

Retouches, which suggests that he has in mind a revision of his views. But I cannot say. We must wait until it is published.

Q.: We liked especially the passage in *Days of Wrath* that described the sensations of the hero, Kassner, during a dangerous airplane flight. Will you tell us how it feels to confront Nazi and Italian airmen in actual combat?

A. (after first refusing the question altogether): Well—heroes belong in books; and I would not care to speak of myself as if I were the hero of one of my own books. But I will tell you what I have gathered from other members of the squadron as to their sensations during the war. At the start of the war we were all happy to be in action, happy at the chance for a crack at Franco. The squadron was quickly organized on a basis of revolutionary discipline; I mean that the officers first were elected, then were obeyed. At that time our equipment was still very poor. We flew old transport planes hastily armed with machine guns. But in spite of this, we beat off Franco's planes without much trouble and had a number of fairly easy victories. The war at that stage was still largely an abstraction for us. After a few reversals, we had a better idea of what we were up against. "Here's war," we said to ourselves; "this is what it really means to fight fascism." And

presently this stiff, conscientious determination of ours was to change into something else. Several members of our squadron were brought down behind the enemy's lines; and we who returned safely to our base had no way of knowing what had happened to them. We soon found out. A stretch of enemy territory fell into our hands. We discovered the bodies of some of our late comrades. They had been mutilated and many of them had been tortured alive. (The Spanish minister of war has photographs proving this.) One day, two men of our squadron were in the air, when suddenly their plane was damaged. One of them bailed out in the only parachute they had; and the other stayed with the plane, hoping to bring it down safely within our own lines. He did. A few days later an enemy plane appeared suddenly over our base. While we were getting ready to go up after it, something was dropped from the air in a parachute. While we hesitated, down it came, settling slowly in a field near by. There, cut to pieces and wrapped in a bag (and attached to his own parachute!) was the body of the comrade who had bailed out a few days before. Such incidents made a further change in our feelings.

We no longer felt merely determined: what we now felt was rage, fury. These were our emotions in the third period of the war, and

I do not suppose they have changed very much since.

Q.: What do you know of the International Brigade, and has it been as effective in the war as we hear?

A.: The brigade has been *very* effective, and it is an interesting organization. It is made up of Italians, Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, etc.; of very young men on the one hand, and of men around forty on the other. The Germans and Italians, having known fascism at home, are frankly revolutionary. The other nationalities are inspired by general anti-fascist motives. Realizing that fascism does not respect national boundaries, they want to stamp it out wherever it appears. The older men in the brigade, the men around forty, are veterans of the Great War. They are in Spain because of the hatred of war and its causes which they learned in the years 1914-1918. The young men are drawn from the ranks of the great anti-fascist youth of Europe and the world.

Q.: There is a great deal of interest in this country in the French people's front. What do you think the Blum government will attempt next in the way of reforms? What will be its program, and will it move towards the left or the right?

A.: I can tell you this much, and I think it is very significant. At present there is a powerful movement directed towards the formation of a single unified workers' party for France, made up of the Communist and Socialist parties and other genuinely progressive forces. I think that this organic unity will be achieved and in action within three months.

Q.: What is your opinion of the present state of the Spanish war, and how do you think it is likely to develop?

A.: The war is just now at a very critical stage. It is impossible to say with any assurance how it will turn out. But I want to say this: the workers of America should remember the American Revolution and Valley Forge. In that struggle, the armies of progress were hard pressed at first. But they won in the end. Remember also your own Civil War. There the armies of the reactionary South came close to winning in the early days of the war, but in the end they lost. Remember also the Siberian phase of the Civil War in Russia. There, too, the armies of the people were close to defeat in the early days. Wrangel, commander of the White forces, made a two-faced deal, promising the peasants land, on the one hand, and on the other pledging to the big landowners the integrity of their estates. In this way, he kept the support of the peasantry for a few months. But when harvest time came, the contradictions in his promises became apparent. The peasants did not get their land, and they deserted him. In Spain there is a similar situation. Franco has also tried to reconcile with false promises the demands of the peasants and the demands of the landowners. At harvest time (July-August) he will probably seize the crop and give the peasants no land in return. Thus the peasants will discover that their real interests lie with the Spanish proletariat.

★ ★ ★

The Tomb

(For those who fell defending Spain)

After the last gun has split sky with echo of crumbling earth;
after the bones have whitened; after the fresh blood, thickened,
has dried with the dust; after the headless, unlimbed,
the lanced and lashed have been laid smooth in their rows,
as smooth as the grass which will soon spread their cover;
long after, after their sons have grown, and their sons' sons,
the tomb will stand. . . .

When the full harvest gathers from many throats a song rising
over threshed wheat, over bushels stacked and bales packed high,
beyond heavy purple vines; when their hands have made of molten ore
surrier, stronger hands, steel-flexed, to hug the breadth
of their land with parallel rails, bringing warmth from the looms,
strength from wheels directed, dynamos controlled;
when the sons of that new Spain of peace and plenty

break sunlight with laughter, lie
close in a night that is
everywhere soft, still, they will
pause in a moment torn
from another day: this day, remem-
bering the tomb: this tomb,
which you have blasted with bomb-
shattered lungs,
scooped with jagged joints, mortared
with spliced flesh,
and sealed forever in a sure faith
hurled with every last agonized
cry:
the tomb of fascism.

PENIA TAYLOR.



