

A Love Letter for France

MICHAEL GOLD

MID-ATLANTIC, JULY 15,
S.S. ILE DE FRANCE.

IT'S sad, wet, cold, the gray Atlantic and the gray skies are drab as eternity or a hungry man's sleep in a flophouse and the people in the third class are seasick and all my thoughts are of Paris.

I think of the easy-going, friendly city, Paris of the innumerable fine bookshops, Paris of the chestnut trees, colleges, gardens and crazy taxicabs, Paris with its lovely girls and fat, vain clerks and shopkeepers with the elaborate whiskers and the Legion of Honor. I think of the spirit of revolution and art that haunts every street and I think of the workers of Paris—these gay, ardent, talented people who have such an instinct for fine living.

Our "exiles" have slandered Paris. I never wanted to go there because of their tourist café gossip. They were escapists and Paris was their opium.

But now I am glad that for even a month I was permitted to see this Paris, so different from their adolescent dreams.

2.

FRANCE has had three revolutions and the workers have never lost their self-respect. Waiters will familiarly discuss politics with you, or literature, or your family problems. This is the most democratic land I have ever been in, outside of the Soviet Union.

Everywhere, in subways, streets and parks, one meets soldiers—France has the largest standing army in Europe. It is a conscript army of young peasant boys with fresh naïve faces, just up from the provinces. They are the least militaristic soldiers I have known—no swagger or toughness, just boys in uniform, sons of the people.

It is hard to put the thing in words, but the attitude of the people to these soldier boys is different from that of Americans or Germans to their own army. It is more like the Soviet Union—the people act as if these boys belonged to them and show no self-consciousness in their presence.

And every day, in the papers, one reads of strikes and protests in the barracks—the boys, too, refuse to be considered mechanical robots in a military scheme, but insist on their human rights as workers and peasants. Every day reports come of another regiment of young conscripts that as it marches home after the year of service, raise the Red Flag and sing "The Internationale" in the streets.

The fascists will not easily turn this army against the people.

Everywhere one sees cripples—men without legs, arms, noses, faces, the mutilated of

the last war. There are so many of them that special seats are reserved for them in the subways and buses. Most of the Army of Mutilés are Socialists and Communists. It is their miserable pensions that Laval and the bankers are attacking, "to economize" and to save the bankers' gold.

It is the wages of the state functionaries, too, that are being attacked. These state employes are organized in trade unions and are in the United Front. I attended a meeting of delegates from all the custom houses of France, deliberating under pictures of Lenin and Stalin. This radicalization of the rank and file of the state apparatus infuriates the banker-fascists. They are always wailing about the "Moscow" enemy within the state machine. Fools, hogs, they themselves have done it with their shameless taxation of the workers' life, their wage cuts and their currency juggling!

Life is more expensive in France than in New York. And the wages for those who work are so much pitifully less that one wonders how the people manage to keep alive.

Unemployment is increasing rapidly. France was the last country to be hit by the crisis, but now this grows in momentum like a rockslide. You find signs of it in Paris—every morning, on my way to the Writers' Congress, I saw a couple out of Stienlen, a ragged old woman and her man, resting in the same doorway, her poor old weary head on his lap, "waiting for nothing." You see them around, lying under the bridges, the groups of pale, hungry men sleeping on newspapers.

The price of horse meat has doubled and wine is dearer. There are state taxes on everything, even on the rent. The Seine flows through Paris; and along its banks there are hundreds of fishermen. Maybe this looks picturesque to tourists, but I know why these working men are not at work, but are fishing in daylight—it is not for pleasure. When you travel through our own South you will see Negro men and women fishing at every stream—and also, not for fun. It is because they are out of work and are fishing desperately for their next meal.

The fascists propose to solve this all a la Hearst, by deporting the foreign workers, for whom life has already been rendered so difficult.

They propose to solve it by increasing the army budget (the Armament Trust subsidizes the fascists.) They propose to solve it by abolishing the republic and regimenting the French people so that they will learn to enjoy starvation, because it is patriotic (but the Metal Trust, which subsidizes the fascists, has never paid bigger dividends).

But the polite, the gay, the passionate

French people still dance to accordions in the little *bal musettes* and drink their wine and kiss their girls. In the open air markets where the workers buy their cheap meat and vegetables they also are careful to buy little bouquets of field flowers, blue lupins and white lilies for the breakfast table. Nothing will crush their spirit. The subway guards openly read *Humanité*, the Communist daily, or *Le Populaire*, the Socialist paper.

Everywhere the great tide rolls up of the United Front, soon strong enough, perhaps, to form a government. The French people are not ready for revolution. But they are passionately aroused against the fascists, the bankers and wage-cutters. Thirty percent of France now votes Socialist or Communist. If the exploiters press the people too far, there *will* be a revolution.

A little fact: the achievements of the Soviet Union are daily described and praised in the republican and socialist press of France; you would think you were reading our own Communist Daily Worker. Leon Blum, the outstanding Socialist leader, for years opposed the United Front; but I chuckled when I read a recent article in which he spoke warmly of our "good friends, the Communists."

The Abe Cahans and Jim Oneals, those poisonous enemies of the Soviet Union and the United Front against fascism, ought perhaps be deported to France and there forced to study the program of their own party.

In France, anyone who tries to break up the United Front is considered an enemy of the working class and an ally of the fascists. I wonder whether one ought not feel this way in America, too. I wonder why more Socialists don't ask the Old Guard misleaders whose cause they are serving. Does their sabotage help even the Socialist Party itself?

