

At the next corner a couple of newspapermen had trained their cameras on the rear of a police wagon, waiting for a picture. I paused a moment to watch. One of the officers, seeing me, yelled, "Move on." I "moved," but in vain. The same officer yelled, "Another smart guy, huh?" and grabbed me, tearing my shirt. Another shouted, "Resisting are you? Resisting an officer!" whacked me a couple of times with his club and pushed me toward the next man, who whacked, shouted and pushed me toward the next; and so I went, back and forth, down the line and into the wagon. The officers had gotten their man, the newspapermen had gotten their picture.

Resisting arrest? With seventy-five or one hundred police on that one corner? I didn't even resist "resisting." I just covered my face with my hands and took the pounding. Luckily I am tall and so took the blows on my shoulders and back. The shorter men caught it on the head and neck.

At first I blamed my luck for being on the scene just when the newspapermen were all set for a picture, but I learned later that it made little difference. The police picked up nearly every white man in the neighborhood within five or six blocks of the scheduled meeting place. They took men and women out of drug stores, soda fountains and even from 5 & 10 cent stores and department stores. Many of those taken knew nothing about the demonstration, but were in the neighborhood on business, or because they worked or lived nearby.

Once in the wagon, one of the officers started informing me that he "enlisted in the army at seventeen and was fighting for my country when you were in short pants, you wise —— you." He repeated the same,

with variations, to each new arrival. On the way to the station, when a woman, who had been picked up while waiting on a corner for a bus, asked why they were being held, he answered, "I enlisted when I was seventeen and fought for my country." One of the other officers gave a truer answer when he said, "Because you're white, a white man has no business in this neighborhood." I have often known of them arresting a man because he was black but this was the first time I ever heard of them arresting a man because he was white. The police merely assumed that all white men in the district had some connection with the demonstration.

At the station we had to run a gauntlet. One officer stood just outside the door and punched each man in the spine with the end of his club as he passed through. If the man tried to dodge, an officer inside the door socked him. They seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Once inside the station I found at least four hundred there ahead of me, not counting the police; and a bloody bunch they were. The short men, especially, had been beaten on the head. Bloodiest of all was an elderly man who stood several inches under five feet tall.

We were lined up and questioned as to our names and addresses, height, weight, nationality, etc. I was placed in a small cell with forty-eight others. The cell was about ten feet square with a bench on each side. Seats were "rotated" every fifteen minutes, but most of the time were occupied by men who obviously could not stand. We were so crowded that there was no room to sit on the floor. We stood from about 3:30 P. M. until after 10:30 when they started to sort us out. During all of this time we

had even been denied the use of the telephone.

At about five o'clock, an officer led a plainclothesman in front of our cell and recited: "Look at the Jewish bastards, look at the faces on those Jewish sons of bitches. They won't look at a colored man usually, but today they come down here and pat him on the back. The Jewish bastards!" Then he walked around the corner and repeated the same formula before the next cell. This was no accident; the majority of the men in the cell were not Jewish. This officer wanted us to feel that we were being led astray by the Jews, and the Negro to feel that the white man was really his enemy.

Before releasing me two of the officers gave me a heart-to-heart talk, which ran something like this. "You should never fight an officer—You can't fight a thousand police. Yes you did resist, or tried to—You can't fight a thousand police. Nobody struck you—you can't fight a thousand police.—You go back up to your part of town, where you can look out over the park and the lagoon (I had given an address in a more well-to-do section of town.) There's nothing for you to see down here. You go back up to your part of town and stop worrying about these people.—You can't fight a thousand police.—Who tore your shirt?—Oh no—You tore your own shirt, you and nobody else tore your shirt.—You can't fight a thousand police."

Once outside the station I asked an officer where I could catch an "L." He answered. "The 'L'? How in hell did you get down here, on a street car? You grab the nearest transportation and get to hell out of this neighborhood or I will run you right back in. We'll make good Americans out of you."

Two Years of Drought, One of Rust

MICHAEL BLANKFORT

ROBERTS COUNTY, S. D.

"IF YOU farmers can't make enough for seed next spring, you ought to quit farming." The speaker was a medium-sized man with serious eyes and a moustache; the County Agent. A laugh went up in the court room. The wooden seats were filled with farmers and business men. They had come together to discuss what was going to be done with the seed and feed loans. The laugh came from the farmers who were sitting uneasily. It was a sharp, unfunny laugh; bitter and angry. One of them got up. He had farmed in South Dakota for forty years. He walked to a window, spat out a quid of snuff turned his blue, angry eyes on the County Agent.

"We got to stop farming, eh? It's our fault, eh? We made the drought. We made the black rust that ate up this year's wheat.

