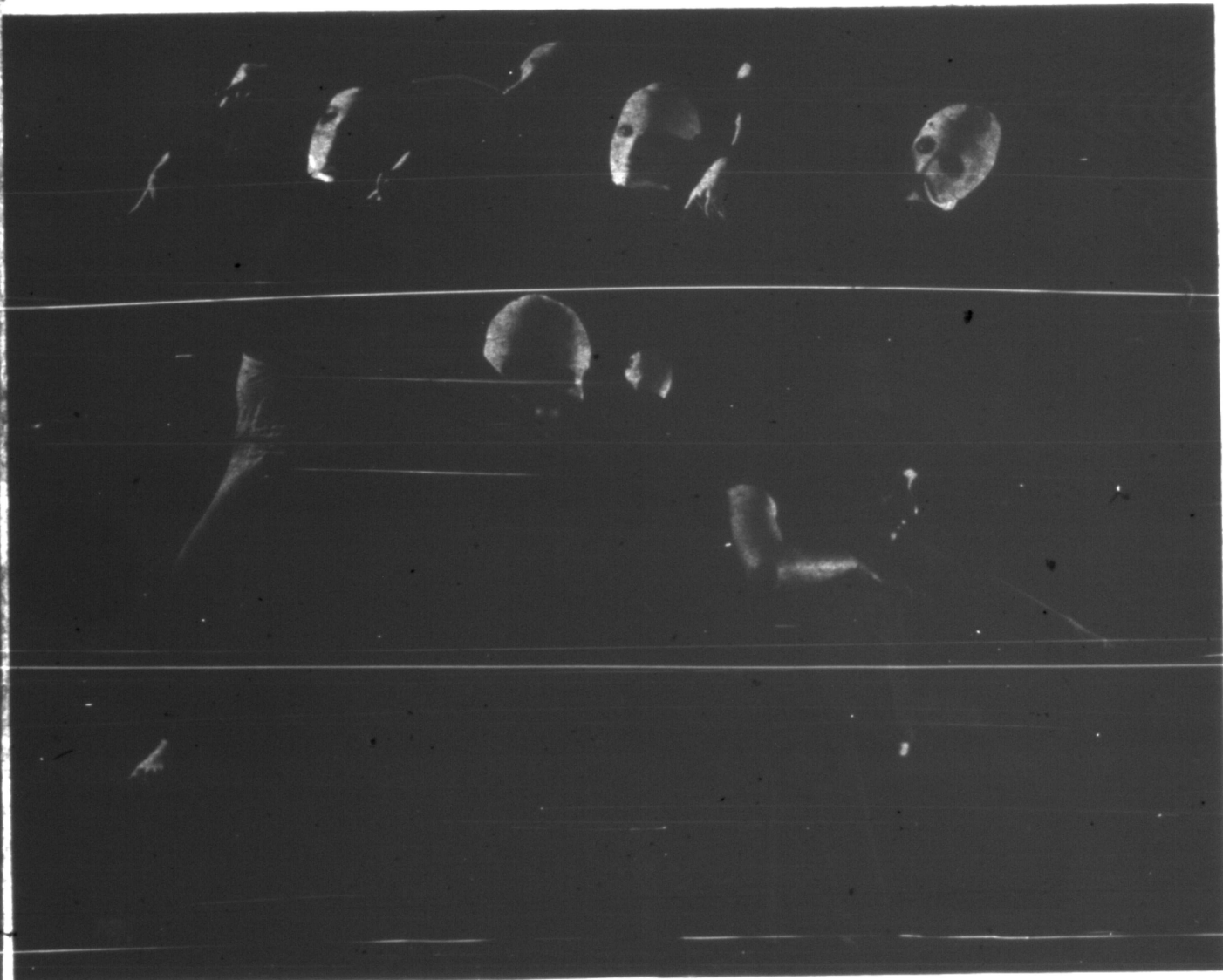


NEW THEATRE

JULY - AUGUST 1934



Van der Lubbe's Head New Dance Group

Photo by Walter

- **DIMITROFF**
A Play by SMITH and KAZAN
- **KRASNY-PRESNY**
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NEW THEATRE

JULY - AUGUST, 1934

ONE of the most promising theatre projects for next season is the work of the four Marx Brothers. Groucho, as everyone knows, went to the U.S.S.R. to make the Soviets laugh. He made them laugh, and they made him think. He returned to the United States enthusiastic to put it mildly about life in the Soviet Union, and wasn't afraid to say so. Groucho was particularly impressed with the vitality and high artistry of the Soviet Theatre and cinema.

The four funniest men on earth got together and decided upon "direct action" as their part in helping to revive the American theatre. The result—plans for a playhouse right in the heart of the movie industry, a playhouse "that will present the work of young authors and give them a chance to speak their minds." All this under the very noses of those most reactionary executioners of ideas—the film censors. And, best of all, as the New York *Daily Mirror* describes it: "The plays will have a popular interest and significance which will be of special interest to worker audiences. They will be daring, original, and even inflammatory plays, perhaps of the *Stevedore* type. Since the theatre will be non-commercial the prices will be low enough to accommodate every possible type of audience."

Not only the workers of California, who will have the privilege of seeing the plays, but workers and theatre artists throughout America will look forward to the realization of the plans of the Marx Brothers. Goodluck—Harpo, Groucho, Chico and Zeppo!

WHILE Paris, Washington, London, Berlin, and other capitals of the capitalist countries are having nightmares of bombs, bullets, and tear gas, Moscow, the capital of the only workers' country in the world, is dreaming of another prodigious cultural event. From September 1 through September 10, Moscow will celebrate its second theatre festival.

Last year the Soviet government induced a number of the theatres to con-

Theatre Lobby—First Night

centrate their efforts in an intensive ten-day dramatic spectacle. This year ten first rank repertory companies will cooperate in spreading before huge audiences masterpieces of socialist opera, ballet, drama, tragedy, comedy and fantasy.

The festival will serve to strengthen the work in the popularization of the building of a classless socialist society in the U.S.S.R. and the stimulating of the growth of the material and cultural standards of the toilers of the Soviet Union. The efforts of the Moscow theatres, as of all revolutionary theatres, will be directed toward stimulating the workers' artistic initiative toward the replacement of "art for art's sake" with the true art corresponding to the interests of the working class.

Furthermore this festival will undoubtedly quicken the tempo of that part of the second Five-Year Plan which calls for thirteen new theatres in the Moscow region as well as multiplying the present audience by ten.

Not only will this demonstration affect the theatres and audiences of the U.S.S.R., but it will also stimulate the artistic initiative of the toiling masses of the entire world. We, in America, will be inspired to great efforts in our work of using the theatre as a medium to promote the political and cultural development of the American people.

NOT long ago President Roosevelt was being set up as the modern Lorenzo de Medici. He would bring the poor artist out of his garret and the starving actor off the streets. The arts, like the navy, would be the

darling of the government in this, the era of the Brain Trust. The swanky art clubs were delighted. At last "art" was being appreciated by the hitherto indifferent Powers That Be. The newspapers approved. The radio blared. The cinema flickered. Artists in every field scurried about for those wonderful jobs.

Only a few were rewarded, resulting in the organization of Artists', Writers', Musicians' and other unions to fight for jobs by mass action. Now there rises the Actors' Emergency Association to fight for the unemployed actor. Anyone reading the March issue of *NEW THEATRE* will discover the reason. While persons confessedly ignorant of dramatics are holding down C.W.A. jobs, only 150 of over 5,000 unemployed actors in New York succeeded in getting C.W.A. jobs lasting at best only eight weeks.

This new militant Actors' Emergency Association sent two actors to see Commissioner Hodson with several demands, the most important being: that amateur actors in the C.W.A. be replaced by professional paid actors and that discrimination against Negro actors discontinued immediately (Negro actors are excluded from the C.W.A. project *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). These delegates just escaped being beaten by police—the usual reception to relief seekers.

While gigantic sums are being expended by the government in the manufacture of instruments of mass murder the \$1,500,000 planned for the hire of 1,200 actors is not forthcoming because of "lack of funds."

No help can be expected from Equity,

By Adolph Dahn





Theatre Lobby—First Night

By Joseph Dehn

Roosevelt's promises have proven false, only mass pressure can force the government to give real aid to the thousands of unemployed actors. All unemployed actors and all employed actors who are sympathetic, are urged to support the Actors' Emergency Association.

FOR some time now there has been a growing dissatisfaction among the actors with the stagnant, bureaucratic leadership of Equity. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that the rank and file movement which grew out of the recent *Sailor Beware* strike is gaining strength rapidly. This in spite of the most active opposition on the part of the officials.

Doubtful tactics have been employed by President Gilmore and his aides to obstruct not only the organizational growth of this movement but to discredit and defeat any legislation that this progressive group may initiate, no matter how valuable to the actor.

Although the movement is still less than four months old, several important victories have already been achieved. At the annual election on June 1, seven out of the thirteen members elected to the executive council were candidates of the new movement. At the same meeting, two amendments to the constitution proposed by the committee were adopted. One amendment calls for four regular meetings of the general membership each year, instead of one. This is the first step in a program designed to destroy the inertia and secrecy with which heretofore, the administrative and executive activity of the organization has been conducted, and to awaken a more active interest on the part of rank and file actors. The second amendment provides a means for the general membership to amend and change the by-laws of the association.

The vote on the first, and probably the most important amendment resulted in a tie, thereby defeating the amendment, but a stubborn fight by Philip Loeb, one of the new Councillors elected by the committee won the right to have the amendment submitted to a general referendum. This amendment, if carried, will enable members who are not more than one year in arrears to vote.

Investigation revealed that approximately 1,000 members would thus be enfranchised. This extension of the electorate would make it considerably more difficult for the officials to pack meetings at which voting is held and for

that reason is being bitterly fought by the leadership. In opposing this amendment the Council betrayed its utter lack of sympathy for the jobless actors when its spokesman, Pedro de Cordoba, made the following astonishing statement, as recorded in the *Actor's Equity Magazine*, June, 1934: "We inquire among ourselves and of our executives, whether members who have been out of work for a season can hold an unbiased and judicious viewpoint which would be for the good of all of us. After all it's perfectly natural that our opinions should be affected by our circumstances." In other words, Equity officials are determined to exclude any actors from their meetings who might, because of actual need, display even the slightest social consciousness. In view of this position it is easy to understand why the rank and file has decided to take action.

Contrary to the impression the officials would like to create, the new committee is not composed of "impetuous youngsters," but claims many older actors including some who took part in the 1919 strike. Not only the lesser known young actors but many important actors are taking part.

Since its inception the committee has been meeting regularly and its sub-committees have been occupied with exhaustive investigations on conditions.

Their recommendations have been considered and numerous resolutions have been passed by the members to be submitted by their councillors to the Executive Council. Among these are: a resolution that Equity sponsor and support the Workers' Social and Unemployment Insurance Bill (H.R. 7598): a resolution limiting the conditions under which managers may cut actor's contractual salaries, prohibiting individual bargaining: a resolution accompanied by a tentative plan, providing one week's unpaid rehearsal and \$2.00 per day thereafter (in effect not a payment for rehearsal but a rehearsal expense-account). In addition they are fighting for a closed shop, with new members always welcome and a minimum of \$16.00 per week for extras.

GOING TO THE THEATRE has come to mean sitting back for two hours and seeing whether the people behind the footlights can give you a kick or fool you into a good laugh. That's what they're paid for. The second NEW THEATRE night packed the Fifth Avenue Theatre for an event of a different temper. Several parts of the program would have baffled a theatrical booking agent; but the story of an organizer fresh from the Alabama terror

NEW THEATRE

Organ of League of Workers Theatres, Film and Photo League, and Workers Dance League.

JULY-AUGUST, 1934

C O N T E N T S

114 W. 14th St., N.Y.C.

Editorials	3	The Movie Front	Tom Brandon 19
Krasny-Presny	E. Stephen Karnot 6	Dimitroff	Art Smith and Elia Kazan 20
The Brookfield Playhouse	John Mitchell 8	Diagnosis of the Dance	Emanuel Eisenberg 24
Garbage Delivered to Your Door	Robert Stebbins 9	Revolutionary Staging for Revolutionary Plays	Molly Day Thacher 26
Hisses, Boos and Boycotts	Leo T. Hurwitz 10	Workers Theatre: From Coast to Coast	27
Marion Models, Inc.	Nathaniel Buchwald 11	Reply to Michael Gold	Edna Ocko 28
Newsboy from Script to Performance	Alfred Saxe 12	Dance Convention	Grace Wylie 29
Facing the New Audience	Michael Blankfort 14	Eight Men Speak	Will Ferris 30
Scenes from the Living Theatre	Film and Photo League 16-17	Drawings and Photos by	Valente—Adolph Dehn
Sin and the Cinema	David Platt 18	William Segal—James Kelly	G. Giltner—Phil Wolfe

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told plainly to an audience that was alive and eager to hear it, seems to us sounder theatre than any number of New Faces going through the old grimaces. And Eula Gray's Alabama sharecroppers songs were a new kind of spiritual—the beautiful militant Negro songs of protest. The warm informality of Leigh Whipper as Master of Ceremonies bound together a program of diverse forms and different degrees of technical skill, unified by the fact that each number had something important which the actors wanted to express.

NEW THEATRE as the beneficiary of the evening takes this chance to thank those who participated and to call attention to a sign of change which holds high promise for the revolutionary theatre. *Dimítroff*, published in this issue, was written and presented by members of the Group Theatre. The fact that the performance suffered from lack of rehearsal does not lessen its importance. Throughout the winter certain members of the Group have been leading the training at the Collective and Theatre Union Studios, and others have entertained at revolutionary meetings. *Dimítroff* is their first concerted and sustained effort at revolutionary production.

The W.L.T. skit, *Hollywood Goes Red* was not up to their standard, but they are always full of energy and life and this piece contained the memorable couplet, delivered by the cinema Bolshevik behind the heroine's back,



“Ha, I'll surprise her—
I'll take her home and nationalize her!”

The Artef scene from *Yegor Bulitchev* was their usual excellent performance. *Kykunkor*, which was turned down by Broadway until it has made an independent success under the sponsorship of the Unity Theatre, was a very exciting spectacle for the audience, and in its use of rhythms and the high concen-

tration and intensity of the players, it was suggestive material for directors and actors.

The sell-out houses marking performances sponsored by NEW THEATRE and the Workers Laboratory Theatre prove that a permanent audience for workers theatre exists, and plans are being made for the regular presentation of full theatre nights in the fall.

A NEW wave of terror more cruel and bloody than anything before is being launched by the rulers of fascist Germany. Behind it is the fear and desperation of the Hitler regime. With misery and hunger widespread in the “New Germany” there is only terror and torture to check the rising protest.

For the first victim of this legalized terror, the fascists have selected the world-known leader of the German anti-fascists—Ernst Thaelmann, beloved leader of the German workers.

The Nazi press, Hitler, Goering, Goebbels, scream for his death. . . . We call upon all workers, intellectuals, professionals, artists . . . all who stand for freedom and justice . . . to join in solid ranks for mass opposition to the Hitler terror.

We urge professionals in the theatre world to follow the example of J. Edward Bromberg and Alexander Kirkland of the Group, and John Howard Lawson who recently participated in the picketing of the Nazi consulate in New York.

In closing, we urge all theatre, film and dance groups to become active at once in the campaign to “Free Thaelmann.”

THIS enlarged issue of NEW THEATRE is concrete evidence of the rapid growth of the revolutionary drama, film and dance, an indication of the quickening of tempo which is the answer of the whole revolutionary movement to the wave of fascist suppression now sweeping the country. In order to organize and consolidate our staff, which in the coming months will be forced to function at breakneck speed to keep abreast of events, we are publishing the July and August issue as one number. Our policy will be to publish a new play in every issue together with complete reports of the latest developments in drama, film and dance. There will be feature articles by leading playwrights, actors, directors, etc. These will be coordinated with up-to-the-minute news of what workers' theatre groups through-

out the country are doing. In this connection we urge a united front of workers in both the professional and non-professional theatre, for only by mass co-operation can the new cultural movement reflect and direct the great upsurge in the arts. We call upon all those interested in the revolutionary cultural movement to give us their active support.



MORDECAI GORELIK, scenic designer, well known on Broadway for a long list of remarkable stage sets including “1931” and this year's Pulitzer prize play, *Men in White*, as well as for his pertinent articles on revolutionary theatre in America, will be on a NEW THEATRE Lecture Tour beginning July 1, the subject being “The American Theatre.”

Mr. Gorelik, in this important lecture, will point out the danger of a fascist theatre monopoly and call for a united front of workers' theatre and community theatre. All workers' theatres and community theatres are urged to communicate at once with Mr. Gorelik, 5424 Franklin Street, Hollywood, California, or with NEW THEATRE. The itinerary is as follows:

Los Angeles, July 1 to July 10; Salt Lake City, July 13 to July 16; Denver, July 18 to July 21; Kansas City, July 24 to July 26; St. Louis, July 27 to July 30; Cincinnati, July 31 to Aug. 1; Pittsburgh, Aug. 2 to Aug. 4; Philadelphia, Aug. 5 to Aug. 7 and New York, Aug. 8.

A RECENT and very important development in this year's theatre news is the project for a *National Negro Theatre*.

Technically the development of the Negro in the theatre as a craftsman, technician, actor, playwright has been thwarted. *This Negro Theatre* will be composed of Negroes and whites, who will combat the insidious slander of the Negro people by producing plays of genuine artistic merit, which will fight against the white superiority hoax, lynch terror, discrimination and segregation, and fight for the full economic, political and social equality of the Negro people.

KRASNY - PRESNY

The Birth of a New Theatre

By E. STEPHEN KARNOT

PERHAPS one should not have been so astonished at a unique theatre experience after having spent so much time in a land of unique theatre experiences. Two years of theatre-going and theatre study in the Soviet Union should inure one to the unexpected. But when the unusual is coupled with the profound, the most calloused must succumb. After one evening at the Krasny Presny Theatre, the exquisite finish of the Moscow Art Theatre, the rich profundity of the famous Vakhtangov-ites, the brilliant dexterity of Meyerhold, the vigorous realism of the Theatre of the Revolution were all reduced to a rich background for the most amazing theatre production it has been the good fortune of this writer to witness.

