

NEW

SEPTEMBER, 1934



THEATRE



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NEW THEATRE

SEPTEMBER, 1934

THE increasing importance of the dramatic arts as a stimulus to thought and action is evidenced by the remarkable growth of the revolutionary theatre, film, and dance during the past year. The strength and growing influence of the workers' theatre has alarmed the ruling class of every bourgeois country . . . for the slogan, "Art is a weapon in the class struggle," has penetrated the broadest strata of worker-artists the world over. This slogan has been translated into terms of life and blood and death in far off China and in Germany where the revolutionary theatres have agitated against the war lords Chiang Kai Shek and Hitler, where their leaders have been imprisoned, tortured, murdered and even buried alive. Whether in fascist Austria or "democratic" America where hired provocateurs (Heimwehr and Nazis in Vienna, police and "vigilantes" in San Francisco) have attacked and destroyed workers' centers, held Hitlerite "burnings of the books," defaced murals and wrecked stages and scenery, cameras and pianos, and jailed and beaten artist-workers, the revolutionary theatre groups have not hesitated to take an active part in the class struggle. They are always to be found where the fight against war and fascism, against the starvation and degradation of the masses is raging. For every Hans Otto murdered, for every Peter Maccharini beaten, for every Jan Wittenber imprisoned, the revolutionary theatre workers are determined to add new cadres, to raise their work to higher artistic and political levels.

The fascist governments and governing fascists have issued their challenge in terms of terror. . . . They seek to intimidate workers and intellectuals who are fighting capitalism on the cultural front. They propose to destroy the workers' theatres—not only in San Francisco but wherever the theatre groups take an active part in the class struggle. Despite the combined onslaught of that unholy trinity, Capital, State and Church, revolutionary theatre workers the world over will continue the fight against war and fascism, for a social system in which the arts and sciences serve not the Morgans and the Mellons, the Rockefellers and the Rothschilds, the Krupps and the Comite des Forges, but the mass of mankind. Revolutionary workers, not idealists, these workers know what they are after—peace and security, bread and beauty. And they know that without revolutionary practice, revolutionary theory

isn't worth a damn. Their fearlessness and determination even in the face of open terror is revealed by this excerpt from a letter written by a member of the San Francisco group: "They have destroyed our theatre completely. But they can't beat us. We've only begun to fight."

UNFORTUNATELY our art, our "weapon", has often been as blunt as our fight has been brave. Frequently we find ourselves lagging behind the high demands of revolutionary art. While worker audiences will tolerate amateurish work for a while, they will not tolerate work of a low level indefinitely. We must analyze the weaknesses of our work now, and begin an intense and immediate drive to remedy them, to raise our art to a new high level.

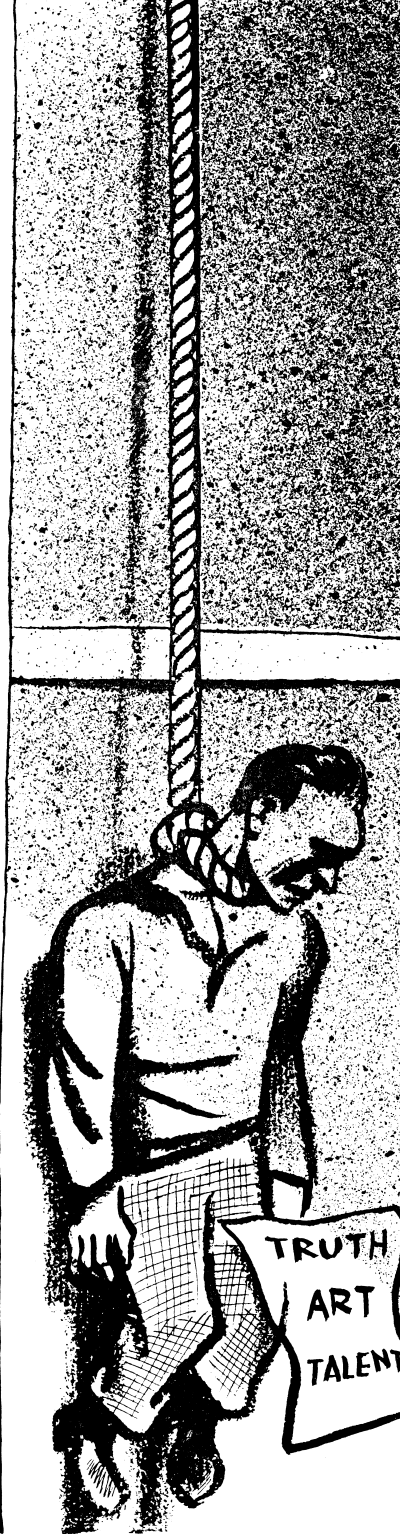
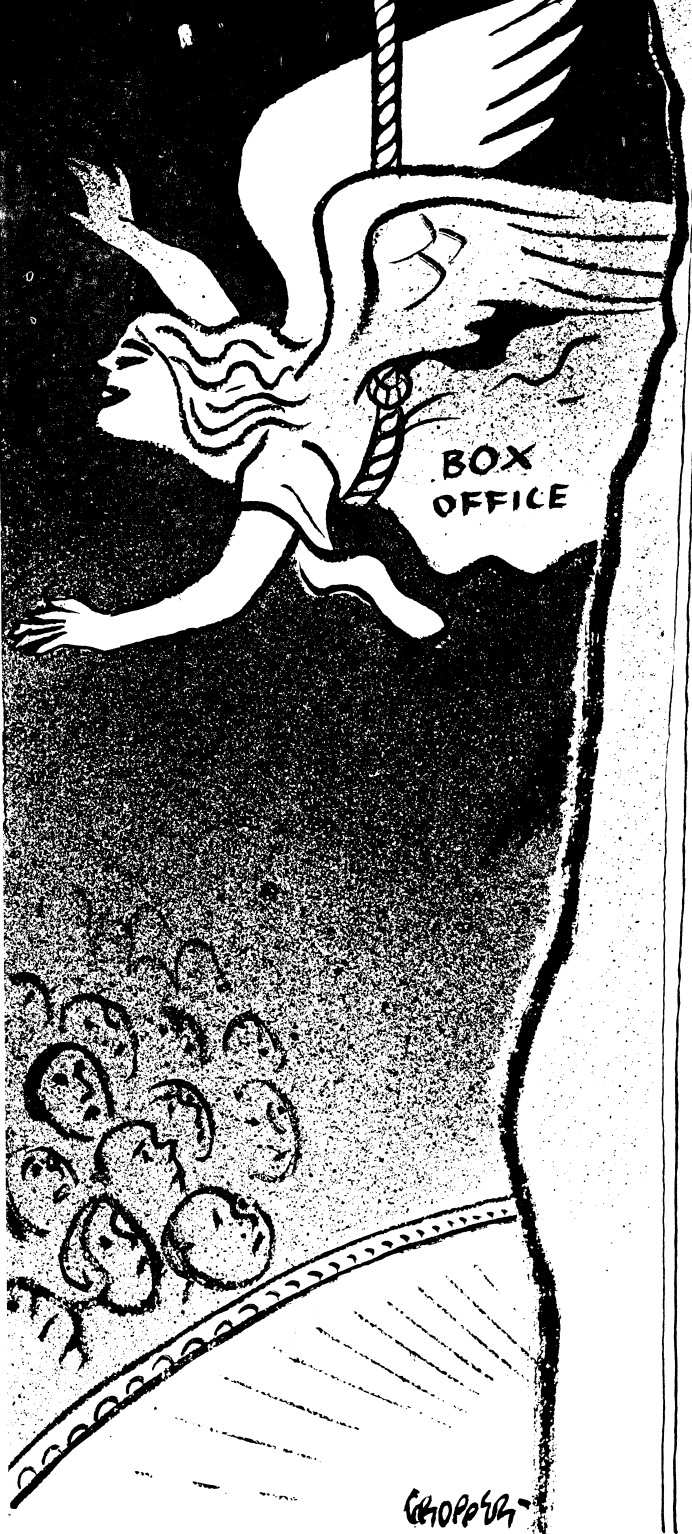


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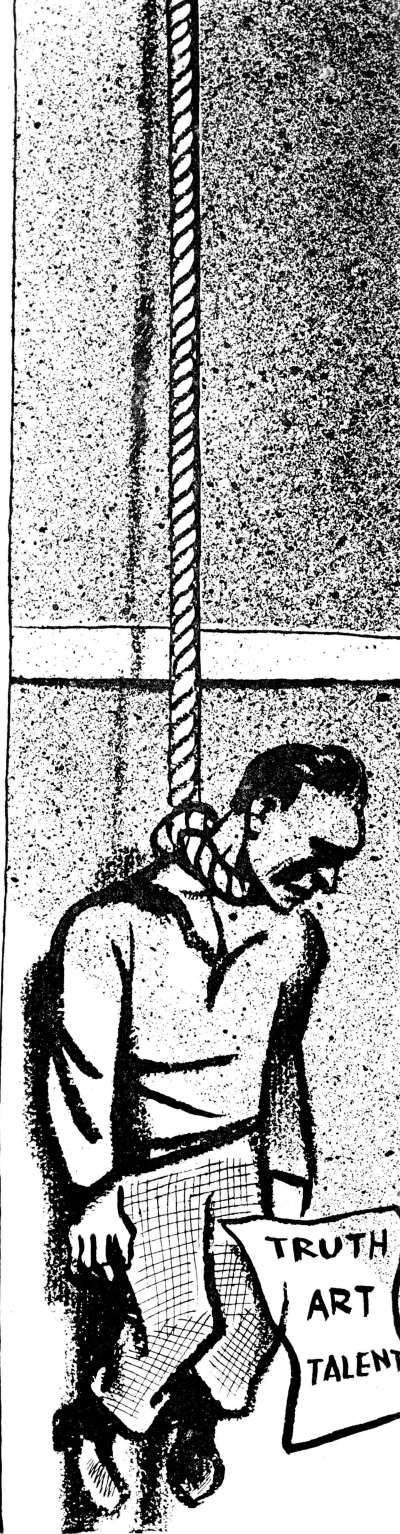
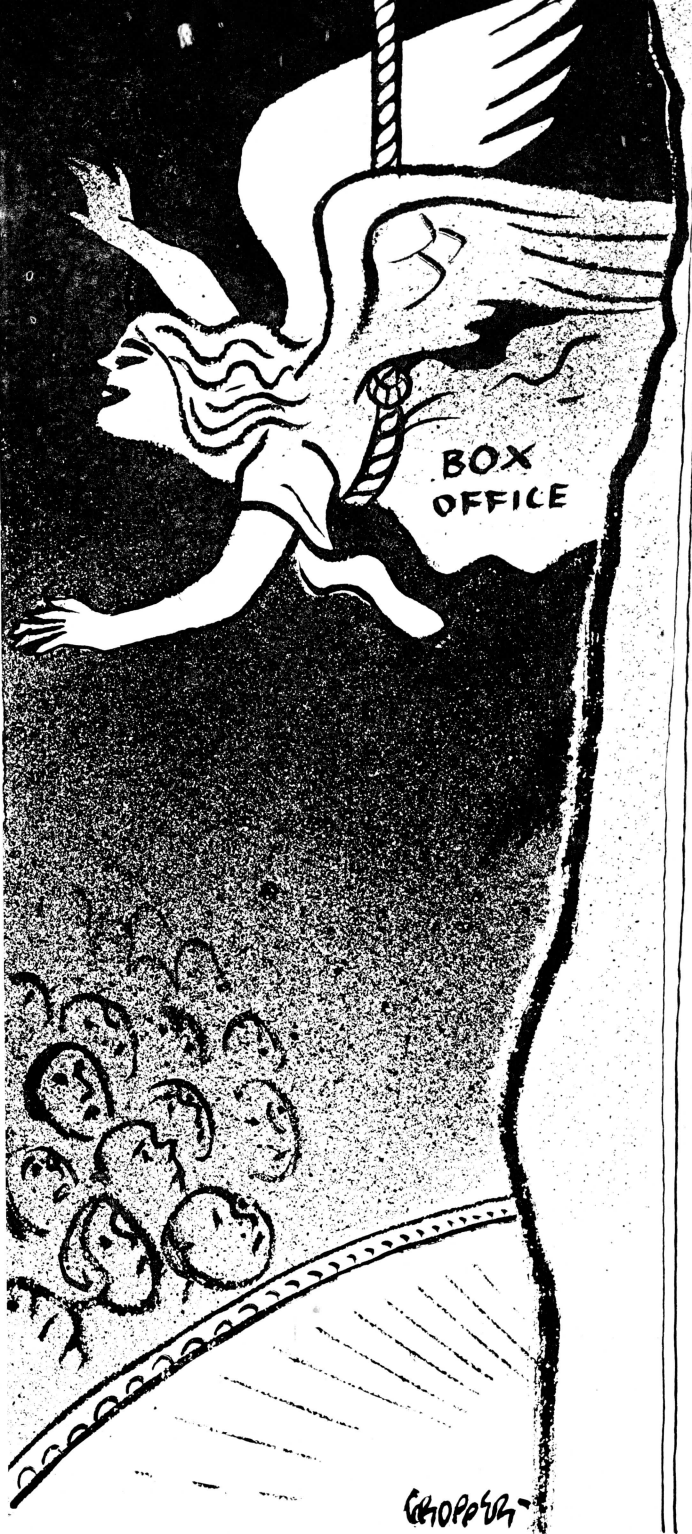
The conference on creative problems held after the International Theatre Olympiad established the following as serious shortcomings:

- (1) *Too much schematism and sloganism; low artistic technique; inability to express political tasks through artistic images, etc.*
- (2) *Theoretical and political backwardness; lack of knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and consequent inability to solve problems facing revolutionary art.*
- (3) *Organizational work lagging behind political work and the influence of the movement on the masses.*

Although conditions are somewhat different in every country the basic problems are the same. The Theatre Olympiad con-



Drawing by William Gropper



Drawing by William Gropper

ference revealed the tremendous tasks facing revolutionary art. It mobilized a fight against the underestimation of the essence of art. As a result the quality of our work has greatly improved.

It is our chief task to make our movement a mass movement. We must win over more and more competent artists. We must indeed *professionalize the revolutionary theatre arts* with their assistance, and assist them in *revolutionizing the professional theatre arts*. An essential part of our work is technical. The outstanding theatre workers and playwrights who have gone "Left" must be activated to work directly with us, to teach us the art of the present that they have built on the great art of the past, and to aid us in our first fumbling strides toward new forms.

NEW THEATRE is pleased to offer to its readers *Rubber Stamp Movies*, an article by King Vidor which instances the growing dissatisfaction with Hollywood even within its own ranks. We agree with Vidor's statement of the artistic inadequacy and emptiness of Hollywood films, but wish to point out that the basic cause is not so much the producers' failure to address "discriminating audiences," but their failure to say anything of interest and value to the masses which the movies reach. That a mass art of the films is possible is well attested to by the film production of the Soviet Union where the highest level of artistic standards and the broadest mass base have proved not only compatible but essential to the true flowering of the movies. Needless to say such a development is impossible to Hollywood, the smug servant of ruling class ideology.

King Vidor, one of the most capable and sensitive of American directors, famous for *The Crowd*, *Hallelujah*, etc., heartily endorses the program of NEW THEATRE and the Film and Photo League. Briefly the program declares: (1) against federal or state censorship in any form, and against the attempt of the Legion of Decency or any other clerical groups to foist censorship on the movies; (2) against all fascist and pro-war films; (3) for the creation of a workers' audience and production film movement, that honestly pictures social conditions and workers' struggles in America today.

SOME of our readers may feel that we are exaggerating the fierceness of the fascist onslaught on culture in America. Fascist elements in California have raised a red scare the implications of which should convince the most incredulous. Rev. William B. Spofford, Protestant minister and editor of *The Witness* clearly indicated these fascist tendencies in a recent sermon.

"Only yesterday," he declared, "we read in our newspapers of a district attorney in California threatening to indict for criminal



"Let's get that red."
"Aw! But Mickey Mouse is my favorite movie star."

syndicalism a moving-picture star because he is said to have presented a friend, who is secretary of a labor organization, with typewriter ribbons.

"A story out of Hollywood that a star was interested in the struggle of the workers of California for decent working conditions, instead of all-night orgies, one might suppose would cause general rejoicing, but apparently such is not the case. From reading the press reports that come from California I am sure all of us could suggest better ways for the district attorney to occupy himself. For the past year Imperial Valley has been ruled by vigilantes.

They have kidnapped, beaten up, robbed, and in scores of ways thwarted the constitutional rights of citizens.

"This is but one example of the marked trend toward fascism in the United States.

"Fascism does two things—limits production and creates an artificial scarcity, as we are doing under the New Deal, and drives for foreign markets in which to dump the goods denied their own starving people. And this drive for markets leads straight to the next international war, for which we are so energetically preparing."

AFTER seeing *Brother Mose*, a P.W.A. super-production, one suspects that the dramatic big-wigs on the Actor's Project deliberately chose the piece to counteract the revolutionary influence on Negro workers of *Stevedore*. *Brother Mose*, by Frank Wilson, Negro actor, is a heart-rending lesson to Negroes that it doesn't pay to object to the superior judgment of the white men. Originally called *Meek Mose*, it was a Broadway flop in 1927, even the "carriage trade" being sickened by its stupid moral.

Briefly, it deals with the mistreated Negro workers in a Texas town. A large corporation in need of the land on which their miserable shacks stand, orders them to move to a disease-infected section of town. The Negroes are divided, one-half refusing and defying the whites. The other half, headed by Meek Mose, deciding there is no course left them, move to the new

NEW THEATRE

Organ of League of Workers Theatres, Film and Photo League, and Workers Dance League.

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Cover—Scene from "Little Katy's Journey", Children's Theatre, Moscow

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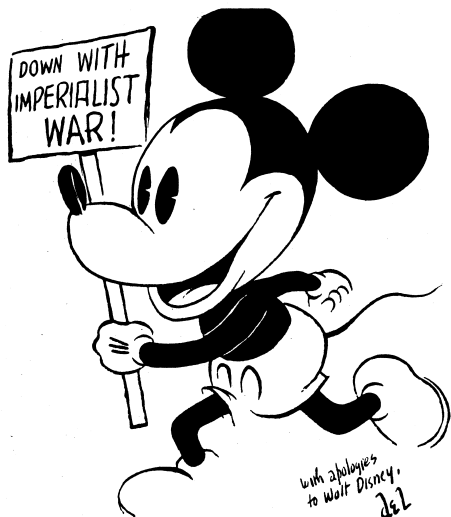
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quarters. As Meek Mose puts it: "If Mr. Walton wants us to move then they ain' no use in us arguin' 'bout it, we jes' gotta move." Isn't it the white man who feeds them, gives them work and protects them from starvation? Why cause trouble?

So poisonous is the play that the militant workers are depicted as drunken and rowdy; whereas the Meek Mose element possesses all the admirable qualities, including an unquestioning love for the



News Item—Capt. Hynes of the Los Angeles Radical Squad accuses Hollywood film stars of supporting "red activities." *Courtesy of Daily Worker*

teachings of Christ. "Turn the other cheek," etc.

When the Negroes are falling ill and dying of disease, their white benefactor, Mr. Walton, who moved them into the death-trap, discovers oil on their land and magnanimously sends Meek Mose a thousand dollars in advance with a promise of many more to come. The play ends with Meek Mose waving his thousand dollars in the air and warning the audience that the "meek shall inherit the earth—an' I done got my share." From another character comes the wise remark that the white man is all right after all, but "yo' cant' live with him an' yo' can't live without him!"

When the Actor's Emergency Association, an organization of unemployed actors fighting, among other things, against Negro discrimination, discovered that *Brother Mose* was being cast with an entirely Negro company in spite of the fact that the play calls for two white characters, they immediately wired the P.W.A. authorities and objected against such Jim Crowism. The next day their delegation interviewed Mr. Earl Booth and were told that the original script was not being used and that the new play had no white parts in it. This was only a half truth. After receiving the wire, the authorities had set to work feverishly to so change the script that no white characters would be necessary and this was accomplished by putting a Negro sheriff in a Texas setting!

\$6-A-Week Actors

ALWAYS a gambling proposition, the commercial theatre has furnished its employees at best a very precarious livelihood. Figures obtainable from *Billboard* and the *Theatre Arts Monthly* show that in 1927-28, the peak year of the American legitimate theatre, approximately 30 per cent of 8,500 actors Equity members in good standing were unemployed in dramatic and musical productions in New York alone. The 70 per cent who did find work were "gainfully employed" an average of only 28 per cent of the time, or less than 15 weeks a year!

Of the 6,031 actors who worked in New York productions that year, 79. per cent averaged less than nine weeks and 40 per cent less than four weeks' employment. (Of the 2,563 actors engaged for dramatic plays 89 per cent averaged less than eight weeks' and 42 per cent less than three weeks' employment). Estimating the average salary in both musical and dramatic productions as \$100 a week (above average), this means that over 4,700 actors received an average income of \$880 or less that year, and that of these, 2,400 received only \$350 for the year; less than \$6.00 a week average weekly income.

At that time the average failures of production was a mere 65 per cent! Today with the average of failures risen to about 80 per cent for New York productions, the odds against the actor are appalling (according to Frank Gilmore, president of Equity, in his June 1, 1934, report). Membership in the Actor's Equity has dropped from approximately 12,000 to 4,000. Exact figures on membership in Actors' Equity for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1934, are: Members in good standing—2,127. "Out of benefit" for non-payment of dues—1,228. Total membership (including those not paid up but not delinquent enough to drop)—4,216. The annual dues for an Equity member are \$18. This means that within a period of *four years* there has been a tremendous drop in membership, a decrease of 8,000.

Add to these 8,000 known unemployed actors, 5,000 unemployed members of Chorus Equity (reported on June 4, 1934, by Mrs. Dorothy Bryant, executive secretary), and this brings the total number of *unemployed in these two actors' unions alone to the staggering total of 13,000*. The Negro actor is even worse off. It is modestly estimated that there are 2,000 unemployed Negro actors in New York City who are in dire need.

Fifteen thousand unemployed actors in New York City alone. Of 17,000 unemployed actors on relief in Hollywood, 15,-

400 were laid off by the N.R.A. administrator as we go to press. Add to these the thousands of unemployed actors in vaudeville, burlesque and other branches of the theatrical profession equally as hard hit by the depression and the figures mount well over 35,000.

What has the N.R.A. code done to remedy this situation? Practically nothing. Unemployment continues to increase and the minimum wage code is being continually violated through "kickbacks" and private agreements, although the more "respectable managers prefer to wring concessions from their employees by pitting the stage unions against each other.

Equity requires every player to give free performances for the actors' fund, thus forcing semi-employed actors to support those who are still worse off. And it is notorious that actors even if they are starving must dress well in order to obtain jobs. The Equity "old guard" shows little inclination to take arms against this sea of troubles; it is sufficiently absorbed in collecting dues and paying the salaries of Equity officials. At best these officials hope for the realization of plans for the so-called National American Theatre which will furnish seasonal work to only a small fraction of the membership.

The "progressive" movement in Equity is fighting for the unemployed actors as well as for improved working conditions for employed actors. They are forcing the conservative Equity leaders to represent the rank and file of the actors, instead of always compromising with the managers and producers. The Actors' Emergency Association, which represents the interests of unemployed actors in all fields, dramatic, musical, burlesque, etc., is putting up a militant struggle for immediate and adequate relief. Both groups favor enlarging the public relief works' programs to include dramatic projects that will give work to all. **NEW THEATRE** urges all actors to support the efforts of these organization to obtain necessary relief for needy actors. The actors must join with members of other stage unions in calling an All Union Stage Conference. All stage union members who have been dropped for non-payment of dues must be brought back into the unions, otherwise these unemployed, who are now in the majority, will be the logical source of "scab" labor at the first show-down between the unions and the managers. A united relief body of the employed and unemployed stage workers can obtain relief and decent working conditions far more effectively than disunited and warring factions. The united efforts of all theatre workers will raise living standards throughout the industry.

