourteenth Amendment meant thus and so, and it is supposed to be shocking to Justice Black's associates that he should dare say that it means something else. I don't know whether it actually shocked all of Justice Black's associates, but I do know that it shocked the members of the legal profession as nothing else has shocked them in two generations. And it has shocked them not only because it is contrary to the accepted lawyers' theory of the Constitution, but also because it may have very serious practical consequences. If it be permissible for a justice of the Supreme Court to question a decision rendered fifty years ago and acquiesced in ever since, all sorts of things may happen to that great body of law which is contained in the two hundred-odd cases in which state laws were held unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment. Also something else might happen: Something might happen to the first decision under the Fourteenth Amendment rendered some sixty-five years ago which deprived that great amendment of the real purpose for which it was enacted—namely, the protection of personal and minority rights. This would not only be contrary to the "rules of the game," which make Supreme Court decisions superior to the Constitution. It might actually mean a revolution in our constitutional government. No wonder the "leaders" of the legal profession are shocked. We may therefore expect them to resort to every means available to make sure that future appointees to the Supreme Court will be limited to lawyers who subscribe to the rules of the game. But the interests of the people of this country require judges with a different kind of equipment. These interests require a complete revision of the Fourteenth Amendment, so as to make it perform the functions it was intended to perform when it was framed and adopted. That can only be done by men who put the Constitution above the judicial gloss. In other words, we need more judges who, like Justice Harlan, are impatient of the "refinements and subtleties of construction," and are ready to construe the Constitution in accordance with the dictates of common sense and the intentions of the framers—and, above all, men who are not afraid to openly depart from precedents.

A Congress of Labor

The First Constitutional Convention of the CIO

DAVID RAMSEY

FIFTY-SEVEN years after the founding of the AFL in Pittsburgh, the foundation stone of a greater and more modern American labor movement was laid in the same city. In the area which was formerly the citadel of the open shop in this country, the scene of the defeat of the steel workers in 1919, industrial unionism had scored its greatest victory—the organization of the steel trust. The very holding of the first constitutional convention of the CIO—now the Congress of Industrial Organizations—in Pittsburgh is therefore of historic importance.

It was truly a congress of American labor which met in the Grotto, the squat convention hall in Pittsburgh lying in the shadow of giant mills. But this was more than a labor convention. A program was adopted which economically and politically can serve as a platform for the entire American people, for the preservation and further development of democracy. Coming after the depression, after the election setback, the convention lighted a beacon for the immediate future.

American labor has come of age. The mark of maturity was stamped on every action of the convention which set up a democratic formal organization and met the grave problems of the day without equivocation. From John L. Lewis' moving appeal on the opening day for the persecuted Jews and Catholics of Nazi Germany down to the passage of the final resolution, the CIO tackled central economic and political questions as only an organization rooted in the strength and aspirations of the workers can hope to do.

The convention dealt with three major questions: labor unity, the adoption of a constitution for the CIO, and the formulation of a program for organizing the unorganized, meeting the depression, and political action by labor in behalf of democracy.

The stand taken by the delegates on unity advanced the cause of peace in the labor movement. Without sacrificing the fundamental principle of industrial unionism in the mass production industries, the CIO made clear its desire for unity. This was shown in the acclaim with which the convention received President Roosevelt's plea to leave the door open for peace, and in its own unity resolution which accepted "the goal of unity in the labor movement." There could not have been a better demonstration of good faith than this action. Here we have a powerful movement proclaiming unity as its goal in the very act of setting itself up as a formal organization.

The desire of the CIO to unify the labor movement was not expressed merely through this one resolution. In its pledge of support to the railway workers, in its declaration for the unity of Negro and white workers, in its plans to organize the unorganized, in its program for the unemployed, in the manner in which it greeted the unified Canadian labor movement that has resisted William Green's efforts to split it, in its instructions to the incoming Executive Board to consider affiliation with the International Federation of Trade Unions, the CIO showed that the unity of all workers on a national and international scale was fundamental to its activities and aims.

The convention by displaying the strength of the CIO also contributed to unity in another way—it will discourage the big employers from launching attacks on all labor. Just as last year's Atlantic City conference of the CIO played a decisive role in halting the wage-cutting drives of the employers during the depression, and consequently protected the AFL workers as well, so the Pittsburgh convention will place the American working class in a better position to win higher wages and better conditions.

The second big action of the convention was the adoption of a constitution for the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The constitution is both modern and democratic—so democratic that the press, which consistently smeared the proceedings, tried to discredit it by fabricating a "left-wing revolt" against the constitution.

The preamble states, "A new freedom has been brought by the CIO to American workers and it has forged an instrumentality whereby labor will achieve and extend industrial and political democracy." In the light of this aim, the constitution pledges the CIO "to bring about the effective organization of the working men and women of America, regardless of race, creed, color, or nationality."

The supreme body of the CIO is the annual convention. A broad Executive Board is set up with representatives from every national and international union and organizing committee. Thus the CIO departs from the narrow oligarchic rule of the Executive Council of the AFL. At the same time, on disputed issues, the Executive Board members may cast only as many votes as there are members in their organizations. Of further importance are the sections guaranteeing the autonomy of the affiliated unions, although the CIO through its centralized setup assumes responsibility for the conduct of its organizations. The Executive Board is given power

to "make recommendations to the affiliate involved and to make a report to the convention" if and when the principles of progressive unionism are violated.

Naturally, the constitution arouses the worst fears of the enemies of the CIO. It is democratic; it guarantees autonomy to the constituent unions; it provides for that strong, centralized organization which is needed to carry through the enormous tasks confronting the American workers. The reactionaries prefer a weak organization which they could knife from within and attack and destroy from without.

Because the CIO displayed such power, because it showed a degree of unity unknown in the AFL, the reactionary and pseudo-liberal press sought to discredit the convention. That is why they tried to play up the withdrawal of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union as a death-blow to the CIO. When the convention showed no signs of dying, the press invented a "revolt" of its own. During the second day of the convention, just as the constitution was to be discussed and voted on, several delegates from the maritime industries urged that action be postponed until the following day. They argued that every delegate should read a printed copy of the constitution before voting. This was agreed on and the following day the constitution was unanimously adopted by a rising vote.

Out of this discussion on procedure the general press concocted a "split" and pictured Lewis as a ruthless dictator stamping out an incipient rebellion. These false reports embarrassed their fabricators no end, when subsequent actions of the convention revealed them as ordinary liars. On the very day that the papers carried stories of the "revolt," the convention unanimously adopted a resolution denouncing the rumor mongers:

> The press generally and certain newspapers especially have striven to portray and actually to create splits among the forces of the CIO. To this end the press has misrepresented the purposes of ordinary debate, has twisted meanings and has distorted headlines. . . . We here demonstrate by a rising vote that the forces of the CIO are solidly united.

Cornered, the press tried to picture this resolution as an attack on the reporters covering the convention. They carried another false story which had Heywood Broun apologizing for a supposedly unfair attack by the convention on the working press. It was typical of the biased reporting of such labor experts as Louis Stark of the New York *Times* that he distorted the justified rebuke administered by the convention to the press lords into a personal attack on himself. His reporting of the convention should be dissected by some honest newspaper man like George Seldes.

The comprehensive report of Lewis to the convention and the eighty-odd resolutions adopted by the delegates offer to America a progressive program for democracy. Here is the goal that progressive trade unionists

A. Ajay

"All that Bill Green asks is for the workers to have as much confidence in him as Tom Girdler has."

fought fifty years to attain; but even more important, the realization of this program will take the American people a long way towards safeguarding their liberties and ensuring a better life for all.

The CIO has no narrow approach to basic problems. It tackles such questions as the depression, new organizing drives, and political action from a profound understanding of the realities of American life. In discussing the depression and methods of overcoming it, Lewis did not make pleas for restoring "the confidence of business men," as William Green does periodically. Instead he pointed to the core of the difficulty: the gap between production and super-profits, and the consuming power of the people. He directed attention to the central fact that full production and full employment can be attained only through "planning." Obviously Lewis has not reached the point where he draws all the necessary implications from this conclusion. But for the present American scene he gave a progressive solution for the needs of the hungry one-third of the nation: intelligent economic direction, he said, can come only through the instrumentality of the government. And he sounded a new note in the councils of labor:

> Only labor, representing the majority of the people, can guarantee a continuous movement towards full production. Labor must have a strong voice in the government and in the agencies which administer a sound economic program to guarantee that such a program shall not stagnate or be perverted.

Together with this solid analysis the CIO called for the complete organization of the unorganized workers so that labor can truly have "a voice in government." The need for immediate organizing drives occupied the constant attention of the convention. There were field reports of successes achieved during the course of the depression, in contrast to the old AFL policy of abandoning strong positions whenever the economic curve turned downwards. Plans were made to crack the solid South for unionism, and to mop up unorganized sectors in the mass production industries.

Linked with its approach to the depression and its organizational work is the political program of the CIO. Here is a progressive platform for the fourth New Deal, embodying the needs of the people—workers, farmers, small business men. It provides a mechanism for defeating the tory drive for victory in 1940. First, the CIO adopts a realistic program of political action to cement the cooperation of labor and the progressive forces. Second, it endorses the broad social aims of the New Deal and appeals to the people to rally round President Roosevelt so that he may "continue his determined fight to maintain the gains of labor and the common people and to forge ahead to achieve a program of economic and social reform." Third, it calls for a policy of united action by labor, the farmers, the Negro people, and other sections of the population, which will win gains for them and get their support for a common program. Fourth, it advocates a platform of social security to embrace every need of the people: unemployment insurance, relief, health, housing, jobs, old-age pensions, and education. Fifth, the CIO takes a militant stand for democracy and peace, at home and abroad.

