

# THE WANDERERS

*Weary, hounded, despairing—the old man doggedly led them on to a safer place. . . . A short story by Hans Marchwitza.*



Hans Marchwitza comes from an Upper Silesian miner's family. From the age of fourteen he labored in the ore and coal mines of his province. Even during the first world war, he had begun to protest against the war-mad Prussian spirit, and after the downfall of the Kaiser he fought against the growing menace of fascism. Among his novels of this period are "Storm Over the Ruhr" and "Walzwerke." He fled from Germany in 1933 after the burning of his books. He also fought in Spain for two years and spent twenty months in French prison camps. It was in the latter that the novel ("The Crashing Mountain"), from which we print an excerpt, was written. The book treats of the downfall of France and the episode below tells of the escape of a small group of anti-fascists from a French concentration camp. This is one of the series of stories by exiled writers which NEW MASSES has been publishing for some time.

WE WANDERED through a pitch-black night. No moon, no stars were visible. Now and then a rumble accompanied by a distant flash came up out of the darkness across the dead landscape in which we trudged on and on. Unable to see in the blackness, I heard only the stamping and scraping of our feet.

We were reluctant to pause for a rest, fearing that some new mishap might prevent us from reaching the Rhone. And even if we did get there, we were faced with a new danger. The stream was closely guarded. Would we be able to cross it safely? Our weariness grew so that at times, like over-tired horses, we fell asleep as we walked and lurched forward in a daze. But then we were aroused from our sleep-walking by an impatient cry or a push from the old man. And it took us a while to come to our senses again and realize where we were. This realization caused renewed fright in the face of the hopelessness surrounding us. At times there was a brief exchange of words.

"Man, where are you dragging us anyhow? Won't we be just as badly off when we get there as we are now?" The high-pitched voice belonged to lanky Martin.

The other, a hoarse voice, was Michel's. It sounded somewhat tense and impatient: "Just wait! When we get to Agde, all our troubles will be over." Michel was dragging us toward the still distant little seaport where before the war he had had a few French friends from whom he desperately hoped for help.

The old man merely growled and urged us on: "We must see to it that we get out of this mess here soon, before it catches up with us. We must go on!"

Again the sky lit up. There was a rumble across the silent forest. I felt as if this parched wasteland were pressing its heavy, sultry breath against my dull brain.

Half-dozing, I heard the old man close by my side: "Where are you, men? Where are you wandering to?" I forced my eyes open and saw that the night was over.

COCKS crowing, birds singing, and animals bleating announced the dawn. White smoke rose straight over the tiled roofs of the peasant huts which we left further and further behind us. The awakening families made ready to begin their day's work.

Silent, lost in our own thoughts, we came meanwhile to a new forest. The brightening sky tossed away the last shadows of night and was suffused with a flaming red. But again the oppressive dullness of increasing weariness lay over my senses. What still impelled me forward was habit—and the haste with which the old man was now relentlessly driving us.

The reechoing sounds of the world of the living had been in our ears only a short time before; now they slowly receded again. The feeling of abandonment was now doubly hard to bear. When we had broken loose from our prison we had also had to renounce the company of fellow-men.

The old man, like a hardened, ever vigilant native guide, now stepped forward. His lean sunburned face with its pointed, determined chin betrayed the obstinacy of an inflexible man.

Our resistance had long since been paralyzed. But Schwalbe had shown often enough that in an emergency he did not shrink from the seemingly impossible. He did not cherish idle hopes or indulge in wishful thinking; by his soberness and his vigilance he forced us to follow his advice. Small, solidly built, he had hard, sure movements. He seemed to possess an astonishing tenacity which never dried up.

Again we were walking along the smooth dusty highway. At this hour it was completely deserted. The new day dawned warmly and tenderly, with all the wonders of a Southern dawn. But Schwalbe was more suspicious than ever of its brightness and friendliness. And yet there was a struggle within him. Should he remain true to his old rule, or yield just this once to temptation and proceed further along the more comfortable highway? Perhaps the struggle was intensified by his increasing desire to find some abandoned peasant's hut where we might find something to eat.

Several times I heard Michel's dry croaking voice say: "We've got to look for something to drink!" But the old man replied roughly: "What, you want to run right into the hounds? Then go ahead, just wander aimlessly on!"