3.

I SPENT one day walking around the Jewish quarter of Paris with Isaac Babel, the artist who fought under Budenny and who wrote *Red Cavalry*.

As everyone must now know, writers are not at all like their books. Some are much better and some are amazingly rottener. Babel is neither better nor worse but different. He is stocky and baldheaded, with a kind, broad, homely face and he doesn't seem like a poet or ex-cavalryman but like the principal of a village school.

If you will read his work, you will find that his is an intensely romantic nature, which sometimes distorts reality because he is vainly trying, like Arthur Rimbaud, to pierce behind all its veils. But the frenzied poet, Isaac Babel, for the past six years has been the manager of a big horse-breeding collective

farm in the North Caucasus. He had come to Paris for the Writers' Congress, because he is a famous Soviet writer, but he was also visiting French stud farms to study their methods.

(Sholokov, the author of *Quiet Flows the Don*, recently took a trip abroad, too, and spent his vacation not among the literary men of Europe but in studying the model dairy farms of Denmark—he is passionately interested in cows. The Soviets are developing a new sort of writer in a world that has grown tired of tales about the dark souls of writers.)

Yes, Babel is a practical and humorous human being. He made one of the most original speeches at the Congress. He sat simply at a table and chatted in French with an audience of several thousand, telling them anecdotes about the Soviet peasants and the naive way in which they went about the historic task of acquiring culture; witty, tender, proud anecdotes that made one see intimately the new Soviet life.

Babel loves France and Paris. I was glad to hear him say this, for I myself had feared to say it, thinking it was American naiveté on my part and also because I remembered the "exiles" and their escapism.

"You cannot be a writer until you know French," said Babel earnestly. "No writer can acquire a feeling for literary form unless he has read the French masters in their own tongue. Of this I am sure."

(There must be something in this dogmatic theory; after visiting the gardens of Versailles and the Luxembourg, that affected me like some strange and beautiful dream, I was impelled, for the first time in my life, to attempt the writing of a sonnet!)

Babel and I sat in a Jewish restaurant on a Friday night in Paris and I told him about the East Side and he told me about Odessa.

He was surprised and glad to hear about the militant Jewish workers of New York. "In the Soviet Union one forgets one is a Jew. The whole race question has already become dim, like ancient history. But here in Paris it comes back to me." Babel is soon to publish a new book, an experiment in a new form, but the novel that he has been writing for six years he isn't satisfied with; this horse-breeder has one of the most painful artistic consciences in the Soviet land.

4.

ANDRE MALRAUX is lean, intense, and young, the restless aviator type. I saw him first in the office of the Congress, where he was swamped like a commissar in a mass of organization detail. He was one of the active organizers of the Writers' Congress, spending weeks at the "dirty work," like Aragon and Jean Richard Bloch and the others. These French writers throw themselves into what they do with passion and directness. How is one to explain it? America is supposed to be the land of energy, but so many of our authors seem afraid of doing anything. It is as if working with

other human beings were somehow dangerous. But Malraux did not seem afraid of losing his "individuality."

And he was not afraid of banging on the table and shouting at the top of his voice like a human being when the Trotskyites made their mean little disruption foray and tried to turn a United Front congress against fascism into a demonstration against the Soviet Union. Malraux was chairman at that session.

Aldous Huxley, lanky, pale, boyish, shy, was more like some of our own intellectuals. Is it because Anglo-Saxons still believe with the philistines of commerce that there is something unmanly and unworthy about being a writer? Only the stock that produced a Shakespeare has brought this attitude into the world. It is a real mystery.

After the Congress ended, Malraux left for Algiers, to address a huge anti-fascist meeting. The fascists threatened to break up the demonstration and to attack Malraux. In the *Socialist Populaire*, I read the lyric report of its correspondent, who said, "Our brave young Socialists and Communists formed a defense corps and were sufficient protection for Comrade Malraux, this author who charmed us all with his ardor, his intellect, his youth and his devotion to our the great cause." That's what French authors are like these days; would that a few more British and American authors might learn from them.

5.

OR FROM Martin Anderson-Nexo.

It is years since I first read the working-class epic, *Pelle the Conqueror*. I have never had the lust to meet famous authors; the best of them is in their books. But I had always wanted to meet the great Anderson-Nexo, whose book had such a deep influence on my youth.

He is a solid and powerful man, like some ruddy sea-captain or master-workman. He is simple, like a worker; he likes babies and wine and food and fresh air and working with his hands and jokes and simple men and women; he despises stuffed shirts, be they authors or politicians, and he has that organic hatred of the parasites, the emotion that finally crystalizes into Communism.

The King of Denmark once invited him for a visit to the palace. Anderson-Nexo informed the King he had no objections to meeting him but since the King knew his address, he could call on him first, on Martin Anderson-Nexo, good shoemaker, trade unionist and proletarian author, as good as any King. The King dropped the whole matter.

Anderson-Nexo told us many stories, gay and sad, about his life. He is a happy man, because he has lived for the working class and every day this class comes nearer to its goal. It happened to be his sixty-fifth birthday and several of us made a little party of the event. We toasted him in champagne and told him (Ralph Fox, James Hanley

and Pearl Binder of England, two Australian authors and myself were there) what his books had meant to us in the English-speaking lands.

