NOVEMBER
1948

masses & MAINSTREAM

In this Issue: **WHY WAS DU BOIS FIRED? by Shirley Graham**
WRITERS AFTER TWO WARS, *by Isidor Schneider*
THE MEANING OF BERLIN, *by Gerhart Eisler* · ART: *Orozco, Picasso, Shahn* · REVIEWS OF: *Fast, Faulkner, Sandburg, Saxton*

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 9

masses & MAINSTREAM

November, 1948

MASSES & MAINSTREAM *is published monthly by Masses & Mainstream, Inc., 832 Broadway, New York 3, N. Y. Subscription rate. $4.00 a year; foreign and Canada: $4.50 a year. Single copies 35 cents; outside the U.S.A., 50 cents. All payments from foreign countries must be made either by U.S. money orders or by checks payable in U.S. currency. Re-entered as second class matter February 25, 1948, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.* MASSES & MAINSTREAM *is distributed nationally by New Century Publishers, 832 Broadway, N. Y. C.*

AMONG THE CONTRIBUTORS

SHIRLEY GRAHAM is the author of a prize-winning historical novel *There Once Was a Slave,* and biographies of Paul Robeson and George Washington Carver.

OROZCO'S murals, reproduced in this issue, are part of a series painted in Jiquilpan, the birthplace of Lazaro Cardenas.

RUTH STEINBERG'S story is from a novel in progress. Her story, "The Diamond," appeared in our April number.

ALEXANDER WATT is an outstanding Polish poet.

• •

COVER: by Irving Amen

All manuscripts should be addressed to The Editors of MASSES & MAINSTREAM *832 Broadway, New York 3, N. Y., and be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope for return. Payment is made on publication.*

ONE *of the* TWELVE

by PHILLIP BONOSKY

I HURRIED through the streets on my way to meet a man. A radio, in the crisp voice of an anonymous speaker, cried: "Spy . . . spy . . . Communist . . . spy. . . ." Around me men and women, the gray stain of the secret and fearful anxiety of our times washed through their faces and isolated in their eyes, carried newspapers; and the huge black headlines, again and again. And again, as I turned the corner and almost fell into the arms of a man holding a magazine. A truck going by, carrying a huge placard. There again! "Spy . . . Communist . . . spy. . . ." And again, as I walked; and all around me, again and again.

I hurried on that calm September morning. Children were going to school. There was that hint of haze in the air which, in the country, hangs across the sun and lies half-shining across the pear and apple trees. One longed to surrender to the peace and languor of the day; sighed, as if this were a lost dream, for the memory of simplicity; a home, work, family. . . . I wanted to reach out into the crowd, to any of the frightened people who hurried by with their eyes averted from the headlines on the newsstands, take anyone I could touch by the hand and say, Come, come with me; I want you to meet somebody. . . .

I was going to see a man named Gus Hall; he is the state chairman of the Communist Party of Ohio, one of the twelve members of the National Committee of the Communist Party indicted by a grand jury for conspiring to teach. . . .

It hardly matters what the indictment says. Nobody really cares what it says, nobody believes it, least of all those who drew it up. They have other reasons, and their game is bigger: to steal the freedom of the American people, first, and then the world.

I had seen Gus Hall only once before. He had just been mustered out of the Navy, and there he was, still in his blue uniform, poking

a fire at the back of a cold meeting hall in Cleveland. It was the spring of 1946, I believe. But the most remarkable thing about him at that time was the enormous handle-bar mustache he had grown in the Navy and brought home with him, his only trophy from the war.

But memory never shaves a face. "What ever became of that wonderful handle-bar?" I demanded abruptly. For instead of the mustache I remembered was a conventional little two-incher.

"Shaved it off," he said, with just a touch of regret and a smile.

I got the vital statistics from him at once. Date of birth: October 8, 1910. Place of birth: Iron, Minnesota. Parentage: Finnish-American. Schooling: left school after the eighth grade to work. Married, two children. Work record: lumberjack at the age of 15; railroad; bummed about the country in his teens going where the climate fit his clothes; steel worker, organizer, Communist. . . .

"You're not going to tell me you were born in a log cabin, too, by any chance, now are you?"

A slow smile began to spread over his face. "Well," he said, "as a matter of fact I was. Dad was an expert carpenter and built the cabin I was born in!"

We sat in the little room and shook with laughter for a whole minute. Somehow I felt I was losing the point of my interview. Here, simply, was a man who had spent his whole life fighting the battles of the underdog, because he himself was one; he fought them well and with vision. Period. One wanted to shake hands and go home. If truth were its own witness, this would be enough. I would not be writing this article. Instead, I have to prove the obvious. I have to show that a man, Gus Hall, is just what his life is: open, honest, militant, incorruptible. Everyone who has met him personally knows this—including his enemies and those who lie about him.

In any case, even if I wasn't there to get the facts I would have stayed to hear the details of this man's life. For he added: "Not only that," tasting the humor of it, "some time ago, an amateur photographer took some pictures of that cabin—and those photographs of my birthplace won prizes all over the country and in South America, too!"

It struck me as bizarre that perhaps the same good people who were sent into a cold sweat by the press stories of American Communists' *intentions* (it's always in the future!) might have lingered sentimentally over that photograph of a cabin in which an American Communist leader was born.

IN OUR talk Gus mentioned his father frequently and eagerly and with obvious pride. For his father, Matt, had been active practically his entire life in the labor movement. He had been a friend of Big Bill Haywood, back in those turbulent I.W.W. days; he was a miner who had worked in coal and iron, had led attempts to organize the miners into a union and had been blacklisted for thirty years as a result. Thirty years! And it was only during the war that he was called back again—and now he was sixty-eight years old.

Both Matt and his wife were charter members of the Communist Party—that fledgling party which was hounded immediately by Attorney-General Palmer with the crude but effective assistance of the then apprentice-in-frameups, J. Edgar Hoover.

Gus was one of ten children, and life was no merry-go-round for the children of a man who was hounded by the great mining corporations and their hundreds of hirelings as Gus himself was later to be hounded and framed by them and their sons. His father built a home out of the wilderness with his own hands, and added more space to the cabin as more children were born.

"We lived in semi-starvation," Gus said simply.

Sometimes a father will say to his son, "My way was hard, and I want you to take an easier way." But Gus's assignment in life was no easy one. He stood on the shoulders of his father, and perhaps that is why, so young, he could see so much farther than men three times his age. For at fifteen he was doing a man's work, as a lumberjack, for the Backus & Brooks Lumber Company, at $32 a month, and he was organizing at the same time. Conditions of labor were brutal. The men lived in bare barracks and were completely at the mercy of the company, which kept an eye sleeplessly peeled on rebels—which meant just about everyone. The blacklist was long and notorious, and out in the woods anything could happen to a man.

Still, young Gus pitched in to organize men old enough to be his father. The Young Communist League, which was active there in northern Minnesota and to which he had attached himself (he was still too young to be a member), gave him the assignment of building the union. He did a good job. When he became a full-fledged member, the Y.C.L. sent him on a speaking tour. "I made my first speech about then," he said, wryly. "Never made a speech in my life before. My first speech was two minutes long—and, after that, I've been increasing them ever since. . . ."

He floated logs down the river, was a four-horse skinner at $45 a month, spoke for and helped build the Y.C.L. Obviously a boy to be watched. Eyes were on him: the bosses' and, what was more important, the workers'.

There was a restless period, however, in his teens when he went on the bum—moved about the country by freight, absorbing it, seeing how the people lived, discovering that he was legion. It was on the back of the worker that the country rested—everywhere men were sweating and everywhere others profited from that sweat. This simple truth was taught to young Gus by those two remorseless instructors: hunger and unemployment.

From this period until the Little Steel Strike in 1937, life moved rapidly for Gus Hall. His next assignment was as organizer on the famous Mesabi Range, the richest iron ore deposits in the world, private property of U.S. Steel. This was in 1928-29; and here he was arrested for the first time for leading an anti-war demonstration. Dozens of high school kids who had listened to him and watched the arrest protested—kept on protesting over Hall's own protests, for they could have been expelled from school. The cops beat them with clubs and hustled them to jail after Gus. They came into the jailhouse with noses streaming scarlet and blood caking their hair and their shirts torn and that stunned look that comes when young Americans get a sudden glimpse of the iron fist behind I-pledge-allegiance-with-liberty-and-justice-for-all. (How many of them are dead now, on what Pacific shore?)

THEN the storm cloud that had slowly been growing from a speck on the horizon in the high-noon days of prosperity broke, and the storm flooded the country. In Germany, finance-capital hoisted a sign-painter onto the stage. The Reichstag Fire was lit; Dachau and Buchenwald loomed in the shadows. The accused Communist, Dimitrov, stripped the stage armor from the strutting Goering. The frame-up was exposed.

Roosevelt was in the White House. Hoovervilles still dotted the country, an army was on the move by freight, living in jungle camps beside the road at night, eating slumgullion from tin cans. Men, women, children. The Mellons, Weirs, Morgans quaked: a new force was arising. Labor was slowly beginning to snap the bonds that had kept it hobbled for two decades. On Park Avenue the dowagers stocked their

cellars with food in case the mob came north from Union Square where Foster and Amter and Minor spoke to thousands.

From the ranks of the unemployed, fighting for bread, rose the Communists—men like Gus Hall. In 1932, he was leading an unemployed demonstration in Minneapolis that "took over" the city hall and sent shivers down the backs of the rich. Bread was won.

In 1934, the famous Minneapolis Teamsters Strike broke out; Gus Hall led the most decisive part of that struggle. It was bitter and brutal, approaching the conditions of open warfare. Thousands of thugs were recruited from all over the country, equipped with deputy badges, clubs and guns, and then turned loose against the strikers. They swaggered about town in storm-trooper style "until," says Gus grimly, "the men couldn't take it any more. They went to work themselves. Never saw such a shellacking of police in my life—they were running all over the city throwing their badges away!" He smiled nostalgically.

At Atlantic City, John L. Lewis punched Bill Hutcheson in the nose and stalked out of the convention of the A. F. of L. Soon the portentous letters began to appear on the American scene, C.I.O., the Committee for Industrial Organization. Phil Murray was assigned the organization of steel and the Steel Workers Organizing Committee was formed. Gus Hall became a staff member.

He began to look through his wallet as he told me this, and finally produced a time-worn card which identified him as an organizer for S.W.O.C. It was signed by Murray himself. Hall's job was to organize the steel workers in the Republic mills at Warren and Niles, Ohio. Only shreds of organization existed there—the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, A. F. of L., whose president, the venerable, slumbering Mike Tighe, like a befuddled bear sucked his paw in seclusion in Pittsburgh.

Tom Girdler became president of Republic Steel at about this time. His name lives in infamy, connected forever with the Memorial Day Massacre in Chicago in 1937. And here, in Niles and Warren, this shrewd, hardbitten corporation boss was pitted, with all his goons, hired police, tear-gas, strikebreakers, labor spies, police clubs and guns, against the courage and skill of this young man, only twenty-seven years old, whose job was to help wrench loose the workers from the murderous grip of this steel baron. In his autobiography, *Bootstraps,* Tom Girdler describes the campaign to organize his plants as an invasion of Communists and other men, "probably Italian," with dark

faces. His story is the story of staunch Americanism facing off the invasion of a foreign horde.

The men of Republic worked in conditions of virtual peonage in these small company towns on the flatlands of Ohio. Tom Girdler proposed and disposed for them. Their only fear was not unionization—but if it failed! Reprisals. Blacklists. Nevertheless, they answered the call to strike and accepted Gus Hall's leadership. But Girdler's men were not asleep either. They had been busy rounding up scabs and "loyal" employees and barricading them inside the mill. They began to put pressure on the police and the political errand-boys. They organized back-to-work movements and through their hired press spread the alarm far and wide. To feed the men in the mill, they sent food by air from Cleveland. They deputized goons and supplied them with tear-gas and grenades. They shot and they killed.

IT WAS in the course of this strike that the first attempt to frame Gus Hall was made. Gus had been sent by Murray to Chicago, and while he was there a warrant was issued for his arrest. He had been indicted, Gus said with a shrug, "for almost everything under the sun—nothing was left out. When I saw the Chicago papers," he continued, "I sent a telegram to the newspapers and the sheriff, who said I was a fugitive and that I was being hunted in six states, telling them I'd be back. But both kept the telegram secret. When I hurried back they slapped bail on me—the highest bail ever slapped on anyone there—$50,000!

"While I was in jail," he went on, "I had two delegations come to visit me and see for themselves and hear for themselves what my story was. One delegation was made up of Protestant ministers, the other had a Catholic priest in it. They were impressed with what they learned."

The frame-up was the work of a stool-pigeon who planted nitroglycerine in the union's station-wagon. National Guardsmen "discovered" the nitro in the car. The point of all this was to connect Gus with an attempt to blow up something. "All the time I was in Chicago."

The prosecution started a big campaign to buy witnesses, and finally got one. "But before the trial came up," Hall said, "the man was sent to prison for the criminally insane." He laughed.

"What happened?" I asked. "Did they convict you?"

"Oh," he replied, "the case dragged on and on. The judge didn't want to handle such a hot potato, so finally a new judge was appointed by the Supreme Court. This judge asked me to go along on a misdemeanor fine of $500 for knocking down a post. I shouldn't have even agreed to that, I guess."

Phil Murray paid Hall a great compliment on his handling of the strike. It was the best organized strike anywhere, he told Gus. Then Murray sent him on various other assignments. Gus was in northern Michigan for a while, then helped organize the can factories in Brooklyn, Washburn Wire in the Bronx.

From these assignments he returned to Ohio and sent in his resignation to Murray. At this time Gus was the highest-paid organizer on the S.W.O.C. staff. This decision came as a surprise to Murray and the other union officials; and they were dumbfounded when they learned of the new job Hall was taking: section organizer of the Communist Party in Youngstown. Pay, $20 a week—when they had it.

"Why? Why did you leave a good job with the S.W.O.C.? Your future was like a plush carpet ahead of you. Instead of facing indictments, today you could be meeting the heads of Marshall Plan Europe, like Jim Carey, or, with the snap of fingers, decreeing the end of the labor movement in Greece, like Clint Golden, or spreading gold like manna from a Wall Street heaven to the right people in Europe's trade unions, like Dubinsky? You could even shake Mr. Truman's hand!"

His answer was serious, however. "I felt I was making my best contribution to the steel workers by helping to build up a core of Communists. They'd guarantee that the union would remain a fighting organization. Don't forget, the steel union was largely built under Communist leadership."

ALTHOUGH Gus had escaped the first attempted frame-up, he was not so lucky the second time. Frame-ups are the occupational hazards of working-class leaders, and one grows almost used to living among them, as a trainer gets used to his tigers. In 1940 the Communist Party circulated petitions among the electorate of Ohio, as elsewhere, soliciting signatures to get the party on the ballot. Each petition bore the name of the party, big as life, as the law requires. There was nothing unusual about this activity. But this time, something new entered the picture. The F.B.I.—the same F.B.I. which in 1920, with the pant-

ing assistance of J. Edgar Hoover, had driven the new Communist Party underground. Its agents roused citizens out of their beds in the dead of night, threatened them with arrest, implied they had committed some crime by signing a Communist Party petition, threatened them with loss of their job if they refused to repudiate their signatures. The local newspapers published the names of the signers. A certain number gave way to this terror and "repudiated" their signatures. On that pretext Gus Hall and several others were indicted. They were found guilty and sent to jail. Gus drew a ninety-day sentence.

"I was in jail on Pearl Harbor Day," he said. "The sheriff woke me up at four A.M. to tell me about it. In 1943 I was drafted into the Navy, had my boot training at Great Lakes. I was sent to the Pacific, around Okinawa, Guam and Saipan."

And now I was ready to ask the jackpot question.

"Where were you," I said, "at the time the Grand Jury indictment charges that you conspired to teach and advocate the overthrow of the U.S. government—in April, 1945?"

"In April, 1945," he answered deliberately, "at the time they charge me with conspiring to do that, I was in direct charge of all repair work of all motors in the biggest naval base in Guam."

We sat in silence, pondering this.

I SHOOK hands with Gus Hall and left him as he hurried to catch a train for Cleveland. In the confident, at-ease tone of his voice and shape of his will, I caught a glimpse of the courage and wit with which he had pulled through the many bitter trials of his still young life.

Outside, the atmosphere was paralyzed with deceit. Nobody as yet was attacked by roaming mobs of storm-troopers (but Bob Thompson, another one of the Twelve, soon would be!). No one carried the yellow star of David on his arm to be shunned by the populace. But there was fear, a strong, live fear, like an odor. It hung about everyone, it hid in their eyes, it was tucked away in their conversation. People looked upon the Dewey-Truman exhibition with confusion, horror, frustration or fear. All their beings revolted against the fate to which the newspapers and radios were driving them; everything in their lives yearned for peace and happiness. But over and over, like a club, was the cry, "Communist . . . spy . . . Communist. . . ." And

like a gun, the threat of war. You planned for a week ahead; you had given up planning for a year. A glass wall had been quietly and slowly built around each brain: you saw but you did not hear; you heard but you did not see.

The glass wall would have to be broken down.

One thing was different from 1933 when the Reichstag was set afire. Fascism had already suffered a mortal blow, and there were more to fight it. The world was wiser. The wall of lies had been shattered in Europe. Only here did it remain relatively intact.

The glass wall would have to be broken down.

I HAD wanted to ask Gus Hall what he got out of being a Communist. "What do you get out of it? What's in it for you?" But it is impossible to ask a man why he loves his children and dies for them, or what character is, or honor, or loyalty, or conviction.

He's A Real Gone Guy

A Short Requiem for Percival Angleman

by THOMAS MCGRATH

As I walked out in the streets of Chicago,
As I stopped in a bar in Manhattan one day,
I saw a poor weedhead dressed up like a sharpie
Dressed up like a sharpie all muggled and fey.

He was beat to the socks, and his sick nerves were jumping
Like newly caught fish in the sack of his face.
He was wearing the monkey between his hired shoulders;
It twitched like a bullseye: the sign of the chase.

Twenty-three years from the dark of his mother,
From the water-borne dreams of before he was found;
Sixteen years from innocence, two from state suffrage,
And one year away from a hole in the ground.

"I can see by your threads that you're not in the racket."
Like knife-wounds his eyes in the corpse of his smile.
"Have a couple on me and we'll talk while I'm waiting.
I've got an appointment but not for a while.

"Oh I once was a worker and had to keep scuffling;
I fought for my scoff with the wolf at the door.
But I made the connection and got in the racket,
Stopped being a business man's charity whore.

"You'll never get yours if you work for a living,
But you may make a million for somebody else.
You buy him his women, his trips to Miami,
And all he expects is the loan of yourself."

"I'm with you," I said, "but here's what you've forgotten:
A working stiff's helpless to fight on his own,
But united with others he's stronger than numbers.
We can win when we learn that we can't win alone.

"Because bosses can't bribe us or buy an indulgence
For the years of our youth that they coined into gold.
Without our consent they have no power to rule us;
If we folded our arms they'd be out in the cold."

"You sound like a mission-stiff gassed up on alky;
I won't hold my breath till your kingdom has come.
They've got us in jail and there's no key that fits it,
But I'll walk through the hole I can make with a gun.

"Machinists or miners, sandhogs or chenangos—
Born in a scratch joint, live poor and die good.
With eight kids and a rupture, a wife and a mortgage,
And the years running out of their muscles like blood.

"Oh the boss stole the world and he's locked you outside it;
He's bought up the cops who patrol on his land.
He has hired judge and jury to hang you for trespass,
And pieced off a Bishop to see that you're damned.

"Put a gun on the world and walk out with the damper
And put out the ice for whoever talks back—
I may not live long but at least I'll be living,
Stacked to the bricks from the bright to the black."

Crazy as bats in the glare of a street lamp
The terrible words whispered over our heads.
Then he covered his face with the hard look of money
And nervously followed his star where it led.

