

**NEW** **MASSSES**



**JUNE**  
**1932**  
15 c

**ROMAIN ROLLAND • HUGHES • SEAVER • BRAGIN • GORKY**

# I Cry: Help!

In the name of besieged China—in the name of the menaced Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—in the name of the peoples of the earth—in the name of the great hopes of humanity which the awakening of the oppressed races of Asia and the heroic reconstruction of proletarian Russia arouse and sustain in us, I cry: Help! Down with the assassins! And I denounce to all the world, the ignoble lies of the governments of Europe and America, especially that of France, whose handful of adventurers in the service of the warmongers stretch out their rapacious fingers over the earth and use Japanese imperialism as the executioner's axe to sever the heads of the revolution. And I denounce the treason of that intellectual class which formerly was the look-out at the mast of the ship to pilot it through storms—which today purchases its peace and comfort by its silence or its servile flattery which serves the interests of the moneyed and privileged classes. And I denounce the farce of Geneva and the folly of the League of Nations.

I appeal to the sleeping conscience of the best forces of Europe and America. I appeal to the consciousness of colossal power as yet unrealized in all the people of the world, to cut the serpents knot of all the plutocratic and military Fascisms which tomorrow will encircle the globe—to crush the new-born conspiracy and to seal the union of the working masses of all free peoples.

**Romain Rolland**



# NEW MASSES

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## DRAFT MANIFESTO of JOHN REED CLUBS

The Editors of New Masses take pleasure in publishing this Manifesto which is a draft prepared by the John Reed Club of New York to be submitted to the conference of John Reed Clubs of the United States, meeting in Chicago, on May 30. The conference was called following a suggestion to the International Union of Revolutionary writers. The International Union then empowered the Executive Board of the New York Club to constitute itself a national organizing committee, to function until a regularly elected National Executive Board could be formed.

Mankind is passing through the most profound crisis in its history. An old world is dying; a new one is being born. Capitalist civilization, which has dominated the economic, political, and cultural life of continents, is in the process of decay. It received a deadly blow during the imperialist war which it engendered. It is now breeding new and more devastating wars. At this very moment the Far East seethes with military conflicts and preparations which will have far-reaching consequences for the whole of humanity.

Meantime, the prevailing economic crisis is placing greater and greater burdens upon the mass of the world's population, upon those who work with hand or brain. In the cities of five-sixths of the globe, millions of workers are tramping the streets looking for jobs in vain. In the rural districts, millions of farmers are bankrupt. The colonial countries reverberate with the revolutionary struggles of oppressed peoples against imperialist exploitation; in the capitalist countries the class struggle grows sharper from day to day.

The present crisis has stripped capitalism naked. It stands more revealed than ever as a system of robbery and fraud, unemployment and terror, starvation and war.

The general crisis of capitalism is reflected in its culture. The economic and political machinery of the bourgeoisie is in decay, its philosophy, its literature, and its art are bankrupt. Sections of the bourgeoisie are beginning to lose faith in its early progressive ideas. The bourgeoisie is no longer a progressive class, and its ideas are no longer progressive ideas. On the contrary: as the bourgeois world moves toward the abyss, it reverts to the mysticism of the middle ages. Fascism in politics is accompanied by neo-catholicism in thinking. Capitalism cannot give the mass of mankind bread. It is equally unable to evolve creative ideas.

This crisis in every aspect of life holds America, like the other capitalist countries, in its iron grip. Here there is unemployment, starvation, terror, and preparation for war. Here the government, national, state and local, is dropping the hypocritical mask of democracy, and openly flaunts a fascist face. The demand of the unemployed for work or bread is answered with machine-gun bullets. Strike areas are closed to investigators; strike leaders are murdered in cold blood. And as the pretense of constitutionalism is dropped, as brute force is used against workers fighting for better living conditions, investigations reveal the utmost corruption and graft in government, and the closest cooperation of the capitalist political parties and organized crime.

In America, too, bourgeois culture writhes in a blind alley. Since the imperialist war, the best talents in bourgeois literature and art, philosophy and science, those who have the finest imaginations and the richest craftsmanship, have revealed from year to year the sterility, the utter impotence of bourgeois culture to advance mankind to higher levels. They have made it clear that although the bourgeoisie has a monopoly of the instruments of culture, its culture is in decay. Most of the American writers who have developed in the past fifteen years betray the cynicism and despair of capitalist values. The movies are a vast corrupt commercial enterprise, turning out infantile entertainment or crude propaganda for the profit of stockholders. Philosophy has become mystical and idealist. Science goes in for godseeking. Painting loses itself in abstractions or trivialities.

In the past two years, however, a marked change has come over the American intelligentsia. The class struggle in culture has assumed sharp forms. Recently we have witnessed two major movements among American intellectuals: the Humanist movement, frankly reactionary in its ideas; and a movement to the left among certain types of liberal intellectuals.

The reasons for the swing to the left are not hard to find. The best of the younger American writers have come, by and large, from the middle-classes. During the boom which followed the war these classes increased their income. They played the stock-market with profit. They were beneficiaries of the New Era. The crash in the autumn of 1929 fell on their heads like a thunderbolt. They found themselves the victims of the greatest expropriation in the history of the country. The articulate members of the middle-classes—the writers and artists, the members of the learned professions—lost that faith in capitalism which during the twenties trapped them into dreaming on the decadent shores of post-war European culture. These intellectuals suddenly awoke to the fact that we live in the era of imperialism and revolution; that two civilizations are in mortal combat and that they must take sides.

A number of factors intensified their consciousness of the true state of affairs. The crisis has affected the intellectual's mind because it has affected his income. Thousands of school-teachers, engineers, chemists, newspapermen and members of other professions are unemployed. The publishing business has suffered acutely from the economic crisis. Middle-class patrons are no longer able to buy paintings as they did formerly. The movies and theatres are discharging writers, actors and artists. And in the midst of this economic crisis, the middle-class intelligentsia, nauseated by the last war, sees another one, more barbarous still, on the horizon. They see the civilization in whose tenets they were nurtured going to pieces.

In contrast, they see a new civilization rising in the Soviet Union. They see a land of 160,000,000 people, occupying one-sixth

of the globe, where workers rule in alliance with farmers. In this vast country there is no unemployment. Amidst the decay of capitalist economy, Soviet industry and agriculture rise to higher and higher levels of production every year. In contrast to capitalist anarchy, they see planned Socialist economy. They see a system with private profit and the parasitic classes which it nourishes abolished; they see a world in which the land, the factories, the mines, the rivers, and the hands and brains of the people produce wealth not for a handful of capitalists but for the nation as a whole. In contrast to the imperialist oppression of the colonies, to the lynching of Negroes, to Scottsboro cases, they see 132 races and nationalities in full social and political equality cooperating in the building of a Socialist society. Above all, they see a cultural revolution unprecedented in history, unparalleled in the contemporary world. They see the destruction of the monopoly of culture. They see knowledge art and science made more accessible to the mass of workers and peasants. They see workers and peasants themselves creating literature and art, themselves participating in science and invention. And seeing this, they realize that the Soviet Union is the vanguard of the new Communist society which is to replace the old.

Some of the intellectuals who have thought seriously about the world crisis, the coming war and the achievements of the Soviet Union, have taken the next logical step. They have begun to realize that in every capitalist country the revolutionary working class struggles for the abolition of the outworn and barbarous system of capitalism. Some of them, aligning themselves with the American workers, have gone to strike areas in Kentucky and Pennsylvania and have given their talents to the cause of the working class.

Such allies from the disillusioned middle-class intelligentsia are to be welcomed. But of primary importance at this stage is the development of the revolutionary culture of the working class itself. The proletarian revolution has its own philosophy developed by Marx, Engels and Lenin. It has developed its own revolutionary schools, newspapers, and magazines; it has its worker-correspondence, its own literature and art. In the past two decades there have developed writers, artists and critics who have approached the American scene from the viewpoint of the revolutionary workers.

To give this movement in arts and letters greater scope and force, to bring it closer to the daily struggle of the workers, the John Reed Club was formed in the fall of 1929. In the past two and a half years, the influence of this organization has spread to many cities. Today there are thirteen John Reed Clubs throughout the country. These organizations are open to writers and artists, whatever their social origin, who subscribe to the fundamental program adopted by the international conference of revolutionary writers and artists which met at Kharkov, in November, 1930. The program contains six points upon which all honest intellectuals, regardless of their background, may unite in the common struggle against capitalism. They are:

(1) Fight against imperialist war, defend the Soviet Union against capitalist aggression;

(2) Fight against fascism, whether open or concealed, like social-fascism;

(3) Fight for the development and strengthening of the revolutionary labor movement;

(4) Fight against white chauvinism (against all forms of Negro discrimination or persecution) and against the persecution of the foreign-born;

(5) Fight against the influence of middle-class ideas in the work of revolutionary writers and artists;

(6) Fight against the imprisonment of revolutionary writers and artists, as well as other class-war prisoners throughout the world.

On the basis of this minimum program, we call upon all honest intellectuals, all honest writers and artists, to abandon decisively the treacherous illusion that art can exist for art's sake, or that the artist can remain remote from the historic conflicts in which all men must take sides. We call upon them to break with bourgeois ideas which seek to conceal the violence and fraud, the corruption and decay of capitalist society. We call upon them to align themselves with the working-class in its struggle against capitalist oppression and exploitation, against unemployment and terror, against fascism and war. We urge them to join with the literary and artistic movement of the working-class in forging a new art that shall be a weapon in the battle for a new and superior world.

## TELL THAT TO THE MARINES!



1917

## We Are Waiting, Two Soviet Writers Appeal

The graves of the great imperialist butchery are not yet forgotten. Those who were not entirely beaten and crippled, the invalids, still live on to brand with crime the governments of all nations. Again there is war. The Chinese people have been attacked. The immediate danger of war threatens even the USSR. Again millions of active working men will be sent into service at the front—cannon-fodder for the bankers.

In France, a country with a centuries-old culture, the government is abetting the destruction of all that technical achievement which the nationalities of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics wrought by straining their energies to the utmost. What greater shame for France—the home of thinkers and artists! And yet many of the representatives of the cultural life of contemporary France maintain an obstinate silence. The voice of Romain Rolland should not sound alone. And not only from France—from every country in the world we must hear the voices of the creators of the spiritual works of the nations. We are waiting for them. The USSR, the fatherland of the toiling masses of the whole world, will find support in the proletariat of all countries against the death-dealing guns that the capitalists are levelling upon us.

*In every army division in the enemy's camp we will find not only foes, but also defenders. Of that we are convinced. Then*

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193-?

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## Intellectuals!

*the ignominy of those representatives of culture will indeed be great who did not raise their voices against the danger of attack upon the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics by those countries that desire our destruction.*

LYDIA SEIFULINA

### *Why I Defend the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*

I will defend the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics not only because I am a citizen of the USSR, not only because in the mobilization I must take my place in the ranks of the Red Army.

I will defend the USSR because the attack against our Union is an attack on the homeland of all toiling humanity. Because what we have built up in these glorious years is the basis for the future transformation of the whole world.

Only a barren humanism can conjure up abstract notions on the reality of things and vague speculations of good and evil in this world. That section of the leading intellectuals of the West which does not cry out with us today—"To arms for the defense of the toilers! Struggle against the menace of war! Struggle against the war which is now being waged in the Far East!"—that section of the intellectuals the logic of history will very soon leave behind in ignominy and shame.

VLADIMIR LIDIN



TELL THAT TO THE MARINES!

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193-?

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JAMES HOGGHERY ILLUSTRATION

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VLADIMIR LIDIN

## At the Shanghai Pier

*In the evening the sea with the high tide surges  
And the cold wind of November blows.  
Stealthily the smoke of tobacco floats  
Under the sign: NO SMOKING  
From the tough fingers of Chen-lung-te.  
He is my comrade and tomorrow he departs for Shanghai.  
Chen-lung-te, I ask him, what memories have you?  
—I remember the bats that flew under the eaves of childhood,  
But now Shanghai is a maelstrom  
And the gentle songs of evening have been strangled  
With the death of the past.  
Our songs are not those of children but of revolution,  
Songs of struggle and of comrades who starve.  
We remember the odors of cotton and wheat  
But from hunger we strive to advance.  
Now at the piers are no merry mariners  
And boatswains and stokers are driven to land from steamers  
To never return.  
The sea gulls with dirty wings fly on the sea in this evening  
As ever, but with talk and laughter  
Dynamite is concealed. It is we who intend to aggravate  
The struggle in China, and Chen-lung-te is the fire to ignite  
Their hearts with the solidarity of ours.*

SHINKICHI ITO

## Children of Japanese Soldiers

Save the Comrades in To-Koku District!

*In the afternoon the children are picking the flower of the petasites  
On the sides of the bank in the snow-break.  
(The thin scruff,  
The pale cheeks,  
The painfulness of profile of a girl who is smiling lonely  
Peering into a poverty-stricken basket.  
In hunger and cold  
The children in the district of bad harvest  
Are picking eagerly the flower of the petasites.*

Children!

*Why were your brothers sent to prison?  
For what were they entrained to the slaughter of Manchuria?  
Why were your sisters returned with empty hands from the city  
By a government that has taken tax  
From your impoverished fathers for tens of years?  
What life has it guaranteed you?  
Even now in your breasts of bitterness,  
Which subsist on the flower of the petasites instead of rice,  
Flaming revolt is burning  
On the ashes of starvation.  
Who says, "It is not only the tenant farmers that are distressed?"  
When did the children of landowners go together,  
Picking the flower of the petasites?  
Dumplings of rice bran are always upon their table.*

*In the evening when the northern winds are blowing  
Your mothers wash the moxa beside the river,  
Children hurry home, holding their baskets,  
And babies cry from the hollow pain of their bodies.  
O, the children in the district of bad harvest,  
With hunger and revolt ironed upon their faces  
Will grow up to be stronger than starvation or prison,  
Will throw away the bitter baskets  
Containing the hopeless flower of the petasites  
And demand of those who have taxed them with exploitation  
The warm boiled rice of their labor!*

TASUKU NAGASAWA

Adapted from the Japanese by Norman Macleod and Masaki Ikeda.

# THE 19TH ROUTE ARMY SPEAKS

The soldiers are lying in a former school—now a hospital. The first in order is Tien sho shin. He has been wounded in the arm. His uniform is hanging on a nail. On his cap is a map of Shanghai. He is the highest in social rank among the soldiers, his parents being landowners in Hunan province. In 1929 they owned 100 mu, thirteen acres. When his father died Tien's elder brother sold their estate secretly. Now only two and one half acres remain. This land his mother rents to poor peasants and receives fifty percent of her tenants' crops in payment.

"My name is Tien sho shin and I joined the 19th Route Army when I was seventeen because then it was still a revolutionary army. In 1930 I fought against General Yen shi shan's troops in Shanshi province where I was wounded. Now our army is no longer revolutionary, but Nanking is worse than our army". My question as to why Chiang kai shek did not support the troops against the Japanese, Tien refused to answer. "I have fought against the Reds. They are stronger and braver than our Japanese adversaries. The Soviet organization in Kiangsi is very strong. All the villages there are full of it, and when our troops reach the villages they find all the people have disappeared with their belongings and food. Last year our general, Tsai ting, sent a telegram to Nanking from Kiangsi: 'We are not dying by the hand of the enemy, but from lack of salt'. The 19th Route Army is the strongest anti-Red army, and we were much hated by the Reds." Tien sho shin seemed to want to say much more, but did not dare.

In the next room lies Li shen tsung. He has a narrow, tanned face, and glistening white teeth. His unkempt black hair falls over his forehead, and in his animation he forgets the pain of his wound until a sudden movement reminds him, and he lies back, gritting his teeth.

"At sixteen I left home and became a clerk in a district of Hunan province. But I was too proud to remain there, for they made it hard for me, and then, too, I was bored. So at eighteen I joined the army, because the army is more energetic and active." In the army he stood one rank higher than a common soldier and received four dollars a month wages. He belonged to the 16th division in Hunan and had come to Shanghai only a few days before. He had sent the colonel of the 16th division a telegram asking him to send them to reenforce the 19th Route Army in Shanghai. The colonel refused, whereupon Li deserted with ten men under him and took them to Shanghai where he served as a common soldier in the 19th Route Army. He sustained a severe wound in the arm.

"The government doesn't support the anti-Japanese movement sufficiently. The Japanese have better munitions than the Chinese, but the Chinese are braver. China is in crying need of the support of all countries, for the imperialist attack by Japan (he made use of that expression) is only the first step toward the complete partition of China into colonies. The Chinese peasants and soldiers are very poor. More important than the struggle against the Japanese is the struggle between the peasants and the rich people. I have a friend, he is a Red Soldier, in the army of Peng te hwe and Hwang kung liu. In 1928, the combined armies of the two Red leaders numbered 1300 men. In 1932—400,000. I asked myself, 'Why was the 19th Route Army not popular with the masses during its fight against the Reds? And why are we supported by the masses now in our struggle against the Japanese?' Because this time it is a struggle for the masses, and the fight against the Reds was not.

"Why don't I fight on the side of the Reds? Because I am waiting until I have some authority in the 19th Route Army. Then I will put my opinions into practice, and not alone either, but with many others."

In the next room are a number of serious cases. I pick out one young soldier who is singing to himself. He has a leg wound and suffers less than the others.

Long fe (which means the dragon's flight) is nineteen years old. His parents are peasants who own two acres of their own and rent two and a half acres for which they must give up one half of their crops. His schooling consisted of two years, after which he was apprenticed to a shoemaker. "He beat me and gave me nothing to eat, so that I ran away to the army when I was twelve and have been a soldier ever since." At first he fought under General Wu pei fu, whose army was defeated and taken over by General Tang shin tse. Tang's army was captured by General Chang fa kwai. Under Chang he did not receive any wages for six months, so he

deserted to the 19th Route Army. Long fe had fought for a year against the Reds, and said, "The Reds know the roads better than the government troops. They are very clever and have the support of the population. When the government troops reach a village, they find it absolutely empty. The rich flee to the cities and the poor go off with the Red Army. We remained several months in that district and had to mend our own shirts and harvest our own rice, otherwise we'd have starved. Especially we lacked salt. The Japanese are much weaker opponents than the Reds. When the Reds take prisoners, they ask them if they want to fight on their side, or go back to the government armies. If they want to go back, the Reds give them a passport and three dollars. Many prisoners prefer to remain with the Reds than go back to the government armies. When whole troops and their leaders are captured, the Reds ask the soldiers, 'Is your officer good or bad? If he is good, we will not kill him, because we do not wish to kill more than we have to.' The leader is killed only if his own troops agree to it.

"The Red Army of Fukien province has 100,000 men. The Red Army is not built on individualism, but on the idea of the masses, and its slogan is: 'Down with imperialism!' But the Nanking government doesn't want that, and so the Nanking government fights the Reds."

Wu tin shwe is a common soldier. When I sit down beside his bed, he reaches for the thermos bottle and pours me some of his tea in the cover.

He is twenty-eight years old and comes from a village near Canton. He went to school for one year and can read a little. His father owns two acres of land, of which one fourth belongs to Wu tin shwe. His father is a bad man, smokes opium and gambles away his money. So his son joined the army.