The younger man repressed a vindictive retort. His voice was choked but again docile as he simply said: "I just meant well, after all, it would also do you good." Then Schwalbe grumbled, less severely: "I can still wait."

The sun had risen higher. The forest again seemed yellow and dry. Schwalbe's eyes roved in a wide circle. Since he did not find what he was looking for, he gave his shoulder a jerk where the strap was cutting into the flesh, and proceeded in grim silence.

Again the moment had come when the usual mutual understanding and sharing of misery turned into reciprocal resentment and rage. Martin burst out. "Oh, I'd like to lie down and rest!"

Long and lean, his shoulders hunched high as though he were constantly freezing, his small thin face held to one side, he had walked by the old man's side the whole time. He watched the latter frown and again yielded: "All right, we can still plunge deeper into this wilderness. As you please." Again he took long strides out in front. Now and then he averted his head questioningly toward the silent old man who was breathing hard.

"How far are we still going to drag ourselves?" muttered Michel with a despairing glance at the old man who kept doggedly walking on without deigning to answer. Now Schwalbe turned into a footpath which ran into the woods. It was like a dried up brook, full of whitened pebbles, running between high cliffs and sharp tangled shrubs. "Where are you running to?" He shouted to lanky Martin who had failed to

notice the turn. "Do you want to run off aimlessly again? Here is our way!"

The tall man obediently turned back. He pointed in a direction as if he wanted to say that something over there had attracted him. After we had proceeded for some time on the new path which was stony and hard going, he smiled despondently and uttered his repressed desire: "I hoped to find a well there."

THE sun began to go down. Now the old man shouted, hoarse and panting: "You should have looked out for yourself before daybreak. Did you search for water then? No! Now it's daytime again. We have to go on."

Finally Michel stopped. His dark eyes betrayed open resistance: "You go on alone! I'm going to lie down. Why are you dragging us through these holes? We would have made much better time on the road and wouldn't feel so rotten now."

The old man also halted and looked at despairing Michel. His eyes blazed with anger: "We must get to the Rhone. We've got to escape the trap here. You want to get caught and dragged back to the camp? Then go ahead, lie down."

The young man let his head sink as if he had a guilty conscience. Schwalbe continued with a snort: "I can't trust in your hopes. Maybe the collapse has also swept away your friends, Gillot and Degoutte. It will be much worse if we find every crossing of the river blocked."

Michel raised his head and stared piteously at the old man. Then he gave a long cry, thin and hoarse, like the croak of a bird: "It's mad! We're just killing ourselves. We're not eating any more and we're dying of thirst here in the woods. Is there really any point to all our wandering?"

The old man answered in a changed voice. Tossing the bundle from his shoulder, he sank with a groan to the hot stony earth: "We'll see if there's any point to it. There must be a way out of this mess. Let's stop again and rest; then maybe we'll think of some way out. We won't remain forsaken forever; for even here life isn't altogether dead. It just needs time to assert itself again."

"Then why are we hounding each other so?" the youth murmured.

"We're not hounding," the old man replied with a bitter look, "we're being hounded." He stretched himself out. Now for the first time he seemed completely weakened. "I'd like a drink," he croaked, closing his deeply sunken and wrinkled eyes in their two gray sockets.

We three others stared at him in bewilderment for some time. Michel's resistance seemed to have shaken the old man's stubborn will.

Now, it seemed to me, each of us felt the same anxiety. Let anything happen, but we mustn't lose him.

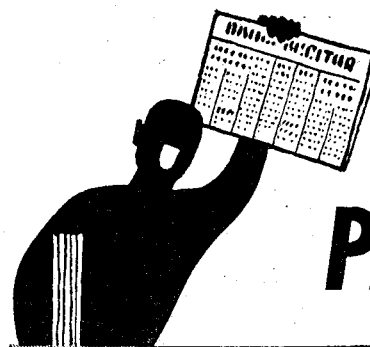
With a sigh we all lay down.

Great birds flew over us with cold, round, hostile eyes. They circled around and around us, croaking all the time. Shrill chirps surrounded us, as if everything about us had turned into innumerable, piercing little voices.

