

of neighbors—with Lily Andriolo—playing in the hot streets.

"Glad to get home?" he said to Katy.

She nodded.

Glad? he thought. They went into the building.

It was still far from sundown; the heat was almost as bad as at midday. In the papers on the way home he had seen that today was breaking records for heat. The heat closed like a furnace around them as they entered the building.

There was something else. Coming from the beach, with the clean smell of the ocean so late in his nostrils, Coyle particularly noticed, as he came in, the smell of the tenement. A peculiar unmistakable smell—rot, old paint, remnants of garbage falling from the pails left outside of doors, all the close packed human smell—from cooking, breathing, living in a space that was meant for half the number of people.

They started upstairs. Once they had gone up half a flight, although it was still full daylight outside, here it was almost pitch dark. No wonder he had noticed the darkness at the beach bathhouse—Darkness, poverty. Instead of decent windows—airshafts, airshaft windows. Windows like the ones at each landing here, windows that out of the two-foot-wide airshaft dropped a spot of ghostly light on the landing platform. The light was invisible in the air, it could only be seen actually on the landing. Coyle was astonished—looking at it—to see that there could be light without illumination. The darkness of the stairway angered him. He had always hated to have Katy going up and down it. Even now, holding her mother's hand, she stumbled. It would be easy, by herself, to have a bad fall. But that was not the principal thing he feared. It was—

"You have the key?" his wife said.

They had reached the fifth floor, their floor, and Coyle got out his key and opened the apartment door for them. They were back. There were the same two rooms, the same stifling atmosphere, the same furniture, walls, life. Even the Andriolo baby was crying again; they could hear Mrs. Andriolo, who was still overweight from her pregnancy, walking back and forth with it. He turned and looked at his wife and Katy. In their eyes was no longer the happiness they had felt at the beach. They were oppressed; like him they knew their lives had little in them.

They ate supper, with a better appetite than they usually had. But Coyle noticed something. His wife was worrying. He knew what she was worrying about, whether anybody would come for the rent. Nobody would come; nobody would come before Friday. But he began to worry too.

When they had finished eating and cleaned up, they went to the window and sat down. It was just like the morning except that now there was not so long to wait for darkness, for possible coolness. He reached over and took his wife's hand; they sat without speaking. Katy leaned on the window sill and Coyle noticed that her arms were again outstretched;

they seemed again to be imploring the heat as they had in the morning.

Other people sat at other windows; people came and went; voices called, changed, grew loud or soft.

When the sun finally set, it seemed to get dark quickly. They put Katy to bed and did not put on the light so that she would sleep. He knew now why tenement children stayed up late, why—

Yes, he knew plenty he had not known until the last two years.

He and Mary said nothing, but sat in silence by the window. The air had cooled a little, had to. A few lights came on around the courtyard, threw a faint radiance in their room. He heard a radio announce, faintly, "—nine o'clock." At almost the same moment he heard Andriolo.

Andriolo was talking in the hallway downstairs. He could tell his voice. There was another voice, under it—he knew that voice too. The two voices continued, one loud, the other less loud. He turned and looked at his wife.

What was there to say?

After a few minutes it was quiet; steps sounded on the stairs, then there was the expected knock on the door. He answered it. In order not to wake up Katy, he opened the door quickly, stepped into the hall, and closed the door behind him.

"What's the matter, don't I come in?" Mr. Regan said.

"The kid's asleep."

"Okay—well, what I want don't take long. You got the rent?"

"No, I'll have it Friday." Fourteen dollars. He had never offered less than at least one month's full rent, would not now.

"You're two months behind, y' know? Wha' d' y' expect me to do, come every day for it?"

"I'm sorry, but—"

★ ★ ★

Sunset at Wall

In skypools deep between the buildings' banks
wingtips of the gulls are wet with slanting
sun

O see them wheeling in depressing circles
past bars of brokerage windows bright as
bullion!

the wings flap shadows on the electric eyes
flickering in the darkness of the mountain

the bottom of that canyon is a sea
where sunless light seeps green as dollar-bills

by the Exchange some bloated fish float by

SIDNEY ALEXANDER.

