

**Covering Up  
for Coster**

**PAUL G. McMANUS**

**Juanito  
and Dolores**

**A True Story of  
Children of Spain**

**WINIFRED BATES**

**Weeping Is  
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**An Interview  
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**"Spirituals  
to Swing"**

**Reviewed by  
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**Cartoons by Gropper,  
Redfield, Reinhardt,  
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**ON THE COVER  
Juan Sola  
TURN TO PAGE 5**

**JAN. 3, 1939**

*New* F I F T E E N C E N T S  
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F I F T E E N C E N T S

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NEW MASSES' December 23 concert of American Negro music not only brought an unknown music but a new Carnegie Hall audience as well. The capacity crowd for *From Spirituals to Swing* was composed of distinguished musicians, literary and artistic folk, vacationing college students, hot-jazz fans, some Carnegie Hall "regulars," curious readers of this magazine, and a clean crosscut of all classes of New York society. They joined in unanimous enthusiasm for the history-making program produced by John Hammond under our auspices. Press response to the concert was unusually warm; what's better, most of the little known musical artists making their first New York appearance have been offered professional contracts. Alan Lomax, folk-music historian, hastened to record several of the performers for the archives of the Library of Congress and a great critical stir has been set up among the musical periodicals.

We take this space to write our deep gratitude to the following artists on the program: Albert Ammons, Count Basie, Sidney Bechet, Big Bill Broonzie, Buck Clayton, Shad Collins, Harry Edison, Herschel Evans, Freddie Green, Helen Humes, James P. Johnson, Pete Johnson, Jo Jones, Tommy Ladnier, Ed Lewis, Meade "Lux" Lewis, Dan Minor, William Brown, Julius Davis, Louis David, Sam Bryant, Benny Morton, Walter Page, Lips Page, James Rushing, Ruby Smith, Sonny Terry, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, The Reverend Tharpe, Joe Turner, Earl Warren, Jack Washington, Dickie Wells, Leonard Ware, and Lester Young. Our sincere thanks, also, to Mr. Hammond, the resourceful producer and master-of-ceremonies; Mac Liebman, who jumped in at the last minute to stage the concert in the absence of Charles Friedman; James Dugan, whose comprehensive program notes were valuable; Tiba Garlin, who manages our department of cultural events; Ira Steiner, who was responsible for the publicity; Crockett Johnson and Hugo Gellert, who contributed their work to the printed program; and James B. Long, Kingston, N. C., who helped Mitchell's Christian Singers and blind Sonny Terry to overcome their shyness on their first trip to the big city.

You will be hearing about *From Spirituals to Swing* for a long time. Some of the projects it has set in motion: an album consisting of recordings made at the concert; offers from commercial record companies to the various artists; and, of course, a plan to repeat the concert as soon as possible. There are several hundred copies of the sixteen-page program on hand, which NEW MASSES offers free to its out-of-town readers and friends who will drop us a line. This collector's item includes an essay on Negro music in America by Hammond and Dugan, and biographical material and pictures of the entertainers with lists of their outstanding recorded works.

There are only a few seats left for NEW MASSES' New Year's Eve Theater Party for *Gentle People*, Irwin Shaw's new Group Theater play. In

## Between Ourselves

the brilliant cast are Sylvia Sidney, Franchot Tone (his first Broadway appearance in six years), and Sam Jaffe. A last minute call to Tiba Garlin at CAledonia 5-3076 will reserve tickets.

The boy in the cover drawing by Valloton is Juan Sola, an inhabitant of the Republic of the Free Refugee Children, which Winifred Bates describes in her article in this issue. Juan lost a leg in a bombardment. His photograph, together with the drawing by him on page 7, came with Mrs. Bates' article.

From a reader in Ukiah, Calif., we learn that we "are doing a swell job. There are a few of us even out in this benighted neck of the woods that hope you can keep it up. Beringed by Associated Farmers and besieged by reactionary Republican news-

papers, I don't know what we'd do without a weekly NEW MASSES to keep us a bit up on the true status of the world. We haven't many dollars to spare, but some subscriptions have already been sent in. And here is another to add to your list. Best of luck for your drive toward twenty thousand new readers."

And the drive, we should like to say, will take a good deal more pushing to reach the twenty thousand mark. We're still ready for suggestions and requests for the "I Like America" sub books. And see the details of our \$1 down-payment plan on page 30.

The editors of the *Harvard Communist*, publication of the Young Communist League at Harvard University, are giving a cocktail party for the magazine's benefit on Fri-

day afternoon, December 30, at 174 Bleecker St., New York City. The staffs of NEW MASSES and the *Daily Worker* will be guests, and several scenes from *The Cradle Will Rock* will be produced.

## Who's Who

PAUL G. McMANUS is a statistician and a writer on political and economic questions. He has had a number of articles published in NEW MASSES. . . . Winifred Bates has been in Barcelona since the beginning of the Spanish war, working in connection with medical aid. She is the wife of the well known novelist Ralph Bates. . . . I. Gibson Ziegler is European correspondent of the Louisville (Ky.) *Courier-Journal* and the Richmond (Va.) *News-Leader*. . . . Hu Williamson is an American correspondent in Mexico. . . . Marjorie Brace has contributed several book reviews to NEW MASSES. . . . Arnold Shukotoff is a member of the English department of the City College of New York. . . . Willard Maas and S. Funaroff edited the Federal Writers Number of NEW MASSES' Literary Section (May 10, 1938). They are both poets—Mr. Maas is the author of *Fire Testament*, and Mr. Funaroff of *The Spider and the Clock*. . . . William Blake is a lecturer and writer on economics and the author of a novel, *The World Is Mine*. . . . Norman MacLeod's poetry has frequently appeared in NEW MASSES.

## Flashbacks

JANUARY 1 might well be set aside by the Negro people as a time of special celebration. On that day in 1804 the independent Negro Republic of Haiti was established. . . . Importation of Negro slaves into the United States became illegal after Jan. 1, 1808. . . . The first issue of William Lloyd Garrison's Abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*, appeared Jan. 1, 1831, the penniless editor vowing "determination to print it as long as he could subsist on bread or water or his hands obtain employment." . . . Thirty-two years later, on New Year's Day, *The Liberator*, still being published, bore news that President Lincoln declared "all persons held as slaves" within the areas in rebellion "are and henceforward shall be free." . . . *Esquire*, which in its December issue called for the suppression of the Communist Party, could very appropriately continue to delight its advertisers by alluding this month to the anniversary of Attorney General Palmer's Red Raids. On Jan. 1, 1920, politically ambitious Palmer turned Department of Justice agents loose on the country, rounded up three thousand men and women, and accused them of advocating violent overthrow of the United States government. Among all these dangerous Reds were found exactly three pistols. (Memo for Mr. Dies: Mr. Palmer was not elected President). . . . Tom Mooney's struggle with the courts may end on or close to the anniversary of its beginning. His trial opened Jan. 3, 1917.

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## Covering Up for Coster

Hiding Profits Is an Old Corporate Custom

PAUL G. McMANUS

LET'S start with something simple, so simple that no one will think of disagreeing. If you want to buy a gun today, you must be licensed to carry a gun. Why? Because too many people who had no right to be carrying guns were shooting people up. When the frightened public began to agitate for the elementary protection provided by gun-licensing legislation, the idea was by no means simple. In fact, some people may have regarded such legislation as an invasion of individual rights by the government. Their name might even have been Dies.

Then, let's pass on to something that until not so many years ago was highly controversial. In the days when your life wasn't worth a plugged nickel in the Wild West, opening and manipulating fly-by-night banks was a much more profitable racket than highway robbery. Decade in and decade out, thousands of people saw their savings melt away with the "assets" of their banks. Of course there were plenty of legitimate banks that kept right on going, whose depositors were not robbed. And the managements of these banks did not take kindly to the growing demand that governmental authority be imposed upon all banks, with periodic examinations assuring depositors that their money was safe. Eventually, however, bank examination became a commonplace function of government, and today you couldn't get a rise out of a full session at the Bankers Club by attacking it.

Now, let's talk about something that is still very controversial. Let's say flatly that men who undertake to get people to invest in their corporations, and to depend for their livelihood on jobs provided by their corporations, are asking the public to repose trust in them precisely as though they were owners of guns or receivers of bank deposits. Because we still live in the year 1939, we haven't yet come to accept this truism as a truism. We don't perhaps realize that the great corporations which dominate American life were organized, like the railroads, because the government trusted them sufficiently to present them with the land over which their roads run and with the funds to build their lines; and, like the oil and mining combines, because the government simply gave them land containing limitless reservoirs of wealth and trusted them not to misuse the wealth they would amass from exploiting these natural resources.

Finally, let's talk about the sensation of the year, the McKesson & Robbins drug scandal. The entire country, from Wall Street to sharecropper land, has been revulsed by the story of the smuggler and con man who, as a jail-bird, flourished in the occupation of stool pigeon, until finally, as F. Donald Coster, he flowered forth as a respected magnate. And yet we have heard surprisingly little about the reasons why Coster was able to perpetrate his gigantic swindle. To be sure, indignation has been expressed that a drug firm ostensibly reinvesting its profits in buying raw drugs to be processed and resold to the public, should have actually reinvested those profits in gun running. But no one has asked how this could have happened unnoticed. And no one has assured the public that it need not fear that malpractices as costly as Coster's are not occurring every day, thanks to the unregulated activities of respected managements who are in no sense guilty of the criminal frauds committed by this "black sheep" of the business family.

And the reason why we cannot know that Coster was just a "black sheep" is simple. For we cannot know the most elementary things about any corporation, no matter whether we have invested our savings in it, whether we depend upon its prosperity for our jobs, even whether, like the Treasury, we depend upon its profits for the tax income without which the most elementary public services—right down to providing jails for swindlers like Coster—cannot be carried on.

Let's pursue this tack a little further. Just

before Christmas, 1936, the government was drawing up its budget to be presented to the country in the first half of 1937. The country was booming. Production was going up. Unemployment was falling. Very understandably, the government assumed that profits would rise as well. For one thing, the stock market was rising to new peaks each month, and apparently business men had no end of confidence. Accordingly, the new budget was drawn up on the basis that government tax collections would rise with the profits of the corporations paying the taxes. And, for the same reason, it was assumed that government spending could safely decline.

Now let's think back to what actually happened. Along about March 1937, the country's leading corporations began to issue their annual reports. To be sure, every last one of them reported a volume of production which compared very favorably with that attained in 1929. But what of profits? With equal unanimity, the reports regretted that earnings had not been able to keep pace with production; costs—"wages and taxes"—were rising too fast. This dangerous tendency became still more marked later in the first half of 1937, as the reports for the first quarter appeared. The decline in profits from the first quarter of 1936 became alarming to the entire country—so alarming that in April 1937, when the steel rate was still at 91 percent of capacity, the stock market precipitately broke from a peak which it never recovered.

Clearly, the entire country had a stake in these reports which everyone was taking at face value. The government, which had assumed that relief and recovery spending could stop, suffered when these reports became known. So did the workers on relief and in private industry who had been encouraged to buy cars, refrigerators, and everything else involving them in debts they couldn't pay off unless work was steady. And so did everyone whose livelihood depends upon the tricky fluctuations of our business system.

In view of the enormous interest involved in these reports, and the tragic upset they forecast (the recession broke at the end of the summer), it was surprising that no one questioned the writers and endorsers of these reports. And yet it is not surprising. For, although we assume that the doctors who look



Fred Ellis

after our health are licensed, we have not yet got around to supervising the activities of those high priests of the business system—the certified public accountants. Not the small CPA's, but the big shots.

Now, it is a commonplace that half a dozen great Wall Street law firms represent the interests whenever there is any question of the government regulating utilities or investigating freight rates or imposing labor legislation. And the public has become accustomed to label men like John W. Davis as mouthpieces of the Sixty Families, and to discount what they say accordingly.

But we continue to assume that the accountants are impartial, and that what they say is to be accepted unquestioningly. And, whereas corporate law is practiced by an inner circle of at least several hundred rich and powerful firms competing with one another for the cream of the practice, our suspicions are not even aroused by the fact that the corporate accountancy of the country's corporations is monopolized by no more than a handful of firms, of which the outstanding and by far the most powerful one is Price, Waterhouse & Co., the very one which obligingly certified the accounts of the house of cards presided over by F. Donald Coster.

So, when corporation after corporation testified that labor and government in 1938 were conspiring in an unholy alliance to raise costs and deprive business of the normal profits of recovery, everyone was impressed. If half a dozen bad actors like Bethlehem Steel said so, no one would have cared. If even a few unlucky industries had said so, the reaction would have been sympathetic to such exceptional cases. But people said, everyone can't be talking poor. There must be something to this. Maybe Roosevelt is causing another depression.

The answer is that not everyone was saying this. Price, Waterhouse & Co., Ernst & Ernst, and the two or three other self-appointed guardians of capitalism were saying so. They were certifying the accounts, lending their unimpeachable authority to the statements. And they were not lying. They simply weren't saying.

Exactly as in the McKesson & Robbins case, they weren't saying where the boom profits of 1936-37 were going. They simply ignored the convenient way in which their clients were reinvesting their profits in inventories as fast as the production boom rolled the money in.

For the accountants thought this was prudent policy. After all, George May, the head of Price, Waterhouse, was telling audiences of stuffed shirts that the greed of labor was insatiable, that the usurpation of "socialist" powers by the New Deal was subversive. He said publicly that managements who wanted to be protected against workmen who would strike under government incitement to demand higher wages, and whoever wanted to be protected against the price increases in the materials they needed, caused by similar threats to the managements from whom they bought, had better fill their warehouses with many months' supplies of goods. And, he added,

taxes are on the rise too, so you would do well to reinvest your profits in still more inventories. Talk poor, and fill your warehouses, Mr. May and his colleagues advised.

And then the day of reckoning came. Every corporation was overloaded, and there were no orders left for anyone to fill. As evidence accumulated that the country had been caught in an unprecedented inventory recession, men were laid off in droves, production collapsed, government tax collections fell off sharply, and relief and emergency expenditures by the government had to rise just as sharply. Roosevelt certainly had been put on the spot.

No one went to jail. No one even suspected that Price, Waterhouse and its peers had simply failed to say where the profits were going. Nor did anyone suspect that, instead of reporting that there were no profits, the accountants should have reported that there were no profits left after their clients were through piling up inventories.

So, over and above his criminality, there was not really anything unusual about the corporate technique Coster used in his swindle. He was no "mastermind," as the tabloids have said. What he did is done every day by every corporation, by the one you work for, or whose stocks and bonds you may own, or about whose activities the welfare of your community revolves. Instead of spending his hidden profits on inventories of drugs, he spent them on inventories of munitions and narcotics. The essential point is that Price, Waterhouse certified him when he concealed his profits and that it did not consider itself responsible to the public to whom it was reporting when it did not even take the trouble to look to see whether he was hiding his profits "respectably," as he said he was doing. The accountants simply assumed that he could be trusted to hide his profits "honestly," as all their non-jailbird clients did. They were just as shocked as you

were when they found out that he had not been a "trustworthy" profit concealer.

Now let's talk turkey to the "men who know what it is to meet a payroll." Let's say just this to them: If you want to go on meeting payrolls, we can't afford not to know when you will be unable to meet them. We can't continue to put up with this "here today, gone tomorrow" affair you call the business cycle. And we insist on knowing just how big a payroll you can meet.

More specifically, some of us are now out of jobs because you have been installing new machinery. You wouldn't be installing that machinery if you couldn't make money from it. Yet, you go on reporting that your costs are unchanged, just as though you continued to operate the old-fashioned machines we used to work. Where are your profits from labor-saving devices going? Are they being poured into inventories? Or, as Coster in his desperate "death note" charged that his bankers and lawyers were doing with McKesson & Robbins' concealed profits, are they going into political war chests? Or are you just pocketing them, without going through the formality of reinvesting them in inventories or some other aspect of your business?

If the government stopped reporting to the farmers on weather conditions and the state of the crops, they would march on Washington and force the government to resume its "socialist" function. But the general public at large has never forced the government to get down to brass tacks about the state of business. And after all, what is more important to the 129,500,000 people who don't know where their living is coming from if they can't earn it from month to month?

If you were one of those naive traveling Persians who used to visit Paris, in the pamphlets of the revolutionary French intellectuals like Voltaire and Diderot who did so much to modernize France, you would



William Sanderson

## To the Dead of the International Brigade

Let me break down foundations of the earth  
and speak to you in the dust  
as the wind speaks in the dust,  
as the dust is carried in the wind  
and the wind makes a speech of it.

Listen to me who hold you in memory  
as a sky holds a cloud, tenderly,  
as the earth holds you, eternally,  
bearing each Spring green remembrances.

S. FUNAROFF.

wonder why such a simple reform could not be started. But if you had just dropped in from some exotic land, you would never have heard about a man named Martin Dies. And you would not know how honest men must sweat to put a modest appropriation through a Congress he is on the way to dominating.

For this elementary reform is precisely what the Temporary National Economic Committee is after in its publicized monopoly investigation. It wants to find out how business really works, how big the take really is and who gets it. It wants to find out how much more profitable a new continuous steel mill is than an old-style hand mill employing many more workers. And it wants to trace the tortuous paths that managements pursue in concealing the profits of technological progress. Because what the men running the investigation are trying to work towards is economic security and a greater measure of democracy for those who don't know what it's all about because they can't find out how the books are audited.

What the Monopoly Committee is working up to is an investigation of real profits, of profits in the raw, before concealment. And the little known monopoly it is planning to put on the spot is the cost-accounting monopoly. It is going to ask Mr. May whether he thinks he is being honest when he certifies that warehouses are bulging with inventories when he hasn't looked. Then it is going to ask him whether he ever argues with his clients when they say that their existent or non-existent inventories are worth so many millions of dollars and no less. Finally, it is going to ask him where all these inventories and new machines come from. In short, it is going to go after the real balance sheets that the corporations use themselves, not the ones their public-relations counselors, the accountants, draw up for public consumption. And then we may get a new slant on just how high a wage rate and tax schedule our great corporations can really afford. And on the millions that are simply unaccounted for after they come into the cash register.

Unfortunately, there is one hitch to all this. The Monopoly Committee wants to do these things; it is sincere about probing into the fundamentals of business practice and malpractice. But it needs money from the next Congress, and it needs a political mandate from the people to go ahead.

And just as the Martin Dies' who worked for the gunmen of the last century tried to frame the decent people who wanted gun-buying licensed, so the present terror from Texas is trying to preserve the democracy of a setup in which those holding the public trust which is put in our corporations are not subject to genuine regulation. He is getting ready for another scoop—against the subverters on the Monopoly Committee. But, of course, if he were really looking for dictators, he would beat the Monopoly Committee to the job of investigating George May and the accounting monopoly which frames and perverts the facts about the rule of the monopolies Mr. Dies is working for over the United States.

