

Sea-Strike Scene

When the crew is signed on for the first settled ship on the East Coast, the atmosphere forecasts a victory

By Rhoda Holmes

SMELL of smoke and human sweat, tocsin of strong male voices. Clump of boots and clamor of phones . . . the seamen's strike headquarters in New York. Seamen, dozens of them, oilers, wipers, messmen, firemen, linen-keepers, pantrymen, polishers, cabin-boys, pursers, and stewards.

Excitement which picks you up as you push through the dingy door on Eleventh Avenue, across the street from the tall ships' masts. Enthusiasm which pulls you along the stairs thick with empty tobacco packages and cast-off strike bulletins. Delirium which surrounds you at the top as the guard eyes your union card.

Delirium it is, made of the wild dreams of practical men. A long, low room hung with smoke and packed from door to door with a roaring crowd. A queue at a scrawled sign "All Men Eligible Apply Here," another at "West Coast Information and Census," another before "All Men Who Sign Up for Picket Duty and Do Not Report Will Not Get Food and Flop."

A little man surveying "For Free Bath See Housing," "Lend Your Overcoat to a Night Picket," "Protest the Copeland Bill," "Sign Here for the I.S.U. Soccer Team," plead the other walls.

Surge of the men to the bare board screen at the farthest end of the room. "Quiet!" bays a voice, and out of the Strike Strategy Committee gate rolls a stumpy figure in a small round hat and a pea-jacket. Behind is a blue-shirted seaman with a blond moustache and heavy horn-rimmed glasses. "Quiet!" yells Francis ("Mulligan") Mulderig. "Quiet!" booms William McCuiston.

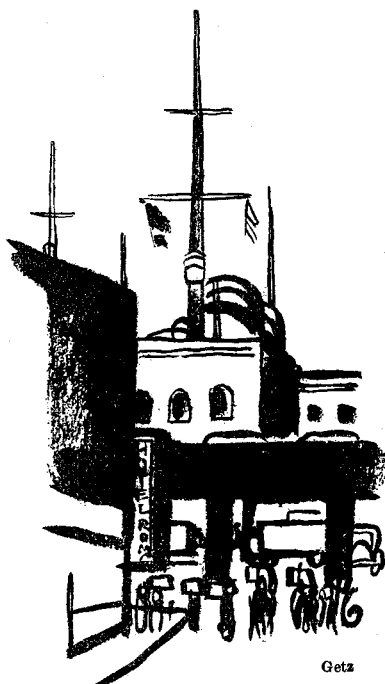
The boots stop clumping. Mulderig announces that a crew will be signed on for the S.S. *Santa Tecla*, Prudential Steamship Corporation vessel leaving immediately for Gulf ports. The boots stop, but the cheers start, and McCuiston's thumpings mean nothing until the seamen show how they feel about the *Santa Tecla*. It will be the first crew to leave under the agreement signed the day before by the Prudential.

"Have your cards ready," roars Mulderig over the din. "Your registration date and your picketing record are what will count."

Out come the small gray badges of strike service, proud records of a month of waterfront vigilance. McCuiston can stop pounding now, for hope is an even better silencer.

"Oiler, at ninety dollars a month and overtime," intones Mulderig, to be smothered by the whoop which goes up.

"Ninety a month, the b-----s! Are they



signing oilers or company presidents?" "There isn't that much money, or if there is, they wouldn't give it away!" "Why didn't my mother raise me to be an oiler?"

Through the mob presses Joseph Wilson, small and sturdy, "Hooko" because of his nose. Veteran of labor struggles on both coasts, No. 39 on the strike honor roll, Hooko gets the first job.

"Oiler at ninety dollars a month and overtime," calls Mulderig, and up comes James Gallegon to be rewarded for an unpaid month in the engine room of *Tragedy I*, the little launch in which the men go down the bay to sound the strike call to incoming ships. Ninety a month looks big to Gallegon, who always thought he was lucky to get seventy-



two-fifty. Cash overtime at \$1.50 an hour is like a couple of government bonds.

"Oiler at ninety dollars a month and overtime," calls Mulderig again, and the third member of the crew becomes James Mullen, "Moon" on land and sea, whose ponderous 250-pound frame has withstood the shocks of picket-line battles up and down the Atlantic and the Pacific.

