

in his estimation the fire on the Morro Castle was deliberately set by an agent of the "Caribbean Section of the Third International." It can be pointed out here that the Grace Line, for some time, has been trying to force a company union down the throats of its seamen. This is the Grace Line Association, for which it is reported that the seamen voted overwhelmingly "yes." On the beach, on the waterfront, they will tell you, that every ship, with the exception of one, on the Grace Line, voted "no" to the company union, and that, on the one exception, the vote was never disclosed. As for Senor Hernandez, who has aided the Mendieta Government in driving the revolutionary workers from the Havana docks, who helped load the Morro Castle with scab labor, his Caribbean Section of the Third International is an invention as raw as the Protocols of Zion or the supposed plan for the burning of the Reichstag. It is not new, not well prepared, even for the accomplished propagandists who make the charges against the Communists. They have done much better in the past. At least Goering planned his incendiarism with a degree of cunning.

But though the "red scare" story will fall through the weight of its own falseness, though the Grace Line will find that the Morro Castle will make poor capital for its own company union, many puzzling and inexplicable circumstances

still surround the burning of this big steamship.

The Morro Castle was a new boat, built in 1930, valued at \$5,000,000. During its last cruise that ended off the coast of Sea Girt, New Jersey, in flame and smoke, it carried a crew of 244 seamen. A full crew, according to the sailors, for a ship the size of the Morro Castle, would be about 275 hands. The shorthandedness was in the steward's department. The significance of this lies in the fact that it is the stewards who have the responsibility for seeing that the passengers know how to adjust their life belts, and operate the emergency exits. The stewards aboard the Morro Castle were working an average of 14 to 16 hours a day, and during the emergency, the shorthandedness assumed great significance.

Further, it is claimed that because she was a quick turnabout ship, not much time was left for repair work when she was in port. Although nothing has been said as yet at the investigation, seamen have reported that the extension rods, overboard valves, sea cocks and main firevalves, reaching down from the boat deck, were broken. No explanation has been given as yet why, when the blaze roared through B deck, the fire hoses did not pump water. Nor have the officers explained why, when the fire doors could be controlled automatically from five central points of the ship, it was

necessary for the crew to force them shut with iron bars—a fact disclosed privately by seamen—although the chief engineer categorically testified the fire doors were not closed.

Other questions:

Why does John Kaempf of the New York Fire Department, a passenger aboard, claim that the fire was burning fiercely and out of control at 12.45, standard time, Saturday morning while Chief Officer Warms contends that the fire was first reported to him at nearly 3 o'clock?

Why was the S.O.S. call delayed until past 3.15?

How was it possible for the blaze to sweep with such appalling rapidity the entire midships in so short a time, even granting the strong draughts in the passageways?

Did the Acting Captain William F. Warms deliberately gamble with the lives of hundreds of his passengers in order to save the Ward Line the salvage fees an S.O.S. would entail?

These and other questions shroud the origin and course of the big ship blaze. Testimony by other members of the crew and passengers may help to clear up the mysteries. Meanwhile, the seamen of the Morro Castle are stranded in New York, their clothes and money destroyed by the flames, uncertain whether or not the Ward Line will make any effort to compensate them.

The International Gunmen

THOUGH the Senate Munitions Investigation, under the captainship of Senator Gerald P. Nye, "insurgent" Republican of North Dakota, has hardly got out of sight of land it has already revealed an impressive collection of graft, scandal, and corruption. It is dubious, however, if it will be allowed to proceed much farther. Secretary Hull has already begun protesting against its disclosures of government connivance with munitions makers, it has committed acts of *lèse majesté* in showing up King George V as a super-salesman of super-armaments, it has besmirched the name of the saintly Calvin, and if it proceeds much farther into the sacrosanct realms of Navy-Second-to-None Roosevelt it may hit a submerged mine that will blow it out of the water.

The investigation already shows a few signs of slowing up, but the letters, reports and statements it has produced are sufficient to prove that no racket ever invented by underworld punks and gunmen can touch, so far as corruption and double-crossing are concerned, the various exploits of the munitions makers. But the most important fact the investigation has brought out is not so much the corruption or the international intrigues which the munition makers have fostered as the fact that the War, Navy and State Departments of this country are being used by them during times of peace as salesmen for all the instruments of war.