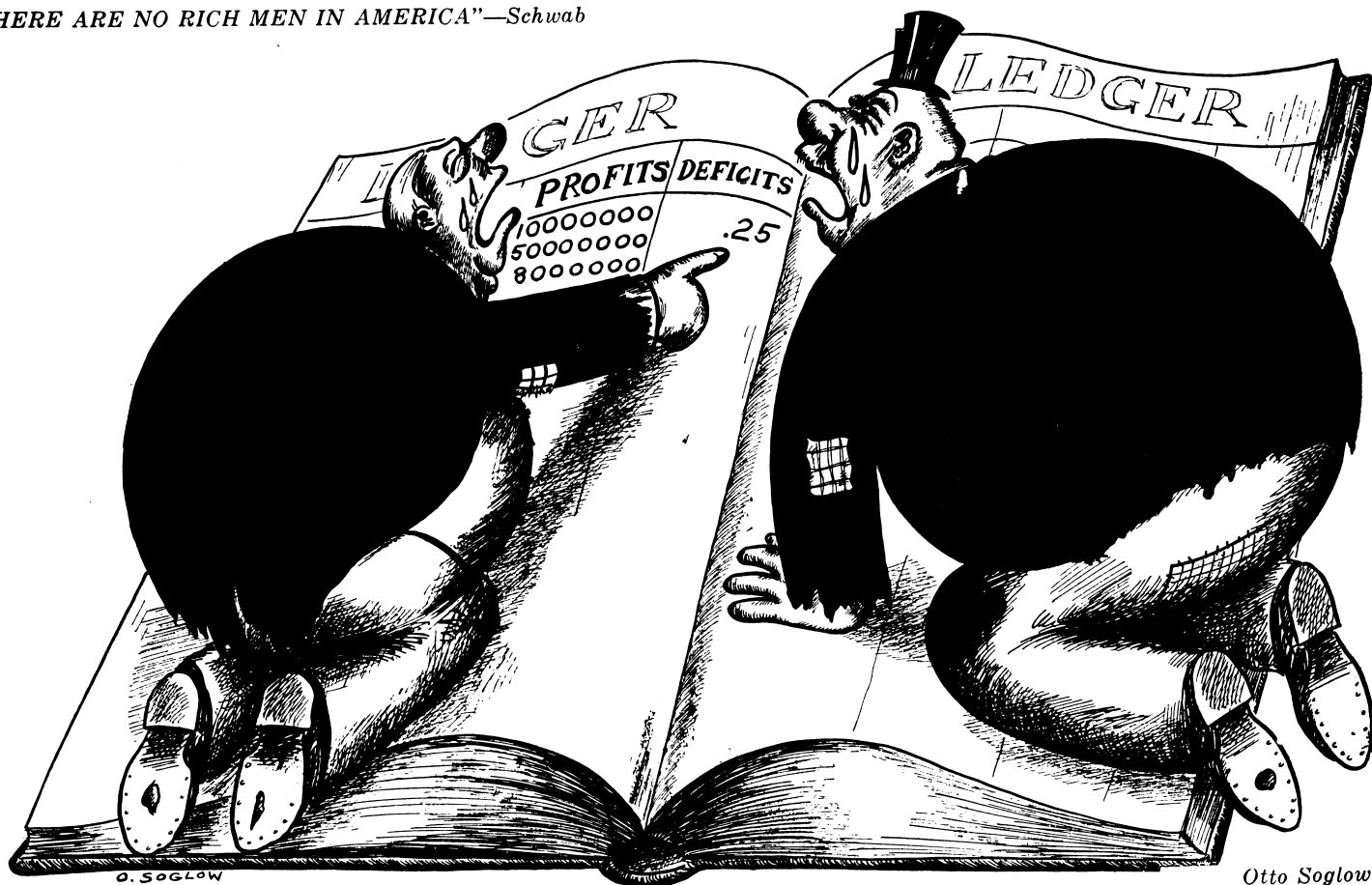
In 1931, he fought against the Reds in Kiangsi, and said, "The war against the Reds is very difficult. The land is mountainous, and the Reds know the roads much better than we. The 19th Route Army is much feared by the Reds. When we came the Reds fled. On the other hand, they would surround other government armies and capture them. Whoever wants may remain with the Reds. The others are given money and sent back. Once we were on one mountain and the Red Army was on another mountain opposite. The Reds had many women with them, and the women shouted over to our mountain, 'Come over to us, we have food and we are fighting for your interests!' In the Red villages are lots of schools with many books about Communism. When we came to the villages we used to take the books and read them, and our officers, too. But now we are not permitted to keep the books, we have to burn them.

"The poor peasants go to other poor peasants and say, 'The rich man must go into the Red Army and let us take his money, or we will kill him.' The land is divided among the poor peasants according to the size of the family. Then a board with the name and the number of acres that now belong to the peasant is put up in his field. In this fight ten of our men are a match for one hundred Japanese, but a hundred of us are not a match for one hundred Reds."

Wu tin shwe had fought the Reds in Kiangsi from January, 1930 to July 1931. "The Reds are very strong, they are supported by the masses. When the Reds capture our soldiers, they do not kill them, but when we capture them, we have to kill them. We don't want to, but our leaders say we have to. When we reach the Red villages, all the people have gone off with the Red army. Then our leaders command us to set fire to the villages and fields for a mile around. The Red villages have many schools with red flags. In Kiangsi there is what is called an agrarian revolution. That means that the land is taken away from the rich and divided among the poor. The Soviet government has a big book with all the names of the peasants and how much each took at the new distribution. And the same thing is written on a wooden sign and put up on every piece of land. I do not think this method is right. It is true, that all become free and equal in that way, but you can't just do away with private property. If they take everything from the rich, where can we borrow anything? It is our fate if we are poor, and we should do nothing about it."

Wu tin shwe's neighbor sat up in bed and began to argue with him. "The Communist system is better. All alike. Take away the land from the rich—that's good."





O. SOGLOW

Otto Soglow

## MANUEL GOMEZ

# THE END OF A SYSTEM

Whether bravery or folly prompted Thomas Nixon Carver to write his apologia of capitalism for the April issue of *Current History* I leave the reader to decide. A discreet silence would have been the better part of wisdom, to leave aside entirely the question of good taste. For Mr. Carver is not merely a reactionary professor of political economy at Harvard University, but he is a man who has made a great name for himself throughout the bourgeois world by reiterating simply that capitalism and prosperity are synonymous terms.

The article is a bewildering grotesquerie, to be sure, but it has its importance, first because of Professor Carver's standing, second because it represents perhaps the first effort at a generalized defense of capitalism by a prominent American economist since the present phase of the economic crisis set in, and finally because of the discussion it has evoked.

"Capitalism Survives" is Professor Carver's title. Eliminating all the gibberish about the American (capitalist) system being one of contract and reward, and the Soviet system being one of authority and command, his thesis may be compressed into four propositions: (1) That Marxists are wrong in their theory of concentration of wealth on the one hand and increasing working-class misery on the other. (2) That according to Marxist teaching Communism would have to come first in the most advanced capitalist countries but actually it has threatened only in very backward ones. (3) That although, with the development of the tools of production, "ownership and work are now more or less separated," the class division is not more basic than divisions along lines of "religion, race, color or cultural standards." (4) That "wherever industries have become most capitalistic, there the workers are best paid and most comfortable."

It is not to be assumed that Professor Carver succeeds in stating these propositions in anything like orderly fashion. The quality of this economist's reasoning may be appreciated from the fact that he defines capital as "all goods which help their owners legally (!) to get an income"—and then suggests that the Soviets "might almost as well pay their own people for the service of supplying capital" as to borrow from foreigners.

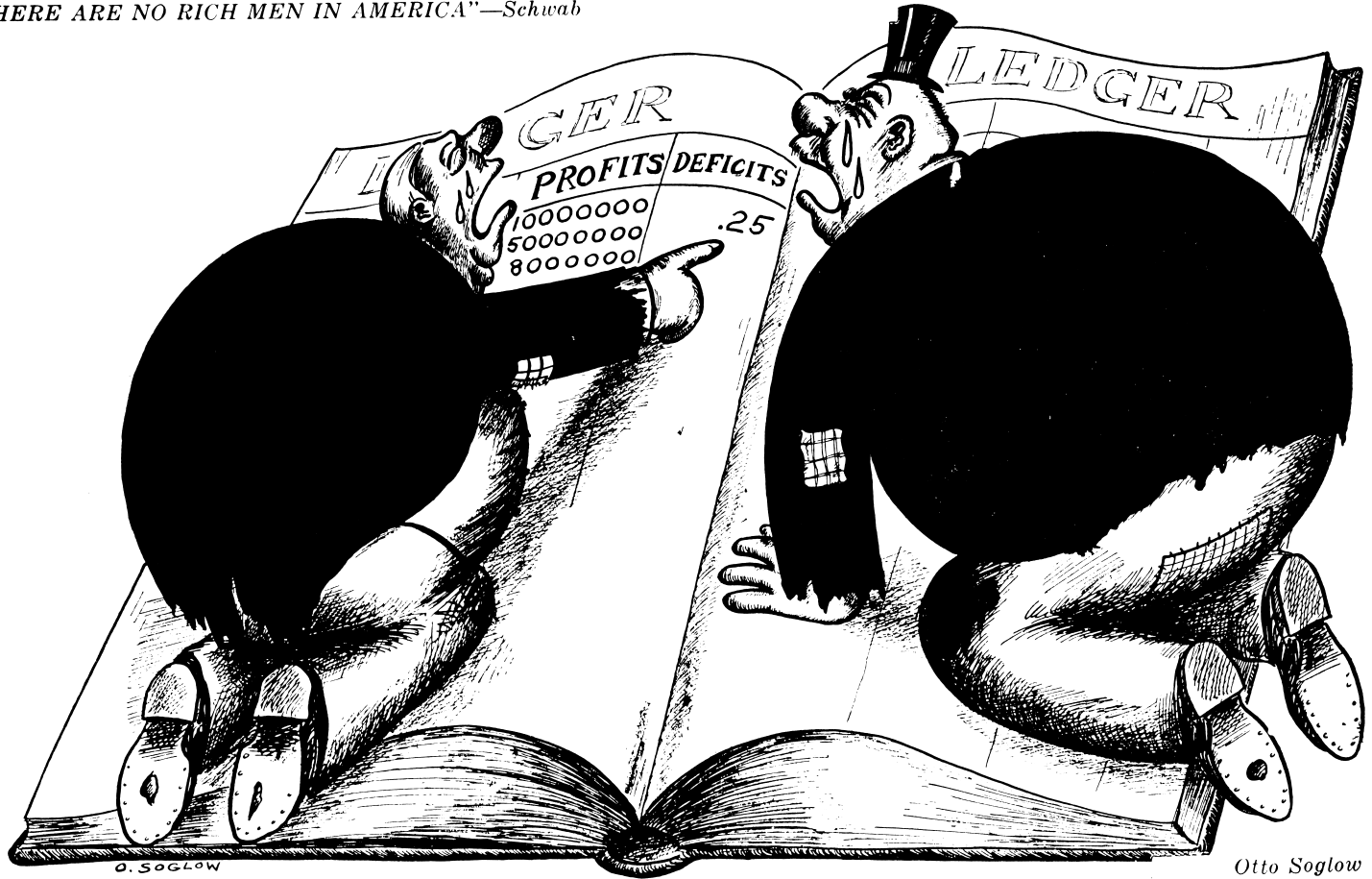
"Capitalism," he says, "is not always a system in which pro-

duction is carried on for profit. It may be a system under which production is carried on for wages (!)—as when a laborer owns his own tools. Tools are capital, and where they are privately owned there is capital in the most fundamental sense." Here the meaning is obscured by the ridiculous misapplication of the term "wages", but the professor later makes it plain that his reference is to an earlier period of tool-owning workers. He goes on to say "if it was useful to make *small* tools then, it is useful to make *large* ones now. If the *owner* was entitled to something for their use then, he is entitled to something for their use now." (Emphasis mine. M. G.)

Such monstrosities of expression of course require no comment. I present them merely as a sample—so that the reader may get an idea of the sort of thing with which we are dealing. The main point is that here is a defense of capitalist stability which takes no inquiring note of the most deep-going economic crisis in history, which does not attempt to explain how that crisis came about—or how it is to be overcome, which considers neither supply and demand relations, nor reinvestment problems, nor international rivalries, which dismisses class divisions as of secondary importance, and which talks fatuously about the well-being of the workers at a time when breadlines dot the land. Capitalism survives! But when its leading economic spokesmen abandon all pretense of analytical examination into its problems, we have one of the most convincing signs that there is no vitality in it.

Data regarding the mergers and combinations have become so plentiful in recent years that one wonders how even Professor Carver can have the nerve to question the theory of concentration and centralization of capital under capitalism. The 1930 income tax returns showed that 200 corporations, representing less than one-sixteenth of 1 per cent of the 303,000 companies filing returns, reported more than 40 per cent of all net income and 44 per cent of all gross assets. If stockholders's lists were available, or if the existence of billions of dollars of tax-exempt securities did not make it impossible to get adequate figures on large individual incomes, a much more striking contrast could be presented. As for the great mass of the workers, they file no income tax returns, because of insufficient income. At least 12,000,000

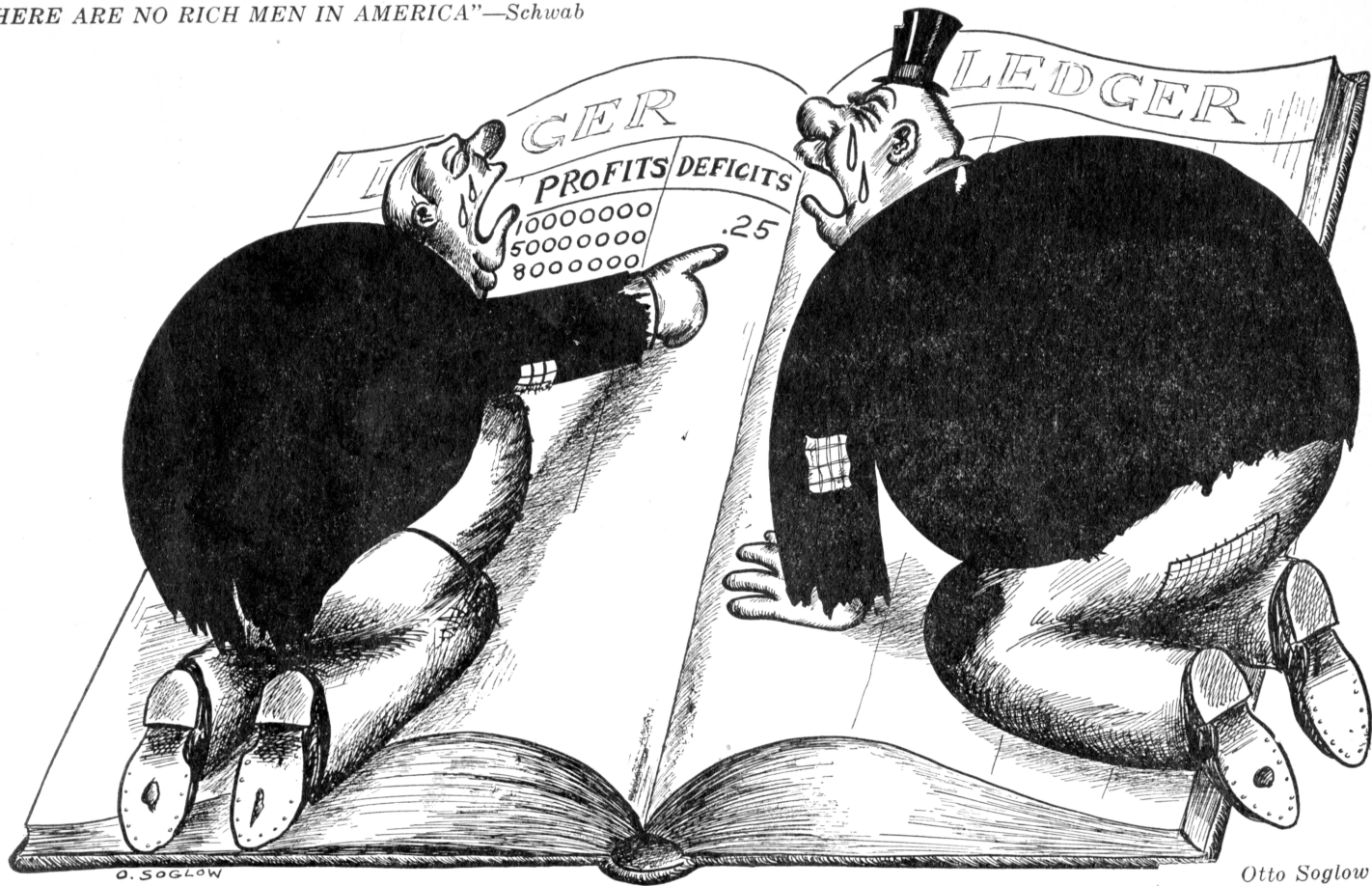
"THERE ARE NO RICH MEN IN AMERICA"—Schwab



O. SOGLOW

Otto Soglow

"THERE ARE NO RICH MEN IN AMERICA"—Schwab





workers are unemployed at the present time, and most of the remainder are working part-time. Professor Carver may object that this is an abnormal period—a period of “depression”—but such “abnormalities” have occurred cyclically since capitalist economy became dominant. Moreover, they have become increasingly frequent and the business chart published by the National Industrial Conference Board shows that since the turn of the century fully half of the time has been taken up by “recession” and “depression.”

The centralization of capital into fewer and fewer hands proceeds step by step through every stage in the development of capitalism. It is assisted by the increasing dependence of large-scale industry on the banks, by the merging of banking groups and by the penetration of bank funds into industry in the form of finance capital. It is accelerated tremendously in periods like the present, when, through bankruptcies of “marginal concerns”, stock market losses and losses of depositors in closed banks, large sections of the bourgeoisie are thrown into the ranks of the proletariat. Centralization of ownership has extended to farm lands. The plight of the working farmer has been a sorry one for years, and the outlook for his property in the period ahead is indicated by the fact that at the present time more than fifty per cent of all farm mortgages are in default.

Professor Carver tells us that the progress of capitalism has meant a general rise in wages. The wage-cost-of-living tables of the Bureau of Economic Research contradict him. He asserts that the general well-being of the workers has improved steadily. How then does he account for the fact that today, one hundred and fifty years since the dawn of the factory system, the organized public and private charities admit they are unable to administer to the most elementary needs of the penniless? The professor cites no evidence whatever to prove his case. No doubt he expects us to think of radios and movies (they no longer talk of automobiles and silk shirts), and to forget that, to the extent that workers may still enjoy them, they are only the counterpart of a system of rationalization and speed-up which, even as it is, wears a worker out before he is forty-five. Add to this the unemployment that is with us even in “normal” times, the system of labor espionage, the terrorization that prevails in company towns, the ravages of imperialist war, and we get something like a proper picture of how the insecurity and misery of the workers has grown with capitalism.

Strangely enough, Professor Carver admits there is a gap separating those who toil and those who live by owning, but he has this to say about it:

“The fact that ownership and work are now more or less separated is an important social fact, but no more important than many other forms of specialization that have come with our industrial development. By far the most important aspect of this separation of ownership and work is psychological. It makes class consciousness possible. But anything which separates people into distinct groups, whether it be religion, race, color or cultural standards, produces the same kind of class consciousness. Wherever class consciousness exists, some one is pretty certain to play upon it for demagogic purposes, and therein lies the danger.”

Can the professor name a single other form of specialization that has “come with our industrial development” and is of comparable importance with the division of society into economic classes? The class division cuts across race and color, it reshapes religious attitudes, it is itself the molder of cultural standards. No one in the capitalist world is seriously afraid of people playing upon racial or cultural differences “for demagogic purposes” except as these affect the basic class struggle. Anarchy of production, and the division of society into classes are the mainsprings of the manifold contradictions of capitalism.

Professing not to see the great revolutionary working-class movements of central and western Europe, it is not surprising that Mr. Carver should fail to understand the significance of the U. S. S. R. Could anyone not abysmally ignorant or deliberately misleading revive the shopworn nonsense about Marxian doctrine providing that Communism would have to come first in the most advanced countries? This is a false rendering of Marxism. Marxists see capitalist economy as international. Marx taught that capitalism would fall as a result of the sharpening contradictions inherent in its development. Whether Marx, living before the epoch of capitalism as imperialism, had expected the revolution to occur first in one country or the other is beside the point. The Russian Revolution was just as truly the fruit of the advanced development of capitalism as if the scene of the event had been



AT THE EMPLOYMENT OFFICE

Jolan Bettelheim

England or Germany. In November, 1917, there was a greater admixture of capitalism in Russia than many professors suppose, but the essential fact of the proletarian revolution there was that it was part of a world phenomenon. It could not have occurred without the world interconnections of capitalism, without the over-ripe development of the general body of capitalism as evidenced in the pattern of imperialism and of class relationships, radiating from the economically advanced countries. It would have been inconceivable without an accumulation of working class experience in the struggle against capitalism, transmitted from one country to another through an international proletarian movement. It could not have taken place without the Paris Commune, which taught fundamental lessons on the subject of proletarian dictatorship. Nor could it have occurred without the clarification of tendencies in the Second International, in which the line of the Bolshevik Party leadership was strengthened. And can its incidence be disassociated from the Imperialist War?

The overthrow of capitalism in Russia was the product of the progressive extension of precisely those contradictions of which Marx wrote. Moreover, it was due quite as much to the stage of capitalist development in England as in Russia.

In considering the international setting of the Russian Revolution it is well to bear in mind that Russia was not the only country to experience working-class uprising in the critical years that climaxed the war. Besides the Soviet regime in Hungary, there were important working-class struggles for power in Germany, Austria, Italy and other countries. They were defeated with the assistance of betrayal on the part of the Social-Democrats. The Russian Social-Democrats betrayed the masses also, but capitalism was not powerful or flexible enough in Russia at that time to provide an adequate background for such efforts. Russia was the weakest link in the capitalist chain. When the chain was ready to snap, naturally the first break came there. Capitalism—not only Russian but world capitalism—exerted every effort to prevent it. Today world capitalism looks upon the U. S. S. R. as its mortal enemy.

Capitalism survives. But how? With an important segment of its domain torn away, and with capitalist authority in much of the remainder being preserved only by open fascist dictatorship, an expedient which obviously cannot last. With divers nations actually in formal bankruptcy, with colonies rising in revolt, with tariff conflicts on all sides. Workers are starving in the midst of plenty. The distribution of commodities breaks down. The tremendous plant equipment of present-day society confronts a gorged market. The problem is not merely one of an immediate “depression”. Capitalism cannot function continuously except on the basis of the progressive accumulation of capital, and the limits of capitalist possibility in this respect have become virtually an actuality. As capitalism struggles to save itself the class antagonisms become sharper, world war threatens, the period of final agony is not far distant.

