

NEW MASSES

ESTABLISHED 1911

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Neutrality Violations

MOST NEW MASSES readers won't remember it, but on March 1, 1915, Prime Minister Asquith told the British Parliament:

We are not going to allow our efforts to be strangled in a network of juridical niceties . . . under existing conditions, there is no form of economic pressure to which we do not consider ourselves entitled to resort.

That was the answer to Bryan's effort to maintain America's position as a neutral, efforts which Walter Hines Page sabotaged as though he were on the Bank of England's payroll. The difference between 1915 and 1940 seems to lie in the comparative feebleness of Cordell Hull's notes to England; whether Kennedy works for England or the USA hardly matters. Two weeks ago, the United States corralled Latin American nations to protest violations of the safety belt; nothing yet has been heard from London. Last week Cordell Hull whispered another protest, this time on the repeated British seizures of American mail en route to Germany and neutral nations. The Eleventh Hague Convention specifically states: "The postal correspondence of neutrals or belligerents, whatever its official character may be, found on the high seas on board a neutral or enemy ship, is inviolable." Yet the Allies who prate about the restoration of law and order in Central Europe violate international law when it suits their purpose. Quite appropriately, the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* for January 4 commented editorially: "Imagine for a moment what the feeling would be in this country if German submarines made a practice of stopping and boarding neutral ships, and censoring or throwing out American mail. Yet parallel action by the British has brought only mild protest."

Even more alarming is the State Department's revelation of its note of December 14 in which it is disclosed that the American steamer *Mormacsun*, one of four sold to Brazil, was stopped on its way to Bergen, Norway, and hauled into Kirkwall, England. Our Neutrality Act delineated a war zone in which American citizens must not travel. Now the British are compelling American seamen to do what the law of their country forbids.

But the fact that the *Mormacsun* had been

sold without public knowledge to Brazil dramatizes a deeper hypocrisy. For the State Department is winking at the nullification of the spirit and letter of the Neutrality Act by our own shipping concerns even while it doth protest softly against equal nullification by London. It was further revealed this week that four American Hawaiian Line freighters and two more belonging to the Lykes Line were sold to England itself; more companies are doing the same.

Already committed to the fortunes of the Allies, Washington is deliberately permitting the nullification of laws which were touted as measures to keep us out of the war.

The Belisha Beacon

LIKE the traffic signals he popularized in London, Leslie Hore-Belisha's ouster from the Secretariat of State for War in Chamberlain's Cabinet signifies another step in switching the imperialistic war machine from the Western Front to the Northern Front. It was to be expected, of course, that Gen. Sir Edmund Ironside, that veteran of British intervention in Russia twenty years ago, would strive for one more go at the Bolsheviks who ingloriously rubbed his nose in the snow of Archangel when they polished off his pal Kolchak and sent Herbie Hoover packing. The sun of Gibraltar has not softened Sir Edmund's memory of defeat and his present position as chief of staff in blighty enabled him to wangle his last chance.

But Leslie Hore-Belisha, like Gladstone's "Jew-boy" Disraeli, stood in the way. Like

that older duke of York, "the Soldier's Friend," Belisha had built up a great following in the army through his "democratization" program of firing those Boer War veterans who were responsible for Passchendaele lest another Haig or Kitchener try out their fondness for shelling the Westwall with shrapnel. In this he was seconded by such military mentors as Liddell Hart and J. F. C. Fuller. They were "Western Front" men and, curiously enough, most of the English people thought that this was a war against Hitler. Hence their outcry when Belisha's removal came suddenly and the prophecy of NEW MASSES is come to pass. Maybe it won't be so easy to stampede the English people from Flanders mud to Scandinavian snows. The campaign to do and die for dear old Pilsudski's Poland didn't pan out too well.

The tipoff on the whole business is the naming of the Rt. Hon. Oliver Stanley to Hore-Belisha's post. Stanley is an old Etonian, a younger son of the Earl of Derby, and a son-in-law of the marquess of Londonderry, that interlocutor of the Cliveden minstrel show. He is president of the Board of Trade (the business men's association which has been running the British empire for the last two hundred years), filling Runciman's well licked boots. Oliver Stanley was entrusted with the big payoff money that was being sent to bribe Hitler out of the war just before the Nazi invasion of Poland. But he failed in that job as he has failed on every job assigned to him in his public career.