The difference lies in the fact that the productions of the above theatres remained within the general framework of the theatre as we have always known it, despite many brilliantly radical variations, while at the tiny Krasny Presny, there was unmistakably and unequivocally, *new* theatre. Not the invention of a new trick of setting, or a peculiar dramatic form or any other novelty "pour epater le bourgeois"—but a new synthesis of age-old elements. Very likely there will not be a single theatrical element in the following description that you will not recognize as having been tried hundreds of times. It is the use and juxtaposition of these elements, that has determined the nature of this new form.

The play itself is not new. It is *Mother*, by Maxim Gorky. The dramatization was made especially for this production, reducing its essence to a series of highly concentrated episodes. At that, textually, it isn't really a play as we know it—it is a chronicle—a piece of theatricalized literature. The character-drawing is signalized, of course, by that breadth of vision and depth of emotion that is always Gorky. The mother, work-worn, oppressed by a drunken husband, groping painfully but courageously toward an understanding of the social turmoil around her; the son, surcharged with youth and militant energy, keenly sensitive to the horrors of his environment and bitterly resentful of the oppression of the ruling classes; the grotesque farce of Tsarist "justice"; the heroic self-sacrifice of the revolutionary intellectuals in the cause of the workers; all these are vividly human pen-portraits.

But if you look in the script for "theatre," you won't find it. "Theatre" is in the head of the talented young director of the play, P. V. Tsetnerovich, and the equally gifted

young chief of the theatre, N. P. Okhlopkov and his troupe of actors.

The theatre is a small unpretentious building with a modern facade. We find the house manager, present our credentials as foreign theatre artists, and are shown to our seats. We slowly become aware of our surroundings. Vaguely we look for the curtain. There is no curtain. There is no proscenium. There is no "stage." Are we really in a theatre?

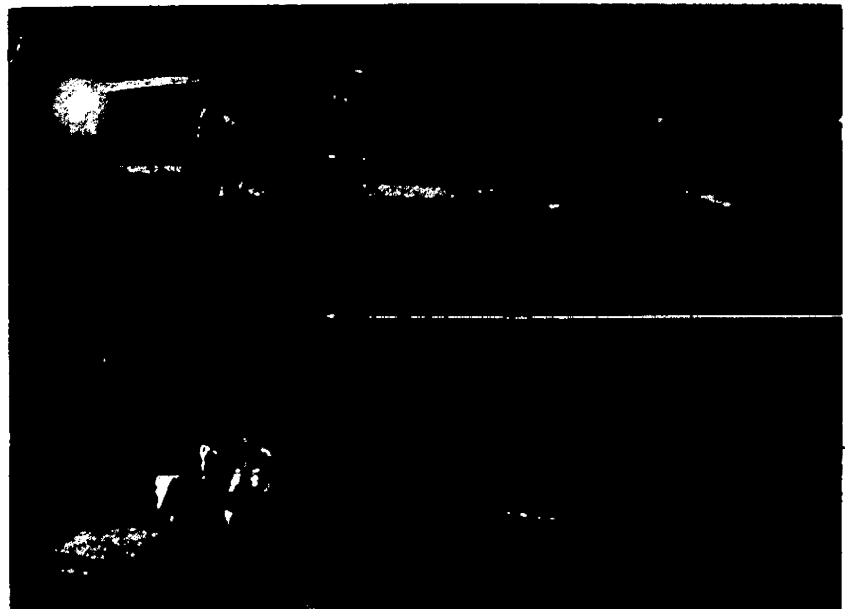
Here is a small rectangular hall seating not more than 500. In the center is a circular platform about ten feet in diameter, formed by concentric discs set one upon the other, decreasing in diameter as they rise a height of about four feet. The platform is surfaced with wooden strips spaced like slats, giving it ruggedness. Around, three walls of the hall run galleries finished in the same manner. They are hardly more than three scaffolds, about four feet wide. The one to our right is six feet from the floor. The one opposite us is a series of three or four-foot platforms dropping from six feet in height on our right to two feet at the balcony line on our left. The one in back of us is twelve feet high, broken in the center by a stairway with one landing. The risers of the steps are concave, following the curve of the central platform. Another stairway connects the balcony with this same landing. Other steps, a runway, platforms, provide a variety of approaches to the principal playing spaces. Everything radiates from the central platform, this point is the vortex. A constant flow of lines and masses toward the center, flung back

again with terrific centrifugal power. The sheer dynamism of all this is immediately perceptible. Above all, the sheer playability of the structure.

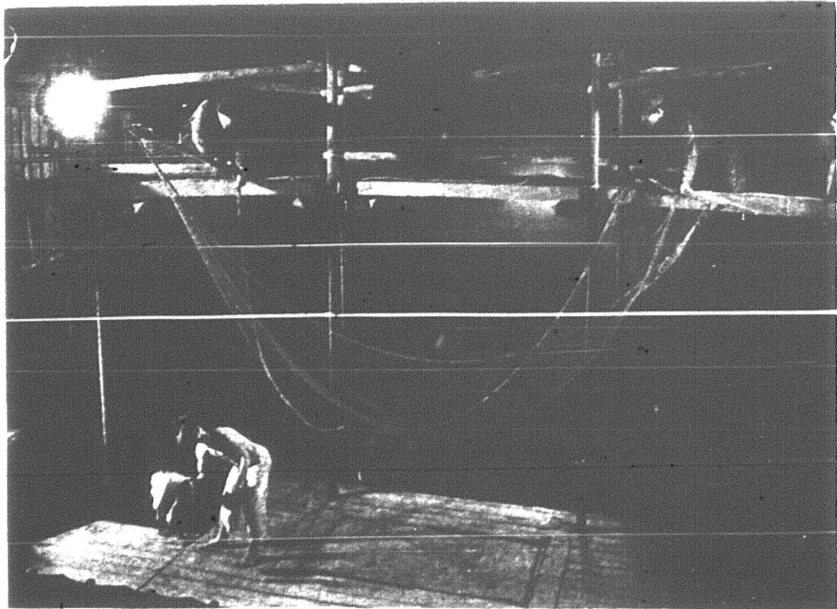
For locale, "atmosphere," "mood"—a few items selected and placed with excellent taste and unerring accuracy. A three-sided shell of plywood panels runs behind the galleries and masks with its dull mahogany-brown finish, the original walls. At broad intervals along the walls are huge "bronze" wreaths, five feet in diameter, encircling an ornately imperial "N" and surmounted by a crest. Metal rods curving from behind the shell dangle square 19th century street lamps at intervals around the three sides. The galleries are bordered by squat "stone" posts, truncated obelisks which support the grim, pendulous arcs of a massive "metal" chain. Lights are suspended from a long elliptical pipe batten overhead center, and are also concealed in various parts of the framework of the runways and platforms.

And where is the audience? Right in it.

But look, the hall has darkened, the play is about to begin. We become silent, tense, expectant. Scene after scene, alive, throbbing, intense, engulf our senses. The acting—is it acting, or have we accidentally wandered into the lives of these people and been caught in the maelstrom of their hopes, sufferings and tragedies? Yes, it is acting, but a new kind of acting. None of the usual "isms" really define it. The nearest is realism, a kind of realism that is as far from the naturalistic impressionism of Stanislavski as from the early stark theatre of Meyerhold. Here is the actor stripped to the



Razbek (The Start). First Production of Krasny-Presny.



Razbek - The Start. First Production of Krasny Presny

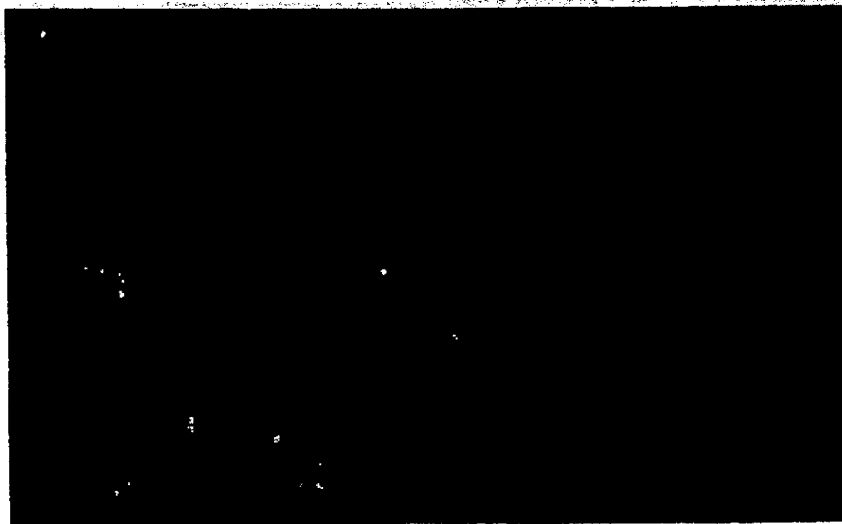
tensed muscle, the glistening eye, the quivering nostril. Here he is—so close to you that with no effort you can touch him, you can sense his trembling muscles, can hear his stifled sob. Here is neither ranting nor studied mannerisms. Here is not the elaborate puppet, but the Man.

SCENE: Mother (beautifully and most un sentimentally played by a thin, wiry little woman) sets the table for dinner. (No table—small props). Poverty—but joy and a festive spirit at the release of her son from jail. She silently and quickly darts about the center platform, with deft movements lays the cloth. Ivan, old friend and comrade helps her. The cloth is whisked from underneath somewhere and placed on the upper step of the platform. Also a loaf of bread. With exquisite simplicity Mother puts the loaf in the hands of the nearest spectator, says, "Please hand this to Ivan," and turns away to get some other necessities. Ivan casually walks over and takes the loaf with a quiet smile of thanks. No one in the audience laughs—no one is embarrassed. The spectator concerned seemed at ease. (He was not a "plant"—it might have been you or I.)

I, on the other hand, experienced a strange sensation. How like my own childhood—when mother would "mobilize" the help of the boys who were hanging around waiting for supper.

SCENE: A workers' political study circle (in those days illegal). Center platform. Piles of pamphlets on a rough table. Half dozen workers, youths and adults sitting around, discussing in low tones. A tall, slim, tired-looking young woman with bright eyes animatedly explaining the problem of the evening. Suddenly, behind us, the sound of tramping feet and jingling spurs. The gendarmes! A raid. Fear. Scurry. A rush of soldiers on the scene. Heavy boots stamp about. The creaking of leather, clank of accoutrement, the smell of gun-oil, sweat and tobacco. Blackout.

SCENE: Revolutionary demonstration. The handful of militant workers from the village are gathering. Familiar faces. New faces. There is the bearded blacksmith who vigorously throws his apron over the be-whiskered employer (in morning clothes) thrusts a shovel in his elegantly gloved hand and tells him indignantly to "try it yourself." There is the Son, elected to carry the flag. They advance, closely packed, up the steps to the runway—silent, fearful, desperately brave. Military calls—a squad of fixed bayonets appear before them. They pause, breathe deeply, advance—closer, closer—the tension is terrible—someone tries to sing, the voice falters and dies. Up another step. A military bark—the click of gunlocks. They hesitate, then a pent-up cry is hurled from a strained throat—a mighty surge forward—a volley. Down and back they hurtle—a tumbled heap of grotesque dead and wounded at the foot of



Scene from *Razbek* (*The Start*)

Photos courtesy of THEATRE ARTS MONTHLY

the stairs. I start from my seat to their aid—when the blackout reminds me that this is theatre.

SCENE: The prison. In the darkness we hear the chink-chink of keys somewhere behind and above us. We turn and look up. The lights reveal the two revolutionary friends, the Son and Ivan, on the high gallery walking behind an old snuffing turnkey. Their progress is barred by a series of four narrow iron-grilled doors. The turnkey unlocks one after the other, locking each one behind him before opening the next. Will the old fool *never* get done? The barred doors seem an endless succession. Finally the last. A grim sally at the warder and they begin to descend the stairway, tentatively, unfamiliarly, slowly they reach the first landing. Then with a rush they fairly fly down the next flight, reach the floor, and facing center, they stop short—light-dazzled—take deep breaths of fresh air. Free!

SCENE: The Trial. Opposite us is the low gallery. In the opening at the center, between two of the posts, is a long velvet-draped table. Smaller tables on the steps below. On the projecting runway to our right and a little above us sit the prisoners—the Son, Ivan and several fellow revolutionaries. A little below us to our left, at the bottom of the stairway which comes from the high gallery, and facing the judges, sit the prisoners' relatives and friends. The bailiff enters to the center—the Court approaches. At the far right-hand corner of the low runway opposite, there appears, from an aperture in the wall, a grotesque procession the Court. Caricatures—and yet real people. Stuffy, snuffing lawyers, braided judges—bearded, mustached, formal clothes—every line—every movement screaming "bureaucrat!" "autocrat!" "twisted inhuman soul!" And look! Keeping pace with their silent funeral procession appear tremendous loops of gold rope and Gargantuan tassels. A glance above reveals that they are suspended on a wire running the length of the hall.

The audience chuckles—what graphic

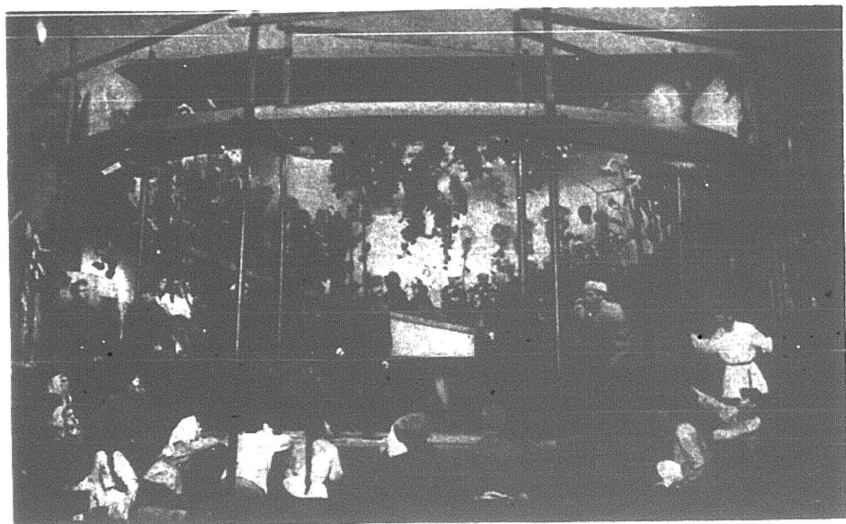
satire! The Court take their places, the loops and tassels continue their pompous way until the whole gallery is framed by them. The Czarist Court of Justice! The trial proceeds. The tragic farce begins. The judge drones unintelligibly. The prisoners on our right speak out in clear angry tones. The Court-appointed "defense" makes a grandiloquent speech—but no words or sounds issue from his gabbling mouth. The prisoners' friends protest and are silenced. The presiding jury sleeps. Bitter farce!

Intermission: We go to stretch our limbs and taut nerves, loathe to break the speed, too enthralled to speak. The bell soon rings and we hurry back. But what now? In our absence a pine grove has grown in the center—young pine saplings—real ones—sheer-stemmed and sparsely branched, spreading their fragrance through the hall. The scene is a picnic of the workers, but at this picnic serious things take place. A group of revolutionary workers meet in this very grove to get their "illegal" literature—the "underground" distributing system.

And so the play proceeds to its close—brilliant image after image, poignant scene after scene. The audience receives it with wild applause and cheers, calling the actors back again and again, until the leading player has to beg off with the plea of exhaustion.

Director Okhlopov is surrounded by enthusiastic visitors (and this is long after the premiere!) The famous German director, Piscator, is there, visibly moved, shaking Tsetnerovich's hand fervently. And then we hear some interesting facts.

The Krasny Presny Theatre is actually in its infancy. Okhlopov, the head and organizer is a former Meyerhold trouper, and a well known actor. Those in America who have seen the Soviet film *Jobs and Men* will remember with pleasure his performance of the "shock-brigadier." He and Tsetnerovich are both refreshingly simple, direct and unassuming and full of an almost boyish enthusiasm for their projects.



Scene from *Razbek* (*The Start*)

PHOTO COURTESY OF THEATRE ARTS MONTHLY

The house is to be remodeled, the balcony to be removed and the seats arranged on swivels so that the spectators can follow the action with perfect ease. The shell (the false walls) the seats and all the platforms are demountable, so that the next production, although based on the same general principles, may be scenically quite different in architecture. In effect this means a different interior for each production. As regards the acting, needless to emphasize the necessity for a radically different technique than that of the proscenium stage. Okhlopkov remarked that months were spent in a painful process of re-education of the actors who, on the regular stage, were con-

sidered quite competent.

The most outstanding achievement is the perfect realization of that priceless unity of actor and auditor on the basis of an intimacy hitherto unknown. Do not be misled by a certain similarity to the "arena" form of theatre. It is not the Gargantuan howling of mobs and the physical violation of the audience with which Reinhardt browbeat his auditors into submission. A man, as a member of a mass is *not* compelled to move, think or act in harmony with the mass *unless* there are previously established emotional and intellectual bonds between the individuals comprising the mass (in contradiction to the hokum about "mob psychol-

ogy" and its "laws"). It is this subtle welding that is done at the Krasny Presny. When you leave the performance you do not draw into your little shell again, but smile in friendly sympathy at your neighbor, and feel impelled to exchange words of comment with erstwhile strangers.

In sum, here is the theatre toward which many of us the world over have been striving, here is the next, historically logical step in the development of our glorious art—born, significantly it seems, in a land where the theatre has been freed from the bonds of commercial monopoly. How far are we from such a theatre?

The Brookfield Playhouse

By JOHN MITCHELL

ONE May morning three men sized up the outlines of a large abandoned tobacco barn on the Pittsfield Post Road near Danbury, Connecticut. This worm-eaten structure slouched against a hill seemed to discourage more than spur what was in their minds; how could the invalid be revived?

