

new masses

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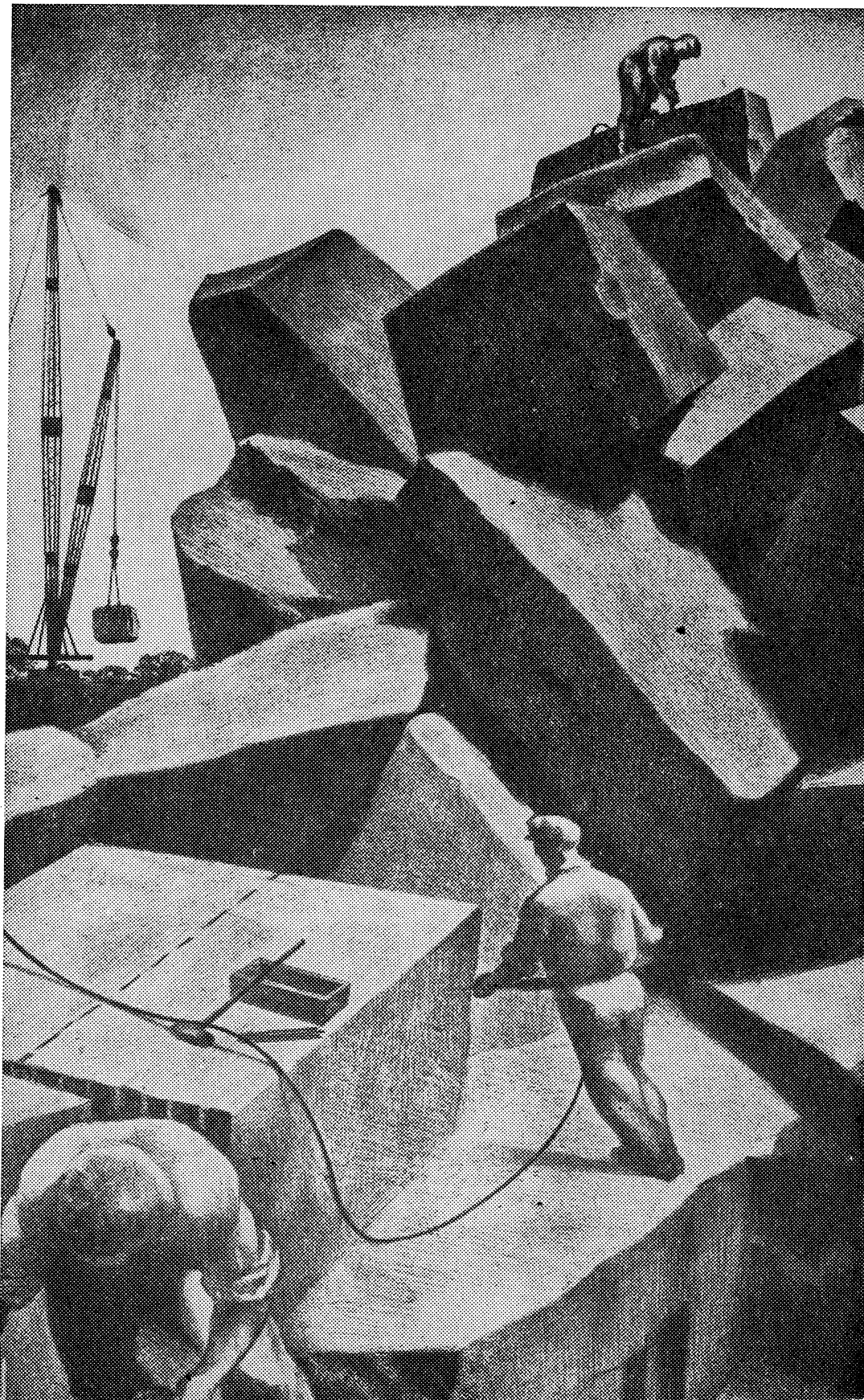
WALL STREET FIRES WALLACE

by Virginia Gardner

SIMONOV ON THE AMERICAN THEATER

WHAT THE TEACHERS DID IN NORWALK

by Charles Humboldt



just a minute



WE HESITATE to add our few lines to the Mississippi of words already devoted to the Louis-Mauriello fight, but we would like to pass on an observation that we heard concerning the outcome. We heard the broadcast of the, pardon us, fight from a dashboard radio of a parked automobile. Grouped around the car, in a scene duplicated by the thousands all over the city, were about ten people: taxi-drivers, a couple of waiters from a nearby hash house, and some passers-by. When Tami landed that first right-handed haymaker, there was a polite gasp. Nothing serious, but certainly a surprise. Then Joe began to work on his opponent, and two minutes later the fight was over. Said one of the listeners, "It looked for a minute like youth was gettin' the better of old age, but Louis can still give away a few years." "I guess that wallop that Tami handed Joe made him mad," explained a second. "You're right," said another, "he shouldna hit him." Everybody agreed with the last speaker. He shouldna hit him.

YOU may be surprised, what with the truck strike settled, to see us appear in a meager sixteen-page issue once more. But ours is a tough story. It seems that a large paper supply, in-

cluding ours, has been pushed onto a siding somewhere in New Jersey, along with tons of other stuff. In order to get it moving again, we must first find the precise sidetrack, and then get all the stuff in front of it moved off. This was not done at press-time; hence the small issue. But the printer promises us that this will positively be the last lighter-than-air NM.

OUR campaign for a subscription in every library is gaining momentum. Thus far ninety-seven public and university libraries within the larger schools and cities are carrying NM for the first time. Also some ten YM and YWCA's have also agreed to carry us on their shelves. This is a marked improvement over previous years, but there are still countless thousands of community houses, libraries and universities that should make NM available to their students if the free circulation of ideas in a free school system is to mean anything. That is where you come in. When you finish reading this copy of NM, reach for your hat and make for your nearest local library. Check to see if they carry us on their shelves. If they don't, speak to the librarian about it. *The subscription is paid for* out of the Art Young Memorial Fund, and all that is required is the consent of the librarian to

complete the matter. Most of the ninety-seven libraries mentioned above are now getting NM through the tireless efforts of a grand eighty-two-year-old lady, who wishes to be anonymous. So you can see that your visit to a local library is hardly, by comparison, any work at all. Let us hear about it soon.

A DDENDUM: Our ten-series forum on aspects of American civilization (see page 12) will include Howard Fast, who will lecture on American literature. We will announce the names of other lecturers as soon as they are secured. Meanwhile our information indicates that the series will be invaluable to any serious student of American society.

A. B. MAGIL, NM executive editor, will cover the Conference of Progressives that will be held in Chicago on September 28. This conference, called by Elmer Benson, Jo Davidson, Harold Ickes, Philip Murray, C. B. Baldwin, Walter White and others, represents numerous organizations fighting for Roosevelt's policies, including the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions, the CIO Political Action Committee and the National Citizens PAC. In addition, Magil will speak in Madison, Wis., October 1; in Chicago Oct. 2, 4 and 5; Milwaukee Oct. 6; Denver Oct. 8; Seattle Oct. 11 and Tacoma Oct. 12. He will be in California from Oct. 15 to 23, speaking in Oakland, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Other meetings will be held in St. Louis and Detroit. The subject of his talks will be "America's Future: Capitalism or Socialism?"