If the imperialist Tories of Britain don't want another Passchendaele with snow instead of nice comfortable mud they had better pay more attention to their strategy. Almost a century ago they were advised by Jomini (Clausewitz's rival) before the Crimean campaign: "The Russian army is a wall which, however far it may retreat, you will always find in front of you. You will be beaten." Lenin knew that.

New Masses Takes a Bow

FOR the past month, NEW MASSES has presented analyses of the campaign in Finland. Our sources were those available to any newspaper reader in the United States. We have placed our confidence in the unvarnished reports of the Red Army in drawing our conclusions. It is interesting to note that the *U. S. Army and Navy Journal* arrives at strikingly similar conclusions as NEW MASSES. Here is an excerpt from that publication's December 30 issue, page 388:

Without detracting any from the stubborn defense being put up by the Finns in defense of their territory it must be pointed out that the problem of Russia in taking that territory is vastly different from that of the Germans in their Polish campaign. Poland was taken under the most favorable of weather and over terrain similar to our Midwest plains. Russia, on the other hand, has not even been fortunate in the type of cold weather brought by this season, for the snow, instead of being the normal dry snow, has been wet and heavy, while the ice and marshes have been mushy instead of hard frozen

The Box Score

THE following tabulation of casualties in the Finnish affair, as of January 8, is taken from the *New York Times* alone. Care has been taken to avoid duplication, but certain statistics are approximate, based on calculations of the size of Red Army "divisions, regiments, battalions, and companies," frequently surrounded and annihilated by the correspondents. No reckoning of casualties of the "several hundred" or "fearful" variety has been made.

	Finnish Losses	Soviet Losses
Men killed	269	55,537 ¹
Prisoners	0	3,500
Tanks	0	425
Armored Trains	0	1
Destroyers	0	2
Submarines	0	Several ²
Airplanes	4	251
Crows	2	0
Cellulose Factories	1	0

¹ Including seventy killed by a Finnish skier, and seventy-seven by a Finnish sharpshooter.

² Observed along a Russian railroad track (they were being shipped to the Arctic Ocean by rail!) after a Finnish bombing.

—all impediments to military operations either on foot or by motor. Then, too, virtually a continual fog has hung over the country, forbidding any effective air operations. In addition, the very conformation of the land, lakes and inlets through which the invading army must wend its way, precludes the use of the overwhelming forces available to the invader, for there is just no room to operate.

There appears to be no ground for the large number of reports reaching this country that the Russians are inadequately equipped and fed and that many are freezing to death because of inadequate clothing and shelter. As a matter of fact it is quite likely that the losses have been considerably less than contended in dispatches. As a matter of fact, the entire Russian invading forces number only some 200,000 men. . . .

While the Russians have made little genuine progress in their southern sector around the Karelian Isthmus, they appear to be going satisfactorily in the north where they set out from Murmansk. It would seem that the Russian design is to use the southern drive toward Helsinki to keep the Finns busy there while the northern action will cut them off from Sweden and deprive them of supplies from that source and from the ocean in the north. Meanwhile the drive in the central sector, across the narrowest portion of Finland, is intended to cut the little nation in half, disrupt communications, and leave the southern section isolated, to be squeezed out in time.

Balkan Bagatelles

THE Allied effort to develop a Balkan front against both Germany and the Soviet Union met with new difficulties last week in the continued internal irritations among the Balkan nations themselves.

Early last week, Count Csaky, the Hungarian foreign minister, visited the Italian foreign minister, Count Ciano, at Venice and then returned unexpectedly to Budapest with "big news." Hungary needs Italian support in its claim upon Transylvania, the province which the Treaty of Trianon gave Rumania. Italy desires domination in the Balkans; but the breakup of Rumania, which is the Poland of the Balkans, might facilitate exactly what Rome and the Allies wish to avoid: an improved Soviet position. For it will be remembered that Moscow never recognized Rumania's seizure of Bessarabia. Moreover, Rumania's integrity has been guaranteed by the Allies. If Germany were involved in a push toward the lower Carpathians, Il Duce could break his neck trying to face two ways at once. All this is quite apart from how the Turks, new partners of London and Paris, feel about increased Italian influence and the chances of general instability around the Dardanelles.