ELMER RICE

By JOSEPH FREEMAN

PROBABLY it was a good thing that Elmer Rice began his career as a maker of melodrama—a type of play in which the author first invents sensational situations, then straw men to participate in them—as against the drama, in which the situations arise out of the characters themselves and out of the conditions of which they are part. *On Trial* was a smashing box-office success; the middle-class spectator lapped up the melodrama with joy; but even in this sleight-of-hand performance the dramatist displayed social bias, a sentimental approach toward the injustice of an uncharacterized, undifferentiated contemporary society. Injustice was negatively criticized from a humanitarian viewpoint without the slightest indication that all contemporary justice is class justice. Working with unusual success in the melodrama, Elmer Rice, while insulating himself against serious thought on the stage also insulated himself against intellectual snobbishness. Perhaps he was plotting better things all along.

In 1923 came a play in a higher form which revealed what Elmer Rice was thinking. The form of *The Adding Machine* was symptomatic of its time; it was labelled "Expressionism"; it sought to reveal its characters not only through the medium of action and utterance, to clarify them through their deeds and those thoughts which they speak aloud, but through a minimum of action and utterance, and a maximum of the soliloquy of the unconscious. The emphasis of Expressionism upon the internal psychology of characters was part of the intellectual movement of that period which just preceded and just followed the World War, which in psychology gave us Sigmund Freud, in the novel James Joyce, in the theatre men like Ernst Toller. We cannot say that these three movements—to take three of many—are parallel results of the identical social situation. That would be true only to a limited extent; the process is more complicated. Each of the intellectual fields is affected by the others; in addition to their co-existence in time they have different, as well as analogous, social backgrounds in space; and each has its internal history. In the post-war period, various social classes in various countries at various times took what they needed for their social objectives, as they did half a century earlier from Darwin. We distinguish between the evolution of the theory of evolution and the social slogans which the bourgeoisie fashioned from the vulgarisations of that theory, such as that the survival of the fittest is identical with the right of capitalists to ex-

plot the workers. The Freudian theory of neurosis loomed upon the cultural horizon at the moment when war was a traumatic shock which made Europe "neurotic"—creating millions of what Lenin called "the petit-bourgeois gone wild." Post-war disillusion broke down those social myths which enabled the bourgeoisie to hurl millions into carnage. There followed the sense of isolation among middle class intellectuals, that introspection which in the drama resulted, as in the novel, in the stream-of-consciousness.

EARLY among American playwrights, Elmer Rice took over this method from Europe and applied it to an American theme. But note the theme—the horrors of the white collar slave's life. The office-worker is nothing more than an "adding machine". In economics this plaint of the white-collars is old; in the novel not new. On Broadway of the year 1923 it had little or no precedent. In that specific place, at that specific time *The Adding Machine* was something of a "radical" gesture, considered in its form, its content, its author, its audience, not to mention its producers. On a Broadway where the upper class and the smug *kleinbuenger* is the hero of the drama of the Return to Normalcy, a successful melodramatist dares to remind the employers in the baldheaded-men's rows, who come to the theatre to forget their "troubles", of the real troubles of their white collar slaves; dares to shout that their subordinates at the office suffer barren, pitiful, horrible lives. That is a gesture of rebellion, but of a specific kind. The dramatist identifies himself to a certain extent with the white-collar, ignoring social classes which not only, from the humanitarian viewpoint, suffer more, but from the scientific viewpoint, are more exploited. But he does not appeal to the white-collars to revolt; the sermon is to their masters. Look, gentlemen, your slaves suffer. The white collars, it should be added, although in the upper category of slaves, are here supposed, incorrectly, to symbolize all the slaves of capitalism; they are "humans" no longer; they are Adding Machines; they do not think, they cannot love, their lives are mechanical and sterile. And whose fault is it?

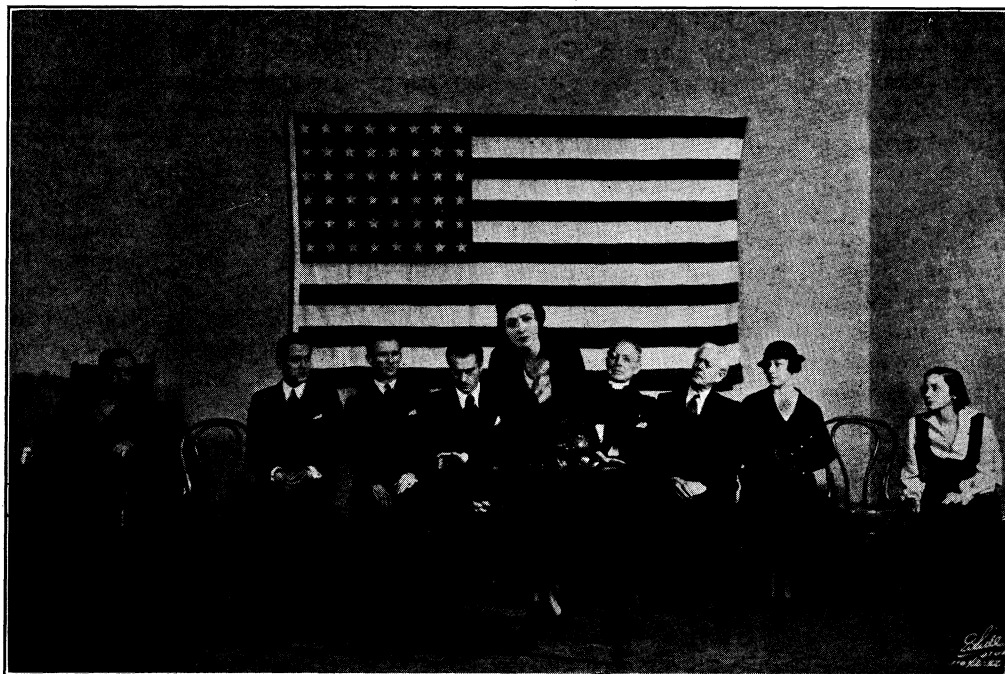
The answer is typical of the British intelligentsia in the nineteenth century and of the American intelligentsia in the twentieth. It is the fault of the machine which has made "man" himself mechanical and which holds out to him only one prospect, that of becoming more and more mechanical. The American intelligentsia shortly after the war was pessimistic about "civilization", without

realizing that it was wrong because it was capitalist civilization. The fault was the machine's; Samuel Butler was slapped on Broadway with an American accent; Mr. Zero, the white-collar, the Adding Machine, the unskilled intellectual had nothing to look forward to except bigger and more monstrous machines which he would operate no longer with his fingers but his toes. Progress and irony, irony and pity. And no way out? Indeed yes. Irony without pity. The Adding Machine, the white collar, the unskilled intellectual will find escape from the machine, the all-pervading, all-oppressive tyrant, the Frankenstein of contemporary (not capitalist!) life in hope; not an abstract hope, but a real honest to goodness, flesh and blood Hope with a capital H—a woman! Against the machine—sex! That, as a matter of fact, was the way in which the intellectuals, the middle class in general, escaped from the capitalist-controlled machine in the twenties, through the pursuit of Sex. But the author—and this is worth nothing—suggests Hope-Sex not as a solution; he points his finger at it in irony. *Sex! Hope! The poor sap!* In addition to a poetic, psychological, expressionistic description of the life and moods of the post-war middle-classes we get a revelation of Elmer Rice's position as a playwright, a position a little ahead of his own class. But thus far the dramatist is capable only of negative criticism of surfaces. Something is wrong; but what is really wrong, Rice does not know; or knowing, does not say on the stage; how to get out of the horror he portrays into something better is a question which, as dramatist, he has not yet raised.

EARLY in 1920 came *Street Scene*, from the literary viewpoint a dramatic continuation of Sinclair Lewis' method. Naturalism, now nearly a century old, was staged and applied on Broadway to a new milieu, the slums of New York. The Street is one inhabited by the "poor"; not by the industrial proletariat engaged in basic production, as in the case of John Howard Lawson's *Processional*, which appeared on Broadway six years earlier; but by janitors, musicians, stage hands, school teachers; once more the *kleinbuenger*, the little citizens, the lower middle classes, those who belong to the "toiling masses" without belonging to the proletariat. The play has, on the surface, no viewpoint; no one character predominates over the others—which in itself is a definite viewpoint, that of the "impartial" observer deceiving himself that he is evading decisions in the struggle of the classes. We get

here the Main Street of the East Side; we get photos remarkable in their surface accuracy. Here is the melting pot, the immigrants inter-marrying, living in the same house, maintaining their racial heritage in the midst of a common attempt to become "Americans"; here are Italians, Jews, Irish, Swedes, oppressed races all, feeling inferior to the mythical "pure" American, and hating each other in the light of the myth and under fire of ruling class policy which is to conquer by dividing; here are the conventional concepts of the races—the Jew is radical, socialist, intellectual and intellectually aggressive; the others are workers and physically aggressive on behalf of their conservatism. Unions, charity, the family are discussed; now and then the theme of the argument is capitalism itself. "Ve got prosperity in dis country", says the Swedish janitor Olsen, and, this being some months before the 1929 crash which sent prosperity and with it millions of workers, farmers and little citizens hurtling into the abyss of unemployment and starvation, the socialist Jew can argue only contrasts: "Sure, for de rich is plenty prosperity! Mister Morgan rides in his yacht and upstairs dey toin a woman vit two children in the street." The Jewish socialist preaches the "sushal revolution"; the dramatist is presumably the pure reporter "impartially" presenting "types" of American "humanity". Yet the impartiality is deceptive; there is a negative criticism of society implied in the shabby, filthy, drab life of the Street. But this criticism is on the surface only; the tragedy is of the customary variety; the "eternal triangle" is transferred from Park Avenue and Westchester County to the East Side. We are all "human"; the voice of socialism, echoed by Kaplan, the Jew, is not an integral part of the scene; it is the Greek chorus commenting on events, but a Greek chorus which speaks not the truth behind the events, the truth which is wiser than the characters, but as one of the characters, no more valid, no wiser than the rest, just another "type".

The play, for all its power, turns out to be "reportage" of the familiar liberal order; inferior, if not in technique, certainly in concept to Em Jo Basshe's "street scene," which the New Playwrights produced two years earlier, in 1927, and in which there is not merely a "type" preaching social doctrines, but an exposition of the social conflict itself; a "street scene" where the Rice process is reversed, and the love story is subordinated to the conflict of social groups and is conditioned by it, a dramatic ratio approximating not the conventional dramatic devices of Broadway but the truth of contemporary life. The New Playwrights, however, was a revolutionary theatre, fighting in isolation from the main American theatre for a new kind of play. On Broadway, *Street Scene*, for all its limitations,



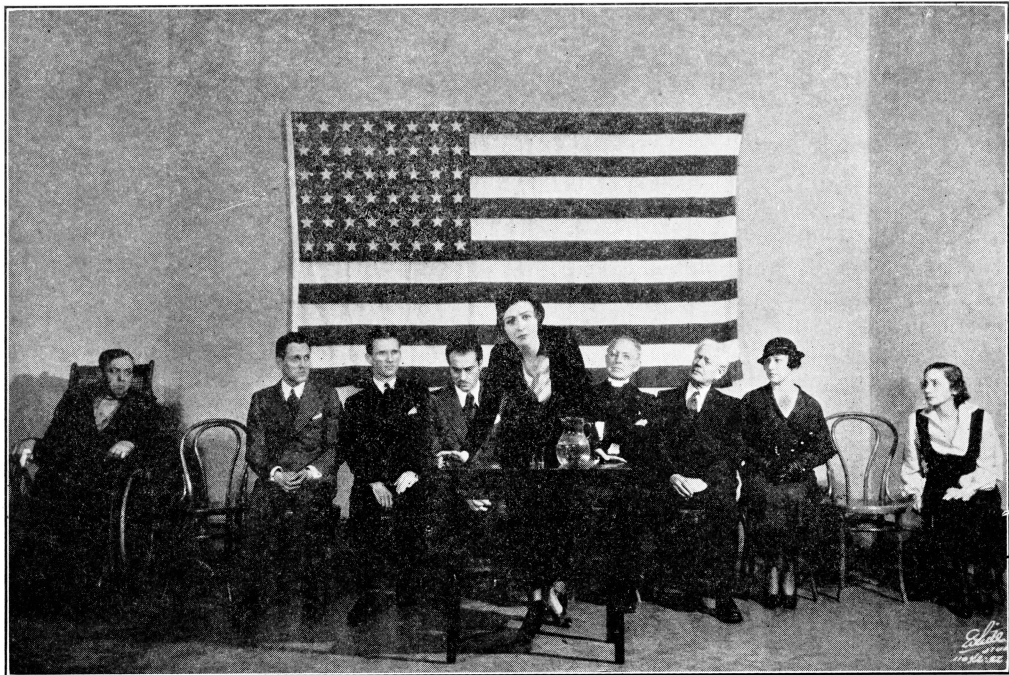
Scene from *We the People*

Courtesy of Coward McCann

marked a step forward. Into a theatre at that time devoted to glorifying the gangster, bootlegger, and racketeer; amidst plays devoted to the world of sports, movies and tarts, to Elmer the Great, Jack Dempsey in disguise, Jarnegan, Diamond Lil, Eva the Fifth, the Royal Family, the Gentlemen of the Press; to the thin "clean" comedies of domestic life; to the clumsy sentimental criticism of capitalist society obliquely implied in the dramatization of the Snyder-Grey "passion murder", Rice brought the slum street, tense with the life of the "lower classes", and loud not only with the revolver shots of raw passion, but with the voice of working-class criticism. No wonder Broadway—the theatre of the bourgeoisie—just then drunk with prosperity, would not touch *Street Scene*, compelling Rice to produce it himself. The play, while not revolutionary criticism, was liberal criticism; in the halls of the masters it was bold to shout: this is *not* the best of all possible worlds. Yet remember that in the halls of the masters there was applause—the Pulitzer Prize, a Hollywood screening. . . . Below, in the slave galley, heads nod: true, true! Now say more, cut below the surface, more of the truth!

RICE, always somewhat behind the times, always picking up both the stage and the social "experiment" when it is ripe, even overripe, expressionism with one hand, the Rand School with the other, waited for the economic crisis to say more of the truth. Some talents hitch their wagons to a star at a safe distance. In 1931 came *Counsellor-at-Law*. It was all the reviewers said—revealing, true in characterization, showing a genius for turning the commonplace for effective use on the stage, convincing, simple and pugnacious'y real—but its approach, like that of Rice's *The Left Bank* and *See*

Naples and Die—street scenes of the post-war American intelligentsia inhaling the poison gas of European cafes—like *The Adding Machine*, *Street Scene*, and *The Subway*, is that of the radical little citizen sensing without understanding, or understanding without stating on the stage, the essential things which are undermining the basis of contemporary society. Great talents are serving a great evasion; irony and pity, pity and irony; pity, the evasion of the heart; irony, the evasion of the mind. The law is crooked; the lust for power is foe to—love. Meantime the crisis grows bitter; not only the workers and farmers suffer; even, O *even* the middle class; indeed, O merciful heavens, *EVEN* the intellectuals, they too suffer. At last our dramatist leaps out of irony and pity, which was itself a height above the melodrama of mere situation, into the realm of an outraged sense of justice. The year 1932! Three years of crisis, unemployment, suffering; the collapse of illusions; No chicken in every pot; No car in every garage; papa has lost his job as foreman after twenty years of loyal "service"; his daughter, the school teacher, gets it in the neck, too; his son, the college student, faces a black future. The security of life has collapsed. The miseries of the skilled workers and the unskilled intellectual, the two social groups which so often concern the literary intelligentsia when it becomes social-minded, form the theme of *We, the People*. The play, within its limitations, is full of sensitiveness and insight. For the first time as dramatist Rice speaks out about American society with a full voice; he is no longer the "impartial" reporter; he *indicts*, he *accuses*; he exposes unemployment, misery, the persecution of the Negro, the firing of school-teachers; he denounces the emotional frustration which capitalist culture imposes on most



Scene from *We The People*

Courtesy of Coward McCann

people; he holds up before his audience of citizens and little citizens the horrors of imperialist murder, the injustice against the shell-shocked veterans, the bank failures, the breakdown of the home; the killing of the jobless demanding work or bread.

On Broadway, the theatre of the ruling class, this play is tremendous as a social document. It ends, from our viewpoint, in a muddled ineffectual manner; an agitator vaguely appeals to the audience in the name of the Declaration of Independence. The conclusion is naively liberal; the ideology of rising capitalism is raised, like Banquo's ghost, to plague the conscience of dying capitalism. But a system of exploitation, especially in its death throes, has no conscience. Yet this agitational speech—the very fact that any kind of political appeal is, openly, directly made from the dramatic stage—is an innovation, a revolutionary step.

In the world theatre this gesture is not new; remember Meyerhold, Piscator, the New Playwrights. Once more Rice has followed rather than initiated. But the pioneers need epigones. Rice brought this technique to Broadway; he gave it conventional standing. In the halls of the masters he portrayed, from a liberal viewpoint, the radicalization of American workers and intellectuals as a result not of foreign or domestic agitation but of the conditions of life in capitalist America. Class-conscious bourgeois critics sneered at the play. Again his own producer, Rice lost money, revealing himself once more the idealist. *We the People* stressed and brought to fruition two of Rice's tendencies: his old social-democratic view of life, his gift for giving solidity to new dramatic forms. The play came after Rice's visit to the Soviet Union where his radicalism and technique were reinforced by the bolshevism and sublime technical courage of the Soviet theatre. Rice possibly realized that, taking the world as a whole, his menshevism and expressionism are mild matters. Hence the relative radicalism and insolence with which he returned to the stronghold of the American bourgeoisie on Broadway.

OVER a period of years devoted to sincere labor in the theatre, Rice has acquired a genuine technique. That may be enough for the mere craftsman pleased to control a medium among the illiterate; for him who has ventured into the realm of thought, control of the medium is the beginning, not the end of wisdom. Rice has also sincerely, within limitations which he has imposed upon himself, spoken on important social questions. Themes and forms new to dramatists just awakening from the bedroom play are second nature to him. But now he has an audience such as existed until recently only on a small scale; there are thousands today who will listen attentively to the playwright who will rip the last veil off the fraudulent, shabby, diseased civiliza-

tion of the bourgeoisie, who will switch the spotlight of his talent to those social classes which are struggling to raise humanity out of its present morass. What an opportunity for a man of Rice's gifts and experience to create a Carter Sloane who, with passion, insight and eloquence can stir his "fellow citizens" to something more effectual than the contemplation of the dead ashes of the spirit of '76. These new Carter Sloanes, today filled with the spirit of the twentieth rather than the eighteenth century revolution, have spoken in American, yet international accents in New York, Minneapolis, San Francisco. The dramatist who can make them speak as articulately on the stage

will be an artist worthy of his epoch.

It is worth considering now, whether Rice, who has grown so steadily, if unoriginally, from the clever melodrama of *On Trial*, to the honest, burning social indictment of *We, the People*, will grow still further. He has the equipment for becoming not merely a clever playwright but an important one, seeing and speaking, like Ibsen and Shaw, ahead of his audience. His new plays, to be produced shortly, will show whether he has taken advantage of his opportunities to surpass himself, as John Howard Lawson has done, in the light of that knowledge of contemporary life which the revolutionary working-class gives us.

Workers Theatre Advances

By GEORGE SKLAR

THE past eight months have seen a tremendous burst of vitality in workers' theatres throughout the country. Its main impetus has come from three very definite theatrical developments. The first of these was, of course, the successful demonstration by the Theatre Union that a workers theatre could function professionally, attract large audiences and maintain itself financially. The second was the Workers Laboratory Theatre's production of *Newsboy*, and its subsequent presentation at the National Theatre Festival in Chicago, which set a challenge for the creative ingenuity of groups all over the country. And the third was the reorganization under new editorship of NEW THEATRE and its increasingly important role in stimulating these groups with news and guidance. The result has been an unprecedented acceleration in the growth and development, not only in terms of numbers but also in the level of its technical and artistic expression.

I had the good fortune to witness concrete evidence of this growth about a month ago when I attended the first performance of the newly formed Stationary Theatre of the Jack London Club of Newark, N. J. Playing before a jammed house of more than 800 people the great bulk of whom were intellectuals and uncontacted middle class who had quite obviously never seen a revolutionary group in action before, the actors succeeded in provoking them from polite passivity to a spontaneously voiciferous response as the performance went on.

The first of the two plays on the program was a production of Alfred Kreymborg's *America, America* by the Shock Troupe of the Club. The opening which was affixed to the original by the director of the Troupe gave a cross-section of the American scene in terms of news flashes, and served as a very exciting introduction to the poem, which was presented in the mass recitation technique. The direction in general was patterned after that used by the Repertory

Playhouse Associates in New York, but was a development and expansion of it. There was a clarity and sureness which the New York performance lacked. I was particularly impressed by the almost professional quality of the action—its precision, its ensemble feeling, its conviction and sincerity. The acting level of this group struck me as being even higher than that of the Workers Laboratory Theatre of New York.

The full length production of *Can You Hear Their Voices*—the first full length revolutionary play performed in the state of New Jersey—was also marked by the quality of the playing. It was especially noteworthy because realistic acting is much more difficult for amateur performers than the more simple chanting or slogan shouting of the mass recitation or agit-prop play.

The play itself has deficiencies. It is much too episodic and scrappy in construction; its situations and its characters are often underdeveloped and meager. But it does have a theatricality, especially in its bourgeois scenes, which lifts it out of dullness and brings a climax excitingly to life.

The episodic and scrappy quality of the scenes demand a swift moving production which does not wait for scene shifts. The director failed to give it such a production, and as a result there were some dull stretches which were saved only by the verve and sincerity of the acting. A little technical ingenuity would have shown him that the play should have been set in terms of spotted areas, with at least two areas set at a time, so that one scene could flow into the next without interruption. The use of news flashes before a curtain while the next two scenes were being set could have maintained a continuity and swiftness of pace which would have compensated for the dead waits after unclimactic, choppy scenes which couldn't stand on their own. But aside from this technical short-sightedness, director and actors deserve high praise for the quality of the performance.

20° COOLER INSIDE

By ROBERT FORSYTHE

THE trouble with writing about Hollywood now is that Mr. Hearst and the little Black Fathers are not through with it and the fate of Mae West is still undecided. As an ordinary thing my sole contact with Holy Church is sitting behind the Brothers from Fordham who come into the Polo Grounds on a pass and root for Chicago. But for the past several months I have never entered a movie house without looking into the far left and right corners for Cardinal Hayes with a pop gun. It makes motion picture reviewing a matter of fortitude rather than aestheticism and it has quite upset Luella O. Parsons and Mordaunt Hall.

My first feelings in the controversy were pleasurable. There was once a fight between Aurelio Herrera and Willie Ritchie or Joe Rivers and Ad Wolgast which ended in a double knockout. It seems that Mr. Rivers hit Mr. Wolgast at exactly the same moment Mr. Wolgast hit Mr. Rivers and they both landed on the backs of their necks simultaneously and out. Without really believing that such a thing could happen in the purity campaign, it was delightful to contemplate a situation which would call for the concurrent annihilation of Jesse L. Lasky and Archbishop Bologna.

