MASSES & MAINSTREAM

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Our Time

By SAMUEL SILLEN

THE "READING CRISIS"

THE book trade is worried—and with good reason—about the decline in American reading habits. The "reading crisis" was a major theme at the convention of the American Booksellers Association held in Washington recently. Previously, the publishers had set up a "Committee on Reading Development."

It is not the decay of culture but the dip in cash receipts that has alarmed the industry. Some consolation was offered at the booksellers' convention by Allan McMahan, retiring president of the A.B.A. "There have been reading crises before," he said; "there will be reading crises again, as long as civilization lasts."

This makes the blight of semi-literacy that threatens America sound as natural and inevitable as a spell of drought. And all the bookdealers seem able to do is invoke the Rain God with prayers and lamentations.

They ignore two facts. One is that the "reading crisis" has grown more acute with the *war* crisis. The second is that this peculiar affliction has been visited only on our country. In the leading countries of the world *peace* camp—the Soviet Union, the new China, the People's Democracies—the zest for reading worthy books on the part of scores of millions is unequaled in history.

In these countries huge editions of serious literary works are sold out almost as quickly as they are issued. While reader demand there outpaces the supply, despite phenomenal expansion, book sales here dropped 20% from 1946 to 1950 according to *Forbes Magazine*. While bookshops on the main streets of Warsaw and Prague have been expanding, as I can testify from direct observation, the number of bookstores here has been shrinking.

Free-enterpriser Harry Scherman, president of the Book-of-the-Month Club, says "it is significant that one old-line publisher will now carry only the accounts of some 400 stores, the business from the rest being so small that it is unprofitable to handle. . . ." This averages eight effective bookstores for each state in the Union!

The public library picture is no brighter. A few years ago the Carnegie Foundation, which as every schoolboy knows is our great benefactor of the books, granted $200,000 for an exhaustive Public Library Inquiry. The painful results of this expensive study may be found in a re-

cent volume, *The Public Library in the United States,* by Dr. Robert D. Leigh, director of the project. Summarizing this book in the *Saturday Review,* an official of the Library of Congress, Dan Lacy, writes:

"Most Americans, found the Inquiry, don't read books. Most of those who do, don't get them from the library. Most of those who do use the library resort to it for light fiction. . . . Most of our thousands of libraries are found to be little more than small, random, and ill-selected collections of novels and popular works, manned by one or two untrained persons, and inadequately available a few hours a week."

Experts on the "reading crisis" have their favorite explanations. Some stress the competition of TV, some the high price of books, others the failure of schoolteachers to awaken enthusiasm for literature. A Gallup poll sponsored by the publishers showed that a book is doomed to failure if there is a Yes answer to the question "Would a teacher of English recommend this book?" Lester Asheim of the University of Chicago finds:

"A good 'all-American boy' might well be disturbed by discovering in himself an interest in reading; its association with old-maid teachers, girls, 'sissies,' and 'grinds' would make the whole activity seem improper and effete for the kind of boy he feels he ought to be. Book reading seems also to be seen as a kind of private activity which separates one from his peers—which is, of course, another way of saying that in general his peers don't read. The image is widely held of the reader as one who separates himself from his fellows, is out of touch with the world, and lives in a realm of unreality. Parents are more likely to be concerned that their children read 'too much' than that they might read too little."

MOST of the theories sell short the intelligence of the American people. They blame everybody but those really responsible for the undeniable debasement, the *systematic* degradation of cultural interests and standards in this country. That there is indeed a "reading crisis," but it cannot be separated from the economic and political crisis of American capitalism.

The period of imperialism is a period of the decay of capitalist culture. Just as a dying capitalism can not further the material growth of society, so it cannot advance its intellectual growth. It can meet neither the material nor the spiritual needs of the masses.

Nor does it wish to, of course. The narrowing of intellectual horizons is essential to the ruling class. Only by blunting and blinding men's minds can it hope to ram down the throats of nationalities of pirate wars and fascism. It still needs literacy, though on the lowest possible level, as the brutal slashes of school and library budgets show. It still wants people to read, but only its own propaganda in the form more and more capsulated, condensed, programmed, boiler-plated. The classics with their humanism and truth, are a threat to the parasitic class which can see only one useful purpose in reading: not to open people's eyes but to shut them.

Book-lover equals subversive

hat McCarthyite equation is openly tated in a typical product of the rul-ng culture, Hollywood's *My Son ohn.* This fascist film, glorifying the .B.I., menacingly points the finger f suspicion at a character simply be-ause he is "bookish." What further vidence is needed that he is Un-American, tainted with Communism, foreign element? Did not General Eisenhower, upon becoming presi-ient of Columbia University, pro-claim to the world that he had not ead a book in nine years?

My Son John is not a freak film; it is the logical expression of such book-burning statutes as the Smith and McCarran Acts. Anyone who has sat in on the Smith Act trials in New York, Los Angeles, Baltimore, knows that they are trials of books, and the readers and teachers of books.

HOW can the publishers have a "Committee on Reading Development" and at the same time support the witch-hunt against books and ideas? When a fellow-publisher like Alexander Trachtenberg of International Publishers is indicted, they are silent as the grave. Their capitulation is a disgrace to their profession and makes a mockery of their concern about the "reading crisis."

Moreover, virtually every book they themselves issue nowadays is a monument to bigotry and corruption. They deify paid informers, Nazis, atomaniac generals. If the commercial publishers fought the bookburners instead of glorifying their filth, more progress might be made in "Reading Development." Why should people rush to read the masterpieces of perversion currently celebrated?

An indication of the mentality of these publishers is given by Matthew Josephson in the special issue of *The Nation* (June 28) devoted to the ravages of thought-control. Josephson quotes a publisher as telling him recently: "We are doing things we never dreamed of five years ago, or that we thought could happen only in Mussolini's Italy." Josephson writes:

> "In Nazi Germany a people who were among the best read in the world were reduced to reading only what Goebbels believed was good for them. Will American publishers and their authors also wait patiently until everyone is 'co-ordinated,' that is, made to think the same thoughts and read the same few books?"

And how are schoolteachers supposed to awaken an enthusiasm for ideas and literature when they are made captives of an official dunce-dom by legislation such as the Pechan Act in Pennsylvania and the Feinberg Law in New York? As Justice Douglas warned in his dissenting opinion, the Feinberg Law "inevitably turns the school system into a spying project. . . . The principals become detectives; the students, the parents, the community become informers. . . . It produces standardized thought, not the pursuit of truth."

Books are burned in Sapulpa, Oklahoma; labelled with stickers saying "subversive" in Burbank, California; yanked out of the school libraries of Montclair, New Jersey. We have long

passed the stage when such events could be described as "sporadic."

IF THE book trade wants to combat the "reading crisis" let it examine the devastating effects of militarization on the country. Here is how the Big Brass looks on the adventure of ideas, as revealed in a classic article by Captain John H. Burns in the *Infantry Journal*:

> "The military problem, psychologically speaking, resolves itself into taking every advantage of the herd instinct to integrate the mass. . . . This military processing of civilians is a purely empirical thing, but it is an eminently sound one. . . . It is useless to try and convince men of the value of military standards by reasoning with them, for reasoning, no matter how brilliant or conclusive, always leaves a suspicion of doubt in the mind of the average man. . . . Constant repetition of the item to be inculcated, unsupported by any reasons, will have an immense effect on the suggestible herd-minded human. An opinion, an idea, or a code acquired in this manner can become so firmly fixed that one who questions its essential rightness will be regarded as foolish, wicked, or insane. . . ."

Preparation of the "herd-minded human" for automatic, unquestioning bestiality has become the function of that branch of American reading where there is no "crisis" today. Witness the pressure campaign behind the works of Mickey Spillane, "Death's Fair-haired Boy," as *Life* Magazine termed him in a recent issue which spread his prowess over sixteen pages.

Spillane is not so much an ex-comic-book writer as a writer of comic books in thought-defying pros His six books in the "cold war" perio have sold 13 million copies. The formula is sex, sadism, and slaught hitched up to anti-Communism – in other words the formula of *Li* Magazine itself and the current fashionable "longhair" writers who Spillane professes to despise. ("Tal Faulkner," says Spillane, "all the guys now. Nothing but sex.")

Spillane writes like a stormtroope He slobbers in blood, hate, brutali He is infuriated by intelligence a decency. And he is a favorite auth of leading public figures, includi Arthur Krock of the New Yo *Times.* There is a Mickey Spilla Club at Radcliffe College, and H works are so popular among t American liberators in Frankfu that, reports *Life,* "the command r fused to release actual figures, le they reflect unfavorably on Arm reading tastes."

The anti-Communism natura goes with the rest of the fascist me tality. In *One Lonely Night* Spilla hysterically commands his readers go out and murder radicals: "Tre 'em to the unglorious taste of su den death. . . . Kill 'em left and rig show 'em that we aren't so soft af all. Kill, kill, kill, kill!"

A visit to the corner drugsto with its quarter-book display w convince anybody that Mickey Sp lane is typical of the murderous st being dispensed to the American pe ple. A generation brought up on t so-called comic book for its litera diet graduates into these books. T

sheriff of Los Angeles County reported that a 14-year-old boy who had poisoned an old woman learned his recipe for poison from a comic book. In the same way *Life* now chortles that an Air Force sergeant in Korea hitchhiked a plane ride to Tokyo to get a copy of *One Lonely Night.*

Spillane says:

"Hell, I'm not an author, I'm a writer. I've got to make a living, somehow. I'm not writing just for fun. I'm not trying to educate the people. I'm just trying to entertain. If they put their money in the hat, that's all I want."

THIS uninhibitedly cynical definition of the writer's function is another aspect of the "reading crisis" in America. By the laws of capitalist economics, it is not the writer expressing himself but the writer taking his orders from MGM, CBS and *Collier's* who is the productive worker. The latter may not produce art, but he fulfills a loftier function. He produces capital.

Karl Marx noted in his *Theories of Surplus Value*:

"For example, Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost,* was an unproductive worker. On the other hand, the writer who turns out factory-made stuff for his publisher is a productive worker. Milton produced *Paradise Lost* for the same reason that a silk worm produces silk. It was an activity of his nature. Later he sold the product for five pounds. But the literary proletarian of Leipzig who fabricates books (for example, Compendia of Economics) under the direction of his publisher, is a productive worker, for his production is subordinated to capital in advance and takes place only because it increases that capital."

From this point of view, American writers have become increasingly "productive" in the past few decades. Today their output is almost totally "subordinated to capital in advance and takes place only because it increases that capital."

The point may be illustrated by a recent article by Elmer Rice on "The Industrialization of the Writer" in the *Saturday Review.* Rice was for many years an official of the Authors League of America, the main economic organization of authors in this country. He recalls that when he joined the Authors League in 1914, shortly after is formation, the membership consisted almost entirely of "self-employed" individuals — fiction writers, dramatists, etc. Since 1914 there has been a big shift, and "The fact is that today almost every American writer derives all or part of his income from salaried employment."

Most writers are "staff" writers of one sort or another. They work for newspapers and newspaper syndicates, publicity services, advertising agencies, trade, governmental and professional publications. They are "ghost writers," or they produce books on assignment. With the expansion of the motion picture, radio, TV, and mass-circulation magazine industries, the "independent" writer has all but disappeared. One result, as Elmer Rice points out, is that it has become harder and harder for the young writer or the unorthodox writer to find an outlet—let alone

make a living.

The literary effects of this "industrialization" have been described by Malcolm Cowley: "Even in fields where the process was less advanced, much of current American writing had come to represent not a personal vision, but rather a trend, an imprint, or a decision taken at a board of directors' meeting."

Thus, the more "productive" the writer's work from the capitalist point of view, the less independent, creative, deeply felt it is from the point of view of literature. Yet one of the chief myths proclaimed by capitalism, through its hired writers, ironically enough, is the freedom of the artist under "our way of life." The only freedom that capitalism offers the writer who refuses to prostitute himself is the freedom to starve.

The "reading crisis," then, is inseparable from the "writing crisis." And in this respect the meekness of so many writers, their capitulation to censorship and thought control, has the effect of a death warrant. Only by getting together and fighting for some modicum of integrity in their craft can they survive as anything but rubber stamps.

IMPORTANT symptoms of growing resistance should be noted; the battle against regimentation is by no means lost. Last month's convention of the American Librarians Association hit out strongly at the destroyers of books. The convention reaffirmed the forthright librarians' Bill of Rights drawn up a few years ago. It emphasized that what needs protec tion is not so much the freedom c librarians as the right of the Amer can people to choose, read, and evalu ate books for themselves.

There was a similar groundswe of concern at the meeting of the Na tional Education Association. Thoug an American Legion official spok the N.E.A. took sharp issue with fascist-like attack on the organizatio in the *American Legion* magazin The alarm of educators was also re flected in an article by Benjami Fine, education editor of the Ne York *Times,* surveying the effects text book censorship throughout th country.

These broad resistance trends a also to be seen in the special issue *The Nation* already referred to. Th editors are to be commended for distinct public service in presentin a detailed picture of the civil libe ties crisis in many fields. This effe tive number of *The Nation* undoub edly speaks for many thousands scientists, writers, lawyers, educato and other professionals. Naturally th issue vexed the pro-war intellectua who revelled in the notorious speci issue of *Collier's* magazine last ye A renewed attempt to silence *T Nation* has been undertaken by t Social-Democratic *New Leader,* t Catholic hierarchy, and the Natio Association of Manufacturers.

Despite all sorts of vacillations a confusions that are to be found the growing civil liberties moveme the important fact is that more a more people are being aroused by t

reat to all that is precious in our tional tradition.

WITH the channels of truly creative communication being immed up—producing a crisis for aders and writers alike—*Masses & Mainstream* undertook, with more ith than means, a book publishing rogram. So far we have had encouraging results that can be measured n terms of both the quality of the ooks and the breadth of reader interest in them.

Our first full-length book (following the publication of shorter works ke Pablo Neruda's *Let the Railsplitter Awake,* which sold 6,500 copies) as Lloyd L. Brown's *Iron City.* This ovel is currently being translated nto a number of languages. And its ale here so far has been gratifying; t is now in its third printing. Despite the systematic boycott of the ommercial press, 10,000 copies of *ron City* have been sold.

M&M's second book, V. J. Jerome's *A Lantern for Jeremy,* is also meeting n enthusiastic response. This distinguished novel, a work of lyric beauty and Marxist insight, is only now beginning to reach the wide audience it merits. We receive daily warm letters of appreciation from readers throughout the country who are moved by the book to support all the more vigorously the defense of V. J. Jerome and his co-workers on trial at Foley Square. Our first printing of *A Lantern for Jeremy* is 6,500.

And now it is our great privilege to publish a new book by the dean of American letters, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois. *In Battle for Peace: The Story of My 83rd Birthday* is a personal narrative dealing with the stormy events during the past year in the life of the distinguished scholar. It is a dramatic sequel to his classic writings—*The Souls of Black Folk, Black Reconstruction, Dusk of Dawn, The World and Africa,* etc. The book includes comment by Shirley Graham (Mrs. Du Bois), who took a leading part in the successful fight of her husband and his associates against the monstrous "foreign agent" frame-up.

In Battle for Peace is the story, set down by a masterful pen, of a victory for peace that brought joy and new hope to millions. It describes the background of Dr. Du Bois' work for peace and its relation to his lifelong crusade for Negro freedom and colonial liberation.

This exciting human document which we are issuing this month has a profound message for the American people in this election year. Dr. Du Bois unmasks the warmakers. He shows how peace can be won. We are honored to publish this great book by a great American.

To make *In Battle for Peace* available to the widest circle of readers we have cut costs to the bone and are publishing the book in a popular edition of $1 (there is also a cloth edition of $2.50).