King Carol's saber-rattling this week was therefore directed farther than Hungary; not so much intended against Moscow, it was a warning to Rome and a cry of despair to Downing Street. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union goes about its business calmly. The Red Army stands on the northern and eastern frontiers of Rumania as well as the Slovakian border, where, during the Benes days, the Ruthenian area of Czechoslovakia strongly supported the Communist Party. Soviet relations with Bulgaria (from whom the Rumanians seized

Dobrudja in 1913) were greatly improved this week in a three-year trade and navigation pact. Bulgaria will ship hides, rice, tobacco, and hogs in return for Soviet farm machinery, iron and steel products, petroleum, chemicals, and cotton.

Mr. Murphy Goes Upstairs

DICKENS' Uriah Heep didn't get very far with his pious hypocrisies but, then, the old master didn't know Frank Murphy. The great Michigan liberal goes to the U. S. Supreme Court now but black robes can't conceal the renegade. His final action as attorney general revealed the measure of the man: that scandalous letter charging a number of individuals and organizations with military espionage was so flagrantly unfair that even the conservative *Washington Post* got alarmed: "Extraordinary" the *Post* termed Murphy's procedure. Innocence must be assumed until the defendants are proven guilty, that newspaper said. The *Post* wants the job done—but Heavens, not in a blundering way that will arouse the antagonisms of the American people. "These individuals . . . are all said to have Communist connections. But their guilt must not on that account be assumed. They have not yet been convicted. They have not been tried. Indeed, they have not even been indicted." Joseph Brodsky, noted progressive attorney, one of those smeared by the former attorney general put it this way: "The procedure indulged in in this case can have no other result than to raise a smoke-screen of prejudice and war hysteria, and in my opinion, will be condemned by all decent Americans."

The kickback nationally induced Murphy to admit: "If we were to do it again we wouldn't do it just that way." But do it, he will. And this man now becomes a justice of the Supreme Court. He steps up with F.D.R.'s benedictions—to swing the court foursquare behind the President's pro-war and anti-democracy line.

Mr. Murphy's illusory liberalism is fully bared. Frank Kent, in the *Wall Street Journal*, knows the man. "Mr. Murphy is not really a radical, and might turn out 'pretty sound' . . . he could not be counted as a Supreme Court justice merely as a member of the radical faction, as a matter of fact his tendency would be in the other direction." Mr. Kent speaks with the circumspection required by a Wall Street commentator: "tendency" is somewhat euphemistic. Mr. Murphy stands condemned as a traitor to his own, in fact almost daily, professions. He has become as dangerous a foe to civil rights as Martin Dies, perhaps even more so. Mr. Dies doesn't know all the tricks.

Browder for Congress

IN NEW YORK the Communist Party announces that its general secretary, Earl Browder, will run for Congress in the special election Feb. 6, to fill the seat of the late Rep. William Sirovich. This effort should

gain the backing of all progressive New Yorkers who see the reactionary aims of the Democratic and Republican Parties becoming more and more alike. A democracy like the United States should have at least a few men in its Congress whose program is not dedicated to the betrayal of their people. With an energetic campaign and the support of all people of good will, Browder has a very good chance to be elected.

The Supreme Court Decides

THREE decisions of great import in the enforcement of the National Labor Relations Act were rendered by the U. S. Supreme Court last week. The court refused to interfere, on the instance of the AFL, with the certification of the CIO longshoremen's union as bargaining agent for all the Pacific Coast stevedores. It reversed the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals' interference with a runoff election among the employees of Consumers Power Co. In the Falk case, it upheld the NLRB's right to keep a company union off an election ballot. The first two rulings inured to the benefit of the CIO, the last to the AFL and CIO.

These decisions represent a victory for administrative law. They proscribe interference with election orders, certifications, and other interlocutory decisions of the board, the sole agency qualified and authorized to make the necessary determinations. This is in consonance with the provisions of the Wagner act, which specifically permits court review only of "final orders" of the board. Limitation of review was written into the law to prevent repetition of the NRA abuses whereby employers substituted court appeals for collective bargaining.

