

# NEW MASSES

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## Freedom for Puerto Rico

NEWS that President Roosevelt has approved a plan whereby the people of Puerto Rico will elect their own governor, by 1944 if the war's over, or shortly after, comes as the beginning of the fulfillment of the Atlantic Charter.

It comes also apparently on the recommendation of the present governor, Rexford G. Tugwell, as a result of the struggle he has been having with a small group of powerfully entrenched reactionaries in Puerto Rico, who draw their inspiration from the Spanish Falange. Tugwell, whose resignation is now expected, has learned in his brief stay in Puerto Rico that his measures for improving Puerto Rico's food situation and assuring the future of this important Caribbean outpost of American defenses have the wholehearted support of the people, including the majority of the recently elected national legislature, but a group of merchants and agents of the big sugar companies, most of them tied to the Falange, have been blocking his program with incredible bitterness.

And one of the levers they have employed is the traditional irritation that exists in Puerto Rico with the dependent status of the island. As Earl Browder pointed out in his Madison Square Garden speech of July 2, Puerto Rico is really a Latin American nation; but she has been treated as a colony.

So the reasons for President Roosevelt's step are manifold: it has become clear that real security for the Puerto Rican base is not only a matter of fortification and navies, but depends on the cooperation of the people. And it has also become clear that the influence we must wield in bringing about rapid changes in British colonial policy, as in India, will be compromised unless the United States takes the lead in making the terms of the Atlantic Charter real for Puerto Rico.

It is a step forward, this latest measure, and does credit both to Tugwell and the long struggle of the Puerto Rican people themselves. But it is still a hesitant step. What must be done is to assist the diversification of Puerto Rican economy, to lower prices on foodstuffs, to curb the grip of the sugar monopolies. Breaking relations with Franco, as well as Vichy, becomes vital in smashing

the power of Franco's stooges in Puerto Rico. And the whole process would bring far more satisfactory relations for all the hemisphere if, instead of waiting until 1944 to elect their own governor, the Puerto Rican people were granted what is theirs by right: independence now.

## Memo to Mr. Biddle

JUST what is it, Mr. Biddle, that has paralyzed that right arm of yours which was all set to strike a blow at Goebbels' agent Charles E. Coughlin? Since the suppression of *Social Justice* Coughlin has begun building an underground organization out of its old subscribers. He is also establishing a high school to inoculate young boys with his traitorous ideas. Whom are you appeasing by your failure to act against the fifth columnist Charles E. Coughlin? Whom are you appeasing by your efforts to deport the patriot Harry Bridges, and your smearing of a patriotic organization, the Communist Party?

## Tearing the House Down

IT LOOKS, at this writing, as though an unhealthy large number of congressmen are set on making a shambles of President Roosevelt's seven-point program. The violent assault on price ceilings is only one feature of the general attack, which is directed toward bringing the whole house down after breaking up the furniture. By cutting appropriations for the Office of Price Administration from a recommended \$161,000,000 to \$75,000,000, the House majority has attempted to cripple Leon Henderson's power to control prices and rents. The result of this attack is already reflected in two OPA decisions: to raise ceilings on canned fruits by fifteen percent; and to permit quality deteriorations in garment manufacture. The OPA Consumers Division, which has been picked at by profiteers all through its existence, is suffering from lack of funds and many of its workers are being fired.

Linked with the offensive against the OPA is the twin attack on the Farm Security Administration and on the government's request for permission to sell its wheat surpluses below "parity" (a request already granted by the Senate). The latter issue needs a little

explaining. Parity, as most people now know, is the relationship of farm to industrial prices as it was in the period of 1910-14. Congress has refused to place ceilings on farm prices below 110 of parity. However, the wheat surpluses held by the government date from a considerable time before this law was passed. The government proposes to sell this grain for stock-feeding purposes at eighty-five percent of parity. Its theory is absolutely sound: that while there are surpluses of grain, there are potential shortages of pork, beef, milk, chickens, and eggs. Hence, make the grain available and help prevent shortage of these other foodstuffs essential to fighting the war. The so-called farm bloc can't see it that way. They will risk being short of any food for the army and civilian population in order that their big-farmer friends may stay long on profits.