This publishing program is part of our answer to the reading-and-writing crisis in America. But the job only *begins* with the publication of a book. The real problem is to get

it into people's hands, to let people know of its existence. The bourgeois press categorically refuses to notice our books. The major book outlets will not carry them. Advertising is costly and would merely add to the price of our books, thus working against our primary concern: mass circulation among working people.

This means that we have to launch a *Battle for the Books.* This means the direct involvement of every single progressive reader. It means a new sense of responsibility on everybody's part for distributing, circulating, discussing works like *Iron City, A Lantern for Jeremy,* and *In Battle for Peace.*

We are convinced that there is a large potential market. We believe that the 10,000 figure already achieved for Lloyd Brown's book can quickly be doubled with serious effort, that a new edition of V. J. Jerome's novel can be achieved within a short period. And there is no question that Dr. Du Bois' book in these pre-elec months can roll up tens of thousa of sales. The peace forces in Ame will find it the most powerful sin weapon at their command at m meetings, election rallies, etc.

All of this assumes a keen sciousness on the part of every re that this is a battle for the surv of genuinely free and creative bo We call on our readers in every c munity to discuss plans for promo and selling these works. We call you to order books for your frie We call on you to help these im tant books of our time to reach t rightful audience. We shall be to co-operate in any way by provid speakers on these books, arrang for special discounts, sending a graphed copies.

Won't you let us hear from y We need your suggestions and vice. We can move forward only you. Let us together mount a b campaign that will make history

VOTING FOR PEACE

By PAUL ROBESON

IN 1947, on an N.A.A.C.P. picket line in St. Louis, I decided to retire from the concert stage and enter the day-to-day struggle of the people from whom I spring. Logically, in fighting for the full civil rights and equality of my folk, I entered the struggle for peace. I know how critical it was in 1947 when the Truman Doctrine officially launched that major turn in the American foreign policy which has now taken us into a senseless war in Korea for over two years.

Peace was the issue in 1947 and 1948. Peace meant some opportunity to wage major battles around freedom for my people here in the United States and for an end to colonialism in Africa and elsewhere. Peace meant a fight for security and jobs. Peace meant some chance of a return to the Bill of Rights.

In 1952, after four years, how much more we know that peace is the most important issue in this election, affecting bread and butter issues and every aspect of life—housing, jobs, wages of steelworkers and the conditions of oppressed minorities.

I remember our famous tour in the South in the 1948 election campaign, standing before 4,000 Negro and white citizens of Houston, Texas — the same Texas whose delegates to the Republican convention Eisenhower and Taft are fighting over, as though it made any difference which set of delegates were going to vote for "states' rights."

I remember huge meetings all over the South—white and black standing side by side in militant challenge.

Since 1948 I have been touring up and down this land for the cause of peace and for the freedom of the Negro people. As I get about, I see the men and women of labor and I see my people, the Negro people, responding to what has happened to them in four years, calling insistently for honest leadership. It is these visits with and talks with the people themselves—two or ten or twenty in Harlem, Brownsville, on the Southside, in Detroit's Paradise Valley—which have given me strength to continue the battle which led from the campaign of 1948 into my tour of 1949

PAUL ROBESON delivered this address on July 4 at the National Convention of the Progressive Party in Chicago.

and was climaxed at Peekskill.

We have come a long way since Peekskill. I come to you tonight stronger than ever in the conviction that the choice I made and the choice which almost two million Americans made in the 1948 elections slowed down the drive toward war and forced out of the Democratic Party a discussion of the real issues which affected the people. Truman's Committee on Civil Rights came almost immediately after a great mobilization in 1946 in Washington, embracing every section of Negro life and thousands of our allies.

And the response to the recent occurrence around the joint appearance of myself and Mrs. Sampson shows that the Negro people are not fooled by the myth of the "tremendous progress"—the progress of a few big-shot jobs and appointments, while the great masses of our folk in the South — yes, in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, New York and the West Coast—struggle for every little gain in living wages, in upgrading, in dignity of leadership, while Ciceros and Martinsvilles match the terror in Korea.

So I stand before you stronger than ever in the conviction that the need is greater and the possibilities are greater today than ever for the party that we launched together four years ago in Philadelphia.

Some of us have been discouraged in the fight since four years ago. A couple of "summer soldiers" have left, but I will tell you that they were very few and that a whole host closed up the gap left by their going. T people want peace. The people wa civil rights. The people want jo and security and protection for th old age—some approximation of t democratic heritage of which boast.

They want a return to the Bill Rights for all of our citizens, bla and white, and of whatever politi opinions. They are recalling that af 1917 it was Debs and that now it Eugene Dennis and Benjamin Dav Further back it was Douglass, Tu man, Lovejoy and the Abolitioni and earlier in our history it w Thomas Jefferson and his so-call Jacobin colleagues.

I WILL tell you something el the American people are beg ning to fight for these things. I kn this from my recent tour of the co try. Most significant events prom important developments for the and reception of the peace and fr dom ticket. I reached close to 100,(people on the tour. And the peo themselves reversed the verdict Dewey and his State Troopers Peekskill and they registered this winning the right for me to sing many municipal auditoriums throu out the country—in Seattle, Berke Denver and Milwaukee—at very h levels of struggle.

The tour was climaxed at the h der when 40,000 Canadian American citizens, standing on h sides of the border at the Pe Arch, listened to a concert for pe and freedom of the Negro peo

ıd in Chicago when close to 15,000 ood on the Southside in Washing- n Park as I sang songs of liberation ıd peace to thousands of Negro peo- le, many of them recent arrivals from ıe South; and all along the West oast thousands, some of whom are elegates at this convention, joined in ghting hysteria and in fighting for ıe dignity of my people.

The Negro people, in magnificent adership, were joined by great sec- ons of the Jewish people, great sec- ons of those who have come to our ıores from all over the world to uild this America—millions recently ısulted by a cowardly, dastardly Mc- arran and a whining, fame-seeking Valter.

Again, this tour represented my aking up my function as an artist, ut on a level deeper and higher and igger than ever before, because I ang to and with the people to whom ıy talents and my life are dedicated, o the people who happen to be the ource of all great art. Just as certain m I that this convention in 1952 rings the battle, the political fight or peace and security to a deeper evel than any we were able to achieve ı 1948. For the forces which made ossible this tour are the same forces hat are now making possible new chievements in the political life of he American people.

THE outsanding organizations of the Negro people clearly recog- ize that both old parties want to etreat on civil rights. The clear-cut lemands of the Negro people for equality, and particularly for the full use of the powers of the Federal Government to secure Fair Employment Practices—this straightforward demand has cut through the rosy glow that was built up around Eisenhower; and Taft and his Dixiecrat allies only recall 300 years of genocidal slavery and serfdom for my people.

And the Democratic dilemma will not be solved by any stepped-up, double-talking by either Truman or Harriman. And it's dangerous double-talk—but our folks want *civil rights now!*

Yes, the Democrats will discover that the old dodge that "it's Congress, not Truman — the Dixiecrats, not Truman" — they will discover that this dodge won't work.

It will not suffice to put up a hedging "states' rights" Stevenson and a Dixiecrat Russell. My people will notice the remarks of Mrs. Roosevelt in the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations—that these United States could not sign the human rights document against Jim Crow and discrimination because of "states' rights" — Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia must decide our fate!

That's supposed to be our America! Well, well! Did Mrs. Roosevelt and Truman decide this? Please! So Truman's for "states' rights" too, when you get down to the nitty gritty.

AND so again we are witnessing what we saw in 1948. In 1948 the campaign of the Progressive

Party challenged the two old parties on civil rights. So in 1952 our campaign is challenging the two old parties and raising that challenge to new heights. We will force the Democratic Party in the person of Mr. Truman and his Wall Street boy Mr. Harriman to respond to the demand for genuine civil rights for the Negro people.

Eighteen organizations of the N gro people have set forth a clear- demand for Federal F.E.P.C. w teeth, anti-lynch legislation, anti-p tax legislation, the end of segregat and discrimination in public facili and housing. The Progressive Pa extends its hand to these spokesm of the Negro people. We join th in their fight for these minimum

Mrs. Vivian Hallinan:

AMERICAN soldiers are fighting today, tonight, and tomorrow — in Korea. My idea of peace is to stop the shooting now. Argue about the details later! Is this so difficult? Is this so complicated? The truce negotiators are wrangling about the technicalities of the exchange of prisoners. These prisoners on both sides are alive and healthy. While we wrangle over them, we are killing hundreds of Americans and murdering a like number of Koreans. Does this make sense? It does not make sense to me, or to millions of other wives and mothers.

The Progressive Party is on the ballot to give the American people a chance to vote for something the old parties do not favor—an immediate cease-fire in Korea. We are here tonight offering to the American people a political party that says, "Take us over, make us yours. We belong to you. We shall serve your needs."

It is my privilege and honor tonight to speak for a man who cannot speak for himself—temporarily—but who will have a lot to say beginning next month. It is my humble and deeply felt obligation to accept in his name the honor you have bestowed upon him, my husband. He asks me to say to you:

"I, Vincent Hallinan, accept the nomination of the Progressive Party to be its Presidential candidate and I will devote all my energy and whatever strength I possess to speak on behalf of all those Americans who have no voice and no place to go, but who, in the not too distant future, shall have a loud voice that will be heard and that will return to our nation the honor and the love that rightfully belongs to them."

(*From the speech of Mrs. Hallinan on behalf of Vincent Hallinan, Presidential candidate of the Progressive Party.*)

nands for full citizenship for the Negro people.

Our convention meets this challenge and addresses itself to these demands in a way which neither of the two old parties can, because we have no vested interest in Jim Crow, because we have no investment in slums, because the Progressive Party does not own the railroads where Negroes have to eat in special sections of the dining rooms as on the railroad Mr. Harriman owns. On Mr. Harriman's Union Pacific Railroad, they recently sent out an order that dining-car stewards must seat Negroes with Negroes and white with white and must separate them in opposite ends of the dining car.

Our interest is in wiping out these

Mrs. Charlotta Bass:

I HAVE been asked by more than 2,500 delegates to our Progressive Party convention to stand side by side with a fine and brave attorney, Vincent Hallinan.

Can you imagine the party of Taft and Eisenhower and MacArthur calling upon a Negro woman to lead a struggle against high taxes and high prices and frozen wages? Can you conceive of the party of Truman, of Russell of Georgia, of Rankin of Mississippi, placing in nomination a Negro woman, like myself, to carry on a battle for fair practices in employment, against segregation and for full equality? Would the Democratic or Republican parties nominate a Negro woman whose platform can be stated in these words: Peace, end the war in Korea now!

I make this pledge to the American people, to the dead and the living, to all Americans black and white, to every mother who waits for news of a loved one abroad and every son in uniform on alien soil. I will not retire nor will I retreat, not one inch, so long as God gives me vision to see what is happening and strength to fight for the things I know are right.

For I know that the Kingdom of all the people of all the world is not beyond the skies, the moon and stars, but right here at our feet. Acres of diamonds: Freedom—Peace—Equality—Justice for all, if we will but stoop down and take them. It is for me the greatest honor of my life to accept the nomination of the Progressive Party for Vice President of the United States.

(*From the Convention speech of Mrs. Bass, Progressive Party candidate for Vice President of the United States.*)

things. Our interest is in equality. We do not make hypocritical promises for votes; we fight every day in the year for civil rights and for peace.

At this convention of the Progressive Party we see the fight for these things and the fight for equality fully united. A brave and courageous lawyer who has sacrificed everything he holds dear to defend the right of a union and its leaders to remain alive is joined in this campaign by a sturdy, fighting colored woman whose life has been a forthright struggle for the rights of her people to live in peace as first-class citizens. She's a great woman, is Mrs. Bass—tried in struggle, forgiving, understanding in the fight for unity of black and white—a true Sojourner of Truth.

WE MAKE the fight for peace and the fight for equality indivisible. We know that we cannot expect a Tom Connolly of Texas or a Russell of Georgia or a Byrnes of South Carolina or a Taft or Eisenhower, who are willing to live with oppression of the Negro people in this country, to do anything else abroad. In South Africa they stand by and support the Nazi racist theories of a Malan who oppresses millions of Negroes. In Africa they support British imperialism and in Tunisia, French imperialism, and in the Middle East and Asia they support all the decadent imperialism which would prevent the colonial peoples of the world from seeking that elementary liberty that our own colonists fought for in 1776.

The leaders of the Democratic a Republican Parties are united in p paring for war. Preparing for w means that they must destroy ci rights. Not one of them embraces one, real, practical alternative, wh is desired by all the peoples of world—peaceful co-existence with Soviet Union, a nation which demonstrated that many repub can live together in peace and frie ship.

Last week in the British Parliam the British Labor Party united violent protest against the arrog war-making activities thoroughly proved by Taft, Eisenhower and T man. The people of France, It Denmark, want trade and peace, destruction.

These are signs that the people the world are revolting against a p icy of war and demanding a policy peace, survival and a promise for future. They want their youth dead, but *alive* to build anew. A certainly I know I want the Ne youth and working youth of land alive to ever strive toward fulfillment of our generations-l dream.

As Langston Hughes has sa "America has not yet been all *m* —but it *will* be," because our str gles will make it so. And then only then, my deep *hope* will turn love embracing all of a new-born public. Today we alone in the e tions of 1952 offer a chance to w for peace, for equality of all peop for true security, for freedom— freedom and full human dignity.

These Treasures in the Earth

By ETTORE RELLA

He was a good union man
and she was a good union woman—

nineteen-four and they kicked him out of town
and she was alone in the clapboard shack
for the birth of her child—

the militia came with fixed bayonets
and thrust the gleaming blades down through the mattress,—
"just in case your husband is hiding under the bed—"

too high and mighty to stoop and look—
the sonsabitches—

place: Colorado—
product: gold—
action: the struggle for the eight-hour day—

and they got the eight-hour day—
the good union men
and the good union women,
with blood, much blood,
and struggle, much struggle,
they got the eight-hour day—

and then they went down—
that generation went down
and this one came up
and another one is coming up
and even a bit of another one—

and the place now is the world—
and the product: superprofits—
and the action: the struggle for a peaceful time—

and the time MUST be peaceful,—
or the blood of the good union men and the good
union women,
stirring in the earth,
will not be fulfilled—and it MUST be fulfilled,—or the
flower
will be the fixed bayonet—and the sound of summer
will be the sound of the fist, smashing the panel in the
door
to admit the obscene mercenary.

Oh children and grandchildren and great grandchildren
of those good union men
and of those good union women,
remember, wherever you are,
here in this springtime,
nineteen fifty-two,
remember the graveyard out near the mill—

remember the union button
that by now has fallen from his lapel,
and remember the old-country earrings
that by now have fallen from her ears—

remember these treasures in the earth
and see to it SEE TO IT
that they shall show above the earth
like the other green things of spring—

a tree in the graveyard out near the mill
resplendent with union buttons
and gleaming—gleaming—night and day
with old-country earrings.

MARION PERKINS: Worker-Artist

By VICTORIA STEELE

THE first time I heard of Marion Perkins was during the Depression when word went around our Southside Chicago ghetto that a strange fellow was down on 37th and Indiana selling papers and chipping things out of stone. So as soon as I could, I boarded one of the rickety old Indiana streetcars and rode on down to that corner. There he was, a lean, brown, intense-eyed man sitting by a newsstand and chiseling away on a head in limestone. Occasionally, he would stop to sell a paper and to make change. When a slack would come, he would get back to his chipping.

I joined the crowd that stood around watching him. At times he would admonish the children who came too near: "Watch out! Some of these stone chips might fly and hit you in the eye."

A long time has passed since then and I was fortunate enough to get to know Marion Perkins personally and to follow closely his steady rise to distinction in his field. He has kept as the primary audience for his work the same people who used to stand and gape as he worked at his paper-stand, the working people.