This was before I saw a picture called *Grand Canary* (Fox). It was plain at once either that an edict from Rome or the Hollywood blight had fallen on the gentlemen who made this piece of scrapple. There were evidences that it had been completed just at the moment Mr. Winnie Sheehan had decided that an Irishman had obligations other than those to the Chase National Bank. I haven't read the book but the film epic ended as if Mr. Sheehan had seen the next to last rushes and decided to get in touch with his Lord. I still don't know what the ending was supposed to mean but obviously it was meant to bring it to a full stop and to hell with it. This of course is not the proper attitude and I don't know whether to blame the Pope or Mr. Will Hays or simply the man in the cutting room. On second thought it may be all right. In a crisis I might be persuaded to sign a petition asking that all Hollywood films be cut in half.

But in a campaign between Hollywood and the Church, I'm afraid I'll have to take the side of Hollywood. Its morals have never worried me. There are those who can get very angry at Carole Lombard but I am not one of them. What is so disgusting about Hollywood is not the female shapes but its cheapness, its vulgarity of taste, its lack of even the simplest good sense. I have discussed this with earnest writers who have

gone to Hollywood with the intention of elevating its standards. They have had no illusions that they could win Junior Laemmle or Mr. Harry Rapf or Mr. Irving Thalberg to their side but they had hoped that by utilizing the more elementary forms of suasion they might be able to produce pictures which could be enjoyed by people who had managed to get through the seventh grade. What has always interested me is the psychology of these same writers after six months in California. If they have any ideas of surmounting the stupidities of Beverly Hills, they involve such intricate reformations that only a bomb explosion in

the Irving Trust Co. could make them possible. For the rest they throw up their hands.

But in spite of this it is necessary to be on the side of Mr. Zukor against Father Coughlin. The movies after all are only concerned with the movies. They may corrupt the stage to some small extent by producing flops which will later be successes for Joe E. Brown but it is rather late to be worrying about the people who make up the typical Broadway audience. The Catholic Church, however, can be concerned about things other than movies. I have made this point elsewhere and am not going to be-



Drawing by Esther Kriger



Esther
Kriger



Drawing by Esther Kriger



Esther
Kriger

Drawing by Esther Kriger

labor it here but it is evident that the censorship which begins with films can be carried over into the more important field of literature and the press. The Catholic Church does not like ideas and certainly not revolutionary ideas and anybody who thinks that repression will stop with the cleanup of the movies is too light witted for human companionship.

The pictures turned out by Hollywood prior to the Crusade were good run of mine products. I still feel that *Fog Over Frisco* was almost an ideal Hollywood movie in that it was entirely devoid of ideas and gave the marvelous mechanical forces of the place a chance to go full blast. It had the characteristic Hollywood pace and sharpness and the photography was superb. On the other hand *Thin Man* which was hailed so rapturously (by the people who had not read the book) seemed to me a diluted something or other after *It Happened One Night*, which is undoubtedly the best picture of the year and of many years. Because it kept resolutely away from anything but the most trivial subjects, the latter film was a triumph for Frank Capra and the actors, Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert, not to mention Robert Riskin, who wrote the script and the dialogue.

Mr. Wallace Beery made a terrific ass of himself as Pancho Villa and Ben Hecht made an even more extreme fool of himself as the author of the same ludicrous treatment of the late bandit whose idea of the way to place the land in the hands of the peasants was to take a considerable slice of it for himself, this perhaps on the theory that he was after all one of the most thorough and complete of all peons. As for *Little Man, What Now*, it was, with the exception of the happy ending, a most faithful reproduction of the book and thus a perfect confirmation of the fact that the novel itself was nonsense. The film incorporated a character something like Tarzan of the Apes to represent Communism when nothing of the sort was to be found in the book but it did reveal the hero of both the film and the novel as a man of such sub-normal capacities that any resident of Park Avenue would be justified in holding that unemployment was much too kind a state for such pathetic creatures.

The point I am making is that Hollywood would be a fine place if it weren't for the propaganda. Confining itself, as it usually does, to the higher forms of objectivity and art, it is a little disturbing to come across *Stand Up and Cheer*, which practically wiped the depression off the map by standing up and cheering. You can gauge the exact calibre of that great American philosopher who sets the tone of the *New York Times*, that profound student of governmental problems, when I tell you that Will Rogers furnished the idea for this pictorial

dramatization of *Science and Health* by Mary Baker Eddy. Mr. Rogers is probably now at work on a saga of Oklahoma entitled *Lie Down and Die*, which will effectively overcome the drought.

Lester Cohen made an excellent transcription of Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* but in that case again he succeeded only in showing up the bullheaded moronity (is that a word?) of Mr. Maugham's hero. If I had time I should like to analyze the book as a typical bourgeois example of self pity but it really isn't worth it. What was extraordinary about the picture was the acting of Bette Davis, who practically took her screen career in her hands in doing a part so ungrateful that not even national legislation would have forced any other actress to attempt it. She was excellent in a similar part in *Fog Over Frisco* and is undoubtedly the dramatic find of the year.

But as I say the pictures themselves matter very little if we are to have Norma Shearer appearing shortly in *Tony the Bootblack* or *Lavender and Old Lace*. Having succeeded in bringing whimsy to a point of nausea (a point where it invariably insists on arriving), Wallace Beery has just made *Treasure Island* and somebody is making *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*. Although *Little Women* was a success, *Alice in Wonderland* was a reverberant bust and it is a little difficult to see just where the producers are going to secure the audiences which will make the Monsignors and Bishops so happy. After all Mary Pickford didn't stop making pictures because she was tired of it. She stopped when the red ink threatened to wash away the cashier's cage.

If *Grand Canary* is an example of what can happen when God and Mr. Hearst come to California, I am afraid that I am not on the side of the angels. At its best Hollywood is bad enough. The assistance of Joseph I. Breen, the Catholic layman who is now acting as censor, is hardly likely to improve it. What is even less likely to improve it is the promised flood of films based on the Soviet Union. Mr. Hecht, with his great flair for the historic, is now preparing a satire on the subject and Ursula Parrott, the author of *Ex-Wife*, has just been sent by *McCall's* and the *Saturday Evening Post* to report on the progress of the socialist experiment. She is getting \$50,000 for her labors and tidings of it are bound to trickle out to Hollywood, where Miss Parrott is regarded as second only to Moliere as a dramatist.

I have not mentioned films from the Soviet Union because comparisons are odious and Hollywood has enough to worry about now. Even the Soviet failures, however, are superior in drama and content and acting to the best of our product and I hear that the supremacy in mechanical brilliance of Hollywood has been overcome in the

forthcoming Moscow films. This is a comforting matter to me at least because if Hearst can frighten the Hollywood producers almost to death with his strictures on their chief stock in trade, to wit, the female body, he will have little difficulty in convincing them that anything but a definite brand of American nationalism will smack of treason. The fascist phase is upon us and we may as well be prepared to face it. For that reason what Moscow does in the cinema is of the utmost importance. It will be impossible to find anything but the most perverted and juvenile ideas elsewhere. It is because of this that I am so enchanted by *Fog Over Frisco* and others of its general kind. Our only hope is that Hollywood will be so frightened by the Holy Fathers that they will cease attempting ideas at all. The only danger with that is the stimulus such success may have in inciting attacks on other and more important forms of art. If I thought that the insertion of a slip of cheese cloth across the bosoms of the Hollywood sylphs would appease the Church, I should be quite content, but one look at Ireland or Italy or any other priest ridden land is enough to convince me that repressive ideas never stop with such mild triumphs. Just as Northern California has seen the Red purging when the crisis became threatening to the ruling powers, so we are likely to experience a new phase in motion pictures when the Communist will cease to be a comic character and will be the object of the most ferocious attack. Any way you regard it, Hollywood seems to be in another transition period. Just what the future holds is beyond me, but at least Hollywood can be given credit for one thing: in the hottest summer in history, even the theatres in the small towns have been air cooled. You can't be too lofty about a thing like that.

CHILDREN'S PLAYS

THE International Union of the Revolutionary Theatre announces an international competition for the "best play, skit or scenario for the professional and amateur's children's theatre." Themes may be taken "from the life of the workers' children in the U.S.S.R. and in capitalist countries."

Awarded in honor of Felix Kohn "for his heroic struggle in the first ranks of the revolutionary proletariat, and on the front of art within 50 years" this competition is announced as a permanent annual award. Prizes for foreign authors; first prize is a free trip to and a three weeks' stay in the U.S.S.R.; second prize: a free trip and ten days' stay. The contest closes January 1, 1935. Manuscripts should be addressed to Children's Play Contest, L.O. W.T., 114 West 14th St., N.Y.C.

RUBBER STAMP MOVIES

By KING VIDOR

A PRODUCER was planning to make a picture against a background of German submarine activities during the World War. I was to direct the picture. The story was insignificant and I was not enthusiastic. I had used every manner of argument to talk the producer out of his plan, to no avail. Over a week-end holiday, I learned from several friends that five other studios were preparing the same type of picture. This fact, I thought, would be my defense against having to make the submarine picture, so Monday morning I eagerly awaited the producer to report my findings.

When I told the producer that if our submarine picture were made it would be the sixth, as five others were already in work, his reply, to my utter astonishment, was: "That proves I'm right."

Walt Disney makes fantasy popular with his delightful *Silly Symphonies* and Paramount produces *Alice in Wonderland* and makes a bust of it. Before *Alice* was rated a failure, Goldwyn planned to do Frank Baum's *Wizard of Oz*. Now he will be in a complete quandary because of the continued success of Disney fantasy and the failure of Paramount's venture.

A producer told me that the success of *Little Women* was due to the fact that the public was beginning to demand costume plays. Ridiculous! As if the public all got together and passed a resolution demanding costume plays. As a result of the success of *Little Women* there will be a flood of similar films and a consequent raid on the "classics" until the public is nauseated and yells for mercy. One exhibitor when asked what picture he liked best last year replied *Three Little Women*.

Five years ago when sound pictures were first inaugurated, musicals were extremely popular until the producers made so many of them, and all exactly alike, that the public simply went out on strike against over-teethed sopranos. The same thing happened again because Warner Brothers sneaked out with a grand little picture, *42nd Street*, and the flood was on.

After many months of dickering, the Greater Garbo was persuaded to return to Santa Monica and a new contract. Then followed months and months of story conferences and many, many changes of writers to get the proper vehicle to carry the "I-tank" girl to her poor clamoring public

Actually one year was spent on the story but when the picture reached the theatres it was the same old story that has been produced dozens of times before. John Gilbert should know by now that that pretty

blond he meets in the crowded tavern in the snow country is a woman and not a pansy. Think of the time he loses. Anyway, the story is so familiar I think even Marion Davies would have rejected it.

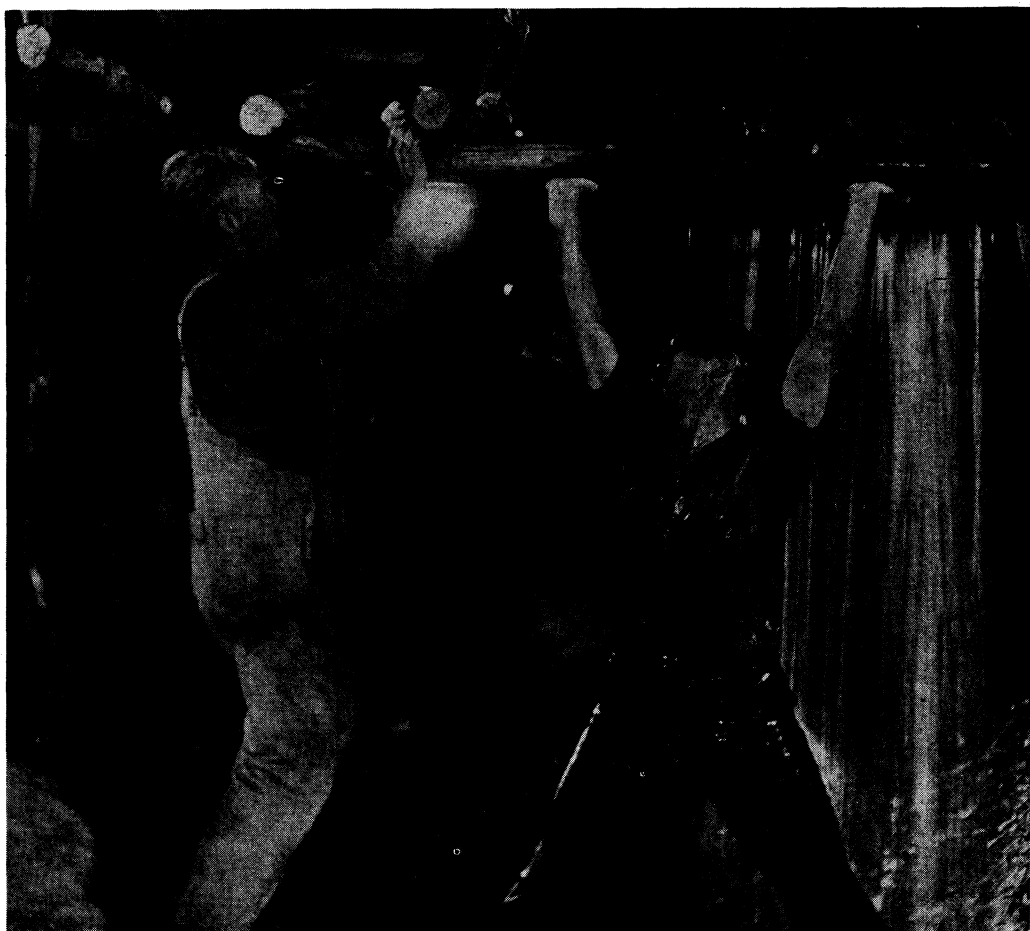
What causes all this, you may be thinking. Well, the first offender is high-cost. For example, an author may write any book he cares to, and the production cost against the completed article could be as little as: Food and lodging for three months, \$86.10; paper and pencils, \$3.16; clothes and barber shop, \$0.00.

But if a motion picture director gets a big idea he has to dig up a hundred thousand some place even if he does go without shaves and haircuts. A man will gamble two bucks on an old horse at a race-track but if he bets a thousand he's going to pick out the horse that's won the most times before. Consequently, in the movie business the final decisions are made by business men, not artists. If a writer or director could finance himself, and if his work of art could fail completely without the artist going to the poorhouse for the rest of his life, more interesting pictures would be made more frequently.

But the purse-strings are held as I said, by business men and not by artists and when they weigh those hundred thousands on one side and the director's talents on the other the decisions are generally made in favor of the pot of gold.

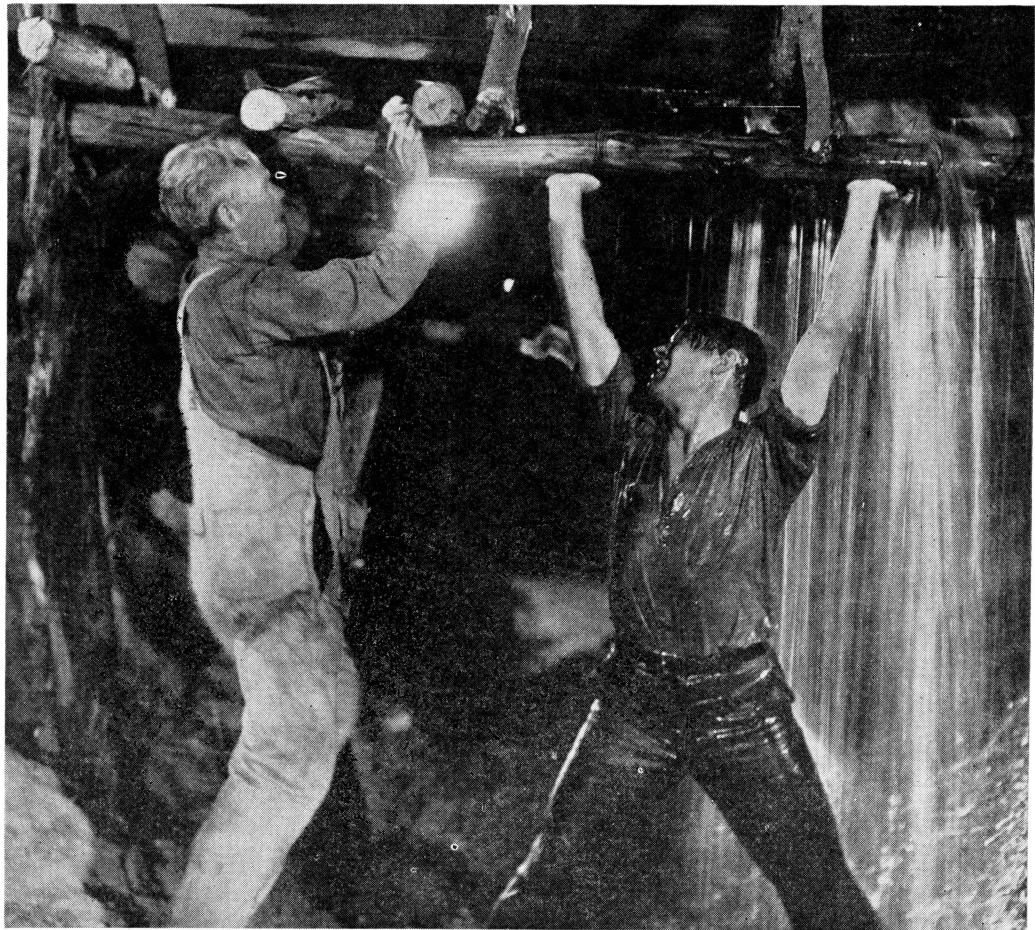
Many original ideas are accepted for production in Hollywood studios but by the time they reach the screen they appear to have been poured from the same mould as all the others. With a few exceptions all pictures that make a definite step forward come from outside studios and individual producers.

On account of the high cost of production Hollywood producers are afraid to take a chance. They will spend all kinds of money on a picture but they will not gamble with subject material. The hopeful public continue to frequent the picture theatres but in most cases comes away unmoved. The physical aspects of the picture are beyond reproach—direction, casting, acting, photography, settings, dialogue, are the best money can buy. But what of it? The inspirational basic idea has been distilled out of it and what does the public get for its money that it hasn't gotten hundreds of times before?



Still from Vidor's *Our Daily Bread*

United Artists



Still from Vidor's *Our Daily Bread*

United Artists

Intelligent people try to forget the picture as quickly as possible. The result is usually a bad taste in the subconscious. How long they'll continue to abuse themselves in this manner no one knows, but the gross attendance has been falling steadily off and the people will stay away in mobs as soon as they find something better to do.

A few years back they used to say, "Let's go to the movies tonight," now they say, "Let's see if we can find a picture tonight." And usually they are unsuccessful. Sometimes they go anyway and the evening ends with the ultimate resolve to be more careful next time.

One of the different obstacles in production is the fact that a script or scenario is only the foundation on which something else is to be built. That is, the scenario that the director submits to the supervisor is the skeleton upon which his finished picture is going to depend. If the scenario expressed all the emotion that the finished picture will contain it would have to be written in literary or book form. The supervisor with his lack of visual imagination, is unable to fill in the gap between the scenario and the finished article. Consequently he orders that each detail of the script be so obvious and over-written that when the

ingredients of good-direction, good-acting, and good photography are added the ultimate whole is all too obvious and dull. The audience cannot use its imagination, and it is the use of the imagination that is the psychological meaning of most entertainment. That was the great value of the silent picture. In the silent picture the audience was compelled to use its imagination at every moment. That is why Charlie Chaplin will do a lot of thinking before he makes a talking picture. We, in America, have never thought of Charlie as an Englishman while watching one of his pictures and neither have the natives of Afghanistan. But let him speak, and English he will be, and all your imagination will not be able to make him anything else.

A scene in a silent picture could be more intense than a similar scene in a talking picture. A talking picture is literal, you take what you are given. In a silent picture we could mix in our sound and dialogue to taste. As soon as some of our stars of the silent days spoke they were finished. Their voices couldn't live up to the imaginative aura with which we had surrounded them. This, however, is not true of Chaplin. Charlie is just as amusing audibly as he is pictorially.

The second drawback to better pictures is "catering to the mob." Pictures, being expensive, are made for what the producers call the "mob taste," synonymous in their minds with "infantile." Every other project has the element of discrimination in its appeal. Imagine trying to make a pair of shoes that would satisfy every human animal from nine to ninety, male or female. anyone who can solve that riddle is not only a Houdini but a phenomenon. Even with as universal an article as a newspaper you can read what you like and ignore the rest. But with a picture you must swallow it all. Silent pictures did have the element of flexibility: they could be seasoned to individual tastes by adding imagination.

But this is not supposed to be a discussion of silent pictures or talking pictures but a bark at the producers with a hope that it will have a widespread effect and an ultimate beneficial result.

Pictures would be better if they were not controlled by big business. Big business could make better pictures at much less money by dividing its studios up into individual units and encouraging individual expression instead of throwing all creative endeavors into the same stew-pot.

From A Director's Notebook

By STEPHEN KARNOT

NOTE: This article is a continuation of the notes, published in the June issue of the NEW THEATRE, on the problem posed at the National Conference of the League of Workers Theatres, viz., "What is the elementary production procedure for a newly-formed, inexperienced workers' dramatic group?" The previous article dealt with the assembling of script material and the selection of a script.

AFTER the selection of the script, we go into production. The first step in production is the organization of the *Production Staff*, and the defining of their respective functions. The head of the production is the *Director* who is responsible for the creation of the production as a whole. He must prepare in advance of casting a

PRODUCTION PLAN

which will outline clearly how he proposes to treat the play, the style of production, the interpretation of the various scenes, suggestions for revisions, questions of setting, costuming and lighting and a time limit for the completion of the production. The director, in preparing his plan, must apply certain

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY PRODUCTION

I. Analysis of Content

Here the same basic question as outlined in the principles of script-selection must be answered. These answers are now formu-

lated, however, in terms of the specific scenes or episodes of the play. For example: What scenes introduce the major theme of the play?

Which characters carry the positive argument of the play? Which characters carry the negative argument? What is the relationship of scene to scene (in terms of content)? What is the relationship of character? It is not enough, however, merely to determine the nature of the script as it is written. It is next necessary to determine what its nature *should* and must of necessity be for our purposes. This means that certain characters may be strengthened, others changed, emphasis in certain scenes shifted, scenes and characters added, etc. At this point we see clearly the fact that the director (and actor) in the revolutionary theatre is not simply a faithful reflector of the script but a *conscious creator of the production*. As such his understanding of the workers' economic, social, and cultural development must be based on a scientific (i.e., Marxist-Leninist) analysis and method of work. If the director is a worker with class-struggle experience, this phase of his work will be easier for him, although added theoretical development will always be necessary. The director who is unfamiliar with the worker and the class-struggle, will

find this lack of subjective experience (no matter how high his theatrical technique) a distinct handicap. However the class-struggle is just outside the door of the Workers Theatre, and this experience should not be hard to get. The director must understand one thing definitely—workers' theatre means plays presenting the world, society and individuals, with all their problems, *from one definite point of view, the point of view of the class-conscious, revolutionary working class*. The desirability or necessity of this point of view cannot be discussed in these notes, but accepting it as axiomatic, as nearly all workers' theatres do, we see that the director (and actor) in analyzing the script-content must understand this both subjectively and objectively (practically and theoretically); in other words he must be able to feel it as well as explain it.