J. F.

new masses

established 1911

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Cover: "Granite for Monuments," a lithograph by Louis Lozowick. New Age Gallery.

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WALL STREET FIRES WALLACE

Byrnes and Vandenberg transmit the orders. The plotters of World War III try to gag the growing opposition to their foreign policy.

By VIRGINIA GARDNER

Washington

"Then the Emperor walked along in the procession under the gorgeous canopy, and everybody in the streets and at the windows exclaimed, 'How beautiful the Emperor's new clothes are! What a splendid train! And they fit to perfection!' Nobody would let it appear that he could see nothing, for then he would not be fit for his post, or else he was a fool. . . .

"'But he has nothing on,' said a little child.

"'Oh, listen to the innocent,' said its father. And one person whispered to the other what the child had said. 'He has nothing on—a child says he has nothing on!'

"'But he has nothing on!' at last cried all the people.

"The Emperor writhed, for he knew it was true. But he thought, 'The procession must go on now.' So he held himself stiffer than ever, and the chamberlains held up the invisible train."—From Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales*.

ON THE Wednesday afternoon of last week when Sec. of Commerce Henry Wallace was closeted with the President, the minutes ticking into hours, the scene outside the White House was strangely reminiscent. Of what? Then you remembered. It was the death of that other President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. People came then and stood quietly; but there was a war on, and for security reasons they had to stand across the street. Now about 200 people drifted to the west gate of the White House and waited, some of them for more than two hours. When Wallace emerged, from the longest conference the President had held to date, he drove out past the west gate, and someone called out in Spanish, "Viva Wallace!" In reply he too called out something in Spanish.

For a moment everyone thought that Wallace had won a partial victory, even though the compromise worked out would have silenced him until after the Paris conference. Everyone thought that Wallace's July 23 letter to Truman and his Madison Square Garden address would speak for him until he could resume the great debate.

Two days later the political assassination took place. The newspapers which screamed for Wallace's scalp had it. Mr. Byrnes, who undoubtedly had issued an "either-or" ultimatum with the support of Vandenberg, had helped to eliminate from the Cabinet the one obstruction that stood in the way of their American Century imperialism. The Army and Navy heads who momentarily thought that their anti-Wallace pressure was availing them little finally won out. Truman, instead of listening to Robert Hannegan and a few others on the Democratic National Committee who had put up a terrific fight to keep Wallace in the Cabinet because they recognized the popular support behind the Secretary of Commerce, yielded to the Republican high command and the Southern Bourbons. This capitulation by Truman, this victory for Republican reaction and its tory Democratic abettors, again signifies how the memory of Roosevelt and

his policies have been betrayed. It is a victory for the war-hungry monopolists, who will seek to make demagogic use of it for the party they own lock, stock and barrel—the GOP.

But it signifies other things too, for the publication of Wallace's letter to Truman, in addition to Wallace's New York speech, has helped to crack wide open the conspiracy of silence. Wallace voiced what great numbers of people were thinking—that the Byrnes-Vandenberg line was not a peace policy but a war policy. Senator Claude Pepper had said it repeatedly for months. Senator Glen Taylor of Idaho, too. But they were muzzled by the press, ignored or buried. They and the Congressmen who also dared criticize our foreign policy had spoken out at the Win the Peace Conference held in Washington last April, but no one except the delegates knew what they said. The press, when it did not ignore them altogether, obscured their remarks in a fog of Red-baiting. It was only after a Cabinet member spoke at a huge rally that the iron curtain was lifted. And now Wallace's enforced resignation means that a great attempt will be made to ring down the iron curtain again, to charge as un-American anyone who speaks out against the administration's foreign policy.

WITH wonderful care, the newspapers had built the myth of a country united on its foreign policy. There were pictures of Byrnes and Vandenberg departing on a plane for Paris, wreathed in smiles, surrounded by Republicans and Democrats; of the ever-smiling little man in the double-breasted suit; of Byrnes receiving a bouquet of flowers from a little miss as he steps off to be tough with Russia and win the peace. Suddenly all this has been spoiled. The people are let in on the truth. This was what the newspapers and the hard-bitten Tories in the Republican and Democratic hierarchy could not forgive Henry Wallace. They screamed for his blood. They demanded that he resign. And all the courtiers around the President, all the public figures who have bowed and said, yes, isn't it fine to have a united, non-partisan foreign policy, stand aghast.

But the rumble among the people grows. If they protested in large numbers the attempt to fire Wallace they will now be roused to an even greater anger. No one can miss the meaning of the wires that were pouring into the White House before and after Wallace's dismissal. People were astounded. Whether they were the 5,000 ministers of the Methodist Church who pleaded with Truman that Wallace be retained, or whether they were the rank and file of a union local, they all asked how it is that Roosevelt's best disciple in the government, Wallace, has been thrown out because he spoke his mind. In Wallace's office the mail was piling up five to one in his favor even before he was fired. The conspiracy of silence is being ended and it will be clearer now than ever who are the enemies of peace in the GOP, in the State Department, in the Army and Navy, in Congress,

(Continued on page 12)

LOOKING AT THE AMERICAN THEATER

The wandering nomads along glittering Broadway and the almighty dollar which rules their art. Impressions of "Oklahoma!" and the Actors' Laboratory.

By Konstantin Simonov

Mr. Simonov, well known Soviet playwright and Stalin Prize winner, is the author of the novel "Days and Nights." He recently traveled through the United States with Ilya Ehrenburg.

PEOPLE soon get accustomed to good things, take them for granted and eventually cease to perceive anything remarkable in them. It is useful, therefore, to move away from them sometimes and view these familiar things from a distance. In perspective, it is clear that their commonplace quality was only an optical illusion, and that actually these things are remarkable, inimitable.

Whenever I saw a play or talked to actors in New York, the heart of America's theatrical life, I thought about the Soviet theater, not because of its points of resemblance, but its contrasts. And above all I felt proud and grateful to my country and its social system, remembering the thing that is most remarkable, yet commonplace now to us and, for the time being, impossible in the rest of the world: the total absence of money's domination over art.

As I learned more about the American theater I was struck by this contrast at every step because I should say that of all other arts it is the theater in America that is most hopelessly in thrall to money.

To make this point clear, it is necessary to give an idea of how the American theater is organized. And I hope the reader will forgive me if I start from the very beginning, because even at the outset the American theater is so different from everything we are accustomed to in our country that it is even strange at times to hear the word "theater" applied to both.

I shall start with the word "theater."

In the USSR a theater implies a group of actors, directors, scenic designers, make-up men; that is to say, a body of people who can play in any theater, yet remain true to themselves.

In New York a theater is a place in

which anybody can play; some today, others tomorrow.

In the USSR a theater bears the name of a writer, or an art director, or suggests the genre peculiar to this theater.