"But meeting you younger revolutionary writers means more to me," said the old fighter. "I am happy when I see our youth and know that the great work will never die." It sounds, perhaps, like politeness as I write it, but it is a feeling all good revolutionists have as they grow on in years. It is what keeps them happy.

"The first portion of *Pelle*, the childhood, is largely invention. I wanted a story of lyric pathos and tenderness to win my readers. You see, at that time there had been nothing like a proletarian novel in Europe. They would have flung my book away had I plunged at once into the story of a trade-union organizer and his spiritual life. The critics would have been bored with such a vulgar theme. They could accept only lurid, sordid, sensational tales of the workers' degradation. But I wanted to write about a class-conscious worker who was a conqueror of life, not a victim. So I had to use strategy and I began my novel with pathos and weakness." (The trilogy was written in 1905-7.)

"But the latter portions are not invention—they are my own story. Like *Pelle*, I was apprenticed to a shoemaker and worked at this trade for many years. Then I helped form our trade unions and was one of the leaders in our great general strike. Yes, I have lived as a worker for many years; only out of the depths of revolutionary experience will come our proletarian art.

"As to form; it has never troubled me. I believe that one must write from the heart; the form will follow naturally. One must, of course, knead and knead the material; slow, as the proverb has it—slowly one must grow a tree or write a book or make love. But above all, follow the deepest instincts of your youthful heart. Give my heartfelt greetings to the youth of your countries."

6.

PAUL VAILLANT-COUTURIER, a rugged Gascon with a barrel chest, innocent blue eyes and the free and fearless manners of a pioneer, is the author of some six novels, a book of poetry and as many political essays. He is a horseman, a crack shot, an aviator and a boxer. He fought all through the war in the tank corps. He is one of the editors of *Humanité*, the Communist daily and one of the Party leaders on the central committee and also the Mayor of Ville Juif, a workers' suburb of Paris.

About a year ago, Comrade Paul was given a six-months term in prison by a fascist judge for something he had written. He was naturally bored with his vacation and persuaded the prison authorities to permit him to have some paint and canvas. Paul had been too busy to experiment in this art, which, like all good Frenchmen, he adored. So in prison he painted and painted and ac-

cumulated canvasses. When he came out, his friends persuaded him to hold an exhibition. It made quite a stir; even the bourgeois critics praised the prison artist.

But now Paul is up to his neck in Party work again. He is one of the most popular Communists in France. His painting adventure has not handicapped him politically. I wonder what would happen to Clarence Hathaway if he began to write sonnets or to Earl Browder if he should join the Composers' Collective and write proletarian songs. Bob Minor felt it necessary to suppress his great art in order to do political work. Nobody would have felt that way in France, I believe.

Comrade Vaillant-Couturier is also a remarkable cook. Babel and I visited his suburb with him one Friday morning. We first visited the clinic, where for less than fifty cents workers get a thorough medical examination, with X-rays and the finest apparatus. (Unemployed free.) Then Mayor Paul sat in his office and the workers poured in with their troubles—unemployed workers, mostly, who'd been cut off relief and the like. Then Mayor Paul went shopping in the butcher shops and groceries, and smiling chauffeurs, street cleaners and housewives came up to shake hands, saying "Comrade!"

At home, the Mayor turned into a master cook; I tasted nothing better in France, home of the world's greatest cooks, than his sauces, delicate as the herbs of the springtime.

As we were sitting at lunch, the bell rang. A very fat and stylish man of the middle class came puffing in. He mopped his brow and talked to Comrade Paul earnestly. He was the owner of a laundry. During the war he had served with Comrade Paul in the tanks and was one of his best friends. For years, however, they hadn't seen each other; but during the past year, this man, a Radical Republican, grew deeply aroused against the fascist menace. This had brought him around to seeing Comrade Paul now and again.

Well, the day before, a friend of his who owned a café had had a group of fascists eating in his place and had listened in on their talk. They were gleefully planning, it seems, to make an armed raid soon on the home of Comrade Paul.

"You must be on your guard, Paul," said the fat, respectable businessman, earnestly. "Whenever there is a sign of trouble, you must phone me at once. I will bring my friends with our guns and we will finish these people."

Paul thanked him and said he would be sure to phone. When the friend had left, he smiled and said, "Do you see how some of our businessmen feel these days?"

The Sunday before that was one of the great days at the Communist suburb, Ville Juif. A new main boulevard that runs to Fontainebleau was to be opened. The Communist suburb had decided to name it after Maxim Gorky. Everywhere on the walls were red posters calling on the people to as-

semble in homage to the great proletarian writer, Maxim Gorky.

Ten thousand men, women and children were gathered on the hot asphalt of a burning summer day. The fireman's band played "The Internationale." André Gide unveiled the name-plaque and Michael Koltzov spoke briefly.

Red flags, gray old leonine workers in red sashes and velvet pants, smoking their pipes; the lively, happy Pioneer kids in their red scarfs and khaki shorts; gymnasts, mothers in shawls pushing baby carriages, the lean, fighting youth, in berets and overalls; workers with big moustaches and beards, wearing caps; shopkeepers and clerks, the people of France.

Vaillant-Couturier introduced André Gide as "our great comrade who has risen to the defense of world culture and the working class." And the crowd of proletarians shouted, "Vive la culture!" André Gide dedicated the Maxim Gorki Boulevard. He was deeply moved. He said later it was the first time in his sixty years that he had spoken to workers at a demonstration in the streets.

