

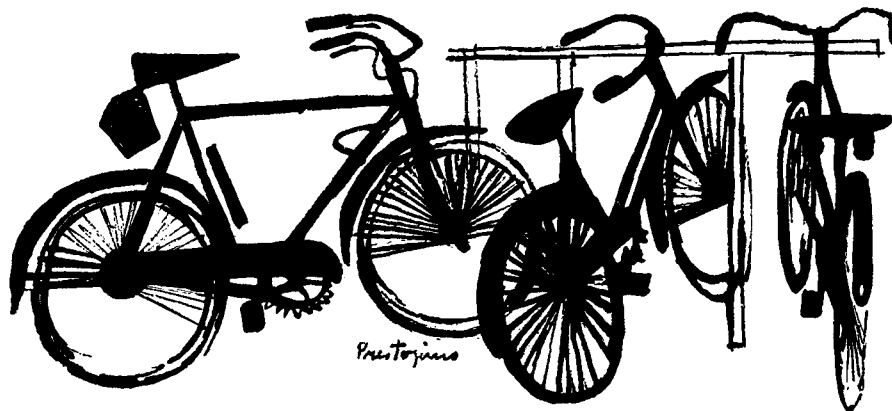
cal breakthrough, or both? Whatever the cause, the problem of jobs is one of the most paradoxical and obstinate of our times.

To sum up, the economy not only must provide jobs for those displaced by machines; it will have to make room for an increasing number of new jobseekers. The best economic analyses all conclude that strengthened demand for goods and services will make the deepest cuts into the jobless rolls. But though the first nine months of the current recovery have been marked by strong increases in demand and output, the jobless rolls remain clogged. The Kennedy administration agrees in theory with the inadequate-demand approach; in practice, it plans to restrain demand slightly and focus its modest programs on easing hardcore unemployment. The unions are frustrated at the bargaining table and at best only build shelters for those now at work.

BYOND ALL THIS, a great unknown is the pace of technological change. Despite the findings of the economists that automation has not been responsible so far for the over-all rise in unemployment, some suspect that the recent past is a poor guide to the future. They believe that automation will drastically reorganize the ways in which goods and services are produced and will demand equally drastic changes in the nature of work and new methods of distributing the growing abundance. The historical link between work and pay will be shattered. Some visionaries predict that men will labor for the sheer pleasure of expression, not out of need, and that creative leisure will replace cruel unemployment.

But this is scant comfort for those who are jobless now and those confronted with the threat of unemployment. With the prospect of a massive increase in the working force during the next few years, existing unemployment threatens to become worse, and contradiction and inconsistency continue to bedevil all attempts to grapple with it. From all present evidence it appears that unemployment will remain a massive and enigmatic problem that will engage the best efforts of government, labor, and management for some time to come.

VIEWS & REVIEWS



The Day the Gas Masks Came

A chapter from the author's forthcoming novel, 'Key to the Door'

ALAN SILLITOE

MR. BATES was powerless to stem the tide of commotion in the classroom. With good reason the boys were excited, everyone talking to everyone else. The regular timetable dissolved as if by magic, and the map of South America—in white chalk for the coastline and brown for the long curving rib of the Andes—was being rubbed out by the prefect, who even forgot himself and shook the chalk rag in the classroom, so that brown and white dustclouds penetrated layers of light slanting in through the windows.

Assembly and prayers had gone by and, to the intense joy of the class, Mr. Bates stayed writing at his desk. Brian was close enough to hear the reedy turmoil of his pen and the rustle of overturned paper. What was he writing on a day like this? For whom could he be using these unique minutes? Maybe it was the best he could do while waiting to see what happened, because had he ordered the class into the hall and set them to singing hymns, they would possibly have mutinied, or acquiesced so truculently that hall

discipline would have been impossible.

"Bosworth!" Mr. Bates cried, glancing icily at the prefect when dust settled on his coatsleeve and notepaper. "How many more times do I have to tell you to shake that thing outside?"

