

GORILLA IN THE LIBRARY

An editorial by JOSEPH NORTH

ONE of the more distasteful obligations a NEW MASSES editor undertakes is to wade through the daily commercial press which has, I feel, sunk to the lowest level in history. I cannot recall, at least in my own experience, a time in which its morality, political and otherwise, has been worse. Our journalism wallows in bestiality, and the exceptions are few and far between. The mind which accepts the atom bomb as the solution to international differences betrays the humanity of a gorilla. And about the most neanderthal of all is the Hearst press. Everything gruesome in our society—murder, rape, perversion, all the Kraft-Ebing horrors—are dragged onto the front pages, vivified with abundant photographs, described in gasping, last-minute detail, and forced upon the public as daily fare.

The insane youth who murders a child, the pervert who carves his initials upon his victim, become national phenomena who shuffle into your home, sit in your parlor, and, under police bludgeonings, shout every detail of their criminality into your ears. An adult, at least, can skip those stories if he will, but do the children and youth of the land? Murder, rape, perversion become part of their small-talk; and much of the decent parenthood of America allow this to go on unchallenged, conditioned as they have been by the shibboleths of the Publishers' Association. The lords of the press speak loftily about their responsibilities, but we know what guides them. "Will it sell newspapers?" And of them all, Hearst is the master.

It is all the more ironic, then, and abundantly suspicious, to find the campaign for "clean literature" spread over the pages of Hearst's journals. One needs a cast-iron stomach to see this spectacle of hypocrisy—to read the editorials, the trumped-up news columns solicited for expressions of unctuous concern about our national morality, side by side with the clinical murder and sex stories and photographs of people who should be in psychiatric wards, victims of a bestial, dog-eat-dog profit society. And this is not to speak of that crowning inhumanity—the crusade to administer liberal doses of Uranium 235 to any people defending their sovereignty against the rapacious American imperialists.

FOR weeks now, Hearst has been campaigning, in his traditional fashion (front-page editorials, solicited expressions, hopped-up news stories, horrific cartoons) for "clean books." Now, all responsible men and women stand opposed to pornography and books that palm that off as art. But we also know this: the dominant class in all capitalist and feudal society has conjured up "morality" as a peg on which to hang political campaigns. This, as Samuel Sillen has said in the *Daily Worker*, is "a phony issue" raised by "reactionary forces that want to crush literary realism, artistic standards, and any challenge to the existing social order." All informed readers know he is right when he says that "every serious work, from Shelley's *Queen Mab* to Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, has been hounded as 'filth' by the bigots who stand for everything backward in society."

Hearst's Clarence Budington Kelland, of GOP National Committee fame, let the cat out of the bag when he equated "loose political thinking" with "obscenity." And there is more than meets the eye when this tory ideologue writes,

"It's all part of the pattern so strongly influenced by Communists." He has in mind not only the long-term goals of the Communists, but also the immediate issues they support and have supported—the win-the-war, win-the-peace goals for which the overwhelming majority of Americans yearn. "Loose politics" in his mind equates with the politics that have been characterized as those of Roosevelt; he means Big Three unity, peace, democracy, a better break for the common man.

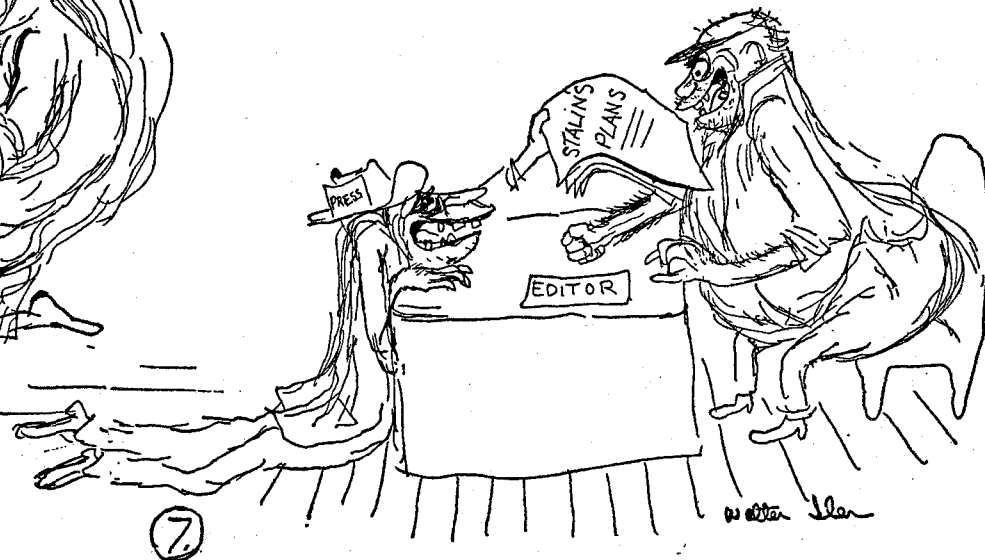
In this campaign Hearst has full support of the reactionary Catholic hierarchs, who cite the "splendid" results the Catholic Legion for Decency has obtained in the films. Every informed person must acquaint himself with that record. Here, too, in the name of "morality," the Church hierarchy has suppressed many first-rate anti-fascist movies; for full details we refer you to Thomas Bledsoe's article in the June-July number of the *Protestant*—"Hierarchy over Hollywood." Because these clerical reactionaries have got away, so far, with their high-pressure tactics in Hollywood, they seek to extend their power over creative literature.