Then we marched for several miles behind the firemen's band to the athletic stadium. Songs, cries, slogans; and from the sidewalks, other workers cheered from their front doors and little gardens.

I will never forget a fiery old man in the procession who was the delegate of the Paris Commune. He shouted and sang at the top of his powerful lungs, this rugged septuagenarian and by the hand he led a little boy of three.

The old Communards have an organization in Paris and he was here to represent them, dressed in a red sport shirt, like Garibaldi's, a big red sash and an armband that said, "Vive la Commune, 1871." He sweated with excitement, his eyes flashed, his long white hair waved in the breeze. He taught the little boy, who was carrying a red pennant, to raise his little fist in the Red Front salute and to sing "The Internationale."

I talked to the old Communard. His name was Louis Gomet and he was a Socialist. "Ah, it is a great day! I am rejoiced to see this day of the young. If my wife were only here! She is not in her first youth, you understand, but still charming. Yes, charming! Do you know, I spent three days in prison last month for fighting a fascist in a café. He had insulted my Communard shirt. Here is the warrant they served me. I am proud of it. Here, little one, let's sing the 'Carmangole.' I will show you the way we sang it on the barricades."

Slogans: "Disarm the Fascist Leagues!" "Put Chiappe in Prison!" "De La Roque to the Gallows!" "Soviets Everywhere!"

The stadium: young athletes of the Red Commune go through a series of exercises, while the band plays the "Carmangole."

We visit the Karl Marx Children's School, one of the finest in the world. Designed by André Durcat and a collective of Red architects, erected by the Red carpenters, stonemasons and plumbers of Ville Juif, in the

year 1932. The first modern children's school in France. Architects and other visitors have come to see it from all over the world. It is well worth seeing; an entrancing monument to a new and freer life, built in the midst of the old.

I have always had a slight prejudice against modernist architecture. Much of it seems faddist, a straining to be different at any cost. Inhuman and cerebral exercises by bourgeois artists who are removed from the people, it gives one no joy. But this school is both modernist and human and a joy to the heart and the mind.

It was built, not to please the architects, but the children. But the architects were Communists and loved and understood the children, so they too found a joy in the task. Great glass walls everywhere; so that the sunlight pours in on the children all day; it is like being outdoors, even in the winter-time. Beautiful yellow and blue tiling, murals everywhere, to delight the children; beautiful laboratories for little scientists, great porches to play games in on rainy days; marvelous maps and a dining room and model kitchen; classrooms that are interesting as little theatres; a children's palace, clean, happy and bright with color, sunlight and a new spirit.

All the Socialist and Communist suburbs are now building such schools for the workers' children. But in wealthy New York, under capitalism, many children still spend their days in dismal old firetrap buildings, where the toilets stink and the air smells like prison and the teachers are driven like factory slaves.

A little banquet had been arranged for the visiting authors in the dining room of the school. Here, surrounded by the workers, we drank toasts in champagne to Karl Marx, to the Soviet Union, to the Communist Mayor Paul Vaillant-Couturier and to the Socialist and Communist workers of Ville Juif.

Then back to the stadium; where through the loudspeakers, each of us made a brief address of salutation—Alexie Tolstoy, Michael Koltzov, Louis Aragon, André Gide, Isaac Babel, Erich Weinert and others. And as each speaker ended, a worker of Ville Juif stepped forward with a great bouquet of roses, lilies, gladioli and fern, all from the local gardens, and presented it to the visiting author and kissed him on both cheeks.

7.

GOOD-BYE, Paris, au revoir, beautiful city that for centuries has held the world's imagination. I am going back to my own raw, young city and land that I love painfully, the way a man loves a woman who is bad for him. France, your devoted sons love you in a different manner. Did I not hear Leon Moussinac, the gifted and passionate Communist novelist and critic, argue with great fervor that a revolution was necessary soon, if the glorious wines of France were to be saved, if the traditions of the great

vineyards were not to be destroyed by the capitalist depression?

Au revoir, Paris. Your generals and bankers love blood and gold but your ditch-diggers and machinists love flowers and song and love. Your clerks dream of painting and poetry and your scientists and artists are ready to fight on the barricades for humanity against fascism.

Au revoir. I can understand why Americans, like the rest of the world, have ever been fascinated by your charm. Some of them have found only the tourist perversion and filth in you but your real self has been revealed to the artist and the revolutionist. Au revoir. I shall never forget your streets where the great story of humanity is revealed on every corner, where one meets memorials to a Danton, a Pasteur, a Claude Bernard, where side by side with an ancient monastery one finds a statue to a young student who was tortured by the Inquisition or to the first printer of libertarian books, his arms tied behind his back as he proudly awaits the executioner.

The great tradition of democracy and science that began here in the Renaissance hovers with wings of terror and beauty over every one of your alleys. Paris, it is an old story to you but to me it was still thrilling to travel by subway to stations bearing such names as Danton, Jean Jaures, Saint Simon, Place de la Bastille and to walk on streets named after Balzac, Baudelaire, Laplace and Lenin.

Au revoir, dear Paris. Now I know that the bourgeois dilettante lied about you. You are not a city of cheap vice and easy emotions. You are deep, serious and passionate unto the death over the great human things. You have always been so. It is no accident that you were the birthplace of the Commune, which served as model for Marx and Lenin and the proletarian democracy of the Soviets.