The stand taken by the CIO on peace throws the powerful support of the most progressive section of American labor on the side of the democratic forces throughout the world that are uniting to resist and defeat the fascist aggressors through concerted action. The convention urged that the United States and "its people should not give any aid or comfort, either through material or other means, to these aggressor nations [the resolution previously had named Germany, Italy, and Japan as aggressors] which are so determined to bring fascism to the entire world through war and brutal aggression." It appealed to President Roosevelt and the United States government to "cooperate with all other democratic nations in the strengthening of democracy and democratic institutions." Specific measures were endorsed to strengthen democracy in Central and South America and to defeat fascist penetration in the Western Hemisphere.

At home, the convention directed its criticism against repressive legislation, against such small-time Hitlers as Hague, against fascist groups like the Associated Farmers. It appealed for civil liberties for the people and the wiping out of all barriers to their right to organize, vote, and act like free human beings. Of special significance is the demonstrative action taken in behalf of the Negro people to free them from their present serfdom in the South through organization and the repeal of poll taxes and other discriminatory legislation. Thus the proceedings of the convention provide a contemporary bill of rights adjusted to the specific needs of the people today. If the instruments called for in this modern bill of rights are forged, then a united people can rout the lords of money and privilege.

No picture of the convention would be complete without noting two features: its overpowering enthusiasm and its youthfulness. This was a congress of young people; the

overwhelming majority of the rank-and-file and the leadership itself was made up of men and women in their twenties and early thirties. The stamp of youth was evident in every action and discussion. These delegates came from mills and factories; the leaders had emerged in the great struggles of the CIO. They bore the marks of battle in spirit and body. Their progressivism was buoyed by youthful elation at a job well done and the greater battles that lie in the future. And since youth is the motive force of the CIO, it is fitting that young James B. Carey, the president of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers, should be elected its first secretary.

There are conclusions to be drawn from this first convention of the CIO which are important for the immediate future of the United States. The very holding of the convention confounds those false prophets, who had proclaimed the breakup of the CIO as the result of the ravages of the depression and internal dissension. Those reactionaries in the AFL, who had argued against unity on the ground that the CIO would go the way of the Knights of Labor, will now have to look for other historical arguments. Wall Street was waiting for the crackup of the CIO to launch a sweeping offensive against labor, but it will find the strength shown by the convention a big obstacle to its plans. Faint-hearts like Mr. Dubinsky have been shown to be completely wrong in their opposition to calling the convention. Their dream of creating a middle bloc of unions drawn from the CIO has been shattered.

The CIO remains the driving force which will lead to the unification of the labor movement on the basis of protecting the gains of the workers and preserving industrial unionism in the mass production industries. The convention thus marks the defeat of the employers in their efforts to disrupt the CIO from within, after failing in open frontal assaults.

Finally, a strong CIO, in the words of Lewis, means that there will be no Munich peace pacts for labor, there will be no dismemberment of the newly organized industrial unions. The convention has produced an atmosphere which makes it easier for the rank-and-file in the AFL to fight for unity. This should encourage President Roosevelt and the New Dealers to exert greater pressure for a labor peace which will preserve the principles of industrial unionism.

Thus there are signs that the present split can be healed. Perhaps the best remedial efforts are joint actions by the two bodies of labor on local issues as was done in the elections in California, and cooperation on national issues like housing, health, and the like. Out of this cooperation and joint action on the picket line, which is increasing despite the sabotage of William Green and his allies, the process of unification will emerge and develop. Even without the meeting of formal committees from both sides, there exists this possibility of the joint knitting together of the torn sinews of the fighting arm of labor.

Constancia de la Mora

Portrait of an Unsung Heroine

ELLIOT PAUL

"CONSTANCIA will attend to that."

In Madrid, Valencia, or Barcelona, wherever the Spanish government has made its headquarters since the war began, that phrase has been a watchword. Think of Constancia as a young wife and mother whose husband is almost constantly flying in combat, whose child is in a foreign country far distant from her so that she may be wholly free to do this job, whose friends are working feverishly or dying nobly, whose country is in peril. Think of her working calmly night and day in the midst of the most barbarous bombardments, supplying what her country and her ideals need most desperately, a steady patience and efficiency.

I knew Constancia in Madrid in the early days of the republic. To her the republic was what it should have been to all of Spain. For Constancia—she was Connie then to us all—was by birth of the Old Spain. Her grandfather was old Don Antonio Maura, the great Catholic Conservative prime minister of the early decades of the century. There was a fine clear strain in the Mauras. Old Don Antonio, poet and painter, was the best of the *politicos* of Alfonso's sorry reign; he *wanted* to clean up the mess. One of her uncles is Don Miguel Maura who thought he could win Catholic Conservatives to the republic—and the republic to them. Another is the Duke of Maura, a monarchist diehard. And there were many others of the Mauras and of the Moras, her father's family, who were hopelessly of the Old Spain and would have no truck with the republic and, when the time was ripe, rose to do it down.

Constancia had never been susceptible to their reactionary ideas and she had seen clearly through the muddled thinking of the others who were balanced between two irreconcilable schools of thought. But life was not easy for her in that cobwebby world. It was, in fact, very hard.

Then came the republic and release, release for them all had they so chosen. I think of Constancia then, of her incredible beauty and of her dignity that is a part of all Spanish beauty. (Although very tired now, she is still beautiful with the beauty that is on the face of every woman of Spain who has given her best for the freedom of her country.) She was working very hard then, pioneering in business, enjoying her new freedom and her romance with a young captain of aviation, Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros. This man, with a name from the great past of Spain, was a Republican before there was a republic and fought to bring it about. He was the hero of the 1930 rising against the monarchy and during the years when the republic was ruled by good men, so good that they could not imagine evil in others, it was he who fought the losing fight to clean up the army. When the revolt began he saved the air field, he flew in the ancient crates of the Spanish air force against the new planes from abroad and . . . all that is legend. But this piece is about Constancia and her own legend.

She was one who was prepared, like few others, to face the present war, for she knew too well the selfishness and fanaticism of the former ruling class and cast her lot with the people long before the firing began. Today she is at the head of the Spanish government press service but whenever another kind of task has to be done neatly and quickly, any one of the Cabinet ministers is likely to turn it over to Constancia and through all these harrowing months she has not failed them. One hears more about Pasionaria because Dolores' work keeps her constantly in the public eye. The opposite is true of Constancia and the work she does. Outside of Spain it has seldom been mentioned. Even when the whole heroic story of the fight for democracy can be told, much of Constancia's contribution will be overlooked. That is agreeable to her. She wants better things than fame—her husband safe, her child at her side, her country free.

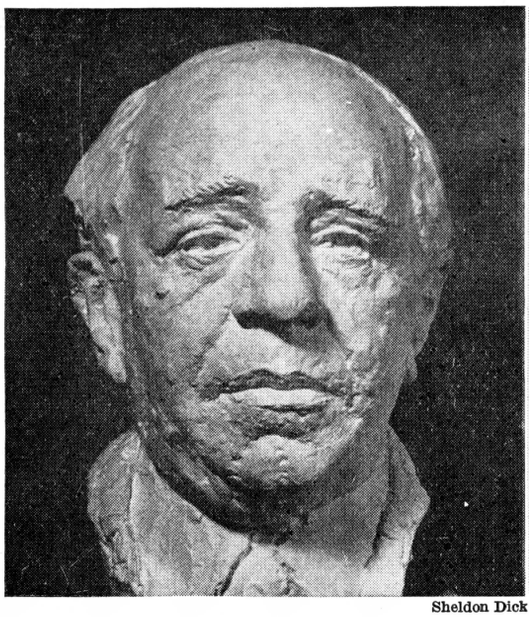
★

Jo Davidson

THE SCULPTURES on the facing page and the head of Constancia de la Mora on the cover comprise a group of ten portraits of leading Spanish loyalist personalities that Jo Davidson completed this year in Spain. They were exhibited at the Arden Gallery in New York City, for the benefit of the Spanish Children's Milk Fund. The catalogue contains word portraits of the sculptor's subjects by eleven authors, among them the above sketch by Elliot Paul. In her introduction Dorothy Parker, chairman of the exhibition, writes of the artist and his subjects:

Many things happen in a few years. There was Spain about which no one thought much until the Spanish people had to fight, not in a civil war but against an invasion, not for lands and revenues and power, not to abolish anybody's God, but for their lives—and more than their lives—for the right to live those lives in decency.

Jo Davidson, ever the plastic historian, saw these things. He had his comfortable, safe, honored life. He threw aside the whole business and, in Spain, out of the nobility and greatness of his art, he modeled these heads of great and noble people.