The Supreme Court decisions, however, contain no guarantee for the future. For that matter the NLRB itself has at times been amenable to reactionary pressure. Ultimately, labor's best protection is on the picketline, by strike and by boycott. In view of the way the wind has been blowing in Washington in recent weeks, this cannot be too strongly emphasized.

Dies Talks Democracy

THE devil can cite Scripture, and the Dies committee can talk democracy. Its report to Congress is being described as "moderate," "temperate," and "factual." The beast has learned cunning. After a year and a half of assaulting constitutional rights, the Dies committee rolls its eyes to heaven and intones: "But it is at least equally important that in combating subversive groups of this character nothing be done which would undermine the fundamental structure of constitutional liberty itself." After enlisting an all-star collection of labor spies, fascists, anti-Semites, criminals, and professional Red-baiters to spew their hate on progressive individuals and organizations, it is indeed comforting to learn that:

The committee condemns without reservation the evident willingness of some supposedly responsible people to endanger the very civil peace of their country by encouraging, for purely political purposes, suspicion, fear, and bigotry of the worst sort.

The committee's report is a transparent fraud. Its "moderate" tone, introduced at the prompting of such renegade liberals as Rep. Jerry Voorhis, is the greatest fraud of all. There is nothing moderate or American about the committee's activities and aims. Most of the report is occupied with smearing the Communist Party and various progressive organizations, including ten CIO unions, the League of American Writers — of which Franklin D. Roosevelt is an honorary member—and the Spanish Refugee Relief Campaign, of which Secretary of the Interior Ickes is honorary chairman. Window-dressing is provided by a perfunctory discussion of Nazi and fascist organizations, with the biggest fascists like Father Coughlin omitted.

The committee's purr is more dangerous than its bark. By a show of good manners it hopes to bamboozle liberals into abandoning their opposition to it, and abandoning as well those progressive causes in which they have collaborated with Communists. But not all are being duped. The American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom has just issued a statement signed by twelve college presidents, six deans, and more than one hundred other leading educators, scientists, churchmen, writers, artists, and public officials, demanding the unqualified discontinuance of the Dies committee. Let's hope there will be a resounding echo to this demand in Congress.

Roundup

FIFTEEN HUNDRED sharecroppers in south-east Missouri face eviction due to land boom. . . . Treasury Dept. last week revealed that identical bids were received in 1938 for 25 percent of government contracts. . . . N. Y. *Post*, pro-British paper, was banned in Canada for a story on maltreatment of Canadian recruits. . . . Act One—Roosevelt appoints Charles Edison secretary of the navy. Act Two—Charles Edison proposes extraordinary powers for President to mobilize industries for war, annul union contracts. . . . One hundred Pennsylvania labor leaders pledge, "The Yanks Are Not Coming!" . . . Eighteen prominent Negro unionists denounce GWTW as Negro papers, Pittsburgh *Courier*, Amsterdam *News*, New York *Age*, and Chicago *Defender*, join *Daily Worker* and NEW MASSES in drive against film. . . . Revival of St. Lawrence Waterway plan, killed years ago in Senate, part of F.D.R. war preparation. . . . Toledo schools reopen after six-week shutdown that "saved" \$400,000 for budget balancers. . . . Mexico's President Cardenas in New Year's message rejects return of oil properties. . . . USSR and Japan renew Kamchatka fisheries pact and agree to permanent demarcation of Mongolian boundaries. . . . Brenda Frazier, nineteen in June, ekes out expenses on a \$3,500,000 trust fund.

. . . White House Conference on Children in a Democracy moved up to Jan. 18 to get a word in the papers before war blots out all news of national crisis. . . . Public agency job placements declined 19 percent since October. . . . Fund shortage curtails ninety-two-year-old activity of New York Academy of Medicine. . . . 92,000,000 Soviet citizens in eleven republics voted in local elections last week. . . . B. Smoliar, of Jewish Telegraphic

Agency, cables that Jews in Poland, ignoring editorials that fascism and Communism are same thing, now streaming over Soviet borders. . . . Final payment for Chinese Eastern Railway recalls beating which Red Army gave Chinese militarists ten years ago for attempted rail seizure. . . . United States farmers alarmed over British blockade and restrictions cutting down cotton, pork, tobacco, and fruit exports.

