

are special rules governing the fight against the usurers. The rules read: "If a rich man owes a poor man, the debt must be paid. If a poor man owes a rich man, the debt must not be paid." That is fine. Usurers must be done away with like the most harmful insects. Our district organized a workers' and peasants' bank. It lends money to the peasant, but is not permitted to charge more than 1 percent. A workers' and peasants' bank is the strongest weapon we have against the usurer.

June 17.—Yesterday I visited a neighboring village, with which we also have an agreement for socialist competition. I went there to attend the Soviet meeting. In that village I saw a marvelous thing: on the walls and gates of several houses, and on the temple by the roadside, there were blazing placards. In half-illiterate hieroglyphics the placards proclaimed: "Do not shut your gates at night." and "If you lose something on the road, no one will touch it." I liked particularly the placard on the temple. It read: "In a state that has no vacant land there are no wander-

ing men in the fields." I was very much impressed by these placards and asked the chairman of the village about them. He explained: "Formerly we had many thefts in the community and once we even had a murder. But when the Soviet finally established itself here we called several large meetings of the peasants. We told them: 'The land is ours, the houses are ours, the bread is ours, in fact, everything is ours. Therefore anyone who steals prevents the Soviet power from abolishing poverty.' Since that time, that is, two months ago, we have had but two thefts." That is fine propaganda. We must spread this throughout the county.

June 29.—All these days I have had no spare time. In the Loon-tan region the Kuomintang army broke through into Soviet territory. General Jan-Jen united with the army of Sien-Chan-Bien and advanced on our county.

At present there is only one short day's march between ourselves and the front. A Red Army brigade has already gone forward. In the villages we are organizing a detach-

ment of the Young Guard, and placing sentries on the rivers. In two of our villages we organized the peasant women into several laundry brigades, two Red Cross units, and three units to sew underwear for the Red Army.

General mobilization has been declared. On the Square a big meeting will be held today. The commander of the Red Army detachment whose task it is to defend this county will himself speak. We, the armed peasants, as well as the women auxiliaries, will go with this detachment.

We are leaving behind only a small corps of guards to defend the village. Almost all the people are going to the front. The old, the lame, the ill, the very young, and the pregnant women remain behind. We put aside hoe and sickle and pick up rifles. But we will be back soon. We will defend our Soviet land.

I am writing my last words. I put aside my brush. Before the last drops of ink have dried in the bottle, I shall return again to my native village, Pei-Tsun.

Pacific Mills

MARTIN RUSSAK

It hurts the eyes, Pacific Mills, it hurts
To lift them here and look at you, Pacific Mills,
Dead black against the setting sun, your upper lines
Brimming with dazzlement of blazing light,
Your twin bell-towers pouring orange flame
Through their open steeples, and your thousand window-panes
Flashing reflected crimson from the sun-struck mills
Of the further bank.
Even the Merrimack that flows between is fired
To purple and to polished rose.
What is it makes me pause upon the bridge,
Amid the Lawrence mills?
What is it makes me see them as though never seen before
By any eyes? The mills of Lawrence!—
Five on the north bank, five on the south,
Now strangely radiant in the keen glorious clarity of sunset
glow.

It is the end of the day-shift, the surging multitude
Of workers presses homeward across the bridge
More eagerly and yet with heavier steps
Thronging toward the sunset than they came
Hurrying into the sunrise and the mills.
In troops of chattering women they stream across,
And men whose talk is but a word or nod,
And bold-eyed girls in laughing bands who find
Laughter where everyone else finds tears and gall,
And youngsters listening to a buddy tell
How he spoke up to the boss that afternoon

And told him where to get off at, curse for curse,
And here and there a man, as he stumbles along,
Holding our Communist leaflet, just received
At the mill-gate, and hard to read, before his eyes.
They jostle me and wonder no doubt as they pass
What can a fellow be doing like that on the bridge,
Moping over the rail at supper-time
Like one who hasn't a thing to do or a care to forget,
His cap pulled down to shade the sunset glare,
Gaping at the dead Pacific Mills,
Where no one even goes to look for a job anymore.

It hurts more than the eyes, Pacific Mills,
To think of what you signify
In all your emptiness and death;
And again to think
Of what in your productive days
You meant to the generations of our class,
When all your looms and spindles and machines of work
Roared night and day upon the Merrimack,
And we produced for farthest peoples of the world
The famous cottons of Pacific Mills.
Once your gates, too, were thronged at evening and dawn
With laughing girls and chattering women-folk,
With fearless youths and thoughtful men, and on the bridge
At supper-time, the surging multitude
Of workers, now in one direction bound, would press,
More numerous then, in both directions bound.
Ah yes, the wealth and power of our toil remains

Still for the surfeit and ease of those who owned—
Invisible overlords and visible overseers!—
You and our vigor and cloth, Pacific Mills.
Nothing remains for us who toiled to wrest
From your chambers of work a meager livelihood,
Nothing but hunger and want and desolation;
And in the City Ditch upon the hill
Are buried before their time the older folks
Who slaved their lives away within these walls.
The peoples to the farthest precincts of the world
Are ragged, and thousands of us in rags,
Here in your very shadow, Pacific Mills,
The best of spinners, weavers, carders in the land,
Are kept from weaving, neither may we spin,
So that our masters may be profited.
Well, they have profited and we are idle too—
We here with empty hands and you,
A huge, disused, abandoned hulk
Against the sunset of a dying world.

