

The Gun Is Loaded, Theodore Dreiser—By MICHAEL GOLD

new

MAY 7, 1935

10c

Masses

What Is Communism?

First of a Series of Articles

By EARL BROWDER

*Drawings by Gropper, Wolfe, Siporin,
Limbach and Mackey*

Papers Read at the Writers Congress:
Waldo Frank, Malcolm Cowley, Joseph Freeman

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new Masses

MAY 7, 1935

Tame Professors

WHEN Marxist and Jewish professors were being expelled from German universities, the "University in Exile" was founded in New York City, to offer an opportunity to eighteen German scholars to continue their professorial activity. The report of the director of the school, Dr. Alvin Johnson, on the first year of activity, contains the following significant passage: "There is a prevalent conception that the German professors expelled from their chairs were all either 'Marxians' or Jews. This conception is not valid . . . it was found that rather more than one-third had no Jewish blood at all and of the others, several could be classed as non-Aryan only by virtue of the 'grandparent clause.'" It is characteristic of these educators that they should defend themselves against the charge of being Jews. This will interest especially those American Jews who have helped to make the school possible. It is further stated in the report that "no member of the graduate faculty is a Marxist as the term is understood in America."

ONE naturally wonders what strange kind of Marxist it is who is a Marxist according to the German but not according to the American conception. Among the eighteen professors there are at least six Social Democrats: the former Social-Democratic Deputy, Staudinger; the Social-Democratic Reichstag candidate, Simons; two professors, known as Social Democrats, Lederer, who wrote in *The Berlin Vorwärts* on many occasions, and Heimann, who published a "Socialist" newspaper; and at least two others, probably more, members of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany: Salomon, who published the Marxist newspaper, *Society*, and Frieda Wunderlich. Whether these two instructors are willing to be designated as second-class Marxists we do not know. According to Dr. Johnson's report, the very fact that these professors supported the S. P. D. seems to present difficulties. We quote further: "A number of them were supporters of the Social-Democratic



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Party, whose position was virtually that of the present day American progressive, whether Democrat or Republican." The characterization S. P. D. is apt, and places these professors in the correct light. It is well that the university has abandoned the high-sounding name of a "University in Exile," which might have awakened hope that this school would support the struggle against fascism of those driven out of Germany. The new name, "The Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science in the New School," shows us that anti-fascism can expect nothing from this university. These professors have found themselves jobs, and from now on are being good professors.

The Race Toward War

THE arms race throughout the world proceeds with unabated zeal with each day fresh announcements that

the capitalist nations of the world are ready to solve their economic and moral collapse by leaping at each other's throats. During the past weeks the United States increased its appropriations for the army to a sum unequalled since the War; Mussolini in a cryptic speech implied that his countrymen must reduce their standard of living even lower in order to build up a larger army; the English threaten to re-arm, according to *The New York Times'* correspondent, "on the grimest scale known since before 1914"; while Hitler in Germany, continuing his flaunting of the Versailles Treaty has launched a program of manufacturing baby submarines at a rate which will make that arm of its defenses as powerful as its present air forces are. The announcement of the submarine program has estranged the English government still further from Hitler, it



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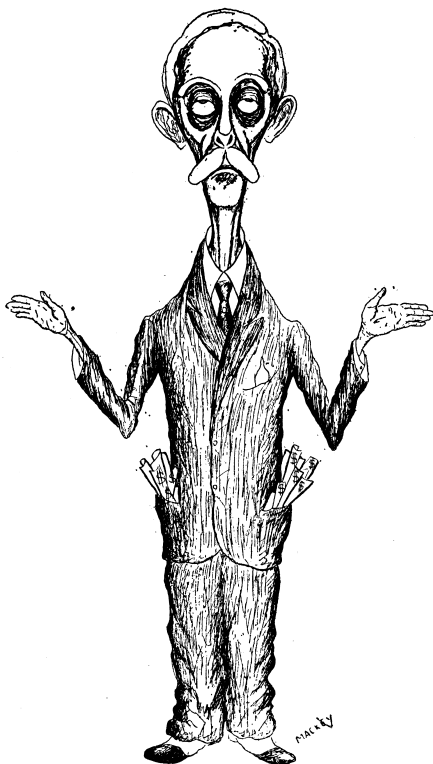
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places the projected naval conference between the two countries out of the question, and it makes Sir John Simon's refusal to join in an Eastern Locarno one of the most serious blows at universal peace any of the diplomatics has made in recent months. The naval armament race between Germany and England is on, to the unconcealed pleasure of those who will gain most from it—the Krupps, Vickers and Schneiders—all those whom Sir John Simon, Hitler, Mussolini, consider first when in their diplomatic conferences they decide how soon the people of their nations shall once again plunge into universal war.

A Fake Insurance Bill

WITH a great deal of exalted fanfare and mutual back-slapping for their "social consciousness," the New York legislators passed and Governor Lehman approved the State Unemployment Insurance Act. The law is patterned after the Social Security Bill recently signed by President Roosevelt. It has been ballyhooed as "liberal" legislation, as a cure for unemployment and other diseases of decaying capitalism. But on analysis, the Act proves to be another typical New Deal fake. Payment of benefits does not begin until 1938—three years from now. And what benefits! In no case do payments exceed \$15 a week, or continue more than sixteen weeks in a year. Despite the law's exalted title of Unemployment Insurance, whole categories of workers are automatically excluded from its benefits: farm laborers, white-collar workers who have earned \$50 a week or more; government and municipal employes; those engaged in non-profit making organizations (which would include religious, charitable, literary and educational institutions); those employed in establishments of less than four workers.

STILL further conditions are imposed. Any applicant for unemployment payment must have worked in an *insurable* occupation for at least three months during the preceding year, or six months during the two preceding years. This neat provision penalizes all those who have been foolish enough to hold jobs in excluded occupations, or still worse, who have earned, prior to unemployment, a wage larger than the very minimum. Nor are benefits for those who do come under the category of unemployed insurables paid automat-



ANDY

Mackey

ically. Applicants must wait three weeks until eligible. An open strike breaking provision reveals the true class nature of the law: the applicants must wait *ten* weeks if loss of job has been due to "discharge for misconduct or strike or lockout." What happens to the professionals, the middle-class men and women without work or other source of income but who fall into the excluded classes, the law does not say. In all probability, they must either find jobs in the accepted categories or go ahead and starve—as in fact *all* the unemployed in New York State are evidently supposed to do until 1938 comes round.

Theatre Union in Danger

PEOPLE have become so exercised over the pros and cons of Albert Maltz's play, *Black Pit*, that in the heat of the controversy many of the critics have overlooked the value of a revolutionary theatre which has made such a play possible. Moreover, the very success which has attended all the productions of the Theatre Union—*Stevedore*, *Sailors of Cattaro*—has actually to a large extent militated against the development of its progress in the field of workers' theatre movement. Convinced by reports that huge audiences have attended the performance of these plays, many of the Theatre Union supporters have jumped to the conclusion that the venture was a success financially and have begun to neglect giving it their

financial support. Actually Theatre Union faces right now a serious shortage in funds. Although more than \$50,000 has passed through the box office during the season, it has \$7,000 debts on its hands and a bank balance of only \$176. The debts were contracted largely when *Stevedore* was put on the road and under the burden of these obligations the Union is barely able to scrape along. So slight is the possible margin of profit that two weeks of bad weather might put the Theatre Union out of action. Though the benefit system by which organizations buy blocks of seats or the whole house, has helped the theatre to some degree, the tickets are sold at a heavy discount and in order to meet actual expenses the Union must have support from the individual theatre-goer who does not belong to a union or a club. *Black Pit* is at present running to a packed house and will continue to run if it receives the support which the professionals, intellectuals, students and the "unorganized" general theatre-going public can give it. It is this support which the Theatre Union needs at this time, a support which is imperative if the Union is to continue its existence as the outstanding workers' theatre.

Trouble at The Forward

THAT the Socialist Jewish Daily Forward feels somewhat abashed that one of its editorial staff sold himself down the river to Hearst was made clear in an editorial which it printed last week. In an attempt to clear itself of the crime of playing ball with Hearst, Hitler's ally, The Forward announced that the movement to oust Harry Lang and the other responsible editors of The Forward was a deep-dyed plot against the paper. The plot, according to the editorial, was hatched by the Communists who are determined to ruin The Forward. Though the editorial writer does not go so far as to accuse the Communists of having ghosted the anti-Soviet articles signed by Lang and then having secretly sold them to the Hearst syndicate, The Forward lays the major blame for the resentment of the rank and file Socialist workers at the doors of The Morning Freiheit and The Jewish Day, which the gifted editorial writer describes as "pogrom makers."

MEANWHILE, with protests pouring into the office, the staff of The Forward is kept busy not only in defending itself for printing the ar-

ticles in the first place, but in merrily passing the buck. According to a report of a recent meeting at The Forward office, Lang accused the editor of the paper, Abraham Cahan, of having been the one who sold the anti-Soviet articles to Hearst. This was mere ingratitude, for Cahan had valiantly defended Lang against the attacks of Socialist workers, who had made their anger felt at this meeting in the inner sanctum. Cahan announced flatly that if Lang went, he went too, and managed to pull his protege through by the none-too-glorious vote, we are informed, of 38 votes for ousting Lang (and Cahan) to 54 against. Who sold the articles to Hearst is not important, whether Lang or his boss, Cahan. The whole point is that a Socialist newspaper has aligned itself with Hearst in his campaign against the Soviet Union and for fascism. And sooner or later the rank and file Socialist Party members, who are for the Soviet Union and against fascism, will organize their anger against their treacherous Old Guard officialdom, which derives its main support, moral and financial, from The Jewish Daily Forward.

Two Strikes End

AFTER three months of violence, intimidation by the police and general brutality, the National Biscuit strike has ended. Though William Galvin, president of the Inside Bakery Workers' Union, had assured the strikers that the

fight would continue until all workers won reinstatement, he signed an agreement which provided that union men who remained at work during the strike would be retained while those who walked out would be put on a preferential list and re-hired as the company needed men. One thousand strike-breakers were to be discharged. Machinery removed from a Uneda plant formerly employing 800 men was to be reinstalled. The strikers, however, cannot understand why Galvin signed an agreement which allows the company to retain union scabs while men on the picket line must wait indefinitely for reinstatement. Once more, a strike conducted and controlled by the A.F. of L. bureaucracy has sold out its membership, made high-sounding promises to the workers and then backed down at the last moment. Galvin forbade mass picketing, discouraged militancy and raised the Red scare. In typical A. F. of L. fashion, the "leaders" shout "no compromise" and then proceed to accept vague promises and stringent conditions from the company officials—while the workers find the strike sold out from under them.

ON THE other hand, the drug clerks of the Pharmacists' Union, an independent organization, won their strike against the Silver Rod Stores. Of the sixteen men fired for union activities, twelve were reinstated, and the remaining four employed in stores that closed

because of lack of business, were put on the preferential list. The company union was dissolved. The strikers won the right to organize, and ended discrimination against union men. The first drug-store-chain strike, led by an independent, militant union, was a success, whereas the National Biscuit strike was weakened and finally broken. A.F. of L. unions, if controlled by the rank and file, mean success for the working class; when they are run by a small, remote bureaucracy, they spell defeat so long as that bureaucracy remains in power and controls battles fought by the rank and file.

Virtuous Congressmen

THE National Broadcasting Company, it appears, got itself into hot water last week by sending over the air a poem which sixteen Democratic and Republican Congressmen regard as so "indecent" that they are petitioning the Federal Communication Commission to cancel the firm's license. The poem which contaminated the ears of millions of the silent audience was sponsored by the Mexican government, whose anti-Catholicism was probably an important influence in persuading Father Parsons, editor of the Catholic weekly America, into leading the cohorts of virtue in the attack on the poem. We are printing the worthy Father's version of the translated poem even at the risk of forever blighting the innocence of our readers.

O, the night I spent there,
At the side of a girl
Of graceful and regal bearing,
Firm and wide proportions.

Later she sang to me,
Interspersing her song with kisses,
Some war song,
To the accompaniment of my guitar.

And then my heart
With enthusiasm filled,
As if at the call of arms,
In conflict I had engaged.

But my greatest delight
Was when she stood, naked
Of her flowing garment;
And like a bending branch
Of a willow, uncovered to me
Her beauty, an unfolding rose
Which breaks its bud
And displays all its loveliness.

Convention of Marine Unions

AS THE Navy steamed out of San Pedro, Calif., to participate in war maneuvers in the Far East, Alaska and

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the South Pacific, the West Coast Marine Federation ended its first convention. Meeting in Seattle, Washington, representatives of all marine unions up and down the Coast unanimously adopted a resolution proposed by Harry Bridges, militant leader of the Longshoremen's Association, which called for a general marine strike if the oil companies continue to refuse the demands of striking oil-tanker seamen. At the same time, the convention wired to Madam Perkins, Secretary of Labor, warning her that the newly organized Federation will take action if the American Hawaiian and other steamship lines do not accept collective bargaining with their licensed personnel. The Federation's determined action has forced the oil companies to withdraw their ultimatum threatening a lockout unless the strike of oil-tanker seamen is called off within a week. The Standard Oil Company of California, prime force behind the oil companies, has felt the pinch of a coastwide boycott, the refusal of labor to buy Standard products so long as the company continues its strike-breaking, anti-labor policies.

BEFORE adjourning, the Federation pledged itself not to handle scab lumber when 75,000 to 100,000 workers walk out on May 6 for higher wages and shorter hours. Not since the I. W. W. days, immediately after the war, has the West Coast been threatened with strikes affecting so many major industries at one time. The reaction is frantically preparing for another Centralia. California newspapers carry daily stories of the formation of vigilante organizations that will swing into action at the outbreak of labor troubles. The foundations for the Red scare are being carefully laid. But the owners and their newspapers can cry "Wolf! Wolf!" just so often—in the end they might find that they are frightening only themselves and no one else. The Federation elected as their first president the progressive candidate of the Sailors' Union, Lundberg, active in last summer's strike. They are preparing to extend the solidarity that for the past year distinguished the West Coast marine unions, to workers in all other industries as the first step in preparing for more militant, more significant struggles.

The Anti-Lynching Bill

SENATORS from the South, supporters of New Deal's "fuller life," draw the line at the Wagner-Costigan

so-called anti-lynching bill. Though the proposed bill makes no real attempt to prevent lynching, it does mouth pious words against the red-blooded American custom of torturing and murdering in order that the Negro worker can be kept in a position of an "inferior" race—"inferior" so that the Negro can be exploited, so that race-hatred nurtured by the ruling class can be utilized in preventing black and white workers from joining in a common drive to forward their common interests. In opposing the bill which challenges the Southern lynch regime and builds up mass resistance to lynch, Southern Senators are in difficulties explaining their opposition; they point out that the bill as it is now worded contains a hidden anti-labor threat, a menace to trade-unionists and to the

right of assembly. The representatives in the Senate of Southern ruling-class culture do not like to be accused of supporting lynch. It is much pleasanter to pretend lynch doesn't happen and let it go at that. And though the bill does not provide for adequate penalties against mob leaders and "peace" officers who use rope and gun and fire, it might be a first step in the direction of more stringent laws against lynch and it does acknowledge the existence of mob rule. While the anti-lynch law formally condemns lynch on the statute books and does little more about it, the Southern gentlemen are opposed to even the condemnation. Lynch is a good old Southern owner tradition—and the ruling class does not readily give up its traditions which hold workers in subjugation.

To the Trade

JAMES NEUGASS

The function of the intellectual has always been . . . to embellish the boredom of the middle class.—Maxim Gorky.

