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new masses

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VIRGINIA GARDNER

J. Parnell Thomas' **STRANGE VISITOR**

CHARLES HUMBOLDT

SHOP TALK ON SHORT STORIES

CHARLES ABRAMS

PALESTINE: ACT II

YES, YOU!

This issue of **NEW MASSES** is only sixteen pages — one-half size. We told you that unless we raised \$5,000 by May 8, our printer wouldn't go to press with the next issue. But all that came in by that date was \$3,805. After a conference with the printer — who, incidentally, has his own pressing obligations to meet — he agreed, in order to avoid suspension of **NM**, to publish a sixteen-page issue this week. But he felt himself unable to make a commitment for next week.

You alone can make that commitment. We appeal particularly to those thousands of **NM** readers who haven't yet contributed. Do you want to hold the fort that is **NEW MASSES**, to build it stronger for the battles that loom ahead?

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THE EDITORS.

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WHO, ME?

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ROGER BALDWIN:

What are you hiding?

The head of the Civil Liberties Union pays a mysterious visit to the head of the House Un-American Committee. "A strong meeting of minds between us," says Rep. Thomas.

By VIRGINIA GARDNER

Washington.

IF YOU will thumb through the guest book in Rep. J. Parnell Thomas' office, you will find among the February 27 entries the name of Roger Baldwin of Oakland, N. J.

I first learned of this when, a day or so later, Rep. Thomas proudly showed me the Baldwin signature and said softly, a far-away look in his eyes: "I've been pretty close to Roger Baldwin. He's a constituent of mine."

It was all very puzzling, because the American Civil Liberties Union, of which Baldwin is the executive director, has opposed the Un-American Committee. In fact, at the time I had been needling Rep. Thomas, who chairs the committee, on two actions of the ACLU. It had been reported in the press as condemning the Thomas bill, introduced the same day Mr. Baldwin visited Mr. Thomas, and as condemning the committee for its role in the Gerhart Eisler arrest earlier. Rep. Thomas said he could understand how they might take issue with the Thomas bill—setting up a commission which would be the "final" authority on deciding what government workers should be fired as "disloyal." But he expressed surprise that the ACLU had taken such a position on the arrest of the German Communist, and it was then that he called for his guest book and produced Mr. Baldwin's signature.

I kept a notation on the matter in an "unfinished business" folder, meaning to obtain the ACLU's statement on the Eisler case and return to confront Rep. Thomas with it, and to ask Mr. Baldwin for an explanation of the mysterious call on the Un-American chairman.

However, I might have forgotten

about Rep. Thomas' revelation, his guest book and his smug little smile on the occasion, except that I saw a three-paragraph reprint from the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* beginning, "Gen. MacArthur has done something which adds to his stature as an occupation chief." It went on to tell how he had invited Roger Baldwin to Japan and Korea to advise the Army on civil rights, and how Baldwin had arranged to go in an unofficial capacity. This recalled the Thomas interview, and I determined to find out more about the ACLU position on the Un-American Committee, and whether Baldwin called on Rep. Thomas simply to pass on to him the committee's resolutions.

Obtaining a copy of a resolution passed by the ACLU executive board and released in part in its March 3 *Weekly News Bulletin*, a long and forceful statement calling for the abolition of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, I was more puzzled than ever about Mr. Baldwin's relations with Rep. Thomas. Obviously the ACLU was not changing its position or in any way pulling its punches with regard to the committee, as some groups have begun to do in the present witch-hunt. The ACLU found that the "principal effect" of the House committee's probes had been "the unwarranted discrediting of genuine liberals who have been earnestly and sincerely seeking needed reform, particularly in the field of labor, monopolies and race relations." It declared that "resistance in the courts to citations for contempt where witnesses properly refuse to give information will again, as in the past, tend to restrain the committee's undue exercise of power."

Pursuing my efforts to learn Thomas' reactions to the resolution, I was surprised to hear that he had not seen the statement previously, although he thought he had read about it somewhere in the press. It seems the committee clerk could not find it in the files. Apparently Mr. Baldwin neglected the routine matter of sending an official copy to the committee about which the resolution centered.

Moreover, in checking with members of the ACLU board of directors, I learned that Mr. Baldwin had made no report to the Union of his meeting with Rep. Thomas. Rev. John Haynes Holmes, president, was in Chicago, but the treasurer, Ben Huebsch, said the meeting was reported to him privately, and while it would be improper for him to quote Mr. Baldwin, he could say that the meeting was not on behalf of the ACLU. "Don't imply there was something secret about it," he said. "So far as I know nothing was said at the meeting with Mr. Thomas which might not be shouted from the housetops." Of course, he said, such a meeting could take place to protest against the committee's activities, and he reminded me, "We are opposed to that committee." I asked, "But this meeting was not such a one, was not in behalf of the ACLU?" That was correct, he said.

Another member was openly incredulous that such a conference should have taken place "in view of the board's strong position against the Un-American Activities Committee," but when told Rep. Thomas had described it, he had no further comment. Still another said he did not remember hearing about it, but it might have been reported at a meeting he did not

attend, or might not have been reported.

All in all, I got a persistent impression that Mr. Baldwin had failed to evince the same pride in the visit to Rep. Thomas that Rep. Thomas showed in his visitor.

IT WAS the morning of May Day when I returned to see Rep. Thomas, and he mentioned the appropriateness of the day. He read only a small part of the ACLU statement I handed him. He did not bother to turn to page two, where he might have read: "Nothing in recent years has been as un-American as the conduct of the hearings of the Congressional Committees on Un-Americanism." Handing it back to me, Rep. Thomas allowed a little smile, almost a smirk, to play about his lips. In his relaxed and confident mood, as he basked in the memory of Baldwin's visit, his cheeks were several shades less purple than usual.

"I think I can safely say," he said, "that as of today, May First, the ACLU cannot object to any of the

committee's procedures or actions. In fact, Roger Baldwin was here—he sat right in this chair," he said, touching the black leather cushions on the chair to his right. Yes, I murmured, that much he had told me before. But this statement—. "In fact," he went on, and the little smile widened, "he came here to get my advice on something."