## NEW MASSES



AT THE EMPLOYMENT OFFICE

*Jolan Bettelheim*

**EDWIN SEAVER****AMERICAN WRITERS AND KENTUCKY**

Within the last year something new has happened in the American literary scene. New, that is, in our own time, although it would be nothing new to the generation of Thoreau and the abolitionists. Our writers have begun to abandon their role of aloofness and disillusion, of cynicism and disdain—their historic role of the twenties—and to become participants instead of amused or bored observers.

Faced with the alternative of retreating within the ivory tower and banging the door shut behind them, or of temporarily relinquishing their typewriters, if need be, to take their stand in the social welter, some of our writers have chosen the latter course as the only way out of a situation that was becoming intolerable. Time alone will show how real was this movement whose beginnings are now in evidence, whether it was merely the exorcism of the depression years or the germinal inception of a new and vital tendency in contemporary American letters. But time will not only reveal, it will also condition and determine, as it has already determined the first steps, for literary movements no more than political or economic arise from thin air to dissolve like smoke into nothingness.

Theodore Dreiser's decision to visit Harlan, Kentucky, as the head of a committee whose purpose was to investigate the terrorism practised against the striking miners there, may well prove to have been a decisive gesture for American writers of the thirties. Nevertheless, it did not represent a sudden and incalculable step on Mr. Dreiser's part. He had recently travelled much throughout the United States and had become convinced that the people of this country needed, as he put it, "a new deal". Almost without his realizing it his vision of life had been turning from his gloomy version of willless, conditioned "chemisms" to a belief that man could devise a less haphazard and brutal state of society, that man could change the ideological superstructure of society, to use a Marxian term, by changing the economic base. And this change in Mr. Dreiser's belief had in turn been conditioned by his visit to Russia some years previously.

Mr. Dreiser's going into Kentucky was only a logical result of a revolution that had taken place within himself. It was the counterpart of the same urge that had made him write *Tragic America*, that had induced him to contribute to the Communist press of this country.

Something of this same revolution must have been going on within the consciousness of Sherwood Anderson, for he could not suddenly, illogically have emerged from psychological novels about marriage and romantic enthusiasm about Negro laughter, to a sober defense of Mr. Dreiser's action in Kentucky and a call for "more such criminal syndicalists."

"He (Dreiser) said in public what millions of Americans are thinking in private," said Mr. Anderson at a mass meeting staged in New York City by the National Committee for Political Prisoners. "For that he was accused of criminal syndicalism. So that's what criminal syndicalism is? I am glad to know. Now I know what's the matter with this country. We need less speak-easy citizens and more criminal syndicalists."

This is a far cry from Sherwood Anderson, the editor of small town newspapers. But so was that a far cry from Sherwood Anderson, the middle-west primitive whom the New York literary elite delighted to honor and to spoil.

What I am getting at is that Mr. Anderson's coming to the defense of Theodore Dreiser was no more sudden, no more erratic than Mr. Dreiser's coming to the defense of the Kentucky miners. It is the result of a process of development that has been going on quietly for some years now. It is an indication of a new temper among American writers, a return of the people to a sense of citizenship, to an awareness of social responsibility beyond the literary responsibility merely of a writer to his craft.

Mr. Dreiser was the first of our established writers to go into Kentucky, but he was not the last. The number by now must total a score or more, and it includes such divergent types as Waldo Frank and Malcolm Cowley. And here again, Mr. Frank's

mystical prophecies about the "rediscovery of America" are of quite a different nature from a voluntarily accepted commission to see that food sent to the starving miners actually got to them—a commission which, as we have seen, was not without peril—as is Mr. Cowley's pure aesthetic preoccupation of a decade ago.

Again, there is a writer like Edmund Wilson. Someone has said in jest that you could plot a graph of Mr. Wilson from Proust to Karl Marx. We may take the jest in earnest and say that you could indeed plot such a graph from "I Thought of Daisy" and "Axel's Castle" to "The American Jitters: A Year of the Slump," and that this graph would again show a new and vital tendency on the part of American writers, a return to a sense of historic immediacy, to a new social awareness that has joined forces with the literary.

If one would like to have a test case for comparison between this new temper and that of the twenties, one has merely to go back five years to the Sacco-Vanzetti case of 1927. It is true that the liberal forces in the United States took an unequivocal stand against the execution of the two men as they had taken a similar stand for justice for Sacco and Vanzetti since the case had begun seven unhappy years before. But our writers were not then allied with these same liberal forces.

They were handicapped by a terrible sense of inertia, and found themselves unprepared and incompetent to do anything in a crisis whose significance was rapidly achieving world dimensions, even within their own limited sphere of literary activity. If in 1927 our writers did not feel themselves to be actually indifferent to the fate of the two anarchists, they nevertheless felt themselves to be impotent.

When protests began to pour in against the imminent execution, it was the writers and artists of Europe who took the lead. One recalls a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay and a personal interview with the Governor of Massachusetts, one recalls heated communications from John Dos Passos, physical protest from the *New Masses* writers. But from the solid reputations of our middle generation—from such men as Mr. Dreiser and Mr. Anderson, for instance—only silence, the silence of impotence.

There is, I submit, a vast difference between the attitude of American writers today in the Kentucky case and their attitude in 1927 in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. It is the difference between the active attitude of the participant, and the passive, hopeless, defeatist attitude of the observer. This far, we can say definitely now, have American literary men come within the last five years.

If we compare the American literary scene today, in this early year of the thirties, with that of the first years of the twenties, are we not justified in saying that a new social-consciousness has taken the place of the old self-consciousness? Compare, for instance, John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers*, published in 1920, with his new novel, 1919. Or compare Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* with his article on the end of the jazz age, published some months ago in *Scribner's*. Or compare H. L. Mencken's *American Credo* with Edmund Wilson's recent articles. Or even Van Wyck Brooks' *Letters and Leadership* with Kenneth Burke's *Counter-Statement* although what Mr. Burke proposes is not a sense of social responsibility, but a program of social irresponsibility to confound our present standardized society.

In this connection it is interesting to note that even within the scope of a single book like *Counter-Statement*, which was begun in the twenties but completed only in 1931, one can see a decided split between the old temper and the new. Thus *Counter-Statement* was conceived originally as a book on aesthetics, and in his opening essays on psychology and form, written in the last decade, Mr. Burke adhered to this intention. But when he came to his closing papers, written a year ago, Mr. Burke could not escape the influence of a different intellectual climate, and with the new decade he crossed the bridge from a purely aesthetic to a social preoccupation. And this is what we mean when we say that time not only reveals but itself conditions and determines literary tendencies.



So one could go down the whole list of publications of the twenties and of now, and pick out comparisons book for book, showing an entirely different attitude on the part of our writers today. An attitude not of scoffing at Main Street but of seeking to understand it as a social phenomenon, an attitude not of boob-thumping but of serious interrogation, an attitude not of crying for freedom but of seeking responsibility.

The early twenties were a period of self-discovery and self-expression. The early thirties point to a period of social discovery and social expression.

The objection may be raised that going into Kentucky to investigate oppressive labor conditions or to distribute food to starving miners and their families is one thing, and writing articles about conditions there and making speeches is still another, but that actually to weld this material into the stuff of creative literature—the ultimate objective of the writer—is still something else, and that this has not as yet been done. It may be objected, in short, that very little if any of this new social-consciousness I have mentioned on the part of American writers has as yet found its way into books of enduring merit.

The objection is valid but not, I think, far-sighted. Books of enduring worth never did grow on trees; in times of stress less so than ever. It will take time before our novels, our poems, our short stories, plays, criticism become socially-minded. For the present, the important thing is precisely the fact that our writers are willing to take time out from their books, are willing to put their convictions into action rather than into words. It is just this move on their part that has broken the charmed circle of lethargy and frustration that marked the culmination of the twenties.

By the end of the last decade our literature had reached a stage of almost complete divorce not only from the dominant ideas of the age, but from any ideological content whatsoever. We were going around and around in an ever narrowing circle of disillusion and cynicism and violence and despair. A whole world had gone down with the war, leaving us only with a very bad taste in the mouth; we were growing stupid, yes, and desperate with prosperity. Something had to happen, something that meant life, that meant impact with fresh ideas, that meant escape from increasingly empty pleasures. Our philosophy of escape at any price had found us caught at last in a blind alley. Psychologically, as well as economically, we were ripe for a crash. And when it came, bringing with it the death of the jazz age, as Mr. Fitzgerald has said, it brought with it as well the death of jazz age literature and jazz age self-consciousness. And when the debris began to be shovelled away, it became increasingly clear that for American writers the way ahead was either to the ivory tower and despair or back to fundamentals.

"Art" wrote Thomas Craven in the February issue of *Scribner's (American Painters: The Snob Spirit)*, "cannot continue to feed upon itself and command the respect or indulgence of the American public." No more can literature.

However little in the way of real action the emerging participation of our authors may seem to the revolutionary writer, from the point of view of American letters the Kentucky episode may prove of genuine historical significance for our literature of the thirties.

Of course, to the Communist social-consciousness is no substitute for class-consciousness, just as he does not consider sociological criticism any substitute for class criticism.

This, however, is still another story. Just as we had to have self-consciousness in American literature before we could have social-consciousness, so we must have the present phase before we can have class-consciousness.

I had almost concluded by saying that we cannot cross our bridges before we come to them. But that is all nonsense. It is not we who are coming to the bridges, but the bridges that are coming to us, and with an ever increasing momentum.

## REVOLUTIONISTS IN WAR

An account of the struggle of American revolutionists against the last war, a description of their life and fortitude in prison, and a forecast of their determination to fight the coming war and to defend the Soviet Union with their lives, has been written by one of them and will appear in *New Masses* for July.

## Langston Hughes

# An Open Letter to the South

*White workers of the South:*

*Miners,  
Farmers,  
Mechanics,  
Mill hands,  
Shop girls,  
Railway men,  
Servants,  
Tobacco workers,  
Share croppers,  
GREETINGS!*

*I am the black worker.*

*Listen:*

*That the land might be ours,  
And the mines and the factories and the office towers  
At Harlan, Richmond, Gastonia, Atlanta, New Orleans;  
That the plants and the roads and the tools of power  
Be ours:*

*Let us forget what Booker T. said.  
"Separate as the fingers."  
He knew he lied.*

*Let us become instead, you and I,  
One single hand  
That can united rise  
To smash the old dead dogmas of the past—  
To kill the lies of color  
That keep the rich enthroned  
And drive us to the time-clock and the plow  
Helpless, stupid, scattered, and alone—as now—  
Race against race,  
Because one is black,  
Another white of face.*

*Let us new lessons learn,  
All workers.  
New life-ways make,  
One union form:  
Until the future burns out  
Every past mistake.  
Let us get together, say:  
"You are my brother, black or white.  
You my sister—now—today!"*

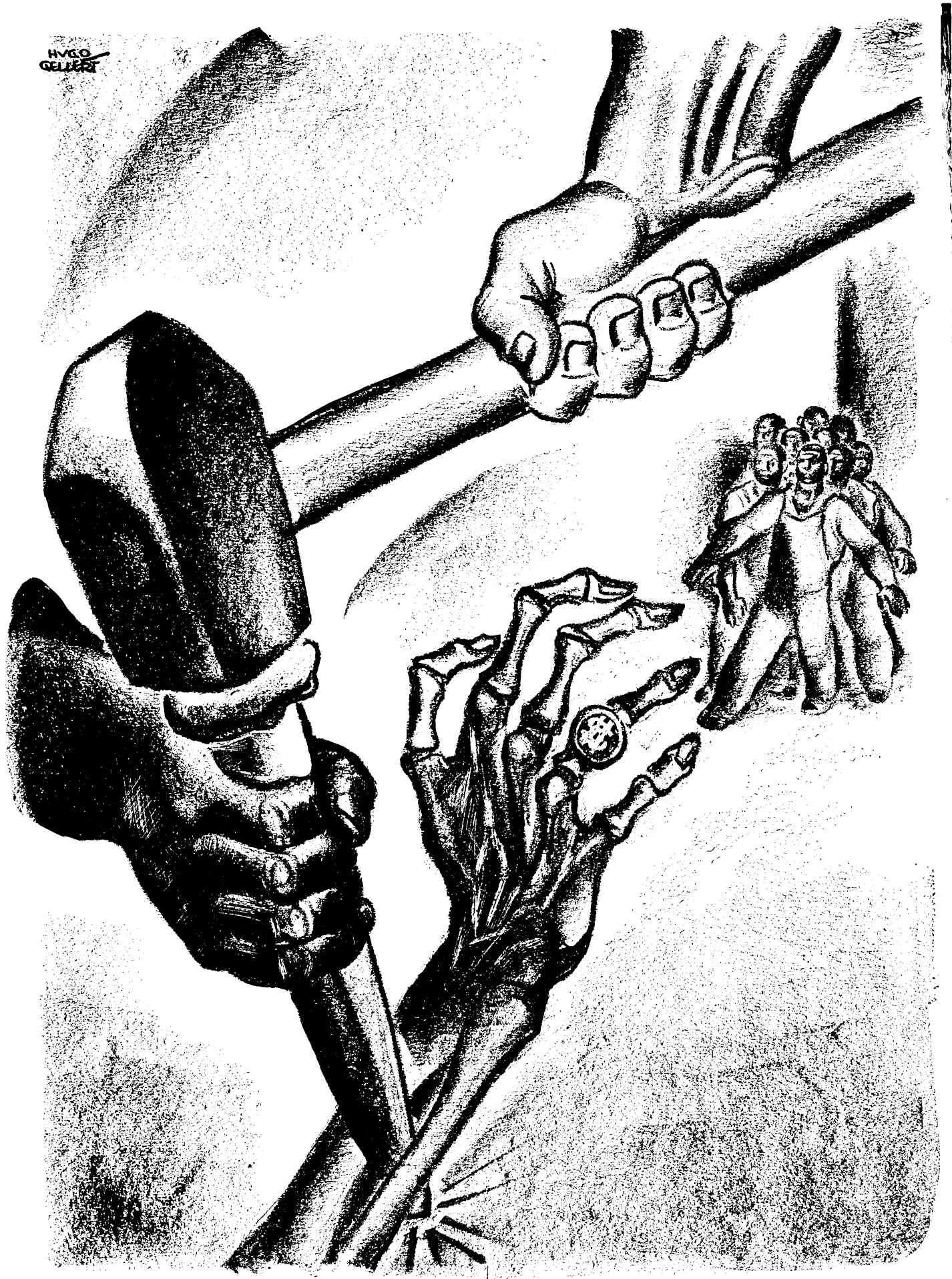
*For me, no more the great migration to the North.  
Instead: Migration into force and power—  
Tuskegee with a red flag on the tower!  
On every lynching tree, a poster crying FREE  
Because, O poor white workers,  
You have linked your hands with me.*

*We did not know that we were brothers.  
Now we know!  
Out of that brotherhood  
Let power grow!  
We did not know  
That we were strong.  
Now we see  
In union lies our strength.  
Let union be  
The force that breaks the time-clock,  
Smashes misery,  
Takes land,  
Takes factories,  
Takes office towers,  
Takes tools and banks and mines,  
Railroad, ships, and dams,  
Until the forces of the world  
Are ours!*

*White worker,  
Here is my hand.*

*Today,  
We're Man to Man.  
April 25, 1932.*

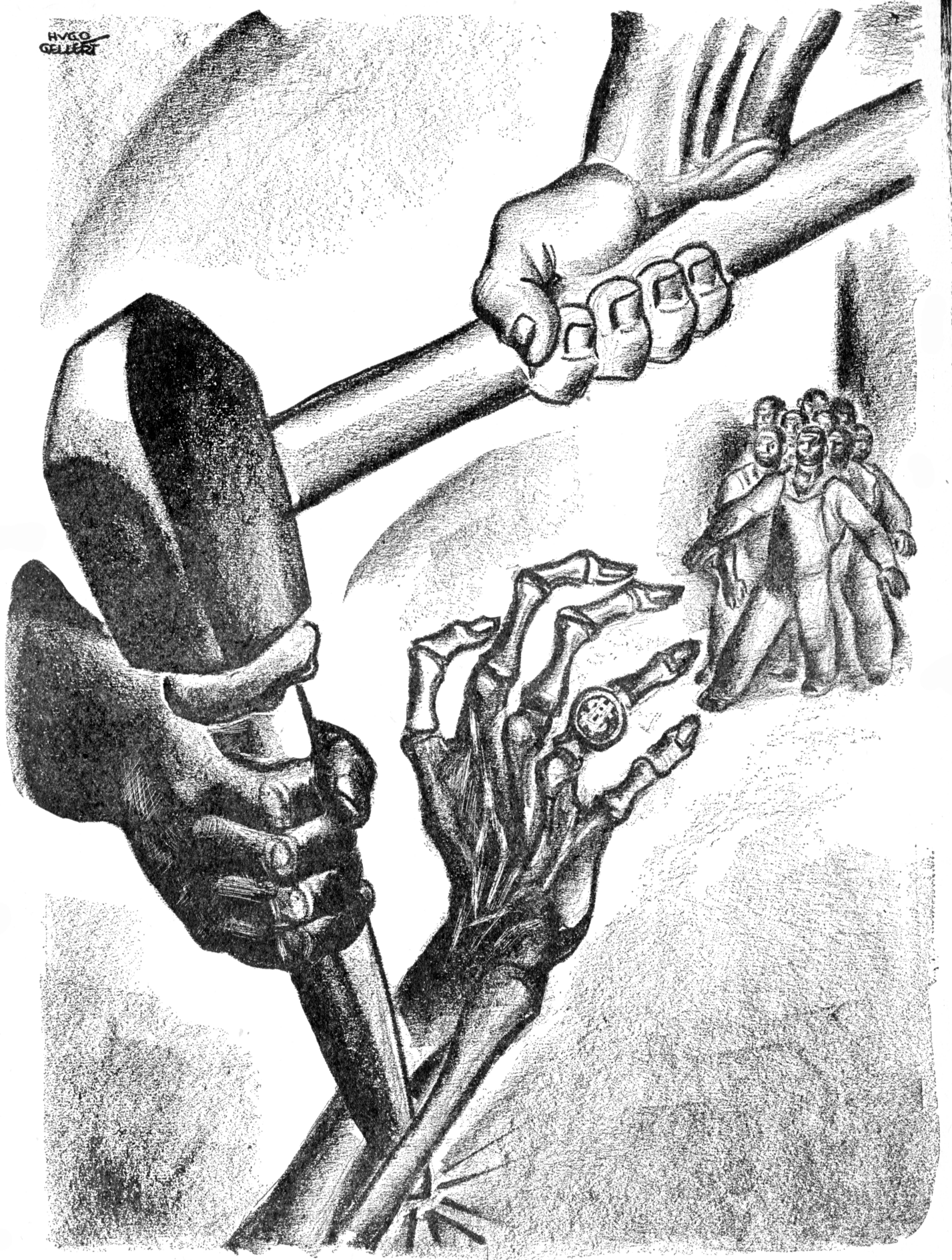
HUGO  
GELLERT



THE FIGHT OF THE SCOTTSBORO BOYS FOR LIFE AND FREEDOM IS YOUR FIGHT!

Hugo Gellert

HUGO  
GELLERT



THE FIGHT OF THE SCOTTSBORO BOYS FOR LIFE AND FREEDOM IS YOUR FIGHT!

Hugo Gellert

**HENRY STORM**

# THE CRISIS ON THE CAMPUS

*"Never have I seen men trying so hard to understand, to decide. They never moved, stood staring with a sort of terrible intensity at the speaker, their brains wrinkled with the effort of thought . . ."*

—JOHN REED

University students in the United States have never been the serious factor in socio-political life that their fellows have been in Europe. They have played no role comparable to that of revolutionary students of Vienna and Paris in 1848 and of Czarist Russia during half a century, or to that of the reactionary German *Burschenschaft*, the French *Camelots du Roi*, or the fascist student squads of contemporary Germany, Poland, Hungary and Roumania. This has been true, firstly, because they have shared to an exaggerated degree the "respectable" American view that politics is a dirty business. Second, the educational structure permits immature elements (freshmen and sophomores) who, in Europe, would be in the *gymnasium*, *lycee* or "public" school, to retard the development of older students. Thirdly, because American universities have far outstripped European in developing a technique (sport, gin, sex, "college spirit," art-for-art's-sake) which diverts student interest from socio-political problems. Perhaps most decisive are certain economic differences. The European student has tended to look for a future livelihood to some form of State service (usually overcrowded), and has hence become interested in public affairs. The American has looked largely to private business. And wherever he looked he saw a generally more promising economic situation than did the European.

As a consequence, the American student has not only been an instinctive stand-patter but he has rarely showed signs of political consciousness. The college generations '10-'16 produced Walter Lippmann, Randolph Bourne and a few others, but they were a political flash in the pan. The war cut off from the main current of American life all who, unlike Lippmann, clung to their rather abstract ideals. To the students who followed, they became a pathetic joke. A mild flare-up of interest in 1919 was extinguished by the economic boom, the anti-radical oppression of State and university authorities, and the hyper-development of rah-rah which then set in. Conditions at City College, where some socio-political interest permanently flickered, were exceptional. Of my classmates at Columbia between 1920 and 1924, only one or two maintained such an interest longer than a semester, and in the country clubs (Williams, Dartmouth, Princeton) the situation has been even worse.