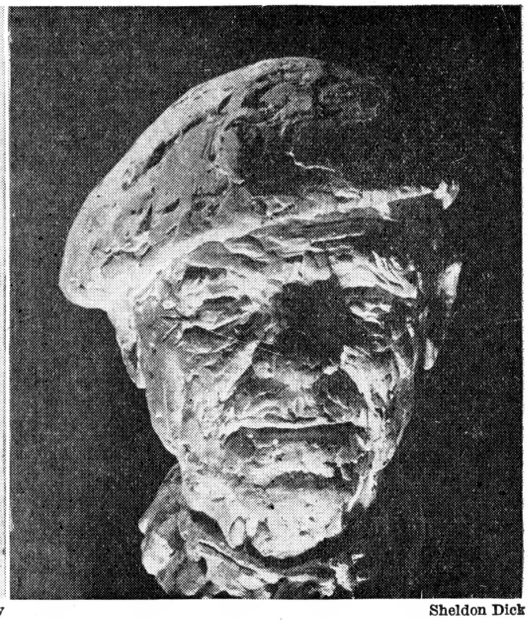


Sheldon Dick

President Manuel Azaña

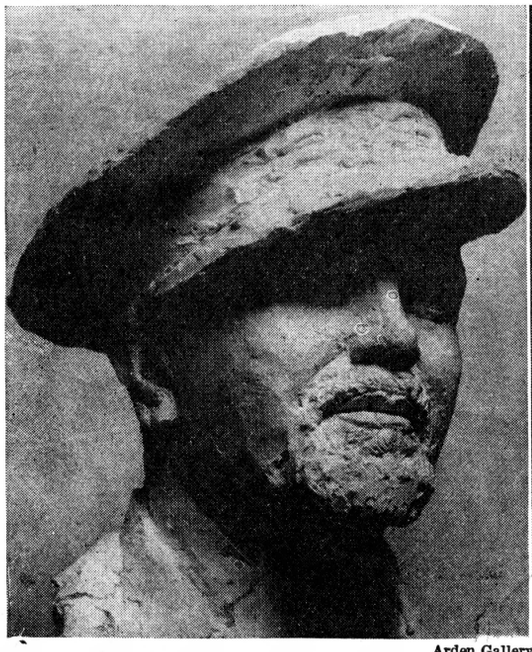
Arden Gallery

Colonel Juan Modesto Guilloto



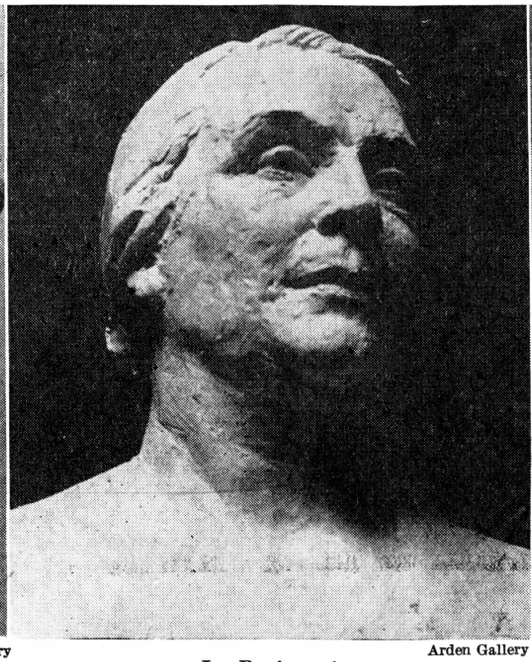
Sheldon Dick

A Spanish Peasant



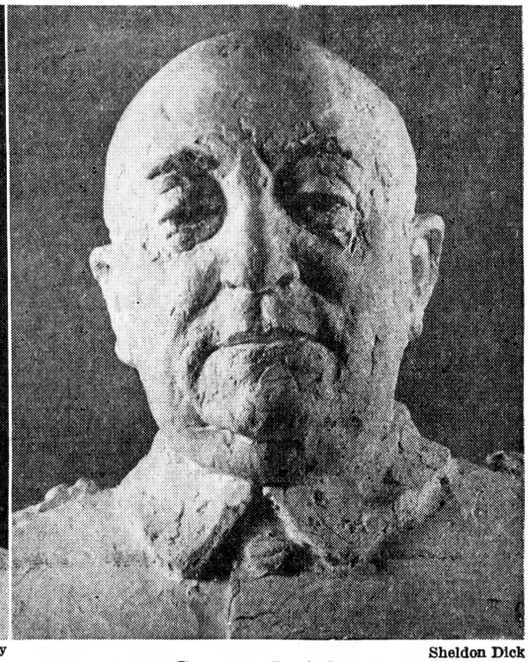
Arden Gallery

El Campesino



Arden Gallery

La Pasionaria



Sheldon Dick

General José Miaja

Arden Gallery

Julio Alvarez del Vayo

Sheldon Dick

Major Milton Wolff

Arden Gallery

Colonel Enrique Lister

Readers' Forum

More on "Creating Money"

TO NEW MASSES: John Strachey's uncritical enthusiasm for the various pension plans, these kites with leaden tails now flying the national skies, is shocking indeed from a scholar of his past attainments. How he can fail to detect the inflationary character of these schemes with their ultimate havoc upon the bellies of the working class is astonishing. In California, fortunately, the workers weren't nearly so obtuse, or fooled by a superficial progressivism. Certain sections of the middle class championed the movement, that pie slice of the almost-dispossessed which yearned for some redistribution of purchasing power with no attendant surgery upon the profit system as a whole. Another large part of the middle class opposed the "ham and eggs" project, convinced by Bank of America propaganda (specialists in crackpot monetary juggling) that the idea was crackpot money juggling. The workers held the balance of power in the election on this issue. Proposition 25 died in almost every industrial area. It died not because the workers were influenced by reactionary propaganda, or suspicious of sleight-of-hand, but because they recognized the veiled sales-tax feature of the plan, and what its effect would be upon their grocery bills. Plainly the repudiation of the pension-plan initiative by the thoroughly advanced California trade-union movement could have no other interpretation.

Further, how can Strachey say that "Keynes is correct when he says that capitalism would be workable indefinitely if the capitalists would tolerate a rate of rent, interest, and profit following steadily towards zero"? Truly this is Marxism with an Oxford accent, abstract speculation in a vacuum. Where are the dynamics of the class struggle in such reasoning? What of Spain, where the process of "steadily towards zero" commenced? Keynes is talking into his flat don's hat with such statements, and Strachey, as a Marxist, should rebuke him sharply for it rather than quote him approvingly. Academic chatter of this sort can only lull the people into inactivity in the terribly necessary fight against fascism.

New York City. JOHN BRIGHT.

TO NEW MASSES: As I understand his argument, Strachey is not discussing a monetary operation carried out at the instance of monopoly-capital to overcome a capitalist crisis. If he were, I have no doubt that he would discuss the usual results of such operations, including a rise in the cost of living. He is concerned primarily with the imperative human need to increase mass purchasing power. And he recognizes that without some immediate redistribution, recurring crises will stimulate the move towards a fascist setup to protect profits and stifle resistance. This to my mind is an important distinction. Redistribution, as illustrated by government spending for relief and works projects, does actually result in increasing mass buying power. There is no indication, on the other hand, that printing press inflation would accomplish the same result.

Your conclusion that devaluation of the dollar presented "proof of a practical kind" that this "inflationary" operation raised profits 6 percent during the 1933-35 period while it increased living costs by the same percentage does not seem well founded. Abandoning the gold standard has practically no effect upon the internal economy of the United States. Furthermore, we know from the record that the original course of the so-called "New Deal" gave definite aid to capital. Under NRA, anti-trust laws were shelved, employer groups were permitted to get together to stimulate and carry out price increases, and the burden of taxation was shifted still further to the shoulders of the lower middle and working-class groups. These were much more potent influences in the boosting of corporate profits than the much publicized devaluation. And to my mind, consideration of these facts is much more important to NEW MASSES readers than a rehash of the ordinary economist's views.

New York City. JAMES MILLER.

TO NEW MASSES: It is my belief that Strachey is right in the debate with NEW MASSES on "the central problem of our day," the problem of increasing the purchasing power of the people within the framework of capitalism. That is my belief, at least, concerning the form which the debate has taken so far.

I feel that by dismissing Strachey's argument as an "inflationary nostrum," you have merely labeled it, without answering it by any reasoned argument. You have yet to show exactly why Strachey's proposal is an "inflationary nostrum."

On page 66 of *Hope in America,* there is the statement that "A government, when it creates new money, is doing nothing more nor less than the banking system does every day of its life." The pages around this assertion give reasons to back it up—of course admittedly sketchy, in line with the nature of the book.

To me, it would have been highly sensible of the government to have financed most of its recent expenditures of billions by issuing credit itself instead of paying the banks interest for doing this. With excess reserves in the private banking system at an enormous level, and little lending to private industry because of the deep-seated depression, it is clear that money loaned to the government is money which would otherwise be "idle." And so this creating of purchasing power would lead to inflation just as much as if the government created it. If inflation were a danger, we would have it either way. Why, therefore, is Strachey's policy an "inflationary nostrum," while the present policy of borrowing is to be considered "sound"?

Akron, Ohio. SUE BOLAND.

TO NEW MASSES: Mr. Strachey's article was very much of a surprise; especially so since we were told that in it he was going "to expand this germ into a *full* statement of the idea." [My italics—M. B.]

No forward-looking person will take exception to Mr. Strachey's contention that for the progressive movement to succeed, it must raise the (mass) standard of living by increasing (mass) purchasing power *really* and not *nominally.* Again, no one would object to Mr. Strachey's *method* of *ultimately* bringing about a state of *full,* or *nearly full employment,* i.e., currency inflation, if this were *sufficient* to ultimately raise the standard of living, let alone bring about a state of *full,* or *nearly full employment.* It hardly need be said that we do not want a state of *full,* or *nearly full, employment* in conjunction with a declining standard of living, as is the case in Nazi Germany.

Taking the article as his "full statement," the Marxian student of economics must state that Mr. Strachey's conclusions are unwarranted. In no way has Mr. Strachey demonstrated theoretically that the given end would be attained. Indeed, current history does not seem to have validated his thesis. It is dubious whether it can be attained in a system of *contracting* economy.