It was hard to dream when you looked squarely at it. In front was the municipal garbage dump or what resembled it. The roof had the sag of a broad mare's back. Weeds, moss, birds' nests and general despair shrouded the walls. As for space, there might be room for a dozen middle-sized Holsteins but you had to be more particular when it came to housing an audience. Add brain, muscle and hope to all this and still you'd need a bankroll. "We'll never do it," was one guess.

The Brookfield Players tackled the job of founding a theatre where plays, not the middle class pap of the current stage, could be produced.

The Brookfield Players were incorporated. The barn was owned by one of the three, avoiding the problem of rent. On the land stood a house, where an acting company could be put up; there was a well, toilets; within walking distance, a river from which water for cement could be drawn, and a nearby grove to supply timbers. An acting group, the Repertory Playhouse Associates, was contracted to produce plays on pay-as-you-go basis, and a schedule of performances mapped out.

Someone started painting an inscription, *The Brookfield Playhouse*, in three-foot letters on the side facing the highway. Morning, afternoon and evening they hammered and sawed and dug. May, June, July. A friendly hillside supplied sand and gravel. Three men and a half-ton truck, with shovels little better than pitchforks, had to work pretty steadily to move that sand, but they got it moved.

Meanwhile they tinkered with financial problems. Why not pay with tickets instead of cash? A lumber dealer and a hardware merchant fell in with the idea. Half-ton boulders seemed to move easier after that.

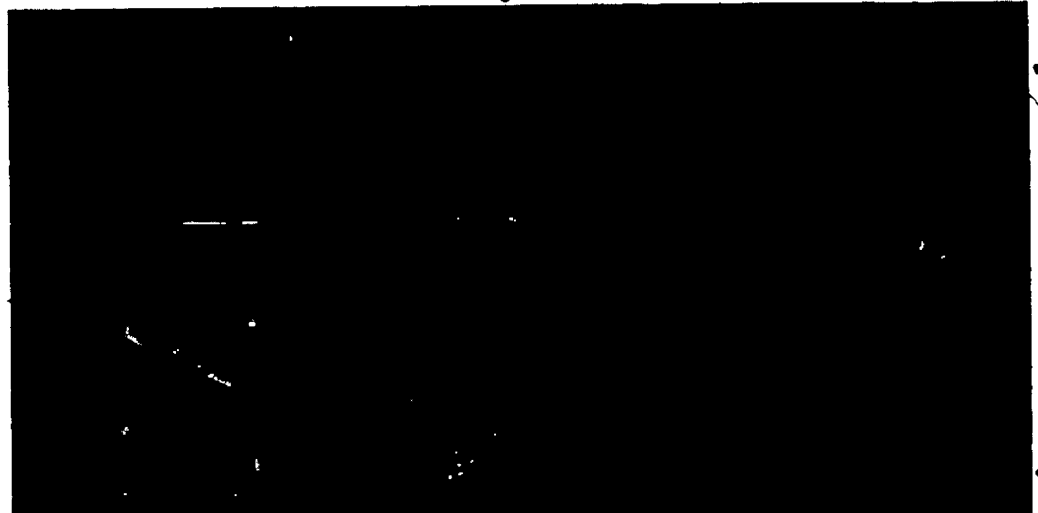
In the country gossip still works better than the radio. The players' reputation grew as suddenly as the adjacent field of asparagus they ate for supper. Every day people were looking in, cars were stopping. People seemed anxious to help and a few tickets were sold. The stage was built, the balcony finished, exits had been cut in the walls, the box office was complete. The cement floor, mixed by hand, had dried perfectly. What about seats? It looked as if benches built of planks would be the only way out. One day came news of a church going bankrupt. Among the assets were some real theatre seats. Some 200 seats were bought for \$20.00 on credit.

A few days before July 17, the date of the opening, came a test which showed how thin was the ice on which they skated. A light-

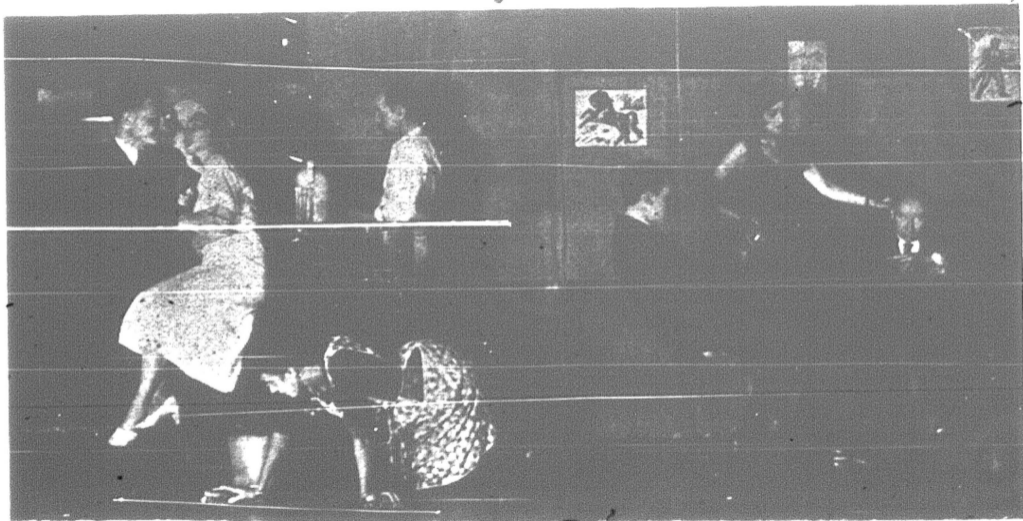
ing system had been installed, and the idea was to string the wires from the adjacent house. Without warning, the power company ruled that a pole was necessary, and a bond of \$100 must be posted. The men stared gloomily over their theatre. Ten-cent store paint had made the ex-church seats look like new. A fine maroon curtain, a bargain found buried in a Manhattan warehouse, hung on the stage, and behind the scenery the actors waited. The barn that had had a capacity of a dozen cows, could now accommodate 175 human beings. But what was the sense of this miracle if the lights could never be lit? Louis Bunin, the technical director, and Virgil Geddes walked the man from the light company up and down the grounds. Why couldn't the wires be strung on that strong maple? They spent a couple of hours this way, gradually exhausting the man's resistance. Finally it was decided.

Geddes' theory about drama audiences is

(Continued on page 30)



R.P.A. Players. Scene from Virgil Geddes' *In the Tradition*



R. P. A. Players: Scene from Virgil Geddes *In the Tradition*

Garbage Delivered To Your Door

By ROBERT STEBBINS

THERE are few fields wherein the technological superiority of the United States over the nations of the world is more amply illustrated than the radio. According to statistics gathered by the *Radio Weekly*, January 24th of this year, the United States possesses 585 broadcasting stations, Russia, her nearest competitor, showing by comparison a meagre 73; but unlike Russia, in our country the capitalist class through the radio came into possession of the last and most elusive of the original four elements, the ether. Let us pause for a moment to ask how they have fulfilled the conditions of their trust. After a consideration of the facts of radio the only conclusion that can be formed is that in this instance, as in all others, the custodians of bourgeois mass culture have again exhibited their unerring talents for cheapening and vulgarizing beyond reclaim whatever their Midas hands touch. One need only contrast the glowing dedications to Public Welfare of Messrs. Sarnoff and Aylesworth, R.C.A. and N.B.C. respectively, at the beginning of each year with Radio's actual accomplishments to detect the deception inherent in the statements of these impressarios. Radio, day after day an unending succession of mediocrity: voiceless warblers, disembodied dance orchestras—"Jazz" is terminologically outlawed at present. Paul Whiteman, for example, with remarkable modesty for one who barely struggles through the intricacies of four quarter time desires to be called Dean of Modern Music and Andre Kostelanetz, the latest purveyor of dessicated insipidities invites people to designate his offerings "Harmonic Sophistication"—senile lecturer-conductors who under the dubious leadership of Walter Damrosch, Old Mother Goose of the air, have done perhaps more than any single agency to pervert musical taste in America, philosopher-songsters like Eddie Cantor whose exophthalmia and extraordinary indifference to truth elevated him to a position of importance in the current scheme of things, demagogues of the Father Coughlin cut, flinging out their handful of moribund stars, and finally, most vicious of all, the "fearless" news commentator dealing the false axes of recovery from a carefully stacked deck.

The efficacy of the radio as an instrument for misinforming great numbers of people, rendering them permanently somnolescent, is being increasingly exploited. Particularly now that the ruling order, poisoned by self-generated toxins has called in that final quack Fascism in a vain attempt to purge its rotting vitals, shall we see the radio utilized both to whip up war propaganda and create group hatred against the militant elements in the working class. That this is no me-

chanical, a priori assumption will perhaps be partially indicated by the following extracts from the editorial in *Radio Guide*, June 9, 1934. There, David Landis, who stylistically and by an extreme predilection for large-capital letters, shows the unmistakable influence of his master William Randolph Hearst, declares: "The great service performed on that occasion (the recent stockyard fire in Chicago) brought home to millions of listeners, far and near, a realization of the fact that in every crisis which may face our civilization, radio will stand in our first LINE OF DEFENSE. Indeed, as one listened to its thrilling voice, it seemed as if some dread invader had marched with ruthless legions upon the city, unaware that this great instrumentality of communication was striving to save it. There was enough of horror in the holocaust to bring home to those who listened a realization of the fact that if this land were at war, radio would be its sentinel. NOT A SENTINEL MARCHING UP AND DOWN BUT FLYING ACROSS THE WIDE SKY, another and a greater Paul Revere. Until this great disaster revealed radio in this thrilling role, we had thought of it as an entertainer, a minstrel, a comedian, a singer, but when we saw it take its tinsel off, put on its armor and march forth to fight, we hailed it as a hero. For what it did in the Chicago fire the country salutes Radio as a warrior, A WARRIOR WITHOUT FEAR AND WITHOUT REPROACH."

Several Wednesday evenings ago over Station W.O.R. Mr. H. Stokes Lott Jr., with all the the delicacy of innuendo that characterizes the use of a rubber-hose jimmy in the hands of the boys in blue, cracked down on the union menace. Eschewing the semi-religious and pallidly erotic themes that compose his chief interests, he ventured forth in a playlet bearing the grim title *Sabotage*. As the scene opens, John, the protagonist, a militant member of an Electrical Workers Union, is heard confiding his ambitions and plans to a side-kick.

"I want power and I'm going to get it. Think I'll stick around and be an underpaid electrician all my life?"

Apropos of nothing his crony replies:

"Well what do you want to hang out with the union for? You're good enough not to have to belong to the union."

John knows he's good but—

"I'm going to get power *through* the union. See! They're asking lots of questions and I know the answers."

There is a brief interlude during which the orchestra plays "Heart-wounds" to limn the author's grief at such a state of affairs and to adumbrate the approaching tragedy.

The next scene brings a view of the union man's home life. Johnny Junior is just pulling out of a bad case of diphtheria. It was hard yet—

"Johnny wouldn't be my kid if he couldn't lick *anything*," remarks the U. M. His wife Mary is still worried. For the moment, however, she turns to other troubles.

"John, I hear you're active in the union. For God's sake don't go there tonight. Things are fine. The company's good to us. Gave us this house and garden. Your wages are good and my embroidery is picking up. Don't make useless trouble for yourself."

"Oh yeah," shouts back John. "From the way you talk the company's our friend. Well I want to tell you the workers never got anything without fighting for it and we aren't stopping."

"All right," answers Mary. "There you go getting all steamed up over nothing. Go to your meeting but please let the *other* men make the speeches. I'm sure the company is keeping its eye on you." Many similar flashes of profound insight follow, accompanied by appropriate strains from the *Last Spring*, *Les Preludes* when the going gets tough and *Panis Angelicus* for the purgation after the catastrophe. While John is away, actually to blow up the central dynamo of the electrical works, (*Allegro Tempestuoso*—more tremelo in the bass, please!) Johnny Junior takes a turn for the worse. The doctor is hurriedly called in. An operation is imperative.

"I'm afraid, Mrs. Jones, we shall have to cut open his throat to permit him to breathe. It's our only chance."

In the midst of the operation, the doctor calls for more light at which very moment a loud crash from the tympani announces the explosion of the dynamo and the lights go out over the entire city leaving Junior to bleed his life out in the dark. John returns jubilant to a house of death. Victory is his and the union's, but at what a cost! Before him in the dim candle-light he sees his son, a corpse in the arms of his wife, in her eyes hatred for his infanticide. Gone life, gone love, gone all. And the union's to blame! The broadcast furnished an excellent example of what the workers of the United States may expect as the alignment in the class struggle becomes clearer and more naked. Against the attacks of radio's well-remunerated heroin peddlers the unremitting protests of all class-conscious workers whether unionized or not must be hurled to make future broadcasts of the above nature too uncomfortable for repetition.

Hisses, Boos and Boycotts

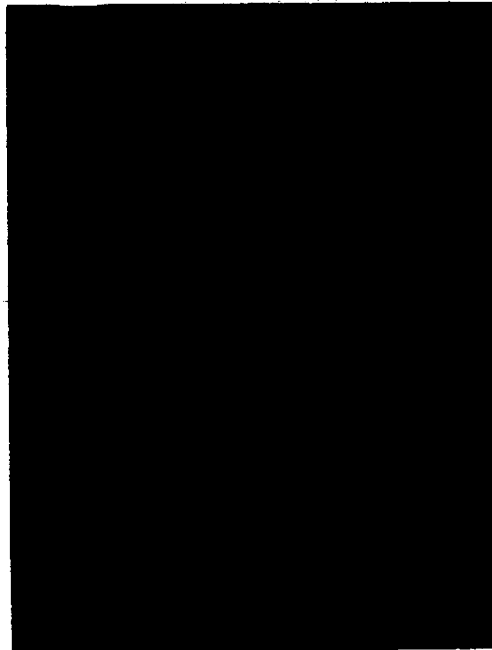
By LEO T. HURWITZ

DURING the years of the movie between the last World War and the crash, the growing audience was lulled into boom-time quiescence with screen experiences of vicarious adventure, chorus-girl love, million dollar society and get-rich-quick heroes. As the subject matter of the movies drew further and further away from the lives of the moviegoers into the realm of insipid fantasy, and as the film grew to its true function under temporarily stabilized capitalism—a soothing shot in the arm—the audience succumbed gradually and surely to passivity, apathetically sucking on Hollywood's doped breast. The inalienable rights of audiences to hiss and cheer, to approve and denounce, were indifferently abdicated. In the darkened theatre the audience sat and absorbed the hypnotic gesticulations on the screen, resigning two hours from their lives to watch a waking dream. It took more than the waving flag, Coolidge in feather headdress being inducted into an Indian tribe, or one of the many prize fights of the century, to rouse the filmgoers to more than weak response. In fact, the audience came to be assuaged, not moved. They soon became self-conscious of expressing emotion about the happenings on the screen. It was all unreal, just moving shadows on a screen that was simply a white sheet when the lights went up.

But—each night last week more than five hundred moviegoers picketed a theatre in Yorkville . . . and a movie house on Broadway became with every performance a mass demonstration, the audience loudly signifying its approval and disapproval of every shot in the film!

What has happened to audiences? What has happened to the movies? What is converting the movie theatre from a dark place where masses communally dreamed with their eyes open into a theatre forum where masses will more and more thunder their protests and cheers about the live issues of the day?

During the holocaust of economic crisis which has been sweeping through the capitalist world for five years the great moguls of the flicker industry have not found it as profitable to present the abstract fantasy stuff they had taught their public to lap up. The working class, which makes up the vast majority of the movie audience in this country, was pricked awake by the exploitation of the owners of capital. The brutal economic facts which stare a worker in the face with cuts of wages, speed-ups and months of unemployment are not conducive to paying his hard-earned quarter for a lulling opiate. As quickly as the sales staffs could



Glorified Nazis from *S. A. Mann Brand*

count the pulse of the box office, the movies were changed from narcotics into inebriating stimulants—following the pattern of the movies in every major or minor emergency of capitalism—the World War, the labor struggles of the early twenties, and even the Spanish-American War, when the technique of the films was as infantile as a baby's cry. War, unemployment, penology, Hoovervilles, bank crashes, farm and strike struggles, N.R.A. and numberless other questions which concern the working class of this country have become "proper" subjects for the films. During this period ownership of the movie industry has been centralized in the hands of a few great banks, and very capably they have been using the film medium in features, shorts and newsreels to cover up the failure of capitalism, their system, to solve its economic problems. With the rising tide of working class militancy they have attempted to divert it from its aims, to slander and lie about the leaders of the workers, and to present a roseate picture of future N.R.A. prosperity. Fascist demagoguery has become the keynote of Hollywood's and Wall Street's movies. Along with the narcotics they are serving up stimulants to patriotism and jingoism.

No wonder then that audiences are beginning to sit forward in the movie houses, no wonder that they begin to make comparisons between their experiences and films.