The result of this attitude is that, as we go to press, the House and Senate are deadlocked on agricultural appropriations and there are no funds for running the Department of Agriculture, with its 81,000 employees. But that isn't all. Besides cutting down on the availability of grain for feeding, the House majority has cut the Senate appropriation for the FSA from \$222,800,000 to \$127,700,000. The FSA, according to the slashers, is not a "war effort." All it does is lend money to small farmers to produce food—and apparently the congressional Tories don't regard food as important to the war effort.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT has a phrase for these wrecking groups of congressmen: "selfish and power-hungry." He used it in a letter responding to seven labor, religious, and small farm leaders who protested to him the slashing of FSA and the "parity" diehards. It is an apt phrase, but the profiteering sympathies of these groups have wider, more dangerous implications. If they can abolish price ceilings, create farm shortages, and start an inflation spiral, then they will have damaged the war effort indeed. And if they can use the threat of an inflation to freeze wages and depress labor's living standards and morale, they will deserve a medal from Hitler. It is already evident from their speeches that this is what they are attempting to do. It is evident, also, that, unless stopped, they will use every possible tactic to tear up the seven-point program. Talk of a sales tax has been revived—on the grounds that the present bill won't raise enough revenue. Of course it won't; it's over \$3,000,000,000 short. But whose fault is that? The sales-taxers', who refused to tap wealthy sources while they broadened the income-tax base to include the sub-standard groups.

IT is significant that President Roosevelt, in his letter denouncing the power-hungry,

expressed gratification at the unity and understanding of the seven leaders who wrote him. He also predicted that "the people" would hold the obstructionists "to strict account." The people are already swinging into action. Some sections of organized labor have offered their services as "price wardens," to check on violations of the law. Protests against the FSA cuts and the "parity" obstructionists have been registered in Congress. United action by both labor and consumer groups is bound to bring results. Most of Congress has to face the polls in November and the calling to account will be relentless. For the sake of victory in this war, it can be nothing less.

## Wage Policy

**"I**NFLATIONARY spiral" is the bogey conjured by officials of Little Steel to avert a dollar a day increase requested by the United Steel Workers of America. These officials have been answered in a report to the War Labor Board submitted by a four-man panel after an investigation lasting several months. All four of them, including industry's representative, Cyrus Ching, recommend a substantial wage increase in Little Steel—and they recommend it on grounds which are important to the whole question of wage stabilization. First, it is pointed out that the four Little Steel companies—Republic, Bethlehem, Inland, and Youngstown—are able to grant the requested increase without difficulty from profits remaining after taxes are paid. Besides, the report adds, to withhold justified wage increases because of profit taxes is to impose a tax burden on the workers themselves. Second, and more important, the buying power of the steel worker's earnings has decreased 13.3 percent during the past year because of higher living costs in the steel towns.

So much for the justice of the union's demands. As for the danger of inflation: "It is clear," says the report, "that the national money income shares importance with the consumers' 'pie,' and that, though the latter will shrink, the former will grow. To ask labor to accept less than its proportionate share of the nation's money income in order to prevent labor from acquiring too much pie leaves out of account that money has value even when it must be saved." A fair division of the shrinking "pie," as we have pointed out before, entails an equitable rationing system—not cutting down the income of workers whose spending is largely in the field of food, clothing, and rent rather than in durable goods where shortages exist. And rationing, plus price ceilings, is the effective preventive of inflation—not holding wages to a sub-standard level that also impairs the worker's morale and his capacity for the all-out effort. As we go to press, the WLB has not yet

announced a decision on the panel report although it has held hearings at which both the union and the companies are represented. That decision will have grave importance in the nation's war economy.

## Murder-by-Poll-Tax

**O**DELL WALLER was not snatched out of a jail and strung up on a tree. He was lynched with formality, in an electric chair, and in accordance with an old bourbon custom as effective as swamp hangings. That custom is trial-by-poll-tax. Two years ago Odell Waller, a Negro sharecropper of Virginia, was convicted of killing a white landlord who had cheated him out of his share in a wheat crop. In the jury that tried him there was not a single Negro, not even a "poor white." They were not allowed to serve on the jury—the only persons eligible for such service were those who had paid Virginia's poll tax. Waller was sentenced to death, but the national protest impelled two Virginia governors to grant him



*On July 6 the cables brought word to America that Eugene Petrov had been killed at Sevastopol. To the thousands in this country who had read translations of his writings, the news must have been hard to believe. For those thousands had been delighted by the high spirits and wit of the satirical "Little Golden Calf," written with his collaborator, the late Ilya Ilf. Some had met Petrov during his visit to America with Ilf in 1935, and remembered his lively, humorous mind and vivid personality. People of the Soviet Union knew him also as Lieutenant Colonel Petrov, a brilliant war correspondent on the staff of the Soviet Information Bureau. He spent much of his time at the front, often in great danger, and was finally killed at his post. Eugene Petrov, like other Soviet writers, was proud to wear a uniform in the service of his country, willing to risk death in that service. Writers in other countries must surely feel proud of him too. His courage symbolizes the supreme heroism of the defenders of Sevastopol.*

five reprieves. Governor Darden, however, even after a fifteen-hour hearing on the case, refused to commute his sentence to life imprisonment: Odell Waller was executed on July 2.

