

# NEW MASSES

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## Hitler's Next Steps

WITH the thirteen-day conquest of Yugoslavia, and the reduction of the Anglo-Greek forces to the very water's edge of the Aegean Sea, the first phase of the spring military campaign is coming to a close. Taken together with the recapture of Libya, the Nazis have scored a powerful victory, one which raises their odds in the struggle for Suez. It is true that Hitler was compelled to fight for something he had already gained by diplomacy; true also, his losses in highly trained man-power and expensive equipment must have been substantial, and there were invisible losses in terms of the profound upheaval among the Balkan peoples, the severe dislocation of the Danubian economy, with its grain fields, metal mines, and oil on which Germany depends. The short-run gain, however, is all Hitler's. The appetites of his vassal cronies can now be satisfied at the expense of the living body of Yugoslavia: Mussolini takes a section of the Dalmatian coast, Hungary has reoccupied the Banat, the Bulgarian army has taken over Macedonia. The last vestiges of Versailles disappear, with only skeletons of men and machines to mark the spot.

Strategically, the Nazis have gained commanding positions against the entire Mediterranean basin. Whether they try to gain Suez from Libya, whether they combine a thrust through Egypt with intense air warfare over Britain's sea bases, whether they are compelled to come round by way of Turkey the fact remains that the Nazis have the psychological advantage and the military initiative. Since there is no evidence that the Turkish army would do better than the Yugoslavs against a full fledged German assault, we must assume that the Turkish leaders are once again weighing their alliance with Britain. They face the same decisions which occupied most of the fall and winter months in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, the only difference being that Turkey commands the southern shore of the Black Sea, of vital interest to the USSR. What happens in Turkey therefore is a problem not only in Anglo-Turkish relations, but a problem in German-Soviet relations.

In Iraq, where the big oil regions are, the military *coup d'etat* seems to have been inspired by the Nazi advance on the other side of the Dardanelles; it may also represent native nationalist elements who do not wish

their country to become the plaything of opposing imperialist forces; evidently, it is serious enough for the British to be sending substantial troops up the Tigris and Euphrates valley. Another significant repercussion of the German success is taking place in France. Discussions for "collaboration" were resumed last week between the Vice-Premier Admiral Darlan and German representatives. It is not hard to see why. In proportion as Nazi armies approach Suez, they approach Syria also; the relative independence of French policy can no longer be maintained; British reverses tend to close the possibility of any major sections of the French empire going over to Churchill's side, and the problem for the Vichy government is to get the best possible terms. Necessarily, German advances in the eastern Mediterranean have their implications for Spain. It would not be surprising if motorized divisions soon make their appearance below Gibraltar on their way down the west coast of Africa.

BRITISH NEWSPAPERS are preparing their public for bad news. In the United States, there has been a noticeable increase in pessimism, and many commentators are confessing that Colonel Donovan's diplomatic sortie in the Balkans was a failure. The whole purpose of the British intervention in Greece, it is now admitted, was to gain time; regrets are being expressed that not quite enough time was gained. Thus two tendencies begin to crystallize somewhat sharply in the American ruling class: first, a demand for "all-out" assistance to Britain, from convoys to an actual declaration of war; second, a more cautious tendency, which capitalizes on the crisis by demanding greater speed in fascization at home, but confines aid to Britain to such forms as would benefit American imperialism in case the British Tories reconsider their entire position later on this year.

## Pact with Canada

THE latest agreement with Canada is a perfect example of the dual character of American imperialist strategy. On the face of it, the coordination of the Canadian and American rearmament programs facilitates "aid to Britain"; but it does so in such a way, that should the British ruling class try to reconsider its relations with Germany later this year, the empire's most industrialized dominion will be more securely in Wall Street's grip. The agreement is a secret one, but it is not difficult to divine some of the ground it covers. For one thing, there is the matter of opening the seaport of Halifax to American shipping: this would advance Mr. Roosevelt's program of sending convoys up past Greenland, Iceland, and over to Scotland. Another problem is to adjust Canadian production methods to conform with American rather than British specifications. Canada does not produce completed airplanes, for example; she does not produce heavy artillery. The British require certain specifications, for which American parts often do not fit. The chances

are that the discussions between Mackenzie King, the Canadian premier, and the President went over some of this ground.

