

TENNESSEE TREK

"I'm a-goin'," Milton D. Ellis overheard the South say. The big things that are happening since Pearl Harbor. What the average man thinks.

PEARL HARBOR hit Tennessee hard. Almost every town in the state seems to have lost a boy. Harriman (pop. 4,200) lost four; and every newspaper I picked up carried a picture of some Tennessee lad reported missing—in Honolulu, in Wake, in Guam. At the farmers' market in Knoxville, I heard two farm women talking between customers. One of them was middle-aged, stout, dressed in new black. Red-eyed but tearless, she stood there between her wares (holly and ground pine) and the busy Christmas crowd. "No," she told her companion, "they didn't draft him—he enlisted back in June. 'Mom,' he says, 'I'm a-goin.' And it warn't up to me to tell him no."

The US Army Recruiting Service in Knoxville reported that seventeen clerks were required just to handle letters received each day from Tennesseans demanding to be told what they could do "to help lick the Japanese." One farmer, a determined, slow-spoken man who was obviously over age, came in. Twisting his hat in his hand, he explained that his son was in the service in Hawaii, and he had not heard from him since the Japanese attack. "I want to get out there and go to work on 'em," he said.

The bus stations seemed to be full of young men headed for Nashville—receiving point for the navy. The navy has always been popular in those landlocked valleys; and Pearl Harbor hasn't damaged its prestige. I talked to one group. They were going to Nashville for their "physicals"; they hoped they wouldn't be rejected; they had round-trip tickets but they weren't going to use the return stub. "By God, we'll get in somehow!" Three of them in the washroom had a bottle of corn. Surprisingly, they struck up a Methodist hymn. They did it beautifully, and an inquiry revealed that they were three-fourths of a religious quartet which sings every day over a small local radio station. It was the marines for them.

THE SOUTH had been "pro-war" long before December 7. The strong economic and historic ties with England, even in some odd fashion memories of the Civil War—all this and more contributed to a militant all-out sentiment. The war has also changed the southern press. Whereas three or four years ago foreign news consisted of a six-line, pro-Franco dispatch on the last page, today foreign datelines dominate the front page. The editorials are extraordinarily unified, the last vestiges of provincialism having disappeared. Recognition of the global character of the war is general. A Roanoke (Va.) paper has a permanent new eight-column slogan: "Remember Pearl Harbor!" The Chattanooga Times complimented the Russians on their Christmas present to Hitler—"a present Stalin had long been preparing." Recognition of the Soviet contribution seems widespread, and Moscow and Kuibyshev dispatches were on page one of every paper I saw.

The attitude toward Russia is interesting. Except for the big metropolitan press, and relatively small upper class circles in the cities, there was until recently an attitude of genuine neutrality toward the Soviets. This is now everywhere tempered with growing admiration for the Red Army.

A farmer going to the county seat to pay his taxes was more or less typical of this sentiment. We approached the subject with rustic circuitry. He said he wouldn't put it past 'em if them Japanese hadn't been a-planning this here attack for a long time. He thought we ought to go over and clean 'em up

—them and the Nazis—once and for all. Heard one of them commentators telling about how the Russians was whipping Hitler. Seemed to him them Russians had done right well—but then, always *had* seemed to him there was more to the Russians than most folks made out. Minding their own business and all. . . .

BY AND LARGE, Tennessee seemed not only more war conscious but also more war prepared than the East. A filling station operator way out in the mountains wanted to know if we had a flashlight. Never could tell, he said, when you'd run into a blackout, and most tourists weren't prepared. I found Nashville citizens old hands at blackouts and experts at identifying planes. The power shortage in the southeast (due to abnormally low water) had necessitated a thirty percent cut in civilian consumption last fall. Many owners of electric signs installed gasoline generators to manufacture their own power, along with miniature neon signs in the lower corner pointing to this fact. There was a rush for candles and lanterns, and now they are better prepared for real blackouts than most Easterners.

Here at Nashville is the huge new Vultec factory, just getting into the mass production of its savage pursuit planes. This is said to be the first completely mechanized assembly line for planes in America. The Nashville skies are alive with planes and it is small wonder that Nashvillians are air-minded. They can tell the make and type of plane overhead with scarcely a squint at it. Hundreds of them are attending new aeronautical schools there, and the demand is so great that one of the schools is now operating on a twenty-four hour basis.

Civilian Defense note in the Knoxville Journal—a letter to the editor from a Negro citizen. "Does it not seem strange and out of place that even now, as we battle against aggressor nations who would destroy our form of government, that we Negroes are still denied the privilege of helping defend the things we too hold dear? . . . I refer to the recent statement in the Journal that 'all white men between the ages of 18 and 50 should be eligible to join the Volunteer Fire Department.' We, as Negroes and as citizens in this American democracy, have the desire to fill our duties as citizens at home as well as on the battlefield."

