



THE WEEK IN REVIEW

More and More

THE spring offensive has started on the production front. From war plant after war plant comes the news of a vast forward push. And on many sectors of the front it is the newly organized management-labor committees that are serving as the spearheads of the production advance. These committees are now functioning in the factories of 308 companies, and their number is rapidly growing. US Steel, the world's largest steel company, employing 325,000 workers, is among the latest to announce that it is establishing labor-management committees in all its units. Some of the best reports to Donald Nelson, head of the War Production Board, have come from steel plants: the Middletown, O., division of the American Rolling Mill Co. in March beat all monthly records in its history; and both the open hearth department of Weirton Steel and the Warren, O., blast furnace of Republic Steel claim new world's records.

The automobile industry, which is slated to turn out about one-fifth of the war production program, announces that, despite conversion difficulties, it is ahead of schedule. And from the West Coast comes news that eight major aircraft manufacturers have set up an Aircraft War Production Council to exchange information, pool facilities, and coordinate production efforts. They ought to follow up by organizing management-labor committees to push production levels still higher. At the same time one ought not to ignore the report of a subcommittee of the Senate's Truman committee, which pointed out that the output of military and naval planes was being seriously impeded by the failure to expand the facilities of about 4,000 suppliers of parts and subassemblies. (Incidentally, one part of the subcommittee's report that was *not* played up in the press stated: "In view of the present widespread demands for modification of the 40-hour week, the subcommittee believes it worth while to report that only one of several score [company] executives interviewed suggested that lengthening of the work week would increase production.")

Though significant advances have been made, the production offensive is by no means hitting on all cylinders as yet. The recent report of the New Jersey CIO, which showed that war plants in that state were working only forty-nine percent of capacity—a situa-

tion which Donald Nelson said was typical of most of the country—indicates there is still much to be done before all-out production is reached. Many companies are resisting the idea of joint management-labor committees. And the failure to give labor greater responsibility in the directing agencies of the WPB also hampers the production program, particularly since certain dollar-a-year men in control still have not abandoned business-as-usual practices. Continued shortages of materials is another major bottleneck. Moreover, as Nelson pointed out the other day, production achievements cannot be measured by ordinary standards, but by the urgent needs of the global war against the Axis juggernaut.

Spring Campaign

THAWS are spreading northward on the Soviet front and the winter campaign is merging into the first engagements of heavy spring fighting. It would be rash at this distance to estimate the full results of the winter for either side, but we certainly would not, as some newspapers are doing, try to judge simply by looking at the map. The Nazis still hold from the Crimea, through Kharkov, Bryansk, Vyazma, Staraya Russa

to the outskirts of Leningrad. But what price have they paid? and how closely are these outposts surrounded by Soviet forces? These are the real questions. Our own suspicion is that the Nazis have paid such a heavy toll that their *elan* will never be the same again. And evidently the Red Army is so strategically situated, that when the Nazis launched a big tank attack supported by 50,000 men below Leningrad last week, they were unable to break up the Soviet position, or wrest the initiative away.

But the evidence is that the Nazis are massing all their forces for powerful blows, perhaps not of a blitzkrieg character but nevertheless a series of powerful blows east of the Dnieper, toward the Caucasus. And this may be combined with a blow-up of the Bulgarian-Turkish situation. Unless, therefore, we are to expect the Red Army to retain the initiative alone, we must take the initiative ourselves. A second front on the continent remains the central problem in the strategy of the war.

More voices are being added to the demand for a second front; one of the most authoritative was Lieut. Col. W. F. Kernan's voice on the Town Hall Meeting of the Air program, April 3. Kernan emphasized that Europe was the *decisive* theater, that our offensive must bring down on Hitler *preponderant* forces, and that it must jibe with the Red Army's fighting at the *right time*, which Kernan judged to be this spring and summer. In all three concepts, he stands on what seems to us firm ground.