Those educators who felt that the main trouble with American politics was a lack of "gentlemen" in the field and yearned to transplant the English tradition of the bright varsity boy in Parliament, exhorted students to "be more serious," to participate in public affairs. While suggesting nothing concrete beyond the casting of a ballot or an hour's tour of a factory, bank or city bureau, progressive educators argued that social problems cannot be studied solely from books.

It took a concrete situation to do what abstract sermonizing could not. That situation is the present crisis, which has thrown into the crucible where social attitudes are made and remade, a mass of inquisitive, energetic, potentially creative youth. How has the crisis worked on the campus?

While the lower middle class has not, like the working class and some farm elements, been reduced to starvation or even destitution, it has undergone an experience it finds extremely painful. This experience has touched the students at several points. Middle-class parents (and most students have such) have cut allowances and warned that university careers may have to be abandoned midway. Thousands of students who depended on part-time labor to pay expenses have lost their jobs. University employment agencies have many student applicants but no jobs to give them. For example, several weeks ago at Mt. Holyoke College there were about 100 applicants for 35 domestic service jobs at about \$6 per week. Student labor (even in university dining halls, bookstores, etc.) has experienced speed-up, stretch-out and wage-cuts.

Above all, student prospects of future occupation are black.

Many want to be teachers. But in New York City alone there are already about 8,000 licensed teachers unemployed. In several cities (for example, Chicago and Elmira) teachers salaries go unpaid for months. The American Association of University Professors has informed its members that a nationwide campaign of wage-cuts and lay-offs is in full swing. Yale, N. Y. U. and other important universities plan big staff cuts for next year. The University of North Carolina has cut faculty wages thirty percent during this academic year. Long Island University has slashed faculty wages in half—and skipped a pay-day into the bargain.

Conditions in other fields of intellectual work to which students look for careers are probably worse. Thousands of doctors, lawyers, journalists, engineers are unemployed. Thousands live on microscopic incomes. One dental association reports that its members average twenty-five percent of their incomes of three years ago. An engineering school kindly opens free graduate courses for unemployed alumni. A journalism college Dean states that there are as many students in training as jobs in existence—and the jobs are already filled to overflowing. Professor H. F. Clark of Columbia pointed out even before the crisis that there was a "surplus" of professional men. Now the "surplus" is many times greater.

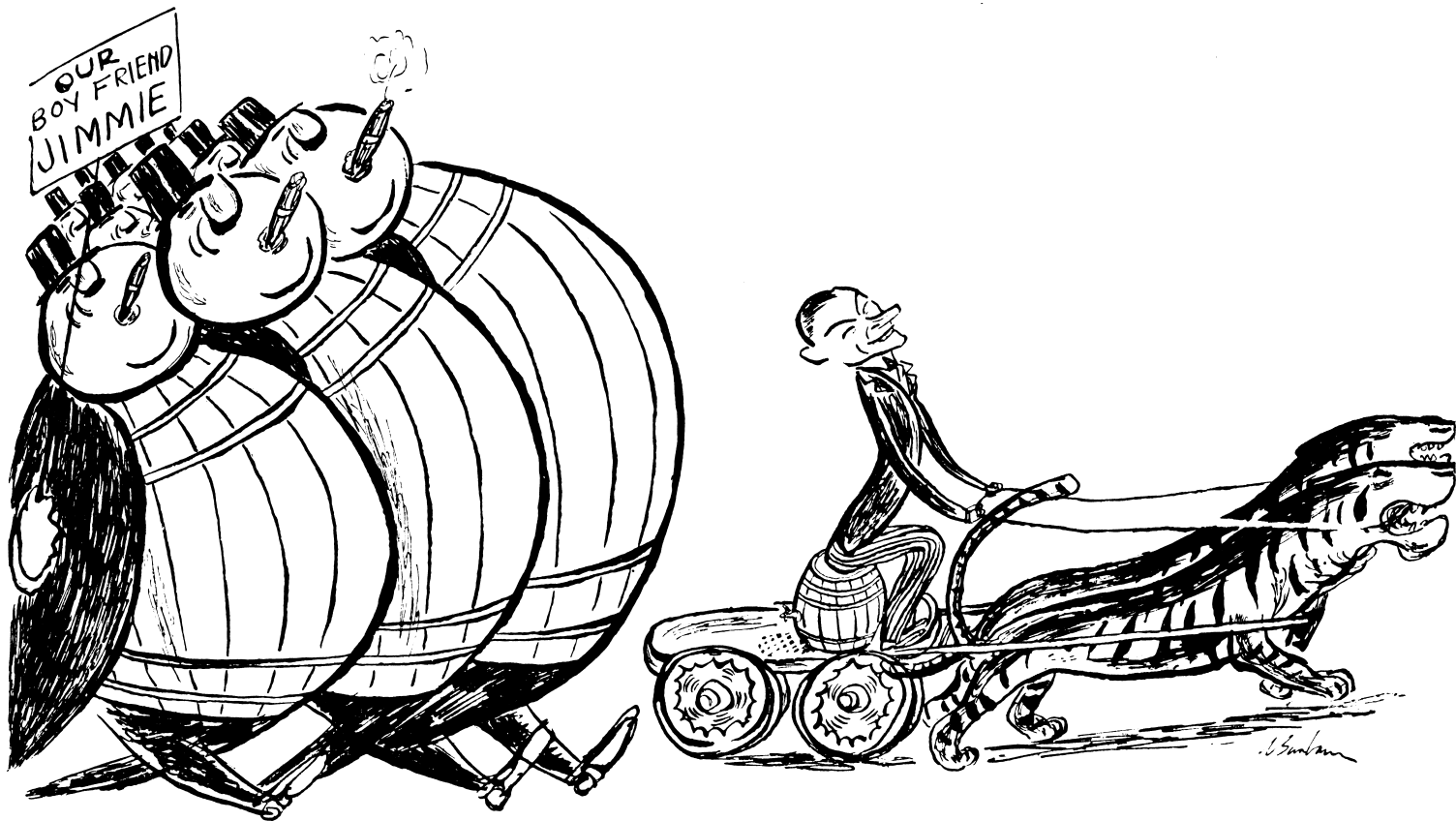
And business? This spring the personnel manager of the giant corporation does not comb the campuses for bright seniors whom he will set on the royal road to success. Quite the contrary: he lays off a few of his hopefuls. Department stores can now have their pick of A.B.'s and even Ph.D.'s, as floorwalkers and file-clerks at \$12 a week. Anxious employers seek to stem the flood of student applicants for jobs, and Professors A. B. Crawford and S. N. Clement of Yale rise to the occasion: in their newly published *Choice of an Occupation* they propose that an "internship" for business be instituted. The prospect becomes one of four college years, several years of unpaid work as, for example, "advertising interne," and then—if then—starvation wages.

The economic effects of the crisis are felt first by such student groups as the Negroes, Jews and foreign-born or the children of foreign-born. Negro students, accustomed to finding vacation jobs in hotels, on Pullmans, on excursion steamers, have little hope of employment this summer. About 90,000 Negroes graduate from college every June, having learned from their liberal educators that "education" would enable them to enter the charmed circle of the middle class, if only that of an insular Negro ghetto. But today thousands of Negro intellectuals are without employment or clientele and in another month thousands more will flow out of classrooms, leaving despondent undergraduates behind.

But no amount of white American ancestry is a guarantee to the trained and hopeful student, for the law of profit is, to the employer of labor, higher than all other obligations. Already the pressure has become so great that large masses of students who are not affected by national oppression in any form feel it. The Senior class at N. Y. U. in 1930 recorded by ballot its expectation of earning \$11,500 at the end of ten years. The expectation fell to \$10,000 in 1931. This year it is \$5,000. Anyone who talks to university students today quickly learns that these are not "bright college years." The once petted and pampered are wondering how they can escape the hard lot which seems to threaten them."

\* It is interesting to note that so great has become the "superfluity" of trained intellectual labor that proposals are being made to cut down educational opportunities. T. Swann Harding in *Current History*, XXXVI:1 (April, 1932) p. 38-41, proposes to silence "the clamor of all sorts of young people to enter colleges and universities." His "good reason" is that thereby educational standards "may" be raised. Actually, financial standards will be raised. The Harvard Crimson proposes to bar students who earn their living. Plans are being formulated to introduce tuition fees at C.C.N.Y., Hunter College, Brooklyn College, Detroit City College and other municipal institutions. And this at a time, when, according to the National Education Association, the country lacks 7,500 trained teachers and, as is every day apparent, there are woefully insufficient doctors, dentists, artists (if a plethora of lawyers!) to care for the needs of the population at large. The new proposals are of the same reactionary, destructive nature as the Farm Board's suggestion to "plow under" two-thirds of the cotton crop while thousands are clothed in rags. They are the proposals of a class sinking in a morass of its own creation and ready to throw overboard its boasted cultural ballast to save its profits. They lead, of course, to the creation of a politically conscious intellectual proletariat such as already swells the revolutionary tide in Europe.





CIRCUS PARADE

A. Birnbaum

But it would be incorrect to overlook the important part played today by factors other than economic need in remaking the attitude of the individual student. Students observe the intellectual bankruptcy in the face of the world crisis not only of grafting politicians and demagogic publicists, but also of learned professors in the social, economic, political, moral and aesthetic fields. They observe the disintegration of hallowed ideals and institutions, indeed of a whole culture now devoid of promise to them. They see the intensification of the struggle between owning and working classes in which the owning class betrays the principles of culture, democracy, progress and "idealism" which its academies have been expounding. Being young, sensitive, energetic, they are impelled to action in this cultural crisis. They look for a place where they may plant their feet, raise their heads, deal a blow in battle either for the ideals they have been taught and still take literally, or for ideals transvaluated through their new experiences.

Some signs of change in attitude are isolated or of dubious meaning. The fight of Hunter College student editors for the right to print cigarette advertisements may be only stiff-neckedness. Even the student riot at Colgate to compel reduced movie prices smacks of rah-rah, although the grounds of student riots formerly contained even less good sense. Student protest against faculty wage-cuts in Long Island University may have been but a vague friendly feeling for intimates. It is, perhaps, because of the special circumstances in which they find themselves that Negro students, particularly at Jim Crow institutions (Fiske, Tuskegee, etc.) have swung into action, especially in protest against legal lynching, even defying university administrations averse to a militant defense of the nine condemned Scottsboro boys. Student picketing in the New York dress strike and in the anti-imperialist demonstration before the Japanese consulate in Chicago show how deep is the change in some students, but these incidents do not reveal its extensiveness.

The significance of the Student Delegation to Kentucky, however, is hardly open to question. That socio-political interests induced eighty students to spend Easter holiday in uncomfortable buses and to risk bodily harm, rather than to pass the days at tea-dances and the nights at poker, bespoke at the outset a radically transformed attitude. In the end it meant even more. Barred from the state by a lawless mob, organized by mine-owners and provoked to lynch mood by a county official, laughed at by one

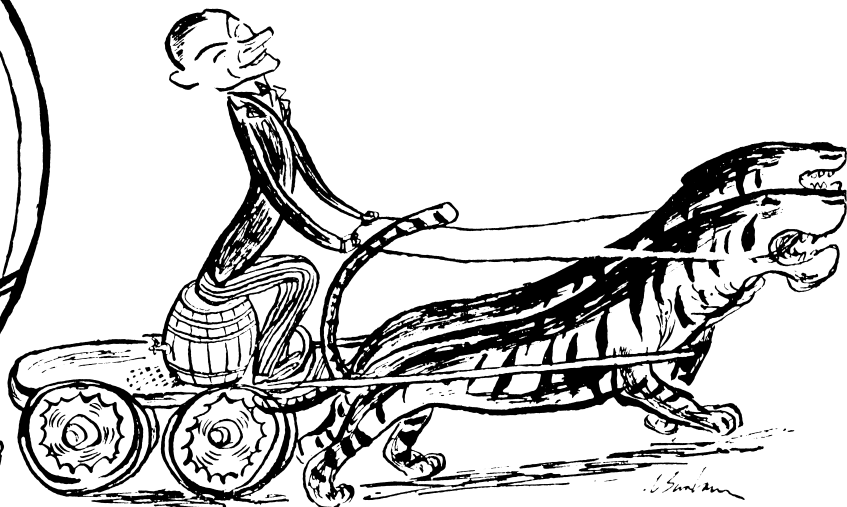
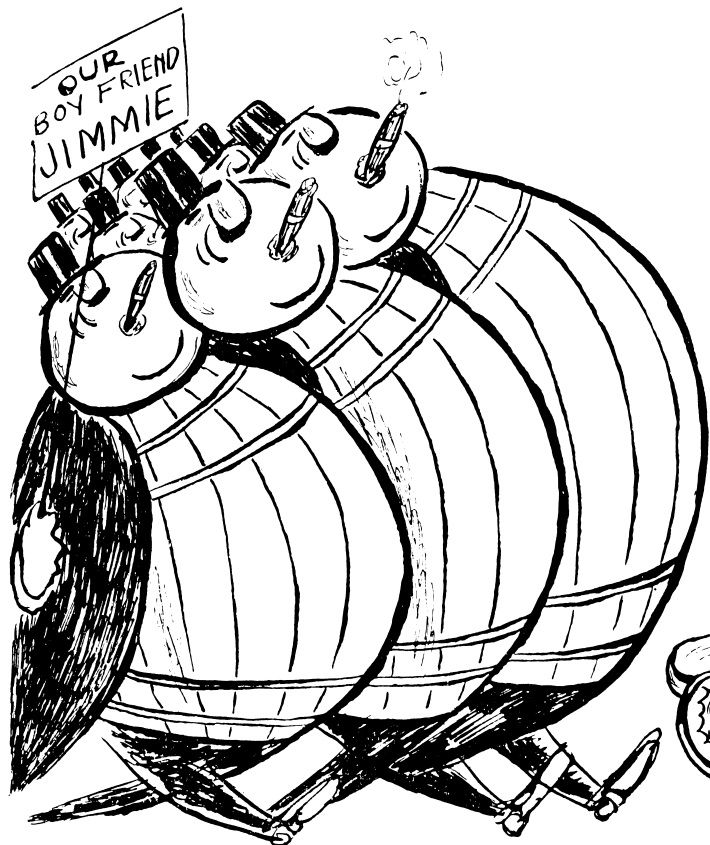
Governor and sneered at by another, cold-shouldered by their own university authorities, the students absorbed a lesson their teachers had never expounded. As they reported on their return, they learned that class-struggle is real, that it transcends political boundaries, that the owning class uses the State in that struggle, and that any move calculated to aid the workers (such as an investigation which would do no more than bring to light hidden, bloody truths) is subject to the punitive action of a boss-run State even if it is not a calendar crime. The unanimous conclusions drawn by the students and presented to hundreds of their fellows on their return were these: if they treated us so badly, think what they must do to the miners; we must participate in this struggle; we belong with the workers and must help them.

The expulsion from college of Reed Harris, editor of *Columbia Spectator*, initiated a series of incidents equally illustrative of new trends in American student life. Regarded by some as a publicity-seeker, Harris is muddled at best. But it is not without meaning that, whatever his motives, he expressed himself not in a campaign for bigger and better football teams, not by publishing "daring" jokes and drawings, but by the discussion of political and social questions. And he did not simply "discuss." He criticized sanctified authorities and institutions such as "semi"-commercial college football, college militarism, anti-Semitism, bad dining-hall conditions, the imprisonment of Tom Mooney. He advocated such a constructive idea as unemployment insurance, despite the horror of "dole" current in academic circles, and endorsed and publicized the Kentucky trip, despite administration frowns.

There began to flow into Columbia's good-hearted "liberal" Dean, complaints from old grads who love football and military training, who hate unemployment insurance and Tom Mooney, and who contribute funds to nice little universities. And the Dean finally expelled Harris without a hearing, admittedly because of his editorial activities. It immediately became apparent that Harris was not isolated. Protest was spontaneous. It was also effective. The University repeatedly refused to investigate conditions Harris had criticized or to reinstate Harris, but in the face of student mass pressure (what administration officials called "mob spirit") it backed down, ordering an investigation and later reinstating Harris.

This victory was possible because the Social Problems Club, in which for two years there had simmered a general interest in





CIRCUS PARADE

public affairs, placed itself at the head of the protest movement. It organized mass meetings, a one-day strike and an intensive propaganda. Its competent demonstration of political leadership was in itself a revelation of change and growth.

Even more significant has been the spontaneous country-wide support of the students in these two incidents. The actions of the Bell County mob and of the Columbia Dean released inhibitions in a hundred colleges. From all parts of the country there rained upon the Governor of Kentucky a shower of student protests, beginning with a telegram from the University of Kentucky Liberal Club, which revealed that the eighty ejected students had the unsolicited approval of unknown thousands more. College papers, college clubs, and spontaneously organized groups of students at Barnard, Bates, Brooklyn, Chicago, Cincinnati, C.C.N.Y., Colby, Dickinson, Harvard, Hunter, Kentucky, Lafayette, North Carolina N.Y.U., Syracuse, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Yale published editorials or sent messages of sympathy and support to the Columbia protestants. Hunter, City College and Brooklyn College clubs sent representatives to the Columbia mass meetings to voice their support.

In both the Kentucky and Columbia incidents, an important role was played by the National Student League, which sponsored the one and, especially as the national body of which the Columbia Social Problems Club is a chapter, supported the other. It is the existence and character of this organization which most concretely reflects the changing student attitude. Growing out of the New York Student League, it stepped on the political stage less than six months ago as a purely eastern organization. It has now reached into both southern and western institutions, the chapters show increased membership from month to month, and the number of chapters increases rapidly as old college organizations or spontaneously organized new ones join the ranks. It publishes the *Student Review*, which contains clear demonstration of capacity to think and write and formulate. That these students can act has already been made plain.

The League program is far in advance of anything American students have previously formulated. It advocates academic freedom for students and faculties, unemployment insurance, and recognition of the U.S.S.R. It opposes racial and national discrimination in college and out, all tendencies toward fascism and toward imperialist war, including its collegiate arms, military training and futile pacifism. It calls for support of the revolutionary student movement in all countries, and for student participation in working class struggles on the ground of a logical and sociological community of interests among workers and students as such.

The N.S.L. has been wrongly characterized by some as a Communist organization. It is, in fact, a broad organization, containing many liberals, "progressives," and "radicals." Many of its members describe themselves as socialists and still belong to the Socialist League for Industrial Democracy, which most of them feel is worthless because "it does nothing." A portion of the leadership (exclusively student in character) and the rank-and-file of the N.S.L. is definitely Communist in sentiment. But this is far from making the N.S.L. a Communist organization.

No Communist supposes that the student body is coming over to him tomorrow. This upsurge is more, as one Columbia student told the strikers, than sap rising in the spring, but however great its destiny, the American student movement is a babe today. Many bandages still confine its limbs, placed there by tender or stupid or calculating authorities. Students must overcome many inhibitions: it still takes heroic nerve for an undergraduate to tell a gathering of fellow-students that he is ready to fight for anything but dear old Jerkwater. He must face the opposition not only of timid parents, conservative university authorities, a distrustful populace, an inimical State, but most immediately of an important element in his own midst, made up of sons of the very rich, tea-hounds, professional athletes, "frat" boys, administration boot-lickers and many other backward or deluded, if well-meaning, youths. This opposition resents not only revolutionary, not only critical thinking, but any thinking at all, and is prepared to back up its resentment with catcalls, missiles and slugging.

Against all this the students must fight before the mass of them learn to be interested in principles, which principles to espouse, and how to advance them intelligently. Will they learn? Certainly education is possible when the pupils are eager, and many now deeply desire to learn about socio-political problems. There will be little yawning in this school.



William Gropper



William Gropper

AFTER DEARBORN—MELROSE

**MAXIM GORKY****AN ANSWER TO SOME AMERICANS**

TRANSLATED BY LEON DENNEN

You write: "You will probably be surprised at this communication from unknown people on the other side of the ocean." No, your letter did not surprise me. Such letters come quite often, and you are wrong in calling your last communication "exceptional"—for the last two or three years the disturbed cries of the intelligentsia have become a frequent occurrence. This is natural—the work of the intelligentsia always consisted in ornamenting the existence of the bourgeoisie, in consoling the rich in the sordid sorrows of their life. The wet nurse of the capitalist—the intelligentsia—in most cases, occupied itself with mending the threadbare philosophical and clerical attires of the bourgeoisie, abundantly soiled and dirtied with the blood of the workers. The intelligentsia continues to occupy itself with this difficult, not very flattering and, in our days, altogether fruitless task, showing sometimes almost a prophetic prevision of events. Thus, for instance, before the imperialists of Japan began to divide China, the German Spengler, in his book "Man and Technics," began to babble about the fact that in the 19th century Europeans committed the gravest mistake in giving their knowledge and technical experience to the "colored races". Spengler is imitated in this respect by your own American historian, Hendrik Van Loon. He, too, admits that the arming of black and yellow humanity with the experiences of European culture was one of the "seven fatal historical mistakes" committed by the European bourgeoisie.