But Bosworth recognized his words as a protest, not a threat. "Sorry, sir," he said, hung the duster over the easel lath, and went back to his seat after seeing his apology met only by a bent preoccupied head and the sound of a pen scratching across foolscap like the exploring claws of a badger.

Anybody'd think he was writing a book. The noise rose to a climax, a sea beating against the sound barrier of Mr. Bates's pen, until suddenly the stream of his thought was taken in the flank: "Quiet!" he shouted. The sea didn't fall back, for only those closest, always careful not to make much noise anyway, heard him. "WILL YOU BE QUIET!" he bawled.

The sea roar stopped, the waves receded, but the unbearable throb

of excited unanimous conversation was replaced by a silence that paralyzed Mr. Bates's pen. He assumed a stern expression and looked at the forty faces before him, adjusted the spectacles chafing the back of his ear: an unnecessary movement, but he could not at that particular moment keep his hands unoccupied. Every face, from four rows of ancient name-scratched desks with two boys frozen at each, converged on the focal point of his own. He knew quite definitely that each one was waiting, with their silent collective gaze, for him to tell them something—and the passing seconds assumed a pandemonic quality because he did not know what to say. He who held his class always within the bounds of discipline—though never tyrannically so—wavered because for once he could not give them their rightful due of words on a subject spreading like a thornbush through every brain.

"I suppose you all know," he broke out firmly at last, "that gas masks are to be given out today?"

A question to which no answer was needed. Everyone was relieved that he had addressed them with such satisfactory wisdom. Tension drew from each face, and he was aware of a smile growing like an apple rolling as if before wind among them.

"Also," he went on, easy now that a beginning had been made, "there won't be any geography or arithmetic lesson." The smiles became definite, and Mr. Bates thought of his half-completed letter. "Go on talking, but keep your voices down. Mr. Jones may be in soon."

Once more his pen scratched, disguising paper with a camouflage of ink, and slowly—like a great hoarse dynamo that has difficulty in starting—the noise of speculation grew until reaching a level that stopped Mr. Bates being aware of it.

"I'm glad there's a war," Brian said to Jim Skelton. "Dad says he'll be able to get a job if there is. Then he'll give me a penny every Friday. As long as we aren't gassed, though."

"I'm not frightened," Jim replied, "but what about Mam and Dad and Maureen and Frank and the others? There's seven of us and we can only just fit into our cellar if bombs start dropping."

Brian absent-mindedly tipped the viscid contents of one inkwell into another, making a black pool on the wood and almost blotting out the first carved letter of his initials. "But perhaps everybody'll have guns," he ventured, dabbing at the ink, and wiping it on his jersey.

"We won't get guns," Jim said. "Everybody'll have to stop in their cellars. I can't think what we'll do."

"Your dad'll have to build bunks," Brian advised. "He's a joiner, so it'll be easy for him. But our house don't have a cellar to it."

"You'll go in air-raid shelters then." No one had attended to the flowers in the window jars, and their yellow heads drooped for want of water; neither had those detailed entered the temperature or barometer readings on the graphs that stretched in colored undulations along one wall like a mountain panorama in the geography books; it was inkwell morning and no one had filled them; and no books had been given out. Lack of timetable discipline convinced them that there was no need to be silent, to read, write, or sing because it was marvelous, miraculous confusion, with all hoping beyond hope that disorganization had come to stay, thinking that if war was this then it wasn't so bad after all.