HAVING made every effort to analyze the content of the script, and to pose clearly the various problems to be brought out by the production, the director *must* make:

II. An Analysis of Form and Style

Here again the questions posed in the notes on script selection must be gone over and answered—this time in terms of staging. What is the relationship of the con-

tent to the form? Does the form presented in the script give the best expression to the content? If not, which form should be used to properly present the content of the script? Will this form be easily understood by the given audience?

The answers to these questions involve many complex esthetic considerations. However the experience of the director shows that certain forms are more suitable for certain problems. For instance, it is obvious that a play dealing with the intense psychological conflict of an individual will be presented in the "straight dramatic" form rather than a musical revue. We also find that the one act play is generally limited to plays of situation, of conflict concerned with a small group, *i.e.*, O'Neill's one act plays; while the dramatic sketch uses still more restricted locale, few characters, a single incident. The revue however is more flexible and broader in its scope, and therefore very useful in presenting a panorama of topical events. The episodic play is similar in construction to the revue and likewise useful to cover a broad series of events. Other forms such as the vaudeville sketch, and the slapstick song-and-dance are important forms for the theatre-of-action, since they are familiar to the native American audience and can be used effectively for a graphic and satirical presentation of political topics. Puppets and marionettes, especially the former, are a medium which is extremely effective for the presentation of plays treating the subject matter in a symbolic or fantastic style. The dance-pantomime and shadow-graph are two forms as yet hardly touched by the workers' theatre; forms which offer tremendous possibilities for plays of simple theme but deep emotional powers and mass movement. Here in general, are the existing, tested, historically developed forms. The new and inexperienced groups should select their forms from these, master them, learn all their possibilities, before attempting innovations. The conditions of performance of the workers' theatre will generate variations of the old forms and lead toward creative experimentation.

Form	Content
"Straight Drama" (Three-Act Play, etc.)	Detailed depiction of inner development of character—psychological conflict.
One-Act Play	Single dramatic incident—small group of characters — restricted locale.
Dramatic Sketch	Single dramatic incident—two or three characters — restricted locale.
Episodic Play (Realistic Style)	Broad social conflict series of events, many different locales, many characters.
Revue (Satirical Style)	



Detail from Mural at Workers' Theatre Los Angeles

Revue	Broad survey of political figures and issues.
Musical Comedy (Satirical Style)	
Puppets (Symbolism, Satire)	
Vaudeville (Broad Comedy)	
Dance Drama	Generalized treatments of broad social or political theme (e.g., international politics, war, mass unemployment, etc.)
Shadow Graph	
Pageant	
Mass Recitation (See below)	

The mass recitation needs special attention. It is not a native form, and it is one of the most abused and *misunderstood forms in the workers' theatre movement. The mass recitation as used by the early "agit-prop" groups was not mass recitation—but group recitation. As employed it was a vehicle for some of the most abstract, schematic and unconvincing scripts we have seen. Its apologists claimed it was the form for the revolutionary theatre, because it required no individual "talents", because it emphasized the "group" as against the individual, because it was a highly effective political agitational weapon. Time proved all these contentions to be false—it was sectarian in approach both in content and in form. It did not educate, and strangest contradiction of all, the mass recitation demands a very high degree of training along specialized lines, *i.e.*, voice rhythm and movement. Discovering this, most groups abandoned the mass recitation. But the mass recitation properly conceived is a form of tremendous possibilities. The secret of it lies in proper use of orchestration of the spoken voice (study of oratory) plus broad graphic group movement, orchestrated sound, tympani and musical accompaniment. It is a vehicle for the epic, narrative, polyphonic poem. (Study Vachel

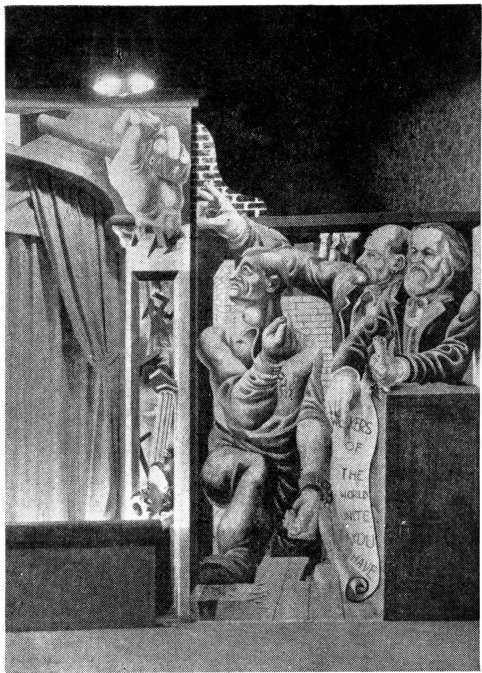
Lindsay's works in this connection, and certain Soviet works in "rhythmic declamation").

BRIEFLY on the question of style. Many of the mentioned forms are susceptible of treatment in several different styles. Of course, the style is usually suggested by the nature of the script, but it does not always follow that this will be the style of staging. One of the director's means of recreating a script in production is to stage it in a style which conflicts with the original. For example, a play is written in a straight naturalistic style, presenting certain problems of the bourgeoisie in a serious light. By staging this in satirical style, without changing a line, we can expose our point of view on the issues involved. Or again, a play of social and revolutionary implications is written in a romantic style (*i.e.*, Hauptmann's *The Weavers*). By staging the play in a strong realistic style we bring out its strong points and minimize its weaknesses. Some forms carry a traditional style—for instance the revue is usually satirical in style. The same with the puppet. One style in particular, symbolism, is used very indiscriminately by our workers groups. A symbol is an abstraction, a sign in place of the real thing. To be effective, it must be perfectly familiar to the spectator. For the class-conscious worker, a silk hat means capitalism. For a worker who is not class-conscious, it may simply mean a dude, or a rich guy, or even something to be desired. For the class conscious worker, a clenched fist and upraised arm means the height of militant working class solidarity. To someone else it may simply mean a punch or violence. Examples are innumerable. The understanding of any symbol is conditioned by the class, and general cultural condition of a spectator. It is therefore necessary to be extremely careful in the use of the symbolic style, and in the choice of the style in general. *Once the style is determined, it should be carried through consistently in all phases of the production.* Style in the visual presentation setting, lighting, costuming is important.

CONCLUSIONS

The director must take all the above outlined problems into consideration in preparing his production plan. For help he may turn to other qualified members of the group, to critical literature, etc. All details of the plan need not be determined before the production process begins, *but it is essential that the key problems be defined in advance*, *i.e.*, major theme, minor theme, key scenes, key characters, audience to be played to, which form, which style, and the concrete applications of the answers to these questions to each scene and character, and to the play as a whole.

The next article in this series will outline the duties of the rest of the production staff, their relationship to each other and the production procedure.



**Detail from Mural at Workers' Theatre
Los Angeles**

The Magic Of Meyerhold

By LEE STRASBERG

THE name of Meyerhold has long been of unusual significance. To the theatrical Russian it has been a rallying-cry or a danger signal. People still tell you of the actual fist fights in the streets about this man. To the foreigner with the added burden of the language difficulty, unaware of where to seek for the "why" or "wherefore" of what he sees before him, this is still a constant puzzle.

One sits in the Meyerhold Theatre awaiting the start of *The Forest*. There is no curtain. The scenery stares back at you, a bridge, a see-saw, a pair of swings. You do not know whether to smile or to be impressed. The audience babbles on quite unconcerned by now. A gong. The lights go out. On the stage the last props are brought on, candles are lighted; positions are taken. A gong. The lights go on. The play is on.

As you don't know the language, you watch the scenery, the acting. You are annoyed and shocked by the latter. It looks old-fashioned. The actors move too much and posture and strut. You are sure you don't like it. It is all so unreal. You feel out of it. You don't know whether to be disappointed. It is certainly "different" and "unusual". But is this the man of whom Vakhtangov said, "He is a genius. Every production creates an epoch in the theatre"? The play goes on however and before long you are thinking differently. You are caught by the scenic action, by its imaginativeness, by its flair. The entire life of the people begins to unfold. You feel you have misunderstood the scenery. It is not unreal. It actually makes possible more reality than would be possible in a realistic set. It stems from the desire not to be limited by the stage—the conventional set. Thus Meyerhold in *The Forest* can have the girl ironing, hanging clothes, chasing pigeons, people on a road, fishing, love scenes on the road . . . marvelous in its effect of throb and pulse—the large swings used for the first love scene, the action on the see-saw, all these following one another or intertwining one with the other, creating the entire atmosphere of the life on the old Russian farmstead, bringing out and sharpening the drama. The taps of the rolling pin, used to wring water from freshly washed clothes, serves to accentuate a quarrel, becomes the dynamic rhythm of the scene. The see-saw becomes an instrument to bring out a Freudian comment. In the first love scene, a simple text involving two minor characters, the actors climb into the swings. They swing higher.



Vsevolod Meyerhold

"The spurts of hope are designated by Peter's three upward flights, punctuated by the words, One day in Kazan, the other in Samara, and the third in Saratov! With every swing he goes higher . . . The swing of the upflight exactly conveys the movement of the intonation; the higher the tone, the steeper the upward flight."*

The young people in love swing up, as they fight to rise from their environment, and your own blood, as you watch, leaps with them. The girl stands on the bridge. The boy swings towards her. The mood is very lyric. The text is very simple. When you go back and study it, it is hard to realize it was not written to be played this way. But none of this would be possible in a confined, conventional, "cottage" set. The canvas of the production is elastic. It is a room or the whole Russian countryside. And sometimes it is both together; two men walk along a road toward the house, far away, the internal and related life of which is visible to us.

IF it is Camille you are watching, you are first dazzled by the amazing luxury of the sets and costumes. Each object is carefully arranged in its place in a magnificent composition, the whole breathing the very spirit of French art. And into this scene Camille blazes, literally stunning us by the bold theatricality of her entrance. Blindfolded, her body poured into a dress the soft red velvet of which accentuates her body, she drives before her two fatuous gentlemen harnessed like circus zebras. Her hands are covered with black gloves: one of them holds the reins, the other a scarlet whip with which she slashes at her two male steeds.

* Slominsky's article on *The Forest*, in the collection *Theatrical October*, to be privately published by The Group Theatre.

By the time the second scene comes on, we have been whirled into a maelstrom of movement and action. The scene in which Armande meets Camille is, from some slight hints in the text, turned into a party at her house. The whole life of the period swirls here. From one part of the stage to another, weaving increasingly in a steady beat, the songs, the dances, the poetic declamations, masquerading, move. Confetti and gay balloons appear out of nowhere. The whole becomes a riotous carnival mounting at terrific pace throughout the scene, creating a strange foreboding in its hecticness, an exhilaration, a desperate gaiety.

And yet throughout this entire episode the director's magic succeeds in constantly riveting our attention on the almost motionless figures of Armande and of Camille, whose eyes behind her fan constantly search and flirt with him.

There are memorable touches in this scene. One comes at the moment in which Camille is prevailed on to sing. Her voice rises childish and strange, hardly in tune, wavering and hesitant as the notes picked out on the piano by a child. And at the end of the song, the actress collapses.

Again, there is the suggestive and grisly introduction of a mask of death, coming sharply on the end of a love passage. It is noteworthy that this element, bizarre as it is, has been marvelously prepared for us by the introduction of two men in simple masks, and by the act of one of the characters in the play who, left without a partner for the dance, picks up one of these masks, fastens it to his cane and dances with it. Already, then, the masks have become symbolic, and when the friends of Camille enter in a procession with masks, we accept that one which represents death as a foreboding of doom. Thus the first act is a complete cycle, which like a musical overture repeats all the themes to be treated in the play—life, love, and death.

Meyerhold's stage is not and has never been a mere striving towards theatricality—tho his effects are so brilliant and unusual that you forget the reason for them and tend not to notice the new content uncovered or interpreted. His technical inventiveness derives from a desire to mirror and explore life more fully by means of the theatre. His form derives from his content.

The production of *Don Juan* in 1910 is the beginning of Meyerhold's "new manner". Here for the first time he worked without the stage curtain. He brought back the use of the foresage. He lighted the auditorium as well as the stage, made use of the stage servant, Japanese manner.

But this was no effort at historical reconstruction for its own sake. Meyerhold's productions have never been "revivals"; they are creations. He saw Moliere as the first of the masters of the stage of the Roi-Soleil who aimed to bring the action out of the middle of the deep stage into the apron, the very edge. Moliere, according to Meyerhold, needed to come before the proscenium to bring out fully and freely the overbubbling hilarity, to give space "to the expanse of his large, truthfully sincere touches, in order that the wave of denunciatory monologues of the author might reach the audience, in order to bring out fully the free gesture of the Moliere actor, his gymnastic movements unimpeded by the colonades of the wings." The proscenium molds the acting. The forestage will not tolerate an actor with an inflated affectation, with insufficient elasticity of bodily movement. The dancing, movement, gestures, of the Moliere actor must aim not to make him the "unit of an illusion," but to express fully all the designs of the playwright. In the old theatre the actor was the only one who could and had to convey the creative design of the playwright. Thus, having chosen the proscenium as the only traditional platform fit for a Moliere play, Meyerhold speaks consistently about the necessity of restoring the technique of the proscenium acting, of tricks natural to the old scenes, of the vivid lighting of the auditorium, and finally the analogue of the old Japanese Kurambo, the stage servant.

THE second problem in *Don Juan* was to create the environment. Meyerhold holds that the full grasp of some plays require the reproduction of an environment such as enveloped the audience for whom they were written. Apart from the epoch which created the genius of the author, this script might give the impression of a tedious charming play. In order that the modern

audience might listen without getting bored by the long monologues and altogether foreign dialogue, Meyerhold held it necessary "to become intimately familiar with the most trivial traits of the epoch which created that work." In recreating the perfumed, parasitic Versailles court against which Moliere's comedy temperament struck out, Meyerhold supplied the second party to the conflict which is not contained in the script because originally it existed in the audience: the Versailles stiffness, the dissonance between the king and the poet, the sharpness of the Moliere grotesque against the luxuriously decorated proscenium.

Since *Don Juan* there has been a steady and uninterrupted development of his art, a development that flowered under the Revolution, fostered and inspired by a new, sympathetic, audience. There is a widespread misconception of Meyerhold as a sort of will-o-the-wisp, changing his shape in each production, never continuing in any one direction, continually breaking with his past achievements, affirming his theoretic beliefs one moment only to throw them overboard the next. This impression is created by the unusual, spectacular and original nature of each of his performances, which so dazzles the observer that he sees no more than this, and those elements in his work which have steadily and continuously developed are lost to sight. The judgment is fostered by his own statement, made in 1913, that the director should never codify his theory, but should simply state to his co-workers the premises on which each production is to be based.

During the early period of the proletarian revolution the old academic theatres maintained, to justify their existence, that they were the guardians of the authentic traditions of the past, "the only basis on which the new proletarian art can be built." In 1920 Meyerhold, the leader of the revolu-

tionary front, wrote an article accusing the academic theatres of

"deliberately and systematically destroying the traditions of the great masters of the theatre, of diligently cultivating the theatrical rubbish of the second half of the XIXth century, the most poverty-stricken and hopeless of all the periods in the history of the Russian theatre. I accuse all those who hide behind the fetish of imaginary traditions of not knowing how to preserve the authentic traditions of Schtchepkin, Shumsky, Sadovsky, Lensky." (Russian actors of the XIXth century.)

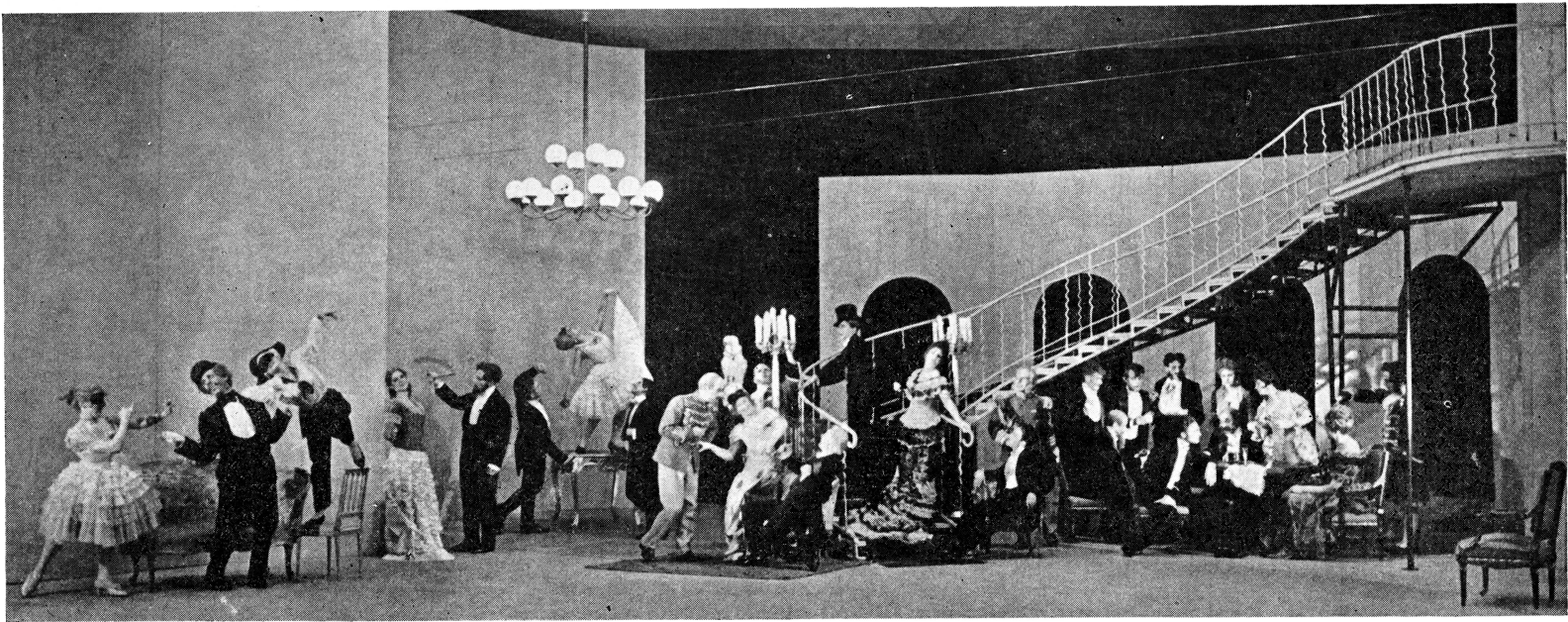
Coming especially at the time it did, this statement is of the utmost importance for the understanding of the work of Meyerhold. Since 1910, in his productions and in the work in his Studio he has tried to study the classic periods in order to discover those rules arising out of the very basis of theatrical material. But this work is not an absorption with purely technical problems. It aims to restore and continue the line of the "folk-theatre", lost in the bourgeois epoch of our history.

THIS folk theatre however, is not to be confused with the liberal idea of a people's theatre or with the popular theatre which we know. Popular theatre is no more than the sunken theatre of the upper classes permeated to the masses in the period of its decay. Folk-Theatre is indigenous and class-conscious. It rises from the masses whose interests it represents, as against the theatre of the upper classes. In the various periods of its existence, whether in the theatre of the Greek mimes or the old Roman comedy of the masks, the medieval histrion-jongleurs or the old Russian zanyes, the Italian Commedia del'Arte or the wandering actors of England and Spain, the creators of the profoundly national theatrical systems, as in the folk theatre of Japan or China—"everywhere we find such traits of resemblance that we are able to discern a single style of folk theatre common to

(Continued on page 30)



Scene from Meyerhold's production of *Camille*



Scene from Meyerhold's production of *Camille*

Meyerold Theatre

Scenes from The Living Theat

By PHILIP STEIN

THE Workers' Theatre and the Film and Photo League of San Francisco, quartered in the Ruthenberg House' at 121 Haight Street, did not escape the Fascist fury during the bloody week of terror against the organizations which were giving their best men and efforts to the General Strike. They did not escape but they survived.

It is difficult to write a report of what happened to the Workers' Theatre of San Francisco. It's like writing of what happened to an eagle during a hurricane. Read the papers, talk to people who lived through the General Strike, dig through the magazines, and still you can hardly begin to reconstruct the magnitude of the event. Still you cannot plumb the depths to which it shook the American working class and all its roots and branches.

For a week the newspapers of the entire country cried out against the "menace." Editorials, news pictures, news dispatches, cartoons, conjured famine, violence, pestilence and chaos as the four horsemen of a new Apocalypse called down by the embattled workers of San Francisco and the Bay counties. Radio and cinema joined in the holy crusade against the "disaster." At this date the reason for the nationally concerted cry of hunger, disease, violence and disorder is obvious. It was the necessary prelude for the violence of the governmental forces which broke the strike. Without the barrage of horrors it would not have been possible to smash workers' headquarters, to jail 300 or more of the most important supporters of the strike.

The general strike offered the best demonstration since the war days, of capitalist-controlled popular cultural agencies in action. Not since the war has so much money and organizational effort been expended by the ruling class in a drive to poison the minds of workers against the working class.

Now the Workers' Theatre and Film and Photo League in common with other West Coast organizations are taking up where they left off, every cultural agency of the revolutionary movement must look with new understanding and determination on its role as working class fighters against ruling class terror.

NOT so long ago, workers' theatre and film groups which felt the completeness of their bonds with the struggles of the workers had a difficult time getting themselves taken seriously. Those days are gone. One need not point to the illegal Blue Blouse groups and the Agit-



Prop theatres of Japan, which appear suddenly at a street corner and present their dramatic message before the police can interfere. Just look at San Francisco.

The actual circumstances of the raids and the history of the Workers' Theatre just before the raids present an instructive picture of what a workers' theatre means.

During the first days of the general strike, NEW THEATRE received a letter reporting on the progress of the Workers' Theatre there.

"On May 1," he said, "We had our first anniversary affair, for which we produced five short plays, *The New Road*, *Charity*, *For Christ and Constitution*, *Cell No. 1* and *The Bulls See Red*.

Without having seen any of these save *Charity*, one gets the feeling that at least three of the remaining titles were prophetic of the theatre's experiences two months later.

"Looking backward to the day when we started," the letter continues, "it is pleasing to see the progress we have made. Our

Theatre . . . San Francisco 1934

By PHILIP STERLING



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first plays were . . . short and very crude. . . . However we worked hard and our members increased until we could afford to put on *The Follies and Blunders of 1933* in May. This was quite a success but instead of doing us good it had the opposite effect because we had no organization. . . . Things went from bad to worse until we had only two members left, a girl of 14 and myself. We decided to reorganize."

There follows a detailed description of the slow and painful process of correcting the organizational mistakes which nearly

cost the life of the group. New quarters were taken in Ruthenberg House, a stage was built, modest production ventures were successfully undertaken, round table discussions organized.

In the next paragraph: ". . . the Blue Blouse group was doing very well until two weeks ago. . . . They went down to the waterfront here to put on *Recruit*. The police attacked and severely clubbed them. Peter Maccharini organizer of the Workers' Theatre got a fractured skull. Little hope was held for his recovery. However,

he has improved a little and it is thought that the danger is over."

THAT'S the way it stood until NEW THEATRE received another letter two weeks ago. This letter from the organizer who has replaced Maccharini describes the raids which wrecked the Workers' Theatre as well as the other working class organization offices quartered in the Ruthenberg house.

The new organizer writes:

"The Ruthenberg House was raided three times. The first two times the vigilantes were repulsed by David Merrihew who, to quote the bourgeois press, "brandished a sword like a character out of Dumas. . . ."