# Juanito and Dolores

## A True Story

WINIFRED BATES

JUANITO was nine years old; Dolores was six. They liked playing in the yard of the house over the way with Esteban and Pedro, the Asturian boys. Esteban had a toy rifle and it was good to play at defeating the fascists with them. Pedro was making an airplane, and whenever he shouted "Avion!" you had to run and hide. Sometimes Dolores was not quick enough and then the bravest of the three boys had to dash out into the middle of the courtyard and rescue her, yelling "Idiota!" at her to make her understand. Esteban and Pedro knew all about the fascists and they could tell how they had escaped from them on a ship.

One day Juanito went to the big square in the middle of the town to buy red pepper for his mother. For a while he watched the workmen digging big holes in the middle of the square where the cloth market used to be on Fridays. Such big holes. A woman with a pitcher on her hip tilted it for him to drink and told him that they were building a refuge for them all to go into if the black aviation came. He pushed through the chain curtain into the half-empty shop. He remembered a time, before the fascists began sinking the foodships, when old Maria's little shop was full of "ultramarinos," nice things to eat from over the seas. He was not in a hurry; he'd take a look around and see what she had left.

Suddenly the church bell began ringing. Last time it had rung, mother had made him go down into the cellar under the house and take Dolores with him. Maybe he had better run back home and ask mother what to do. He dashed out with the little paper packet of pepper in his hand. Some people were running with children in their arms. Some stood at the doors of the houses or against the pillars of the arcades, gazing upward, their wrinkled faces screwed up against the light, their anguished eyes seeming to say "No, not on us, oh, not on us!" Juanito ran crying, "Madre, madre!" There was a whistle of something going through the air fast, and then the loudest noise he had ever heard. He thought someone had knocked him down like a rough boy at "futbol." The red pepper burst in his hands and splashed his face. There was so much gray dust too that mixed with it and made him cough. The shriek-bang noises went on and people screamed. He lay amid the fallen masonry and the dust and sobbed, "Madre! Madre!"

After that he was not clear what happened. He remembered a man picking him up. They tied up his arm and said "He's not hurt much, only frightened. It's Julia's little Juan."

Then he saw his mother with Dolores in her arms. He had never seen his mother looking so dirty. Her hair was down over her shoulders, her dress torn so that her striped petticoat showed through. Tears ran down her face. "My son!" she cried, snatching him from the nurse.

Next day he walked to the square. The side where Maria's shop had stood was a heap of ruins. The backs of the houses still stood and pictures were hanging on the walls, and half a bedstead stood on half a floor. He glanced at his hands. No, of course they had been washed. There had been red pepper on them yesterday. Ah, Maria. He wanted to ask about old Maria, but something in his child's brain told him not to ask.

The church bells rang every day after that. Juanito and Dolores had to spend so much time in the cellar under the house. Then one day grandfather got out the big cart and the little cart and harnessed the two mules and the baby donkey to one and the mother donkey to the other. He got together the smaller tools and some oil and wine and some dried fruits from the barns, and mother packed a big box with all her pretty embroidered linen and the clothes of the whole family. And their neighbors' two big lads helped her lift it on to the cart, because father was away fighting the fascists at the front and grandfather wasn't very strong with heavy boxes. And they piled on the blankets and mattresses and saucepans and a basket of cups and plates and all the food they had. On top they put the pens of rabbits and chickens, and tied up in some sheepskin bags were a few baby goats and lambs. On top of it all they lifted Juanito and Dolores. At the last minute they tied on three chairs and the little table out of the kitchen. "Now, that's all," said grandfather, "come along."

When they got out on the road they saw many of their neighbors driving their carts out too. Goats and sheep and dogs ran under and alongside the carts. Except for an occasional "Arre" from the old men and boys who were driving, it was a quiet file that went down the winding road. Juanito looked back on the little town. He could still see his house perched on the edge of the cliff, and the tall church tower. He had once heard father and a visitor calling it a "lovely church." There was a notice on the door, put up by the mayor at the beginning of the war. Juanito remembered it because he had had to read it to grandfather, who was born a long time before the republic and had never been to school. "This building is a public treasure. Take care of it. It belongs to the people of Spain."

One day he had seen a smart van drive up to the door and some men had taken away the beautiful picture that used to hang over St. Jeronimo's altar, and the silver crucifix. "What are they doing?" he had asked the man who stood next to him. It was the mayor. "They have come from Madrid. They are going to put the picture and the crucifix in a place where they will be quite safe, and then when the war is over we shall all be able to see them again."

As Juanito sat on the piled-up cart, he suddenly saw the black airplanes come out of the sky. Again he heard the shriek-bang noises and saw the dust fly upward. Dolores was crying; he took her hand and tried not to cry too. Mother and grandfather ran to the donkey's heads and the long file quickened. Again and again the bangs came. Would they leave nothing of the little town? Slowly the dust began to clear. "Shan't we see our house any more?" sobbed Dolores, as the last of its walls tottered down the hillside.

The church tower was breaking over the ruined nave. Esteban ran beside their cart. "Look, Juan, the church! and Maestro at school said not to hurt the church because it was valuable and belonged to us . . . Can I come up on your cart?" They hauled and pushed him up. "Your sheep can't keep up," he chattered excitedly. "You'll lose them."

A man ran by. "Get under the mattress, children," he shouted. Mother jerked the cart off the road into an olive grove and brought it to a halt amidst some foliage. She saw that the children were under the mattresses and then flung herself under the cart. Grandfather stood white and shaking and then fell. A lad took his cart and hid it in the trees. But he could not lift the old man, who was in reality dying of fright.

The airplanes had left the town and changed formation. In circles they swung over the road. The air was pierced with the rat-tat of machine-gun fire. Dolores' favorite sheep went down, then two of the goats and both their dogs. Grandfather was put out of his agonizing fright by machine-gun bullets. The lad who had tried to help him got one in the leg. And when the airplanes rose high again and became black fleeing specks in the sky, the road was strewn with the townspeople and their domestic animals. Mother crawled out white and disheveled. "Stay where you are, little ones," she whispered, as though she feared that the fleeing murderers would hear her. And she went across the olive field to the road . . .

For weeks, Juanito and Dolores ran wild in the hills. Mother washed their clothes, without soap, in the streams. Her little store of thread was soon gone and she could not mend them. At last they came to a town far away from the front and mother went to see the mayor. He gave her a room in an old house to live in and promised to find her work. Some of their neighbors were housed in a disused factory. The villagers took them all in. There were seventy children, not counting

the grownups; so many for one little village to feed. But by now the children were getting artful at begging for food. This village was fine, for only a mile away was a hospital where the wounded soldiers ate on the terrace outside. You had only to stand with your little bare feet, and with your big brown eyes gaze up into the face of a wounded soldier, and he gave you his ration of bread. Juanito learned to take Dolores with him, because somehow she always managed to get two pieces of bread, so there was a piece for mother. Sometimes a soldier gave you his soup or beans to finish. One day Juanito took a basin with him, and instead of eating the rice the soldier gave him he tipped it into the basin and took it home to mother. But one of the nurses saw him and said, "Come, come, we can't have this. We've told the guards to keep the children out, but they get in somehow. Run away, children, run away." She gave Dolores a little push, but she slipped a bit of chocolate into the child's hand at the same time.

That night there was a meeting of the staff and many of the patients in the hospital. The next day a committee went to the mayor and offered to pay for a school for all the refugee children from the bombed towns. He offered them an old monastery building with a garden. It needed a great deal of repair, so, since the village school was closed for the holidays, he said that they could use that. The wounded soldiers and the hospital staff collected from their wages to pay for a midday meal for the children and a cup of cocoa and a piece of bread before they went home.

So the little colony was started at once. Imagine the task. Seventy hungry children, one woman teacher, and not a piece of paper, a needle, or a piece of chalk between them.

They call it the "Republic of the Free Refugee Children." One soldier, who is now over army age, spends his days at the school. Two young wounded men have offered themselves as teachers under the direction of the qualified teacher. The children call the teachers by their Christian names, for after all they are only big brothers in the same fight. They are all being attacked by the same enemy, hit by the same bombs. Some of the children, like the soldiers, are maimed.

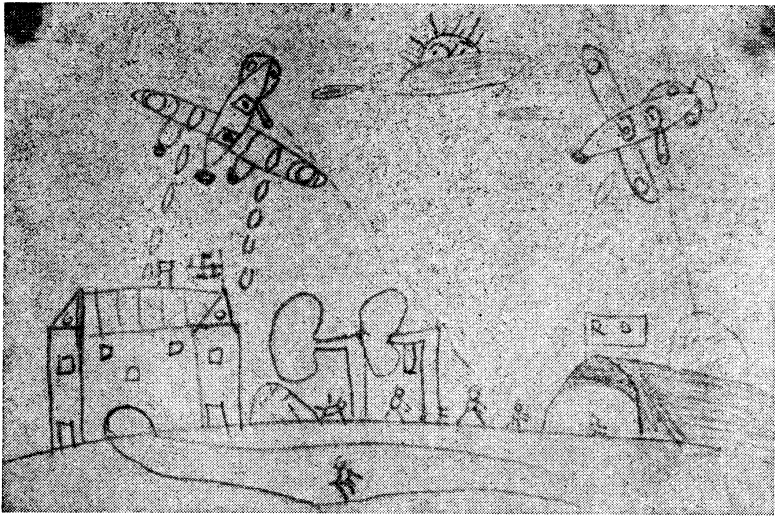
The teachers have no power to give either punishments or rewards. A committee of children does this. Equality of the sexes is strongly emphasized. When they can get soap the children are allowed to wash their clothes in the tank in the garden. Boys do their own; the girls are not expected to do it for them while they play in the patio. Seeing them around the tank in their little aprons made me think of the wrinkled, black-clothed women of bygone Spain, old before their years, bent by everlasting housework. I wondered how long these men-children would put up with washing their own shirts. It is they who will build the communal laundries in the Spain of tomorrow. These men from the children's republic will want wives who are not bent and wrinkled before their time.

Every Sunday afternoon one of the ambulance drivers from the hospital calls for the children with a lorry and takes them off to the hospital, where they are all given hot baths and the barber trims their hair. It is a jolly fine outing and they sing as they bowl along. When they are waiting in the garden to be gathered together again, they play with their big brothers, the soldiers. Then just before they leave they crowd round the front steps and sing one of the anti-fascist songs of that greater republican Spain.

On Monday afternoon the English doctor from the hospital goes with a nurse to give the children a thorough medical examination. The committee arranges a room with a large table. It has made out medical record cards for every child. One delegate gives out the cards and lines the children up in the corridor. Another helps the little ones undress. As the doctor calls out particulars, "teeth need seeing to," "sores on elbows," etc., the nurse fills in the record cards. But the really clever man is the Delegate for Hygiene, who listens to the doctor and writes little notes to the parents about how each child needs attention. These notes he puts in a leather dispatch box which he carries on his back for delivery in due course.

When they can find enough paper, they write little articles for the wall newspaper which hangs in the corridor. Composition is therefore spontaneous. All the articles are written in red ink, there being no other available. As soon as they move into the monastery premises, they are going to start rabbit and chicken keeping and gardening. The committee has also mapped out a scheme for teaching the girls to make their own clothes and the boys to do carpentry. At present they haven't a needle, a reel of cotton, or a hammer between them. But this little republic is absolutely undaunted. They are quite sure that the children of other lands will send them pencils and paper and crayons, and pieces of stuff to sew on, and needles and cottons and tools and balls and such things as all children love to learn with.

Juanito said, "I did have a real pen and a football before our house was bombed." Esteban asked to see how the camera worked. Pedro put his hand on my knee to draw my attention from his brother. "Listen," he said, "my father had hundreds of books, but our house went down in a heap of stones the day the fascists bombed the town hall. Esteban and I know how to read and write." The teacher whispered, "That is true. They had a lovely home. Their father was a university man, a scholar." One of the teachers limped across the room. "Look," he said, "here we have discipline and cleanliness and medical service. Do you think other countries would send us materials for education, and perhaps some soap and disinfectant?" And then the older man said, "I have been unhappy; all the world is weeping, and there is so much hunger. But," he said, "I see the Spanish republic of the future disciplined and cultured. The children are helping us to work towards the final victory."



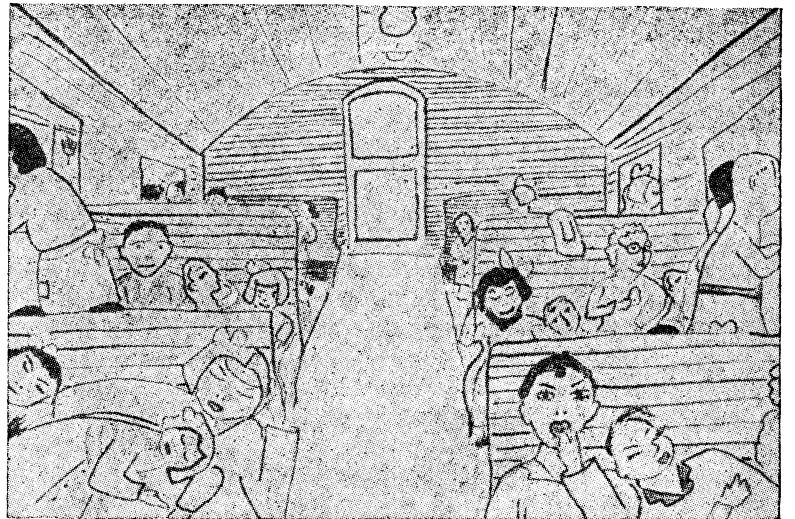
Such an air raid cost Juan Sola, 9, his right leg.



A family leaves Madrid, the home of Artist Luis Casero Esteban, 11.



Death and destruction in Valencia by Magalena Ruiz, 11 years old.



The train which carried Raphael Rodriguez, 13, to safety.

### They Still Draw Pictures

Most children draw pictures. It satisfies the visual, the first sense to develop. As a rule they caricature Teacher, lampoon their elders, or create some unhappy monster which they claim to be the family cat or dog. The more artistic try their hands at landscape—a familiar hillside or their own backyards.

Not so the Spanish children whose drawings are reproduced on this page. The one thing that fills their memories is the terror that Franco's grandee rebellion brought into their lives. Forced to spend long hours in refugee colonies, they penciled their memories of two years of war. Except for the one by Juan Sola, these drawings are included in a book of sixty plates published by the Spanish Child Welfare Association, *They Still Draw Pictures*. As Aldous Huxley points out in his introduction, the symbol of their experience is invariably the enemy bombing plane, the hateful emissary of the invaders.—R. H. R.



From a hospital cot, Manuel Garcia, 12, recalls his flight from enemy bombs.



# Goosestep in Hungary?

Hitler Continues His Defense of "Minority Rights"

I. GIBSON ZIEGLER

**W**ILL Adolf Hitler content himself with Hungary as a cajoling friend who, along with her German neighbors on the other side of the Danube, is willing to shout "Sieg Heil, der Führer!" or will he be unable to resist the temptation to push his country's southeastern border to the Danube, thus sacrificing an unimportant friend and acquiring a piece of rich Hungarian land—a piece of land occupied in scattered groups by discontented Germans? That is the question troubled people in Hungary's capital are tossing about over glasses of Tokay, over their apricot brandy. That is what people are talking about in Budapest's hundreds of glittering coffee-houses.

Every Middle European knows that the continued existence as national minorities of the four or five minority groups in Hungary is infinitely less probable than it was for Czechoslovakia's minorities a few months ago. Accepting Hungary's policy of gradually absorbing the minorities without regard for the post-war treaties supposedly protecting them, these groups can claim neither political nor economic independence, and since 1920 have been consistently deprived of the right to foster the culture and language of their fathers. Despite her administrative mistakes and ultimate failure, it is ridiculous to deny that Czechoslovakia granted her minority groups enormous political and educational privileges which similarly situated minorities in Hungary, Germany, and Italy have not dreamed of. As in Italy, where the Germans of the Italian Tyrol are being tyrannically denationalized, and in Germany, where the Lusatian Serbs have practically lost their national face, the minorities in Hungary are considered citizens within a foreign country, who speak another language, know another culture, but must reconcile themselves to the loss of that language and culture.

The inconsistency, the hypocrisy, of this policy showed itself during the German destruction of the Czechoslovakian republic—with Hungary coming along a bit later to pick up some crumbs for herself, while Italy stood by to cheer.

Among the minority groups, the largest and most significant is the German one which is composed of a unified block of territory where Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia have a common frontier; scattered bits around Lake Balaton, that important tourist country; a large section to the south, along the Danube, crossing the boundary into Yugoslavia; and a good-sized piece of land north along the Danube as far as Budapest. According to Ger-

man statistics these people, totaling nearly three-quarters of a million, make up from 8 to 9 percent of Hungary's population. For the most part the original German settlers moved in after the Magyars had won their country back from the Turks in the late seventeenth century.

The second minority, numerically important, is a fairly well centralized group of 150,000 Slovaks who occupy the land near Rumania, and who, in addition, have scattered themselves over the North and the Northeast along the Czechoslovakian border. In a town like Szarvas, and in many others of that section, the Slovaks can claim a nearly 100 percent majority. These people also settled in Hungary after the Turkish invasion. Fewer than fifty thousand Serbs and Croats form relatively unimportant groups along the Yugoslavian border; some fifteen thousand Rumanians are found along the Rumanian frontier; and a few Ruthenians have crossed the border from Subcarpathian Russia to settle in Hungary.

The educational principles established by the post-war treaties guaranteed the minorities schools in which the language of instruction should be the mother tongue and the instructors should belong to the national minority. In accordance with these principles laws have been written down in Hungarian books providing for three types of schools: first, the honest-to-goodness minority school in which the mother tongue is the dominating language and the instructors are of the minority nationality; second, the mixed school in which neither language is given preference, and subjects are taught in both the Hungarian and the minority; third, the majority school in which all instruction is offered in Hungarian and the minority language is treated as a special subject.

Up to the present time these laws are still merely in the books. The Slovaks do not enjoy a single school of the first type, and the Germans have only forty. Of the mixed type the Slovaks have three, the Germans 230. Of the third type, which is clearly a majority school with a great deal of influence toward the Hungarianization of the school children, the Slovaks have five hundred, the Germans two hundred. As a result of this anti-minority educational policy the majority of Slovak children are compelled to attend the Hungarian schools in which their own language is not taught, and 10 percent of the German children may attend one of the three types of schools provided for by the Hungarian law. The others must receive instruction in the all-Hungarian institu-

tions. Progress in minority education is handicapped by the fact that there are no teacher-training schools in which minority teachers may find instruction.

The educational history of the Rumanians is an equally unhappy one. Before the war this minority had twenty schools of the Orthodox Rumanian type and seventeen belonging to the Rumanian Greek Catholic Church. Today the same minority has five Orthodox schools and has lost all of those which belonged to the Greek Church.