Martin and Michel were soon asleep. There was a rattling sound from their open mouths. Was Schwalbe asleep too? I don't know. His eyes shut, he breathed heavily and with a rasp. He talked—whether awake or in his sleep I could not tell. He spoke of horse-saddles; he was driving a herd at great speed before him. He spoke of Siberia, of Lake Baikal, of riding 3,000 miles in the icy cold. He told of the Sierra Nevada in Spain, of Madrid. He wrinkled his old forehead and murmured, as though ending a life story which he had revealed for the first time: "Whatever is good remains good. Nothing can shake the good; it comes through everywhere—in spite of everything. . . ."

I listened I was deathly tired, yet my senses had become strangely alert. Softly and warmly the yellow, whispering forest swayed and rustled; the bright chirpings and the sky and the earth fused with it in a gray-white surging flood across which flaming mists were sinking.

HANS MARCHWITZA.



## PRESS PARADE

LONDONERS who have recently been dropping in at the Soviet Exhibition in Piccadilly to see the handsome saddle bought for Marshal Timoshenko with British subscriptions were hoping last week that the sympathy of this country with the Marshal's present struggle would soon be expressed in a more acceptable form of leatherwork—the planting of British and American boots on occupied soil.

Mollie Panter-Downes' "Letter from London," in the "New Yorker."

A SECOND FRONT is not envisaged as "help to Russia" but as the sole means by which the Allies can help themselves. . . . That is how Moscow sees it.

Moscow's chief concern now is that the Allies realize the gravity of the situation and that, stirred with bitterest hatred, they should hasten to bring about Hitler's defeat. I asked my friend from Sevastopol what those people down there used to say about the second front. He replied with an old Russian proverb: "Oko veedet zob, nye ymyot"—"The eye sees, but the tooth can't taste it."

Ralph Parker, writing from Moscow, the New York "Times."

LADY NANCY ASTOR of Cliveden is embarrassed by the way the Nazis recognize the value of her utterances and make use of them. Recently the former hostess to Charles Lindbergh et al. complained angrily in Commons that Hitler's boys were misquoting her. One or two of her colleagues made helpful suggestions—the best, if not exactly the most sympathetic, coming from the Labor MP Frederick Seymour Cocks: "It would not be difficult to avoid such a problem if for the remainder of the war the noble lady preserved an iron silence."

"LIFE" magazine, July 6 issue, tries to mix some Old South incense with 1942 gunpowder. In a twelve-page spread on "The Fighting South," it appears that colonnaded old plantation homes handsomely illustrate "the personal dignity, the family pride, and sense of honor" which help account for the enthusiasm with which southern boys go out to fight Hitler today. Robert E. Lee, the slaveholders' general, gets honorable mention along with his ancestors who signed the Declaration of Independence. There are pictures of the American Revolutionary guerrillas too, and very fine pictures they are—and of some present-day fighters. But someone should tell the "Life" editors, in case they don't know it, that the granddaddies of most of the boys in this 1942 fight never lifted a gun in defense of slavery unless they were forced to—and the record of desertions from the Confederate Army is probably the highest in any war. The South fought in 1776. It is fighting as hard today. But not because of Jeff Davis—the Colin Kellys and Dorie Millers are doing the fighting now.



# ZIP YOUR LIP

The story of a West Coast army-civilian campaign to stop loose talk about military matters. From juke boxes to editorials. A model for other states.

Los Angeles.

FORT ORD is located on the Monterey Peninsula—an area popularized by John Steinbeck in his *Tortilla Flat*. Until recently it had a heavy population of persons born in enemy countries. Undoubtedly there is fifth column activity around Fort Ord, as there is around any sizable army cantonment. Hence the necessity for complete silence regarding troops moving in and out of the Fort. This, however, is not easy. Civilians in Monterey, Salinas, Watsonville, Carmel, and Pacific Grove—the cities most frequented by soldiers—are a friendly sort. It is only natural that they should ask a soldier his home town, his unit, how many other men there are at the Fort—never dreaming that such information is useful to the enemy.

Yet it is just such information which the Military Intelligence of every army is out to get. To know everything possible about enemy troops before meeting them in battle—the size, characteristics, average age, training, morale, and movements of the troops—this is the job of "Intelligence."

Small wonder that the commanding officers of Fort Ord were anxious to stop loose talk among the civilians of Monterey. So a "Zip Your Lip" campaign was initiated. Conceived by the Fort's public relations office, it was launched under the direction of Col. Charles H. Mason, post executive, with the approval of Col. Roger S. Fitch, post commander. Its success makes it worth study for nationwide application.