And we see that the capitalists of America and Europe want to rectify this mistake, supplying the Japanese and Chinese with money and arms, to help them destroy each other. At the same time, they send their navies to the East so that (having shown the Japanese imperialists their mighty mailed fist) they may at the opportune moment, together with the heroic rabbit, divide the skin of the dead bear. Personally, I think that the dead bear will not be killed, because the Spenglers and Van Loons and the like consolers of the bourgeoisie, pondering much upon the dangers that face European-American "culture," forget something. They forget that the Hindus, Chinese, Japanese, Negroes are not socially monolithic, alike, but are divided into classes. They forget that against the poison of the middle class of Europe and America Marx and Lenin worked out a healthy antidote. However, it is possible that they do not forget this, but choose to remain silent, and that their danger-call about the death of European culture is explained by their realization of the weakness of their poison and the power of the antidote.

The number of those howling about the death of civilization is becoming greater and greater. Their cries sound louder and louder. Three months ago in France the former minister, Caillaux, publicly proclaimed the instability of civilization.

"The world is living through a tragedy of abundance and distrust. Is it not a tragedy that it is necessary to burn wheat and to drown sacks of coffee when millions of people lack food? As for distrust, it has already wrought harm. It called forth a war and dictated peace agreements which can be corrected only when this distrust shall have disappeared. If we do not succeed in establishing confidence, all civilization is menaced, for the people may be tempted to overthrow an economic order to which they ascribe all their ills."

To speak of the possibility of confidence among robbers, who in our day so openly bare their teeth and claws one has either to be a desperate hypocrite or a very naive person. And if by "people" is meant the working class, then every honest man must admit that the workers are justified in ascribing to the idiocy of the capitalist system all the ills with which this system rewards them for their labor in creating values. The proletarians see clearly that the contemporary bourgeois system justifies with horrifying correctness the words of Marx-Engels in their Communist Manifesto.

*"And here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law. It is unfit to rule, because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him.*

*Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society."*

Not very long ago the consolers of the bourgeoisie, to prove the economic wisdom and stability of capitalism, took their stand on science. Now they excuse science from their foul play. On the twenty-third of February, in Paris, the very same Caillaux, following Spengler, said before ministers of the type of Paul Mil-lukoff, and other persons of the past:

"Technical developments create unemployment in many cases, transform the wages of discharged workers into surplus dividends for the auctioneers. Science 'without conscience', not warmed by 'conscience', works to the detriment of the people. We should bridle science. There is no greater harm for science than a great man. They expound theoretical propositions. These have a meaning and significance for the time when they are expounded. They may be justified, as for example, those of Karl Marx are for 1848 or the 70's though they are altogether erroneous in 1932. Were Marx alive today, he would write differently."

With these words the bourgeois admits that the wisdom of his class is impotent and bankrupt. He advises them to bridle science, forgetting that science enabled his class to maintain its power over the world and the toilers. "Bridle science"—what does that mean? To deny it freedom of research? Once upon a time the bourgeoisie quite heroically and successfully struggled against the attempts of the church to bridle the freedom of science. In our days bourgeois philosophy is gradually becoming what it was in the dark years of the Middle Ages—the servant of theology. Caillaux is right in saying that Europe is threatened with the reversion to barbarism predicted by Marx, whose science is unknown to him. Yes, it is indisputable that the bourgeoisie of Europe and America, the owners of the world, become every year more and more ignorant, intellectually impotent, barbarian—they realize it themselves.

The notion of the possibility of a return to the epoch of barbarism is the most "modern" thought of our present-day bourgeoisie. Spengler, Caillaux, and other "thinkers" of their kidney reflect the mood of thousands of the middle class. Their fear is called forth by a feeling of class decadence, the factual growth of the revolutionary consciousness of the working masses. The bourgeoisie does not like to believe in this revolutionary cultural development of the working people, but it sees it, it feels it. It is a process well justified. It is a logical development of the working experience of mankind—an experience which the bourgeois historians can describe only academically.

But since history is also a science, it, too, must be bridled, or more simply—its existence must be forgotten. "Forget history," advises the French poet and academician, Paul Valery, in his book, "Review of Contemporary Life". He very seriously indicts history for the plight of mankind. He says that in reminding one of the past, history calls forth fruitless dreams and deprives people of peace. "People"—are here, of course, the bourgeoisie. Valery is evidently incapable of noticing other people in this world. This is what he says of that history of which the bourgeoisie were once so proud and about which they wrote so masterfully:

"History is the most dangerous of all products worked out in the chemical laboratory of the brain. History makes one indulge in dreams. It intoxicates people. It gives birth to false memories, exaggerates their reflexes, opens their old wounds, deprives them of peace and throws them into delusions of grandeur or persecution."

In his role as a consoler of the bourgeoisie, he is quite radical. He knows the bourgeoisie wants to live peacefully. For the sake of a peaceful life it considers itself justified in destroying millions of people. It can, of course, very easily destroy several thousand books, for like everything else in the world, the libraries are also in the hands of the bourgeoisie. History prevents one from leading a peaceful life. Down with history. Withdraw from circulation all historic works. Don't teach history in schools. Declare the study of the past socially dangerous, even criminal. People interested in the study of history should be declared abnormal and exiled to an uninhabited island.

One could point out the criminality of consoling these worried



bandits and killers, but I know that would not move anyone. That would be morality, i.e., something excluded from life because it is unnecessary. It is more important to point to the fact that in contemporary life, the intellectual consoler becomes "that excluded middle" whose existence is rejected by logic. If the intellectual is of bourgeois origin, but a proletarian in his social status, he seems to understand the degradation of work for a class that is sentenced to death and that fully deserves death. Just as a professional bandit-killer would deserve it. He begins to understand it because the bourgeoisie no longer requires his services. He begins to hear more often how people of his class desirous of helping the bourgeoisie begin to speak of the non-productivity of the intelligentsia. He sees that the bourgeois turns "for consolation" no longer to philosophers and "thinkers", but to charlatans who foretell the future. The newspapers of Europe are full of the advertisements of astrologers, creators of horoscopes, fakirs, graphologists, spiritualists, and others who are even more ignorant than the bourgeoisie. Photography and the cinema kill the graphic arts, the artists, in order not to die of hunger, exchange their paintings for potatoes, bread, and the cast-off clothing of the middle class.

Artists are no longer needed. They are supplanted by the Fairbanks, Harold Lloyds, and other tricksters with the sad and sentimental Charlie Chaplin at their head, even as classical music is supplanted by jazz, and Stendhal, Balzac, Dickens and Flaubert, by various Wallaces—people who can tell how a detective, guarding the private property of the big robbers and organizers of mass massacres, catches little thieves and killers. In the field of art, the bourgeoisie is perfectly satisfied with collecting stamps and street-car tickets, or on a higher plane, with collecting imitations of old masterpieces.

In the field of science, the bourgeoisie is interested in finding the methods of better and cheaper exploitation of the physical power of the working class; science exists for the bourgeois only insofar as it is able to subserve his aims—to regulate the activity of his stomach and to stimulate his sexual degeneracy. The bourgeoisie does not understand the fundamental problems of science; the intellectual and physical development of mankind, depleted under the yoke of capitalism. The transformation of inert matter into energy, the problem of the human organism—all this interests the bourgeoisie as little as it interests the savages of Central Africa.

Seeing this, some of the intelligentsia begin to understand that the "creation of culture" which they had hitherto considered their task, a result of their "free thought and independent will", is their task no longer, and that culture is not an inner necessity of the capitalist world. The occurrences in China remind them of the destruction of the university and library in Louvain in 1914. Yesterday they heard of the destruction by Japanese guns of the University of Tungsi in Shanghai, the Navy College, Fishing School, National University, Medical College, the Agricultural College, and the Workers University. These acts of barbarism do not arouse anyone, just as no one is aroused by the curtailment of funds for cultural institutions, followed by growing expenditures for armaments.

Of course, a very small part of the European or American intelligentsia feel their subjection to "the law of the excluded middle", and wonder—where shall we go? Should they obey their habit—and follow the bourgeoisie against the proletariat? Or obey their conscience—and follow the proletariat against the bourgeoisie? The majority of the intelligentsia continue to be satisfied with their service to capitalism—a boss who, realizing the moral flexibility of his servant and consoler, and seeing the impotence and fruitlessness of his pacifying work, begins openly to despise his servant and consoler, and doubts the necessity for the existence of such a servant.

You, D. Smith and T. Morrison, wrongly ascribe to bourgeois literature and journalism the role of "organizer of cultural opinion." This "organizer" is a parasitic growth which attempts to hide the dirty chaotic reality, but with less success than weeds hide dirt and ruins.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the press of Europe and America assiduously, and almost exclusively, occupies itself with lowering the cultural level of readers whose level is low enough as it is.

And what is the church doing these days? First of all, of course, it prays. The bishops of York and Canterbury, who have recently propagandized in favor of a crusade against the Soviet Union—these two bishops are the authors of a new prayer in



#### THE ARMY BUILDS MEN

which English hypocrisy is perfectly blended with English humor. It is a very long affair, constructed in the form of the Lord's Prayer. Thus do they call upon their God:

"In the policies of our government and the re-establishment of credit and prosperity—Thy will be done. In all that is being undertaken in organizing the future government of India—Thy will be done. In the forthcoming disarmament conference and all that is being undertaken to secure peace in this world—Thy will be done. In the stabilization of business, credit, and mutual well-wishing—give us this day our daily bread. In the cooperation of all classes in the work of the common weal—give us this day our daily bread. If we have proven ourselves guilty in national pride and found more satisfaction in ruling over others than in serving them to the best of our abilities—deliver us from our sins. If we have shown any conceit in the execution of our business and



THE ARMY BUILDS MEN

William Gropper

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THE ARMY BUILDS MEN

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Gropper

William Gropper

You intellectuals, masters of culture, should understand that the working class in taking political power in its hands will open for you the widest possibility for cultural development.

Look what a grave lesson history has taught the Russian intellectuals: they didn't go with their working class and now they decompose in impotent wrath in exile. Soon they will all die out, leaving only the memory of traitors.

The bourgeoisie is hostile to culture and cannot help being hostile to it—this is the truth which capitalist practice and bourgeois reality affirms. The bourgeoisie rejected the proposal of the Soviet Union for complete disarmament—a fact which in itself, proves the capitalists to be people who are socially dangerous. They are preparing a new world butchery. They keep the Soviet Union in a state of sus-

placed our interests and the interests of our class above those of others—forgive us our sins.”

A typical prayer of scared shopkeepers! They ask God several times to forgive them their sins, but do not even once promise to stop sinning—and in only one case do they ask God for “forgiveness”.

This is the depth of the vile and stupid vulgarity the Christian church has reached, and how humorously the priests have lowered God to the post of chief shopkeeper and conniver in all the commercial schemes of all the best shopkeepers of Europe. But it would be unfair to speak only of the English priests, forgetting that the Italians have organized a “Bank of the Holy Spirit.” There are hundreds of facts of this kind and they all prove one thing—the church is the servant of capitalism and is infected with all the diseases that destroy it.

pense, compelling the working class to spend a great amount of their time and materials to make guns for their protection against the capitalists, who are organizing to attack the Soviet Union, in their desire to make this great country their colony, their market. For defense against the capitalists the people of the Soviet Union are compelled to spend strength and means which could be used in the cultural development of mankind, for the process of construction in the Soviet Union has an all-human import.

It is time for you to answer this question—*With whom are you, masters of culture?* With the laboring power of culture for the creation of new forms of life, or against this power for the perpetuation of a caste of irresponsible robbers, a caste which is rotten from the head down, and which continues to function only through inertia.

## HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN

# TENDENCIES IN THE SOVIET FILM

The film was immediately recognized by the revolutionaries of October as a singular instrument for the enlightenment of the Russian masses. There was more impulse than thought in the production, which was at first entrusted to a cinematographic committee. The initial picture was conceived in scenario by Lunacharsky: it dealt with the appropriation of a bourgeois apartment by workers transferred from unhealthy quarters. In 1922 a corporation was established for film-making, and the fierce experience of the famine, among other themes, was re-constituted. Although no concrete philosophy of the cinema had been defined, the instincts at least were pertinent. They were directed upon profound and common realities. It is true that there were contradictions to this central direction, as for instance the film *Aelita* which dealt with the mundane revolution through the "futurism" of a Mars locale.

The content of the early Soviet film was essentially correct as far as the source of the theme was concerned. But it was oppressed by immaturity into bluntnesses that wearied the idea with false values. The first false value was that of an extreme proletarianism that was really a petty-bourgeois self-consciousness; the second was literalism. The films were agitated by a species of performance known in America as "mugging": emphasis on the actor's self-esteem. They were stodgy through lack of leavening. They needed two trainings: ideological and technical.

Not to understand this period as an historical pre-nativity is to err in the direction of snobbery. We may call this the automatic period, when without preparation the Soviet cinematographers transferred old acquaintances to new themes. Soon, however, the automatism was annulled by an awakened purpose, and the consolidation of the film-forces took place. It is, therefore, not incorrect to call *Polikushka* the first Soviet picture: it was the first film to have its entity comprehended. But still this was not the revolutionary experience re-enacted, elucidated and transfigured. That was first articulated in the films of Pudovkin (*Mother*) Eisenstein-Alexandrov (*Strike* and *Potemkin*), Raisman (*In Old Siberia*), and others. In this period too the Soviet film took up the extension of film aesthetics from where it had remained standing in the splendid provincial cinema of Sweden, the German kino's "golden age," and the folk-utterances and Griffith platitudes of the U. S. A. movie. As Comrade Leon Moussinac has said, the Soviet film has extended the motion picture through its participation in the Revolution.

It is not surprising, considering the world role of this Soviet kino, that it should have become interested in a production principle which at times distracted the director from the content-experience. This principle called "montage" has indeed become, outside of the Soviet Union, a cult that frequently passes per se, not only for the Soviet film, but for the entire cinema. It is, in reality, an emphasis superseding the previous emphases, such as the actor, the camera. Today the Soviet kino is recognizing these for the instruments they are and is arriving at the terminal contact, which is, after all, the human experience. This does not, however, come about without a debt to the primitive period; for the source is identical. Indeed we find that, just as today, we have a *Road to Life*, yesterday there was *The Deserted Children*; just as today there is *Siberian Patrol*, yesterday there was *The Red Partisan*, *The Red Gas*, dealing with the self-formed worker-peasant armies that drove out the interventionists. But the difference between them is great: it is the difference that maturity has produced. Instead of the actor, there is the character, the human personality. Instead of the oratory of the "grand" films of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, there is intimacy of contact. The arbitrary syllogism that led from petty-bourgeois individualism (actor-inflation) to impersonality is declared archaic, and instead we get a *Road to Life* and a *Golden Mountains* in which collectivism is experienced through its florescence, the human personality.

Unfortunately, the transference of Soviet pictures to the U. S. A. is not always wholly successful in these days speaking films. Insufficient quantity and inept quality of titles falsify, to an extent, the intelligence of these pictures and make them sag in places. Still, if one can deduce the intention from the progression

before one, the picture becomes luminous with a new reality, that of the advance of Soviet culture. This may seem an ambitious assumption, but I support it in this borrowed phrase, "ideological re-armament." That is what is taking place in the Soviet film concurrently with the evolution of Soviet society. The exceptional social relationships that were inevitable, stringently necessary, in the first fourteen years of the Soviet Union are now being dissolved in the new momentum discharged by the successful establishment of the social framework. The social steel-skeleton is there; now build the human multiplicity upon it. In this work the film is as important as it has been in the establishment of the social base. It will help to re-arm the Soviet citizen with a more detailed arsenal of understanding. That, we may say, is the general direction.

The film has not waited until today to assume this function. Since it has always been current in the educational practice of the Soviet Union, it has anticipated and helped to effect the need for this re-armament, the wish for it. A film like *A Fragment of an Empire*, by utilizing the lessons of the "oratorical" film in a positive study of a widespread state of mind through the representation of one character, stimulated the Soviet film to a richer purpose than "the making of masterpieces." It is not accidental that this picture was created by an unequivocal Communist.

Today the Soviet film can turn to the pre-revolution for its themes. It has done so in the past, but then mainly as a general statement; today as a particularization through human details. In *Soil is Thirsty*, made in 1930 in the indeterminate moment when the Soviet film was ceasing to be mute and had not yet become audible, we see the traces of the idyllic in the epic, which in this case tends to make intimate a large and even remote adventure. Raisman, the director, had already, in *In Old Siberia*, revealed his ability, through non-intrusion, to evoke charm. In *Soil is Thirsty* there is, in the play of the epileptic idiot, a fault, remnant from the histrionic era, a "cosmic" commentary in a film whose proportions have been put entirely within the reach of one's fingers. But the enjoyable importance of the picture is its vivacity, its homeliness that achieves with small means, the telling of a major social event, and renders it human.

In the progress of the Soviet film one may also study the career of the individual artist. Take Protozanov: he directed *Aelita*, also *The Man from the Restaurant*, one of those very bad films of German influence belonging to the false-proletarian category; but since then he has made one of the finest of comedies, *The Holiday of St. Jorgen*, and that detail of the intervention, *Siberian Patrol*, which seems curtailed in the American presentation. Protozanov is one of the granddaddies of the Soviet film; he antedates "montage." It is true he will never obliterate traces of the primitive past, but nevertheless he can go on vitalizing the film with his own personal talent for humor and folk-essence, which he has been given the opportunity to discover in himself.

Of *Road to Life* I have spoken very fully in *Workers' Theatre*; of *Golden Mountains* I must say summarily that whether it is the greatest or the worst of films is of minor importance. It is a pivotal film that will make film-direction more, rather than less, difficult in the Soviet Union. Eisenstein said before his return to the USSR that he doubted the feasibility of films of "concrete evidence"; he thought the movie better suited to the "general statement." I am ready to agree that the general statement, the broad canvas, is "easier," just as melodrama is easier, but not better; that is better which is more complete. And *Golden Mountains* indicates the more complete film, in which a variety of minds, social groups, inter-refer through one mind, the mind of change. And it does not matter whether the event is of 1914 or of 1941, it is present—the experience of the proletarian revolution is secured in its dialectic understanding. This type of film is not a sudden outshoot, it is itself a dialectic eventuality. In many Soviet pictures we have seen the climactic development of a benumbed mind to awareness and assertion: *The End of St. Petersburg*, *Storm Over Asia*, *A Fragment of an Empire*, etc. In the first two, however, the mass events either overwhelm the insistence of the development, or the individual concentration wanders from the mass-meaning. Today there is coordination.





Herb Kruckman

"AFTER ALL, IT IS A CASE OF THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST"

## They Accuse Universal!

After a thorough examination of the charges made by Martin Mooney and myself against Universal Pictures Corporation, The John Reed Club of Hollywood, has asked us to write a brief statement of the facts for *New Masses*.

Mooney and I were brought from Broadway to Universal on five-year contracts. These contracts, by the way, are binding on the writer but not on the company, which reserves the right of dismissal for a hundred reasons or more. By the terms of these contracts, the company had the right to take up, at the end of three months, an option for another three months, and so on for five years.

About ten days before Mooney's option was due, he inquired of two executives if his work was satisfactory. They told him he was "on top of the world." They assured him his work was more than satisfactory and that there was no conceivable chance of his being dropped. He said, "If it is certain, I will wire my wife and family to come out. But I don't dare take a chance if I am to be dropped." He was told he was taking no chance at all.

My own status at the studio was similar. In eight weeks I had completed three acceptable scripts, a record, I understand, for this or any other studio. The first of these, recently finished, is being advertised by Universal as "The Greatest Picture of the Year" (*The Doomed Battalion*).

Mooney was assigned to do an original story on Boulder Dam.

He insisted on going to the dam to investigate, but instead of going to the publicity directors of the construction companies, he talked to the workers, and unearthed a tale of the horrors of capitalistic exploitation of labor that is hardly excelled by the reports from the Kentucky mines.

On fire with the horrors he had discovered, he tried to sell the executives on the idea of making a genuine story of the situation. They were intent rather on making a flag-waving drama of patriotic achievement. Mooney disregarded orders and wrote a script in which he painted in vivid detail the oppression, the starvation, the robbery and the killing of the workers at the dam. He was the first, I believe, to come from the dam and report the true story of the horrors there. He was told later that his script was "very offensive to the front office."

Meantime a friend of ours, a member of the John Reed Club, invited him to speak at the Club on what he had seen at the dam. Though Mooney was not a Communist, he agreed at my urging. I made a point of publicising his speech around the office, since we were told we might invite as many guests as we liked. The day before the speech Mooney was warned by an executive of the company that "since he went to the dam on company business, and sponsored by Universal, it would be most unwise for him to discuss publicly what he had seen." Mooney ignored this warning, and on Friday evening, April first, he spoke at the Club.