Students United Against War

IF THE vitality of the American Student Union depended upon good press notices, it might have succumbed to pernicious anemia long ago. If this foremost progressive student organization relied for its unity upon White House benevolence, its Christmas Convention might have been a less hopeful augury of the future. Newspapermen at the Madison, Wis., convention, the fifth since the ASU's inauguration in December 1935, were hot after evidence of splits, anti-Communist hysteria, divisive disagreement.

But there was no split; Red-baiting was severely rejected; the resolutions adopted were earthy, matter-of-fact, sober, commonsense affirmations that American students are not being buffaloeed by the American press. The only truly controversial issue developed in connection with the proposed censure of the Soviet Union in re Finland. When the matter was brought up on the floor as an amendment to a resolution expressing opposition to the imperialist war in Europe, it was defeated by a vote of 322 to forty-nine.

In the circumstances of the past six weeks, this constitutes a rousing vote of non-confidence in the American press. It is a resounding rap at the policies of the "fourth" New Deal. The editors of the New York *Post*, the doughty *Herald Tribune*, and others recognize this fact for what it is. "If you could read," said the *World-Telegram*, "you couldn't be that way." Yet the students are not merely literate; they are "reading between the lies" with a vengeance.

The First Lady of the Land was embarrassed: these ASU'ers, said she, are youngsters after all, and besides, represent only a small slice of the student opinion. But in Madison, apparently, they knew that in wartime "the young go first." During the same Christmas vacation, meetings of the National Student Federation of America, in Minnesota, and the Association of Medical Students, in Philadelphia, likewise declined to follow the Washington line. Resolutions on Finland were not even offered; these gatherings sounded significant progressive notes.

The truth is that the American Student Union was merely following the President's injunction last September, when he urged folk to think things through for themselves. They were obeying Franklin D. Roosevelt's own precept at the University of North Carolina a year ago December, in which he himself castigated the "headline mentality."

The liberal weeklies also fail to perceive the portent of this collegiate independence. The *Nation* for January 6 wrote it all off as evidence of "the unique and unflagging energy of the Communists." Irwin Ross in the *New Republic* for January 8 felt that the failure to condemn Russia "can only result in the isolation of the ASU from the main body of students in the country." Yet Communist students were in an unquestionable minority. With some surprise delegates found upon their arrival in Wisconsin that students west of the Alleghanies were not prepared to condemn the Soviet Union, nor were they ready to whitewash Washington at all. On the contrary. This is indeed the crucial, illuminating fact: support against warmongering was general and national in scope, welling up from tens of chapter delegations geographically far removed from the East.

Most impressive to observers was the convention's unity and enthusiasm on all other questions. Indeed, its critical attitude toward the Roosevelt retreat amounts almost to clairvoyance. Ten days after the students voted for the defense of social legislation the President's budget announced a \$60,000,000 reduction for the CCC, and one-third as much for the National Youth Administration, while war budget figures skyrocketed to a new high.

An occasion of this kind which angers the reactionaries, embarrasses the New Dealers, and peevs the liberals has a meaning that transcends the level of the campus. The fifth convention of the American Student Union symbolizes a trend. Defying assaults upon their own unity, the students made clear the basis on which a larger and deeper unity of the people can be built.

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Readers' Forum

"Finlandia"—Off Key

TO NEW MASSES: Here I am, whistling *Finlandia*. The propulsion is terrific. Dialing off the New York City Orchestra concert Sunday afternoon, to the strains of Sibelius' patriotic growl, we fell into it again a moment later with the Philharmonic. When I heard a small boy tuning up his harmonica with a few well blown Finnish chords, I saw that soon it would be hawked in Times Square. Those of us who are partial to revolutionary music, nationalistic, cacophonous, or otherwise, can't help vibrating to the sound of that gloomy saga let out from under the lid of Arctic night, struimming across the taut pines, shaking a little brisk snow in our eyes—*ad infinitum*, till we are almost Finns ourselves.

What can you do about it? Music so immersed in the patriotic trees it cannot see the forest—and us, from this distance, believing that we, however, do see. Let me say that mere heartsickness at this vulgarity (and don't forget that Lenin could use the word vulgar) is enough to repel us. The "patriotic" tune resounding over the bourgeois world is too sweetly keyed, too disarming. We stand fast against it, if only by intuition. Not even Sibelius, nor all philharmonia, can wash a particle of that away.

