

Johnson—The Man Who Was

ROBERT FORSYTHE

WITH all the best intentions, the Second Coming of General Hugh A. Johnson is not going to take. One sees his picture in the papers and even hears his voice in the newsreels but there is an eerie feeling about it and even a sense of embarrassment, much as if one had sat suddenly up in bed and witnessed a lately deceased maiden aunt floating serenely through the window and perching herself on the tie rack. The General is here in the good graces of the Hon. Fiorello H. La Guardia but it is impossible to believe that he is present. It is not that he is seen through a glass darkly or any of that nonsense but that he has violated all laws among dead men by refusing to lie down.

This constitutes a tragedy of the larger order because if there was any one field in which the General was felt to be prominent it was in that of drama and there is nothing so utterly anti-climactic as the great Hamlet reduced to playing the race track tout in *Three Men On a Horse*. Even if it were conceded that the General had returned in full, it would be only a half-Johnson because of the loss, far back along the trail of insanity, of the ineluctable Robby, that fabulous female who coasted through fame in a short six months and seemed about to reinstitute the rule by matriarchy in a country which could only stand and gape at the fury and nonsensicality of a weird contrivance known as the N.R.A., which was to reconstitute mankind, cure chilblains and forever remove need from the world. When the history of that demented period is written I hope that the greatest of all pens will save himself for Robby.

Looking back now one is not so much amazed that two such incredible persons once ran America but that America is here to tell the tale. I speak only for myself but it seems like a dream and I distrust fantasy. To the credit of Robby, it may be said that she has preserved her wraithhood. The General has not been so fortunate. Although dead, he was obviously embalmed in headlineitis, a drug which affords no peace for the deceased. The virus began working on him almost as soon as services were said over him at the last N.R.A. press conference in Washington and soon after he was bursting forth in a radio attack which was to annihilate Father Coughlin and Huey Long. He was next found decently interred in the columns of the Scripps-Howard newspapers, a bourne from which few return and none unscathed. Just what prevailed upon the Hon. Fiorello to trifle with the past has not been revealed but there is evidence to the effect that the General has suffered an attack which made it necessary for the reporters to come in lest Heaven fall under its indignant burden.

Reviewing General Johnson's past is no task for a sane man. About it hangs an aura of

incredibility which will be the dismay of the future historian. There was first the insanity of the Hoover regime with its radio talks by the great man, Julius Klein, he who possessed the economic truths of eternity and predicted the return of prosperity by noon of next Wednesday, and the pronouncements of the high-collared ninny of Palo Alto himself, predicting an end of all grief and a restoration of good will and wealth by a certain June 28, 1930, at three o'clock sharp. This will be enough to confound the investigator of the future but if he struggles when reaching this point, he will be lost when he arrives at the General and Robby. The picture of the bulbous-nosed warrior and his pert secretary careening about the country by plane in a state of high inanity will

be beyond the powers of compass of anyone not accustomed to dementia in high places. It will not seem believable. It seems unbelievable at this very moment, with the crazy events no more than two years in the past. There will never be any place for satire in the treatment of General Johnson and the N.R.A. The most stupid direct testimony will be enough for the future generations. Nobody need preach to me about the glories of the past while I am able to vision the joy of the students in Soviet America racing through the chapters in their history telling about the Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Hon. Rexford D. Tugwell, the Hon. Hugh A. Johnson, the Hon. Charles A. Dawes, the Hon. Andrew W. Mellon, the Hon. William D. Green when America was in



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peril and the New Deal was formed to instruct the economic forces of the world of their place in a universe governed by such intellects.

What General Johnson is doing now in New York, I really don't know. It matters a great deal, doubtlessly, but I simply can't believe the man is here and it is impossible for me to deal with an apparition. If it is relief he is handling, it need only be assumed that those on relief need the prayers of all decent citizens. If there are fascist speeches needed to give vigilante bands courage to attack the workers, the General can be counted upon. He will not be the Johnson of old, cracking down upon everybody who can not crack back and losing every battle with the Fords and Weirs and Hearsts, but he will do his best, in a voice now muffled by its necessity of arriving through a ouija board, to do for New York terrorists what he did for the San Francisco murderers.

His start in his New York job was interesting as being a faded imitation of his former explosive self. The air was rent, as of old, with the coruscating expletives but they seemed only shocking, as one is shocked by a grandmother's goddam. There was something pitiful about it all, with the General lounging over a table in the presence of the newspaper men and trying vainly to be what they wanted him to be. Just what the Hon. Fiorello had in mind when he inducted the General is not known but he may have felt that the hullabaloo of a typical Johnson circus might be an excellent thing for a hot summer and a cut in relief expenditures. He may have recalled the fake police raids in the regime of Grover Whalen which successfully covered up the corruption of the Walker administration. He may even have remembered the heaven-rending commotion of the N.R.A. itself, a concatenation of sounds which stupefied the country for two years and had such a bludgeoning effect upon a few such weak minds as Abraham Cahan and John L. Lewis that they are still bemoaning the loss of liberty for labor which was contained in Section 7a of the fantastic bill. Granted that it would require little pressure to indent the soft minds of the gentlemen mentioned, one is able to see what went on in the Hon. Fiorello's mind when the name of the General was suggested to him from, it is rumored, the Throne Room of the White House.