Your working people, as I studied them in mass meetings, in cafés, in streets, have a collective soul beautiful as anything I have seen. Hungry, cheated and oppressed, they have never been degraded. They have a deathless instinct for culture and beauty and through blood and anguish, you must beat the fascists, for they would destroy all this, they will take this soul of your people and make of it a dull, senseless cog in a brutal military machine.

The free soul of French culture and the French people is too good for such a fate. But the Soviets will release all this mass genius, this wonderful spirit. Your people have traveled far, they are ready to be a super-race, when the wisdom of your past is incorporated in the daily life, when culture will be free to all, when democracy releases every talent, when workers and intellectuals build a new socialist France.

Les Soviets partout! Soviets everywhere! Until then, au revoir, Paris, and accept the gratitude and hopes of another infatuated American!

Correspondence

Butler Not a Fascist

TO THE NEW MASSES:

In the July 2 issue of THE NEW MASSES a serious political error was made. In an editorial the following sentence appears:

He [the middle-class man] is a natural prey to the Huey Longs, Father Coughlins, the Hearsts and the Smedley Butlers, because he does not distinguish between promises and action.

The editorial was correct in so far as it characterized Long, Coughlin and Hearst, to whom could be added Macfadden and the signers of Hearst's "new declaration of independence," including one of the co-signers, William Green, president of the A. F. of L., who thus openly associates himself with the most reactionary forces in the country. A number of names of other individuals and organizations could be added, showing the wide ramifications of fascist forces in this country.

This, however, should not lead to linking up others whose actions—the measure of political line—take a different course. No matter what his past has been, it cannot be said of Smedley Butler in recent periods that he is lining up with the fascists. On the contrary, Butler's disclosure before a Senate Committee that he had been offered the job of leading 500,000 veterans to Washington to take control, either with Roosevelt accepting the fascist line or deposing Roosevelt and setting up a dictatorship, was an act against fascism. Butler, it will be remembered, also declared that the offer came from Wall Street.

Butler endorsed the students' anti-war strike on April 12. He also appeared on the same platform with Earl Browder at a meeting in New York on the bonus issue, I believe. A man who is willing to speak at a meeting with Communists, adopting a similar line, cannot be called a fascist and certainly is running counter to the fascist policy of Hearst, Coughlin and Long.

No one can tell today how far Butler will go. Political developments might be such in the near future as to change his course. It is not our job to create gulfs where none exist, but on the contrary to build bridges that will enable sincere people of all political and religious opinions to come closer and cooperate with us in the burning task of mobilizing the forces against fascism and war.

New York City.

I. AMTER.

Dr. Sealock's Suicide

TO THE NEW MASSES:

In a correspondence brief of a letter I sent you on the Sealock case, printed in your issue of July 23, through an error you quote as my own a statement by Paul Martin, one of the regents of Municipal University who resigned in protest against the dismissal of Sealock.

Martin said, in part, "Dr. Sealock was not the sort who enjoys a fight, but he fought with courage when he was forced to. I think he had simply gone through so much that he could not face the prospect of a long fight ahead."

For myself, I cannot subscribe to this justification of Dr. Sealock's action. It was the logical conclusion of the typical liberal response to incipient fascism. Some of these destroy themselves physically; braver no doubt than those who commit moral suicide and fall lower and lower until they are accepting a pension from Hitler or writing a column for Hearst. But whatever Dr. Sealock had "gone through," however painful and trying, it cannot be mentioned in the same breath with what Communists in Germany, Japan, China, Bulgaria, to mention only some, are enduring bravely and with undying resistance.

The Scott Nearing's, the Granville Hicks, those who, in whatever degree, feel their strength in the rising consciousness and militancy of the working class, do not shrink from a fight, nor feel themselves

overwhelmed by the brutal, slaving appearance of capitalism at bay. They can see past the terror to the advancing movement it is trying vainly to quell—the coming to power of the working class, which alone will advance education, expand culture.

Dr. Sealock would not have taken poison if he could once have felt the relationship between the struggle of the Municipal University to maintain itself as a free educational institution and the fight for decent living conditions of the street-car men, going on at the same time. Petersen, Johnson, the heads of the Chamber of Commerce that was trying to shackle and crush the University, are on the board of directors of the car company, the spearhead of the capitalist offensive against the trade unions in Omaha. The people here feel this relationship. Their response to both situations was instant and the same—fight. How could this man have been so insensible of the forces behind him as to have left them leaderless and confused in the midst of the battle? The "No" of a vicious corporation head meant more to him than the emphatic "Yes" of thousands of workers, students, teachers who had rallied in the fight for academic freedom.

Some of the liberal professors yet on the campus are making the same mistake. One of them said, "It would hurt our cause to involve the trade unions in the University fight." Still holding illusions of academic dignity, still in hopes of "keeping politics off the campus," although the local fascists, under the aegis of the regents, daily invade it with patriotic pathologic antics, and Mrs. Harris, angel of the local Silver Shirts, makes the front page with the statement that the faculties of the local universities are "uninformed" as to the danger of Communism on the campus, "and refuse to be taught"; and their classrooms are invaded by spies paid with F.E.R.A. funds.

The people of Omaha will look to stronger leaders in the fight against the C. of C. and its Silver Shirts and scab-herding agents. Dr. Sealock was only a pitiable victim of menacing fascism, where he might have been a standard bearer in the fight to defeat it.

I hope you will make a correction of the error. My comrades will think I have gone soft in the head.

MALVINA REYNOLDS.