Some weeks ago the Nazi-made propaganda picture, *S. A. Mann Brand*, opened at an out of the way neighborhood theatre

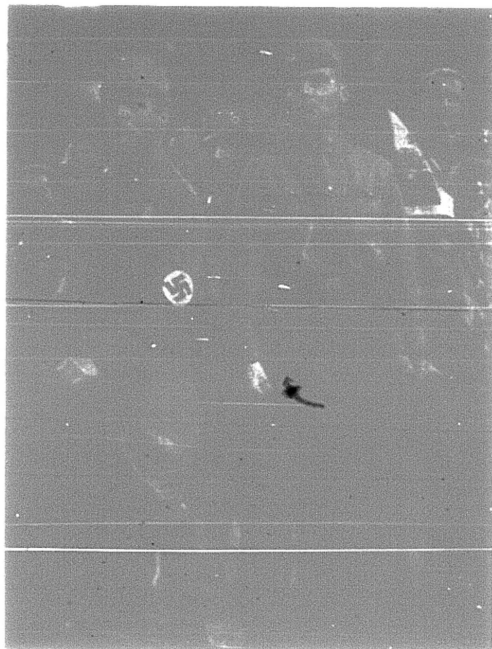
in Yorkville, unannounced in the press. Protest vigorously raised by the Film and Photo League had prevented it from opening in a centralized location, and the Bavarian Film Co., film propagandists in America for the Hitler regime, were forced to eliminate most of the rabid anti-Jewish sequences including the repeated cry: "Perish Jews!" Storm troopers combed the German neighborhood and coerced shopkeepers into buying blocks of tickets. Of the film as shown it need only be said, in the words of the leaflet distributed by the Film and Photo League and the Anti-Nazi Federation, that "it is a disgusting and vicious attempt to whitewash the murderous reign of terror of the Nazis in Germany." The trick is turned by portraying Communists and trade union leaders as greasy, dark-skinned, unkempt criminals and perverts, eager to shoot down even a guileless Nazi boy; the Soviet envoy as a lewd conspirator, his boudoir crowded with houris, conspiring the destruction of the German race and using every mean trick, including getting a Jewish boss to fire an innocent Nazi, to attain his ends. The Nazis, on the other hand, are well shaven, clean, fair-skinned true gentlemen, who have the proper respect for their mothers, and whose only purpose is to rid Germany of Marxist and Jewish scum so that Germany may awaken to its true destiny (heads rolling, unemployment on the increase, production and trade falling, civil war impending in New Germany).

The film is made in the best fake blood-and-thunder Hollywood manner. It is only the obtuseness of such reviewers as H. T. Smith of the *Times* and Furnas of the *Herald Tribune* to the essential reality of Russian films as compared with the hideous hokum of the Nazi product that permits them to compare this picture with the films of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovschenko, Erm-ler and Barnet. But it is just the smooth meretriciousness of *S. A. Mann Brand* that makes it so dangerous for German-American and American audiences, a danger which the leaders of the workers' film movement quickly realized and which precipitated action in the form of picketing and boycott. Each night open air meetings here held on the corner opposite the theatre, exposing the film in speeches and leaflets to crowds of more than five hundred passers-by. At the first demonstration police aided the Nazis by breaking up a mass picket line in front of the theatre and clubbing the protesting moviegoers. Succeeding demonstrations, however, impressed the police with the mass pressure behind this protest, and pickets bearing placards were thereafter unmolested

Hisses, Boos and Boycotts

By LEO T. HURWITZ

DURING the night of the 1954-55 season, the New York City School Board, in a move that has caused a great deal of controversy, has decided to remove the name of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from the list of names of the schools in the city. The board's action is the result of a long and bitter struggle between the board and the parents of the children of the schools named after Dr. King. The board has decided to remove the name of Dr. King from the list of names of the schools in the city because of the "hisses, boos and boycotts" which have been directed against the schools named after Dr. King. The board has decided to remove the name of Dr. King from the list of names of the schools in the city because of the "hisses, boos and boycotts" which have been directed against the schools named after Dr. King. The board has decided to remove the name of Dr. King from the list of names of the schools in the city because of the "hisses, boos and boycotts" which have been directed against the schools named after Dr. King.



by police or storm troopers. In a short time *S. A. Mann Brand* was playing to empty houses and finally was withdrawn as a result of the forewarning given to the moviegoers by these demonstrations. In Portland, Oregon, several months ago, this same film was driven from the screen after showing one day, by workers mobilized in protest against this fascist filth despite the attempted intimidation and attack of the police.

For such films as *S. A. Mann Brand*, whose lie is cut from the whole cloth and whose aim is complete deception, there is only one answer by audiences who recognize the force of the movies as persuasive propaganda for the *status quo*: boycott and exposure by means of demonstrations, delegations to theatre owners and distributors, picketing and critical broadsides to impress film makers and theatre owners that the audience is no longer asleep, that it will no longer abide the fraud and chicanery of the screen. But every movie performance has something to say of our lives and our times, and these statements, however brief or fragmentary, must be answered within the theatre. Every newsreel can be converted into a mass demonstration against war and fascism (shots of new armaments, preparedness speeches by admirals, generals and Cabinet secretaries), against police terror and strike-breaking, against intervention in Cuba, for unemployment insurance, by hissing, cheering and loudly raising the rele-

vant slogans in the proper places.

The moving picture theatre, the church's successor as the meeting place of the masses, can be transformed from a dope den into a forum where the working masses of the country raise their powerful voice—as was done in the Rialto Theatre in New York last week at the showing of *World in Revolt*. The film is an opportunistic attempt to capitalize upon the rising militancy of the



Drawing by G. Giltinger

American worker by presenting news shots of mass upsurge in many countries with a pseudo-neutral commentary. In the true liberal manner, all underlying causes, the specific economic conditions and demands for betterment were omitted, and the blame for violence placed implicitly on the "madness of the mob" instead of on the shoulders of authority where it belongs. The audience, however, was alive to the challenge of the film, and for the hour of its performance, booed the murder of Socialist workers in Vienna, the violent scenes of government troops charging workers in Cuba, India, China, Germany; hissed the figures of Hitler and Mussolini, cheered the heroism of the workers, the great Paris May First demonstration, Lenin, and Soviet construction in the U.S.S.R., shouted "Bunk" and "B-loney" to the smug episode on America—"Work . . . work . . . work! The offensive is on! . . . the enemy is depression. . . . Work—more work! Young men saving our forest treasure. . . . A million people have been put to work—another million—many more millions—this is our revolution . . . the Blue Eagle triumphs."

When one of the audience who had shouted "Bunk" to the New Deal ballyhoo was asked:

"What are you shouting for? They can't hear you," he turned and replied:

"You're listening to us. The theatre owner hears us. Hollywood and Roosevelt in the White House will soon hear our voices."

Marion Models, Inc.

By NATHANIEL BUCHWALD

RECENTLY, a young group of proletarian actors, the Theatre Collective, produced *Marion Models, Inc.*, a collective play by Olga Shapiro, John E. Bonn, and Jack Shapiro. To one who is well acquainted with the dramaturgy of the needle trades, *Marion Models, Inc.* is a decided step forward. Although the play suffers from schematicism and the spouting of revolutionary phrases, the authors, nevertheless, brought forward a number of individual persons who are very convincing in the light of reality. Although the schematic revolutionary workers who make the highly revolutionary speeches are the chief characters of the play, there are, however, true dramatic personages who move you by their experiences and not by their talk. The model who, for her scant wages, must go out with debauched buyers, is far more dramatic than the revolutionary workers who organize and lead the strike against the sweatshop bosses. And the bosses themselves are not portrayed in the accepted clichés, but are very human beings. One of the bosses is the promoter, the man who brings in the customers and makes the plans. The second is the money-

man and the driver of the workers. Both are somewhat exaggerated but nevertheless quite believable. It is refreshing to see how the dramatists attempted to show us the business difficulties of the bosses no less than the conditions of the workers. In this way, we see the mechanism which drives both sides to the inevitable conflict. This concreteness, to a large degree, rescued the play from the usual schematic mold. There is also individualization of the workers. The leaders of the workers are the weakest. They are the well-known figures who can be depended upon to say the "right" words. But the other workers are believable.

As is often the case in our young revolutionary literature, the negative types are portrayed with more conviction and understanding than the positive. The best portrait of the entire gallery is the business agent and racketeer of the right union. He was the only real and true labor faker that I have seen on the revolutionary stage. Also convincing is the scab who tries to attack the Negro errand-boy of the shop.

This human quality is also present among the workers. There are two characters, two

very live people, who interest the audience from the opening of the play—the model and the Italian sample-maker. Any one of these two characters could have been made the central figure of the drama and thus saved the play from its clichés. The model who can no longer bear her lot and the backward worker whose conflict with his conscience before he goes over to the strikers—in both these figures there is material for drama. Unfortunately, the play treats them as minor characters.

The play gives one the impression of struggle between originality and stencil. Stencil is the victor. On the whole, *Marion Models, Inc.* is similar to the other "agitas" of the sort. The Collective's revision had added much to the play from an ideological viewpoint, and has lost much dramatically and in the development of character.

On the stage the play was much worse than it actually is in the script. The blame for this can be traced to the direction which encumbered the play in an arty formal set, with a maze of steps and platforms which were annoying both to actors and audience.

(Continued on page 30)

NEWSBOY - From Script to Performance

By ALFRED SAXE

THERE has been much discussion pro and con about form in the workers theatre. Which is the real revolutionary form? Is it satire, realism, symbolism, etc? Must we laugh in the revolutionary theatre or shall solemnity rule the day? In the Workers' Laboratory Theatre we have been producing various forms for the last four years. Patiently, diligently we have gone about dissecting the elements of various theatricalisms looking for forms which will best solve the problems of the theatres of action—namely, to present a story dynamically, clearly, in terms of dramatic images within a time space of not more than forty minutes.

For four years we have been searching for forms pliable enough to fit any content, to be cast to any mold—any situation. By this time it is obvious that no one form will ever solve the problems of the Theatre of Action. To expect such is to narrow and simplify a problem which must of necessity—as a reflection of actual conditions—be as varied as these conditions. The more varied our approach to the present forms, the more critical and experimental our approach to these forms, the more quickly will new forms be added to the old.

Four years' work then have helped in the attempt at mastery of the old forms and, further, have already assisted in the development of a new form which to date shows great possibility for use in the Workers' theatre. One of the most pliable, dynamic theatre of action forms which has yet appeared is the technique utilized in *Newsboy*.

What are the elements of form and content which went into the construction of *Newsboy*? Groups facing similar problems throughout the country are to search for what—in the mastery of this technique?

Very sketchily I will attempt to draw a picture of the major element a director must be conscious of in approaching his problem. I boil it down to the essentials which make up *Newsboy*—conflict—mounting—economy—transition—timing.

CONFLICT is the basis, the root of all life movement. The Marxist who studies the dialectic forces, the scientist who analyzes the struggle of plant and animal life—the molecular conflict of matter—understand very well the law of conflicting elements. The theatre long before the approach of materialism made use of conflict unconsciously as the basic factor in a play, without realizing its tremendous role in society. Today we have come to a historic period when this conflict has reached a higher level. Marxism has penetrated the entire economic and political thought. Industrialization has quickened the conscious-

ness of this interplay of social forces on the minds of millions of workers. The crisis has torn down illusion after illusion and brought these conflicting forces more and more into the open. As a form *Newsboy* is a definite reflection of the quickening process of this conflict. It is pitched at the feverish tempo of industrialization gone mad. A scene comes and goes as swiftly as a machine. Push a lever and a character springs up like magic—press a button, he disappears, changes quickly to another character. What essentially makes *Newsboy* dynamic? It is the intensity, speed and conflict of present day industrialized America. Nothing more. Here we must look for our answer to form such as *Newsboy*. The more deeply we go into the processes responsible for the growth of society and all its mainsprings; the more thoroughly we study the conflicts in today's and tomorrow's events, the more capable we become of producing such dynamic material. Conflict is the first and primary factor. Conflict never leaves *Newsboy*. An analysis of any part of the script finds this clash—everywhere. In the opening scene, for example, playing time of sixty seconds, the following conflicts take place:



Newsboys fighting. Clash—
Competition under capitalism.

Young man tries to "pick up" girl.

Clash—Conflict of sexes.



Blind woman begs from newsboy.
Clash—he doubts her blindness.

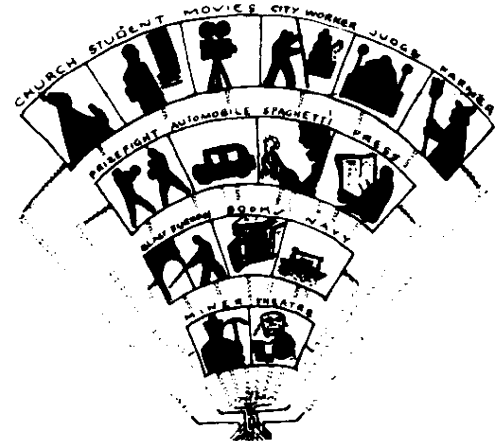
Charitable gent gives blind woman penny. Clash—between smile and penny.



Within the space of sixty seconds four completely separate conflicts take place. We will find consistent conflict through the entire play. *Newsboy* is built around a series of conflicting images to the ideology of the newsboy and the attempt to draw him to a higher level of understanding. Every scene drips with this clash. The scene from "1931" is built on conflict. The third degree scene is one of tightening tense conflict between the Negro and his torturers. Every available inch of space and time is taken up with the clash of two forces—the dialectical method is the manner of conceiving the

things and beings of the universe as in the process of becoming through the struggle of contradictory elements and their resolution. Thus with a thorough grasp of dialectics and its application, directors of the Workers' Theatre will be able to produce dramatic dynamic realities.

All Threads Lead to the



Materialistic Interpretation of History

The above diagram shows a series of seemingly unrelated incidents. Under capitalist society we are educated to believe that these incidents take place without rhyme or reason—that chaos bestrides the world like a colossus; that luck, opportunity, good fortune, chance and the roulette wheel make or break not only kings, queens and presidents but also, a lack-a-day, the poor masses. The Marxist approach smashes this theory to bits. The Marxist interpretation of history clarifies and shows scientifically the relationship of the smallest details and incidents in every part of the world. The clash between the two dominating classes (Historical Materialism), the growth of this struggle leads today to a terrific heightening and quickening of the process of struggle throughout the world—and increase in the pitch acceleration and rapidity with which the above events happen. *Newsboy* as a form is particularly suitable to throw into relief, to bring out the relationship of these incidents. Here is not the conventional two or three-act production which requires an organic and intricate development of plot—a psychological analysis of characters—a growth of character to character and act to act. There is no plot, no relationship as we are acquainted with it in the ordinary theatre. Instead we take as our plot the line of Marxist thought of a particular poem, a short story, etc. (Note diagram—the thread which joins all.) Around this thread we are at liberty to choose any scene at random. In *Newsboy* for example the plot is as follows:

to show the truth and strength of the revolutionary press in relationship to the working class and in opposition to this the hypocrisy of the capitalist controlled newspapers. This is what is expressed in poetic images in the poem *Newsboy* by V. J. Jerome. Translating these poetic images into dramatic ones allows the liberty of choosing any one of hundreds of incidents, allows one to choose scenes from plays already written (scenes in *Newsboy* from Paul and Claire Sifton's "1931" and Maltz and Skar's powerful *Merry Go Round*). Let us take for example the following line from the poem *Newsboy*:

Seventeen million men and women.

To dramatize this image we picked the scene from "1931." Any number of other things could have been used. Evictions—men sleeping in subways, parks—death, misery, starvation in hundreds of forms happening in every section of the world. . . . Having finished this scene we revert back to the poem carrying the thought of the poem further. Thus image after image is built and developed. Incident follows incident without the conventional continuity of conventional drama—street scene, bread-line, ballet—scenes which could just as easily be utilized in any other production.

These scenes, however, are built just as the conventional play is built—a logical climax, a growth of the idea to its completion. How these scenes are placed or mounted to allow for this development, both artistic and ideological, becomes highly important. Here one must thoroughly plan, step by step, the process of development, allowing for both the social and artistic value of the play to grow up together. Scenes must be mounted to build emotional and ideological climax organically to its finale. The pliability of this form—the fact that scenes may skip from coast to coast—from New York to San Francisco to Rome, utilizing the Marxist thread to keep them together, makes it possible for this form more so than any other to keep pace, to best reflect, to gather these incidents of seeming chaos and clarify them with scientific materialist understanding.

ECONOMY — TRANSITION — TIMING. To carry through successfully such a form requires not alone the thorough study and application of dialectics and historical materialism—but, it goes without saying, theatrical knowledge; of problems of the theatre conquering of all its forms (for such a form as *Newsboy* which is a composite and makes use of several forms in one—where the characters are at times symbols then real—where they jump from newsboy to thug to minister) and mastery of technique is essential. In *Newsboy* as in other plays of a similar character there are several outstanding technical problems which face director and actor. I choose at the present stage of theoretical development to touch on

three elements. Economy — transition — timing. Here it is necessary to state that none of these elements are clear cut. Each overlaps into the other, each molds and affects the other.

Here is a conversation which took place the other day after a particularly effective performance of *Newsboy*.

He—I certainly enjoyed sweating through that performance.

I—Thank you (followed a discussion on the merits of collective work).

He—By the way, how long does the performance run?

I—Twelve minutes.

He (astonished)—What! You're kidding me.

I—Certainly not.

He—You must be mistaken. I'm sure it takes at least a half-hour.

I (gently but firmly)—No. Exactly twelve minutes.

Here is the answer to the problem of economy. Every minute of a short production is highly important. Every minute of that twelve minutes is so full that the audience has lived through an entire evening. There is no waste. Every minute is filled with conflict, action, with theatrical pictures. Say what you have to say—and be done saying it. Thus scene by scene, point by point, idea following idea, each germinating to its emotional crisis, developing and growing minute by minute to a final great crash, the idea has crysallized—the play is finished.