In New York, the theater is named after the owner of the premises, after a corporation or simply the street on which it is located. Its name is not associated with any group or artistic trend; it is a lucrative place of entertainment, its reputation being determined in the first place by the amount of rent it brings in.

New York has several dozen theaters, the most popular of which are on Broadway. When it is said of a playwright that his play is running on Broadway, it does not mean that it is either good or bad, but simply that it is making plenty of money; for a play which does not make money will immediately be withdrawn from Broadway by the theater-owners.

When a dramatist writes a play in the USSR he takes it to a theater, reads it to the art director and the group of actors. It is accepted or rejected; it may be staged or not.

But in New York a dramatist takes his play neither to an art director, for there is no such person there, nor to a group of actors, for there is no permanent group of actors in New York. The playwright offers his play to the "producer." This may be someone connected with art—a noted director or actor with capital that he is willing to risk on a play. But this is rare. The typical producer is a person whose connection with art is mainly of a financial bent. He loves the theater as a manufacturer of suspenders loves the production of suspenders. If the suspenders sell he will manufacture them and will speak of his suspenders with affection; if they do not sell, he will start manufacturing chewing gum or hot-water bottles.

If business is bad for the theatrical producer and the play brings him no profit, he gives up the theater and tries to extract profit from the fists of a

famous boxer. He is not a philanthropic society, he is a businessman: he cannot and he does not want to lose his money.

So the dramatist takes his play to the producer, who, after judging the state of mind of the public, the latest press campaign, the season of the year, the existing rental rates and his financial resources, decides to accept it.

Now he is faced with two problems: first, premises, second, a director and actors, who are bound by the strongest of links—the dollar. A large theater in the, theatrical hub would mean a high rent, but if the play proves a hit, it will bring in big profits. Then there have to be some stars in the cast to assure high box-office receipts, but stars cost big money. In a word, his "artistic"-financial waverings boil down to this: to spend as little money as possible and to secure the biggest profit.

Since there are no permanent theaters, the actors are selected either from the films, radio studios, or from among those who have finished or are finishing one contract and are hoping to find another. The director engaged for the production naturally takes part in choosing the cast, but it is the producer who has the last word on every actor. And if the money required by an actor is higher than estimated, this actor will not play.

At last, the main business is done: the star, whose name will appear in foot-high letters on billboards above the title of the play and the names of the author and director, has been found and contracted. The choice of the rest of the cast depends largely on how much of the general budget is swallowed up by the star or stars. The director may now consider forming an ensemble (if it is possible to think of actors who are to play together for the first time in their lives in terms of an ensemble), but he must keep strictly within the bounds of the budget—everything beyond that is taboo.

The cast is engaged, and here are

the director, the play and the star. A contract has been signed with the owner of a Broadway theater, according to which he receives a guaranteed percentage of the profits in the form of rent. A reservation in the contract gives him the right to demand that his premises be vacated at any moment if he does not get the guaranteed percentage of profit after the fifth performance. Notwithstanding a play's artistic merits, it will fade into oblivion if it is a financial failure, and the theater will be rented out to those who can pay the guaranteed profit to the owner.

The fate of a play, therefore, is unknown. In the meantime rehearsals begin. The rehearsal period, as may be supposed, is determined not by the significance of the play or by the time needed by the actors to penetrate into the author's conception, or for teamwork of the whole cast, but by far simpler and more "essential" questions; as, for example, the date from which the producer hired the theater, or the sum he has invested in the play.

The directors and actors, who are paid during rehearsals as much or almost as much as for performances, are naturally interested, prompted by the artistic sense which is present even in such conditions, in prolonging the rehearsal period; the producer, on the contrary, who has many expenses during rehearsals and no profits, tries to shorten the time. If he were not afraid of failure and if he thought that the actors could rehearse the play in one day, he would not allow them even an extra hour. This struggle usually ends in some compromise, which is generally closer to the producer's preliminary estimate.

Rehearsals continue day and night, lasting six, eight and even ten hours a day. The important point is not the number of rehearsals, but the number of days. The day is the unit—because days cost money. Rehearsals last on an average twenty-five to thirty-five days.

The settings are designed and constructed while rehearsals are in progress. The scale on which they are done is not determined by the epoch, the fabric of the play or other necessary requirements, but by the producer's scale of doing things and the theater in which the play is to be staged. A trifling little comedy or revue may be produced on a magnificent scale, if the producer has decided to do things in a big way; on the other hand a classic play demanding monumental settings



"The Butcher," oil by Alexander Dobkin. At the ACA Gallery.

and treatment may be a very shabby affair if it is taken up by a second or third-rate producer.

The opening night comes at last. The main question — is it a box-office success? — will be settled in five or



"The Butcher," oil by Alexander Dobkin. At the ACA Gallery.

ten days. Critics may foam at the mouth and call the play banal, stupid and trivial, but if it is a box-office success their opinions will be ignored; the play will run for a month, a year, three years, perhaps. On the other hand, critics may shout themselves hoarse praising the depth of the play, its moral significance, its importance for society, but—the day the owner ceases to get his guaranteed percentage he will kick the play out, as a landlord evicts a tenant for non-payment of rent.

LET us take a happier example: a good play, well produced, running in a large theater and scoring a success.

While working in the Soviet theater I heard actors complain that sometimes, due to some changes in the repertory, they had to act in the same play for three or four days in succession. They maintained that this was bad from an artistic point of view, that it had a bad effect on the freshness of the acting. One has to agree with this—there is truth in it. Our theaters usually plan their repertoires so that the plays rotate and the actor, as a rule, does not perform in the same play for more than two days running.

I was reminded of this at times in New York. Let us suppose that everything is fine: a good play is making a hit. It would seem that the actors ought to derive artistic satisfaction from their work. This satisfaction very soon becomes a torture, because money interferes with art despotically and unceremoniously. The play is popular and profitable and each day means so many dollars. No one, neither the owner of the theater nor the producer, wants to lose these dollars. So the play must go on every day. It must run until it is exhausted, as long as it is profitable, for one month, two, three months, a year or two or even three without a break. It will run until it ceases to bring in the guaranteed profit.

And the actor may play one and the same role seven or eight times a week for years. It is hard to imagine anything more terrible for an artist. The producer's success becomes the actor's nightmare. He cannot give it up without paying for a breach of contract. He cannot play in any other production because he is engaged in this play every day. He cannot suggest staging a new play, for such a suggestion, while perfectly natural in the Soviet Union, would sound like sheer idiocy to a New York producer. Why should he bring



"And with each machine we're giving away, free, an original plot for a historical novel."

new expenses on himself if the public continues to come to see this play and it still brings in clear profit?

A person out for clear profit is not and cannot be interested in art. He is a capitalist, and it would be ridiculous to reproach a capitalist for wanting to get surplus value first and foremost. This is not a wart on his hand that can be removed by a chemical. It is his nature, his heart.

I SAW about ten plays in New York. Their subject and general trend would require a separate article. But, on the whole, it would be hard to imagine anything more deliberately intended to distract attention from any serious social problems that concern the best progressive elements of American society. I would like to take as an example one which has a bearing on the specific points I have raised.