The bells still hang in the bell-towers,
But never ring for work.
The chimney rises between them
With never a coil of smoke.
The iron bars on the windows
Guard but an inner void.
Pacific Mills! A black fortress
Of shadow between life and light.

The Boston bus rolls hollowly across the empty bridge,
Ending with drowsy passengers its homeward run
Through Malden, Reading, Wakefield, Andover.
The surging multitude has passed the bridge,
Leaving me mournfully washed up against the rail
Under the darkening walls of Pacific Mills.
The single stream of masses, pushing on,
By now has spread in dribbles through the town,
And scattering into single tired folks
In separate tenements at supper-table
They eat in silence or in angry talk relate
The troubles of the dying day—and now
How many hands are smoothing out, how many thoughtful
eyes

Inspect our leaflet! There in the tenements of the town
Its brave sharp leaping words are stirring up
Imagery and hope of action in anxious minds.
Like lights that need but the igniting touch,
Knowledge of power, foreknowledge of mastering revolt,
Remembered flaming visions of the Lawrence strikes—
The strikes of Lawrence!—
Emblazon the troubles of the dying day,
And images of the future haunt the immediate words.

The gulls, too, fetch their supper
From the Merrimack below,
Here at their favorite spot
In unmolested peace
Riding the waters of their roadstead
And perching undisturbed
By any stir of life
On the window-ledges of the Mill,
Their inland, lightless, pacific
Acropolis to Atlantic storm.

But in the mills of either bank the lights are on,
In bright rows gleaming, though with gaps of night

Between the rows, for they too sicken and die
Toward the darkness of the Pacific Mills.
The sleepy night-shift that has slept by day
Is moving singly and in scattered groups
Back over the bridge and the black Merrimack
To man the combers and spindles, the looms
And card machines—dim forms of men;
To them the sunset is the dawn of day
And sunrise signals end of work and sleep.

Pacific Mills! Your darkness stains
The dark night and your silence palls
The passing river and the busy town
Behind your shadow of death—and yet
Is there not light that seems to hover here
Like phosphorus in dead wood? Do I not see
The generations of the workers of Lawrence surge with song
And laughter and cries and shouts of wrath
Around you and the mills of Lawrence in the strikes
Of Lawrence? Do I not see
The spirit of that youth the soldiers slew
Beside your walls in strike-time now on guard
Up on your towers, watching through the night
For the red signal that will make him leap
And ring your bells, O, ring your bells at last!
Death is for you and yours, silence for you and yours;
Joy and creation are with us alone;
The toiling generations through the years
March deathlessly to storm your walls and seize
Empire of you for freedom and for life.

Be patient on the towers, youthful spirit,
We know you wait on guard; good-night, so-long;
I go; good-night; I pass,
Pacific Mills, your shadow; I go to join
My comrades in the busy town beyond.
So-long! The meetings of the evening start
And there is much to do,—
Our little band that makes articulate
The mass; our growing band forever wakefully on guard,
Eyes of the giant body of our life,
Set high and wisely in the frame of toil and strife.

For like the rainbow that we sometimes see
After a summer storm from Prospect Hill
While trudging homeward at the end of work,
Bestriding the east, one foot on Andover
And one foot south of Boston; so now we see—
Unquenchably aglow through day and night,
Through shine and blinding storm serenely bright—
The Red Rainbow of our flaming visions, aloft, alive,
Tremendously astride the whole world's East:
The image of our future that is here!

The passing river passes and is still with us,
And still shall be; yet it comes down from far
And flows through many towns and cities of men,
Washing the walls of many mills—the mills
Of Manchester and Nashua and Lowell
And here the mills of Lawrence and below
The mills of Haverhill, and so out to sea,
Where meeting in Atlantic many streams,
Perhaps beyond, beyond, at the Red Rainbow's foot,
It mingles its eager waters from America
With those bright morning waves that bathe and wash
The free shores of the land of Soviets.

Ivory Towers—White and Red

I: *History versus Hysteria*

JOSEPH FREEMAN

IN A RECENT issue of the Daily Worker, Albert Halper raised some important questions affecting revolutionary literature in the United States. It is a healthy sign that a novelist like Albert Halper has moved so rapidly to the left, that he talks today in terms strikingly different from his *Union Square* which Michael Gold sharply and justly attacked as a slander on Communism. It is gratifying to see Halper now concerned with the problems of our movement. He is symptomatic of a large group of talented writers who have developed similarly in the past two years.

It is also gratifying to see Halper exhibit a quality which we should particularly prize: frank, courageous criticism. We need it, and just now we need it especially in our literary movement. Halper tells us that in private conversations with left-wing writers they "admit" the weaknesses of Marxian critics; but, he says, "they are too timid to come forth and grapple with the matter." Halper is not timid. He comes forth and grapples with the matter. And the matter as he sees it, is astonishingly simple. The Marxian critics are "intellectually lazy." And he is afraid that when worth-while revolutionary fiction appears, the Marxian critics will not be prepared to defend that fiction against the reactionary reviewers.