Gentlemen, we have spoken about these things before,
Yet in a thousand years there will still be sunsets,
Again there will arise questions of autumnal scenes,
Tenderness, the fearful landscapes of the mind, grace,
And all the fine swoonings of our historic aptitude:

But in the meantime, boys, we have a little job to do.
We have powder to pour, fuses to set, sparks to strike;
We shall be the book-keepers of international agony,
We shall be the sharpshooters, the bouncers at the door,
But—you can't pack a wallop, poets, on roller-skates.

Children, loose in the wardrobes of our literary dead,
Appendixes, deep in the bellies of the middle-class;
Freaks, black-sheep, ephebes, sourbellies and academes,
Thumbers of arabesque on the lyre of the pure senses—
All bullseyes for the dungs of literary office-help:

Yet ours is the finest blade of all; a slender lancet
With which to lay open the glaucous brains of statesmen,
An ax with which to clear the underbrush of these years,
A ploughshare to prepare acres of fallow, crusted minds;
Our best verses cut more deeply than other mens' volumes.

Gentlemen, poets, workers—we have a little job to do.
Afterwards, we will turn our eyes to Time and Space,
Consider the nautilus, drink again at the Lethean stream,
Again enmeter the grand passions of agony and manners,
Seine 24-carat eternal verities with our platinum nets.

The League of American Writers

AT Mecca Temple, April 27, four thousand people crowded to hear the opening session of the first Congress of American Writers. Facing them on the platform were more than 200 delegates, among them the ablest writers of the middle and younger generation. Sixty-four had come from twenty-four states other than New York. Thirty-six were women—guests and delegates—and twenty-one were Negro writers. Mexico sent four delegates, among them José Mancisidor. Cuba was represented by one woman writer and editor, Lola de la Torriente; Jewish literature by Moishe Nadir, poet; and the German revolutionary writers, many of them in the Nazi prisons and concentration camps, sent greetings to the Congress by Friedrich Wolff, author of *Sailors of Cattaro*. Japan sent one woman delegate.

The next day the delegates began their two days of discussion at the New School for Social Research, which concluded in the organization of the League of American Writers. The myth that writers cannot meet together to talk over the questions that come to them in the study, cannot act together, because of "temperament," professional jealousy and so on was exploded. With an extremely wide range of views, of methods of approach, differences of opinion on almost everything concerning literature, there was nevertheless unity and strength. The inwardness of an event that gives it life, excitement, reality, was present at the sessions as a whole, and in the too brief conversations that went on between the sessions. In this gathering of intellectual craftsmen there was not one moment of musty academicism.

As Waldo Frank the newly elected secretary of the League, said in his last address, "It is only possible to describe our feeling about this Congress in terms which we, who are trained in understatement, shrink from." It is impossible in a brief report to do more than suggest the scope of the subjects discussed. To name the writers who spoke and their topics would merely become a long list. More than thirty prepared papers were read, and these were discussed by a still larger number of speakers from the floor. One evening

was devoted to literary crafts in separate commissions, dramatists, novelists, poets, critics, for more technical study of their work.

Geographically, the membership of the congress was significant. From the far West came the young novelist, Tillie Lerner, and Louis Colman, author of the working class novel, *Lumber*. Jack Conroy represented the Middle West, James Farrell and Nelson Algren, Chicago, and Meridel Le Sueur, whose articles have been outstanding among the contributions to *THE NEW MASSES*, came on from Minneapolis. Eugene Clay, young Negro poet, came from Washington; Eugene Gordon from Boston. Josephine Herbst spoke of her people in Pennsylvania, German settlers who arrived long before the American revolution. Grace Lumpkin was a delegate from the far South, Rebecca Pitts from Indiana. There were writers from Arkansas and New Mexico. In background too, these writers differed widely. The overwhelming majority of course, were middle class but Jack Conroy, Michael Gold and many of the younger writers spring directly from the working class. Langston Hughes, the poet of the Negro worker, was unable to be present but a paper by him was read at the opening session.

The Congress was addressed by a number of working-class leaders, among them Earl Browder, General Secretary of the Communist Party, Hays Jones, marine worker, Angelo Herndon, and Clarence Hathaway, editor of *The Daily Worker*.

Harry Carlisle, from Los Angeles, brought up the problem which faces many writers today. Until a few years ago he was a novelist with a decided leaning toward the material of workers' lives. During the economic collapse he had been drawn into the struggles of the agricultural and marine workers of California and had been too active in organization to write. But this is a problem that even in California, where every available active organizer is needed, has been gradually solved. With the growth of the base of the movement in the West, Carlisle explained, greater division of labor has been possible, and poets and novelists can begin now to func-

tion in their professional work. Earl Browder, in his address to the first session of the Congress, referred to this dilemma:

First, is the question: Does the Party claim a leading role in the field of fine literature? If so, upon what basis?

Our Party claims to give political guidance directly to its members, in all fields of work, including the arts. How strong such leadership can be exerted upon non-Party people depends entirely upon the quality of the work of our members. If this quality is high, the Party influence will grow—if the quality falls down, nothing in the world besides this can give the Party any leading role. We demand nothing more than to be judged by the quality of our work.

That means that the first demand of the Party upon its writer-members is that they shall be good writers, constantly better writers, for only so can they really serve the Party. We do not want to take good writers and make bad strike leaders of them.

The Congress concluded its sessions with the task for which it was called, the organization of the League of American Writers, to be affiliated with the International Union of Revolutionary Writers. The League, under the leadership of Waldo Frank, begins its career with nearly two hundred members. The work of the League will be carried on by a national council of fifty. From this national council, the Congress elected seventeen members to the executive committee, who will guide the central work of the body in New York. The members of the executive committee are: Kenneth Burke, Malcolm Cowley, Waldo Frank, Joseph Freeman, Michael Gold, Henry Hart, Josephine Herbst, Granville Hicks, Matthew Josephson, Alfred Kreymborg, John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, Harold Clurman, Edwin Seaver, Isidor Schneider, Genevieve Taggard, Alexander Trachtenberg.

We rise and cheer the Congress, the departing delegates, the newly organized League of American Writers, and Waldo Frank in his responsible task. The League will make for a greater unity and singleness of purpose, and will create an organic social significance for literature, which has never been known before in our history.



"NOTHING CAN STOP US!"

William Gropper



"NOTHING CAN STOP US!"

William Gropper

What Is Communism?

1—General Johnson Proves It

EARL BROWDER

CASTING about for a current text to introduce this examination of some of the problems of Communism and why it occupies the center of political thought in the United States, it was inevitable that I should hit on General Hugh S. Johnson. For some time the worthy General has been an invaluable adjunct to the Agitation-Propaganda Department of the Communist Party. His utterances occupy a place of honor in bold-face type in our reports and resolutions, serving to prove the points which we are laboring to establish. In fact, if Hughie Johnson, by some unaccountable misfortune, did not exist, we Communists would have the necessity, as Voltaire is reported to have said about God, to invent him. He has the inimitable faculty of "spilling the beans" at the moment when and on the issues about which Communist resolutions are written. When General Johnson went forth into the wilderness, bearing the sins of the Roosevelt administration on his bowed back, no one mourned his going more than the Communists. We thought we were losing our unconscious collaborator. But God was with us! The General obtained a job as newspaper columnist! Our sorrow was turned into rejoicing.

Our text is from the column of April 4, dated in Washington:

But this is certain. If the powers of government and industry cannot, by some immediate and determined action, be exercised to lift this curse—no power on earth can avert big trouble soon.

The "curse," it is clear, is the crisis and depression which closed down about 30 percent of our productive apparatus and excluded about 40 percent of the population from useful work, most of them condemned to enforced idleness.

Now, the unsophisticated reader may well ask: "What is so valuable about this statement? The ordinary man-in-the-street knows that. Surely the Communists should know it."

True, the Communists knew it even before our General. But coming from Johnson it establishes two fundamental points of our argument: (1) It means that everybody knows it now, even those who publicly deny it; and (2) it means that General Johnson was a liar when he said in San Francisco last summer, that the general strike was a Communist conspiracy—that same general strike which taught Johnson to look for "big trouble soon."

It is important to establish, from such an authoritative source, that the great social struggles, the class battles, the strikes, the disorders, that rise like a great wave around us everywhere, are caused by the breakdown of

capitalist production, and the inability of government and industrial management, representing the capitalist owners, to find any solution after five years of efforts.

Let us again delve into the mind of our authority, to find the evidence upon which he bases his expectation of "big trouble soon." He describes the kind of letters written to him as a result of his famous radio address, in which he rebuked the "eighty million cry-babies" for being discontented:

My mail changed its color both as to the kind of people who were writing and as to what they said. Some of it is angry and vicious. This plainly comes from people who have suffered most from this depression. They are bitter, resentful and desperate. . . . People don't get over such wounds in a lifetime. . . . This resentment of suffering is a dangerous thing, because a majority are sufferers.

The majority of the population of the United States is rapidly becoming "bitter, resentful and desperate." Some of them are "angry and vicious." They will not forget the lessons they are learning "in a lifetime." Their attitude is "a dangerous thing" for the men, the class, the system, which they will hold responsible for their sufferings. This is the evidence which General Johnson contributes to the Communist analysis of the situation in the United States.

To make the picture complete, let us add to the evidence of the champion of the New Deal, that of the capitalists who oppose the Roosevelt policies. We quote from a circular letter broadcasted by the New York Chamber of Commerce on March 30, 1935:

We will not desert our country in this hour of her wreckage and degradation.

For the moment we are not interested in the promise of our New York capitalists that they "will not desert our country." We can take that for granted, so long as they can continue to draw huge incomes which, even when decreasing in total sum, are still increasing in proportion to the total national income. What is of importance here is to establish the essential agreement between New Dealers and the Right opposition to the New Deal, that the condition of the country is such as can be summed up in the words "wreckage and degradation."

On behalf of the Communist Party, which leads the labor opposition to the New Deal, I can declare that on this question we are in complete agreement. The united front on this judgment of fact is surely a broad and all-inclusive one. Our agreement, however, stops short at this point. On the questions of locating the precise responsibility for the crisis, and

what is the way out, the Communists stand on one side with clear and definite opinions and program; on the other side is a Babel of confusing and confused opinion and counsel.

It is hardly worth our while to examine the "arguments" of the Old Deal against the New Deal, though their real policies are basically important. These arguments have lost mass appeal. Let no illusions arise from the current fact that movie audiences are everywhere receiving in cold silence the warm smiles of F.D.R. in the news-reels, while granting a moment of applause, at least lukewarm, to the cold countenance of Herbert Hoover. That applause is only an indirect registration of disillusionment with the New Deal; it is a recognition of error in having accepted F.D.R. as "something better, something hopeful"; before election day the memories of 1929-1932, and the first days of March, 1933, when Hoover graciously handed over to his successor a nation of closed banks and universal panic, will effectively prevent a re-emergence of Hoover Republicanism.

It is important to establish what are the essential differences in policy between the Old Deal and the New Deal. To do that, we must note their points of agreement: these are, in the first place, agreement that "recovery" means, and must mean, a recovery in profits (in the rate of profit as well as in the proportion of profit in the total national income), from which alone all other phases of recovery can flow as from a fountain-head; agreement that this can be achieved only by strengthening the role of the central government against all forces that threaten this profit, both from within (demands of workers, farmers, veterans, etc.), and from without (encroachments of other imperialist powers upon U.S. foreign trade—Britain, Japan), by means of increased repressions and limitations upon civil rights, intensified national chauvinism, and preparations for war. Upon these essentials of the policy of modern finance-capital, there is implicit and explicit agreement between the New and Old Deals.

The differences arise upon the basis of the existence of two possible paths to reach the common goal. The general character of these two paths are a modern example of the dilemma upon which Hamlet was cogitating when he uttered the oft-quoted lines:

Whether 'tis better to bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.

The Old Deal would cold-bloodedly "bear those ills we have," preferring to face the issues, which it knows must be fought through, in their clearest form. It is for deflation, sound money (gold standard), reduction of

wages, lengthening of hours, ruthless elimination of marginal enterprises, reduction of social services (up to complete elimination), governmental retrenchment all round, governmental subsidies only to the biggest financial institutions, placing the government squarely *behind* big business which directly carries through its attacks upon the masses, boldly fighting against all "demagogues" who promise any other way out of the crisis. This is the policy of the Old Deal. It must be given the credit for a certain elementary honesty and forthrightness, a facing of the real issue.

But the Old Deal suffers from one fatal defect! It exposes before the masses the true class alignments, and thereby mobilizes the masses in revolt against these policies which openly condemn them to destitution and degradation. It is to escape "those ills we have" of rising revolt among the masses, that the New Deal comes forward, leading the flight "to others that we know not of."

The New Deal, however, merely gives a new form to the Old Deal policies. The New Deal launches upon a course of inflation (for the moment a "controlled" inflation). The dollar is devalued by 40 percent. This is the foundation upon which the whole structure of New Deal policies is erected. From this base, hourly wage-rates can be raised while actually reducing the workers' share in national income; hours can be shortened with the effect of distributing the burden of unemployment among a larger number of workers, and taking it off the relief rolls; some marginal enterprises can be kept in operation while actually speeding up the trustification of industry as a whole; social services can be formally extended while actually gutting them of their real significance; the state budget can be multiplied while its burdens are lightened on the rich and heavily increased upon the poor; governmental subsidies can be extended to the lower ranks of capitalists while actually multiplying the weight of subsidies to finance capital; the government can be placed *at the head* of big business with the proclamation that thereby big business has been "subordinated to the general good"; and finally the government itself takes over the role of the "demagogue" who promised another way out of the crisis. This is the New Deal. It chokes and disintegrates for a time the mass revolt against the Old Deal, while achieving the same aims at the price of deliberately abandoning a clear posing of issues, cultivating hypocrisy as a system, shrouding economic and political policies in a fog of mysticism—and sharply intensifying, even while postponing some issues, the fundamental struggle of contradictions inherent in capitalism which gave birth to the crisis.

It is a characteristic of the New Deal that it must deal extensively in demagogy. The chief item of this is the slogan of "economic planning," which the Old Dealers denounce as "regimentation." But every honest theoretician of capitalism, who is able or willing to follow through his logic to the

bitter end, will state as emphatically as any Communist that "economic planning" and "capitalism" are two utterly opposed and mutually exclusive categories which can mix no more than oil and water.

With the New Deal all semblance of a unified system of economic policies has disappeared. Confusion reigns supreme. Anybody's latest crack-pot theory is as good as anybody else's, because not one of them, from the Brain Trust down to Huey Long, any longer pays even lip-service to science. Again we call upon our authority, General Johnson, to give evidence on this point. On April 23, speaking about the Brookings Institution, the last refuge of capitalist economic science, the General says:

His (Brookings) principle . . . was that there is as great a need for a purely scientific clinic of our economic ills as there is for a running survey of our physical ills. . . . The Brookings Institution, masquerading under the ideas of its grand old founder, has become a pressure bureau to publicize the preconceived ideas of Harold Moulton. If economics is an art, where was his warning of the 1929 collapse?

Pertinent question, indeed, oh General! It could be addressed, with the same pertinence, to every capitalist institution of science and learning. It must be added that the inability to foresee the crisis is equalled by the inability to understand or explain it afterward.

But there were people who foresaw the crisis, and loudly proclaimed it! Early in 1929, the Communist International addressed a letter to the Sixth National Convention of the Communist Party of the United States which warned of "the approaching crisis in America." A few months later, in May, another letter sharply called attention to the fact that:

With a distinctness unprecedented in history, American capitalism is exhibiting now the effects of the inexorable laws of capitalist development, the laws of decline and downfall of capitalist society. The general crisis of capitalism is growing more rapidly than it may seem at first glance. The crisis will shake also the foundation of the power of American imperialism.

