

FEBRUARY 23, 1936

Advance in Spain

THIS week the People's Front scored two significant victories in Europe.

In Paris nearly a million people opposed to reaction united in a mighty demonstration protesting the assault on the Socialist leader, Léon Blum. They swept the fascists off the streets of the leading cities in France.

In Spain, the People's Bloc won a smashing victory at the elections. The United Front of Communists, Socialists and all other enemies of fascism triumphed over the reactionaries headed by Gil Robles. Even the incomplete reports which have arrived at this writing indicate a victory for the people in Madrid, Catalonia, the Basque and Galician provinces, Seville, Saragossa and Bilbao. In Barcelona the People's Bloc has already taken power.

Significant in the Spanish victory was the role of the anarcho-sindicalist workers. These abandoned their traditional policy of boycotting politics on principle and threw in their lot with the Communists and Socialists.

Germany and Italy have taught the world that fascism *must* be stopped. France and Spain are now teaching it that fascism *can* be stopped if only all the progressive elements of contemporary society unite their power.

We in America ought to learn this all-important lesson before it is too late. The most effective reply to the Liberty Leaguers and the Hearsts—the La Rocques and Gil Robles of America—would be a nationwide Farmer-Labor Party, the American equivalent of the People's Front.

National Blacklist

IN Boston a work relief administrator named Emil Fuchs recently announced that Washington was about ready to establish the Nazi passport system in America. Every American citizen could soon be compelled, crowed the little bureaucrat, to register at a police station and to carry an identification card.

In Philadelphia the City Council has already compelled registration with the police by every person who has served any sort of a sentence for crime. This



SERRANO

"Come on, don't get discouraged. For years I painted and starved—until—presto—I won the Sweepstakes."

Serrano

includes, of course, pickets arrested during a strike, speakers jailed in a fight for free speech and many other wide categories of progressive citizens who are not Liberty Leaguers.

Finger-printing and registration for all has been debated by the assembly of New York and in other states. This is becoming a national campaign and it is not difficult to guess who is behind it.

Hearst has been the loudest and most obvious champion of this Czarist passport system, but every other banker and industrialist who hates union labor is pushing it too. Here is the grandest blacklist scheme ever invented to crush trade unionism and insure low wages. Here is the most beautiful

device for ticketing every citizen who displays the faintest pink of liberalism, and rubbing it out of him. If there is any first step toward an American fascism, this is it. The danger cannot be exaggerated; and it must be met now, or tomorrow there will be worse.

"God's Elect"

NEW YORK police beat up Congressman Marcantonio at about the same time that French fascists beat up Léon Blum. So far American tory technique differs from the French. In this country, when an elected representative of the people attempts to exercise his constitutional right of free assembly, the police take the place of the fascist bands, the police beat him over

ne head and take him into "protective custody."

Representative Vito Marcantonio spoke at a demonstration of W.P.A. workers in New York City in favor of demands for adequate relief. "I believe in civil liberty," he said. "I can't talk one way in the House of Representatives and dodge the issue in New York."

But Representative Marcantonio was opposing the wishes of Mayor LaGuardia, his former friend and law partner. The mayor dislikes demonstrations. His appointees have appropriated the power to grant or withhold permits to parade, to assemble, to exercise the right of free speech.

LaGuardia's machine refused W.P.A. workers permission to march through the streets of New York. When Marcantonio attempted to lead workers to W.P.A. headquarters, LaGuardia's police charged, beating the crowd, beating the Congressman who had the temerity to lead his constituents in the fight for bread. Twelve were arrested. "An undetermined number of marchers were clubbed," reports The New York Post. "Women's clothing was torn, men fell to the icy pavements."

In France, fascist bands beat Deputy Blum for his advocacy of world peace and the Franco-Soviet Pact. In America, terror is exercised not alone by vigilantes, but by the police. After all, fascism is not so "foreign" to certain classes in America. Mayor LaGuardia, for one, has taught his police the duties of storm troopers.

If they beat up a Congressman for exercising his right of free speech, who is safe? As Sam Hoffenstein once remarked:

If that's what happens to God's elect,
What the hell can you expect?

Eight Prisoners

JUSTICE has been dominated in California—perhaps more openly than in any other state—by big business and the banks. And when this powerful minority last year demanded that workers charged with criminal syndicalism be imprisoned, the court selected the eight organizers who were most effective in organizing agricultural workers in the rich San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys; it sentenced them to from one to fourteen years. The prosecution had not proved (even to the satisfaction of the hand-picked jury) the charge of criminal syndicalism; but eight young men and women

were pronounced guilty of the fantastic "crime" of "conspiring to enter a conspiracy."