Like many other Southside cultural workers I have benefited greatly from knowing and talking to Marion Perkins. For he is a worker-artist and has positive ideas on the role of artists in society. Even though he is today being hailed as one of the leading American sculptors, Perkins at 44 still holds his job as a freight handler for a shipping company.

"Very few artists, either Negro or white, can live off of their art in this society," he points out. "Many white artists can teach or lecture, but Negroes have to take whatever job they can get outside the field. It is not our fight alone to broaden opportunities for Negroes in cultural work; it should also be the fight of progressive white artists."

In a recent talk with me, Marion Perkins recalled how the progressive white artist and sculptor Si Gordon discovered him during the days of WPA and became his teacher. "Certainly, quite high among the requisites for a Negro artist's growth is the solidarity of his white colleagues. Hardly a Negro writer, a singer or painter could have scaled the walls of prejudice which bars us out of the arts without the encouragement and help of our white brothers and sisters."

Speaking of his long, hard struggle, he said: "In the arts, as in every walk

of life, the iron door of Jim Crow bars the Negro artist from developing his skills. But somehow, in spite of the menial jobs and segregation, out of our ghettoes come outstanding Negro artists such as Gwendolyn Brooks, Eldzier Cortor and Charles White."

Like these artists, Marion Perkins is a product of Chicago's vast hemmed-in Negro community, where he has lived since 1916 when he was brought as a child from the Arkansas farm on which he was born. He attended Wendell Phillips High School, but was forced to leave school and take his first job as a dishwasher. Later came day-laboring, the newsstand, truck-loading.

At first, Perkins was interested in playwriting and enrolled in a WPA writing course, but the encouragement of Gordon turned him to his career as a sculptor.

Perkins first won national prominence when his "John Henry," an imposing figure in limestone, was exhibited at the Chicago Art Institute in 1943. Among other well-known works are his "Ethiopia Awakening," presented at the University of Illinoi Art Show, and his marble "Figure A Rest."

He recently won the first-plac award in the Annual Chicago Art In stitute Show with his "Man of So rows," a head of a Negro Christ. C this work the sculptor says: "It show the Negro people's conception c Christ as a Negro—which is as should be. We cannot conceive c Christ as a weakling and there nothing weak about this piece. Th head reflects the suffering of our pe ple, but it reflects it in a strong an forceful way."

It is a commentary on the cultura situation in our country that th prize-winning artist has to obtai his stone mainly from junk yards, va cant lots and wrecked buildings.

Perkins is an active trade-unionis a leader of the Illinois Committee fo a Free Press, an ardent fighter fo peace. The spirit of the man is ex pressed in the grandeur and profoun humanity of his current work, group of sculptures dealing wit Hiroshima.

Seven years have passed since that fateful August day when the wor Hiroshima was burned into the conscience of the world. The interna tional peace movement will observe the date; throughout Japan meme rial meetings will be held on August 6 by a people struggling for liber ation and peace.

On this occasion, we asked Marion Perkins to tell our readers somethin about his sculptural project, "Hiroshima." Here, in these words of the Negr worker-artist, is a voice of that America which joins with all humanity i crying out: No More Hiroshimas! Outlaw the Atom Bomb and Ger Warfare!—The Editors.

HIROSHIMA in SCULPTURE

By MARION PERKINS

SCULPTURE, in its highest traditional sense, is almost extinct in America today. Even the erection of monuments to the great figures who founded or helped mold our country is a thing of the past. In most art exhibits, sculpture is not solicited at all, or if accepted is largely confined to small decorative pieces.

The decadent trend in American culture is sharply reflected in sculpture. The stench in Korea, the atom bomb war-cries, along with the domestic crises, require the ruling class to suppress realism and humanity in art. Hence the fashionable craze to throw out all idea-content in sculpture.

In the face of this situation, at times depressing to the spirit, I find myself engaged in conjuring up great sculptural projects whose complete realization may be somewhat dubious. The Hiroshima group which I am now working on has turned into a challenge which I am a long ways from meeting satisfactorily.

The tragic bombing of Hiroshima is unquestionably one of the great themes of our time, a turning point in the history of mankind. Man's ability to loose the genii of destruction is such that today the issue of war or peace is rightfully considered a must on the agenda of a majority of humanity. Another reason why the theme of Hiroshima strikes me is the fact that I am a Negro in a country where the cancer of racism—white supremacy—is a major disease.

It may surprise some people to learn about the bitter reaction of a large number of Negroes to the bombing of Hiroshima. Many Negroes noted that the atom bomb was used only against Asians, not against Hitler. Today they are keenly aware of the indiscriminate raining of napalm bombs upon Koreans and the slaughter of unarmed prisoners. And now there are the charges of germ warfare. Personally, on the basis of experience and documentary evidence of the brutal lynchings, rape and murder of my people, from the time of the arrival of the first slave until now, I put nothing beyond some white Americans.

Can such a great tragic event as Hiroshima be expressed in sculptural terms? This was the first question I had to ponder. In the graphic arts and mural painting the answer has been given—witness Goya's series of prints on the "Horrors of War" and Picasso's controversial mural on "Guernica." But great events in sculpture are commemorative, subject to the approval of the ruling segment of the community; and they can be adequately realized only as a public monument. Rodin's approach to the problem in "The Burghers of Calais" I consider as an outstanding example of how an epic event can be realized in true sculptural language.

Obviously, for me to attempt to ex-

press the idea of Hiroshima in such a fashion would have been the height of folly, since no American community would today be interested in such a public memorial. This act must be reserved for the future, when we have repudiated the crimes which at present make us the most feared and hated nation.

Executing the idea in a series of reliefs had an attraction, but I discarded this form because I consider relief sculpture ineffective without a proper architectural setting. The magnificent success of the Egyptian, Assyrian and Greek sculptors in the use of the relief to express events arouses one's admiration. But I am ever conscious of the fact that I am a 20th century sculptor in industrial America, subject to the economic and social laws of capitalism.

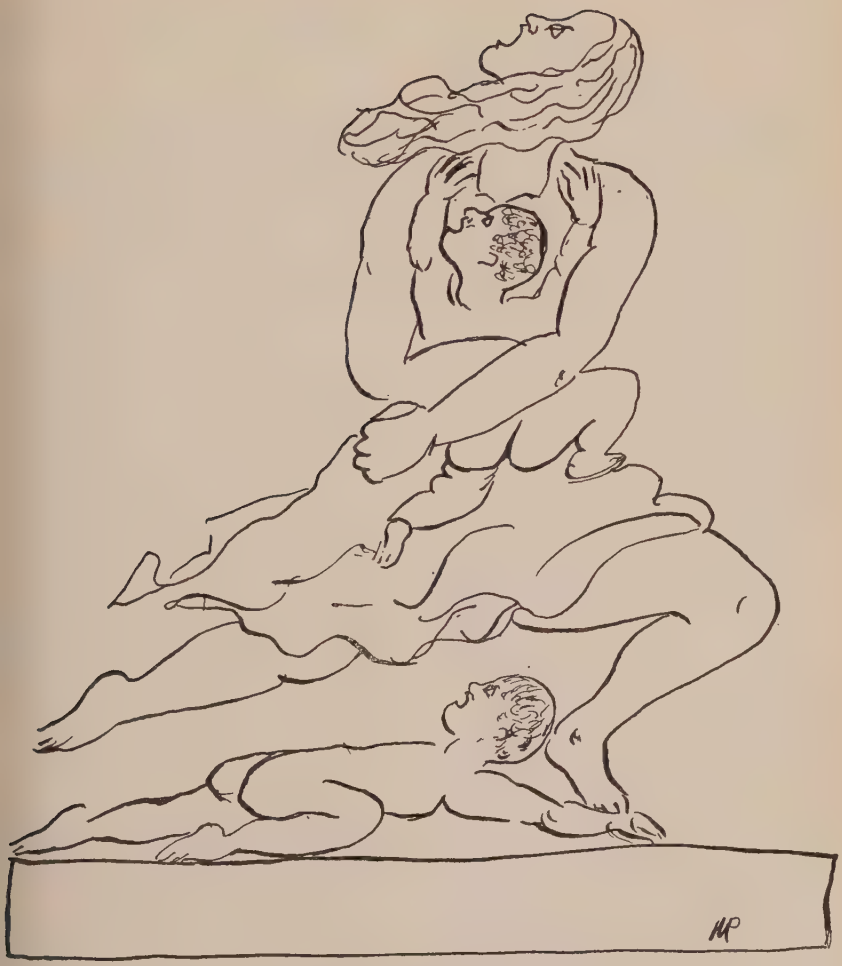
I FINALLY hit upon a form which causes my enthusiasm to undergo mercurial changes of temperature as I labor for its realization. This conception is embodied in a group of medium-sized sculptures in the round, with each individual figure portraying some aspect of Hiroshima. Each figure can stand alone in its own right, but fitted into the group each contributes to a total conception.

I am still undecided in regard to the materials that will be used in my final versions. I am concerned about portability. I want to create a group that can be conveniently transported, set up in a large room or small hall. For I want the sculptures to be seen. Hence I became interested in experimenting with flat slabs of marble and thick wooden boards for sculpture. I find that these flat pieces provide some of the answers to my problem. In fact, one of the initial studies for the Hiroshima series was stolen at an exhibit two years ago because it evidently was convenient to carry away without being observed.

Some people who have seen one or two of my studies have expressed surprise that I have made no attempt to indicate the racial identity of the models. This is an important point. Hiroshima to me represents not only what happened to the Japanese people; it points definitely to what can happen to all mankind regardless of racial or national origin.

Basically, I want to project a tragic event, using symbolical forms that will be universally understood and which will move the spectator to contemplate, and then to act. Because today, the specter of the airman streaking through the skies bearing the seeds of destruction affects everyone. First it was Guernica, then Hiroshima, and your city and mine will be next on the list unless the common people of the world act.

No one can pass final judgment, of course, upon a project still in process. While this may seem a consolation, I wish the job were finished and all possible reactions to the results weighed. For I feel that only in the new world to be born will a really fitting memorial be created for this never-to-be-forgotten city, Hiroshima.



FAMILY IN FLIGHT

(A sketch by Mr. Perkins of one of the sculptures in his Hiroshima group.)

TAKING THE STAND

By HERBERT APTHEKER

SOME things one never forgets. Walking, for example, at two in the morning with Steve Nelson in the Hill district of Pittsburgh, and Steve facing twenty years, and the steel mills' open hearths blazing and Steve catching your arm and saying with passion and pride: "See it light up the whole sky! Look at the beauty and the power!"

Watching George Aloysius Meyers explain to an aged Federal judge in Baltimore why he, a worker and a Communist, could not be an informer though the judge threatened him with eternal imprisonment. "Judge," says Meyers, "on my first picket line all of us were taking turns except this one worker. He said he was staying on the line all the time. We told him to take his turn like everyone else, but he said no he was staying on. And we didn't press him too hard because we knew what was eating him—his father had scabbed once and the son was trying to live that down. I'm not putting that load on my kids, Your Honor, so I'm giving you no names, and you go ahead and give me jail."

Johnny Gates giving you his open, beautiful smile of comradeship; watching the marshal handcuff him and march twenty feet down a corridor (John still with that springy walk of his), enter the McCarran Board hearing-room, unlock the cuffs and then seat himself a dozen feet from his prisoner, and John testifying, after days of solitary confinement in a hot Washington cell and haggard from a year in Atlanta Penitentiary, to the truth and glory of his life, his belief, his Party. And hearing John Gates tell the Government lawyer, Paisley of Mississippi, who wants names: "If you are looking for stoolpigeons, Mr. Paisley, apply to J. Edgar Hoover. He is the keeper of the rats. You could lynch me legally, Justice Department style, or you could lynch me Mississippi style, and you still wouldn't get such information from me."

THERE is much about those McCarran Board hearings that requires telling and one day, I suppose, it will all be told. Right now there are just a few points I'd like to make.

Those hearings resulted from the passage of the McCarran Act. That Act, fathered by Franco's favorite Senator, says that Marxism-Leninism is the theory and practice of forcibly overthrowing governments in general and the United States government in particular and that the Com-

munist Party is the agency dedicated o this purpose and that it is guided nd directed in achieving this aim by ne Soviet Union. Therefore, says the Act, all Communists are, in fact, gents of the U.S.S.R., and Commu-ists in the United States have repu-liated their allegiance to their coun-ry and are really traitors, espionage gents, fiends incarnate. That is, the Act says what Mussolini, Hitler and Hearst said in their wildest moments. f the McCarran Act is true then hose three unlamented gentlemen were paragons of truth.

Congress finds all this to be a "fact," sets up a Board, tells it to in-vestigate the "fact" and promises to pay the members $15,000 annually to find the "fact," the finding of which has already moved Congress to set up the Board in the first place! And, says this insane law, after the Board "finds," as Congress "found," that Communists are, indeed, monstrous agents of chaos, murder and tyranny, they — the Communists — must duly register themselves as in "fact" what the Board and Congress "finds" them to be! And if one does not so label himself, he is to go to prison for *ten years*—with every day's failure to register a *separate* offense! Then comes the turn of the "Communist-front" organizations—to infinity—to fascism.

Distinguished, certified-one-hundred-percent-pure Americans will, with the help of the Department of Justice, examine the thought-processes of some representative, live Communists—one out of a prison-cell, another out of a court room where she is battling to stay out of prison, and the third from an editorial desk. All this after listening, for fourteen months, to twenty-five informers and government agents.

And upon what rested the Government's position? Fierce malevolence compounded by stupendous ignorance.

The ignorance is exemplified in the official recording which certainly did no injustice to the intellectual equipment of the prosecuting personnel. The ancient *poet, Terence,* became the *ancient proletariat;* Lenin's *mastery* of Marxism became his *massacre* of Marxism; imperialism, the stage of *moribund* capitalism became the stage of *more abundant* capitalism; *Lord Bryce* who seventy years ago characterized the Republican and Democratic parties as Tweedledee and Tweedledum, became *Lord Christ; dialectical materialism* became *direct imperialism.*

At times this created serious difficulty. Thus, Mr. Paisley demanded that Elizabeth Gurley Flynn give more details concerning the many street fights in which she had participated.

"Street fights?"

"Yes, street fights."

"What are you talking about? I've not been in street fights."

"So," said Paisley, sensing a significant victory, "did you not testify at page so-and-so of the transcript to your participation in many street fights?"

And, sure enough, so it was re-

corded and so it was understood and so it was argued—until finally the veteran battler for civil rights persuaded all and sundry that she had testified to taking part in *free speech* fights, not in *street* fights!

The same cultured gentleman began a phase of his examination of me in this way: "So you Communists don't believe in heroes?"

"What's that?"

"I say, you Communists don't believe in heroes?"

"Heroes?"

"Yes, heroes."

"I don't understand. I have many heroes."

Then, a light dawned and I remarked: "Oh, Mr. Paisley, you are thinking of my testimony in which I said that Marxists do not believe in the *hero concept* of history!" This delightful exchange concluded with the Justice Department's man petulantly wanting to know what was the difference anyway.

PREVARICATION, with malice aforethought, was also very much present. Mr. Taylor — the Government's "theoretician," miseducated at Harvard—feigned shock, for example, when upon asking whether the Soviet Union did not have a dictatorship of the Communist Party, he was answered in the negative. With a flourish he demanded Government's exhibit such-and-such, which was not a pistol, nor a mink coat, but simply a paperbound book entitled *Problems of Leninism* by Joseph Stalin.