On May 6, 1929, Joseph Stalin made a speech on the problems of the C.P.U.S.A., in the course of which he made the following clear declaration:

Many now think that the general crisis of world capitalism will not affect America. That, of course, is not true. It is entirely untrue, comrades. The crisis of world capitalism is developing with increasing rapidity and cannot but affect American capitalism. The three million now unemployed in America are the first swallows indicating the ripening of the economic crisis in America. . . . I think the moment is not far off when a revolutionary crisis will develop in America.

The Central Committee of the C.P.U.S.A. since its Tenth Plenum in the first days of October, 1929, when it finally removed the Lovestone leadership which had been advertising "the Victorian Age of American imperialism," has been proving the correctness of the judgments quoted above—ably assisted by the crisis and such helpers as General

Johnson. The Tenth Plenum even then noted the downturn of production in July, and evaluated this as the beginnings of the crisis. Within a few weeks the Wall Street crash dramatically confirmed this judgment.

These historical notes serve to show that it is by no means an accident that the Communist Party has been developing a tremendous mass influence in the course of the crisis. It was the only organization which foretold the crisis. It was the only one which correctly analyzed the policies of Hoover. It was the only one which from the first moments of the New Deal already indicated the nature of its policies and their inevitable outcome—an outcome now clear to the world. The Communist Party could do this because it is the only organization that is armed with science, with the teachings of the greatest social scientists—Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin.

All of which will serve as an introduction to a series of articles, in which, at the request of the editors of THE NEW MASSES, I will undertake to answer dozens of questions which they have received from their readers about Communism, the Communist Party and its program, its relation to other parties, and to the various classes in the population. We will take these questions up in the concrete form in which they have been put to us, trying, however, to arrange them as much as possible in a certain logical order of development.

Beginning with his second article, in next week's issue, Earl Browder will answer supplementary questions, arising each week. Readers are invited to send in their questions, addressed to Earl Browder, care of THE NEW MASSES.

Georgia Work Song

Heiura, Heiura
Ding, dong, ding
Sing 'bout Freedom
Nigger sing

Blow de horn
Soun' de drum
Slave no mo'
Freedom come

Owl Head, Lueger
Magmazine
Got no gun
Grab anythin'

Come ashoutin'
Neber stop
Fo de bottom
Hit de top

Worl' a bottle
In yo' han'
Bus' it open
Be a man

Come on join
Dis fightin' ban'
Make lousy coun'ry
Promise lan'

Collected by LAWRENCE GELLER.

Letters from America

Obstructing the Law

GRAPEVILLE, PA.

AFTER our father had paid on our house in Jeannette, Pa., all his life, and had gone without many things so that he might own a home, the depression hit us and they sold it in 1932. They had been giving us many notices to move but having paid so many years on the house we were not willing to move without a protest. Just this winter, on January 25, one of the coldest days of the year, they came at 10 o'clock without giving us any notice. My mother, interrupted while eating her breakfast, became very nervous and picked up a small piece of a broomstick and began to tell them they couldn't put her out of the house and no place to go. Instantly they handcuffed her and sent her to jail. We didn't have any place to go. We came home from school and had to go to a neighbor who was kind enough to give us our meals for the day. For a whole week we were scattered among our friends and neighbors. Mother was bailed out the evening she was arrested. A few days later my sister who works in East Pittsburgh, phoned that mother had to come there because she was sick. At this time my father and two brothers were looking everywhere for a house. Finally they came here and rented this place. But mother's case came up in court and she was found guilty for obstructing legal process. The lawyer even said that he didn't care if mother had fifty children. They did not give her the sentence right there but waited till now to give it to her. She was given a parole for a year. She might not have gotten this if it wasn't for my brother. She began to ask them a question "whether they had a law to put people out." They got mad and told her if they sent her to the workhouse and teach her they have a law. My brother asked them if they would give him some time to calm her down and when they called on her again she didn't ask questions so they gave her a parole. Now she's home, and now we are branded in Jeannette as "Communists."

LUCY K.—

Share Croppers in Arkansas

COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE,
MENA, ARKANSAS.

IN EASTERN ARKANSAS among the large plantations of twenty and thirty thousand acres each, the share-croppers are fighting a desperate battle against heavy odds. In their efforts to organize they have discovered that the opposition will use all means in an effort to crush the union. Jail sentences and arrests have become common, and the lynch rope is a threat that continually dangles before the union members who

carry on the fight. Where whites and Negroes can meet together, some of this terror can be warded off, but since the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union is over 60 percent Negroes, this is not always possible; and terror is always much more intense against the Negroes.

Three of us from Commonwealth, the director, Lucien Koch, Atley Delaney, a militant young Socialist, and myself went to the scene immediately after Rodger's arrest several weeks ago. We started a series of open mass meetings, and also spread out into unorganized territory to build the union. After we had been there about a week, Koch and myself went with a white share-cropper one night to a meeting which had been arranged in a Negro church-house at Gilmore, in Crittendon County. Delaney attended the regular meeting of the local in Marked Tree, which is one of the strongholds of the Tenant Farmers' Union.

We arrived a bit late and the crowd had already assembled. About two hundred were present, all of them Negroes but about ten. We saw nothing to cause us to worry. Everything looked peaceable enough. A Negro, one of the leaders of the union, acted as chairman. He opened the meeting, spoke a few words and introduced Koch. As Koch spoke, I noticed the crowd becoming a bit restless, and then I saw a bulky white fellow come striding down the aisle. "One of the riding bosses," a Negro whispered in my ear. He stopped near Koch. "What're you talking about?" he demanded in a loud voice. Koch answered him civilly, recognizing that he was drunk. He threatened to break up the meeting, but finally walked back outside. Then I noticed another white man sitting on one of the front benches taking notes of the talk. The Negroes saw him also, but they stayed in their seats, and I admired their courage, because there in the black belt, if a Negro is shot by some boss who doesn't like him, the white man is never brought up for trial.

Under the Cotton Acreage Contract, share-croppers and tenants are supposed to receive some few benefits. Koch mentioned some of these in his talk, and the audience was amazed. The law there is planter law, and it's enforced with the threat of the lynch rope. After Koch finished, I suddenly felt a tenseness in the air. The Negro chairman took charge. "If anything's goin' to happen," he said, "it'll happen just the same if you keep acting restless." So in this way he got the audience calmed, and then called for membership in the union.

For a brief moment, there was a pause, then several Negroes came forward to join. Just then there was an interruption. Several white men, led by our first visitor, came stalking into the room with pistols. They

dragged Koch out, kicking and beating him. One of the bunch held a gun on the crowd. A tall Negro reached for his pocket, but the gun was pointed in his direction. I managed to slip out and follow the bunch with Koch. The thugs recognized me and swung on me with their gats. They were a lynch-crazy bunch of planters and deputies, most of them drunk. "You goddamn nigger lovers," they shouted.

At that they shoved us violently into the car, still slugging and kicking us, and threatening to shoot us at any moment. One of them, a deputy-sheriff, we learned later had just been released from an insane asylum. Down the road a few hundred yards, they stopped so their buddies in the car could have a chance to give us a few blows. A third car, two deputies who were not drunk, pulled up. They realized that if we were killed it would be embarrassing for the law forces in Crittendon County, so they took us into their car, the others slugging us in the meanwhile, and hauled us into Marion, the county seat. The others followed us, and Koch and I crouched down out of the lights of the car behind.

In the office of the sheriff we were questioned. Our friends, the planters, came up also and continued cursing us. They were all good friends of the county officials. The Justice of the Peace also talked to us, suavely warning us that "Your meetings may be legal all right, but there are other means of stopping them." He meant the lynch rope, backed by the armed forces of the law. The sheriff was called off to answer a telephone call. When he came back, he was a bit more civil, giving us a chance to wash off some of the blood. To our surprise, no charges were filed against us, and two deputies escorted us back to our car, warning us, of course, not to come back. In the doorway of the little church-house we found a rope that had been dropped in the excitement. There was a hangman's knot on one end of it.

As the old Ford bobbed over the pavement toward Marked Tree, we expected at any moment to be stopped and have the job finished. Just outside town we met a familiar truck that belonged to one of the union men. We stopped. Fourteen men piled off, cursing joyously to see us alive and safe. They were union men, armed with pistols, rifles, shot-guns. Delaney was one of the group. Word had been brought back to their meeting in Marked Tree, and the bunch almost went wild with anger. Delaney phoned the sheriff at Marion, demanding that we be protected. He told him he was a representative of the New York office of the I.L.D. and that things would be made hot for Crittendon County if we were hurt badly. This explained why the sheriff turned us loose and gave us protection.

BOB REED.

May Day, 1886-1935—The Haymarket



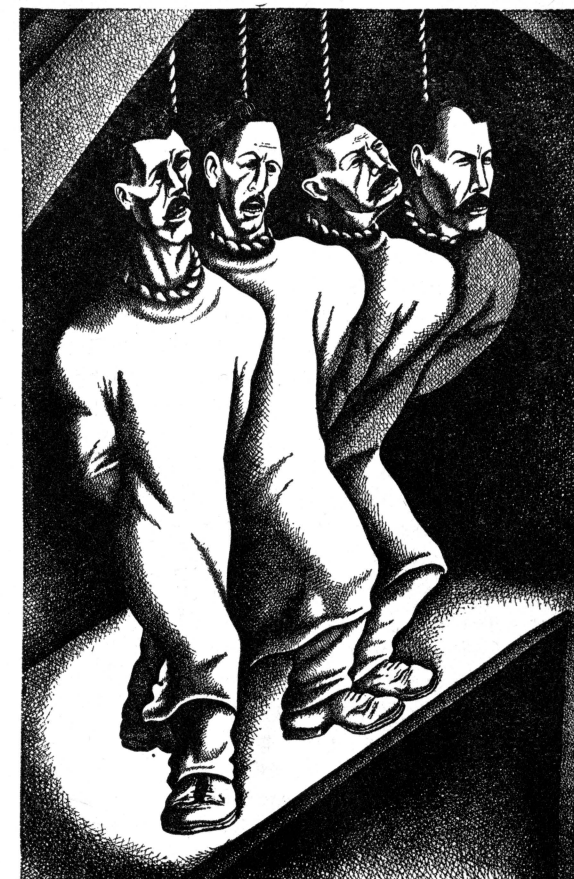
The raid on Vorwärts Turnerhall. Captain Bonfield and the Chicago police



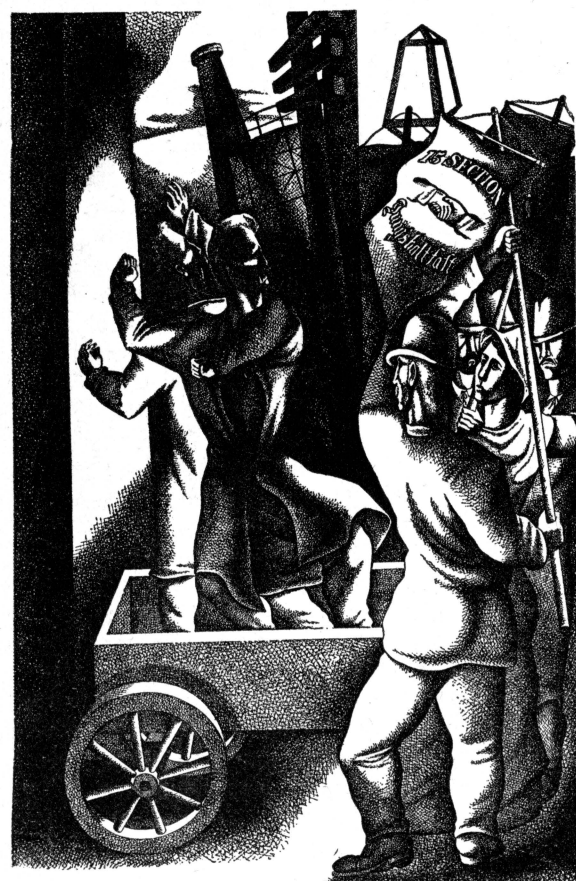
The Strike at McCormick's. Death of Joseph Doldick, striker



McCormick's jury. The frame-up



The hanging of Spies, Fisher, Engel and Parsons. "There will come a time, when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today."—August Spies.



The Wagon at Crane's Alley. Protest meeting against police terror, May 4, 1886



The meeting on the Haymarket



"In the name of the State of Illinois I command peace" The dedication of the monument to Patrolman Matthais J. Degan



The Haymarket, 1935

Mitchell Siporin

The Gun Is Loaded, Dreiser!

MICHAEL GOLD

A CHILD finds a loaded gun and thinks it a fine toy. He points it at his brother playfully and pulls the trigger. The gun goes off and kills the brother. The child does not comprehend what he has done; bewildered, he stares at the silent little corpse of his brother, and runs off to some less puzzling game.

How can we punish a child for such a crime? We do not punish him; he is not responsible. But a grown man we must consider responsible for all his actions.

Theodore Dreiser, a year ago, stumbled in some manner upon the Jewish problem. Almost playfully, without any real study of this blood-stained question, he arranged a symposium with his fellow-editors on that rather trivial journal, *The American Spectator*. It was a symposium, according to their own account, "with the accompaniment of wine." Eugene O'Neill, James Branch Cabell, Ernest Boyd, and that example of all the vulgar froth in the Jewish bourgeois mind, George Jean Nathan, were among those who drank the wine and indulged themselves in the planned, self-conscious wit.

The tone was one of sophisticated banter. All seemed to agree with Dreiser, even the very clever Jew present, that the Jews as a race were too clever for the Gentiles to live with. The Jews must be put on an intellectual quota of some sort. If they refused to practise intellectual birth-control, the Gentiles would be justified in asking these clever and dangerous guests to depart to some country of their own.

The Hitlerish symposium was noticed for what it was in a few journals, including *The Daily Worker*. The liberal Hutchins Hapgood wrote an indignant letter of protest to *The American Spectator*. That gallant and airy paper edited by grown men, one of them even noted for his beard, assumed the child's prerogative of irresponsibility, and simply refused to print it. But Mr. Dreiser replied privately to Mr. Hapgood. The latter wrote a second note, and Dreiser made another reply.

Recently, in *The Nation*, a year after the event, the letters have been printed with the permission of Theodore Dreiser. They have aroused a small storm of shocked indignation. Theodore Dreiser had come to be regarded in our country as our outstanding symbol of the literary artist who brings his genius to the aid of the oppressed. Like Romain Rolland in France, or Maxim Gorky in Russia, here was a writer who had become, in the fine words of Zola, the conscience of his land. Twenty years ago Dreiser was already writing essays of protest and rebellion in the socialist and anarchist press. His fiction has

always been deeply laden with the compassion and brooding tenderness of a man who feels in his own spirit the wounds of the humiliated mass. Dreiser went to the aid of the Kentucky miners. He aided other groups of persecuted workers. He wrote a book of straightforward condemnation of capitalism. He defended the Soviet Union, and even called himself by the proud name of Communist.

Was this the man who was now repeating so airily many of the familiar slogans of the *Judenfressers* Hitler and Streicher? It was unthinkable; if true, it was an American tragedy, infinitely worse than that which befell Clyde Griffiths.

Our conference with Mr. Dreiser was reported in last week's *NEW MASSES*. What was not conveyed sufficiently, was the tone of the conference. To Mr. Dreiser all this hulla-baloo about his letters seemed almost humorous. After all, he had expressed only his private opinion, and was he not entitled to that? He was not an anti-Semite, but a friend of the Jews. In advising them to form their own country he was helping them. But he was still a "Communist," and what did this Jewish question have to do with Communism?