The minimum sentence expires on February 27. The parole board composed of Fred C. Sykes, Kohl Building, San Francisco; Joseph H. Stephens, president of the Merchants National Bank of Sacramento; and David F. Bush of Oakdale has the power to release the eight victims of big business backed by the vigilantes.

Along with other labor organizations, the San Francisco Labor Council unanimously passed a resolution calling on the parole board to exercise this power. Its action is supported by the California Conference for Repeal of the Criminal Syndicalism Act and by a United Front of liberals, professionals, students, teachers, middle-class and working-class groups.

THE NEW MASSES, which has described the persecution of these eight young men and women, which carried full accounts of the vicious trial at which they were openly railroaded to jail, urges its readers and all defenders of civil liberties to write to the parole board and to Governor Merriam of California demanding the immediate release of the eight victims, so that they can return to active life in the labor movement.

Arms and Neutrality

THE forces making for war were discussed at a recent NEW MASSES Forum by Senator Nye, Chairman of the Senate Munitions Committee; Representative McSwain, Chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee; and Joseph Freeman, one of our editors.

At that time, Mr. McSwain opposed war on principles of sentiment. War, he explained, was a dreadful thing, due partly to the vagaries of human nature and partly to the mysterious way of Providence.

But since pious politicians are always anxious to assist Providence in its administration of the universe, Mr. McSwain rushed back to his job in Washington. That job was to pilot through the House the biggest peacetime army appropriation in our history.

The House of Representatives appropriated for strictly military purposes \$376,888,333, a considerable increase over the military expenditures of the current fiscal year. The increase was chiefly for harbor defense on the Pacific Coast, in Hawaii, in the Panama Canal. The bill also provides for the

construction of 565 additional army airplanes.

To this Congress will no doubt add the \$567,872,400 naval expenditures for which President Roosevelt asked in his budget—bringing the total for national defense in 1936-37 to \$944,000,000.

In defense of these enormous military and naval expenditures, General Malin Craig, chief of staff of the army, said:

"It is perfectly evident to every one that troubluous times have again arrived in the world. A state of war exists in Africa; Asia is resounding to the tramp of marching men."

The general might also have referred to the preparations for war against the Soviet Union openly made by Japan and Germany. And to General Smedley Butler's frank statement that the United States is preparing for an *offensive* war. The presence of the fleet in Pacific waters and the emphasis of the new military appropriations on defenses in the Pacific would seem to indicate that America's preparations are against a Far Eastern power near the Philippines.

The rapid arming of the United States throws an ironic light on the new neutrality bill passed by the House to replace the law expiring February 29. The changes in Washington's neutrality policy do not alter the fact that the same Congress which can pass a neutrality law can, when the interests of American capital require it, rescind that policy as Wilson did.

Words by Riegger

JAMES ONEAL is worried about Soviet culture, as every steady reader of his weekly, The New Leader, knows. But a pang of pain must have fallen across Oneal's Old Guard Socialist heart when he read Denny's New York Times dispatch of Feb. 15, recounting the opposition to the music of the young Soviet composer Shostakovich. With a tear in one eye and a publicity scheme in the other, Oneal called in his secretary and started to dictate letters. He sent the following one to Wallingford Riegger, who is known to NEW MASSES readers as one of the most interesting and important American composers.

Dear Comrade Riegger:

I enclose herewith a clipping from The New York Times, Feb. 15, on the latest reaction to "leftism" in music in the Soviet Union.

No doubt this will interest you as a composer and a Socialist. Would it be possible to send us your opinion on this matter in the form of an article of about the same length as Mr. Denny's dispatch. Should you favor us with a story we would appreciate it if you would send us a photograph of yourself suitable for newspaper reproduction.

Thanks in advance for your kindness and cooperation.

Fraternally yours,
James Oneal.

Mr. Riegger was kind enough to send us a copy of his answer to Mr. Oneal's generous invitation. The fact that Riegger's own compositions are by no means opposed to the general spirit of Shostakovich's work adds pertinence to the reasoning in his reply.

Dear Comrade Oneal:

Your favor of Feb. 15, at hand, with "Times" clipping.

I had already seen Denny's article, but somewhat discounted its accuracy, knowing the author's anti-Soviet bias. However, even if true I am convinced that, as in the past, there will be a healthy play of dialectical forces towards an adjustment.

It should be obvious to us who believe in the principles of Socialism that the vital thing is to fight against all the encroachments of fascism, which as we know spells death to all artistic development.