But the most important problems are financial. Britain has been compelling Canada to pay for her own rearmament as well as most of her production for Britain. Canada finds it hard to pay: first, one-fourth her population is stricken by the severe agricultural crisis, second, because both Britain and the USA have cut down their purchases of Canadian goods. Moreover, the Canadian ruling class does not wish to pay for Britain's war effort when that country is getting what she wants in this country under the lend-lease program. Mr. Roosevelt expects to give Canada financial assistance out of the lend-lease, or the Export-Import Bank appropriations; Wall Street will get a mortgage on Canada's raw materials resources, a firmer grip on Canada's economy and political orientation. The working class of Canada, which must pay for the contradictions among its masters, will learn that Mr. Roosevelt's program demands a heavy price. American workers are learning that lesson quickly.

## Coal Miners' Unity

"NATIONAL UNITY" is a much abused term. Evidently in the opinion of the administration and its big business backers, it is reserved for the exclusive use of war demagogues. When organized labor actually contributes to the unity of the nation, the "men of substance" bitterly resist.

Take the case of the United Mine Workers. Union demands for the elimination of the differential between wages paid in Northern and Southern coal fields are, to put it mildly, most unwelcome to President Roosevelt and the non-labor press. Yet not so long ago the President himself described the South as America's economic problem Number 1. The cause of Southern ills has long been clear—the carefully guarded low standard of living has been used to maintain pay levels far below even the inadequate wages of the North.

The United Mine Workers have struck a blow against this abuse. Armed violence against them, even murder of UMW members, cannot weaken their resolve to protect the union, to end the inequality of the Southern miners before returning to work even in the Northern mines. They are determined, John L. Lewis warned, "to starve together if they are going to starve at all."

Recent strikes in industry have gained improved working conditions, better wages, stronger union organization. Now the United Mine Workers, having forced agreement from the Northern operators to their economic demands, press the struggle against the system of semi-slavery in the South. It has been pointed out that their fight today is as crucial, as significant, as the struggle for the eight-hour day by railroad workers during the last war. Like Wilson before him, President Roosevelt's devotion to democracy does not lead him to support just demands of the working class. Rather, the President tries to balk

the union: a few weeks ago, he privately opposed wage increases in steel; now he gives comfort to the Southern operators who refuse to accede to the UMW. Perhaps he, like David Lawrence in the *New York Sun*, realizes that "once the wage differential is eliminated in coal, it furnishes a basis for agitation in all Southern industries. . . ." Unity is a fine thing. But to the administration that does *not* include unity of workers, North and South, for their mutual benefit and for the benefit of all the people suffering under the starvation standards below the Mason-Dixon line.

### Shifting Battlegrounds

**W**HILE the United Mine Workers broke new ground, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee also set an important precedent. The triumphant signing of the contract with the US Steel Corp. raised wages ten cents an hour and provided improvement of working conditions. Even more significant, it assured for the first time in the steel industry a basic wage for women equal to that of the men. Moreover, success in Big Steel convinced other operators, including Bethlehem, Weir's National Steel, and Youngstown Sheet & Tube, that they would be wise to raise wages to meet the new levels.

The SWOC contract closes one phase of the national attack by the administration and industry against organization and wage standards. By holding firm, labor advanced after each major engagement. Now members of the United Automobile Workers in the General Motors plants demand higher pay against rising living costs, and a new contract protecting workers against company abuses.

But labor's success in the first battles does not mean that the administration or the industrialists are willing to call off the war. There are other ways to smash the unions besides violence, OPM threats, compulsory mediation plans, and lockouts. For example, there is restrictive legislation: the House Naval Affairs Committee favorably reported the Vinson no-strike bill after hearing very few witnesses—one of them Secretary of Navy Knox who favored the bill. The build-up was carefully prepared ahead of time. William Knudsen, OPM director, called strikes "criminal." Government labor spies at the Bridges trial in San Francisco were permitted to indulge in the wildest Red-baiting. The House Rules Committee approved a new "investigation" of strikes and unions conducted by the poll-tax Representative Vinson of Georgia. Representative Ford of California introduced a bill imposing twenty-five years' imprisonment for any person joining a strike in defense industry, the death penalty if anyone is killed (by either side) in the course of the strike. And numerous other anti-labor attacks included lengthy remarks by Secretary Stimson at a press conference to the effect that "History shows also that these disputes may get out of the control of local authorities and make it necessary for the States to fall back on the Guard to maintain law and order."