Arthur Getz

Freedom Sprouts in Arkansas

*The recent defeat of a sedition bill that menaced
Commonwealth College signals a new militancy*

By Arthur McEwen

TWICE within three months that arch foe of civil liberty, King Cotton, has been on the receiving end of an upper-cut from progressive America and aroused workers and farmers of Arkansas.

Just now these determined liberty defenders have again wrenched the crushing yoke of plantation slavery by smashing a vicious anti-sedition bill. Last December they soaked a city marshal \$3,500 on seven counts of outright peonage in the cotton kingdom of eastern Arkansas.

Intense nation-wide protest and Arkansas vigilance (the anti-Reaction kind) have just caused the legislature at Little Rock to kill a measure which provided five-year imprisonment for teaching workers and farmers how to better themselves. It was buried securely in the House of Representatives by a forty-six to nineteen vote.

While purporting to ban the study of communism and the "alleged teaching of illegal cohabitation," the bill was openly sponsored by twenty-two-year-old Representative Herman Horton (yes, he's from Craighead, a cotton county) as a second drive to close Commonwealth College.

Had "Baby Solon" Horton's planter-inspired bill become law, however, it would have been used not only to padlock the college. Workers' and farmers' education would have been eclipsed throughout Arkansas by the pall of political and economic illiteracy under which King Cotton rules. And that would have signaled for a new state-wide onslaught of vigilanteism against all militant organizations, especially the powerful Southern Tenant Farmers' Union.

Instead: Progressive unionism among Arkansas's impoverished farmers and hungry workers has come through another battle with stronger sinews. Indispensable training in organization for those who till and toil has been defended and advanced at the same time. Commonwealth College is plowing deeper and wider into its field, showing tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and wage-earners of the South ways of improving their lowest of all American standards.

And, not least, entrenched Reaction—King Cotton's rope-and-gun control—may be routed earlier than previously expected. Down on the plantations and up in the mountains of Arkansas, folks have learned something from Flint, the maritime strike, and Madrid.

In January 1935, Representative S. A. Gooch of Wynne, also a cotton county, pushed a similar sedition measure as far as the state senate. Failing there, he instigated a

phony "legislative inquiry" of badgered witnesses against Commonwealth, because students and teachers from the college actively aided organization of sharecroppers in his plantation domain. This time he threw in with Horton.

The college has received scores of interested inquiries from prospective students ever since *Liberty* magazine in December smeared its lying pages with Hearstian dung about "nudity, co-ed dormitories, and communism," imagined to prevail on the campus.

Preparations are now being rushed for an anticipated influx of new students when the spring quarter opens March 29.

Congresswoman Caroline O'Day, like countless other vigorous protesters against the attempted sup-

pression of academic freedom, saw the widest danger in it. She warned that the bill might even hit her personally for belonging to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, since that body has recently been branded as "Red" too.

Francis J. Gorman, president of the United Textile Workers and a member of Commonwealth's advisory board; Oscar Ameringer, publisher of the *American Guardian* and also on this board, and the recent New York City mass conference of the American League Against War and Fascism—these typify the diverse progressive forces stirred into action for defeat of the anti-sedition legislation and for defense of Commonwealth College.

Telling support in this fight to keep Arkansas from seceding again beyond the pale of American democratic tradition was given splendidly by the labor press, several key capitalist organs, and all important state newspapers.

Possibly most decisive were hundreds of individual wires and letters that inundated the capitol. Speaker E. L. McHaney of the House, who finally came out against the bill, stated he gave up answering correspondence after the first fifty communications poured in.

But of perhaps equal strength were resolutions from dozens of union locals in varied sections of the country. Arkansas labor bodies, also, recognized and helped repel an imminent danger to their existence.



Declared readiness of the LaFollette senatorial committee on civil liberties to intervene upon the first overt violation of constitutional rights was a substantial factor in discouraging planters from playing their hand further.

Why such an effective array of progressive forces could be rallied is explained by conditions that yet remain:

Civil liberty is still at a low ebb in Arkansas. The tide is only beginning to turn, with repeal of the infamous anti-evolution law now before the legislature. Peonage continues without further prosecutions. Organizers' lives in some parts of eastern Arkansas are not worth a tin dime. The whips that flogged Willie Sue Blagden are still in circulation. "Enticement"—i.e., any manner of inducing workers or renters to leave their jobs or homes for striking or other purposes—remains today a serious crime. Polk County, because it is far from cotton areas, has for over thirty years been "lily-white," challenging any Negro found within its boundaries after nightfall.

In all this, the average Arkansan has clearly shown himself friendly toward labor organization and workers' education, or at least passively neutral. And no less than average residents of the forty-seven other states does he cherish the basic rights of learning and organizing.

But—mark this—isolated mountain and plantation life with its difficult contact has kept Arkansas labor considerably behind the rest of the movement. In only two or three cities and a few counties have unions secured a firm foothold. The heroic, terror-ridden Southern Tenant Farmers' Union as well as the Farmers' Union are beset with well-known handicaps.

The present gain for freedom is made in a state where a one-party power and a poll tax offer unique obstacles to establishing a farmer-labor party or its equivalent. This battle brought victory to the people of Arkansas and Commonwealth College around the slogan: "Let no one string barbed wire around our schools!"

Last year, when the state celebrated its admission to the union in 1836, organized workers and farmers rallied effectively to "Celebrate Arkansas's centennial by ending peonage!" and got City Marshal Paul Peacher convicted on slavery charges. Yet there remains a long rocky stretch before attaining even the degree of economic liberation that obtains in northern industrial states.

Arkansas's political emancipation, which hinges upon achieving such an economic advance, is a good piece farther along the road.