"Fireman at eighty dollars a month and overtime," McCuiston yells over Mulderig's shoulder. Pat Kiely, "Popeye" to the crowd, engine-room delegate of the famous *California* crew of last spring, No. 90 since he walked off the *Washington* and sixty-two-fifty at the end of every month, is picked.

"Fireman at eighty dollars a month and overtime," sounds again. Hands in the pockets of his dungarees, little blue watch cap on the back of the head which has received brisk clouts from the law and company deputies in half a dozen ports, J. P. Quinn strides up and is enrolled.

"Messman at seventy dollars a month and overtime," is the reward for "Twenty-One Karat" Sterling, who has worked long and hard for forty-two-fifty until now. C. C. Morrow, gray-haired veteran of the rank-and-file movement, is signed on as chief steward. Twenty-two-year-old Harry Mazurowski becomes the *Tecla* utility man.

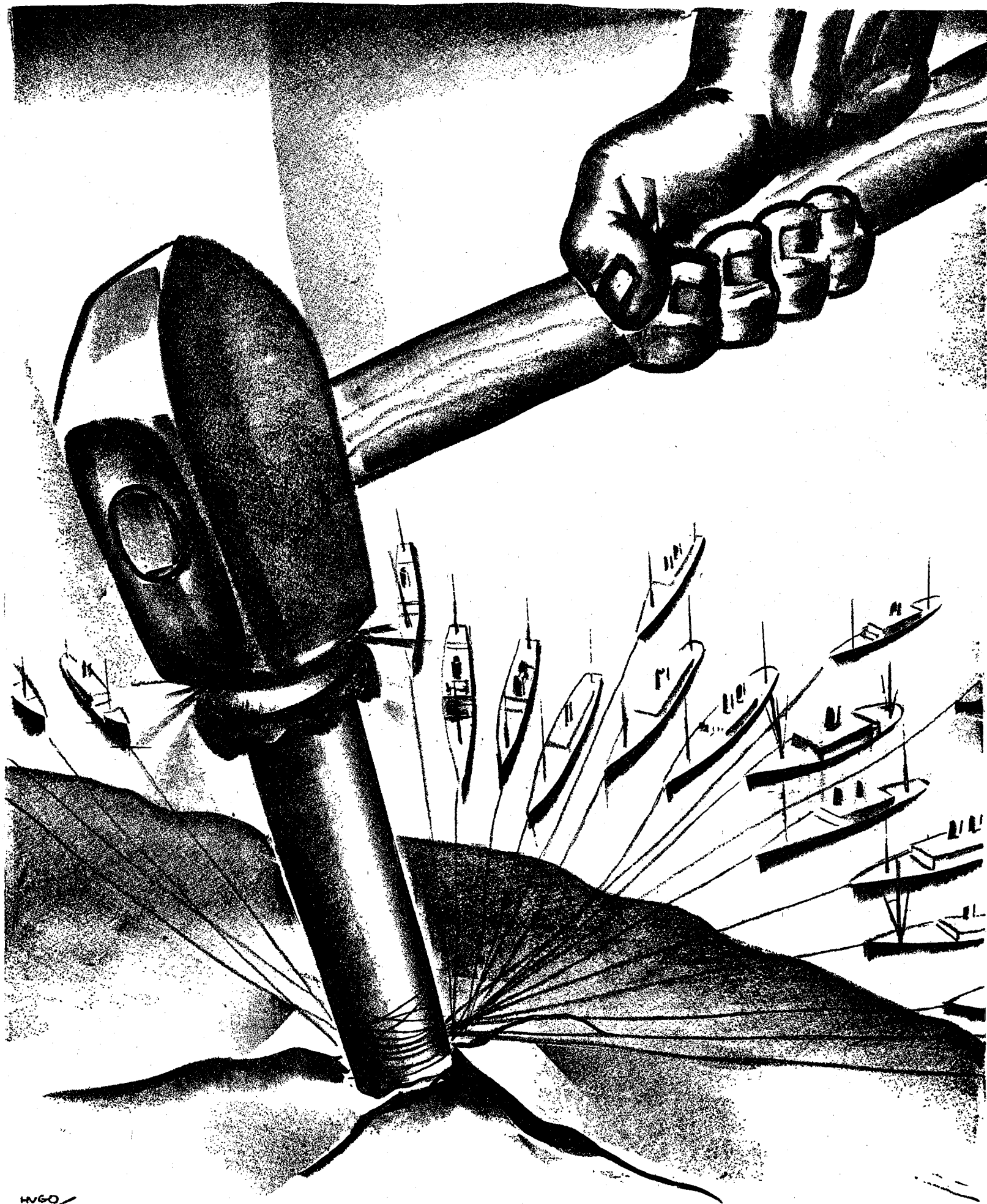
Twenty-six of them are taken, and all twenty-six are thumped vigorously by dozens of fists as they get their instructions, yell good-bys, and start off for the Seamen's Institute to collect their gear before reporting to the *Tecla* at her Brooklyn pier.