What cheering news for the Axis, that another American Negro has been lynched. Adolph Hitler now has the satisfaction of knowing that the poll tax is a double weapon in his cause. Not only does it keep in power Martin Dies, Howard Smith, and their friends—but it operates against democracy in the courts also. In the case of Odell Waller, the poll tax was powerful enough to withstand protests from Philip Murray and William Green, from clergymen, civic leaders, some of the best known people in America. President Roosevelt, who has evidenced a real desire to stop jim-crowism in war industry, still refused to heed all pleas to intervene in the Waller case—although it is inseparable from the whole jim-crowism pattern.

Yet there is available an immediate way to abolish this wrong against democracy: by passing the Pepper-Geyer bill, which forbids the poll tax in federal elections. Pressure can, and must, be brought on Congress to enact this measure. Similar pressure can finally push through the anti-lynching bill. It can end Jim-Crowism in the armed forces, discrimination against Negroes in civilian life. The Waller case did not end with the electric chair—it is too symbolic for that. It is up to organized labor, to all American citizens, to consider and to take action—now.

## Spotlight on New York

**T**HE very proper emphasis that has been placed on the congressional elections in this crucial war year should not obscure the importance of certain state and local contests. This is particularly true of New York state, which is a major influence on national events and hence a factor in shaping our country's course internationally. Right now there is a good deal of debate taking place over possible candidates for governor. In both major parties the machines have picked their men and are expecting the forthcoming conventions, still two months off, merely to go through the motions of ratifying decisions made long in advance. But within both parties and among the voters generally the feeling is growing that the machine choices, Attorney General John J. Bennett and Thomas E. Dewey, won't do. The American Labor Party as well as the Communist Party is agreed that they won't do. Bennett is just a routine hack, with no understanding or enthusiasm for the foreign or domestic policies of the Roosevelt administration. Dewey is what might be called a Pearl Harbor patriot whose position prior to December 7 was strongly tinged with isolationism and whose more recent pronounce-



ments show a tendency to compromise on basic questions.

Dissatisfaction among the voters has manifested itself in the movement to draft Wendell Willkie, one of the few Republican leaders who has given active support to our government's course in foreign affairs. Despite Willkie's announcement last week that he would not be a candidate, efforts to draft him are continuing. There is likewise a movement under way, one that has already enlisted large labor support, to secure the Democratic nomination for someone like Lieut. Gov. Charles Poletti or Sen. James M. Mead. The Greater New York Industrial Union Council of the CIO made what seems to us a happy suggestion when it proposed a few days ago that President Roosevelt, Governor Lehman, and Mayor La Guardia get together and choose a candidate "who can win the support of labor and progressive forces."

One thing is certain: a broad coalition will be necessary to elect such a candidate. As Israel Amter, Communist standard-bearer, pointed out in an Independence Day broadcast: "Neither the Republican, Democratic, nor American Labor Parties, standing alone, represent the united win-the-war forces of the state. . . . What is needed in our state is a coalition of the win-the-war forces—the powerful Labor groups, the New Deal Democrats, and win-the-war Republicans, who place nation above party, yes, a grand coalition of the people, from the conservative to the Communist."

### Echoes of Rapp-Coudert

IT IS an ugly piece of irony that in the week of July Fourth, Morris U. Schappes' appeal has been rejected by the Appellate Division, First Department, of the New York Supreme Court. Schappes—to review the case briefly—was convicted in General Sessions on June 28, 1941, on charges of perjury. Specifically, he was "convicted" of misinforming the Rapp-Coudert committee about the extent of his knowledge regarding Communist activity at City College of New York, where he was an English instructor. The trial rivaled the Rapp-Coudert hearings for unfairness: stool-pigeon witnesses, a Red-baiting judge, and a jury that admitted beforehand to anti-Communist prejudices. Despite public protests, Schappes received a sentence of one and a half to two years in State Prison. In rejecting his appeal the Appellate Division simply refers curtly to what it calls "overwhelming proof of defendant-appellant's guilt." His claim that he was given an unfair trial is not challenged.