All the more disappointing then to find

Free Earl Browder, Mr. President

LOOKING back at the recent Free Browder Congress, one's appreciation of some aspects becomes even sharper than at the time. Those who read Benjamin Appel's report on the Congress in last week's *NEW MASSES* have an idea of its color and vitality and importance to America. Yet it is not possible to depict a meeting of this sort fully in a single article. Glancing over the report of the Citizens Committee to Free Earl Browder, which was presented to the Congress, reminds us of certain significant phases. We are struck, for example, by the very large number of different trades and professions represented in the army of citizens who have urged the freeing of Browder. Besides the millions of trade unionists, there are the scientists, the educators, public officials, lawyers, editors, authors . . . and so on.

In the non-labor press the long silence concerning the Browder case has begun to give way. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, for example, published on March 29 a lengthy review of the case by its chief Washington correspondent, Raymond P. Brandt, headed "Move Growing for Release of Earl Browder." There is also a healthy reflection of public sentiment in the letters-from-readers columns of some papers. These columns make an excellent public forum for presenting Browder's case—for the facts in the case are so plain, the issues of justice and fair play are so appealing to Americans, that the very airing of the truth is bound to have its effect. If you have not already done so, we ask you to get your neighbor or shopmate, your trade union local, fraternal, or community organization—to ask the President that he grant this great anti-fascist fighter his freedom.

Ralph Bates in last week's *Nation* apologizing rather weakly for the absence of a second front. That Britain must be defended as an island fortress is true. But is not her best defense to force Germany to spend its power in western Europe? Was it not always the maxim of the British High Command that the Germans had to be stopped in Belgium and the Low Countries? Then, obviously the continent is where to defend England now. And to hold the Middle East, what is easier? To ship men and materials over a far-flung line or to divert Hitler's forces to the west and thus prevent the deployment of his armies toward Suez? *The second front is the key not only for the relief of the Red Army but for the defense of Britain and the United States.* It is the way to ensure the decisive victory over our enemies this year.

Good News from Canada

REALLY encouraging news from Canada across the border is that a number of important anti-fascists have just been released from internment. "Pat" Sullivan, leader of the powerful Canadian Seaman's Union, who was interned in June 1940, is now free; along with him several other seamen's leaders were released. Dr. Howard A. Lowrie, prominent Toronto physician, has also been freed, and according to the new Minister of Justice, Louis St. Laurent, "quite a large number" of other internees will soon see the daylight. Many of these brave Canadians have volunteered in Canada's army. Others return to frontline posts in the fight for Canada's full participation in the war, which will be voted on by the people in the form of a plebiscite on April 27. The two-year fight for democratic liberties in Canada now comes to a close with full victory in sight. Both the Ottawa government and the great movement for justice that was built up in Canada these two long years are to be congratulated. The legalization of the Canadian Communist Party should now be the logical next step.

Decision Without Justice

THE Supreme Court decision that a strike by seamen aboard a ship is mutiny even if the vessel is docked in a port is an unfortunate departure from the spirit of national unity that ought to govern the highest tribunal of the land in this war crisis. That the court divided five to four hardly strengthens its position since this virtually means that one man has overthrown a ruling by a major federal agency, the National Labor Relations Board, and deprived American seamen of what they regard as one of their precious rights.

The case before the court resulted from a

sitdown strike in July 1938 by members of the National Maritime Union on the *City of Fort Worth* while it was docked at Houston, Tex. The strike occurred because of the refusal of the ship owners, the Southern Steamship Co. of Philadelphia, to bargain collectively after the union had won an election. To call such a strike mutiny is to twist both law and logic and to revive archaic concepts which the National Labor Relations Act was designed to correct. The fact that Justice James F. Byrnes, in delivering the majority opinion, went back for precedents to 1790, before any trade unions existed in this country, and to 1835, when strikes were still generally regarded as illegal conspiracies, only underlines the business-as-usual character of the decision. Justice Byrnes attempts to draw a parallel between the situation on the *City of Fort Worth* and the *Normandie* fire. But the dissenting opinion, written by Justice Reed, counters: "The seamen's conduct did not affect the safety of the vessel." A far more accurate parallel would have been with a strike on land.