The heat is on. Undoubtedly the Vinson bill is the most menacing threat to labor thus far. It enforces a "cooling off" period to break strikes, freezes the open shop, modifies the National Labor Relations Act so that it would no longer have meaning. It would "seriously endanger the future existence" of the CIO, warned President Murray. Even William Green had to condemn the bill—and local AFL unions have expressed their strongest opposition. Like all other blows against labor, the measure has far wider significance than its effect on the unions. For without a strong labor movement there can be no democracy.

### The TWU Fights Jim Crow

**T**oo often, organized labor is considered no more than a bargaining agency interested in winning better conditions and higher wages for its membership. Such goals are vital and significant. But in addition, progressive unionism can contribute specifically to the political and social scene. In New York City last week, the Transport Workers Union, which has done so much for taxi, subway, and bus workers (so much, indeed, that the union is under continual attack from the state legislature, the city government, and the press) won a victory with implications far wider than the direct benefits it brings to a handful of workers.

In conjunction with the National Negro Congress, the Harlem Labor Union, and the Greater New York Coordinating Committee for Employment, the union conducted a boycott campaign against the city's two major bus companies which refused to hire Negroes. The boycott broke down discrimination. The companies signed an agreement to hire 100 Negro bus drivers and seventy Negro maintenance men before taking on other new employees. The Negroes are to be hired on an equal basis with the whites. Thereby the union struck a blow at racial discrimination, the shame of America. Once again, CIO shows what it means by its insistence on the defense of democracy. For that which is worth defending must first be given content.

### The "Bomb Plot" Again

**N**EARLY a year ago Philadelphia police, claiming they had received an anonymous phone call, searched the Workers School and found a time bomb. They did not investigate the phone call or the manufacture of the bomb. Instead they arrested two men, Adolph Heller, a director of the school, and Bernard Rush, a student, who were charged with possession of the bomb. At their trial, which ended last week in a conviction, the evidence presented was purely circumstantial and very flimsy. But Judge Curtis Bok, a Roosevelt Democrat, harangued the jury about Communism and "violence," with side cracks at the Soviet Union. The learned judge made Communism the issue even while he instructed the jury that it wasn't. Thus he completed the dirty work begun last June by

Moe Annenberg, whose Philadelphia *Inquirer* started the "bomb plot" scare by linking the bomb found in the Workers School with a mythical conspiracy to blow up the Republican National Convention. Mr. Annenberg, who had been found guilty of trying to bilk the government of \$5,000,000 income taxes, was seconded in his campaign against the Workers School and "Reds" by one William Randolph Hearst. Now Judge Bok has added the final touch. But has he? The defense has filed a motion for a new trial, and the protest against this latest "Philadelphia story" grows in Pennsylvania and nationally.

The frameup of Heller and Rush was denounced as "the Mooney case of World War II" by the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties at its week-end conference in Washington. Two hundred delegates drew up a program of action to protect civil rights. Included in this program, besides a campaign against the Philadelphia frameup, are plans for countering the administration's many anti-labor, anti-democratic measures. Delegates went on record for a nationwide campaign to free Earl Browder. The parley ended with a mass meeting addressed by Edwin S. Smith, NLRB member, Clifford T. McAvoy, New York City's deputy commissioner of welfare, and Harold Christoffel, president of the Allis-Chalmers local of the United Automobile Workers.

### See You May Day

**W**E'LL be looking for you along the line of march on May Day. It may be hard to find you among the many thousands but we hope you'll find us. We'll be somewhere near the NEW MASSES float, which, we are assured by the artists working on it, will be the best one in the line. And from all indications there will be many. This May Day bids to be the greatest in history. The United May Day Conference held the other day in New York represented 238,093 organized workers. Other organizations that have since indicated their desire to participate will bring the number to 350,000. Twenty-nine CIO and fifteen AFL unions will march officially in the parade.

No wonder the number mounts to this unprecedented total. For never, since World War days, did May Day mean so much as it does today. Americans will march to safeguard their civil rights, their labor gains. They will demonstrate their desire for peace. They know that their enemies carefully watch the size and spirit of May Day as an index to the temper of the people. And Americans will not be the only ones observing the day. As you read these lines, men in Europe, in Asia, all over the world, are preparing for the big day. Underground, in Hitler Germany, in Churchill India, in France, in Spain, wherever terror has prevented the open expression of the people's will, they are running off the secret leaflets. They are writing words in many languages today, slogans for peace and freedom, and on May Day these words will be heard around the world.