The musical comedy *Oklahoma!*, directed by the famous American film director, Robert Mamoulian, is now in its fourth year on Broadway. It is, perhaps, one of the most sensational successes in the last few years. Acquaintances in art circles, people whose taste I can trust, advised me strongly to see what they considered a lively and interesting production. I went to see it with my interpreter, who had attended its opening three years previously and praised it highly. Like the rest, he stressed the liveliness, buoyancy and

spontaneity of the play and its actors.

I watched and wondered. Everything that I had heard about the play seemed to be lacking. Although it had good music, artistic settings, and a cast that played and sang well, from a professional standpoint, there was something stilted and mechanical about the whole thing; it was too automatic—the pauses calculated to coincide with the laughter of the audience, the mechanical smiles, the forced animation.

The whole play was forced, and too noisy; it made you think of a person tortured by anguish, trying to conceal it by speaking very loudly and with a show of artificial cheerfulness.

"Well, how do you like it?" my companion asked me after the first act.

"I don't like it," I answered, and told him the reasons I have given here.

"Somehow I don't think I like it so much now, either," he said. "In any case I like it less now than I did three years ago. I think many of the actors are new. There's something wrong. Anyhow, it isn't what it was three years ago."

I did not doubt the sincerity of his impressions now and of three years ago. The crux of the matter was summed up in the words "three years ago." The actors had been playing in this production almost every evening of the year for three years. It was not a question of whether some of the actors,

who could not stand the strain or whose contracts expired, had been replaced. They may not have been changed at all, but their acting changed so much in three years that they were unrecognizable. The point was that the incongruous power of money had destroyed the life and soul in art, converting it into an enterprise where the object of exploitation was the actor, and the aim profit.

MY PURPOSE in this article does not include judgment on all the plays I have seen in America, particularly since I had to have an interpreter, and therefore in some cases I might risk making mistakes. I only wanted to speak in general on the principles of organization and the system of the American theater, a system which is in the highest degree alien to art, and makes an artist a slave to the dollar.

Least of all can I blame the actors themselves. They are no more than grains of sand in the orbit of this system.

The power of this system is such that it frequently corrupts people in the arts. They take it as a matter of course, and in the end regard it almost as the only way. Some of them, having ultimately acquired capital, establish art enterprises no better and no worse than others.

But other workers in American theatrical art (I believe they are in the majority), though they, too, revolve in the orbit, cannot, as artists, under any circumstances reconcile themselves to such a situation; they attempt to struggle against the producer's attitude toward art, to defend their rights, but rarely succeed. And what happens to them is not their fault, but their misfortune.

Knowing that American actors do not work in a creative atmosphere, stimulated by a collective and a permanent repertory, I was often surprised to see the successes that some individual actors achieved (in the plays I have seen). These successes of individuals never became successes for the whole ensemble, because the theater as a highly-developed art is attained by years, decades of collective creative work. The most brilliant performance of individual actors cannot create a first-rate theater in the highest sense of the word.

Capitalism has many faces, and has some very ugly grimaces in stock. With reference to art I want to de-

scribe a grimace that struck me as incongruous.

In the search for a means of saving great numbers of actors from starvation in the early years of Roosevelt's presidency his administration formed some small permanent theatrical companies on a minimum state subsidy. This measure was put into practice on a fairly wide scale. The companies presented their permanent repertoires in many cities. The more or less normal conditions of work resulting from this measure caused a stir in the theatrical world and gave an impetus to theatrical art; to some theatrical promoters it seemed that the American theater had discovered a way out and was heading in the right direction.

But the general depression gradually lifted, unemployment decreased, state subsidies disappeared and owners of art enterprises, very little interested in the development of their national theater, hastened to reinstate the old tried and trusted methods of extracting profits from theatrical enterprises. The repertory theaters went to the dogs one after another; those that persisted in carrying on their work were boycotted by both producers and owners of theaters, and finally they, too, perished.

The paradox of capitalism proved stronger than art.

A FEW more words on the moral state of the actor who has to work under existing conditions in the American theater.

The American theater today reminds me of a hotel more than anything else. The people living in it are often nice, even very nice people, but when all is said and done, it is only a hotel with a definite manner of living, and no matter how nice the people there may be they are not at home, they are only travellers on their way somewhere else.

Actors go from company to company; they step into the next production as they would stop at a hotel. They may not be pleased with the room—their role—they think the furniture is not well arranged or a picture on the wall is not to their taste, but is it worthwhile making any changes if, within a week or a month, they will leave for another hotel? Everyone has a perfectly reasonable and natural desire to have his own corner and his own home. But in America this natural desire rarely exists in theatrical art, and I knew of no people more

“homeless” in art than actors of the American stage.

Under capitalism houses are built primarily for profit. If it pays—houses are built. But if the existing situation starts a housing crisis, it will persist. No charitable persons will be found to build at a loss.

Something of the kind is taking place in the American theater. American actors wander like nomads through the hotels of their art, not because they want to but because of a housing crisis in art, artificially created by theatrical entrepreneurs. True, this is a catastrophe for art, but it is advantageous for the entrepreneur. In anything that concerns the dollar the conclusions of the pocket will prevail.

Still, I saw one theater in America which is not contaminated by the dollar. It is a small place in Hollywood, called the Actors' Laboratory. The premises were bought from some auto-repair company and converted from a garage into a theater. It has a stage and a seating capacity of 300. It was organized by a group of progressive screen actors not for the sake of profit. They became its owners, and they will not allow any entrepreneur to fatten on art. They play late at night and rehearse in the evening and at night, as soon as they are free from filming.

The artists of this theater have worked in close cooperation for years; they are not haunted by the spectre of the dollar. They work seriously and achieve fine results. I saw their production of Ben Jonson's *Volpone*; it was splendid in form and profound in content. The production was the fruit of long and intensive work, the period of which was not determined by contracts and fines, but by something that is most unusual for the American theater but customary for the Soviet theater: the artistic finish of a production.

A theater where the actors do not work for profit or cheap popularity is an excellent manifestation. I should like to say more about it, but unfortunately that would lead me too far afield, as this theater is not typical of the American theater as a whole. And this is still another grimace of capitalism. In a rich country which was spared in two wars, one has to cite as an example of genuine theatrical art a little playhouse working in the premises of a former garage, rehearsing at night and maintaining itself on the earnings of about thirty enthusiastic actors.

TEACHER NEEDS MORE THAN AN APPLE

You can't make a go of it on salaries that start at \$1,300, they said in Norwalk. How the citizens felt about it. A first-hand account.

By **CHARLES HUMBOLDT**

Norwalk, Conn.

"**Y**ESSIR," said the short order cook, wiping the counter. "It's like the old gag: I ain't seen so much fuss since the hogs et my grandpappy." He laughed at his own joke. "It couldn't of been hotter when the English burnt the town."

"And who's burning it now?" I asked.

"Not the teachers. Maybe it's those officials on the boards playin' with recognition like a little girl with a new dolly. Or maybe that big airplane company boss Connery got his fingers in. Anyway, don't let 'em fool you with that Florence Nightingale stuff about the tender souls of children. A stomach ain't much tougher, and I like to see a teacher eat as well as a bank lawyer."