I would therefore urge the adoption of

the United Front with the Communists, the achievement of which I as an artist consider desperately necessary. The enclosed clipping from today's Times proves the efficacy of these tactics in France, which but for the "Front Populaire" would today doubtless be under the iron heel of fascism.

Fraternally yours,
Wallingford Riegger.

Nazi Olympics

IN the best of circumstances the myth of democracy and tolerance in sports is the arch-legend of the pyramid of lies upon which American sports are based. But just as politics has its presidential year when the tone of demagoguery hits high C, so sports has its Olympic open season.

At the conclusion of the Nazi Winter Olympics, only a Brundage, a Goebbels or a Munchausen could find the "promotion of international goodwill, tolerance of race and creed, mutual respect, understanding and co-operation" among the fruits of the icy fiesta. Scarcely one event went off smoothly, recriminations were plentiful, skulduggery was the key to all the rules and only the shortness of time prevented the formation of international alliances which might have led to open war. Dissemination of propaganda was at its peak. Between races der Fuehrer announced a new wave of pogroms.

The battle against the American participation in the Olympics next summer continues. The boycott of the Olympic funds is gathering headway. If Hitler wants an American team, he is to pay a good fraction of the bills. The boycott of the Nazi Olympics voted by the Artists and Writers Congresses gives a deathblow to one phase of the Games which was already tottering, the cultural Olympics. Regardless of the outcome of the struggle to keep America out of the Nazi Olympics and to free the A.A.U. from Nazi domination, the sports movements among the workers in this country and abroad goes forward immeasurably strengthened by the alliances it has made in the course of the fight. The issue is the survival of the spirit of sport itself and the response arises from the instinct toward health.

Death of a Child

EVERY foulness bred by a commercial society has wriggled to the surface of the Lindbergh kidnapping case and the end is not yet.

Has Governor Hoffmann of New Jersey granted a reprieve to Hauptmann because he believes there is some new and undivulged evidence? Many people, including influential members of the Governor's grand old Republican Party, have a serious doubt. They think their buddy is slyly fishing in filthy waters to help his private ambition to be the nominee for the office of Vice-President.

The famous old Bronx clown, Jafsie, who handed the ransom money to the kidnapper, has also been cashing in on the death of a child. In Liberty, a magazine noted for its pornographic stories, fascist editorials and cheap crime thrillers, Jafsie has been telling all, via one of Bernard Macfadden's ghost-writers. There has been three instalments of the lurid tale and each one ends with Jafsie's mysterious promise to uncover new evidence in next week's instalment (price five cents).

The famous criminal lawyer and Democratic candidate for office, Sam Leibowitz, has also found a way into the mud-puddle as defense counsel. He is in the case to see that only "pure justice" is done.

And the end is not yet. There may even be a re-trial, furnishing a harvest for hot-dog peddlers, yellow newspapers, sobsters, confidence men, society women and all the other racketeers.

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Paris Defends Léon Blum

RAOUL DAMIENS

PARIS, Feb., 17.

I HAVE just returned from 25 Quai de Bourbon, which is the home of Léon Blum, the Socialist leader who was recently attacked by Royalist-Fascist thugs.

The Blum apartment is on the first floor; and in the reception hall Madame Blum and two secretaries were sorting masses of telegrams. These had come from every corner of France and every country in the world, and expressed the universal indignation that has been aroused by the attempted assassination. Léon Blum was felicitated on his narrow escape from murder by men who spoke for every political party except the extreme Right. The secretaries also arranged stacks of clippings from the world press, all of those denouncing the dastardly crime against Blum.

The Socialist leader himself, his head bandaged, pale, serene and smiling, bore his wounds with dignity. The doctors reported that he had rested comfortably the night before. Blum, though able to speak, has chosen to be silent about the attempt on his life. He has made no formal statement even to his own Socialist newspaper, *Populaire*. The doctors say his temperature is normal and they discount the possibility of any complication, though Blum is past sixty. His weakness, they say, is due to loss of blood and after-effects of nervous shock.

Yet if Léon Blum is alive, and there is certain hope for his recovery, it is no fault of the Royalist bullies who attacked him. Murder was unmistakably their object. Nothing better demonstrates the complete and desperate demoralization of fascism in France than the stupidity and cowardice of their crime.

The Socialist leader was seated in the automobile of his friend, Deputy Monnet. Madame Monnet was the third member of the party. They were returning home from the regular sessions of the Chamber of Deputies. Their car was quietly crossing the Boulevard St. Germain when it was halted, like hundreds of other cars, by a traffic jam caused by the funeral procession of the Royalist author, Jacques Bainville.