There is even more involved here than a case of flat injustice, contrary to democratic procedure. Schappes is well known as a progressive trade union leader and anti-fascist. He has

## Half Way Is the Wrong Way

IS AMERICA waging all-out war against the Axis? Are we matching the victory-or-death spirit of the Russians and the Chinese, the stubborn aggressiveness of the British people, the heroic self-sacrifice of the unconquered peoples of the conquered countries? Hardly. We have made great strides since Pearl Harbor, and among the plain people of the country there is no lack of readiness to give all that the struggle requires. Yet in every phase of the war effort there is abundant evidence that we are either still winding up or, at any rate, not bearing down on the ball with all we've got.

Take such an elementary matter as the building of our armed forces to carry the fight to the enemy. One idea that has been definitely exploded by the fighting in Russia is the illusion that this is primarily a war of machines requiring only limited forces in the field. True, this idea has reappeared in a different form in recent months: the propaganda, of which Major Alexander de Seversky is the leading exponent, that a mere bombing offensive, rather than a land invasion, is sufficient to beat Germany into submission. But there is no indication that this fallacy is seriously entertained in responsible military or governmental circles, and the Washington-London-Moscow agreements for opening a Western Front in 1942 are official recognition that bombing can be no substitute for land operations.

Yet, though it is clear that a new Western Front in Europe, as well as the fronts in the Pacific, Asia, and Africa, will require millions of trained American troops, we still hesitate about mobilizing our full available manpower for the armed forces. In the Soviet Union, in Britain, in Asia and Africa, youngsters of eighteen and nineteen are shedding their blood for *us*, as well as for their own countries, but we are still saying that our own eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds are "too young" to fight for *their* country and *their* future. This seems to us a gross libel on hundreds of thousands of young Americans, so many of whom, during the recent registration of the eighteen-, nineteen- and twenty-year-olds, expressed their eagerness for active service. It is an open secret that when Congress amended the Selective Service Act last December, it exempted the eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds for political reasons, the sights of many members being leveled on the approaching elections rather than on the hard necessities of total war. We do not share these legislators' low opinion of the patriotism of our citizens. We are confident that the mothers and fathers of America, were the issue clearly explained to them, would give their younger sons as readily as they give their older.

About 3,000,000 young Americans registered on June 30. But only some 500,000 of these, who have reached the age of twenty, will be eligible for military service under the present law. In other words, there are about 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 physically fit young men who are being kept out of our armed forces at a time when they could be training to help open a Western Front in Europe and man the existing fronts elsewhere.

This qualified, as against an all-out, participation in the fight against fascism is also evident in the failure to utilize smaller plants in war production, in the continued appeasement of Vichy, Madrid, and Helsinki, in the gingerly treatment of fifth columnists like Charles E. Coughlin, and in many other aspects of our war effort. These weaknesses—weaknesses which are translated into defeats and inadequacies on the battlefield—flow from wrong policies and wrong conceptions that have not yet been fully overcome. They are part and parcel of the theory that America's role in the war is to be one of limited liability and of the strategy which was geared to striking the decisive blow in Europe in 1943 or 1944. Though both this theory and strategy have now been officially abandoned, we have been slow to draw the practical conclusions from our new orientation toward the war and our strengthened alliance with the Soviet Union. But time does not wait for us. In Europe, in Africa, in Asia the Axis still has the initiative. It is *our* lives, *our* institutions, *our* cities and fields, *our* future that are threatened. Let us grasp with both hands our responsibilities and opportunities so that America may play its full part in winning victory in 1942 and the peace in the years to come.

been working steadily in support of the war. Coudert, who led the Red-baiting pack against him, is a member of the law firm which represents the Vichy government. We point out this contrast because it highlights the tactics and motives of Red-baiters—who, in the recent words of Congressman Sabath of Illinois, attack Communists "solely to hide their own fascist activities." The Schappes Defense

Committee, which is taking the case to the Court of Appeals, deserves support from all anti-fascists, all believers in justice. There are two ways of expressing that support: by sending funds to the Committee, at 13 Astor Place, New York City; and by urging Governor Lehman to see to it that Schappes be allowed to continue his work for the war without interruption.

# A VIEW OF SOVIET PEACE AIMS

*The clues can be found in a study of Soviet policy before and during the war. A leading engineer presents his approach to the problem.*

Walter Rautenstrauch is one of the country's outstanding industrial engineers. He studied at the University of Maine and Cornell and has been teaching at Columbia, where he is head of the Industrial Engineering Department, since 1906. The author of several books on technological subjects, he is also a member of the National Research Council and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.



**T**HE probable peace aims of the Soviet Union may be surmised from the history of its development both with reference to its economy and its foreign policies.