As far as the fostering of their own cultural life is concerned, the minorities have met with the same defeat. The Germans have organized a Cultural Verein with branches throughout the country, but its existence depends upon the willingness of its leaders to conform to the Hungarian denationalization system. The newspapers and periodicals which they publish for themselves have some cultural influence, but here again the Germans find they must not annoy their masters. The Slovaks have a similar Cultural Verein, but this organization works steadily toward the Hungarianization of the Slovaks in Hungary. Their one or two periodicals have ceased to make any efforts toward the preservation of the Slovakian national minority.

It is not difficult to justify the desire on the part of the Hungarian regime to blend all of these minorities in one corporate whole, its exaction of unqualified patriotism from all of the citizens who choose to live within Hungary's boundaries, but justification is outside the point. That Hitler's defense of German minorities in neighboring countries is incompatible with the German attitude toward minorities who have established themselves in the German Reich is also outside the point. Of importance is the fact that Hungary's anti-minority policy can excuse a German invasion of her territory.

Will Adolf Hitler continue to ignore the so-called tyranny, as he has ignored Mussolini's thorough denationalization of the Germans living in the Italian Tyrol, or will he "peacefully" invade this land? Its invasion would be distressingly simple. In herself, Hungary is without defense, and Germany is her strongest ally.

Many people are asking the question. Many more have answered it for themselves, and are merely wondering "when."

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## Maritime Wages

**B**EFORE the National Maritime Union came into existence, shipyard workers made far less than the income required for a family to save anything from its earnings. In 1936, according to an analysis in the bulletin of the Waterfront Research Committee, in order to live on the average wages of shipyard workers, a New York family would have to get along on 14-cent meals, \$35 rent per month, and carry a debt of \$100 a year.

The bulletin cites figures from the Maritime Commission Study and the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics showing that skilled workers

received an average of 89 cents an hour, unskilled received 69 cents, and apprentices 50 cents; and that of the 27,887 workers surveyed, more than half worked exactly thirty-six hours a week. Office workers averaged \$1,474 a year, and apprentices \$931.

These conditions have, of course, been improved since the union was born. By May, 1937, wages for skilled workers were up 5.1 cents an hour, and for apprentices 3.9 cents an hour. Recent victories brought other gains.

However, the workers face a problem in competition from unionless Japan, Germany, and Italy, who compete for the shipbuilding business of the world. German wages now

run about \$14 a week for work comparable with shipbuilding, or about half that received by the American shipbuilder. Italian workers get around \$1 a day in shipbuilding. Japanese wages are notoriously low.

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### A Catholic's View

THE *New World*, official organ of the archdiocese of Chicago, publishes a letter from a reader taking issue with the pro-Franco attitude of the Catholic press and official Catholic circles. The fact that this letter appears in such an authoritative source

makes it particularly significant. We believe it represents a growing body of Catholic opinion. Its text follows:

As a Catholic and a signer of the Legion of Decency pledge, I wish to protest against placing the moving picture *Blockade* on the condemned list under the heading, "Not suitable as entertainment for general theatrical exhibition," and against the pro-Franco attitude of the Catholic press in general. The Legion of Decency pledge, which I gladly signed, says: "I condemn absolutely those salacious motion pictures which . . . are corrupting public morals." "Considering these evils, I promise to refrain from all motion pictures except those which do not offend decency and Christian morality."

After learning that the film *Blockade* merely concerned the Spanish war now in progress, and was not vile and filthy as many might think from the way it has been attacked, I went to see it and am glad that I did so. I could see nothing whatsoever in the picture which could be construed as salacious, vile, filthy, or indecent in any sense of the words. The film in question violates neither the letter nor the spirit of the Legion of Decency pledge which I took, and by no criterion can my act be adjudged a violation of the pledge of the Legion of Decency which I accepted. To me it appears that in this instance the legion has been besmirched by being employed as a political tool, for it is very plain that *Blockade* has been damned merely because it is considered sympathetic to the cause of the Spanish people in their present struggle against the fascist hordes which threaten the existence of their free republic. By this and other acts the church has placed its endorsement on a mob of insurgents who are in armed rebellion against a democratic and legally constituted government and on the brutal bombings, starvation, and ruthless slaughter of thousands of fellow Catholics in republican Spain.

Nothing is more misleading than the familiar charges of the Catholic press that loyalist Spain is Communist. Notwithstanding the fact that some Catholic churches were destroyed by certain undisciplined mobs, there is no justification for alluding to the republic as "Red Spain." Communists have never had a large representation in the Spanish government, and are not the dominating influence. What Communists there are in the government reached their places by democratic and peaceful processes. The Catholic press committed a grave injustice when it labeled as "Reds" such faithful church adherents as the liberty-loving people of the autonomous Basque republic and their devoted Catholic president, José Aguirre, merely because they gave valiant support to the central government. The church press does no good for Catholicism when it supports bloody Franco Bahamonde who wages war on the Holy Father's children with the aid of the heathen Nazi government, totalitarian Italy, and thousands of pagan Moor mercenaries from Spanish Morocco. Truly Christ must weep to see the streets of Spanish cities run red with the blood of thousands of innocent children murdered for fascism in His name.

As for the stories of the execution of priests and nuns by the republican government, they were even more fantastic than the buncombe dished up by the press during the World War concerning German "atrocities." They were so obviously manufactured that the press has stopped printing them. Religious parades are held in the streets of Barcelona without molestation. Churches in Madrid are well attended, according to the reputable correspondents. If any clergy were jailed or executed, it was for spy activities in behalf of Franco. By taking sides in this conflict the church has done itself more harm than good, as the *Commonweal* seems to have realized at last. Such events combine to make it more difficult for me and others like me to defend our church against charges of "reactionary" and "pro-fascist," which are constantly being hurled at it.—VIRGIL H. J. VOGEL.



Mischa Richter

"Monsieur Lindbergh vient d'arriver de Berlin."



1939 JANUARY 1939						
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1939 FEBRUARY 1939						
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1939 SEPTEMBER 1939						
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1939 NOVEMBER 1939						
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1939 DECEMBER 1939						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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A HAPPY  
NEW  
YEAR

Grolph

# NEW MASSES

ESTABLISHED 1911

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## Nearer a Break

**N**AZI insolence has overreached itself and brought the relations of the Hitler regime with the United States to the breaking point. If a formal rupture of diplomatic relations occurs, it will be more than an official withdrawal of consular agents and so forth: it will signalize the deep chasm that the Nazi have deliberately opened up between themselves and the whole of the civilized world. Throughout this country the abhorrence of Hitler and all he stands for grows deeper daily. There was exact truth in what Undersecretary Welles told the Nazi chargé d'affaires, that Secretary Ickes' speech denouncing fascism represented the overwhelming sentiment of the American people. And nothing we hear from Germany indicates that Hitler intends doing anything to lessen that abhorrence. The Nazi press has turned up its hymn of hate against Roosevelt, Ickes, LaGuardia, and every progressive element here to a still higher pitch, at the same time carefully keeping from the German people any inkling of the mounting resentment against Hitlerism. The insane logic of fascism dictates that it cannot stand still for an instant, but must go on from one "victory" to the next, and so we find the first open references to a complete diplomatic break with the United States appearing in Hitler's and Goering's press organs.

We have long advocated the severance of economic relations with the Nazis, as one means of resisting their drive toward another world war. The Nazi themselves are now hastening on a situation where the United States government, expressing the feelings of its people, may mark its recognition of the danger of fascist aggression by just such a break. Together with Welles' blunt rejection of Hitler's insolent demand for an

apology for Ickes' speech, there came every indication that the administration could give of a determination to stand firm against Hitler. President Roosevelt's unusual drive out to Ickes' farm was a plain indication of approval of Ickes' speech; and Senator Pittman's four-point statement, coming from the head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, left little to the Nazi imagination as to what the United States thinks of them.

## The Americas Get Together

**T**HE Declaration of Lima adopted by the Pan-American Conference is stronger than even the most sanguine believed possible a few days earlier. It is a revindication of democratic processes and a clear warning to fascist aggressors. The declaration represents twenty-one separate and distinct points of view forged into one after two weeks of patient effort. It could not have been done except by nations and men who valued the rights of others equally with their own. It represents, not perfection, but a broad foundation upon which a firmer structure can and will be built. The twenty-one American republics have affirmed continental solidarity and given their word to defend themselves and one another from "any foreign intervention or activity that may threaten them."

As a demonstration that democracy can be efficient, the conference reached agreement on 109 other projects, some disappointing, but for the most part progressive.

A strong resolution condemned the persecution of racial and religious minorities. Another, designed to prevent the creation of a "Sudeten" issue on American soil, opposed the granting of special rights to minority groups or the exercise by foreigners of political rights conferred by their native countries. Meanwhile the first Popular Front government on American soil took office in Santiago, Chile, while in San José, Costa Rica, the masses were bringing effective pressure on their Congress to condemn the bombing of Spanish non-combatants by Italian and German planes. Lima's success in welding together conflicting points of view was re-awakening the faith in democracy throughout Latin America.

The solidarity given expression at Lima, however, will grow to be a genuine solidarity of peoples only as the peoples of a number of the Latin American republics shake off their dictatorships and establish democracy at home. Until that happens the danger of fascist aggression will not have been met, for Italy, Germany, and Japan are influential in the inner politics of a number of regimes now in power. That danger can only be met by a solid front of democratic political and trade-union organizations in each of the separate republics. The skeleton of an effective sol-

idarity has been built at Lima, but only the collaboration of the democratic masses of both continents can clothe that skeleton with flesh and blood.

## The Medical Monopoly

**T**HE American Medical Association defends itself against the indictment of a Federal Grand Jury by claiming that the medical profession is not a "trade" within the meaning of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. This defense would come with more grace if the AMA had granted to other medical groups the same kind of immunity that it now seeks for itself. By opposing the Washington Group Health Association, the AMA, its leaders, and its affiliate organizations set themselves up as a business group attempting to restrain another business group. The physicians of the Group Health Association are as much a part of the "medical profession" as Dr. Fishbein and his associates. The doctors of the medical cooperative were restrained not because of their inferior professional status, but because their plan for medical care and hospitalization competed with the more selfish plan of the AMA.

Some newspapers have raised the classic howl that the government is attempting to dictate to the doctors. The opposite is true. The action of the government, based on a long and careful investigation by the Department of Justice, is designed to prevent a small but entrenched group from dictating the business practices of an entire profession.

Government action has already had its effect. The AMA recently made a strategic retreat in order to soften the blow of popular opinion. It seems unlikely, however, that the moguls of medicine will give up their monopoly unless they are forced to. When that happens, a tremendous impetus will be given to the growing sentiment for some type of social medicine.

## Tammany Saves Its Jobs

**S**HERIFF DAN FINN of New York County—you probably never heard of him—is safe, at least until 1942. So are the shrievalties of the Bronx, Kings, Queens, and Richmond. A hard-fighting Tammany majority of the City Council, moving in well disciplined fashion behind a Red-baiting gas barrage, last week defeated the sinister Fusion-Labor County Reform Bills by seventeen to nine, and saved about \$800,000 worth of jobs for their deserving stalwarts. The Red plot of the LaGuardia-Fusion-Labor forces to abolish useless county offices and carry out the terms of the 1935 referendum was foiled. Peace reigns once again in the Tiger clubhouses.

Few New York citizens stayed up through

the wee sma' hours to follow the whole debate during the fantastic nineteen-hour session. Those that did were rewarded with a choice collection of pitiful arguments from the desperate Tiger flock and their two Republican supporters. In much the same spirit as the enemies of the federal Reorganization Bill fought that measure, the Tammany mob shouted that the bills meant the introduction of "totalitarianism" into New York's body politic. Veteran reporters yawned at this, however, knowing what all informed New Yorkers know—that the issue at stake was simply political jobs.

Probably the most important lesson out of the whole situation is that labor and the good-government forces of the middle class here have an excellent basis on which to unite against reaction and corruption. Laborite Councilman Michael J. Quill correctly called the Tammany action a "stick-up." Labor and all other forces interested in progress and civic decency may well begin now to prepare for the councilmanic elections of 1939 to send the Tammany gentry back to the clubhouses. Sheriff Dan Finn and his fellow payroll-artists, unfortunately, will be with us until 1942. But the Tammany councilmen can be eliminated.

## Watch Harrington

**H**ARRY HOPKINS ought to make a good secretary of commerce. Under Hoover and his successors the Department of Commerce has been a private preserve of big business, the back door into the White House. The least that Hopkins can do is to make it function as part of the New Deal administration.

We are, however, not nearly so certain that Col. J. C. Harrington will make a good successor to Hopkins as Works Progress Administrator. As David Lasser, president of the Workers Alliance, pointed out: "Such a vast undertaking as the WPA needs at its head a man who has not only administrative ability and business judgment, but also social vision." That is a quality which is not likely to be associated with "the army type of mind."

The sidetracking of Hopkins' deputy, Aubrey Williams, is a New Deal sop to reaction. The pressure from the right is also responsible for the drive to curtail WPA—at a time when a panting recovery movement needs the oxygen of WPA purchasing power to keep going. Williams has announced that unless additional funds are voted prior to January 26, three million WPA workers will lose their jobs between that date and February 7. The Workers Alliance has informed President Roosevelt that a deficiency appropriation of \$1,050,000,000 is essential to keep 3,200,000 WPA workers employed from

February 15 to June 30 and to provide them with a needed wage increase. At the same time the alliance is supporting other recovery measures: a large-scale housing program, aid to farmers, adequate old-age pensions, etc.

John L. Lewis has also sounded the alarm in the name of the CIO and called for a \$1,000,000,000 deficiency appropriation. And a group of sixty-nine distinguished economists from more than twenty colleges and universities has sent a letter to the President urging him to prevent recovery from being undermined by WPA cuts. The case is clear. The American people are not yet out of the red economically, even though black ink may be plentiful in Wall Street. Not only the workers, but every merchant, professional, small manufacturer, and farmer has a stake in the continuation of WPA. Tell it to your senators and representatives.

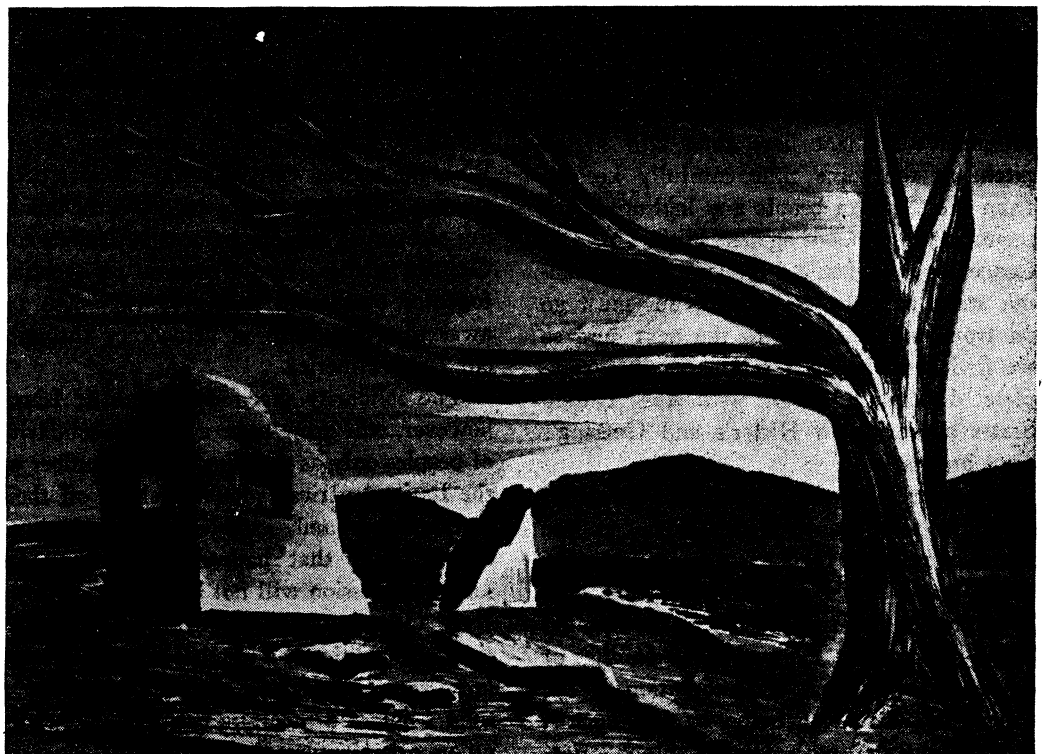
## Spain's Needs

**T**HE developments of the first few days of the long-awaited Franco offensive give every reason to believe that the decisive fascist victory which Messrs. Chamberlain and Halifax had hoped to present to Mussolini when they visit him January 11 will be conspicuously absent. A formidable war machine has been hurled against the defenders of the Spanish republic. Participating in the operations are no less than four Italian divisions, with a fifth held in reserve (even the Franco communiqué admits the presence of "some foreign volunteers"). And the fascist forces maintain their usual superiority in material. But the loyalists have obviously made good use of the weeks that have passed

since they withdrew across the Ebro and Segre Rivers. Only at Seros did the fascists succeed in breaking through—though "General" William Carney, Franco's correspondent for the *New York Times*, has, from a superior position many miles from the front, been "capturing" town after town and many thousands of prisoners.