DIRECTORS of the campaign faced certain difficulties at the outset. The necessity for secrecy surrounding troop movements was readily understood by both soldiers and civilians, who could envision submarines and sinking troop ships off the coast. But why the same secrecy should be observed regarding units stationed at the Fort—this was harder to explain. The campaign, therefore, was directed toward silencing everything that might convey military information, with no fine distinctions between "vital" and "not vital."

Another difficulty was the peculiarly delicate relationship that obtains between the military and the civilian population. The latter do not like to be "told" by the military what they may and may not do. Voluntary civilian cooperation must be enlisted, and whatever suasion is necessary must be applied by civilian sources. So the campaign was designed to promote a feeling of deep personal responsibility for stopping rumors and discussion of military subjects. And since soldiers are the chief source of military information, the campaign was started among them.

One day the camp paper, *Panorama*, which

is read by all soldiers at Fort Ord, ran a front-page box headed, "Dummy Up, Boys, Dummy Up." This was the first of a series of lead articles, editorials, and cartoons reporting the progress of the campaign and generally popularizing it among the men. A public address system was rigged up in the Fort's central bus station on Saturday and Sunday nights, when the largest number of boys leave camp. The last thing they heard as they went out was the loudly voiced caution: "Zip your lip, don't talk military matters when you're in town."

Even the juke boxes were used. More than twenty post exchanges at Fort Ord are equipped with these boxes, operated by telephone through a central exchange. You put your nickel into a coin slot, then tell the operator what number you want played. A series of ten-second transcriptions of jingles, with sound effects, etc., plugging the "Zip Your Lip" message, was cut at a local radio station. These were played over the juke box system before the requested number. They became so popular that soldiers often asked the operator to play three or four of them instead of a musical number. The system was also placed in effect in Monterey, which has a similar central juke box exchange with outlets in bars and restaurants throughout the city.

A fine public relations job was done by a Fort Ord liaison officer through the newspapers of Monterey, Salinas, and Watsonville. First he explained to editors the objectives of the campaign and offered the assistance of the Fort's public relations staff in the preparation of news stories and pictures. Without exception the newspapers pitched in. News stories and editorials, written by both soldier and civilian reporters, immediately began to appear in papers throughout the peninsula.

The area's two radio stations—KHUB in Watsonville and KDON in Monterey—agreed to do their part. A spot announcement was broadcast every half hour, then ten times a day, from each station: "Here is a message from the Public Relations Officer at Fort Ord.

We are at war. Keep military information out of your conversation."

Handsome posters with the admonition "Keep Military Information Out of Your Conversation" were furnished at cost to local Chambers of Commerce, which distributed them to business establishments in the communities near Fort Ord. In addition the public relations officer outlined the campaign to Chamber secretaries and, in some cases, to membership meetings.

Since most public conversations take place in bars, restaurants, and beauty parlors, a small army of bartenders and waitresses was enlisted in the "Zip Your Lip" drive. They were asked to keep their ears open for discussion of military topics, and to take steps to stop it. Newspapers carried picture stories showing how information might spread from these public places.

Signs reading "Keep Military Matters Out of Your Conversation" have been posted in every telephone booth at Fort Ord. Western Union and Postal Telegraph installed a form of "voluntary suggested censorship" in the Monterey Peninsula area. A telegraph clerk who spots military information in a message asks the sender if he wouldn't like to delete that part. So far no one—soldier or civilian—has refused to cooperate. (Before the campaign 5,000 telegrams were sent out in one day, containing the information that the Fort had been "alerted.") If anyone should refuse to delete the military facts, the clerks are instructed to report him to the post intelligence officer.

IMPRESSED with these results, the public information committee of the State Defense Council, with the aid of the Fort Ord public relations office, prepared an outline for a statewide campaign that is now receiving serious consideration. This outline might well serve as a model for the other forty-seven states in blanketing the nation with silence concerning matters vital to its security. Briefly the plan is for the campaign to originate with the State Defense Council, but to operate through the local defense councils in order to bring it close to the average citizen. In addition to regular spot announcements, radio dramatizations, and radio contests for slogans, with war savings bonds as prizes, would be tremendously effective. The schools, movies, posters, stickers, buttons, and many other devices could be used.

"Zip Your Lip" has the advantage of appealing to the public's imagination as well as to its patriotism. It also gives the participants a feeling of personal responsibility which is invaluable for national morale.

TOM CULLEN.