"During the first raid the hired thugs, masquerading as union men, succeeded in breaking nearly all the windows, in upsetting furniture on the first floor, and they got up on the stage and ripped the front curtain on which the symbol of the International Union of Revolutionary Theatres was painted.

"But not until Merrihew was safe in jail and his sword confiscated by police did the vandals dare to venture further into the interior of the building. . . . This time furniture was broken, cameras were smashed, stair-rails were chopped into, kindling.

"Again the Workers' Theatre stage was a mark for the thugs," the letter reports. ". . . they ripped flats, broke frames, tore the curtain into shreds and smashed props. The meeting room was broken into and there a complete file of NEW THEATRE along with a bundle of the current issue was taken from a locked cabinet and destroyed.

"Peter Maccharini was up for trial July 23. The jury stood eleven to one for conviction so another trial will be set. The day after the trial his home was raided by police. . . ."

There is no note of defeat in the letter. "As a result of the fascist terror there is an excellent possibility of drawing into the membership of the Workers' Theatre a large group of workers. . . ." the letter declares. "At present, the stationery theatre and the Blue Blouse groups are joining so that mass chants and short plays can be given at street meetings and demonstrations."

Increasing numbers of workers and intellectuals realize that the only hope for a culture of continued vitality, capable of reaching higher levels lies in the culture which the revolutionary movement is using as a social weapon. To those who have not yet realized it, the fascist onslaughts

(Continued on page 30)



SAN FRANCISCO

DOLLAR LINE

WESTERN WORKER

AMERICA TODAY

Ruthenberg

VIGILANTES JOIN ROUND-UP OF REDS
Wreck Three Nests of Communists, Break Up Public Meeting, Beat Opponents.
POLICE GATHER
Intention of Pushing Radical Element by Citizens and

MENACE OF FACISM

LABOR DEFENDER

FIGHT THE MASSES

LENIN

WE DEMAND...

WE DEMAND...

NEURO UNITE

AMERICAN SHIPMENT

NOVEMBER 1934

WE DEMAND...
BU... MARINE...

PREP TOM MOONEY SUPPORT LAB...

MARBINE LABOR INDUSTRY...



SAN FRANCISCO

DOLLAR LINE

WESTERN WORKER

AMERICA TODAY

MENACE OF FACISM

LENIN

LABOR DEFENDER

FIGHT

FOR THE MASSES

Ruthenberg

VIGILANTES JOIN ROUND-UP OF REDS
Wreck Three Nests of Communists, Break Up Public Meeting, Beat Opposers.
POLICE GATHER Intention of Purging Radical Element by Citizens and

WE DEMAND HIGHER PAY
WE DEMAND REVOLUTION



FREE TOM MOONEY SUPPORT LAB

NOV 1934

Perspectives of the Dance

By HARRY ELION

DURING the past few years I have watched with keen interest the development of the Workers' Dance movement. One cannot deny that much has been done toward the development of this field of proletarian culture. However, while I was watching the dances presented at the Dance Festival it became clear to me that a thorough examination of the aims and methods of the workers' dancers is necessary if the dance movement is to make immediate progress. The weaknesses so glaring in almost all the dances result mainly from a lack of understanding of the relations between content, form and style. Although one could notice a general improvement in the mastery of the technique of dance form, the content, though selected from class struggle events, did not get across the footlights clearly. It was as though content and form were not integrated but paralleled. At times content overshadowed form and at other times form completely obscured the content. This seeming contradiction between improved technique and lack of clarity in expression is the very basic difficulty of dancers. It arises from the rigid adherence to formal technique when the question of a new content is involved.

It is a generally accepted principle that revolutionary art form is dependent upon its content. This principle was reiterated at the last Dance Convention and was accepted as a basis for work. When we examine the content of the various dances presented at the Festival we find that most of it was abstract. In *Bruno Tesch Memorial* dancer after dancer walks to death of his own free will. Intuitively they are drawn to the butcher's axe. These dancers may have reason for doing it, but the audience was never let in on the secret.

In the same manner were the dancers in *Dirge* attracted by the light. In *Uprising* they were drawn, just as intuitively, upward, forward, as a moth is drawn to the light. Certainly terror, upsurge and uprising are manifestations of a very bitter class struggle. In this struggle every gain, every defeat is a result of terrific class conflicts. If the subject matter of workers' dances is to be class struggle, these conflicts must become more apparent in the content of the dances.

If the workers' dancers honestly and truly make it their task to use the manifestations of class conflicts in life as content for their dances, the form of the dance will of necessity have to undergo some development in the direction of becoming more dramatic. I stated in my introductory paragraph that most of the dances failed to develop their subject matter. This failure was due to

the fact that the dance embodied no conflict. Development without conflict is impossible because such conception is undialectical. Every dynamic art form must base its conception upon conflict. Eisenstein formulated this principle in the following manner:

"In the realm of art, as the fundamental basic principle (this dialectic principle of dynamics incarnates itself in conflict) of the substance of every art-work and every art form. For art is always conflict."

The static influence in the dance conception comes from the bourgeois dance. There is only one way to overcome this influence and that is to make dramatic development, or conflict, part of the dance form.

THE problem of style and its relation to the content of the dance requires a thorough analysis; for it is in the field of style that the workers' dances show most the influence of the bourgeois dance. The dance images with few exceptions are not derived from the content of the dances but from some preconceived styles. As a result, it would probably be necessary to equip every member of the audience with a dictionary, defining the meaning of every movement in order to make the dance understood. If the content of the dance is a specific incident in the class struggle the basic image, in order to be communicable to the audience, must be derived from that incident and not from any abstract movements. The content of a dance, if it is specific and not abstract, will provide a basis for a communicable image. From the particular the general is derived. Lenin formulated this truth in the following passage quoted by V. Adoratsky in *Dialectical Materialism*:

"The approach of the mind (of man) to a particular thing, the taking of a cast of it (in other words, an impression) is not a simple direct act; a lifeless mirror reflection, but a complex, twofold and zig-zag act, which harbors the possibility that the phantasy may entirely fly away from reality; what is more, it harbors the possibility that the abstract conception, the idea, may be transformed (imperceptibly and unwittingly on the part of man) into phantasy (and in the long run into God). For even the simplest generalization and the most elementary general idea is a fragment of phantasy."

How much more are we subject to flying away into the realm of phantasy when we begin with the most abstract ideas, such as *Uprising* and *Upsurge*?

The researches into the art creations of the aborigines can teach us much in this regard. Harrison writes in *Themis*, p. 44, that

"... when the men return from the war, the hunt, the journey, and re-enact their doings, they are at first undoubtedly representing a particular action that actually has taken place. Their drama is history, or at least narrative; they say, in effect, that such and such a thing did happen in the past. Everything with the savage begins in this particu-

lar way. But it is easy to see that if the dramatic commemoration be often repeated, the action tends to cut itself loose from the particular in which it arose and becomes generalized, abstracted, as it were. The particular hunt, journey, battle is in the lapse of time forgotten or supplanted by a succession of similar hunts, journeys, battles, and the dance comes to commemorate and embody hunting, journeying, fighting."

This is not only confined to the savage but is the life history of every idea or concept. The dancers can learn from this that if they proceed in the same manner to dance out the specific incidents of the class struggle they will in due time acquire a dance language which will enable them to represent struggle in general. This does not mean that they will remove the "possibility" of getting into the field of phantasy.

The contradiction between the facts that the dancers have reached a higher level of technical development while the content of the dances remains obscure, results from the fact that while the dancers generally accept the proposition that form is derived from the content, their preoccupation with the existing technique in the dance makes it impossible for them to carry this truth into practice. The dancers cannot find the solution to their difficulties in the study of the contemporary dance alone; they must acquire a historical perspective of the dance in its relation to other cultural forms and to society as a whole. When they do this they will of necessity come to the conclusion that while dance throughout its history had its internal development, it had to undergo changes in accordance with the demands placed upon it by every change in society as a whole.

Historical Perspective

IN the primitive communities, the dance plays a very important role. Every function, birth, education of the young, religion, sickness and death, and above all the struggle for existence finds its expression in the dance.

The content of these dances varies with the specific conditions of obtaining a livelihood. Among the hunting and fishing tribes it deals mainly with the invocation of the spirits and the forcing of the evil spirit to supply herds of animals for the hunt. When there is a scarcity of animals, the tribe will get together and perform a ceremony which represents a hunt. This will be continued until a herd appears. The witch doctor usually does not hold these ceremonies until he gets tidings that a herd is not far away. He fears for his prestige.

In more developed communities where agriculture is the dominant means of support, worship of the elements, the sun, the

moon, the wind, the rain, is more closely tied up with the contents of the dances.

The Greek dances were no exception. The content and form of the dances were closely associated with the life of the time. The dances fall into two distinct classes: dances designed for war training, and work dances. During the decadent period of Greek life another class of dances appears, the entertainment or sex dance. Xenophon describes one of these dances in the "Banquet" and concludes that:

"When the guests saw that they (the dancers) were embracing one another and seemed to be going to repose, such of them as were unmarried vowed that they would marry and such of them as were married mounted their horses and rode off to join their wives; while Socrates, and the others who stayed behind, proceeded, with Callias, to accompany Lycon and his son in their walk."

Such were the effects of the dance. However, another dance was performed at the same banquet and is described in the following manner:

"A hoop was brought in, stuck round with swords standing upright. Into the midst of these swords the dancing-girl leaped head foremost, and sprang out head foremost over them so that the spectators were struck with terror lest she should be hurt."

A guest remarked that this dance should be exhibited to the youth as a feat of courage to train the youth to run upon swords without fear.

There are more direct opinions of the ancients as to the value of the dance. Athenues states in "Deipnosophists":

"... the kind of dancing which was at that time used in the choruses, was decorous and magnificent, and to a certain extent imitated the motions of men under arms. . . . For the dance is very nearly an armed exercise, and is a display not only of good discipline in other respects, but also of the care which the dancers bestow on their person."

It must be remembered in this connection that dancing was prescribed as part of the training of the youth for war. The contents of two dances described by Atheneus show clearly how the content of the dance was used to inspire the Greeks to fight and struggle.

"After the libations were made, and the guests had sung a paen, there rose up first the Thracians, and danced in arms to the music of a flute, and jumped very high, with light jumps, and used their swords. And at last one of them strikes another, so that it seemed to every one that the man was wounded. And he fell down in a very clever manner, and all the bystanders raised an outcry. And he who struck him, having stripped him of his arms, went out singing sitalces. And others of the Thracians carried out his antagonist as if he were dead; but in reality, he was not hurt. After this some Aenianians and Magnesians rose up, who danced the dance called Carpaea, they too being in armor. And the fashion of the dance was like this: One man, having laid aside his arms, is sowing, and driving a yoke of oxen, constantly looking around as if he were afraid. Then there comes up a robber; but the sower, as soon as he sees him, snatches up his arms and fights in defense of his team in regular time to the music of the flute. And at last the robber, having bound the man, carries off the team; but sometimes the sower conquers the robber, and then, binding him alongside his oxen, he ties his hands behind him and drives him forward."

A great many of the dances dealt with work subjects, (*i.e.*, the sower's dance). The songs used as accompaniment to these dances show that almost every phase of work had its song and dance. The movements were derived from the particular work the dance represented as was indicated in the above quotation. The audience recognized these movements very easily and were very definitely involved in themes of the dancers.

The Romans used the dance for entertainment's sake even more than the Greeks. However, the Romans developed pantomime to a very high form; pantomime became one of the most popular forms of entertainment. G. Vuillier in his *History of the Dance* quotes an incident which shows how popular this form of entertainment was, and at the same time sheds light on its role in the class struggle. The supporters of two mimes, Pylades and Bathythis, would have battles in the streets of Rome as to which of the two was a better performer. Every person was either a Bathylian or Pyladian. Augustus reproved Pylades on one occasion for his perpetual quarrel with Bathythis. "Caesar," replied the dancer, "it is well for you that the people are engrossed by our dispute; their attention is thus diverted from your actions!" It would be a mistake to think though that the dance did not have any class struggle content.

THE exponents of "art for art's sake" who get their inspiration from the ancients, base their knowledge of the dance not on the content of these dances but on the movements divorced from the content and preserved on frescoes and vases. As a result these movements, though they had meaning at the time, have no meaning to us. Thus Maurice Emmanuel in *The Antique Greek Dance* has taken up the positions of the legs and their movements, the positions and movements of the arms; and those of the head and torso, as used in the modern classic dance and depicted upon ancient vases, high and low reliefs, and upon frescoes of Pompeii. Similarly Duncan states in *The Art of the Dance* that

"... the most beautiful dream is that of finding again the Greek theatre that is ideal for both spectators and actors. To bring to life again the ancient ideal. I do not mean to say, copy it, imitate it; but, to breathe its life to recreate it in one's self, with personal inspiration; to start from its beauty and then go toward the future. The subject of the dramas can be modern. But to find again the ancient idea, and by a miracle of love and devotion, to unite anew the arts and the artist."

Another time Miss Duncan denies that she was inspired by the ancients and states that she is "American" foremost. Duncan's creative ability and her eclectic philosophy fortunately permitted her to create in spite of the Greek influence. However, she might have been much more effective had she completely divorced herself from this influence.

I shall not attempt to give an exhaustive historical analysis of the development of the dance, for neither space nor time will permit me to do this. The object here is to give a perspective that will aid those who are preoccupied with the dance in further researches. The medieval period was less fruitful as far as dance creation is concerned. This was largely due to the fact that the church interfered and permitted only church dances. The rise of the merchant bourgeoisie brought a fresh wave of cultural development and with it the revival of the dance. The dances however were mainly confined to the ruling classes and reflected their preoccupation with court manner and chivalry. G. Vuillier states that:

"... the dances of the eighteenth century had a charm all their own; with their supple and rhythmic grace they combined a dignity which surrounded man, and in a still greater degree, woman, with an atmosphere of beauty. . . . But there was a fearful morrow to those days of supreme elegance and careless gaiety. . . . The roar of Revolution broke in upon the dream; kings, women and poets were dragged on tumbrils to scaffold. . . . And yet dancing went on. . . . men and women danced round the scaffold, their feet stained with blood. . . . Twenty-three theatres and eight hundred public halls were open every evening immediately after the terror. . . . A veritable revolution took place in dancing at this period. The middle classes developed a passion for balls, which had hitherto been confined almost exclusively to the aristocracy, save for the rustic festivals of country districts. Unable, however, to enjoy the amusements in their own small rooms, dancers soon flocked to public saloons. . . ."

Dances such as polkas and waltzes became very popular. However, the bourgeoisie soon got rich and could afford large enough rooms. The modern dance was revived as private entertainment. It was again divorced from its social function, and assumed the character of entertainment. Its content was sex and exaltation with pure being. The bourgeoisie was growing, prospering. A healthy body, an apple, grapes, and other objects became subject matter of art. The technique that developed under these conditions was suited to the needs of the audience.

While it is true that the workers' dance could not cast aside bourgeois form and style at its inception, it is equally true that such a slavish adherence to such form and style will not permit proletarian content to get across to the audience. During the process of creative work it is necessary to develop new forms, to experiment with style and above all to make every attempt to derive both from the content.

The workers' dance took over a great deal of the bourgeois technique. In fact most of the leaders in the dance were trained to be bourgeois performers. The workers' dance must free itself from this influence and create a dance form that is expressive of the workers' needs. This form will come as a result of the revolutionary content, providing the dancers free themselves from the idea that all that has to be done is to give the bourgeois dance working class content.

THE SHADOW DANCE

By SIMON BREINES

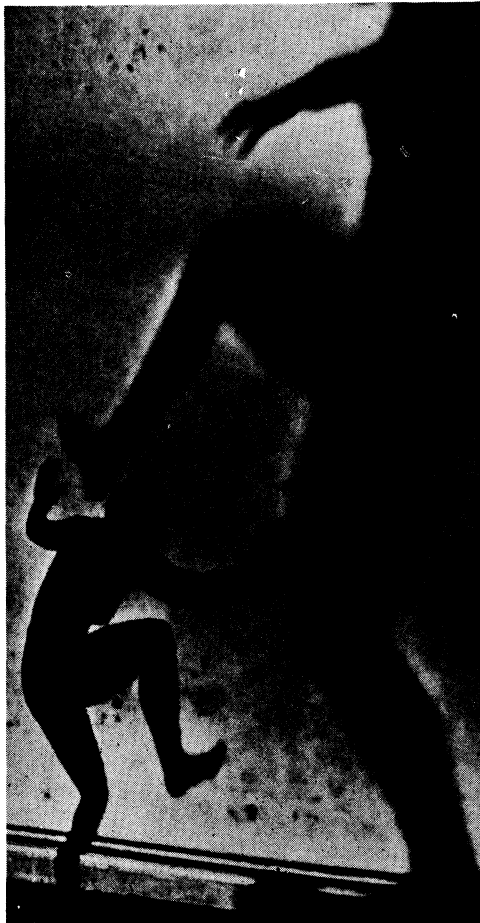
MICHAEL GOLD in commenting on a recent evening devoted to the proletarian dance, asks, "where is the elan, the courage, and passionate warmth of the revolution? Is this rattling dance of corpses on Walpurgis Night around the coffin of a corrupt world OUR revolution? Can you inspire the workers to struggle with such a dismal message?"

While I am in agreement with Gold on the relative ineffectiveness of the contemporary dance as revolutionary art in the political sense, I do not wholly accept the formulation of his criticism. It seems to me incorrect to expect the dance to play as important or as similar a part in the revolutionary movement as other mediums. Obviously, it is not as easily available, nor so directly and explicitly comprehensible to large masses as e.g. the printed word, the movies, the newspaper cartoon or the play.

Furthermore it must be made clear just what kind of dancing one is talking about. If by urging dancers to "come out into the revolutionary streets," Gold means that they should teach workers themselves to dance, I am in hearty accord. Certainly that is a great and hitherto neglected field for the members of the Workers Dance League to operate in, just as it is important for musicians in the revolutionary movement to write songs which workers can sing.

But there is also the field of performing for others—on the concert stage before footlights, or out in the open air or anywhere else. It is this aspect which we usually have in mind when referring to the dance today. Putting aside, for some other time, the broader questions of the role of the proletarian dance during the period of revolutionary struggle and in the socialist state, it is my opinion that the unsatisfactory development of the modern dance movement—both bourgeois and revolutionary—is due not to a lack of ideas or of things to say or even of how to say them, but rather to certain inadequacies inherent in the dance itself. In this article I shall offer a remedy for some of these shortcomings.

Until quite recently, the dance was not thought of as an independent art medium. In its earlier forms it did not usually exist in its own right but was connected with the different festivals and the various ceremonial rites of hunting, religion, marriage, etc. In those times, the dance was a more or less subordinate part of the ritual itself, and it was natural, therefore, for it to become conventionalized. These factors of formalized movement and subordination of the dance were carried over in the ballet of



Shadows

Photo by M. Levy

recent day, which was usually of a fixed pantomimic pattern and a minor feature of the opera.

The modern dance sought to express our time. Since contemporary society had eliminated or changed the foundations on which most of the old dance structure had grown, the first step was a break with the conventionalized patterns. This historically inevitable development led to the establishment of the dance as a medium of expression in its own right. In its own right, the dance, freed from the domination of ritual, music, pantomime, etc., is essentially variations of more or less abstract movement. And so, in winning its independence, the modern dance had lost precisely those elements which in the past had provided the framework for its existence.

In addition to becoming abstract, in the sense implied above, the modern dance differs from the old in being intellectual. It attempts to function as a creative medium for conveying ideas.

Unfortunately, no basically new form or technique was developed in support of the radically changed objectives contemplated

by the dance. In this writer's opinion the reason for this inability to balance theory with practice, is undoubtedly due to the limitation of the medium itself—in other words, to the human body.

We have many illustrations of the inability of the contemporary dance to cope with the problems it has set for itself. For example, there is the work recently exhibited in this country of the Joos Ballet—in particular the dance cycle called *The Green Table*. In one of the sections in this work, the figure of Death dances with each of the several protagonists, and after brief struggles, succeeds in overpowering them one by one.

Here is an excellent idea for a dance composition. The oppositional elements, while abstract and symbolic, are sufficiently clear and plausible. The spectator quickly comprehends the nature of the ominous and inexorably powerful force of Death, the tragic and unequal struggles of the other characters, and the relation of the denouement to the central theme of the cycle. Nevertheless, the complete emotional potentialities of this idea are never realized.

In his mind, the spectator understands this conception of Death as an awful, unfeeling presence, as a tremendous and brutally powerful associate of the diplomats of the *Green Table*. But with his eyes, he sees this figure as a mere man, five feet, eight inches in height and, in spite of the mask and the painted ribs and the greys, a figure which does not begin to fill the role.

Poetic conceptions and symbols such as Death in the *Green Table*, Capital, Labor and Revolt in the revolutionary dance, had their counterparts, of course, in the dance of other times. But as I have indicated earlier, the success of the dance in the past was due in large measure to the emotional assistance of the ritual or conventionalized ceremony or other function, of which it was a part, but which is no longer an accessory of the dance today. The contemporary dance, independent and intellectual, is therefore faced with the problem of providing an added element in its technique which will give emotional validity to its conceptions.

Evidence that the normal human body is inadequate in expressing many of the ideas peculiar to such a medium as the dance is found in the numerous attempts in the past to alter and enlarge the body of the dancer with headdress, costume, stilts, etc. If we could have varied the size of the above mentioned Death so that this figure actually loomed and towered at will above the others and presented a visual justification of the unfolding idea, we could have unleashed the



Shadows

Photo by M. Levy

emotional force inherent in the situation.

It is obviously impossible to change the size of the body of the dancer sufficiently or flexibly enough. However, if the spectator sees, not the dancer himself but his image projected upon an interposed, translucent screen, there exists immediately the opportunity for infinite variations in the actual and relative size of the images.

The reader can grasp the possibilities of the use of the shadow in the dance by an experiment which he can perform without moving from his chair. Let him hold his hand between the light and the wall. By moving towards the light, the image on the wall becomes larger. By moving away, smaller. If the process is repeated freely, and, at the same time the fist is clenched and unclenched, and if in addition the hand is twisted from the elbow, the variety of the resulting images is infinite.

Everyone has observed the interesting shadows of objects or people cast upon the walls of a room by a strong light, and of course dance enthusiasts have noticed the exciting, constantly changing incidental images of the performers thrown by the footlights upon the backdrop of the stage. The Chinese and others have used the shadow in the theatre and all children who have gone to camp know the shadow-play. But thus far, no attempt seems to have been made to deliberately use this phenomenon as a controlled, creative element in dance technique.

In the first place very little special equipment is necessary. Between the spectator and the performer is interposed a translucent screen. On this screen the images of the dancers are cast by a light, with adjustable focus lens. The technique of body movement remains substantially the same as before, but, of course, choreography is conditioned by the compositions desired upon the screen.

Shadows immediately suggest a limitless number of possibilities for the dancer—especially the revolutionary dancer. In a composition where Labor is opposed to Capital, the former can at first be many times smaller than the other. As the dance unfolds and Labor becomes stronger in struggle, the representative figure can actually grow larger and larger until, in the climax of revolt, it fills the stage while its crushed opponent lies in a relatively tiny heap at its feet. Suppose the choreographer wants a hero coming forward in a critical moment. Instead of a mere man he could have a really heroic figure whose size is limited only by the demands of the conception. Of course, these are rather simple examples but they show how the dancer has at his command a new factor for making plausible the ideas he wishes to convey to the spectator.