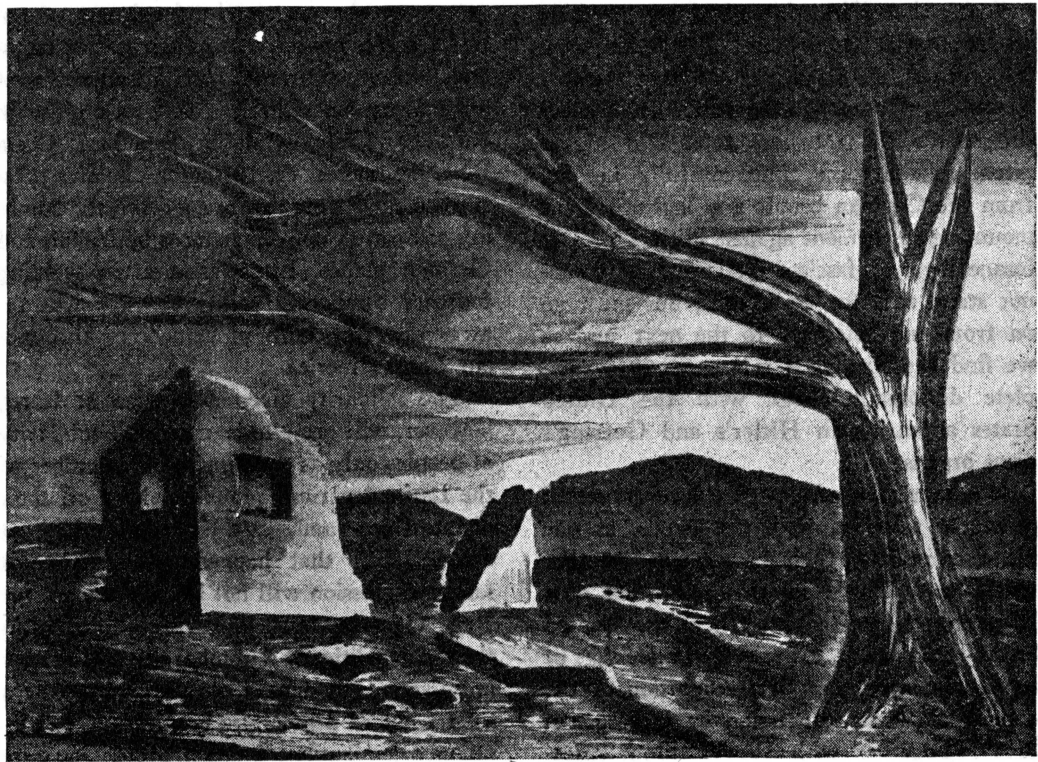
But democratic Spain fights with food as well as arms. And the food situation is little short of desperate. The announcement by Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles that the United States will provide three million bushels of surplus wheat to be distributed by the Red Cross in Spain is welcome news. But much more needs to be sent. On Christmas Eve, United States Ambassador Claude Bowers and *La Pasionaria* issued moving appeals for food for the Spanish children and women. And the plight of the children in the overcrowded cities and villages goes beyond the question of food and clothing. It touches on the children's social surroundings and sanitary and health facilities. A plan for the establishment of Children's Cities is now being put into operation. One thousand children between the ages of eight and fourteen will be cared for in a single unit. The Medical Bureau and North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy is opening a drive January 1 to raise \$24,000, its share in the building of the first city. This sum will provide six dormitories for three hundred children.

Winifred Bates, in her graphic account in this issue of *NEW MASSES* of the tragedy which Spanish youth faces, shows the great need. American help to Spain's children is an American answer to fascist aggression.



*Fascist Landscape*

Monotype by D. Connolly



Monotype by D. Connelly

*Fascist Landscape*

# The Black Year Ends

THE tide of the old year moves out. This was the year of horror and the phantom peace that was no peace. This was the year of the death of Austria and the mutilation of Czechoslovakia, of the holy lynching of human beings and nations. This was the year of Munich.

It is easy to make a nightmare out of the history of the past year. Certainly, not since the war has world capitalism sunk to such depths of infamy and barbarism. And yet there is light as well as dark: the people of Spain and China fight on, the Soviet Union is more powerful than ever, the United States is still a fortress of democracy, and in every land the anger of the people is rising and the millions who hate fascism are learning to bind their hatred together to make it strong.

The outstanding fact of the year 1938 is the Nazi advance in Central and Southeastern Europe. That advance was made possible not by Hitler's strength, but by the action of those who, above all, sought to save him from the consequences of his weakness. At Munich the reactionary ruling circles of the capitalist democracies of Britain and France rescued fascism by entering into an alliance with it. In sealing this alliance Chamberlain and Daladier not only betrayed Czechoslovakia and world democracy and peace, but the national interests of their own countries as well. Munich gave Hitler new economic advantages; it gave him, more important still, new strategic positions that enable him to directly menace the small nations to the east and the large nation to the west—France, which today stands isolated, dependent for its national security on the quicksand promises of the British Tories.

But every victory of reaction, because it is a victory of a minority over a majority, generates the forces of its potential defeat.

And the second outstanding fact of the year 1938 is the speed with which the forces of democracy, rousing themselves from the soporific of Munich, have in a number of countries ended their retreat and begun to hit back. Two months after Munich the general strike shook France. Today Daladier, the political hack who is trying to be the strong man for the two hundred ruling families of France, finds himself skating on the thin ice of a seven-vote majority in Parliament. How long before he crashes through?

In England the recent by-elections, despite the defeat of the Duchess of Atholl, have on the whole shown an increase in the opposition to the Chamberlain foreign policy. It is largely the stubborn resistance of the

Labor Party leadership to uniting all opposition forces in a great People's Front that still prevents these rising rivulets of anti-Chamberlain sentiment from becoming a rushing tide that will sweep away the Tory government.

The elections in Yugoslavia and Poland, held under conditions of semi-fascist dictatorship, likewise reflect the reawakening of the democratic forces. Simultaneously, even the reactionary governments of Rumania and Poland have, for the sake of self-preservation, moved to escape from the tightening Nazi vise. In the case of Poland this has resulted in a rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

In Spain the crushing victory which General Franco thought was certain in April 1938 still escapes him in January 1939. And the Japanese, too, have found that when one faces a united nation, it is possible to move from victory to victory and still come closer to ultimate defeat.

What of the United States? Here, too, the conflict between reaction and progress has grown sharper in the past year. On the plus side were the passage of the Wages-and-Hours Bill and the President's relief-recovery program, the defeat of the railroad wage cut, the development of trends toward unity in the labor movement, the New Deal election victories in New York, California, and Washington, the Roosevelt administration's condemnation of the Nazi pogroms and recall of its ambassador to Germany, the provision of credits for China and food for Spain. On the minus side were the defeat of the Reorganization Bill, the continuation of the Spanish embargo, the vacillations of our foreign policy, the activities of the Dies committee, the Republican gains in the elections.

These questions have all been discussed in the pages of *NEW MASSES* and there is no need to repeat. Here we merely want to emphasize two conclusions that are especially urgent.

1. There can be no victory for progress in any field without unity and organization. The election results revealed not a turning away from the New Deal on the part of the people, but a demand for a more vigorous pursuit of New Deal objectives. By adopting a policy of Janus-faced "liberalism," the reactionary Republicans were able to deflect a considerable part of this sentiment, particularly among the middle classes and farmers, away from New Deal candidates. But they would not have succeeded were it not for the fact that the masses of the people are largely unorganized and dis-

united. It is of the greatest significance that the three states in which the New Deal scored its most notable successes—New York, California, and Washington—are the states where the organization and unification of the labor and liberal forces are farthest advanced. The front of democracy needs to be organized in every state and nationally to assure the forward march of the New Deal and a progressive victory in 1940.

2. There can be no stable victory for progress in the domestic sphere without defeating the Hoover-Chamberlain axis that is attempting to drive the United States along the Munich road in foreign affairs. Let us remember that our government, too, bears some responsibility for Munich. Had we long ago taken the initiative in the direction of a positive peace policy, had we lifted the pro-fascist embargo on Spain, had we denied Japan the products of American fields, mines, and factories which enable her to wage her war against China, had we sought the cooperation of the USSR and of the peace forces in every country, Munich might have been averted. Now we face the fight for peace under more difficult conditions. But it is not yet too late for that fight to succeed. *Fortune* magazine has just published the results of a most significant survey showing a sharp swing of American sentiment away from isolationism and toward a positive peace policy. To the question: "Should the democratic powers, including the United States, now stand firm together at any cost to prevent Hitler or Mussolini from taking any more territory at the expense of other nations?" The answers were 56.3 percent in the affirmative, 31 percent in the negative, while 12.7 percent said they didn't know. In other words, nearly two-thirds of those with opinions favored concerted action to restrain the aggressors.

As 1939 comes around the corner, millions of Americans are filled with fear and perplexity. Will this be another year of horror and defeat for democracy? Will the war that has already begun in China and Spain engulf the entire world? The answers to those questions lie in ourselves. The new Congress will be one of the great battlegrounds on which these issues will be fought out, and the outcome has by no means been predetermined by the results of the elections. 1939 still is a blank sheet. Let us not hesitate to lift the pen and write in the language that the men and women of Spain and China have made international.

# Forsythe's Page

## Weeping Is Not Enough

**T**HIS world must provide an obscenely humorous spectacle for the citizens of Mars. Indeed, I sometimes have a great longing to belong to those untouched observers who can sit at a distance and examine the grotesqueries of life without being affected by them. But since that is impossible for any normal man, there remains the necessity of trying to maintain sanity in this atmosphere of horror and insanity.

As Thomas Paine said about Valley Forge, "These are the times that try men's souls." It is also a time of despair. It has seemed that there is to be no end to the blows falling on civilization. As if what had gone before was not enough, we were treated to Munich and after-Munich. If we toot our horns and welcome the New Year, it will only be because the Old Year was a year of torture and degradation. It may seem criminal to be hopeful in the face of these tragedies and yet there must be hope. At the worst, we do live; we do continue to fight; we do sustain ourselves with the knowledge that history is working for us.

The real trouble is that we don't believe our own analysis of events. We say that we are taking part in the great battle between reaction and progress, but we act like anything but warriors. Each defeat overturns us completely. During the early days of the Spanish war, I reached a point where it was torture for me to open a newspaper. It seemed impossible that the men at the front could go on with nothing but defeat facing them. It has only been since I have talked with members of the Lincoln Brigade that I realize how different it is at the front. War is not a game (that is just something generals and newspaper analysts believe); but it is a fact. A defeat at the front is not a cause for despair, no matter how severe it may be. It is a lesson for the future. It is amazing and a bit shocking to find military men discussing a great engagement in terms of technique rather than in human losses; but if it were not that way, they would be unable to go on.

It is a war we're taking part in. We talk academically of the conflict between ideologies which will eventually split the world into two camps. That isn't a war for the future; that war is going on today! And in a war there are bound to be defeats and great losses. We may rage and weep over the treatment of the Jews in Germany but we will help neither ourselves nor those unfortunate people by our mere lamentations. Weeping is not enough; we are faced with the necessity of fighting. What has happened in Germany belongs with the great tragedies of history, but for us in America it

is no excuse for repining. It makes one despair of mankind and we may ask ourselves where this horror is to end—but it will end, and it will end in victory! Defeat is disastrous only if it weakens our will to fight.

Recently I had a letter from a friend in California asking what was the use of it all. The election victory in California was something, she admitted, but it was years too late, everything was too late. The German tragedy had made her feel that everything was hopeless, that the forces of brutality swept along more rapidly than we could build our dikes.

As a matter of truth, the California victory is not too late at all. In my opinion it was exactly on time. The election of 1940 will be the most important in our modern history and California will play an immensely important role in that drama. When Upton Sinclair was defeated for governor of California under circumstances which were a scandal, many liberals felt that a great reverse had been suffered. As a matter of fact, it was the very rawness of that campaign which made Hollywood the most socially conscious city in America. The movie workers had their eyes opened and the progress since has been amazing. If Sinclair had been elected at that time, the result might





easily have been disastrous—not because of what Sinclair would have done as governor but because of the campaign of scurrility which would have followed his election. Every crime in the calendar would have been imputed to his administration. Because he has been honest and outspoken all his life, every word and gesture had been gleaned for the purpose of twisting it about and using it against him. The cause of liberalism might very well have sustained a blow from which all progressive movements would have suffered. The present administration cannot be thwarted in that manner because California has tried its democracy, has been through a successful campaign, and knows that the forces of reaction, powerful as they are, can be smashed.

It is not too late; it is never too late. The Munich agreement made millions politically aware. Never in the history of the world have so many people been so concerned about their rights and their future.

It is not going to be so simple for fascism to sweep the world. When I hear my liberal friends bewailing the fate that has overwhelmed us, I take some pleasure in sidling up to them and whispering in their ears—“*Soviet Union*.” Where would we be without it, what hope would the world really have if we didn't know that this was one place where the murderers wouldn't have their own way? They are going to send the nice little new czar in to govern Soviet Ukraine! Yes, they are; like hell! The Nazis of Germany can play ball with the Nazis of France, the beautiful Two Hundred Families, and with the Cliveden Nazis of England, but they can't wangle the Soviets around in that simple manner. The whole stupid game will collapse the minute they touch the Soviet Union.

Hope! There is every reason to hope. Besides, it is war and we're in the front trenches every day of our lives. In the World War the Allies lost everything but the final battle. They lost the Dardanelles, Serbia and Rumania were crushed, Hamilton and his British army surrendered, Germany occupied Belgium and most of France, the Russians were annihilated at Tannenberg and finally forced out of the war, the submarine campaign almost brought Britain to its knees. Everything went wrong, but the Allies finally won. It will be that way with our struggle. We need victory for our morale but even if we don't get it in the immediate future, the end will be no different. We're going to win. There isn't the faintest chance that they can beat us. We will lose battles, our fighters will be tortured and killed—but the final conquest is ours! A fighting New Year, my comrades!

ROBERT FORSYTHE.

★

## Hear, Hear!

**W**HAT the economy needs is still more success if it is to have less failure.—ALFRED P. SLOAN, JR., *chairman of General Motors*.

# Vicente Lombardo Toledano

## An Interview With Mexico's Labor Leader

HU WILLIAMSON

**T**HE *bête noire* of Mexican reactionaries, Red Menace to conservative army generals, “loud mouthed” according to *Time* magazine, next to be “shipped down the river” by General Cárdenas according to the wishful thinking of Hubert Herring—Vicente Lombardo Toledano is a soft-spoken ascetic who has forged the disorganized Mexican labor movement into a powerful, united federation which is today inspiring the workers of a continent and a half to resistance and revolt.

This slender, slightly built man economizes every moment of his time and works with an efficiency and drive unusual in Mexico. Although convalescing from an operation, Lombardo today has the combined tasks of running the Mexican Labor Federation (CTM) which claims nearly a million members, welding the new Latin American Labor Federation into an army able to win battles, and guiding the CTM press, the Mexican workers' universities, and the bloc of labor deputies in Congress.

In 1918, Lombardo Toledano began his career as a teacher. He was twice director of the National Preparatory School, and boasts doctor's degrees in law and philosophy. He has written eloquently on such diverse subjects as the influence of heroes on history, public law, ethics, trade-union law, education, the Monroe Doctrine, geography, land distribution, and the Soviet Union.

In most countries, the intellectual Lombardo would not have risen to leadership in the trade-union movement. But in Latin America, due to the uneven development of industry and the absence of a seasoned modern proletariat, the student movement is generally the precursor of trade unionism, and a large proportion of labor's leaders spring from the ranks of the intelligentsia.

While still a very young man, Lombardo joined the staff of the Popular University, became its secretary, and taught science and class struggle to worker students. In 1921, he joined the CROM, at that time Mexico's dominant labor organization, and served his apprenticeship under the ruthless, but then progressive, labor leader, Luis Morones.

Appointed chief official of the Federal District, Lombardo at once dealt with the prostitution problem. Mexico City was being overrun by French and Belgian whores, the backwash of the World War. These girls were spreading disease throughout the city; they were both protected and victimized by a group of army generals. Lombardo opened clinics to cure diseased prostitutes, attempted to re-

train those who wanted to enter more productive occupations, and established a bureau where they could make complaints if they were being exploited. It took courage to wipe out the supplementary income of men like the notorious “General Aspirin” (so named because he blew out the brains of an aide in a Mexico City restaurant, explaining that he had “promised to cure his headache”).

The triumvirate of the North broke down in 1923 when Obregon named pro-labor General Calles as his successor. Disgruntled General de la Huerta, with two-thirds of the army behind him, struck for power simultaneously in three directions, surrounding Mexico City with an iron ring. Obregon sent young Lazáro Cárdenas north to attempt suicidal delaying action in Jalisco, while the one-armed president pounded at the rebels in the East and South. Cárdenas carried out orders, but was beaten, wounded, imprisoned—almost shot.

The loyal forces consisted of the jobholders and military around Obregon (some of them impelled by vague liberal convictions) and the Partido Laborista of Luis Morones. The Labor Party decided to put its own men in the governorship of the three key industrial states surrounding Mexico City, just in case Obregon should turn against his allies after the victory. At midnight, Luis Morones called Lombardo to his office, told him that the governor of Puebla was ready to go over to the rebels in the morning, and urged Lombardo to take the governorship. The young intellectual drove all night with a small group of followers. The Executive Committee of the State Senate were pulled out of bed and shown the hollow ends of revolvers. The committee decided that the disloyal governor had resigned, and Lombardo took over. Lombardo Toledano again did a magnificent job, but his program was too revolutionary to suit Obregon, and when the barracks revolt was finally put down, he was eased out of the governorship.

It is significant that at this time an influential group of intellectuals around Morones believed that the ambitious Vasconcelos rural-education program would give the people of Mexico enough power to elect civilian presidents. On this theory, President Calles was to be succeeded by José Vasconcelos; Vasconcelos by Lombardo Toledano.