Hearst has called forth, as he always does in his campaigns, expressions of support from those who see eye to eye with him, and from the unwary. To a man the various churchmen and others—like John Stelle, the war-hungry leader of the American Legion who quickly "pledged" his 3,300,000 members to the campaign—reiterate the words of the hypocritical editorials. Some may mean well; others are highly suspect. But not one of them—and this renders whatever testimony they present as worthless in my eyes—has excoriated the Hearst press and the rest of our commercial journalism for trafficking daily in murder and sex abnormality. Have the Lords of the Press become so powerful that they are sacrosanct? Why, for every "obscene" book about which they virtuously fulminate, millions of newspapers circulate daily, bringing their regular dosage of filth, lies, immorality, to the overwhelming majority of our people.

NEEDLESS to say, this campaign is a further step in Hearst's *drang nach* fascism. This crony of those now in the dock at Nuremberg is far worse than a rank hypocrite: he is a spokesman for that most ruthless, most brutal section of monopoly capitalism that is fascism. His is a serious, deliberate act which carries the most deadly implications against truth, against genuine art and culture, against peace. Goebbels has taught him many a trick: or, to be more accurate, should that not be put the other way around?

For these reasons we welcome the anti-Hearst meeting called by the young and rapidly growing Contemporary Writers, on September 15, at the Hotel Capital, New York. This should be but the first of many. Do not be misled by the fact that the campaign has begun in the unspeakable Hearst press; powerful forces stand behind it, forces that would destroy democracy as quickly as they would art; that would kill you as heartlessly as they would a book by Howard Fast, by Ben Field.

Hearst's Brisbane, who loved to philosophize upon the relative strengths of the gorilla and man, would have loved this campaign. His gorilla is prowling over the land and is reaching for your mind.



Walter Sear

POGROM

"Irma looked out of the window and saw what she believed to be the most beautiful view in the world. It was the Kahlenberg and the Vienna Woods."

By **ELFRIEDE FISCHER**

Illustrated by **A. Dobkin.**

It was eleven o'clock in the morning, and the third period had just begun. Notebooks and pens appeared on the desks, books were given out, classroom doors opened and closed a few times, then closed for the last time, and silence fell on the old school house.

With her black hair drawn severely back from her pallid face, the teacher began the lesson. One after another of the little girls got up, and recited. It was a beautiful poem, very romantic, about a hero, and friendship, and loyalty. It was the story of Richard the Lion-Hearted, who was imprisoned, no one knew where, and of how Blondel, the minstrel, played his song before every prison in Europe. And what a song it was! Whenever another stanza was finished, the little girls held their breaths and dark eyes sparkled at the wonderful words: "Seek, Blondel, seek loyalty, and you shall find." And then again the mournful song: "Richard, Richard, hero of the East. . . ." And finally, one night when the moon was shining brightly, a faint whisper from inside a dungeon where Richard sobbed and sobbed. He had found what he had sought, and how triumphantly he proclaimed to all the world: "Seek, Blondel, seek and you shall find."

At this highly dramatic moment, when handsome, gallant men on dark horses were haunting dark little heads, another dramatic event occurred: the classroom door opened. In came fat Frau Markin. That was Edith's mother. But why should Frau Markin come now, when school wasn't over yet for another three hours? It was only on Saturdays that school closed at eleven-twenty. But this wasn't a Saturday. This was a Thursday, a Thursday in November. . . .

"Dr. Abramovitch, Dr. Abramovitch!" the small, fat woman panted to the teacher. Apparently she had been walking very quickly. The class was surprised. No one had ever seen Frau Markin like this before.

She wanted to take her Edith home.

After all, in times like these, you never knew, it was better everyone should be at home, safe behind his own four walls.

"Yes, in times like these . . ." Dr. Abramovitch shrugged her shoulders and let Edith go. The others were surprised. Didn't their parents always say "the best place for children is in school"? Yes, undoubtedly it was. The children agreed. At home it was different now than it had ever been before. There were always people coming and going. And how all the grown-ups waited for the mail man! They expected letters from Australia, from the United States, from Cuba, from the Argentine. Yes, it was easy to learn geography now. It was even easier to acquire a large, new vocabulary. Strange, fascinating words were in the air. There was the word affidavit, for instance. Then there was another one, quota. Whenever uncle and aunt came over with grandmother, you could hear for hours nothing but these words. The grown-ups rolled them on their tongues, they caressed them, they chewed over them, and always there was talk, talk, talk. Yes, it was much better to be in school.

DOWNSTAIRS, Lene's mother was waiting. Irma and Lene hurried over to her. "Edith's mother came," they whispered excitedly. "What has happened?" But Frau Stern didn't answer. Firmly she took Lene by the

hand, with Irma on the other side. The two little friends lived in the same house, and Frau Stern always took Irma home, too.

They passed a truck. Suddenly a young, strong voice bellowed: "Any more Jews?"

Irma stepped from the sidewalk, and began to walk rapidly, almost to run, with eyes always to the ground. "Irma," the sharp whisper reached and reassured her. Frau Stern grabbed the trembling little hand and walked rapidly on. But not too rapidly. "You silly girl, to behave like that." But Irma laughed. It was all over now, and nothing had happened. With her heart still pounding Irma had already half-forgotten the incident.

They had crossed the bridge and were now in Vienna's famed "Second District," Vienna's ghetto. Now it was