Letting this sink in, while I was busily writing, he went on with evident enjoyment: "He's a constituent of mine. We've been on the debating platform a number of times." His tone was mellow, almost tender. "There is between us," he said, "a strong meeting of the minds. We see pretty much eye to eye." Then he explained gently, his round dark eyes twinkling confidently: "He is quite anti-Communist."

I asked if he had given Mr. Baldwin advice on Japan. Again the same mischievous twinkle, as he looked me in the eye mockingly, knowingly, and said, "I can't say what it was on."

But did he know that Baldwin was in Japan, I asked? (This was before Baldwin began giving out to the Japa-

nese press on Henry Wallace. According to an Associated Press dispatch from Tokio on May 5, Baldwin told the Japanese press he disagreed with Wallace on Russia. He attributed to Wallace the belief that "all you have to do with the Russians is lend them money, be nice to them and gloss over the situation." He also said, according to the AP, that "Wallace thought communism had the answers to the problems.")

"I know he is," he said, nodding delightedly and smiling his teasing smile, for Rep. Thomas, you must know, has a gift for boyish enthusiasm despite his baldness and his beautiful store teeth and his magenta (when angry) hue. "And I knew he was going."

"And does it make you very happy, his appointment as adviser to the Army on civil liberties?" I asked.

"Well, they probably selected a man who knows his subject."

"By that do you mean a man who knows how to do a job on the Communists in Japan?"

"If he's tough with the Communists," he replied, his color mounting slightly, "he will be protecting civil liberties. If there's one outfit that's opposed to civil liberties, it's the Communists."

I asked him how, but he was off on his favorite subject—Russia. Then he said, suddenly, "If we didn't have civil liberties here, Eisler wouldn't be out on bond."

"Is that your idea of civil liberties, to let a man out on bond who has been unfairly arrested?" I asked.

"If ever a man was fairly arrested, it's Eisler," he said, somewhat touchily. "But I'm in a rush—I haven't time to talk about all these things." I arose to go, but then he held me with questions.

There was his stock question, did I think I would like Russia, and if so, he would buy me a one-way ticket. Would I go? "Sure, but I'll come back, Mr. Thomas," I said. "This country is mine just as much as it is yours. My family has probably been here just as long as yours or longer—since before the Revolution, in fact."

"Then I'll bet those ancestors of yours turn over in their graves every now and then," he said.

"Not at what I stand for," I said. "That's in the American tradition."

But the fact that to demand an altered form of government is an old American custom left Mr. Thomas cold.

portside patter

By BILL RICHARDS

Clare Boothe Luce has attacked Wallace's political and economic philosophy before the US Chamber of Commerce. The reactionaries are throwing the monkey wench into the works again.

Representative Hartley admits that there may be "some dislocations" if his bill is passed. This represents his idea of giving labor a break.

Arthur Murray's dancing teachers have organized. They've realized that it'll take more than a rhumba to shake his wallet loose.



Vittorio Mussolini in Argentina has a splendid opportunity to live up to his family traditions. He's been offered a job as a wholesale butcher.

Westbrook Pegler claims that an American must join a union or starve. This may be the reason why he's so consistently from hunger.

There are many who applaud Congress for making it officially Hoover Dam. Somehow the two words seem to go together.

Congress is warned that a harsh labor bill will cause trouble. As a baseball enthusiast put it: there is nothing more likely to cause a strike than a foul Ball.

The House and Senate are slated to adjourn for vacations on June 15. This will undoubtedly be their most constructive act of the year.

REVEILLE IN DC

By LLOYD L. BROWN

The writer was one of the 414 delegates who attended the First National Encampment of America's Communist veterans. Held in Washington, D. C., the rally was called to protest the Truman Doctrine, anti-labor legislation and the attempts to outlaw the Communist Party.

New York, May 8.

LITTLE BEN, the boudoir bugler, sounds off at 5 AM. This vet stuff is as bad as the Army . . . Before leaving I take a peek in the bassinot at Pvt. Bonnie Ellen (age 2 mos.). Still sleeping, her little behind humped up under the blanket. Hah! This is one time you won't wake me up. I'm off to Penn Station . . .

Somewhere in Jersey, 7:30 AM. New York's contingent fills a couple of coaches . . . high spirits and horseplay. "Tell the top kick to bring me my coffee" . . . "Fort Dix next stop and Gawd help ya sojer!" . . . An ex-Wac ankles down aisle—wolf whistles, of course. "Please, comrades," she smiles . . . likes it. Lots of talk: recruiting drive . . . Happy Chandler . . . French cabinet . . . Brazil. A small-time blackjack game gets going. Kibitzer, vainly trying to get a fourth for bridge, chides the players: "You reactionaries!" . . . Another guy holding forth on the merits of NEW MASSES—a regular booster. That's me.

Washington, 10:30 AM. We're outnumbered! The station is crawling with FBI's . . . snapping pictures, making movies. Few uniformed cops around—this is undercover stuff. The great Stork Club sleuth must have his whole freshman class out on this assignment: How to Spot a Communist Who Is One. Terrible thought: what if some poor little gov't clerk is getting off same train—wearing a ruptured duck?

Turner's Arena, 11 AM. We hook up with the delegates from Out of Town—that part of the country which lies between the west bank of the Hudson and the West Coast. This flag-decked prize-fight and wrestling arena is to be our HQ. At the door we're handed mimeoed directions: "Washington, unfortunately, is a city of many Jim Crow practices. This is especially true of restaurants . . . Most of the non-Jim Crow places are in the Negro neighborhoods or are government cafeterias. We suggest that all delegates eat in either of the two." A reporter from the *Washington Times-Herald*, bucking for next year's Pulitzer prize, writes that "the Reds plan to stir up trouble by visiting restaurants which are generally patronized by non-Negro patrons." The same paper also reported our housing plans: a number of the vets "will infiltrate into small hotels in the downtown sections."

We get down to business . . . Bob Thompson (NY State Sec'y, wearer of the DSC) keynotes: "We are here to re-dedicate ourselves to the great anti-fascist objectives for which we fought." Taps . . . and the roll call of our dead. You think of those you knew, good guys—the best—like Sgt. Sam Banks, killed in action. Last time you saw him he said, "Take care of yourself, fella." And then back into the buses to the Iwo Jima monument to lay a wreath. The plainclothes platoon follows—sniffing the trail.