The shadow dance falls heir to the limitless range of distortion, contrast and force which the political and the animated cartoon use so well. In addition, it can avail itself

of many tricks of the moving pictures, such as double or triple exposures (two or three sources of light), fade-outs, softened or strengthened values (weaker or stronger light), etc. Of course, the shadow is not necessarily a complete solution but rather one of other possible ideas which may suggest themselves from the analysis outlined in this article. It would be possible, for example, to have dancing before and behind the screen. On the screen could be developed a contrapuntal subordinate theme which could be similar to the minor themes in music, or the "asides" of the drama. The minor theme might even develop into the major, as in the approaching storm technique of Beethoven's *Sixth Symphony*.

There are any number of possibilities. For example, using colored lights, or even movable lights or superimposed images. And there is the use of cut-outs or masks over the lens for setting effects, such as forests, houses, clouds, etc. These masks could be of varying translucency and combination. The writer has done a little experimenting with a small screen and cardboard figures, but experiment with dancers is certain to yield rich results.

Naturally, there will be objections raised to the use of this technique in the dance. It will be said that the shadow is flat, is two-dimensional and has no depth. It is correct that the screen figures are two-dimensional, but in the truest sense these images represent

an abstraction of the three-dimensional dancers. Certainly the reader did not question the "depth" of the image of his hand upon the wall. If he knows the theories of perspective, he will understand that this image is formed by the projection of all three dimensions of his hand and therefore gives the illusion of depth. This illusion is a most important factor because its boundless potentialities offer to the dancer a technique suited to the new aims of his art.

Stripped of formality and convention, the dance is essentially movement. Movement can be faster or slower and it can change its form. Music, a complete art, can also vary its tempo and its tonality. But it can do something more. It can vary its volume—it can be louder or softer. Similarly the shadow can be larger or smaller. The screen therefore gives to the dance a new element—an additional variability—of magnitude. This element has always been sought by the dance, but it was not really necessary that it be found until today.

Another objection to the shadow will be advanced by the dancer himself. The screen, he will say, removes the personality of the performer. It will be lacking in life and interest. The writer's opinion is that it will do nothing of the kind, in a fundamental sense. The personality of the dancer, if it really amounts to anything, will be

(Continued on page 30)

On The New Season

By EDNA OCKO

THE concert dance in the bourgeois world stands, at the close of one season and the beginning of another, at a puzzling crossroads. It has either to swerve unequivocally left in order to gain the active support of broader masses of people, or else lose its formal identity completely by merging wholeheartedly with the theatre. Already both directions have beckoned. Travelling along the first road, as yet uncertainly and hesitatingly, to be sure, we find *The Green Table*, an indictment of diplomacy and war by the Ballets Jooss, *Cycle of the Masses*, a confused portrayal of suffering and rebellion by the versatile Pauline Koner, an unclear bit of pantomime by the virtuoso Martha Graham in *Theatre Pieces*, and *Toward the Light* and *Group Dance* by Tamiris. It would be absurd to assume that all dances mentioned in this incomplete category are revolutionary, or even casually concerned with revolutionary ideology; the fact remains, however, that more and more the bourgeois dancers are finding the class struggle offering stimulating material for artistic exploitation.

Taking the other direction are those responsible for the revival of interest in the spectacle of the ballet. A tremendous theatre audience was mobilized for Monte

Carlo Ballets, Ballets Lifar, Ballets Jooss, the Foxine Ballets, etc., this past year, exceeding by far the numbers attending modern dance recitals. This was not due entirely to the high-pressure publicity of nostalgic White Russians: rather did it suggest that the modern dance is failing to advance the gains made in the last few years. The resurgence of the ballet will not build up the modern dance movement in America; it has become a rival, not a co-worker. Dancers, realizing the strong appeal theatre has for the layman, have attempted to recall its audiences. They have chosen, in some cases, to be nominated by critics and public "Theatre dancers," and have labeled their studies "Theatre Pieces," though the distinction is seldom a flattering one.

The concert dance as it is being practiced now in the bourgeois world has little chance of survival in these days of crises and social upheaval. Either it shall cease to be a specific independent art form, and serve as another prop to bolster a collapsing bourgeois theatre, or else recoup its waning prestige by becoming sympathetic and cognizant of the changing times, and readjust its outlook to appeal to the needs and desires of masses of class-conscious and art-loving workers whose star is now in the ascendancy.

Revolutionary Movie Production

By RALPH STEINER

EVERY one will admit the potential importance of the film in the struggle for a sane and decent world. Few realize its actual importance today. The present size of the organized audience which now sees Soviet and other working class films turns that potential importance into a very real and exciting fact. Last year in 1,580 theatres, workers' groups, and organizations in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Cuba and South America 400,000 people were entertained by, excited by, educated by, and strengthened by seeing revolutionary films. This great audience should not only be a great inspiration to film makers but also a definite responsibility.

I assume that the primary function of a film group is film production. Certainly the counteracting of reactionary propaganda in films through reviews and general activity in the class struggle is essential, but unless a film group is actively engaged in making films its function will be incomplete. If the film is eventually to be a powerful weapon in the class struggle, film groups must learn to speak effectively through the medium of the film rather than with words. The use of the *film* by the bosses necessitates the use of the *film* by the workers. And even though we must continue to use words for articles and reviews of capitalist films, those words will have more strength and meaning after we ourselves have increased our knowledge and judgment through our own production.

What activity and progress has there been in the revolutionary film movement? What have film groups produced in the past few years? No one acquainted with the few films made so far, can deny that film production—in quality and quantity—is painfully in need of a stimulus. In relation to the exciting activity and progress in the fields of literature, theatre, music and dance the film has not even started to move.

Good film making is not easy, but also it is not impossible. None of the arts are easy, but good work is being done in them. If we, the potential revolutionary film makers in America, believe in the necessity for good films and are serious in our desire to make them, then an examination of the obstacles in our path is immediately imperative. These obstacles are two-fold: the inherent limitations of the medium and the difficulties of proper organization.

Before going into the limitations of the film we must start by defining the Revolutionary Film. It is one which clearly and forcefully reflects and directs the class struggle. For the highest standards of effectiveness we must demand the clearest exposition of the theme and the maximum impact of

that theme on the audience. The first requires of the film maker a clear political knowledge,* the ability to transfer that clarity into the scenario, and a high order of technical proficiency.

For a clear political understanding it is obvious that the producer must have a basic foundation in the principles of the class struggle.

The foremost obstacle is then the lack of a high order of technique, which can only result from training and experience. Since we have in this country no background of revolutionary film making and no Pudovkins or Eisensteins to teach us, we must find our own direction and we must train ourselves.

How can we train ourselves? By a school, perhaps, but not a school in the traditional sense, since we have to admit that we have no one in this country who can lead and instruct us. Therefore the only school possible is one based on production. A school based on production should differ very greatly from a film group making films for public exhibition. Such a school would first formulate the basic problems of the film, and then proceed to solve them with very short films. The success or failure of these short problem films would not depend on whether they resulted in films "good" or "bad" in themselves, but on how much they could teach us. Since there would be no thought of exhibition, these films would need to be only long enough for the completion of the problem—perhaps as short as two or three minutes on the screen. The problems would have to be kept so simple that their solutions or failures would lead to clear, definite, and helpful conclusions—the selection of too complex problems can easily result in films too complicated for analysis. From long, expensive and painful experience I have learned the importance of selecting film problems which are not beyond my ability to carry out, and which will not take so long for completion that I may get lost before finishing. The natural ambition to

* Not only is there a definite relation between the political understanding (a basic comprehension of politics, economics, history and sociology from a Marxist point of view) of the producer and the political validity of his film, but more than that, a muddy political viewpoint will result in a muddy technique; only from political clarity can come a clearly stated scenario, and good technique can derive only from the exercise of technical knowledge applied to the clear ideas of a scenario. Thus in an "anti-war" film I recently attempted, my lack of understanding of the political nature of imperialist war affected the conception of the film. My lack of clarity of the real issues underlying war came out in the scenario as vague symbolism. *And what is important from the technical angle, the vagaries of the scenario presented no technical problems for me or the camera to sink our teeth in.*

make important and impressive films must be tempered at first by the realization that one can learn only from work which one is able to carry to a profitable conclusion. "Biting off more than one can chew, and then chewing it" is certainly not the motto for a film school.

All the revolutionary films that have been attempted in this country have been documentary (news reel, non-acted). This form has been adopted because of the immediate need for incontrovertible visual evidence of what is actually taking place in the struggles of the workers. Another reason for the sole use of this form is the belief that it is easy to use or that it is easier than the acted film. The immediacy of the need cannot be denied, but there is no truth in the idea that the documentary film is simple to make or that it is necessarily simpler than the acted form. It would seem natural to assume that the documentary was an easy form since the material to be photographed is already in existence, and does not have to be created by the producer. This idea is not only fallacious but very harmful.

The documentary film demands first that the director and cameraman locate and select the truest, most accurate, and strongest examples from the material which exists in the world to illustrate each image in the scenario. It then demands that they record that material on film so that it will say clearly, accurately, and forcefully to the audience what that image in the scenario had to say. The word-images of the scenario must be turned into visual images. That step in the process has so far constituted the big stumbling block in the way of film makers. Saying something on film is akin to writing a sentence: there must be nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, but they must be visual nouns, verbs, and adjectives, and if each is not a strong and accurate visual image the film sentence will necessarily be weak or meaningless. I say this, all "montage experts" to the contrary. The erroneous idea that the effectiveness of the shots does not matter so much since through montage (the manner of putting them together) they could be made effective has weakened us too long. The skill necessary to handle expertly the elements of the documentary form can only be acquired from laboratory work designed to educate and develop producers in this field.

One great limitation of the documentary film lies in the difficulty of photographing certain events and material: events that have happened in the past, events which happen only once, and those of which capitalist society may not be sufficiently proud to want recorded. The revolutionary cameraman

may often find the police and other agents of the present order not too helpful to him in getting the best shots of strike scenes, cops "preserving the peace" and shots of what the rich do with "their" wealth. Even when these hindrances are not present there is the annoying fact that events happen in time. They will not slow up, stop, or repeat themselves to allow the cameraman to photograph them in the most dramatic manner. A documentary film of the October revolution made by the most sensitive and capable director alive could not be as effective as the created films *Ten Days That Shook the World* or *The End of St. Petersburg*. The cameraman and director would have had to be omniscient (in advance), omnipresent, free-floating, impervious to bullets and invisible in order to photograph the events with the maximum dramatic effect.

All these difficulties are inherent in the documentary form. As in any art form, the limitations do not detract from the art, but serve to define and direct the creator toward the utmost use of that art. The acknowledged limitations of his medium can be one of the artist's most serviceable instruments. When these limitations are recognized and utilized, only then will result the true revolutionary form for the revolutionary document.

Another obstacle in the way of film pro-

duction is the expense. The cost of the negative, developing and printing is high. However, those unacquainted with film making costs have exaggerated ideas, perhaps based on Hollywood costs. One reel (ten minute) standard size films have been made for less than one hundred dollars. With substandard film, adequate for audiences of 500, the cost of a ten-minute film, can be as low as fifty dollars.

Even these amounts may be formidable to workers' film groups. Successfully promoted showings of Soviet and other films can defray these production costs. Well managed periodic showings would create an organized supporting audience. Again another reason for short films presents itself: short films are proportionately cheaper to make than long ones.

Finally, organizational and structural faults have to a great extent held back film production. The leadership of organizations may have good political and organizational ability but their lack of understanding of the problems involved in production has contributed to no small extent to the backwardness of the revolutionary film movement in this country. The leadership may not have the qualities necessary for making good cameramen or directors, and never intend to engage in those capacities, but a certain amount of experience in film

making would give them a conception of "what it takes" to make films.

In any large group of "enthusiasts" there are necessarily only a few with sufficient ability, energy, responsibility, and purpose for a high standard of film making. The major portion of the leadership's time, energy and thought should be concentrated on those selected few. The major portion of the group's finances should be concentrated on them and their work. They should be supported by the group as a whole so that they can devote their full time to production. A fine example of this concentration idea is the Workers' Laboratory Theatre "Shock Troupe." Here a small group live in cooperative quarters and are financed by the theatre as a whole. They are thus able to spend ten to twelve hours a day accomplishing an extraordinary amount of excellent work.

If the film groups of America are to retain a right to the word "film" in their names, they must immediately get into active, planned, and continuous production. Nothing less than fine workmanship will be acceptable in their product. Film makers must keep in mind that the statement "there is no art without propaganda" is also true in the reverse: *there can be no effective propaganda without good art.*

The Films of the Bourgeoisie

A Lecture Delivered to Moscow Film Workers

By BELA BALASZ

THE events of the past two years in Germany have shown us very clearly and brutally how important it is to analyze and clarify bourgeois film propaganda. Fascism did not drop from the sky overnight. Seventeen million votes—a great mass movement—must have been prepared over a long period, and by means of the most diverse methods of influence. We, in Germany, were not sufficiently prepared theoretically to evaluate and combat the subtle, uncommonly cunning forms of influence used in pre-Nazi films. We did not see just what psycho-technical methods they enlisted to bring the petty bourgeois mass into the fascist current. It is our problem now to liquidate this theoretical shallowness. In countries other than Germany the danger is still in the stage where it can be opposed more successfully than is now possible in Germany.

A few examples will show how the bourgeois film has been used not only to divert but to convert—how it was used in Germany and how it is being used elsewhere now to create a definite fascist ideology. I want to indicate the psychological influences that were employed in Germany to snare the sympathy of the blindly confident, blissfully ignorant

petty bourgeois mass which was not clearly conscious of its own interests.

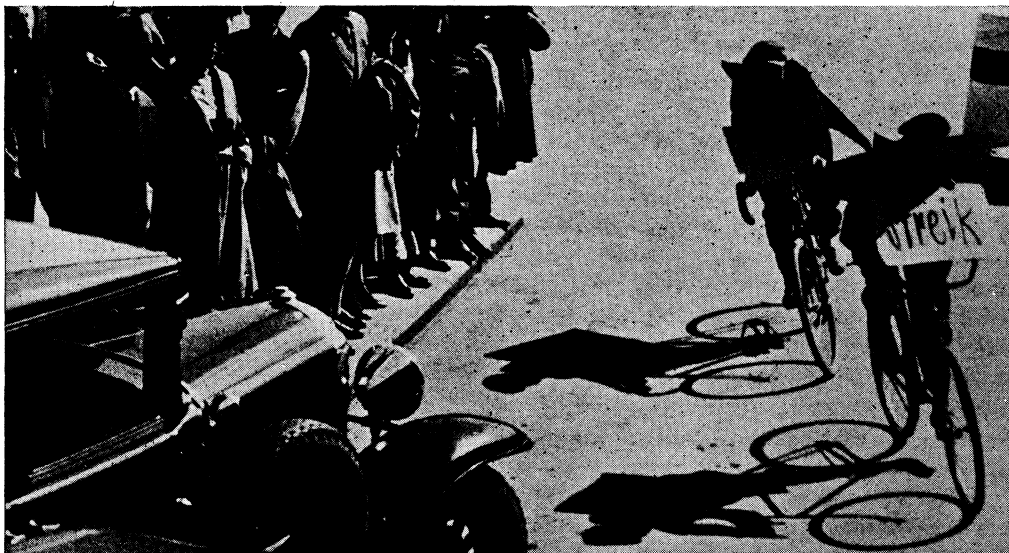
Why does every bourgeois film employ love as its theme? Not only because it is a pleasant thing, which diverts, but also, because love is portrayed as a power of nature that has nothing to do with social concerns. We know that this is not true. But the bourgeois film presents it in this manner. In these films love is victorious over all class contradictions. They influence the petty bourgeois by suggestion; there are powerful contradictions in the social situation, but in the movies, love is all.

The second main theme is crime, the detective story. The film shows how a safe is cracked, but not how it is filled. The petty bourgeois is diverted by one danger (that of the robber) from the other. But how does conversion enter here? Who is the detective, the hero? The protector of private property. Because this figure is idealized, the worth and the meaning of private property is idealized. Have you seen films in which the burglars are poor people, who steal for a piece of bread? The social problem is not mentioned once in this form. We are in such high society that even the burglar appears in a full dress suit. However,

in Germany, poor people were shown in films. These films about "poor people" are no less dangerous than the others. Even in the best of them only those who have fallen by the wayside, the lumpen-proletariat are shown: drunkards, thieves, beggars, people who are so humbled and poor, that they are portrayed as victims.

What is the psychology and influence of this type of film? When the petty bourgeois sees misery where help is no longer possible, he is partly soothed. Because, when you cannot help any more, you need not help any more. Therefore these broken creatures are not dangerous people.

Have you ever seen a film showing the awakened proletariat? Never. Even in our films, those made by our own side, this error was committed, e.g., *Mother Krausen*. This film which was praised by us as proletarian, is really the opposite, because it does not show the fighting proletariat at all, but the fallen, lumpen-proletariat. There is another form, the smug, but very efficient fascist film. These films are fashioned after historical anecdotes in monarchist style. The princes and kings are magnificent people. No money is spared in production. Imposing decorations produce a splendor

Still from Pudovkin's *The Deserter*

Mejrabpom Studios

that always intoxicates the petty bourgeois. He thinks, "Ah, it was beautiful then." He forgets what is close to home. Thus it goes step by step until the fascist taint of the production becomes most distinct. I speak of German experiences, but we know that in other countries similar forms exist.

For years it was the custom in Germany to make charming light opera films about small principalities. It is worth analyzing the fascist effect of these films, for they were not so primitive that they merely praised the feudal court. Our enemies do not work so obviously. These courts were even caricatured, made ridiculous. They certainly were not dangerous; they were such little illusions, somehow very congenial. One laughs; it would not be unpleasant to live there. But in every one of these films there is one person who is not ridiculous—the young prince or the young princess. He is modern, thoroughly; he makes the great court appear very ridiculous, and the petty bourgeois feels sympathetic with him. He appears in the films as one who no longer represents the old feudal ideology, but as a modern and democratic man. The petty bourgeois approves of such a man. This tendency is pursued in a seemingly accidental way, but the flood of these films demonstrate that this is no accident. Anyone can name ten such films. For years the German film prepared for fascism. There was a series of films in Germany on "Old Fritz" and Queen Louise. There was one year in which seven pictures about "Old Fritz" and five about Queen Louise were made. What is there in them that is not simply diversion, not simply historical nonsense? The "Old Fritz" is not shown as a ruler in his castle, but as a friend of the soldiers, who also wears torn boots, who eats the same meals as the soldier. The petty bourgeois is deeply impressed by seeing a king sip his soup! "Then I too can die for him. When he goes about in such worn boots, how can I complain that I have none. How can I complain of the danger of war when the king himself

shares this danger with me?" The powerful comradeship ideology which is intended to bridge over class distinctions, is the fascist ideology.

A year later there was another flood—the military farce. It is uncanny to see, when you look back now, how systematically this line was pursued year after year. It was as if they had a five-year plan, to accomplish their fascist propaganda. The military farce was tremendously successful. War was still unpopular at that particular time, even with the petty bourgeoisie. For many years neither military films nor war films could be shown. But they showed pre-war barrack life in the form of parodies and comedies. Life there was really so comical and comfortable. When one sees these films one cannot understand at all the high percentage of soldier suicides. The uniform again becomes likable. When I laugh I hate no more. It really seems as if it were not at all bad.

During the next season, the serious war films, "pacifist" films, suddenly appeared. These films must be analyzed a little differently. There are some among them that should really have revolutionary effect simply because war is shown with all its horrors. But the psycho-technique of the war films, as of the literature that came at the same time, is: War is terrible, but it is a natural catastrophe; nobody can do anything about it. No word, no question about who causes it, who gains by it. In *All Quiet on the Western Front* there is a scene in which the soldiers discuss this problem. The answer is to the effect that war is like the rain. In all these films the characteristic attributes inherent in war were idealized: comradeship, manliness and loyalty. This is now clearly defined fascist ideology portraying war as a moral institution. The film takes on a dangerous form the instant that comradeship and loyalty transcend class distinctions. In the trenches all are alike, it is said, and therefore, when in the trench a shell can kill a private and an officer with

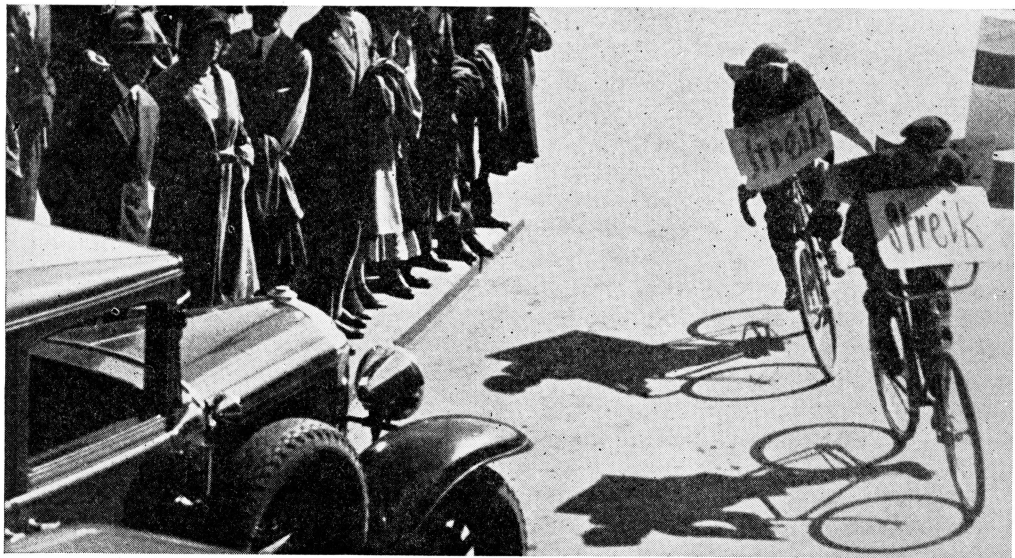
one shot—with that, class distinction seems to be removed. To the happy-go-lucky proletarian and petty bourgeois this is really a sensation of satisfaction. He has the feeling that here we are equal, here there are no class differences.

There are films that make war disagreeable because they show war too clearly, but even this type of film has the ideological point that shows war as a natural catastrophe. There is a French documentary montage film called *For the Peace of Humanity*. This is not a revolutionary film in our sense, but it is truly pacifist. It was issued by people who have been wounded so horribly that they can no more mingle with others. The film is dedicated to the eight cameramen who were killed in photographing it. It is an original cinema study of a group of French soldiers who capture a German trench. One of the subtitles reads: "As soon as the German soldiers were released from the firing, they helped us to gather the wounded." One scene shows the destroyed vineyards of Champagne. The audience sighed so at this point that I was sure there would be an anti-German demonstration. But the title to the scene is not "The Germans did this," but "This is war." We wanted to exhibit this picture in the Volkfilmverband in Germany, but it was impossible. *All Quiet on the Western Front* was publicly prohibited, though actually everyone could see it, since it was allowed to be shown at closed organizations. This was only a matter of form, since everyone could enter. *The Peace of Humanity* was suppressed.

It becomes clear that theme itself can be a transition toward fascist ideas. Nature films, for example. Man in his battle with Nature has nothing to do with class war, they point out. Take North Pole expeditions. Why they are made is not discussed. Naked man is pitted against naked Nature, and so they seek to camouflage the class war.

The film is the first art that originated in the bourgeois era. None of the other arts (which still retain some feudal forms) exhibit the bourgeois ideology as clearly as the movie. It is characteristic that, although the movie apparatus was invented in France and the first movies were made there, film making did not advance a step in that country for twelve years. Films remained pantomime. The artistic form of the film stems from America. It was the Americans who discovered continuity, montage, etc.