That was sample number one of public opinion. But I was starting cold and needed some facts.

The Norwalk "troubles" first started in February when the teachers' contracts came up for discussion. The teachers said they couldn't live decently on their past wages and the Board of Education promised to think about it. After much heart searching, the Board of Education, which is an elected body, decided in favor of the teachers and went to the Board of Estimate, which is an appointed body, to report on how much money was needed for wage increases. The Board of Estimate refused to appropriate the sum requested and the Board of Education shrugged its shoulders and scratched an empty palm at the teachers.

By then it was April and the contracts should have been signed in March. So the teachers went to Sidney Vogel, a lawyer who had handled a few labor cases in town. Mr. Vogel, we want your candid advice. "I knew they were a bit scared of me," Vogel explained. "Otherwise they'd have asked for more than advice right away. 'You can't win on advice,' I told them. I gave them a picture of the rocky road ahead and how they'd have the book thrown at them if they meant to

stand up for their livings. To tell the truth, I was a little scared of *them*. I didn't know whether they could take it when the baiting began."

The teachers, all members of the Teachers' Association, went home to talk things over. A week later they sent their Professional Committee to tell Vogel they meant business.

"Well, we went to the Board of Education for a talk," said Vogel in his office, offering me a cigarette. "They thought we were coming with our hats in our hands. Instead we asked for recognition for the Professional Committee. It was like being invited to a formal dinner and spitting on the table. They accused us of using all the dirty words: collective bargaining, union, negotiation of contract, though I hadn't said a word about any of that yet. Okay, I thought, looking at Serena, the chairman of the board—go through your dance, but you'll end up just where you landed with your insurance agents."

Alexander R. Serena, district manager of the John Hancock Life Insurance Co., used to call his salesmen in for morning "conferences." While they listened nervously, he gave them his philosophy of life and bawled out those who hadn't met their quotas. The agents finally got sick of him and organized. One morning they stared hard at the gauleiter and told him about their union. Since then, he's resigned to being a windbag. One of the agents told me that when I inquired.

The Board of Education met again, with and without the teachers, in public and private (executive session, it is called), discussed, argued, sweated and probably swore, and recognized the teachers on June 25.

Meanwhile the Board of Estimate, Horatius at the budget, scorned surrender. They fought it out all summer and on August 10 announced there were no further funds available for salary increases. In the same issue of *The Norwalk Hour* in which one member of the board appealed to the sportsmanship of the teachers, another

member was reported to declare, "I wouldn't give them another nickel if the schools never opened."

THE temper of the Board of Estimate encouraged the Board of Education to take an action which the teachers' Professional Committee termed "a shocking betrayal of the principle of bargaining in good faith." At a closed meeting in Norwalk High School on August 14, it voted to discontinue negotiations with the Norwalk Teachers' Association, withdrew recognition from it, and ordered all contracts to be in its hands by August 22, noon. All principals and supervisors who were supporting the teachers' action were invited to the office of the superintendent of schools to listen to an address by bank and probate lawyer Frederick F. Lovejoy, a member of the Board of Education. He wanted to talk to them on the inadvisability of, or, as he put it, on the "question of the propriety of their belonging to a union of teachers."

I asked Vogel about Lovejoy. "A man you know where you stand with, a smart, honest man. An honest Tom Girdler."

Lovejoy was joined by Board of Estimate member Arthur D. Sylvester, who sent an open letter to the teachers threatening them with "public revulsion," accusing them of coercion, and proposing to hire outside teachers. Mr. Sylvester is rumored to represent certain Du Pont interests in Norwalk.

The principals and supervisors listened quietly to Mr. Lovejoy, and decided to stick with the teachers. On August 22, Alice Cole, chairman of the Professional Committee, presented 225 unsigned contracts to the Board of Education. Six teachers out of 236 had voted to return. Among the six were two sisters of US Senator Brien McMahon. The senator, who has a good labor record, refused comment but was supposed to be in a state of disgust. He was not pressed by sympathetic reporters.

Other things were not so rosy either for the anti-teacher forces, as certain letter writers to the *Hour* called them. The Connecticut Teachers Association offered "financial, physical and moral assistance" to its affiliate. A citizen of Norwalk, a former chairman of the Board of Education, Charles A. Haas, filed a show-cause against the board which threatened them with an injunction against hiring outside teachers. (The Board of Education was said to have its eye on certain old ladies on the New York retirement list). An *Hour* editorial advised the board to stop holding closed meetings.

The board was further outraged when Alonzo G. Grace, State Commissioner of Education, urged recognition of the teachers, recommended a complete investigation of the Norwalk school system to the State Board of Education, and suggested to Lovejoy and Sylvester that hiring abroad would be in violation of the contracts to which the Board of Education was bound because it had informed no

teachers of their termination before March 1.

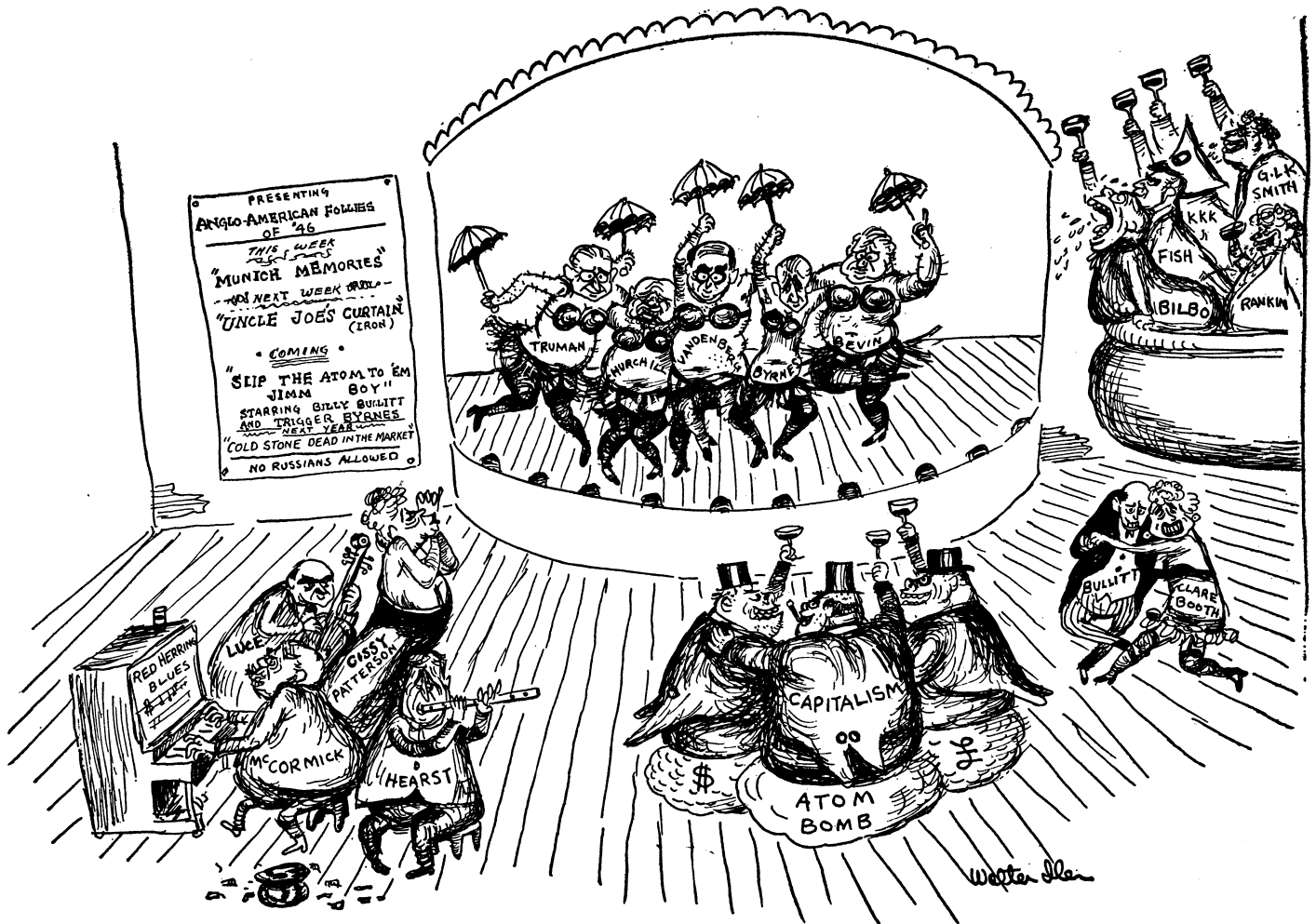
Letters were also coming into the local paper, such as one in which a Mother and Taxpayer opined that "Our teachers would certainly show themselves a spineless group if they too (like the officials) were to go back on their decision," in their case to fight for a living.