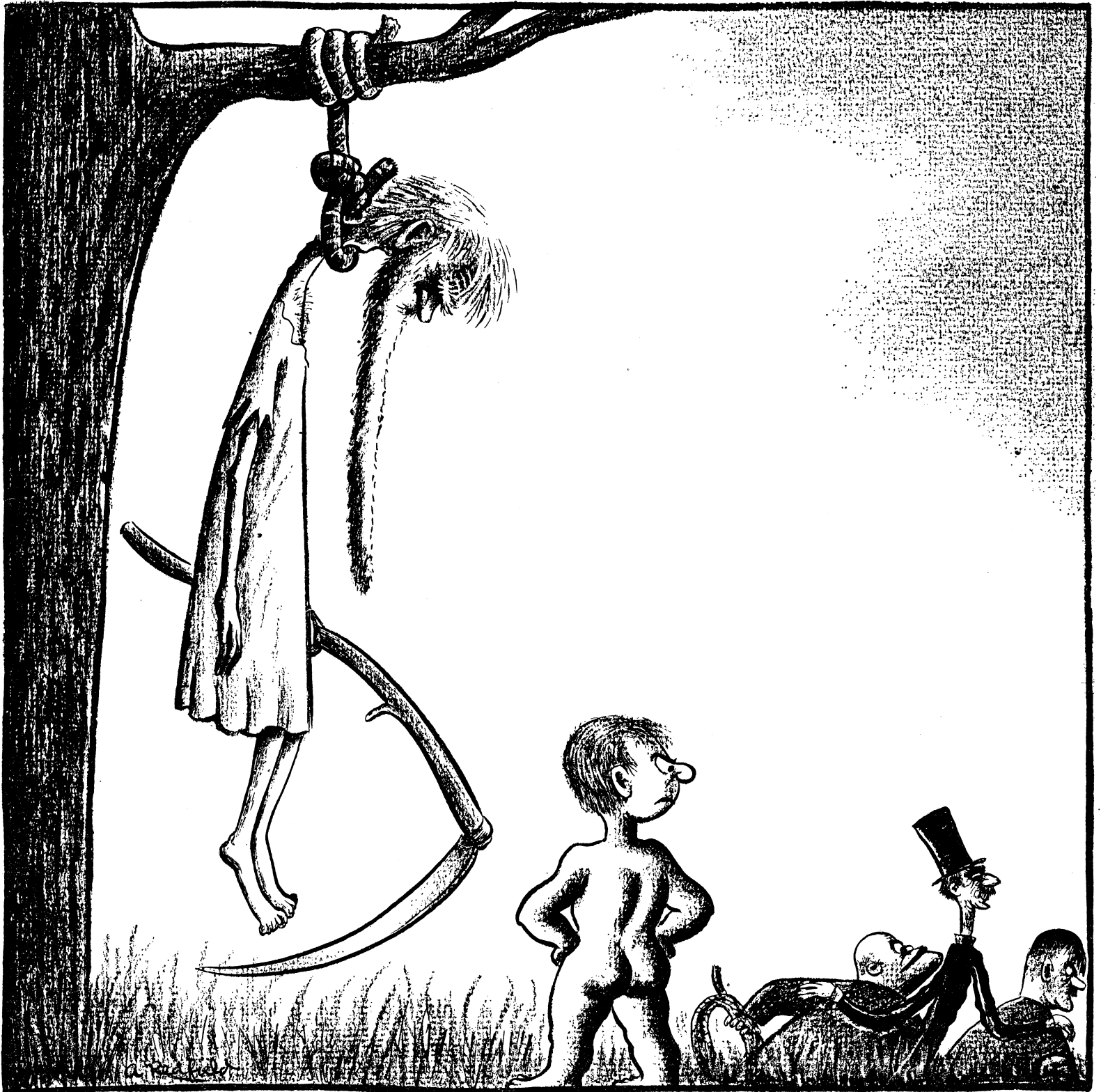
Alvaro Obregon turned against the CROM and was killed (for entirely different reasons) in 1928. This made the Obregonistas even more anxious to settle matters with Luis

Morones, and the peasant-army alliance soon began battering at trade-union power. Internal factors of disintegration were also at work. Morones, while secretary of labor and industry, had amassed enough money to buy a private bullring ("only a very little one," he was to explain later to a hostile audience) and to flash robin's-egg diamond rings on his chubby fingers ("These are the reserve funds of the Mexican Revolution," he informed a Gringo heckler). The inner Grupo Accion, a self-appointed executive committee, ruled the CROM with an iron hand, supplying the organization with about two-thirds of its revenues. Grupo Accion members enriched

themselves in government office, made or broke strikes, created jurisdictional conflicts, and then, in their role as government officials, settled them by breaking up the independent unions and forcing the recalcitrant workers into the CROM. The disintegration was essentially organizational, not moral. Morones' men probably stole no more than their opponents, but the method of stealing made labor dependent on fortunate political alliances, placed the CROM treasury at the mercy of the government, and, in short, involved labor organization from above, rather than from below. When CROM enemies took over the government, all they had to do was

dismiss the Grupo Accion from lucrative graft-laden sinecures, and crush the trade unions between the powerful cogs of the arbitration machinery.

In 1928, Lombardo Toledano, then a CROM secretary, urged disbandment of the satellite Labor Party. In 1931, a dissident group tried to make Lombardo the CROM leader, failed miserably, and seceded. Enemies accused the Puebla intellectual of deserting a sinking ship. Friends saw the Lombardist schism as the beginning of a cleaner, more revolutionary labor movement. The friends were right. Lombardo was moving with giant



strides from a reformist to a Marxist philosophy. A trip to Russia somewhat later resulted in enthusiastic lectures to enormous worker audiences, his book *A Voyage to the World of the Future*, and the final maturing of his revolutionary philosophy.

On Dec. 1, 1934, Cárdenas was inaugurated into the presidency of Mexico. Lombardo Toledano's new labor organization—the General Confederation of Workers and Peasants—launched strikes throughout big, imperialist-controlled industry, winning wage increases. Under Cárdenas, the labor tribunals declared almost all of these strikes legal, which practically ensured victory. Cárdenas' "chief and teacher," Plutarco Elias Calles, suddenly issued a warning that Mexico was drifting into anarchy and that strikes must be stopped. The millionaires of the revolution stood solidly behind Calles; the remnants of the CROM intrigued and resorted to terrorism; the victory of Calles would have meant Mexican fascism.

Lombardo was instrumental in uniting the main labor organizations, peasants, students, and the Communist Party into a Committee for Proletarian Defense. The Defense Committee was Cárdenas' main bulwark in the June-July crisis. It shattered the backbone of the reaction, and from its ranks arose the CTM.

Three years have passed. Lombardo now leads a united Mexican trade-union movement, over half a million strong. The CTM has won better wages and working conditions in the chief industries. It has organized the once terrorized oil workers into a powerful industrial federation. It is at the helm of a large part of Mexican industry. It is a vital part of the growing Mexican People's Front—the Party of the Mexican Revolution.

My interview with Lombardo took place in his huge office in the new CTM building. At one end of the room, a committee of forty sugar workers was arguing the terms of a new collective contract for the industry. Lombardo sat with his head bent forward, frowning slightly, interjecting remarks which generally settled arguments. After a few minutes, he rose, sat down beside me, and answered questions without hesitation. When the interviewer lagged in writing down replies, Lombardo would read telegrams and dictate answers, or turn to the sugar workers with additional advice.

Q.—What will be the attitude of the CTM in the coming presidential elections?

A.—As to program, we will be guided by the Second Six-Year Plan. This is being drafted by a party committee of which I am a member. There are other labor representatives on the PRM (Party of the Mexican Revolution) planning board. The CTM has not yet decided which of the pre-candidates it will support for the party nomination. Once the nomination has been made, we will be guided by the discipline of the Party of the Revolution.

Lombardo continues with shrewd, brief, off-the-record characterizations of the leading

presidential aspirants. He hopes this will be a campaign of issues, not personalities; indicates that he is personally not in the running; and adds that while labor may have the deciding voice as to which of the various favorite sons of the army will be nominated, the candidate will almost certainly be a general.

Q.—How stable is the four-class alliance within the PRM, and when, if ever, will Mexico be ready for a labor party?

A.—The trade-union movement faces only immediate issues, and we cannot speculate as to the future possibility or desirability of a labor party. The Party of the Mexican Revolution is stable and necessary because it unites in a single revolutionary front the four chief groups capable of forming an anti-fascist alliance.

Q.—What is the CTM position with reference to labor control of industry?

A.—Organized labor opposes producer cooperatives, since they transform workers into petty bourgeoisie without leading to any solution of the social problem. We favor consumer cooperatives as a method of modifying capitalist exploitation in trade and increasing the workers' real income.

As the size of the worker-controlled sector of Mexican industry increases, it becomes essential that we formulate a more precise program on this matter. Accordingly, we are calling a conference of all such labor-manager groups in the near future. The turning over of industries to the workers took place at the initiative of the government. We have not considered how far this process can be extended under present conditions.

[In 1935, Cárdenas told obstinate Monterrey employers: "Those of you who are tired of the social struggle, can turn your factories over to the government or the workers. That would be patriotic." Since then, partial or total worker management has spread to cover about 75 percent of the railroad lines of Mexico, the magnificent model sugar mill in Zaca-tepec, other sugar refineries, the Government Printing Office, bus lines, cigarette and match factories, tile factories. Lombardo volunteers that labor will soon be running Mexico City slaughter houses. The government turns over plants to workers, if they so petition and provided that the owners are unable both to continue production and obey the Labor Code.]

Q.—Have labor's real wages gone up or down under Cárdenas?

A.—Real wages of labor have risen somewhat despite the rapid rise in retail prices. This is due to the fact that we have forced uniform collective contracts on industries; due to Cárdenas' decision that employers must pay wages for the seventh day—which meant an automatic wage increase of 14.3 percent—; and due finally to the fact that almost all new collective contracts provide for extensive social services.

Lombardo explains labor's new strategy in fighting profiteering. The CTM is to start a chain of food stores which will sell at cost plus a small markup. Capital has already been offered by a liberal foreign commercial organization.

On the platform, Lombardo Toledano is cold, eloquent, with lightning flashes of irony. Speaking at a joint meeting of the PRM, the CTM, the National Peasant Federation, and the Communist Party in commemoration of the Bolshevik Revolution, he answers the charge of the gutter press that he is in the pay of Moscow:

Only people who are in the habit of selling themselves assume that their opponents are bought. I am not bought by Moscow, but I am sold on the

Russian Revolution. No trade-union leader, no progressive, and no revolutionary can be an enemy of the Soviet Union today.

Answering the attacks of chest-pounding "generals of the revolution": "If the only qualification of a revolutionary was that of having killed people, then, comrades, mules would be revolutionaries, too."

The chief target of his speech is Leon Trotsky. Lombardo claims to have documentary proof that Trotsky has intervened in Mexican politics (if substantiated, this should ensure the exile's immediate deportation). He comments on the articles of ex-President Gen. Abelardo Rodriguez on the Soviet Union—a stream of abuse against Stalin and fulsome praise for Trotsky: "Why did Rodriguez remain silent for a year after his trip to the USSR and then start writing articles on the eve of the presidential campaign in Mexico?"

Referring to the ex-president as a "semi-illiterate," Lombardo warns the workers that the Trotsky followers in alliance with a reactionary army clique are starting a Red-baiting campaign along Dies-committee lines. The object, he asserts, is to propagandize "against Stalinism," fight the labor movement, and impose a reactionary candidate.

Apparent confirmation of the existence of this intrigue is the abortive attempt to reform the federal constitution so as to permit former provisional presidents of Mexico to seek office again. The available ex-provisional presidents are—Gen. Abelardo Rodriguez.

Meanwhile, the Trotskyist Anita Brenner, writing in *Fortune* (the manuscript was submitted for advance censorship to the megalomaniac of Coyoacan), coyly suggests that Cárdenas may soon purge Lombardo. Forthright Hubert Herring repeats the same thought in his inaccurate *Harper's* article.

Behind this delusion is the profound Trotskyist prayer that Mexico be delivered of Lombardo Toledano and that the CTM be broken or reshaped. The delusion, incidentally, shows a complete misunderstanding of Lazáro Cárdenas.

Priest-eater Garrido Canabal, Calles and Morones, slick Emilio Portes Gil, sinister Saturnino Cedillo, were, to be sure, painlessly extracted from the Mexican body politic. But Cárdenas extracts ulcers, not revolutionary leaders. He has never sought to apply Emperor Caligula's maxim of lopping off every head that stands as high as his own.

In terms of the necessities of a Popular Front policy, Cárdenas insisted that the CTM make no attempts to absorb the peasantry within its ranks. More recently, he put the strategic government workers' union under PRM rather than CTM control. Should Cárdenas, on his retirement from the presidency, place himself at the head of the genuine popular forces outside the government—using the PRM as the main cohesive force—this would strengthen the Mexican labor movement, not weaken it. Nor is there any reason why this should preclude close cooperation between these two outstanding leaders who have such similar ideals and objectives.

# At Least the Children

## A Short Story

MARJORIE BRACE

AS SOON as she opened the front door, Emily saw those two girls in her algebra class almost in front of the house. She closed the door swiftly and jumped back into the hall, trembling. With a feeling of shame she stood there staring at the dirty splintered boards of the floor. From the kitchen behind her came a listening kind of stillness. Make them hurry, Emily prayed, make them have gone past before I come out. She heard her mother's chair scrape back from the breakfast table.

"Emily? Whatever are you doing, dear? You'll be late for school."

"I'm going, mother. I was fixing my shoe." She bent over, tugging at the ties, her heart beating blood up to her head. When she had made the knot fast she picked her books up slowly, one by one. She knew her mother was listening inside, with that tense, anxious expression on her face.

The girls were no longer in sight. Emily went dispiritedly down the steps into a cold slaty morning. Gray rows of two-family houses leaned, pinched and numb, over the bluish pavements. The grocery next door had, as usual, piled its refuse in open cans upon the alley so that she had to pick her way over a frozen mass of rotting grapefruit the cats had dragged down overnight. Blood was still beating tremulously in her head.

She had tried so hard to feel and act happy this morning, but something in her was aware, even as she pulled the new dress over her shoulders, what it would be like when the day was over. Because, no matter how mother attempted to conceal her eager eyes when she came home from work, inevitably the question would pop out: "Well, how did they like your dress, Emily? What did the girls say?" And Emily, with sullen reserve, would shrug her shoulders: "Nobody mentioned it." She would not be able to look at mother's quivering face. "Oh, *mother*, I've *told* you the girls don't talk about things like that anymore."

She would sit miserably silent at supper, feeling hateful and stubborn, for surely the least you could do, when your mother worked for a dressmaker all afternoon and then stayed up alone sewing at night so you could have nice things—at least you could show you were grateful. You could invent words of praise to tell her. But somehow, Emily did not know why, it was impossible. As impossible as to tell her how things really were; that the reason no one mentioned a new dress was that scarcely anyone talked to you at all: or only the kindest ones, out of pity. You would think you could tell your mother the things that tortured you,

especially when, as she often said, you were her whole life now and it was you two alone against the world, against father and Lennie, sharing the same ideals. But this thought did not make Emily feel triumphant as it seemed to make mother; it only made her more unhappy and bewildered. For if mother knew everything maybe she too would feel defeated and then what would become of them?

In a way, though, it was as if mother did not want to understand. Once she had pretended it was on account of the divorce that she herself no longer saw her old friends on Hillside Avenue. Emily knew that wasn't true. Lots of parents were divorced and it didn't make any difference as long as you were still well off. And it wasn't just father that mother wanted her to be against but Lennie too. Emily often read in magazines that poverty brought families together. But in hers it had torn them apart. She would never forget how mother had screamed and cried that time when father had been tired and come home from work in overalls. But father and Lennie didn't want to understand either. It was no use to turn to them. She was alone.

She went slowly down the streets to the Central High School, nervously shifting her books from arm to arm. Every day it became a little harder to drive herself into that inimical atmosphere, heavy with imminent disclosure of all her concealments. It was like a bad dream, persisting night after night, in which the thing you dreaded lay just before you and you had to walk up to it because there was no other path. What if those two girls had seen her? How busy they would be telling everyone where she lived, starting the horrible current of whispers and laughs. . . . They, and all the boys and girls like them, hated her. In the corridors, hanging on to the fringes of her own little group, Emily would see their scornful eyes following her and she would feel she had gone pale as a criminal about to have his secret disclosed. She did not know the reason for their hatred. She knew only that it was their mission to betray her. Perhaps, not having known her before, they were more alert to the queerness and remoteness which had overtaken her.

Emily did not know when or why this queerness, this difference from others, had arisen. She was ashamed of it, as of everything else, but she accepted it drearily, as part of the whole secrecy in which she had somehow become involved. She had felt it first as she sat every afternoon in the library, under the curious eye of the teacher there, long after everyone else had left the school—for how else could she count on reaching home unobserved? It

made the girls think her a tiresome grind, never wanting to have any fun, just as they thought she wasn't interested in boys. These were fragments of the tortuous necessities which guarded her lips and conduct, like some vast conspiracy in which she was an uninitiated participator, but the queerness was something apart, growing in darkness. Maybe it was this that the children who did not know her sensed, with exactly the same horror of it Emily herself felt. So it was natural they should want to torment her, even if she had tried to be friendly with them—and it was, of course, the crux of the whole matter that she should not. For they lived in the same sort of places, and even worse, than she did now, and in all those other houses life was something ignominious, with which she must never be contaminated, which she and mother held off from their own house by their titanic efforts. Once they let it in, by association with those others, they would be doomed. It was Emily's part of the struggle to keep on going only with those girls she had grown up with, when her family too lived in a white house with a lawn and garden and had a car, when her father had not come home in overalls and her brother Lennie had not worked in a garage.

So Emily persistently walked the halls with those same girls, on the edges of their laughing chatter, and sometimes Eileen or Helen would ask her how she liked it where she was living now on the other side of the city and once Eileen had looked at her in a curious intent way and asked exactly where she lived. And Emily, trembling, had said, Oh, up near the park; it was quite true and there were a few nice streets west of the park. It was this she could not manage to explain to mother. Mother thought it was enough to have the right clothes, but it wasn't. How could she talk to the girls anymore or go out with any of the boys in the crowd when she could never invite them home, when they would despise her if they knew what it was like. How explain that she lived in most abject fear they would discover she lived just off Central Avenue in an awful peeling *tenement*—tears came into Emily's eyes. As long as they didn't know they let her stay with them, the way mother said she had to do, but once they found out they would drive her away with contemptuous looks, with laughter hushed pointedly as she came up to them after classes. . . . People didn't like you if you didn't have money. They didn't like you if you told lies and were secretive either, but if they knew how poor you were they would loathe you.

That's the truth, Emily insisted painfully to herself as she went up the drive to the school building. She bent her pale face against the raw wind, shaking the forming tears from her eyes. But mother would never, never admit it was true, and it did sound awful to say of all the lovely families on Hillside Avenue. Perhaps, Emily thought with despair, it would not be true if there were not something wrong with her. There were times lately when everything seemed mixed up and pressing in her

head, a kind of muffling cloud inside and people could see it by looking at her, know how she felt when she was with them as if she weren't a human being at all but some other kind of animal. No matter how nice your clothes were, she'd tell mother, it didn't help if you looked like that. Emily crept miserably up the steps and into the locker room. The first bell was ringing and girls crowded the mirrors. Emily opened her locker and hung up her coat. Grace and Beatrice were whispering to each other in front of the mirror; she saw them look at her and giggle together. Emily flushed. They couldn't be laughing at her new dress, could they? But they couldn't, it was impossible, it was a lovely dress. She tried to nerve herself to go up to them. They looked so happy. Everyone else seemed to be having such a good time. Oh, that was all she wanted, Emily could have screamed, in a sudden spasm of rebellion. Just to have a good time and escape these mysterious inflexible laws that prevented you from having any friends or fun unless you had other things too. She forced herself up to them and stood next to them, smiling weakly at a joke she hadn't heard. They clutched each other, ignoring Emily.

"Darling, but he's marvelous," Beatrice was saying. "That haughty look, you know."

"I don't see how he's so wonderful," Grace said scornfully. "Maybe he's just shy. He's never lived in a city before, probably."

"My dear, you're crazy. Eileen says he comes from one of the oldest and most distinguished Southern families."

The second bell rang. Emily touched Grace timidly on the arm. She felt a sudden frantic desire for communication. But as Grace turned large inquiring eyes on her she could think of nothing to say. She searched her mind and then, with horror, heard herself asking: "Do you like my new dress, Grace?"

Grace stared at her. Beatrice smiled patronizingly. "Oh, is that a new dress? Why yes, it's very pretty, isn't it, Grace? Did your mother make it, Emily?"

"No," said Emily wretchedly, with the throb of shame she experienced each time she lied. But why did Beatrice have to ask that right away? Everybody bought their things at Folsom's downtown. Did Beatrice know Emily's mother worked for a dressmaker or was she just being mean? Why did they always say things like that to her? It doesn't look homemade, she thought mournfully; but suddenly she hated the dress.