## More on the Soviet-Japanese Pact

Now that a full week has passed it is possible to get a better focus on the Soviet-Japanese neutrality agreement. Most observers emphasized that the agreement came as no surprise; there has been almost none of the high moral pretense and outraged innocence such as marked the reception of changed relations between the Soviet Union and Germany seventeen months ago. Only the most discredited sections of American opinion, the most rabid Social Democrats still have the gall to blame their own impotence and all the world's ills on the Soviet Union. Official and semi-official circles expressed their chagrin at the pact by trying to minimize rather than exaggerate its meaning. The *New Republic*, for example, went to some pains to prove that the agreement between the USSR and Japan hardly changed matters. The *Nation* said nothing at all; evidently its pipelines were busted. Walter Lippmann, once a foremost exponent of appeasing Japan, felt that the Anglo-American position in the Far East was being outflanked. He also opined that the USSR had suffered a defeat; it had been outsmarted and surrounded by false friends. When a case-hardened observer like Walter Lippmann thinks the USSR is in danger, sympathizers of socialism are naturally reassured. Quite clearly the gentleman has been hurt in his solar plexus.

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT to recapitulate what the rulers of Japan hope to gain from this pact, although whether they do so remains to be seen. The Prince Konoye-Matsuoka group that has come to power in the past half year hopes to calm internal opposition, those elements who hesitated to embark on adventures in cooperation with Hitler before normalizing relations with the USSR. Secondly, they hope to increase their campaign within China for a capitulation: as NEW MASSES readers know, much of the trouble within China's United Front has come from pro-Japanese elements. Thirdly, Japan expects to press for economic advantages in French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies. The press dispatches also emphasize the point Joseph Starobin made in his article last week: Japan hopes to exploit the pact in the sharper bargaining with Britain and the United States, which the Matsuoka group has by no means abandoned. It would be untrue to say that the pact serves as the signal for, nor is it the beginning of, a southward expansion. This expansion has been long under way. It is true, however, that the occasion and form of that expansion depend on Hitler's successes in Europe: if these successes continue, Japan will intensify her bid for colonial empire at the expense of those imperialisms which are suffering defeat. Needless to say, the Soviet Union bears no responsibility at all in this regard. Responsibility for the imperialist conflict lies within the imperialist system. It was the de-

mocracies so-called, against the will of their peoples, who gave, and are still giving, Japan the oil, scrap iron, copper, and markets for textiles, the positions from which to threaten a revision of all relations in the south Pacific. And those people who charge that the USSR delights in "fomenting war" among the capitalist powers are usually the ones who are most anxious that the United States keep the war going and get into it.

THE AGREEMENT has not changed the status quo for China, most reliable observers agreed. And there were press reports of specific Soviet assurances to this effect. But some columnists, like Samuel Grafton, in the *New York Post*, have chattered away about an imminent "division of China." These are gentlemen who never got over the German-Soviet pact, and learned neither history nor Marxism from it. China is a very different country from Poland historically, and in every other respect. There is nothing analogous in the Far East to the *cordon sanitaire*, the creatures of Versailles which existed in eastern Europe. The USSR liberated western Ukraine and Byelo-Russia because the era of Versailles was over. There is no basis for similar events in the Far East.

Nevertheless, it is true that China's United Front has been weakened in the past year, due to conflicting foreign pressures, among them the contradictory diplomacy of the White House, as well as the fear of the Chinese national bourgeoisie of its own workers and peasants. The question arises of what Soviet policy would be in the eventuality of a complete breakdown of the United Front. It would be presumptive to answer that question off-hand. There is every likelihood that China's democratic masses, under the leadership of Communist and left-Kuomintang patriotic elements, would carry forth their resistance to Japanese imperialism on as national a scale as possible. Since this resistance is likely to be strongest precisely in those areas which Japan covets most, it is impossible to visualize Soviet-Japanese cooperation at China's expense.

Finally, the question is raised as to whether the treaty represents a recognition of Manchukuo, Japan's first conquest in China. The terms of the agreement seem to have been deliberately worded to avoid formal recognition of Japan's puppet; there is a mutual pledge of "respect" for "the territorial integrity and inviolability" of both Manchukuo and the Outer Mongolian People's Republic—rather natural, is it not, in view of the fact that so much conflict has taken place on the borders of these areas? It comes in distinct bad faith for anyone to worry whether the USSR has recognized Manchukuo when most of the capitalist world helped Japan conquer this region and long ago accorded it *de facto* recognition by carrying on trade there.