"You think all I got to do is collect rent?"

Coyle held himself in. "It's the best I can do. Two days' work a week—"

"And maybe that's my fault. Coyle, if you wanta live here, pay. If you don't—"

"Live here," he said explosively. "Live."

"It's better than the street—"

Coyle got the hidden threat; his anger flared up.

"This tenement's better than the street. Stairs like sewers—"

"All right, I didn't come here to argue, Coyle. I been renting this place to keep it going; it's about time I made some money. Fourteen a month with a toilet, two rooms—it's cheap. I oughta get sixteen, eighteen. You don't pay your rent, I'll get somebody who'll pay it and pay more."

"So that's it, hey? You're getting the place filled up so now you raise the rent."

"Why not? Rents have gone up—"

"Listen, maybe I'm short today but I'll pay. I'll have it Friday. Before you talk about raisin' rent, why don't you fix some of the violations?"

"What violations?"

"You think I don't know? You think because there's a lot of Greeks and Italians here they don't know a few things? Fire escapes—The front door—does it lock? See that door over there? That's a dumbwaiter only it don't work an' it's filled up with paper an' garbage. Maybe you don't know about that—"

"All right, pay a couple more dollars and I'll put improvements in—"

"The house is lousy with violations. What you ever put into it? If it was to fall apart, you wouldn't buy a nail to hold it together. Now you wanta raise the rent. Raise the rent outa what—food for my kid? Outa Andriolo's baby—?"

Without realizing it, his voice had risen. In the room behind him he heard something; Katy was beginning to cry. He knew what it was, she had heard him and was frightened. Her crying was muffled with sleep; in a minute she would be crying loud.

"Okay," he said, turning, "you'll get your rent Friday."

"Coyle, I don't like people that talk—"

Coyle went back into the apartment and closed the door. After a while his wife quieted Katy; afterwards Katy tossed restlessly. They kept the light off so that she would go back to sleep again.

"Nice, ain't it?" he said to his wife.

He wondered if his wife would throw the dollar up to him, but she did not. She was intelligent.

They went to bed. In bed, neither of them slept. At ten—it was still early—the doorway of the Paraskevopoulos' apartment opened; they heard the trill of the canary, three sweet sucking gasps.

"Jim," Mary said.

"What?"

"Regan gonna put us out?"

Coyle said nothing. He got up and, pulling on his pants, said, "I'm goin' down an' talk to Andriolo. He's got ideas."

Readers' Forum

Munich and History

TO NEW MASSES: Hitler's helots march; great and terrible events impend. It is a time for solidarity, but also for diligent analysis and frank counsel. In this spirit may I offer an interpretation of the present situation?

Consider September's fantastic fairytale. Hitler's heart bled for the *Sudetenvolk*. He vowed to succor them, even if it meant war. Britain and France were cowed. Chamberlain yielded, induced Daladier to yield; and a deal was improvised, in stress and fear, at Berchtesgaden, Godesberg, and Munich!

That the first item in this yarn—Hitler's care for suffering Germans—is bunk, I know you agree. But it's all bunk. Hitler threatened nobody. The French and British governments weren't scared a bit. Nothing was decided at the three melodramatic, spotlighted conferences. A crazy theory? Well, while you and the whole world were anxiously asking, "It it war?" I said "No."