He turned and went out to the darkness inside him
To the Hollywood world where believers die rich,
Where free enterprise and the lies of his childhood
Were preparing his kingdom in some midnight ditch.

Now behold him, you watchers, as he turns at the corner,
Consider his soul when he's lost in the dark.
His shoulders are high but his sick heart can never
Be padded with hope by Hart Schaffner and Marx.

And pardon his means which are those of our statesmen;
Forgive his ideals which are those of success;
Who had nothing to love him, not even a bank book,
And sins not important enough to confess.

When he's dead send the body to all those who made him:
His head to the state, to the church his last scream;
His love to the poets, his heart to Chase National;
His skill with a gun to the U. S. Marines.

And God, if there were one, might have for a jewel
The bright human fire in the soul of his son,
And strike dead in an instant the scum who forgive him—
Who willed him and killed him and never cared once

That twenty-three years from the dark of his mother,
From the water-borne dreams of before he was found,
Sixteen years from innocence, two from state suffrage,
He was one year away from a hole in the ground.

Why was Du Bois fired?

by SHIRLEY GRAHAM

"We will not be satisfied to take one jot or tittle less than our full manhood rights. We claim for ourselves every single right that belongs to a free-born American, political, civil, and social; and until we get these rights we will never cease to protest and assail the ears of America. The battle we wage is not for ourselves alone, but for all true Americans. It is a fight for ideals, lest this, our common fatherland, false to its founding, become in truth the land of the thief and home of the slave—a byword and a hissing among the nations for its sounding pretensions and pitiful accomplishment."

THOSE words were penned over forty years ago by Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois. They formed the heart of the creed of the Niagara Movement, organized by the same man, which united those Negro leaders —most of them teachers, lawyers, ministers, editors—who opposed Booker T. Washington's policy of acquiescence and preferred instead one of militant struggle for freedom and equality.

It was this movement and these Negro leaders who joined, in 1910, with such white liberals and reformers as William English Walling, Oswald Garrison Villard, Charles Edward Russell and Mary White Ovington to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Of the five original incorporators of the organization, one was a Negro and he was Du Bois.

On September 13, 1948, the Board of Directors of the N.A.A.C.P. passed a motion, "that it will not be in the best interest of the Association to continue the employment of Dr. Du Bois. . . ."

To understand this action and its significance for the Negro liberation movement it is necessary to review some salient features in the history of the N.A.A.C.P. In its origins the organization was largely middle-class; its approach never questioned seriously the basic pattern of the American social order. Rather it attempted to achieve reforms within that pattern by court action and by appeals for decent treatment.

Dr. Du Bois was the key force in the agitational and propagandistic work of the early Association. In the Spring of 1910 he left Atlanta University to become Director of Publications and Research of the N.A.A.C.P., and set about planning a monthly magazine. The treasurer, Mr. Villard, said frankly: "I don't know who is going to pay your salary; we have no money." One thousand copies of the first issue of the *Crisis* (November, 1910) were printed. Within a year it sold 15,000 copies, and within a decade the fearless, pungent editing of Du Bois had brought its circulation above the 100,000 mark, an unprecedented event in the history of Negro journalism.

Meanwhile, the selfless organizational work of Mary White Ovington, plus that of the poet-philosopher-statesman, James Weldon Johnson, and the Field Secretary, William Pickens, was laying the foundations for the transformation of the N.A.A.C.P. from a closely-knit, professionally-minded reform body into that of a genuine mass organization.

In 1918, James Weldon Johnson, returning from a Southern trip, remarked to Dr. Du Bois, "There's an energetic young chap in the Atlanta branch—a recent graduate from the university there—says you know him. His name's Walter White. He'd like a job with us." After a moment's thought Dr. Du Bois replied, "Oh, yes, his brother was a student of mine. I know his father and mother well. Why don't you ask for him as an assistant?"

So Walter White was brought up from Atlanta. He had taken his A.B. from Atlanta the year before, had no professional training, but he made up for his lack of knowledge and experience with a boundless energy and daring initiative. With his flair for drama and publicity, the young man began to add color to the Association's activities. His investigations of lynchings became sensational not only because he got facts but because by posing as a white man in the deep South he added suspense and amusement to grim horror.

UP TO this time Dr. Du Bois was the only Negro in the National Administration of the Association. However, practically all the active members throughout the country were Negroes. Their personal contact with the Association was through the field secretaries, also Negroes, and they looked to Du Bois as their most powerful spokesman.

During the years of boom, N.A.A.C.P. dollar memberships poured in. Negroes were in earnest about supporting the organization which they believed was defending their rights and advancing their progress on all fronts. Then came the depression. The stream of dollars diminished to a trickle. A high price now had to be paid for philanthropy.

In 1931, James Weldon Johnson was replaced as Executive Secretary by his assistant, Walter White. For some time Mr. Johnson's health had been poor. Many people thought a temporary adjustment might have been made to relieve Mr. Johnson for a period. However, Mr. White wanted the job and James Weldon Johnson left the Association.

Immediately policies expressed in the *Crisis* were called into question. Since January, 1916, the magazine had been entirely self-supporting. It had, indeed, contributed support to the National Office, and it had been completely uncensored by the organization itself. As the depression deepened and the *Crisis* ceased to be self-sustaining, the right of free expression in its pages became an issue. The executive officers and the board of the Association demanded increased control and the right of censorship. This Dr. Du Bois opposed. Indeed, he felt that instead of backtracking the Association should have pushed its thinking further along economic and political lines and shed some of its purely reformist character. He had become convinced by 1930 that "in a world where economic dislocation had become so great as ours, a mere appeal based on liberalism, a mere appeal to justice and further effort at legal decision was missing the essential need." That essential need, he believed, was to fight for the basic economic rights of the Negro people, to expose the connection between the promotion of racism and the maintenance of "wealth and power." "We must seek," he concluded, "to increase the power and economic organization among Negroes" and he proposed to battle for this in the *Crisis*.

Du Bois was defeated. In May, 1934, the Board of Directors voted

"that the *Crisis* is the organ of the Association and no salaried officer of the Association shall criticize the policy, work or officers of the Association in the pages of the *Crisis*." The editor's reply to this ruling was:

> "In thirty-five years of public service my contribution to the settlement of the Negro problem has been mainly candid criticism based on a careful effort to know the facts. I have not always been right, but I have been honest. I am unwilling at this late day to be limited in the expression of my sincere opinions in the way in which the Board proposes . . . I am, therefore, resigning."

The editing of the *Crisis* was given to Roy Wilkins, under the very rigid control of the Secretary and Board of Directors. Power in the Association was concentrated in a few hands; the resulting bureaucracy has caused an extraordinary turnover in personnel. Yet with the growing social consciousness evidenced among the masses during the depression decade and the last war, membership in the N.A.A.C.P. reached half a million, and included not only professional and middle-class elements but more and more industrial workers and farmers. Thousands of dollars came in from Negro soldiers, frequently one soldier collecting a dollar membership from every man in his outfit.

BECAUSE the history, achievements and ideals of the N.A.A.C.P. are so deeply rooted in the consciousness of Negroes everywhere there has been real reluctance to criticize it. Yet people all over the country are asking questions. With no stated policies, no over-all program, branches attempting to function in their own communities find themselves repeatedly in hot water with the National Office. Is collecting dollars to be their sole purpose?

At the annual convention in 1946 the growing demand from the membership for democratic control of the organization rose to a new high. Committees were formed, there was talk of changes, of increased representation on the Board, of branch autonomy. In May, 1946, Ella J. Baker, for three years Director of Branches, and known throughout the South for her devotion and courage, resigned from the Association. She told Mr. White:

> "My reasons for resigning are basically three—I feel that the Association is falling short of its present possibilities; that the full capacities of the staff have not been used and that there is little

chance of mine being utilized in the immediate future. Neither one nor all of these reasons would induce me to resign if I felt that objective and honest discussion were possible and that remedial measures would follow. Unfortunately I find no basis for expecting this. My reactions are not sudden but accumulative, and are based upon my own experiences during the past five years and the experiences of other staff members both present and former. . . ."

Meanwhile, Dr. Du Bois once more enters the picture. Following the announcement of his retirement from Atlanta University in 1944, he was invited to rejoin the N.A.A.C.P. as secretary of a committee to prepare material on the Negro for the expected World Peace Conference.

"I did not answer this invitation," Dr. Du Bois recently wrote, "until both Arthur Spingarn, President of the Association, and Louis Wright, Chairman of the Board, both old friends, strongly urged me to accept. June 23rd I wrote Messrs. Spingarn, White and Wright saying, 'You will realize that any decision I make now will have to be final for the rest of my working days. I have four offers before me—two very attractive ones from universities. I could not afford to turn them down and take a temporary job at high pressure which might leave me at the end of a year's work exhausted mentally and physically and without prospect of employment. On the other hand, the offer which you make would fit very well into any scheme for collecting authoritative data concerning Negroes of Africa and persons of Negro descent elsewhere in the world'."

Dr. Du Bois met in conference with the Secretary, President and Chairman of the Board, and it was agreed that Du Bois join the staff of N.A.A.C.P. as Director of Special Research and that his main work would be "to collect facts and documents, arrange statements, articles and booklets concerning the peoples of Africa and their descendants and concerning other colored races so as to form a body of knowledge and literature, designed to educate the world in matters of race and cultural relations."

In the forty months since his appointment Dr. Du Bois twice crossed the continent on lecture tours, visited and spoke extensively in Haiti, presided over the Pan African Congress in Manchester, England, attended U.N.E.S.C.O. and the World Youth Congress in London, was an observer at the founding session of the United Nations in San

Francisco, attended several State Department conferences in Washington, presided over conferences on the Near East, Greece and China, edited the N.A.A.C.P.'s petition to the United Nations, as well as the preparatory volume for an *Encyclopedia of the Negro,* and wrote the books, *Color and Democracy* and *The World and Africa,* in addition to numerous articles appearing in journals and newspapers throughout the world. Despite this brilliant record of achievement Dr. Du Bois has been summarily fired.

Setting aside for the moment any case which the Executive Secretary and Board might have against Dr. Du Bois, how dare they insult Negroes all over the world by treating so contemptuously the one man who has been our foremost spokesman, our most eminent statesman for half a century?

On the occasion of his eightieth birthday at a dinner tendered him in New York, *not* by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People but by the Fisk Alumni Association, greetings came to this man from the great of all lands, and from the plain folk, too, as this from a workers' union in Johannesburg, South Africa: "We South Africans are particularly indebted to Dr. Du Bois who has contributed so greatly in the solution of race problems and the adjustments in race relations. Dr. Du Bois' example and consistency will serve as an inspiring example to all of us."

THE campaign against Du Bois and his ideas began with the first days of his re-employment. It started with petty needling. Office space was "unavailable" and when he rented a place of his own the Association refused to meet the expense. When a place was finally found for him it was about the size of a powder room, without shelves and desks. When shelves for Du Bois' 2,500 books were installed, fretting followed as to their costliness. Objection was raised to Du Bois opening his own mail. When Dr. Du Bois testified before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. Senate he was reprimanded by Walter White for having appeared without consulting him—though Dr. Du Bois had made it quite clear that he was testifying as an individual.

I am told that at a board meeting which took place at the end of 1945 most of the day was consumed with argument over these details concerning Dr. Du Bois, and that finally Mr. White "threw down the gauntlet" and declared that either the Board would back him against Dr. Du Bois or he would quit. Dr. Du Bois was "reprimanded" for

exceeding his authority. An oral directive was circulated to the effect that Dr. Du Bois was not to be consulted about anything.

Assured of his "backing," the Secretary now moved from petty heckling into matters of policy. In September, 1946, Paul Robeson wrote Dr. Du Bois asking him to endorse the "American Crusade to End Lynching." When Dr. Du Bois did so, Walter White wrote him that the Association had just formed the National Emergency Committee against Mob Violence and therefore he should not have signed the Robeson statement. Dr. Du Bois replied:

> "Your memorandum of September 19th was the first notice I have had of your Anti-Lynching movement. Had I been notified I would have gladly co-operated. On the other hand I have been fighting lynching for forty years and I have a right to let the world know I am still fighting it. I therefore gladly endorsed the Robeson movement."

The entire matter of presenting and printing the petition of the N.A.A.C.P. to the United Nations on discrimination and segregation of Negroes was a long-drawn-out battle. With no discussion, the Board appointed Dr. Du Bois to draw up such a statement. However, when Eleanor Roosevelt, who is a member of the Board, heard of it she opposed the whole idea. When the final draft was finished, Dr. Du Bois sent a copy to the Secretary and asked him about formal presentation and publicity. After Mr. White had told Dr. Du Bois to make his own arrangements, and after these had been made, Mr. White intervened, declaring some corrections had to be made. He then changed the arrangements for the petition's presentation from a public affair as had been planned to a restricted one for Association officials only. He delayed the printing for several weeks, finally recalling the proofs in order to add thirty-four pages of additional material. When Dr. Du Bois asked, "How can a corrected manuscript be added to or be changed without consultation with or at least notification to the editor?" Mr. White revealed that he had been negotiating for book publication by a firm and that as it needed more text for that purpose he proposed to write an introduction himself. To which Dr. Du Bois replied:

> "I strenuously and definitely object to any explanatory introduction being added to the printed Petition. The Board voted for the printing

of this Petition as it now stands. I shall not consent to any addition to it."

No addition was made.

In March, 1948, Dr. Du Bois received from the Secretary a copy of a directive made by the Board four years earlier forbidding "employed executive officers of the N.A.A.C.P. from partisan activity in political campaigns." Dr. Du Bois replied that while he fully appreciated the necessity of maintaining the nonpartisan character of the organization, he assumed

". . . that the Board could not possibly have meant to forbid any individual, in his capacity as a private citizen from casting his ballot as he pleased or of defending his convictions and candidates. To do this would be seriously to interfere with that political freedom for which this organization has fought for nearly forty years."

Dr. Du Bois continued to support with vigor the Wallace movement.

STAFF members of the N.A.A.C.P. soon learn that appeal to the Board of Directors, discussion with them or suggestions to them are not easy. It is the unwritten rule of the organization that approach to the Board must be through the Secretary and largely at his discretion. The Board of Directors is a body of some forty-eight members widely scattered over the country; their monthly meetings are usually attended by a dozen persons. The meetings are more or less perfunctory, consisting of the report of the Secretary and recommendations of the Committee on Administration which are usually confirmed without debate. New business or the details of old are usually referred to this committee for examination and recommendation.

This Committee on Administration is a recent innovation. It consists of nine members of the Board and six members of the staff of the National Office. Thus the Secretary sits in this body with six votes, since the five members of the staff are virtually his appointees. Moreover, while the staff members are usually present, the other members are more or less irregular, four of them usually attending. The Secretary has large and continually increasing power. His vote with two members of the Board can over-rule the vote of a thousand members in annual meeting. The staff is appointed on his recommendation and dismissed in the same way. He controls the collection of funds and

therefore has large influence in expenditures, including salaries. He is the sole medium of communication between the Board, branches and membership. The staff makes all reports to him. He decides which of these reports shall reach the Committee on Administration and the Board. Dr. Du Bois writes:

> "When Mr. White complained of my lack of co-operation and I replied that this was often due to my ignorance of what was going on, Messrs. Spingarn and Wright suggested that I become a member of the Committee on Administration. I had not asked this, because I had not come to the N.A.A.C.P. to make its policy. But of course I did not want to be entirely ignored on plans and policy in my own department. Nevertheless, I was never asked to join or meet with this committee."

The power and responsibility assumed by the Secretary is more than any one man should have. The present form of the organization resembles that of a business with one simple objective: money. It is not conducive to such democratic control as is necessary for an organization devoted to efforts at a people's liberation.

For several months Dr. Du Bois has been fighting to bring the framework of the N.A.A.C.P. in accord with its needs as a mass organization. This is the heart of the Du Bois-White conflict. In 1946, after the Secretary had invited members of the staff to submit suggestions which would "appraise the situation ahead of us during the next few months and years," Dr. Du Bois submitted a memorandum which, among other things, said:

> "When, as in the first half of the twentieth century, progress fails and civilization is near collapse, then the suppressed group, especially if it has begun successfully to reduce discrimination and gain some integration into the national life of America, must adopt something beyond the negative program of resistance to discrimination, and unite with the best elements of the nation in a positive constructive program for rebuilding civilization and reorienting progress. . . .
>
> "At present realizing that party government in this nation has definitely and disastrously broken down, we should in future elections ignore entirely all party labels and vote for candidates solely on their records and categorical promises. Each state, each county, each election precinct, should find out for itself carefully and as completely as possible the record of each candidate and strive to elect

or defeat him whether he be Democrat, Republican, Labor Party or Communist. This should be a continuous job and not merely a pre-election activity; and it cannot be done on a national scale. This is a local job."

In November, 1946, Dr. Du Bois wrote the Secretary:

"The N.A.A.C.P. has taken no stand nor laid down any program with regard to Africa. I have repeatedly urged this since my return from the Pan-African Congress. . . . If we are to enter into conference with regard to trusteeships and other programs we should be prepared with a policy and clear statement of position. I asked two years ago for authority to collect and publish the various demands of Africans for freedom and autonomy. Permission was never given. Such a series of documents would now be invaluable before the Assembly of the United Nations."

He received neither acknowledgement nor information as to whether this request ever reached the Board.

On August 20, 1948, Mr. White wrote Dr. Du Bois: "The Committee on Administration has recommended to the Board that I represent the N.A.A.C.P. at the U.N. General Assembly beginning September 21st in Paris. I would be grateful if you would give your recommendations of action on the issues which will arise there, particularly those dealing with human rights and trusteeship." In reply, Dr. Du Bois made four specific recommendations. He realized, however, that this was an entirely futile gesture, that no words of his would have the slightest influence on the U.S. delegation in Paris, that the N.A.A.C.P. was being "loaded on the Truman band wagon." He knew that the next meeting of the Board would take place *after* Mr. White sailed.

Nevertheless this indomitable fighter for the advancement of colored people resolved to storm the fort of reaction within his own organization. He sat down and wrote the now famous Memorandum condemning the Secretary's acceptance of membership "in this delegation without a clear, open and public declaration of the Board of our position on foreign policy"; as tying the Association "in with the reactionary, war-mongering colonial imperialism of the present Administration. . . .

"I insist that here, if anywhere, in an organization seeking the welfare of the millions of colored people the world over is the place for careful knowledge of all facts and thoughtful consideration as to just what our plans and purposes are in this world crisis. . . . I deny the right of any official to tie this organization to a foreign policy of an administration which stands against public discussion of our civil rights, for the despoiling of Ethiopia, for delaying the recognition of Israel, and in all matters against the best interests of colonial peoples."

I have before me Walter White's answer to Dr. Du Bois, a copy of which was sent to the Board of Directors for their meeting on September 13. From this insulting communication the Board drew the very words of its dismissal of Dr. Du Bois.

Fourteen years ago on July 9, 1934, the N.A.A.C.P. Board of Directors wrote:

"It is with the deepest regret that we now accept the resignation of Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois . . . the ideas which he propounded . . . transformed the Negro world as well as a large portion of the white world, so that the whole problem of the relation of black and white races has ever since had a completely new orientation. Many who have never read a word of his writings are his spiritual disciples and descendants. Without him the Association could never have been what it was and is. . . . He had been selected because of his independence of judgment, his fearlessness in expressing his convictions and his acute and wide-reaching intelligence. A mere yes-man could not have attracted the attention of the world, could not have stimulated the Board itself to further study of various important problems. We shall be the poorer for his loss in intellectual stimulus, and in searching analysis of the vital problems of the American Negro."

Of the Board members who passed this resolution, Joel Spingarn, then president, is dead; Mary White Ovington lies helpless in a hospital; John Hayne Holmes has withdrawn from any active part in the Association and Oswald Garrison Villard—well, two years ago they kicked him off the Board!