The next afternoon he was called into the office of John Zinn, business manager, and told that his contract was voided and he was "to leave the lot immediately". He asked for an explanation



*Herb  
Kruckman*

“AFTER ALL, IT IS A CASE OF THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST”

*Herb Kruckman*

and was told by Zinn that "I am only carrying out orders; I know nothing about it". I was not at the studio Saturday afternoon; Mooney told me of his dismissal Saturday night. When he attributed it to his talk I was reluctant to agree with him. I remarked, "If they fire you for radical activities, they will certainly fire me, since I am really responsible for your talk. Well, if they fire me Monday it will prove you are right."

Monday morning, ten minutes after I reached my office, I was called to the front office. I was told my work was unsatisfactory, I had produced nothing they could use (this after the sensational preview of *The Doomed Battalion* Saturday night—and two other scripts in eight weeks!), and that while they could not take up my option, they would put me on a week to week basis until I finished the story I was on, subject, however, to being dropped at any time. I signed the waiver they had asked for and left the studio. I did not care to finish the story on those terms.

After an exhaustive analysis, Mooney and I were forced to the conclusion that the Boulder Dam situation could be the only cause of this abrupt and extraordinary dismissal. Up to the very day before the speech we were both assured by numerous executives that we were the star writers of the lot, that our services were invaluable, that among the other writers we didn't even have any competition. We had both worked conscientiously and well, obeying all studio regulations, and making no enemies. Our options did not mature at the same time, neither had matured at the moment of dismissal—and yet, the day after the Boulder Dam speech we were both picked out of approximately forty writers on the lot, not one of whose achievements equalled ours, and told, almost literally, to "clear out".

While neither of us minded being fired, since three months of Hollywood is enough for anyone, we nevertheless felt that our case might serve to bring the Boulder Dam situation before the public. We consequently told our story to the press, and I also wired Theodore Dreiser, who immediately and generously gave time and energy to publishing the story.

With the usual logic of capitalism against its enemies, Mr. Cochrane came out with a denial of our charges, together with the astonishing statement that I was still on the payroll. Well, as for being on the payroll, I have been unable, to this day, almost three weeks from the time I went off the payroll, to collect the money still due me from the company. They have also refused to give me my railroad ticket to New York, to which I am entitled under my contract.

Meantime Universal sent another writer to Boulder Dam, with definite instructions to consult only with the publicity directors of the corporations operating there. This writer, quite willing to be a tool of the interests, quoted Gallison, press agent for the Six Companies, as saying "If and when a Boulder Dam story is written, I will write it myself." This writer, and the studio, are apparently quite willing to let him do so.

PATRICK KEARNEY

Hollywood, Calif, April 21, 1932.

## Mooney's Statement

Hollywood hokum has for a long time supplied laughs in all parts of the world. For years on Broadway I wondered why. I couldn't somehow believe the widely publicized and generally accepted impression that most studio executives were jesters playing monarch. Presenting the deaf Treasurer with a jet black pedigree Scotch terrier—trumpeting the manhood of the small General Manager to every beautiful lass—playing sailor on the big Scenario Editor's yacht—teaching a supervisor's dumb wife the technicalities of contract bridge—all these chores diligently performed by writers bring reward at option maturity. There is only one way out of Hollywood. It isn't the Santa Fe, the Union Pacific or the Southern Pacific. It is to express your own opinion without first having your gray matter offspring okayed by the front office.

You quickly recognize how this peculiar preamble has plenty of significance in an article more tragic than humorous. I arrived on the Universal lot January 28th, 1932, to write dialogue and originals, having signed a five year contract in New York. Having been told my work was great—that I was "sitting on top of the world," I worried little about the various trick options in said contract. THEN CAME THE DAWN.

About the middle of March I was commissioned to write an original around Boulder Dam. Though it was to be an epic, I was instructed to assemble my facts from railroad folders, gov-

ernment anti-depression leaflets and public library files. What interested me was not the "big business" story but the heart throbs of those poor devils building the Dam. This I couldn't get in folders or books, so I went to Boulder Dam.

Outside of Baker, Nevada, were three men lying across the road. A machine making seventy was almost wrecked in avoiding the licked men who gambled death for a lift and didn't care much which way fate dealt the cards. The roads were full of men, most of them walking, all headed for the prosperity oasis in the heart of the desert where government propaganda assured the robust ten years work at high wages. Many of them hadn't had food for days and made the trip across miles of torrid desert land by filling their stomachs with water at each gas station. They were men who feared nothing. No other type would brave such hardships. Here was my story, not how many pounds of concrete would be dumped into the Dam or how many millions the government would have to feed the building kitty.

At last I was in Las Vegas, twelve miles from the work center. There was a peculiar boom aspect about the place. All the old hotels were building extensions. New hostleries were being rushed to completion. Rooms in shacks unoccupied since the last mining rush were freshened up with cheap towels, soap and the familiar old pitcher and basin. "Let's get ours!" seemed to be the business slogan. Everything was wide open. It was plainly the survival of the fittest. Scores of men stood on the sidewalk looking at nothing—their thoughts being far away. Girls displaying their physical attractions, which might be had at a price, aired themselves in rocking chairs on the sidewalks of First Street. The confidence man was competition to the street-corner faker, each trying to get his share of any loose coin. Hundreds of men, some with their faces buried in the dust, were outstretched in Fremont Park completely exhausted, many of them not far from death.

Then there was the cause of it all—the construction companies employment shack—where workers were picked via lottery as needed at Boulder Dam. Thousands applied but few were chosen.

At the Dam, with the thermometer far above a hundred, men stripped to the waist, with perspiration streaming down their brawny bodies, drilled into the hard rock of the mountains, dangling hazardously from supporting ropes. Others handled high explosives in the dark auxiliary tunnels. Death due to negligence wasn't uncommon. When a life was snuffed out a live man was rushed in. Work mustn't stop. Big business was erecting a giant monument. The government was proving depression a lie. Work roared on with three shifts a day. The finest man power in the United States at a wage scale and under conditions only a licked man would tolerate. Six companies ran the job under federal supervision. These companies sold the men their food, clothing and shelter at higher prices than existed but a few miles from the Dam. If the men were broke they got company scrip instead of U. S. currency on their IOU's, which showed the companies a profit on the sweat and muscle of a free nation.

On my return to Hollywood, when it was plain I was out of order for having the audacity to suggest such a picture, Patrick Kearney urged me to address the local John Reed Club members on Boulder Dam. This I did on Friday evening, April 1. The following day I was dismissed by Universal without notice, notwithstanding that my first contract option hadn't expired. Kearney, likewise, was immediately summoned to the executive sanatorium and chopped down. Thanks to the splendid co-operation of Theodore Dreiser, decent papers and publications printed the facts.

The studio was highly indignant. Writers in the past said many unpleasant things about the making of pictures, but they always took particular care to voice their utterances in London, New York or elsewhere. No one before had the temerity to remain in the state which has never been kind to labor and call a spade a spade. Articles printed in the East and syndicated in Los Angeles were deleted. Of course these were misprints—errors made in the composing room—the studio had nothing to do with curbing or suppressing freedom of the press. That's not their business. They're making pictures.

Oh, I almost forgot to mention that Boulder Dam has been officially baptized Hoover Dam. Any worker up there, after a meal, will tell you that whoever christened the dam site thusly named it well.

MARTIN MOONEY.

**MOE BRAGIN****IN THE GRASS — A Story**

Pop couldn't find work on any rotten ship like thousands of other A.B.'s during the great sea slack. On the beach for a year, he managed to pick up a few half-ass jobs off and on. But most of the time he spent down around the docks near the Marine Workers' Industrial Union headquarters, listening to agitators, or in the library laboriously reading. He got fish-eyed from books, and flabby-necked with a chin like a yolksack.

In the flophouse he ran into a pale young lad, Humpy Smith. Humpy had fallen down a shaftway once and twisted his spine. His ma had just died from cancer of the lung come from a punched breast long ago. He was on his own now. He was working as an elevator boy in a shoe factory, sometimes giving a hand with the skiving machine. His pay had been cut, and the bosses were talking of having him oil machines all Sunday.

Pop kept his eye on timid Humpy. He talked his head off to him. He tried to put steels into him. Finally Humpy feebly protested to his foreman and was swiftly fired.

The whole hard winter neither of them earned a cent. They sat on cold benches envying the sparrows picking grit in the gutters and hammering horsedung. They waited patiently in the breadline, like a long clotted tail out of a hole opened by the city relief for stale bread and sloppy coffee.

Pop was born on a Kansas gumbo farm. Towards spring he took Humpy out to the country. They plowed the mud of a dozen states. They became cowmen on one farm where a couple of hands were laid up with the flu, they buried a horse on a second, sprayed orchards, cut wood, sheared sheep, built fences, spread manure.

One evening under a sun like a spike they dragged themselves into a village. It began to shower. They went into the general store and had beer and crackers. Pop muttered they would have to keep on sleeping in ditches and outhouses unless they landed something steady mighty soon. The storekeeper scratched his noodle. He knew of one place around where they might find work—a hard man, Ferguson, once full of Bible talk of Absalymon and Hog King of Basin, tough as a boar's snoot, but they could try him.

They tramped in the rain up a dirt road. Flat fields, a dim house like a soiled mushroom, outbuildings red as oxblood. The giant, who opened the door for them, had a small swollen head like a bobcalf. He combed them both with a flashlight. He led them sullenly to the cockloft of an old stable. He would wake them at four.

They stared at each other, dripping, at the smudgy stable lamp, the cots hard as pressing boards, and the small spidery window. Something below snapped like the cocking of a shotgun. Humpy, whom the beer and crackers had loosened, crept down. The door was locked.

Pop cursed furiously. "Goddamn it, why in hell won't they ever trust us? I'll stove in the lousy bastard's door."

Humpy said wearily, "He don't know us yet." He sat out on the window, trembling.

Pounding at the door woke them at cockcrow. They hustled to feed and milk fifty Holsteins and clean stables. As the milk stitched into the pails, the boss watched them closely. He wouldn't let them finish a cow; he would always strip after, didn't want his stock spoiled. Times were changed: you couldn't be too careful any longer with hired men. He led them to the low house with the weathervane near the chimney—a large fish-bellied angel blowing the trump of doom. It looked smoked to the devil.

A gaunt woman served breakfast in the kitchen. She had a soft voice. Humpy, head lowered, gulped his food. Pop talked a blue streak.

Ferguson snorted as if he had a straw in his nose. "From the city? That damn devil's nest. It's the cities that's killing us farmers. Full of them unemployed too lazy to wipe themselves."

The woman said quietly, "But, Georgie, we're half city ourselves. Ma and Uncle Theodore upstairs come from the city."

"They got us checked and docked, oxfles sucking us dry. Railroads, milk companies, feed places, all in the city . . ."

Pop poked up his shoulders. "They got their beaks into us, too . . ."

He glowered. "What you fellers got to be sucked out?" His great hands like stags locked for a moment, tugging each other with their horns of fingers. He swallowed his coffee and pulled out into the cowyard.

Most of the field work was haying. They started with enough work for six men. They drove out with three wagons, drawn by double-bitted Suffolks and unloaded in barns and barracks. As they drummed in with their first loads, Ferguson cursed the sparrows fluttering about. He reached under the old sheaves of wheat in the small grain mow. He tore out nest after nest. He yanked the head off the small birds and the legs so that their guts spilled loose threads. He chucked them through the door to the dogs. "Damned English sparrows. From the backdays nobody ever did see anything good come from that bull cross the water."

Pop muttered to himself, "People starving, and such pigheads still grunting about that stale war, the Revolutionary."

As they hunched in for dinner, hayseed in sweat on them, they met a shriveled old woman in the footpath. She carried a stick of camphor ice like a candle-offering for the sun. "Hope you keep these men so's Hattie won't have to help."

"Don't fret, Ma."

At the table he belched like a brass. He had to go to the dining room where his mother and the invalid minister, his uncle, had their meals. When he came back with his pills, Pop was tamping down his pipe.

Ferguson snorted, "That's a nice clyster bone you got in the wrong place. There ain't a cigarette but is a coffin nail. That's just the trouble with them unemployed, all of them, squirting money everywhere like a dog. No smoking in the barns, you fellers."

Pop's face twitched. He caught Humpy's begging eye. The wind died in his mouth. He merely grunted and scratched his match.

Ferguson gave neither of them a chance to finish smoking. He rushed hell-bent into the lot. They kept drawing long after the swollen cows started bawling in the yard. They milked in the dark. After supper, Pop and Humpy heaved up to the loft and stripped in the heat. Ferguson fussed a long time in the stables, then lunged across the yard. The lock snapped.

The eye of fire in Pop's pipe glared. "I'm going to shove this hell of a job down his guts. If this trap gets stuck, we'll have to lie down like coals. A biscuit throw from a big city and you'd think you was living a thousand years ago . . ."

Humpy jumped up from the cot. He almost upset the slop pail Ferguson's sister had given him. "But, but what'll we do?" He stuttered and pulled at his fingers.

Pop walked up and down, cursing. "All right, all right, I'll keep my shirt on a while until you learn. One place they feed us slops, the other we got to use the cowdrops in the barn and squat, afraid we'll dirty their godly toilets, the third they're always watching us like rats. He gaffed us up here, but he'd better watch his step."

Haying, Ferguson worked himself and his new hands ragged. Humpy loading, he would keep his team last and drive them hours without a chance to blow. He didn't wait for hay to cure but drew it in green and salted it down. His eyes lighted up only when he stared at a heavy stand of timothy or at his Suffolk mares that he stroked like women.

Sunday, instead of working their regular sixteen hours, they put in about half the time. Between chores they had to wash their clothes. Not allowed to use the bathroom, they tramped to the brook in the woods, shallow as a soup dish. After the beef and boiled potato dinner, the family dozed on the porch. On a rocker the silent sick minister, hands clasped on his belly like a snake fence. Through an open window the picture of the father, a beard like a shovel which seemed to have scraped up a great stone of face.

The two hands found a place near the brook in the pasture under a wild apple. Humpy lay down blissfully in the shade. Beyond



the woods the great spread cock of light. Over the fence the flagged cornfield and at his feet the little braiding water.

Pop had dug up all of the week's papers and some old farm magazines with Ku Klux articles from the carriage house. He read greedily. His eyes, the color of blue vitriol, were tireless. Finished, he brooded while Humpy sighed softly in the easing air.

A horse nickered in the stalls. Ferguson and his sister leaned on the fence and studied them. He grimaced at Humpy. "The girls must keep away from you like a snake. How did you get that on your back?"

Pop flung up. "He had a pimple and scratched."

Ferguson hawed and walked back into the yard.

The sister shook her head. "Don't pay attention to everything Georgie says. You're the best help he's had in years. You ain't soft as ladies' gloves or green as gall, he says. He's a little hard because he's got a stomach, and you know how farmers got to work."

Pop bellowed, "We got stomachs too, missus. We ate in ships and shops soup with the only meat flies and cockroaches. That don't excuse us acting like skunks. Boss farmers or bosses anywhere ain't the real ones up the creek these days. He's the kind of fellow that needs a club to make him understand."

She said softly, "He doesn't mean anything. I'll speak to him." She went back through the burdocks.

Pop stared at the great crab of his hand working as if eating its own flesh away. He looked at Humpy. "All right, I'm just wondering how long you're going to stand it, boy." He leaned against the tree and stared at the silo like a red bullet.

Humpy lay on his back, white-faced and silent.

Ferguson used to get them their tobacco when he drove his milk truck to the village. One night they went down themselves. The storekeeper was surprised to see them still holding on to the job. He told them all about the Fergusons.

Old Jess had met his death when his yoke of bulls had turned on him one Sunday. He was careless that morning, too goshdarned eager to get to church where he was deacon. They trampled him to a cheese. They found his fingerbones in one place, pinches of hair in another.

Humpy doubled up as if he were going to vomit.

Pop puffed his pipe. "Well, what did they do with the bastards?"

"Sold 'em, fotched a nice price being good ones . . . Jesse trusted his Maker too much. The old lady come from the city and hated farm life. She was going to make her only boy a minister. A young sprout, he knew the guts of the Bible inside out. The old man killed, the old lady took up with a queer sickness. She was wanting to eat dirt all the time. The uncle's a katydid. The boy had to drop school and scratch. Now the girl, she's a good one, she fell in love with a farmer down near the river. But he was German Catholic and they wouldn't have him. They got money, work like oxen. What's the use when their shadows is gads?"

They got back at midnight. The loft was locked. Pop flew into a rage. He rushed off to wake Ferguson. Humpy raced after him. He hung on to him, choking and trying to catch his hard breath. Under a moon like an oil splotch left by a sunk ship, the boy's face was the color of spat-out blood. They climbed up into one of the mows.

Pop rustled in the hay. He didn't understand why he was letting that haylouse get away with it. This was the first time that anyone had stuck the stick so far up his back and gotten away with it. Even the crimps, the fink halls, and the captains hadn't gone so far. When he was a squirt straight from Kansas the women had. Down in the southwest that Indian girl with the hips like a sidewinder snake and her tongue in and out like a feeler, like one of them poison lizards.

The fun and color didn't move Humpy. He jerked out, "We've got to stick here even if it's hell. The papers say next winter'll be worse."

Pop blew his nose and went to sleep.

Next morning Ferguson said he was sorry he had locked up. He thought they had gone to bed with the chickens.

"A feller's got to have a little fun once in a while," muttered Humpy.

Ferguson chanted: "Man didn't come here for recreation, by God; His mission on earth is to work, by Jesus."

"Like hell," butted Pop. "Humpy here's worked since he was the size of my thumb. I worked in stoke, jackassed 'beanbags' of coffee and sugar on docks, lugged my guts out as deckhand times enough and been knocked about like dice in a box. All that hap-

pened was our sweat bloated the upper feller. Our mission is to stand on their heads them that's leeching us. If there's a boss, the kindest hearted on two legs like you, when he eats a green apple, we got to pull our pants down . . ."

"You're crazy or dead drunk from yesterday's stink beer," snorted Ferguson. He wheeled about, disgusted.

Poy honked at him through his fist.

Haying wasn't all the work. There was truck to weed and corn to hoe. On their knees, shirts awash with sweat so that they looked like yanked-out bladders, Humpy and Pop rooted in the hot earth. Ferguson brooded on the porch, his hands trussing his blown stomach, or turned sod on his sulky plow on the other side of the farm. He used to sneak over to them, cross lots. They spied his straw hat in the bushes time and again. "Can't trust us, thinks we'll eat the weeds," fumed Pop. While they were hoeing, they caught him squinting at them from the fencerow. Once in sneaking up, he scared Humpy so that the lad spat and crossed himself before he knew what he was at.

As the summer moved toward the dogdays the heat became greater. The sun blazed away. Without warning the sky would fill with balled up clouds and burst into rain. At night tines of lightning in the stacked darkness.

One afternoon Humpy's face broke like a yellow bubble. He jabbed his fork into the stubble. He buckled under and slipped on his face. Pop jumped for him, belling. "For Christ sake, for Christ sake."

Humpy jerked up on a knee, and tried to grin. "I'm all right." He scratched in the dirt. "That damn sweat greases the fork. The fork twists like it was in pig spit. I—I just slipped."

"You got to rest this afternoon. We'll clear the goddamn lot without you."

Ferguson tugged his lines. "Come on, you fellers, look like rain."

Humpy shouldered his fork. "I'm fine now."

Beating it back for the last loads, sky the color of emery. Lightning playing like a great butcher knife from west to east. Ferguson straddled his wagon.

Pop leaped under a rumpled tree. Humpy couldn't move out of the rain. He stiffened like a hitching post, the foaming wind pulling at him like terrified horses, while Ferguson cursed God.

"All this spring the sky's got a spider in her. No more rain than a fly can p. . . . We farmers ain't going to suck a hind teat, even Yours, any more. Damn, damn You." He mauled the air with great wet fists. He started bawling like a calf for suck. He slashed his team through the murk.

Pop hopped from under the tree. He looked at Humpy's horrified face. He doubled back, laughing. "I'll be damned, what a man that is, what a man. Spits over his head and gets it all back on hisself."

When they drove up with the other wagons, Ferguson was in the stalls. He was petting his winded mares and feeding them crabapples.

All night a coarse rain. Humpy, a little feverish, left his bed for a slug of water. The door locked. Pop growled from his iron cot, "Hell, and you knew it all. He'd change. Why don't you use the slop pail?"

But next morning he lost all patience.

Ferguson drummed the rump of a restless heifer. "If you don't like it, get the hell out."

Pop kicked his stool back.

"I trusted some of you city fellers. Two of them run away with the car. In the next town a hired man set fire to barn and house. Down in Maryland, a nigger hand killed his boss. Times like these just making everybody crazy. In the old days we used to get help from Castle Garden—Swedes, Dutchmen, them Polaks. Never no trouble with them."

Pop's face was red as if it had been belted. "They didn't know any better."

"They'd work just for board and tobacco. Now hired men think our turds is gold. Feed, fertilizer, freight still knocked high as a kite . . ."

Humpy switched his hands at Pop not to answer. Pop straightened up and out into the bucking rain. Humpy found him in the loft.

"We got a few more days to the month. Can't you stay without kicking up a rumpus?"

Pop snarled, "So, so you changed your mind. You're not going to rot here your whole life."