P. S. Additional material on the Finerty story. The chief of police of Council Bluffs came to the strikers and asked them if the company might replace the windows in their buildings, since it might rain in. "Sure," said the strikers. "It's no fun throwing bricks through windows with no glass in them." So the windows were boarded up. At present writing, however, glass is in the windows. The enclosed leaflet announces a picket line which effectively kept the cars in the barn this morning—in Council Bluffs, that is. Omaha cars still run. Continual stonings on the outside, where the packing workers live, are not reported in the papers.

M. R.

Omaha, Neb.

"Teachers Fight Back"

TO THE NEW MASSES:

An editorial paragraph in the July 16 issue headed, "Teachers Fight Back," makes favorable comment on the fact that an organized opposition at this last N.E.A. convention forced through a resolution to cooperate with other agencies in maintaining the principles of academic freedom as well as a plan to have a committee of the organization investigate violations of academic freedom with a view toward combatting these conditions.

The militancy that drove this resolution through (over the opposition of the reactionary leadership) was good. No doubt it springs from the rank-and-file classroom teacher who has suffered most both

from such onslaughts as well as from the betraying leadership of the N.E.A. which has never even made a gesture in defense, although at last year's convention a resolution upholding academic freedom was passed.

But the leadership of the present fight in the organization, as reported in the press, is a very bad one, perhaps even worse—if we take note of the increasing need of defense which present conditions show. And for this reason, the tone of approval in the paragraph, even though it was somewhat tempered by the last sentence, is generally misleading. For it gives one the impression that the teachers have only to follow their new leaders, to safeguard their interests. In fact, the opposite is the case.

Prof. William Heard Kilpatrick of Teachers College, one of these "leaders" has an approach to the fight for academic freedom that is as dangerous as that of the conservatives whom he fought.

In the first place, though he sounds, at times, like one who is eager to do battle, Prof. Kilpatrick has proved himself on at least one occasion, as unwilling to make a forthright move, as the worst of those in the N.E.A. whom he fought. James M. Shields was ousted last year by the tobacco interests of Winston-Salem, N. C., for his novel, *Just Plain Larnin'*, which tore the cover off the intimidation in that baronial fief. It was Prof. Kilpatrick who refused to allow the committee that interested itself in the case, to give any publicity to it, even though the reporters were waiting for it at that time. The committee never met again. No action was taken. The slim news note which appeared a few days later must have gotten out in spite of him. Mr. Shields received a lesson in militant talk and non-existent action. A suggestion made that evening that the case be broadcast to the classroom teachers everywhere and that protest action be based on the rank and file instead of the "leaders" of organizations as he suggested, was passed by in cold silence by the professor.

If his action on that occasion justifies the suspicion that the new N.E.A. fight for academic freedom will end just where the old one did, then his basic approach, his line, so to speak, promises even worse.

In a Times article on July 14, Prof. Kilpatrick's discussion of the "great step forward" which the N.E.A. convention took at Denver omits entirely the sole reason why boards of trustees and enquiry on the part of students and free speech on the part of the teachers did not threaten to hamper the program of the ruling capitalists who control schools and colleges; if academic freedom for both students and teachers did not lead to action against their program of hunger, fascism and war, then, of course, Granville Hicks, Isidore Begun, Williana Burroughs and Isidore Blumberg, to cite only a few, would not have been expelled, nor would the students all over the country have been victimized for opposing fascism and war.

Yet, with two columns at his command, Professor Kilpatrick "leads" the fight for academic freedom by saying:

"The only way to solve the new problems (i.e. 'changed conditions') is by thinking out new solutions or making new adaptations." And he concludes with "It was essentially a victory for intelligence over obscurantism," having previously emphasized the point that "Those who would hamper and restrict the schools are enemies of intelligence."

Are we going to win the fight for academic freedom with such a plan of battle? Not by a long shot. These "enemies of intelligence" are our boards of trustees and education who are by their very nature the executives of dominating finance-capital today. When they fire teachers and victimize students, they use precisely this cry of "intelligence" to conceal their real reasons. Their cool excuse is, in one form or another, that they want "intelligent discussion of all sides of the question." But they do not want action, they do not want decisions made either by students or by teachers. This is propaganda. In this connection, note the professor's contribution; he says:

"If people are to be intelligent, on any issue, they must be so on all sides and aspects of that issue."

Harold C. Hand, assistant professor at Stanford University, is another of these progressive educators "leading" the fight for academic freedom. Before the opening of the Denver convention, he delivered himself of a speech on "Freedom of Teaching." It is interesting that the station which put itself at the service of this drive for freedom of teaching was station KYA—operated by Hearst. Apparently, no objections from this foremost opponent of academic freedom were seriously made. After sketching the "changing conditions" (a term which these progressive educators hold dear without ever making it clear that these conditions are changing for the worse and will continue to become worse until a fight puts an end to these worsening conditions), he concludes with this flourish:

"If we would 'think' [his italics and quotes] and not fight our way out of our present social and economic perplexities we dare not intimidate and gag the teachers in our schools and colleges."

Like his "progressive" colleague, Prof. Kilpatrick, he shadow-boxes vigorously while those who are slowly depriving him of security strike blow after blow at the schools throughout the country, and themselves encourage "thinking" rather than fighting.

