

organized movement of the workers and peasants might have swung Toro and Busch to a consistently progressive program, as Cardenas in Mexico and Batista in Cuba. Under Bolivian conditions, however, expropriation of the Standard Oil Co. resulted only in a rich field for political graft, and the state oil monopoly soon fell under the domination of the Anglo-Argentine financiers who had backed the Chaco War. The workers gained little. In 1938 Toro produced a fairly progressive constitution. It is still a dead letter.

Busch's death was followed by a union of the right wing parties, the *Concordancia*, in the effort to stabilize the situation. They put forward an inexperienced army officer, General Penaranda, as sole presidential candidate in last spring's general election. This uneasy alliance governs Bolivia at present. Two amorphous "Socialist" parties, descended from the Toro and Busch regimes, waver between the left and right.

More genuinely progressive tendencies appeared soon after the Chaco War, but still as small disunited groups. The leader in the effort to bring these together into a unified Marxist Party is Jose Antonio Arze, a university professor and former leader of the Bolivian student movement. In the election last spring his Bolivian Left Front won four seats in the mining districts, in spite of the *Concordancia's* attack upon it as Communist. (The Communist Party is illegal in Bolivia.) The Left Front followed up this victory by calling a congress at the mining town of Oruro for the purpose of forming a united Socialist party. It met on July 26 with delegates from local political groups, from fifty trade unions, from Indian and student organizations. After two meetings the congress was broken up by armed Falangists and Trotskyites, who, by a transparent coincidence, happened to attack it at the same time. One of the delegates was killed and thirty were injured. The government jailed the Falangists for one day, but sent most of the congress delegates to concentration camps.

THE PRISONERS

Among some of the writers, students, and organizers imprisoned in the unhealthy valleys of Chaco were: Prof. Jose Antonio Arce, president of the Institute of Sociology and secretary general of "Left Front"; Jose Murillo Vazcarreza, rector of the University of Oruro; Ricardo Anaya, Arturo Urquidio, and Lucio Alvestegui, professors at the universities of Cochabamba and Oruro; J. A. Munoz, editor of the independent newspaper of Oruro called *La Manana*, as well as Julio Rivero, a labor leader.

Their arrest occasioned wide protest throughout Latin America. The Chilean Popular Front itself made a public protest followed by the League for the Defense of the Rights of Man, the Chilean Workers Confederation, and the Teachers Association of Peru.

Despite these persecutions, the convention of July 26 accomplished its purpose, uniting the organizations represented into a new

"Party of the Revolutionary Left" which is growing rapidly.

This past autumn a large-scale strike movement swept Bolivia. Prices of foodstuffs have gone up in the past year by an average of 150 percent. There have been frequent shortages of meat, sugar, rice, and flour, all of which are imported. Speculators are flourishing, despite the government's regulatory gestures. In one field after another, half-starved workers have demanded wage raises to meet the higher cost of living. First, there were strikes among the organized printers, taxi drivers, oil workers, and electrical workers. Then, in October, the railway workers came out for eight days, in defiance of a government threat to use troops. Their claims are now being negotiated; and if their demands are not met, they may strike again. Even more important were the strikes in Patino's Huanuni and Colquechaca mines. Bolivia's 60,000 mineworkers have never before been organized. The Huanuni miners, who seized the company stores and distributed the food, soon won their demands. They were led by an Indian woman—a very symbolic fact in view of the double oppression endured by women in backward countries such as Bolivia. Up to the present Bolivian trade unions have been small, confined to skilled workers, either Anarcho-Syndicalist or government-directed. These are rapidly being replaced by mass organizations under Marxist leadership.

An anti-imperialist revolution in Bolivia must also be an agrarian revolution. It must free the peasants from serfdom. In Bolivia newspaper advertisements for the sale of land emphasize not the number of acres, but the number of Indians which go with the estate. The peasants often work five days a week on their master's land in exchange for a plot which they can cultivate during the other two. They owe the landowner unpaid service at his town house and must give him a share of what they produce. The Bolivian government makes them work out their taxes in road building.

The Mexican revolution has been a portent for the Bolivian *hacendados*, the large landowners. They have resisted com-

pletely even non-political attempts to educate the Indians, anything which might help them to unite, to learn what goes on outside their own village. An Indian arrested for agitation among the peasants usually simply "disappears." The Indians have been almost entirely excluded from national life although they constitute nearly 80 percent of the population. The government has granted them one privilege, however: compulsory military service. The Indians make up the rank and file of the army which has in the past suppressed peasant revolts. Nevertheless, cooperative schools, managed by the Indians themselves, have had considerable success. Peasant unions have also been formed, though it is hard to say how much success they have had, since they must work in secret.