I have seen many potentially good plays ruined because there was a lack of recognition of that essential element—economy of words and movement—no growth to new ideas but a constant repetition of the old ideas hiding in different words—prolonging a scene and dragging in ideas which are not important and in keeping with the sum total of the content. *To assist in achieving economy in production a clear and thoroughly planned script, step by step, from idea to idea, is highly important, with constant revision from rehearsal to rehearsal.*

Economy is closely tied up with the element of timing. Timing is a problem of every Workers' Theatre production. In such a script as *Newsboy* timing becomes even more a part of the whole than in the conventional drama. Here we depend on speed and precision, one scene must dovetail into the next without a second's loss. A cross-section of events takes place—a bread-line—a street—a torture cell—never for a moment is the stage empty—as one actor leaves the other enters. Now are we to know the proper moment when actions should begin—stop? What is the basis for an understanding of the timing problems? Here we must understand the value and relationship of rhythm to the theatre. We find everything in life is rhythmic. The earth spins a rotating rhythm on its axis. The seasons come and go in rhythmic succession. All

nature is rhythmically arranged. Our bodies work, play, walk in rhythm. Timing is the concrete application of these rhythms to the theatre. Timing is the coincidence in time of two or more actions. There are hundreds of variations in timing—some obvious, others highly subtle. The more conscious we become, the more keenly we adjust eye and ear to the rhythm and timings in realities around us, the more sensitive our reactions and our ability to transmit these rhythms to the stage. The director, let us say, is faced with the problem of bringing out competition under capitalism. He is given Capitalist A representing one trust, and B the other. The action is worked out as follows—at no time do A and B sit or stand together. When A sits—B is standing fully erect. And when B hits the chair we find A standing. If the scene is to be effective it depends on exact timing. *At exactly the point when A hits the chair B is standing.* Make use of musical time—four beats to a measure. At the end of the fourth beat A is standing, B sitting—at the end of the next measure the positions are exactly reversed. Simple enough in such an obvious problem in timing. *Newsboy* is filled with a series of subtle rhythms. The timing, the exact beat when one scene gives way to the next, one character enters, does his bit and makes way for a new character—a new scene—is what helps build the intense speed and excitement of the production.

Perhaps the most difficult task in evolving *Newsboy* and one which is still far from clarified in its actual technical process of growth is what we term *Transitions*—changes from scene to scene. In a series of unrelated incidents as in *Newsboy* the task is that of bridging the gap from realism to symbolism, from street scene to home scene to breadline and yet allowing your audience to understand to believe with the character in the illusion of this change. Here the change will be dictated by the material—at times soft, at times smooth, flowing easily into the next scene itself. Timing plays an important role. Mechanically again let us do our transition by means of beat. In three beats we shall change from a street scene into a breadline. As the street scene ends—Beat One—the actors freeze—not a soul moves. *first movement*—preparation for the transition.

Beat Two—the actors make one movement which relates itself to hungry men on the breadline, for example—hunching over—turning up collar, etc. Here the softness or strength of the movement is dictated by the content, *i.e.*, if the content is weak the transition movement will be weak and *vice versa*. *Second movement*—transition half accomplished.

Beat Three—all actors turn on the third beat and to an increased rhythm fall one behind the other to a steady hunger pace—

(Continued on page 29)

Facing the New Audience

Sketches Toward an Aesthetic for the Revolutionary Theatre—Part II.

By MICHAEL BLANKFORT

Prefatory Note

In the first of these articles which appeared in the June issue of *NEW THEATRE* I indicated that the core of the theatre's appeal was its ability to satisfy the wishes of its audience. I pointed out how wishes emerged from the conflicts in the individual either with himself or with others or with society; and by society I mean not only "the human nature" of Ibsen, but also the class struggle of Marx. A distinction was made between wishes which were predominantly economic and those which were predominantly psychological, and those, finally, which gave the appearance of being psychological but which, in reality, grew out of a very definite class bias.

In the present article, the specific procedure by which the wish is satisfied will be described, and further, how wish fulfillment is utilized, consciously and unconsciously, by the bourgeois theatre in order to complete the cultural and economic purposes of capitalism.

In the succeeding articles the analysis of the class role of wish fulfillment will be completed; analyses of class-collaboration plays, "injustice" plays, and revolutionary plays will be made; and certain problems both aesthetic and immediate, will be presented.

One more introductory word is in order. The ideas proposed in these articles are set down not so much to make a point or to create a theory, as they are to start the ball rolling. The revolutionary theatre can never rest on its laurels any more than an organizer can. It must continually check on itself and grow. These ideas, therefore, should be in the nature of stimuli. They represent a "thinking out loud" of the problems we face. If by means of argument or counter-argument these problems are clarified, I will have done my job.

How Wishes Are Satisfied

There are so many unconscious wishes in our personalities that it would be a thankless job as well as an endless one to ascertain all of them. Wishes are functions of the individual's history, his particular class history, and the history and state of the culture in which he lives; they emerge, as we have seen, out of the economic and psychological conflicts raging in and around us. To treat them, therefore, as a branch librarian catalogues new books, is both out of our realm and off the issue. But this we know, however; they are ever present, and are satisfied, transiently or permanently, in the theatre.

It should be clear from the above that it is neither our function nor purpose to treat with the audience as though its wishes were one, or treat with plays as though they satisfy this or that one wish. All we can do is to discern, generally, in what manner the ordinary run of audience wishes are fulfilled, and not what particular wish is fulfilled and how. It is not a matter of ultimate importance to a psychologist that a particular white rat goes to a particular foodbox

to eat; it is important for him to discover certain laws of animal behavior. So here, we are interested not what the specific wish is, nor how it is specifically satisfied, but in certain general observations of theatrical behavior.

There are three ways in which the wish is satisfied. The first way was decried by Mr. Nathan when he said, "A theatre audience enters a theatre with the deliberate intention . . . of forgetting itself for a couple of hours. . . ." The psycho-analysts use a word which can be used here too: *Sublimation*. To Freud the process of sublimation is an unconscious and a sexual one, but in the audience it is both conscious and unconscious, and it may be social, economic and psychological as well as sexual. If to Freud, the concept implies "an exchange of infantile sexual aims for interests or modes of pleasure-finding which are no longer directly sexual" then to us, the concept implies an exchange of socio-economic conflicts for conflicts which are neither directly social nor economic, nor even remotely connected with them.

A business man harassed by and in conflict with bankruptcy or strikes has undoubtedly a wish to escape. He seeks out, therefore, that which will allow him to escape. He seeks for an experience which is as far from reality as possible. When he goes to the theatre he exchanges the conflicts of the day for the surcease of the evening.

The tired business man has been made the scapegoat of "aristocratic" critics who have never wanted to understand that the stenographer or the linesman, the truckdriver or the label maker are even more tired, and are the real victims, to say the least, of more vicious and sharper social and economic conflicts. This group, of course, cannot afford the luxurious relaxation of the *Follies* or an *Ah! Wilderness* or a *Men in White*. They have to content themselves with a burlesque show, a movie, or a warm bath. This is not said in a plea for sympathy, for the worker who escapes in that sort of pabulum pays less for it, but it is necessary to point out that the wish to escape from an uncomfortable reality is not a bourgeois wish as distinguished from a proletarian wish, but is, simply, a human, all too human wish.

However, in the bourgeois theatre, this wish is satisfied in a bourgeois manner as would be expected. The soothing syrup is doled out in a way, as we shall see, which is subtly connected with the aggrandizement of bourgeois virtue, morality, ethics and economy.

When we arrive at the second way of wish-fulfillment we discover that the theatre may offer more than relaxation. It can be more than a warm bath; it can be a good cathartic as well.

The question of the *purgative* value of the theatre is an ancient one. Many writers have tried to explain it one way or another but whether they conceived of it with Aristotle or with Hegel, whether the purgation was an affirmation of the human will as Nietzsche saw it, or a release of unconscious rebellious energy as Bergson conceived it, the theatre as represented in the tragedy, fulfills its function of subduing, for the moment, the audience wish.

When we view a modern tragedy, a bourgeois tragedy, if you will, there is something more than suppositious Aristotelean "ennoblement." Let us assume, for the moment, that O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* makes verbal many of the thoughts which we have dared think but have been too cowardly to speak. In this way it has satisfied a wish of ours. But O'Neill is a Catholic, let us say, believing in God and the rights of private property. His characters and the ideas they illustrate represent a class overburdened by property and neuroses. Those of us then who are satisfied by this tragedy must have participated at one time or another, in psychological adventures not unlike the characters in *Strange Interlude*. This must be true or else the conflicts in the play would be unintelligible to us, leaving us with a wish or wishes unsatisfied.

Before going into a more detailed analysis of the wish as satisfied by tragedy, let us see what the third method of wish fulfillment is.

If *Strange Interlude* satisfies those of us, who, bourgeois-minded to that degree that we can understand and be satisfied by the portrayal of upperclass, psychological conflicts (neuroses which emerge from decay), then there are a long list of dramas from Bouccault's *The Long Strike* to the latest cinematic transcriptions from Hollywood which satisfy those of us who are on the borderland of economic insecurity, the middle class, and unclass-conscious workers: (Class conscious workers are also economically insecure but they are not easily satisfied). In these plays, in one form or another, the hero or the heroine rises out of her station. The worker marries the boss' daughter or the starving stenographer is found by a casting director, and after having frustrated his attempts at seduction, marries and gets a job at five hundred a week. Moving pictures like *If I Had a Million*

or plays like *The Milky Way* in which a milkman is made over into a millionaire world's champion prizefighter are further examples. Another aspect of the "democratic" and consoling spirit in the theatre may be observed in plays like *Biography* or in any moving picture starring Joan Crawford. Here, the hoi polloi, the lower middle class and the proletariat, are allowed, for a small admission price, to gaze unseen on the adventures of the rich and the mighty.¹ Out of this specious liaison with the upperclass, a fiction is created that beneath their trappings the wealthy are just as human and even more troubled than the poor and the poor ought to be glad they're poor. "Let them eat cake" is no longer in style as a slogan. Today the upper class might conceivably say, "Even we eat bread."

The Role of Wish Fulfillment

As we have intimated before the theatre doesn't exist in a cataleptic fit all its own, in a private ward with airtight windows, artificial ventilation and indirect lighting. Rather it is in the full-bodied mainstream of life, and those of us who believe that life today is inseparable from the clash of cultures around us, cannot accept the advice of that ostrich critic who said, "If we wish to understand dramatic literature itself, we must seek understanding in the great plays and not in the dead material out of which plays are made." Rather our course is laid down by Plekhanov who wrote:

"In the productions of art and literary tastes of a given time is expressed the social psychology; and in the psychology of a society which is divided into classes much will remain paradoxical to us if we continue to ignore—as the historical idealists do, despite the best intentions of the bourgeois historical scientists—the mutual relations of classes and the class struggle."

Our next question therefore is this: How do the three means of wish-fulfillment in the theatre play a role in the "mutual relation of classes and the class struggle?"

If there are classes in society, there are class interests. The class in power strives to perpetuate itself and its power. It uses all the conscious organs of self-perpetuation: the schools, the church, the press, legislation, the courts, etc., and its many unconscious organs, the social sciences, philosophy and art. The combination of both is its culture. Therefore, it should be no shock to anybody that artists (and playwrights whether they are artists or not) express, consciously or unconsciously, the culture which gave them birth. This is what happens in most cases. May art, therefore, be defined as a sort of defense, a species of

¹ This type of wish fulfillment is observed more frequently in the moving pictures because, by virtue of lower admission scale, its audiences are predominantly middle and working class. It is to these two classes that the idea of rising in the world has most appeal.

apology for the culture of the status quo? Our answer to this question will grow apparent when we discuss the revolutionary use of the audience wish.

It is a natural law of society that the class in power strives mightily to impose its culture on the whole population. Frequently it even succeeds in establishing its fictions, its rationalizations (philosophy, politics, religion, psychology, etc.) on large sections of the class whose real interests are diametrically opposed. In this manner they are vitiated and thwarted. It does so in the theatre by the way it satisfies the wish.

The three major theatrical devices for the fulfillment of the wish, you will remember, were sublimation, purgation, and consolation. (Democratization would be a better term than consolation to describe the fiction that everyone may be an Horatio Alger hero, but it has certain political inferences which might make its use confusing.)

Sublimation: The Pulitzer prize play of 1934, *Men in White*, concerned itself with hospital life. It treated this life in such a way that the realities inherent in the situation were, consciously or unconsciously, suppressed. All that came through was a hackneyed triangle situation, the tale of a man with two maids. But despite its triteness, or rather perhaps because of it, this play was the most popular one of the season. Why? It satisfied its audience. How? It exchanged the social and economic conflicts which harassed its audience for conflicts which were no longer directly or even remotely social and economic. It succeeded, in short, in making the audience forget itself and its despairs. No one would want to deny that that was a worthy achievement. But when the wish "to get away from it all" is sublimated in this play, it is identified with the interests of the status quo, with the contradictions and decay of bourgeois society.

Men in White in sublimating the social and economic conflicts inherent in its theme disregarded, and in disregarding, objectively condoned, the culture and economy which gave birth to these same social and economic conflicts. Its treatment of the conflicts of hospital and medical life omitted the most important considerations of that life, considerations without which there could be no reality. By being false to reality the play betrayed the core of life around us, the life which inevitably includes the struggle between classes, the decay of one culture and the emergence of another.

It is no accident when a play appeals primarily to a bourgeois audience. When it does so it is playing ball with the interests of that class and satisfying the wish in its behalf. You may ask, has not the theme love versus duty a universal tang about it? Such a theme might easily be one for a workers' theatre but only when its resolution (the manner in which it satisfies the

wish) is identified with the class interests of the workers. The Russians have done this successfully in a movie.

But *Men in White*, despite the best intentions of everybody concerned, identified the fulfillment of the wish with the interests of the bourgeoisie. This play of Mr. Kingsley's is representative of a whole category including the genre of *20th Century*, *Dinner at Eight*, *Once in a Lifetime*, *Grand Hotel*, etc. Sometimes a play is openly reactionary, i.e., it make no pretense at camouflaging the identity of its wish fulfillment with the dying culture of the bourgeoisie—such a play like O'Neill's *Days Without End*; and sometimes a play may be considered reactionary when it strives to be otherwise, like *Tobacco Road*, in which the poor white in the South is practically blamed for his own destitution.²

It might well be asked at this point, how can a play satisfy the "wish to escape" without identifying the satisfaction of that wish with the class and cultural interests of the bourgeoisie? You may remember that earlier it was stated that "the wish to escape for an uncomfortable reality" is not a bourgeois wish as distinguished from a proletarian wish, but is simply a human, all too human wish.

If war is an uncomfortable reality then *Peace on Earth* satisfies the "wish to escape" from it, and at the same time identifies this wish fulfillment with the class interests of the workers simply by means of showing that war can be eliminated by the united efforts of the working class. This sort of escape from reality is not the ostrich kind that puts its head in a comedy or a meretricious romance and says "war does not exist," but, on the contrary, it is the kind that says that war can be overcome. Escape in the bourgeois sense is withdrawal and retreat, and in the proletarian sense, defiance, attack, and change. You can escape by killing your adversary as well as by running away from him.

Other examples of the working class "escape" play may be found in *Stevedore* and to a lesser degree in "1931."

(To Be Continued)

[Since the publication of the first of Michael Blankfort's sketches toward an aesthetic for the revolutionary theatre, NEW THEATRE has received a number of criticisms of Blankfort's ideas. None, however, had anything definite to say in refutation of Blankfort's article. NEW THEATRE invites the critics to use these pages to answer Blankfort. (The deadline for the next issue is Aug. 1.)—EDITORS]

² *Tobacco Road* like *The House of Connolly* by Paul Green and several of the Tchekov plays present the question whether or not a picture of decay of the upper class, or a picture of the misery of the working class is sufficient to satisfy the requirements for a worker's theatre. Whether a play has to have a call to action is one of our most important considerations. More will be said about this later.

SCENES FROM THE LIVING THEATRE · No. 1 MASSES AND MEN

PHOTOS by FILM PHOTO LEAGUE



SIN AND THE CINEMA

By DAVID PLATT

EXTRAORDINARY things are happening in the American motion picture industry that may before long change the entire complexion of the Hollywood movie.

For the first time perhaps, in the history of films, a nation-wide movement led by the foremost reactionaries of the country, and gaining momentum day by day has been vociferously expressing itself in the capitalist press, pulpit, school, radio, against the current product of the movie industry. The Roman Catholic Church supported by the Protestants, Jews, Daughters of the American Revolution, the Boy Scout movement, national women's clubs led by Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt and hundreds of Better Films Councils is fervently up in arms against the Hays organization and the salacity it represents and condones.

This movement which has as its chief weapon, the boycott, has had and is having a tremendous effect upon those involved in the film industry. It has stirred up writers, actors, directors, technicians, film workers in the industry like nothing else. It has given the screen writers, who are usually blamed by the studios for the slime and scum that finds its way into the films, an unprecedented opportunity to collectively voice their bitter resentment against the manner in which their efforts are brutally and unrecognizably supervised and mangled in order to fit the mould of the box office. It has made the movie producers supremely conscious of the fact that movie audiences can be influenced as easily against, as for their films. And millions of movie fans directly under the influence of the Catholic Church have been literally commanded to stay away from films.

Even the theatre owners are clamoring for purity on the screen to save themselves from bankruptcy. The Departments of Labor and Justice are also joining the holy crusade, against what they contend to be the "serious menace of the crime and gangster type of picture," at the same time extolling pro-war films like *No Greater Glory*, a hundred-fold more menacing than any gangster or crime picture can possibly be; while the producers and bankers are helpless before this calamitous invasion of what they have always considered to be their inviolate ground. It is the first time they have ever been threatened with the loss of their audience, something undreamed of in the "make believe" of sunny California.

On the other hand, this movement which threatens to smash the present status of the industry, has had an opposite effect upon the offices of the Hays organization. Will Hays, tottering on this throne, yet supported by

those movie producers and bankers who have amassed fortunes and who have fortunes invested in the type of movie so vigorously decried by Cardinals Mundelein and Dougherty and their Legion of Decency, has accepted the challenge and has prepared a war chest of \$2,000,000 to fight the boycott and proposed censorship of his darling.

The forces currently arraigned against the Hays organization have been accumulating for some time. All through 1933 the White House was steaming with Catholic Bishops, Baptists, University Professors, Rabbis and others lobbying for Federal Censorship and control of movies. And as result of pressure particularly from the pulpit during this period, a growing breach was noticeably manifesting itself between the representatives of Hollywood and Washington, D. C. Federal censorship of certain scenes of *Gabriel Over the White House* over the heads of the Hollywood masterminds did not help much to conceal the split. Later when Roosevelt sent the National Labor Board to sabotage the strike of the film workers to the advantage of the producers, he even succeeded in winning certain powerful forces in the industry to his side.