Three major concerns have, at the time we go to press, been investigated—the Electric Boat Co., the Driggs Ord-

nance and Engineering Co., and the great British semi-official surplus-arms corporation, Soley and Co., Ltd. And in each case testimony has proved that members of the Navy, the Army or the State Departments have done their utmost to sell the goods which these concerns handle or manufacture.

Driggs. This company manufactures heavy artillery, particularly anti-aircraft guns. After selling \$1,800,000 worth of guns to Poland, Louis L. Driggs, president of his company, could not contain his admiration for the U. S. War Department. "Except for the support of your department," he wrote in a letter to Major-General Samuel Hof of the United States Army, "we have for several years carried on this fight for foreign business single-handed."

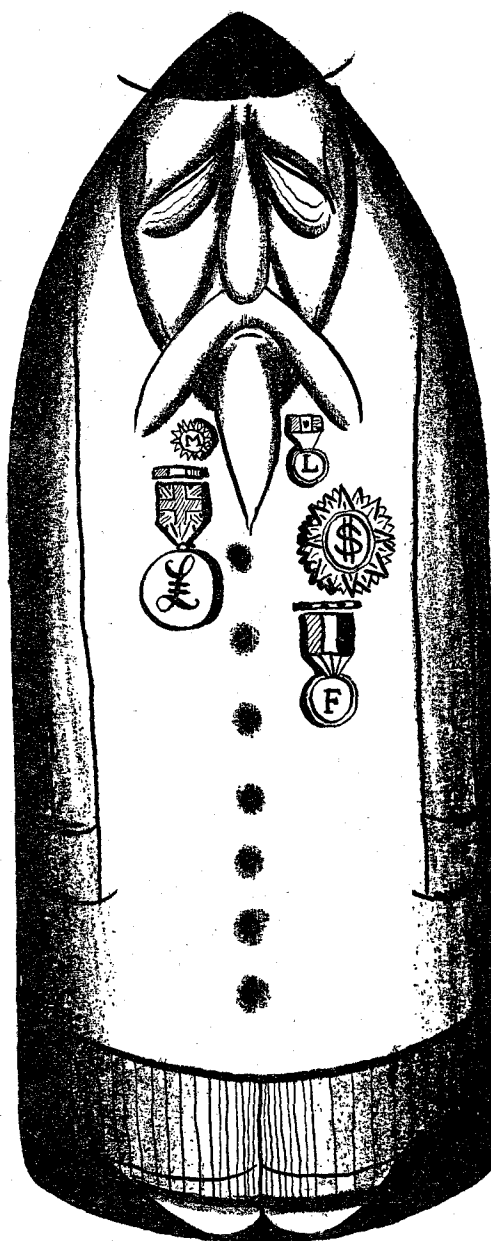
Mr. Driggs was hardly fair. The Navy Department had also exerted every effort to bring his company profits. It had, indeed, according to testimony, dispatched a cruiser to Turkey so that the Turks might look over several improved anti-aircraft guns which the United States Navy had developed at the expense of \$2,000,000. Though Navy officers were instructed to help the Driggs company in every way to sell the guns to the Turks, Mr. Driggs did not get the order. His agent complained that Vicker's, Ltd., was using dirty tactics in Constantinople by employing "women of doubtful reputation" to persuade the Turkish officials that the British guns were more efficient.

Testimony before the committee shows, however, that not only were "women of doubtful reputation" used by Vickers to defeat the government-backed salesmanship of Mr. Driggs. For though the American manufacturer wrote that the War Department was "cooperating 100 percent" in permitting him to use the latest American designs, His Majesty, George V, threw a wrench into the works, by intervening in favor of Vickers when the Driggs company attempted to sell anti-aircraft guns to Poland. Poor Mr. Driggs not only had scarlet women but kings to compete with. Even American salesmanship can't break through that!

Soley and Company. This company, evidence disclosed, controls something like \$30,000,000 worth of outmoded equipment which the British government is eager to unload on small-time nations, preferably in South America. The head of the concern is John Ball of London whose letters to his American agent were read at the investigation. Though he acts as president of his concern, he is in fact only a sales agent for the British War Office which is eager to unload its surplus material.

Granted that a government had the money to buy the munitions, the British War Office has for sale through Soley and Company a sufficient amount to alter the balance of power of smaller nations, among its neighbors. As Ball writes, in a letter made public at Washington, "The stocks we control are of such magnitude that the sale of a big block of them could alter the political balance of power of the smaller states, involving corresponding complications from the point of view of finance and industry."