Bull Session, 1 PM. Johnny Gates (National Legislative Chairman) presents a veterans' program: jobs . . . housing

. . . terminal leave pay—and now . . . disabled vets' and widows' pensions . . . soldier's bonus. Discussion is sharp and lively. A highlight is the raw deal being given Negro vets in the South, only one percent of whom have applied for terminal leave pay. Officials down there say: "We ain't got no blanks for you-all." Many of these vets have got more than a sharecropper's annual income due them . . . and that's the reason for the brushoff—and the terror.

Breakthrough, 8 PM. We're getting somewhere—the place is packed. Two thousand people raise the roof at the biggest Party rally in DC history . . . here in the Red Scare's hometown. Foster, Dennis, Winston speak. Big Paul Robeson sings . . . and talks . . . bullseye! Then he's off to Albany.

Task Force, May 9. "We are here to stand up and be counted—and to be heard." So at 9 AM we divide up into squads to talk turkey (and Greece) to State Dep't, Dep't of Justice, Vets Administration and Congressmen. First to the Senate gallery . . . Joe Ball is beating his gums—wants another knot in the noose for labor. Then to the House . . . Rankin interrupts the Greco-Turkish debate to call the Communist vets "misguided idealists." (In our next session Chicago's Claude Lightfoot tells him off—but good.)

Big Business' Brass-hat. I latch on to Ohio's delegation waiting to see Sen. Taft at 11:30 AM. Here he comes—straight out of an NM cartoon. Tall, smooth, smiling



Sketched at New York's May Day parade by Milton Wynne. An exhibition of Mr. Wynne's recent paintings will be held at the ACA Gallery from May 19 to 31.

... NAM's fist in a silk glove. Ohio CP State Sec'y Martin Chauncey (2nd Division, five battle stars) leads off on the anti-labor bills. Taft's smile widens to a grin, but the pale eyes are cold: "Now look, there's no use talking about that. That's in. Nothing you can do about it." Mike Davidow, Cleveland leader (165th Inf.—the Old 69th, "Fighting Irish" — Okinawa vet) asks his stand on the attacks against our Party. Will he vote to deny bargaining rights to a union charged with having Communist officials? The smile slips a notch: "Well, I haven't made up my mind on that yet, but I'll probably vote for it." (Later in the day the Senate adopted that amendment by voice vote.) "I'm not in favor of outlawing you . . . your Party can be on the ballot and have all Constitutional rights."

Ed Chaka (Local 218 Moulders and Foundry Workers AFL; machine-gunner, 89th Division) asks if Taft thinks Congress should be able to dictate who can represent labor. "Their Bob" beams: "I certainly do." There's lots more back and forth . . . I'm dying to do a Virginia Gardner on him but I yield to the gentlemen from Ohio—they've got priority. They're alert and aggressive: Bob Gunkel (14th Armored Division) from Cincinnati, the Senator's home town; Abe Lewis, Negro vet of Lincoln Brigade; John Mitchell of Dayton (UE member, 296th Engineers). Mike says: "Look, Senator, you've got a pretty good housing bill. Why don't you fight for that like you're fighting for anti-labor laws? Don't you think housing is more important for us vets?" The GOP's big gun didn't think so. "Sorry, boys, but I've got to get back to the floor" . . . genial . . . like a mortician.

Two-Star General. I tag along with the Pittsburgh guys to see Senator Edward Martin, ex-governor, ex-Major General (forty years in the Army). Joe Filner (300 combat days with 45th Division) is spokesman, two others follow through. Martin's comeback: no answers; reads a canned go-back-to-where-you-came-from harangue. Tough guy—veteran of many a hard-fought Legion convention . . .

Comes the Revolution. We reconvene at 1 PM for reports . . . adoption of a program . . . a proclamation . . . a decision: to come back again next year. Gates gavels adjournment at 4:30 PM—one-half hour ahead of schedule! That revolutionary deed goes over the heads of the gumshoes . . .

WHAT'S WRONG WITH OUR SHORT STORIES?

A discussion of the weaknesses of left-wing fiction and of the positive values needed to create a literature that can be both art and weapon.

By CHARLES HUMBOLDT

SOME months ago, when changes in the character of NEW MASSES were being talked about, the editors decided that we should publish a short story or section of a novel in each issue. We have carried out this plan, excepting only weeks in which no stories were available or when some unforeseen contingency deprived us of the necessary space. Since then I have read some five hundred stories, most of them by young or hitherto unpublished writers, and I have had correspondence with a considerable number of them. I'd like first to thank these writers for their work, and then pass to a few generalizations about it.

I hope that the following remarks will be taken for what they are—shop talk about specific stories, the kind of things that might be said at an informal reading. They should be thought of as falling within the context of our general literary aims and as attempting to raise the level of production stemming from those aims.

When I say "shop talk," however, I do not mean the usual haggling over craft attainments and distinctions, the elevation of nuances, the worship of literary *coups d'etats* and "new forms," and the mathematical analyses of style which preoccupy authors with little or nothing to say. Our shop talk must always be preceded by a reiteration of our aims and infused throughout with our view of literature as an instrument of struggle, of knowledge and change. For us literature is more than an amusement for a sensitive audience; it is our

very life speaking. And today it is our plainest, most open way of affirming human dignity, so trampled upon by capitalism and so minimized or obliterated in the philosophies and art of its apologists.

Perhaps at no previous time has the young writer been so beset with contradictory needs and temptations. The need to live in order to write is pitted against the impulse to write in order to live. The honor of writing the truth must still the loud rewards of compromise. Then there are the intellectual pits dug by the talents of bourgeois literature. There is the lure of finding in the dream world the deeper, truer goals of man. There is the theory that a writer violates his artistic integrity if he allows his values to creep into his story: that the senses alone are the recorders of actuality. There is the conviction that reason is an intruder in the exalted realm of imagination; that poetry owes it not even ultimate allegiance, for truth is an individual matter which may have validity only for the particular man who "discovers" it in his fantasy.

Then there are the fashionable systems of disillusionment, whole philosophical structures erected to prove to men that their only freedom lies in despair—not in the recognition of necessity in order to manipulate it for human ends, but in an acceptance of fatal inevitability. Only by perishing gloriously, to the strains of art, is man liberated. Such are the romantic paths which can divert writers from the daily struggle before them. It is good to

report that few writers within our orbit of thinking have taken them.