New York City. MAX BLOOM.

TO NEW MASSES: In his reply to Bruce Minton's review of *Hope in America,* John Strachey could hardly defend himself against the inverted snobbery that aims to classify him merely as an expounder of Socialist ideas to the "middle middle class."

That patronizing and humiliating description of Strachey's work would sound strange in his home country where it is safe to say that at least ten workers to every member of the "middle middle class" read his books. I think we do Strachey and an increasing number of working men and women a woeful injustice to think that the exposition of Socialist ideas in simple, straightforward, vivid English is necessarily limited to the "middle middle class."

To speak of Strachey as writing "in the language of his special audience" is to overlook the fact that his books have reached and influenced more people in both the middle and working classes than those of any other contemporary Socialist writer. Let's be done with these left-handed insults to the intelligence of working people.

Winnetka, Ill. HARVEY O'CONNOR.

Letters in Brief

CONGRESSMAN-ELECT VITO MARCANTONIO, national president of the International Labor Defense, asks support in mobilizing American aid to political refugees in Czechoslovakia—trade-union leaders, ex-mayors of democratic Sudeten towns, leaders of non-fascist parties, lawyers, teachers—who have been set adrift by the fascist occupation and are potential victims of Hitler's Gestapo. Their number includes also about a thousand refugees from Berlin and Vienna who had found a refuge in Prague before the Munich pact. To provide immediate relief for these people until asylum is found for them in some other country, the ILD has formed a Non-Sectarian Committee for Political Refugees, which has as its goal the raising of $10,000 by January 1. Contributions may be sent to the treasurer, Mrs. J. C. Guggenheimer, at Room 504, 112 East 19th St., New York City.

The monthly publication *International Letters,* which publishes letters from people dealing with their past or present experiences, incidents in daily life and observation, and opinions and impressions of current affairs, invites contributions from NEW MASSES readers. P. A. H. Stahl is editor of the monthly, which is published in New York City (Dept. 11, 419 East 84th St.).

We have received a copy of a telegram urging amnesy for Peru's five thousand political prisoners, sent by twenty American liberals to Mme. Francisca Benavides, wife of the president of Peru, just before she sailed from New York for Lima aboard the ship carrying American delegates to the Pan-American Conference. The telegram is signed by Rockwell Kent, Gifford Cochran, George S. Kaufman, George Seldes, John Chamberlain, Donald Ogden Stewart, Leane Zugsmith, Saxe Commins, Bennett Cerf, S. L. M. Barlow, George S. Counts, Carleton Beals, Upton Sinclair, Maxwell Stewart, John Howard Lawson, Lydia Gibson, Langston Hughes, A. J. Isserman, Frances Winwar, and Waldo Frank.

The American Friends of the Soviet Union announce that *Quiet Flows the Don,* celebrated Soviet opera based on the novel by M. Sholokhov, will have its American première, in abridged form, Sunday, December 4, 2:30 p.m., at the Washington Irving High School, 16th Street and Irving Place, New York City, under the auspices of the AFSU. The production is in full costume with scenic effects. There will be a narrative in English by S. N. Kournakoff. The program also includes a suite of dances by the celebrated Chernishevsky Dance Group. Corliss Lamont, national chairman of the AFSU, will speak on "The Soviet Union Today."

REVIEW AND COMMENT

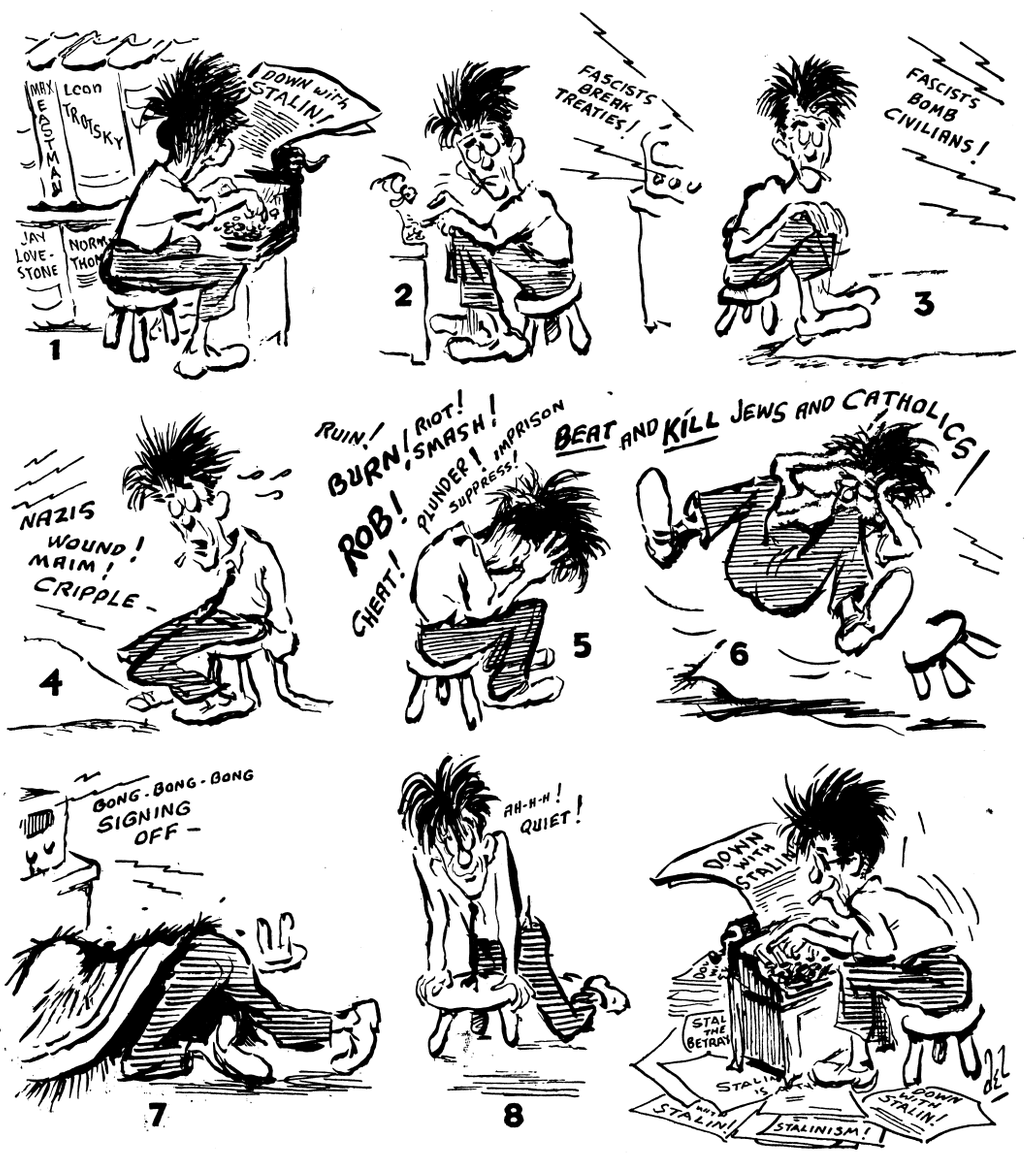
The Negro and the Democratic Front

THE annual meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in May 1865 was not a mere victory celebration. One month after Appomattox, the leaders of the Abolition movement were involved in a long and heated debate over their future course. William Lloyd Garrison argued that the society should be dissolved, since its major purpose, emancipation, had been achieved. Wendell Phillips and Frederick Douglass were more realistic. They won a majority for their proposal that the Abolitionists continue their work until the Negroes were recognized under the Constitution as citizens sharing equal rights with all other citizens of the republic. When President Grant proclaimed the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment, five years later, Phillips shouted *"Io! Triumphe!* Our long work is sealed at last." But the Abolitionists, with prophetic insight, were still reluctant to end the existence of the Anti-Slavery Society. They adjourned *sine die*. "We sheathe no sword," a crowd of sympathizers was told at Steinway Hall. "We only turn the front of the army upon a new foe."

The fight of the Abolitionists is not over now, any more than it was in 1865 or 1870. No American who has eyes to see and heart to feel needs to be reminded that our great national disgrace is still with us, in new, brutal, and unofficial form. The evils of sharecropping and tenancy have replaced the evils of formal servitude. Despite the Fifteenth Amendment, four million Negroes of voting age are disfranchised. There are thirteen million Negroes in this country, but there are less than sixty thousand Negro school-teachers. The political, economic, and cultural oppression of the Negro people is the ugliest reality in our national life. This is not new. What is new is the fact that never since the days of Phillips and Samuel May and Sojourner Truth has the fight for Negro rights assumed such mighty proportions. The realism, courage, and militancy of that fight is set forth in James W. Ford's *The Negro and the Democratic Front* (International Publishers, $1.75.).

Ford's own life epitomizes the obstacles and achievements which he discusses in his book. This outstanding leader of the Negro people, the son of a poorly paid steel worker, spent his childhood in Alabama. Despite great difficulties, he attended Fisk University. Just before his graduation, he joined the army, in 1917. As a non-commissioned officer he led his men in protests against the prejudiced white officers. After his return, Ford worked in the Post Office at Chicago. He joined the Communist Party in 1926, became a delegate to the Chicago Federation of Labor, helped organize the Trade Union Unity League, the American Negro Labor Congress, and the League of Struggle for Negro Rights. In 1930, Ford went to Germany as secretary of the International Committee of Negro Workers. A thorough student of the African colonial question, his was an influential voice at the Geneva conference on African children called by the League of Nations in 1931. When Hoover evicted the bonus marchers from Anacostia Flats, Ford was on the scene. As a militant spokesman for the veterans, he was thrown in jail. In the 1932 and 1936 election campaigns, Ford was the Communist Party's candidate for Vice-President. A splendid tribute was paid to the Negro leader recently by the workers of Cuba. No less than eighty thousand people came to hear him when he spoke in Havana.