Is it any wonder that a rising wave of protest from the membership is now sweeping across the country? Is the present Board of Directors for the *advancement* of colored people or for their control? And is

this power of control of the masses being paid for by advantage to the few? It is on record that Board-member Eleanor Roosevelt at the meeting of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva voted against placing the N.A.A.C.P. petition on the agenda, that she has since requested Dr. Du Bois not to press for its consideration by the U.N. General Assembly. It is also on record that several members of the Board are affiliated with the Truman Administration. At a time when imperialistic powers are vying with each other for control of Africa it is obviously safer in colonial matters to "consult" Walter White, who is blissfully ignorant of Africa, its peoples, its resources and its struggles, than W. E. B. Du Bois, who recently published *The World and Africa* and is in close touch with many colonial mass organizations.

People have built the N.A.A.C.P. for "organized determination and aggressive action on the part of those who believe in Negro freedom and growth." Through the years Dr. Du Bois has hewed to his credo upon which the Association was founded: *"We will not be satisfied to take one jot or tittle less than our full manhood rights."*

From Savannah, W. W. Law, chairman of N.A.A.C.P. Youth Conference and College Chapters, has recently written Dr. Du Bois: "I am happy to join you in a fight that I trust you will not relinquish until the membership—not the Board—is fully aroused. To the youth of the Association, Dr. Du Bois has always symbolized the spirit and direction of the Association we all love."

Dr. Du Bois has yet to relinquish a fight. This one, to democratize the N.A.A.C.P., has just begun.

ROUND-UP OF PEASANTS

THE SHOOTING OF GENERAL ALVIREZ

THE EXECUTION OF MADERO'S MEN

IN THE MIDST OF BATTLE

Writers After Two Wars

by ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

TO A WRITER who has passed through the two post-world war periods the first must feel like the "good old days." Even in the resemblances comparison of the literary scene favors the Twenties. This is so in the most obvious of the resemblances, the so-called postwar "disillusions."

The pre-World War I period had been marked by a liberal trend in intellectual life. The political high point was the 1912 election campaign when the Wilson "New Freedom" was forced on the Democratic party; the Republican party was split; and the Socialists, under Debs' leadership, became a serious factor in American politics. In literature the progressive impulse found expression in the work of the realists and of socially conscious writers like Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Vachel Lindsay, Edwin Markham.

Reaction could not stop this progressive current. It succeeded, however, in splitting the stream and deflecting the flow into the postered and beflagged channels of the First World War. Many progressive intellectuals were hoaxed into the "war for democracy," but a considerable number, notably those around *The Masses* and *Seven Arts,* were not taken in. Randolph Bourne wrote his famous open letter to American intellectuals warning them of the trap. His predictions came true. The "war to end war" turned out to be a war to preserve empire. And the "war for democracy" almost extinguished it in America while collaborating churches, universities and the press blessed the gun and rationalized the policeman's billy.

Then in the 1920 elections American reaction won a political victory. It settled back to inventory its fabulous war profits and develop its new markets. Its subsequent "isolationism" was rather like that of the boa constrictor who retires to digest his prey.

But the progressive urge was not spent. It turned mainly into cultural forms, new attitudes toward the family, education, the arts. What came to be known as the "disillusionment" was marked by a turning of the back on capitalist politics and rejection of capitalist moral pre-

tensions. Against the latter, intellectuals fought with an energy and conviction that are never associated with that pale term, disillusion.

In this anti-Philistine revolt everything institutionalized and respectable was subjected to ridicule. Almost nothing and nobody was sacred. To write history was mainly to confute a tradition; to write biography was to "debunk" a hero. Some of the effects were salutary. If capitalism escaped direct attack, some of its psychological outerworks, the myths surrounding it, were blown down. After the debunkers it was harder to pretend that American history was a pure distillate of democracy, that great fortunes were all the reward of wits and work and that poverty was the Darwinian penalty for natural inferiority. Puritanism and its drawing-room companion, gentility, two of the most persistent inhibitors of American culture, were jeered into corners.

Virtually every established institution of capitalist culture was renounced. Little magazines, among them *Poetry,* the *Little Review, Broom, Pagany, Secession, Seven Arts, Transition, This Quarter,* in which most of the outstanding contemporary writers made their first appearance, sprang up, some as regional expressions to stand against the domination of New York, but most in rejection and defiance of the Big Magazine. Similarly, "Little Theatres" challenged Broadway, among them the Provincetown Players who introduced O'Neill, and the Washington Square Players who were to acquire respectability as the Theatre Guild. New schools (some to grow elderly within a decade) were established to defy an educational system that trembled when a reactionary congressman cleared his throat. Painters and sculptors bypassed the commercial galleries and ran "independent" shows of their own. Convention-breaking architects began to change the very look of American cities.

It was a period of enthusiasm, experiment and protest. Much of the enthusiasm was over trivialities; much of the experiment was in cultural demolition rather than in creation; but there were clear advances and substantial contributions. The almost universal disgust with bourgeois values put into the insurgent camp a number of writers whose own predilections were reactionary or aristocratic.

PERHAPS the most significant effect of the inward turn of insurgent energies was the isolation and exaltation of the individual. Capitalist institutions as sources of moral authority were rejected. But the next step, to locate moral authority where it now belonged, in the working

class, was taken by only a few writers, Randolph Bourne and Mike Gold among them. In effect, the shift of moral authority was to the individual conscience, or rather perceptions. For, in the shift, the conception of value itself abandoned moral terms for intellectual and esthetic judgments. The values most persuasively propagated were those of the socially alienated, sensitive, esthetic individual. Whatever limited or frustrated him was evil; whatever he wrought, in belligerent assertion of his individuality, was glorious.

The outstanding symbolic figures of the time were the Babbitt, the Robot and the Sensitive Individual. The Babbitt was the de-personalized product of capitalist philistinism; the Robot was the still more de-personalized product of capitalist exploitation. The Sensitive Individual shunned both; he kept out of the suburban "Babbitt warrens"; and he kept out of the Milltowns. Those who were scoffed out of Main Street sought romance and dignity in Greenwich Village, a corner of which they tried to reproduce in their own "emancipated" homes.

Was the "Sensitive Individual" of the Twenties a gay, vigorous insurgent creating new social values? Or a decadent, cynical solitary seeking private havens for the cultivation of private values? There were both, and each had his day. The Twenties were marked by creativeness and insurgence—and by decadence and cynicism. They co-existed throughout the decade, with insurgence dominant in the opening years and decadence dominant in the closing years. Throughout the decade, as we have seen, common disgust with bourgeois values united writers of aristocratic temper with writers of democratic temper. T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound were on a common footing, for a time, with Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters, with Sandburg and Masters dominant in the first period; Eliot and Pound in the latter.

In the later Twenties, capitalism got around to culture. The boom entered American publishing in shoddy ways. There was a vogue for limited editions on the part of the new profiteer "book collectors," who could thereby satisfy two Philistine itches, ostentation and gambling. Limited editions, mostly erotica, were bought for speculation on a rising market, like Florida land parcels.

It was against this background that literary dominance passed from the social-minded writers to the esthetes. In some cases the two tendencies struggled in the same individual writer. Those who saw the recent interesting production of E. E. Cummings' play *him*, by the Interplayers group at the Provincetown Playhouse, saw one of the most

representative of these two-minded works. Another figure who illustrated this duality was H. L. Mencken. It was Mencken's support of Dreiser which, in the early Twenties, more than the advocacy of any other single critic, was influential in establishing the great realist in his secure place in American letters. But vulgar, anti-social comments were pouring off his typewriter in the same period. Examination of writers like Cummings and Mencken helps explain both the hold they had for a time on progressive-minded readers and their subsequent reactionary, anti-social course.

Others, in whose works a similar duality may be seen, among them Kreymborg and Bodenheim, took the opposite course. One figure, that of Hart Crane, was to remain poised between the two until his unhappy death.

But if at the close of the decade the alienated individual appeared dominant, he had also been undergoing a testing. In that testing, particularly as the depression forced an accounting, certain truths became clear, among them that man is a social being, not a solitary. Progressives, in the Thirties, were to take this truth a step further, that man cannot fulfill himself apart from society, and that he can best hope to fulfill himself in a *changed* society.

Demonstrating that, and thereby both tempering the individualism of the Twenties and preparing the way for the Thirties, was the unignorable presence in the world of the new socialist state. Around it had been drawn an iron curtain of admittedly Western construction, the *cordon sanitaire.* To the iron had been added a smoke-screen of slander. But the cultural world, expressing its optimistic and still progressive mood, listened not to the hacks but to writers like John Reed, Theodore Dreiser, Albert Rhys Williams, Anna Louise Strong, Dr. Frankwood Williams, Lincoln Steffens, the last of whom put the gist of their reports in his famous summary phrase, "I have seen the future —and it works!"

The ordinary reporting on the Soviet Union, as exemplified in the most respectable of the capitalist organs, the New York *Times,* was subjected to a brilliant exposé in several issues of the *New Republic.* It is ironical that this exposé established the reputation of two now conservative journalists, one the political columnist of the New York *Herald Tribune,* Walter Lippmann; the other the editor of the New York *Times,* Charles Merz.

Out of the 1929 stock-market crash, and the already existing de-

pression that it deepened, came the discontent that powered the New Deal. As Roosevelt succeeded in shoring up the collapsing capitalist system, reaction recovered its brass. The reactionary drive was partially suspended by the war, but it was resumed with augmented energy after the war. Reaction has found all too willing collaborators among some leading writers. Constituting a literary Right, they profess a new-found faith in capitalism and its values. Some have exhorted American capitalists not to be shamefaced, to glory openly in being capitalists instead of hiding behind the euphemism of "free enterprise."

Others who have not gone so far, though in fact their acquiescent passivity has been of equal value to reaction, have fallen into what is being called the new postwar "disillusionment." Actually it is a sort of moral anesthesia which seems to render its subjects incapable of reacting to anything. Some behave in what they would like to appear as an involuntary moving with the times, like those reticent collaborators with fascism who wanted themselves to be thought of as flotsam on the "wave of the future." As they would like man's history to read, his life is a tortured and mere existence; he has contrived to live longer only to suffer longer; to acquire knowledge only to enlarge his threshold of pain. Man's intellectual quests, they say, have ended in neurotic self-tampering and the atom bomb, inner and outer measures of self-destruction. His dragon slaying has only raised greater dragons. Thus it was noble to thwart the Nazis but the result was to put greater potentialities for world empire into the all too ready hands of our own imperialism. Why do anything?

One reason for the prostration of so many intellectuals is that they have been, quite literally, stunned by the spectacle of American power. When Marxists said America's productive capacity could easily be doubled they were laughed at. Then the doubling was achieved, fantastically without strain, for purposes of destruction. And the achievement was consummated in a symbol more terrifying than any nightmare, the atom bomb, which the sages in Washington promptly put to use to freeze the world into a new terror.

Another explanation is the new, more explicit, more conscious terms of the class struggle today. On both sides identities are clearer, margins are slimmer. There is less room and patience for the vacillating. It is obvious that leadership in the capitalist world has passed to the United States, but it is equally apparent that the rest of the capitalist world is close to ruin. Thus the strongest capitalist power is at the

same time part of a collapsing system. Therefore it brings to the class war not only a concentrated power but the hysteria of a battle for life.

A COMPARISON of the two postwar periods underscores the subservience of most of our intellectuals in the present era of American reaction.

Take the matter of literary values. This, perhaps an obsessive concern of the writers of the Twenties, is largely a matter of indifference today. In the Twenties censorship was often met with picket lines. Today's invasions of basic creative rights, far more decisive than the physiological realism over which most of the censorship battles of the Twenties were fought, evoke a tepid response. This unreadiness to fight for creative rights and values extends inward into the mind. Only too often a literary value that might disturb a book club judge is killed while it is still gestating in the writer's brain.

As a consequence there is little enthusiasm today either for experiment or tradition. What one sees is a sitting in safe corners or an unashamed preening before the high bidders at Rockefeller Center and Hollywood. One finds an active sense of literary, along with other values, more often toward the Left than elsewhere; as, for example, in those fine first novels, Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, Barbara Giles' *The Gentle Bush* and Arthur Miller's *Focus*.

I have been made acutely aware of the indifference to literary values in talks with some writers, young and old. A young writer who was doing well with magazine fiction was unenthusiastically at work on a novel, quite like a post-graduate student sweating out his thesis for a degree. The novel was to establish him professionally and push up his rating in the literary market. I never met with such an excuse for writing a book in the Twenties.

An older writer, who was deserting poetry for fiction, disarmed me with the declaration that he meant his novel to be read by the hundreds of thousands. His writing was to be a sharing of his discoveries of life with others, as many as he could reach. Literary values would be kept in mind, but only to the extent that they were sharable or served to facilitate communication. For his work was to be, he insisted, an act of communication, not the sickly self-expression, as he called it, of the Twenties and against which the new generation was reacting.

Since I, too, had reacted against self-expression as an end in itself I gave him advance congratulations—which I soon had to take back

Left tags could be found in his book, if you hunted, in cynical sideward remarks, that had as much carrying power as words spoken under one's breath. "It's no good," he admitted. "I reached a large public—but so does a prostitute." And he added something about having recognized the importance of his former literary values. Nevertheless his next book continued his communication with the pulp deposits in the American mind.

WHAT once served to sustain the morale of writers, *avant garde* work, is today unfit for such a purpose. What is considered the *avant garde* is strangely passionless, and cold. Its insurgence is against insurgence. It is fastidious and correct. Its leading figures include Catholics and religious converts and renegades from radicalism. Its rallying calls have been Eliot's "Royalty and the established church," Auden's "ancestors" and the almighty dollar-a-word, as others have put it, in works if not in words. Even seeming anarchs like Henry Miller, and Steinbeck in some later aspects of his work, are advocates of submission. The rule of the mind and will is abjured for the rule of the reflex. Their good life is to be attained by a plunge down the evolutionary tree into the cosy swamp where the single-celled animal leads its unprotesting, carefree existence.

Today's snuggling toward authority is exemplified in the contrast between the influential "little magazines" of the two periods. Where, in the Twenties, such magazines were belligerently anti-academic, today they are tied to colleges, and their editors and leading lights are on the faculties, hold Library of Congress Fellowships or Rockefeller research grants. Reaction has tied up the *avant garde.*

The theatre is less affected, but it shows an analogous tropism toward authority in its sudden turn toward the classics. Where the theatre of the Twenties made history by new plays and new production techniques the theatre of today leans back on history with revivals. Such vigor and social sense as it retains, in the work of playwrights like Lillian Hellman, D'Usseau, Gow and Arthur Miller, are an inheritance of the proletarian Thirties.

The backward turning is also to be seen in the current absorption in criticism. In the Twenties the major literary interest was new writing, and the criticism of the time was largely polemics in support of the new writers. Certain works in progress—and authors in progress—were followed with rapt anticipation and excited continuous discussion

that, in the case of Joyce, lasted into the Forties. Today criticism is the *avant garde's* major interest, a criticism that fights for nobody, that is mainly analytical and a tracing of origins.

The one contemporary interest that seems to be pursued with some spirit is psychoanalysis. There was a comparable interest in the subject in the Twenties, but the emphasis then was on liberation of the self, the release of "suppressed desires." Today's emphasis is on the invincible power of the subconscious, a rationalization of the submission to power.

But the most significant contrast between the two periods is in attitudes toward the Soviet Union. I have already noted the stimulus that the emergence of the first socialist state became to the intellectuals of the Twenties, and the largely unavailing efforts of reaction to discredit it. The press slandered the U.S.S.R., but there were progressive intellectuals who brought back and reiterated the countering truth. Today, the anti-Soviet propaganda has reached fantastic and explosive intensities, but this has not evoked a similar challenge from the writers and journalists on whom the American people should be able to rely as their defenders against untruth.

Some, indeed, are themselves the fabricators and transmitters of untruth, like that revolutionary for whom the Soviet Union was not revolutionary enough, Eugene Lyons, whose fulminations against the Soviet Union ended with a book eulogizing Herbert Hoover; or like those two Johns, Dos Passos and Chamberlain, who came to the inevitable end of "liberal" Soviet-baiting by working to swing the support of intellectuals to Senator Taft for President. Along with such activists one must regretfully put those passivists whose silence, at a time when their voices should be loud in counsel and warning, is as useful to reaction as explicit consent.

THIS discussion would be incomplete if some account were not given of changes in the structure of the book industry, still the center of American intellectual activity.

If, in the first half of the Twenties, writers (of books) appeared rather indifferent to popularity and money, it was to some extent sour grapes. They were resigned to minority audiences and to token financial returns. Possibilities of money-making were as yet too limited to matter much. Literature was largely its own reward, with the additions of self-satisfaction and a little fame among the coteries.

But while the book public was small, its growing prestige could be used to attract masses, as enterprising capitalists soon recognized. And it was an influential audience; as much as any section of the American public it could claim the status of arbiter of taste. In addition the book reviewing setup gave books a promotional base for later buildups. At the high point of the vogue of the Sensitive Individual and of the spiritual migration from Main Street to Greenwich Village, the exploiters moved in.

First came new publishers with new promotion methods for making best sellers at will; then came the book clubs which built on the new prestige of books to establish a mass market. The penetration of capitalist control into book publication has resulted in an increasing manipulation of editorial and critical judgment and a new growth of the already well-grown caution and opportunism in the book trade.

Mass-circulation books have become more valuable as film properties. Magazines are exploiting the successful books by printing condensations for which they often pay more than the earnings in direct sales. Reprints have boomed and the twenty-five-cent paper bound editions at last brought books back into competition in the mass reading market. In this development subsidiary rights have come to account for a larger percentage of publishers' and authors' income than bookstore sales, even of most best sellers.

Drawn by the new big money, monopolist processes, formerly rare in book publishing, have become general. Smaller houses are being absorbed; once separate branches of the industry are coming under unitary control. One large house, for example, not only has absorbed a number of others, but operates several clubs, several reprint enterprises, a bookstore chain, a paper mill, a printing plant and a bindery. Another large house, itself a property of a department store and newspaper owner, operates a club, the largest of the paper book houses and has a substantial interest in a large reprint house. In other cases the directors of book clubs, publishers, magazine chains, mail order concerns and reprint houses, interlock. Movie companies have planted pre-film book publication for the advantage of book prestige and review promotion; some have included promotion and even production subsidies in their book deals; and some pay part of book publishers' editorial salaries for scout services.

One effect of this extension of monopoly capitalism into book publishing has been the tendency to restrict criticism to obscure coterie

organs. Criticism in the big book supplements has become an adjunct to book promotion. In any effective sense independent criticism is withering in America.

But three factors limit this tendency. One is the prestige of books which makes them valuable for subsidiary exploitation. To preserve this value some sense of discovery and some conviction of quality must be maintained; therefore some venturesome books must be published. Another factor is the devotion to truth and beauty which animates a number of writers. And, finally, the monopolists must reckon with what they call the "quality market" which exerts a pressure beyond its purchasing power. This minority "quality market," like the minority of conscientious writers whom it helps to support, resists the influences that degrade taste.

Nevertheless the extension of monopoly capitalism into the book field is felt not only in the attitude of editors, but in the work of the writers as well. In the wash of the big money, moral standards and literary values erode. Even successful and seemingly independent writers become, to some degree, hacks. A literary agent said cynically: "It doesn't matter how arty they are. They describe their new book to me; and sooner or later they ask me: 'Don't you think there's a movie in it?' or 'Don't you think it has a chance with the clubs?' "

Thus, part of the post-world war paralysis in American intellectual life is the inevitable result of the extension of capitalist monopoly controls into the industries serving cultural needs.

IN ANY exposition, particularly like this article where it has been my purpose to make a contrast sharply visible, certain exaggerations are unavoidable. Thus I feel that I have perhaps over-accentuated the progressive aspects of the literary trends of the Twenties as I have somewhat underplayed the resistance to the reactionary trends in our own day. As a corrective I feel it necessary to point to the stubbornly resistant core of progressive writers in America who are meeting a persecution terribly close to that of intellectuals in fascist Germany. The day is certain to come when Americans will speak with gratitude and pride of the Hollywood Ten and other indicted writers and intellectuals who stood up for human rights and values. The heavy fire that anti-fascist writers draw from reaction, a fire disproportionate to their numbers and apparent influence, is a measure of their potential strength.