Halper indicates a crucial problem which our criticism must solve, but unfortunately he formulates it incorrectly; he shows no awareness of the dynamics of our literary movement as it has developed in the past ten years. It is not the fault of Marxist critics that younger writers are ignorant of this development, nor is it the fault of the writers. This ignorance is not due to a lack of published material. A collection of Michael Gold's literary articles, which have had a profound influence on writers coming to the left, would easily make up a book of five-hundred pages; I could collect my articles on literature published in the past ten years into a book as large; we could gather the critical pieces of other revolutionary writers published during the formative period of our movement to make up a third good-sized volume. These pieces were published when the "fence-sitters," as Halper calls the fellow-travellers, were elsewhere. In so far as literary criticism has any influence on writers, the writings of the Marxist critics have profoundly influenced even the "fence-sitters," let alone those writers who have decided to come off the fence and join the revolutionary proletariat. We do not exaggerate the importance of literary criticism. We know that what impelled writers toward the revolutionary movement was not literary

criticism, but the collapse of capitalist economy. Yet criticism plays an important role in the development of literature; it is the bridge between imaginative writing and general ideas, between the poet and the public; or to employ less antiquated categories, between creative writers and the class for which they speak. When one sets out to estimate Marxist criticism in America, one ought to have some notion of the objective facts involved.

It is not the fault of the Marxist critics in this country that no publisher would get out collections of their essays. Publishers primarily serving the working-class have limited funds; and however important it may be to issue literary essays, it is much more important to use those limited funds for the publication of Lenin's works or the studies of American economic life prepared by the Labor Research Association. And until recently no bourgeois publisher would touch a Marxist book. There was no "market for it." There was and is a market for slanders on Communism; men who know nothing about the revolutionary movement and hate it have been able to publish books distorting the facts about revolutionary literature here and abroad; the imprint of respectable publishing firms and the plaudits of the reactionary press have been reserved for those whose discussion of revolutionary literature is on the low level of hysterical abuse and personal libel. Today, thanks to the heroic battles of the American workers in San Francisco, Minneapolis, and other cities, and thanks to the radicalization of the American intelligentsia under pressure of the crisis, the bourgeois publishers think they see a "market" for left-wing writers. Proletarian literature is all the rage; writers who have been neglected for a decade because they were "only" Communists are having their books published. No distinctions are made since all that is important is the "market." This state of affairs is bound to be temporary; soon the publishers will close their doors more tightly than ever to revolutionary writers. Meantime there is this brief opportunity for such writers to reach a wider reading public.

But until this temporary "market" for left-wing literature came into existence, the Marxist critics, a handful of men until very recently, were compelled to propagate their ideas in all the available *ephemeral* forms. They published articles and book reviews in *THE NEW MASSES* and the *Daily Worker*; they lectured; they taught classes in the Workers' School; they agitated among writers in private conversation; they edited publications; they read and re-wrote other people's books and articles; they gave their time and energy without stint and without reward and without in-

tellectual or physical laziness to other writers and to numerous organizations in the hope of developing a widespread movement for revolutionary literature. They worked with methods inevitable in a period when organization and agitation were of paramount importance, and when all but the revolutionary publications were closed to them.

Today the movement for an American revolutionary literature is growing rapidly; many gifted writers are devoting themselves to the cause of the proletariat. But each new phase of our development raises new problems. The importance of Halper's piece—since he talks not merely for himself, but for left-wing writers too "timid" to talk for themselves—lies in its indication of some of these problems; its weakness lies in its failure to "grapple with the matter" politically. For Halper voices not only the "timid" left-wing writers, whoever they may be, but middle-class critics who claim that the Communists give no thought to fundamental problems of American life and culture. This is a widespread prejudice; it exists because of an anterior prejudice. In bourgeois literary circles, nobody is presumed to think about a problem unless he writes about it; and nobody is presumed to have written anything unless it is published in the bourgeois press. And since Communist writers do not, as a rule, publish in the bourgeois press, *ergo*: they do not write or think about the fundamental problems of American life and culture. The fact that this prejudice is current among certain left-wing writers shows that they still are more acquainted with and more influenced by bourgeois than by revolutionary literature.

This prejudice prevails partly because the Marxist critics have failed to publish fundamental works. Only the most limited effect can be achieved by fugitive pieces. It has been easier for professional foes of our movement to achieve a wider hearing by plagiarizing from our fugitive pieces and getting them out, vulgarized almost beyond recognition, in book form. The book is the heavy artillery on the so-called "cultural front," and we have been deficient in that ordnance. If only one Marxist critic had failed to write basic books, one might indulge in personal accusations and argue Halper's profound explanation of "intellectual laziness." But when all the Marxist critics active in the movement for the past seven or eight years are in the same fix, we must look for something deeper.

In the summer of 1932 I submitted to the John Reed Club a list of proposed books and pamphlets to be done by various of our writers. These books and pamphlets were to be: (1) *Politics and Poetry*: a study of the relation