James W. Ford, in short, has participated richly in the liberation movement of the Ne-



Strange Interlude

gro people, and he has consistently linked this movement with the democratic struggles of the American people as a whole. Indeed, the central meaning of his career, as of his book, is that the Negro question cannot be separated from the broader question of the democratic front. The central thesis of *The Negro and the Democratic Front,* as A. W. Berry points out in his admirable introduction, is this: *"The Negro people, in alliance with the working class and all others willing to fight for democracy, must and can make democracy work."* The book consists of articles and addresses written during the past three momentous years. It achieves a threefold objective: it analyzes the special problems of the Negro people in the United States; it evaluates the efforts toward democracy from 1935 to 1938; and it outlines a specific program and method for attaining that full social equality of the Negro people in the absence of which our democracy remains incomplete.

The Negro people are confronted with special economic problems. No single group in our population was so hard hit by the economic crisis. Few people in the North realize that over one-half of the Negro population is engaged in agriculture. What little land the Negro agricultural worker could call his own is being taken away from him by banks, insurance companies, and large landholders. "The plantation country in the South," as every unprejudiced observer must agree with Ford, "is like a prison, a veritable hell to which five million Negro sharecroppers and tenants have been consigned." The Negro has fared no better in the city. He is doubly exploited under capitalism. Ford reminds us that in 1935 the unemployment of Negro workers was six times as great as that of white workers. The reactionary leaders of the American Federation of Labor have discouraged unity of black and white labor. Negroes have suffered from discrimination in relief. Nearly half the Negro population is excluded from the benefits of the Social Security Act, since the act does not provide for agricultural and domestic workers.

The political and social problems are equally glaring. Jim Crowism, lynching, the poll tax and other voting disqualifications, segregation—these terms symbolize bitter and incalculable suffering. The caricatures and distortions of a Margaret Mitchell or an Octavus Roy Cohen are paralleled by the roles assigned by Hollywood to a Stepin Fetchit. Writers like Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, and Sterling Brown, artists like Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson, union leaders like A. Philip Randolph, indicate the cultural potentialities of a people who have never been given half a chance.

Ford's speeches in the 1936 election campaign—which he properly regards as the most crucial since the Civil War—emphasized the truth that new times demand new alignments. After the election, he could document the striking shift of the Negro vote from Republicanism to Roosevelt. This is one of the most significant developments in recent political

history. An ever increasing majority of the Negroes recognize that the Republican Party of today bears not the faintest resemblance to the party of Lincoln. At the same time, the Southern Negro is learning the difference between Democratic Bourbons like Senator George and progressive Democrats like Roosevelt. The organization of the Harlem Legislative Conference, which Ford discusses in this book, shows a new understanding of the need for united action, an understanding which Communists like Ford have helped to develop. Among the most interesting sections in this volume are those in which Ford evaluates the National Negro Congress, an organization thoroughly committed to the improvement of the Negro's economic status and to the democratization of American life. The movement toward effective unity found further expression in the fight around the Scottsboro and Herndon cases. Unity of Negro and white on an international scale was cemented by the campaigns on such issues as Ethiopia and Spain.

These developments point the way to a practical program for Negro liberation:

> All democratic issues of the Negro people come to the fore in the democratic front. These are: the fight against discrimination; for full civil rights and citizenship; for the right to vote; the right to sit on juries and hold public office; the enforcement of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments; the passage of the Anti-Lynching Bill; and the defeat of all reactionary forces. These issues necessarily form a programmatic segment of the democratic front.

The growth of the CIO, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, Labor's Non-Partisan League, the Southern Negro Youth Movement, and other progressive labor and political organizations means an important step forward for the Negro people. They have a great deal to contribute to and a great deal to gain from such organizations.

It is natural that Ford should take pride in the work of his party, which has consistently advanced the claims and interests of his people. He is convinced that the Communist Party carries on the work of the Abolitionists under the changed conditions of a modern industrial society. The ultimate solution to the Negro question, he feels, is Socialism. In the Soviet Union, "The right to work, to education, to enjoyment, to security is the rule of the Socialist land. The people are building the greatest society in history, in which food and culture exist for everyone; where no oppression of the many by the few, or nationality by nationality, is tolerated." But Ford knows that the immediate issue before his people, and before the American people generally, is not Socialism against capitalism, but democracy against fascism. For fascism, it is clear, would mean for the Negro a reversion to the conditions of the Confederacy; whereas there has never been such a splendid opportunity for the winning of those elementary democratic rights which are long overdue the Negro people. The winning of these rights is a necessary part of the struggle for Socialism. SAMUEL SILLEN.

Contemporary Legend

CONCERNING THE YOUNG, *by Willard Maas. Farrar & Rinehart. $2.*

MUCH of our poetry today is a poetry of broken images, of shorthand—poetry like the clicking of a telegraph key in an empty wayside station. The poetry of Willard Maas presents its own broken images, but they are endowed with more significance than those of much modern verse because they are rooted in dark experience and strong emotion. To my mind no one better than he, so far in our time, has presented the bewilderment and frustration of young love trapped in an age some of whose chief manifestations are violence and horror. His touch upon language is as sensitive as that of blind fingers traveling a page in Braille. His undercurrent of sad melody is his own. Beauty is undeniable in his phrase. But his implications are powerful, and he juxtaposes to the wistfulness and tenderness of young love remembered the harshest facts of today.

Here is youth in the modern world, in a metropolitan world of garish and grim stone streets, grinding subways, shouting newspaper headlines, bald electric bulbs in dark hallways, huddled forms on park benches, the memory of war and the threat of war, the growing menace from overseas. And in this environment it is youth remembering also carefree days in a larger, sunnier country, for Mr. Maas rode the freights east from California to New York in the worst days of the depression.

This young poet is innately an artist. He expertly makes use of the phenomena of his own time without sacrificing his true lyric gift. He has the power of compression that is the signature of a poet:

Gray oak in the evening
Star in your branches
And the cities thick with bombers

Poems that have particularly impressed me are the title poem, "Affirmation of Solidarity," "No Season for Our Season," "Journey and Return," "Sequence for the Hour," and Section IV of "Contemporary Legend." I will quote the beginning of the last-named as an example of Mr. Maas' quality, though his book as a whole is worthy of being read carefully and pondered, and one example cannot convey his various achievements in precise epithet and haunting cadence.

More sad than the world's sorrow, the faces of the children
with the eyes pitiable with laughter,
when the first snow
drives to the wall and the swift wind sweeps the dry bricks,
banking the great whiteness against the warehouse.
You can
see them in the mornings pull their sleds up the hills,

mushrooms to be gathered after the first rains and the violets

CALENDAR
of New Masses Events

Dec. 3—Saturday evening—27th Annual New Masses Ball—Music by Savoy Sultans, Webster Hall, 119 East 11th Street, N. Y. C.

Dec. 23—Friday evening—"From Spirituals to Swing"—An evening of American Negro Music. Featuring Count Basie—Carnegie Hall, 57th Street and Seventh Avenue, N. Y. C.

Dec. 31—New Year's Eve. Group Theatre Production of Irwin Shaw's "Gentle People" with Franchot Tone, Sylvia Sidney, Sam Jaffee and others.

For tickets and reservations call: Tiba Garlin. CAledonia 5-3076.

sprinkled on the green turf by the stone wall.

And she answered:
"What is to be done? In Madrid they are bombing the children.
I dreamed last night they held me prisoner in a dark wet cellar.
—And there about me they were crying. They had no eyes nor hands.
I heard them with my elbows held against my head."

But this poet's last words in his book are: *Defeat no word for the young.* "There must," he says, "be answers for the morning And the replies not of death." His expression throughout is honest and beautiful.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

A Great American

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, *by Carl Van Doren. Viking Press. $3.75.*

FROM the time he made his first success as printer until, in his will, he established a long-range philanthropy on a basis of loans to industrious young men, Benjamin Franklin was a good business man. It was his shrewdness, embodied in the maxims of Poor Richard, that endeared him to many bourgeois generations. His was the first American success story, and the saga of the poor apprentice's rise to power and wealth was an important part of the American legend. So completely, indeed, did attention focus on the Rotarian aspects of Franklin's thought that when, in this century, there was a revolt against Rotary, he was one of the victims.

Nothing, as this biography shows, could be more ridiculous. What, however, Mr. Van Doren does not seem quite to grasp is that the qualities he admires and those beloved by the Rotarians were naturally and logically united in one person. Franklin himself could have seen no incongruity in mingling rules for getting rich with speculations on science and philosophy. He was representative—in, of course, the rather special sense in which exceptional men can be representative—of a class that was rapidly conquering power throughout the world. The basis of the power of that class was the accumulation of wealth by various methods, including those Franklin recommended. He was, then, attentive to what, in his times, could only be regarded as legitimate means to a legitimate end.

The fact that he was concerned with money-making did not, to be sure, mean that, like the money-makers of subsequent generations, he had no other concern. On the contrary, his interests were almost boundless. But even in this he was representative, for the bourgeoisie in those days was a revolutionary class, full of an eager sense of the infinite possibilities before it. Moreover, though he was certainly a bourgeois, Franklin had risen from the working class, and he never forgot it. He spoke not merely for the successful but also for the aspiring. The great political and intellectual upsurge that swept him forward and that he expressed and dramatized was no narrow movement, for the masses were moving forward in one of mankind's significant advances.