Brian's idea of war was Napoleonic, at any rate in tactics, with barricades in every street while a gas-masked Waterloo exploded from Clifton Grove to Gotham Village. Molded by an addiction to *Les Misérables*, he saw wagons of paving stones and sandbag parapets blocking Denman Street and all approaches to it, while a higher blockade sealed each main road off from the country to stop tanks. His picture showed a tin-hatted soldier with rifle and bayonet running along the cobblestones of Radford streets, while Mr. and Mrs. Skelton and all the little Skeltons gazed anxiously up from the grill of their cellar grate. Then a bomb would fall and blow up a house, gray bricks shooting into the air, now colored gray, though they had been red before the explosion. Perhaps he, too, like Marius Pontmercy, would go off with a rifle to the barricades and fight the Germans (a rifle picked up from a body in the street) and kill many men, saving the Skeltons, who, in the

proscenium of his mind, still looked anxiously from their cellar grate at the soldier running up the street with bayonet fixed.

Then a container would fall—silently almost—and lay in the gutter, and after a few seconds a slit would open in its side and a yellow vapor spill out and ascend a few feet, then thickly spread. And Brian would put on his gas mask (which miraculously appeared, for he did not have it a few seconds before) and clamp it over his face. If he saw someone without a gas mask he would give it to them; for himself, he knew exactly what to do, which was to soak his white handkerchief in water that somehow appeared in the gutter, and lay it over his face. That would stop the mustard gas—or so Uncle Doddoe had told him.

AND hadn't his mother said there were to be trenches in the Forest, as in the last war? He saw people wearing gas masks filing into them as twin-plane aircraft came over to drop bombs—like he had seen them blasting the slumdump ruins of Albion Yard. Then a change of scene as enemy soldiers—Germans, of course—came over the greenpainted railings far away and advanced through mist toward the trenches, so that conveniently and from nowhere English soldiers streamed out to repel them, and Brian somehow mixed himself up with them and killed so many Germans with the rifle he carried that he was asked to organize a schoolboy battalion, of which he would be commander-in-chief.

"You won't get a gas mask."

Through the glass partition of the next classroom, chairs and tables moved, feet shuffled, and orders were carried out. A report was passed from a daring observer: big boxes were being heaved in from outside and laid on tables. There was a smell of rubber. "Frenchies," someone called, "that's what they are"—as the words Large Medium Small were shouted time after time. Brian caught the note of jubilation that swamped the class: it was after ten, and would soon be playtime so that a rush for straws and milk could commence.

A second later he filled his underbreath mind with swearing, tell-

ing himself that he above all should have known that such freedom was too good to last. Mr. Jones walked in. Mr. Bates did not push the letter out of sight as he usually did, but left it lying on his desk and turned his chair to look at the small tight dynamite headmaster as he entered the room. There was no need to tell the boys to stop talking, for even the sea would fall silent at Mr. Jones's shadow. He stood compact within a vacuum of silence, and Brian felt an itching behind his neck but held his arm fast from scratching for fear of drawing notice to himself. Jim Skelton's eye went into a winking match but Brian did not take him up on it, seeing his lips curl up at one corner as if to smile. He'd better not make me laugh, the rotter. A lorry roared along the street and pulled up at the school door. The milk's come, he guessed, but when he didn't hear the clash of filled cases coming through the hall he assumed it was another load of gas masks.

"They weren't very quiet," Mr. Jones said.

"It's hard to keep them quiet on a day like this," Mr. Bates said as he casually slid the letter in his desk. Mr. Jones became sarcastic: "I feel sure you could have done better than that."

"They're excited."

Picture clouds of war plagued every brain, and the outposts of fear that preceded Mr. Jones as he walked among masters and boys had been neutralized by the overwhelming bomb of a question that smoked to varying shades in the hearts of boys and masters alike. "I still sav there's nothing to be excited about," he snapped.

When is the old bastard going? Brian wondered. Why can't he leave us to talk, or let Mr. Bates read summat good to us? If there's a war I hope that old bastard's the first to cop it, with a great big bomb (the biggest bomb in the world if it can be managed) right onto his spiteful white loaf. Or maybe a Jerry will get him with a rifle when they start sniping from chimney pots. You never know, these days.

"They wouldn't be excited if they knew what war meant."

"Boys never know what war means," Mr. Bates said.

"It's a pity they can't be told then,

and have some of this excitement drained from them."