Nevertheless, it is useful to admit the weaknesses we do have. It is even more important to define them and trace their origins. For one thing, our literature has suffered severely from the lack of organs of expression. When the all-too-few Left cultural magazines of the Thirties suspended publication, our writers had almost no place for their serious work. Why write when there's nowhere to appear? Our writers turned entirely to the novel and movies, or learned to angle their stories to meet the requirements of the commercial magazines. They wrote *Atlantic Monthly* stories, *Harper's* stories, *Collier's* and *New Yorker* stories, or for slicks and pulps. Others simply stopped writing altogether. Naturally, we do not imply a recommendation to cease writing for the commercial press. We are not sectarians who expect others to underline their purity by starving to death. But it must be stated that during the Browder period of opportunism, writers tended to move away from us and to make a fetish of success, as though to prove that Left writers could do as well as anybody else in the bourgeois hack world, if only they applied themselves to it.

As a result, many of our best writers stopped writing for our own press entirely, and many have not yet resumed working for it. This was bound to have a serious effect on their ideological clarity. Yet here too, with the publication of *Mainstream* and in the pages of *NEW MASSES*, we have begun to register gains. Left writing is getting underway again.

The war interfered with the opportunity of many young writers to develop their craft. It will take still some time before the complexities of their war experience will have been assimilated and appear as more than the recording of incidents. Our responsibility to publish their work will be very great then, for truthful war stories will be quite unfashionable. They are already.

There is, however, something more pertinent that must be said about literature of the war—and of the post-war period, too. It is imperative that our writing embody a correct estimate of the character of the war and the extent of our victory. Those writers who fought in the war must guard against allowing their personal frus-

trations and the complexity of motives with which the war was pursued to blind them to its chief aim and result, the liberation of whole nations and the saving of mankind from fascism. Further, the effect of contradictory forces operating on all levels within the capitalist countries and armies, of profit-seeking, opportunism, brass-hattery, racial and religious prejudice, should not prevent us from seeing how the chief aim, the liberation essence of the war, made itself felt through and despite the welter of bitter disappointments of the daily struggle. That aim was not merely an ideal; it was the cause that determined and gave quality to our actions. The thwarting of our lesser hopes, yes, even the sordid betrayals, were and must be now when we consider them, subordinate to the realization that only victory made hope possible.

Yet even this is putting it too negatively. Our writers have the further

obligation of conveying a sense of continuing victory in their work. It is true that the imperialists have won certain great successes, particularly in Congress, and that their threats have become ever more desperate and dangerous. Their desperation should teach us something. It is that the victorious war has freed millions in Eastern Europe from the slough of Middle-Ages serfdom; it has set millions on the path toward socialism; it has given immense impetus to the struggle of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples in Asia, Africa and South America against imperialist oppression. Even in the United States, where the political development of the working class is not yet adequate to the problems which confront it, organized labor, huge and militant, when allied in coalition with the awakened and progressive sections of the middle class, promises to defeat its enemies not here and there, not once and again, but once and for all.

It is our task to show the working class, and with it all progressive elements in society, that the strength of the ruling class is half frenzy, and that we do not perish in its doom. As we have won, we will win again.

But this involves an ability to generalize from experience which few progressive writers have achieved. Tailing after the bourgeois literateurs in themes of individual disillusion and defeat, they feel they have accomplished enough when they interpret the causes of that defeat correctly. Historical changes rarely enter the consciousness of their characters, so that very often stories are written as they might have been conceived twenty years ago, about people whose social existence has undergone profound



"All American," oil by Leo Quanchi. At the Harry Salpeter Gallery through May 24.



"All American," oil by Leo Quanchi. At the Harry Salpeter Gallery through May 24.

transformation since then. Our literature must, in its totality, be cognizant of the new elements added to the life and thinking of millions of Americans since the middle of the Roosevelt era. Even if it does not deal directly with trade union organization, the struggle for racial equality or for civil rights, and other such progressive causes, it must somehow encompass these in the thinking and actions of its people. If, after Balzac, no writer could ignore the economic status of his characters, so none can pretend that the great social movements of today have left no mark on the minds of his *dramatis personae*. To acquire the experience of that change and to raise his characters to a level where they are capable of expressing it becomes a primary problem for the progressive writer.

Here again, the political task of the writer is not divorced from his literary aims. A literature does not attain spiritual maturity until it can express positive values; it does not achieve technical maturity until it can create characters in whose actions these values are reflected. What have we accomplished if we show the same confusion and lack of confidence in the face of battle as do the literary defenders of the old order? If our characters are distinguished only by their readiness to be destroyed quicker even than in ordinary run-of-the-mill novels? The age of fabulous heroes is over, but there is always a time for heroic human beings, or at least men and women with the capacity for heroism. If in life, then in our literature. We have known political prisoners to come out of fifteen years of solitary confinement to resume leadership in the working class. Our literature must, as never before, be cognizant of

. . . . those who in their lives
fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire's
center.

But for this we must start from a point of view. We value courage, passion, endurance not in the abstract but as these have their place in the effort of man to preserve himself from the ravages of capitalism, and to free his energies for love and creative work. On the other hand, when we write of those who suffer, pity is not enough. No one must be allowed to wonder why this suffering goes on, or to think that it is man's lot to be in pain. The

artist must cast unsparing light on the causes of human anguish, avoiding hypocritical sympathy which merely echoes cries but does not answer them. We want art to be a weapon as knowledge is a weapon. In championing realism in literature, we do not mean simple slice-of-life naturalism which records what it perceives without judgment. We assert that judgment is entirely within the province of the artist, who is in no way exempt from the obligations of other men.

Insisting that the writer bear responsibility for the ideas which he places at the service of mankind, we want at the same time to avoid narrowness in our attitude toward literary problems. Often in the past we tried to combat the stereotypes of bourgeois literature by confronting them with our own formulae. The intention was worthy but ineffective. It was easy to expose the shallowness and schematism, the cardboard heroes and the jerky contrivances of the average novel; but we tried too frequently to meet these puppets on their own stage. We weakened our attack on the unreal figures of romance by ourselves offering somewhat too naive versions of human beings.