Grace winked at Beatrice. "Will you have a new dress for the Christmas dance, Emily?"

They knew she wasn't going to the dance. "I don't think so."

"Why not? Your mother could make you one, I'm sure," Beatrice said cruelly. "Or aren't you going?"

"Nobody's asked me," Emily said stiffly.

"You're too retiring, Emily. You ought to meet Helen's cousin Arthur. Maybe he likes quiet little things. Maybe he's afraid of us bold Nawthun gals. There," she exclaimed, as they approached the study hall, "there he is. Want to meet him?" Before Emily could stop her she

waved to the boy. Emily knew she was just being used as an excuse to speak to him. She was remembering the gibe about the dance as he came up and she scarcely saw him as Grace spoke their names. How terribly thrilled mother would be if anyone at all asked her to the dance. And no one ever would. Even if one did, somebody like Arnold who couldn't see two feet in front of him even with heavy spectacles, she wouldn't be able to go. He could see well enough to tell what sort of a home she had, Emily thought bitterly.

Today, for the first time, she hated the girls. She wished she need never try to talk to them again, that she could make friends with another crowd. But, looking about the study hall, she knew it was impossible. They were all taking commercial courses or something, their clothes were awful, they probably hung around street corners at night with tough boys. Besides, it would kill mother. Mother had gone through enough with Lennie. She had been so proud of him until, when he was in this same high school, he began going with all the Italians and Jews on Meridian Street where it was even worse than Central Avenue, and joined all those radical clubs and almost got expelled that time. But how could Lennie bear it, when he had



### In the Depot . . . Refugees

On the long benches some men sleeping.  
And through the night the whistles of the train

Moan, like voices of women calling  
The lonely home and out of the cold.

There is no more home; there is no fire,  
no food.

On the road and under the night they rest,  
like cattle branded,  
Herded across the borders.

They sleep together.

A woman holds her dead child to her breast.

How long, how long, the exiles; and those  
others,

Homeless and cursed within the land of  
their birth; how long

Shall they set forth in hunger where the  
roads

Lie over the curve of the earth?

NANCY CARDOZO.

been all ready to go to college, to have to study nights and work in that filthy garage? She wondered if any of the girls knew Lennie worked there. They never went up that way, how should they know?

It was odd the way she sometimes felt that Lennie sympathized with her. He was hardly ever home for dinner, but he looked at her sometimes in a way that made her long to tell him things as she had when things were different. Tell him how intolerable it was—but that was just it. Lennie and father didn't seem to think it *was* intolerable. They were perfectly happy. That was what mother couldn't endure. They didn't understand the ideals she was trying to uphold. And even if Lennie did seem to sympathize sometimes, look how he acted just the other night, asking her why she wanted to run around with all those dopes from Hillside Avenue, and mother said sarcastically, I suppose they're not as brilliant as your charming friends from the shoe factory. And Lennie laughed in the coarsest way and said, "No, and in addition to that, they stink," and mother went simply white and furious and said, "At least in front of your sister you could speak like a gentleman." And Lennie said, "I'm not a gentleman, mother, I'm a common laboring man," and grinned as he got up from the table, saying the way he had before, "You're sure taking it the hardest way, mother." It was like those awful days before the divorce when father and mother were always fighting and Emily, trying to do her homework in the next room, would hear mother crying and telling father she had never uttered one word of reproach all the time he had been out of work but she didn't intend to lower her standards in life one inch and see her daughter degraded the way her son had been after all the values she had given him. Then they would begin about father joining the union and allying himself with all those radicals and exiling himself from decent society. "At least," mother would say, crying so hard, "the children don't have to be affected, even if we can't give them the same advantages. At least they can be untouched by all this. We can fit them for the life they were born to." And then she would tell Emily afterwards how they had to fight for their cultural standards alone and stick together. Remembering mother's desperate voice, Emily felt a sick loyalty and fear twining within her. She wasn't doing what mother expected of her. She couldn't, she couldn't . . . something had happened to her. She wondered how mother could help seeing, the way everyone else seemed to, that she was something weak and shameful. . . .

That afternoon, Emily was too exhausted to stay in the library as she usually did. Somehow, this had been the worst day of all, whether because of the new dress, or almost being seen this morning, or the girls being mean—she didn't know. She felt faint, and little tremors of nausea spiraled up from her stomach. She longed to be home, awful as it was; she wanted to slink home quickly, like, she thought, a rat to its hole. Like a spider scuttling under a



**Fred Ellis**

stone. But as she walked through Hillside Avenue, passing the fat comfortable houses snug behind their shrubbery, the pounding in her head increased until she was frightened. She had to talk to someone, escape this feeling of being something apart. It was like being cut up, severed from yourself. Lennie, she thought desperately. She would ask Lennie: What else can I do? What other way is there? She would stop at the garage. She tried to go faster but as she reached Central Avenue she had to lean against the drugstore window for a moment. Little pinpoints of color were exploding against the blackness in her head. She could scarcely understand when she heard her name spoken. She looked dazedly at the boy who stood beside her. He was grinning confidently. "Hello, Emily," he said again.

"Hello," she whispered.

"I didn't think you'd forget my face as soon as that," he said. "When we were just introduced this morning. But I reckon I didn't make any impression on you."

"Oh, yes," she said politely.

"You don't even remember my name," he said softly.

"Oh, yes," Emily said again, perplexed. "Arthur."

"Maybe you think I'm pretty fresh, following you this way." He looked at her tentatively. "I hoped you'd walk home with one of the other girls, you know. But when you came alone, I just couldn't help myself, coming along after you. That's a fact," he added, "I just couldn't. I thought maybe you'd let me go along with you a piece."

A smile quivered on Emily's lips. She let him take her books out of her hand. Astonishment possessed her. This was the boy they were all so crazy about, the Southern boy they hoped would ask them to the dance! If Grace and Beatrice could see her now! Her triumph was almost too great for her to grasp. Maybe he was going to ask *her* to go with him. Maybe—heavens! She shook with excitement as they walked to the corner together.

"Do you live up this way?" he asked.

"No," Emily answered automatically. "I mean, I live up near the park."

"Oh, I couldn't help wondering. You know I'm a stranger in this town. I was sort of surprised when you came up this way. I've never been here before."

"I have—I've an errand," said Emily. For a moment she had forgotten how it was with her. Now she remembered and cold globules of sweat rolled down her back.

"Oh, of course. I might have known. . . . Terrible neighborhood, isn't it?"

"Yes, isn't it awful?" she said in a stifled voice.

"You'd hardly think white people lived here," said Arthur, gazing interestedly around. "I reckon it's a pretty funny sort of white people that do, at that," he commented, beginning to laugh. Emily followed his gaze and experienced a sudden thrill of horror. "Of course, where I come from, you don't see things like that," said Arthur. "I reckon I'm just ignorant, but it still seems funny to me."

Emily shuddered. Coming down Central Avenue toward them was Lennie, accompanied by the two Negroes who worked in his garage. They were talking animatedly and as they approached one of them laid his hand on Lennie's shoulder and Lennie slapped him on the back, nodding in that gay, excited way he had with everyone.

Emily turned blindly. "I forgot," she gasped. She looked about wildly for escape: the drugstore. "I have to telephone."

"Why, that's all right. I'll wait for you."

"No," said Emily frantically. "No. I have to talk a long time. I mean, I'm not going home. I have this errand first, someone I have to see. . . . I'm sorry." He was looking at her in the odd way the girls sometimes did now. "Why, I can just wait a minute and walk along with you—" he began. But she snatched her books out of his hand and fled into the store.

Inside, closeted in the booth, she watched the street. Arthur lounged against the window. Lennie and the others appeared and as they came abreast of Arthur she saw that Lennie was illustrating some point in a newspaper he held. His face, intent and alight, broke into a smile as he waved the paper in the air.

Emily stood rigid in the narrow booth. There was no use in coming out. She could not let him take her home. Better have him hate her, think her queer and crazy, rather than sum her up in that knowing contemptuous glance. . . . She watched the boy fidgeting about, peering through the window into the store. She shrank back further into the

airless darkness. The minutes dragged slowly past and finally, looking out, she saw him give a sudden resentful shrug of the shoulders and turn away.

But Emily remained immobile in the dark box. Her hand stroked the stuff of the new dress monotonously. As if she had been rolled up in a bolt of cloth like a mummy and stood upright in a coffin, she leaned stiffly against the metallic wall. The darkness and stuffiness lulled her into an undefinable trancelike state which was vaguely soothing. The dazzling light from the street hurt her eyes. Lennie's face, joyful and radiant, seemed swimming in the light. She closed her eyes. Gradually the confused pounding in her head numbed her and she was content just to stand there, isolated from the world outside.

★

## Lasser on Harrington

THE new Works Progress administrator will be Col. J. C. Harrington, until now assistant administrator in charge of operations for WPA. He is being promoted over the head of the deputy administrator at the insistence, we believe, of reactionary congressional leaders.

We have nothing against Colonel Harrington personally. . . . Such a vast undertaking as WPA needs at its head a man who has not only administrative ability and business judgment, but also social vision. . . .

Colonel Harrington came to WPA from the Army General Staff. He represents the army type of mind which does not, in our opinion, embody the qualifications necessary to administer a civilian undertaking involving so many social problems and labor relations.

Our experience with army officers as administrators of WPA has not been a happy one. . . . The selection of Colonel Harrington, without assurances that the interests of three million workers will be protected, coming at a time when the whole program is imperiled, can only cause grave concern, not only among the unemployed and WPA workers, but among the labor and progressive forces.

We are ready, however, to cooperate with the man who is finally selected. . . . on a program which will ensure efficient and constructive operation of the program and protect the interests of the federal government, the communities, and the WPA workers. — DAVID LASSER, president of the Workers Alliance.



"Heil Hitler! What news from America?"

# Readers' Forum

## German Girls' Camps

**T**O NEW MASSES: The first foreigner ever to visit the German girls' labor camps has returned to Paris, after spending two weeks at one of them. She is the American Miss Helen Hielt, student lecturer, who is making a study of European social and cultural conditions.

Miss Hielt relates that coffee made of ground acorns is part of the regular diet of the camp. The rest of this regular diet consists of black bread and goose fat.

"After a long, hard day's work of carrying coal or working in the fields," states Miss Hielt, "we got nothing to eat but a plate of macaroni and potato salad."

She described the regimental discipline, and said that the girls were even given their "thoughts" for each day. One of these was: "Do not think of temporary things."

The girls, who are all between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, are "hired out" to resettled farmers and work in the kitchens and the fields. "There is so much supervision and bureaucracy," Miss Hielt says.

Naturally, all the *Mädchen* were in uniforms, which were all identical. The day begins at 5 a.m., when they are wakened by a gong and given two minutes to dress. Everything is done by gong at the camps. The first thing that the girls have to do when they are dressed is to sing "God bless labor, God bless the Führer."

At the moment only university students attend the camps, but a big drive is on to make it compulsory for all German girls. Miss Hielt said that she believes this campaign will succeed in the near future.

A definition of freedom is written on the walls of the camp and the first part of it says, "Freedom is not doing what you want to do. . . ."

Paris. A. F. M.

## Fingerprinting Workers

**T**O NEW MASSES: You are undoubtedly aware of the recent order issued by Colonel Somervell, WPA administrator, to fingerprint all educational workers who come in contact with children. The ostensible reason for the order was that fingerprinting would serve as a preventive of possible sex crimes.

We are, of course, in agreement that precautions should be taken to avoid sex crimes, but it is self-evident that finger-printing will not serve as a preventive and that the sex angle is being advanced to justify the fingerprinting of a large section of our working class.

Our suspicions have been justified by the new course the fingerprinting is taking. Instead of limiting it to workers who deal with children, as previously announced, everyone is being fingerprinted indiscriminately. Carpenters, printers, clerks, technical workers, and many others whose duties never bring them near children have reported to us that they have been ordered to submit to the fingerprinting.

We feel that the present order to fingerprint educational workers is simply a trial balloon which, if successful, will lead to the fingerprinting of more than 170,000 WPA workers in New York City. This would be a most dangerous precedent for all the laboring people for the following reasons:

1. Compulsory fingerprinting provides the basis for a labor blacklist.

2. It offers the WPA an easy means for control and intimidation of WPA workers.

3. It subjects a large body of organized workers to police surveillance.

4. It opens up unlimited possibilities for frame-up and blackmail.

5. It opens the way for search without warrant and denial of habeas corpus.

6. Under a reactionary or fascist regime, under the guise of national emergency, it might lead to untold persecution. It might conceivably be used to destroy the secret ballot by providing a post-election check.

7. Compulsory fingerprinting sponsors violate in spirit at least three amendments to the Constitution—the first, the fourth, and the sixth.

WILLIAM LEVNER,  
Executive Secretary,  
WPA Teachers Union.

New York City.

## Lift the Embargo!

**T**O NEW MASSES: I went to Spain in October 1936 as an anti-fascist and returned a few months ago. I left behind me many fine young Americans who sleep in the warm and grateful bosom of the Spanish earth. I have seen fascism in action in all its naked brutality and I shall never forget.

A beautiful land, and a simple, generous people united to defend their liberty against the modern curse of international fascism. Under the bright Spanish moon, in the silence of night, the fascist wings rain death and horror on women and children. Sometimes it comes suddenly and then the children are placed on the ground; over them lie the mothers, over the mothers stand the men. Why? To save the children from the flying shrapnel of the bursting bombs. They escape one night only to face another moonlit horror. The bright dawn mocks the terror of the previous night and I have wondered how the sun could shine so warm and bright on the remnants of blasted homes and the twisted sightless faces of innocent people. The following morning the fascist radio boasts of a successful raid in which a large number of "Reds" were killed.

In Paris, Rome, and all the capitals of Europe and America, the lights shine brightly and the music plays. Wine flows and well fed democrats belch contentment and security while this massacre of a brave people continues and Spain bleeds. Democracy should hang its head in shame. To return here after actually experiencing conditions in Spain is to see our country in a carefully planned confusion of opinion and ideas on a subject that should be crystal clear to any democracy. A democratic people invaded by fascist butchers whose whole philosophy is force and terror needs no profound discussion as to what our position should be on such a question.

I believe that not all fascist murderers in the world are worth the life of one innocent Spanish child. I am not interested in diplomatic astuteness or hair-splitting theories, or in the fine speeches of reactionaries and phony liberals who are definitely adding to the general confusion by swamping themselves and everyone else in a flock of phrases about non-intervention, isolation, neutrality, peace at any price, etc. I am not tolerant in that I can argue with intellectual word-jugglers, well fed and secure, who piddle away their responsibility while Spain is starved and slaughtered. Such people think that liberty can be preserved by per-

suasive arguments in a comfortable chair under a soft light, or bargained across a diplomatic table with nationalistic maniacs. Austria learned this bitter lesson. When the Storm Troopers of the Führer knocked on the door of Austria, liberty was dispossessed.

Liberty and democracy were not handed down as a gift from some source on high. They were paid for in the blood and courage of the people. To hold them they must be defended. Spain knows this. Spain refused to sacrifice her liberty to fascism or double-crossing diplomats. She decided to fight. After two years she is still fighting. And what a splendid fight! The swashbuckling fascists of Europe, aided by the Mohammedan defenders of Christianity, have buckled more than they have swashed. Spain is not Austria. All the terror and horror of international fascism have been held at bay by a People's Army determined to keep their liberty.

Spain is fighting with one arm tied because of the embargo. Not all the smooth-talking foreign experts or State Department officials saturated with diplomatic caution can wipe out the stain that we have evaded our responsibility and directly aided the bandit invaders by a foreign policy contrary to the revolutionary and democratic traditions of our country.

But it is not too late. All that Spain asks is a fair chance to do her own fighting. She is evacuating foreign volunteers. Her head is bloody but high. She has faith in herself and her future. Surely this great democracy will not stand by with this infamous embargo while these brave people are thrown to the wolves of fascism and the stinking hypocrisy of Chamberlain.

The issue is clear. We owe nothing to England. What are we waiting for? Let us begin now and raise hell to lift the embargo. Untie Spain's arm. Give her a fighting chance.

Do this and upon the ruins of fascist devastation in Spain will arise a new Spain—free, democratic, and hopeful. We, here, have liberty and hope in the future for our children. It is a priceless thing. It is worth dying for. Hundreds of American boys have paid that price for Spain. Spain is fighting and dying for the future that is ours. Step forward—unbind that arm. Lift the embargo.

Long Island, N. Y. A SPANISH VETERAN.

## William Carlos Williams

**T**O NEW MASSES: It is good to see the poetry of William Carlos Williams getting the appreciation it deserves. He has been as much misrepresented by those who have praised him as by those (like Mencken) who have abused him. He has been hailed almost exclusively as a stylist, and few have taken the pains to analyze his work with an eye to anything else. It has been more than style which has raised him so far above the contemporaries of his youth. There must be some other explanation for the vitality which has kept him writing at the age of fifty, when those others have faded out of sight or disappeared in escape from the contemporary scene. All this Eda Lou Walton has ably pointed out in her review of Williams' *Complete Collected Poems* (NEW MASSES, November 29).

One thing just to keep the record clear: Miss Walton gives the impression that "The Wanderer" is a late poem and expresses a growth or change in Williams' point of view. "The Wanderer" is the final poem contained in his second little volume, *Al Que Quiere!* published in 1917. "The Wanderer" does not represent a late change in his work, but does perhaps mark his departure from the escapism of his early imagist friends. It is an early indication of his fundamental rightness of instinct. When he has departed from that rightness, we can forgive him. He is not all pure gold by any means—who is?—but the fine metal is there and is beginning to be seen.

New York City.

MYRA MARINI.



# REVIEW AND COMMENT

## Proletarian Short Stories

IT IS impossible to read the current O. Henry Memorial Award collection, *Prize Stories of 1938* (Doubleday, Doran & Co. \$2.50.) without realizing that the American short story has profoundly changed since the onset of world depression. Both the change and the date of its inception are suggestively revealed in two of the three prize-winning stories. For Albert Maltz's "The Happiest Man in the World," awarded first prize, and Richard Wright's "Fire and Cloud," awarded second prize, are both proletarian short stories.

The former deals with the intense yearning of those on relief for jobs. Focusing on a dramatic conversation, Maltz describes the obstinate struggle of a "reliever" for a job that means certain death, and communicates the happiness that the "reliever" feels when he has clinched the job. Richard Wright gives us a breath-taking narrative of a successful Negro-white demonstration for relief. The demonstration climaxes a series of scenes which depict unforgettably the violent social forces surging around a Negro preacher. The preacher comes to believe that it is his religious duty to lead his parishioners in the demonstration; but the decision does not come until after he has experienced the alternatives vividly posed by various groups—by the Communists, who urge participation; by the church board, which at first warns against it; by the mayor, who tries intimidation; and by a vigilante gang, which brutally beats and horsewhips him.