Beaming at the scene is big Joe Curran, chairman of the Strike Strategy Committee, who is the center of the room no matter where he is standing. Beside him lounges Jack Lawrenson, lean Irish oiler, secretary of the committee. Eddie Rothbach shouts reports over the telephone while Blackie Meyers hounds Tony Hennessey for advertising money for the *Pilot*, strike organ.

"You know, lady," says Joe, reaching over for a package of dates someone has left in the corner, "this is sort of historical. That's the first crew ever to go out of the Atlantic Coast with a Pacific Coast wage scale."

"Highest wages paid in the American merchant marine since 1921!" bellows Eddie Rothbach into the phone.

"They're beginning to crack on this side . . ." dictates Lawrenson to a frowning seaman who laboriously picks out on the typewriter a letter to the Joint Strike Committee in San Francisco.

HUGO
GELLERT

Lithograph by Hugo Gellert

THUNDER!

SUPERFICIALLY, the week was one of high melodrama. In London, a king-emperor abandoned his throne and went into exile, unable to discharge his royal duties, he explained, "without the help and support of the woman I love." And in a far-off province of western China a powerful general startled the world by kidnaping and reportedly killing the dictator-president of the Chinese Republic. Beneath the theatrics of both events appeared swirling political currents far transcending them in importance.

Of the two developments, the more significant was the episode in the Orient. According to first reports, anti-Red troops in Shensi, under the command of Marshal Chang Hsueh-liang, decided it was more to China's advantage to drive the Japanese out of Manchuria than to fight Chinese Communists. Duly alarmed, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek flew to Shensi, into the waiting arms of Marshal Chang, himself the former ruler of Manchuria. The price of Chiang's freedom, wired Chang at first, was an immediate declaration of war against Japan, a pledge by the central Nanking government to recover all lost territories, and the reorganization of the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) so as to readmit Communists to membership.

From later reports, however, it appeared that Japan itself might have had a hand in the Shensi events. For Chang's action promised to plunge China into civil war and thereby favor Japan's aggressive drive on the Asiatic mainland. An immediate result of such a conflict would be the renewal of Japan's campaign to capture Suiyuan province, where its Mongol mercenary forces were recently repulsed by Chinese defenders. It was not unlikely, some observers felt, that War Lord Chang had used anti-Japanese slogans knowing that to do so would discredit them. The view that his coup was intended to disrupt genuine resistance to Japan was strengthened by a report that the marshal, before the alleged execution, had modified his demands, asking primarily that Nanking cede him certain "choice provinces" and a greater share of booty from the treasury.

The Japanese government was reported "gravely concerned," however, and its press was quick to point an accusing finger at Moscow. Fantastic charges that Chang Hsueh-liang was planning a government with Soviet support were characterized by Tass, the Soviet news agency, as "without foundation" and a "malicious invention."

Helping to hold in check the danger of an immediate anti-Soviet outburst by Japan was the still-pending fisheries treaty, which Moscow has so far refused to ratify because of Japan's "anti-Communist" treaty with Germany. The refusal, which plunged Tokyo into diplomatic doldrums, threatened the job of Foreign Minister Arita, who, along with Premier Hirota, was called to account by the emperor's Privy Council for his artlessness. Criticism was directed at the two officials not so much for having concluded the alliance with Germany as for having allowed the U.S.S.R. to learn of it before its signature to



Covering the events of the week ending December 14

the favorable fisheries agreement had been secured. Apologies were not considered to be of sufficient avail for Arita to retain his job unless the Soviet Union should be convinced that the German agreement is as innocuous as Arita now says it is.