For Hitler had no power to threaten. Czechoslovakia-France-USSR could have crushed him like a nut in a nutcracker; being no fool, he knew it. It might have taken a fortnight. If Italy, perhaps Poland, joined him, it would take a bit longer; but not much if Britain joined his foes. The idea of Britain cringing to Hitler, and the other theory, so popularized these last two years, of Britain trembling before Mussolini, are history's prize jokes. Joseph North sees the point: "You would never," he says in your columns (October 4 issue), "know Britain had a fleet, to listen to the *London Times*." Yet the British fleet has never for a day ceased to be stronger than the next two largest navies. No one knows the various powers' air strength, but I'll bet my teeth that Britain far surpasses Italy and Germany. London has been taught to tremble in fear of sudden attack; but any such plan, though made in the secret heart of Hitler or Mussolini, would be known to the British secret service in an hour, and averted by the simple means of bombing Rome and Milan, or Berlin and Essen, first. The pragmatic British would not hesitate, and they have the means. The pacifist General Crozier revealed last spring, in his book, *The Men I Killed*, that the navy, under Duff Cooper, while talking "defense" has been building long-range bombers.

I have hitherto (NEW MASSES, August 30, and elsewhere since June 1937) called the "tension" between Britain and Italy a preconcerted game designed to lull Moscow with the hope that the capitalist powers could not combine against the Soviets, and designed also to fill the peoples with fear, thereby to induce them to bear the cost of armament, and condition them for war hysteria at the proper time. Fantastic? Well, look at the facts: The peoples groan but bear the burden, even labor approves arming to the teeth, but instead of war among the capitalist powers, we see them embracing, even as I predicted sixteen months ago. I now say that Hitler's "threats"—since he had no power to threaten—were sheer phonies, part of a prearranged game, uttered with the full knowledge that Britain and France would yield, and in fact dictated and timed from London. I say that Hitler and Chamberlain, Daladier and Mussolini decided nothing; that save as actors in assigned roles, they had no more to do with the business than you and I; that the decisions were made, and the outcome fixed, before Chamberlain ever set foot in his first airplane. And at this point I turn to Lenin—and NEW MASSES.

From your issue of September 20 I quote

"Lenin's dictum" that "the state is an executive committee of the governing class." My crude version of the same thought is that cabinets, premiers, even "dictators" are mere errand boys of the governing class—the money lords, the major capitalist exploiters of the peoples, the real rulers of the world outside the Soviet Union—and errand boys don't make decisions affecting the fate of nations. As you well said in NEW MASSES of September 27, "Chamberlain did not have to go to Berchtesgaden to learn what Hitler wanted. That was camouflage."

Yes: the entire "crisis" was camouflage; the fate of the *Sudetenvolk* and their few miles of territory was camouflage. What then was all the excitement about? I said in the *New York Post* September 9 and again September 30, that the object of the game was to break the Czech-Soviet alliance and force Czechoslovakia into the all-capitalist front against the USSR. The supposed war danger, the fear whipped up by press and radio, and such melodrama as airplane flights, the 2 a. m. ultimatum to Benes, the Hitler message handed to Chamberlain at exactly the right point in his speech (very crude, that!) were devices to ensure that the British and French peoples would look upon Chamberlain and Daladier as the saviors of peace and confirm them in office with increased majorities. These devices were also useful to cheapen the British pound sterling, whereby British export trade was advantaged, and to send stocks and bonds dizzily up and down, whereby the insiders could and probably did make countless millions of other people's money, useful among other things to properly reward obedient statesmen in various countries, perhaps even in Czechoslovakia. If any of this seems fantastic—behold the situation today: The Czech-Soviet alliance is broken; a potentially fascist regime takes power in Prague; Czech officials, press, and people begin to talk of alliance with Hitler!