That the unprecedented movement against Hays and what Hays stands for is leading toward Federal censorship and control of film production can no longer be denied by film observers. The church, the university, the schools, all are clamoring mightily for government film control. The National Congress of Parents and Teachers, a nationwide organization having a membership of 1,400,000 is sponsoring a project for "virtual government control of all young people's entertainment through the establishment in every American town of a municipal community motion picture theatre." This congress of parents and teachers is seeking "the creation by Congress of a federal commission to supervise the selection and treatment of all film material and trade practices" with "eventual federal production of pictures for young people." Also, over five million Catholics organized in over a score of dioceses are committed on pain of sin, to the boycott of films, until the moral tone of movies has been sufficiently elevated to permit easy entrance of children into theatres. The Roosevelt administration itself is demanding a larger share of the screen for propaganda purposes and more appetizing revelations by the studios, of the glories of war and death.

Federal control of the motion picture industry is the goal of the Catholic Church crusade.

It is the desire of the Roosevelt administration.

But it is a dangerous threat to the liberties and activities of the workers and moviegoers of this country.

Have the bigwigs of the church and government suddenly become so vitally interested in elevating the moral and intellectual level of the moviegoers that they have undertaken this campaign to reform the screen? Do they really and sincerely believe that the Hollywood film as represented by Mae West or Jean Harlow or James Cagney is more of a threat to the morale of American moviegoers than say the showing of sympathetic newsreel episodes in the life of public enemy No. 1 and up, Samuel Insull, about which they are strangely silent? Or is all this just pretext for something else they have in mind, something that they hope will bolster up the fast failing respect for the blessed authorities that dominate the scene with mailed fist.

A cursory examination of some of the films issued in Hollywood that have been endorsed as excellent and good by the Catholic Church, reveals without shadow of a doubt, that the sole aim of the leaders of this propriety crusade is to gain complete control over the minds of their followers, so as to be able more easily, to infect them with the bitter blood poison of the ruling class—absolute obedience and subservience to the twin sisters of capitalism—the church and the state.

In fact the primary interest of the movement to purify the film is to tightly preserve the status quo of the ruling class against any film that dares belittle or speak against it. Preservation of ruling class power and ideology means therefore production of worthier kinds of films—films that will inspire sentiment for, rather than mockery against them, as so many of the current sex-crime-love flickers innocently enough, often achieve. That this new brand of film they are preparing now is fascism pure and simple can be easily surmised.

It is not strange, therefore, that the Catholic Church while opposing sex and gangster thrillers, which it considers to be harmful to the morale of youthful moviegoers, endorses films that are later acclaimed as national socialist cruisers by Hitler and Goering. Nor is it strange that government officials and church leaders are incensed over newsreel scenes of John Dillinger's escapades (which they say reveal him in a light inimical to public interest) while *House of Rothschild*, a much more dangerous presentation because it is an open glorification of legal banditry is glowingly endorsed everywhere in the bourgeois world. Nor surprising that Jewish rabbis denounce nudity musicals while silent about *S. A. Mann-Brand*, the Nazi

anti-Semitic and anti-labor film now in America. It is not extraordinary at all that *Cavalcade* which was selected as one of the ten best motion pictures of 1933 by the very leaders who have instigated the movement for better films, was ballyhooed as a pro-war film in Berlin a little while ago, being publicized as a sound film with "10,000 soldiers, four troops of cavalry, 50 cannon, 6,000 weapons, three zeppelins, 100 horses and 200 motor cars."

This is what the church calls elevating the minds of its moviegoers, preparing them for war and fascism.

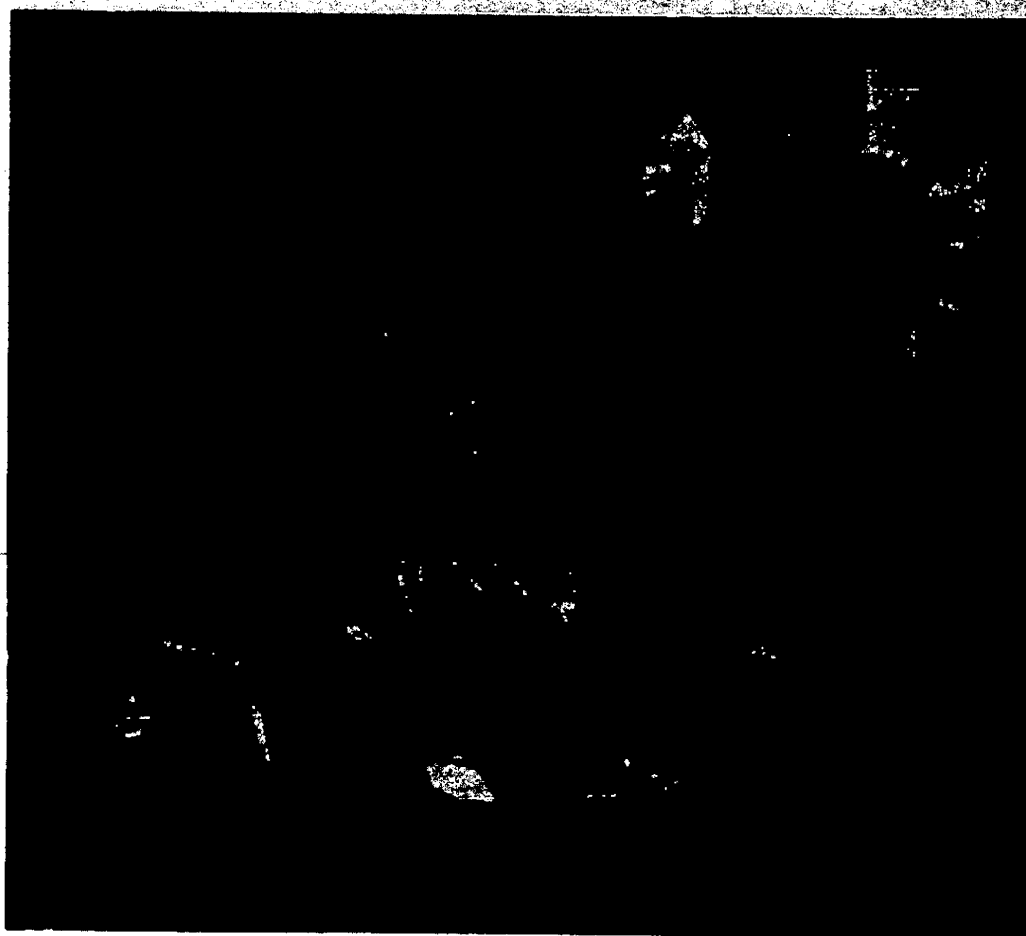
Lastly, Federal control of the motion picture will mean fantastic and deliberate misinterpretation of the struggle of American workers against oppression on a scale hitherto unknown. It will mean hundreds of *No Greater Glory's*, hundreds of calls upon American citizens to rise up and defend themselves against "enemies" within and without.

This is the present direction of the movement supposedly against smut and slime in the Hollywood film. In an important sense, however, much good is being accomplished indirectly through this crusade. Producers are being made to realize that it is the dimes and quarters of the moviegoers who keep them alive. Film workers are becoming conscious of their position in the industry and are beginning to assert themselves *en masse* against the autocracy. The boycott itself has set a precedent for future audiences to fight the coming onslaught of federal and church propaganda films.

The Film and Photo League of America must bore hard into this movement, and endeavor to direct it into the more fruitful channels of an uncompromising fight against all reactionary films and for the production of vital films truthfully depicting the struggles of the American workers.

The Movie Front

Laurence Stallings, writer and editor has been placed at the head of the editorial department of Fox Newsreels. He was formerly literary critic of the old *Morning World* in N. Y., co-author of the *Big Parade* and other pacifist films, editor of the book of war pictures *The First World War*. He has sold the rights to his book to the Nazi government of Germany with permission for them to change as they see fit. To those who have always observed "no real word" in all of his sentiments about war, this latest job for Stallings comes as no surprise. This man who has been through the stinking hell of war, suffering from it as few survivors have suffered, has never had the courage to acknowledge that it is his job to fight against war and to speak out against its real causes. Now after editing the extraordinary collection of photos on *The First World War*, he moves into the key office of the Chase National Bank's most powerful war-making machine . . . *Fox Newsreels* . . .



Still from Alexandrov's *Jazz Comedy*—New Soviet Film

to help prepare for the next world war.

* * * *

The little Hitlers of the California agricultural fields have taken an interest in the movies. In Tulare, where more than one striker has been banged up and railroaded into jail, Lester Balog, member of the Film and Photo League of San Francisco, has been jailed. Why? He was showing movies to the agricultural workers. What movies? *Road to Life* and newsreels of last summer's Cotton-Pickers' Strike. The National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners and the Workers International Relief have begun a campaign to free Lester Balog—demanding hands off workers' movies.

The mayor and police of Jersey City have taken an interest in pictures too. Milton Harris of the Film and Photo League of N. Y., has been jailed together with two pickets of the Furniture Workers' Industrial Union. Why? The two pickets were strikers; the cameraman was making a film record of their orderly, disciplined picketing. They are being held in the Hudson County jail for the monstrous bail of \$2,5000 each. The New Jersey branch of the International Labor Defense, the Union, and the Film and Photo League will secure bail and lead the fight to free all three.

* * * *

From the studios of the U.S.S.R. comes word that Piscator has finished *Revolt of the Fishermen*, and that the long-time associate of Eisenstein, the talented Alexandrov, has finished a musical comedy *The Jazz*

Comedy. Now that Pudovkin's film about German strikers, *Deserter* and the much talked about, *Petersburg Nights* are completed, it looks as though it'll be worth going to the movies again next fall. Meantime, we take pleasure in reminding you that Pudovkin's 1905 based on the novel by Maxim Gorky has been released in the U.S. And that if you want to see a magnificent example of the art of the cinema, go to see this great historic document. It's an inspiration. If you really want to see it, you should demand that your neighborhood theatre arrange to show it.

* * * *

Movies on the Left . . . Ralph Steiner completing his anti-religious documentary film. . . Harry Alan Potamkin Film School group under the direction of Samuel Brody completing a documentary film on the subject of *Waste and Want*. . . The Film and Photo League completes reel three in the series of shorts, *America Today*. *Sweet Land of Liberty*, mounted by Leo T. Hurwitz of the Film and Photo League of N. Y., will be exhibited in New York during July. Edward Maton is adding sound to his experimental film, *Revolt*. Animated Film Group of the Workers International Relief animatedly at work on their first production.

* * * *

Has anybody checked up on the story about the film critics who attended the preview of *Little Women* in Hollywood and shouted, "We want Louisa May Alcott. . . Author! . . . Author! . . . Author!"

—TOM BRANDON.



Still from Alexandrov's *Jazz Comedy* - New Soviet Film

DIMITROFF

A Play of Mass Pressure

By ART SMITH and ELIA KAZAN

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE story of this play is not primarily the story of Dimitroff. The hero of the production should be mass pressure. The production-play should be the account of how the pressure of the world proletariat forced the release of the class-war prisoners: Dimitroff, Taneff and Popoff. It should lead directly into the present mass-struggle to force the release of Thaelmann and Torgler. The script itself does not make this clear enough. It becomes the task of the director.

In our production we created, with the actors who were the crowd, another play, parallel to the story of the trial in Germany, which was in simplest terms the story of mass-consciousness from the time that Hitler came into power until the voice of the world proletariat became clear enough and militant enough to force the release of the prisoners. In nearly all the scenes the presence of an off-stage crowd is realistically accounted for. In certain of the scenes the masses themselves come on stage. Thus we were able to keep them active throughout the play and indicate their final rise to great strength.

The other important production problem in the script, we did not solve. The drama of the court room scenes comes from the great daring necessary for Dimitroff to speak the truth under constant threat of death and torture. The menace and the danger of the courtroom must be created, Dimitroff must be taking his life into his hands every time he taunts and ridicules the Nazis or the real drama of these scenes is lost.

The production should have as much and no more scenery and props, than can be struck and set up within a blackout.

PROLOGUE

[The play begins offstage, before the curtain rises. A worker is heard speaking to his comrades about the menace of oncoming fascism—they must resist it with all possible activity. His speech is answered with a roar and from the shouts songs emerge, first RED SOLDIERS, then THE COMINTERN, then THE INTERNATIONAL. The workers are heard marching when HITLER'S voice begins. The light comes up on HITLER speaking at a microphone. A speaker is heard calling his comrades to resist the armed forces in the streets.]

Hitler (Working up a frenzy.): Citizens of the New Germany! Your leader is speaking! Arise! The German God of vengeance is awake, determined to crush our enemies. We must stamp out the Red Menace!

(A burst of gunfire. Cries. The songs stop. Through the next scene RED SOLDIERS is chanted in low tones, and accented with marching rhythm.)

SCENE ONE

(VAN DER LUBBE is seated behind a table, center. GOERING is giving him his last instructions, slapping the table with a riding whip. He wears a brown shirt and tie, brown riding pants and brown boots.)

Goering: Do you understand?

Van der Lubbe: (Stupidly.) I can't do it!

Goering: You will. Do you understand?

Van der Lubbe: All right. All right, I will.

(GOERING goes up left and looks off through passage. GOEBBELS comes in right, leans over VAN DER LUBBE and whispers to him gently. HITLER enters right.)

Goering: He's been instructed. He's primed, stuffed. Send him through the passage immediately. The troopers are waiting for the signal. The Reichstag is soaked in oil. What are we waiting for?

Hitler: Don't get nervous, Herr Goering, we must be sure.

Goering: There's nothing the matter with my nerves. They've been all right up to now.

Goebbels: (Fondling the boy.) Come, Van der Lubbe, you ought to know your lesson now.

Van der Lubbe: Is it dark in there?

Hitler: Count Hellsdorf will meet you halfway through the passage. Have you got your Communist pamphlets, your passport?

Van der Lubbe: I'm all ready.

Goering: You'll be a hero!

Goebbels: With your torch you will not only set the Reichstag on fire. You are starting a conflagration that will purge Germany!

Hitler (His arm round Van der Lubbe, he takes him up to the passage.): This is the greatest moment of your life, Van der Lubbe.

Van der Lubbe: Yes. The greatest moment of my life. (Goes into the passage.)

Hitler (Turning and saluting.): To the New Germany!

Goering and Goebbels: To the New Germany!

(Blackout.)

SCENE TWO

(Light comes up on GOEBBELS speaking into a mike.)

Goebbels: This most heinous of all crimes was plotted and carried out by an international gang of red criminals. We must search them out and exterminate them from the land!

(Blackout GOEBBELS and light up on HITLER, broadcasting.)

Hitler: Citizens of the New Germany! Communism has struck its last blow at our civilization! We must purge our nation of these vicious fire-bugs! The leaders of the plot: Dimitroff, Popov, Tanev and Torgler will immediately be brought to trial. The smoke of their crime will smell round the world, and the world will know we are right!

(Blackout and light up on GOERING.)

Goering: The arrested man has been continuously present at the meetings of the Communist Action Committee and was drawn in to carry out the act of incendiarism. Among the material which the police discovered in their search of the Liebknecht House were instructions for carrying out the Communist Terror on the Bolshevik model. The discovery of this material has checked the carrying through of the Bolshevik revolution. I would rather shoot a few times too short and too wide, but at any rate I would shoot. My nerves have never given way up to now.

(Blackout.)

SCENE THREE

(The Court Room—Defendants right. Behind them stand armed Storm Troopers. JUDGE center. At his left sits the PROSECUTOR. Left stage the witness chair, and the clerk's desk. VAN DER LUBBE is in the witness chair, half doped.)

Judge: Are you a Communist?

Van der Lubbe: No.

Judge: Are you an Anarchist?

Van der Lubbe: No.

Judge: Are you a Social-Democrat?

Van der Lubbe: No.

Judge: What are you then, Nazi?

Van der Lubbe: No.

Judge: Then what are you?

Van der Lubbe: I was a member of the Communist Party without being a Communist.

(DIMITROFF laughs.)

Judge: Silence! Did you leave the party?

Van der Lubbe: Yes.

Judge: Why?

Van der Lubbe: A personal opinion.

Judge: A personal conflict?

Van der Lubbe: No. Yes.

Dimitroff: He became a Nazi agent. They threw him out of the Party. He made trips to Germany and went back to Holland with his pockets bulging with money.

Judge: Be quiet. No Communist propaganda here.

(DIMITROFF laughs.)

Judge: Silence!

(VAN DER LUBBE is laughing.)

Judge: Silence! Why do you laugh?

(VAN DER LUBBE: Stupidly.) At this trial.

(The PROSECUTOR takes the witness.)

Prosecutor: Van der Lubbe! (At the sound of his voice Van der Lubbe lapses into his stupor) Van der Lubbe! Get your head up. Do you know me?

Van Der Lubbe: No.

Prosecutor: Van Der Lubbe! Stand

up and come here. (VAN DER LUBBE does so.) Did you set fire to the Reichstag building?

Van der Lubbe: Yes.

Prosecutor: Read his statement.

Clerk: "I carried boxes of coal soaked in naphtha through an unguarded window of the Reichstag Building and rushed about setting fires in a score of places using my vest and shirt as a firebrand with which to spread the blaze through the building."

Prosecutor: Van der Lubbe! Is this which has just been read correct?

Van Der Lubbe: Yes.

Prosecutor: Now you must tell the truth! Do you know that it has been stated by expert opinion that it was impossible for you to have set the fire by yourself?

Van der Lubbe: Yes.

Prosecutor: Did you set the Reichstag fire alone, or did you have accomplices?

Van der Lubbe: Alone. There were no accomplices. I did it.

Prosecutor: And what did the others think about it?

Van der Lubbe: What others?

Prosecutor (Increasingly overbearing): You know what others I mean

Van der Lubbe: What others?

Prosecutor: You know what others. . . .

Van der Lubbe: You mean . . . ?

Prosecutor: Yes! Yes!

Van der Lubbe: But Doctor Goebbels said that I . . .

TORGLER: Goebbels!

DIMITROFF: Goebbels!

TORGLER: Yes. He said. . . .