So, two weeks after the school board had thrown down the gage to the teachers, it pulled in its tail and recognized them again. Grumbling that it didn't know what had happened to New England, it settled down to talking lump sums. So did Mr. Vogel and the teachers.

Several months before when the budget was up for approval, the Board of Education asked the Board of Estimate and Taxation to appropriate \$1,025,875 for the school payroll. The latter appropriated just \$813,652.90. This did not even cover the amount required to equalize the pay of men and women in the school system, approximately \$32,000. (Equalization

of pay had become mandatory by state law since the last budget, but the Board of Estimate thought it had found some technicality to avoid paying it.) The teachers therefore pointed out to the Board of Education that it now opposed their demand to be paid what the Board of Education itself had felt they should be paid. Nevertheless, they proposed a compromise. Would the school board press for an additional \$90,112, which was one-half the difference between the sum made available by the Board of Estimate and the amount requested by the Board of Education? Mr. Serena answered: he would press for \$31,000; he thought confidentially he could get it from his friends on the Board of Estimate. That body had been letting out similar hoarse whispers.

"I asked them," Vogel told me, "whom they thought they were fooling? In a polite way of course. That thirty-one grand was no present. It was not for salary increases but to equalize the pay of the men and women. When it finally occurred to



them that they couldn't evade that issue, they decided to play Santa Claus with it. With that amount not a single man teacher or supervisory employe would get a penny more." No one had to look that gift horse in the mouth to know what was wrong with it, so the teachers refused to bid.

WHAT did people here think of all this? "It depends on *what* people," young Charles Lee said, smiling. I had seen his name signed to a letter in the *Hour* and had rung his bell in the late afternoon. We sat on the porch. It turned out that he was Reverend Charles W. Lee of the First Methodist Church, and that he had studied under Dr. Harry F. Ward at Union Theological in New York. "It depends on who they are, how much they know, or what they're willing to learn. My wife's from Herrin, Illinois, so you needn't ask her how she feels about it. Nor me."

I looked at his church across the street, and read the slogan in the case standing on the lawn: "People would not be lonely if they built bridges instead of walls."

"I can tell you about the veterans," he offered, noticing my discharge button. "The city recently appropriated a few thousand dollars to throw a block party for the veterans of Norwalk. A number of my boys told me that if the city was so hard up as not to be able to pay its teachers decent wages, the vets could do without this expensive show of politicians' love."

I learned that the National Association of Manufacturers had tried taking a hand in guiding Norwalk opinion. A letter to its local members suggested that they invite "your" clergymen to tea from time to time. In Norwalk the host was the president of the Hat Corporation of America. The clergymen were agreeably surprised, until they discovered that big businessmen were catching religion all over the New England states in obedience to their parent body.

More important, Lee thought, as a factor impeding some people's understanding of the teachers' struggle was Norwalk's traditional attitude toward industry, which of course benefitted only the employers. "The administration's policy is always: low wages, low taxes; everything for industry. They might as well say, nothing for the worker. It's characteristic of the backwardness of our outlook that we pay

\$1,800 to a male teacher and \$1,300 to a woman for the same work. They're only now beginning to see any wrong in that. I've told my congregation—and some of them ask me why I have to stick my neck out on these issues—that a victory for the teachers will go a long way toward scrubbing Norwalk's grimy conscience."

I asked Reverend Lee why a town as rich as Norwalk balked at paying its teachers a living wage. I had seen the wire-enclosed plants of South Norwalk, flanked by workers' frame houses, and I remembered the outlying estates and the shore places of their owners and managers. "Irving Freese can tell you more about that than I can," he said. "He's been Socialist candidate for mayor and his specialty is taxes."

Freese was standing in shirtsleeves outside his small photographic supply shop when I introduced myself. We got down to business at once. He told me there had been no adequate tax survey made for the city of Norwalk since 1913. Not less than ten million dollars had been lost to the community through industry's escaping proper taxation. For example, the Hat Corporation of America, largest of its kind in the world, is assessed at \$690,000. This includes its plant and office equipment, factory machinery and stock. General Aircraft Equipment Inc., second largest holder of industrial property in Norwalk, assessed itself at \$95,000. This evaluation was so ridiculous that the local tax commissioner blushing raised it to \$265,500. The man who certified the lower valuation was Paul R. Connery, local Democratic boss, member of the firm of Tammany (a Republican) & Connery, the town's Corporation Counsel—and a vice-president of General Aircraft. It was officials of corporations like these who called the teachers "chiselers."

I was grateful to Freese, but I was not quite happy about him. Every time I tried to get him to talk about the teachers he went back to taxes. He never wanted to connect the two, though it was obvious that if the industries of Norwalk were properly assessed, all city employes could be granted wage increases without stretching an eyelash. I remembered that when I first came up, a reporter from the *Bridgeport Herald* was kidding him. "Your uncle's going to have his hands full soon with those Bridgeport

teachers. They're getting mighty riled up at old Jasper." Freese looked at him and began to shiver as though he were deathly cold. I wanted to tell him to put his coat on. He is a nephew by marriage to Jasper MacLevey, the "Socialist" mayor of neighboring Bridgeport, whose teachers are up in arms at a cut in their appropriation. Such an uncle complicates matters. There are two sides to every question.