"But—but we can't leave just this way. We got to give him





*"With one foot on the land and the other on industry, the country and every family are soundly based.—HENRY FORD.*

William Siegel

That night their month was over. Ferguson called them into the house where the old mother was teetering around. He showed them bills and reports that farm wages were low as a horse's hock. He handed Humpy three fives.

Humpy blinked at the bills. His face sucked blood. He jerked up a young ram of fist. He choked, "But you can't, you can't. You said—"

Ferguson said, "You can take or leave it. The companies don't ask us when they cut milk. Yes, and we slopped the pigs with it many a time. You weren't so darn experienced."

Pop pocketed his thirty without a word. Up in the cockloft, he watched the swollen-eyed lad bury his face in his pillow. "So you're waking up, young feller. Now we're going to stay another month."

Humpy flung up in bed.

"Yessir, I stood all his gaff for you. Now you're going to stick or I'll break every goddam bone you got."

Humpy fluttered like a pinned moth under the swift thrust of the hairy arms. He dared no more. He lay back, hacking his heart out.

Ferguson was surprised to find them hanging on to the job. They went out to finish the lot in the late afternoon. Humpy limped but worked spunkily. Late afternoon, as they were whetting up, Pop whispered, "Heads down. There's what we're waiting for."

He tore out his pipe. He stumbled up to the thicket as if he were going to light it. He grabbed a fence rail. Bellowing "Snakes," he beat the stubble. He swung round. He brought the rail down with the backing of his thick shoulders. Humpy, aped him, trembling. A hat flew out. There was a great blurting in the thicket. Ferguson was caught like an ox by its horns in the branches. Their rails split. Splinters stabbed around them. They caught up others. They pounded and batted mightily. The greater the threshing within the thicket, the harder they swung and heaved.

Leaves whipped. Twigs rained. The tin on the kitchen porch started banging; supper was ready, get to milking.

"I feel I was giving it them all," barked Pop.

He led Humpy to the stable pump. He calmed and helped him wash. "You got to treat a snake like snakes. Are you game again?"

The footpath and the door of the farmhouse were spotted with blood. No one in the kitchen. Humpy couldn't touch a crumb. Pop ate heartily. The sister rushed down, hopped in bandage. A box of wool fat rubbed against her breasts.

"Lord, Lord, we warned him thousand times. Where were you, men? Says he fell through the haytrap into the bull pen, says—"

She hurried, moaning, to phone the doctor. Upstairs the uncle's and mother's bleating.

Pop finished his meal deliberately. He grunted to brace up, more of the same stuff was facing them. He strode to the cockloft. The swollen cows were bawling. They packed their belongings in feed sacks. They went out into the twilight. A last look at fields and house.

"Boy, it was worth a day's wages," sang out Pop, turning down the road with Humpy.\*

notice. He's got to find other men. And where the devil will we get another job?"

"We got to be nice to him."

"Who says so? The Pope? You got a little more to get into your noodle."

Humpy's face creased. He wrung his hands.

Pop let loose a volley of curses, and went back to milking.

The last meadow was too heavy and wet to mow by machine. They had to cut by hand. Stopping to light cigarette and pipe, they saw a half-rotten old branch at their feet. It crawled into the high grass sluggishly. They jerked heads at the crackling. Ferguson again in the brush, hard at making believe he was hooking a cherry sapling.

He came out grumpy. "With nosing around and poking the devil's dibble into your mouths, you fellers manage well." He beat the grass for the snake.

Humpy cried, "Hey, it's a pretty little sucker. It can't do no harm."

Ferguson broke its back and bitted it with a stick. There the fang thorns from which leaked the yellowish green dew. "Copperhead. Get stuck here, and you can kiss yourself goodbye."

With his scythe he led the way round the field. Master at mowing, bending as if his bones were richly oiled in their sockets, the snathe like the spoke of a whirling wheel. Pop kept easily a hen's flutter behind him. He gained a round on Humpy and was at his heels.

There was a wedge of grass left, when a cloud like a mare's tail yanked over the trees. The west banged with thunder.

"We got to hurry 'fore the rain. Are you bushed?"

"Christ, no. I'll put more steam on."

Ferguson laughed and redoubled his efforts.

Suddenly, Humpy flared, guttered in the stubble, his leg flickering. They rushed him to the house. The sister made a legging of bandage. It kept blotting up blood.

Ferguson shook his head. "You was slow. I—God, there was the rain coming. God."

Pop whet his fist against his buttocks. "God, God. God's a handy fence for bastards to sneak behind."

Humpy's lips trembled for a moment. He tightened his hold on himself. "It's all my fault, Pop. I ain't so strong yet, I ain't. I should a-fallen back."

Pop clamped his jaws, said nothing else.

\* The Editors of the *New Masses* are glad to print this excellent portrayal of the American agricultural laborer's lot. They invite comment, especially from worker-writers, on the political content of the type of action to which the workers in Bragin's story resort.

**JUNE, 1932**



*William Siegel*

*"With one foot on the land and the other on industry, the country and every family are soundly based.—HENRY FORD.*

**JUNE, 1932**



*William Siegel*

*"With one foot on the land and the other on industry, the country and every family are soundly based.—HENRY FORD.*

**H. H. LEWIS**

# HOME GUARDS

Ew, the German soldiers were liable to make a running-jump over the British blockade and the ocean, and land kerplunk down here in Southeast Missouri. In 1917-'18. Those Bismarckian iron heels would trample our of-for-and-by-the-people Utopia, and we would have to hoch der Kaiser instead of savior Woodrow. Those devil-faced Huns, so realistically drawn by the cartoonists, they would start raping our 101% American mothers and sisters and sweethearts. There would be a swilling of beer and a munching of pretzels beside the smouldering ruins of our once happy, happy homes . . . Horrible! We were not going to let it happen. We younger and older, and we of draftable ages but not draftable bodies—with our kin on the way to France—we were not going to let our neck of the woods be trampled by Hun hordes suddenly materializing out of the blue sky.

So we joined the Home Guards.

Ra-ta-tat, ra-ta-tat, ta-tat. Halt. Present arms. Shoulder arms. Right about face. March. Ra-ta-tat, ra-ta-tat, ra-ta-tat, ta-tat. Run. Raaaa t-t-t-t. Halt! Right about face. Salute. Attention there, Lewis, whassa matter? Aw, the daggone sweat runs down on my glasses, en' I cain't see whure I'm a-goin', daggone it. Take it easy men, while Lewis wipes his glasses . . . March. Ra-ta-tat, ra-ta-tat, ra-ta-tat, ta-tat . . .

I was a kid then. Eighteen. Now I can *see where I'm going*. And it's not that I have gotten out of the sweat-class, either. Furthermore, when it comes to tears—through that furtherance induced by teargas from the police I can discern *clearly indeed*.

Captain "Leatherleggings," the village horsedocter and Boy Scoutmaster, herded us together on Sundays and holidays for training. Sometimes the call would come unexpectedly for an afternoon drill during the work-week; then a lot of groundings made to feel important, like Cincinnatus of old, we would quit the plows and hie off to the grim glories of saving "our" country. Intrepid? Home Guards!

What was the purpose behind the asinine farce? To keep uniforms moving and flags dancing in public, to din psychologic rata-tats, to keep up the war fever.

In my uniform or out, I kept an eye peeled for German spies. Like a Department of "Justice" agent now looking for Bolsheviks. There were many farmers of German extraction living in my neighborhood; and I bought what was a spyglass indeed from Sears and Roebuck, with which to watch those premises for such "signals or signs" as might convey a seditious meaning to some Boche confederate. For Leatherleggings had told us how spies in France were caught using the changeable positions of ordinary objects for relaying messages. From the top of Bald "Mountain," the highest hill around, there lying flat on my belly, I did this counter-espionage. I lay with a lone and great sense of responsibility, with much pride in my performance of my duty.

When Frau Frankfurter hung her bloomers on the line she had better not act sneaky about it. And she had better not hang them unusually, by one leg, for instance. Because I was keeping focus on her. And old man Schliiffenglotzer around there on the other side of the hill!—hey, hey, why was he putting his *red* hogs where his *white* hogs used to be? . . . Daggone that sneaky old "Dutchman" anyhow!

Subversive-like, a ladder was left standing against Whoofendorf's smokehouse. Next day the ladder was not there. Then on the third day, for no innocent reason discernable through the spyglass, the befocused Whoofendorf was setting that telltale ladder in the very same place again. While up the hollow at Himmelschnitzer's,—well, somehow or other there seemed to be a mysterious arrangement of things around his premises also. Those two krauters—links in a transcontinental chain of it, I betcha!

So I went and stuffed myself into uniform and then approached Herr Whoofendorf, with a sociable-like manner. I swung the talk around the ladder. The poker-faced rascal remained perfectly at ease. I kept "pumping" him about that one damned thing until he wanted to know why it mattered—he using a tone to mean that I

might tend to my own business. Then changing to a raw, third-degree bellow, I bluntly told the purpose of my presence and demanded a full explanation for the movements of the ladder. Aware of the mobbish feeling then against "the Dutch", intimidated, he complied.

But he should have knocked me in the nut; and made fertilizer of my carcass, as Germany was said to be doing with her dead soldiers.

Peeved by the frank explanation, this plausible snatching of a feather from my cap, I faced about on one heel and goose-stepped away, barking, "Hep, hep, hep-hep-hep." Turning face aside and throwing voice back with a cupped hand, I maliciously sang war songs as I kept going. "Johnny, gitch yer gun, gitch yer gun, gitch yer gun . . . Over there, over there . . . Goodbye Maw, goodbye Paw, goodbye mule with yer ol' hee-haw . . . Tramp, tramp, the boys are marching . . . Keep the home fires burning . . . Raus mit der Kaiser (he's in Dutch)." I finished with a backwoods yell, EEEEE-HOO.

When the Liberty Bond salesmen, usually three of the community's most respected kulaks together, motored from house to house, it seemed appropriate that a Home Guard in full regalia should go along with them—to add even more pressure. A German renter thought himself unable to buy a bond. The salesmen thought otherwise but in vain. On the following night somebody crept into the barn and slopped yellow paint all over the peasant's buggy. Later on, the poor devil was mobbed by the Home Guards and forced to the obscene ceremony of kissing a flag: he decided to purchase a bond on the installment plan.

Captain Leatherleggings stuffed a number of tow sacks with damp sawdust and suspended them in a row on the drilling-grounds. Understanding them to be Bosches, the Home Guards had bayonet practice. Jim Rooney got a well-meant though misdirected jab in the hind-end and had to be taken to the captain's, veterinarian's, own horsepital for first aid.

Came the Fourth of July, 1918. Army airplanes lighted on the county fairground, inside the racetrack. Pretty soon they were aloft again, circling about, humming in unison, into crescendic *beats* that stirred the blood. Here came Lon Sullivan, the hog-buyer, a grizzled old rawboned burgher with a florid face and a like manner. Stepping from behind the upward-faced peasant who was my father, laying hand on the shoulder of the hog-raiser, he drew a heroic breath and pointed. "A Jake, ah Jake," he enthused—our three heads rairing backwards again—"thim kinda Liberty Motors up yander, they're goinna win the war fer us. Jis' lis'n to 'em, Jake!" His booming bass tones shook with emotion. And my blood leaped as if to burst the top of my head off. It throbbled with the motors. Gee, I could have killed me a Hun right then!

Of course all the Home Guards were there in uniform. Every once in a while we would stage another march around the racetrack. It was a long, hot way to Tipperary; but the ovation received when in front of the grandstand more than compensated for the work. Sweet things then fluttered handkerchiefs, there being "Something about a Uniform that Makes the Ladies Fall"; and the band, striking up again, made us prance like Rozinantes. How we gloried in it—arousing encore after encore, playing up to the grandstand.

Just before the crowd started dwindling in the afternoon we performed something even grander to "send 'em home on"—a sham battle inside the racetrack. One small cannon firing loud blanks, ably assisted by a host of beaten pans, laid down a horrific barrage on the Scourge of Europe. The Scourge quailed low in his trench. Safeguarded by the barrage, we loped forward and "dug in," hurriedly made a trench, fifty feet from his. After a short respite we went "over the top" with a flash of bayonets, charged the Huns. They saw what it meant, Yanks come to win the war, so they all flung hands up and cried, "Kamerad!" And the crowd went wild.

*The crowd went wild . . .*



MAY DAY SKETCHES

Cikowski



Chodorow  
Chodorow

# A WORKER WRITES

## Renters' Court

In the heart of Chicago's Loop district stands a mammoth stone building, stained by many years of smoke. It is the City Hall. In it is the machinery of the city and the county governments. The center doors of the entrance are locked, and one has to enter through narrow swinging doors on the sides. For now the city is broke, and this locking of the center doors prevents drafts and conserves coal, and makes a pretty gesture of economy.

The long center corridor is thronged with citizens. They huddle in groups and whisper mysteriously. Most of them are trying to fix something or other. Exhorbitant taxes, or a criminal prosecution, or an election, or some job-holding proposition.

Jam into a crowded elevator and go up to the seventh floor and push about amidst more buzzing groups. Here are the courtrooms of municipal judges, and before the door of one the crowd is thicker than ever. To the side of the mahogany (imitation) door is pasted a cardboard sign, and on it, printed in ink, are the words—Renters' Court—Forcible Entry and Detainer.

The judge is a hard-faced young man, slightly bald and thin, with tight pressed lips. He looks intelligent and quick witted and unscrupulous. He is, for he got his job in a bitter ward fight, by buying votes and stealing ballot boxes, and riding along with the most crooked faction of his crooked party. The bailiff is fat and squat and dexterous in herding the mob of bewildered defendants. He got his job by playing shadow to the man who now is judge.

A nondescript sort of man, dark complexioned, spectacled, and dressed in a wrinkled suit, assumes a place before the railing. He leans negligently at his ease upon it and thumbs a sheaf of papers, as the court clerk calls out the first of his cases. He is the lawyer for the plaintiff. Not much of a lawyer, but then, he don't have to be.

"Blank Bank versus Smith," mumbles the clerk.

A bewildered Negro steps out of the crowd.

The judge's eyes brighten. Negroes are good fun.

"Are you Smith?," he asks sharply.

"Yas suh," mumbles the black man, fingering a cap. His clothes are cast-offs and shabby, but he holds his back erect.

The judge frowns slightly. He likes his Negroes humble, with bent backs and servile glances. He asks his next question. They are all stereotyped by now.

"How much rent do you pay?"

"Twenty dollahs a month, jedge."

"How much money do you owe?"

"Twenty dollahs, suh."

The judge glances at the lawyer for confirmation. Needless to say, the Negro defendant has no lawyer. Then comes the final question, "How long will it take you to move out?" This last is

put sharply and quickly. It catches the man off guard. He starts to reply but the judge cuts him off with, "You can find another place in eight days, can't you? All right, pay up or move out in ten days. Got any children? One?" He makes a slight motion with his hand which the bailiff catches with a practiced eye and he hustles the benumbed Negro off to one side, to make room for the next, already stepping up.

The whole case took hardly more than thirty seconds.

All through the morning the procession wends its way. The Law is evicting the jobless from their hovels. The plaintiffs are nearly always banks or trust companies or the like. By this time most of the small landlords have been foreclosed.

Sometimes you could see that some ragged head of a family was going to say, "But, judge, I haven't got any place to move to, or any money with which to pay rent." He never had a chance to get the words out. The bailiff knew the signs and he'd hustle him away. He knew the signs.

What becomes of this man who lost his humble job, who lost his puny savings in the failure of a crooked bank, and who now is turned out of his bare flat? (The chattel mortgage gypers already have his few sticks of furniture). He has a wife and a child. Well, if he is lucky he knows a group who have a flat. In it are crowded from three to ten other families. They sleep in shifts, not in beds, but on the planks of the floor. Between them all they beg or steal the money to pay the rent. Some who have a drag, or luck, get food tickets reluctantly doled out by the "relief agencies." They live on rice and neck bones and beans and spare-ribs, and pig-snouts, and stinking hamburger, and cabbage.

Most of the oldsters will die before their time. Most of the children will survive. Won't they grow up to be fine upstanding Americans? Big and brave and strong and robust, waving flags, and being staunch Republicans. Lykell they will.

ROBERT McDONALD

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# BOOKS

## "1919"

1919: *John Dos Passos. Harcourt. \$2.50.*

It was hard to believe that John Dos Passos could outdo what he had already done in "Forty-Second Parallel"; but it is hard too to deny that he has done it in "1919." Perhaps it is that the storm which you felt to be ominously gathering in the first book, breaks with a violent din and downpour in the present one: at any rate, "1919" has all the energy of "Forty-Second Parallel", and still more tactical mastery. Dos Passos is one of those rare novelists who have generalship as well as dash: like Tolstoy and Zola and (in his way) Frank Norris, he can plan a campaign, manoeuvre his troops, and send them into action at the right moment with the sure foresight of a Napoleon. This power, if nothing else, would distinguish him from the ranks of even his talented contemporaries: where they make themselves masters of the microscope or of the cardiograph, he has learned the use of field-glass and the semaphore: to vary the figure, he writes for the age of the cinema rather than that of the daguerreotype. Where a Hemingway will concentrate on a fugitive couple, Dos Passos, even while sticking to biography, will keep his people in step with the march of their class; where a Faulkner will play tricks with the illusions of time, Dos Passos will manage, without strain, the ruthless movement of time itself.

But Dos Passos is no more a mere tactician than Tolstoy: what makes these two books so remarkable is exactly that the individuals are not sacrificed to the campaign. "1919" is no "mass novel" written to a formula. One by one, these men and women, these boys and girls, are as studiously—yes, as tenderly—dealt with as Hemingway's desperate lovers or Faulkner's incestuous suicides. For the most part, they are the sorts of people we are already familiar with in recent bourgeois fiction. Ward Moorehouse, so far as the *type* goes, might have come out of Lewis—though Dos Passos exposes him with far more pitiless weapons than Lewis used on George F. Babbitt. Dick Savage, superficially speaking, is the sensitive, spineless youth of a dozen novels of the gin age. Even Joe Williams *might* have been done by Lardner—with a difference. But what other American novelist has Dos Passos' range of sympathies? There are others who could deal perhaps as truthfully as he does with the Harvard boys of Dick Savage's generation, and their futilities; but could they also follow Joe Williams aboard the *Argyle*, and into the ports of the Caribbean, and among the whores of St. Nazaire? How many American writers could get under the skin of a girl like Eveline Hutchins, and also have the imagination to understand Ben Compton?

This sympathetic understanding of individuals—of an amazing variety of individuals, too—is what, when taken along with his command over mass movements, gives Dos Passos' fiction a quality one might call dialectical. Anne Elizabeth Trent may be carrying on an amour with Dick Savage in Rome, but the two of them are never allowed to get out of earshot of the Peace Conference or out of the clutches of the American Red Cross. Joe Williams is not much interested in international affairs: much less interested than he is in Del and other girls: but he too is confusedly aware that large events are in progress; and the reader is never allowed to disassociate him from the history of the American marine during the war. Eveline Hutchins is more interested in clothes and in men than in ideas; but she is forced to overhear, sooner or later, a good many ideas expressed by her friends; and these ideas have been making history. The individuals, as I say, are never sacrificed to the campaign; but they never run away with it either.

This is not the only respect in which Dos Passos achieves a kind of dialectical perspective. He is a good enough Marxist also to do justice to both "destiny" and "will." Most of the people he writes about are familiar in modern fiction because they have no control over their lives, and never succeed in getting any: more or less ineffectual members of the middle class, daughters and sons of ministers and small business men, they drift about helplessly, like Dick Savage, or thrash about aimlessly,

like Anne Elizabeth, or go down in the ruthless struggle, like Joe Williams; and never learn what it is all about. Taken by themselves, these episodes in "1919" might seem to be merely an addition, an exceptionally fine addition, to the large literature of futility. But they cannot be taken by themselves, because Dos Passos does not see them out of focus. No doubt he himself is still very close in feeling to the lives of such people: and it is true that his militancy is not yet all that it may be. One hopes that his coming novels will go much further in this direction. But already he has shown that drift is not the whole story: already he has shown, with "Mac" in the first volume, and Ben Compton in "1919", that the only class in the world is not the lower middle class; that the making of history, indeed, is not in the hands of this class, but in the hands of the workers to whom Ben Compton devotes himself; and that, among their leaders, there is and must be the most heroic energy, decision, drive, and mastery.

In a scene toward the end of the book—in the midst of all the chaos and confusion—Ben Compton, on trial for opposing the imperialist war, gets to his feet in the court-room, makes a speech, and ends with a passage from the "Communist Manifesto": "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." Not much by way of what the liberal critics like to call "propaganda", but enough, for the purposes of this book; enough, along with the sketches of Randolph Bourne, Paxton Hibben, Joe Hill, and Wesley Everest, to sound the note of proletarian activism.

HUGH COLE

## You Are a Reactionary!

"AS I SEE IT" by Norman Thomas, MacMillan, \$1.50.

This book is described in the author's preface as "in an important sense . . . an effort to bring up to date a position . . . set forth in *America's Way Out: A Program for Democracy*."