Did not Spain's people, her artists and her composers too, cry out—but were there national hookups for that tragedy? No, this trumped-up audience we'll have no part of. Not even if we're clouted with a bass viol, all full of Sibelius.

JOHN MITCHELL.

New York City.

A Nation of Shopkeepers?

TO NEW MASSES: Recently efforts have been made to liken England's war against Hitler to her campaign against Napoleon. While thoroughly deprecating this effort, I do think it makes appropriate calling to the attention of your readers the following honest passage from Charlotte Bronte's *Shirley*:

"During the late war, the tradesmen of England would have endured buffets from the French on the right cheek and on the left; their cloak they would have given to Napoleon, and then have politely offered him their coat also, nor would they have withheld their waistcoat if urged: they would have prayed permission only to retain their one other garment, for the sake of the purse in its pocket. Not one spark of spirit, not one symptom of resistance would they have shown till the hand of the Corsican bandit had grasped that beloved purse: *then*, perhaps, transfigured at once into British bulldogs, they would have sprung at the robber's throat, and there they would have fastened, and there hung—inveterate, insatiable, till the treasure had been restored. Tradesmen, when they speak against war, always profess to hate it because it is a bloody and barbarous proceeding: you would think, to hear them talk, that they are peculiarly civilized—especially gentle and kindly of disposition to their fellowmen. This is not the case. Many of them are extremely narrow and cold-hearted, have no good feeling for any class but their own, are distant—even hostile to all others; call them useless; seem to question their right to

exist; seem to grudge them the very air they breathe, and to think the circumstance of their eating, drinking, and living in decent houses, quite unjustifiable. They do not know what others do in the way of helping, pleasing, or teaching their race; they will not trouble themselves to inquire; whoever is not in trade is accused of eating the bread of idleness, of passing a useless existence. Long may it be ere England really becomes a nation of shopkeepers!"

America may well ask itself whether England has or has not become a nation of shopkeepers.

MILLEN BRAND.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Three Senator Slaters

TO NEW MASSES: Morris Kamman, in his article "Where Dies Got His Technique" (NEW MASSES, November 7), states: "Ex-State Senator Slater of New York shouted at a meeting of the Kings County, Brooklyn, Republican Club, 'The nation is challenged by organized labor, organized Socialists, organized Bolsheviks!' He also railed at liberals."

I am an ex-state senator and this quotation has been sent to me by a friend of mine and charged against me. May I state that I never addressed the Kings County Republican Club and never made the quoted remarks. There have been two other Slaters who have served in the Senate—George A. Slater, deceased, Port Chester, Westchester County, 1915 to 1918; and Samuel S. Slater, New York City, 1901 to 1902. Possibly the last named is the author of the quoted remarks. But I assure you, gentlemen, that I am not the guilty one.

FRED J. SLATER.

Rochester, N. Y.

Sumner Welles Forgot

TO NEW MASSES: Sumner Welles spoke to the Cuban Chamber of Commerce about how the United States preserves the independence of the Cuban people. He did not remember that the Cuban Revolutionary Party does not like to have United States naval bases in the islands and perhaps he forgot that the Cuban people would like to be more independent.

He was so busy talking about the Soviets in Finland that he forgot entirely about Puerto Rico and the Palm Sunday Massacre down there last year. Maybe those who shot upon an unarmed parade of boys and girls were only saboteurs or detractors of the good reputation of American democracy. At any rate they received the order of Governor Winship, who had all the blessings of the President. No redress of the massacre has ever been advanced; instead a few more Puerto Ricans have gone to jail.

JULES VELASQUEZ.

Topeka, Kan.

A Request

TO NEW MASSES: One of the most consistent friends of labor that America has ever known was Clarence Darrow, whose life story I am now writing. That is why I feel that many of your readers will have known Mr. Darrow, will have worked with him, followed his cases and causes with great personal interest, and may be able to contribute to the biography by sending Encino, Calif., material which I might not otherwise be able to find. I will return all such material safely.

IRVING STONE.

Encino, Calif.