Mr. Van Doren, needless to say, does not see all this. In fact, his whole effort is to make Franklin seem unique, and, though he is right in insisting on his superiority, he loses much by thus isolating his hero. To be specific, I think Van Doren has by no means grasped the pre-revolutionary strategy of the colonies, and as a result he makes Franklin's mission to London seem futile, which it was not. He quite misses the point of the episode of the Hutchinson letters, and finds himself in the ridiculous position of apologizing for Franklin's ungentlemanly conduct. In general, though he industriously records all of Franklin's meetings with his contemporaries, he seldom seems conscious of his points of contact with his age.

But on the other hand he has given us a vast mass of material about Franklin, much of it in Franklin's words, and it makes an exciting record. The bourgeois, in the days before specialization, could afford to have a speculative mind, and none was more resourceful or bolder than Franklin's. He loved gadgets, and he loved equally well the construction of sweeping generalizations. In politics he had the combination of common sense and idealism that is possible only in a man who knows where he is going and by what route. (Far-fetched as the comparison seems, I was constantly reminded of Lenin as I read the book.) He had, too, the kind of confidence in himself and his class and his cause that permitted him to assimilate whatever seemed to him good in the culture of the class that was being superseded.

Repeatedly one reflects: how has the bourgeoisie fallen! It is not fair, of course, to compare the average Rotarian of today with Benjamin Franklin, who was an extraordinary man even in his own times. But it is unthinkable that a modern bourgeois could ever reach such a level. That is what makes it outrageous that, because he wrote the Almanacs, the Rotarians should have appropriated him. He doesn't belong to them, and

Chet La More

Mr. Van Doren has made that clear. He has given us one of the greatest of Americans, and we ought to be grateful.

GRANVILLE HICKS.

Hero of the Twenties

A PURITAN IN BABYLON: THE STORY OF CALVIN COOLIDGE, *by William Allen White. The Macmillan Co. $3.50.*

LATE one night, when Calvin Coolidge was a young boy at boarding school in the little Vermont village of Ludlow, some pranksters dragged an iron stove down the staircase. Calvin was quizzed by the headmaster.

"But Calvin, you must have heard the noise when the stove rolled down the stairs?"

The boy admitted that he had.

"Then why didn't you do something, give the alarm?"

"It wa'n't my stove," he answered.

Throughout his long political career, Calvin Coolidge stuck to the principle of never interfering, never involving himself in any situation which "wa'n't" directly his affair. Just before the Boston police strike of 1919, Coolidge, then governor of Massachusetts, disappeared from Boston and only made a gesture of authority after the mayor had taken responsibility and chanced his political neck by calling out the militia. Then Calvin Coolidge emerged, when the risk was over, when a well timed move would bring only credit and no political dangers. He ordered troops into Boston, clamping down on organized labor. He followed this cautious bravado by a close-mouthed, vitriolic message to Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor. "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anytime, anywhere!" Coolidge wrote, misrepresenting the affair and posing as a strong man after the fact.

Subsequently, he sat as an observer in the Harding Cabinet. Long before the graft and corruption of the Harding administration became public knowledge, Coolidge had learned the facts. But he kept his mouth sealed—"It wa'n't his stove."

And when the heart throb that separated Coolidge from the presidency failed, the son of rockbound Vermont's ruling class became sponsor of finance capital's mighty years of speculation, greed, and economic sleight-of-hand. He understood the implications of the bull market as well as an economic illiterate could understand. He could have used the prestige of the presidency to warn the country. Instead, his silence encouraged millions to believe the myth that economic laws had been outdated, that there could be no end to greater and greater profits, higher and higher stock-market quotations. When he did talk, Coolidge urged the profiteers to go ahead, patted the backs of financiers who were selling gold bricks to the public and pocketing the returns. If in doubt, he turned to the man behind the throne, the rapacious, unprincipled

Andrew Mellon, who believed himself anointed by destiny to assure—and share in—ever mounting gains for the handful of his cronies among the bankers and industrialists. The Coolidge years were the heyday of phony investments and inflated speculations, blessed by the White House and backed by Coolidgean high tariffs, low taxes for the rich, and reductions in the public debt that permitted the Treasury Department in effect to encourage manipulators in the stock and money markets.

William Allen White, Republican with a liberal tinge, is intrigued by this small-town lawyer who became President by being regular. What explains the parsimonious Coolidge, reticent, with a small courage to serve his masters, astutely opportunistic, cautious, distrustful of the intellect, suspicious of learning, the party hack, slyly sadistic and pettily honest, who never dared to dream of himself in the White House? Mr. White's biography is a long search for a touch of genius beneath Coolidge's hard-shelled exterior. But the qualities Mr. White finds, and that become the basis for a tender apologia, only reveal to the reader the true character of Coolidge. For Mr. White is an able—and honest—reporter, and he portrays facts as he uncovers them. His un-Marxist, at times fumbling, biography contains the raw material from which a keener, more perceptive appraisal of the "boom" years can be drawn. *A Puritan in Babylon* cannot be overlooked by anyone who wants to estimate the years preluding the Hoover chaos and the New Deal. Here are the threads to be woven into a Marxist analysis of the twenties. Here emerges Calvin Coolidge, product of the middle classes in the years when the middle classes served finance capital, who became the family retainer of big business, schooled to forego the luxury of emotion, able to see, hear, and interest himself only in those things that would serve his bosses and advance his political fortunes. Coolidge's predecessor, Warren Harding, prince of reaction, failed to observe the etiquette of reaction. Coolidge trod more cautiously, willing to be a proxy who ruled according to instructions. He knew the secret of doing nothing, of never hazarding an action that might interfere with the schemes of the big boys. He served the rich and, like Hamilton, he thought of the rich as the "wise and good." "The business of this government is business," said Coolidge. His task, as he saw it, was to avoid "the big problems." Let those to whom the country was mortgaged cope with them.

A Puritan in Babylon is the story of the era that crippled America. The hero of those days was Calvin Coolidge. By knowing the hero one can judge the times. William Allen White, for all his speculation about the "true" Calvin Coolidge that he felt was hidden under the flinty surface of the man, has painted a full-length portrait of the hero and thereby has aided those who disagree with his conclusions in understanding the preceding decade.

BRUCE MINTON.

The New Theater

THE ONE-ACT PLAY TODAY, *edited by William Kozlenko. Harcourt, Brace & Co. $2.50.*

LET no one underestimate the importance of an attempt to introduce a definitive volume on the "technique, scope, and history of the contemporary drama."

The one-act play, as everyone must know, has in recent years experienced a renaissance of impressive character. Though the beginnings of the one-act play's present stature can be traced back to O'Neill and the Provincetown Theater, the renaissance which made possible a book such as this is the product of the new playwrights writing for the new-theater movement.

Only six years old, the new-theater movement is the product of the economic crisis and the resultant turn to the left of young American playwrights who seized the opportunity to speak to a people's audience through their art. In the hands of Odets, Shaw, Bengal, Maltz, Stevenson, Green, and many others, the one-act play became a major contemporary art form. Through the new-theater movement, organized by the New Theater League, these playwrights reached millions of Americans with their revolutionary plays.

Social documentation is the basis of approach of these new playwrights, but social documentation alone is hardly enough, as the one-act plays of an O'Neill prove. The new playwrights not only sought to interpret reality; they wanted their plays to help change it. *Waiting for Lefty* and *Plant in the Sun,* for example, reflected the mass need for industrial unionism; *Private Hicks* exposed the use of workers in the National Guard against their striking brother-workers. The plays of the new theater did far more than expose; each inculcated a mood for action. Their success, of course, varied with the talents and craftsmanship of their authors. Hence it is clear that a book such as the one under review might well be of considerable value if it made a genuine contribution to the difficult art of writing the one-act play.

However, despite the frequently able contributions of such notable authorities as Percival Wilde, Walter Prichard Eaton, Sidney Box, Isaac Goldberg, Gilbert Seldes, Alfred Kreymborg, Barrett H. Clark, etc., *The One-Act Play Today* is somewhat disappointing.

This disappointment may partially be attributed to the editorial misconception which attempts to cover so wide a range of subjects that the book's net effect is one of extreme diffuseness. The book is divided into three sections: "Technique and Form," "Scope," and "Historical Survey." These sections have respectively four, six, and five parts. Sample subjects are: "The One-Act Play and Film," "The One-Act Play and Television," "The One-Act Play in the Church," "Where Does the One-Act Play Belong?," "The One-Act Play in England," and so on.

In view of the fact that there have been few, if any, important contributions to the one-act play in recent years outside of the ranks of the new-theater movement, one might quarrel with the editor's division of space within his volume. However, such criticism is more than forestalled by the inclusion of two contributions which alone are worth the price of the book.

The first of these, "The One-Act Play in the Revolutionary Theater," by John Gassner, is an excellent critical analysis of the development of the revolutionary drama and the new-theater movement. This essay is an indispensable sequel to Ben Blake's pamphlet, *The Awakening of the American Theater,* which dealt in greater detail with the emergence of the new theaters back when all workers wore blue shirts and bosses high hats. Compare Gassner's piece with Glenn Hughes' tepid essay, "The One-Act Play in the United States," to observe how superior criticism from the left can be. Where Hughes smugly dismisses the "propaganda" play, Gassner correctly credits the new social drama with the commanding position it has won for itself.