It is a book of 173 pages, with ten chapters, ranging from one like the third, on "The Acceptance of Violence", which classes the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Communists as "brothers under the skin" by virtue of a common "faith" in violence, to one like the ninth, on the "Faith of My Fathers", which is a tender yet restrained tribute to the protestant faith of his fathers.

In all ten chapters there is no mention of Scottsboro.

There are scattered references to the Soviet Union throughout the volume. The dictatorship of the proletariat, the Five Year Plan, the building of Socialism, the Soviet government are repeatedly referred to as "the Russian experiment". On page 13 the author confesses the necessity of revising his earlier judgment (in *America's Way Out*) on the prospects of agricultural collectivization in the Soviet Union. In further estimating the results of "the Russian experiment" the author maintains a judicious balance between pro and con. It is difficult to make out whether he regards the "experiment" to be "on the whole" a "success".

(It should be remembered that the author was writing his estimate just as America was completing the third winter of the bitterest crisis in the history of capitalism, and as the Soviet Union was entering upon the completion of the Five Year Plan in four.)

Illuminating is the author's subjective feeling toward the first workers' republic in history. The feeling is, of course, difficult to discover in so judicious a book. Occasionally, however, a striking utterance, or slip of phrase, gives us a clue.

On page 40, for example, in discussing the possibility of war within the next decade, the author feels bound to deal with the possibility that *the Soviet Union will initiate war!* And he writes: ". . . Russia's concern for her own development, and the strong sense of realism her rulers have shown in actual diplomatic relations, make Russian attack on capitalist nations within the next

decade far less likely than alarmists of the Matthew Woll school profess to fear."

What is to be inferred from the expression "*far less likely. . .*"? Just how likely does the author mean to say it is?

Again, in discussing "Economic Planning" he writes: "Though I do not think the Russian government gets its astonishing results primarily by terror, I agree, in the main, with Professor Beard's vigorous statement: 'One thing, however, is certain: the Russian government rules by tyranny and terror, with secret police, espionage, and arbitrary executions. The system may be adapted to a people who endured Tsarist despotism for centuries, but to suppose that it could be transported intact to the United States, even if deemed successful in its own bailiwick, is to ignore the stubborn facts of American life and experience . . .'" etc.

Thus, the Soviet government is not the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the political instrument for the building of Socialism and classless society—it is a *system of "tyranny and terror."*

In a world where the first workers' republic in history has already celebrated its fourteenth anniversary, and where basic class antagonisms are coming increasingly to the sharpest possible focus, friendship to the Soviet Union is a touchstone of a man's fundamental class loyalty. Note should therefore be had of the psychological and subjective company which this "socialist" author keeps.

Some inkling as to the roots of his thought is offered by his peculiar vocabulary. It abounds in expressions like "salvation", "faith", "crusade", "save mankind", etc.

Whence these peculiar metaphors for a socialism which the author devoutly wishes to be wished? What ecclesiastical parasitism has here breathed its engaging breath of style? Shall we not recognize the dying class by the dying style?

A note of rising anxiety is apparent throughout the volume. If the author were writing *America's Way Out* today, he would add, he says, an "even stronger note of urgency". And in another place he says, just so, "There is no time to lose."

And the reader, who has been witnessing the deepening crisis, the tens of millions of people in degrading and agonizing want, the corpses of Chapei, of Dearborn, of Chicago, the lengthening foul shadow of Scottsboro, the confirmation of the "legal" burial-alive of Mooney, the rhythmic advance of police clubs against the heads of hungry workers—men, women, and children—the manoeuvres at Geneva and Shanghai, Paris, Washington, Tokyo and London in preparation for the next imperialist shambles, the reader himself feels the necessity for an "even stronger note of urgency," he feels impelled to address to the "socialist" author the classic question of Lenin: *What is to be done?*

What is to be done, Mr. Thomas?

The author has thought of that too.

And scattered like precious gems throughout the rough ore of the volume, he has the following specific proposals:

1. With reference to the farm problems—the price-level of 1927 should be restored.

(Restored for whom, Mr. Thomas?)

2. With reference to mining—coal should be "socialized." (By and for whom, Mr. Thomas?)

3. With reference to unemployment—a five billion dollar hunger loan should be floated, and used to attack the problem of "sub-standard housing" and for the electrification of rural areas.

(People are starving, Mr. Thomas. Shall they wait until the shiny interest-coupons are engraved? When will they be engraved, Mr. Thomas?)

4. With reference to finance—all banks should be placed under federal regulation, and the postal savings system extended into a full banking system.

(Regulation for whose benefit, Mr. Thomas? Who will control credit, and for whom?)

5. With reference to disarmament—disarmament.

(Mr. Thomas is not hopeful for the Disarmament Conference. He wishes they had called Russia's "bluff", "if it was a bluff". From whom do you expect disarmament, Mr. Thomas?)

6. With reference to Russia—recognition and trade.

(Are you speaking for Mr. Hillquit, his clients, and other "socialists" too, Mr. Thomas, or is this just your personal opinion?)

7. With reference to debts and reparations—cancellation.

(Has M. Leon Blum, the French "socialist", come out for the cancellation of debts and reparations, Mr. Thomas? Did the famous British Labour Government when it was in power? Where was your party when the credits—which are now "debts"—were extended for the slaughter of the workers of the world?)

8. With reference to "liberty"—certain "liberties" ought to be preserved.

(Which liberties and whose liberties? What of the liberty of the worker to say what shall be done with his mind and body and life? When he exercises this liberty in the Soviet Union, it is a system of "tyranny and terror". And the "liberty" of the workers to protest, in the face of police terror, against starvation—that is "riot", is it not? Mr. Thomas refers to it as such.)

9. With reference to education—both children and adults should be taught to think.

(Do you mean Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, Mr. Thomas? Are you kidding us, Mr. Thomas? *Who will run the schools, Mr. Thomas?*)

10. With reference to Tammany Hall, and other things—a socialist attack upon the social and economic order of which Tammany Hall and other things are but the symptoms.

Thus, casually, and by way of allusion, as it were, Mr. Thomas comes to the point.

Who will lead that attack upon the capitalist order?

Here and there Mr. Thomas may be observed to indicate his belief that it ought to be and will be the Socialist Party.

Here are Mr. Thomas's reasons:

1. Because "No better or greater organization is in sight." (page 172.)

Frankly, Mr. Thomas, we do not believe that ought to be said about the party of Mr. Hillquit, and about a party with a record of organization among workers such as is enjoyed by the American Socialist Party. You didn't really organize the Hunger March, or the Unemployed Councils, or the National Miners Union, did you, Mr. Thomas?

Or do you mean you helped Morgan organize the "Block-Aid"?

2. Because "the propaganda of violence and some future revolutionary movement (sic) is more likely to serve the cause of an American fascism than of communism, at least within the decade . . ." (page 32, chapter on "The Next Decade.")

Since, on the same page Mr. Thomas says that it is the Communists who "are likely to profit or seem to profit (in the next decade) most by the rising tide of discontent", there is evidently something contradictory in Mr. Thomas's bland prophecy of fascism.

Will you make it beyond peradventure of doubt clear, Mr. Thomas, whether you are here stating your judicious calculation of the objective chances, or your preference?

We know of course that you prefer "neither." But, Mr. Thomas, between the alternatives of a transformation of the present disguised and imperfect dictatorship of the bourgeoisie into a naked and open dictatorship, on the one hand, and the seizure of power by the workers, on the other,—which do you prefer? *That is the question, Mr. Thomas.* Will you not make it clear, or shall we draw our own inferences?

These two reasons are not very satisfactory, the reader feels.

The one reason is a self-evidently absurd claim for the most backward political organization even in the Second International. The other—a negative reason, to eliminate the Communists—is merely a prophecy of fascism.

You must have a real reason, Mr. Thomas. What is it?

Here we are. On page 18 of Mr. Thomas's book:

3. Because "The socialist ideal, as distinguished from the communist, is social salvation *without catastrophe*, and with a minimum of confusion and disorder." (Mr. Thomas's italics.)

Very good, Mr. Thomas, now we understand.

Only—

Was the "socialist ideal", as described in the imperishable thought above, being carried toward realization when the various Socialist Parties of the Second International voted the war credits in 1914? Did the Socialist Parties sanction and support the butchery in the belief that it would entail "salvation . . . with a minimum of confusion and disorder"?

The boys got "saved", didn't they, Mr. Thomas? And the "Socialist" International helped to save them, didn't it?

Was it being carried toward realization when the "Socialist" leaders of America jumped on the bandwagon in 1917?

Is it being carried toward realization by McDonald, the "Socialist" premier of the semi-fascist National Cabinet of Great Britain, when he unleashes against the Indian masses the best-organized and most ruthless terror they have yet had to endure?

Is the Social Democracy of Japan sanctioning the Japanese rape of Manchuria and butchery of Shanghai and provocation of war against the Soviet Union in the belief that "social salvation"

will thereby result with a "minimum of confusion and disorder."?"

With a minimum of confusion and disorder *for whom*, Mr. Thomas?

When the League of Nations stands cynically by while Japanese imperialism accomplishes the dismemberment of China, and while the members of the League forge a united front against the Soviet Union, and when the Second International—under these circumstances—accepts the role of the League's agent to the toiling masses, does it do so in order to bring about "social salvation without catastrophe and with a minimum of confusion and disorder"?"

Without catastrophe *for whom*, Mr. Thomas?

When war is raging on the eastern front, and is already brewing on all the western fronts, and when you, Mr. Thomas, take the lead in assuring the workers that war can be "prevented" by devoutly wishing it not to be wished—is that in order to bring about "social salvation without catastrophe . . . etc."?"

Without catastrophe *for whom*, Mr. Thomas?

Without catastrophe for the workers and peasants of China, or without catastrophe for American munitions manufacturers and the shiny, cynical, impotent Commissions of the League sent to inspect the corpses of Chapei?

Without catastrophe for the Japanese soldier and worker, pawns of the savage game of Japanese imperialism, or without catastrophe for the bloodthirsty feudalism of the Mikado and the section of the Japanese Social Democracy which has now split off to form a Fascist party?

Without catastrophe for the workers of America (for whom several million draft blanks have already been prepared in anticipation of—an absolute minimum of confusion and disorder!) or without catastrophe for the decrepit leaders of the American Socialist Party who have given no reason to believe that they will not behave during the next war as they did during the last?

Without catastrophe for the heroic toiling masses of the Soviet Union—who have been allowed barely ten years respite from bloody "disorder and confusion" led by Mr. Hilquit's clients and friends and financed by the bosses of League of Nations, which is the boss of the Second International—or without catastrophe for those well-known friends of the Soviet Union, Dr. Stephen S. Wise, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, and Mr. J. P. Morgan, in whose enterprises of one sort or another Mr. Thomas joins?

Without catastrophe for the crashing structure of foul and insane capitalism—seeking to arrest its crash, as it thinks, by using the corpses of workers as buttressing stuff all the way from Dearborn to Shanghai and beyond—or without catastrophe for the rising revolutionary masses led by their Communist vanguard against whom your friends of the press, the pulpit, and the police are daily unleashing an increasing terror.

Without catastrophe *for them*?

Your intentions are good, Mr. Thomas—without doubt the best in the world!—but like the Second International you belong to the past. And those of the present who belong to the past are called *reactionaries*.

WILLIAM KEENE

## Gilbert Seldes' "Loose Chatter"

AGAINST REVOLUTION, by Gilbert Seldes. John Day Pamphlets. 25c.

THE THREE PHARAOKHS, by Herman Hagedorn. John Day Pamphlets. 25c.

According to Gilbert Seldes, there is a lot of "loose chatter" about revolution "at dinner tables and at speakeasies" at present. Apparently it is this "loose chatter" that he has set out to confute, for he argues against revolution in terms such as the following: "Politically and economically, the idea of revolution is a South Sea Island dream of warm suns, the simple life, food growing on trees, and naked girls in worshipful attitudes." "We see ourselves commandeering motor cars to rush down to the bankers centers, and if there is to be looting we have picked our favorite shops."

Seldes' real effort is to discredit the idea of revolution, and he does this—like any good publicity man—by casting slurs on revolutions and revolutionaries. "There is nothing more old-fashioned than the radical revolutionary; revolution as a method is five

thousand years old . . . Everything has changed except the revolutionary idea. That has only worn out, etc., etc.

Seldes advances the proposition that a revolution in the United States would probably mean several years of economic disorganization. This original notion is about all he has to offer by way of real argument. The rest of his pamphlet is straight counter-revolutionary propaganda.

He makes some statements that are obviously untrue. "The revolutionary, although it takes him a long time to abandon Russia entirely, has already gone over emotionally to Mexico." "The brilliant discovery that people with money, even if they are workers, spent money and so rolled up profits, made capital tender. (before 1929)."

The pamphlet is full of misconceptions and befuddled thought. One wonders why, having so little to say, Seldes attempted writing about revolution at all.

"The Three Pharaohs" is a poem in which the present crisis is treated. Communism appears in it as one of the "three pharaohs", a red specter which announces, among other things, that "man is a cog."

CLINTON SIMPSON



Hugo Gellert

"US FELLAS GOTTA STICK TOGETHER"—AL CAPONE





*Hugo Gellert*

**"US FELLAS GOTTA STICK TOGETHER"—AL CAPONE**

## We Capture the Walls!

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART EPISODE

During these years of joblessness, Rockefeller Center with its huge wall spaces loomed big, as a mural decoration possibility for many an artist. They waited the completion of the buildings with impatient expectancy. Then came the news: these walls had been assigned without competition. Feeling ran high, the art pages of the bourgeois press were filled with indignation and protest. Something had to be done. The architects of the Rockefeller Center issued a statement denying that the contract were assigned.

Upon the heels of this upheaval the Museum of Modern Art, of which Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. is treasurer, invited artists to participate in an exhibition of mural decorations.

*"At the present time such an exhibition would be particularly valuable for the information of many interested architects in New York who are in search of competent decorators for buildings proposed or in construction . . . The exhibition will be hung to display the work of each artist to the best possible advantage before as many architects and as great a public as can be brought together."*



William Gropper

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

A day or two after we delivered our murals, the writer was called to the Museum and told that his use of a horizontal, instead of a vertical panel was contrary to specifications. He agreed to paint a new panel. After this talk, he received the following letter:

"I was thinking, when you are doing over your mural, if it would not be a good idea in a way to do the panel of Lenin instead of the one you did . . . I think that the large figure of Lenin that you indicated would really be a definite and different aspect of the symbolism of the whole social struggle, and also as there is a single large figure, it might take you less time to do it over. Also, in a way—it is a more monumental design . . . It was so terribly understanding of you to be willing to paint the panel over and the Museum and myself are really grateful."

Later a telephone call: inquiries, which panel was the writer working on? Shortly after William Gropper learned that three murals had been rejected: Ben Shahn's "Sacco and Vanzetti," Gropper's "The Writing on the Wall," and Gellert's "Us Fellas Gotta Stick Together"—Al Capone." Then another letter from the Museum.

"I must inform you that (unknown to me) any picture which can be interpreted as an offensive caricature or representation of a contemporary individual, cannot be exhibited. This applies to part of your composition."

The trustees of the museum held conferences with their attorneys. Ivy Lee was summoned. A. Conger Goodyear, President, Samuel A. Lewinsohn, Secretary, Stephen C. Clark, a trustee, were the most violent in denouncing our pictures.

"How can Mr. Hoover come to the opening!" exclaimed Mr. Goodyear, "and how can I face J. P. Morgan if these pictures are hung in the museum of which I am a trustee!"

Gropper and myself got in touch with a few of the artists and told them of the rejections. They were indignant. One of them volunteered to organize a group and all would withdraw their pictures from the exhibition. The museum heard about it and backed down; all the murals were hung. The victory was the artists'. The strength of numbers shows what can be done if *they stick together*.

Young Nelson Rockefeller, chairman of the advisory committee, went to J. P. Morgan to break the news, and he agreed that it was better to hang the pictures than have a lot of unfavorable publicity.

The Museum crowded our paintings into a little room downstairs and later, finding that the attendance at that room was great, they moved them up to the fourth floor where visitors are unaware of their existence. Photographs in the possession of the Museum were withheld from newspapers. Photographing was forbidden. Only the insistence of the writer won for a cameraman permission to take pictures.

Throughout the entire procedure the museum was evasive. Even now it endeavors to place all the blame and responsibility of the exhibition upon the shoulders of Lincoln Kirstein, in spite of the fact, that Nelson Rockefeller is the chairman of the Advisory Committee. The critics are only too ready to be of service: "The exhibition is so bad as to give America something to think about for a long time," says Mr. Jewell in the Times. That releases the architects of Rockefeller Center from their obligation to the artists.

"The class struggle orgies may be dismissed as harmless trifles—not because of their theme, but because of the childish or generally uninspired way in which they are handled."—Another gem of Mr. Jewell which releases the Museum from any obligation to us.

And Murdock Pemberton says in the New Yorker: "The show easily divides itself into two classes; a few serious artists, who really hoped that they would snare a contract, or at least interest the American architect in their potentialities, and a great many young men who saw only an opportunity to stick out their tongues and have a little prankish fun with their hosts."

Yes, snaring contracts is a *serious* business. To observe your times, and to boldly state your findings, regardless of contracts, is *sticking out your tongue!*

HUGO GELLERT



*William Gropper*

*THE WRITING ON THE WALL*

# DRAMA

*Hirsch Leckert, Historical-Revolutionary Drama by A. Kushnirow. Produced by the Artef (Jewish Workers' Theatre). Directed by Beno Schneider. Settings and Costumes by M. Solotaroff.*

Strong and moving, with play, actors and sets fusing to form a single organic whole, the new Artef production, *Hirsch Leckert*, marks a great leap forward along the path of the creation of a vital proletarian drama in this country. No need for apologies here. No need for reservations or those omnipresent "extenuating circumstances." Here is a finished performance, a creative achievement that bites into the imagination and whips the emotions into play. And the Jewish workers who flocked to see *Hirsch Leckert* showed how much a part of their own struggles this story of czarist Russia of thirty years ago is.

From *Trikenish (Drought)*, the last Artef production, to *Hirsch Leckert* is a journey to another world. *Trikenish*, the Yiddish version of *Can You Hear Their Voices?*, as produced by the Artef, never took on the flesh of life. The Artef players declaimed *Trikenish*, they didn't act it; and bad direction didn't help them any. But *Hirsch Leckert*, besides being a better play, offered material that was obviously closer to them, if not in time and space, at least in spirit. It may be too bad that when Jewish worker-actors try to interpret American farmers, they produce either clowns or tragic Second Avenue heroes, while, on the other hand, they can make Jewish workers of thirty years ago seem very much alive, but if *Trikenish* and *Hirsch Leckert* are any criterion, it happens to be the truth. *Hirsch Leckert* really lives and moves; intelligently directed and stirringly acted, there are no creaking joints.

It is now nearly thirty years since the Jewish cobbler, Hirsch Leckert, fired the shot at Von Vaal, governor of Vilna, that was meant to avenge the bloody suppression of the May Day demonstration by the czarist satrap. It is nearly thirty years—yet today the name of Leckert, who died on the gallows, is for thousands of Jewish workers throughout the world an unwithered symbol of heroic struggle and sacrifice. And in the city of Minsk, U.S.S.R., the Workers' Republic has built a monument to the simple cobbler who was one of the trail-blazers of the proletarian revolution.

No writer could want more vital material than the period of Leckert's martyrdom, the period immediately preceding the 1905 revolution. The well-known Soviet Yiddish poet, novelist and playwright, A. Kushnirow, has used if not all (which would have been impossible), yet an important section of this material, and used it well. He shows us Jewish workers, real proletarian types, shows them in struggle against the czarist regime and in conflict with their own leaders, the timid intellectuals of the *Bund*. He shows us in the person of Sonia Schereshevsky the deluded worker, who unwittingly becomes a "Zubatofka," a police agent, but at the end realizes her mistake. On the other side, he shows us the brutality and corruption of the czarist officials and the treacherous role of the Jewish capitalists and rabbis. And the play is not an abstract thesis; its figures are human and its ideas are expressed through the development of the living class struggle. Leckert, too, is not romanticized, but is presented as he was, a rank and filer, one of the mass, who came forward at a particular historic moment as the embodiment of the desperation and fiery heroism of the masses. But the play falls down ideologically at a most important point: it fails to contain any criticism of the attempt at assassination. The act of Leckert, viewed in historical perspective, was a heroic act of class vengeance and at the same time a protest against the legalistic opportunism and timidity of the leaders of the *Bund*. Nevertheless, as an act of individual terror, it tended to lead the workers away from the path of organized struggle, struggle not against individuals, but against the system of capitalism and semi-feudal parasitism. Failure to point this out means failure to perform the supreme task of proletarian art: to be that dialectic synthesis which not merely presents pictures of the class struggle and indictments of bourgeois society, but shows, either explicitly or implicitly, the path that must be followed for the transformation of that society into its direct opposite, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Yet despite this major shortcoming, *Hirsch Leckert* remains a significant proletarian play. And what minor defects there are

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Before me, a Notary in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Frances Strauss, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that she is the Business Manager of the New Masses, and that the following is, to the best of her knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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