Nobody would ever believe that a man of the age and dignity of Léon Blum would have been tempted to provocation at such a moment. Hundreds of witnesses and most of the newspaper reporters were unanimous in their statement that Léon Blum was attacked suddenly by hundreds of young toughs who left the funeral parade and swarmed around his car.

A few had recognized him, and they led the others into immediate action. They broke the windows of the car, smashed at his gray head with their fascist blackjacks.

When Madame Monnet tried to protect the Socialist leader with her own body, they dragged both her and Léon Blum to the sidewalk. Here the young fascist heroes kicked and pummelled the prostrate bodies of the helpless couple.

Some building workers in overalls, at work nearby, ran up and fought to protect the man and woman. Two policemen ran up and helped effect a rescue. Such is the picture Paris newspapers the next morning gave of the chivalry of the noble Royalist youth whose patron-saint is Joan of Arc. It was a low, brutal crime, and yet one must characterize it as being even more stupid than it was dastardly.

For whether it proved a successful or abortive assassination, its only possible result could have been to arouse a universal detestation of royalists and fascists, and this is actually what has happened. Not one newspaper, not even the most reactionary ones which are not openly fascist, failed to identify and chastise the Royalist Camelots as the assaulters, or to demand an end to the general disorder and insecurity they are causing in France. The entire press is contemptuous of the lame alibi offered by the leaders who form the royalist Action Française. And a government decree, based on the law of January 10, 1936, orders the dissolution of the three Royalist leagues and forbids their reconstitution under any other alias. Charles Maurras, the fiery dotard and provocateur who is editor of the Royalist journal, has been charged with incitement to murder and complicity in condoning assassination. Three young royalists were photographed in the act of bludgeoning Léon Blum by a movie camera. They have been imprisoned and other arrests are expected.

Indignation in France approached a climax when the police, searching the premises of Action Française, discovered Léon Blum's hat proudly displayed in the trophy room. Documents were also discovered implicating officials in the French Ministry of the Interior, who have been secretly conveying state information to the Royalists.

The public indignation actually reached its climax yesterday in a parade in Paris, with nearly a million marchers, who cheered the name of Léon Blum, and who demonstrated that the vast undecided vote in Paris is swinging to the People's Front.

Unmindful of the discoveries made by the police in their quarters and the movie camera evidence against them, the Royalists at first attempted some clumsy lying. They justified the attack on Léon Blum by claiming that he had tried to force his car through the solemn funeral procession for Bainville, and that this had aroused the pop-

ulace, who "reacted instinctively." Léon Blum, they said, was merely scratched in the scuffle, and had been saved from a worse fate, and even death, by a group of chivalrous young Royalists. The unparalleled impudence of their alibi proved as useless as it was fatuous, when the police magistrate confronted them with Léon Blum's hat and the movie film made at the scene. The Royalist chiefs were stricken dumb by this evidence, but on recovering their powers of speech, they still asserted that it had been no premeditated attack. But here again they struck another snag. Courtois, who had arrested one of the royalist bullies, cross-questioned him in the police station. At first the young fascist denied his royalist affiliations; but later he admitted that the assault on Blum had been ordered by his squad leader. His testimony indicates that though it is possible no assassination had been planned beforehand, it actually was improvised in concert on the spot.

Characteristically, the royalist leaders after years of stirring their witless followers to violence, now deserted them when the whole gang had been trapped. Unluckily for the leaders, however, they had printed the facts of their blood-lust in their newspapers. For thirty years Charles Maurras had clamored in his paper that all working-class leaders should be assassinated—not symbolically, but literally. Other royalist leaders crammed The Action Française with invitations to murder. Maurras is probably the guiltiest of them all. It was he, in 1914, on the verge of war, who publicly demanded that twelve bullets be shot into Jean Jaurès, the great Socialist leader who actually met his death at the hands of an assassin. Recently this same lunatic of a Maurras shrieked that the 140 French Deputies (congressmen) who were pro-League and anti-Mussolini, be killed in the same manner. "Use automatics, revolvers, kitchen knives!" this vile old man shrieked in his paper. Later, on April 9 he wrote: "Léon Blum deserves shooting, but from behind." Again he said, "Imprison Blum and Cachin!"

A GAIN and again these reactionaries cried out in their press: "Imprison Blum and Cachin! They should be shot!"

Inevitably the day came when wretches poisoned by this sanguinary literature converted words into deeds. Then the leaders who inspired the assault repudiated them. These are the tactics of Hitler and Mussolini, of the fascists everywhere. Wherever types like Maurras and La Rocque have seized power it has been through crime and assassination. The Nazis, blackshirts, Camelots, Crosses of Fire and Francistes are the same