He then read from page 54 of that work as follows: "Who gives effe to the power of the working clas The Communist Party! In this sens we have *the dictatorship of the Part*

Of course, anyone glancing at th volume will immediately see th those words are from the trait Zinoviev; that Stalin is quoting then that he is quoting them in the cour of arguing *against* this position—t position of Trotsky—and that Stal and Lenin held this position to b as they said, "impermissible." An one examining this work will see th its whole Section V, and especia pages 50-59, are devoted to demolis ing this concept of the Party and the Soviet Union.

No, Stalin says there, it is not dictatorship of the Party, but of t working class, and those who spe otherwise "are wrong from the poi of view of Leninism, for they there violate the conditions of the corre relations between the vanguard a the class." Recall, says Stalin, "Leni golden words" that "Among t masses of the people we [Comm nists] are but drops in the ocean a we will be able to govern only wh we properly express that which t people appreciate." And Stalin quo these words again, putting them italics, *"Properly express that whi the people appreciate,"* and then co cludes: "This is precisely the nec sary condition that ensures for t Party the honorable role of the ma guiding force in the system of t dictatorship of the proletariat."

Mr. Taylor's fabrication was and important to the Government, for t

IcCarran Act "finds" the U.S.S.R. to e a "dictatorship" of the Communist arty. It is important for the Governent to maintain the fabrication beause its refutation shows the proundly democratic content of the ictatorship of the proletariat, the ommunist Party's organic ties to the asses, and the Marxist-Leninist conept of leadership as springing from, ed to and nourished by those masses.

MOST revealing, however, was the exposure of the prosecution's orality by their own questions. hus, Mr. Paisley demanded of John ates: "Who said, 'if we don't hang ogether, we'll hang separately'?"

"Benjamin Franklin."

"Well, Mr. Gates, don't you think at your five-year sentence, then, was ild punishment?"

John told him off, fiercely—the all of the question, its callousness, s false assumption of evil-doing. nd—was the representative of the nited States Government taking des with Benjamin Franklin—or ith King George the Third!

And the government insisted that ou Communists" just use the Negro eople and make propaganda of their o-called grievances in order to emarrass and weaken the United States, asn't that right?

No, it was not right, and the "grievnces" were in fact a veritable crucixion of a people for over three hunred years and much of the wealth f the rulers of this country was based n that crucifixion and there was othing "so-called" about it. And only a bigoted brain could conceive of anybody "using" the Negro people. Nobody "used" Frederick Douglass and nobody "uses" Benjamin Davis or Claudia Jones or the Negro people.

The idea can only come from a brain poisoned by white supremacy, by a brain, Mr. Paisley, that looks upon the Negro people as inferior. And it reflects, too, a terrible class snobbishness and arrogance, this whole idea of "using" people. Communists don't think that way. Communists don't think of people, of any people, as sheep to be led around by the nose. Communists don't look upon people as apathetic and stupid. Maybe the present Government of the United States, as represented by you, Mr. Paisley, does, but that's their mistake and your mistake.

Furthermore, the Communist Party is a Party of Negro people and of white people, of all kinds of people of all kinds of backgrounds. And the Negro members are full members, not half or quarter members and they have all the rights and duties of any other member.

And the thorns upon the Negro's head has drawn blood from America's body. We Communists know that. We know that the special oppression of the Negro people fattens up the bosses, divides and weakens the workers, lowers wages, is eating out the vitals of our country. Therefore Communists, Negro and white together, fight for the freedom of the Negro people because first of all they should be free and because until they are free the working class and the farm-

ers and the vast majority of the American people generally cannot be and will not be free.

Mr. Government-lawyer, do you understand that?

This same Mr. Paisley asked Elizabeth Gurley Flynn if it were not a fact that Communists support the steel workers in their strike because it hurts the "defense" effort of the United States and "helps" the Soviet Union.

No, said the Communist leader, eyes flashing. We are a working-class Party and so we support the just demands of the working people. And when you talk of a "defense" effort you are really talking about a huge war-making effort and it's to protect that effort that you are persecuting Communists who want peace, not war. And nothing that strengthens the working class can hurt the real defense of this country. On the contrary, strengthening the working class strengthens the country. And there's no question of "helping" the Soviet Union here. The question is gaining the elementary rights of the steel workers and protecting the organized trade-union movement.

At this point Vito Marcantonio and John Abt, the courageous lawyers defending the Party before the Board, added that Mr. Paisley's question showed precisely the logic of the McCarran Act, for, by the terms of that Act and by his reasoning, the United Steelworkers Union-C.I.O. should be forced to register as agents of the "World Communist Movement" since it was "aiding" the Soviet Union!

THE government, however, l hardest at earnings. How mu money have you made? That was t main question for them. Do you ha a car? How many rooms in yo apartment? Is it an elevator apa ment? How much were you paid fight Franco? What's your salar How much royalties do you ge What does the Jefferson School p you?

The answers, pointing, of course, what the Government incredulou called "meager" earnings, visi shook Mr. Paisley. He thought eve one—not only his own colleagu but everyone—was like Mr. Pais

The simplest answers were most difficult for the Governm men to believe. Faced by Gur Flynn's bell-like clarity and tra parently open sincerity, they w helpless. This is right, this is j this is true, this is against decen this is unprincipled—such ideas what most disturbed these lost so

Thus, "international solidar sounded sinister to the Governm What is it? The feeling of fratern of comradeship, of kinship. The f ing of common interests, of unive aspirations. For instance, Dimit stands up to the Nazis in their c court, exposes them for the crimi they were, to their face. What di get from Dimitrov? Courage, stren inspiration — international solida How can a police mind underst this?

Towards the end of the hear Mr. Paisley demanded: "So you th you can change human nature?"

nat, to the monstrosity pictured in e McCarran Act? No, he meant, said: "Do you really believe you n ever end man's inhumanity to an? Ever end greed, envy, jealousy?" What irony! Because we did be- ve this we were traitors!

And Mr. Paisley knew that we ommunists believed affirmatively id passionately on these matters. In- ed, he really knew in his own isted way and his questions proved that it was because Communists ean to help end inhumanity, elimi- ate greed and hate and envy, and ile by the greedy and envious and iteful, that it was *because* of this at Communists are the first to be tacked and persecuted by the bosses id their servitors.

Really, it was obscene to see a aisley question the integrity and pa- iotism of a John Gates and an Eliza- eth Gurley Flynn, whose lives are oems of dedication to the noblest aspirations of humanity. But in a deeper sense it was reassuring. For Paisley, spokesman for imperialism, chauvinism and obscurantism, was, though clothed with brief authority, the uncertain weakling, and the prisoner and his indicted comrade were the firm, strong, uncompromising partisans of peace and creativity — the sure heralds of a noble American future.

We believe even Mr. Paisley and his finely-tailored Harvard associate, sensed something of this by the time the McCarran hearings closed. Indeed, one of the numerous Government staff remarked, privately, to one on the opposite side: "I think, maybe, in twenty-five years, I might come up to you and say, 'Well, you guys were right.'"

It may take him twenty-five years, but it is going to take the vast majority of the American people a great deal less time than that.

REE STEVE NELSON!

All progressive Americans were deeply shocked at the savage and unprecedented sentence meted out by a fascist-minded judge to Steve Nelson last month on the trumped-up charge of "sedition": 20 years in prison, $10,000 fine plus $10,000 court costs. We urge our readers to write in protest against this outrage to Gov. John Fine, State Capitol, Harrisburg, Pa., and to District Attorney James Malone, County Courthouse, Pittsburgh, Pa., demanding that bail be granted pending the appeal.

The case of Steve Nelson, gallant working-class leader, fighter for peace, veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, is a life-or-death challenge to us all: to free him; to save our country from fascism.

—The Editors.

CELLULOID REVOLUTION

By JOHN HOWARD LAWSO

THE appearance of *Viva Zapata!* early in 1952 has caused the usual controversy, and more than the usual confusion, concerning Hollywood's ability to deal honestly with important social themes. In this case, there can be no question that the theme is significant. The film portrays the revolutionary movement of the peasants of Mexico led by Emiliano Zapata in the second decade of the 20th century. Zapata is one of the great figures in the history of Mexico, and of the Americas. The most far-sighted and consistent leader of the Mexican revolution, he created a tradition that is still a vital force in the culture and political life of the Western Hemisphere.

The picture has been hailed as an honest and sympathetic portrait of Zapata, and as a powerful presentation of the peasant struggle for land and liberty. Some progressives, while noting that the film has weaknesses, have greeted it as a generally positive achievement, a contribution to our understanding of the spirit and strength of a people's movement.

If the applause is merited, *Viva Zapata!* is an astonishing phenomenon—disproving what we have s about Hollywood and showing t we have done the motion picture dustry a grave injustice. The agrar revolt led by Zapata was essentia anti-imperialist, and the events h far-reaching present-day implicatio If the struggle is presented with sy pathy and respect, it means that film monopolists have defied the ficial foreign policy of the Uni States government. While the ru of our country burn Korean villa aid the suppression of peasant mo ments in Indo-China and Mal support anti-democratic regimes all parts of the world and increase heavy burdens imposed on the p ple of Latin America by Yankee perialism, Hollywood asserts the p ants' right to land and liberty honors the struggle of oppressed p ples!

Critical appraisal of *Viva Zapa* must be based upon the film its the cinematic images and sound-tr

This article is from a larger work Mr. Lawson, *Film in the Battle of Id* to be published as a booklet by Masse Mainstream. Another excerpt, "Hol wood: Illusion and Reality," appeared our last issue.

which project its structure and meaning as a work of art. But in examining the picture, it is essential to consider a number of pertinent facts which have a bearing on the finished work—the circumstances of its production, the plans and purposes of its makers, its place in the social and political pattern of Hollywood production.

Viva Zapata! was written by John Steinbeck, directed by Elia Kazan, produced by Darryl Zanuck for Twentieth Century-Fox. I have not seen any statements by Steinbeck or Zanuck concerning the film, but the director has stated his views with unusual frankness, in two letters to the *Saturday Review* and in testimony before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The first of Kazan's communications appeared in the *Saturday Review* of April 5, 1952. Five days later, he appeared as an informer before the House Committee.*

We are accustomed by this time to the dreary spectacle of frightened men and women, who lie and supplicate and repent, denying all that is decent and progressive in their professional and personal lives in order to secure absolution from the ignorant politicians who have become the arbiters of culture in the United States. But Kazan seemed determined to outdo other informers, both in treachery to his friends and in personal abasement.

In addition to supplying the committee with names, Kazan offered an affidavit in which he provided "a list of my entire professional career as a director, all the plays I have done and the films I have made." (Decent citizens have warned that it is the committee's purpose to establish total control of the artist's life and professional activity. In an earlier chapter, I have cited the statement of the Council of the Authors League of America in 1947, denouncing the committee's attempt to censor "the whole corpus of a man's work, past and future.")

Kazan gave the inquisitors the whole corpus of his work, twenty-five plays and films, each accompanied by a craven note of apology—"No politics" . . . "not political" . . . "shows the exact opposite of the Communist libels on America" . . . "again, it is opposite to the picture which Communists present of Americans" . . . "not political" . . . "almost everybody liked this except the Communists," etc., *ad nauseam.*

KAZAN'S conduct is of some interest as a case-history of moral degradation. But we are less concerned with his personal infamy than with the cultural and social pattern of which it is a part. *Viva Zapata!* cannot be divorced from Kazan's

* Hollywood methods of production place major responsibility on the director. It therefore seems proper to place major emphasis on Kazan's viewpoint toward the picture, and his explanation of his own work. Kazan's statements make frequent mention of Steinbeck and indicate that the writer and the director were in complete agreement. Both, of course, were accountable to Zanuck, who acted as the direct representative of the corporation.

testimony before the Un-Americans. The director emphasizes the connection. His affidavit says: "This is an anti-Communist picture. Please see my article on political aspects of this picture in the *Saturday Review* of April 5, which I forwarded to your investigator, Mr. Nixon." (Official transcript of Hearings, April 10, 1952.) (Not only does the artist submit his work to the Congressional Gestapo; his comments on the work are slanted for their approval, and submitted with due reverence.)

Let us examine Kazan's evidence, laid before the enemies of democracy as proof that *Viva Zapata!* has no democratic taint.

Kazan begins his letter to the *Saturday Review* with a comment on "the political tensions that bore down on us—John Steinbeck and Darryl Zanuck and me—as we thought about and shaped a historical picture." The tensions, according to Kazan, related to one point in Zapata's career:

> "What fascinated us about Zapata was one nakedly dramatic act. In the moment of victory, he turned his back on power. In that moment, in the capital with his ragged troops, Zapata could have made himself president, dictator, caudillo. Instead, abruptly, and without explanation, he rode back to his village. . . . We felt this act of renunciation was the high point in our story and the key to Zapata himself."

In the first place, we must ask whether this situation is historically accurate? In the second place, why was the incident selected as the crux of Zapata's story?

The act of renunciation which fa cinated Kazan and Steinbeck, not mention Zanuck, is an irresponsib fabrication. There is no mystery, a no hint of renunciation, in Zapat departure from the capital. He cou not hold power because the forc arrayed against him were too stron Among these forces was the milita might of the United States, whi threatened Zapata with full-sc armed intervention.

Carleton Beals writes that the K zan-Steinbeck theory of Zapata's nunciation of power is an "absu concept . . . Zapata committed such gross betrayal of his followe . . . He was in a trap with power armies closing in on him. . . . Zapa was outnumbered ten to one and wh he rode out of the National Pala that last time, rifle fire and artill were already shaking Mexico Ci (*Saturday Review,* May 24, 1952)

In answer to Beals, Kazan s that the research conducted for t picture "was extensive," but "I ne did hear the version Mr. Beals tell (Kazan's answer appears in the sa issue of the *Saturday Review,* M 24, 1952). This is an alarming co mentary on techniques of film search. Kazan could not have pick up any reputable history of the riod without finding that Zapa position in Mexico City was thre ened by Carranza's army to the e Gonzales' troops to the south; far more modern and well-equip army of Obregon, backed by White House, stood at Puebla wit striking distance of the capital.

Kazan and Steinbeck, and their modest co-worker, Zanuck, were blind to historical facts because the facts did not fit their political purpose. The essence of Zapata's life is summarized by Frank Tannenbaum, a bourgeois scholar whose books on the Mexican Revolution must be known to Kazan: "From the day he rose in rebellion to the day he was killed, he never surrendered, never was defeated, never stopped fighting." (*Peace by Revolution,* New York, 1933.) It is the real Zapata, the unconquerable hero of the revolution, whose grave in Southern Mexico is a sacred shrine to the people of his country.

THE makers of *Viva Zapata!* wanted a hero who surrenders. "In a moment of decision," according to Kazan, "this taciturn, untaught leader, must have felt, freshly and deeply, the impact of the ancient law: power corrupts. And he refused power."

Underlying this phony philosophy, which Carleton Beals describes as "eye-wash," lies the hard core of the film's political meaning. Every struggle for human rights involves the question of power. If power is an absolute source of corruption, if it must be renounced by every honest leader, the people are doomed to eternal submission. The "ancient law," presented as the central theme of *Viva Zapata!,* denies any possibility of the rational use of power for democratic and socially constructive ends.

At a time when colonial peoples are throwing off the yoke of poverty and oppression, it is not possible to deny that these great popular movements exist. It is possible, however, to deal sympathetically with the "futility" of revolt, to lament the "inevitable betrayal" of the revolution by those leaders who demand fundamental changes in the system of exploitation. This service to imperialism occupies the lives of whole regiments of scholars in the fields of sociology, political economy and history.

Hollywood selects a moment of Mexican history for its lesson in the futility of people's movements. The choice is not accidental. Careful, and conscious, political analysis determined the selection of the time and the place. The period is sufficiently distant to avoid any direct allusion to contemporary events. The plight of the farm workers of Morelos is similar, in many respects, to the plight of colonial populations. We cannot miss the historical parallel, but the role of United States imperialism is not so obvious in the Mexican conflict as in more recent events in Asia and other parts of the world.