The Electric Boat Company. This American firm, which deals in submarines exclusively, has powerful European



ZAHAROFF

Mackey

connections and, if the reported testimony may be accepted, stops at nothing to sell its goods. Sir Basil Zaharoff, whose ability at greasing statesmen, or, as he expressed it in a phrase which has already become famous, "doing the needful," is part owner of the concern and its European agent to whom it has paid more than \$2,000,000 during recent years for "services rendered." Whenever Sir Basil, the world's foremost exponent of mass murder, comes around one can be pretty certain that graft, corruption and intrigue are not far behind.

Sir Basil's most effective sales talk is "palm oil" and his most ready clients are politicians. Executives of the Electric Boat Company have profited greatly from his advice. They listened to him when he wrote advising that they bring pressure on the State Department to help the Boat Company peddle its sub-

marines in Spain. If the State Department acted, Sir Basil wrote, "I will have no difficulty in persuading the British to do it too, ditto, ditto." The State Department at once sent a note to the American Ambassador in Spain and the Electric Boat Company gladly paid Sir Basil his commission.

Under the approval of the State Department the Electric Boat Company held a conference in Turkey for the purpose of selling submarines. In order to make their sales-talk more effective, the company brought along two United States Admirals, H. E. Long and Hilary Jones. Unfortunately the worthy Admirals, however earnest they may have been in extolling the products of the Electric Boat Company, failed to get an order for the company.

The company also maintained a lobbyist at Washington who fought valiantly for bigger and better naval appropriations. If we can believe his letters to his employers he passed practically all the naval appropriations himself. "Our legislative efforts have borne fruit," he wrote to his superiors. Through his blandishments, he boasted, two friendly Republican Congressmen had been placed on the powerful House Rules Committees and were ready to go through fire to see that the Electric Boat Company got orders from everywhere. He also announced that he had been successful in lobbying through a \$3,000,000 claim against the government and he ended his glowing letter with the statement that members of the Navy Department had congratulated him "on the success of such parts of the program as we were directly interested in."

So go the revelations which the munitions investigation has unearthed. There is little doubt, however, that only the surface has been scratched for in the welter of testimony there are implications of even greater corruption and intrigue than the committee has yet produced. But that we will hear more scandal becomes more dubious as the investigation goes on. Governments—the executive committees of the ruling classes—are soft-hearted parents to their children, the munition makers, even if they do occasionally sell armaments to the enemy. They have to be coddled, they have to be helped along when nations are not murdering each other and business is slack. And if we are not very much mistaken the present investigation will begin listening to voices higher up before they come out with the real dirt about the men who batten on slaughter.

Behind the Headlines

JACKSON X. CURRY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

FRANCIS J. GORMAN, Vice-President and Special Strike Committee Chairman of the United Textile Workers of America, has the Washington correspondents exclaiming at the big-time manner in which A. F. of L. Napoleons are generaling the strike.

Strike headquarters are located in the well-appointed offices of Chester M. Wright (once managing editor of the Socialist Party's defunct Call, now assistant to the affluent Red-Baiter Matthew Woll, and all-round ghost writer and publicity man for the A. F. of L.). Stenographers, clerks, the familiar staccato of the news ticker, news-reel men, half a dozen ringing telephones, an impressive map, staff members bent over speeches which soon will be recited or released by Gorman, girls pounding out stencils, comfortable desks and chairs—all the paraphernalia the financial newspaperman is accustomed to seeing in Eugene Grace's Bethlehem Steel offices or in some other industrialist's niche in the neighborhood of Broad and Wall Streets.

Of course, the New Deal publicity set-up, even if multiplied a hundred times, would have availed Gorman and his A. F. of L. clique little with the big newspapers if they had not screamed unceasingly for "faith in the President," and tirelessly reiterated their plaint that they were not striking "against the government or the code," but against "management."

Despite the fact that the N.R.A. Code Authority is "management"-in-person and that the \$12-\$13 cotton textile code was signed by the President (government) and formulated by the textile operators and the MacMahon-Gorman leadership, of the U. T. W., the capitalist press carried many thousands of words picturing Gorman as a sort of Yorkshire-born lad fighting desperately against mill owners with medieval minds. The Daily Worker was the only English-speaking newspaper to point out the discrepancy between the specified wage demands of the U. T. W. Convention—from \$13 a week for unskilled to \$30 for highly skilled operators; specified demands as to loomage—and Gorman's general demands for union recognition, abolition of the stretchout, and vague increases in the higher brackets. Nor did the newspapers explain that nothing was said in the Convention about compulsory or any other kind of arbitration. It was a strike convention. Fortunately or unfortunately for the A. F. of L. big shots, the demand for recognition of the U. T. W. couldn't be emasculated.