The simplest and most basic discovery made by Marx is that there are no indivisible races or nations, but that all the races and nations are split sharply by the war of two classes, the war of owners against workers.

This war can be detected as easily among the Jews as among the British, the Germans or the Japanese. It rages most strongly on Mr. Dreiser's very doorstep in New York, and it is a marvel that he has never noticed it.

New York is the center of the clothing industry of America. The industry is controlled by Jewish capitalists, and almost a quarter of a million Jewish workers are exploited by them in their factories and shops.

"They (the Jews) do not, in spite of all discussion of the matter, enter upon farming; they are rarely mechanics; they are not the day laborers of the world—pick and shovel; they are by preference lawyers, bankers, merchants, money-lenders and brokers, and middlemen," says Mr. Dreiser. "If you listen to Jews discuss Jews, you will find that they are very money-minded, very pagan, very sharp in practice, and usually, insofar as the rest is concerned, they have the single objective of plenty of money."

Yes, this is true of the bourgeois Jews. They are sharp in practice and money-minded, like the rest of their class, Jewish and Gentile. Mr. Dreiser says he has been fleeced by these Jewish associates of his, cheated

by these crooked publishers and lawyers.

But does he think these Jewish exploiters are more tender in their mercies to their fellow-Jews who happen to be of the working class? Hasn't Mr. Dreiser ever seen any of the fierce and bloody strikes in the clothing industry of New York? They have been raging for more than thirty years. Jewish bosses hire gangsters to slug and kill their Jewish workers. They even hire Irish and Italian gangsters, they can never get enough Irish policemen to break the skulls of their "brothers."

Neither were the American nationalists, Anglo-Saxon and proud of their pioneer stock, who own the coal mines in Kentucky any more backward in killing and starving their blood-brothers, the Kentucky miners. This you did see, Mr. Dreiser. It is capitalism. Would you say of the Kentucky miners that since they are also Anglo-Saxon like the mine-owners, "they have the same single objective of plenty of money?" But you say it of these Jewish workers all over the world, who are as much the victims of the capitalist Jews as you think yourself to be.

I must confess that whenever I hear anyone glibly repeating this old vulgar lie of anti-Semitism, "all the Jews are rich, all the Jews are money-minded," it makes me want to howl like a dog with rage and fight.

Shame on those who insult the poor! More shame to you, Mr. Dreiser, born in poverty, and knowing its bitter humiliations! Don't you know, can't you understand that the Jews are a race of PAUPERS? You ramble around with your George Jean Nathans and your slick Jewish lawyers and bankers, and think this is the Jewish race.

Ten years ago or more I took you around on a tour of the East Side. You were gathering material for your sensitive and compassionate play about Jews, *The Hand of the Potter*. What did you see on the East Side, Mr. Dreiser? Do you remember the block of tenements I pointed out to you, famous among social workers as having the highest rate of tuberculosis per square foot of any area in the world? Do you remember the ragged children without playgrounds who darted among the street cars and autos? Do you remember the dark, stinking hallways, the hot congested ant-life, the penny grocery stores?

This was only one Jewish ghetto. All over the world the mass of Jews live in such hell-holes of poverty, and have been living in them for centuries. The ghetto has been the historic home of the Jewish race, and the ghetto is not picturesque, I can assure you; it is bedbugs, hunger, filth, tears, sickness, POVERTY!

Yiddish literature and music are pervaded like the Negro spirituals with all the hopeless melancholy of ghetto poverty. This is our tradition. How do you account for the fact that so many young Jews may be found in the radical movements of all the lands? It is because they have known the horror of poverty, and have determined to revolt and die, if need be, rather than suffer such a fate. And the first spiritual operation a young Jew must perform on himself, if he is to become a fighter, is to weed out the ghetto melancholy, defeatism and despair that centuries of poverty have instilled in his blood.

The majority of Jews, like the mass of every other race, are workers and paupers. You do not believe in statistics, but as a "Communist" you should have learned this basic truth from Marx and Lenin, and it would have saved you from this cruel taunt.

As for the rich Jews, the exploiting Jews who are your friends, Jewish poverty has never disturbed them. Many of them live off it. Many of them, bankers and industrialists, are even complacent under anti-Semitism. As long as capitalism endures, they will endure. Many of them helped Hitler in Germany with funds and advice, and still are at ease in their Nazi capitalist Zion.

THERE is a residue of truth, however, in Theodore Dreiser's complaint, (it is Hitler's also) that too large a proportion of Jews are shopkeepers, professionals, and middlemen, "luftmenschen," as they are named in Yiddish, and compete with the Gentile parasites. There is a historic reason for this in the centuries of Europe when Jews could not own or farm land, or engage in any form of skilled labor, (this is coming again in Germany).

Historic reasons, however, do not heal a political danger. What is needed is a change. Even among the bourgeois Jewish nationalists the brand of the "luftmensch" has become hateful. The Zionists know they cannot attempt to build Palestine with lawyers and storekeepers. There is a great agitation among them for a Jewish peasantry and working-class; though in a capitalist Palestine, it would mean the same old exploitation.

In the Soviet Union the Jewish masses have in a single generation weeded out their middlemen into workers and farmers.

In the Soviet Union it is being done by the Jews themselves. The Soviet government does not put a quota on the Jews in the professions. It does not tell them only a certain percentage can go to the universities, or write books, or practise medicine or law.

There is no nationalist chauvinism in the Soviet Union, though there are many national cultures. Here is another Marxian-Leninist truth that Theodore Dreiser has never understood.

He says, "I am a Communist." And he also says, "I am for nationalism, as opposed to internationalism," and thinks, probably, he means the culture-nationalism practised in

the Soviet Union. This leads him to the reactionary argument that the Jews ought to have a nation of their own, and ought to be glad to leave America and Europe *en masse* to found this new nation.

The Zionists would agree with him, of course, just as the Ku Klux Klan at one time had a compact with Marcus Garvey, who wanted to lead all the American Negroes back to Africa. Both Zionist and African nationalists agree with their persecutors that two races cannot live side by side in a country. This fascist theory is completely anti-Communist, for in the Soviet Union over a hundred races now live peacefully and equally side by side.

Mr. Dreiser wants the Jew to become assimilated in America, or leave it and found a nation of his own. "The Jew insists that when he invades Italy or France or America or what you will, he becomes a native of that country. That is not true. He has been in Germany now for all of a thousand years, if not longer and he is still a Jew. He has been in America all of two hundred years, and he has not faded into a pure American by any means, and he will not."

This sudden preoccupation with "pure" Americanism is shocking, coming from Theodore Dreiser, son of German immigrants. It is the same spirit that one finds today behind the mass deportation of foreign-born workers. Half the working population of this country is foreign-born, or the children of foreign-born, and part of the technique of capitalist exploitation is to terrorize these workers with the threat of 100-percent Americanism.

Dreiser denies he is with the Nazis, and we believe him, but any theory of nationalism which forces cultural assimilation on its citizens is a big step toward fascism. Can't he see where such a theory leads him?

In the Soviet Union there is no such cultural imperialism. The Jews who have nationalist feelings have been given a great territory of land, large as France, for their own autonomous republic. Other Jews are scattered throughout the Soviet Union, in factories, and collective farms. Those who wish to carry on the old Jewish culture are helped to do so. Those who wish to be assimilated find no prejudices in the way. The choice is free; but Mr. Dreiser points his chauvinist gun at the head of this racial minority, the Jews, and says, "Either assimilate or get the hell out."

I am one of those who see only good in assimilation. I want to see the time come when all the races have intermingled, and there is an end to this disgusting and barbarous race-hatred. I want to see a single, strong, beautiful and united human race, and I am more than willing to surrender all that I know is good in the Jewish tradition in return for a greater good.

But does Mr. Dreiser think he can force assimilation on any people? All the imperialists have tried it with their racial minorities and it has ever been violently and success-

fully resisted. So long as the Jews are oppressed, they will be forced to cling to each other. Under freedom, they have always assimilated. One of the reasons many orthodox Jewish rabbis hate the Soviet Union is because, under the flag of Soviet freedom, the Jews are assimilated so rapidly there.

Theodore Dreiser, you will not assimilate the Jews to your "pure" Americanism by force. And you cannot persuade four million people to leave the country where so many of them were born; it is too impractical. There are some ten million other Jews in the world, and if each country followed your plan, where is there a virgin land that could take care of fourteen or fifteen millions?

They won't assimilate, they won't leave, and so what is the next step, Mr. Dreiser? Hitler has given one answer.

As for the working-class Jew, the radical Jew, he has already been assimilated to a better America than the one you offer him, Dreiser: the America of the future, the America without capitalism and race hatred, socialist America! In the working-class movement there is no race problem; that is a problem made by capitalism.

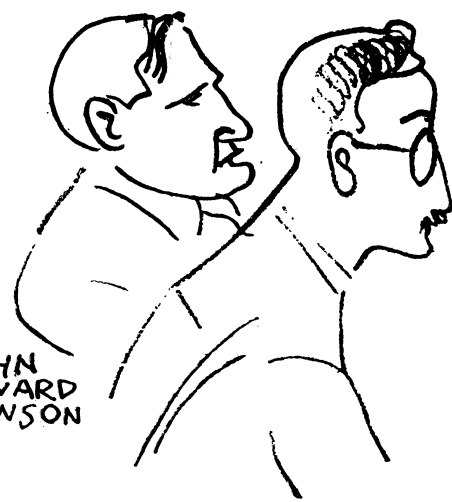
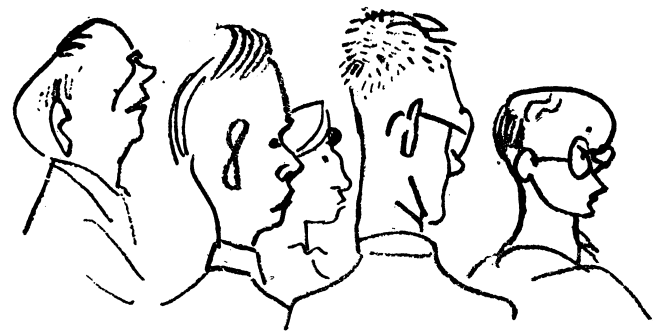
The child didn't know the gun was loaded. Some slick Jewish lawyers and publishers fleeced Theodore Dreiser; he brooded on the crime; stumbled on the remarkable idea that the Jew ought to be happy to leave Gentile America, and then he announced this idea.

Frederick Engels once called anti-Semitism the socialism of fools. Theodore Dreiser is not an anti-Semite, but he has invented a kind of socialism directed only against capitalist Jews which smells and sounds dangerously like anti-Semitism.

Here is where, in a time like ours, murder begins. It is a historic fact that every reactionary movement for the past century has begun with anti-Semitism. We are hearing it in America today in the speeches of Father Coughlin and other potential fascists. Capitalism, in danger, finds a scapegoat. It begins with a mock attack on Jewish capitalists, and then gets down to its real business, which is destroying the labor unions, crushing every vestige of liberal thought, burning books, culture and freedom in a grand medieval bonfire.

It is not the slick Jewish lawyers and bankers who have been put in danger by your carelessly spoken words, Mr. Dreiser. They can always take care of themselves. It is the Jewish workers who will suffer, and then the working-class of America, those Kentucky miners you met. We have seen all this before, in Czarist Russia, in Hungary, in Roumania, in Germany.

Theodore Dreiser has damaged his own great name and the cause of the oppressed by his carelessly spoken words. It is my belief he can now undo this damage only by years of devoted battle against anti-Semitism and fascism. The times are too dangerous for any lesser proof, or for childishness.



JOHN HOWARD LAWSON



JACK CONROY



MICHAEL BLANKFORT



EDWARD DAHLBERG



FORD MADDOX FORD



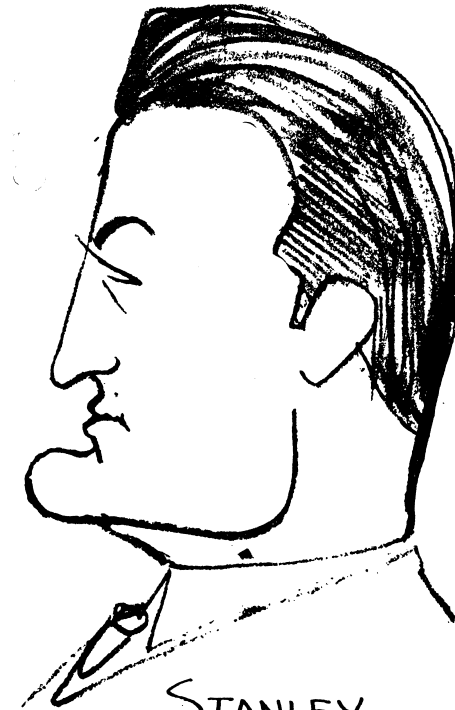
MALCOLM COWLEY



JAMES FARRELL



LOLA DE LA TORRIENTE



STANLEY BURNSHAW



JUAN DE LA CABADA



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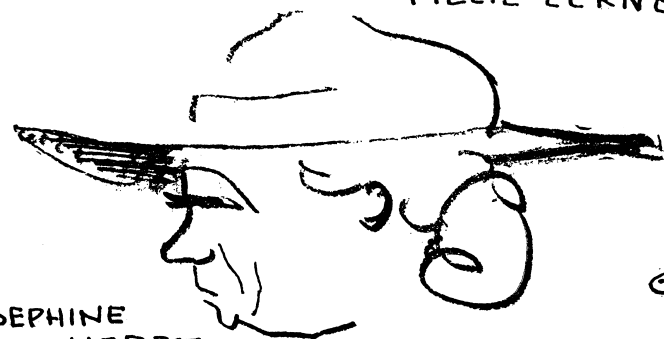
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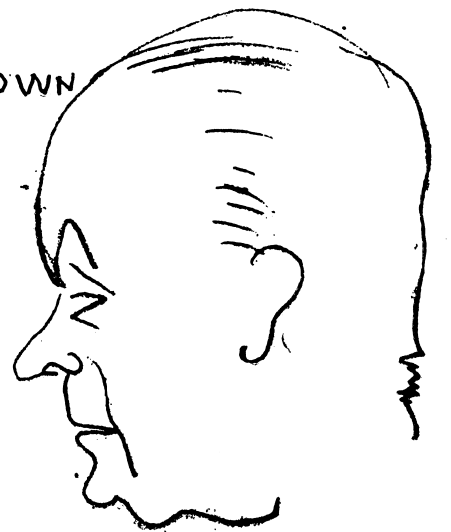
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BOB BROWN



THE AMERICAN WRITERS CONGRESS

Values of the Revolutionary Writer

WALDO FRANK

This address, read by Waldo Frank at the first session of the American Writers Congress just held in New York, is an abbreviated version of a long essay.

1. Definitions

MY PREMISE and the premise of the majority of writers here assembled is that Communism must come, and must be fought for. The world stands at the crossways. It goes forward into the socialist order, or human culture, not as we know it but as we aspire to create it, will perish. I do not say the way forward is certain. The life of man is at issue; and with man the alternatives are present, at all times, of life or of death. They are present now. But this is certain. To agonize within the present system, to refuse to get clear by the social revolution of the working classes, means the plunge of Western man into a darkness to which his productive and his intellectual forces, if they continue uncontrolled, must doom him: a darkness from which even the intimations of light that have made our present, will have vanished. This makes clear that the cause of the socialist society is not, finally, a political-economic problem: it is a cultural problem: it is *the* human problem.

I propose to show the specific value, in this crisis, of the literary work of art—not as a chorus of revolutionary politics, not as an echo to action: but as *an autonomous kind of action*. I propose to show that above all in America today, owing to our peculiar cultural conditions, the revolutionary writer must not be a “fellow-traveler”: that his art must be coordinate with, not subordinate to, the political-economic aspects of the re-creation of mankind.