We cannot ignore the many-sidedness of art, treating its formal aspects as niceties not basic to its structure. Our criticism should avoid relying on quotations and come to grips with the individuality and sensibility of separate writers. Otherwise, it will do our readers a disservice by narrowing the area of their vision, making them less sensitive to literary values, and fostering a certain innocence and oversimplification in their knowledge of human relations. It will set them hunting for direct political and moral connotations, so that they tend to overlook whether or not a story is a strong and true description of people, their environment and their dealings with one another. It may also encourage the invention of idealized characters, breeding in the reader a disdain for real human beings with all their complexities and feelings.

I MENTION this because no healthy literature can grow where writers and readers do not understand one another, or where either believes that the other does not have a proper approach to reality. I think that the trouble here may lie in a misconception as to

the method by which the writer's aim is achieved. Yes, the writer has a point to make in his story, but paradoxically, it is not he but the reader who must make it for himself. The skill of the writer, the value of his presentation lies just in his not seeming to be dealing with a point at all, and yet seeing to it that the reader is led to the meaning of the events and the correct estimate of his characters. He teaches the reader by engineering his development, moving him to new perceptions, raising him to a higher imaginative level. If the writer can do no more than make the reader nod his head approvingly because he has represented what the latter already knows, what has he accomplished? We do not ask that a writer "show" some generalization, make a point with an incident. What we really want is not that the writer illustrate a point which we are already aware of—otherwise we could not ask him to make it—but that he create human beings in action, so that we shall know what men are capable of, for good or bad, in our society. Never fear, he will still make his point, but he will make it with flesh and blood, instead of straw and calico.

Flesh and blood is a complicated business. For every man and woman who acts in accordance with a fixed ideal, there are thousands who act by what we call motives, that is, who are moved by hunger, greed, sexual desire, ambition, love, tenderness, mischief, or by memories hidden from their own waking consciousness. Now, writers have to show not only the interaction of these elements, the ideals and the others, upon one another, but also the influence of social conditions and class origin and allegiance upon them and the characters in whom they contend for mastery. The struggles of individual human beings take place on the stage of society, and, conversely, the great social conflicts are waged in the arena of the human soul. While concentrating on the purpose of their stories, our writers have often reduced their figures to much too simple components. They have been penny wise, pound foolish in characterization. Their stories frequently have an overscrubbed look, like the auditorium of a Sunday school, or the parlor of a good housewife. No positive character is ever diverted from his mission in life by drink, sex or other temptations. On the other

(Continued on page 11)

LAUREL WREATH AND POISON IVY

An Editorial by JOSEPH NORTH

As a newspaperman, I have taken much pride in America's tradition of fine reporters. Our people have had their share of men and women with the penetrating eye and the heart for humanity that makes for great reporting. Men in the trade always regarded Lincoln Steffens as representative of the great tradition; not a few have carried on in his spirit. John Reed, one of the founders of this magazine, and numerous others—of various political affiliations—have carried on with regard for truth and concern for their fellow men: writers like Edgar Snow, Agnes Smedley, Leland Stowe, to cite a few contemporaries. The encroachments of the banking mind which began, at the turn of the century, to chop down the independent publisher and transform journalism into a six-percent investment did not entirely kill the tradition. Not entirely.

But this big business mentality went a long way to drive any vestigial remnants of honest journalism out of our own commercial press with the Pulitzer awards the other day. You could almost hear the collective gasp go up in city rooms when Frederick Woltman, of the New York *World Telegram* got the prize for reporting. This four-ply hack, junior understudy to Westbrook Pegler, is suddenly presented as a talent for other newspapermen to emulate. We are told, in brief, that the Goebbels tradition of journalism is better than the Steffens. All you need, son, is the soul of the agent-provocateur and the benedictions of J. Edgar Hoover and you're made. Line up with the anti-Communists and

the union-busters, the student in the university is told: there's a fat career in it for you. You'll get awards, your picture in the paper, and a handshake from the regional director of the FBI. Your boss will send a congratulatory message from his penthouse. What does it matter if your stuff is wooden, your head filled with sawdust, your heart a vial of poison—if you hate the Communists you may get the Pulitzer award some day.

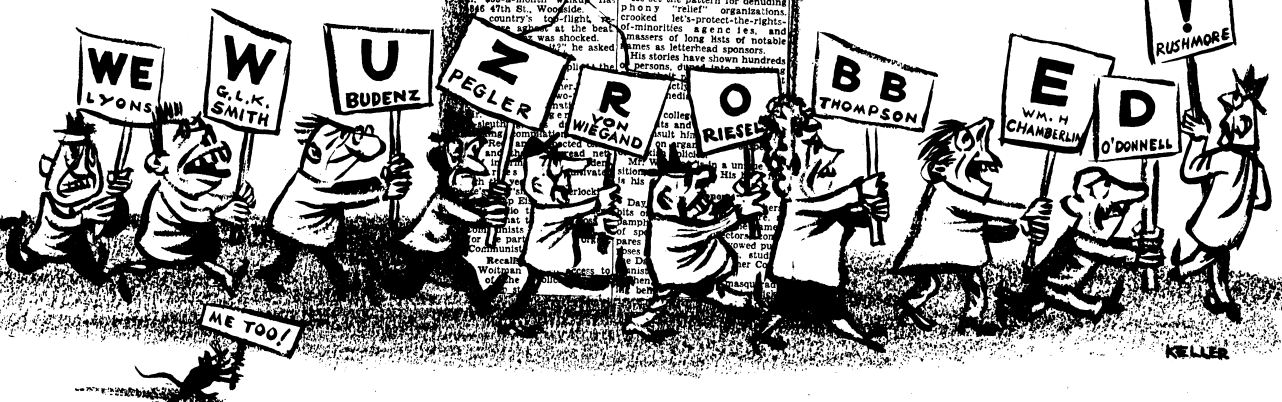
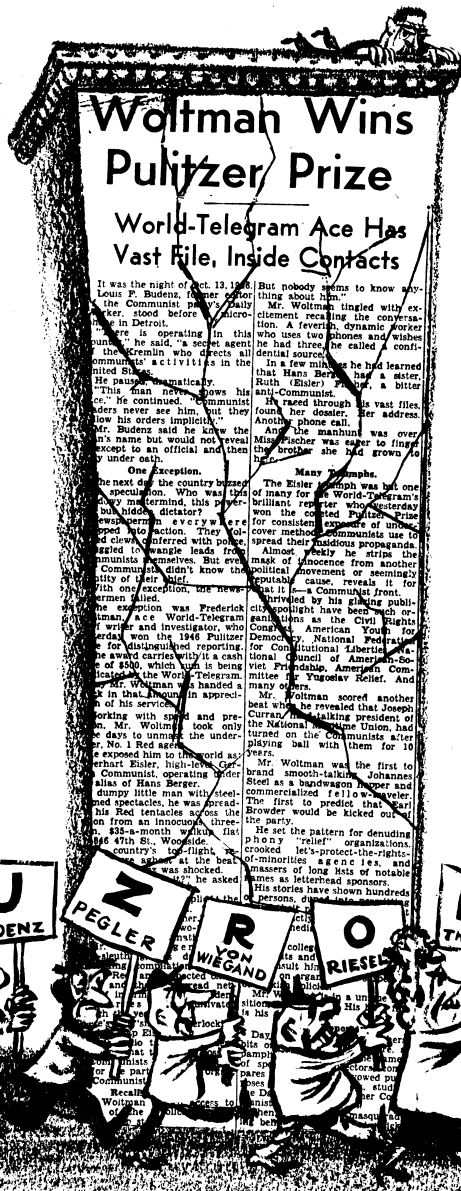
And Brooks Atkinson, who has, in