When the textile workers called for a strike they meant *strike*. Roosevelt countered with one of his typical "mediation" boards. Gorman greeted it warmly. An outfit that would

not "begin with a cut and dry program." One that would "devote some time to exploration of the field." All this before Gorman had even seen the text of the executive order creating the Board, and despite his previous repeated exhortations of all government boards as snares and traps for workers. The workers, he had said a hundred times, were "sick and tired of boards." And furthermore, Gorman announced a month or so after the job the N.R.A. did on San Francisco marine workers and shortly after N.R.A. Counsellor Richberg's own report showed a 1.1 percent drop in the worker's real wage in the period from June 1933 to June 1934, and a concomitant 600 percent in corporation profits—furthermore Gorman declared, "The President has acted out of a spirit of helpfulness and because of his genuine concern for the welfare of the workers. We know that. We are following a program which we believe best calculated to aid the President in his heroic efforts to bring about real recovery and I think the President will fully appreciate that fact."

Still the employers refused to nibble at Gorman's N.R.A. ballyhoo and his "adjustments" tied onto the recognition of the U. T. W. So, chucking all the Convention demands, Gorman offered Sloan's gang an agreement to accept whatever decision the Winant Board should see fit to render. The employers let two 6 o'clock deadlines go by and Gorman was forced to "withdraw" his arbitration offer.

"The battle goes on." The stencils still clicked. "Our action demonstrated our great faith in the fairness and highmindedness of the President's Board . . . our generous gesture has been to no avail. Management seems still

determined to ride high and ride hard, as it has always ridden . . . we have sought the way of peace from the beginning—from long before the strike. Peace is denied to us and we must face management on the field of conflict—with folded arms; they with paid thugs, militia, machine-guns and gas." The words were shoved into Gorman's mouth on the night the second ultimatum was ignored.

"Folded Arms" is truly a euphemism for the U. T. W. leadership's open discouragement of mass picketing and its cooperation with Green in stamping out the first suggestions from workers for sympathy strikes and in calling off a scheduled conference of other A. F. of L. national and international unions to wage a financial campaign in support of the strike. On the same night (three more workers slain) Gorman radioed to 500,000 desperate workers: "We shall win because our cause is just. The lines will be tightened. New orders go to all local unions and division headquarters tomorrow. Management has decreed that the strike must go on. We decree that it shall be won. All strikers: Hold the lines and stand by for instructions No. 8."

The relationship of forces makes it necessary for Gorman, whether he likes it or not, to swell the ranks of the strikers by the effectiveness of the strike publicity machine he was forced to construct. The publication of strike telegrams, the issuance of mounting totals, irrespective of the motive behind them, militate to extend the strike. How long Gorman will do this is difficult to say, but for the time being he must save his face with one side of his mouth while he talks to Sloan, Winant and Hyde Park with the other.

Notes on New England

WALDO FRANK

NEW BEDFORD, MASS.

AT DAWN, they are all outside the mills: men, girls, mothers with children. The huge structure submerged in mist, leaps suddenly with lights; the gates swing open; nobody goes in. The men talk in lively groups, the mothers smile, the girls have put on their glad rags and there is song in their throats. At the doors stand a few guards, glumly: in half an hour, they swing the gates shut and the lights snap out. The crowd of strikers, sure of its strength, strolls up the long flank of the mill; stretches in the morning sun; idles down to the next mill where stands another crowd before the shut doors.

The strike has begun gaily. Men and women have joy of themselves in their common purpose, like a young animal discovering the beauty and health and potency of its body.

Over on the North Side, before the open gates of a mill stands another crowd of strikers. Half a dozen girls pass forward, their heads a little low, their shoulders hunched. They are going to work. As the guards let them in, women call after them: "Ain't you ashamed!"; men mutter angry and then ugly words. The thousand strikers understand the six disloyal girls; a sharp doubt stirs in them all, particularly in the women. "We need the money too . . . maybe they're right. Maybe we'll lose and only those girls will win. . . . Rent . . . milk . . . coal . . . winter coats for the children." The strikers are murmuring against their own fears . . . the faithful presence of poverty and cold . . . which they see personified in the six girls. They are at work, now. The mill has become the form of betrayal and of the fear of the strikers. Already the holiday mood is gone.