This requires some definition of history and of literary art (for we are engaged in making history). Fortunately, I may point to the historic sense of mankind, implicit in Marx, as of a body which, like all organic life, evolves by reason of inward assimilations of an objective world from which it wins sustenance and on which it reacts—all according to a pattern which is the nature of the organism: a pattern which in man is capable of great variations chiefly through the process of what, vaguely, we call consciousness.

The part of consciousness, or if you prefer of *experience*, in historic evolution is important for us because it leads straight to

the social function of art. The work of art is a means (among other things) for extending, deepening, our experience of relationship with life as this organic whole. The feeling of intimate kinship with any part of the objective world is what we mean by beauty. As this relationship expands to an inclusive social form, it is what we mean by culture. The basic social function of art is *so to condition men that they will, as a social body, be the medium for the actions of growth and change required by their needs*. These social actions, to be healthy, must be performed within the true experience of *the whole of life involved*—and the conveying, the naturalizing, of this experience is the especial function of art.

I will make this plain. Suppose a man needs to hammer nails for his new house. He must hit the nails square on the head. But in order to do this, the man must be in good general condition. If his eyes are poor, if his brain is dizzy, all his technical skill of wrist-action won't save him from hammering nails badly. No man, it is obvious, is in shape for even an act so simple as hitting a nail on the head unless his body and mind are a fit *medium* for the job. No society of men or class of men is in shape for any needed action, save insofar as it has been conditioned to become the *effective medium* for that action.

In simple societies, the prime conditioning arts are lyrical: they are music, the song, the dance. By means of the experience absorbed and sustained through them, the folk becomes the effective medium for the kind of action its emotional and economic needs, and the needs of its rulers, call for. In our world where a chaos of forces is breaking down the life of man before our eyes, the chief conditioning art—although all arts have their place—must be one to synthesize our complex pasts and present, and to direct them. This is the art of words, by which man captures the worlds and selves that have borne him, and renders them alive with his own vision.

We know, now, roughly, the kind of social action to demand of our literary art. It is in general to condition men for the multitude of direct actions of which their life consists: it is, with us, the crucial task of conditioning our readers—who we hope will be the workers, the farmers, and their allies, to become the effective medium of revolution.

This subtle process of *conditioning* is not

to be confused with the work of direct *preparation* for daily struggle: work which falls primarily to the teachers, the theorists, the organizers of party and of union, who are largely conditioned by the accumulated work of writers. And it must be clear that this work of conditioning the social body, however invisible it seems, is the direct action of the writers. Words of course, are also instruments for “preparation”: reportage, pamphlets, slogans, manifestoes (this paper is a kind of manifesto) have their legitimate uses in political work. But only insofar as the need of the revolutionary *medium* is understood; and as the main function of literary art, *which is to create this medium*, prevails. The writer who forgets this, in order to bend his art to some seemingly more immediate task, weakens the organic health and progress of mankind by betraying his integral part in it. And in a world full of hunger, of hideous injustice, of threatening war, only a clarity rare, hard and heroic, will hold the literary artist to his own often thankless, often obscured, yet fundamental action.

2. The American Writer Under Capitalism

I apply at once these definitions to the special problems of the American revolutionary writer. To this end, we must first glance at the general state of readers and writers in our country.

We have never lacked literary talents. But the economic soil in which they rooted was washed away ere the roots could hold. We have had great writers. They have been influential abroad, where an organic cultural life possessing what we still lack—memory and consciousness—could employ them. Here, a Poe, a Whitman, a Thoreau, a Melville, could win only sentimental disciples because the discontinuity of ethnic and industrial conditions made their message obsolete more quickly than a generation could mature to hear them. We Americans are weak—infinately weaker than the peasants of China, America Hispana, or old Russia—in that intuitive connection with soil and self and human past, which makes of a folk an effective medium for creative action; and which makes the psychological transition to conscious Communism comparatively easy. In this, our common state of cultural malnutrition, the need of sound literary art cries aloud. But our writers have been attainted by the disease they must help to cure. A sense of impotence, derived from their unconnectedness with the

vital classes of the American world, has delivered them up to a succession of European fads and dogmas; and their reflections of foreign literary styles, like the shallow glints of a kaleidoscope, have added up to nothing. When they have turned to our world, our writers have been unable to resist the overpowering pulls of the capitalist system. They have been entertainers, purveyors of candy and cocktails. When at the turn of the War, they began to rebel in numbers, their revolt was hollow: an exhibitionistic beating of drums or a snarl and a sneer.

Now the deepest cause of their subjection as writers, and of their impotence, is the hidden ideology of the American system, which—liberal and conservative alike—most of our writers have absorbed. *And this is painfully to the point*, because—whether they know it or not—the same ideology prevails among our revolutionary writers. Far too many of us have taken over the philosophy of the American capitalist culture that we are sworn to overthrow.

3. *The American Revolutionary Writer*

This American ideology, which has ruled from the beginning—from the time of those prophets of bourgeois business: Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton, the true masters of our way of life—is a shallow, static rationalism derived from the thinnest, not the deepest, eighteenth-century minds of France and Britain: an empirical rationalism based on fact-worship, on a fetishism (both unscientific and unpoetic) of the finished cut-and-dried report of the five senses, which is not remotely related to the organic rationalism explicit in Spinoza and implicit in the historical dialectic of Marx. Had this vulgar rationalism ruled in seventeenth-century England and France, there would be no modern science. It is, since it ignores the organic and evolving nature of man, by definition the foe of all creative work: the foe, therefore, however hidden, of art and, in the Marxist sense, of revolution.

Briefly, I will disclose symptoms and attitudes in our revolutionary writers, which reveal (although the writers know it not) this sterile philosophy. . . .

1. Disbelief in the autonomy of the writer's art; in its integral place *as art* in the organic growth of man and specifically in the revolutionary movement. This self-distrust makes the writer capitulate *as artist*: leads him to take orders, *as artist*, from political leaders—much to the dismay of the more intelligent of said political leaders. It moves the American writer to misapply in his art borrowed foreign definitions of values which have cogence in their place and time of origin; but are meaningless here. This is a carry-over of the faddism of middle-class American writing.

2. From the same inorganic view of life and hence of art, comes the servile or passive concept of revolutionary literature as primarily "informational," "reflective," "propaganda." This is of course borrowed

from the mid-Victorian, middle-class idea of utilitarian or moralistic art. There is no reason why good literature should not be of high documentary importance, and have a strong political appeal. Indeed, in a dynamic age like ours, a profound literary art, insofar as it must reveal the deepest evolving forces of man at the time, must be "propaganda" for these forces and for the goal of these forces. But this kind of propaganda derives from the work's effectiveness as literary art and is dependent on it.

3. What murders the effectiveness of so much of our revolutionary writing? The clue is the word "murder." We all know that murder is a conspicuous American trait: there are more murders, we are told, in the United States in a day than in some European countries in a month. Now murder is a sort of short-cut: it is an over-simplified solution of a problem—say a nagging wife or husband—by simply getting rid of them. It eliminates the *life* of which the problem is a factor. What murder is to the art of life, this dead philosophy is to knowledge; and translated into literary terms it becomes "over-simplification." Call it, if you prefer, a kind of misplaced or *forced* direct-action. Here are some of its results:

a. Novels aiming to reveal the revolutionary portent and substance of our world which are stuffed with stereotypes . . . or imitate the spiced journalese of newspaper reports of surface events . . . or echo the bravado (hiding weakness) of the Hemingway-Dashiell Hammett school . . . or borrow the drab pedestrian effects of Victorian realism—as if these were adequate to convey the body—tragic, farcical, explosive, corybantic, tender, deep as hell and high as heaven, of American life!

b. Proletarian tales and poems which portray the workers as half-dead people devoid of the imagination, soaring wills and laughter, which are the springs of creation—and of revolution.

c. Laborious essays in criticism and literary history in which the organic bodies of the works of poets and prosemen are mangled and flattened to become mere wall-papery for the structure of a political argument.

4. In these refusals, often by men of genuine literary gift, to find the material for a deep revolutionary art, lies the one ideological taint. Its final evil is to turn Marxism itself into a dogmatically, mechanically *shut* philosophy. And the effect of this, were it to prevail on our eager, unschooled and sensitive youth (workers as well as writers) would be to repel them: indeed, to drive many of them (and not the worst because the worst-bewildered) to seek a home in reactionary schools of thought which do lip-service to old forms of man's organic intuitions.

If the youth of America are drawn by the decayed loyalties of nationalism and church into the ranks of fascism, it will be *in part* because our revolutionary writers have been thwarted, by this dead rationalism implicit

in the dying capitalist culture, from making clear that life today—in the depths that call for sacrifice, loyalty and love—is on the side of revolution.

* * *

The American revolutionary writer . . . to act 'his part, which is to create the cultural medium for revolution . . . must see life whole. He will have a political creed; if he is a generous man, it will be hard for him to forego some share of the daily political-industrial struggle. But his political orientation must be within, must arise from, his orientation to life as an artist. Any course of action, any creed, lives within the dynamic substance of life itself: *and this substance, in all its attributes, is the business of the artist*. Therefore it is proper to state that the artist's vision of life IS the material of his art.

There is much confusion among us as to "material" and "subject." The subject of a book is a mere label or container; it may mislead or be empty. Our poet or prose-man, by his loyalty to the working class (whether born in it or not) and by natural selection of strong, expressive subjects, will write more and more of the struggles of farmer and worker. But if his vision be sound, it will make—*whatever his subject*—the material for revolutionary art. The term "proletarian" applied to art should refer to the key and vision in which the work is conceived, rather than to subject. It should be a qualitative, not quantitative, term. A story of middle-class or intellectual life, or even of mythological figures, if it is alight with revolutionary vision, is more effective proletarian art—and more effective art for proletarians—than a shelf-full of dull novels about stereotyped workers.

I wish to characterize two of our specific problems.

We writers have two highways for reaching mastery of our material. We must go into life . . . in person and in self. These two ways are really one; and the writer must go them together, else he will make headway in neither. If we look upon persons or classes, save with the eye of self-knowledge, we will not see them; and if we look inward upon self, save with an eye disciplined by objective understanding, we will see only the mists of egoism which are the true self's denial. Even more complex is this double way we must take, and never cease from taking. If we look upon persons of one class, we will not know them unless we see the class opposing. If we look upon the present of any scene, we will not know it unless we see within it the past . . . and its dynamic direction: its future. *This is the dialectic of the artist*.

Because classes are in mortal conflict, *and because we have taken sides*, does not mean they have nothing in common: it means they have life in common. The class struggle, for us, is a focus of light, a modern form, by which timeless ingredients of human nature common to every person are revealed. It is not a substitute for understanding, but

a kind of *spectrum* wherein hunger, passion, love, pity, envy, worship, dream, fear, despair and ecstasy, receive a dynamic modern order.

The other branch of our simultaneous highway is the self. Self is the integer of value and of social action, the norm and form of life as man may know it. The revolutionary writer must understand the *person*, or his portraits of social struggle will be flat and ephemeral as the poster on a billboard. As early as Shakespeare, Cervantes and Racine, the artists were creating the image of the "lonely Soul," the "atomic will"—an image which served to make the *medium* in which the Protestant-bourgeois, individualist economy could flourish. We must have poets to sing the image of the new and truer person: the person who knows his integration with group and cosmos; the person through whom the whole speaks—conscious cell of the conscious Communist order.

Only by bringing home the timeless values in the class struggle, to every member of the exploited classes and to the sensitive of all classes (for under capitalism all decent men and women are oppressed) can the writer

stimulate the will to revolutionary action. Only by deepening his comprehension of cultural historic forms, such as religion, in which, however faultily and impurely man's profoundest intuitions of his organic nature were embodied (as the mature man's creative will is embodied in the dream and play of the child) can the writer touch the *spirit* of the American worker and farmer and middle class, to release their spirit from obsolete forms into new creative channels. And only thus can we save them from the decayed devotions which are the treacherous bait of the fascists.

Thus, for the American revolutionary writer to give less than the whole picture is poor philosophy, poor art—and poor strategy.

We are aware there is war; we have declared this war to be ours; and we know that in war strategy is important. But this is a war whose battleground is the world—the world of extension and, no less, the world of inward depth. In this battle are countless separate struggles. Many, engaged on their particular fronts, are forced by the crisis of their position to ignore its relativity in the whole; or to misprize and forget val-

ues which do not appear to apply to their one urgent need. Therefore we writers must know the breadth and depth of the whole struggle: know its background and its foreground: know its ultimate values within its immediate aims: in order that, by the common experience of our work, the balance and unity be kept; that in the fever of struggle no human heritage of truth and freedom languish; and that the great war for Man move, without error or blindness, to its issue.

Our special work is the universal. In our field, there can be no strategy but the whole truth.

If a writer doubts this, I doubt he is an artist; and I doubt he is a Marxist. If we believe that Communism is the organic next step of the world to be released by freeing the world's forces of health, we must believe in the art revealing man's depths which bear this destiny. We will embody in our work the substance of life: the blood, the bone, the eye, the conscious embrace of necessity whose child is freedom—knowing that insofar as we create this truth, we are moving, and moving those who hear us, toward the Revolution.

What the Revolutionary Movement Can Do for a Writer

MALCOLM COWLEY

(The following paper and Joseph Freeman's were among those read at the American Writers' Congress.)

IT IS important first of all to define what the revolutionary movement cannot do for a writer, so that nobody will hope for miracles that will not be performed. It cannot give him personal salvation. It is not a church that calls upon him to have faith, to surrender his doubts, to lay down his burden of anxieties, and from henceforth to follow a sure path mapped out for him by sanctified leaders. This is an age when Messiahs are being invoked not only by unemployed preachers and engineers and by shopkeepers who have lost their shops, but also by bewildered novelists and by poets no longer able to write poetry. Marx and Lenin were not Messiahs; they were scientists of action. Their aim was not to convert but to convince.

Again, the revolutionary movement cannot transform writers, men used to walking by themselves and puzzling over personal difficulties, into political leaders of the working class. The working class will furnish its own leaders. And yet again, the revolutionary movement cannot change third-rate bourgeois novelists into great proletarian novelists. It may not be able to transform bour-

geois novelists into any sort of proletarian novelists at all.

At this point I am not using the term "proletarian novel" in the very wide sense that Edwin Seaver tried to give it yesterday. I am defining it in a much narrower sense as a novel written from the revolutionary point of view about working-class characters. There is a great need for such novels today, but there is also a considerable doubt as to whether many of them will be written by men who began their career as middle-class novelists. Of course, such men might succeed after a period of years, by living among workers and actively taking part in their struggles and learning to see the world from their point of view. They might also succeed by going around with a notebook, like Emile Zola, and approaching their material from the outside. But Zola's type of objectivity is not wholly satisfying to most contemporary novelists, who demand more "inwardness," a deeper knowledge of the characters one is describing. That sort of "inwardness" cannot be acquired in a few months or a few years, since it depends on a long, slow process of acquiring sympathies and associations.

Of course there are examples of great fiction written about the members of one class by a man or woman who belonged to another class. Elizabeth Madox Roberts' fine

novel, *The Time of Man*, belongs to this category; it is a book about a tenant farmer's wife written by a woman of the land-owning class. Tolstoy, the nobleman, finally succeeded in identifying himself completely with the Russian peasants. But Joshua Kunitz tells me that Tolstoy once tried to write a novel about a Jew and abandoned the project. His plan was good, his ideas were sympathetic, but he found that he could not feel his way inside the character. It seems to me that some recent books about the proletariat or the lumpenproletariat would never have been written if their authors had been as thoroughly conscientious as Tolstoy. Two examples are a novel by Catherine Brody, *Nobody Starves*, which had hidden in it a vague sort of condescension and which made the lives of workers seem duller, more hopeless and apathetic than they are in reality; and Sherwood Anderson's so-called Communist novel of three years ago, *Beyond Desire*, which sentimentalized and priapified them, made them smell of sex.