his time, written some interesting things, got his honors too—for his anti-Soviet series in the *New York Times*. The best cartoon of 1946 proved, appropriately enough, to be one blaming the rise in living costs on labor's wage demands. Naturally, the best editorial was one in the *Wall Street Journal* blasting the Soviet Union and the Big Three agreements at Yalta.

In tune with these awards was the one non-award. The gentlemen who found patriotism in Woltman and public service in the *Wall Street Journal* couldn't be expected to honor what was obviously the best play of the year, Arthur Miller's stirring and progressive *All My Sons*. They avoided embarrassment by omitting any award for the drama.

But it is hard to murder the democratic tradition, for cash or for laurel. That tradition lives, and if not in the six-percent press, in our progressive publications: in the *Daily Worker*, *NEW MASSES* and those few remaining journals that don't believe the essence of wisdom and justice resides in the head of Arthur Vandenberg or Harry Truman.

The people have other standards than those of the Pulitzer committee: even old man Pulitzer himself must, from the other side of the abyss, be ashamed. There are rewards for integrity and talent which the Pulitzer committee cannot replace: they are in the hearts and souls of men. But why talk about that? The arbiters of today's journalism can only comprehend the language that money talks.



PALESTINE: ACT II

By CHARLES ABRAMS

TO ANYONE who knows anything about Anglo-American relations, particularly on colonial matters, it is hardly surprising that Britain's suave and lean delegate, Sir Alexander Cadogan, plays second fiddle to America's Warren Austin. You might expect that their performance would show greater skill considering that it takes place before so critical and distinguished an audience as comprises the special session of the United Nations General Assembly. But for all the outer polish their playing of the Palestine issue is quite crude. It is crude because it is so transparent and because everyone with the least insight knows that their theme is how to squelch any thorough and fundamental discussion.

Mr. Austin, attired in a stiff, starched white shirt and black bow tie, has revealed in a dozen different ways that his job is to apply the bipartisan Truman Doctrine to whatever comes up at this meeting. It is a great study in hypocrisy to see him and his colleagues plead for one thing when they mean something else entirely. They spoke for democracy yet it was only after heated opposition that they consented to give Jewish representatives the right to be heard. The truth is, after what I have seen and heard, that the State Department and its emissaries at Flushing and Lake Success have only one objective in mind: to shield the British colonial rulers of Palestine. This is the sorry outcome of an American foreign policy which upholds a corrupt Kuomintang regime, the Roxas quislings in the Philippines, the Greek royalists, the Turkish feudal lords. After that what else can anyone expect but parliamentary shenanigans and tedious procedural speeches? The American representatives have become masters at how to avoid the substance of things unless it suits them and their purposes.

I do not say anything new, of course, when I point out that despite the pro-Zionist pre-election campaign promises of both the Democratic and Republican parties, members of the American delegation did not lift a finger to make possible Jewish representation in the Assembly discussions. This came as a shock to a good many people who were counting on American help in arriving at an equitable solution of the Palestine question. Linked to this sense of shock was one of dismay, for these same people began to realize that the American position was formulated at the highest levels, even though General Marshall in a statement made last week pretended that the United States has no policy on Palestine and will not have one until all the facts are in. This again is hypocrisy, for there are enough facts around to fill a dozen libraries. The State Department is engaged in the effort to make certain that more facts do not emerge at this session—damaging facts which would incense world opinion even more against the American and British policies in the Middle East. Mr. Austin tried desperately, therefore, to put Assembly proceedings in a straitjacket.

What is most heartening is that he has not been too successful. Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union adhered firmly to the principle of representation for the Jews, a vital part of Palestine's population, and untrammelled dis-

ussion. In the steering committee they could only muster their solitary three votes for this principle. But they did not give up the fight. They carried their proposal to the full Assembly meeting and rallied additional support. It was not enough to secure an affirmative vote on the resolution to invite Jewish representatives to the plenary session of the Assembly but it was sufficient to win a compromise resolution directing the Political Committee to hear the Jewish Agency.

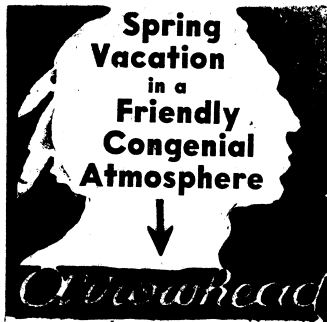
THE principled position championed by the people's democracies and the Soviet Union was supported by a number of semi-colonial Latin American countries. These countries evinced sensitivity to the basically colonial character of the Palestine question. In the face of a threatened collapse of the Anglo-American bloc the United States delegation was, therefore, forced to give face-saving support to the compromise resolution, which would not have reached the light of day had it not been for the battle put up originally by the Czechoslovaks, Poles and Russians on behalf of the interests of the Jewish and Arab masses of Palestine and of world democracy. The fact is underscored by all objective and honest observers. Last week in *The Nation*, for example, J. Alvarez del Vayo, the former foreign minister of Republican Spain, wrote: "Without the initiative of the Czech and Polish delegations and the support of Russia the admission of the Jewish Agency even to the Political Committee could not have been accomplished."