Mr. Bates's eyes gleamed, as if about to water; he smiled to stop them doing so. "There'd be no cannon fodder for the war after the one that's about to start if that happened."

Mr. Jones looked hard at him, then at the class. "Are they all here?"

"Ten are absent."

"Too excited to come to school, even?" A few bold spirits began to whisper, and hisses passed from across the room like jets of escaping steam. "Silence!" he roared, his anemic face flushing.



There was silence.

"What do you intend doing?" he asked Mr. Bates. "They can't go on like this, war or no war."

"I'll probably read to them."

Mr. Jones snorted. "Let me use your desk." He moved aside and sat in a chair, a stack of *Foundations of History* rearing at the back of his head.

"I suppose you all know that they're giving gas masks out today?" Mr. Jones addressed them.

He knows bleddy well we do.

"Any of you know what a gas mask is like?"

Not yet, but we will.

"I'll describe one to you. A word picture of one." Brian remembered: the first Jerry shooting from a chimney stack ought to put one right into his four-eyed clock. "There's a rub-

ber facepiece, with a celluloid frame you can see through, and to this are attached straps that you pull back over your head to hold it on. Very neat and well thought out. Now, under the chin is what's known as a filter. This is what you breathe through. This is what makes the poison gas harmless before it gets to your mouth and nose. Simple, isn't it? Any questions?"

No questions.

"I didn't think so. You've all got heads made of putty. You wouldn't think a puttyhead would need a gas mask, but it does." A few crawlers laughed. Mr. Jones grinned at his own joke. "All right, puttyheads, I've told you what a gas mask's made of. Now I'll tell you what it's for. It's to be used in case (or should I say when?) German aeroplanes drop poison-gas bombs on Nottingham." He paused, possibly for questions, perhaps for some reactions, but they hadn't heard enough.

"Anyone know what a blackout means?" No answer. "Well, puttyheads, it means that no lights of a city can be put on, that everything's kept in complete and total darkness so that German planes flying above won't know where they are. And at such times you'll all have to go to bed early because there'll be no sense playing in the streets when it's pitch dark. And you'll carry your gas masks to bed with you, careful not to drop or damage them. If you do, then you'll be in a fine fix when the bombs fall, won't you? So you'll take the gas mask out of its cardboard box and place it by your bed for when the air-raid warning sounds."

HE SETTLED HIMSELF comfortably at the desk. All day, Brian moaned. "Of course, when they do go and you hear bombers coming over, there'll be no need to put your gas mask on. Only when a man comes around the streets with a klaxon do you do that, and when gas is dropped you all act very quickly—except the puttyheads, of course—and pull the masks over your faces. Naturally, if any of you have smaller brothers and sisters you'll help them with theirs before putting on your own."

His bloodless head turned from one side of the class to the other,

and as his face passed the front both eyes were blotted out by circles of light as big as his glasses. "Something else," came from his mouth: "Do any of you know when poison gas was first used in a big battle?"

One hand did: "In the Great War."

"Ah, so you're not all puttyheads. Yes, quite right. Fifty thousand Frenchmen (and many British) were gassed by an afternoon breeze at Ypres. All the troops saw was a greenish yellow fog coming toward them at dusk and soon scores of hundreds of men were choking from it. Those who got away from the trenches were blinded or injured for life, and lines stretched for miles as each man followed the one in front to the hospitals behind the lines. Yes, war is lamentable business, and isn't worth getting excited about, is it? Is it THEN, YOU PUTTYHEADS?" he roared, his gunburst lifting even the sleepest from their daydreams.

A few voices sent out a mixture of yes and no.

"It's hard to tell you what war is, but I can promise one thing: there'll be plenty of pain flying about. I suppose the easiest pain I can think of in war is when you have to queue all day in the snow for food or coke, and when you have to eat horseflesh at the end of it, and when you have to listen to the noise of sirens. Not much pain there, is there? However, it's possible that the war will still be on when you're men, and one of the hardest pains perhaps is when one is left wounded after a battle without water or food. War is taking place in China and Spain at this moment, and happened in Abyssinia not so long ago, so what I'm telling you shouldn't seem so impossible, though judging by your faces you aren't bright enough to take in much of what I'm saying."