Good novels about the working class are needed at present more than any other type of literature. But this does not mean that those who can write good middle-class revolutionary novels should feel it a duty to write bad working-class novels. They can serve in other ways.

I have devoted perhaps too much of my brief time to these negative aspects of the revolutionary movement. But it is important to arouse no hopes that cannot be fulfilled. The writers who join the revolutionary movement in the expectation of being saved or being endowed with leadership or being reborn to genius are likely to leave it suddenly—as Sherwood Anderson did after the failure of his novel. Others, who come with more reasonable hopes, are likely to remain. For the fact is that the revolutionary movement can and will do more for writers than writers can do for the revolutionary movement. The fact is that it can offer them practical inducements—not financial inducements, certainly, for it will never make them rich; but still inducements that are worth a great deal more to them than money.

In the first place it offers them an audience—the most eager and alive and responsive audience that now exists. We saw part of this audience the other night in Mecca Temple, when for one evening our discussions were carried out of the atmosphere of the study and the back-bar-room into a bigger world. We heard about this audience from the delegates speaking for the Marine Workers and the American League Against War and Fascism. We might hear still more about it from Alexander Trachtenberg, who can tell us how pamphlets issued by International Publishers Company are printed in editions of fifty and a hundred thousand and exhausted almost on the day of publication. But the most impressive testimonial to the quality of the revolutionary audience was given a few weeks ago by Archibald MacLeish.

Now MacLeish is scarcely a revolutionary writer. Mike Gold once described him as having “the fascist unconscious.” I believed at the time that the charge was at least premature, but later it seemed to be justified by other poems and articles that MacLeish was writing. All of us were amazed to hear that he had arranged for a special performance of his play *Panic*, to be given for the benefit of The New Theatre and THE NEW MASSES. After the performance, he partly explained his motives by thanking the audience for its attention, for its applause, for its criticism, for its general lively interest. The whole point was that this poet who had won the Pulitzer Prize, this editor and writer for *Fortune*, had to turn to a revolutionary audience to get that sort of response without which any writer has the feeling of living in a vacuum and writing with invisible ink.

In the second place, the revolutionary movement gives writers a whole new range of subject matter. It seems to me that during the half-century ending in 1930, there was an increasing tendency for serious novelists and dramatists to occupy themselves with a single theme: the conflict between the individual and society, between the Artist and the World. This theme has been treated in hundreds, in thousands of bad novels and in a few good novels that almost all of us have

read. James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is perhaps the best of them all—but there are also *The Way of All Flesh*, *New Grub Street*, *Of Human Bondage*, *The Hill of Dreams*, *Manhattan Transfer*, *Look Homeward Angel*, *Of Time and the River*.

A few characteristics are shared in common by all the novels of this type. One is that the hero usually is presented as a great figure typical of all mankind—“a legend of man's hunger in his youth”—whereas in reality he is typical of nothing except the over-educated and under-adjusted young man of the lower middle classes, who finds that the dream-world of books is to be preferred to the drab world he actually encounters. Another characteristic is that although these novels portray a conflict between the individual and society, all the emphasis, all the loving sympathy, is placed on the individual. Society, the outer world, becomes progressively dimmer and more puzzling in the artist's eyes. There is an attempt to escape from it into an inner world, into the subconscious, until finally these artist-and-the-world novels are transformed into interior monologues.

Now, the interior monologue was at first saluted and celebrated as a great new device for enriching the texture of fiction. In reality, it had the opposite effect. After several years we began to see that the inner world it was supposed to illuminate was really not very interesting, not very fresh. The inner world of one middle-class novelist was very much like the inner world of another middle-class novelist. And the liberating effect of the revolutionary movement has been to carry the interest of novelists outside themselves, into the violent contrasts and struggles of the real world.

In the third place, the revolutionary movement gives the artist a perspective on himself—an idea that his own experiences are not something accidental and unique, but are part of a vast pattern. The revolutionary movement teaches him that art is not an individual but a social product—that it arises from experiences in society, and that, if these experiences cease and if the artist no longer participates in the life about him, the whole source of his inspiration runs dry, evaporates like a shallow pool after the rain.

In the fourth place, the revolutionary movement allies the interests of writers with those of a class that is rising, instead of with the interests of a confused and futile and decaying class. It gives them a new source of strength.

I have said that the revolutionary movement can perform no miracles, and yet with writers, especially with poets, it does sometimes produce effects that appear miraculous. Take William Wordsworth, for example. During three or four years of his long career, he wrote great poems; during the rest of it he settled down to be the most skillful, high-minded and accomplished bore in English literature. Critics and college students

have always been puzzled by this phenomenon. It is only during the past few years that some light has been thrown on it—that we have learned how he visited France at the height of the French Revolution, how he was filled with revolutionary enthusiasm, how he learned to think in universal terms—and then how he became disillusioned, turned his eyes inward, accepted the eternal rightness and triteness of British society, and spent his last fifty years bumbling in a garden.

We might well be skeptical about the source of Wordsworth's strength, if it were not that we could find the same pattern in the lives of other poets. William Blake called himself a Jacobin, he paraded the streets of London in a liberty cap, he wrote great poems—then he too became disillusioned, he decided that the first revolution must be “in the soul of man,” and he wrote those Prophetic Books that nobody reads today precisely because they are not worth reading. Even Baudelaire had an experience something like this. In 1848, the revolutionary year in France, he fought for the revolutionists. He fought for them both in February, when the middle classes and the working classes rose together, and again in June, when only the workers manned the barricades. He wrote at least one proletarian poem correct enough in its ideology to be printed in *Pravda* or *Humanité* if it had been written in 1935. He wrote many other poems at this period and immediately afterwards; it was the most productive time of his life. But the working class was defeated and Baudelaire lost his interest and his energy.

Heinrich Heine, Algernon Swinburne—the pattern could be traced through many other lives, and this is a task that I specially recommend to revolutionary critics. But the most striking example of all is Arthur Rimbaud. During four years of his life, from the age of fifteen till the age of nineteen, he wrote poems that are certainly among the masterpieces of French literature; then, for the rest of his life, he wrote nothing whatever. This miracle—this genuine miracle—has always dazzled critics. So far as I know, not one of them has pointed out the obvious connection with the struggles of the French working classes. Rimbaud began to write during the Franco-Prussian War, when Napoleon III was overthrown. At the age of fifteen, he was drawing up the constitution for an ideal Communist state. During the Paris Commune, he was in the country, at a distance from the fighting, but he was doing his best to help—he was winning over soldiers in country inns and he was trying to make his way into Paris through the lines of the besiegers. The fierce energy he displayed during the next few years was not his energy alone; it was that of the revolutionary French working classes. But the Commune was overthrown and the reservoir of energy was not refilled. Rimbaud turned away from literature altogether and devoted himself to adventure, exploration, the smug-

gling of rifles into Abyssinia. His life became a parable of what happens under fascism.

Perhaps I am spending too much time on these examples chosen from the literatures of other countries. But I want to make it clear that our discussions here in this room, tedious as they may sometimes seem, have a direct relation with what has happened and what is about to happen in the great world of human affairs. And that sense of relationship is, I believe, the final and the principal gift that the revolutionary movement can make to writers. It gives them the sense of human life, not as a medley of accidents, but as a connected and continuing process. It ties things together, allowing novelists to see the connection between things that are happening today in our own neighborhoods, at the gates of factories, in backyards and street-corners, with the German counter-revolution, with the fight for collectivization in Russia, with the civil war now being waged in the interior of China; and it connects all these events with the struggles of the past. It gives the values, the unified interpretation, without which one can write neither good history nor good tragedy.

During the past year as a reader and literary critic, I have had several opportunities to compare books written from a revolutionary point of view with books written from a liberal point of view, when both authors were treating the same subject. In almost every case, the revolutionary books were better, not merely as politics but as literature.

To give one example, both Pearl S. Buck and André Malraux have written novels

about life in Shanghai at the time when the proletarian leaders were being executed. The novels by both writers contain an episode in which the hero is imprisoned and waiting for death. In Pearl Buck's novel, he doesn't really know why he was arrested; the whole thing seems a regrettable and not very exciting accident. In Malraux's novel, the hero knows exactly why he is to be killed; he has deliberately faced death in order to help the revolution. And this keener consciousness, this voluntary purpose, this sense of unity with his comrades, are qualities that transform the story from accident into tragedy.

Again, both Konrad Heiden, a liberal journalist, and Ernst Henri, a Communist journalist, wrote books about the National Socialist Party in Germany. Of the two men, Heiden, the liberal, is better informed and has a better style. Yet the chief impression left by his "History of National Socialism" is one of confusion and bewilderment. Heiden himself revised the manuscript for English publication, and found that after two years he had to change many of his estimates and his prophecies. And the curious thing is that his 1934 changes make the first part of his book less interesting and less permanent than it was in 1932. As for Ernst Henri, the author of *Hitler Over Europe*, he is only a middling good Marxist—and yet good enough to chart the course of events, good enough to write a book that does not need serious revision even now, since it casts light on the future of National Socialism as well as its past.

Yet again, there are two men who have written factual accounts of the tortures they

underwent in Nazi concentration camps. One of them, Dr. Seger, was a middle-class Socialist member of the Reichstag; in this country he would probably be a Roosevelt Democrat. The other, Karl Billinger, was an underground Communist organizer. In Seger's book, we have the impression of reading merely a personal horror story. In Billinger's book, there is even more horror, yet the emphasis is elsewhere, being laid on the heroism and solidarity of the German workers. Seger's book is a document; Billinger's belongs to literature.

I don't mean to suggest that any of us can write a book as good as Billinger's *Fatherland* merely by proclaiming our undying allegiance to the proletariat. There is an ostentatious, just-look-at-me sort of revolutionary spirit that it would be well for us to avoid. For my own part, I am not a proletarian writer and I doubt that I shall ever become a proletarian writer. My background and my family and my education were all strictly middle class. I might be described as a highly class-conscious petty-bourgeois critic. But I believe that the interests of my own class lie in a close alliance with the proletariat, and I believe that writers especially can profit by this alliance. Their souls won't be saved and they won't be magically supplied with talent if they have none already. But they will, if they approach the revolutionary movement without pride or illusion or servility, receive certain practical benefits. Literature and revolution are united not only by their common aim of liberating the human spirit, but also by immediate bonds of interest.

The Tradition of American Revolutionary Literature

JOSEPH FREEMAN

THE bourgeois revolution at the end of the eighteenth century transformed the life of the western world under the abstract slogan of liberty, equality, fraternity. These social goods became the monopoly of the bourgeoisie along with the factories, the machines, the banks, and the state. Literature reflected this profound change in society. The Christian myth was replaced by the myth of sacred ego as the central theme of nineteenth century bourgeois literature. We now know what the sacred ego really was. The freedom of the individual—from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Declaration of Independence down to recent plaints that Europe has really been a success and the promise of American life still a promise—has meant in reality the freedom of the propertied classes to exploit those who

have nothing to sell but their labor. This freedom for the privileged has been achieved through the enslavement of the millions. In ignoring those millions, in confining itself to the upper and middle-class individual, bourgeois literature has been a class literature.

At first it was frankly that. The class concept of literature antedates the organized movement of the proletariat. The ideologues of the bourgeois revolution demanded a new art and did not hesitate to name it by its right name. Diderot and Lessing called frankly for the *bourgeois drama*. Madame de Staël defended bourgeois against feudal literature, urged a complete break with the ideas of the old order, and called for a literature animated by specifically bourgeois values. Prosper de Barante argued that there was a necessary connection between literature

and society, and concluded that society *conditions* literature. We know to what an extent American literature of the nineteenth century voiced the national-democratic aspirations of the then progressive bourgeoisie of our own country.

This has been called the great tradition. But there are really two great traditions in the modern literature of the west. Disappointment in the results of the French revolution ushered in the romantic movement of the last century. From the cult of the ego the romantics developed the myth of the primacy of art which led, until very recently, to the Ivory Tower. When art failed to satisfy the unbounded longings of the poet, overstimulated by the sublime phrases which concealed the bourgeois pursuit of profit, the poet fell back for solace into the arms of

the church. But by this time, the church and the bourgeoisie, foes for centuries, had struck up an alliance against the proletariat, which took over rational materialistic thought where the bourgeoisie had left it. With a background of classical German philosophy, English political economy, French socialism and revolutionary doctrine, Marx and Engels developed dialectic materialism, the ideology of the working-class, which became the revolutionary class of modern society. The new doctrine revealed more clearly than anything before it not merely the *social* but the *class* basis of ideas. The thinkers of the proletariat were able to perceive this profound truth because the proletariat is the first social class in history which fights for the abolition not only of class privileges, but of social classes altogether.

For the past century we have had a conscious, organized, purposeful struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This has meant two conflicting traditions in economic life, in philosophy, in literature, in art—bourgeois and proletarian. In the forties the great German poet Ferdinand Freiligrath spoke of himself as a *poet of the revolution and the proletariat*. Subsequently Communist critics like Franz Mehring analysed literary classics from the proletarian viewpoint. In Russia a great school of critics developed—including men like Pisarev, Byelinsky and Tchernishevsky—who were not only able aestheticians, but leaders of thought, teachers of the people, revolutionaries who linked poetry with politics. From Marx and Engels to our own day, the organized movement of the working class has been vitally interested in art and literature, past and present; it has always been interested also in developing that art and literature which reflects the struggles and aspirations of the proletariat. Wherever the socialist movement developed, there grew up around it groups of socialist writers and artists. Where the class struggle was latent, the socialist movement was weak; where the movement was weak, the art it inspired was weak. Where the class struggle was sharp, the movement was strong; where the movement was strong, the art it inspired was rich and vital.

America has been no exception to this general law of development. For example: in 1901, when the American socialist movement began to grow, a group of New York socialists founded *The Comrade*, whose contributors included Edward Carpenter, Walter Crane, Richard Le Gallienne, Maxim Gorky, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Edwin Markham, and Ryan Walker. This publication—precursor of *The Masses*—announced that its aim was to give its readers "*such literary and artistic productions as reflect the soundness of the socialist philosophy. . . . To mirror socialist thought as it finds expression in art and literature . . . and to develop the aesthetic impulse in the socialist movement.*"

You will be convinced that this was no "Stalinist" plot to put American artists in uniform, when I remind you that this was

in 1901—and that the editors of the magazine included John Spargo and Algernon Lee—at that time more or less Marxians.

The magazine, which ran for four years, employed the phrase *proletarian poet* to describe working-class writers of verse. No one considered the phrase odd. It was a logical corollary to the working-class outlook on life, the obvious poetic byproduct of proletarian politics. For all its utopian, sentimental fantasies, brought into the socialist movement of that period by middle-class intellectuals who were still bound to the class of their origin, *The Comrade* represented a literary movement in America out of which grew Upton Sinclair and Jack London. It brought more or less socialist standards to literary criticism. In its pages Edwin Markham predicted "a great revival of literature" in America and throughout the world, which, he said, would grow out of the movement to emancipate labor.