In the Political Committee the Anglo-American bloc suffered two additional defeats. Austin proposed that Britain be set up as censor of all requests from organizations desiring to be heard. It was rejected. And another of Austin's proposals to bar discussion on the substance of the Palestine question was also defeated by a vote of twenty-three to nineteen.

As I write another battle is in the process of unfolding which may be settled by the time this reaches the reader. It is a battle on the composition and terms of reference of the Investigation Commission to be established. On this issue the American delegation is also playing Truman Doctrine politics. It has been urging a commission of "neutral" small powers. But this "neutrality" approach is of the same kind as the "non-intervention" which helped saddle Franco on Spain. Both the cynics and the realists among the correspondents with whom I have talked recognize this move as one to keep the USSR from any voice or role in democratically solving the Palestine tragedy.

The three big facts that emerge, then, from the debate thus far on Palestine are (1) that American imperialism is staunchly defending colonial subjugation; (2) that the new democracies and the USSR are the chief foes of colonialism; and (3) that the debate in the UN is a step forward inasmuch as it focuses international attention on a critical international problem. If these facts are properly understood the road to the emancipation of Palestine from its present bondage will be that much easier to travel.

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Short Stories

(Continued from page 8)

hand, those who represent retrograde elements in society are pictured without even the charm or power which would permit them to exercise sway over other people's fate. A writer does not accomplish his aim by substituting morality for realism; this carefulness of what people "might say" if they misinterpret him serves only to de-vitalize our literature. We will concoct incidents and dramatic figures that will shock no one—and thereby leave the reader unprepared for the thousand shocks of real life.

AN IMMEDIATELY noticeable effect of this sometimes arbitrary and sometimes unintentional limiting of the range of action and emotion is the predominance of the expected story and the cliché character. I have, for example, read dozens of tales dealing with racial discrimination and the sufferings of national minorities in America. I know that the editors of other magazines have also received an unusual number of such stories. It is an excellent sign that the conscience of young writers is awake on this issue which becomes the gate to further exploration of the sources of all the evils of our society. Most of these stories are weakened, however, by a lack of freshness which stems from insufficient knowledge. A Negro enters a bus, either a white passenger or the driver provokes an incident and he is killed. A Jew is about to be hired when the boss asks him his name, or he is just going to sign the lease on an apartment at long last when the landlord notices his signature on the check for the first month's rent. He is turned away, smoothly or crudely, depending upon the nature of the stereotype. A little Negro or Jewish boy is set upon by a gang of Christian Front ruffians, somewhat less than human. But the victims are somehow lacking in vitality, somehow unrealized, somehow dead before they are killed, beaten before anyone has challenged them. Their powers of resistance have already been broken; they can only be pathetic, never tragic.

I shall come back to this in a moment, for it raises a very fundamental problem for our literature. I want first to mention another weakness which is easier to correct. Most of these stories, like many I have read of the war, of Nazi Germany, of the French Re-

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review and comment



THE SEAMEN AND THEIR UNION

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By WALTER BERNSTEIN

THE DARK SHIP, by Richard O. Boyer. Little, Brown. \$2.75.

sistance, etc., are pure inventions, even when they are based on the newspaper clippings from which some are obviously derived. They are written by young writers who have no way of knowing what they are writing about. Now, it is fearfully important to know the right and wrong of a thing—it is not a matter of incidental importance at all. But life is not one of those photographer's sets you see in side-shows, with the boat, the sea, the clouds, the sun and even the arms, legs and bathing suit painted in. You cannot just stick any old head in the hole above the neckline and expect the spectator to believe here is a man rowing off the Florida coast. Why do our writers give themselves assignments which involve the most delicate details of speech, regional traits, national psychology and the like, details which it often takes years to master; why do they want to write of places they have never seen, people they do not know (I mean such people in general, not this or that one), events whose terror they can hardly imagine or whose humor they are almost bound to miss? For one thing, many young writers come from middle-class backgrounds and they feel that their own circle of experience is not a serious subject; they are a little ashamed of it. This is a false attitude, harmful to the beginning writer, ruinous if he persists in it. Just as nothing human can be alien to the writer, so there can be no incident, no character, no group of people whose speech or actions need be trivial in implication or impossible to fit in the context of society. It is vital for the writer to widen the circle of his experience, to live in new places. But he must not dilute his expression to cover areas alien to his eyes and ears. He cannot invent or concoct life. For life does not spring from fancy. *It is the root of imagination.*

We must also make every effort to develop writers from the working class, from rural areas and among the national minorities in our country, out of whose lives and thoughts our best literature may come. It is significant that some of the finest contributions in poetry and the short story in NEW MASSES have come from young Negro, Jewish, Irish and Lithuanian writers, among them shop, steel and tin-mill workers, seamen and longshoremen, railroad men and farmers.

(The concluding half of this article will appear next week.)

THIS is a rich, exciting and important book. It is the story of the National Maritime Union, but it is also the story of America and the best part of its people. Boyer is one of our country's best reporters; what is not generally considered is that he is also a fine and sensitive writer. He can write of the so-called "little people" without condescension, which is more than many equally well-intentioned writers can do. This may seem a negative virtue, but it is a rare one. He has chosen as a theme the growth of a working-class organization and the growth of the individuals who make up the organization, surely one of the most basic of American themes. As he says in one of the book's sharpest passages, "The canons of accepted taste and self-interest usually combine to blind writers, editors, preachers and other moralists to that which is heroic in their own age. They can be eloquent enough about the Battles of Lexington and Concord, or the administration of Jackson, the covered wagon and the winning of the West. But the present they often regard as a degenerate age filled with little but backbiting and self-interest. They see nothing of kinship between the men who fought for their rights at Concord and the men who fight for their rights on the picket line. . . . Even Jackson's unkempt masses have acquired the benediction of time; but the steel workers, auto workers, coal miners, electrical workers and seamen, the 14,000,000 American trade-unionists who fight in the present, are too disturbing to honor."