The other arts as a whole, which have an older tradition are, so to speak, isolated from their spectators. A picture is framed and I look at it. In the theatre I sit before the stage as before an altar. There is a distance between me and the theatre; I cannot enter. These arts have grown out of the Church arts, and the early form, the holy unapproachability, was retained. The film has created an entirely new art form, since it annihilates distance. The fashion of five



Still from Pudovkin's *The Deserter*

Mejrabpom Studios

thousand years of art is thereby destroyed. The distance of the spectator, the enclosed art form, is destroyed. That was an American discovery, a bit of bourgeois demagoguery; I might say a bourgeois revolution.

The Russian film needed and developed new forms to express a new life. It is not by accident that the bourgeoisie considers montage a peculiarly Russian art. Montage in revolutionary Russian films is different from montage in bourgeois films. In the latter, it is employed only to make the plot clear and lively. In the former, montage means connection between facts which have a social content. For example, in *The End of St. Petersburg*, the Bourse is shown. The next scene is a battlefield. This is montage which does not relate to plot, but to a political idea which indicates a definite relation.

In conclusion it is necessary to analyze the bourgeois film thematically more thoroughly than we have done so far. We must not dismiss this issue with the word "diversion," but in every case we must unmask and uncover the psychological method. Further, we must consider the formal problems of the films for their ideological effect, so that we can recognize the difference between the bourgeois and revolutionary influence. We must not, on the other hand, descend to revolutionary formalism, which sometimes happens in bad Russian films. There was a time when the bourgeois was always the fat man from whose jaws grease dripped. Capitalism, of course, is not to be fought because one individual is bad, but because the system is bad. These are the problems which we must work out.

Translated by H. BERMAN and F. LAUFER

Notes on Contributors

LEE STRASBERG, one of America's most talented directors, just returned from a trip to the U.S.S.R. He is now directing the Group's production of Melvin Levy's *Gold Eagle Guy*. Joseph Freeman, author, critic, poet, formerly editor of *New Masses*, is preparing an article on Maxwell Anderson for *NEW THEATRE*. Robert Forsythe seems to us about the wittiest writer "Left" in America today. Philip Sterling is well-known to readers of *New Masses*, *the Left* and other revolutionary magazines. Stephen Karnot is a director in the Workers' Lab. Theatre. Horace Gregory's trip to Ireland delays his essay on Virgil Geddes until November. Bela Belasz, famous film critic, who was expelled from Germany by Hitler, is now living in the U.S.S.R. John Howard Lawson promises an article on playwriting before long. Meanwhile Paul Romaine, is preparing an article on Lawson and Dos Passos. "A Playreader Looks at Revolutionary Playwriters", by John Gassner of the Theatre Guild will appear in October.

Revolutionary Dramatic Art

By VIRGIL GEDDES



Raphael Soyer

WHO is a revolutionary dramatist? Of what does revolutionary dramaturgy consist?

These will soon be burning questions wherever dramatic art is discussed, since no alert dramatist or theatre-goer today can ignore the deep importance of the revolutionary front, whether he be stubbornly set against its ideals, a revolutionary in the making or already actively at work for our new theatre and drama.

On one point I think we can all agree: that a dramatist is a revolutionary dramatist in so far as his revolutionary outlook and talents find expression in his work—his dramatic writings. Seldom, however, can a playwright contribute more than one or two elements of a revolutionary character to the drama. Some may strengthen dramatic technic, others may make complete changes in style, call for reversal of methods from the actors, etc., while still others may contribute to the theatre a revolutionary ideology necessitating a new approach to subjects. Any or all of these may be in one sense or another revolutionary dramatists. Strindberg, for example, unquestionably made revolutionary changes in the drama, as did many of the German expressionists who stemmed from him. On the other hand, a man may be definitely revolutionary in active life but as a dramatist be ineffectual in a revolutionary way—as in the case of the plays of Lunacharsky.

What is important is that the dramatist must recognize that the theatre is not *the* instrument of revolution but one of the revolutionary aids towards a fuller and better life: that his purpose is to use the power of the theatre in expressing revolutionary content through the use of the strongest possible dramatic art.

The first question which confronts the serious dramatist is: "Is it so?" To this the bourgeois playwright may answer "Yes" in his plays, but the revolutionary playwright asks himself another question: "Does it matter?" "Is it so?" may equal art of a kind but it does not equal revolutionary art.

Physically, art is a seed, a pregnant germ, which on the slightest encouragement seeks the sunlight and air. Seeds do not always receive careful attention and if, when dropped on ash-heaps or confined to cramped flowerpots in stuffy lodgings—which bourgeois artists have long been doing with

them—we observe slow and scrubby growth, the seeds should not be blamed.

Experience, for all its value toward bringing decision and definitiveness to a writer, is an uncertain and often misleading factor. In a true philosophic sense there is the experience of illusion, real luminous and full of length and imaginative truth, as well as the more factual and concrete experience of mind, flesh and blood. Poetry in its live and growing state is the result of an acute experience, derived from the extreme pressure of common realities upon a swiftly developing intelligence. But poetry and sincerity are not in themselves the powers of great art: they are merely the driving and energy providing factors. The guiding elements are the pressure and control which revolutionary knowledge exercises over this energy.

A strong sense of poetry is the foundation for any dramatic art, and in this American drama it is well fortified from beneath through a throbbing body of poetic consciousness and by numerous examples of poetic expression. But where our theatre writers of the past have been content with experience for its own sake the revolutionary dramatist begins to value and select.

Dramatic literature and philosophy have for a long time suffered an unnatural divorce. In the deepest sense they are attributes of a common process of interpenetration and when dramatic talent is working maturely a motivating philosophy heightens the emotional conflict. When drama runs high on the stage we should experience emotion in the presence of the power of a philosophy of life. Drama is activated by desire but drama does not surely live until it reaches the climaxes of desire.

On the stage, all is an arrangement and flows to a rhythm, to be sure, but what is expected is the rhythm of drama as people live it and not the mere rhythm of speech. When dramatic content yields to the picture in which it is set or to the manner of saying it, reality and conviction are lost.

It apparently takes man a long time to learn that it is impossible to see a thing as it is without first being able to see beyond it. The revolutionary dramatist is constantly aware of this fact. Which makes his task twofold: he must quicken the pulse of thought and desire, and he must constantly indicate what lies beneath and ahead.

Send Us Scripts

The Workers Theatre Appeals for Plays

THE crisis has a tight hold on the American playwright, professional or aspiring. He is not only kept from a living; he is also forbidden an audience and the right to develop his craft.

The workers' theatre cannot, at the moment, offer a livelihood. It can and does give to writers for the theatre a channel through which to speak. It presents a technical medium capable of intelligently portraying plays of nearly all forms and statuses. It has at hand an audience and a crew of fellow craftsmen literally hungry for new plays in which to participate.

Already there are several hundred groups from every part of the country affiliated with or working closely with the League of Workers' Theatres. They are to be found wherever there is a struggle—on the docks in New York City and San Francisco, in halls in Gary and Detroit, on the streets of reactionary Los Angeles.

These groups and the audience to whom they give courage and guidance are badly in need of new plays. Those already available have almost been exhausted by repetition. Collective writing is too slow to supply the need, and consumes time needed for other work. Many of the old plays—brief sketches, simple group recitations and schematic symbolisms—can no longer satisfy an audience which has become trained and critical, nor actors, designers and directors now able to interpret mature and subtle scripts. The crude and youthful workers' theatre movement of yesterday already has at hand a technical prowess which demands expression. Audience and theatre workers alike are turning to the playwright to satisfy their needs; and to join them in forging an efficient weapon in the common struggle.

The plays needed are of all kinds. There is probably not an existing form in the theatrical catalogue which one group or another is not prepared to undertake, nor a conceivable experiment which could not be given form and life. The problems of straight drama, vaudeville sketches, revues, musical comedies, puppet plays and dance dramas have already been met and overcome somewhere in the structure of the American workers' theatre movement.

There is a call for work cast in the already established theatrical forms. Co-operation is needed in exploring the realm of new forms which must inevitably grow out of the conflict of traditional media and new content.

This content is, of course, an essential feature of work designed for the workers' theatre movement. And yet it is hardly a restriction on the creative powers of the writer. The streets, factories and farms

seethe with the drama of workers' struggle. It takes every form. It expresses itself in every experience and emotion. Love, hunger, sorrow, victory and defeat, growth and decay, bewilderment and enlightenment—these are as much the domain of the revolutionary playwright as they are of the bourgeois playwright. And the forms in which they can express themselves are fresh and young, rather than devitalized and worn.

The day of cliché and mechanical statement has gone by for the workers' theatre. The brilliant polemic of Lenin may be intensely dramatic to the writer, but it is so much Esperanto to the worker who wants that polemic presented in terms of flesh and blood—not to mention a little thunder. An animated symbolic pantomime in a whirl of top-hats and red-front fists punctuated with appropriate slogans, may clearly illustrate to the intellectual the theory of surplus value, but the worker would prefer a vivid dialogue between a worker and a boss in terms of cash and cabbages. The class struggle has many channels and facets. A prevailing monotony apparently assumes that a worker has no life outside his place of work; forgets that he also thinks in terms of love, life and death outside the shop—with his job always a conditioning factor. There is theatre to be created in graphic portrayal of the anxious hours of waiting for the Home Relief investigator, or the heartbreak of trying to make love or get married or keep house under the easing administrations of N.R.A. *This theatre calls for characters that breathe, in situations that are real.* As compared to the bourgeois theatre, which stresses its "liberty of action" but forbids as a matter of course even the mention of nearly every serious thing, the workers' theatre offers the writer freedom of vision and form.

Formal freedom, however, is inevitably subject to certain physical limitations. The first of these is economic. The presentation of a script by workers for workers must not involve a great expense for settings or lighting. The writer must also keep in mind running time and mobility. While there are some groups capable of producing and exploiting a full length play, there are even more which must seek their productions in the shorter forms. For most of them thirty-five minutes is a maximum. And in almost every case, the workers' theatre goes to its audience, carrying by necessity a minimum of technical equipment. Such restrictions, though, can become writers' tools for the development of ingenuity and economy.

The problems which the workers and farmers desire to see in their plays are those

which face writers themselves. The workers' theatre calls on them for collaboration. And those who respond will find—as others have found before them—a warm greeting, a receptive audience, faithful and serious interpreters, and even, so far as possible, an attempt at financial return. The collaboration itself will feed all these things. Artistic quality and financial return will grow as the writer struggles to free himself and the workers he writes for.

Prize Play Contest

TO stimulate the writing of revolutionary plays for immediate production by the workers' theatres, NEW MASSES and NEW THEATRE join in offering the following prizes:

1. \$50 for the best revolutionary play, anti-war, anti-fascist, strike or relief struggle, etc. Any dramatic form; realistic, symbolic, musical, comical, etc. Maximum playing time, approximately 35 minutes.
2. \$25 for the best short revolutionary play; any form, any subject. Maximum playing time, approximately 15 minutes.
3. \$25 for the best revolutionary political sketch suitable for performance at street meetings, workers' clubs, picnics, etc., as well as on the stage. Maximum playing time, approximately 10 minutes.

The contest begins at once, closes December 15. Winners will be announced in the January 1, 1935 issues of NEW MASSES and NEW THEATRE. The prizes will be given in cash immediately, and the two magazines will sponsor presentation of the three prize plays by workers' theatre groups at the Civic Repertory Theatre in New York, and in other cities.

RULES: NEW THEATRE and NEW MASSES reserve all rights including publication and performance of winning scripts. Royalties to author, wherever possible. No full length plays will be considered. Scripts submitted should be typed on one side and double spaced, and accompanied by return postage. Contestants may submit any number of plays. Judges: Harry Elion, L.O.W.T.; Al Saxe, Workers' Laboratory Theatre; Herbert Kline, NEW THEATRE; Stanley Burnshaw and Joseph North, NEW MASSES.

* * * * *

International Children's Week will be held October 8th to 15th. The Pioneers of America need plays, songs, poems and skits, to be used then to give the children an idea of the character of the revolutionary movement in this and other countries. NEW THEATRE appeals to all who can write in a way that will appeal to children to do so at once. Send manuscripts to NEW THEATRE.

Nijinsky's Tragedy

By LYDIA NADEJINA

NIJINSKY'S life, in the presentation of his wife, is a deep tragedy of a great dancer. Human passion and the passion for art overflow each other ending in a sinister tragic way—in insanity, for which the Russian term is "soul-sickness."

The tragedy is Nijinsky's. His temperament, his childhood, his life-experiences did not prepare him for defending himself, for struggle and strife. He gave his genius, soul and mind to his art, and realized his unlimited possibilities. He sincerely believed it to be all that one needed to do to achieve harmony and happiness in life.

It proved not to be enough. Something else, besides the great artistic self-expression and gentleness, was needed to overcome the obstacles of life to find the balance and to make it a success.

Mme. Nijinsky stresses the dominant factors in Nijinsky's tragedy—Diaghileff's possessiveness and her husband's lack of Western-European practical perceptiveness of life-realities. Diaghileff assumes the aspect of an unsurpassable monstrous myth, while the inner life and ideas of the incomparable dancer remained for his wife an enigma till the end of his conscious days.

The book consists of two themes: art and love. Through it Mme. Nijinsky develops the story of her own life and love for Nijinsky. All the facts are tinted with an over-emotional, personal interpretation. The events surrounding the Russian Ballet and its great dancer Nijinsky are inserted into the story of her life in patches of glittering mosaic.

The first part of the book is written in a more objective vein. It is to a great extent the contribution of Nijinsky's friends and deals with the youth of Nijinsky and with the Russian Ballet in that phase of its development which sharply divides the old and the new in the world of art, resulting in a Renaissance of the ballet dance. It gives a panorama of an exciting world of art and personages, in a manner that could be presented only by one to whom it is a vital reality. For the "immense labor and patient researches into the history of ballet" by Lincoln Kirstein the readers may well add their thanks to those of Mme. Nijinsky.

The second part of the book is a personal story of a woman distinguished by a singleness of purpose in her love and suffering for the great and gentle Russian artist. Mme. Nijinsky is never-faillingly aware of her dramatic element of her life-story, of herself. She matches her wits against Diaghileff's against all influences that may have threatened her supremacy over Nijinsky's life. There is an abundance of insignificant detail now and then told in the fashion of drawing-room chat. However, the collec-

tion of vivid facts will be appreciated by a wide range of readers: by the future biographers of Nijinsky and Diaghileff, by those interested in the dance, and by lovers of thrilling fiction, who will find in this book all the elements of an absorbing novel.

The portrait of the dancer is ever-present. Though drawn in silhouette, it stands out movingly alive, human and pathetic—the target of monstrous circumstances from which insanity seems to be almost a release.

Nijinsky's gentleness and submissiveness to a mode of life patterned by those he loved, makes evident how narrow a margin there was left for his own creative life.

Are not those limitations responsible for his search of an outlet now in a weird theatricalization of his life by playing the lunatic in the village of St. Moritz, now in the craving for the simple existence of a Russian moujik according to Tolstoy's teaching, and always wishing to return to Russia, to his native artistic environment.

Mme. Nijinsky, evidently unconcerned with the literary methods of modern biography writing, succeeded in presenting an unusual book of her own life. She shows a fine skill of a story-teller and gives an humbling tale of the life of Nijinsky—the greatest dancer of our time.

International Theatre

THE first issue of the new magazine, *The International Theatre* (No. 1, 1934), enlarged from its previous bulletin form and published by the International Union of the Revolutionary Theatre (I.U.R.T.) as a 64-page bi-monthly, has appeared with information on the development of the revolutionary theatre all over the world. There are articles on the Blue Blouses of Chicago and the Rebel Players of Los Angeles; on the workers' theatres of England and Holland; on the revolutionary theatre of Korea, and on many Soviet theatres. Extremely interesting are two articles describing the birth of national theatres among two nationalities which had no theatre at all before the October Revolution created the U.S.S.R.—the Mongolian theatre and the Gypsy theatre.

There are interesting articles on the outcome of the first Five-Year Plan in the Soviet cinema and the course of fascism in German music. The first Dance Spartakiade of the Workers' Dance League, held last summer in New York, is reviewed by Sophia Delza. Brief informative articles are included on three revolutionary playwrights—Paul Peters, American—Maurice Magdaleno, Mexican—and Giovanni Germannetto, Italian. The first part of an interesting but rather general theoretical article on

"The Theatre of Feudal Society" by A. Gvosdev (under the unclear heading of "Conclutation", appears in this issue, together with articles on various sectors of the Soviet theatre. There are also short items of theatre news, news of the I.U.R.T. sections and center, and a book review.

The editorial articles deal with the most vital problems confronting the revolutionary theatre today—the sharpening of the class struggle in the field of art and the necessity of learning (as Lenin taught) to use everything that is progressive in the culture of the past for the fight against fascism and reaction, methods of developing a mass revolutionary theatre around the struggle against fascism and the need for mastering artistic theory and technique—the development of a revolutionary science of art. There are also editorials on the death of Anatol Lunacharsky and on the murder of Hans Otto, revolutionary actor of the Berlin State Theatre arrested by Fascist Storm Troopers and discovered a week later with a fractured skull, dying in a hospital.

This first new issue of *The International Theatre* gives promise of becoming a mighty force for the progress of the revolutionary theatre arts in the United States as well as all over the world. Some of the best material on the art of the theatre ever written has appeared in previous issues, and will no doubt continue to appear.

But *The International Theatre* would be improved if it published, in addition to the short articles on playwrights (and other theatre artists), articles analyzing carefully the dramatic work of the playwrights. Thus, while the article on this issue on Paul Peters gives an interesting account of his background, it is by no means a study of Peters as a dramatist—a study which should certainly be made.

There is far too much material that is purely informational. There are no major articles on creative problems and on the creative methods of major Soviet theatres (of the kind that distinguished *Bulletins* Nos. 4 and 5 in 1933). There are no articles on important phases of the bourgeois theatre in any country—a tremendous short-coming. Although the magazine aims to deal with the theatre, music, film and dance, there is only one article each on the latter three arts. The page of "Theatre News," which contains short items on the bourgeois theatre in several countries, is (except in the case of the material on France) sorely in need of editing. Much of it is presented in the form of isolated facts, not at all analyzed from the revolutionary viewpoint. Some of the material in this issue is not brought up to date—a fact explained by the great organizational and translating difficulties of getting out the English edition. (*The I.T.* is published in separate Russian, French, German and English editions) of the new bi-monthly. This weakness is already being overcome. BEN BLAKE.

Shifting Scenes

Workers Theatre from Coast to Coast

INVITATION PERFORMANCE

Before the theatrical scene shifts from the barn theatres and outdoor shows at picnics to rehearsal halls, scenic studios and fall openings, a glance backward at summer activities is in order. . . . For the first time in American history a theatre group was invited by the mayor of a city to give a public performance of a revolutionary play. . . . The mayor of Platt, Michigan, invited the John Reed Dramatic Group of Detroit to play there. . . . How come this official sanction at a time when revolutionary theatre workers are being clubbed and their headquarters smashed up (e.g., in San Francisco and New Orleans) . . . the mayor of Platt is a Communist! . . . In New York, without any invitation, the Shock Troupe of the Workers Laboratory Theatre introduced Drs. Mixemup and Fixemup to the seamen on the waterfront . . . they are now very popular with the seamen, who like the way they explain the N.R.A. code and other current mysteries. . . . The W.L.T. has been doing other active outdoor work this summer. . . . At an open air meeting of the Y.C.L. Unit 6 an audience of 200 workers cheered their performance of *Free Thaelmann*. . . . It staged the Summer Fascist Follies of 1934 at picnics and excursions, performed at camps, its own headquarters, and parties to raise funds for Herndon and other class war prisoners. . . . A swell summer record. . . . In Toronto the Workers' Theatre Progressive Arts Club raised funds for the Hunger March Committee by giving shows at camps and picnics.

A REAL SUMMER EXPERIMENT

One successful theatre experiment this summer was made by the Plainfield, N. J., Jack London Dramatic Group . . . a shadow-graph, *Newsreel*, given during a workers' movie performance . . . a skit after the manner of a screen newsreel as the name implies . . . the content was taken from three poems, *Van der Lubbe's Head*, *In a Movie*, and *Great Man Knows No Fear* . . . the actors moved in back of a screen lighted from behind to produce shadow effects . . . spotlights picked out a speaker, then moved to the next as he finished, etc. . . . The shadowgraph is traditional in Japan and Greece, and still very popular with mass audiences there. . . . *Newsreel* is the result of the group's policy of dramatizing current events. . . . It is at present writing and rehearsing *Harbor Strike*, based on the West Coast struggles, for the fall. . . . It also participated in the August First demonstration, giving *Troops Are Marching* from a truck that moved through the crowd.

CHICAGO CONFERENCE

A high spot of the summer's activities was the conference of eleven affiliated League of Workers' Theatre Groups of Chicago at the Nature Friends' Camp there. Reports showed that the Blue Blouses (10 members) gave many street corner performances and held classes in dramatic technique through the hot weather. . . . They stress the need for simplicity in staging "so you can grab scenery and false whiskers and run before the cops get you" . . . a timely suggestion. The W.L.T. added *Share Croppers Unite* to its repertory. Scandinavian Workers' Theatre Group (30 members) rehearsed and produced all summer. The Artes held classes and rehearsed *Harry Sims* for fall. The Bulgarian group, which now has 15 minutes weekly on the air, is working out radio sketches for its program. . . . The Theatre Collective was busy fighting neighborhood hooligans who object to the fraternization of its Negro and white members.

Among the important resolutions passed were: the establishment of local schools for political and

artistic training of theatre workers, with one course on Revolutionary Workers Theatre included in the curriculum of the central Workers School; establishment of a Chicago repertory department, and playwrighting shock brigades in every group; support of the fight for the release of all class war prisoners.

The Oakland group writes, "The terror has been playing hell with our activities—it's as bad here as in San Francisco, with the papers telling 10,000 lies an edition to arouse prejudice against the workers." The group is carrying on, however.



"The skits we are doing resemble political cartoons . . . fantasy, humor and satire are the dominant notes. In spite of a definite artistic weakness the plays are very effective and the workers are enthusiastic about them."

BROADWAY-IN-THE-BARNYARD

Meanwhile pretty ladies and gents in nice white mess jackets were attending dozens of revivals of Broadway shows and try-outs for its fall season in the country playhouses. . . . Broadway-in-the-barnyard remains Broadway. . . . nothing of any real importance in production or content was staged. . . . Revivals of Shakespeare with Walter Huston and Maude Adams was the "big news." . . . They had nothing new to say. . . . Rollo Peters, the well-known actor, told Scene-Shifter he wishes the summer theatres would fulfill a real function—that of giving actors and other theatre workers opportunity to do work they have no chance to do during the months they earn their living on Broadway, and give plays not designed primarily for the theatre's commercial arena . . . but they can't do that while Broadway money and the Broadway idea is what's back of them, Mr. Peters.

New York—the Theatre Collective membership is concentrating on basic studio work under instructors of fine professional standing, and productions in the immediate future will be experimental outgrowths of the studio courses . . . the Theatre of the Workers School, which gave 100 performances in 9 months at workers' clubs and schools, mass meetings, rallies and strikes, is now writing collective new plays, some of which will be ready for production in a few weeks . . . the Shock Brigaders of the Boro Park (Brooklyn) Cultural Center is rehearsing a two-act play, *Toward A Soviet America*, written by its director, to be given in early fall. . . .