PROSECUTOR (Trying to cover the slip): Did you ever see any of these men before? You know Torgler, don't you?

Dimitroff: Van der Lubbe, who advised you before you set those fires?

Judge: Silence! You cannot ask that question.

Dimitroff: Then let one of the defense lawyers—one of our defense lawyers ask it. Ask if he ever saw Goering before. Or if Goebbels has talked to him. Why doesn't one of our lawyers ask that?

Judge: It is unworthy of a German lawyer to produce as evidence here rumors that Minister Goebbels devised the arson plan or that Prime Minister Goering executed it and that Police President Heines . . .

Dimitroff: Unworthy! Unworthy!

Judge: Silence!

Dimitroff: Unworthy of a German lawyer? It would be worse than that. It would be fatal.

Judge: Take him out of court. (Two Storm Troopers have already seized him.) You are excluded for today.

Dimitroff (As they are dragging him out of court): It would be fatal to even hint at the truth in this court!

(Blackout.)

SCENE FOUR

(A spotlight picks up the speaker addressing the crowd in the dark.)

Speaker: Comrades and fellow-workers! We have already sent the telegrams protesting the torture and frame-up of our comrades in Germany who are defending themselves against tremendous odds. They come from militant working class organizations from all over the United States. And don't forget that all over the world workers' organizations are doing the same thing.

(The meeting responds with a cheer. The slogan, "Free Torgler, free Popov, free Tanev, free Dimitroff," begins and grows to a high climax at the end of the speech.)

The workers not only of America but all over the world will shower the Nazi government with protest, and such protest will exert great pressure on the captors of our heroic comrades. But fellow workers we need money to carry out the fight against Fascism, the enemy of the workers of all nations. We need funds to help the work of saving our comrades in Germany. Who will begin the contributions? Any five-dollar bills, (etc.?)

The speaker takes up the swelling slogan. Hands offering money come into the spotlight.

(Blackout.)

SCENE FIVE

(The Court Room—The session is about to start.)

Judge (Reading): Torgler defended by Dr. Sachs, Dimitroff defended by Teichert.

Dimitroff: I defend myself.

Judge: You're beginning again?

Dimitroff: Yes.

Judge: What do you want now?

Dimitroff: I demand the right to defend myself in this court.

Judge: Granted.

Dimitroff: Call Goering to the stand.

Judge (Hesitates): Call Prime Minister Goering.

..Clerk: Prime Minister of Prussia, Hermann Goering!

Goering: (GOERING pounds into the witness box. He clicks his heels together, flings up his right arm in a fascist salute. The JUDGE, PROSECUTOR, CLERK, STORM TROOPERS answer the salute): Here! . . . Your excellency! May the court bear in mind that it is only through a quixotic condescension to abstract justice that I am allowing myself to be questioned by this man. I consider it below the dignity of an officer of the German State to meet a Communist except at the point of a bayonet. Communism is an international pest spread by murderers, poisoners, jail-birds, hoodlums, tramps and foreign crooks. Their accusations against myself are insolent and grotesque. Is that understood?

Judge: Yes, your excellency.

Goering: Finally, that because of pressure of affairs of state I have only a few

minutes. Let this gesture to the Gods of Justice be over with as soon as possible.

Dimitroff (Taking the witness): "Gesture to the Gods of Justice" is very good, your excellency.

Goering: I will not be mocked by a Bolshevik.

Judge: Dimitroff, confine yourself strictly to the questioning.

Dimitroff: I apologize your excellency. (To GOERING) Your name?

Goering: Prime Minister Hermann Goering of Prussia.

Dimitroff: Your address?

Goering: 34 Breinners.

Dimitroff: This is across the street from the Reichstag Building, isn't it?

Goering: Yes.

Dimitroff: And there is a secret passage underground between your house and the Reichstag, is there? . . .

Goering: It's not secret.

Dimitroff: I mean the passage that wasn't discovered until after the fire—the only secret passage to the Reichstag.

Goering: It's not secret.

Dimitroff: It has been stated by experts that the mass of inflammable material required to lay the fire could not possibly have been brought in without knowledge of the management.

Goering: Experts! That was that fools' court in London.

Dimitroff: Did you set fire to the Reichstag?

Goering: No!

Dimitroff: Then whom did you get to do it?

Goering: I had nothing to do with it.

Dimitroff: Then who did it?

Goering: I don't know.

Dimitroff: Van der Lubbe says he did it alone. Do you believe him?

Goering: Well since he admits it. . . .

Dimitroff: Still, in the parts of the building not destroyed, inflammable material enough to fill a large truck was found. He couldn't have brought in all this material and the rest through one unguarded window, could he?

Goering: I don't know. . . .

Dimitroff: He probably had accomplices.

Goering: Yes. I don't have to be told, I know it.

Dimitroff: Excellent. Who were these accomplices?

Goering: They were Communists.

Dimitroff: How do you know?

Goering: I'm sure of it.

Dimitroff: What evidence have you?

Goering: I have the plans for the fire which the police seized when they raided the Liebknecht Haus?

Dimitroff: Oh, the police found plans in the Liebknecht Haus?

Goering: Yes.

Dimitroff: Plans for the fire?

Goering: Yes.

Dimitroff: Complete plans stating time

and place?

Goering: Yes.

Dimitroff: Clerk, will you read in the evidence the date of the raid on the Leibknecht Haus?

Clerk: February 25.

Dimitroff: And now the date of the Reichstag fire?

Clerk: February 27.

Dimitroff: In other words the Reichstag fire happened some time after the raid on the Leibknecht Haus. Now, Your Excellency (*The Judge*) whatever I would accuse *Prime Minister Goering* of, I should not accuse him of plain stupidity, of knowing exactly when and how the fire was to be set and still not calling out the police to protect the Reichstag Building. But still on that day and at the hour known to *Prime Minister Goering*, the Reichstag Building was totally unguarded, and the caretaker had been dismissed by Nazi officers. Did you know that, *Herr Goering*?

Goering: No.

Dimitroff: The fire was set by someone who had the full protection and blessing of the Nazis. The Fire Department was not called until long after the fire had been discovered. Nor were the police called, until Storm Troopers had escorted the Nazi firebugs from the scene. . . . NOW, *Herr Goering*, you were there yourself and never thought of calling the fire department. Why was that?

Goering: That's not true.

Dimitroff: You were there?

Goering: Yes.

Dimitroff: You were one of the first to discover the blaze.

Goering (*Storms up to the judge*): I will not answer any more insulting questions.

Dimitroff: Who were there with you? Who were your accomplices? Who set fire to the Reichstag?

Goering (*Now turns on DIMITROFF*): You ought to have been at the gallows long ago for firing the Reichstag yourself.

Dimitroff (*Bellows back*): Are you afraid of my questions?

Goering: You dog, I'll catch you when you leave prison, you scoundrel, you!

Judge: No Communist propaganda, *Dimitroff*.

Dimitroff: All we get in this court is Nazi propaganda!

Goering: Take him out of here! Take him out of here!

(*Two Storm Troopers rush to obey GOERING.*)

(*Blackout.*)

SCENE SIX

(*DIMITROFF's prison cell. He sits on his bed. He is writing on a box which he holds on his lap. It is his summing up speech, and he is intensely absorbed.*)

Voice: *Dimitroff!* (*The prison GUARD is coming toward his cell.*) *Dimitroff!*

Dimitroff: *Dimitroff.*

Guard: Your mother. Only a moment, do you hear? (*DIMITROVA follows the GUARD. She goes up to the cell. The GUARD retreats a little, but watches everything that passes between them.*)

Mother: You working—here?

Dimitroff: Mother you look tired . . . did you have difficulty getting here?

Mother: It's always hard to get in. But the streets! The elections are on and soldiers everywhere, troopers guarding the polls. There is something in the air like a pogrom. So many people, it took hours to get here, and the people are frightened. They know what they have to vote. When you hear cries or a shot you know someone is trying not to vote Nazi.

Dimitroff: Of course, Mother. Capital has found an excellent watchdog.

Mother: George. There is something I want to tell you. Last time I didn't have the courage. Your wife, son, in Moscow, she heard about your arrest. She . . . it was hard for her to realize. I'm afraid her reason. . . . Her mind is broken. She . . .

Dimitroff: Yes. They told me.

Mother: And since then, *George*. The last I heard . . . since then your wife has died.

Dimitroff: I heard that too.

Mother: What are you writing?

Dimitroff: My speech.

Mother: Will they allow you to speak?

Dimitroff: I sum up my defense in court.

Mother: I'm afraid; they will never let you go.

Dimitroff: Is that what they say outside?

Mother: They say *Goering* will never let you go. You are too strong. He is afraid of you. He is afraid of all of us. Of the people. His government is the last stand of a wild animal crazy with fear. It is almost time. The people will rise and overwhelm him.

Dimitroff: I believe they will, Mother.

Mother: They still meet. Even now in Hitler's Germany. They have rapid street meetings. They come together quickly and break up before the soldiers and the guns can find them. All my sons have died for the Revolution. Each one brought it a little closer.

Guard: *Dimitrova!* Time is up. You can't chatter here all day.

Mother: I'll come back soon and bring you what I can. A little food.

Dimitroff: And more paper to write on.

Mother: And more paper.

(*She exits. Outside can be heard the sounds from the funeral of a dead worker. His comrades are singing the Comintern as a funeral march. It swells a little and then begins to fade.*)

Dimitroff salutes, his fist up.

(*Lights dim slowly.*)

SCENE SEVEN

(*A dark street late at night. Under a street lamp center there is a one-legged beggar, crouching with a tin cup in his hand. Near him there is a man waiting for somebody, looking at his paper by the light of the lamp. A few people hurry by on their way home. A school teacher asks a direction and hurries off. A Storm Trooper walks by. Then for a minute the stage is empty. The beggar lifts his cup to the man with the newspaper. The man drops a coin into the cup. The beggar gives a low piercing whistle. From all sides people rush to the pool of light center. It is an underground meeting.*)

Beggar: Comrades. This is very important. We only have a minute, listen carefully. Next meeting. District twelve, 3 A.M. sharp. Frau Jankowski's report to be made behind the Inn Liebenwalderstrasse. Comrades we have a six-page issue of *Arbeiter Zeitung* which must be distributed immediately. Comrade Neissen will hand them out as I go on talking. You all know the homes of workers from which these papers go out. They must be guarded closely and they must be read. There is dangerous poison to counteract with these and other forthcoming papers. We have pamphlets proving that the Reichstag fire was set by the Nazi government. Also leaflets analyzing in simple terms the danger of Nazi power and the best way to combat it at present. We must have courage comrades. Workers all over the world are intervening in our behalf. The next information is about Comrade Zweig. Zweig is dead to us. Hold no correspondence with him; do not be seen in his presence. Avoid him carefully. He was always weak as most of you know. He has gone over to the storm troopers for a nice new uniform and a gun he will use against us.

(*A police whistle. The crowd is gone. The beggar is left alone under the street lamp. Two Storm Troopers come into the center light from different directions and grab each other. They tussle.*)

First Trooper: Let me go you dummkopf. It is I, August.

Second: What! Damn them where are they? . . .

First: Are you asking me, stupid?

Second: Of course. You let them slip through your fingers like rice. . . .

First (*sees beggar*): Here! He was here. He must have seen them. Hey you. (*He shakes the beggar. The beggar is hard of hearing. In fact he is deaf.*) Hey you! Where did they go? The people that were here, where did they go. (*The beggar tries hard to hear what they're saying but cannot.*) You know who! Where did they go. . . . (*He starts to shake and hit the beggar. The beggar points off left.*)

First: There!

(*They start to rush off left, as the sound of singing is heard off right. RED SOL-*

DIERS: *The Storm Troopers hear it. They turn. One of them hits the beggar, knocks him down. They rush off right. The beggar gets up, looks after them, then crawls off in the opposite direction.)*

Blackout.

SCENE EIGHT

(The German Embassy in America. Outside there is a demonstration. Half the people are singing RED SOLDIERS. The other half are shouting "Free Torgler! Free Taneff! Free Popoff! Free Dimitroff!") The German Ambassador and his clerk are in the room. The windows are shut tight but the noise still comes in.)

Ambassador: It's getting worse. The German Embassy gets no adequate protection from the U. S. Government.

Clerk: The police are doing what they can.

Ambassador: Bah! They swing a club now and then but these American police are weak and feeble. They ought to take some lessons from our Storm Troopers.

Clerk: We're a long way from the Storm Troopers.

Ambassador: I'm getting sick of this business. The United States Government can't secure any real peace for us. If I hear more of it I'll go back to Berlin and let them yell all they please. It's a fine state of affairs when a German Ambassador gets no respect.

Clerk: They say its happening in our embassies all over the world. There must be a reason.

Ambassador: Reason! I'll show them a reason. *(He goes to the window and throws it open. All outside join in a mighty blast of this slogan "Free Torgler! Free Taneff! Free Popoff! Free Dimitroff! . . . The Ambassador slams the window shut angrily.)* We've got to silence this. It's bad for Germany. *(He looks outside again. Doesn't know what to do.)* Gott! Send this cable right away. "Twenty thousand demonstrate all day before the embassy here. Demand Communists' release, Anti-Nazi feeling very high and growing. Advise."

(Blackout.)

SCENE NINE

(HITLER is making a radio speech. GOERING paces up and down the room, while HITLER bellows into the mike.)

Hitler: I thank the German people. I thank God that the German people have seen the way, have stood behind me and the National Socialist Party at this election, and have given us the most complete backing and show of confidence that any government has ever had. I beg our God for the strength to carry out the work the German people have given me to do. To restore our Fatherland to her rightful and just place on earth and among nations. Enemies surround us on all sides and work in the darkness among our very ranks. Their knives are drawn. They wait the chance to stab

us to the heart. Germany arise! We must fight for what's ours . . . what God has given us. Germany arise! Follow me! Win back our Fatherland!

HITLER sit down, tired. *A knock and the door opens. Enter GOEBBELS followed by an attendant carrying a large basket piled high with telegrams and cables.*

(Off stage sounds. The slogan, "Free Torgler, Free Taneff, Free Popoff, Free Dimitroff," which was coming from the whole crowd outside the embassy in the previous scene, continued all through the interim between scenes and through this scene, steady, rhythmic, low in volume.)

Goering: What's this?

Goebbels: Telegrams from all over the world. The whole world is against us.

Goering: Tell the world it can go to hell. We're running Germany.

(GOEBBELS hands HITLER a telegram.) As HITLER takes and opens it, there come a tremendous shout.)

OFFSTAGE VOICES: *Free Torgler! Free Taneff! Free Popoff! Free Dimitroff!*

Goebbels: The world is against us. Do you know what that means? Can we convict them? Can we proceed to the execution of the four Communists in the face of world protest?

Goering: They shall never go free! No matter what, they shall never go free!

OFFSTAGE VOICES: *Free Torgler; Free Taneff! Free Popoff! Free Dimitroff!*

Hüler: Don't be too sure Herr Goering.

(The slogan, now is repeated again and again, building in force, volume of sound, and speed until it reaches the highest climax it can reach.)

(Blackout.)

SCENE TEN

(The court room as before. VAN DER LUBBE is fast asleep, drugged. DIMITROFF is busy writing. PROSECUTOR WERNER is making his final, summing-up speech.)

Werner: To sum up: There is no direct evidence to connect the Bulgarians with this crime. Nevertheless, they were plotting against the state. As for Torgler, we admit that none of the scraps of evidence against him are damaging. What his particular participation was in detail . . . well the court hasn't necessarily revealed that. Nevertheless if I add everything together, his political point of view, his persistent refusal to admit his guilt in this court, I come to the conclusion that his actions imply that Torgler in some fashion or other must have been an accomplice in this deed.

(DIMITROFF roars with laughter.)

Judge: Dimitroff you must respect the court!

Dimitroff: But that speech really does seem funny to me.

Judge: Silence.

Werner: Therefore I demand that these men, self-confessed, openly-intentioned wreckers of the social order, be convicted of

that most detestable of all crimes, high treason—and the punishment: the maximum within the power of the state. *(He sits down.)*

Judge: Dimitroff! Although Herr Teichert has already made a speech in your defense, on the basis of the penal code, article 258 you are entitled as you say, to speak both as defender and accused.

Dimitroff. *(He takes his place.)* We stand in this court as accusers . . . not as the accused. I want neither the honey nor the poison of a defense which is forced on me. I feel myself in no way bound by the speech for my defense made by Teichert.

Judge: It is none of your business to make such criticism here.

Dimitroff: I admit that my tone is hard and sharp, but the struggle of my life has always been hard and sharp. I am not a lawyer appearing before this court in the ordinary way of his profession. I am defending my political and revolutionary honor, my Communist ideology, the content and significance of my whole life. Therefore, every word I have said in this court is part of me. Each word is the expression of my honest and deep indignation at the unjust accusations which have been brought against me. This anti-Communist crime: the burning of the Reichstag, is being put to the account of the Communists. I know that no one in Bulgaria believes in our alleged participation in the fire. I know that in all other foreign countries hardly anyone believes that we had anything to do with it. But in Germany other conditions exist and in Germany it is not at all impossible that people might believe such peculiar things. Therefore I wish to prove that the Communist Party had nothing to do with the crime.

The Public Prosecutor declared in this court that the Communist Party had been forced into a situation in which it had to fight or capitulate without fighting. That it had either to retire from the field without firing a shot or else stake all on one roll of the dice. This supposition shows that the enemies of the Communist Party do not know much about it. The suppression of the Communist Party as a legal organization was momentarily expected by the leadership itself. But it could not possibly think that at such a moment the question was to be or not to be—insurrection or final destruction. The German Communist Party naturally knew perfectly well that illegal work would mean tremendous sacrifice and heroism, but it knew also that its revolutionary strength would increase again and that it would one day be able to carry out its final tasks successfully. For this reason, it was quite impossible that the Communist Party wished to indulge in any hazard in the given situation. The Communist Party is not an organization of conspirators, but a world party. Such a world party does not play insurrection and revolution. Such a

party proceeds with all seriousness and with a full knowledge of its responsibilities when it approaches the million masses of the people, and when it adopts its decisions concerning its tactics and its immediate tasks. It does not go in for double bookkeeping.