While it was recently stated by Stalin that the republics of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Karelia, Moldavia, White Russia, and the Ukraine, now largely under Nazi domination, should be included in the Soviet Union at the close of the war, no agreement to this effect was entered into by Molotov in the recently concluded British and American treaties. The governments of these republics are at present established in the Soviet Union and their representatives are being elected under the Soviet system. They are recognized as the accredited representatives of their people, many of whom are fighting in the Red Army. The continuance of these Baltic republics as members of the Soviet Union would be important to peace in Europe first, because of what it means to the peoples of these countries and, second, because of the significance to the Soviet Union of the strategic position of these republics. It would not be surprising if the Soviet Union would also accept similar protection on its borders farther south. Stalin himself has pledged the creation of a strong independent Polish state after the war. All of these matters are well known and have been restated by the Soviet Union from time to time.

It is probable that another of the peace aims of the Soviet Union is that there shall be no subject peoples, forced to pay reparations and held in economic bondage to another group. While the leaders of the Axis powers should be punished, the Soviet Union has stated the people themselves should be given the freedom to choose their own form of government and elect their own representatives in that government. Under such circumstances it is highly improbable that the people of the Axis governments will choose the kind of government which leads a people to the exploitation of others and to war.

We can get a fairly good picture of what to expect from the Soviet Union at the peace table, when we realize certain significant facts of its organization. In the first place, the Soviet Union has no investments in foreign territory; that is, there are no powerful investing groups among its citizens who own securities in other lands. This means that the Soviet Union will have no designs which will lead to mandates or colonial possessions because it doesn't follow the principle of foreign exploitation. There are also no investments by foreigners in the industries of the Soviet Union, and therefore the Soviet Union does not have to be in a trading position at the peace table and has a clear conscience in the making of its peace.

Again the economy of the Soviet Union does not depend to any considerable extent on foreign trade in the sense that she needs those kinds of political trade treaties with other nations which give her an economic advantage in a world competitive market. Therefore, it is not likely that any of her proposals will reflect such a need.

It is also interesting to reflect on the fact that on three different occasions the Soviet Union went before the League of Nations and proposed programs of disarmament, and on three other occasions the Soviet Union proposed to other powers in Europe, that there be agreements of collective security. Failures to act on these proposals are now remembered with regret. In view of this history it seems, therefore, not at all unlikely that the Soviet Union will again make proposals looking toward disarmament and collective security.

It also appears probable that the Soviet Union will do all things possible which will not only enable her to build up her internal economy but will also make it possible for the conquered nations to do as much. The Soviets have an expanding economy which was only temporarily interrupted in its expansion by the need of building up a war machine against invasion. If collective security arrangements are adopted which will make it unnecessary for the Soviet Union to devote such a large part of its energies to the building up of a war machine she will then be in a position to continue the remarkable advance she has already made in building up her internal economy.

**I** AM rather inclined to the opinion that the representatives of the Soviet Union sitting at the peace table will be more concerned about the *program* of international arrangements than the mere verbalisms of peace aims; as a nation she has learned what every engineer knows, that the product made depends on the machinery used. In other words, she has learned that you cannot maintain peace, no matter how nicely phrased the aims may be, when you set in motion those processes of doing business which inevitably lead to conflict. The peace aims of any nation must be judged by the particular program it established for carrying on its relations with its own and other peoples. There will probably be no significant differences among the united nations as to the basic principles and aims of the peace conference, but there will probably be some difference as to the methods proposed by which these objectives are to be attained. These differences in method will reflect the principles of the economies by which the several nations operate. Accordingly, since the Soviet Union operates on the basis of a cooperative economy, we may look for proposals for carrying out the peace aims which she has found, by experience, to have a high probability of establishing a durable peace between peoples.

One of the important things about any treaty, including peace treaties, is the sincerity with which we may expect it to be carried out. On this point it may be well to reflect on the statements of Ambassador Davies to the effect that the Soviet Union has been foremost among nations in carrying out its agreements. He states specifically "Diplomatic history will record that of all the nations of the earth, none has a finer record of living up to its treaty promises than the Soviet Union." This, together with the testimony of others, should lead us to understand that the peace objectives of the Soviet Union will be sincere, that the methods proposed will be workable and the agreements made will be faithfully adhered to.

WALTER RAUTENSTRAUCH.

*Prof. Rautenstrauch's article is a continuation of the discussion of postwar problems which New Masses began recently in two articles by A. B. Magil. The new US-British-Soviet agreements constitute, of course, the foundation for the future peace aims of the USSR and all the United Nations. We would welcome the participation of our readers in this discussion.—*

*The Editors.*