In addition to the two prize-winning stories, there are pieces by Erskine Caldwell, William Saroyan, Daniel Fuchs, Elick Moll, and others, that suggest the influence of, or deal with, social currents created by recent world developments. These are stories that describe the hardships suffered by poor Southern whites, the elation experienced by poor people over the fulfillment of simple desires, the frequently farcical search of office underdogs for attention, the tragic history of the Jewish people, and similar subjects. These stories give social relevance and a measure of distinction to a volume that is surprisingly mediocre.

From the standpoint of the prize-winning stories, the collection suggests that the proletarian short story has attained a no longer deniable maturity. Harry Hansen, the editor, notes that the year 1938 has seen the appearance of good fiction that interprets or "is in-

spired by the economic situation of the country." From another standpoint, the collection indicates that socially significant materials are becoming the concern of an ever increasing number of short-story writers.

The growing vogue of the proletarian short story is shown not only by the present collection, but by collections which appeared this spring and last fall. This is important because neither Mr. O'Brien, who edits the *Best Short Stories* annual series, nor Mr. Hansen can be accused of proletarian partiality. Further, the collections present stories published by more than forty writers in more than twenty magazines.

In the *Prize Stories of 1937*, Mr. Hansen lamented that "the proletarian short story was less visible than in the preceding year." Nevertheless, we find that of the twenty-one stories, there are stories dealing with: (1) fascist aggression in Spain; (2) the travails of the unemployed and "relievers"; (3) the growth of anti-Semitism in America; (4) the struggle of other racial minorities against discrimination; and (5) the effects of war. First prize for 1937 was awarded to Stephen Vincent Benét's fantasy, "The Devil and Daniel Webster," which implies a more than accidental analogy between Webster's efforts to preserve the Union in 1850 and the present-day struggle for a people's unity. Second prize was awarded to a tale by Elick Moll, which sensitively portrays the mixed feelings of fear and satisfaction suffered by a white-collar worker who is returning to his job after three years on relief.

In the *Best Short Stories of 1938* (Houghton, Mifflin Co. \$2.50), published this spring,



Charles Martin

the number of stories dealing with discrimination, insecurity, war, and revolution constitutes fully half the collection. There are stories of the American Revolution, of the Civil War, of fascist aggression in Spain, and of the horrors of war in general. The privations of the employed are presented in two stories. No less than six stories describe the sufferings, the psychological turmoil, the moral difficulties, and the tragedies endured by the unemployed.

But this enumeration of stories that treat of present-day realities is perhaps not so decisive a barometer of change as the stories that deal with neutral or "timeless" subjects. One finds that the notes of contemporary conflict echo even in the "timeless" universe of these stories. In "Sixteen" (*Prize Stories of 1938*), a romantic story by a sixteen-year-old girl of her first pickup, we come suddenly upon the following:

Now, me, I never wear a hankie. It makes my face seem wide and Slavic and I look like a picture always in one of those magazine articles that run—"And Stalin says the future of Russia lies in its women." . . .

In the same collection, in a story which tells of a small-town girl who breaks an inevitable engagement and goes West after sudden marriage, we encounter the following:

Out here there were simple enemies—wind, fire, cold. Back East there were enemies called business cycles and unemployment, and Phil who had no particular skill by which to earn a living, could never defeat those. . . .

One other illustration of the way today's economic realities intrude into tales of the "universal" will suffice. "Mr. Mergenthwirker's Lobbies" (*Best Short Stories of 1938*) is the fantastic story of a reporter who meets a chap who can foresee the future. But it begins as follows: "That year instead of the raise I damn well deserved, they handed me the resounding title of assistant city editor. . . ." And throughout the story, the point of view of the exploited reporter is maintained, although it has no integral relation to the fantastic developments in the story.

The recent change in the short story involves more than a shift in subject matter. Form and technique have been affected as well. Yet this point is almost always disregarded in discussions of the proletarian short story, and the recent change in the short story

is generally characterized as one involving subject matter alone. The current and recent O. Henry and O'Brien annuals present ample evidence of technical experimentation.

In the work of Richard Wright, we find original use being made of melodrama and the long short story or novella. Wright sets his tales in an atmosphere of violent social conflict. Scene by scene, through dramatic images of the opposing social forces, he builds up tension. The crisis is overpowering, and the characters crash through seemingly unconquerable opposition to achieve a not unexpected triumph. This is true of "Fire and Cloud," the prize-winning story in the current O. Henry collection, as it is of "Bright and Morning Star," the story which appeared in the May NEW MASSES' Literary Section.

Two things are to be noted about Wright's use of the melodramatic. First, this feature is not the product so much of impossible fortuities as it is an assertion of the striking courage and optimism of the class-conscious Negro. Second, the melodramatic arises from a rich analysis, not an avoidance of social reality. This may sound contradictory, but actually it is not. For the struggles of the Negro people in America are today full of melodrama and unbelievable advances. The writer who deals with the life of the Negro may today avoid the characterization "melodramatic" only by distorting or presenting an incomplete picture. Wright has had the courage to reinstate into the short story something of the hope and confidence which pervaded the proletarian short story of the early thirties.

Stephen Vincent Benét, who is represented in each of the recent annuals by an American folk tale, has attempted to utilize fantasy and folk elements with a new purpose. Where the folk tale was once largely a matter of local color and *mores*, as in Washington Irving and O. Henry's *Four Million*, we find that in "The Devil and Daniel Webster" (*Prize Stories of 1937*) and in "A Tooth for Paul Revere" (*Best Short Stories of 1938*), legend is being employed to invest American history with new meaning and to give it the quality of a people's history. We may note also that fantasy, instead of being used spuriously to solve difficult problems, is employed to energize and essentialize significant historical tendencies.

A few writers have been experimenting with the prose of the short story, and have attempted to substitute a rich, poetic prose for the pedestrian writing of most stories. Perhaps the most successful illustration is to be found in Pietro di Donato's brilliant story, "Christ in Concrete" (*Best Short Stories of 1938*). Through the use of trigger-precision imagery and a chiseled, almost precious, diction, di Donato gives tremendous emotional power to a story of building workers killed in the collapse of an improperly safeguarded structure. No element of story structure, but sheer descriptive ability, is the source of the power. The horrible death of each worker is gruesomely portrayed in brittle



Sculpture by Saul Balzerman

### The Miner

prose close-ups. But the physiological naturalism is illumined by social understanding. The foreman, entombed in solidifying concrete, shrieks: "I was born hungry and have always been hungry for freedom . . . I want to live! . . . To tell the cheated to rise and fight! Vincenz! Chiappa! Nick! Men! Do you hear me? We must follow the desires within us, for the world has been taken from us; we who made the world! . . ." Horror is thus transformed into tragedy and the narrative of an "accident" into social criticism.

Of equal interest is a device employed by Don Ludlow in a story which appeared originally in NEW MASSES and is reprinted in *Best Short Stories of 1938*. "She Always Wanted Shoes" describes the needless death of a migratory worker's child. Ludlow, however, intersperses his narrative with excerpts taken from *Transients in California*, a case study of migratory workers made by the California Relief Administration. The juxtaposition of case history and narrative immensely intensifies the emotional impact of the story. For the reader soon realizes that this tale is not fiction spuriously dressed as fact, but the dramatization of social fact. The ironic death is not an accident, but the tragic history of a class.

Other stories might be analyzed to show the concern of socially minded writers with form and technique. But sufficient material has been cited to demonstrate that the last decade's transformation in the short story does not alone involve the utilization of new materials. Within the decade, writers have developed a pronounced concern with the experiences of the underprivileged and with the impact of social forces upon people. In so doing, writers have been compelled to face three technical problems: first, how to suggest group experience through the presentation of individual experience; second, how to convince skeptical readers that the unbelievable experiences of the underprivileged are real, not fictitious; finally, how to communicate to the reader, in addition to the sense

of participating in the *life of fiction*, the desire to understand and participate in the *life of social action*.

The result is that the *psychologism* of the twenties has given way to the *social realism* of the thirties. The *neurological* dissection of inner disturbances has yielded in attractiveness to the *dramatic analysis* of social forces that create disturbances. Moments at which life stands still have become less interesting than moments of change. From a form for *recording intense moments of life*, the short story has increasingly become a form for *analyzing society at critical moments*. One result of this change is that writers like Richard Wright, Albert Maltz, and Pietro di Donato have achieved emotional effects of which the slight short-story form appeared incapable.

ARNOLD SHUKOFF.

## Social Poet

LETTER TO A COMRADE, by Joy Davidman. Yale University Press. \$2.

JOY DAVIDMAN'S *Letter to a Comrade*, this year's selection in the Yale Series of Younger Poets, edited by Stephen Vincent Benét, should be of unusual interest to readers of NEW MASSES. Miss Davidman's first appearance in print was in the pages of this magazine, and NEW MASSES has the distinction of being the only magazine to receive acknowledgment for publication in this poet's book. The title itself is indicative, and the book is dedicated "To Ernst Thaelmann, who will not know." For these reasons I cannot but share Mr. Benét's hope "that this book will reach a rather larger audience than that generally reserved for poets' first books of verse."

*Letter to a Comrade* increases one's conviction that the poets of the thirties are a different genre from those of the preceding decade, who were primarily concerned with rehabilitating the language of poetry while celebrating subjective experience, often to the degree where the poems reduced themselves to a framework of symbols representing the poet's inner conflicts. It is apparent that the emotional problems and intellectual values of the youngest generation of poets are in no way the same as those of the preceding generation, but Miss Davidman finds it unnecessary to pioneer either in form or ideas. Though the machinery of her craft does not always function with streamlined perfection, what she has to say is fraught with problems that confront the depression generation, and what she has to say is passionately worth saying. This is not inferring that how one states a problem poetically is unimportant; one merely suggests that any poet is better off for having a social viewpoint.

Miss Davidman's book, as is to be expected of a young poet's first work, attempts more than it achieves. There is every kind of poetry here: spirited and evocative declamations such



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*The Miner*

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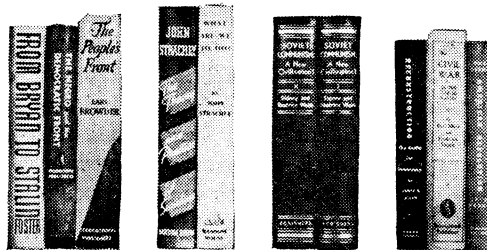
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as the title piece, topical circumlocutions on selected subjects, lyrics on love and nature, but all endow private experience with social meaning which sets her work far above the great run of magazine verse being written today. She flies off in many directions, as did Muriel Rukeyser in her early work, and though her work seldom attains the muscular intensity of Rukeyser's best poems, she often has lyrical dexterity and a sincere simplicity, qualities which will be regarded by many as a new and welcome departure for revolutionary expression.

The poems for the most part are urban in conception. She observes:

the picket lines and the bright jangle  
of children fighting, the litter of streets, the houses  
in windrows,  
here also the broken stairs and the fire and the rat  
also:

And in Dakota the houses have turned yellow,  
the paint scoured from their sides with dust; the  
earth  
baked and split like a bruised lip, the grass  
sends roots five feet down,

and at all points of the mind's focus, pausing  
at roads and inland towns, she sees desolation  
and waste and the need for social action. But  
she accepts the challenge with hope and  
courage:

now with me  
bow and set your mouth against America  
which you will make fine and the treasure of its  
men,  
which you will give to the workers and those who  
turn land over with the plow.

It is in these poems, where she makes use of documentary material, that Miss Davidman is most successful; for her material is sure-fire and is conceived with conviction, though there are several lyrics scattered throughout the book that are well directed, particularly "Prayer for Indifference," first published in NEW MASSES, the third stanza of which is worth reprinting to show her deftness in compressing a deep emotion:

Within these walls the brain shall sit  
And chew on life surrounding it;  
Eat the soft sunlight hour and then  
The bitter taste of bleeding men;  
But never underneath the sun  
Shall it forget the scream, the gun.

These various accomplishments lead one to believe that when Miss Davidman expands to her natural growth as a poet, and has taken time out to survey the structure of her work, she will become not only a valuable addition to revolutionary letters but an important one.

WILLARD MAAS.



## Voltairean History

THE RISE OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION, by Charles Seignobos. Alfred A. Knopf. \$4.50.

THE dean of historical methodology, the author of priceless manuals on the diplomatic and political history of Europe, and the inspired mentor of three generations of objective scholars has here left a testament for the people. He is in his eighties. During the last few years, Seignobos has abandoned the high seats of history to write civic summaries for the guidance of Frenchmen through these troubled days. The connoisseur of palimpsests, the scrutinizer of charters, and the diviner of sources has synthesized his lifework as a citizen. Like the blind Ranke, who at eighty-five dictated a history of the world, Seignobos, in a more modern style, feels that ripeness is all.

He is a Voltairean. Despite his saturation in the historical manuals of the nineteenth century, his German experience, his understanding of the historical schools, he remains a rationalist of the eighteenth century. Like Salomon Reinach, of whose *Orpheus* this book is the cultural equivalent, he delights in arch references to nobility, the church, tyranny, obscurantism, mysticism. Like Reinach and Voltaire too, he is opposed to extremism. The few remarks in his book that are inaccurate as to fact are in the very last section in re Russia and the American financial crisis. For him Socialism is a variant on the Messianic, or rather, millennial dream. Although he is not explicit in this regard, it seems that he views the French radical bourgeoisie, cautious heirs of the Jacobins, as pretty much the most desirable sort of fellows Europe has thrown up. There is a nostalgia for peace, democracy, security, scientific objectivity, that makes the latter parts of the book somewhat wistful. At the same time there plays the amused smile of an old scholar at the passions of our age. Europe has risen from the ashes so many times, it has buried so many rascals, the spirit of man is ever resurgent, so that he sees no cause for despair in its present horrors.

As a descriptive picture of European development it is unexcelled. Since the desire to serve history in capsules has become a pharmacal obsession of scholars, no one has done a better one-volume job. The liberalism of Wells is confused (and incompetent), the manuals of American scholars overweighted with detail and without a philosophic basis. The attitude of Seignobos is straightforward: he shows all his puppets under a clear, dry light, and he notes their antics deliciously. His sense of sequence is unailing; he creates an order in events without imposing an order upon them. His account of the rise and specific character of the nobility, of the lady, the bookkeeper, are little gems. The book has a supreme virtue, it is entertaining.

What, then, can a Marxist ask? Seignobos does not ignore economic causation nor does he much reduce its primacy. His study of the

late Roman Empire is informed by "economic determinism." But the account of the state adoption of Christianity by Constantine is merely magical. So the book see-saws throughout. Changes in the feudal structure are related to plough and harness and arrow, but the rise of monasticism seems to be a psychological freak. Aristocracy is related to war and war to revenue, but science develops as a "sport" of European thought. Why it was allowed to flourish in a religious society, whereas it was deflected into metaphysical channels in India, say, is not made clear. The rise of classes is also treated unequally. Here and there the need for a merchant or banker or lawyer group is definite; suddenly a literary explanation is substituted. The besetting sin of the book, then, is that Seignobos has no concept of historical filiation. He would probably reject any such approach on the ground that it is an over-schematization, that it is a deductive stamp on inferior metal, a counterfeit of historic truth. For him, history is a series of fragments. Some we know perfectly, others dubiously. In some we can trace cause and effect, before others we must limit ourselves to mere description of consequences. In France today that intellectual masterpiece, the *Encyclopédie Française*, under the synthetic direction of Febvre, rejects this tradition and plumps for a nearly Marxist synthesis. But its group has yet to offer a single historic work so delightful as this of the old bourgeois.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

## New York Panorama

BACK WHERE I CAME FROM, by A. J. Liebling. Sheridan House. \$2.50.

THE NEW YORKERS: THE STORY OF A PEOPLE AND THEIR CITY, by Smith Hart. Sheridan House. \$2.

ALMANAC FOR NEW YORKERS, 1939, compiled by workers on the Federal Writers Project. Modern Age Books. 50 cents.

THERE is a vague and generally affected kind of regional consciousness afoot in New York that is represented at its worst by Westbrook Pegler and at its medium best by A. J. Liebling. Pegler, recently, has been lending his raucous style to forewarning New Yorkers of the out-of-town menace and damning Los Angeles, which, he says flatly, is goofy. Liebling, on the other hand, is a mock regionalist. His book is a satiric protest against the local-color boys, Kenneth Roberts, Jesse Stuart, Walter Edmonds, and others who have staked their claims for literary exploitation.

The title of Liebling's book is made from a phrase that radicals know all too well, the meaning of which is usually not quite so jocular as he would have it seem. What he tries to prove, though, is that back where he came from, an area extending outward in concentric circles from Ninety-third Street and Lexington Avenue, is as quaint and dis-

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tinct a part of America as Santa Fe or Cape Cod. Indeed, New York City is a region because it combines, as no other city or state does, the qualities of all. His point, if one cares to make it, is perfectly valid, but he spends most of his time singling out subjects to fit his gags, and, as a result, many of them are pat and unreal. But Liebling's style is engaging, his manner sympathetic, and *Back Where I Came From* is good light reading.

Smith Hart's *The New Yorkers* really has something to say about the people of New York City. Hart is not a raconteur; he is an historian, and a good historian, for he focuses his attention on the city's anonymous millions from the days when they were planting potatoes in Union Square to now, when they are tunneling the Hudson, demolishing the Sixth Avenue El, sweating in the clothing factories, or demonstrating for jobs by which to live and peace in which to work. Hart knows that whatever has been good and progressive in New York has come at the insistence of those people and despite the reaction of the lords and masters. He writes with evident and almost embarrassing glee of the militant days when "Hamilton was pulled from a stoop in Wall Street and given a sound thrashing. John Jay was flung into a mud hole and was burned in effigy by veterans of the revolution. The mere passing of President Adams through the city provoked a riot. Clashes between democratic and tory partisans were frequent and bloody."

Hart seldom indulges in the musty minutiae and stale anecdotes that invariably clutter marginal histories. He selects his facts with an eye to their bearing on major trends and emphasizes them accordingly. He is keenest when he writes of the problems of the early, inexperienced industrial population in conditioning itself for the new mode of life and shows admirably the adaptability of the masses as it was reflected in the transition period. And he is perceptive, too, in analyzing the latter-day attempts to solve the unemployment question. His data on the ineffectiveness and social deadliness of private charity almost take on the character of an exposé. Hart's single shortcoming, to my mind, is one common enough among historians: as he writes of different periods, he alters his style to fit the time. He never refers to an upper-class woman of the late eighteenth century as anything but "milady." This trick has a sticky, posturing effect, and should be eliminated by Hart if he intends to do more writing of this sort—as he most certainly should.