We sold ourselves seed wheat at a \$1.65 a bushel when we could've bought it for 35 cents. We're the dumb ones that thought up the idea of plowing under, of slaughtering our stock. You bet, we're the ones. Is that what you're saying, eh?" There wasn't a peep from the County Agent the rest of the night. And almost every business man in the room spoke up and pledged his support to the farmers.

What's the situation?

Roberts County, South Dakota: good grain land, good prairie land that once upon a time had acres and acres of No. 1 wheat, barley, oats and rye growing on them. Roberts County: the prairie soil broken for the first time by the homesteading Norwegian, Swedish and Yankee farmers from Ohio, New England and Pennsylvania.

Two years of drought when there wasn't

enough green stuff to keep crickets alive; when farmers had to go sixty miles into Minnesota to feed their stock. Drought and the A.A.A. took care that there wasn't too much stock to worry about. Drought and the A.A.A. saw to it that when the spring of 1935 rolled around there wasn't a peck of seed in the bins. And the benevolent government saw to it that farmers had just enough to keep from starving, only by working in the gravel pits at 40 below. (Breaking gravel, grading, scraping, hauling, loading and unloading all by hand when there were enough machines for that purpose in the county sheds. But hand work was the order lest the farmers work less than eight to nine hours a day.)

Spring of 1935. Where is the seed for the sowing? Again the fond parent, the Department of Agriculture. We will lend

you seed for which you will pay \$1.65 a bushel for Durum wheat and \$1.35 for barley and so on and so on. It didn't matter to the Department of Agriculture that the same seed could be bought at the elevators for half—because they knew the farmer couldn't buy at the elevators without cash and they had millions of government bushels stored up that they wanted to get rid of. And with malice aforethought, or if you prefer, with the Triple A reduction program in mind, they held up these loans until late spring and late spring wheat is rarely heavy enough to be used for anything else but feed.

The farmer got his seed and feed loans, almost too late to help, almost too late to sow, almost too late to keep his cow and horse from rotting away. Most of the farmers had all they could do to sow, so weak were their horses. Many had to go in debt further and rent horses, or get gas on credit for run-down tractors. And nearly all of them, 85 percent in Roberts County, wondered as they ran down the furrows what they were doing this for. The crop they were sowing and the stock they were feeding were mortgaged by these loans. What yield there was belonged to the government. But prospects were bright for a very good crop; maybe enough to pay off these loans and have enough left to live on without relief and the gravel pits.

June went by; just enough rain; just enough sun. Then July and the black rust began to creep through the fields. August, the sun dried up the sloughs and the black rust grew like a prairie fire. When harvesting time came, farmers left many a section uncut because it would cost more for binding twine than the grain was worth. And what was cut and bound was almost too light to shock. And the government sent their bird-dogs around to check up. The farmer was told: we expect dollar for dollar on the seed and feed loans. Did it matter to Henry's henchman that a farmer would have to repay his loan three to six bushels for each one he borrowed? Seed wheat for which he paid \$1.65 a bushel yielded him wheat that was worth approximately forty cents a bushel. With this particular wheat, it would take something over four bushels to pay back one bushel.

This didn't disturb the experts of the Triple A; that is, not until the Farmers National Committee of Action, the United Farmers League, the Holiday and the Farmers Union throughout the entire Northwest, in conferences, conventions and mass meetings resolved that no farmer would pay more than one bushel for one bushel. The slogan "Bushel for Bushel" swept the farm country. The countryside was on the move as it had been when foreclosures and evictions were the order of the day.

The Farmers National Committee for Action, as well as the United Farmers League and several counties of the Holiday, went even further than the bushel for bushel pro-

gram. Anticipating the moves of Washington's sidewalk farmers they foresaw that the farmer must have the freedom to sell without interference from any creditor. They knew that as soon as threshing began, the government and the banks would send the long, oh so long, list of liens and mortgages to the local grain elevator, and that the elevator man would make out his check to pay the farmer with the names of the creditors first and the farmer, the producer, with his name at the end of the list. They knew that by the time the check got around to the farmer, there'd be nothing left. He'd still be owing. Freedom to sell his grain without any interference from creditors was the second demand of the farmer.

WHEN the threshing began and the farmer finally realized how poor his grain was, he thought twice even about the bushel-for-bushel payment. In one vicinity in Roberts County, an area of about ten miles square there isn't a bushel of wheat that can make No. 5 grade, the lowest Bureau of Standard grade. And bushel-for-bushel payment was changed by mass meeting after mass meeting to bushel-for-bushel payment only after enough has been set aside to support the family for the winter and to seed next spring. That this was the only program that would keep the farmers from the gravel pits next year is amply illustrated by the plight of one farmer.