It is a gross distortion of history to ignore the fact that the peasant movement led by Zapata was part of a national uprising which was chiefly directed against the imperial power of the United States. But the film presents Mexico as a land of corrupt generals and politicians, acknowledging no obligation to any foreign power. The demand for land on the

part of the poverty-stricken Indians and Mestizos of Morelos is treated as a separate and isolated struggle, humanly justified, but doomed from the start because the peasants are too ignorant or innocent to seize and hold state power.

White chauvinism, contempt for the darker peoples of the world, is inherent in this conception. The directorial treatment, the lighting, setting, costumes and movement of the actors, are all designed to reinforce the impression that the people of Morelos are "picturesque," artistically attractive, but totally incapable of effective organized action. Zapata's brother is shown as a drunken lout. The characterization of Zapata deprives him of the intellectual stature he unquestionably possessed. The author of the Plan of Ayala, the program of land reform and national unity which is one of the great documents of the history of the Americas, is played by Marlon Brando as a man who is not only culturally, but politically, illiterate. The actor employs the crude tricks and mannerisms which he used a few months earlier to depict the brutally inhuman "worker" in *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

ANSWERING Beals' criticism, Kazan exposes his chauvinistic contempt for the Mexican peasants and for Zapata as their representative. He quotes a letter from a lady, in which the lady asserts that the real reason for Zapata's retreat from the capital "was the typewriters":

"He conquered the city, vanquished rivals, contenders, occupied government offices, and there faced modern equipment for the manipulation of law and order. He did not know how to go on. The rows and rows of typewriters decided his retreat."

Kazan observes: "Still another version! And just human enough to have truth in it." To be sure, Kazan does not blame Zapata for his "fear of typewriters." He loves him for it. The "simple" peasant is a saint, if only he will bow to the "ancient law" that power corrupts —conveniently leaving power in the hands of those who exploit and starve the peasants.

Like all authoritarian concepts, the theory of power is mystical and irrational. Kazan shares, or pretends to share, his protagonist's mystical belief that power can never be used rationally or democratically. The anti-intellectualism of the film is embodied in the symbolic figure of the man who "loves only logic," "the man with the typewriter," an incongruous individual who wanders through the story like a lost soul, having nothing to do with the action.

He serves solely as an example of a "real revolutionist." He is close to Zapata in the peasant's rise to power, but turns against him after his "renunciation." If my eyes did not deceive me, he appears in later scenes in a sort of "commissar's" uniform. He displays his affection for logic by urging everyone who will listen to him to burn and destroy. We are fortunate in having the director

xplanation of this character's func-on:

"There is such a thing as a Commu-st mentality. We created a figure of this mplexion in Fernando, whom the audi-nce identify as 'the man with the type-riter.' He typifies the men who use the st grievances of the people for their own nds, who shift and twist their course, etray any friend or principle or promise get power and keep it."

It may be argued that Kazan is nerely introducing a "harmless" ouch of anti-Communism, seeking o clear himself by muttering the enitential words which he also used n his appearance before the Un-American Committee. But in the film, as in the proceedings of the committee, the idiocies of Red-baiting provide ideological excuses for the betrayal of democracy. Fernando is an utterly ridiculous figure in *Viva Zapata!* Carleton Beals asks: "Why introduce this absurd stereotype utterly devoid of Mexican savor? . . . The phony papier-mâché Fernando seems unwarranted even by box-office considerations."

It is true that there is no artistic or dramatic reason for Fernando's presence; the lack of invention or skill in the use of the character is appalling. But the *political* reason for his presence is inescapable; political necessity made it impossible for the

THE YOUTH OF EMILIANO ZAPATA: OBJECTIVE LESSON

(By Mariana Yampolsky, Taller de Grafica Popular, Mexico City.)

author and director to dispense with the character, but the same necessity made it impossible for the character to speak rationally or to play any understandable part in the action. Fernando is just as witless as the anti-Communism he personifies.

FERNANDO'S function is directly related to Zapata's "renunciation." There must be a conflict—or at least the shadow of a conflict—between the hero's abandonment of power and another course of action. The alternative cannot be a real struggle for the land, because the film's social philosophy holds that the struggle is self-defeating and destructive. Yet it is not sufficient to counterpoise the aspirations of the peasants to the corruption of politics-as-usual, because this makes a fool out of Zapata and exposes the moral rottenness of his "renunciation." His choice must be between the existing corruption and something worse, which will eventuate if he continues to lead the people. Something worse is socialism or communism, or any genuine change in class relationships and control of the state.

This, of course, is the purpose of all anti-Communist propaganda. Kazan would appear to be an absolute fool in renouncing his liberal past before the Un-American Committee, if he could not claim that he is avoiding *something worse* by yielding to the badgering of the corrupt politicians. The stale clichés of Red-baiting were used long before the Soviet Union was born, long before the great pioneering work of Marx and Engels to discredit any struggle for the rights of the oppressed and disinherited.

The lies of anti-Communism are anti-democratic in the most fundamental sense. Their whole purpose is to deny the people's right to organize and act, or to take any action for the common good. Red-baiting is the most direct expression of the class interest of the class in power. It calls for absolute control over the thinking, and over the trade unions and organizations, of the people, on the ground that the people are incapable of judgment or discretion, and that only the class in power can be trusted to use its authority with some degree of moderation.

In *Viva Zapata!* anti-Communism is offered as the excuse for re-writing the recent history of Mexico. According to Kazan, "No Communist, no totalitarian, ever refused power. . . . By showing that Zapata did this, we spoiled a poster figure that the Communists have been at some pains to create." It is of no concern to Kazan that the "poster figure" he discards is known and loved by the people of the land.

He tells us, with the arrogance of the imperialist, that he and Steinbeck were warned in advance that the Mexican people would regard the film as a violation of their history and traditions. The director and writer gave a preliminary script to "two men who are prominent in the Mexican film industry. . . . They came back with an attack that left us re-

ing. The script was impossible!" The Mexican film workers found it inaccurate in many respects, "But above all, they attacked with sarcastic fury our emphasis on his refusal to take power."

Kazan and Steinbeck "smelled the Party line." Their suspicion, Kazan informs us, was confirmed two years later "by a rabid attack on the picture in the *Daily Worker*."

We need not comment on Kazan's reasoning that the similarity of opinion between two men in the Mexican film industry and a review in the *Daily Worker* reveals "the Party line." We are accustomed to hearing the same fantasies from the McCarthyites and from stoolpigeon witnesses in the McCarran hearings and Smith Act trials.

SOME of the more astute reviewers of the commercial press have noted that *Viva Zapata!* is a defense of the status quo. Otis L. Guernsey, Jr., writes in the New York *Herald Tribune* (February 17, 1952) that the social problem is handled "as though Zapata's chief contribution to Mexican freedom had been a negative one." According to Guernsey, it is only after Zapata takes "to the hills in disgust at the corrupting influence of power" that he "comprehends the real issue with which his society is faced. . . . Peace and stability, Zapata finds, cannot be won by replacing a bad leader with a good one (even himself); it can be won only when each individual is able to take his own responsibility, when there is no longer a need for any leader at all."

Admirers of the film have said that it ends affirmatively, stressing the people's love of Zapata and their feeling that the cause he represented is unconquerable. But the film hero is the man who denies struggle and forswears power. The *Herald Tribune* critic notes the real point of the conclusion: "The obvious goal—land reform—is as far off as it ever was." Furthermore, Guernsey sees that the characterization of Zapata is designed to reinforce the political lesson:

> "The over-lapping values of bloody banditry and historical meaning are carried out in Brando's portrayal of the brooding Zapata. He is the slow fuse attached to the heavy powder-charge, a grim-looking, mustachioed fellow with dirt on his skin and simple conceptions of justice and violence in his mind. Like most Brando performances, Zapata is heavily underlined with animal traits. . . ."

The cinema Zapata is a saintly animal, always torn between the brutal impulses of his class and his desire to avoid conflict. He dreams of peace, "a time of rest and kindness." But he is quick to renounce the hope, asking: "Can good come from a bad act? From so much violence?"

It is significant that Zapata's final parting from his wife, when he rides into the trap that brings his death, is a scene of stupid physical violence. She clings to his horse, and he throws her off so roughly that she almost falls under the animal's feet. It is a fitting climax to a relationship totally lacking in dignity or depth of feeling.

The scene has a vital place in the thematic development. Zapata has not wholly renounced power. He is still seeking guns and allies to continue the fight. Therefore, it is necessary to show him in a violent mood, rejecting his wife's love, exhibiting the brutal side of his nature. His spectacular death fulfills the theme of renunciation. He must die because he is unable to hold to the "good life" which the makers of the film prescribe for the repentant leader.

Kazan speaks of the people of Morelos as "the proudest and most independent in all Mexico. Their bearing is proof of the kind of man who led them out of bondage and did not betray them. I think it is also witness to the relationship of two things not usually coupled: politics and human dignity."

In a sense, this is the most revealing passage in the director's *apologia.* Ignoring the present poverty of the Morelos peasants, Kazan speaks of their having been "led out of bondage." Zapata did not betray them, as he apparently would have done if he had led them to victory against their oppressors. As long as they accept hunger and renounce struggle, Kazan is pleased to grant them their dignity. This is the significance of the relationship between politics and human dignity as the director sees it: the peasant's pride is personal, inward, unrelated to political and economic reality—except in the fundamental fact, the "ancient law," that he can retain dignity only by eschewing politics.

Kazan elucidates his meaning more fully in his testimony before the Un American Committee. He performs an act of renunciation, subtly connected with the meretricious "renunciation" which he imposes on the celluloid Zapata. Kazan renounces political struggle, denies even the right to conduct struggle or hold opinions. Just as his false Zapata abandons land-reform to avoid any suspicion of Communism, Kazan discards all pretense of personal or artistic independence in order to retain whatever shreds of "dignity" the Committee will grant him.

KAZAN'S testimony has its moments of cruel comedy. The contradiction in the cultural informer's position—his pretense of speaking for freedom while he grovels before the inquisitors—is so intense that the witnesses seem slightly demented, frantic to abandon sense and reason as if the wrack and the wheel awaited them in the ante-room. Kazan's affidavit dismisses the political activities of his adult years with these words: "My connections with these front organizations were so slight and transitory that I am forced to rely on a listing of these prepared for me after research by my employer, Twentieth Century-Fox."

Kazan attains epic irony in describing his reasons for quitting the Communist Party in 1936. Going back over nearly twenty years to crawl and apologize and admit errors to the committee, Kazan explains his withdrawal from the party: "The la

straw came when I was invited to go through a typical Communist scene of crawling and apologizing and admitting the error of my ways."

Statements of this sort are required by the committee. One may assume that the Congressmen, the witness, and everybody present know that the statement is false. If Kazan had gone through any such experience in 1936, his views and activities during the following years would have been affected by it; he would have spoken against Communism; he would have questioned the desirability of unified action of Communists, progressives and liberals. His artistic career would have followed a different course, both in the Group Theatre and in his later career as a director.

The Un-American Committee is not interested in the reliability, or even in the common sense, of the testimony offered by its victims. It has its political purpose, determined by the general strategy of the fascist drive. Gilbert W. Gabriel points out that Kazan "came pretty close to giving the impression that a connection with the late Group Theatre had been next door to inevitable partnership in a Communist cultural plot." Gabriel is kind enough to say that this seemed contrary to the witness' intentions. But Kazan's intentions were obviously dictated by the committee, and the impression given about the Group Theatre was the heart of his testimony: it reflected the committee's main objective in turning its spotlight on the theatre.

Fifteen years ago, the Group was a lively organization of young artists reflecting to some degree the hopeful temper, social sensitivity and democratic conscience of the militant Thirties. Kazan's attack on the Group is designed to undermine the elements of courage and integrity which the stage retains as a heritage of the days of the Group and the Theatre Union and the Federal Theatre.

Gabriel emphasizes the disastrous effect of Kazan's testimony on the nation's drama: "It may all be supposed to save our country, but it's sure hell on the theatre." Commenting on the testimony of Odets and other witnesses who followed Kazan and shared his ignominy, Gabriel observes that Lillian Hellman, "alone, of this fresh batch of theatrical witnesses, has done the theatre no disservice and lost none of its respect" (*The Nation,* June 28, 1952).

The disservice is not only to theatrical art, and to the witness' fellow-craftsmen. The creative vitality that enriched the drama in the Roosevelt years was part of a great current of social change. It was a decade of the growing unity of popular forces, the gradual emergence of a democratic coalition in which Communists played an honorable part. One of the main objectives of the fascist drive in the United States is the destruction of this recent heritage, which cannot be accomplished without going back into our national past to destroy or distort its historical roots in earlier struggles and traditions.

The contempt for the Bill of Rights

which Kazan exhibited before the Un-American Committee is one with the mockery of the aspirations of the Mexican people in *Viva Zapata!*

RETURNING to Kazan's apology for the film, we find a direct reference to United States history. "We know," he says, "that the Communists in Mexico try to capitalize on the people's reverence for Zapata by working his figure into their propaganda—much as Communists here quote Lincoln to their purpose."

We can await the Kazan-Steinbeck attempt to rescue Lincoln from the "poster figure" the Communists have helped to create. The theory that "power corrupts" can be applied in Lincoln's case. It can be suggested that Lincoln made a fatal error in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. It can be shown that he would have been wiser to acknowledge the "ancient law" that renunciation is better than victory. This revision of history will be especially fascinating to Kazan and Steinbeck, not to mention Zanuck, when they discover that the influence of Communists played a part in persuading Lincoln to proclaim Emancipation, as in many other vital matters affecting the conduct of the war.

If the fascist drive continues, we can expect further, and more fundamental, revisions of American history. Indeed, the Un-American Committee is trying to prepare the way for such pictures, and the motion picture corporations are doing their part, as is evidenced in the increasingly favorable cinematic treatment of the Confederacy. Hollywood's deepest moral convictions are stirred by the heroism of Southern leaders—whose integrity was apparently a matter of "individual conscience," unsullied by any question of power except the maintenance of chattel slavery.

No doubt Kazan will play his small inglorious part in the attack on our nation's true history and most sacred traditions. He will be loyal to the Un-American Committee and to his employers, happy in the knowledge that there is no conflict between them. The last sentence of his statement to the committee shows he is untroubled by any problem of divided loyalties: "I have placed a copy of this affidavit with Mr. Spyros P. Skouras, president of Twentieth Century-Fox."

RiGhT FaCe

Free Enterprise

"PARIS—Dave Parsons, publicity man for Pan American airways here, says his concern is cashing in on anti-American signs in France. Mr. Parsons says he has hired a man with a bucket of paint. Every time the man sees a sign chalked on a wall: 'Yankees, go home!' he paints underneath it: 'Via Pan American.'"—*From a Reuters dispatch.*

Strange People

"Like most women in the world, Japanese women are particularly concerned with problems of war and peace, with an odd prejudice in favor of peace."—Margaret Parton in the Paris edition of the New York *Herald Tribune.*

The Great Humanitarian

"I do not propose that we retreat into our shell like a turtle. I do propose the deadly reprisal strategy of a rattlesnake."—*Herbert Hoover to the Republican National Convention.*

Selectivity

"The atomic bomb destroys not only life but also buildings and other structures. . . . Biological warfare agents, on the other hand, affect only living matter, do not destroy material structures and, in most cases, are non-persistent."—The late James V. Forrestal, Secretary of Defense.

We invite readers' contributions to this department. Original clippings are requested.