BRTAIN'S colossal fantasy came to at least an official end when the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod summoned the Commons to the House of Lords to hear the momentous abdication of Edward VIII. Two days later the man who had been, among other things, Emperor of India and Defender of the Faith, and is now merely the Duke of Windsor, walked his dog up and down the lonely station platform at Salzburg, Austria, waiting to continue his journey to the remote castle of the Rothschilds. What was once his government felt satisfied that it had salvaged the moral aura about the throne, though the higher clergy continued to sprinkle the royal seat with spiritual antiseptic.

While the leadership of the Labor Party had, from the beginning, identified itself with Prime Minister Baldwin, citing in justification the fact that Mosley's fascists were supporting the king, Communists and Left Laborites refused to be jockeyed into such a position. Branding Baldwin's stand against Edward an attempt to strengthen the class aspects of the throne, they waged an energetic campaign to divorce labor from both king and prime minister, and urged the establishment of a republic. When Baldwin appeared before the House, Communist member William Gallacher scouted the minister's claim that he was upholding the right of the commoner against royalty. Baldwin had not so much as consulted with members of Parliament, Gallacher pointed out. While the Duke of Windsor is now officially out of public life, anti-fascists were not unmindful that English capitalists, remembering his democratic pretensions, might, in some future contingency, find him a useful figure for exploitation.

THE solution of the Edwardian crisis had the beneficial effect of returning European attention to the Spanish battlefront. Little military action was reported during the week, the long-awaited general offensive by Franco against Madrid still failing to material-

ize. Coinciding with the perceptible weakening of the rebel military position, came an Anglo-French proposal for a plebiscite to decide the outcome of the war. Its sponsors maintained, before the moribund London Non-Intervention Committee, that their plan would prevent the Spanish crisis from developing into an international war. The fact that Franco's uprising had as its aim the annulment of a popular election, they did not seem to consider relevant. Included in the mediation plan was a proposal for an embargo against arms and foreign volunteers to either side. Asked for Moscow's stand, Maxim Litvinov expressed his government's willingness to cooperate in mediation efforts and "with other states to declare abstinence from direct and indirect actions which could result in foreign intervention in Spain, expecting, however, that there would be secured and guaranteed absolute control of similar abstinence by other states." It was plain, however, that the Soviet regarded the move as a futile gesture. Berlin, while intimating clearly that it would not countenance any outcome other than a victory for Franco's junta, which it pleased to term the "national government," declared nevertheless that it was ready to discuss mediation with other powers.

Aside from Franco's failure, Berlin found much to worry over. Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, speaking at the centennial celebration of the German Association for Geography and Statistics, made of it anything but an academic occasion. Colonies-or-war was the theme: "Germany is a country with too large a population and too small room." In what might easily have been taken as an allusion to President Roosevelt's address at Buenos Aires, Schacht upbraided "Those foreign statesmen who seek to bring the European problem under the rubric 'Here democracy, here fascism.'"

The Frankfurt *Zeitung* shortly after this outburst published facts relating to Germany's grain shortage which explained much of Herr Schacht's vociferousness. The newspaper reported the Reich short at least one million tons of wheat, which it will have to import, and one million tons of rye, which it will have to deduct from its seed supply.

Less oblique than Herr Schacht was the Nazi press in its comments on the Buenos Aires Conference for the Maintenance of Peace. Terming it a "Machiavellian" affair, German papers featured General Ludendorff's charge that it was "a plot by Jews, Catholics, and Freemasons, whose agent Roosevelt is, to oust German culture from Latin America."

IN its second week, the conference turned its attention to eight proposed plans for conciliation and neutrality, chief among them the draft convention presented by Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Argentina and other nations belonging to the League of Nations saw in two features of Mr. Hull's draft an attempt to isolate the Americas still further from the world. These were the provision for a permanent inter-American conciliation body,