Bourgeois editorialists were puzzled by the significance of the agreement for Ger-

many. The *New York Times* explained it all as a great victory for Hitler; the very next day it changed its mind, pointing out that the agreement was signed outside of the framework of the Axis. Some people even speculate that the USSR deliberately "freed itself" in the Far East for action against Germany in Europe. Actually, Japan has had formal commitments to Germany since last September. It is significant, however, that the rulers of Japan did not feel free to project cooperation with Hitler until they had clarified relations with the USSR—which reflects on the strength of their ties with Germany. Secondly, it would be just as wrong to think the USSR is deliberately moving to war with Germany as it is to think that the USSR is allied with Germany. It is not afraid of Hitler. It is not appeasing him. It is pursuing a policy of neutrality and peace—difficult for some people to understand, but true, and mighty successful.

THE MAGNITUDE of this new victory for the Soviet Union will be understood if we remember the long decade of intense anti-Soviet hostility in Japan, the thousands of border incidents and the two summers of large scale war. The whole program of Japanese imperialism went forward in the name of "anti-Communism." British and American statesmen long believed that by appeasing Japan, they might yet get her to embarrass the USSR in a serious way. Moreover, Japanese politicians always insisted that political relations with the USSR be normalized only *after* economic concessions in the Sakhalin oil fields and the Kamchatka fisheries. The USSR has always placed the conclusion of normalized political relations *before* improved and stable economic relations. It has insisted upon that position, and with this pact, Matsuoka and Prince Konoye agree to do something which half a dozen previous Japanese Cabinets refused to do. In a larger sense, the USSR has compelled its rapacious and predatory neighbors to do what British and American imperialism still decline to do—namely recognize her neutrality and weight in world affairs. This has required strength in diplomacy, firmness and forthrightness—which statesmen of what nation can assure their peoples that they are capable of the same?

Finally, the pact raises the question of the future of American policy in the Far East. Do the American people realize where a pernicious man like Sumner Welles, an over-confident gambler like Franklin D. Roosevelt are getting us? Having appeased Japan, they now prepare to fight her. They have snubbed the USSR, tried to buy off Japan at her expense—and now, they ask the people to carry on two wars in different parts of the world at the price of their living standards and very lives. Only a complete change will save us from the same ignominy and horror which Chamberlain and Churchill brought on the men and women of Britain.

# SAMMY GLICK AND JOHNNY DOBREJCAK

Two Americans and where they went. Samuel Sillen reviews "Out of This Furnace" and "What Makes Sammy Run?" Two distinguished novels.

OUT OF THIS FURNACE, by Thomas Bell. Little, Brown and Co. \$2.50.

WHAT MAKES SAMMY RUN? by Budd Schulberg. Random House. \$2.50.

OFFHAND, it would appear incongruous to group these two excellent novels. They are poles apart in subject matter and fictional treatment. Thomas Bell's story deals with three generations of Slovak workers in the steel mills of Braddock and Homestead. Budd Schulberg's first novel portrays the sensational rise of a rugged individualist from copy boy to Hollywood executive. Bell identifies himself completely with his proletarian characters, and he treats their struggles for a wage and human dignity with tenderness, respect, and a shining faith in ultimate victory. Schulberg studies that hopped-up motor named Sammy Glick with horrified fascination. One novel burns with a lyrical glow; the other is almost clinical in its ironic detachment.

But there is a deep core of identity between the books, an underlying unity of attitude. Taken together they form an interesting complementary picture of American life. They define alternative ways of hitting back at a social order which staggers along on topsyturvy standards, cynically indifferent to human values.

Kracha, Dubik, Mike Dobrejcek, the immigrant workers of Bell's story are victims of the same forces which have corroded Sammy Glick's East Side family. Both groups had come to America seeking freedom, and both suffered from the cruel denial of freedom. Young Johnny Dobrejcek (or Dobie, to use the third-generation version) is as sensitive to the taunts of "Hunky" in the dirty alleys of Braddock as Sammy is to the catcalls of "Sheenie" in P. S. 15. Dobie's father was killed in a blast furnace explosion; and Papa Glick had to pick up pennies as a cantor in a poor synagogue because he would not be a scab foreman in a glasscutters' sweat shop. Dobie and Sammy alike are fiercely resentful of the impoverished, ghetto-like existence into which they were born; and both are determined to break through it.