Chamberlain got his vote of confidence; Daladier got his plus dictatorial powers. The Communists alone stood for decency in the House of Deputies. Their spokesman was the same Gabriel Peri who wrote in your pages that the "City" of London—the international money-power with headquarters in London—was sapping the united front; three weeks ago it lay in fragments as he spoke. This I predicted in June 1937. At that time I said that the master capitalists, Lenin's "governing class," must try to crush the Soviets before the brilliant success of Socialism becomes apparent to all the peoples; that faced with this danger, they will not let their puppet powers fight among themselves; that an alliance of Britain-France-Italy-Germany would take form. Today the four-power alliance is a fact; the smaller nations are cowed; the gates open before Hitler toward the Ukraine. It is rumored that the four powers will now try brutally to force the Spanish people to compromise their cause. I dare to hope that an end to the war against that people may have been Roosevelt's price for his part in recent events; but we shall see. In any case, expect an attempt to end the war in China, leaving Japan in control of North China as a base for attacking the Soviets in the East while capitalist Europe attacks in the West. Only a quick awakening of the British and French peoples can avert that necessity which Stalin prophesied in his *Pravda* letter, of a struggle for the very life of Socialism against the whole bourgeois world. I have held that to expect any British government of the type which Lenin calls "an executive committee of the governing class" to join in curbing fascism and defending the USSR, was to expect the impossible, something outside the order of na-

ture, a mating of the jackal and the dove. I think I am entitled now to write "Q. E. D."; but no matter. Joint action by the peoples is the need, and our job here is to educate the American people to the real issues.

SHAEMAS O'SHEEL.

Red Hook, N. Y.

"Had Wonderful Time"

TO NEW MASSES: It happened at Camp X—its name used to be Karefree but times have changed, and so has this camp. Situated in the Adirondacks, "nestled among pine trees, by a glistening lake, and combining a congenial crowd with a Continental cuisine"—we went there to seek rest and seclusion after the hectic American Federation of Teachers convention.

The grounds were as described in its NEW MASSES advertisement except for a certain frigidity in the atmosphere. People lived together, yes, but only geographically and by accident. Nothing more bound them together than the common board and lodgings they shared. However, we were assured that this was typical of all the camps in the vicinity, that it was nothing unusual to find people trying their darnedest and still not having a good time.

Of course, people ask what you do for a living. "Teacher, huh? Coming from the convention—what convention? You mean to say you spent part of your summer at a labor convention? And enjoyed it? Tell me about it." We gladly obliged, but after the seventh command performance, we suggested that there be a little get-together, so it could be done for all who were sufficiently interested. "No, that would never do. We're on vacation—and that's too much like a meeting." We reminded them that we were on vacation, too, and seven performances were more grueling than one.

They called the meeting. It was attended by over fifty persons, as well as a few from a neighboring place who had heard of the meeting, including some teachers from Rochester, where there is not yet any AFT local. Within three days, three neighboring camps and a bungalow colony had named dates for us to visit and report, which we did—to audiences of over one hundred.

When some people admired our Relief Ship and Abraham Lincoln Brigade buttons, we succeeded in selling duplicates, although some were confused and asked "Isn't it our immediate duty to help the Nazi refugees?" We refused to answer on the grounds that by doing so we might jeopardize our constitutional rights to a pure vacation. They fixed us—by organizing a committee which speedily arranged a series of discussions.

Before long, a committee was working on a Spanish Night. People who had never before been interested in such things worked so efficiently with more experienced heads that a night which included the showing of *Heart of Spain*, drinks, entertainment, and general gaiety resulted in a collection netting \$300 for the Relief Ship.

By this time, the democratic front was in full blast. Not only were our services demanded in innumerable spontaneous discussions, but we had books to lend, we were the liveliest table companions, swell tennis opponents, to say nothing of containing some highly eligible dancers in our group, who did their duty scrupulously.

We're home now, looking forward to a city reunion with all its possibilities. We made one mistake—as some acquaintances in the city who heard of the whole venture pointedly reminded us. We did not spread the news of our activities widely enough; consequently they spent an unnecessarily boring vacation at a nearby spot. We're trying to make up for that now, so that from now on every single camp and hotel will "combine theory with practice" and introduce enough serious matter to make the vacation a really "wonderful time." That depends on us readers of NEW MASSES, doesn't it?

WILLIAM AND LUCY WALTERS.

New York City.