Warsaw

WHEN you live or, more accurately, when you exist among ruins, you can have only one of two attitudes: either you collapse completely or you act with unusual energy, making constant and tremendous efforts to clear away the ruins, to rebuild homes, and to begin life over again. The second is the attitude we have chosen. To an indifferent observer our feverish labor, our attempt to rebuild our lives after so many disappointments may seem like the work of ants. But if that is true, I know of nothing more human than such an ant-heap.

Living with ruins, we have become extremely sensitive to everything that leads to destruction. All of us, Catholics as well as Marxists, have become partisans of an art that takes sides (*un art engagé*). At the Pen Club Congress, during a discussion of the art of prose as a function of language, our Polish writer Iwaskiewicz protested against a formalist conception and made a vigorous speech in favor of a literature that takes sides (*une littérature engagée*). Yet Iwaskiewicz is not a Communist. He is not even a Left writer; and in Poland he is considered to have a rather formal conception of art.

The French poet, Paul Eluard, has best expressed the significance of our ruins:

> "Pour qui a vu les ruines du ghetto
> les faits humains ne sont pas a refaire
> tout doit changer sinon la mort s'installe
> mort est a vaincre ou bien c'est le désert."
>
> (To him who has seen the ghetto ruins
> the human deeds cannot be re-done;
> everything must change or else death begins
> death must be conquered, otherwise life is a desert.)

There is another fact that determines our behavior: we have spent several seasons in Hell. I have no intention of speaking of the Polish martyrs. I do not wish to run through the streets like a Saint Denis with his severed head in his hands. After all, martyrdom is good for dying—but we want above all to live.

But I would simply point out that we have explored Hell to its depths. We know that it has nothing in common with the Hell of a Rimbaud, a Sartre or a Dostoyevsky. The individual can always save himself. He can always escape—into death, mysticism, religion, suffering, or some form of stoicism.

But when for years we have seen hundreds of thousands of men, women and children file past us toward the gas-chambers; when we have seen the heaps of skeletons dying of hunger; when we have smelled the odor of burned flesh, how poor, inadequate and superficial is such an individual conception of Hell. It is in this sense that our morality has become political. We wish to overcome collective suffering; and we need perspectives for all humanity, general solutions, hope. We need peace, a lasting peace. I think it is no accident that the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace has met in Poland.

Then there is a third fact that profoundly influences our consciousness: the structural changes in our society. As you know, we had no French Revolution in our country. Our economy as well as our social and cultural life was stifled by the remnants of feudalism. Even during the period between World Wars, despite great efforts there was a deep cleavage between the cultured elite and the common people. Today, one does not have to be a supporter of our regime to realize that everything possible is being done to raise the cultural and social level of the people. And at present the most backward elements in our population have been awakened to cultural life.

Sometimes we are amazed to see in how short a time our people has rid itself of its inferiority complex. And the people are asking questions of the writer; they are defining their aspirations, their need of beauty and of cultural enrichment. Can we ignore this appeal? Can we neglect it in the name of pure art? Must we not, despite all the artificial obstacles of literary technique, seek out the road toward popular feelings?

Let me recall a moving anecdote of Heinrich Heine: once when he was sick and paralyzed he had himself brought before the Venus de Milo. He who had always been her devoted servant implored her to

POLISH WOMAN, *by Pablo Picasso*

(*Drawn at the World Congress of Intellectuals at Wroclaw.*)

help him. But the goddess replied: "How can I help you? You see, I have no arms."

In times of distress we have often appealed to pure poetry, to eternal beauty. But what could it answer? Only: "I have no arms."

So it is a question of what Rimbaud has defined: "I must bury my imagination and my memories. A splendid glory as an artist and story-teller snatched away! . . . I, who called myself *magus* or angel, freed of all morality, I have returned to the earth in quest of duty and of a reality to embrace—a Peasant."

NEVERTHELESS, it is not a simple question. We have a literary tradition; we know all the charms of pure poetry. We do not want to lose anything of its beauty; but we do want to get rid of a certain museum-spirit, a sterile spirit of technicians and artistic specialization. How are we to find the synthesis between difficult art and an art the people understand? Or perhaps the two should coexist? We know that here we must proceed with the utmost caution. We realize that, as Paul Valéry has said, a Montaigne, a Descartes, a Bosseut were also difficult writers to their contemporaries.

But there are many difficulties and contradictions in our country. We have become realists: Poland's famous romanticism has been buried under the ruins of the Warsaw uprising. But literary realism? There are many pitfalls and many doubts. Does it give the best understanding of objective reality?

And if the realistic style does not guarantee objective truth, is it the one most suited for changing the world? On the other hand, realist literature has drawn its greatness and moral authority from sources of social criticism. It has developed its methods in analysis, in criticism, in pessimism even. As for us, we aspire rather to synthesis, to affirmation and optimism.

But while the theoreticians discuss literature, literature itself does not stop singing. It is a rather lyrical song, sometimes somber and often leaning on the past. In general, it is above all our terrible past that is the theme of the best of our works. Nor do I think that bad: we must clean out the shadows down to their very depths.

—ALEXANDER WATT

A Dress for Vera

A Story by RUTH STEINBERG

"My cousin came here from Europe. The little immigrant was pretty as a precious stone; cheeks luscious as apples on the bough; tiny feet always begging for a dance."—Free prose translation of a Yiddish song, popular in New York in the Twenties.

Two fingers of her right hand and her thumb turned the radio dial for Rebecca. Even though this radio, once the showpiece of Avenue C, was now scratched, battered and coffee-stained, it continued to woo sweet sounds from the ether, and could boom, bray, carp and sob with the rest. "Oowa, oowa," it cried like a baby as the dial twirled first to the left and then to the right; Rebecca tried to steady the old nag on a station. ". . . *cryin' for the Caroline!*"

"Ut," Rebecca straightened up and smiled a great gracious smile, "Rudy Vallee. He's just gorgeous. I love a man who can sing."

Sam turned down the gas under the coffee pot and stirred with a large discolored spoon. He *despised* Rudy Vallee. And he didn't like working for his mother, brewing coffee all day for every customer, every neighbor, every loafer on Second Avenue, choking back rage and rebellion as customers clad only in corsets sat on the windows to wait for a fitting. A complicated and passionate little gangster was Sam, desiring utter refinement at home, and freedom to debauch, to degrade himself in every silent cellar, to toss a shrill mocking singsong at authority. But he'd like a little bit of refinement at home.

"Darling," Rebecca purred to her son, "pour me in a fresh glass coffee."

"Darling," cooed Lilly. "When do I get my fitting?"

"Shah, shah," Rebecca was annoyed. "Don't make a noise."

"Anyhow," said Vera Berkowitz, breathing a bit asthmatically, "I think I was here first this morning, no?"

"Well, I see already that a person won't be able to have a coffee all day. That's the kind of day I'm going to have." Rebecca reached up and took the glass of coffee that Sam offered to her, and sank her eyes into it as she raised both glass and saucer to drink. Having shamed her customers into quiet by one self-pitying remark, she could now take her time.

Between sips of coffee, Sam grabbed looks at his mother as she sat, honeyed by the vast sentiments strewn over America by Rudy Vallee. No one could see how critically he viewed her. Yet his heart received nervous messages as he observed her careless appearance, then her naked arms and her half-visible bosom. Was it too much to ask that she be seen only dressed, everything all covered up? Was this a proper mother? He regarded her mouth, wet lips and half-smiling approach to the art of the sweet crooner of the radio, and he turned away from the painful sight, a small bad boy. She's good to me, he thought. She'd buy me anything.

But his mother was not all his. For the situation around Second Avenue was such that Rebecca enjoyed a unique position. Her talent as a dressmaker was appreciated and recognized, and she was accustomed to this recognition and took it for granted. She was the master. In this straining, striving society, she felt nor feared competition. In a small magic kingdom, she alone was ruler; therefore she had a fine incomprehension of the necessity for paying the bills. To the confused young representative of the Gas Company who came to collect money or turn off the gas, she replied with shouts and threats. Her landlord was frightened constantly by her pronouncements: "If I have no money, I don't pay rent!" Lonely little landlord in a big, big world, he lived the way he had been taught. But Rebecca refused to play the game.

She refused and she refused to play the game, but the game was played around her. She slyly knew that her husband and her sons stole money from her to pay the bills, and she carried within her a great frustration and violent anger. *She did not like to pay the bills!* "Rent?" she would shout at Levine the landlord. "Rent? I have nothing to worry about but rent? You want your rent to go on forever? Listen," she would turn to her daily guests drinking her coffee, "he wants me to pay my rent! You eat, you sleep, you die, you get buried, you go away for a week, but the

rent goes on forever. Get out, Levine, get out before I give you such a *rent* that you'll be collecting every month in another world!" And Levine would bow out, face muscles dancing. "You're a very temperamental person, Rebecca," he would say quietly. Then after closing the door, he would yell back, "Only the crazy ones can talk to you!"

There was much anger in Rebecca. But astonishingly, within her magnificent bosom, along with the anger, resided an unexpected, derisive uncontrollable laughter. Like two noisy neighbors, the anger and the laughter shared the top floor, willy-nilly getting along.

ONE day, in 1905, Rebecca saw New York for the first time. Her eyes darted over its tousled appearance, and she saw that it was good. Its clamor and the shouts of its men reassured her, made her welcome. It wound its arms around her, married her.

Met at Castle Garden by her brother and some of her friends, she was pushed into the El, which was to take her to her room on Delancey Street, overlooking the El. Coming from Europe, where she and many others of her heritage had enjoyed the favors of the old world's culture, including poverty, apprenticeships and pogroms, she was nevertheless, stubbornly, as plump as a peach. Her cheeks radiated such a rosy hue that the shop girls who shared that particular elevated subway ride with her closed their eyes and sighed bitterly.

A seat was secured for her, and she gently squeezed herself into it between an old man with a mustache and an old lady with a basket of pretzels. Her immigrant's bundles were piled up at her feet. Happiness was bubbling in her and around her. The smiles of the people in the El told her that they all knew about her, that everyone was a friend. Welcome home! The serious expressions of the two good people who sat on either side of her and the smile of pride she detected on her brother's face gave her a delicious sensation of complete well-being.

The train slid into a station and stopped, jolting her ferociously. She was having fun. Some people got out and one lone man got in. He was, unfortunately, a hunchback. He came in with a sharp look on his face, determined to get to the other end of the car. What prevented him from so doing was the arrangement of bundles on the floor and a sight of Rebecca. He was such a pale fellow, just released from a day's work, and he had such a slight wisp of hair sticking out of his hat, and most of

all he had such a pair of melting brown eyes. And in a flash his eyes were whimpering on Rebecca's bosom, and then they turned away, just as a hand was stuck out too late to catch this young man when this excellent train, screaming like a dying old man, went round a bend and jostled him. And what with one emotion and another he tripped. And the flailing and the gasping didn't help. It was a great fiasco and he flopped. As he sat down on a hard bundle, Rebecca's brother Nathan obligingly put two helping hands under his arms to raise him, and a blush came and faded quickly as the man refused the aid, only to cause him to tumble again and to save himself with one hand sunk deeply into the warmth and delight of Rebecca's imported featherbed. And so he was stuck, reminding one of the story of those unfortunates who became stuck to a goose only to pass by the window of the lovely princess who never laughed. And what happened?—the princess laughed.

That's what happened. Rebecca laughed. She laughed and laughed and screamed, and stopped for breath and said, "Oy, oy, oy," just as her mother and her mother's mother before her said oy oy oy when they laughed. The young man, resting, so stuck in her featherbed, realizing only dimly what this situation was costing him, like a seeker after suicide, made no effort to rise. His brown soft eyes looked into that laughing mouth of Rebecca's.

All the people in the train were beginning to move about to fight the rising giggle, but he saw only Rebecca. Nathan, angry and ashamed almost to tears, begged her to stop, only himself to suddenly burst out into such a loud released laugh that the rest gave up the struggle and joined him. Nathan sought to stop his sister by grabbing a pretzel from the old lady's basket and pressing it into Rebecca's mouth. But it didn't help. The pretzel fell into her lap and she laughed on. "Oy," she said, holding her side.

When the train stopped, the little man rose and ran. He didn't stay to pick up his hat, but had to flee the spot, and his hat was thrown out onto the station platform through the open window, Nathan shouting, "Hey! Hoy! Meester!" But the man just ran away and never wanted that hat any more, so he left it, and people coming into the train looked at it. But no one picked it up and it lay there after the train had gone and the station was empty of folks.

And so it was that the little immigrant girl was made to laugh on her first day in America.

IN REBECCA'S salon, on 7th Street, where there was always a crowd to taste her fine coffee, the customers did not like to be kept waiting. For to get a fitting was strictly a matter of luck. If Rebecca, for her own secret reasons, preferred not to work for you on a particular day, you could come in early morning, have breakfast, dinner and supper there, and not be fitted, not even if you stood on your head.

And those whose dresses were near finished, who needed to flit, all new-bedecked, to the important *affaire,* hummed and champed about early in the morning, pleading with God and Fate to see to it that the new dress would be finished on time.

Vera Berkowitz was in her slip, and Rebecca put down her coffee to find the dress for the banquet. Such an item was not always easy to find. Verachka pleaded with her to swear that she hadn't given it to a friend, as a present. For indeed, Rebecca was having trouble locating the dress, and was herself becoming curious as to its whereabouts.

"Listen, Becky," said Vera full of emotion, "why don't you take better care of things? If I ever have a heart attack, I swear it'll be only from you."

"Shah, don't swear," Becky scowled. "Your dress is here and it is all finished. Just a few little things have to be done. I worked on it myself this week."

"Oh! Now I know you're lying. And I'll just have to kill myself, that's all, if I don't have what to wear tonight." A vision of herself dishevelled and poor rose before her eyes and she began to yell. "*Where's my dress?* God-my-God, what did I do to be so punished? What will I do without a *dress?*"

Rebecca was looking intently for the dress, now, not quite certain what had become of it. The chances were always good that she had given it away. But to have a customer shout at her was just too much. She suddenly raised that voice of hers into a bellow, so that all the neighbors knew that Saturday had come, just as a patient Christian flock responds to the awakening of a church bell.

"Keep quiet!" she roared. "What do you want from my life? You want I should kill myself for you?" She turned on all her customers in an all-consuming rage. "You are all killing me. And you," she espied Sam lying on the unmade bed in the fitting room, "what are you laying for? You have nothing better to do?"

He jumped as if he had been stabbed. He could not face too well

Illustration by Herbert Kruckman

this anger of his mother's, and felt sorry for himself and scared in such a way as only one who has a mother can be scared. "Whaddya want me to do?" he whined.

"Do!" she roared, "just find me this dress which somebody stole out of my house under my own eyes. What are you laying for?" The last remark was made in complete disregard of the fact that her son was

already standing, wanting with his whole sixteen-year-old life to know what to do. He knew that he had not stolen the dress. But that was all he knew.

"Is this a life?" asked Rebecca. "Customers scream, my great son lays in bed," she sat down near the machine and faced the room, to play the scene quietly. "I have no more strength no more," she mourned, the quality of her voice pointing the lie. "No more strength," she shouted, "to fight with customers. Why should I do it? Why should I kill myself? Why?" She relaxed. At that moment she expressed with her slumped body that she was giving up the whole business, and fear danced in the eyes of her four customers who were standing around half naked waiting for their new clothes.

"Well, what the hell color was it," Sam broke in, getting his bearings after the shock and shower of mother's wrath.

"Black," she said lugubriously, nodding her head sadly so that the drama in that word would not be lost, "black chiffon velvet." Weakly, she raised her arm to point, "It was hanging . . ." Then she laughed in surprise. Under the old rose gown which was hanging on the door, she saw a little sliver, just a peek of black, showing at the bottom.

She pointed and laughed. "I gave away your dress, hah? What next? Here's your dress. Take your dress and," here the happiness at her discovery was permitted to glisten unquenched, "and have a good time by the banquet, and know that Becky is your friend and wants you to be happy."

Everyone sighed audibly with relief, and Vera almost cried with joy to see her old friend and supporter, the dress.

REBECCA quickly unloaded the hanger and extricated Vera's dress. "She," she said, pointing to the old rose dress and meaning, of course, the absent owner, "is getting a divorce." All eyes turned and looked unashamedly at the dress.

"Don't tell me!" rejoiced Vera. "Finally, finally, she made up her mind. Hodya like that!"

"Yeah!" said Rebecca, smiling. Divorce was a meaty topic to while away the hours for her customers, and she was not above making up stories for their amusement. As for herself, she rarely entered into philosophical discussions. In matters of this sort it was always better to let others chew it over, thus slyly to interlard the meat with gratuitous sauce from others' kitchens.

"Why," asked Lilly, "does she divorce him now, when he's old and no good already. She kept him so long, she should stick it out."

"What are you, crazy?" Berkowitz knew what she was talking about. "Twenty-five black years she took from him. All right a mother suffers, for the children. But now they're big already, going out with fellehs, they can take care of themselves. Now she could live like a queen on the money Marcus could give her. Let him go back to the whores and the underworld. It's her chance now. An' I'll bet she'll get married again. Plenty fine men would appreciate such a woman."

"That's what you think. I don't think so. Why should they be interested in her when they could get plenty girls of eighteen and twenty-two to run after them? You don't know what those young girls are. Men who c'n spend, take them to a good show and a dinner, that's what they want. And they'll go out with any old buck just to have a good time. You mark my words, she's making a mistake. My advice is, 'You stayed with him so long, suffer a little more'."

Sam was again "laying." He looked up at the ceiling and listened to this talk with pleasure. It gave him a cozy feeling to relax unobserved and hear the wise words of women about old bucks. This talk didn't touch the sensitive places of his person, for on the question of manhood he could afford to remain aloof and objective, a sure prize winner, the top of the heap.

Carefully, Rebecca put the dress on Berkowitz, for it was not yet time for Vera to discover that her worst fears about the unfinished dress were realities. Not a stitch had been sewn on this masterpiece all week. The quick, clever basting was all that held everything together. And slowly Rebecca pulled it down over head, shoulders, bosom and bulge. That maneuver accomplished, she got down on her knees and began to make slight alterations in the hemline, then raising her arms she took it in a little here and there to make it fall properly, to make it cling like skin. Then she ran her hand down Vera's side, all the way down. It was a necessary gesture, an inspiration gesture. This *would*, in spite of all odds, be the body beautiful. And eyes screwed up, she surveyed her work.

"Walk away," she drawled, and waved her loving arm. She remained on her knees, as Vera turned slowly. All the glamor that she had missed in her all-too-fleeting youth, all the spotlights, and the murmurs and the words and the shouts of approval which Vera never heard, clanged

faintly in her ear as she walked slowly to the window, turned cutely, and majestically walked the length of the fitting room and into the dining room. Rebecca said with feeling, lovingly and sincerely, "You'll be the belle of the ball!" This was a good moment for Vera Berkowitz. How easy it is, to imagine yourself the beautiful, desired, outstanding woman! How charming, how nice, how . . . ! For a moment before a dream vanishes, a ball of white fire whirls the mind in a gay dance. Then you begin to talk just like Vera Berkowitz again.

"And hodya like it, Lilly?"

"Very nice, honest," said Lilly.

"Nice!" shouted Rebecca. "Gorgeous, that's all, gorgeous! Look at those lines it gives her. I'm telling you Vera, you never looked in your life, like you look in that dress!"

"You think so?"

"Look at yourself in the mirror," she said, taking a piece of green crepe de chine and wiping and wiping the mirror so that Vera could see better. "Look, and tell me if you ever looked so beautiful in your life."

"Well, I wouldn't say 'in my life'," said Vera most sincerely delighted, "but, Becky, I have to say you did a wonderful job and I'm very satisfied. You have golden hands, if I have to say so myself."