Flax is usually Roberts County's best bet. William Nelson lives in Norway Township. He borrowed enough from the government to pay for five bushels of flaxseed at the government price of \$2.25 a bushel. His seed loan for the ten acres he intended to put flax in was \$11.25. He had to hire a horse to seed the flax. His own horse was too weak. That cost about a dollar. To cut and bind the ten acres (gas, oil, repairs, binding twine) cost him \$6.50. His total cost amounts to \$18.75. Flax is selling today (August 29) at \$1.29 a bushel. The usual run of flax is from eight to ten bushels an acre, but two years of drought and one year of rust did something to the land. Mr. Nelson's ten acres yielded altogether six and a half bushels and at \$1.29 a bushel his gross income is \$8.39, making a total deficit of \$10.36. The important thing in this story is not so much that his flax ran him a loss but that even if his seed loan was cancelled, he wouldn't make a cent on his crop. (I haven't included in the cost his own living expenses or even the cost of threshing which runs to about \$6.) And what is true of Mr. Nelson's flax field is true of 85 percent of the farmers in Roberts County, no matter what crop you figure on.

Now, even the Department of Agriculture knows you can't put a farmer in jail for debts. They know the militant tradition of the farmers in foreclosure time. They don't want a little insurrection on their hands. They also know that the small business man in every town in the farming area depends

for his living on the farmer and in most cases is willing to fight alongside him. So they made the first compromise, a compromise designed to divide the banks, to split part of the business men from the farmer. They offered to release up to 50 percent of the value of the crop to be used to pay harvesting and threshing expenses when and if receipts and orders for such services are presented to the elevator man. The other 50 percent will be retained to pay off part of the feed and seed loans. The garage man would be paid off, the thresher, the local grocer (only for credit extended during harvest and threshing time), the twine man, they would all be paid. But what about the farmer? The farmer would get exactly nothing.

The farmers did the unexpected thing. They didn't bring their grain to the elevator. They stored and binned it. They are doing that this very minute. The elevator man is sitting in the sun waiting for nothing. Where he once had 200 loads a day, he is getting six. This 50 percent release didn't pan out.

But grain in the granary doesn't buy flour or oil. Grain in bins doesn't buy groceries. Federal relief has been cut off and the farmer is on the bounty of the county. And what county will give relief if it knows the farmer has a single kernel of marketable grain in his bin? Therefore, the farmer is given this kind of run around. No relief, if you've binned your grain. And if you sell your grain you get no cash, so you're back on relief. Is there any wonder that you can ride down the gumbo roads of South Dakota and see acre after acre of uncut wheat?

With farmers not acting according to the best rules of Wallace and Tugwell, with grain in the bins instead of in the elevators, the boys thought up another scheme to get the seed and feed loans paid without creating a rebellion. Keep your grain, they said. Bin it. Okay with us. We'll even lend you 60 percent on it. In that way you can wait for higher prices and sell when you're ready. Of course, before we send you the 60 percent, we'll deduct your feed and seed loans, and your interest charges, and \$5 a hundred for stock which will be issued. Yes, naturally, we also will retain a mortgage on the crop.

This is the latest maneuver of Messrs. Wallace and Tugwell. They don't seem to understand, or rather they don't care to understand, that even if the seed and feed loans were cancelled outright, 85 percent of the farmers wouldn't have more than what it takes to pay their harvesting and threshing expenses. How much, then, will they have if they get only 60 percent of the value of their crops after the seed and feed loans are deducted?

The farmers are going to be just as quick to see this as they were to see the 50 percent proposition. They are either going to sell for cash and use the money as they see fit, or they are going to keep their grain and demand relief.

The Closing Session

EUGENE GORDON

Moscow.

FOUR MEN within the door opening upon Okhotny Ryad examined my Soviet passport and my pass, comparing the snapshot in the lower corner of the passport with my face. They nodded and I stepped into the broad, crowded foyer of the trade-unions' building. Today's was the closing session of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International.

I had heard so many details about the Congress that a great deal seemed familiar from the start. I had heard of this temporary "bookshop" along the left wall. On the front of the building outside there were appeals in sixteen languages to workers of the world to unite. Above the rows of shelves behind this counter stacked with books and pamphlets similar panels of red cloth and white lettering, but these words in diverse tongues dealt with Marxian literature.

Conversation and laughter in strange tongues made it seem that the sixteen languages had been multiplied by perhaps 16. Voices formed an undertone that neither rose nor fell and in which individual words were indistinguishable. Words were diffused and blurred into a restrained roar. It was the voice of the world proletariat.

Flowers and greenery embanked the passage leading to the white marble staircase, at the foot of which stood four men examining passes. They scrutinized mine as if the first to see it. One man tore off two corners of the card and handed it back; I wound with the stairs to the second landing. There was another temporary counter up here. Delegates pressed upon it buying the Communist papers of their countries. There were also piles of mimeographed news bulletins with the latest dispatches from all countries.