The second notable contribution is Michael Blankfort's "The Construction of the Social One-Act Play." Intensely practical and nicely balanced, Blankfort's advice is based on a mature consideration of the mistakes, shortcomings, and accomplishments of the social one-act play to date. Blankfort's piece is really indispensable to both the beginner and the developed playwright who is venturing into this field for the first time.

Among other things, Blankfort corrects the current abuse of the awkward phrase, "social play." He points out that nearly every play is "social," and that the basic question is the specific world-outlook. Buchmanism or vegetarianism might well inspire a "social" play but, as Blankfort states, "there are other beliefs and doctrines, however, more understanding of their epoch, more realistically appraising of the forces of their times . . . they are the ear to the ground and the heart to the heart of the movement of peoples and classes. . . ." He, of course, refers to Marxism. Unfortunately, the reader is left to guess at the author's meaning, and he will have to turn to other volumes such as John Howard Lawson's commendable *Theory and Technique of Playwriting* before he can learn this indispensable fact.

MARK MARVIN.

John Heliker

★

Protest to *Fortune*

THE CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers) has sent the following letter, signed by its general secretary, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, to the editors of *Fortune,* protesting against the article on Mexico which appeared in the October number, and which Marc Frank referred to in his article in NEW MASSES of November 15:

Dear Sir: Due to the fact that I have for some weeks been absent from Mexico City, this letter of protest against your article on Mexico published in the October number of *Fortune* has not been sent you before now.

You will doubtless recall that when I was passing through New York last summer, the editors of *Fortune* invited me, together with Mr. Alejandro Carrillo, general secretary of the Workers University of Mexico, to a discussion of the material of the article on Mexico which the magazine was then planning. At that conference, with Miss Carr of your staff, we furnished a series of data and other information about Mexico, under the impression that *Fortune* was planning an objective and strictly non-partisan treatment of the subject. On being told by Miss Carr that the person being sent to Mexico to gather material and to write the article was Miss Anita Brenner, we warned her that Miss Brenner was an active member of the Trotskyist party and that she could not be expected to write or even draft an article dealing with the many controversial issues which the Mexican situation presents without her political affiliations inevitably coloring and distorting her report. Miss Carr again assured us that any such "opinion" would be edited out of the article and that *Fortune* aimed at nothing but a purely factual and objective presentation of Mexico today.

Relying on that assurance, we later cooperated with *Fortune* in the way of sending additional data from Mexico City. We had no wish to influence the point of view of *Fortune* about Mexico, nor did we expect that in return for our cooperation the magazine would print what might be called a "favorable" report of this country. We did expect and had a right to ask that the article would live up to the assurances given to us to the effect that it would be completely objective, factual, and non-partisan.

I regret to say that such a description does not fit the article as finally published and that our worst fears with respect to the person selected to write it have been justified. Not only was a good part of her time in Mexico spent with Trotsky's secretaries and with known Trotsky adherents, but her article itself—and this is known to us from absolutely trustworthy sources—was submitted to Trotsky for his approval before being delivered to the magazine. The special illustrations by Diego Rivera, Mexico's principal Trotskyite, merely serve to heighten the impression that *Fortune* has been adroitly utilized as a means of gaining publicity for Trotsky's views on the Mexican labor movement.

In the name of the Confederation of Mexican Workers I feel it necessary to register an indignant protest against this perversion of a supposedly objective report to serve the partisan purposes of a political group that has proved itself inimical to the interests of the Mexican labor movement and of the Mexican people. And as we cannot help feeling that the magazine has not acted in good faith, and to settle any doubts in the minds of those persons who might believe that our cooperation with you may in part be responsible for the result, we are making this letter public.

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

The New Odets Play

CLIFFORD ODETS' new play, *Rocket to the Moon,* asks the question, "Why aren't simple, decent people—dentists, and dentists' wives, doctors, salesmen—why aren't they happy in America of 1938?"

Mr. Odets has no answer, and so *Rocket to the Moon* ends in unhappy confusion. But he asks the question so poignantly that his new play, for all its fumbling conclusions, becomes superb theater. *Rocket to the Moon* poses the authentic dilemma of our times. But its hauntingly beautiful dialogue, its magnificent creation of character, its almost painful sincerity cannot quite veil its fundamental weakness.

Critics on our metropolitan newspapers have announced with a great show of triumph that *Rocket to the Moon* marks the end of Mr. Odets' foolish preoccupation with the "revolution." I'm not quite certain what the *Sun* means by "revolution," but I feel sure that the gentlemen of what is sternly known as the capitalist press suffer from a bad case of wishful thinking. For *Rocket to the Moon* is an enormously better play than *Golden Boy*. Mr. Odets has for the most part left behind him his brief flirtation with slick Broadway melodrama. His new play is expert and technically sure; Mr. Odets is back again writing of great themes.

To be sure, Mr. Odets has no answers for the problems he raises, but I think the critics are badly mistaken when they say *Rocket to the Moon* shows a Clifford Odets ready to forsake his interest in the great contradictions of modern society for the gimcracks and tinsel of a successful Broadway career. The new play is honest, almost tortured—and because it ends on a note of bewilderment, I, for one, am not ready to hand America's greatest playwright of the day over to the reactionaries.

Rocket to the Moon is a good play, a moving one, full of poignant moments. Why then isn't it a great play? What keeps Odets always seeking and never finding even a simple answer to his questions? Why must his third-act curtain go down on confusion, on unresolved problems? I think Mr. Odets has stopped listening to the people he knows so well. His dentist in *Rocket to the Moon* is slightly dated. Mr. Odets, who once wrote *Waiting for Lefty,* is lagging, now, behind America. Once Clifford Odets wrote plays that asked and answered questions people were just beginning to ask in life. Now he writes plays about problems people solved the day before yesterday. His Bronx dentist in *Rocket to the Moon* is today no longer worrying about the long sleep of his life. Now his heart is moved to its depths by the terrible story of the Jewish tragedy in Germany. The young foot doctor no longer cares solely about the motor on his Ford—in life, unlike in *Rocket to the Moon,* the young doctor is profoundly, if vaguely, disturbed by the rapid tragedy of our times. Clifford Odets needs to go back and listen again to America.

For the people of our country have learned how to be bold and brave in the last three years—and Clifford Odets has not. The little dentist in the Bronx, and his wife, and his friends have been jolted out of their narrow vision of life by history, but Mr. Odets sees them today as they were long ago, before the workers of Spain went out to fight fascism, before the workers of America organized to fight reaction in our nation. The great playwrights must be teachers, leaders. Mr. Odets has still to learn from his own characters before he can instruct as well as excite. The people of America are writing Clifford Odets' third acts.

I do not mean to carp at *Rocket to the Moon*—I set these things down because the play moved me so deeply that I wish it could have moved me more. No other American playwright has ever taken the speech of our people and turned it into singing poetry. Elizabethans must have gone to Shakespeare's plays and said, with awe, "He takes the way people talk and makes it poetry." Odets does it for our times. He writes a passage for the father-in-law to denounce the dentist's stale way of life. The words are common, and simple, the ordinary speech of our day. But their use is so precise, the phrasing so exact, the imagery so bold and imaginative, that the brief passage illuminates the play, strikes at people's hearts. A man says to the girl in the play, as she rejects his proposal, "Do you want to go down the road alone—like Charlie Chaplin?" I don't know what this will mean fifty years from now, but for today that image is perfect.

The Group Theater produces *Rocket to the Moon.* But "produces" is the wrong word. This is collaboration. It is difficult to say where Odets begins and the director leaves off. Which one devised the moment when the hysterical blood-donor bawls out the office girl, denouncing her savagely, and then, ashamed of himself, turns back and without a word kisses the girl's cheek? A line here would have spoiled the whole scene; an "I'm sorry," or "Excuse me," would have let the audience fall back, fall away from the play. The silent kiss is deeply moving.

The cast for *Rocket to the Moon* is almost unbelievably good. Luther Adler takes the robust, swashbuckling, heartbreaking father-in-law and makes him flesh and blood for the audience. Morris Carnovsky plays the dentist, and except for a moment or two in the last act, does a magnificent job. And the Group Theater's roster of actors has a new recruit, Eleanor Lynn. Miss Lynn makes the remarkable Odets character, the fantasy-making, half-clever, half-stupid office girl a great character creation.

Rocket to the Moon is very nearly perfectly cast and directed. It is a haunting, disappointing, but challenging evening in the theater. Not to be missed.

Jabez

MESSRS. SHAKESPEARE, RODGERS, the two Harts, Abbott, and Savo have knocked together a musical comedy currently playing on the Broadway boards, *The Boys from Syracuse.* I may be just a simple-minded sucker for Mr. Savo and Rodgers-Hart music but in my opinion, *The Boys from Syracuse* is downright swell, Broadway musical comedy practically at its best, which is pretty good indeed.

As you may have heard bruited around town, *The Boys from Syracuse* has some remote connection with a little play Shakespeare got up in one of his lighter moments, *The Comedy of Errors.* Mr. Abbott has winnowed out most of the Shakespeare lines, but he has salvaged, nay, pointed up, all of what English professors call the late great London playwright's "lusty"

jokes—and then added a few witticisms of the earthy variety on his own.

The music for this little opus is delightful, and you'll be hearing, "This Can't Be Love," and "Sing for Your Supper," and "The Shortest Day of the Year," over the radio immediately and for the rest of the season.

We now come to the subject of Messrs. Hart and Savo, the comedians of the piece. Mr. Savo is wonderful and so is Mr. Hart. I laughed myself sick. Mr. Savo is dressed up in a red tunic and a white headband, Mr. Hart ditto, which adds to their charm. Mr. Savo dances at the drop of a hat and sings a droll song that had even the people who paid to get in rolling in the aisles.