He knows we're all waiting to get to the playground for our milk, Brian said to himself, but he's keeping us in out of spite, the sly bastard. "Do any of you really know what pain is? I suppose you think it's pain when my fist clouts your putty heads to make you pay attention? Well, let me tell you, it's not. It's nothing to what pain is in war. Ah, yes, I know, you're all excited about the gas masks and the war that's coming. Well, you should be

praying to God that by a miracle it doesn't begin. For war means nothing but pain. Some people escape it, but don't let that be a comfort to you, because during a war the earth will convulse with pain, and it will get you and me and possibly everyone else. So let's have no excitement over the thought of war."

He broke off and strode out of the room, and they heard the next class fall quiet as he went among them.

IT'S ALL LIES, Brian thought. Even if it's the truth, it's a lie. But he also scoffed at his own fiction of the barricades and pyramids of dead on paving stones, convinced of nothing except the bursting top of his milk bottle at playtime and the pushing in of a straw before sucking cool liquid into the dry chalk of his mouth, a liquid that nevertheless still tasted like the dull and sluggish iodine pain that old Jones had blabbed about.

At four in the afternoon he ran

home clutching a cardboard box, and burst into the house as his father was having tea. There'd been a rumor in class while waiting to be served the respirators that everyone had to pay for them, so much a week, and Brian had been pleasantly surprised to note when it was actually put into his hand that payment hadn't been mentioned at all, at which he assumed that he had been given an expensive piece of equipment absolutely free. "Look what I've got!" he called out, swinging his treasure box on its string. They were uninterested. Then he saw three others on the floor in a corner, their boxes already bent and battered, a strap hanging from one, Arthur doing his best to break up another. His mother was reading the *Post*: "There'll be no peace in our time," she said scornfully, laying it aside to pour Brian a cup of tea.

"No," Seaton answered, in splendid gruff prophecy, "nor in any other bloody time, either."

Mythcarriage of Joycestice

MARY MANNING

THE LAST TEN YEARS have been bumper ones for the fast-growing Joyce industry. I'm told the bibliography now approximates the population explosion, and that inexhaustible conundrum, *Finnegans Wake*, may turn out to be the biggest boon to scholarship since Moses struck the rock. Criticism in this field is no longer criticism, it is vivisection—only you wouldn't do it to a dog. Granted the master encouraged these doings by the willful obscurantism of *Finnegan*, still I feel nauseated when they start analyzing *Dubliners* to death. Really, I don't care to know that "The Dead" was inspired by a short story by George Moore, or that there was a character called Gabriel Conroy in a novel by Bret Harte and so on and so forth and out of the window with it. Personally, I think it's time the gentle reader was allowed to ramble through the world of Joyce footnote-loose and fancy free.

Richard Ellmann in his brilliant

biography writes, "The ironic quality of Joyce's fame was that it remained a *gloire de cénacle* even when the cénacle had swelled to vast numbers of people." All right, but things have changed. When Joyce was alive, the cénacle consisted of sophisticated literary expatriates and a small vanguard of professors, the Diors of their professions, who could smell a trend a mile off. Now every university has its own Joyce cénacle, and as the industry grows and profits rise, the titles of the numerous critical studies become more and more specialized. Here are a few picked out at random: *Joyce Among the Jesuits*; *The Postwar Mind and James Joyce*; *The Books of the Wake, with Index*; *A Census of Finnegans Wake with Index of Characters and Their Roles*; *A Shout in the Street, Analysis of the Second Chapter of Ulysses*; *Analysis of the Mind of James Joyce*; *The Sacred River, an Approach to James Joyce*; *James Joyce and the Common Read-*