Another sample of the new leadership. The leading bureaucrat of the New York local of the American Federation of Teachers, Dr. Abraham Lefkowitz was also on the spot to support these resolutions. His "leadership" at home, during these few months just passed, has been devoted to initiating a move for the expulsion of minority opposition groups in the local. Together with the reactionary president of the local, Henry L. Linville, he has succeeded in getting a committee of the A. F. of L. to "investigate" the local. Discussed in the New York educational pages of the newspapers as a likely candidate for appointment by the Red-baiting Board of Education, to the post of principal, what prospects are there for a sincere and effective fight for academic freedom from such a "leader"?

Moreover, when Granville Hicks appealed to Henry L. Linville for assistance in his fight for reinstatement, he was met with the usual "militancy" of such hypocrites. Sorry, you are an unemployed teacher, he was told, and therefore, our constitution prevents us from fighting your case; furthermore, we cannot, under our rules take up a case which already has a grievance.

Moreover, when Granville Hicks applied to Henry L. Linville for admission to the New York local, he was met with the following in substance: that he was unemployed and further, that he was en-

tering with a grievance, and therefore he was not eligible to membership; politely, however, Mr. Linville added that they would look into the case.

Now, what prospects for an effective fight can one see in such leadership? True, it was a victory for the rank and file at Denver to have at least obtained "investigating" committees over the heads of their bureaucrats. But, there is not the slightest doubt that it was only an *initial* victory. The enemies of academic freedom are among the teachers as well as about them. And unless this new "leadership" is cast aside by the classroom teacher who organizes the fight himself on the basis of school organization, school committees, and fights on his home ground against every infringement of academic freedom in his own bailiwick, and protests every national case of this kind, also school by school, the succeeding year will see even a greater number of victims to the drive toward lowered living standards, fascism and war.

In the light of these facts, to approve what happened at the Denver convention without discussion or explanation of the prospects, does not help the situation. The false sense of security which such approval gives is harmful.

New York City.

B. JOSEPHSON.

An Appreciation

TO THE NEW MASSES:

Your issue of August 6 was simply magnificent. It seems to me that it came close to an ideal fulfillment of its aim and function.

This is the revolutionary craftsmanship that speeds the day when America will "Awake and Sing." One thrills with pride that such editing and writing (from Gold and North, all the way through to the correspondent, Miss F——) springs so naturally and inevitably from the Marxist camp. One thrills to such able play with the rapier whose point will not be blunted. And one thrills especially to recordings of the seven-league strides being taken in the U.S.S.R. by humanity unchained—strides across frontiers of cultural activities, frontiers of security and dignity and decency in human living, frontiers which mock every philosophy except the Red.

For my part, possibly because I am an "average" reader in the audience you address, I can find no fault with the general balance of the material appearing in *THE NEW MASSES*. I can only rage against an "average" impotence to blast away more of the killing financial worries from the shoulders of your staff, to the end that you give us more, and more, and more, of the same.

Cambridge, Mass.

W. W. HAYNES.

Letters in Brief

Mass picketing of Lebanon Hospital in support of twenty-six workers, locked out three months ago, continues, the Association of Federation Workers of 685 Jackson Avenue, The Bronx, advises us. Fifty-two pickets have been arrested but the struggle has attracted the support of the League Against War and Fascism, Young Socialist League, Communist Party, Home Relief Bureau Employees Association and the Young Communist League.

C. W. Pilgrim, member of the Cooks' Union, San Francisco, takes issue with Leonard J. Grumet because of the latter's statement that lawyers do practice their profession in the Soviet Union. He makes the point that the persons referred to as lawyers are trained students of jurisprudence who explain the law to workers. Lawyers, he insists, have no place under a Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Ella Winter writes from Carmel, Calif., to correct an error in her article "Love in Two Worlds" in the July 16 issue: "I understand Stanley Richardson is no longer A.P. correspondent in Moscow and

that the despatch I spoke of as coming from his typewriter actually came from another A.P. man's. My apologies to Stanley Richardson."

Frank Lloyd Wright's answer to Alexander's review of the Broadacre City Art Exhibit at Radio City has stirred the ire of Garlin Henri. He writes us that Wright's theory of creative individuality makes for social retardation.

Louis A. Thompson, member of Sailors Union of the Pacific, writes to praise Bruce Minton's article on the longshoremen's convention. Seattle longshoremen found the article very much to their liking, he says.

The consistent refusal of New York city colleges to employ Negro faculty members and administrative workers is under fire from the Provisional Committee Against Discriminatory Practices in City Colleges, Secretary Jerry Jonson, of 409 West 141st Street, writes. The Committee is urging that qualified Negroes apply for positions and asks to be informed as to what happens.

REVIEW AND COMMENT

Mr. Jackson Sees It Through

THE POST-WAR WORLD—A Short Political History, 1918-1934. J. Hampden Jackson. Little, Brown and Company. 436 pages. \$2.50.

MR. JACKSON teaches history in Haileybury College, England. He has written a book which, he says, aims "to make the history of the world intelligible to the ordinary newspaper-reading man." This is an outline of history since the Armistice. Mr. Jackson is another British liberal. Like H. G. Wells' Mr. Britling, he is pained and disturbed by the suicidal collapse of capitalistic civilization and wants to be kindly, dispassionate, clear-headed and hopeful. Like Britling (Wells), he is more than a little muddled and shrinks from unpleasant conclusions.