"All right, I'm glad you like it. But I promised you. And when I promise, God himself could come and tell me I shouldn't do it, and I keep my promise. You should always know, that by me a promise is a promise."

"You don't think it's too low in the neck?"

"An evening gown can never be too low in the neck. In fact, I was worried it was too high." This was a sore point with Rebecca. She liked a dress to be décolleté. Regardless of what *Vogue* said, no matter what year it was, or what season, a low-cut dress was her idea of style. She knew that she was sometimes unorthodox. In fact, she sometimes made great efforts to make a more conventional neckline. But the dress was no sooner pinned on than her sharp shears went to work, to cut just a little more off the neck.

"Well, anyhow, I like it," said Vera. "Just like it is, is good. So when will it be ready?"

"Don't worry, you'll have it to the banquet."

"But when should I pick it up? Now listen Becky, I don't want to have no trouble. I have to go to the beauty parlor yet, and I didn't get my shoes. I don't like to leave everything till the last minute."

"Listen, do me a favor and stop worrying. Go to the beauty parlor. Buy the shoes and get dressed at home. When you're ready to go, come up and put the dress on here."

"No!" said Vera. "No, my dear, that I won't do. I'm not going to drag Louie here the last minute, he should have to sit and wait an hour while you finish the dress. Then I'll muss up my hair again, and the makeup will get spoiled and I'll look like a rag to the banquet. Let Sammy deliver to my house six o'clock, you hear?"

"Okay, have it your way," she was carefully, slyly taking the dress off and wanted no argument or fussing at that moment.

Suddenly, the suspicion dawned on Vera that the dress was in the basting stage. While the dress was over her head, she began to scream.

"I knew it! I knew it! You didn't do a stitch on the dress all week. It's just the same as it was on Monday. You won't have it finished! I won't have the dress for tonight! I know it, I know it. You did this to me before. Becky, what are you doing to me!"

"Vera," said Becky, keeping her temper and disengaging the frantic flesh from the unfinished dress, "if you don't have the dress by tonight, I shouldn't live to wear a dress to Sammy's wedding. Is that good enough for you?"

"I don't believe you. I don't believe you," she yelled right into Rebecca's perturbed face. "Whatever you say, I don't believe you." Reduced to the lowest common denominator, she couldn't believe in her dressmaker, and she started to cry.

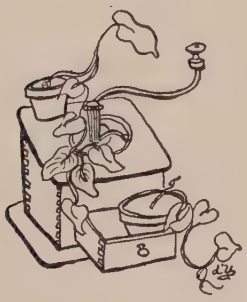
A BITTER taste rolled around in Sam's mouth. To him the sight of a stout woman of forty crying because she had no dress to wear to a banquet was infinitely sad and disturbing. It tore at him and tossed him around, and cries of hate were cut off in his chest. "Pah!" he wanted to say, "pah! I spit on you. I hate you Mama." He lay on the bed, just looking at the ceiling.

The other customers left the room. Wise courtiers as they were, they knew that in such conflicts it is well not to take side, lest a tenuous condition become perilous and all the customers find themselves naked on the street.

Rebecca was embarrassed. A woman's tears deserved some respect. Even the wild anarchy in her heart, the impulse to laugh, must be momentarily stilled. At a funeral, perhaps, the control was not always there, and a giggle might fly out. But in the everyday matter of a disappointed customer, one could summon the gods for help, bite your lip and speak softly with a smile.

"Don't be foolish," she said. "Would I let you go to the banquet in that old dress of last year or the year before? You're nervous now. Go. Go to the beauty parlor and tell Sally, I sent you. She'll do a good job. Go. I'll pay for the facial, and don't be a child to cry. Sammy will deliver the dress to you at six, and you'll be the happiest woman tonight. Go, I'm telling you."

And so was Vera cajoled out of the house. Rebecca went back to the kitchen to warm up the coffee, and deeply curious, she wondered whether Vera would have her dress that night before ten. She stood there, almost dreaming, in her nightgown with an old skirt thrown over it, stirring at her pot of coffee.



THE MEANING OF Berlin

by GERHART EISLER

ON SEPTEMBER 26, 1948, the governments of the United States, Great Britain and France announced that they had broken off negotiations with the Soviet government concerning Berlin, and that they would turn the matter over to the Security Council of the United Nations. The negotiations were ended despite a declaration of the Soviet government on September 25 that it was up to the Western powers whether a four-power agreement on the Berlin situation could be obtained or not. In turning to the Security Council, the Western powers knew, of course, that according to the charter of the U.N. the Council cannot make any decision in regard to Germany.

The Western powers, however, maintaining the ridiculous fiction that the present situation in Berlin is not a German question, asserted in three similar notes to the Secretary General of the U.N. that:

> "The issue is that the Soviet government has clearly shown by its action that it is attempting by illegal and coercive measures in disregard of its obligations to secure political objectives to which it is not entitled and which it could not achieve by peaceful means. It has resorted to blockade measures; it has threatened the Berlin population with starvation, disease and economic ruin. . . ."

The breakup of the negotiations was accompanied by a noisy warmongering campaign. Once again, some war-crazy people played with the idea of an armed aggression against the Soviet zone. Not only imperialist crackpots, but such "respectable" organs as the New York *Herald Tribune* (September 28) were sorry that the Berlin question had not been solved in another way: "In retrospect it seems very likely that if the first tentative imposition of the Berlin blockade had been

met with the prompt dispatch of armored trains and armored convoys into Berlin regardless of Soviet threats, the present crisis would never have arisen." The idea of "probing" the will to peace of the Soviet Union by means of an armed aggression into the Eastern zone had also been entertained by General Lucius Clay and General "Wild Bill" Donovan before the negotiations started on July 31. And who can be sure that we are not to be the unfortunate witnesses and victims of such disastrous adventures in the near or distant future?

How did the Berlin crisis come about? What is the meaning of all the threats and noise? Where does a peaceful solution lie?

The Russians are accused of starving the population of the Western sector of Berlin and bringing ruin to the economic life of the city by having cut off on June 24, 1948, all rail traffic between the Western zone and Berlin. However, if some hothead would like to start a war to save the Germans in the West sector from starvation, let him not be too hasty. Neither a war nor an air-lift is needed to save Berlin from "starvation, disease and economic ruin." The Soviet government has declared its readiness to feed the whole Berlin population and to take care of the delivery of fuel for homes and industry. Every Berliner of the West sector can get his allotments in food and fuel in the same way as the Berliner of the East sector of the city. It is simply not true that the people of the West sector suffer from a blockade which has to be circumvented by the air-lift and by other spectacular and provocative means.

The truth rather is that the American military government in Berlin, with the help of their German agents, is trying to prevent the people in the West sector from taking advantage of the offer of the Soviet military government. According to an order of the American military government, published on August 23 in the *Social Democrat*, an American-licensed newspaper in Berlin, the people in the West sector are forbidden to register for food in the Soviet area.

The fact is that the people of Berlin are not blockaded. They can have their rations and fuel for the winter with the help of the Soviet military government. If the winter increases the hardships of the people of the West sector, it will happen *because the Western powers under the initiative of the United States want to have it that way.* All the so-called humanitarian arguments for the continuation of the air-lift are nothing but sheer hypocrisy.

THE same hypocrisy is used by the Western powers when they declare they have to oppose the Soviet policy and stay in Berlin in order to safeguard German democracy. The fact is that their policy both in the West sector of Berlin and in their occupation zones consists in the persecution of the real democratic German forces. The Western powers are systematically attempting to prevent the development of a democracy that would be more than a temporary mask—as it was after 1918—behind which the reorganization of German imperialism may take place. Henry Wallace has correctly called the present policy of the Western powers in Germany a systematic effort to re-nazify the country.

It is this policy that has brought about the crisis around Berlin. It is this desperate attempt to rebuild beaten German imperialism as a decisive European aggressive force in the service of American imperialism that has forced the Soviet Union to undertake measures to safeguard Eastern Germany. *For Eastern Germany, thanks to the splendid work of the Socialist Unity Party, of the German Marxists, with the guidance and help of the Soviet Union, has become the center of the new anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, democratic development of Germany, one of the best hopes of progressive Europe.*

The measures taken by the Soviet military government in cutting the rail connections between Berlin and the Western zones are not an aggressive act against the United States and its European vassals. On the contrary, they are a defense against the violation of all agreements in regard to Germany.

The basis of the four-power control, as laid down in the decisions of Potsdam and Yalta, was not destroyed by the Soviet Union, but by the Western powers under the leadership of the American imperialists. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan are in sharp contradiction to the main idea of Potsdam. At Potsdam it was agreed to make Germany, *the whole of Germany,* safe against the renascence of militarism and imperialism. It stipulated as the guiding line for the four-power control the economic unity of Germany and the creation of a united, independent nation. It demanded thorough de-nazification, de-militarization and de-cartelization. It called for punishment of the war criminals and encouragement of all genuine democratic forces. It provided for reparations, especially to those countries most harmed by Hitler Germany. It was on this basis that the four-power control was established in Berlin and the city divided into four sectors. Berlin

was chosen as the seat of the four-power control because it was and is the capital of Germany.

The Marshall Plan, on the other hand, has cut the country in two, with the purpose of making Western Germany a beachhead against the Soviet Union and the new democracies. All the big industrialists and Junkers have remained or have been brought back into their old positions. The American monopolies are becoming the senior partners of the big German industrialists. Thus, a third of Germany's mining industry is already in foreign hands; the Hugo Stinnes concern is owned by Americans; General Motors has acquired the Opel Werke, one of the largest auto plants, while Ford is planning to build its biggest European factory in Cologne. The U.S. occupation authorities have vetoed the nationalization of heavy industry in the Ruhr and Rhine regions despite repeated demands of working-class organizations.

FAR from being encouraged in the Western zone, the democratic elements are persecuted and hampered. American reaction's yardstick for the true "democrat" is a readiness to fight progressive ideas and progressive people. *And the more a German's past has proven him steeped in fascist ideology, the better German he is. It is this spirit that results in the remarkable clemency toward an Ilse Koch on the part of the U.S. military authorities.*

Thus the policy of the Western powers, under the guidance of the Americans, has encouraged and attracted all the Nazi industrialists and Junkers, all the incorrigible Nazi gangsters and provocators, all the old bankrupt politicians who helped to save German imperialism after 1918 and whose politics brought Hitler into power. From these elements are chosen the bureaucrats, the judges, the administrators, the whole reactionary canaille. From these elements, also, are established the new military formations, parading under various names such as "German Civil Labor Organization," "Industrial Police" and "Civil Guards."

For example, in the Bavarian police 175 ex-officers of the German army, among them five colonels and seven lieutenant colonels, hold high office. Even a nucleus of the German general staff is kept up: 125 German generals under the leadership of General Halder, the former chief of staff, are writing the history of World War II in a small town in the American zone. Teaching the Americans how to beat the Russians?

In the British zone the Civil Labor Organization, which embraces about 325,000 Germans, consists for the most part of purely military formations. All the traditions of the old German army continue to operate in these units, with officers having disciplinary power. Bizonia has forty battalions of "Industrial Police," mainly composed of ex-soldiers, most of them S.S.-men. According to press reports, General Schwartzkopf, former organizer of the Iranian gendarmerie, notorious for its cruelties, is slated to take command of this force. The American-organized "Civil Guard," called by the Germans "Black Guard," is another reserve formation for a potential German army. It consists of volunteers, former non-commissioned officers and officers of Hitler's army. They are selected by the U.S. intelligence officers with a view to their usefulness in suppressing unrest among the people and their ability in street fighting.

Various centers exist for training German mercenaries, especially for the Foreign Legion and other units of the French, British and American armies. Coblenz is a center for recruiting Germans for Foreign Legion service in the French colonies, especially Indo-China and Madagascar. It is said that every third man in the Foreign Legion is a German. Thus, under all kinds of camouflage, the cadres of Hitler's beaten troops are preserved and reorganized in the Western zones to form the backbone of a future German army. The strength of all these cadre organizations is several times that of the Reichswehr in the Weimar Republic, which formed the basis for the Nazi army.

Hanson W. Baldwin, the military specialist of the New York *Times*, proposes to go a step further and organize quite openly German militarist formations. He writes (September 29, 1948):

> "Sooner or later we must come to grips—whether we like it or not—with the utilization of German manpower for defense of the West and to help to restore the balance of power in Europe. Such a plan has obvious and grave dangers; it could lead to a revived German militarist nationalism, therefore it must be carefully thought out and carefully controlled."

Mr. Baldwin understands that with a few hundred thousand men as organized now in camouflaged military groups one may build the cadres of a future German army, but one cannot change the balance of power. To change the balance of power U.S. military circles visualize, as the crowning achievement of the Marshall Plan, fifty or 100

German divisions, armed by a new, highly developed armament industry of the Ruhr.

THE decisive point in this development of systematic violation of the Potsdam agreement was reached by the London six-power conference which ended on June 1, 1948. This conference decided on the partition of Germany and the setting up of a Western government in Frankfurt-am-Main. And to make this partition even more drastic and irrevocable, the Western powers on June 18 decreed unilateral currency reform—the introduction of the so-called Deutsche Mark—without even informing the Soviet Union of their intentions.

Had the Soviet Union not acted at once, the Eastern zone would have been swamped with the worthless old money. The answer of the Soviet military government—cutting all rail connections with the Western zones and introducing a new currency into their area—was necessary in order to prevent the disorganization of the economy in the Eastern zone.

In its note of July 14, the U.S.S.R. stated very frankly the reasons for these measures:

> "*The Soviet government has more than once warned the governments of the United States of America, Great Britain and France in regard to the responsibility which they would take upon themselves in following along the path of the violation of agreed decisions previously adopted by the four powers in regard to Germany.* These decisions, adopted at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, and also the agreement of the four powers concerning the control mechanism of Germany have as their aim the de-militarization and democratization of Germany, the removal of the base itself of German militarism and the prevention of the revival of Germany as an aggressive power and the transformation of Germany into a peace-loving and democratic state. . . . *These most important agreements of the four powers in regard to Germany have been violated by the governments of the United States of America, Great Britain and France.* . . . After the United States, Great Britain and France by their separate actions in the Western zones of Germany destroyed the system of four power administration of Germany and had begun to set up a capital for a government for Western Germany in Frankfurt-am-Main, *they thereby undermined the legal basis which assured their right to participation in the administration of Berlin.* . . ." (My emphasis, G.E.)

The position of the Soviet Union that Berlin is a part of the Soviet zone and that four-power control can be valid for Berlin only if it is valid for the whole of Germany was more or less recognized by Walter Lippmann in one of his more enlightened moments. He wrote on September 21 in the New York *Herald Tribune*:

> "Berlin can be administered as a community only by four power agreement. The Russians were quick to see the anomaly in our position. That we stood for three power control of Western Germany and for four power control of Berlin. . . . It follows that while the Berlin crisis might be alleviated it cannot be resolved unless the four powers are able to negotiate a general German peace treaty. Until that is done Berlin will still be deep within the Soviet zone of occupation and Berlin will be for us a diplomatic Bataan."

Had the U.S. government followed this advice the negotiations with the representatives of the Soviet Union could have led to a positive conclusion. For even from the American White Paper about these negotiations it is clear that Stalin and Molotov did not propose a "diplomatic Bataan" for the Western powers. The White Paper shows clearly that the Russians asked for a postponement of the setting up of a Western government in Germany in connection with a compromise in regard to Berlin. The Western powers, however, preferred to break up these negotiations. With all their shouting the Western powers will not be able to explain to the world why it is just to exclude the Russians from any say in Western Germany while the Western powers should have their say in Berlin, in the midst of the Soviet zone. This contradiction cannot be hidden by air-lifts, diplomacy and appeals to the United Nations.

THE Soviet Union, together with Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania and Hungary, adopted on June 24, 1948, a resolution which shows a way for the peaceful solution of the German question. These powers propose:

> "In accordance with the Yalta and Potsdam agreements on Germany the following problems should be settled in the first place without any delay:
>
> "1. Implementation of the measures insuring the final de-militarization of Germany, by agreement among Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., France and the United States.

"2. Institution for a definite time of control by the four powers —Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., France and the United States—over Ruhr heavy industry, with a view to developing peace branches of Ruhr industry and preventing the re-establishment of Germany's war potential.

"3. Establishment by agreement among the governments of Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., France and the United States, of a provisional democratic, peace-loving government for the whole of Germany, composed of representatives of the democratic parties, and organizations of Germany, for the purpose of creating a guarantee against a repetition of German aggression.

"4. *Conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany in accordance with the Potsdam decisions, so that the occupation troops of all powers should be withdrawn from Germany within one year after the conclusion of the peace treaty.*

"5. Elaboration of measures for the fulfillment by Germany of her reparations obligations towards states which suffered from German aggression."

Such a program indeed would be in the interest of all nations that do not want to experience a revival of German imperialism. It is, however, certainly not a program for the organization of 100 German army divisions in order to "change the balance of power," or for the revival of a huge armament industry in the Ruhr. This is also not a program to organize Germany as a *landsknecht* in the service of Wall Street and world reaction. This program, rather, promotes peace.

Such a program would be at the same time in the interest of the German people. It gives them the perspective of a united, democratic nation, of a peace treaty in a relatively short time with the removal of all foreign troops, and thereby the establishment of a new German sovereign state. It removes the danger of Germany becoming a colony of Wall Street and a victim of its imperialist adventures.

Despite all attempts of the Western powers to prevent it, fifteen million Germans have signed a petition for national unity. Fifteen million Germans, organized by the German People's Congress representing thirty-five per cent of all voters, have demanded a plebiscite for the unification of Germany. These Germans together with all progressive forces in the world have an interest in seeing that the present policy of the U.S. imperialists in Germany and in Berlin should be defeated, once and for all. *For the destruction of Nazi Germany must not be undone!*

The Chicken Farmers

by BEN FIELD

AMERICA owes the farmers of south Jersey a great debt. Without the food contributed by them during Valley Forge, Washington and his men never could have stuck it out. The descendants of those hardbitten teaburners and revolutionaries, joined by the immigrants of the last sixty years, have turned Cumberland County into the poultry heart of the East and one of the great produce-growing and canning sections of our country. Italians, Jews, Russians, Germans, the Irish and others, freed from the holds of ships and the ghettos of the coastal cities, have flocked to the tip of the state where the soil is light and the climate mild. They bought parcels of land, built coops and rigged up irrigation pipes, and sunk their roots deep, holding on through depressions, drouths, and poultry epidemics with a tenacity which is often incredible.

TWELVE years ago I spent a summer in Vineland, Cumberland County, with Visarion Luken, poultryman and pigeon-racer. Last August he invited me to visit with him again. I came in from the coast by bus at the tailend of the severe heat spell. The bus terminal in Vineland faces the railroad station, and up the street a sparrow's flutter there is a cab stand. I stood over my suitcase waiting for Luken when a cab drove up and a passenger got out. The cabby slipped from behind the wheel, lit a stogie, and walked over to chew the rag.

We start with the weather and work around to conditions in town. Factories are going, but not full blast as during the war; he mentions Kimble Glass and the clothing factory. Maybe the small machine shops will start up again on those new war orders the papers are batting about; plenty of Yankee ingenuity and grit here; Daggett, the in-

ventor of ballbearing transmission, was a Vineland lad. As for the farmers, the poultrymen are holding their own, the truck farmers not so good. No one is getting rich quick even among the chicken-chasers, not that he can see, considering how high every blessed thing is . . .

The cabby is a paunchy little man with lively blue eyes. His own racket? He sips at his stogie before answering that one. Well, if a fella turns around quick enough he can make both ends meet like the dog with a bite in his backside.

Down the street comes a young woman wheeling a carriage. "Now there's some people carry on like the world's coming to an end." He waves his hand at the baby. "But look at that—the world goes right on."

A POWERFUL, big-boned man with a long sensitive face, Luken has aged; his eyes are sunken, and he limps. But the handshake is just as warm, his curiosity and drive unspent. On our way to the farm in his Ford pickup it becomes clear that though illness has twisted him like a scythe-handle, he takes his cut at life with undiminished vigor.