Then Boyer goes on to describe those of the 14,000,000 who happen to be seamen. There is Blackie Myers, "nervous, intense, cocky and brave," whose family has lived in Brooklyn since 1660, and who has been beaten up by cops and company goons from New Orleans to Puerto Rico. There is Bill McCarthy, a former model student at St. Patrick's Parochial School, also in Brooklyn, who went to sea in 1935 as a bellboy, and two years later was fighting fascism in Spain; Arthur McBowman, "a proud, mild little Negro, born in Georgia, who says he is staying in the NMU because he feels he can do more for his race in it than in any other place in American life"; J. Gordon Rosen, "who somehow resembles the sculptured bust of some old Roman senator," who had been the president of his high school senior class in Delavan, Wisconsin, and who saw first-hand that the only difference between fascism in Hamburg, Germany, and Port Arthur, Texas, "was that it was local in Port Arthur and national in Germany. In each case the employers owned the law and operated it for their own benefit. It just wasn't organized as well in Port Arthur. There was and still is a chance to defeat it."

There are many others, dedicated to the defeat of fascism. They have seen it actively at work (many of them were, torpedoed several times during the war) and they know what it means in personal, immediate terms. To understand them and the labor movement, as Boyer points out, "one must understand that there are men in it who would die for it without flourish and without heroics. . . . It is a move-



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ment that draws from its members that kind of devotion." The men who organized the NMU after the 1936 strike were that kind of men. Many of them still are. They are in the great tradition of the working class Americans who built our country. To read about them is to be filled with a great pride that these are Americans, and a great contempt for those who would call them un-American. Their story is one of personal and group heroism in a context of growing political awareness. These men of the NMU starved through the depression, riding the rails from one end of the country to the other, looking for work. Many of them, nurtured in a dog-eat-dog society, were only out for themselves. In the fight for simple survival, for the elementary right to live decently as human beings, they learned the lessons of organization. They learned their dependence on each other and their power as a united group. They gave their lives all over the world so that "there would come a time when history would say: 'These men were the nation's vanguard. They fought the main fight before others even knew a life-and-death struggle faced the world.'"

Some of these men today have deserted the fight. Boyer's book was written before the present factional difficulties split the NMU, and before its president, Joe Curran, had begun his campaign of Red-baiting the strength of the union, which is the unity of its members, out of existence. Several of the men he writes about are currently occupied in destroying the union they helped build. I do not think, however, that this invalidates *The Dark Ship*. Boyer is interested in Curran, for example, as a typical success story of the past decade: the union leader rises from the depths of the proletariat to a recognized position as one of its leaders, and in the process becomes a new and developed person, representative of the people who are gradually assuming leadership of the world. The story of how some of these men later turned phony, as Curran has done, is not to be found in this book. The story that Boyer tells is larger, more positive—if less complex—and more important.

Perhaps, though, what can be learned from Curran's defection and the present trouble in the NMU is the necessity to concentrate attention on the rank and file and on the collective leadership of a union, rather than on its particular

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leader. Whether or not Curran had turned sour by the time *The Dark Ship* was written, he still occupies a disproportionately important part of the book. For example, the great 1936 maritime strike is presented partly in terms of the rank and file, but more particularly in terms of Curran. There is little indication that the strike was planned and won by a group of leaders, of whom Curran was only one—and not the most important one at that. It seems to me that this is a weakness that goes beyond the fact of Curran himself quitting the fight at a later date. It is too much of a dependence on the individual, and this is bad regardless of how necessary the individual may seem at the time.

Yet *The Dark Ship* is not just the story of Joe Curran. It is the story of all the seamen who formed the NMU. Boyer has told their story through personalities, which is a wise and fruitful way, more difficult than it may seem. He has resisted what must have been an overwhelming temptation to present the seamen simply as picturesque types. He has managed the more difficult job of showing them, without sacrificing color or shading, as disciplined and purposeful men in a concrete historical situation. And in the process he has supplied an enormous amount of information about the union, what it has done and how it functions. The result is a really new kind of book, one that should be written about other unions: the longshoremen on the West Coast, the automobile workers of Detroit, the steel workers, the furriers, the electrical workers. That is the real and primary importance of *The Dark Ship*. In a period of the most violent attack on trade unionism and the rights of all people, it shows clearly and without equivocation to whom the future belongs.

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IN NEW MASSES

NAZI GERMANY'S WAR AGAINST THE JEWS, prepared and compiled by Seymour Krieger. American Jewish Conference. \$5. The first completely documented account of Germany's aggression against the Jewish people from the beginnings of the Nazi party in 1920 to Hitler's defeat in May, 1945. Mr. Krieger was a member of Justice Jackson's staff at the Nurnberg trial.

WHAT PRICE PROFITS? by Max Weiss. New Century. 15¢. The best modern pamphlet that we have seen on the question of what determines prices and labor's role in the fight for wage increases. A must in this field. The author is Secretary of the National Education Commission of the Communist Party.

MY LIFE AND HARD TIMES, by James Thurber. Bantam. 25¢. Complete and unabridged. As Thurber as ever.

NATIVE AMERICAN HUMOR, edited by James Aswell. Harper. \$3.75. An anthology of well-known and obscure material, some of it intelligently revised and abridged.

TRINIDAD VILLAGE, by Melville J. Herskovits and Frances S. Herskovits. Knopf. \$4.75. A study of the persistence of African folk culture in a village in the homeland of Calypso.

ON BROADWAY

THIS theater season is not ending in any burst of glory. Of the last three productions to come to Broadway Molnar's maudlin *Miracle in the Mountains* is too banally mystical, and Harry Thurschwell and Alfred Golden's *A Young Man's Fancy* and H. S. Lingsfelder and Ervin Drake's *Heads or Tails* are too banally gag-ridden, to justify taking space to analyze them. The first is already among the departed and the other two are not likely to enjoy a longer life. It only remains to report that Gian-Carlo Menotti's theater-wise operas, *The Medium* and *The Telephone*, reviewed in NEW MASSES in the issue of March 18, have reached Broadway, at the Ethel Barrymore Theater.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.



Paul Hogarth.

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