In America, as in Europe, every decade saw intellectuals join the socialist movement only to drop out later; yet each decade brought new contingents from the educated classes. Each contingent of writers started afresh. No continuity was maintained in socialist literary circles. The *Masses* group started directly from the socialist movement, yet, at the same time, burdened with the middle-class notions which had their roots in the romantic tradition. As persons, the writers and artists of the magazine were socialists or syndicalists or anarchists. The publication as such was a private venture, unaffiliated with any party, formally owing allegiance to no cause. As individual writers and artists, the *Masses* group championed two causes: socialism and a free art. Sometimes these two ideas were fused; at other times they clashed. When Floyd Dell in 1913 urged Dreiser to write the American novel of rebellion, he was employing the socialist standards of *The Comrade*; when he wondered at the *Masses* trial in 1918 what he was doing in court when he should be at home writing fiction, he was reverting to the romantic tradition of the free, unfettered artist above the battle. At odds with bourgeois America, the *Masses-Liberator* writers fought now as journalistic allies of the proletariat, now through the tour-de-force of creative art, which ranged, in letters, from the most saccharine sonnets to stirring revolutionary poetry. The best writing of this period was done by men actively engaged in socialist or I.W.W. organizations—men like Joe Hill, Ralph Chaplin, Arturo Giovannitti, Jack London, the early Upton Sinclair, and John Reed.

The October Revolution in Russia was a turning-point for the proletariat the world over, consequently for its literature. By 1919 Floyd Dell was talking of the proletarian novel in America, and applauding Soviet plans for the development of what was then called "proletariat socialist art." What appealed to our American critic was not only the successful attempt to make literature old

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and new available to the millions, but the equally important attempt to stir the worker himself to create art. Dell at that time grasped the active element in proletarian art. The new stories, he said, should, above all, teach the worker courage and confidence in his destiny, teach him with their satire to scorn the ideals of capitalist society, deepen his sense of community with his fellow-workers in their world-wide struggle for freedom, and make him face the future with a clear and unshakable resolution, an indomitable will to victory and freedom. Later he urged that the literature of America was above everything else a literature of protest and rebellion. It is only a question of time, he said, which shall rule the world—which will be required by force of circumstances to suppress its enemies by force—the capitalist class or the working class; and for a brief period he demanded that writers take sides in this conflict not only as men but as writers.

For Floyd Dell proletarian literature was one kind of literature; for Michael Gold it was the only kind of literature worth creating. In an essay published in 1921 he called definitely for a proletarian art. The old ideals must die, he said. But let us not fear. Let us fling all we are into the cauldron of the Revolution; for out of our death shall arise new glories. His faith in proletarian culture came from his faith in the proletarian revolution. He was the American exponent of that literary tradition which the organized working class had initiated in every country—and which had already given our own country Hill, Chaplin, London, Sinclair, Giovanitti, Dell and Reed. But Gold was more alert about the issues and problems involved: he was molded by the World War and the Bolshevik Revolution.

Everywhere the best writers felt the im-

pact of these two events. The old order was visibly changing and a number of intellectuals in various countries wanted to orient themselves in the chaos. In 1919 Romain Rolland organized a group of writers around a "declaration of intellectual independence," signed, among others, by Jane Addams, Benedetto Croce, Stefan Zweig, Henri Barbusse, Bertrand Russell and Israel Zangwill. Thought was to be emancipated from serving the selfish interests of state, nation or class. The Masses-Liberator group refused to join because the document was not an open declaration for the proletariat. As was to be expected, Rolland's international of thought collapsed. The left intellectuals learned their lesson. In 1919 Barbusse organized Clarté under Communist influence. The new group was outspoken in its support of the revolutionary working class. Its first pamphlet was an appeal to the proletariat of all countries to affiliate with the Third International; it called for a radical destruction of the capitalist system. At the same time it founded a publishing house and a magazine which printed revolutionary fiction, poetry, criticism and journalism. The Liberator was invited to join Clarté as its American branch. Max Eastman, then editor, declined. He argued that the Communist Party must be the *only* revolutionary organization guiding the revolutionary artist. Subsequently he changed his mind a little about this. But those of us who entered the revolutionary movement in the twenties came into a literary heritage based on these ideas:

1. Every social class has its own ideology and its own literature. The proletariat has its own ideology and its own literature.

2. The revolutionary writer not only creates novels, plays and poems which voice the aspirations and struggles of the workers,

but himself participates actively in those struggles—directly—in the organizations of the workers.

3. Capitalism retards the development of culture today. The proletariat is heir to the best of the old culture, and the initiator of the new. For the purpose of combatting capitalism and aiding the proletariat, for the purpose of developing the new culture, intellectuals organize in their own organizations.

4. It is not necessary for a writer to subscribe completely to the political program of the proletarian party in order to aid the workers; it is unnecessary for him to abandon poetry for organizational activity. If he is against capitalism and for the proletariat on fundamental questions, he can participate in a literary organization like Clarté and function in his own specific craft as an ally of the workers.

These ideas were prevalent in left-wing literary circles in this country in the early twenties. During the boom period, many intellectuals who had allied themselves with the workers under the impact of the war and the October Revolution, were absorbed into the then prosperous middle classes. A small group of left-wing writers, influenced by the Communist movement as their predecessors had been influenced by the socialist and syndicalist movements, agitated for a revolutionary art and literature in America. Conditions imposed upon them a task which was primarily propagandistic, educational, organizational. They wrote, lectured and organized with a view to circulating basic Marxian ideas in literature. They founded THE NEW MASSES, the Theatre Union, the New Theatre, Partisan Review, the John Reed Clubs, the Film and Foto League; they taught literature in the Workers School and wrote about it in The Daily Worker, partly to acquaint the workers with contemporary literature, partly to acquaint writers with the viewpoint of the workers and its significance for culture in general and literature in particular. They developed young poets, critics, journalists and novelists who subsequently did creative work of distinction. They published and encouraged revolutionary writers not only in New York, but also in the Middle West, the Coast, the South, among them talented Negro writers like Langston Hughes and Eugene Gordon. In doing so, they were not—as their enemies said—importing a Russian idea imposed upon them by the Kremlin. They were developing in their own country an international idea as old as the proletarian party—an idea that had its own specific American traditions.

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They worked for a decade close to the labor movement, to its mass organizations, to the Communist Party—but they were more or less isolated—for various historical reasons from the majority of American writers. The economic crisis, the spread of fascism, the menace of a new war—the agony and travail of capitalist culture in decay—the barbarization of culture in the capitalist countries—and the colossal triumph of the Soviet workers not only in industry and agriculture—but in science, art, literature, and the cinema opened the eyes of the best of America's writers to the meaning of the class-struggle. In the choice which we must all make in this epoch they have chosen to side with the working-class. Actually, there is no choice. In its final stages of decomposition, capitalism means the doom of everything fine in human thought. The working-class alone, in emancipating itself, can emancipate the whole of mankind, and with it release undreamed-of forces for the conquest of knowledge, the creation of art.

You who represent all that is most promising in American literature have taken over the heritage of progressive and revolutionary thought. You have enriched it with your craftsmanship as it has enriched you with its insight. For the first time in the history of our country, the literary allies of the proletariat may be counted not by the dozen but by the hundreds. Moreover, you are the American contingent of that army of writers all over the world which is militantly fighting for the preservation of culture through the triumph of the working class. In that class lies our strength. A brief, inadequate note on the past has no value except as it teaches us something about the present. We ought to know that we have a revolutionary literary heritage behind us in order that we may transcend it. We also ought to know that we are at our best as writers when we are an integral part of the working-class movement, when our writing emerges out of active identification with it. I have mentioned the names of some who, physically alive, have been dead as creative writers since they broke with the proletariat. Consider what a poet like Arturo Giovannitti, silent today, could write about the October Revolution when he was an active proletarian fighter in 1920—

Victory, lightning-faced, flame-winged has come,
Just on the day it was told us by your prophets
and seers,

The harbingers of your great day, the builders,
of your highway,

The blazers of your world-trails.

Your teachers enlighten the people without any
rest or stint,

And they give them one good rifle with every
good book they print;

And the workers now own everything, even their
right to be born;

And the peasants have taken in the full flax and
the wheat and the corn;

And in Moscow it is high noon, and in Europe it
is the morn

And the Soviets are everywhere.

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Correspondence

More Fiction Wanted

TO THE NEW MASSES:

A word further in the discussion on subject matter in *The New Masses*: There would appear, both from your correspondence columns and from many friends with whom I've discussed the question, that at least a little more fiction would be desirable.

It has been my experience that politically uneducated acquaintances to whom I have given the magazine have in almost all cases reacted most favorably to fiction contributions (a recent exception is "Women and Communism," the worth of which I do not need to discuss here). Because the purpose of this magazine is in large part to reach and propagandize the middle class, the matter of material most effective among readers of that class is of prime importance.

Flushing, N. Y.

J. A.

More Science Wanted

TO THE NEW MASSES:

You asked, in your last number, for an expression of opinion as to whether cultural and scientific articles should be given more space, and purely political and economic articles and stories less. Your book and theatrical reviews seem to me, even at present, of outstanding excellence, very nearly in a class by themselves. The few remarks you have made on scientific subjects have often seemed to me interesting and to the point. Whether or not there should be more of these would depend, in my opinion, entirely on how well qualified you are to cover the field. Certainly it is important. Someone, for example, should show the extent to which psychiatric theory and practice are being used as "means of subjection" by the powers that be. And the abuse of eugenics by governmental groups, the flimsy and outworn basis of "facts" on which this "science" now rests, are subjects crying for radical treatment. But it would have to be well done, and by thoroughly well-informed writers. Heaven knows, you could scarcely handle scientific subjects worse than is often done by specialists, yet it seems to me that you would run the risk of injuring your influence in the economic field if you attempted to extend your scope to scientific subjects, and gave them anything short of first-rate treatment.

Manhasset, L. I.

ELIZABETH LANCASTER.

"Dialectics" for Our Children

TO THE NEW MASSES:

M. W. M., speaking for the millions of class-conscious parents, wants to know how she can "Resolve the conflicts of the child with his environment." Succinctly, she is seeking a synthesis that will house all the contradictions of capitalist society as they exist, and as they are reflected in the minds of children in order to eliminate mental conflicts from the psychological development of the child and allow normal and uninterrupted growth.

This is indeed a pertinent question, not only for sympathizers, but also for Communists. But neither Marx nor Lenin ever attempted to find such a synthetic solution. It was very evident to them that such a resolution is impossible, and because of this, capitalist society is doomed. If they had attempted such a synthesis, theirs would not have been the role of revolutionary standard-bearers, but of class collaborationists like Kautsky, etc. And since psychology is merely a superstructure of the economy, the conflict in this field cannot be resolved.

It is unnecessary to teach a child Hegelian dialectics to have him understand that society consists of two classes: One class the dispossessed, the other class, an insignificant minority of parasites, who have monopolized the means of production, all

wealth—and have so entrenched themselves, that they can dictate to daddy and mother when to work and when to idle, when to eat and when to starve. Tell your child that the ruling class—the bosses, the parasites—at present control the schools, too, and subsidize the inane propaganda that emanates from them.

My child of four and one-half is so well versed in the class struggle, and is so absorbed in the new world the Soviet workers are building, that each evening he greets me with "Reporter! What happened in the S. U. today?" Once I had the temerity to answer, "Nothing happened in the S. U. today"; and a storm of protest interrupted me, "What! Nothing happened during a whole day in the biggest country in the world?"

Only the capitalist ruling class has the problem of resolving the contradictions of bourgeois society. The conflicts of their children with their environment promote their development into imbeciles, neurotics, and all the numerous varieties of patho-psychologies. They of necessity resort to quack cures, psychoanalysts, spiritualists, etc. We, class-conscious parents, are realists, and teach our children to understand and analyze the infinite list of social abuses we tolerate today, so they too can join us on the day of reckoning. We do not hide, but on the contrary expose those innumerable, environmental contradictions and inequalities that will inevitably lead to the antagonism that bursts asunder the shell of the bourgeois egg. Only a Soviet state can reconcile contradictions. Ours is the emerging present and the future.

Hackensack, N. J.

S. B. and A. I. F.

Brookline Children and War Propaganda

TO THE NEW MASSES:

I wish to report an interesting incident of which I heard:

A group of 103 children in Brookline, ranging from 3rd grade grammar school to 4th year high school, signed a letter of protest to the editor of *The Herald-Traveler* of Boston, denouncing the active war propaganda appearing in a comic strip in his paper. I refer to "Gasoline Alley," which abruptly sent "Skeezix" to military school a few months ago. I was in Brookline while this letter was being signed and I can personally attest to the gratifying spectacle of young school children coming in of their own accord. As one young lad said, "We heard about a petition against 'Gasoline Alley' and we wanted to be sure our names were on it. We're wise to all that military junk."

This is a parochial schoolboy speaking. I wish you would give this matter some publicity as I do not know whether or not the editor of *The Herald* will do anything about it, and I feel it is good enough to merit notice.

Cambridge, Mass.

LINDA SHEPARD.

Political "Escapist?"

TO THE NEW MASSES:

The article, "I Handed Out Relief," in the March 5 issue gave an interesting and accurate picture of the conditions existing in relief bureaus. There are many sincere social workers, however, who cannot solve their problem as easily as did Mr. Johnson—quitting his job.

What he says in effect is: "Here is a part of capitalism that I couldn't stomach, so I quit."

Now, Mr. Johnson may have gotten away with it, but the problem is still there. Perhaps his experience has activated him to work towards the establishment of socialism. Many of us have been convinced of the necessity of this long ago. We have felt, however, that our work in this direction should take

the form of organization on the job for better working conditions and for the purpose of approaching relief problems from the viewpoint of the unemployed worker rather than that of the relief executives.

Johnson's article shows clearly how social agencies have discarded, in practice, the lofty idealism of their sainted Pollyannas. Actually, social workers have been relegated into mere tools through which capitalism forces lower standards of living upon the working class. It is hard to stomach this and hard to be a partner to the act. Yet we cannot ignore the fact that social workers come into contact with more workers than does the average radical unless he is solely engaged in organizational work. These workers are vitally interested in unemployment insurance, and old-age pensions, current relief legislation, strikes, the activity of Unemployed Councils, etc. They need no agitation. All they need is the truth. If telling them the truth about such matters means treason, then I think the time has come for our bosses to make the most of it.

The Russians have stated the problem clearly. They say, "We are not interested in changing the individual as such, but rather in changing the environment to meet his need." Only from this premise do you get anywhere. Only in this manner can you remove the poverty-ridden mill and mine town, the slums and the Hoovervilles. Then the social work which we visualize and are working for will be possible.

This is why no escapist action is possible. This is why I am pointing out to Mr. Johnson that for class-conscious social workers to despair of their jobs and depart, is politically incorrect. It would only result in isolation in the field of work for which they are equipped.

Kansas City, Mo.

RALPH MOORE.

Persecution in San Quentin

TO THE NEW MASSES:

I am one of the eight workers recently convicted in Sacramento, California. The charge against me was called "criminal syndicalism"; actually, the charge against me, as against the others, was organizing workers for militant struggle. We have been sentenced to serve one to fourteen years in the penitentiary.

With the prospect of a lengthy visit to San Quentin prison staring me in the face, the latest news from this, one of the worst of all the jails in the country, is particularly disturbing.

San Quentin's walls hold four of the oldest political prisoners in the United States—Tom Mooney, Matthew Schmidt, John Cornelison and J. B. McNamara. Warden Holohan of San Quentin has done everything in his power to make the lives of these men a living hell. It was he who refused Tom Mooney permission to attend his mother's funeral. Having these men under his care day and night, knowing no restraint in the exercise of his power over their lives, he is able to contrive a thousand-and-one petty meannesses against them.