Martha comes out to say hello. She brings me to their best bedroom. Under these double windows stood the table on which I worked that summer long ago, trying to coop a handful of impoverished and rebellious farmers inside a book, while down in the yard Luken put up buildings to coop his poultry. Martha was in the city then working, and he was alone. I gave him a hand with his milk-goat, racing pigeons, and hoed in his garden. Goat, garden, and most of the racers are gone. Everything that the Lukens have left goes into their poultry now.

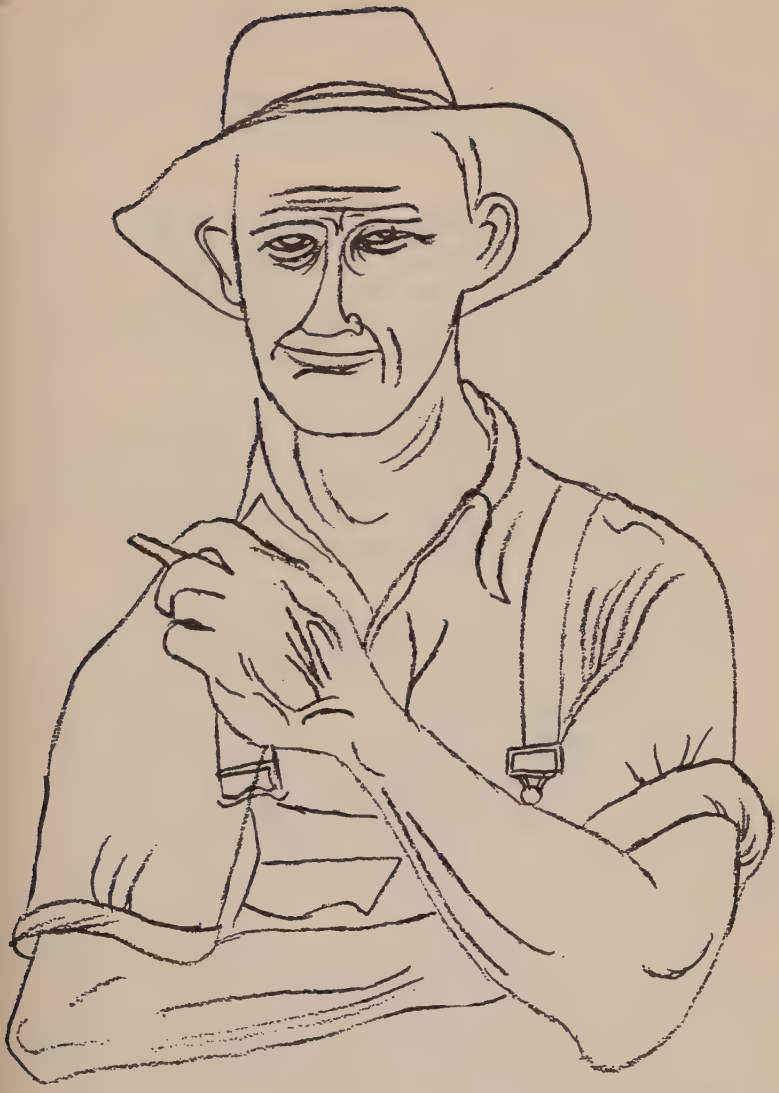
The Lukens are Ukrainians, members of the Ukrainian Farmers Lodge No. 1564 of the International Workers Order which has been branded subversive by the Attorney General. Both are citizens who have been here for over thirty years. Theirs is the story of immigrants who have become blood and bone of our country, whose lives represent a happy marriage of the best they have brought from the old home with the new, whose courage in their struggles should have the profoundest of meanings to all Americans.

Martha is a handsome woman with a pert nose, a small mouth and a girlish face. Only twelve when she stepped off the ship, she went to work immediately. To appear older, she knotted up her hair and wore

long skirts; at her first job she burned the clothes because she didn't know enough to put water into the boiler. Since then she has become an expert housekeeper and an excellent cook and baker. Her cottage is spotless, her strawberry shortcake as good as her pirogi. She has been governess, nurse, hairdresser, waitress, a battery girl and weaver in a textile factory and a forelady in the acid room of Kimble Glass during the war. Few can hold a candle up to her as a poultrywoman: I have seen hens squat at her feet and one elderly dame cluck and fussily call her to share a worm.

Visarion Luken is a work-jack like his Martha. He cut timber in the big woods in the Northeast, helped run a farm co-operative, operated a lathe in Detroit during the First World War, and then became business manager of the *Ukrainian Daily News.* Those were the days of the Palmer Raids; he was beaten up in the street outside his office. After five years of steering the paper through rough water, ill health forced him to resign and go out to Connecticut where he became a chauffeur and gardener for a broker. Recovered, he bought his farm near Vineland. The strain of holding on to the farm, sharpened by the pressures of the war, has crippled him physically. I have seen him, however, fight off pain and weariness, sit down to the phone and make more than a dozen calls, one after the other, cheerfully, with quips, to get neighbors to listen to a radio talk given by a spokesman for the Progressive party. Courage and honesty shine like lamps on the hard road of this man's life.

The outstanding quality of the Lukens is their social sense, their neighborliness, their concern for others. They are active in their I.W.O. lodge, in the Farmers Union and its co-operative, and in the Independent Progressive Party of New Jersey; and Visarion has not lost interest in the pigeon club which he once headed. During the war neither one of them spared himself, and Visarion presented a bunch of his wonderful racing pigeons to the army. Community projects like the local hospital get their quick support. The fences are completely down where their neighbors' welfare is touched, and I have been present when at his suggestion they offered a hard-pressed war veteran help which would have meant increasing the mortgage on their farm. The offer was accepted, and within a few weeks the young man bought his place, and in the latest letter from the Lukens there is the news that he has ordered 3,000 chicks for delivery in October and is on his way as a poultryman.



Ben Shahn

Martha and Visarion both keep open house, and at the same time range far and wide. Almost every night a meeting of one sort or another is held at the Lukens'. People are always dropping in or phoning to invite them to their homes. It is this which enabled me to get a picture of what is going on among the Vinelanders during these days. The visit with the Lukens was a memorable one; most memorable the open house of their hearts.

TWENTY miles to Roth's chicken patch through flat sandy country overrun with scrub pine. Now and then a farmhouse or a shanty pokes through the brush. The road takes a dip and a bend, and we bounce into Roth's yard. And here comes the man himself from the direction of his coop—blackeyed, bull-shouldered, with stained overalls stuck into great misshapen boots.

A New Yorker by birth, raised on the East Side, Roth had always wanted to be a farmer. Unlike some of his neighbors, neither ill health nor poverty drove him south. He made his $150 a week as a fitter in a clothing factory before coming to this rat-infested, ramshackle place, which (and he says this without cracking a grin) he is fast turning into an estate.

Single-handed, Roth has put in plumbing, electricity, fixed the rotten sills of the house so that it no longer stands on "chicken legs." We go through the lower rooms, examine the new flooring and the walls, and get a glimpse of his wife, a tall graceful girl with a melancholy face who is nursing an infant. We tramp down into the cellar to see his new heater. Heaps of rubble are in the corners. It was quite a kick in the pants when, digging his cellar, he hit water. He has rigged up a pump to bail it out, and turns the switch to show how it "sucks it dry as a bone." But it will be kind of damp and cold this winter candling eggs, he admits.

Back in the yard we stand a short distance from the poultry house and study his flock. An argument ensues about the merits of the various breeds of poultry with Luken pitting the heavier breeds against the leghorns which he calls ladies, so scary the raising of a little finger makes them bust their eggbags. From that the men tangle in an argument about feeding habits and the new round poultry houses which can hold 5,000 birds. Plans for the round houses can be gotten from the inventor for $200. Roth boasts he has made up a blueprint in his own head "for free."

Deadpan and braggy is this boy. Starting as a kid of eleven, he has overcome every obstacle in trimming his life according to a pattern based eventually on his being a farmer. "Tell you how it is with me," he says confidentially. "I ain't in farming because I want to get rich. If I wanted to get rich, I'd rob a bank. I want a living. I like to work with my mitts. I'm my own boss here, and got enough wind to dry my sweat. What beat me over the head at first was I was no farmer and couldn't get a G.I. loan. I had to get my money the hard way, but I got it. First year the chickens raised me, I didn't raise them. Now I'm raising them!"

Roth's cockiness is backed by his hard sense, his drive, and only as a last resort, his mitts. "It ain't that I'm tougher than the other guy. It's just that I use the old noodle. When I was in the army, I was an M.P. I can always take care of myself by my lonesome. I was the only Jew in my company, and when a heel started something funny I rammed this mitt down his throat so fast he don't know yet what hit him. I fixed up the boss in the shop, too, when he tried tricks. I got tricks of my own. But I ain't tough. If you know your way about, you don't have to be tough. Just use the old noodle."

MORT is also a war veteran and a poultryman. There the resemblance ends. He will quit the chickens in a few days to return to the university. He is a thin, earnest boy with a stoned-down face and a harassed air.

Mort's three months vacation was spent between the poultry on his father's farm and the Independent Progressive Party. A delegate to the Philadelphia Convention, a leader of the Youth for Wallace, he finds himself constantly strapped for time, yearning to return to his studies and at the same time hating, as the summer draws to a close, to leave his work here unfinished. He is caught on a wire with points in both directions.

In a year Mort will have his degree. He has discussed his plans with his parents and friends and talks of going abroad to take courses at the Sorbonne. Yet how can one go off and leave his people on the rack, his country in crisis? Because of this conflict and his "outside" interests, he feels that he has drawn his punches lately and lost his effectiveness. Instances are on the tip of his tongue. His failure to stand up to the cop who stopped his truck because of a minor traffic violation and started questioning him about his nationality. His failure to defend

with the utmost vigor a woman delegate who has been fired from her job because she attended the Philadelphia Convention; instead of waiting for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union to act, he should have gotten the progressives in town to throw a picket line around the factory and coupled that with other forceful measures. . . .

Mort feels that he will solve his dilemma in time. Life would be simple if he could settle down in Vineland and throw everything that the hens don't pick out of a man into building the new party. Nevertheless, he does not envy the Roths. Only now and then his face tightens and he speaks about the rapscallions who have thrown the world so out of joint that only suffering and great chunks out of the lives of his generation can set it right.

THE progressives in the tip of Jersey are gathering their forces for the election campaign. Stalwarts like the Lukens are on the road day after day, and nightly there is generally a get-together or meeting of some sort. Committees bunch up to make plans for registration of voters, to answer a hostile editorial in the Vineland daily, to plan a series of political ads and radio addresses, to spur people to attend a Glen Taylor Rally in Camden, to rehearse party songs, to protest the discrimination against Republican Club No. 2 which consists entirely of Negroes. Men and women stay up half the night mimeographing letters and addressing envelopes.

One of these gatherings stands out particularly. It is a lawn party given by the Lukens to raise money for the campaign. Martha throws everything into it and invites half the county. There is a wiener roast with all the trimmings. The tables are set on the grass between the bird bath and the night lilies which raise their trumpets in the fading Sunday afternoon light.

Poultrymen flood the grounds with a sprinkling of workers from the shops in town as well as some businessmen. Anderson of the producers' co-operative of the Farmers Union joins us. We get away from the chickens for a moment to talk about the produce-growers. Scald has hit the tomatoes and Anderson chuckles to think how the growers who would not follow the co-operative in refusing to grow tomatoes for the canneries are getting it in the neck. The story he unfolds is one of a growing revolt of farmers who are no longer allowing themselves to be divided, neighbor played off against neighbor. So desperate have the canneries become that they have taken to Red-baiting

growers of several hundred acres like the Hancocks, descendants of John Hancock, the signer of the Declaration of Independence.

The diversity of the forces behind the new party and their caliber are evident here. The native townsman fired from his teaching position here because he supported Loyalist Spain against Franco. The New Englander, recently moved to Jersey, whose livelihood was pinched because he supported P.C.A. The Pennsylvania student expelled by the university because he participated in a strike, and the Italian clothing worker forced out of the union because of her militancy. The oldtimer after whom one of the streets in Vineland has been named, Warren, who put up such a grand fight against the K.K.K. during the strike of the hired hands on the huge Seabrook farms.

These men and women are of the people, politicians of a different stripe. They are not too well acquainted with parliamentary procedure; their meetings bump along and take longer than they should, they are green and somewhat uncertain of themselves, but they press forward, fervent, and they work hard. Maybe they will make only a dent in 1948. They are determined to build, however; and if cut down and beaten back, they know that in the stubble tomorrow will be born.

IMMEDIATELY after the monthly meeting of the Vineland chapter of the Independent Progressive Party, held in a barnlike hall in orchard country, I hitch a ride in a truck which is bound for New York. We drive all night with a load of poultry. The driver is slow-spoken, and as I had gotten the hitch through his boss, he lets me play my cards first.

When he shows his hand finally, he says the fire company has been alerted because of the war danger, thinks we are going back to the days he had read about in the books when kings and bishops called the shots, doesn't know, by Jesus, where the world's heading. Then he talks about the truck strike, and though it seems like the men have a legitimate beef, still they're asking too much. A man can be a glutton sometimes.

I don't know how much he actually believes in the "glutton" he pins on the strikers. But if workers who ask for a fair wage are gluttons, the farmers are surely worse. That is the tale told by the agents of big business to sow discord and to dog worker against farmer. The press has found that the farmers are the "real gluttons of privilege," responsible for the rising cost of food and, consequently, for the strikes.

The packers, millers, the dairy trust, the canneries stand between producers and consumers and industriously hack great chunks of flesh off both. Last year the farmers were urged by the New Jersey State Director of Produce Markets to plow their produce back into the fields. "Crops have good fertilizing value," he declared. While farmers were offered a cent a pound for their tomatoes, housewives were being soaked twenty cents a pound by the A&P whose profits have about doubled since 1939. And in the end the farmers were driven to disk and plow under large acreages of broccoli, lettuce, cabbage, carrots, tomatoes, beets and peppers for which the buyers told them no market existed, offering them prices which failed to cover the cost of picking.

The poultrymen, it is true, are doing better. Feed has dropped. Because of the high price of red meat, eggs and poultry are in great demand. And yet the poultrymen have no illusions about the duration of this "prosperity" and are bracing themselves. In the short span the Lukens have been in the chicken business, they have passed through crisis after crisis which has gutted them. Their neighbor Hanula had to work as a window-cleaner for years in the city while wife and children clung to the farm. The Roths lost most of their flock in 1947 because of Newcastle, a disease for which there was no vaccine then. Thousands of birds were smothered during the heat spell last summer, and it will take grueling effort to make up the losses.

The driver, silent beside me, slaps at his face to keep from nodding over the wheel. He's had only a few hours sleep in the last couple of days. We stop off at a diner in front of which trucks are pulled up, larger than the "Normandies" we loaded when I worked for the Railway Express. Inside the diner are several drivers, grimy from the road and bleary-eyed, listening to the counterman who dishes up a report about the strike, hamburgers, and bits about a little red-headed whore who had spent part of the night hanging out here. One can see that this is part of the counterman's "curb service."

After a while, "refreshed," we go on, roaring through the night, dairy country replacing poultry, and then we pass through towns squatting like marsh hens in the swamps of north Jersey, and as dawn cracks, we enter the city.

A-HUMPING WE WILL GO

"Communism is a sour 'ism' based on envy and hatred of successful people. If communists spent less time in hating and more in 'humping,' as genuine Americans do, they would *have* the things they envy. And then they'd be happy."—*From a Warner & Swasey Machine Tools advertisement in* Newsweek.

SIDE BY . . .

"What would have happened if Adolf Hitler and his idea had not come? If Adolf Hitler had not come, then today the German people would no longer exist. In Middle Europe a bolshevistic chaos would prevail." — From "The Fuehrer's Holy Mission," by Dr. Robert Ley, in *Der Angriff,* April 21, 1945.

SIDE

"The critics of the German party system overlook the role of the Socialist Party of Germany in the fight against Bolshevism. Without German Social-Democracy, Germany and perhaps many another country of western Europe would be—ideologically and politically—dominated by Communism."—Dr. Kurt Schumacher, leader of the German Social-Democrats, in their Press Service, August 2, 1948.

YEA VERILY

"Let us not be pawns for labor leaders who have accumulated greater wealth than the capitalist whom they fight, all at the expense of those who work . . . I am only preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that is to tell the people the truth."—*Major Hughes A. Robinson, U.S.A. (Ret.) in the Pittsburgh* Courier.

HIGHER VALUES

"The desire of a nation to obtain such concrete things as oil fields or iron mines cannot be regarded as an economic motive, and war to obtain such specific objects cannot be regarded as based on economic causes . . . the act of going to war to obtain them constitutes neither an economic motive nor an act of economic warfare; the desire has the nature of an ethical valuation, and the act the nature of plain theft. No economic content is observable in the whole affair.—Professor E. M. Winslow in *The Pattern of Imperialism,* Columbia University Press, 1948.

books in review

Fast's Maccabees

MY GLORIOUS BROTHERS, by Howard Fast. *Little, Brown. $2.75.*

THE writing of this novel was an act of defiance. The book was composed during the year in which Howard Fast, as part of that valiant group of the Spanish Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, was in the front line of battle against the tyranny of the Thomas Committee. Together with Dr. Barsky and his associates, Fast had been unbendingly obedient to the law of the class struggle never to surrender names to the enemy. The process of completing the volume was in part a race against the time when he would be compelled to serve a prison sentence for his stand. Since the publication date finds Fast still on bail, I commend the book to the attention of the judges of the Supreme Court, which is now deciding whether to review the case.

For *My Glorious Brothers* deals with obedience to law. Resistance to tyrants, we learn from this retelling of the heroism of the Maccabees, is the truest obedience to law. We derive the lesson from this inspiriting novel deeply and movingly. The writing of it must have been not a distraction from, but an intensification of, his still uncompleted experience of resistance to the American fascists. In forging his Maccabees, Fast hammered steel for his own use; his own conduct in battle steadied the flame with which the Maccabees burn.

Not since Longfellow wrote his drama has an American writer of distinction taken the Maccabees as his theme, and it is more than fifty years since any American novelist has handled it. In Fast's own case, this is the first of his ten novels in which the setting is outside the United States and the time other than, in the historian's sense, modern. It is of course significant that he turned to the ancient history of his own people.

Yet if the antiquity of 2,100 years ago and the setting in Judea seem unexpectedly close to the reader today, that is because Fast is the kind of historical novelist to whom time and place are secondary and the conflict between progress and reaction is primary. Unlike a Thomas Mann or a Sholem Asch, who provide a many-layered panorama when they deal with the world of antiquity, Fast excites the reader with a sense of urgent immediacy by confining himself to telling a heroic tale of people made easily recognizable in situations and conflicts in which the reader

can find his own place. If one does not learn history from Fast—and rare is the novelist from whom one does—one surely learns how to fight more courageously today. And of such inspiration we can never have enough.

Fast deals not with the Maccabean dynasty, whose rule from about 140 B.C. to about 30 B.C. was far from popular with the masses, but with the Maccabean revolt against Greek-Syrian religious and political oppression, from 166 to 160 B.C. Taking the skeleton of none-too-plentiful fact which the old chroniclers furnish, Fast has fleshed it with the insight derived from study of the resistance movements of the past decade.

He knows that resistance does not come easy and is not instantaneous. In the source-material, when the Greek King of Syria, Antiochus IV, orders the Jews, on pain of death, to abandon their religious practices, to worship Greek gods, eat swine's flesh, violate the Sabbath and abandon the practice of circumcision, the Maccabees (the aged priest Mattathias and his five sons, John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan) spontaneously rise up, kill a Jew who would obey and the Syrian mercenaries who would enforce the order, and take to the hills.