I was in the wide sweep of corridor of which Borodin had told the staff of The Moscow Daily News the day after this Congress opened. Exhibits here of material created in the struggle against imperialist war and fascism, according to Borodin, was the most extensive ever collected. He said it was worth a trip around the world to see.

This corridor was shaped like the blocked letter C, inverted, the hall of columns — the auditorium in which the Congress met — being contained within the curvature. On the lefthand side, therefore, the wall was broken at intervals by doors opening into the auditorium; the righthand wall, however, was an unbroken front of heavy placards. Indeed, both walls were like huge placards, the lefthand side only being interspersed with openings. All the photographs, drawings, maps, newspapers, newspaper clippings, letters, posters, leaflets, throw-aways — everything the militant work-

ing class has printed in its struggle against a resourceful and cruel enemy — had been assembled here, each exhibit bearing the name of the country and the organization sending it. The corridor seemed to stretch for miles, as crowded as a small town shopping center on Saturday night. If I do not see it all now, I wondered, shall I ever have this chance again? Through the doors on the left I saw a few persons in the auditorium.

It seems as if the Communist paper *L'Humanité* has sent from France the largest exhibit of all. Not amazing in view of the advanced development of the united front movement there. Enlarged photographs of French workers in every industrial center of that country illustrate whole pages both from *L'Humanité* and the bourgeois French press. A huge map, drawn to scale, is startling in its black and red areas representing a death-struggle opposition. The red circle around Paris is the People's Front against fascist reaction. Photographs from Germany, Spain, Japan and China are equally horrible. Two Spanish girls lie on their backs upon the cobblestones, their clothing splashed with blood. Militiamen tramp past, their eyes irresistibly drawn to the mutilated bodies. The fine young body of a Chinese worker lies headless in the middle of a deserted street. Chinese, German, Spanish and Japanese workers press upon me, discussing these pictures as something from a casual experience. In a few days they will be returning. No one can say whether this German boy will be alive a month from now. Dolorez, the woman delegate from Spain, realizes that her safe return to the workers who sent her depends wholly upon their own might. The voice of the world proletariat, subdued and restrained, yet roars through these corridors and halls like thunder below the horizon.

Here is the exhibit from the United States, with a picture each of Foster and Browder above it. Here is a May Day demonstration in Union Square; demonstrations in Harlem; workers being attacked by company police; a Negro hanging by his neck to a tree; a Negro agitating a crowd of black and white workers. It is getting late and the auditorium is nearly filled. Since my arrival in the Soviet Union I have met a few young people, born after the October Revolution, who speak with awe of New York and America. Admiration for America's technique has caused some of them to overlook her heinous social face. I wish every worker in Moscow could see this exhibit. I need have no fears for Moscow's young generation, however, I remind myself, recalling a recent experience at a Pioneer camp. "When are the workers in the United States going to have their revolution?" they persisted in asking. They know the answers

to their own questions, a fact which heartens and cheers me.

THE curved corridor ended in a white marble staircase winding upward. Workers at the doors are scrutinizing passes; they examine mine and I enter the hall of glistening marble columns and dazzling crystal chandeliers. I find a seat near the door and opposite the end of the hall where enormous paintings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, above the Presidium, face the delegates against a background of folded red velvet. Here I can see the whole auditorium although I am some distance from the Presidium's platform. On the back of the seat in front of me there is a metal plate with the words "Russian," "German," "English," "French," "Spanish," "Chinese," "Japanese," "Scandinavian" and "orator" printed on it. Beside each word there are two metal holes for plugging in earphones. When the speaking begins you adjust the earphones and plug in at your own language. The interpreter, speaking simultaneously with the "orator," creates the illusion that you are listening to the "orator."

There are several Negroes among the American delegation. William L. Patterson takes his seat. I recognize members of the Marine Workers Industrial Union. Trachtenberg enters from the corridor on the opposite side, his arms piled with new books. He stuffs them into the aperture under his desk and sits down, wiping his shining forehead. The tailor-shop immaculateness of his person has not been disturbed, despite the exertion. I am touched with tenderness at sight of old friends, for recollections of other meetings in other places make me sentimental. I should like to call them by name; I should like to talk with them of folks and conditions back home. They will be returning soon but I shall remain in Moscow. They will be in the midst of daily struggles while I live where such struggles have ended forever. My time to return will come soon enough, however, and I shall be in the midst of struggles as of old. I thus console myself. "In Moscow we have no names," a worker who left the United States illegally told a friend here who greeted him aloud. "The name you called me — forget it. It's not the one I came under." Thus we are reminded that the enemy strains his ears to hear even in this Congress.

I AM subconsciously aware of growing tension, the drone of voices and of massing crowds. Hardly a seat in the reserved section remains unoccupied. Nearly eight o'clock. I take my Russian grammar from the briefcase. The glittering lights hurt my eyes. Patterson leans over my shoulder and we look up and down and across the filling auditorium and