BUT FACTORS other than the war are changing the face of the South. Take agriculture, where progress is dramatically evident. Since the Triple-A was plowed under, the administration has devised a more constitutional and far more constructive means of crop limitation—that of soil improvement. Here the farmer is paid so much per year for each acre he puts into "cover crops" and "soil builders"—nitrogen-fixing plants like clover, lespedeza, and alfalfa. These crops not only halt surface erosion, enrich the soil, and, when plowed back, improve both the chemical and mechanical texture of the soil. They also afford excellent pasturage and hay crops. This, in turn, almost forces the spread of dairying—essential to any balanced agricultural economy.

Other factors are at work in the Tennessee Valley's agriculture. Winter grains—oats, barley, rye—are now providing new winter pasturage as well as new summer small-grain crops. This adds balance to the economy and color to the landscape. The administration is subsidizing a fertilization program, using TVA phosphates, nitrates, and limestone. Fall plowing, an important means of holding winter moisture hitherto almost unknown in the South, is now widespread.

The hilly counties, in collaboration with the TVA and the State Department of Agriculture, are buying huge terracing machines. At little cost to the farmers, these machines can be brought into their fields to throw up trenches which follow the contours instead of the fence lines. This reduces sheet erosion (loss of topsoil) and leaching (loss of soluble minerals

in the soil) to a minimum. It incidentally gives the landscape an architectural character somewhat resembling that of the brilliantly engineered rice fields of the Philippines and China.

One interesting sidelight of the growth of dairying is to be found in Middle Tennessee. This region, with its bluegrass, is the only section of the state with a natural year-round pasture (bluegrass is an "evergreen"). Here both beef and dairy cattle are increasingly important. Here too the great milk combines have moved in—Borden's, Carnation, etc. Now to sell raw milk to these companies, the dairy farmers must meet certain minima: tuberculin-free cows, modern barns, sanitary milk-handling equipment. This naturally requires money from farmers already mortgaged to banks and insurance companies. So now the milk companies have evolved a canny arrangement whereby they step in and build a barn for the farmers. Payment is in the form of small deductions from the monthly milk check. The investment is guaranteed by a lien on the herd and exclusive access to the farmer's output during the life of the contract.

Finally, there is to be seen along all the highways the heroic reforestation and erosion control work of the CCC. In collaboration with the TVA, the Conservation Corps is restoring to their natural state thousands of hillside acres which should never have been cleared in the first place. Although this area is apparently too far north for the cultivation of slash pine for newsprint that one sees in Alabama and Georgia, the forest culture of the CCC will ultimately make the timber crop an important factor in this region again.

All this has helped the farms—and presumably the farmers, although that does not necessarily follow. At any rate, it has won the farmers solidly to the side of the administration—of that there can be no doubt. There is already much talk of expanding next year's crop production, and speculation as to how increased war production will affect the conservation program. I talked to several farmers who had "retired" to dairying; all of them were planning to change over to at least some food crop production next spring. They know that America must feed the world and they aim to do it.

BUT THE REAL IMPACT of a visit to Tennessee lies in the physical structure of the TVA. This is literally breathtaking. The scale of TVA operations, especially since May 1940, has become so vast that it must be seen to be appreciated. A thirty-five mile stretch of US 11 northeast of Knoxville lies along the wall of a beautiful little valley which will shortly become the reservoir of a dam now in construction. This entire area is literally being remade, with astonishing neatness and efficiency. Old farm houses are being taken down or moved, new houses and barns are being built, the highway is being relocated, old graveyards are being moved to higher sites, trees and brushwood, which would be submerged, are being cleared for timber or firewood. The entire lake floor, hundreds of thousands of acres in extent, will be as clean as your living room floor before it is flooded. And as you drive along, you can see the timber line weaving in and out of the hills, marking the design of future islands, coves, and peninsulas.

This new water is changing the cultural and recreational patterns of the entire region. Sailboats, aquaplanes, bathing beaches appear overnight. Even the sea-gulls have moved in—*"Queer varmints,"* a native told me, *"and as bright and sassy as a crow."* This was a region of normal rainfall and many streams; at the same time it was a land of frequent drouth, long hot summers, and no lakes at all. The TVA has changed all this. It has put Knoxville in the heart of a man-made "lake country." It has necklaced landlocked Chattanooga with an eighty-mile lake. When completed, the great Tennessee will have literally ceased to be a sullen muddy river and become a continuous chain of ice-blue lakes. It is entirely possible that the TVA program will eventually modify the climate itself.