The BAPTISM

***A Story by* WARREN MILLER**

AT THE meeting at Lucia's we noticed how Cerrera, who was usually so calm and self-contained, shifted uneasily in his chair. At times he seemed even not to be listening to Pinto's report, but gazed at the wall, at some non-existent point between the Kollwitz print and the Rivera reproduction.

Lucia looked pointedly at me and raised her eyebrows, as if to say: You're his good friend—tell us what's wrong. But I could not have told them; I did not know.

I knew that he was being screened a second time. The Coast Guard, those greedy and unskilled fishermen, know that if the nets are cast often enough they are sure to catch something—although there is always the danger of losing the net. But Cerrera did not worry about such things: he fought them in his Local. It was not a personal matter and, therefore, not a cause for sleepless nights—nor for this distracted behavior.

And it was not explained that night, nor did we understand it until three days later when we received the invitations. After the meeting was adjourned Lucia poured the five cups of *café puro* and we relaxed in our chairs. Our secretary-treasurer, Luis Matero, completed his bookkeeping and announced that although the treasury had suffered great depletion when we paid the tuition for those three young people to go to the Frederick Douglass School, if we continued to pay our dues with regularity we would soon have three dollars in the treasury.

"Educación," Pinto said, nodding significantly. *"Educación,"* he repeated, as if the word alone gave strength. He said to me, "You don't remember Cartajo; that was before your time. He was a man who, when schools were mentioned, ran like a rabbit. He was a *practicalist.* Yes, a *practicalist.* 'I don't have to read Marx and Lenin to know what is Capitalism,' he always said."

"Remember last year," Lucia said, "how he came to the May Day parade. He read in the paper where we were to form our Group, he came, we welcomed him. Ten minutes be-

ore the parade starts he runs off. 'll be back in a minute,' he says. hat was the last we saw of him."

"He went off somewhere to be ractical," Luis said.

"It is the truth."

When we had our second cup of offee—and Cerrera, who always nade many contributions to our dis- ussions, had still said nothing—Pinto ffered a short dissertation on the ubject of television and its effect n the youth. "Their vision is being ffected. And I am not speaking of *hysical sight,* I am not speaking f the *eye* itself." He touched his wn, that we should have no doubt f his meaning. "It is their *vision*: hey cannot see beyond the picture ube."

"I have occasion to see it once week at my sister's house," Lucia aid. "It is decidedly true that there s a prevalence of murder."

Pinto permitted this interruption ecause Lucia was a very old friend nd came from his village in Puerto Rico. He continued his remarks. Earlier he had made a ninety minute eport on the self-determination of nations, but speech never tired him. It was because of his throat and ongue, which never knew fatigue, hat the men in the neighborhood ometimes called him *El Radio.* But nlike the real radio, to Pinto they istened attentively and with respect.

Luis helped me carry the coffee ups to the kitchen and it was only hen, as we prepared to depart, that Cerrera spoke. He answered Pinto by saying that no problem is resolved until it is resolved in action. Then, as if to prove the point, he stood up and invited us to his house on Sunday afternoon at three o'clock. "It is the occasion of my granddaughter Emilia's fourth birthday," he said, with all the formality the situation demanded. He stood in a characteristic pose: his slim, youthful-looking body erect, the head held high.

ON SATURDAY I received the invitation from Emilia's parents, the daughter and son-in-law of Cerrera. However, it was not to a birthday party, but a baptism. And this made clear the cause of Cerrera's great distress: he was embarrassed that *his* granddaughter—even though she was only four years old—was engaging in any sort of religious activity.

Pinto and Luis were waiting for me in front of Cerrera's apartment house on Sunday afternoon. It was one of those late February days of warm sun, and to us cold-flat dwellers it seemed warmer outside than in. All of winter was stored in the walls of our apartment houses, and neither the oil heaters nor our gas stove ovens could drive it out. But soon, we knew, spring would come and release us like the first thaw the frozen river. Across the street the desolate houses condemned by the city waited to be destroyed, while in their walls bred dynasties of mice.

"Out of destruction comes construction," Pinto began, but Luis stopped him.

"We will be late. Let us go up."

I hoped that Cerrera would be in good spirits, that he had not quarreled with his son-in-law or with his wife.

"I hope our friend is feeling better," Luis said.

Pinto remarked, while we waited for the door to be opened, that we must on occasion bend with the wind.

Señora Cerrera admitted us and we stepped into the living room decorated with pink and blue crepe paper streamers. They formed a canopy over the table that bore an enormous cake with Emilia's name on it.

The room was empty but for Cerrera. He sat in the corner near the radio, reading a newspaper.

"He is very rigid," Luis said softly, "for one who is bending with the wind."

Pinto shrugged. He admitted the possibility of error.

Cerrera at first pretended he had not noticed our entrance; then he looked up with great surprise and greeted us. He mocked the formal invitations that had been sent us by asking me where was my *distinguida familia?* I explained that my wife and daughter were visiting my parents in the country. But irony was not enough for Cerrera today. He exploded angrily, waving his hand at us as if we were the cause of it all. "For four years," he cried, "I have fought this . . . *thing!*"

"Enough, if you please," Señora Cerrera demanded.

We sat in uneasy silence for a few minutes until Luis thought of a neutral subject of conversation. He spoke to Señora Cerrera about the new an nex to Mt. Sinai Hospital that was be ing constructed around the corne from where we lived. It was consid ered by all to be an impressive stru ture. Cerrera did not join our con versation but sat silently behind h *España Popular.*

When little Emilia, beautiful i white, arrived from the church wit the godparents and the guests— about twenty in all—the party be gan. Immediately the record play was switched on and the dancin began.

Cerrera carefully folded his new paper and surveyed the room. Du ing the first break in the music I called to the godfather.

"Well, *padrino,* how much did yo pay them?"

The *padrino* shrugged. "There no set price. You pay what you can

"And how much did you pay, *pa rino?*" Cerrera persisted.

"Five dollars."

"Five dollars." He nodded knowingly, all his suspicions, it seeme confirmed. "And how many we baptized this afternoon, *padrino?*"

"Perhaps two hundred; may more, maybe less."

"Two hundred." Cerrera was n interested in the more or the le "Two hundred . . . at an average five dollars a head. . . ." he lean forward, as if it were at just this m ment he had happened on somethi hitherto unknown. . . . "You kno *padrino,* that's a good business to into."

ɔeñora Cerrera put on another rec- and turned up the volume.

ɔINTO toured the room. He shook hands with everyone. He stopped d spoke to every man on the subject *educación,* what it meant to the rking class, how it was a weapon ond to none in importance, that was paramount in the struggle for national independence of Puerto ɔo and, finally, about the state of treasury.

By the time he reached Victor ldés he had collected nine dollars d thirty-two cents. Galdés was a all man with a large moustache; he d eight children and a tiny grocery re on 104th Street. He listened at- ıtively to Pinto's remarks, but did t put his hand in his pocket, and pt his face stony and unresponsive. Pinto stood stolidly before him, iting for him to speak. Galdés had desire to speak but knew that ıto was capable of standing there ever. Angrily, without looking at ıto's face, he said, "I have changed."

"You have changed, Victor? But turally you have changed. We are t static personalities, we grow and velop. People like us, Victor, even we tried, could not remain the ne. Why could we not? Because the ɔrld is constantly changing and en if we thought we stayed the ne we would still, in actuality, be anged. For it is not the same world our relationship with it has anged — therefore, we too are anged."

Galdés was impressed by Pinto's philosophic depth. In spite of his intentions, then, he said, "It is true. It is true."

Again Pinto waited.

"Business is very bad," Galdés said.

"Do you expect it to get better, Victor?"

Galdés sighed. "At the most, for your education fund—I offer fifty cents."

"Accepted with many thanks, friend." They shook hands. And Victor smiled, as if it were his victory—and indeed, in a sense, it was.

Before he took the money to Luis, Pinto added eighteen cents from his own pocket.

"Here is ten dollars, treasurer, for the education fund. This, combined with our magnificent treasury of less than three dollars, puts us in the splendid position of being able to send three more students to the school."

Luis whipped out his receipt book. He trembled in the face of such evidence of the humanity of men. "Ah, Pinto," he said, "how far we will go, how far!"

THE music and the dancing stopped when the cake was to be cut. Emilia's father brought out a small camera with a flash bulb attachment and pictures were taken in all possible combinations: Emilia with parents, Emilia with godparents, Emilia with grandparents. Cerrera held his grandchild in his arms and smiled at her. Pinto nodded significantly. "He is beginning to bend."

All the combinations and possibili-

ties of picture-groups were explored until, finally, there was no one in the room who had not had his picture taken behind the cake with lovely Emilia. And no one who had not orange spots floating before him from the exploding flash bulbs.

With her mother guiding her hand, Emilia cut the first slice of her cake. While Luis and I opened the bottles of soft drinks and poured them into paper cups, the cake was cut and ice cream spooned out of the gallon container. The older children served the adults, the mothers fed the babies, and soon we were all seated about the room, somehow eating the cake, drinking the soda.

I sat on the arm of an overstuffed chair; Alma Garcia sat in the chair, and her father on the other arm. Her father began a conversation with me; it was his professional opinion—he was an assistant chef—that the cake was of an excellent consistency. We spoke in French. Señor Garcia's English, he felt, was not quite good enough; but after eleven years in the kitchens of many French restaurants he spoke that language well. He also spoke Greek, German, and some Chinese—all learned in the kitchens of New York City restaurants.

Alma Garcia, who was nine, was very proud of her father; and especially so when he spoke French. She felt it set him apart from all the other fathers in the room: they spoke only *two* languages.

Someone nudged me; it was Pinto. "He is bending," he said. And I ticed our friend Cerrera in the cen of the room, where the cake had be under the crepe paper canopy of p and blue, holding up his hand attention.

He spoke in Spanish, slowly carefully, as if each word were cho specially for this occasion and never to be used again. "Friends. are here," he said, "to celebrate act that is a part of our tradition."

"Oh, how he is bending," P whispered. "A supple reed."

Cerrera continued. "This act baptism has certain meanings which we are all familiar. Essentia it is the initiation of a child into community. But," he raised his h in caution, "but . . . it does not g antee to the child, to our Emilia, l piness; it does not guarantee a g place in which to live; it does guarantee that she have the pro food and clothing. Indeed, one say that, with certain forces that loose in the world, it does not e guarantee that she will live, that will have a life at all."

"True, true," the godfather

"Therefore it is necessary that —you, Isabella; you, Ramon; Victor; all, all of us—fight for life of this child and for all child I have here . . ." and he pulled f his pocket a roll of papers, ". have here a petition calling for a power peace pact. All of us here t will, together, sign our names first step to guarantee our chil

." He raised his hand with the iliar green-striped petitions in it l cried, "A life for Emilia!"

Everyone applauded this demand. *"Una vida para Ramon!"* There s applause again, and the god-her, Ramon, said, *"Gracia, gracia, cia."*

"A life for Isabella and her chil-n!"

"And her grandchildren," her hus-nd added. And by this time little Emilia knew the procedure and she too applauded. Cerrera demanded a life for everyone in the room, and then he put down the papers and his pen on the table where the cake had been. One by one we crossed the room and signed the petition and while this was going on there was no sound but the scratching of pen on paper, a sound so loud it seemed it might rouse the world.

THE VANGUARD WRITER

By ANDRE STIL

This article is from a speech made by Andre Stil at a mass meeting honoring him upon the award of the Stalin Prize for his novel The First Blow (Le Premier Choc). *Stil, a former miner, is at 31 the author of several distinguished novels, which were discussed by Joseph Starobin in our June issue.*

As we go to press, we learn that the pressure of protests in France and throughout the world have compelled the French government to release Stil from prison. Stil had been arrested in Paris for writing an article in L'Humanité, *of which he is the editor, protesting the arrival of General Ridgway as a threat to peace and France's national independence. As Jacques Duclos, who also recently won release from jail, pointed out, these frame-up arrests in France are "American exports."*

BEARING in mind the general fight of our people for peace, its international importance, and the warm sympathy with which it is followed in all the countries of the peace camp, especially the mighty Soviet Union, it is clear that the Stalin prize was awarded to *The First Blow* essentially for reasons concerned with its content.

And what is that content? It is the effort of the workers of France, guided by the Communist Party, to m their fight against war more effect For this purpose, at the same tim they help with all their energy build and strengthen the broad un movement for peace, the workers, Communists, must never for a ment forget the need for mass act against war, concrete, vigorous tions leading to practical results, e if others do not as yet see the r for this so clearly. The workers,

mmunists, feel it their duty to do erything to help bring about such ions, especially against the most ious form of the war policy in our ntry—the occupation of our soil American troops. . . .

Our Party leaders, especially aurice Thorez, have continually laid ess on this role of the working ss in the fight for peace and na- nal independence. And why should t a militant worker, who happens be a writer, be attracted first of to the key problems which the rty spotlights for all militants?

Why should literature be any dif- rent in this from other weapons of e Party? Certainly, literature has own special characteristics. All the rty's weapons have their special aracteristics. But the differences be- ween them lie in their methods, not the direction in which their blows ould be struck. The Party points it to us all the enemy's heart. Why ould literature be such a peculiar eapon that it has never the ambi- on to strike at the heart?

This is why stress was already laid this point in my earlier books of ories, *The Steel Flower* and *The eine Flows into the Sea.* And for ose who do not understand how the arty can help writers, I would say at the approval of *The Steel Flower* y the Party leadership guided the oice of subject and the whole con- ption of *The First Blow.* Even when ou descend into the depths where terary creation begins, where peo- le sometimes seek that uncontrol- ble thing, inspiration, there too you find the Party and its constant help.

In *France Nouvelle* in June, 1949, in an article called "The Critics Criticized," Auguste Lecoeur, Secretary of our Party, wrote:

> "Is it more difficult for a man of letters, who is a Party member, to write in line with the tasks which have been assigned to him than it is for a worker active in political or trade union work to solve current political problems in line with tasks determined by the same political outlook?"

A great step forward will be taken when many Communist writers answer like Lecoeur: "No, it is no more difficult." For then many wrong ideas will be scotched, which today act as a brake on our writers and, what matters more, discourage those who want to be and can become writers of the struggle.

FIRST of all, there is the idea of an inevitable contradiction between the work of a writer and the life of a militant worker. Certainly there *is* a contradiction between the old, bourgeois idea of a writer's work and the active life, full to bursting, without respite, of an active Communist. And in so far as we are still deeply influenced by these old methods of writers' work, such contradictions may hinder both the work of the writer and that of the militant. It would be stupid to deny this.

But in the course of the work of the militant there can and must be created a new kind of writers' work, in which writing becomes more and more closely allied to action. There

is no contradiction between this new content and method of writing and the action of the militant worker—rather does one help the other. There comes a point where the writer, if he were to leave the fight, with all the demands it makes on time and energy, would find his new methods in conflict with a life which would no longer be equal to them; he would feel a contradiction between his life and the advanced works he wants to create.

Once we understand that it is not the writer's work that cannot be fitted into the daily life of a militant, but only the old, outworn, decadent forms of the writer's work, a Communist who feels drawn to write in the service of his cause has much to gain from the life of a militant.

He can expect to gain not only the riches which every militant worker receives in the school of our Party, he has also much to gain precisely *as a writer.*

His life as a militant worker imbues him, even when he is not thinking about it, with the richest material a writer can have—the life of outstanding men, men of the vanguard, in the front line where the clarity of the class struggle at its sharpest point best brings out all the good or bad traits in a man—and above all the new traits, never written about up to now, the study of which is for a writer the keenest spur to creation.

And since it is well known that the novel is not in the first place a matter of writing, but of experience of life, even non-Communists can easily imagine from outside what it means to a novelist to have this daily contact with men who are, as Lenin expressed it, a step ahead, and have the strength and qualities to draw the whole people after them. And it is understandable if a writer declares that the men to whom he owes most are not the writers, but the far-seeing leaders of the working class, whose lessons and example help us all.