(This is the first of a two-part article. The second will appear next week.)

portside patter by BILL RICHARDS

The Hearst press has hired Louis Adlon, son of Berlin's Hotel Adlon owner, to report conditions in Germany. The Nuremberg trials seem to have diminished Hearst's supply of writers.

Joe Ryan has been accused of knifing organized labor by leading his AFL longshoremen past CIO picket lines. The wound will heal but it still leaves an ugly scab.

There are reports that Secretary Byrnes may resign because of ill health. It's certain, however, he isn't nearly as sick as our foreign policy.

The New York "Times" has announced editorially that it is definitely behind Byrnes. On the other hand, Byrnes is just as definitely behind the times.

King George is slated to return to Greece sometime this month. It would have been better if they had stuffed George instead of the ballot box.

Republican leaders are confident that a GOP victory in 1948 will bring prosperity. It would undoubtedly be the dawn of a new error.

Westbrook Pegler writes that Henry Wallace has "the appearance of having spent the night in a culvert." Pegler must be thinking of the culvert he went through years ago on his way to the sewer.

REVELLE FOR STRAW MEN

A guest editorial by MILTON BLAU

MONOPOLY has changed its cultural tactics. It can no longer rely on its bleary-eyed snipers to pick off the men of culture who move in the direction of progress. The times move too swiftly and the preparations for imperialist war must be speeded up. The stakes are large—there is the Soviet Union to sack, and the world to plunder. But the road is not smooth. There are things in the way—the people of the United States with their hopes for peace, and the damnable truth which persists in raising its head and in shouting: this is crime, this is the mad work of homicides. Snipers are not enough. The scattered shots of the Woltmans, Schlesingers, Luces, Farrells, Flynns, Stolbergs and Bromfields are not enough. But altogether in a band what might they not do to clear the road for reaction and fascism?

The hollow bugle sounds and the straw men tumble into line. A few brisk orders and the regiment is formed. The American Writers Association hoists its strange flag for "liberty" and dispatches its battle communiques. The regiment wheels right-about and attacks that new "invading army of the Kremlin," the American Author's Authority.

Now, exactly what is it that they have attacked?

The AAA is a plan first proposed by James M. Cain—who was active in the Democrats for Dewey campaign in 1944. Mr. Cain's proposals were heard and approved by the Screen Writers Guild by a vote of 343 to 7, in spite of the tremendous Red-baiting campaign conducted by the film monopoly. Essentially AAA proposed that authors no longer surrender the rights to material as a part of the sales agreement; that literary material no longer be sold outright, but that it be leased. This would permit the author a larger economic return for his work on which film, radio, book and magazine companies clean up huge fortunes. It would also give the author a voice in what is to be done with his material, in contrast to the present situation in which the author has no more to say about what's done with his work than Wallace had about the Byrnes-Vanden-

berg foreign policy. The AAA plans to control the copyrights of authors and to protect the rights and interests of authors under the jurisdiction of the authors' own organizations, Mr. Cain writes, much as ASCAP now works to protect the interests of composers.

Some of the critics of the plan claim the AAA would constitute a monopoly. This is a wild cry. First, far from projecting a monopoly, the plan is an attack on the monopolies which tightly control the writing fields; the Authority proposes to loosen the grip of big capital on the author. Second, monopolies are not formed by writers coming together in economic associations any more than workers in trade unions form monopolies.

In voting on and approving the plan the members of the Screen Writers Guild passed a resolution "that there

be no discrimination in the rights or treatment accorded by AAA to any piece of written material by reason of its content." But such a resolution, which testifies to the apolitical nature of the plan, is immediately overlooked by the strange minds which make up the American Writers' Association. What is clear and positive in the idea for an Authority is the fact that it recognizes that writers, big ones and little ones, are exploited by the various monopoly groups and that it will attempt to lessen that exploitation.

Mr. Cain, in his outline of the plan, describes written material as "property"—making writers, in this light, "property owners." With formulations such as these the AAA is made to appear as a sort of panacea for writers, a plan which would end almost all the problems faced by this group of cultural workers. The AAA does not deal with the critical question of new writers entering the field. It also makes no provision for protecting writers from the debasing "content" policies of the monopolies. Problems of such a nature can only be solved when writers enter into a many-sided struggle against the anti-cultural monopolies, which not only squeeze the writer economically but seek to turn his work into a commodity made to their measure. Yet it can be readily seen that the AAA is a form through which writers can win a more equitable reward for their talent.

It would be wrong to assume that the people who formed the American Writers Association do not know all this. What, then, can be their God-awful haste to attack the AAA as a "Communist-controlled plan to establish a literary dictatorship," when the evidence is so foolishly thin? Their names alone give half the answer: Louis Bromfield, Clarence Budington Kelland, Clare Boothe Luce, John T. Flynn, Norman Thomas, Eugene Lyons, Louis Waldman and Benjamin Stolberg. James T. Farrell tags along with his vociferous support for this unpopular front of reaction, this coalition of Republicans, Social-Democrats and Trotskyites.

The haste? The war plans are being readied. The ghastly vision of their



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anti-Soviet and anti-people's war hangs before their eyes. They are done with sniping. The tactic now is the broad assault. The attack against the AAA is with a spiked purpose, for the AWA means to assault and disrupt all the existing organizations of writers. Their hope is to intimidate writers and to keep them from siding with the progressive forces for peace. They are afraid that any writer's movement away from monopoly control will hamper the use of the media of cultural expression for anti-Soviet and war propaganda.

There is one fortunate factor. The American Writers Association gives fair warning of its intentions to all writers. This comes accidentally and as an unintended gift. A clumsiness is involved in the way it handles the tools the Nazis left behind. It would be a tragic danger to culture and the people if this front for reaction is given the opportunity for practice and perfection.

Wall St. Fires Wallace

(Continued from page 3)

in the top Washington officialdom where Truman stands trembling before the Wall Street war lords and rushes forth to do their bidding. Even reporters are unlimbering and asking the State Department embarrassing questions.

While Mr. Wallace waited to hear how Drew Pearson got the letter he had sent Truman last July, it was common knowledge among correspondents that Pearson got it from the State Department. The Department hoped that the release of the letter would add fuel to the fires it was building under Wallace. But its effect has been quite different. It turned out to be an even more powerful argument than his speech in showing where atom-bomb diplomacy is leading us. It was for this reason that the pack of wolves were sent howling at him. And their victory in having him removed from the Cabinet may prove small compared to the fury which it will unleash among Americans who perhaps for the first time see that in Wallace's dismissal the Roosevelt heritage in foreign policy is being deliberately and systematically smashed. No longer can those who violate America's real interests—the need for peace and ever-expanding democracy—keep foreign policy from becoming the central issue of the election campaign. It is on this issue that the fight must be won.

"THE FRONT PAGE"—AGAIN

The revival retains enough hustle for melodrama, but its pretensions to anything more are gone.

By ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

AROUND the turn of the century a change occurred that was to have a greater effect upon journalism than the invention of the telegraph, which had squeezed out the smaller independent publishers and fastened tighter the clamp of big business.