The towns are changing. Tennessee is a state of many small counties, all laid out in the days of horse-drawn vehicles. Since thirty miles was the maximum trip for that day, these county seats are rarely more than thirty-five miles apart. Now, along the main highways, they seem almost to run together. The movement of northern industry into these towns in the last two decades has converted them from sleepy little Saturday market places to communities with a full quota of modern shops, air-conditioned theaters, neon signs, paved and lighted streets. Sign of change and good augury of the future is the appearance of CIO and AFL headquarters on the court house square. In every town you see them there, between such other institutions as the bus station and the bank.

The amount of new construction, especially of houses and small factories, is remarkable. The spread of public power lines over the countryside has released the house from its dependence upon municipal utilities. Hence, bright new houses are going up for miles outside the town in all directions. Driving along in those wintry pre-Christmas nights, we were hardly ever out of the cheery sight of electrically lighted trees. Topping the wild mountains at Monteagle one night, we saw below us the Nashville highway stretching away as far as the eye could reach—all lighted, so that from that distance it looked almost like a city street. Alongside it flashed the airline beacons. . . .

All this has infused, it seems to me, new life in Tennessee and is winning its people solidly to the cause of progress. Keystone to the whole structure is the TVA. It deserves credit both for what it has done and the way it has done it. Symbolic is the way it found time out from heavy engineering to move the graves of long-dead settlers to higher ground, or to carry live coals from hearthstones which had not been cold since Daniel Boone to new ones elsewhere. This has left an indelible impression on the people down there, and gone far to dispel the confusion and distrust which the power trust once tried to spread.

I DO NOT, however, mean to paint a Utopia. Grave problems still confront the southern people, and national unity in the war will not automatically solve them. The unions are solidly entrenched and growing. But their job isn't done by a long shot, nor has it been easy. The tradition of Bloody Harlan is still alive in certain mines and factories, as witness the notorious Ducktown frameup. Here eight members of the CIO's United Mine, Mill & Smelter Workers, leaders of the 1939 strike at the Tennessee Copper Co.'s Ducktown plant, have been convicted of conspiracy to damage federal property. These men face fifteen-year sentences and heavy fines for having allegedly dynamited TVA power lines supplying the plant, although the only evidence is based on the testimony of convicted perjurers, rapists, and a murderer. Company unionism is no stranger to the Valley.

Especially noticeable, even to the holiday visitor, is the plight of the poor farmer and of the Negro people. During those pre-Christmas days, the towns and cities of East Tennessee were flooded with highland and mountain people. They came down in their old cars to sell their holly and ground pine and mistletoe, and their handicraft—baskets, hooked rugs, and tufted spreads. They came to buy as much "store goods" as their sales allowed. They are the least touched by all this change, and the least benefited. They show this in their faded clothes, their bad teeth, their slender, wiry bodies. (After a while you begin to think that "plump" and "mountaineer" are mutually exclusive terms.) These are the Valley's forgotten people. And to see them blue with cold, forced to stand on a street corner haggling over the price of a wreath of holly, is to make one blind with anger. (Did you ever try to weave a holly wreath with your bare hands, or climb to the top of a hickory tree for a lone sprig of mistletoe?)

The plight of the Negro people is essentially the same,



Michaela

though in this part of the South the Negroes are preponderantly urban. There are increasing signs of change, however. The foundries in Chattanooga are being unionized—and a majority of their employees are Negroes. In Nashville, for the first time in history, local businessmen joined actively in a fund-raising campaign for a Negro hospital. In a backwoods country church in Middle Tennessee I heard a young Negro parson preach as fine a sermon on the necessity for unity in the face of the Hitlerite attack as you could hear anywhere. It took him only seven minutes and he chose as his text: you got to do the best with what you got and *make more of it*. He pointed out to his congregation that the Negro people had the right to meet and worship—"and that's more than them pore people over yonder got." It had not been a year of unmixed blessings, but you had to remember what the rest of the world was a-going through. That was reason to

be thankful, he said. "We're all of us in this thing an' we gotta see it through."

There are increasing signs of Negro militancy down there. I got a distorted reflection of this fact in several well upholstered southern homes—stupid and vicious remarks about "uprisings." The Negro people are in movement; and those unique remnants of the slave plutocracy which still infest upper class southern circles are intuitively aware of it, and guiltily worried about it. The segregation they still impose on the South cannot but appall the visitor. Drinking fountains in TVA rest rooms "for white only." Beautiful new buses with built-in illuminated (sic!) signs: "This part of bus for colored race."