The similarity of their backgrounds heightens the radical opposition of their careers. Dobie, remaining a worker and taking pride in his working class inheritance, helps organize the steel mills. The great successes of the CIO are the answer to five decades of discrimination and exploitation. "Out of this furnace, this metal." Dobie's strength is the strength of millions. But Sammy accepts the dog-eat-dog ethics that he sees operating in capitalist society, and he decides to be a

swifter, shrewder, more voracious dog than any of the others. His career, we are told in a withering final sentence, is "a blueprint of a way of life that was paying dividends in America in the first half of the twentieth century." He runs and runs and runs, knocking over frailer bodies, getting bigger and better jobs, cashing in on the big money, faster, faster, faster. And he gets everywhere—and nowhere.

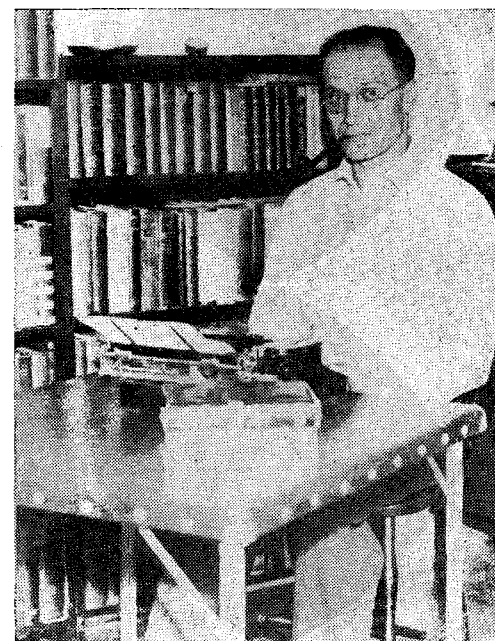
One reason why *Out of This Furnace* is such an excellent proletarian novel is that it places the lives of workers in a historical perspective. Where it might have been tempting to deal exclusively with the dramatic SWOC campaigns in the middle thirties, Bell has insisted on showing the continuity of struggles in steel over half a century. As a result, the reader, like Dobie, has a sense of proud heritage. The roots strike deep. There has been a tendency in American proletarian fiction to treat labor struggles as isolated events suddenly flaring into life rather than as expressions of a historical process. The mechanical "conversion" ending, from which a number of novels have suffered, was partly due to a failure to understand the simple—and momentous—fact that the proletariat has a rich history which shapes and gives meaning and depth to its present experience. Thomas Bell's novel is infused with this important truth. Even though he has not solved all the structural problems raised by this type of novel—there are breaks in the narrative which are only incompletely bridged—and even though the earlier part of his story has less firmness and dramatic unity than the latter part, Bell has made a noteworthy advance from which other writers will be sure to profit.

The main characters of the novel's four sections are Djuro Kracha, his daughter Mary and her husband Mike Dobrejcek, and their son Dobie. There is a steady and natural progression in the degree of proletarian consciousness achieved by each of these generations. Kracha, who comes to America in 1881, toils in the mills twelve hours a day and seven days a week, he notes that he loses twice as much in bad times as he is able to save in "good" times, he sees his best friend Dubik killed in what only the company has the heart to call an "accident"; but he takes no active part in the great conflicts with Carnegie and Frick. He sets himself up in a butcher business, only to be wiped out. In his affair with Zuska he seeks some escape from an unhappy life. He tells young Mike Dobrejcek to think what he likes but to keep his mouth shut.

But Mike has the rebelliousness of a young-

er immigrant who insists on his right to a full life. He has none of Kracha's ability to shrug his shoulders and live to himself in fatalistic acknowledgment that the world is at best a pretty poor affair for a worker, an immigrant, and a "Hunky" to boot. Mike hates poverty and ugliness. He has a lively, questioning intelligence; he is proud of his work even though he despises those who make profits out of it; he wants time to live and learn. Acutely conscious of class distinctions, he understands who is to blame for the contrast between the high hopes entertained by him and Mary during their courtship and the actual drudgery to which Mary was committed when she was forced to take in boarders to help pay the rent. Mike registers Republican in 1912, but he secretly votes for Debs, humiliated in turn by his fear of exposure and by his realization that the only reason why he isn't punished is that he represents too puny a force. And just before he is killed, he is troubled by the question whether workers will ever have enough strength and courage to rise against a system which denies them their human portion of comfort and beauty and peace, not realizing that "he himself was all the proof and hope he needed."

It is Dobie who lives to see that great moment in the fifty-year struggle to free the



THOMAS BELL was born in a Pennsylvania steel town in 1903. Like the characters of his novel, "Out of This Furnace," he is of Slovak ancestry. Son of a steelworker, Bell went to work in the mills at fifteen, became an electrician by trade. His first success, "All Brides Are Beautiful," was published in 1936.