Comrades, it is not because I have a taste for paradoxes, but to explain better what I mean about changing the writer's methods, that I say that the militant's life does not really equip the writer to the full unless he leads this life without making reservations as a writer. What kind of an active member would a man be who, if he had a branch meeting or a section committee to conduct, instead of devoting himself entirely to the job, was concerned with noting what things in the meeting "go well," as they say, in a book? He would be a bad worker, obviously. What is less obvious, but just as certain, is that he would not get far as a writer either.

This is perhaps the most subtle dividing line between the work of writers of the old type and that of a writer who lives at the heart of the working class, which is itself the heart of the nation, the center of the world. That life in itself, without his knowing it, feeds the writer, gives him the material for his writing, and gives to his creative effort a natural strength which enables him, for example, to completely upset the ac-

cepted standards of time required for getting together the material or for the actual writing of a book. And this helps to destroy a whole series of myths which are both paralyzing and comforting (and which have a certain currency even within our own ranks) as to the conditions which are indispensable for a writer to do good work.

TAKE, for example, the myth of *the extreme fragility of inspiration,* the supreme delicacy of the mechanism of artistic creation. Certainly, these are very complex things, but are they any more complex or delicate than what goes on in the head or heart of an active worker, faced with a new and difficult situation, who has to take a decision fraught with grave consequences not only for himself, but often for many other people?

The elements of literary creation are not so delicate that in the presence of militant action they must always be like the earthenware pot clashed against the iron pot, and must continually be put into a hothouse to develop. The conditions are now arising for a completely new inspiration to spring from the struggle itself—an inspiration made not of glass, but of iron and steel like the struggle itself. And we can be sure that more and more writers will come forward who feel no temptation to create works of struggle while reserving for themselves a special privileged little place on the sidelines.

Another of these myths, which arise from the idealist conception of artistic inspiration, would have us believe, in order to explain the "difficulty" of creating fighting literature, that "you can't control inspiration." Expressed in this way, this is not untrue, in the sense that you cannot write on any subject no matter what, just by order or by a simple mental decision.

But there is something that does control inspiration. That is the life one leads, which is itself a matter of choice. And just as it is true that it is difficult to write about the problems of the struggle if you do not personally grapple with them in your own life, so, in the opposite case, you reach this point: the consciousness that a particular subject is politically the important one to deal with goes together with the capacity to handle it as a novelist.

It is, moreover, only in this way that a true novel can be created on the line of the Party's policy. And it is exactly the opposite of what is alleged by those who say that "the Party dictates subjects to us." What they fail to understand is that Party life does not only give us true ideas, but it gives them in their emotional context, with all the warmth of life itself.

Who does not know that it is through the deepest emotions of life that people advance by leaps and bounds in their political ideas? As Lenin said, people gain political experience "in their own flesh and blood." For the militant worker unceasingly engaged in this life, precisely to enable him to clarify his

experience, the essential problems of politics can never present themselves in a dry way, repellent to works of art. He himself often feels the emotion which is the concentrated reflection of the mighty things happening in the world in the most tenuous and subtle things of life, the things to which those people cling who are afraid of "political literature."

And if it is true that there can be no real work of art which is not rooted in an emotion experienced, but is merely the result of a simple decision, that does not mean that a writer's emotion cannot *select* precisely and definitely the same subject-matter as his political thinking.

If you live fully a Party life, you reach a point where, faced with a blank page, there is no longer any discord between heart and mind; you soon reach the point where you no longer think "It would be good to write on this or that theme, but very difficult." More and more often the heart, the creative emotion will choose the right subject even before the mind, because it is just the most difficult and advanced fight, into which the militant worker has thrown himself in answer to the Party's call, which provides the things that most exalt the writer.

Therefore, as well as the Party mind, there is what you might call the Party heart, of feeling for the Party. Without this it is impossible effectively to produce works which are both politically correct and concrete, living; without this we shall always have, as Maurice Thorez so powerfully put it, "wooden hands" when we touch anything to do with the lives of the people.

THERE is a third comforting and paralyzing myth, that of the "distance" which is supposed to be necessary from the event itself before creating a work worthy of it. The absurdity of this would be amazing, if it were not supported by the fact that if, for example, we had had to wait ten years to write a play about Henri Martin, that would have saved the government the trouble of banning *Drama in Toulon* and turning out thousands of armed police to prevent its being played. If we have to take a crack in passing at a myth which is really on the same lines as the taking down of the political pictures hung in the Autumn Salon, it is only because it still circulates among us in disguise, camouflaged behind most praiseworthy things such as concern for quality and the time needed to achieve it.

There are some ideas about quality which need establishing, too, though we have no time here—in particular, that quality is not just a matter of form but first of all of content; and that quality of form is not only a matter of craftsmanship and work, but is a direct function of content and of the artist's reaction to it.

Another word on the basis of this "distance" question. It is understandable that the artists of the past, even the greatest, should have felt the need

for a "distance" of this kind. They had to let history flow on for a time, longer or shorter according to their personal genius, so as to be able, with all necessary guarantees, to reach an assessment which would have a chance of enduring in the face of history. How could they, by themselves, not guided by any scientific teaching, immediately reach a correct historical estimate of the event?

Things are quite different today for a writer guided by the Party of the rising class, which is making history, and which controls events by applying to them scientific methods of analysis and action; for the writer who makes the effort to understand these events in the light of scientific method, while they are still red hot, to help forge them as a militant Party worker.

These three myths are comforting because they help to reserve even for the Communist writer, whether he knows it or not, a special, privileged position, and prevent him from being a man among men, on the same level as others, whose fight as a writer is only part of his fight as a man. It helps to preserve in him a tendency to set himself up, while he is still alive, on the imaginary pedestal of the statue that may perhaps be erected to him after his death.

And these myths are paralyzing because for all too many people who have developed in the struggle and are rich in experience, particularly young people, they make a mountain out of the difficulties of being at one and the same time a militant worker and a writer to express that living experience. They put the stress on the difficulties and not on the essential thing—that it is from militant action, with a practical effort to overcome the difficulties, that we will get the new and best cadres for our literature, as for every other aspect of our work.

We would be much to blame if we presented the conditions of a writer's work in the old way, as inaccessible or in any way intimidating; or if we were to surround our writing today with the mysterious halo of "personal talent" or "innate qualities of a writer," and so set up a barrage of discouragement to future writers, who tomorrow will do better than we have done and whom it is our duty to encourage to the utmost.

This is why we insist so strongly that when we succeed in writing something good, we owe it to our Party. That is why, even if it seems funny or embarrassing to some, I repeat that not only as a militant worker, but as a writer, I owe everything to my Party: because what the Party has given to me it can give to others, and there is nothing mysterious or inaccessible about it.

IS THERE something narrow in saying that better literature will be produced by writers who are not only Party members, but members deeply involved in the Party's fight? Narrowness, for example, in relation to non-Communist writers whose courageously realistic work we approve? But why should they feel af-

fronted if we affirm a strong conviction different from theirs? Why should deep sympathy for their efforts prevent us from being frank, and telling them clearly what unites us and what separates us, in this field as in others?

Narrowness from the point of view of the danger that there might be, owing to this militant standpoint, of only presenting a limited world, limited for example to the working class? Apart from the fact that the main danger so far is certainly not that of having too many workers in our books, we should remember that if there is a man in our time who tries not to limit his view of society, it is the active Communist. Nothing that is national can be remote from the Party of the working class. The Party and its life are, as it were, high ground from which we can best see the nation as a whole. And *The Communists,* by Aragon, is proof that even the big bourgeoisie is seen best, not from inside, but from the heights of the working-class Party, from the life of a militant in the Party, in which respect Aragon sets writers an example.

There are people who cannot bear any talk of militant writing. "Militant" to them means "schematic." Their mistake, which some of our weaknesses may encourage, comes from imagining that we assign to novels exactly the same tasks as to other means of expression by the Party, and limit the functions of the novel to this. Perhaps, when we say so often that books are weapons, we have not ourselves considered sufficiently in what *special* way our books can be useful, what are the *particular* tasks of the novel and short story, tasks which only they can perform, or at any rate can perform better than a newspaper article or speech, and which mean that the novel is not limited to being a heightened form of propaganda or education.

Should not a novelist set himself such special tasks? Is it not valuable for our struggle, for instance, if our books give to everyone in the fight the consciousness of the grandeur and nobility of every act in this struggle, setting it in its true light? Is it not valuable if they light up in this way even the smallest actions, the most humble practical tasks, at a time when the Party and its organizations are alleged to be a sort of gloomy barracks cut off from life? Where can we do this better than in works of literature and art?

And is it not necessary to touch somewhere on the problems which present themselves to all active workers just as much as political problems, and which are certainly no easier to resolve? For instance, problems of the private life of active workers, whose solution, good or bad, is never without influence on their fight? Where can we do this better than in a novel?

And hasn't the novel got its own way of helping the political life even of those who are already fighting? Cannot this be done in a non-schematic way? Politics in real life, even Party life, never presents itself in the same pure form as it does in the

analyses of our Party leaders. It is not worked out, but in the raw state. It consists of a mass of contradictions, hesitations, misunderstandings, errors, not only in words, but still more in actions. Through the midst of this chaos, correct ideas have to find their way. How can we talk of cut and dried schemes in face of this living material, full of conflicts, which the life of a militant puts at the writer's disposal? And this perhaps is one of the most useful things a Communist writer can aim at, to help in solving these thousands of conflicts by showing the reader a straight and clean road through them, and creating a form of art inspired by the value of criticism and self-criticism.

IF WE have not yet thought and written much on these problems, comrades, it proves that we are still only apprentices at this work. . . . And if we were inclined to doubt this, we need only take a glance at Soviet literature, which is incontestably the most advanced because it is the expression of the life of a Socialist country marching to Communism. There is nothing depressing about this superiority: it is full of promise, promise of progress for our literature taking example from that great literature, promise of the advance of our Party in every field, of the victories of our people, inspired by the glorious example of the Bolshevik Party.

And because our Party is leading us towards these victories, our literature has already made a big advance on one of the enemy's decisive fronts: pessimism. How could this literature of optimism have been created in a capitalist country like ours, in the epoch of imperialism, in a period of war and war preparations, of deepened poverty, of growing attacks on liberty, if the Party were not able to show with such power, beyond all this, the certainty of progress and victory? This success, which no one would think of explaining by the personal qualities of this or that writer, which is clearly the work of the Party of Maurice Thorez, is undeniably a great step towards socialist realism.

ON PEACE

By JEAN JENKINS

The dry horizons of our desert thoughts
Define the day
No drop no hint of rain.
And the dry winds of hate and class and power
Parch the lips, make thirst like pain.

Close the eyes tight, solicit from the night.
Beg of the mind's store
A drink, a draught.
Drink deep of the remembering wine.

Remember now the vineyards and who toiled
To make the wine you drink.
Remember in the factories and the fields
And at the washboards or the broom or wheel
Who make, who till, who sweep
And who shall reap?

Around the earth's circumference a link
Of scrawling lines is made, in every tongue
In every ink
Eight-hundred million names!

The dry horizons of our desert thoughts
Grow arable
And hungry children eat
And swords to ploughshares, atoms to defeat
Imperious nature and to service Man!

The vineyards' burgeon and the dogwoods' red
Welcome the day to be inherited!

JEAN JENKINS, a Californian and a mother of four, was a delegate to the Second World Peace Congress in Warsaw.

They Speak for Millions . . .

Many times in these pages we have struck out at the slanderers of the Negro people—against the pseudo-scientific "analyzers," against the self-appointed spokesmen for those who allegedly "cannot speak for themselves," against the perversions of white-supremacy historians.

We have insisted that the Negro people are readily knowable, and as an example of the source material at hand, one might point to the Negro press and in particular to that part of the press which most directly expresses the mind of the people—the letters to the editor. Even in the most conservative Negro newspapers the letter columns consistently reflect the deep stir of militant thought among the masses of the people.

A documentary history of our times might very well include, for example, the following four letters that comprised the "What the People Think" department of the June 28 issue of the Pittsburgh Courier, *largest Negro weekly.*

—L. L. B.

"HERE'S A FAMILIAR STORY TO MANY A RACE VETERAN"

"To the Editor:

"I have been lying here on my bunk reading Collins C. George's article on 'Integration in Europe.' He speaks well of how 'colored men' are treated in Germany. Tell him, if he really wants to hear of some good filthy news, he should drop down to Foret de Hope, outside of Nancy, France. We are the only colored troops here at this post. The rest are made up of Southern whites who have brought to Europe their malicious 'down home' traits. All the MPs that patrol the city are white and go out of their way to embarrass the Negro soldier when he visits the city.

"Take a recent incident for example. One of our men was attacked on a Saturday night while visiting Nancy by a couple of drunken white soldiers. The colored soldier was walking down the street with two Frenchmen when they (the whites) remarked, 'that n——r, who does he think he is?' and proceeded to fight. Another colored soldier, seeing the attacked man's predicament, came to the rescue. The white soldiers ran.

"That night, when the truck was being loaded with men to bring them back to camp, a countless number of MPs swarmed upon us and demanded that all the men (colored) get off the truck. Being Saturday, the streets were crowded and the action immediately drew a crowd of French people. The MPs seemed to enjoy this. They made everyone (colored) line up against a wall with their hands up in the air. They said very hurting things pertaining to the race. One man protested and was beaten severely. None of the men attacked the MPs, but for voicing their opinion they were then embarrassed by being carted off to jail in the presence of a large group of bewildered Frenchmen.

"Easter, we were not allowed to leave the post. That Monday, General Ford came in. He refused to believe the MPs were at fault. He was more upset when he found that the company commander was colored. His words were: 'You, the company commander!' He told us we should not feel as we do because we were pushed around for, after all, 'the Army has done more for the Negro than any other institution.' He went on to say many things to show that the Negro was held in low esteem by him. 'Negro' was on his lips when he entered the tent 'til the time he left. He said that he would see to it personally that one of the men taken in the incident got everything that he could give. This man has a family and is due to be discharged in June.

"If the general throws his weight around and has anything to do with this man's 'court-martial,' it will be years before the man sees his family. There are others involved who have families and are up for court-martial because they defended their rights to be treated respectfully. One of the men, newly married, has a wife who is expecting a child very soon.

"The general especially didn't like a Negro officer commanding a unit with white officers under him. He was the only Negro officer in the company. He had to suffer the humiliation of being discharged from his post of commander and a white lieutenant given his post. This colored officer, Lieutenant Vincent, took over when Lieutenant Quehl, who was then commander, was called home. While commander, Lieutenant Quehl did absolutely nothing for us since we arrived here in France.

"To make things as livable as possible we lived in drafty tents with no flooring, had no proper mess hall to sit in and eat and were up to our necks in mud. The CO even went so far as to have the men at the gate search us, going out and coming in. When Lieutenant Vincent (colored) took over, he immediately went to work and we now have a huge new mess hall with nice tables and chairs, music while we eat and literature on current events on the walls for us to peruse. The once muddy streets were covered with cobblestones and walks were built. Floors were put in all the tents. Morale rocketed to a high never seen before in the company.

"After all these wonderful accomplishments, Lieutenant Vincent was

relieved, with no explanation given. Sunday night, April 20, one of our men was 'pistol whipped' because as the MP sergeant put it, 'I have been wanting to hit one of those n——rs.' Nothing was done about this, though the man required medical attention for a wounded head that the doctor said came from the butt of a gun.

"While C. S. George is here in Europe investigating conditions of Negro troops, inform him of the sordid treatment the men are going through here at Foret de Hope. The men are now barred from going to town 'til such a time as the general feels it is permissible. It has been two weeks and he hasn't relented as yet. Morale is very, very low. Think also of these six or eight men court-martialed for defending their rights. If something can be done, we of the Ninety-seventh Engineers would appreciate it.