Times are difficult for the Bolivian workers and peasants, but the future also looks very grim to the *hacendados* and mineowners. The Bolivian ruling class sees its immediate salvation in the acceptance of complete dependence upon either the imperialists of the United States or of Germany, from whom they expect loans and arms. This does not mean that the Bolivian upper classes are wedded by any unbreakable ties of affection to either Nazi or "democratic" imperialism. They will choose whichever profits them most. Many officers and landlords prefer Nazism, but businessmen and some intellectuals prefer the Roosevelt brand of imperialism. There is, however, no deep gulf between them.

For Bolivia to free herself from imperialist domination is an exceptionally difficult task, first because of the power of the big oil companies, Standard Oil above all, and second, because of her dependence on a market for her major product—tin. Bolivia's first big job would be to recapture sovereignty over her wealth in tin and oil. The second task would be to make Bolivia self-sustaining agriculturally. That means the beginning of modernized farming. Without foreign pressure, Bolivia, like all the Latin-American nations, has all the prerequisites for prosperity and national independence based upon her own riches.

FRANK T. BAKER.

To Whom It May Concern:

Then take your pity, comfortable sir,
 Since that at best is all you ever gave us;
 Pick up your fashionable pen and leave us
 And hurry off to find a publisher
 Quick, while the price is high on learned libel,
 Quick, for the competition, sir, is keen:
 Explain it in a weekly magazine
 Or nickel thriller—anywhere you're able,
 But simply, so the most unlettered bandit
 Among the powerful can understand it,
 And humbly, that the rich may be forgiving—
 Explain how for an unconsidered minute
 (Until you found that there was nothing in it)
 You stood with those who labor for a living.

MICHAEL FINN.

Flow Gently Sweet Aspirin

It would mean an extra thousand a year if he took the job. Laurie tried to convince him. But they both waved good-by to it. A short story.

BEFORE a fire in the tan stucco house sat Tom and Laureen Ashe. It was April outside; the locust was full of pink blossoms and looked, Laureen said, like a ghost blushing, but inside it was cold. Tom was so busy planning a program for Public Schools week to make Oilinda high-school-conscious that Laureen had to tend the fire. She had just shoved a eucalyptus chunk into the fireplace, and was going outside to sniff its smoke when the phone rang.

She ran to answer it, though she supposed it was only some youngster calling Tom about his chemistry assignment, but it was Aggie Merton, the principal's wife. Laureen was surprised for Mrs. Merton didn't, as a rule, do more than nod pleasantly to the wives of the faculty men and say good afternoon in a slow, soft bubble of a voice that threatened to founder before it cleared her chin. Mrs. Merton by no means confined her social activities to the education pool, but swam in Oilinda's best circles. Mrs. Hollingsworth, the banker's wife, Mrs. Hertz, the wife of Oilinda's leading doctor, and Mrs. Lammereaux, the widow of a railroad president, were her friends and members of her bridge club.

Even the telephone was powerless to detonate Mrs. Merton's bubbles.

"I wonder, Mrs. Ashe," she said, "if you could take Mrs. Hollingsworth's place Friday afternoon at my bridge club?"

Laureen was naturally pleased to hear this but decided not to show it too much. "I'd love to, Mrs. Merton," she said, "but you know I have my harp lesson on Friday afternoons." Just as well let her know I have a cultural interest, Laureen thought.

"Of course, Mrs. Ashe, no one realizes more than I the need of routine. I haven't been an educator's wife for twenty-five years for nothing, you know, but there are times—" The sentence broke off while bubbles of sound that were not quite words continued to curve delicately against Laureen's ear.

"You're quite right, Mrs. Merton," Laureen said. "I really can't resist. I'll be very happy to come."

Laureen pranced back to Tom and the fire. "Hey, Tom," she asked, "why's Aggie Merton such a social knockout? She's got a figure like a pouter pigeon, and she goes whoo, whoo, just like a pigeon, too."

Tom laid down his writing board and put a cigarette in his mouth. "It's the owl who goes whoo, whoo," he said. His cigarette wagged with each word. "You jealous, Laurie? You want to be the local Mrs. Astor?"