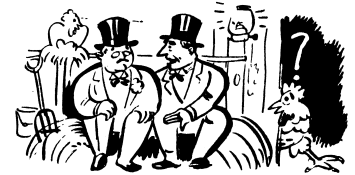
IN NEW YORK

Late August saw five plays on Broadway . . . plans for a big season continue highly optimistic . . . though Sceneshifter agrees with the *Herald-Tribune* that maybe a third of these glowing programs will be carried out . . . one show, all set as to opening date, theatre, cast, etc., was called off at the eleventh hour . . . the backer backed out. Farces, melodramas, leg-and-girl shows form the major part of the 1934-35 theatrical menu on Broadway . . . the producers all agree that the public wants to forget its troubles when it goes to the theatre . . . what, it still has troubles under the N.R.A.? . . . a typical schedule is that of the Shuberts, it includes bringing back the philosopher

of the outhouse, Chic Sale, and some little French importations, one titled *Sexes and Sevens*. . . . Jed Harris is going in for melodrama. . . . *Amaco*, by Martin Flavin, announced for fall, is said to be about the American public's reaction to the "1929-1933 depression" (hadn't heard it was officially over in 1933!) . . . also announced, a new play by Sophie Treadwell (the futility of whose *Machinal* was criticized in Moscow when produced there) "dealing satirically with present-day conditions in Russia". . . that sounds old-fashioned, it's no longer smart to be satirical about present-day Russia. . . . Elmer Rice's first is *Judgment Day*, a melodrama on the attempted assassination of a European dictator . . . and there are dozens of little masterpieces like *Raw Sleeping* listed by shoe-stringers who want to cash in on the movie censorship of s-x. . . .

GETTING SET FOR NEXT SEASON

Los Angeles—the Rebel Players, four years old, has changed from a combination of theatre of action and stationary theatre to a purely stationary theatre to help solve its problems, and has united all its forces to meet the demands of various workers' organizations for full-length plays . . . its first will be *Peace On Earth* . . . the fall program also calls for drawing in professional actors, writers and technicians . . . Hollywood is nearby . . . Please note: the circulation manager of NEW THEATRE says hurry up with a payment on your badly delinquent account . . . Detroit's Theatre of Action may have all expenses of staging a three-act revolutionary play paid by a workers' organization, proceeds to go to some working-class defense committee . . . sounds like a chance to do good work unhampered by money worries, and to link more closely to a workers' audience and the mass struggle. . . . Toronto—the Workers Theatre wants to organize a children's group this fall . . . a fine, sound idea that other groups might follow. . . .



More on the Fall Outlook—

The Cleveland Workers Little Theatre is preparing *Nanking Road* and *Alice in Hungerland* for fall presentation. . . . New Orleans production of *Scottsboro*, delayed by a police raid of the home of one of the actors, and the carrying off of the scripts, is once more under way. . . . Detroit will see *Dimitroff*, scenes from *Peace on Earth* and *James Victory*, written by the writers group of the John Reed Club . . . it's based on the successful I.L.D. defense of a Negro charged with rape . . . the Nature Friends dramatic group of Philadelphia is developing a fine technical department . . . the audience cheered the moving conveyer, revolving gear wheel, pounding piston and other mechanical effects (all made by the scenic workers of the group) in *The Gong Is Striking* . . . the Jewish Dram Section, now affiliated nationally with the L.O.W.T., plans a four-month course for directors . . . the Hungarian National Conference also affiliated with the L.O.W.T., Milwaukee group is concentrating on drawing in Negro actors.

The Group Theatre company, now in the country doing intensive studio work under the direction of Lee Strasberg and other of its members, and rehearsing its next plays, will bring *Gold Eagle Guy*, first play by a left-wing novelist, Melvin Levy, to New York in November after a short Boston repertory season. . . . Eva Le Gallienne, under the protection of the new Selwyn-Franklyn-Cochran firm, is retreating to Broadway with the safe and sane *L'Aiglon* and *Romeo and Juliet* . . . leaving a clear field at the Civic Repertory Theatre for Theatre Union shows and New Theatre Magazine's Sunday Theatre Nights. . . .

While the Theatre Union, not on Broadway, after re-opening *Stevedore* Oct. 1st at the Civic and seeing it started on the road, will offer its mass audience a "red revue"—George Sklar and Paul Peters are now working on it—then either *Crazy American*, a play on the steel industry, or the revolutionary *Sailors of Catarro*, adapted from the German of Frederick Wolf, now an exile from Nazi Germany . . . having established itself as one of the important theatre organizations of America in anybody's language, it plans also to continue its studio work to develop actors for revolutionary productions . . . and is steadily building up a permanent mass audience through its subscription campaign . . . the 158 theatre parties of workers' organizations for *Peace On Earth* turned that play into a hit that made even the critics who had panned it and labelled it bad box-office eat their words . . . and *Stevedore* did even better. . . .

And Others—

The Theatre Guild, on Broadway, but "non-commercial", will give its subscription audience a musical re-hash of *Porgy*, its Negro "folk" play success of some seasons ago, and new plays from its usual stable of authors, Shaw, O'Neill, and Behrman . . . it may bring in the anti-Nazi *Races* that fell by the wayside last year and a dramatization by Albert Bein of Grace Lumpkin's revolutionary novel *To Make My Bread*. . . . Lynn Riggs whose *Green Grow the Lilacs* was produced by the Theatre Guild a few seasons ago, has written *More Sky*, said to be an anti-Fascist, anti-Capitalist, anti-imperialist play. . . . Robert Garland, critic for the *World-Telegram*, in taking another swipe at John Howard Lawson, the dramatist, who did some good reporting in Alabama and got jailed for it, said, "Lawson is going all the way left and entering the fold so that all will be forgiven." . . . Mr. Garland, please read the article on Lawson in the October NEW THEATRE . . . we can criticize those whom we respect and admire . . . Lawson's *Marching Song* may be done by the Group Theatre this winter. . . .

As We Go to Press:

"Reported Communist activities among fifty girls attending a FERA school for unemployed office workers here were subjected today to an investigation . . . dramatic skits staged by the students, citizens said, showed Communist leanings. . . . Major E. O. Brought, state relief director, and Charles C. Stillman, Federal representative attached to Ohio



relief headquarters, left Columbus by airplane to open the investigation here . . . from an A. P. dispatch from Oberlin, Ohio. . . .

Last But Not Least

There's real news for play-hungry New York workers . . . the 1st BIG "New Theatre Night" will be held Sept. 7th at the Civic Repertory Theatre . . . the Workers Laboratory Theatre will present three new revolutionary plays. . . . Jane Dudley of the New Dance Group will be featured in a widely hailed new dance *In the Life of a Worker* . . . an exciting puppet show. . . . Guest "Broadway" stars are on the bill. . . . George Sklar will be Master of Ceremonies . . . other "New Theatre Nights" for Sept. will come the 21st and 28th . . . starting with October there will be two feature "New Theatre Nights" given each month at the Civic Repertory Theatre . . . remember, you've a date with us Friday night, Sept. 7th.

SCENE SHIFTER

Five Month Plan

A Competition for the Groups

NEW THEATRE'S Five-Point FIVE MONTH PLAN is on! Already many groups have agreed to participate in this competition to

1. Increase monthly circulation of NEW THEATRE to 10,000.
2. Obtain 1,500 new subscribers.
3. Raise \$1,000 sustaining fund for the magazine.
4. Increase individual groups' repertory 50 per cent or more.
5. Increase individual groups' membership 50 per cent or more.

After a half year of hard work and vigorous growth, NEW THEATRE has arrived at the point where such a campaign is practical and necessary for its future development, and for the development of the revolutionary theatre arts in America.

Less than a year ago, the magazine was a roughly gotten out sheaf of leaves. True, it was already giving valuable service to the workers' theatre groups. But the demand for a fine, professional organ for revolutionary theatre workers and audiences far exceeded the abilities of the magazine to meet it. A reorganization took place. The magazine, far more attractively and serviceably gotten up, was revamped editorially to include sections of the professional theatre arts as related to the revolutionary movement. Some of the best writers in these fields now contribute stimulating and valuable material. The circulation has more than doubled in the past four months (2,500 in May to 6,500 in Sept.). Our subscription list has widened to include many more workers in the theatre, film and dance, as well as such noted professionals as Sidney Howard, Elmer Rice, John Howard Lawson, Frank Merlin, J. Edward Bromberg, Mordecai Gorelik, Sidney Kingsley, and John Dos Passos etc. Our "New Theatre Nights" have proved most inspiringly that there is a large audience eager to see revolutionary plays.

There is still a great deal to be done in improving our magazine, in giving more direct service to the groups, in enlarging our scope. This Five Month Plan campaign, if successfully put over by the theatre, film and dance groups, and by sympathizers, will advance the workers' theatre arts tremendously, as well as put NEW THEATRE on a sound financial basis. It will draw thousands of new adherents into the revolutionary theatre movement.

To the groups participating in this campaign, this is a call to stay with it and make a genuine effort to meet and exceed your quotas. To those readers not affiliated with any group—this is a call to send in all the subs you can obtain from your friends, to circulate the magazine at meetings which you attend, and to help raise money for or contribute to the sustaining fund, to send in articles, letters to the correspondence section, and to help in every way you can.

First prize, for the group that reaches the highest standard artistically, politically and organizationally, as well as most exceeds its quotas, is a National Tour, managed and financed by NEW THEATRE, playing in over fifty cities, towns, and farm centers.

Second group prize is choice of any equipment, lighting, make-up kits, literature, etc. Not to exceed \$25 in cost. Third group prize is equipment up to \$15 cost.

Prizes for individual "shock troopers" for the Five Month Plan are: To those who get 20 or more dollar subs to NEW THEATRE, autographed copies of all three of the years' best revolutionary plays, *Stevedore*, *They Shall Not Die* and *Peace on Earth*; to those getting 10 to 19 subs, an autographed copy of any of these books; those who get 5 subs, get NEW THEATRE free for a year; those who get 3 subs, get a 6-months' free sub to NEW THEATRE.

The New Theatre group of the Tri-Cities (Moline and Rock Island, Ill., and Davenport, Iowa) writes "Congratulations on the great improvement in NEW THEATRE . . . we read it eagerly, and find most of the articles of great help in our work . . . the Five Month Plan contest sounds stiff, but we're going to try our hardest to win" . . . this group gave a successful performance at a Mother Bloor meeting.

A detailed account of the plan and how to carry it out is already in the hands of all workers theatre, film and dance groups on our mailing list. Anyone may get a copy free by writing a postcard request to NEW THEATRE.

Five months' is a very brief time in which to accomplish our objective. There will be time enough only if every group and every individual reader gets off to a good start *right now*. Order your NEW THEATRES immediately to be sold at your performances, your "theatre nights", at meetings of allied organizations, and among your friends. Get those dollar-bills for new subscriptions out of their hiding places *today*. Organize your plans for a "New Theatre Night" at your next meeting. Begin work on the play, skit, dance, or film scenario you are submitting to the competition *today*. And remember, send in news reports about your activities before the September 12th deadline, for the October issue. We're ready to be swamped with good news.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Eastern Theatre Festival and Conference of the League of Worker's Theatres, U.S.A., will be held in New York, September 21-23, 1934. The conference work will be concentrated primarily on the activities and problems of the individual groups. Each group will present a detailed report on its history, artistic and organizational achievements, method of work, plans, experiments, and experiences. Committees of specialists from the bourgeois as well as the revolutionary theatre will analyze and evaluate these reports, and present their statements to the conference for discussion. The analysis of these statements will add new and valuable material to the experiences of each group. As a result of this conference, the groups will be brought closer together, their work coordinated, their efficiency improved, their artistic standards heightened.

The program of the Festival is as follows: An introductory general survey by the National Secretary; a short report on NEW THEATRE, which developed during recent months into the principal organizer and coordinator in the theatre movement; the main part of the sessions will deal with the reports and statements described above. As a colorful supplement to the business sessions, there will be a gala "Theatre Night" at the Civic Repertory Theatre September 21, and dance groups, the Pierre De Geyter Trio, etc. On September 22, a special night show of revolutionary plays will be given at the Workers' Laboratory Theatre.

The Conference will analyze the vital problems facing the developing art of the workers theatres of America. Therefore participation is not limited to delegations from member groups of the L.O.W.T. representatives of mass organizations, "sympathetic" theatre groups, and individuals, theatre workers, playwrights, actors, artists, etc., are invited.

The groups are urged to begin the preparatory work at once that is essential to making the Conference a success. Reports should be gotten up, discussed, sent in with suggestions on matters to be taken up. Registration blanks, detailed programs and directives, and all information can be obtained from the Eastern Conference Committee, 114 West 14th St., New York City.

ANNE HOWE

The Movie Front

FROM ABROAD

Beginning with the October issue, Jay Leyda, our correspondent in Moscow, will report on the new film productions of the Soviet Studios in NEW THEATRE . . . Advance stills from the films discussed will accompany Leyda's reports. . . . We hear from PARIS that Jean Renoir—the noted director, Claude Heyman, and Claude Autan-Lara, three leading figures in the Syndicat des Chefs Cineastes Francaise, resigned because of the chauvinist and fascist policy adopted by this film directors' union in barring non-French directors from the industry. This policy was aimed at English, American and German refugee directors. . . . June film grosses dropped 13 per cent as against last June. . . . 35 French theatres went bankrupt. . . . A report from PRAGUE states Czechoslovakian movie attendance dropped 50 per cent since 1933. . . . The Austrian Catholic Film Committee has endorsed new Nazi films. . . . This action of the archbishops who O.K.'d *S. A. Mann Brand, Hitler's Youth*, etc., because the films showed "fresh and youthful optimism and sound moral attitude" is indicative of the depths to which the American church crusade for censorship may descend. . . .

NAZI INVASION CHECKED

All movies in NEW YORK are scissoring scenes of Hitler and Nazi material. . . . "Too much audience disturbance," they say. . . . The Rialto, at the crossroads of the entertainment world, 42nd Street and 7th Avenue, has adopted this policy after several lobby fights between pro-Nazis and anti-Nazis. . . .

Variety reports that the Yorkville Theatre is taking it on the chin. . . . It seems that the campaign led by the Film and Photo League against the showing of Nazi films in this theatre (owned by a Jew, Mr. Joseph Scheinman) has almost completely isolated the depraved Goebbels creations and the Nazi cesspool in which they were screened from the mass of moviegoers of New York. . . . 1800 neighborhood theatres showing the vicious war-glorifying film *No Greater Glory* have been picketed by the Film and Photo League, the League Against War and Fascism, and the United Council of Working Class Women. Leaflets and outdoor meetings in front of the theatres helped expose this film that said, "There is no greater glory than to die for your country." . . . Slavko Vorkapich, one of the most advanced movie-makers in America, has joined the National Advisory Board of the Film and Photo League. Vorkapich has done special work on *Viva Villa, Turn Back the Clock, Wolf of Wall Street*, etc. He will work on an experimental short in California when he gets time off from *David Copperfield*. . . .

THE CASE OF BLANDER VS. CINELAB

Mr. Frank Weisser, burly Nazi super, at CINELAB, 33 West 60th Street, New York City, has fired Herman Blander for being a Jew. The Anti-Nazi Federation, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American League Against War and Fascism, and the Film and Photo League have joined in exposing this instance of Nazi anti-Semitism, and have picketed CINELAB . . . leaflets and street meetings have called for reinstatement of Blander. . . . Cinelab say they cannot recall Blander while Weisser is there. . . . The anti-Nazis have raised the slogan "Fire the Nazi that Fired the Jew!" . . . Murray Levy, 1417 Maryland Ave. N. E. is acting as organizer of the WASHINGTON, D. C., Film and Photo League. . . . I. Prager, 77 Westminster Ave., Roxbury, Mass., is one of the organizers of the BOSTON League. . . . The PHILADELPHIA League (write 136 South 8th St. for information) has been very active . . . classes in dark room work, studio lighting, lectures on photography and film taking have been held. . . . Philly's first Still Photo Show, *Men at Work*, was

held recently, and another, *America Today*, will be held Saturday, Sept. 15. . . . Also, the League will hold a symposium: *Whither Hollywood*, in which the chief speakers will be Eric M. Knight, film editor of the Philadelphia *Evening Ledger*, Tom Brandon of New York, and Leo T. Hurwitz, film editor of NEW THEATRE. . . . The Animated Film Group of the W.I.R. (870 Broadway, New York City) will be ready to shoot its first film October 1, if animators and artists join and help now. Helen Kay's story *Battle in the Barnyard* will be animated under the direction of L. Barnes and A. Prestiss. . . . Ralph Steiner has only a half dozen more shots to go on his new anti-religious film *Pie in the Sky*. The Los Angeles League has finished *California* 1934. . . . Chicago League has shot two newsreels. . . . The New York, Philadelphia and Detroit Leagues have failed to make even one reel during the entire summer. . . . Ralph Steiner's suggestions in this issue should stimulate more film production . . . we hope so. . . .

FLASH FROM HOLLYWOOD

News flash from one HOLLYWOOD movie worker who hasn't been frightened by the "red scare" campaign. . . . He writes: "The Hearst press continues its yellow journalism and the rest of the papers are almost as bad . . . even the ads are viciously provocative. One ad for Cagney's *Here Comes the Navy* quotes a review, 'We don't ordinarily care for propaganda films, but here's one we're enthused about.' This latest film about the navy makes you want to go out and clean up a whole nest of reds' . . . thus the papers in sunny California whip up anti-working class hysteria." . . .

Mimeographed statement on The Church Vs. The Movie Industry by the Film and Photo League, which can be secured by writing to NEW THEATRE or any branch of the League, declares: "The main drive of the 'decency campaign' is a drive for 'law and order', anti-labor, jingoistic and pro-war films as the principal fare for the movie audience, to be insured by whipping up sentiment for Federal Film Censorship" . . . National Film Conference to be held in Chicago during the last week in September. . . . All film and photo clubs, societies, guilds and unions invited.

TOM BRANDON

Shadow Dance (Continued from page 21)

just as distinct on the screen. However, if it turns out that this value is lost, it must be remembered that many new values are added to the dance by the screen.

Until actual practice proves or disproves this proposition, it might be well to offer still another theoretical justification of shadow dancing. The form of the ceremonial or ritualistic dance was well adapted to its purpose. It was conventionalized and suited to constant repetition. It was performed in the open air or indoors, as in houses of worship or ceremony, or even in homes, and the spectator was often the participant. The contemporary dance, with the qualifications noted at the beginning of this article, has become an art of the stage. The screen image is also primarily a stage technique and therefore a technique sympathetic with the nature of the modern dance.

Meyerhold (Continued from page 15)

all." The distinguishing features of that theatre are: (1) Independence from literature and gravitation toward improvisation; (2) the prevalence of movement and ges-

ture over the word; (3) the lack of psychologic motivation of acting; (4) a rich and trenchant comic quality; (5) easy transitions from the lofty-heroic to the base and the ugly-misshapen and comical; (6) the spontaneous combination of ardent rhetoric with exaggerated buffonade; (7) an effort at generalization, synthesizing of the characters by singling out sharply a given feature of the character, leading thus to the creation of conventional theatrical figures—masks—(8) the lack of any differentiation of the functions of the actor: the coalescence of the actor with the acrobat, jongleur, clown, juggler, mountebank, songster, fool; (9) the universal technique of acting conditioned by this versatility, built upon the mastery of one's own body, upon an innate rhythmicity, upon an expeditious and economical use of one's movements.

As Mokalsky writes in *The Revolution of Tradition* in the forthcoming *Theatrical October*:

"In their totality all these singularities form a pure theatre of actor's craftsmanship, independent of the other arts whose role in the theatre becomes merely auxiliary. The folk-theatre is free from the esthetic pretensions of the aristocratic and bourgeois theatres; it does not endeavor to create an esthetically gorgeous and immobile show to feast the eye, and that is why it can do without the painter-designer. The decorations of the scenic platform and the actor are confined to the minimum necessary."

If we examine Meyerhold's work carefully we find that the continuation and development upon a higher level on the basis of a new content of this type of theatre is the key to all his work since 1910. The technical means which he has developed: the breaking up of a play into episodes, the musical principle, emphasizing the secondary characters and introducing new ones sometimes without any line, foreplay, transformation, the principle of grotesque, playing with objects, etc., etc., must be closely studied by all students of theatre to whom the problem of producing a play is a creative problem of interpretation and comment.

San Francisco (Continued from page 17) against workers' theatres, film and photo leagues, book stores, libraries, writers and artists groups help to make this clear.

The attack on theatres and bookshops are not merely incidental. The fury with which a vigilante tears a fistful of revolutionary pamphlets grows from his realization that he cannot ever shed enough blood to drown the ideas embodied in the print he is destroying.

There is no middle road. San Francisco brought into clear relief the implacable opposition of one culture against another.

The San Francisco and other West Coast theatres and cultural organizations are continuing to build where they left off when they bowed without breaking before government-made terror. The rest of the nation's revolutionary cultural front must build with them.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT

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- San Francisco Strike
- Growing Fascism in this country
- Whipping up the "Red Scare" in this country
- Roosevelt's N.R.A. Program
- Lynching and legal lynching of Negroes
- Building of Socialism in Soviet Russia
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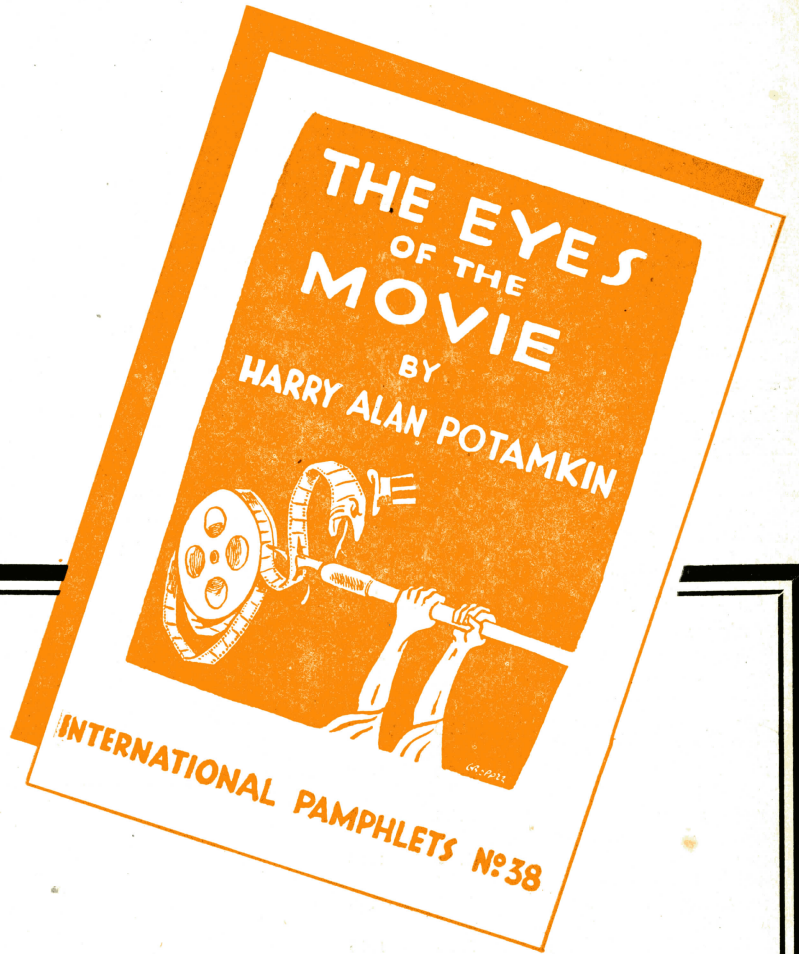
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