To this bald and, in modern experience, unconvincing outline, Fast skillfully adds the following elements: initial fear of an overweening enemy; doubt as to the possibility of victory over such a power; the need for organizing and equipping even a small guerrilla force; and, most significantly, the vitality that the mood of the people themselves gives to their leaders. When the degenerate emissaries of Syrian terrorism first come to Modin, the little village not far northwest of Jerusalem where the Maccabees live, a child is wantonly killed and the old Mattathias is slapped by Appelles, the Greek warden. There is no resistance. But soon after, Judas, who is to become the foremost of the Maccabees, beset by fears and doubts, goes off for five weeks to roam through Judea to see what, if anything, can be done. Appelles and his mercenaries come again to Modin and publicly burn the holy scrolls while the whole village stands by. They kill Ruth, the beloved of both Judas and Simon, who loves Simon only. There is no resistance. But when Judas returns the next morning, he comes bringing both the spirit and a plan of resistance.

The spirit he has imbibed from a Rabbi Ragesh, a character through whom Fast represents the mass Judean sect of ultra-pious Hassidim, which fought splendidly for religious freedom but later refused to support Judas's struggle for political independence. Together Rabbi Ragesh and Judas convince the villagers of Modin to organize themselves, forge such weapons as they can and prepare for action. As Mattathias says to

the still hesitant Simon, "Only the people can make out of themselves a Maccabee and raise him up."

Even the observance of the Sabbath, which had stood in the way of resistance because the enemy cunningly attacked on that day knowing that the Jews would not fight, is made subservient to life when Mattathias judges that "The Sabbath day is holy, but life is holier." The next time the mercenaries descend upon Modin, the Jews refuse to worship Pallas Athene, exterminate the troops of the enemy and evacuate the entire village and its movables to the hills. "We learned the new war," says Simon, "the people's war that is not fought with armies and wealth, but with the strength that comes out of the people."

The Maccabees rouse the whole countryside, the well-equipped legions of the enemy are cut to pieces by the mobile guerrilla tactics best suited to Judean hills, and the Temple at Jerusalem is restored and rededicated in a celebration that became the festival of Hanukah, the first non-Biblical holiday in Jewish history. Greek-Syrian armies keep coming and are beaten back (with the minor aid of an international brigade of Alexandrian Jews) until palace rivalries lead the Regent of Syria to offer peace with religious freedom and a reduction in taxes.

The war aims of the Hassidim having been satisfied, they withdraw from the struggle despite Judas's exhortations to fight for total independence instead of relying on the mercy of the occupying power. Rather than surrender, as is demanded, Judas and Simon continue the resistance until Judas is killed in battle. It is at this point that Fast breaks off the stirring narrative, although, historically, complete Judean independence was not achieved for almost twenty years.

Fast has elected to tell the story in the form of a reflective reminiscence written out in the first person by Simon the Maccabee, the elder brother and close companion of Judas. For his purpose Fast has developed a mildly mannered but simple style that is flexible enough to be effective for many moods, from boyhood recollections to the vividly evoked battle scenes. The style is sometimes tinged with the movement of biblical prose, sometimes it recalls the narrative pace of the Malory of *Morte D'Arthur,* and sometimes, when Simon's mood becomes one of brooding over the events of twenty years before, the prose takes on some of the involutions of Edwin Arlington Robinson's dramatic monologues. In his previous writings which sometimes were marked by an undistinguished bareness, I do not remember having noted such happy diversity as he reveals here.

Whether placing the story in Simon's mouth was the most fruitful way of telling it is open to question. Thinking in what he considers to be Simon's terms, Fast has lifted the heroic foreground almost entirely out of the

complex background of the clash of ancient empires (Greek, Syrian, Egyptian and Roman) in which Judea was, so to speak, in the vortex. For Simon, and it would seem for Fast too, Judea is the center of the universe, geographically, politically and even morally. This emphasis is one of the unfortunate nationalistic elements running through the heart of the main conception of the book. Simon sees the Jews as somehow the focus of the hatred of the whole world "because to all nations and all peoples the Jew was the same, an abomination whose ways were not their ways." Simon believes Antiochus IV orders the regimentation of Judea out of some mysterious anti-Semitism caused by the "separateness" of the Jews, and not because of the strategic and financial considerations that scholars have assigned for the action. Throughout the volume there is an unqualified scorn for Greek civilization that is by no means redressed by Simon's noting, in a fleeting and unimpressive passage, that his hatred is not for the glory that was Athens but for the oppression that inevitably accompanied Greek imperial domination of other lands.

Simon also disappointingly spares us details of the treachery of the urban upper class of Judea and of the corrupt highpriesthood, which were the main "Hellenizing" agents of Antiochus and sold out the Jews for their own class and personal interests. Simon's viewpoint is that of a narrow religious nationalism in which the Jews are the chosen people, the fount of all good and the enemy of all evil. Fast even exaggerates the military strength of Judea by having the imperial power of Rome send a legate to Jerusalem to offer a treaty to Judea, when in point of fact, as far as we know, it was the Judeans who sent emissaries to Rome to ask for a treaty that would help secure their independence from Syria, and the alliance gained was decisive.

That Fast does not entirely share Simon's nationalistic views is suggested in the lengthy coda to the narrative consisting of the Roman legate's report of his visit to Simon in Jerusalem. The legate challenges Simon's concept of the chosen people. He tells Simon of the real relationship of international forces which made possible Judea's independence. " 'Can you survive against the whole world, Simon? . . . You say you fought for your freedom and you will never fight for any other cause. That is a bold statement, Simon—for I will not believe that a Jew is so different from all others. . . .'

"The Jew stared at me, his pale eyes puzzled and sad. He was disturbed, not with fear, but with a deep uncertainty. Then, he made as to dismiss me."

The Roman talks sense, but because it comes from one who confesses he hates the Jews, one is impelled to discount it. The deep uncertainty, however, still seems to be Fast's.

Nevertheless, from *My Glorious Brothers* the Maccabean heroism shines with new concreteness and splendor, pointed for the reader in America's hysterical epoch. The same story inspired the early Christians for the first four centuries of their era, when they celebrated the Maccabees on August 1, and has been an almost universal model to the Jews since the Middle Ages. Erasmus, in the days of the Inquisition, braced himself and his companions by rehearsing the great deeds of defiance of Mattathias and his five sons. And now, wherever this latest version by Howard Fast is read, Jew and non-Jew will breathe more deeply and fashion themselves into bolder opponents of contemporary tyrants. Fast's Maccabees are heroic Jews and heroic people. Because they were once slaves in Egypt, they know their duty to be resistance to oppression. The loss of six million in the last war has not blunted the lesson. Nor is the finger pointed at Jews alone.

MORRIS U. SCHAPPES

Unreconstructed Faulkner

INTRUDER IN THE DUST, by William Faulkner. *Random House. $3.00.*

POSSIBLY no one but Faulkner himself, brilliant expositor of the thinking, inner life and deed of Southern decay, could so well penetrate and expose the grotesque thinking in this, his latest work —if the thoughts were not his own. With all the fanaticism of injured pride—the very quality he has mercilessly dissected in other novels—he challenges the federal government to another Civil War if it passes an anti-lynching bill or otherwise "intervenes" on behalf of Southern Negroes. He is as explicit as that: his fictional spokesman plainly says "repel by force" and "federal law" and "federal police." The phrases, which would be natural to Faulkner's Senator Snopes, Rankin's twin, are all the more bizarre set in an eloquent, elaborately styled monologue in the mind of a Southern white boy who has managed to prevent a lynching. They are no less shocking, either, for being precariously based on a philosophy that we can, while disagreeing, dispute with some respect: that since the condition of the Southern Negro is the fault of the South, it is up to the South to change it; that only the South can and must expiate its own guilt. And Faulkner is explicit here too —the expiation must end in Negro *equality.*

But we cannot dispute such a thesis respectfully with Faulkner. We cannot even dispute is seriously; for the author has himself betrayed it, shattered its pretensions under the weight of his infuriated pride and hatred regarding "the North." Does a man ardently concerned with the dignity and rights of a national minority group sneer at "the coastal spew of Europe"? Or taunt "outlander" friends of the

Southern Negro for having "tried for seventy-five years" and failed at their task of liberation?—which means, if it means anything, that the South can't be charged with the failure simply because it has not tried at all. This is an odd enough boast, but Faulkner has odder ones. The South is a uniquely "homogeneous" region and only a homogeneous region can work out its own destiny, produce a true culture of art, literature and science, and finally endow the rest of the country with a national character which has been lost in "frantic greed for money."

There is a touch of hysteria in these assertions that may provoke constant readers of Faulkner to hysterical laughter. Coming from the South, I myself have never regarded his previous exhibits of perverts, idiots, murderers, madams and buffoons as caricatures—they look much more like the gigantic shadows cast by a lynching bonfire. But neither have I regarded them as representatives of a society allied with destiny, fine art and national character. It is a little as though the *New Yorker's* Charles Addams were suddenly to declare that his cobwebby characters were the only potential builders of a sunshine-and-oatmeal way of life—if other people would just let them alone.

Naturally the perverts and idiots are not featured in *Intruder in the Dust.* Its major characters, portrayed to suit the thesis, are not nearly so believable. Lucas, the man who is nearly lynched, is an old Negro described as "calm and intractable," the grandson of a white planter, who has for decades gotten away with saying "Mister" in such a way that the white men addressed know he doesn't mean it. The seventeen-year-old boy who prevents the lynching was once humiliated in his "white manhood" by Lucas himself—yet, because he cannot endure injustice, digs up a grave at midnight to find the evidence that will save the framed Negro from the mob. Assisting him in the grave-digging is an elderly lady belonging to one of the three oldest white families of the county.

And over them all stands Lawyer Gavin, the author's voice, who has been described before in a Faulkner short story ("Go Down, Moses," the title story of a collection) as a graduate of Harvard and Heidelberg whose vocation is translating the Old Testament back into Greek. It is he, with some help from the boy, who provides the philosophy and points the moral of the tale: that if three people could stop the mob, why have a law?

The characters, the circumstances and the moral taken together are almost too preposterous to discuss. I will grant that there are justice-loving youths in the South—more than Faulkner knows about—and there could easily be Harvard and Heidelberg graduates practicing law, though I am less ready to vouch for their antipathy

toward lynching. But not all of Faulkner's extraordinary gifts as a story-teller, nor his powerful concentration on a living portrayal of his characters, can convince me that old ladies of the South's leading families ever help to dig up graves at midnight. I never even believed that they helped dig up the family silverware after Sherman's armies had departed. And I am quite certain that they never dug up anything that would lead to the intended effect of saving a potential lynch-victim even if he did happen to be the brother-in-law of their old-family-servant.

Then what occurs when the grave *is* dug up? Why, there's another man in it, not the one Lucas is thought to have murdered! So then it turns out that Lucas didn't kill him after all—it was the man's own brother who did. Confronted with this fact, the mob disperses since it lynches only Negroes, not white fratricides. So you see?—you don't need a law.

How did Faulkner, a genius at artistic distortion, arrive at the crass distortion in this work? We cannot say, for example, that a preoccupation with decay must inevitably end in such open reaction. There is a theory that Faulkner's preoccupation sprang from or was attended by a perverse pleasure in its object. However, his material was real and valid, a part of life, no matter how sensational or shocking.

The family in *The Sound and the Fury* is presented ruthlessly but not inhumanly. I do not know of another novel which recreates with so much power and reality this not uncommon family of Southern literature—the deteriorated aristocrats, the material foundation of their pride wrenched from under them, the pride itself fanatically sustained by a myth, the physical rot and the turning inward until the last sane and "positive" member, who knows that only money can restore real pride, becomes in his frantic greed the meanest man in the world. The blaze of Faulkner's intensity illuminates more than one family; it reveals a whole history of Southern ruling-class psychology from the root myth to its blighted fruits. True, it was only part of the South; but an author who could penetrate the sources of decay with such terrible clarity might have been expected to look some day at the whole soil, to discover the genuine counter-

growth to idiocy, incest and cruelty. Now Faulkner apparently thinks he has found it—in the same ruling class, the same myth, the same pride!

So he did after all surrender to the risks of his preoccupation—to that and this curious business of Southern pride, which deserves some examination. One encounters it often in well-to-do Southerners: a feeling that the North, sitting high on its comparative wealth, sophistication and culture, constantly "looks down on" the South with amusement or contempt. Without admitting it, Southerners who feel this way recognize their position as mere colonial satraps, allied with but far subordinate to their overlords of Northern monopoly who supply their industries, hold their lands in mortgage and finance their election of racist demagogues to Congress.

This real and evil "interference" in the South, while welcomed, has its galling effect on caste vanity. Sometimes moral righteousness is outraged too: those Yankees—not the overlords but the "theorists"—want to teach "us" how to treat "our" Negroes. The shrill defenses go up at once: Negroes are happier with little or no money; the South itself would have abolished slavery if the North hadn't meddled; it's all the carpet-baggers' fault, they destroyed our benevolent and cultured Old South. . . . It might surprise these worshipers of myths to know how thoroughly their Northern overlord-allies agree with them. It would probably surprise them more to discover what an army—black and white together—of wonderfully militant "theorists" is growing in the South. For the last thing the rulers will see or admit is that basic to both a "South" and a "North" is the existence of exploiters and exploited, oppressors and oppressed, whose interests and purposes transcend regional lines. The man who refuses to acknowledge that may end up with those who throw eggs at the wrong people. Or he may hurl mystic bombast about homogeneity, guilt, expiation and destiny.

BARBARA GILES

The Railroad Men

GREAT MIDLAND, by Alexander Saxton. *Appleton-Century-Crofts. $3.00.*

WITH the publication of *Great Midland,* Alexander Saxton emerges as one of the foremost American writers of our time. His new book has a monumental quality, a literary grandeur, that in my opinion marks it as the finest and most important novel done by any American writer in the past several years. Here, for the first time in a certain area, is maturity—a maturity compounded out of action and understanding. On this question, I will go into more detail later.

Consider the material first. Sax-

ton writes a tale of railroad workers in Chicago; his time span is from 1912 to 1941; and his area of investigation is the Chicago yards of one of the great Middle-Western railroads. Three families are his subject matter, all of them of the working class, and from two of them come Dave Spaas and Stephanie Koviak, his protagonists. The Spaas are Dutch, the Koviaks Polish, and the third family, the McAdams, Negro. In each of the three families, two generations are depicted—in the fullest terms of growth, development and decay. Against this background, in all of its complexity, the author writes the adventures of Dave Spaas, railroad worker, onetime seaman, veteran of the Lincoln Battalion, and rank-and-file Communist organizer during the three years before Pearl Harbor.

But the finely woven tapestry of the three families which forms the first part of the book becomes all of a piece with those three years during which Dave Spaas is engaged in his struggle for working class solidarity in Railroad. What emerges is a rich and broad canvas of Chicago railroad workers in the latter half of the thirties.

Dave Spaas, in himself, in his growth, in his struggle, is the focus of the book. The son of a railroad worker, with better than average education, he dreams first of becoming an engineer, sees his dream go the way of all such dreams in the depression, goes to work on the railroad, on an ore boat, goes to Spain to fight, returns then to Chicago to become a worker again and a rank-and-file organizer. Out of a "wobbly" family, he sees the tragic anarchistic dissolution of the I.W.W., joins the Communist Party, works in the Unemployed Councils, takes guidance and draws the breath of working-class wisdom from old Roman Koviak, teaches and then brings into the Party the Negro, Pledger McAdams.

Much of the book is devoted to a portrayal and analysis of McAdams, again a testimony to the understanding of Saxton. For the splendor and dignity and stability of McAdams come out of the very circumstances of white chauvinism and oppression. He represents the force that the Communist Party has enabled men to distill out of suffering.

Dave Spaas falls in love with his childhood playmate, Stephanie Koviak; the story of their marriage, of the petty-bourgeois dreams and illusions Stephanie clings to—born out of her mother's influence and her college experience—is a love story of great beauty: to Stephanie, the Communist Party is the bitter rival for her husband's affection—to Stephanie the Party is the force beyond her understanding, which places itself between her and comfort, security and the gentle flow of academic life, a life she has always yearned for and admired.

Their love is compounded—as so much of married love is today—out of hatred and conflict, pas-

sion and urgency. Handled by the author with incredible tenderness and sympathy, it becomes integrated with the central struggle of the workers—knowing and unknowing—to break through the bonds of exploitation.

The very complexity of plot, character and setting prevents any simple recapitulation of the story; more than incident and narrative, Saxton's fine achievement is the creation—for the first time in our literature—of a fully mature and believable Communist hero. Anyone who has attempted this will understand the problems that beset any writer, in America in our times, who attempts to delineate the Communist in terms of the novel. Since the first crude proletarian novels began to appear in the late Twenties, the creative writer met his most difficult obstacle in the character of the Communist, that strange combination of the ordinary and the singular, the fallible and the indomitable. Though many attempts were made through the Thirties, there is no instance of recognizable success. From the megalomania of a *Jake Home* to the transparent fakery of Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle,* where is the example of mature depiction?

Nor are the reasons for this too difficult to understand. In all literary statements of character there is reliance upon the subjective recognition of the reader; a line is drawn, and out of his own experience, the reader fills in the color: but there are no true colors in the public treatment of the Communist in America today—and this leads and has led to grotesques of over-statement and over-emphasis. Also, the Communist movement in America had to fulfill, at least in part, its own struggle for maturity, for dignity and for integration before those ingredients could be reflected in literary terms. Not only the writer and the reader, but the hero himself had to reach and maintain new levels. In addition to this, one cannot set aside the fact of the Communist as the conscious architect of the future, the scientific enemy of hatred, cruelty and oppression. There are no manuals of practice to refer to, and Saxton's achievement partakes of pioneering importance.

He has done what has not been done nearly as well ever before in our literature. Consciously and forthrightly, he took as his dramatic crux that overwhelming contradiction of modern life—the contradiction of socialism and capitalism. Choice of material cannot be over-emphasized in the creative act; and if a whole generation of writers chooses to indulge the safe evasion that *communism* is a dirty word and *communists* do not exist except as pictured by the corrupt *New Leader,* they will always meet that sterility which comes of reluctance to recognize and grapple with reality.

The same maturity Saxton displays in his treatment of the Communist is evident in his treatment

of all workers. With fine objectivity, he paints them as they are, not as demi-gods, not as animals, but as men most centrally involved in the basic contradiction of capitalism and thereby spurred to action. Nor do the other characters of the book fare less well through his handling; for here is a man who knows his materials and works superbly with them.

Particularly in his treatment of the Negro, McAdams, does Saxton's maturity as a creative writer become evident; and the result is a portrait rarely equalled in our writing.

Let me underline the point that is integral to this, and part of it, the fine and ancient craft of story-telling, that mixture of pace and suspense that for me is the salt of the novel. Quite naturally, the success in the creation of this book is matched by the pleasure in reading it.

I like the fact that this book appears in the midst of the greatest campaign of anti-Communist slander and Red-baiting the world has ever seen. As with its hero, Dave Spaas, it sits on the firm foundation of truth and thereby it will long outlast the Parnell Thomases and John Rankins.

I take pride in this book, in the forces that made it, and in the great tradition of American literature, the tradition of Twain and Melville and Whitman and London and Dreiser out of which it came. My hat is off to Alexander Saxton. HOWARD FAST

Sandburg as Novelist

REMEMBRANCE ROCK, by Carl Sandburg. *Harcourt, Brace. $5.00.*

CARL SANDBURG, born in 1879, tramped about the country, fought in the Spanish-American War, worked his way through college, became a Socialist organizer. To him, as to Whitman, creative writing came late, but with the thumb-print of a giant when it did come. *Chicago Poems* appeared in 1916. Two other volumes of poetry followed, and then he turned to his monumental life of Lincoln. After this came the collecting and singing of American folk songs, and *The People, Yes* with its wonderful interweaving of poetry and folk-lore. With a history of almost continual movement from one literary form to another, as if each were a doorway to a different area of experience and he had to enter all, it is not surprising that at the age of seventy he offers us his first novel and that it is a "little piece" of a thousand pages.