"(Soldier's Name Withheld)
Company (withheld), Ninety-seventh Engineer Construction Bn., Ad Sec. Eu-com Com. 2
Foret de Hope, France"

"A 2ND CLASS U.S. CITIZEN PLUGS DEMOCRACY IN ASIA"

"To the Editor:

"Situated as we are, we are as a race supposed to have leaders who allegedly reflect our views or show us the direction we should take on public questions. Most of these 'leaders' are self-appointed or chosen for us by white people who control the means of public information.

"Our plight is desperate. This was illustrated by the manner in which a loud-mouthed buffoon like Walter Winchell has used his column and his radio time to try and destroy courageous Negroes who truly reflect the feelings of their people. I need only to cite the cases of Paul Robeson and Josephine Baker. Winchell has set himself up as the maker or breaker of Negro leaders. It is a question of meet the approval of Windy Walter—or else.

"Bad as this condition is, it is distressing when Negroes, through ignorance, stupidity or sheer mendacity, join the nefarious campaign of misinforming our people for no discernible reason than to get the white people's approval.

"Whether we like it or not, we, an oppressed people, must give first consideration to our racial affairs in all matters. First things must come first. It was ludicrous to see A. P. Randolph, a second-class citizen in his own country, traveling to far-away Japan to advise the Japanese people on matters of democracy.

"ROMEO R. JACKSON
New York, N. Y."

"15-YEAR-OLD SON SLAIN 'LIKE A DOG' IN ROSWELL"

"To the Editor:

"My 15-year-old boy was slaughtered here like a dog, and nothing was done about it. We want to leave here, but we have no money, and I still owe for my boy's funeral. My husband is a minister, Elder John M.

Davis. My name is Mrs. Minnie Lee Davis, 1217 South Elm Street, Roswell, New Mexico. My remaining family consists of Leroy, 7; William, 8; Rosalee, 12; Anna Margaret, 11; myself and my husband. We want to get away from this state.

"MRS. MINNIE DAVIS
Roswell, N. M."

"AVERELL HARRIMAN'S ROAD UPHOLDS SEPARATE TRAVEL"

"To the Editor:

"Is there anyone on the Courier staff who thinks that Averell Harriman would have to be elected to the Presidency before segregation in interstate travel is abolished? The Supreme Court has long since abolished jim crow but Harriman's railroad, the Illinois Central, is one of the few roads which refuse to abolish segregation in accordance with the high court directive. Quite recently the Courier carried a lengthy account of a colored woman having to sue Harriman's railroad. Later the Courier carried a long advertisement boosting the jim-crow railroad's owner. How quickly will Negroes compromise on principle and what won't they do for money? But then I suppose that the Courier needs money.

"GEORGE E. WASHINGTON
Phoebus, Va."

What's Happened to ERSKINE CALDWELL?

By SIDNEY FINKELSTEIN

ERSKINE CALDWELL'S latest novel, *A Lamp for Nightfall,** tells a pathetic story, but the real tragedy it unfolds is the dissipation of what once was one of the brightest talents of his generation in American letters. He came upon the literary scene in the early Thirties with a flock of stories about the land and people of the South, mainly of his home state of Georgia, and with a folk-balladeer's gusto in telling them.

He had nothing in common with the school of Southern writers who wept over the decline of the "old plantation families" and tried to make a chivalric myth out of the moral corruption of the slaveowners. A child of the rural South, it was about the poor that he wrote, the bitterly exploited tenant farmers and share-croppers living close to starvation on exhausted land.

He had a style clear of literary affectation and subjectivity, with a touch of the speech of the common people. His thinking was, like his style, intuitive, pragmatic, working on a level of immediate reaction to the life before him. But a product of the depression years, he was touched by the wave of enlightenment that broke over the American people in their struggle against the banks and monopolies.

This era is now being described by the reactionary critics as a kind of Marxist conspiracy to capture the literary trade, against which contagion they are now trying to inoculate American literature. But what really happened was that the American working people pushed their life, character and growing class consciousness into literature, and those writers who made themselves the vehicle for this realism are the ones we now remember. In this maturity the Marxist and anti-fascist movement played a strong and proud role.

Caldwell was moved by these struggles, although he never really overcame the contradictions that were shown in his earliest works. In his first novels, such as *Tobacco Road* (1932) and *God's Little Acre* (1933), he had shown little interest

* A LAMP FOR NIGHTFALL, by Erskine Caldwell. Duell, Sloan and Pearce—Little, Brown & Co. $3.00.

in the Negro people, even though in the South of which he wrote ten million Negroes lived under conditions of terrible oppression, and the misery and illiteracy of his poor whites was only a reflection of the colonial conditions forced upon the Negro population.

But he was willing to learn and to fight. By 1934 he was reporting for *New Masses* on the lynchings and reign of terror against the Negro people in Georgia. He was himself, while reporting, in danger of his life. During the middle Thirties he also wrote a series of short stories dealing with the violence practiced against the Negro people, the lynchings, the corruption of police and judges. These stories were a high point of his career and of the entire literature of the decade.

At the same time he pulled a winning ticket in the crazy lottery of the literary marketplace. *Tobacco Road* was made into a play. Its tragic undercurrent was discarded and the emphasis was put on its grotesque humor and its portrayal of people incapable of love, copulating like animals. It ran for seven years on Broadway, becoming a kind of national institution, one of the sights of New York to be visited by every tourist, like a peep show.

Another novel, *Journeyman* (1935), was an attempt to continue this vein of humor based on "primitive" sex life and the cruelty which human beings can inflict on one another. With the growth of cheap reprints, and then of the paper books sold in drug stores and on newsstands, Caldwell found a new mar market. Novel after novel, particularly in the 1940's, sold in the hundreds of thousands, all with the same "humorous" goods to offer, alongside of murder mysteries and cowboy stories. He was on his way making a fortune on stories which effect derided the poor.

CALDWELL'S humor is not eas to define. Certainly there ha been nothing like this before American literature, a wild laughte based on poverty, misery, rape, mur der and accidental killing, the cruel of human beings to one another, th degradation of parents who shru their shoulders when daughters twelve and thirteen go off to live prostitutes. It is humor built on foundation of human suffering, an in it life is shrugged off as cheap.

In *Tobacco Road,* for example, th young Dude Lester, wildly drivi a new car without looking whe he is going or blowing his ho overturns a wagon and kills two N groes. The "joke" is that there more concern over the car than ov the human lives.

"It's a shame to get the new car smash up so soon already, though," Bessie sa going back and wiping off the dust. was brand-new only a short time bef noon, and now it's only sundown."

"It was that n——r," Dude said. he hadn't been asleep on the wagon wouldn't have happened at all. He plumb asleep till it woke him up threw him out into the ditch."

"He didn't get hurt much, did he?" Jeeter asked.

"I don't know about that," Dude said. "When we drove off again, he was still lying in the ditch. The wagon turned over on him and mashed him. His eyes were wide open all the time, but I couldn't make him say nothing. He looked like he was dead."

"N——rs will get killed. Looks like there ain't no way to stop it."

Such scenes, in the midst of a comic narrative, are quite characteristic of Caldwell.

The secret of the "laughter" is the shock of the revelation of the brutality of actual life, breaking through the veneer of illusions about civilization, an ironic joke at the pretenses of civilization itself. As against the comfortable hypocrites who assert that by some secret natural process the world keeps on pleasantly improving itself, it is suddenly revealed to us how much people can be made to live and act like animals. But as soon as we put it this way, we begin to see the terrible degradation of this humor itself.

It would be wrong to say that Caldwell the writer is callous to the human suffering about which he inspires this grotesque laughter. He sympathizes with the victims of the Lesters and with the doomed Lesters themselves. He even gives their end a touch of pathos. But what emerges is a close kin to callousness, a frightful feeling of impotence. This is the way the world is, he says, and there is nothing a person can do but make a better joke.

This contradiction is seen in Caldwell's handling of the Negro people. In some short stories, as in the early novels—stories such as "My Old Man," "Big Buck," "Meddlesome Jack"—intended to be funny, he could re-create the most contemptible stereotypes about the Negro people, seeing them through the eyes of the Southern small farmer who himself exploits the Negro. Yet in others, such as "Candy-Man Beechum," "Blue Boy," "Runaway," "The End of Christy Tucker," he could write indignant exposures of the inhuman viciousness with which the Negro people are treated. His stories of lynchings, such as "Saturday Afternoon" and "Kneel to the Rising Sun" are powerful in their anger, underlining both the horror of the scene and the depravity of the white people who take part in it. But putting these stories together, there seems to be an unnecessary dwelling on sadism.

In "Kneel to the Rising Sun," for example, the white plantation owner not only exploits the tenant farmers but cuts off the tails of their dogs, and there is an episode of a hungry old man who stumbles at night into a hog pen and is half eaten by the hogs. In this story, which is perhaps Caldwell's greatest, there is an interesting portrayal of relations between Negro and white share-croppers.

The white man, Lonnie, admires the Negro for his courage in standing up to the brutal plantation owner, and looks upon the Negro as a helper and friend. But he is too weak

and terrified to help the Negro, and in the end he is browbeaten into helping the lynchers. Perhaps Caldwell meant this weakness of the poor white as a generalization of what he thought was wrong with the South. But what emerges unmistakably, through all this indignation, is a terrible feeling of impotence. Reaction is triumphant. Evil wins. Nothing is changed.

MANY other stories of the middle Thirties seem to be, taken individually, notable works of realism, but put together they are obsessed by cruelty, like "Wildflowers" where a homeless woman dies giving birth to a child on a lonely road while her husband is frantically looking for help, or "The Girl Ellen," in which a woman drowns herself because another woman flirts with her lover.

In some of his best stories Caldwell discovered the depression life in the cities. "Slow Death" displayed the kindliness and humanity of an unemployed, militant worker, who at the end is run over by a car while a policeman allows him to bleed to death, sneering at him as a "bum." "Masses of Men" tells of a woman whose husband is killed by an accident on his job. The company takes advantage of her illiteracy to deny her compensation. To keep her children from starving she offers her body on the street, and when the men jeer at her for being too old, she brings one of them to her ten-year-old daughter. The story is grippingly told, and unforgettable in its horror. But what emerges from it, as from all of them, is the sense of impotence, of the unassailable triumph of the brutal forces.

Caldwell's "comedies" and "tragedies" are cut from the same cloth and often he does not seem to know whether he is writing one or the other. In *Trouble in July*, a novel of 1940, Caldwell hit bottom in sheer bad taste, by using a lynching as the theme for a "comic" novel.

It is true that his ridicule is aimed at the corrupt workings of the law in a small town, and the "comedy" deals with the desperate efforts of a timid sheriff to keep out of sight until the trouble blows over, first going on a fishing trip and then locking himself up in his own jail. It is also true that Caldwell exposes the despicability of the lynchers and feels sympathy for the young Negro who is finally killed. But the powerlessness to do anything about it is still the theme on which the book ends, and that he should use such a theme as a lynching for a "comedy" treatment is altogether unspeakable.

Caldwell did not become mature enough to grasp the full reality of the South itself. The fact is that the South, throughout this period, was the center of powerful and heroic struggles which made permanent changes. Labor organization was rising, not only in the mills but among share-croppers and tenant farmers. Ministers took part, figures like the Negro Owen Whitfield and the white Claude Williams, far different from the comic revivalist preachers of the

Caldwell stories. The victory of the Scottsboro case shook the entire structure of legal lynching.

In Georgia, as throughout the South, a powerful drive was under way by the Negro people for the right to vote, and to counter it the racist politicians had to bring all their forces to bear—the Ku Klux Klan, legislative chicanery, lynching, and a prison camp and chain-gang system indescribable in its sadism. The fight for the right to vote, which has now assumed mass proportions, is one of the great heroic stories of our time.

BUT this great collective struggle, this vital movement and change, the rise of new forces, cannot be seen in the Caldwell novels and stories. He has some feeling for the changing scene in the South, but there is no change in his people. *Tobacco Road* had the contradictory effect of throwing light upon the abysmal poverty of the poor white tenant farmer, and at the same time helping to foster the "hill-billy" stereotype, depicting the farmer as a hopeless idiot, unable to lift a finger to help himself, not a victim of exploitation but a case history for the anthropologists to study, putting him alongside of other strange "cultures."

In *God's Little Acre,* Caldwell wrote of a strike in a mill town, but the leader of the workers, who dies at the end in a brave effort to re-open the closed textile mill, is in every other aspect of his life only the same Jeeter Lester stereotype.

A decade later, in *Tragic Ground* (1944), Caldwell told of the farmers who had been induced to work in war plants, and were cast off in the semi-depression that struck the war industry in that year. His central character, Spence Douthit, is still Jeeter Lester under a different name. And in this novel Caldwell turned the force of his ridicule against a social worker trying to bring some aid to the slums in which his cast-offs lived. It is true that some social workers are fools, but this group would not seem to be the main enemy of his unemployed people. It smacks of the "states-rights" politician's cry of "leave the South alone."

And indeed, in a book of photographs by Margaret Bourke-White to which Caldwell wrote a commentary, *You Can See Their Faces,* Caldwell did express himself in some such terms, namely that the South must "cure itself." A couple of novels of the late Forties, *A Place Called Estherville* and *A House in the Uplands,* are pathetic in their efforts to outline a "cure."

What Caldwell could never see was the fact of the South's relation to the rest of the country, the fact that the drum-beating "states-rights" politicians, the "unreconstructed Southerners," were hired agents and puppets of Northern capital, that the forces for democratic rights and human decency in the South needed and demanded the assistance of democratic people over the entire country. A product of the South, he emerged only partially to see it objectively, never losing a sense of impotence.

HIS latest production, *A Lamp for Nightfall,* painfully indicates that he no longer has anything to say. Its scene is Maine, which he had previously used as the background for a number of short stories, such as "The Midwinter Guest" and "Country Full of Swedes." The "comedy" of these stories was invariably based on the stereotype of the skinflint, parsimonious farmer, who hates all "foreigners," such as Swedes, Finns, Poles, French Canadians, New Yorkers, and American Indians. This "comedy" is carried on in the present novel in the character of Thede Emerson, the central figure, who continually mouths racist phrases. Caldwell, of course, does not share these prejudices, as he shows, but the sad thing is that he should think the repetition of them to be funny.

The novel has no feeling of time or place. One could not tell from anything that happens or is said that a second world war had taken place. The description of a farmer, Thede Emerson, amassing $200,000 on a farm, by saving his pennies and working himself and his wife to the bone, is an absurdity. There are the usual scenes of sadistic cruelty. The mother beats the daughter. The father will not give his son the few dollars he needs to go to college. The wife consorts openly with another man. Her lover is attracted to the daughter and the mother sends the daughter to him as the price he demands for continuing her own affair. There is a hint of incestuous love between the son and daughter.

And as in *Tobacco Road* Caldwell, opening in a comic vein, tries to end with a note of deep pathos. The son commits suicide, carrying on the Caldwell theme of impotence against evil. The suicide is completely incredible. The daughter gets married to a "foreigner." The wife leaves home. And at the end the old farmer is sitting alone in the house sadly watching the forest grow back on the land that had once been human habitation.

The writing has a banality which indicates that Caldwell's old command of the writer's craft is gone. It had to go, for its vitality was so much a part of the life with which it once was in contact.

It is a pity that the work of a writer who once promised so much should now be only a thriving commodity in the drug store trade. The deterioration of the artist has gone along with Caldwell's continuing silence on the great issues facing the American people today. How can an artist grow except in struggle against the forces that are oppressing the people and degrading culture in our country?