But something has happened to the General. He is back but nobody knows it and he seems a bit doubtful of it himself. When he poses in a half-witted manner for pictures in the newsreels, being inducted into some idiotic society which requires him to wear a beaver hat and a winged collar with points sticking out from his neck like the ears of a jackass, he is docile and beaten, answering the jibes and yokelish guffaws of the society members with the subdued resignation of an old bear being poked by the sticks of small boys at the zoo. His capacities for stupidity are still unimpaired, as was evidenced by his first intention of compelling relief cases to take whatever jobs were offered with the idea of supplementing the pay up to the regular starvation relief fig-

ure from public funds. Since even an infant or the Hon. Fiorello could understand what such a policy would do to the general wage level in the community, the General was asked to desist.

He was still busy talking about the heinous crime which was being perpetrated in South Jersey because the berry owners couldn't recruit pickers long after The N. Y. World-Telegram had sent a man down who found that if he was content to sleep under a berry bush at night and work all day for 89 cents, he could be assured of an excellent position, at the same time removing himself from the relief roles and being unable to get back until he should establish not only that he was hungry but that he possessed no stray millionaire uncle in Australia who might come to his assistance or that he had not become so accustomed to undernourishment that anything in the way of food

would be a shock from which he would be unlikely to recover.

Obviously the General is not the same without Robby. Indeed it makes one reluctant to give the General full credit for the astonishing success of the N.R.A. and the New Deal. If it is determined that the feminine touch was after all preeminent in the saving of civilization which went on in those dark days of '33, there will be even severer criticism of the General now. Either he should have stayed away or he should have come back with Robby. There is something indecent and unaesthetic about his present return. It violates the eternal verities and mutilates a myth. I should suggest that General Hugh A. Johnson retire at once to the glades of oblivion. I should suggest it if there was any practical necessity of furthering a retreat which was complete before I entered the discussion.

Hitlerites in Hollywood

JAY RAND

LOS ANGELES.

THE Hussars, Light Horse Troop, etc., are amusing superficial manifestations of the California drive towards fascism, but the real threat lies in the alliance between Hearst and the Warner Brothers and the threatened mergers consolidating even stronger the Mellon-Rockefeller control over the industry. Some idea of the fascist drive and what the working class may expect from Hollywood are the following incidents which have occurred here:

Police Chief Davis has given pistol permits and "Lieutenant, Los Angeles Police Department," gold badges to numerous directors, executives and actors. This award is bestowed with the understanding that the recipient will be ready when called upon to fight in Chief Davis' "War on Reds."

The Mayors of Chicago, Jersey City and a few other industrial centers have been entertained recently by Furious Willy in his bungalow at the Warner lot as have various naval and army officials.

Victor McLaglen is occupying his spare time by addressing various groups on "Americanism." According to Sunday's Los Angeles Times, "McLaglen likes to do good pictures. After that his chief interest is his lighthorse troop, which takes up all of his spare time. Its membership is 500 and increasing. When he is not actively engaged with the organization, he is busy counteracting 'adverse propaganda' against it. 'It's amazing what they'll say about a man because he tries to be a good American,' he said seriously. 'And I am an American; an American citizen; although I was born in England. . . . One article in a national magazine accuses us of being fascists. We are not fascists nor Communists nor Nazis,' he exclaimed—'Just good Americans . . . we

encourage all sports, are tied up with the country in the event of a major disaster—though not for police duty—and engage in charitable acts that the world never hears about!'"

Black Fury and *Oil for the Lamps of China* were not accidental pictures. They are the opening guns of the Hollywood campaign against radicals. Even though neither of these pictures are box-office successes they will be followed by others of similar genre for this is one time when the picture moguls think it wise to forego immediate profit.

It is an interesting sidelight that the greatest allies Hearst, Chanler (owner of The Los Angeles Times and lord of the Imperial Valley) and the other California Red-baiters have in their fascist campaign, are wealthy Jews. Louis B. Mayer, the Warner Brothers and the Cohens (Columbia Pictures) do not hesitate to lend their services to the American Junkers.

The California capitalists have the jitters; a hangover from the San Francisco general strike. They are tightening their hold, or attempting to, on all propaganda organs. Known radicals who work in pictures are told to stop their radical utterances and affiliations. The alternative is the blacklist.

The doubts liberals have in New York about whether or not America could go fascist amuse awakened film-workers. Let them come to California and appear on a picket line, in a radical play or circulate a radical piece of literature.

Incidentally, at the Los Angeles Housing Exhibit recently held in Hollywood, the Los Angeles Police Department held an exhibit of "Literature and Weapons—Seized in Communist Raids." Among the periodicals on view that the lecturer (a lieutenant in the police department) termed "Organs of the