This case is a relic of the pre-war days. Since the NMU, in common with the entire labor movement, has pledged to refrain from strike action for the duration, the issue in an immediate sense is largely academic. Under the circumstances and in the spirit of the Wagner act the only realistic decision would have been to have given the NLRB the benefit of the doubt and upheld its ruling that the Southern Steamship Co. reinstate with back pay five seamen who were fired after the strike.

How Long?

TWO more Negro soldiers have been killed, five wounded, before they had a chance to fight in the war against the Axis. They were the casualties of racial friction at Fort Dix, N. J. Judging from newspaper reports, the relations between Fort Dix Negro and white soldiers as a whole were amicable, with the exception of a small group of chauvinist southerners in the camp who kept the atmosphere tense with their antagonism toward the Negroes. In addition, the latter were shoved around by certain townspeople who apparently want only "Nordics" to defend them from Hitler's "blond gods." In the ugly situation thus created a white military policeman fired a shot and a small battle ensued. A white MP was also killed in the fighting.

This sacrifice to Jim Crow occurred in the same week that Secretary of the Navy Knox cited a Negro messman for heroism—"Dorie" Miller, the son of Texas sharecroppers, who manned two machine guns for the first time in his life during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The reason why Miller had

never touched a machine gun before was that he hadn't been permitted to. Negroes in the Navy hold no rank higher than that of messman. But "Dorie," like thousands of Negroes in our armed forces, did not let either rank or discrimination interfere when it came to fighting off his country's mortal enemies.

Surely it is time—high time—that the heroism and democratic understanding of America's Negroes be matched by equally democratic practices toward them. It is good news that the Navy Department now employs twice as many Negroes as it did four months ago. It is heartening to read President Roosevelt's promise to the Fraternal Council of Negro Churches that greater opportunity will be given Negroes for participation in war work and in the army and navy. The FBI is reported to be investigating the horrible lynching which occurred in Sikeston, Mo., on January 24. But more than this is demanded: an end to discrimination in the military and in industry, as well as in civilian war agencies. As James E. Shephard, president of the North Carolina College for Negroes, states it in a letter to the *New York Herald Tribune*, published April 5: "We shall have to use our democracy or we shall lose our democracy. Thirteen million Americans cannot be ignored."

Pacifist Rot

UNTIL a week or so ago Lew Ayres dwelled on a mountain top, apart from human beings except for a few chosen friends. He came down to tell a draft board that he "abhorred war" and would have no part in this one. Mr. Ayres, it seems, experienced the horrors of war through playing in a movie about it, and he believes in the "creed of non-resistance to evil." Accordingly he has been listed as a conscientious objector and assigned to a camp where, with other objectors, he can fell trees and cut underbrush as his share in a war against the greatest evil that has ever threatened the world—an evil that will engulf mountain tops no less than lowlands if it is not fought with every nerve and muscle by democrats all over the earth. Mr. Ayres will let others do that fighting for him. Does he, perhaps, assume that they like war—that only his own desire for peace is so pure that it can ignore the blitzes and bombs unloosed on peace-loving people? Or does he believe that the Axis has never been confronted with a real example of goodness and will shrivel before the sight? Even on his mountain top Mr. Ayres must have learned, if he will not admit it, that Nazism itself is war and the source of unending wars. There will be no peace until it is vanquished by arms everywhere throughout the world.

Thumbs Down on Steinbeck's Novel

[Comment by Samuel Sillen on the following letters appears on page 22.]

TO NEW MASSES: To enter objections to something which, though even in a limited way, serves the immediate cause of unity against fascism is hard. But I think it must be done.

It is good that the popular author of the great book *The Grapes of Wrath* should have devoted his talents to a book meant to serve our war effort; and it is good that the Book-of-the-Month Club is circulating it, thereby assuring that more than 300,000 copies will promptly be in readers' hands. But I think the book is not good enough. I think it is as harmful to be contented with too little in our writing as in our fighting. And I think it is important not to justify or rationalize the thinness of the narrative and the characterization, as I think Mr. Sillen and Miss Buck have done (NM, March 24), but analyze it and explain it.