But all this will change. The South was in movement before December 7. And subsequent events cannot but accelerate its struggle for democracy, abroad and at home.

MILTON D. ELLIS.

EDEN'S JOURNEY TO MOSCOW

Claude Cockburn cables the significance of the British-Soviet discussions. The blow to Nazi propaganda. The postwar settlements. "Injecting a sense of reality. . . ."

London (by cable).

THE importance of Russia in the Europe of tomorrow will be as great as it is today—and it would be hard to put it higher than that." In a leading article, "Unity Beyond War," the *London Spectator*, among the foremost conservative weeklies, makes this comment on the subject of Eden's talks in Moscow. A platitude, of course, a glimpse of the obvious. But nevertheless symptomatic of the fact that things which ought to have been obvious long ago are at least obvious now. And symptomatic too of a change which I should say has only begun to take place here, not since June 22 but since a much more recent date—after the first serious German setbacks and grave defeats in Russia. I do not think that until then you would have found a great many conservatives who would have acknowledged the necessity, or at any rate the urgency, of general Anglo-Soviet conversations going beyond the bounds of military and supply questions such as were covered in the earlier conversations with Beaverbrook.

It is just about unanimously acknowledged here that the Eden visit and the discussions initiated signified a profoundly important recognition of the realities of a much longer perspective. The importance of the tendencies expressed in the Eden visit can be gauged most easily by comparing them with contrary tendencies which existed—and doubtless still exist—in some quarters here. Obviously there were those who, from the moment of America's entry into the war and even before that, saw an Anglo-American alliance now and cooperation in the future as something on quite a different plane from the other components of the grand alliance. Such notions are a powerful relic of quite a jumble of traditional British policies and aspirations. In some people's minds these notions led to visualizing a postwar situation in which an Anglo-American bloc would try to "deal with" problems—including some important European problems—in isolation from the Soviet Union. Eden's visit, and a good deal of the conservative

press comment which followed it, have served to inject a sense of realities, particularly of European realities, into these foolish dreamings.

The initiative of the British government was a blow, a deliberate blow, to those who speculated on an Anglo-American bloc divorced from the Soviet Union and China. It is obvious that with the present economic and social condition of occupied Europe, and indeed of Germany itself, such a conception could be favorable only to the propaganda of the German government itself. In fact it is a card which the German government frequently seeks to play, partly because such an idea would have a splitting effect upon the "oppositional" forces in Europe, partly because it would revive throughout Europe the unpleasant memories of 1919.

The Eden visit has made it clear that there will be no resemblance whatever, at any point, between the Treaty of Versailles and the settlement which will follow this war. It may as well be said that in some respects the treaty or settlement which follows this time will be a great deal harsher than Versailles. Harsher, that is to say, against those responsible in Germany for the aggressions of the last years, for the bestial atrocities of the German troops revealed in Molotov's latest note, and for the prolonged and systematic perversion of German youth and young manhood which has made these things possible. It is time to remember, and we may be sure that Central Europe remembers, that the notorious "harshness" of the Versailles Treaty fell upon the working people of Central Europe. It hardly touched either the ruling royalties of that period, most of whom abdicated safely and wealthily, or the leaders of Central European big business, whose Krupps and Stinnes' flourished like the green bay tree under the treaty's provisions. As for the very politically conscious military leaders of German imperialism at that period, we need only recall, and again Central Europe certainly recalls, that it was Hindenburg who finally opened the gates of power to Hitler. And that men like General Groener and General von Seeckt, because of the freedom permitted them following their defeat in the field, laid the basis for the present state of German militarism and were the instruments through which the disunited but heroic progressive forces were destroyed.

One need only reflect on these facts to see that what was wrong with the Treaty of Versailles was not its "harshness" but that the victorious powers, for reasons with which we are all painfully familiar, preferred to aim their harshness at the wrong targets. It is being realized with increasing clarity here that this must not happen again, and that only understanding between Britain and the Soviet Union is a promise that it will not happen again. It is because Eden's visit to Moscow, following the deeply inspiring agreement between the Soviet and Polish governments, is a real step on the road toward victory first and then a peace which will make sense, that it has been regarded with profound satisfaction here.

It is sometimes suggested that all discussion of postwar problems is at this moment academic and misleading. It is true that nine times out of ten the charge is justified. But I suppose nobody would suggest that the Soviet government is much given to academic dreaming of this kind. And it is realized that discussion of this kind, so far from being "merely" a discussion about "something in the future," is a discussion of future policy which at the same time has the most immediate practical bearing upon the most urgent problems facing us, particularly as regards the practical effects within occupied Europe and within the German Reich itself.

CLAUDE COCKBURN.



C. ROWE in the British "Our Time"