The neo-classic setting for *The Boys from Syracuse* allows Irene Sharaff to do a magnificent job with the costumes, and Jo Mielziner an equally good one with the staging. The show is gay and colorful, the dancing is fine. Some carpers around town think there might have been fewer dances and a slightly faster tempo—but don't you believe them. *The Boys from Syracuse* is a honey, and next to *Leave It to Me!*, the funniest show around town.

A DREARY ITEM ENTITLED *Good Hunting* opened and closed last week. It was about generals. The road to the storehouse has been paved this season with good intentions. *Good Hunting* was supposed to be a satire on war, but alas, it was just too dull.

RUTH MCKENNEY.

Visiting Englishman

THERE is an Englishman visiting these shores who makes poor copy for those salon interviewers of the press who find it pleasant to quote honeyed words about Chamberlain. For Alan Bush, composer and musicologist who has identified himself with progressive forces in English music, knows well the objectives of present British statesmanship. That these objectives relate to musical activities in England was clearly indicated in a lecture which Mr. Bush delivered at the Society for Professional Musicians. He pointed out the growing infiltration of political consciousness into the musical expression of certain of his contemporaries and spoke of those "gentlemen composers" who occupy a position in music not unlike (one supposes) that held by gentlemen cricketeers in the English national sport. That there is hope for English music is evidenced not only by Mr. Bush himself but also by what he says of the other young men working in this art: there is a growing conviction that in the political struggles of their country lies either a salvation or a liquidation of their creative abilities.

For a true exposition of the vitality and originality of Negro music, we shall have to wait for the NEW MASSES concert of December 23. At any rate, two concerts heard within the last fortnight, one by Ethel Waters

and the Hall Johnson Choir, the other a W. C. Handy Birthday Concert sponsored by the Harlem Committee and the Musicians Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, were somehow lacking in punch. Ethel Waters' visit to Carnegie Hall was the occasion for an intimate style being lost in third-dimensional space. And what an error this artist fell into in the choice of songs! Instead of utilizing the valid jazz which she has so often sung with such admirable intensity and projection, she chose the tepid words and music of commercial Broadway successes, songs that reveal a sentimentality which brooks none of the realism of everyday life. The Hall Johnson choir, *sans* Hall Johnson himself, sang with usual expertness, though I feel a growing revulsion for their over-arranged spirituals—so fancy that they fail to carry any conviction. The Handy concert was poorly organized and the confusion on the stage detracted from the presentations. One fundamental error was the broadcasting of the "swing" half of the concert, during which time the program was master-of-ceremonied by an announcer whose enthusiasm for his radio art led him to mumblings in the microphone (entirely lost to the Carnegie Hall audience). He also lost no time in completely obstructing the view of the performer and the listener by placing a banner-bedecked microphone in front of the faces many of us wished to see. My visual memory is now forever destined to see W. C. Handy as a bald-headed gentleman with the letters WNEW written clearly on the lower half of his face.

The only thought after the John Charles Thomas concert of November 23 is a deep wonder as to how and why an artist with such a fine voice could give himself to singing such unmitigated trash. No cheaper display on the concert stage has ever been seen by this writer. Descending into rather poor vaudeville, Mr. Thomas saw fit to tweak his nose, whistle, pinch his cheeks, and generally act like a creature in the zoo, for an audience which, in its applause, was suspiciously claqueish.

JOHN SEBASTIAN.

John Ford's Splinter Fleet

JOHN FORD, who directed *The Informer,* had a head start toward a good picture about the navy in the script of *Submarine Patrol;* through some error on the part of an insubordinate 20th Century-Fox employee no roles were written in for the combined Atlantic and Pacific fleets, and the rosy adenoids of neither Nelson Eddy nor Dick Powell are to be found. Instead we have a raffish crew of assorted civilians taking out after German U-boats in wooden vessels little removed from the dory class. Like the remarkable British Q-ships which shed their innocent guise as fishing trawlers to riddle an overconfident submarine, the American splinter fleet fought

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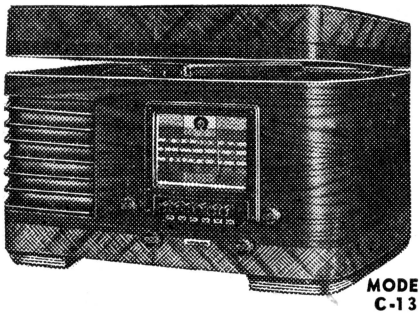

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some effective guerrilla skirmishes in the Mediterranean and Adriatic.

These were pretty ordinary mugs aboard the splinter fleet; they never learned starboard from left or aft from front and their first voyage found them rolling piteously on the decks limp as wet socks. But they were good fighters even if half the gun crew got cracked on the head when they swiveled a one-pounder into play against a U-boat. Mr. Ford shapes these incidents up by drawing real characterizations out of a humdrum cast; you don't realize how good Slim Summerville, Warren Hymer, Ward Bond, J. Farrell McDonald, and other background veterans can be until you see them working with a competent director. It is an adventure story of unusual suspense, told in a richly human way. Nancy Kelly, who makes her debut in the inevitable romance, may not be as purty as Richard Greene, her kissfool, but she sure can act.

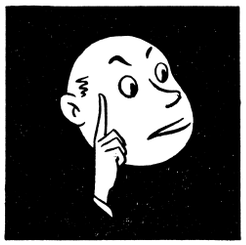
LIKE THE RAMESES FAMILY in Egyptian politics, Hollywood's chief failing is the confusion of size with quality. Musicals are the most conspicuous objects of this wrongheaded idea, so we find *The Great Waltz* enlarging the sentimental intimacy of Strauss into a vast and resoundingly hollow picture. Even a camera guided by the clever Julien Duvivier cannot enliven the drafty vistas of Old Vienna. Colossal perspectives do something to the close-ups; when there is a shot of a singer the effect is precisely the contrary to the one desired—instead of intimacy, the face looks thirty feet high. What's worse, the boys have taken the infirm story of the rich girl and the poor boy in *The Cowboy and the Lady* and applied somewhat the same principle. Half horse-opera and half *It Happened One Night,* the two angles cancel each other out.

JAMES DUGAN.

Robert Joyce

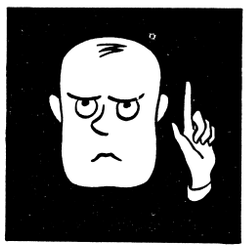
Robert Joyce

The Ostrich Atlanticus. Thinks what goes on in Europe is none of America's business and the way to keep out of trouble is to keep on thanking God for that wonderful old Atlantic Ocean.

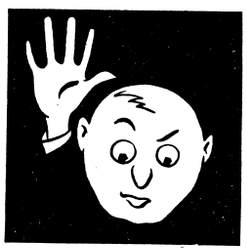


The Yes-Yes-But-er. England and France should have stuck together Yes, yes, and saved Czechoslovakia, but—why should the ALP work with Democrats and but—why doesn't Lewis make up with William Green?

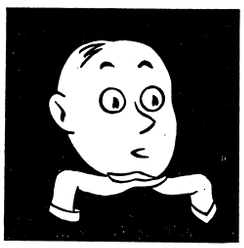
The Too-Timid Soul. He's a teacher, so he knows he ought to get into the fight. But he's still scared of being seen at a meeting or reading *New Masses.* Somebody might think he's a big, bad Red.



The Peace-at-Any-Pricer. Thinks peace-for-us is worth any price so long as someone else pays it. Does he know Hearst suggests we do a Chamberlain when Japan gets ready to grab the Philippines?



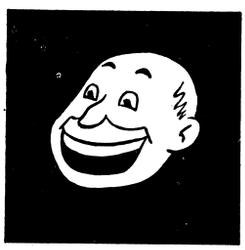
The Fence-Sitter. Has straddled issues everywhere for so long he failed to notice that the fences have completely disappeared from under him leaving him in what is a pretty ridiculous position.



The Gullible Guy. Reads (and believes!) the liberal papers, swallows the Dies lies, thinks the Communists really want to control the unions. But, why should he care? It's none of his business. He doesn't belong to one.

The Can't-Take-It Type. Can't stand to look Truth in the face. *New Masses* makes him want to go on picket lines, write to the President, boycott Germany and Japan. Then what will happen to his precious private life?

Redder than the Rose. He hands it to the Soviet Union the way they've worked for peace. But these Communists here are sissies. Why, they work with liberals and Catholics, and descend to voting for mere "progressives."



The Why-Not-Try-Humor-ist. Thought *New Masses* was too, too serious. The way to fight Hoover, Hearst, and Hitler is to laugh them off with a few more good cartoons. He may not be so sure of this since the "peace" at Munich.

The Tut-Tut-er. He never met a Nazi here. He never saw an anti-Semitic pamphlet. Ergo, they are no danger. Those nervous anti-Fascists are always seeing bogeys. You better get this one before he falls for more of Mr. Hoover.

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YOUR FRIENDS are horrified at Hitler's depravity, at Chamberlain's treason, at the drive against labor's hard-won rights in France. But do they translate this indignation into recognition of the forces that are plotting the same sort of thing right here at home? Their indifference, their confusion, their inactivity is a constant danger to you. Think how different Europe might be today if Germany's middle class had known the truth about Hitler. If England had had a NEW MASSES, as John Strachey wishes they had. Think what's ahead for America unless your friends understand what Reaction plans for them—and understand *in time!*

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