Against McNamara, the oldest political prisoner in the world, who is now serving his twenty-fourth year in jail, the spite of Holohan knows no bounds. A delegation from the California district of the International Labor Defense went to visit McNamara on April 11. Here is what they found:

Warden Holohan is attempting to frame McNamara in connection with the attempted break of a number of convicts from San Quentin a few weeks ago. Of course there is no basis for this frame-up—and Holohan knows it. The jail officials claim that McNamara had information regarding the break, that he knew the code the convicts were using to tap out messages to one another. McNamara said—and proved—that from his cell it was impossible for him

to hear the tapping, and that he did not even know the code. The answer of the jail officials was a threat from Warden Holohan to "paste McNamara in the nose" and a threat from the captain of the guards to "smash McNamara's head in."

Jim McNamara had been occupying one cell for twenty years. After the attempted prison break, he was removed from his cell, and it was given to a stool-pigeon by the name of Eagen. Eagen is a former public defender of San Francisco, convicted on a charge of murdering one of his patronesses to obtain her money. All the cells occupied by political prisoners, and also some of the other cells, were raided by the jailers. All the working-class literature which friends outside the bars had sent these men, in the hope that reading-matter would make things a little more bearable for them, was confiscated. McNamara had to see toted off by a stupid warden his three volumes of Karl Marx's *Capital*; back numbers of *The Labor Defender*; Dreiser's *American Tragedy*; Lincoln Steffens' *Autobiography*; and many other books and periodicals which were labeled by the jailers as Communist literature.

The Prisoners Relief Department of the International Labor Defense has been sending to all political prisoners a weekly two-page letter of information on world events—a brief resume of the news of the week. For a few weeks Mooney, McNamara and the other prisoners were allowed to receive this letter. Then, suddenly, it mysteriously ceased to arrive in their cells.

These actions on the part of the San Quentin regime are, obviously, an effort to break the spirit of the political prisoners there.

As long as Warden Holohan feels that he can do as he pleases—and it is clear that he does think so—so long will he continue in these petty persecutions of our class-brothers behind the bars. What is needed now is a healthy and spirited protest movement, that will make it clear to this petty martinet that thousands of people are watching his every move, that the working class does not propose to tolerate this additional burden imposed upon McNamara, Mooney, Cornelison and Schmidt.

As one who will soon find herself on the wrong side of San Quentin's gates, I want to appeal to fellow-workers and to all who believe in human rights, to protest the persecution of our political in this hell-hole prison. Send your protests to Warden Holohan at the State Penitentiary, San Quentin, California. Support the splendid work in behalf of the political prisoners carried on by the International Labor Defense.

Sacramento, Calif.

NORA CONKLIN.

Popularizing a Strike-breaker

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Protest letters and phone calls should flood Robert W. McBride, publisher, who announces a book by Bergoff, notorious strike-breaking and labor-spy operator, in collaboration with a New York Post feature-writer to be entitled, "I Break Strikes."

New York City.

B. F.

Articles of "Utility"

TO THE NEW MASSES:

William Randorf in his article "Heil Hearst" in THE NEW MASSES for April 9 wrongly attributes to my February article on Hearst in The Social

Frontier the following quotation: "The moral is that William Randolph Hearst still hands out chamber-pots wrapped up in paper. It is a practical joke on the public, and quite without moral illusion." I don't know where Mr. Randorf got the quotation, but it was not from anything I wrote.

My contribution to the current barrage of analyses of Hearst was confined to his economic position and to showing how it conditions his political and social behavior with almost divine precision. Not only did I not make the observation Mr. Randorf attributes to me, but I disagree with it rather violently. After all, a chamber-pot is an article of some utility, especially in rural communities devoid of the blessings of plumbing. I submit that the Hearst papers have never handed out, literally

or figuratively, objects so useful, either wrapped or unwrapped. To me it has always seemed rather as though the Hearst papers were engaged in laddling out to their readers the usual contents of such household utensils.

New York City.

FERDINAND LUNDBERG.

Not Lundberg's Article

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Sorry. The quotation attributed to Ferdinand Lundberg should have been credited to Lawrence Martin. The confusion arose because the latter had an article on Hearst in the same issue of Social Frontier as Lundberg.

WILLIAM RANDORF.

New York City.

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Art

White Haired Boy of the Crisis

THE rural half of "The American School" of painting is on view at the Ferargil Galleries, where Grant Wood's first New York one-man show follows on the heels of the exhibition of Thomas Benton, the more sophisticated, cosmopolitan half.

Seldom has any artist been yanked from obscurity into national prominence and success within so short a time as has Grant Wood. Until about 1929 he had produced nothing to distinguish him from the thousands of young Academy students who used to come back from Europe with hackneyed little sketches of "picturesque France," "picturesque Spain," and that sort of stuff; but on returning from a fourth trip to Europe, Wood began to "discover America." He studied . . . "Currier & Ives prints, ric-rac braid on dresses, wire fencing, overalls, and mechanically spaced cornfields," according to his biographers. It was about this time that the country was precipitated into what is frequently referred to as the Depression. With the capitalist class forced on the defensive by the ever-deepening crisis, the need for bolstering its cracking economic foundations has been reflected in its frantic patriotizing in the cultural fields. While the condition of the overwhelming majority of artists has become steadily worse, a small handful have found in the Depression their great opportunity, and outstanding among them has been Grant Wood. With his "natural ingenuity along the lines of showmanship" (as his appreciators describe it in the catalog foreword) Wood has shrewdly taken ad-

vantage of the rising tide of national chauvinism, to become the country's "best seller," and one of its most influential artists.

Wood's art comes closer than that of any other to being a popular art. He makes little or no use of any of the plastic distortions which demand a considerable intellectual development for understanding and acceptance. Wood knows how to "play dumb" with great skill. He has simulated the archaisms of the "naive" school of Currier & Ives, and the early American "timners," and borrowed generally from early Americana, in his intense desire to purify his Americanism. All this in the name of Truth, Honesty, Authenticity.

But this business of truth and authenticity in art involves something more than Mr. Wood conceives it to be. While no doubt very authentic about his *details*, he is not quite as scrupulous when it comes to the more important matter of *social truth*, of *social relationships*, of *social implications*. One may perhaps wonder why Mr. Wood, who certainly knows about farming and the Middle West, having lived there most of his life, should paint only rich, prosperous farms, with spick-and-span new buildings, fat cattle, fine, fertile crops, and peaceful and contented farmers . . . when we've been reading so much these last several years about farm foreclosures, milk strikes, pitched battles between farmers and state troopers, sheriffs' sales, etc. You'd think that if he were so concerned about truth, authenticity, and honesty, he might have included some of these

things in his pictures of Iowa farm country and people. John Latham, writing from Des Moines last November, about this same Iowa, said, "the four lower tiers of counties in southern Iowa are what the experts at Ames call the 'problem area.' The soil is poor, erosion has in places worked damage that can never be repaired. Relief people working in the area comment on the low standard of living." Nor are these just recent conditions. There are thousands of farmers throughout the Middle West who have even in time of "prosperity" known nothing but hardship and the barest existence. But Mr. Wood takes no notice of such things. His "outlook is wholesome and usually optimistic," as his biographers point out. Let radical artists concern themselves with such unpleasant things as forced sales, milk strikes, foreclosures, etc. It's none of Mr. Wood's affair. He "understands human reactions," and undoubtedly realizes that people like to buy nice, pleasant pictures. And that's what he gives them. Very charmingly decorative paintings they are, too. He knows how to draw, has a good sense of color, and composes with skill. His pictures are very popular with the substantial, well-to-do people who can afford to buy them, and if you are interested you can pick one up for as little as \$600, possibly. Of course it would be a small one. The larger ones come to \$3,000, or thereabouts, I am told.

"In his work and in his teaching Grant Wood has fought for the theory that the painter should draw on his own experience, whatever that experience may be," his biographers tell us. It may be ungracious, but one can't help wondering whether Mr. Wood intended his art credo to hold good for such personal experiences as hunger; living on home relief; getting clubbed by police for refusing to starve; knocking around from one tenement flat to another; lacking for materials with which to function as an artist; or such social experiences as witnessing the burning of wheat, shooting of cattle, and plowing under of cotton by the A.A.A. destruction program, for example. Mr. Wood has never gone on record, so far as we know, as approving the expression of *such* experiences. *They* are probably un-American, and the fault of those artists who lack that wholesome and optimistic outlook. Look at Grant Wood. *He* made good.

STEPHEN ALEXANDER.

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Movies

The Youth of Maxim

THIS film of underground activity of the Russian Social Democratic Party (Bolsheviks) after the abortive uprisings in 1905, is a beautifully integrated work. The directors, L. Koznitzev and L. Trauberg (not Ilya Trauberg who made *China Express*) have succeeded in conveying the police terror, the bravery of the workers, the methods of illegal activity of the Communists with an intensity that is almost overpowering.

Maxim is not a historic character. He is a composite of thousands of such people who helped to bring about the first Workers' Republic and who are today re-enacting these events in real life in Germany and Italy.

A prologue opens the film. In its original state it was a beautiful example of the highest type of formal cinema. It established, by a series of impressionistic and stylized scenes, the relationship between the various classes and social forces in St. Petersburg of 1907: the gayety and debauchery of the bourgeoisie; the Bolsheviks taking advantage of the New Year's celebration to prepare their illegal greeting to the Russian workers and to drink joyously (in the face of danger) to the future; finally the police raid, the flight, the struggle with the Mensheviks in a crucial situation. All this is accomplished by a su-

perb blending of brilliant direction and acting, Moskvin's splendid photography and Shostakovich's amazing score.

The actual plot is unwoven in a clear, simple and realistic style. We are introduced to Maxim, a good humored, sharp-witted young worker who would rather join a circus than a political party. He rescues Natasha (who had been distributing leaflets in the factory) from the stool-pigeon foreman. Later his best friend is injured by a neglected machine. The boss refuses help and the young worker dies. That is Maxim's first blow. Then another fellow-worker is killed. The callousness of the boss arouses the workers and they decide to give this second young man a proletarian funeral. Words are insufficient to describe the workers' funeral, accompanied by the chant of a funeral march, emphasized by the shrill moans of the factory whistles. It is one of the really great things in cinema. A warning from the police to break up the funeral turns it into a political demonstration. At this point the Cossacks attack the demonstrators; a worker uses an accordion (playing the funeral march) in the manner of a bugler on a battlefield; Maxim emerges from the mass to rally them against their attackers. The episode closes with the arrest of Maxim.

After another sequence, which in many ways is even more powerful than the Columbia House section of *Fatherland*, Maxim emerges from prison, not "with that utter hopelessness" as Mr. Sennwald of The New York Times put it, but a new man full of hope, optimism and determination. He begins

his new existence of living "between heaven and earth" (since he has been banned from every province in Russia)—takes part in the the clue to the whole psychology of this kind of underground work of the Party.

An open-air meeting is raided and some of the workers are killed. The leader is wounded and is unable to get out a required leaflet. Natasha makes an effort to write one, but Maxim thinks it is too defeatist. He dictates a leaflet of a different character himself. This simple act is the most meaningful, the most important part of the film . . . it is the clue to the whole psychology of this kind of work. As a result of this emergence into the role of a full-grown class-conscious revolutionist, the Party sends Maxim to another part of Russia to work independently.

From a formal view this film, first of a trilogy, is in many ways better than Chapayev. Its use of the combined sound and visual image is the most advanced to date. There is not a superfluous image, sound, or song. There are no purely decorative compositions of background music. It has a complex but clear continuity.

This brings me to a question which must be discussed more fully sometime. Our bourgeois film critics have complained about the "diffuse" continuity of the Soviet films. What they probably mean is that it is more complex than the straight-line development of the bourgeois film. The very ideological base of the Hollywood film determines a straightforward development along a single plane and a relatively quick tempo. The Russian film—the revolutionary film with its more profound character, its realistic approach—cannot have the form of the dream film. Thus it is unfortunate that there is an attempt to "Americanize" Soviet films. We rely too much upon the dogmas of certain writers who talk at great length about "continuity," "di-

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rection," "photography," "speed," without knowing what they really are and in very general terms about all films regardless of their content or purpose. Whole sections and sometime reels are eliminated from the Soviet films for the benefit of the American audience (a vague term when applied to Soviet films). Is it any wonder, therefore, that the prologue in the present version of *The Youth of Maxim* is needlessly confused and eccentric? But in spite of this and other cuts, the film is so good that it emerges in great form. With their earlier film, *The New Babylon*, Koznitszev and Trauberg attempted to convey the temperament and emotional atmosphere of the Paris Commune. That film was an experiment; *The Youth of Maxim* is a consummate work of art.

PETER ELLIS.

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If your copy arrives after the day indicated, we urge you to file a complaint with your local postmaster and send a copy of your complaint to us.

Ashley Pettis, music critic of THE NEW MASSES, is departing May 16 to attend the Leningrad Festival of Art. Ten days of opera, concert, ballet and drama will compose this second annual event. Pettis was in the Soviet Union in 1931 and since then has been concerned with various studies of Soviet Music. His second visit will help materially in further researches. Persons

who may be interested in accompanying Mr. Pettis to the festival are invited to write to THE NEW MASSES.

The proceedings of the American Writers' Congress, including the three papers published in this issue, and papers by Jack Conroy, James T. Farrell, Meridel Le Sueur, John Howard Lawson, Granville Hicks, Edward Dahlberg, Isidor Schneider, Kenneth Burke and others, will be issued shortly in book form by International Publishers, Inc.

New Masses Lectures

Thursday, May 2: Joshua Kunitz, "The Jew in the Soviet Union," 8 P. M., at 4035 West Gerard Ave., Philadelphia. Auspices: International Labor Defense.

Friday, May 3: Isidor Schneider, "Revolutionary Poetry," 8:30 P. M., at 359 Jay St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Auspices: Brooklyn Chapter, National Student League.

Sunday, May 5: Harry Carlisle, "Terror in the West," 7:30 P. M., Sky Room of the Majestic Hotel, 29 West Quincy at State St., Chicago, Ill. Auspices: Friends of The New Masses.

Sunday, May 12: Sender Garlin, "Inside Story of Huey P. Long," 8:30 P. M., 2874 West 27th St., Brooklyn. Auspices: Coney Island Workers Club.

Sunday, May 12: A. B. Magil, "I Interview Father Coughlin" (meeting hall will be announced next week). Auspices: Stuyvesant Branch, American League Against War and Fascism.

Thursday, May 16: Debate: Ben Goldstein vs. Rabbi Louis I. Newman, on "Can Liberalism Prevent War," at Grand Plaza, 160th St., Bronx, N. Y. Auspices: Hunt's Point Branch, American League Against War and Fascism.

Friday, May 17: Michael Gold, "Culture Under Fascism," 8:30 P. M., at 3034 Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn. Auspices: West Brighton Workers' Center.

Friday, May 17: Ben Goldstein, "Why a Rabbi Became a Radical," 8:30 P. M., at 608 Cleveland St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Auspices: East New York Workers' Club.

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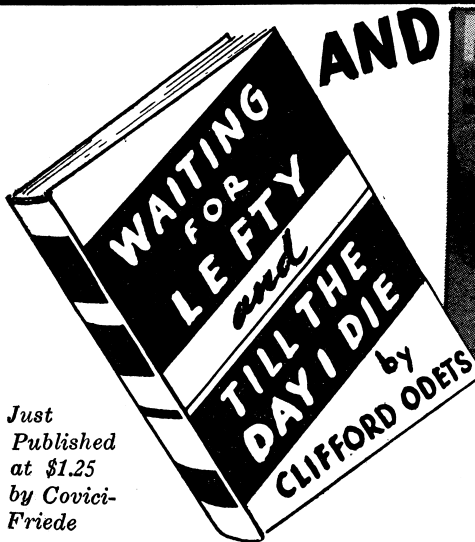
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