"Well, it wouldn't hurt you any," Laureen said, "if I got to be the darling of the local banking circles. Might distract attention from your subversive activities."

Tom threw his cigarette, unlighted, into the fireplace. "Subversive activities, hell. Listen, I make one speech to the Twenty-Thirtians, to define, mind you, to define—clarify, not advocate and—" He took another cigarette from his frayed pack, and began singing one of his infinite parodies, his usual response to a situation he thought couldn't be helped with words.

Jesus, I am all confusion
Pure unbounded chaos I.
Fix in me some stern compulsion
Let me be thy right hand guy.

"Okay, okay," Laureen stopped him. "But it wouldn't. And I am."

"What d'you mean you are?" Tom asked.

"That was Mrs. Merton on the phone. She wants me to play bridge with her club on Friday."

"Yeah? Going to go?"

"What do you think?"

"I don't know. You don't like bridge much, do you?"

"No, I don't like bridge but I'd play every afternoon until school's out if I thought it would help you get the vice-principalship." Laureen sat on the arm of Tom's chair and let her long bob fan out against his shoulder. "And you're going to need help if you keep dallying with that teacher's union stuff," she said somberly.

"So I've got a campaign manager," Tom said. "What's my platform?"

"Don't joke. You know that if Andrews gets the Toluma principalship, you're the logical man for his job. You're the only man in the school with your Doctor's for one thing."

"Looky, kid. That's not the way it's done. Merton wants a vice-principal who can handle discipline for him. Okay. I fit there all right. And he wants some one who can take care of curriculum revision. Okay again. That's up my alley. But he wants first of all somebody the Presbyterians like, and the Rotarians, and the American Legion. And the DAR. And I'm not so sure he'll think I'm a peg who'll fit all those holes."

"I'll bet you, though, Tom, that Mrs. Merton wouldn't be inviting me to this party if they weren't considering you. Why should she? She's never asked any of the other teachers' wives."

"What makes you think Mrs. Merton's the power behind the throne?"

"Nobody could look as much like Abe Lincoln as Ellsworth Merton does, without being

a figure head. Now could he really, Tom?"

Tom laughed. "Don't let Ellie's rustic pose fool you. Under his linsey-woolsey the wheels are going round plenty fast. Why d'you want me to get this vice-principalship anyway, Laurie? There's a lot of grief in cracking down on kids. Andrews says that's the reason he has his hat in the ring at Toluma. 'I've had enough of vice-principalships,' he says. 'I'll take the head job, now, if I can get it—handle teachers and finances and let someone else go through the kids' lockers for tobacco and examples of leg art.' Why d'you want to let me in for all that, Laurie?"

"Why?" Laureen asked. "I'll tell you why. For the thousand dollars extra you'll get." But the minute she said it, she knew it wasn't that. That sure round sum. It wasn't the thousand dollars, it was the dreams—dreams of what the thousand dollars would do. But she shied away from the word dreams, too. That was what she called Tom's plans, Tom's efforts. "Dreams. Visions. Wishful thinking." "A teacher's union," Tom would say, and use the words "security" and "cooperation" and "equity." And she would answer, "Dreams, dreams. The thing to do is to think of yourself."

Was it just a case of her dreams against Tom's? A white woolen dressing gown and the harp paid for—against Tom's nice sounding words? Her dream, the white woolen dressing gown, would keep her warm on a rainy Sunday, or a windy morning—and Tom's dreams, could you warm yourself with an ideal, snuggle up cozily to a hope?

"A thousand dollars," she repeated firmly. "Maybe we could move out of this concrete box. I could go to the city for lessons."

Tom looked at her with delight. He thinks I'm just like a kid wanting things for Christmas, like a princess in a fairy tale complaining of a pea under her mattress, Laureen decided. It tickles him to look into a mind so different from his own. Her heart melted with kindness. She started to say, "What do you look forward to, Tom? What's your dream?" but let the breath she had drawn in for the words seep out in a sigh. She knew. No use hearing that Twenty-Thirty speech over again. No use having her own dream obscured.

During the week she spent a good deal of time thinking about what she should wear to Mrs. Merton's. Not her best, she decided, as if this were the party of her life. The night before she tried on her black jersey with the new drawnwork collar her mother had sent her. When she saw in the mirror how the color set off her ash blonde hair, and the way the material outlined her slender, curving figure, she decided on it at once.

"Hey, Tom," she called from the doorway of their bedroom, "is this the ticket?"