Nevertheless—to give praise first where praise is due—Mr. Jackson's book is a useful survey of events. It is lucidly written, sometimes charming, occasionally suggestive, once in a while naive. It is curiously proportioned. Western Europe gets only 114 pages and the Soviet Union forty-two, while the Near East gets sixty-four and Africa, the Far East and America almost two hundred. Hu Shih, Chinese intellectual, gets five pages, but Nazi Germany only six. Nazi militarism and imperialism do not exist. Mr. Jackson does not know that fascism is breeding war in Europe, no less than in Africa. But, paradoxically, these blindnesses and disproportions give the book added value. It is all but worthless on continental politics, national or international, but excellent on Turkey and Arabia. It is weak on Germany and the Balkans, but strong on Egypt, Persia, Indo-China and South Africa. The "backward regions," which do not get into the newspapers, do get into Mr. Jackson's book. He summarizes recent developments within them with considerable skill.

A historian, however, should at least be accurate. Mr. Jackson says, "it is impossible to be accurate when writing of movements which are still in progress." But Mr. Jackson may reasonably be expected to know (to cite but a few of the gross mistakes) that American trade unions were not "outlawed" in 1920; that no Italians, but only fifteen refugee children, were murdered in Corfu in 1923 and not by the Greeks but by Mussolini; that the Nazi putsch of 1923 was not a "march on Berlin"; that the T.V.A. is not "collectivism"; that the U.S.A. has made no barter agreement with the U.S.S.R.; that a Soviet shop committee is not a "collective"; that the Soviets did not attack Poland in 1920; that French and British troops in the intervention did not "desert" their White al-

lies and "very successfully evacuate" Russia, but were driven out by the Red Army and by internal mutiny; that the Nazis did not win a majority in the election of March, 1933; that there is no such body as a "Council of Soviets" and that it is not the supreme legislature of the U.S.S.R.; that. . . . But a complete list of errors would be too long. It is too long, even in a book of such wide scope as this.

"Liberal" historians are also supposed to be "impartial." Mr. Jackson makes a great show of impartiality, even though he concedes that "it is impossible to be impartial." Like most British liberals, however, he is anti-French, pro-German, anti-Soviet. He cannot conceal his prejudices. Fascism has made Italy "united, alert, proud and hopeful." Hitler "very properly" took Germany out of the League in 1933. Russia is "oriental" and "childish." Allan Monkhouse gets half a page to describe the "terror" of the G.P.U. There was "truth" (!) in stories that the Bolsheviks tortured prisoners, raped women and butchered babies. Trotzky is kosher, but Stalin is "not a prepossessing character." And so on.

But the pity of it is—and this is the tragedy of all contemporary liberalism—that Mr. Jackson has reasonably sound humanitarian instincts and has more than an inkling of what

is wrong with the world, albeit seen darkly through a glass. He hates oppression and exploitation. He is all for "justice" to workers, Negroes, Jews and miserable colonial slaves. He detests Bolshevism, but he concedes that it has made the Russian workers free, prosperous and enlightened. And "the only government in China which offered the workers a square deal was that of the Soviets." Mr. Jackson, moreover, perceives that capitalism is bankrupt and that "industrial riches cannot be converted into communal wealth by the oppression of class by class and of nation by nation."

In the sequel Mr. Jackson is bewildered. And the end he only knows, vaguely, that his age is "the age of the second great Revolution in the history of the modern world." The first, 1789, gave the people a voice in government. The second is to give them control of the wealth they have created and of the economic institutions they have labored to build. The last sentence in this stimulating and exasperating book is: "There is no need to emphasize the fact that the second Revolution was far from complete in 1934." Mr. Jackson would think more clearly if he devoted some attention to a particular organization which is concerned with this Revolution. He does not bother to mention it. It is called the Communist International.

ARNOLD W. BARTELL.

The Peasant Poet

THE POEMS OF JOHN CLARE. Two vols. Edited by J. W. Tibble. Dutton and Co. \$8.

JOHN CLARE: A LIFE. By J. W. and Anne Tibble. Oxford Univ. Press. \$3.25.

THE appearance of the peasant as artist is a rare phenomenon in English literature, which is almost entirely a record of bourgeois expression. Centuries separate Langland and Burns and those are the only outstanding names. A little over a hundred years ago the poetical works of John Clare, the peasant poet of Northampton, had great vogue. His poems outsold those of his great contemporary Keats; then he was quickly forgotten. Within the last ten or fifteen years there has been a revival of interest in his work (as bourgeois literary criticism is driven to look beyond its immediate field for values): a volume of Clare's poetry was issued by Edmund Blunden and Alan Porter in 1920, another by Blunden in 1924; in 1932 J. W. and Anne Tibble published a biography of the poet, and now J. W. Tibble has brought out two volumes of Clare's poetry, almost a thousand items, about a third of

which are here printed for the first time. The two volumes retail for eight dollars, and so it is unlikely that they will reach many members of Clare's own class, either in England or America, nor will many workers be able to afford them. Clare will have to remain the property of libraries and such scholars as can reach him there, or be passed on to a wider public by those reviewers who can beg copies from the publishers. His career offers an interesting study of what force the antagonism of classes can exert on the life and mind of a poet.

Clare was born in 1793 in Helpston, a small village in the northeast corner of Northamptonshire, a district of no particular prominence in literary geography. Clare was the runty one of twins, a condition which was not improved by undernourishment. But this runtiness was a factor in his subsequent literary career, for it not only developed his sensitivity by marking him off as different, but also exempted him from labor in its most arduous and exhausting phases. (Clare, like Keats, never grew much over five feet high.) He went to school: we are told that the wages for eight weeks work paid for one month's schooling,