I will not go into such weaknesses of the book as its sentimentality because that, like the thinness of action and character, derives from the same thing, Steinbeck's recent pseudo-scientific, pseudo-philosophic view of man and Fate, with human beings as the continuing victims of a growing mechanization of life, etc., etc., and no better than the poor fish of the sea.

That was the human picture projected philosophically in his previous book *Sea of Cortez*; and that is the picture we have, again, in *The Moon Is Down*. Men have gone a long way since Aesop; and modern attempts to read human life into frogs and lizards have not been very valuable. Neither, today, is it very valuable to put human beings in terms of animals. Unfortunately the human beings in *The Moon Is Down* are reduced to an animal-like simplicity, astoundingly different from the virile people of *Grapes of Wrath*.

I used to know an anarchist long ago named Hippolyte Havell. For all his anarchist's insistence on the independence of the individual, Hippolyte always had one inevitable phrase of sympathy, "poor little doggie!" To him, human beings were all "poor little doggies."

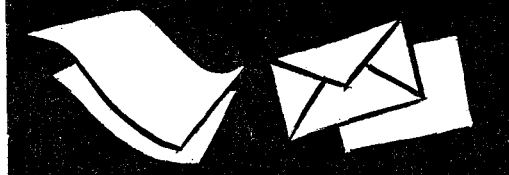
In Steinbeck's book everybody, both the conquered and the conquerors, are poor fish—or poor doggies—the conquerors all the more so because they have conceived themselves as something superior, only to learn in the lovelessness of their conqueror's role that they are only poor fish after all.

As long as Steinbeck sticks to this reduced, fish-eye view of human beings, he will produce, in his writing, poor fish instead of human beings.

The poor-fish conquerors in *The Moon Is Down* are shown as the victims of over-organization who, as soon as they are cold-shouldered in the conquered country, go to pieces. Nonsense. All the evidence points to the effectiveness of the Nazi conditioning by which all that is brutal in a man has been developed. The Nazis have been systematically calloused by their education. They do not go to pieces until they are shot to pieces. That is the lesson of their actions and the Steinbeck treatment is no help in learning it. Let us keep in mind that the Nazis have been trained to carry out known, formulated plans for the extermination of several of the peoples of Europe to which they are applying their scientific knowledge and their organizational apparatus and their soldiery. To keep them from carrying out that terrible plan calls for bloody action, for the gun not the cold shoulder.

The poor fish conquered are shown as going into opposition not by organization, but merely by get-

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ting steadily angrier and refusing to love the conquerors. They are made to seem so effective that the dynamiting they begin to do at the end seems scarcely more necessary than to serve as a symbol.

The town where all this occurs is a port and mining town. The invaders have come in, in order to control the output of its coal mines. In such a town there must have been some organization. But not in the book. There is no organization. There is no political party. There is no trade union. The local Quisling is of no class or party. The mayor is of no class or party. Everybody is on his own. But somehow, mysteriously, the conquered poor fish who are sullen begin to triumph over the conquering poor fish who want to be loved.

It is this view of the situation that constitutes the chief disappointment of *The Moon Is Down*. Even assuming that Steinbeck's way might be preferable, that unity could be achieved by osmosis and effective action by everybody's individual improvisation, there is nothing in history to give us any confidence that it will, or can happen that way. . . .

Poor little doggies may not be able to organize, but human beings can and have. It is because of the presence and immediate functioning of their *strong organizations* that the people of the Soviet Union were able to achieve something much better than the moony resistance of Steinbeck's poor, little unorganized doggies.

With this kept clear, we can express our limited satisfaction with Mr. Steinbeck's contribution. But we can, and should make it known that we expect something more.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

TO NEW MASSES: Mr. Steinbeck's new novel, *The Moon Is Down*, reads too much like an apology for the fascist mentality. . . . I believe that the principal fallacy of *The Moon Is Down* lies in its fatalism and its naive philosophical idealism that flatly contradict the lessons that have been learned by the victims of fascist aggression.