The effects of this change are the core of *The Front Page*, Ben Hecht's and Charles MacArthur's twenty-year-old melodrama currently being revived at the Royale Theater.

Ignored by the historians of American journalism, except in embarrassed asides, this change, the introduction of large-scale display advertising, made the advertisers—big business in the new relationship of virtual partners—more than ever the dominating force in the American press. The press became more directly than before a class instrument. Circulation came to stand not for human beings, but as the basis for advertising rates. The cynicism that corrupted the press cut deepest into the men who gathered and wrote the "news;" and it is the distinction of *The Front Page* that it gave a literary expression, long overdue, to this reality. The play appeared in the bootleg era when the development had reached its climax, when the gangster, the newspaper owner and the political boss were functioning, without incorporation papers, of course, as a syndicate. What the successful reporter had become in the face of this reality was an embittered, cynical, foul-mouthed, calloused violator of his profession. In presenting at least an approximation of him, Hecht and MacArthur smashed the idiotic older convention of the reporter as crusader. I write "older" convention, for what Hecht and Mac-

Arthur produced turned into a new convention, and has now itself become unreal. From the romantic cynic whom Hecht and MacArthur show swapping abuse with his boss you would never know the enormous distance that has come to separate reporter and management. In his virtuoso attitudes you would never realize how the glamor has drained out of him since the personality spotlights came to be reserved for the syndicated names, and you would never guess from Hecht and MacArthur's rugged cynics the men who made a union possible in what was supposed to be the most individualistic of the professions. That union, among other things, has made false as well as offensive the callousness toward the Negro that fills the dialogue. (This is not intended to damn the play for not saying what it couldn't twenty years ago; but the treatment of the Negro was as offensive then as it is now. The timeless human elements that would have kept the play timely are absent.)

The action of *The Front Page* revolves around the hanging of a demented anarchist who had shot a Negro policeman in resisting arrest. Elections are a few days off and the city officials, in order to pull the "law-and-order" vote, have blown up the prisoner into a Red Revolution. Though the prisoner is obviously unbalanced, the administration, in order to get the supposedly vengeful Negro vote, is out to hang the man before election day, and beat the humanitarians who are trying to get a reprieve from the governor. The climax comes when the prisoner, after shooting his way out at a psychiatric examination with the sheriff's own gun, virtually drops into the lap of one of the reporters. The latter has just given up his press card to marry and go East to a "decent" job in advertising; but this chance at the scoop of his life makes him forget bride and new career. It also makes the authors forget their realistic intentions. The play floats away in mystical fog.

Seen today, *The Front Page* retains



J. Levine.

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I. WALLMAN, Mgr.

enough hustle for melodrama. But its pretensions to anything more are gone with the situation that, in its year, made the play so revelatory. Such social commentary as the play contains, on the matter of a corrupt press, corrupt politicians and their mutual ally, the gangster, has little more substance than street corner skepticism. So far as the audience is given to understand, things are as they are not because the big newspapers have a class function to perform but because a fascination for romantic evil, for playful lawlessness, is part of the "newspaper game."

In literary work when the conclusion does not grow inevitably from what the author has set down, he seeks to make his climaxes, which appear to fulfill the action, serve as his explanation. Having failed to show the economic and social compulsions that have made editor and reporter behave like brutalized idiots, the supposed "realist" authors fall back on the worst sentimentalities of their profession.

Thus *The Front Page* is stultified by the uncompleted thinking, finished off with mysticism, that generally characterizes Hecht's work. We get the banal paradoxes of romanticism: the only reasonable character is the madman; the only noble one a prostitute. What Hecht puts forth, in his central character, as a mystical identity of a man and his profession, is simply pathology, misunderstood.

At some points it is hard to tell how much the confusion is due to muddy production and how much to muddy writing. Arnold Moss, as editor Walter Burns, seemed to be overacting until one listened to the lines. Lew Parker as Hildy Johnson was breezily effective until the exaggerations in his relationship with Burns threw him. The best performance and the best-written part was that of Sheriff Hartman, played by William Lynn. Nonentity in public life was here set down in a memorable portrait.

Recent Films

THE first Soviet technicolor film, *Russia on Parade*, is now playing at New York's Stanley Theater. What is fascinating about this picture is not the technicolor, which has yet to reach our technical achievements in this field, but the remarkable variety of Soviet peoples on display. Hour after hour Stalin, other members of the Presidium and General Eisenhower watch the

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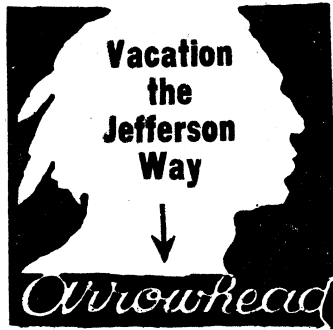
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Uzbeks, Buriat Mongols, Kasaks, Yahutsks, Turkomens, Karelians, Latvians, Georgians, Ukrainians, White Russians and dozens of other national groups proudly display their dances, athletic prowess, national costumes, and ensemble exercises. A section of our critical press thought that the stuff on display was old hat, especially the campfire demonstrations, the "Rockette" formations and the mass calisthenics. What these people forget is the fact that scarcely a quarter of a century ago most of these national groups, living in the Czarist prison-house, had never even seen a sports event, let alone participated in one of them. It is hard to believe, watching the Tadjik girls demonstrate their fitness in brief sports costumes, that only a short time ago their mothers had to veil themselves in public. On the same bill is *Moscow Music Hall*, a cross-section of dance and song of the Soviet Union. If, like me, you are a pushover for the subtlety, grace and dignity of the various national dances, especially the Ukrainian, this film is your dish.

HORIZON FILMS, a new documentary producing company (16 mm) has just released its first film, *Of These Our People*. It deals with anti-Semitism, and answers the better-known slanders of our native fascists by showing the part that Jews played in building up our country, from the earliest pioneers to the Howard Fasts, Max Webers, Hank Greenbergs, Ben Golds, Yehudi Menuhins and others of contemporary life. It shows the teeming thousands living in poverty, working in the stores, shops and factories of our big cities, as well as those working on the farms in every state of the union. Having once seen this film, no one will be taken in by the monstrous fables that all Jews are rich, and are different from other folk. In its brief two reels, *Of These Our People* demonstrates that the Jews, like other minorities, and unlike the vilifiers of national groups, are an integrated part of the life that goes to make up America. This film should be given the widest possible audience. The commercial houses will not show it, of course, thus leaving the burden up to fraternal, social and political groups to get it around. Prints can be ordered through the International Workers Order, or from Horizon Films direct, at 232 W. 14 St., N. Y. C.

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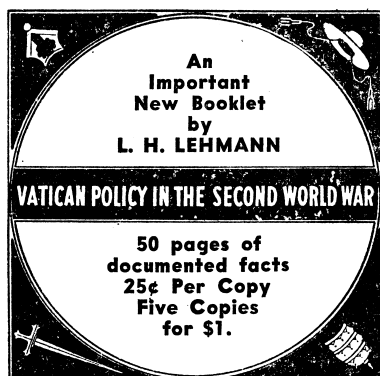
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