The writers of the FWP, together with some of the workers on the art project, have again put together the *Almanac for New Yorkers*. Despite Westbrook Pegler's tory grouching, it is a grand job, every whit as good as last year's, perhaps better because of its excellent commentary on the World's Fair. What a monstrosity that will be! If the people from the project have their facts straight, all the gaudiest, cheapest trimmings of modern capitalism will be there, pompously billed as education. The only bright spots will be the

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Soviet building and the spot where the Nazi building was to have been. But there will be more to New York in 1939 than the fair, as the almanac adequately shows. In it are listed most of the really significant events of the year in all fields of entertainment, and there is plenty of other material—of the sort presented in the 1938 edition—that is invaluable to New Yorkers and useful to those who will come to New York in the season of its unhappiness. RICHARD H. ROVERE.

## Santa Fe

BURRO ALLEY, by Edwin Corle. *Random House*. \$2.50.

ANYONE who has ever visited Santa Fe, and stayed for more than a week, will readily recognize the type characters, the bars, the Stone Chimney, the La Fonda Hotel, the plaza, restaurants, the drinking and wastrel existence of what goes to make up the life of a large portion of the drifting population of the capital of New Mexico. These people are momentarily in the "Great Southwest" for no particular good reason. The sunlight is verbally important to them, but they get the same amount of it (and that only casually), and in the same way, as ocean travelers who remain most of the time in the ship's bar get of the sea. They come to Santa Fe laconically to "write" or "to" paint—the word "to" always being more important than the words "paint" or "write"—or frankly, they come to Santa Fe to get away from it all, to escape, to luxuriate in an atmosphere of irresponsibility and waste away the years of their life.

And in and around all this there are, of course, the Indians, the native Spanish-Americans, illiterate for the most part and horribly undernourished and impoverished to a black shadow in the sun. The community gets its tone from the Babbitt real-estate men, the quack doctors, and the hirelings of the Santa Fe railroad which keeps in its pay (indirectly, of course) everybody of any standing in the town from the governor on down. Edwin Corle has photographed this life very realistically. *Burro Alley* is a shabby, superficial sort of a novel—but the fault lies in the material and not, primarily, in the craftsmanship of Mr. Corle, who (all things considered) can write a smooth story and pack a punch when the occasion seems to require it. NORMAN MACLEOD.



Charles Martin

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## From Spirituals to Swing

FOR many of us the season of cheer began on the Friday evening of December 23, when at Carnegie Hall *From Spirituals to Swing*, the NEW MASSES concert of Negro music made honest men of its most extravagant prognosticators. It is difficult enough to draw an attendance of three thousand, to achieve exciting and commendatory comment from the daily and weekly press, to hold an audience spellbound—all of which the concert did; but to top this it gave a lesson in the history of American music; to use a dread word, it educated. It marked the close alliance between the music made in the everyday life of the Negro and the music which has come to be called swing; it maintained an authenticity which served as a crushing indictment of commercial jazz with all its attendant chicanery and lack of sincerity; and finally, it proved that an instinctive love of music will break through the thickest fog of oppression, and, with lightning speed and irrefutable argument, record that oppression.

The playing of a recording of tribal music from the West Coast of Africa was the signal for the unfolding of a history. This record served to show basic origins and to emphasize the fact that the rest of the program would be living history, told by human beings. *From Spirituals to Swing* proceeded to prove that jazz has a patrimony which many have tried to deny it; an authentic beginning in the soul of a folk art. No one appreciated "Sonny" Terry, the blind harmonica player (and a truly naive country fellow) more than did the sophisticated players of hot jazz who also appeared in the concert. And, to turn about, "Sonny" was in a seventh heaven when listening to Count Basie and his orchestra. Such an untutored homogeneity of taste can have no other explanation than that both musical expressions spring from the same germ.

It seems inconceivable that any history of American music could ever have been written without thorough cognizance and acknowledgment of this aspect of our native art, yet it has been done time and again with only a nod to the Negro composer who could best dilute his own musical feelings so as to make them acceptable in fashionable concert halls.

Last Friday I unreservedly liked everything on the program, but it is not my intention to pile adjectives one on top of another in expressing my appreciation. I want, rather, to record a listing which will tell something of what each performer did, and which is ar-

ranged in what I feel to be the historical chronology of the concert.

*Sanford "Sonny" Terry*, blind harmonica player from Durham, N. C. "Sonny" has all the attributes of a real folk artist who employs primitive devices for producing his music. Magnificent effects are achieved through a combined playing and singing. He provides amazing accompaniments for his voice and equally amazing vocal overtones to his harmonica playing. The music of *Fox-Chase*, *New Orleans Love*, and *Train Blues* is essentially simple, but his harmonica is capable of intricate rhythmic designs and amazing blues notes—sustained wails which he undulates by the movement of his hand.

*Mitchell's Christian Singers*: This male quartet from Kinston, N. C., projected a dignified and deeply emotional quality in their singing of *While He's Passing By*, *You Rise Up*, *My Poor Mother Died Shouting*, and others. They showed clearly the elements of jazz inherent in the most isolated Negro music, no matter what its subject matter, and their entirely unique concept of spirituals consists of unusual intonations, rhythmic patterns, and harmonic ideas.

*William "Big Bill" Broonzy*: He bought a new pair of shoes and got on a bus in Arkansas to make his first trip to New York to sing blues and play the guitar at Carnegie Hall. His blues are of the most fundamental kind, and his appealing, lackadaisical, and bemused performance of them is typical of hundreds of itinerant musicians of the South.

*Sister Tharpe*: Possessed of one of the most remarkable voices to appear during the evening, Sister Tharpe sang Holy Roller hymns which had the same vibrancy and excitement as blues. She poured unequalled fervor into such songs as *Rock Me*, and *I Can't Sit Down*.

*Sidney Bechet and his New Orleans Feet Warmers*: This group, with inimitable style and vitality, gave aural picture to the early

New Orleans jazz era. Included in the ensemble were such pioneer jazz players as Bechet himself, Tommy Ladnier, and James P. Johnson.

*Ruby Smith*: Niece of the beloved Bessie Smith, Ruby recreated some of the songs that were sung by her famous aunt. These included *Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out*, and the Porter Granger composition, *He's Mine, All Mine*. At the piano was Bessie's favorite accompanist, James P. Johnson. Though not as great as Bessie, Ruby nevertheless gave the flavor of the blues in the glorious style of her predecessor and provided an example of the bedrock solid blues foundation.

*The Boogie-Woogie Pianists*: Perhaps no other part of the presentation received so much applause as those masters of the giant jazz passacaglias, Meade "Lux" Lewis, Albert Ammons, and Pete Johnson. Over stunning ostinatos in the left hand, the nimble right hands of these virtuosi pounded out music which was insistent and compelling. Individually, each pianist was treat enough, but when they sat down to two pianos and an old upright with a mandolin attachment, to turn out a superb collective boogie-woogie, it was incredibly wonderful.

*Pete Johnson and Joe Turner*: Joe Turner is a typical Kansas City blues singer, using a clipped, sophisticated style which is ejaculatory and direct. His voice is exceptional and he enjoys the benefit of the masterful accompaniments of the already mentioned Pete Johnson. In fact, they work entirely as a unit, and together have created the songs *Roll 'Em Pete* and *He's All Right*.

*The Kansas City Six, Basie's Blue Five, Count Basie and His Orchestra*: These three groups (the smaller one derived from the large Count Basie Orchestra) were possibly the only logical climax of what had gone before on the program. Certainly, an organization with less drive and dynamic force would have found themselves in a difficult spot. As it was, these orchestras capped the evening with just the right amount of well punctuated verve, leaving the audience gasping at the spectacle of powerful talent let loose.

The whole program was a testimony to the vitality, interest, good taste, and unceasing devotion to Negro music of John Hammond, who conceived and master-of-ceremonied the entire concert.

JOHN SEBASTIAN.



Frank Davidson



# A Year off My Life

WITH acknowledgment to Clifton Fadiman, who makes it his annual practice to regurgitate his critical pronouncements, renouncing some and stressing others, I'd like to do the same for the movies of 1938. The pictures I thought were the best shown in New York are, somewhat, in this order: *Professor Mamlock* (USSR); *Grand Illusion* (France); *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky* (USSR); *The Citadel* (England); *Blockade* (USA); *To the Victor* (England); *A Man to Remember* (USA); *Generals Without Buttons* (France); *Pygmalion* (England); and *Peter the First* (USSR). *Mamlock* and *Blockade* are important because they portrayed two key events in contemporary history—the Russian film with tremendous power, and the American film with as much sincerity as Hollywood has yet brought to a large theme. I failed to make clear in reviewing *Blockade* that it was no artistic triumph. This weakness was seized upon by several choleric critics, notably Otis Ferguson of the *New Republic*, for wisecracks about the futility of trying to get topical events into film. Nonetheless, *Blockade* is the most important thing to happen in Hollywood during the year.

*Grand Illusion* is the masterpiece of 1938. Jean Renoir's picture is inscrutable to anyone looking for direct messages; but it is immediately recognizable as great film art. Renoir has made no stunning technical departures; there is no apparent virtuosity; the key is low, the acting subdued, and there is a sense of distance—the director stands off twenty years from the war that is his theme, and the setting itself is removed from the battlefields of the war. It is truly difficult to analyze Renoir's pervasive effect with all the usual identifications of good direction hard to find. His film knocked a lot of my theories for a loop. Where is what I once called film language? Renoir moves along a straight narrative line, without the brilliant tricks of Hitchcock or René Clair, and the camera work by Claude Renoir, which is really superb, seems no more unusual than a writer constructing the word "love" out of a vertical bar, a circle, an open wedge, and a combination of a circle and a crossbar. We have never seen anything like this in the movies because no one with the deep humanity of Renoir has been able to get control of a film. Renoir seems to be allowing his material to shape itself—the great actors, Gabin, von Stroheim, Fresnay, Dalio, Dita Parlo, and the beautiful child; the stuff of the plot gathered in interviews with veterans of German prison camps; and the forbidding castle fortress—all of these elements meet the director who understands them and puts them together with genius. As Robert Stebbins put it, here is a film with a "physiognomy."

*The Childhood of Maxim Gorky* was a badly neglected film. It ran only two weeks at the Cameo, largely due to baffled notices in the dailies. The reviewers either applied their conventional praises which did not fit this

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picture, or they failed to notice its extraordinary qualities. Here is another picture which does not have cinema tempo, or film idiom, or whatever else I thought a "must" in a good picture. The director, Mark Donskoi, took Gorky's *My Childhood* and made from it a movie that is as superb as the book. *The Childhood* is a feast of acting; no less than a half-dozen masterful performances are contained in it. It, too, has a spirit that is, in passages like the ones of the paralytic child, little short of magical.

*To the Victor, Generals Without Buttons*, and *Pygmalion* are the year's finest comedies, minus the gag dialogue that prevails in the Hollywood product. Robert Stevenson, the young English director of *To the Victor*, deserves laurel for the characterizations of MacAdam and Tammias, the fat boy, and their Scotch setting.

*A Man to Remember*, directed by Garson Kanin, was Hollywood's finest film achievement, while *Peter the First* was the best of the important historical films of the USSR.

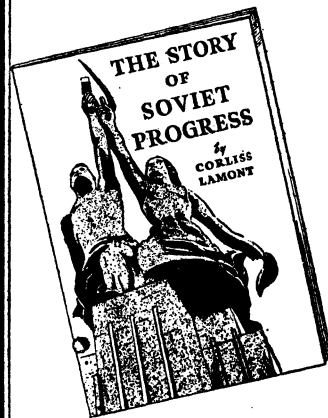
I failed to review two good Hollywood comedies, *Sing You Sinners*, an unusual Bing Crosby picture, and John Barrymore's comical take-off on Huey Long and football, *Hold That Coed*. Now that they are back on the shelves or in the fourteenth-run houses, I urge you to see them. My only alibi is the obvious question: Why in the world would anyone expect titles like *Hold That Coed* and *Sing You Sinners* to be attached to good pictures? When I came out of the daze there were a dozen more films clamoring for our short space. You can't hit them when you can't see them.

Somebody, maybe a psychiatrist, will have to explain why I thought the Ukrainian *Song of Happiness* was "possibly the best musical ever made." It's a sturdy little picture, full of good spirits, but nothing like what I called it. On the other hand, *The Defense of Volochayevsk* seems in retrospect a better film than I may have indicated. I'll stick with the rest of my manifestoes.

I liked the acting of John Garfield, Minnie Dupree, Edward Ellis, Lew Ayres, Virginia Weidler, Louis Hayward, Ferdinand, Mickey Rooney, Spencer Tracy, Jimmy Cagney, John Barrymore, Carole Lombard, Anne Shirley, Will Fyffe, Wendy Hiller, Robert Donat, Zharov, V. Massilitinova, Boris V. Shchukin (as Lenin), Alyosha Lyarsky (as young Gorki), Jean Gabin, Eric von Stroheim, Louis Jouvet, Françoise Rosay, Janine Charrat (in *Ballerina*), Dalio (as Rosenthal in *Grand Illusion*), Pierre Blanchard (a frightening performance in *Un Carnet de Bal*), and Serge Grave (*Generals Without Buttons*). The best direction of the year, in my opinion, was that of Jean Renoir, Jean Benoit-Lévy, Garson Kanin, King Vidor, Leslie Howard, John Brahm, Alfred Hitchcock, Robert Stevenson, John Ford, and Mark Donskoi.

It's a risky business to single out a good Hollywood script writer, because of the highly populated and thoroughly unreliable writers' credits on American pictures, but I'll chance

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that Tess Slesinger, Julius Epstein, John Howard Lawson, Donald Ogden Stewart, Sidney Buchman, Dorothy Parker, Hal Rossion, and F. Scott Fitzgerald did some of the year's best typewriting. My personal leaning is for the fine script Miss Slesinger did for *Girls' School*.

The most powerful odors emanated from Darryl Zanuck, *Marie Antoinette*, *The Texans*, Lew Lehr, *Sixty Glorious Years* (watch this one pop up when George and Elizabeth come over for the World's Fair), *Drums*, and a minor vilification, *Sons of the Legion*. It was when contemplating these that your correspondent was packed off to the balcony for fuming. No smoldering allowed in the orchestra.

Martin Lewis wins the managerial prize for the Fifth Avenue Playhouse's Film Festival and Jean Lenauer of the Filmarte again brought the year's best French film, *Grand Illusion*. I like the seats at Radio City and I wish Santa Claus would bring me the Rockettes for my room. I pray for Disney to do an anti-fascist satire. I look forward to Albert Bein's script on child labor, which is now in the RKO cutting room, to *Juarez*, and to the new Eisenstein film, *Alexander Nevsky*, which has recently opened in the USSR. I am eager to see Frontier Films' feature-length picture dramatizing the testimony of the La Follette civil-liberties investigation, and Herbert Kline's picture on Czechoslovakia. Jean Renoir will ship us his last two pictures—*La Marseillaise*, financed by the Front Populaire; and *La Bête Humaine*, with Jean Gabin and Simone Simon, from Zola's novel.

JAMES DUGAN.

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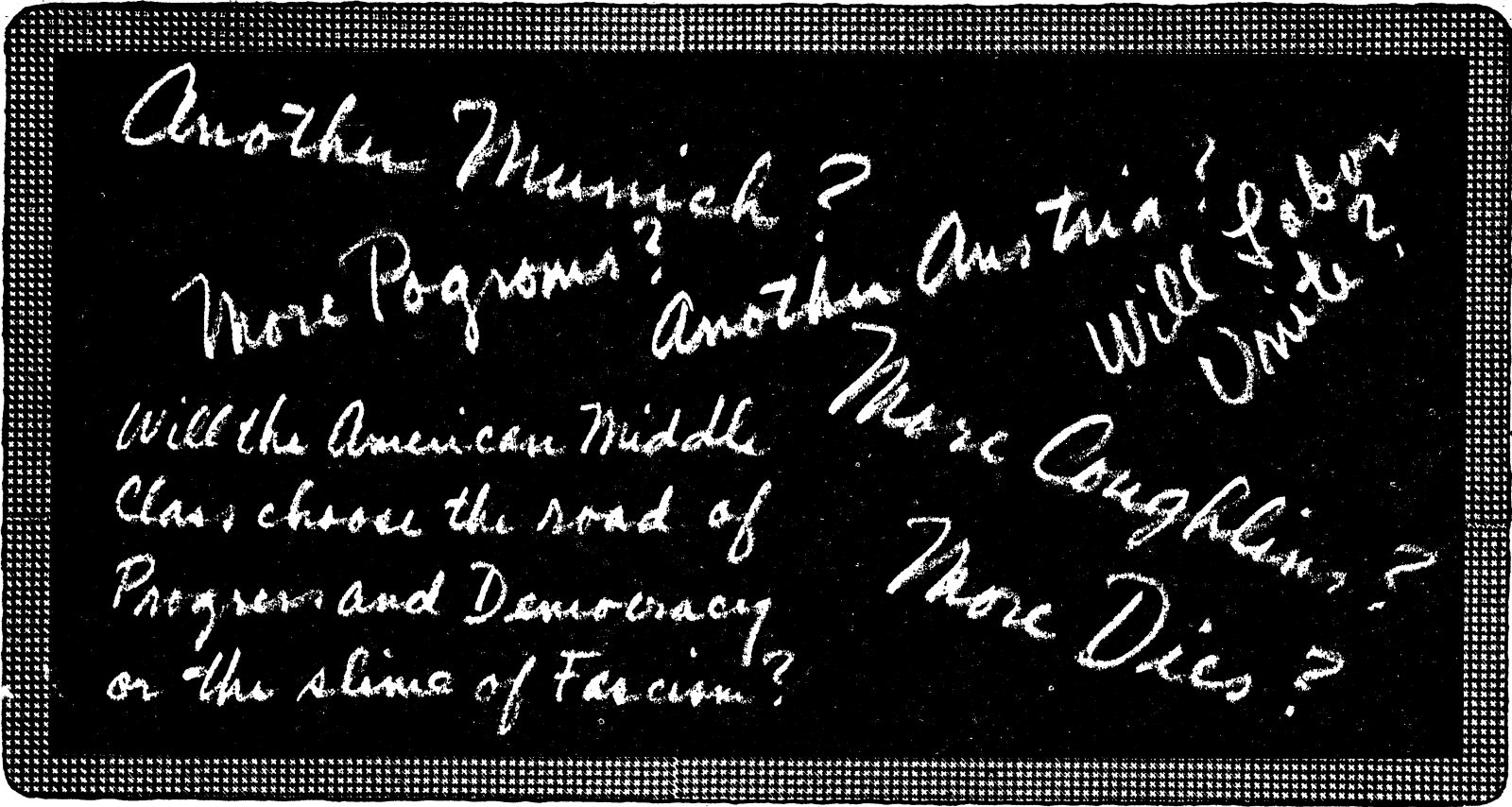
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