It is not a success, but it fails on a higher level than most successes of our time. The reason is not that the novelist's craft is baffling to him. He handles ordinary problems with easy mastery. He populates a world with living characters, combines historical figures with invented ones so that all seem to be flesh and blood. He conceives the historical novel in a way that invites comparison only with the greatest. Historical events

are not the plot but the focal points of the plot, and the novel deals with the impact of these events upon the consciousness of people, the inner conflicts engendered by the outer ones. Nevertheless Sandburg is caught up by the fuzziness of thinking that has always characterized his work; a mysticism stemming from a lack of knowledge about things which in his time were available to be known.

REMEMBRANCE ROCK is an ambitious book. Its opening and closing scenes deal with the past war, and its main body consists of three novels, one dealing with Puritan New England, another with the Revolutionary War, and a third with the Abolitionist movement and the Civil War. These are ostensibly written by a retired liberal Supreme Court Justice to explain the democratic tradition and the "American Dream" to those of his family caught up in the conflicts of today.

The project calls for the full talents of novelist and historian. Sandburg the poet is in this book too. In its rhythms his poetry was always close to human speech, and made up in its imagery of such homely details of life that only a man deeply in love with people would notice and remember. It is a sign of his artistry and sensitivity to words that his style changes with each setting.

The Puritan novel is written in a wintry New England and Biblical imagery, within which he recreates perfectly the inner emotional life of his characters. The novel of 1775 has much of the character of *The People, Yes* with its folk-speech and proverbs. This section opens with a tale of a stagecoach journey from Philadelphia to New York, describing the snowbound farmland of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the inns, food and people, and the firetongues of revolution, with a sensory vividness, a saturation in the very life and color of the age that only Sandburg in our times can do so well. It is the kind of writing for which he has been preparing all his life. And again in the Civil War novel we have a new

kind of speech and imagery, harder, more matter-of-fact, as if the realities of the time leave little mind for whimsicality and laughter.

Sandburg's weakness is that while his sympathies have been with the people, he has never been quite sure of the forces locked in historical conflict. The first two novels of this book, dealing with 1620 and 1775, are not harmed much by this lack. In both, Sandburg's central character has a divided mind. In the Puritan novel, the protagonist is a woman torn between the orthodoxy of Plymouth and Roger Williams' rebellion. In the Revolutionary War story, it is a woman again, suspicious of the selfishness of the Whig merchants, fearful of the violence with which the Sons of Liberty carry on their agitation. But the stories themselves are planned with such grasp of the people's movement itself that the essential character of the struggle comes through.

It is with the Civil War story that the book breaks down: its revolutionary thread disintegrates, its thinking becomes disastrously vague and its structure collapses. The tragedy shifts from that of the price which reaction always demands of progress, to Sandburg's own heartbreak. The scene is largely Sandburg's own Illinois, and he is overwhelmed by memories, still alive when he was born, of the sea of blood, of brother fighting against brother. He falls into "the Blue and the Gray" sentimentality, the nationalism that always lies as a trap for the folk-minded, hinting that this struggle was different because it was between "Americans." To him the war was planned by the equally culpable Abolitionists and Southern extremists. Most of all Sandburg forgets that the Negro people themselves were not objects of pity or charity, but also part of those who "made America," a people fighting with as much reason, and more, as his Sons of Liberty.

Because history and literature are so intertwined in the book, historical weaknesses breed artistic ones. In this section, characters are multiplied unnecessarily, repeat themselves, start lines of plot that are never taken up. Here for the first time leading characters are unconvincing. We are shown a militant, religious-minded Abolitionist, distorted suddenly into a militarist and lover of killing; on the other hand, an "idealistic" Illinois boy who joins the Confederacy and who, after four years of fighting, has not the slightest doubt of its high honor and intentions.

Even the writing itself at crucial points becomes vague and fumbling, with words like "Honor," "Duty" and "Cause"—words that in previous sections Sandburg had adorned with so much human documentation and insight—here weakly thrown about, impressively capitalized, because he does not really know what to say. He loses the thread of his own thinking. The theme he had announced at the beginning of the book was that of the people's constant forging ahead, their ability to bring the new to birth out of the travail of the old, their ability to conquer the "stumbling blocks to truth." And as he approaches our own times, the truth becomes "unknowable," its vagueness to be lamented in a mystical strain.

Dealing with the close of the Civil War, Sandburg rejoices that the Union is preserved, but is disturbed that the United States has become a "world power." And again, in the fragmentary passages dealing with World War II he is sorrowful over the fine young men killed and maimed, confident that the democratic forces would triumph, yet mystified over what the war was really all about. He is too honest to beat the drums for the "American Century," yet too mystified to see that the enemy of the American people today is home-grown, in the form of the giant monopolies and banks. The presence of this problem is shown by the vagueness into which the

book splinters whenever he hits up against it, as if it were an invisible wall.

Sandburg is a democrat whose definition of democracy is limited too much by the struggles of one and two centuries ago; a lover of the people who, here as in *The People, Yes,* shows them always blundering forward, asking "Where to? What next?" as if the people could never master the laws of society and make these laws tools in their hand.

SIDNEY FINKELSTEIN

Barons and Brass

THE WAR LORDS OF WASHINGTON: The Inside Story of Big Business versus the People in World War II, by Bruce Catton. *Harcourt, Brace. $3.00.*

THREE years after the war's end, a lot of people are deeply disturbed because the better world for which we fought has not been realized. Bruce Catton's book is one of the first to attempt to explain why. His thesis is that this bitter result was determined by the *manner* in which we fought the war. The monopolists and the Army brass gradually achieved complete ascendancy in Washington and saw to it that the popular, democratic forces which were being unleashed throughout the world should not be permitted to assert themselves effectively in postwar America. Catton writes:

"For the point of the whole story is that in this world revolution we had, and we still have, one reliance and only one: complete 200-proof democracy, taken straight. During the war it looked like too stiff a dose and we backed away from it. . . .

"We retreated from democracy because democracy means Change . . . and the simple paralyzing fear of change, born of the fact the men to whom change would mean loss sat in the drivers' seats."

Catton worked for the War Production Board when Donald Nelson was Administrator and with the Department of Commerce when Wallace was Secretary. He describes and defends, with understandable feeling, their fight (together with Maury Maverick, Robert Nathan and Leon Henderson) for policies aimed at the quickest victory over the Axis and healthy transition to peacetime economy.

In 1941 and 1942, these policies involved all-out production, speedy conversion to war needs, labor participation in solving plant problems and the fullest utilization of smaller plants. In the same class was the project initiated by Maverick to deprive the big corporations of their monopoly on scientific research and patents and make these available to the smaller producers who could use them effectively for the war effort. From late 1943 until Nelson was fired from his post and sent on the China mission, the battle was for planning the transition to peace, partly

because this would have helped win the war and partly because it was the only way to avoid inflation after the war.

Each of these proposals was bitterly fought by the lords of heavy industry, represented in government not only by the dollar-a-year men but also by the Secretaries of War and Navy and their uniformed aides. Nothing which would interfere with the re-establishment of the "old competitive patterns of industry" was to be permitted. Neither labor nor small business was to emerge from the conflict in a position as strong as they held before the war.

The War Lords won, for in the end Franklin Roosevelt let them have their way. Catton does not attempt to assess the precise amount of blame to be laid at F.D.R.'s door, for he recognized that in a global war, the Commander-in-Chief had to delegate authority and make quick decisions. But it was clear that the monopolists exercised a constant blackmail against Roosevelt, demanding innumerable concessions as the price for their support of the war. Labor and the people asked no bribes for their full measure of devotion, and it is regrettable that Roosevelt took them for granted and acceded so often to the monopolists. In these times when the record of the war President is under a persistent barrage of slanderous attack from reaction, it would help clear the atmosphere

if the real mistakes of Roosevelt were frankly discussed.

It was the habit to say in those days that inasmuch as our all-important objective was simply the defeat of the Axis, this was no time for social and economic changes except those which had an immediate and direct effect on the war effort. This formulation became a cloak to conceal the predatory expansion of monopoly control over new areas of social and economic life and prevented precisely those changes calculated to achieve the quickest defeat of the Axis and to lay the soundest basis for the development of a secure peace.

Catton deals with only a few of these changes, mainly with those for which the Nelson group fought. Programs which would have benefited the war effort through stimulating small business to a greater share in production receive more attention, in fact, than other equally vital aspects of the evils of monopoly domination. Undoubtedly this is due to the fact that in his role of public relations director for Nelson and Wallace, these were the issues through which the general problem became familiar to Catton. But it is also due, I think, to the fact that the author's point of view is largely that of small business. His concept of democracy is essentially that of a society in

which the independent producer can operate freely in a "free enterprise" system. But he understands the threat of the monopolies and with this book provides a useful weapon in the progressive battle against them.

He does not deal with the influence of the monopolists in delaying the opening of a second front nor with that most glaring defeat which democracy suffered under the Administration's "no social reform" policy. I refer to the failure to make the Fair Employment Practice Commission a permanent part of American industrial life, the failure to abolish segregation in the armed forces and assure equal rights for the Negro people.

As a public relations man, in the best sense of the word, and as a former correspondent, Catton devotes considerable attention to the role of the press and other publicity media in a democracy. He believes the people do not need to be fooled, kidded, coddled or propagandized. Give them the facts, he says, and permit them to reach their own conclusions. Any other course, he points out, leads to a policy of manipulating public opinion by men who have contempt for the people and in the end becomes psychological warfare against the people.

To illustrate this, Catton shows that at the time the Army was using O.W.I. to criticize labor and scream about shortages in war production, labor was devotedly producing the goods and there were no shortages. Therefore, he points out, there was absolutely no need for a National Service Act which Roosevelt, under pressure from Gen. George Marshall, asked Congress to enact. This is revealed as simply the result of the determination of the Army and the heavy industry tycoons to exert ever greater control over the people and their organizations.

Catton writes superbly, often angrily and often with wit. Throughout the work there is a profound undertone of tragic bitterness that the American people were cheated of their greatest opportunity to buttress their power against the power of the monopolies. From that, he implies, came those policies which have given us repressive measures at home and the cold war.

ROB F. HALL

Short Stories

PRIZE SHORT STORIES OF 1948: The O. Henry Awards, selected and edited by Herschel Brickell. *Doubleday. $3.00.*

THE BEST AMERICAN SHORT STORIES 1948, edited by Martha Foley. *Houghton Mifflin. $3.75.*

OUR LIVES: American Labor Stories, edited by Joseph Gaer. *Boni & Gaer. $3.00.*

THE curious thing about most contemporary short stories is that the writers do not seem to be particularly aware of the social overtones of their material and appear happy to look elsewhere

for the point of their stories. The short story form has its limitations but writers are usually content with catching a wispy, subsidiary emotion. Taken together the stories in the Brickell and Foley collections present a recognizable picture of American life, but read one by one they are often a wearing, chaffing series of inconsequentialities. One answer is that our society is so anarchic that most people have but tentative, narrow visions and that the short story itself is not supposed to illumine very much. Yet the truth is that one expects broad vision from a writer and the short story is not, nor was, the anemic affair that some have made of it.

The trouble appears to be that despite the refinement of the short story technique in the last two decades writers do not meet their material head on. In Gaer's anthology, *Our Lives,* there is a fine object lesson: Hamlin Garland's "Under the Lion's Paw." It is a story from Garland's *Main Travelled Roads* which brought the voice of the Populists into American literature, and in it Garland powerfully depicts the heartbreaking work of a farm family with the soil and shows how their success as farmers enriches the idle. It is a laboriously written story, it is awkwardly framed, and its characterizations are not always successful; but it makes its point unmistakable and it imposes itself on the reader. Almost none of the stories in the other two collections make its mistakes. They begin correctly at the height of the action or mood and proceed undistracted to their conclusion. This is technically proper, but too many of these stories can be shrugged off before being finished. Their mistakes are that they fail to deepen in insight or to flower into significance and that often their authors attempt to chew too small a piece of life.

There are, it seems to me, several reasons for this literary pallor. One is the absence of contrast, the inability of the authors to project a judgment on the story's action. An example is the prize story in Brickell's anthology, "Shut a Final Door" by Truman Capote. It is a clinical study of a disintegrating personality and it never rises above that. One doesn't feel a compassionate understanding behind the faultless writing and so it emerges cold and unbelievable. It does not contain what is essential to a piece of writing: the running argument that every serious writer has with life and which gives a work depth and movement. This is not something that one asks a writer to intrude on his material by, perhaps, an unnecessary character or a gratuitous comment. It is, as Gorky said, to be found in the very tone of a story and it can only come from an author with a strong hold on life.

Perhaps the creative writing classes of which many of the new short story writers are graduates may also have helped solidify this

trend toward slightness of conception and intent. Creative writing classes have helped young writers overcome technical problems early in their writing and their good effects are evident in the polish of the stories written by college students. But there is a timid, academic hesitancy about the work of these writers. Concentration on purely craft problems often seems the mainspring of a story rather than the material.

There is another reason why these stories on the whole present so flat a social scene. It is because the enemy is hidden. The surface picture is there: lives are frustrated, emotions atrophied, people go mad, but why it is so one would never know from most of contemporary literature. True, a short story cannot be pressed for too much scope, but why is it that in two collections of representative stories of the last year the attempt to suggest wider meanings is not made except in Lance Jeffers' story from *Mainstream?*

Brickell has, with very few exceptions, reprinted the palest things published. Martha Foley's anthology is much stronger. In addition to Jeffers' "The Dawn Swings In," Miss Foley reprints John Cheever's remarkable *New Yorker* story, "The Enormous Radio," which bares the life of a middle-class apartment house through a radio that goes mysteriously awry and begins to receive the conversations of other apartments. The stories by Robert Low-

ry, Sidney Alexander, Elliott Grennard are all as frightening in their revelations of modern life as Cheever's.

Joseph Gaer's collection is not bound by time and it has a point to make—"short stories about American labor." In his introduction Gaer hopes that the book "succeeds in underscoring the fact that a great bond exists between our significant writers and our workers. . . ." That should have offered him an opportunity to compile a magnificent volume of the best of the old and the new, but he has been neither comprehensive nor first-rate in his choices. Some are not stories but sections of novels. And in the case of Sherwood Anderson he includes a story that has little to do with the working class. Thus, the case for the progressive, socially-significant short story suffers.

Perhaps the most glaring omission is that of Stephen Crane whose short stories were pioneers of realism and which are still powerful today. Mark Twain is absent, and there is nothing from that great storehouse of American working-class humor, the Mr. Dooley stories of Peter Finley Dunne. The inclusion of a "Hyman Kaplan" story by Leonard Q. Ross is tasteless and offensive. In the case of some writers Gaer has not made the best choice. It would be a pleasure, for example, to see a portrait of a working-class woman taken from Dreiser's "Gallery of Women." However, Gaer does give us the work of good new writers like Phillip Bonosky and Don Ludlow, and there is a fine core of stories in the book by Hamlin Garland, Erskine Caldwell, Dorothy Parker and Ben Field. "The Apostate" by Jack London alone is worth the price of the book. These stories act as an antidote to the majority of the writing being done today.

JOSÉ YGLESIAS

Four Novels

STORM AND ECHO, by Frederick Prokosch. *Doubleday. $3.00.*

WISTERIA COTTAGE, by Robert M. Coates. *Harcourt, Brace. $2.50.*

TIME WILL DARKEN IT, by William Maxwell. *Harper. $3.00.*

A LITTLE TEA, A LITTLE CHAT, by Christina Stead. *Harcourt, Brace. $3.75.*

FREDERICK PROKOSCH'S novel, *Storm and Echo,* is insufferable. It insults the intelligence of the reader with its phony "soul-searching," and its attitude toward the African people. Wounded by Manhattan life, the "hero" is on his way to discover a friend who read Baudelaire and was lost in the Nagala mountains of Africa. This journey and search, however, have profound significances, as this climactic moment indicates: "I lay on the shore . . . I turned my head, ever so painfully, and saw Nagala rising beyond the leaves. A swift, almost paralyzing sensation took hold of me. Yes, I'd seen that hill

before. Long ago. Generations ago, perhaps. I felt that if I could reach out one more inch, one more millimeter, I could place the tip of my finger on the jugular vein of the universe."

That's all, brother.

ROBERT COATES has written penetrating stories and books, but cannot seem to shake himself loose from the vision of the world as a vast psychiatric ward. Richard Baurie was a young schizophrenic, like your friend there across the table from you—nice, friendly, eager, with only the little cracks in his makeup that everybody shows off; in fact, yourself, maybe. That's the point of *Wisteria Cottage.* Richard Baurie is *supposed* to be yourself—or your close friend; and the point is, we all live somewhat in that world, or our friends do, and it wouldn't surprise you or me or Coates if we woke up one morning with an axe in our skulls.

Baurie gets to know a woman and her daughters, and becoming more involved in their lives, driven by the disjointed spur of his psyche, finally murders two of them and a third who wandered on the scene, for good measure. Blood is everywhere. You can see the bodies spread over the kitchen with hatchet wounds and ice-pick wounds—and you just don't give a damn. For the truth is this story, this boy, touches us at no human point. He is an extended case history, a machine driving on to mechanical destruction.

WILLIAM MAXWELL'S *The Folded Leaf* was a touching and illuminating account of adolescent growth with sharp glimpses into shabby middle-class Chicago life. His new book, *Time Will Darken It,* rests too much on its "sensitivity" and its subtle, tiny revelations. Relatives descend on Austin King and his pregnant wife, and this precipitates a crisis which was already in the making. Among the relatives is Nora, a young girl, who falls in love with Austin, while Austin, but at no time with full consciousness, reciprocates in an almost imperceptible, intangible way. Nothing happens. Nora gets burned in an accident, and so goes home. (Resolution by accident.)

Austin's wife gives birth, and a cold and realistic awareness closes down on the married couple, ending their love which had hardly breathed in any case. Crisis is evaded, decision is side-stepped, character remains unjoined. Only slight brilliant insights remain.

CHRISTINA STEAD'S hero in *A Little Tea, A Little Chat* is a Wall Street hanger-on, living on the fringe of power and money. After a life-time of frenzied money making, Robbie Grant has nothing left but his senses, and of his senses remembers only one. His sexual preoccupation becomes a mania, but a curious, empty mania, ending terribly with a cry of horror at its emptiness. Endless lecheries of a man over fifty, who has a wife whom he keeps like a saint, embalmed and hidden, and at whom he throws quickly forgotten and ritualized prayers of praise; a family that baffles him; a circle of women whom he alternately goes to bed with and gossips about; friends with whom he flounders into and out of blackmail, suicides, love-affairs—it goes on and on, until its almost brutal, remorseless repetition drives the reader away for relief.

New York during the war—*that* New York—was a paradise of adultery, blackmarket activity, bought military commissions, war contracts, drink, drug and hilarity. Upper middle-class and upper-class America had no illusions about patriotism; they knew how green the fields were. Yet a world was cracking down around their ears and every so often they lifted a dazed, frightened and pathetic face from the cloud of smoke and gin and wondered where they were.

Incredibly, Miss Stead presents Grant as sometimes even believing that he believes in socialism. People who are described as "left" float through his circle, but since they are only identified sexually, their politics have to be taken on the author's say-so.

A Barbara Kent, an international prostitute, becomes Grant's ruling passion, although all he is looking for, he says plaintively, is a "woman, a mother, a sister, a sweetheart, a friend." He spins around her the most fantastic web of intrigue, fear, hate, love, hope and despair. The whole book is an almost hallucinatory race of his blinding crazy passion for her. And his end is as shabby and meaningless as his life. Like an animal, some kind of lizard, the woman he loved sits by his body and feverishly calculates how to save enough out of his death to keep her going a few more miles in the stone desert.

In many ways the book is powerful; in many ways it loses itself in its numberless details and repetitions. Action too often is avoided, climaxes are side-stepped. But the portrait is successful: a hollow man, a man whose hard exterior needs but a rap for the whole body to fall into a heap of dust.

P. B.