

sights and sounds



WALL STREET MIT UNS

**"Temper the Wind": the late unpleasantness over,
German cartelists take up where they left off.**

By ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

THAT the theater can be used for vital information and commentary was demonstrated, once again, in *Temper the Wind*, Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins' play about the AMG administration of a German industrial town in the American occupation zone.

Temper the Wind returns generalizations about the war-making cartels to one of their sources in a specific German machine-tool plant and an American industrialist's potential ten percent interest; it gives human embodiments to generalizations about the common anti-Soviet attitudes and interests of German and American businessmen; and it shows the alliance of big business and the underworld that constituted fascism in the murderous present reality of an incited riot aimed at convincing the American authorities that the German industrialist had better be left to run things as before with his plant un-denazified. It gives human illustrations, on the stage, of other truths usually vaped away in abstractions. The audience that has seen *Temper the Wind* will have a better knowledge of the realities of the occupation and denazification of Germany.

The action of the play turns upon the arrival in Bavarian Reitenberg of Colonel Woodruff, on an inspection tour. Woodruff has been identified by the factory owner, Hugo Benckendorff, as a classmate of his dead son and a not too humiliatedly rejected suitor of his daughter. Benckendorff hunts up and dusts off a portrait of his son, publicly unlamented by the Benckendorff family till now, who had died at the hands of the Nazis. As a still more practical measure for

softening up Woodruff, Benckendorff instructs his daughter to be nice to Woodruff, to refuse no dates with him. It had been Papa Benckendorff who had forbidden her marriage to Woodruff and installed the Nazi, Erich Jaeger, as her husband. But, with a flow of soft, persistent, flattering patter, he now covers it all up.

Through Woodruff, "tenderized" by the knowledge of his classmate's martyrdom, and made still more malleable by the warmth of a revived romance, Benckendorff expects to wangle priorities on materials necessary for him to get his plant in full operation within the month. That is all-important to him, important enough to compromise his daughter, if necessary; for within the month there is to be an international industrialists' meeting in London that will take up the suspended agenda of the carteleers and redivide the world market. If Benckendorff is in full production by then, his American ten percent interested friend can put in a bid for their cut in the market.



Forrest Wilson.

Woodruff, however, turns out to be one of those "hot-headed," "impractical," "visionary," "unrealistic," etc., fools who holds to principles; who doesn't trust peacemaking to the "practical" men whose "realism" has cost humanity two world wars. The thwarted Benckendorff then turns to the visiting American manufacturer, Bruce, to help him get around Woodruff through more "reasonable" higher-ups in the AMG headquarters. When that fails to move Woodruff, Benckendorff turns to his Nazi son-in-law to manufacture "unrest" at a public meeting that will prove to Woodruff's superiors that Woodruff is impractical and his policy causes trouble.

The Nazis prove to be over-enthusiastic; there is a little more murder than had been planned, with an American GI among the dead; and the "trouble" that Benckendorff had planned strictly for others reaches into his own house.

Yet this setback to Benckendorff is not made to seem decisive; the audience is not left too easily comforted with a simple solution. It remains perfectly clear that Woodruff's victory is temporary and insecure; and he and his kind will need vigilant and forceful help to make such victories stick.

I understand that *Temper the Wind* was written more than a year ago, when there could still be some hopeful doubt about the course of American policy. Since then the doubts have vanished and the course has become clear. It is the course of Bruce, not of Woodruff, for the Bruces are in command in the administration. This is something which the play, conceived in an earlier period, does not make clear. Yet for me, at least, social commentary on the stage has not often been so forceful.

As dramatic writing, *The Wind* hits no heights. Its climaxes are scattered and the narrative line sometimes sags between them. In the case of Benckendorff and his American counterpart, Bruce (very well played by Reinhold Schunzel and Walter Greaza), the characterization is excellent because it is founded on solid personal and class interest. But in the case of Woodruff (too stiffly played by Thomas Beck), and the daughter, Elizabeth (played by Vilma Kurer as if she were completely confused by the role), the motivation has no source in personal experience or interest; they can only be

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referred to abstractions and remain abstractions. The structural faults of the play are most clearly exposed by the entirely unintegrated role of the Prussian Countess (beautifully played by Blanche Yurka) who, though written in for a lead role, has little more function than that of commentator, a Greek chorus at best.

Yet, despite these shortcomings, *Temper the Wind* is one of the few important plays to reach Broadway.

FILMS

"THE STONE FLOWER" (Stanley), which won first prize for its color qualities at the Cannes International film festival last year, might just as easily have been awarded a prize for charm. It is a captivating fairy story dealing with nobles in fine houses and the impoverished artisans who do their bidding. The aristocrats are cruel and selfish and exploit the stonecutters until they die of overwork or premature decrepitude. We find the same elements in many of the Western fairy tales, except that a magic wand usually brings an end to the miseries of the poor. What makes this story so enjoyable, apart from the charm of its own technical accomplishments, is the fact that all its people belong truly to a past long divorced from reality. It thus creates a genuine feeling of legend.

Mainly it deals with a youthful, handsome stonecutter's quest for beauty. Like the fabulous hero of the Golden Fleece, he dreams of attaining the earthly symbol of beauty and perfection, which in this instance is a stone flower. According to stories spun by the gaffers of the village, only the Lady of the Copper Mountain can lead him to it. In due time he meets, follows and is enchanted by her. But in the end, unswayed by her offer of unplumbed riches, he breaks her spell to find his real love, the girl he left behind.

Thus even this simple, artless tale has its proper moral, and makes more point than many a Hollywood fairy-tale that claims to be realistic. The color is fresh and natural, although the long shots tend to blur somewhat. Changes from color to color have the same magical properties of the early Disney color exercises. This quality, together with the acting, provide suitable concomitants for the story.

JOSEPH FOSTER.

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