. . . It is *because* Steinbeck portrays the Nazi conquerors as victims of inexorable, mechanical forces in life that make of them cynical, cruel, and really inhuman people in their savagery, but nonetheless human beings enjoying the commonplace things as other men do; *because* Steinbeck pictures the diabolically clever, ruthless, and barbaric Nazi system in terms of this *duality*, that *The Moon Is Down* leaves me with the feeling that Steinbeck has become ensnared in the web of his own humanist thinking. Thus, what purports to be an anti-fascist book is *in effect* an apologia.

I believe that we must not differentiate between the system of Nazism and its active and leading proponents. We must learn that once these Nazi leaders participate in the cruelties of military aggression, that whatever is decent and human in them must become transmogrified. I contend that it is impossible for these conquerors to retain their humanness and yet commit the barbarities that the whole world has come to experience. To the contrary, I believe that we must learn to *identify* the fascist character with the rape, plunder, and devas-

tation that is visited upon the peoples by Wehrmacht aggression. We must learn how the process of Nazification dehumanizes the individual to such an extent that he will fight until death for that which he believes in.

The final effect of such a book is to weaken the singleness of purpose that must animate the anti-fascist struggle. The fight against the invaders must be waged not with pity and human "understanding"—but with bitter, intense hatred.

JOEL SHAW.

TO NEW MASSES: I find myself in sharp disagreement with Pearl Buck and Samuel Sillen on Steinbeck's book; it seemed to me a hasty and imperfect piece of ersatz. . . . Its superficiality is no doubt the result of haste. For the book is an obvious "quickie"; its style, though direct and smooth enough, betrays a search for easy effects. The Nazis are presented in hurried thumbnail sketches. They do not reveal themselves through speech or action; instead, you are told about them in bright generalities—one loves the English, one loves dark women, one loves mathematics. . . . How inferior this characterization is to Steinbeck's best may be seen through the portrait of Corell, the one completely realized character in the book. . . .

Haste cannot explain the book's perverted characterization; only foggy thinking can be blamed for that. Steinbeck has, quite correctly, avoided the prevailing temptation of making his Nazis inhuman monsters. Unfortunately he has leaned over backward so far as to make them Rover Boys. A Nazi is a human being who has been warped by a frightful social system, a frightful ideology, a frightful example, and a frightful education. But the sweet and simple lads who talk about "girls" in sugary phrases in *The Moon Is Down* are not only no Nazis; they are no men. These German officers—it is significant that no privates appear, Steinbeck restricts himself wherever possible to "gentlemen"—these officers conduct a war in terms of embarrassed apology, never use a naughty word or tell a dirty joke, moan softly to themselves when compelled to shoot somebody. Like Hemingway's Robert Jordan, they are disintegrating intellectuals forced by their authors into positions they would never occupy in life. Nor has Steinbeck made the slightest effort to show how years of Nazism affect human psychology; his Germans might never have listened to a Hitler speech, they hate no one. To reduce this omission to its last absurdity: can anyone imagine a good Nazi youth to whom mysterious dark women represent a romantic ideal? Steinbeck has overlooked the "Aryan" myth, along with all the other horrors which make Nazis what they are. Yet one glance at the reports from any invaded country should have been enough to awaken him.

For some reason, Steinbeck has shown the enslaved people, his real heroes, much less sympathy than he has shown the Nazis. Although much is said in general terms about the people's fighting spirit, the actual anti-Nazi struggle is carried on mainly by a doctor and a mayor, two middle class intellectuals. When workers do appear they are usually presented with a sneer. . . .

That the book is neat and slick and competent in many ways cannot be denied; Steinbeck is an adroit craftsman. That it is a genuine contribution to anti-Nazi literature, or, indeed, anything more than a cynical attempt to cash in on the headlines, no one undazzled by Steinbeck's previous well earned prestige can believe for long. In its technical shoddiness and lack of human understanding, *The Moon Is Down* seems to me the work of a man who has mislaid his literary conscience.

JOY DAVIDMAN.