Judge: When do you intend to conclude your speech?

Dimitroff: You have assured me I should be able to speak fully in my own defense. Now you wish to limit me. You cannot. I must speak.

Judge: Very well. But you must address your remarks to the bench or else they might be interpreted as propaganda.

Dimitroff: Now as to the investigations. The inquiries sought the incendiaries where they were not to be found: in the ranks of the Communist Party. That gave a number of people the possibility of disappearing. We were taken in their stead.

Judge: I forbid you to make such statements.

Dimitroff: This trial has proved conclusively that we had nothing whatever to do with this fire. I propose the following verdict: The acquittal of all. The quashing of the indictment as incorrect. This refers to all accused. *Van der Lubbe* should be des-

ignated as a tool used to damage the working class. The real criminals who carried out of the fire must be found and placed in prison in our stead.

Judge. (Who has risen to his feet): Your time is up. You will not be allowed to proceed. . . .

(At this signal, from all parts of the audience come slogans demanding the release of the prisoners.)

Judge. (Frenzied): Will you be still! Will you be still!

Dimitroff: You may silence me for the moment, but all your fascist terror cannot silence those voices out there. From all over the world they demand our freedom. The toiling masses whom you wish to stifle—they demand our acquittal!

(At this the demands from the audience which have subsided somewhat to let Dimitroff be heard swell again. The Judge cannot make himself heard. Finally he succeeds in getting their attention.)

Judge: I will now read verdict. I read the verdict. . . . *Van der Lubbe* is guilty of arson and high treason, therefore I sentence him to death by hanging. The evidence against Dimitroff, Popoff, Taneff and Torgler is not definite enough to ask for their

death. Therefore this court must and does acquit them.

(There is a tremendous cheer from the house. DIMITROFF goes to center where he meets POPOFF and TANEFF and they embrace each other. As TORGLER starts to go toward them, he is held by Storm Troopers.)

Curtain.

(Instead of a curtain call: DIMITROFF, TANEFF, POPOFF come out in front of the curtain. DIMITROFF speaks.)

Dimitroff: We have been saved by the world pressure of the revolutionary masses. But Torgler is still in prison and Thaelmann is held in chains. We must not falter now. We must fight fascism with undiminished strength and courage. We must free our comrades. Free all class war prisoners! !

Audience: Free all class war prisoners! !

Dimitroff: Free Torgler!

Audience: Free Torgler! !

Dimitroff: Free Thaelmann! !

Audience: Free Thaelmann! !

(This play is published for the use of members of the League of Workers' Theatres. Other theatres should write to the authors in care of the New York office of the L.O.W.T.)

Diagnosis of the Dance

By EMANUEL EISENBERG

REVOLUTIONARY art is obviously not art which either announces, or depicts soberly in advance, the revolution; the completely automatic recording machine can do that just as well, and bourgeois artists are as slick at the game as any, if only because it is picturesque, dramatic and exciting. True revolutionary art demands an authentic and informed revolutionary point of view—and if I seem to labor a sheerly verbal truism, I plead as justification the occasion of their second annual Festival and Competition which the Workers' Dance League gave in Town Hall on Saturday night, June 2, before a large and distressingly (but understandably) unenthusiastic audience of comrades and sympathizers.

Since none of the dance groups is more than two years old and most of them of far more recent origin, one is constantly and reasonably cautioned not to "expect too much." The inevitable retort to that—at least from this highly concerned commentator—is that nobody expects anything from anybody: If a body of young workers is interested in preparing a theatrical presentation, either as dance or drama, and they need many months of rehearsal and experimentation and thinking through, it is doubtful if anyone would want them to perform before they feel ready. But once they reach the point of entering a public national competition and offering themselves as profes-

sional entertainers before large audiences, the natural and simple reaction is to evaluate them from the highest possible standards. And by these the evening of June 2 was a distinct and disheartening failure.

It would be manifestly unfair to maintain as a blanket indictment that the dances given were not out of or towards the revolution but around and about it; yet this is so close to the truth that the temptation to make a sweeping generalization is very strong. Out of twelve conceptions only the *Van der Lubbe's Head* of the New Dance Group, the *Comintern* of the Red Dancers, and the *Pioneer March* of the Junior Red Dancers did not follow the pattern of the evening.

This pattern, broadly speaking, was along the following lines: Six or ten young women, clothed in long and wholly unrepresentative black dresses, would be discovered lying around the stage in various states of collapse. Soon, to the rhythm of dreary and monotonous music, they would begin to sway in attitudes of misery, despair and defeat. The wondering observer in every case was brought to the choiceless, if tired, realization that this must be the proletariat in the grip of oppression: not because that was one of the many decisions it was possible to come to, but because the program gave titles indicating both theme and contents—and the groups performing were known to have a revolutionary intent.

The swaying would continue for a couple of minutes in the rhythm of utter resignation . . . and then, a vision. Uprising. Revolt. Sometimes it came in the form of a light flooding suddenly from the wings of the balcony; sometimes in the form of sheer music intensity; sometimes as a dynamic figure in red, running passionately among the startled tragedians; once it was in the incredible person of a soap-box orator who moved both hands and mouth in an appallingly inept realistic parody. And always the group would respond with victory: hope had arisen, strength had come, freedom was won, the revolution had arrived. There was never any basis for the introduction of the new motif. Deadly swaying and intolerable oppression had gone on long enough, so a revivifier entered the scene and turned it from grave to gay. No problem of method. No transition. Break from your chains and go forth to the open world.

NOW this theme, considered purely as a theme, is certainly not a contemptible one: so much the opposite, in fact, that indignation and outrage arise precisely because a shockingly inane treatment makes it seem something that should possibly never be attempted by anybody. Yet, even in the recital under discussion, two groups managed to make something of it. But the *Scottsboro* of the Red Dancers and the *Up-*

rising of the New Dance Group were so weighted down and overshadowed by the rest of the evening that their nearness to dramatic truth and contextual convincingness was as nothing to the audience.

To depict oppression and persecution it is not enough to have young women teetering jerkily as burden-bearers. The nature of the burden cries for clarification; the origin of the attack must be vividly implied; the physical and moral effect (and not the hollow postures of resignation) demand to be communicated. For what possible value can it have to those not yet class-conscious and those not yet stirred to significant action to be shown a pageant of blank mourners having a very sad and distinctly unanimated time? What should be shown seems so glaringly plain that I hesitate to venture into literalism for fear of blundering into absurdity. Still, here are some suggestions of the specific aspects created by oppression and persecution in the world of work: terrified cringing; hypocritical lip-service; tubercular sweat-shop deformity; exhausting and etiolating field-labor; the twisted emaciation of overwork and underpay and undernourishment; the sheer jitters of uncertainty, humiliation, unpredictability, unselfconfidence. On the basis of such physical features and their cognates the dancer can proceed to choreographic symbols as broad and abstract as he pleases. So long as there is no departure from something intrinsic in our daily lives; so long as a serious and appreciable recognition can take place in the audience; so long as the picture made is instructive and dynamic and exciting and not a cross-section of post-oppressional phenomena given for their own drab sake.

A parallel criterion applies to the depiction of the arrival of the revolution. The revolution is not a bright white light nor suddenly violent music nor a street-corner orator nor even an active girl in a red dress. These are poetic simplifications which can be useful, in spite of their acute banality, as references to a known thing, as stenographic reminders of an undergone experience or a well understood concept. But, while it is valuable to tell your audience that mass congregation, mass rebellion and mass usurpation of power should be the immediate steps consequent to oppression and persecution, this is a ridiculously and fantastically inadequate configuration of the mere outlines of the revolution. Far from touching the revolution itself, far from seizing it and fixing it and projecting its innermost meaning, it offers a wholly useless sentimentalization of freedom or liberation or any "idealistic" vision anyone wants to put into it.

Constructively, then: how shall the revolution be choreographically conveyed? There must be symbols richer, truer and fuller than music, a color or a light. And there are. The revolution should be presented as a whole way of life rather than as a liberating vision

from almost anything; it should be seen as a struggle, an upheaval, a reconstruction, a tremendous project. And, clearly, it is imperative to define the fighters as the proletariat—because, again, anyone might seem to be struggling for anything, with no intimation of the worthiness of the cause. We have, then, dancers who are definitely workers straining under the specific burdens and oppressions which workers know and which the audience will recognize as conditions surrounding their own existences (always as dance, of course always as meaningful movement). The burden grows beyond bearing and they strain forward to protest—or one of them, more alert than the others, brings an awareness of the possibilities of rebellion. When they rise, it must be unmistakably against someone, not merely out of the depths. When they mass together, it must be in a representative demanding body, not merely as an electrified group that is aspiring somewhere or other. And when they march into the revolution, it cannot be as a vaguely joyous aggregation surging toward the nondescript freedom of unrestricted territory, but as workers proceeding to a higher work, as builders, as executors of a large scheme, as informed and responsible sharers in the possession and the cultivation of the earth. Anything else is dreary bourgeois emotionalism and involves no more than an audacious superimposition of neo-revolutionary gestures on a decayed, juiceless and deceptively earnest body.

BUT all this lengthy talk is no more than preface to the full contents of the revolutionary dance. The theme of revolt against exploitation is a sound and important one; but surely it is only *one* and is far from meriting the misrepresentation of being almost the only idea which an evening of eight competitive workers' groups will offer a hungry dance audience. What are further themes? As initial answer I point to the three dances of the evening at Town Hall—and a half-good fourth dance—which ventured into other paths than the easy ideational road of abuse-awakening-amalgamation-revolution. *Pioneer March*, done by the Junior Red Dancers, children from about five to eight, was lame and "cute," but at least it had the quality of sheer community animation and cooperative joy. *Comintern*, one of the Red Dancers' offerings, lacked color and vibration, but it, too, gave a stirring sense of the strength of organization in numbers and the cleanness of willing coordinated action. *Van der Lubbe's Head*, the New Dance Group's prize-winning dance, set its face in the highly laudable direction of current events and the blindingly vivid depiction not only of their literal actional values but of their political origin and their eventual significance. *Contempo*, the half-good dance, given by the Rebel Dancers of Newark, opened with a striking if complete-

ly naive and undeveloped motion picture of many different kinds of workers performing their various functions . . . and then went on to a tragedy-depression pattern. But its opening had at least revealed a fourth direction.

Group vitality, group power, dramatizations and analyses of political events, conversion of workers' movements into designs of dancing; here, surely, are tendencies worth studying and cultivating and elaborating to the highest degree. They are just as much qualities of the drama as they are of the dance, it is true, but this is scarcely anything that militates against the employment of them for choreographic values.

And then, where is comedy, the happy depiction of small absurdities in the struggle toward revolution? Where is folk-legend (the Negro, the Indian, and the European races from which so many of us are so recently derived)? Where is folk-dancing? And where is satire, the ruthless exposure of bureaucracy, hypocrisy, pretension, affectation, benevolent despotism, disguised fascism, impotent socialism, fake and opportunistic "workers'" parties? Where is the heightened realistic visualization of what we demand of life and what we would like our world to do? The coming to class-consciousness, the observation of the specific evils around us, evictions, strikes, demonstrations, the training and reconditioning of children, the changing of "human nature," the despair and futility of the church in the face of world crisis, the unabating pleasures of the rich, the mockery of legal procedure, the imprisonment of distributors of "insurrectional" literature, chauvinism, armaments, commercial hallyhoo, international relations, the mingled loathing and fear of Russia, the increase in naval and air fleets . . . all this could and should be authentic and exciting material for the revolutionary dance.

Any true projection of the countless motifs demands thorough familiarity with the life and demands of the worker, clear-headed grasp of the phenomena of the world directly around us, and an unwavering vision of the urgency of hastening—and the methods of producing—the revolution. Such a point of view can and must be developed by all of the groups that took part in the competition. For the most part they have a high degree of technique—with the exception of the appallingly ungifted, untrained and inert New Duncan Group. All seem able to think. When they come to understand the emotional bourgeois origin of most of their otherwise admirable training, when they acquire a new body style that is directly related to the literal physical functions and the general psychological background of the workers of the world, and when they become completely documented on the decay of capitalism and the necessity for communism, then the revolutionary dance movement will begin to take on meaning.

Revolutionary Staging for Revolutionary Plays

By MOLLY DAY THACHER

NEW THEATRE last month expressed the aim of many within the Theatre Union as well as the demand of its critical audience for theatrical forms which shall suit the content and spirit of its scripts.

"... not only revolutionary drama but also revolutionary staging..."

New Theatre, June, 1934.

As a generalized proposition this is clear; but ask any intelligent theatregoer, ask any competent and socially conscious theatre worker what, specifically, should have been done in this direction in the case of say, *Stevodore*, and one of the obstacles becomes equally clear. The tradition of the American theatre is the Broadway tradition. We, theatre workers and audience, are part and product of it more than we realize.

That is why the "new techniques" regularly turn out to be graftings on the old system—like the innovation of multi-scene plays, and all the isolated contributions of the designers in the past fifteen years, which began in high hopes and ended by giving us the same old whore of a Broadway theatre tricked out in a new trousseau. It is the reason why dissatisfactions with this theatre so often center on surface and symptomatic features or are so vaguely formulated that they are useless as guides to action.

The Theatre Union set itself the task of presenting revolutionary plays to the biggest audience that could be reached. [By the mere fact of having an idea to express it distinguished itself from most uptown producing offices, whose guiding motive is profit. Because its line is grounded in political and economic realities and it sets itself uncompromisingly on the side of the workers, it has emerged as the most vital and promising development of the season.] But it started as a producing organization. It was a group of people who knew what they wanted said in the theatre, and included playwrights who were able to say it in play-scripts. Proceeding realistically, they engaged actors and other trained theatrical workers to put on *Peace on Earth*.

Suppose they had attempted a revolutionary production? *Who* would have attempted it? The form of the last act, with its rapid flashes from scene to scene, as provided by the authors, invited a strong distortion, an element of caricature and comment upon the characters; its effect could be further intensified by stylized costumes. How can this sort of comment be arrived at? It is easy to talk about. We constantly feel the need for it in revolutionary plays and skits, but we have no experience in doing, or even

seeing it. What shall the director tell the actor? The director has no experience to guide him. What can the actor contribute? The actor has spent his career trying to sell himself to Broadway type-casting offices. Besides, if one actor knows, except perfunctorily, what the play is about, the other, with whom he plays the scene, has no idea. They can "read" the lines, but how can they be asked to make a social comment? Suppose a designer, working alone and with a point of view which exactly coincided with that of the play, brought sketches for satiric costumes to the Theatre Union. The costumes would have been out of key unless they had been part of an integrated theatric plan for the whole production—which did not exist. In other words, a miscellany of workers, regardless of individual talent, cannot be expected in four weeks of rehearsal to evolve a new production form.

Note in this connection that Maltz and Sklar in the original script conceived of the third act in a fantastic treatment and specified a few details to set this tone: the cop was to float down from the flies sporting a gigantic shield. The effectiveness this handling might have had is shown by the only vestige of it which reached the audience: the song and dance act of the college president, the settlement worker, and the other well-meaning people. What happened in rehearsal was that the few suggestions of the authors when carried out without amplification and inserted into the rest of the production, began to look silly and were abandoned.

In other words, a revolutionary production—a production in which every part of the theatre functions consciously and fully (that is, artistically) to express the revolutionary context of the script—is impossible under a producing-office system.

We must re-train ourselves. A revolutionary theatre must work collectively.

It must be permeated by sincerity in technique as well as in the authors' lines.

* * *

The Theatre Union last January formed a Studio to work from these bases. The organizational form is simple and determined by our particular conditions. Actors were selected on their talent, their desire to train themselves further, and their actual or potential sympathy with the social aims of the Theatre Union. The last two requirements eliminated many actors who would have been the first to be chosen for ordinary productions and resulted for the time being in a disproportionate number of young actors.

There is no fee for membership, nor has the Theatre Union been able to pay actors

or directors in the Studio. Members have consequently been released when paid work conflicted with Studio hours. As soon as plays in which they were engaged passed the rehearsal period and went into performance their daytime hours were free and they were welcomed back. We have worked for two-hour periods, three times a week.

There are twenty-seven in the group. With some changes (actors dropped or withdrawn and others admitted on the basis of try-outs) they have worked steadily and seriously on actors' problems. Individually and as an acting group large gains have been made. We wanted to break down acting clichés and type characterizations, the pat and hackneyed "acting" of emotions and "indicating" of relationships which have no place in a theatre that asks its audience to face truths. This is the artistic work which Stanislavsky formulated in the method which is named for him and which has been adapted by the Soviet Revolutionary theatres and in this country by Lee Strassberg of the Group Theatre. We have tried to train ourselves in this method.

Most of the work has been in improvisation, to develop freedom, genuine contact between players, to gain a fundamental attack in acting by using the actor himself and not a script as a starting point, to permit the isolation of specific problems and concentration on them. The material used has been the sort that actors must understand fully when they occur in Theatre Union plays: workers' homes, bureaucratic offices, strike meetings, concentration camps, war scenes.

The first scenes of *Sailors of Cattaro*, by Friedrich Wolf, a play about the mutiny in the Austrian fleet at the end of the World War, is now being rehearsed by the Studio, under the direction of Clifford Odets. It is a probable choice for Theatre Union production next year. More time can be spent on it now, and more careful experimentation than is possible in the rush before an opening date. Staging methods and revisions will be considered on the basis of this trial performance.

The Studio will disband for the summer. Plans are being made for Fall. As a method of self-training, as the only way of establishing the conditions from which collective training and experimentation can begin to evolve a revolutionary technique for productions, a Studio is essential to the Theatre Union. To be fully effective it must be enlarged to include all directors, as well as designers and playwrights to whom it can be enormously suggestive and helpful. And practically, since more and more time will be demanded of the actors, the question of a permanent company in the near future is before the Theatre Union.

Workers Theatre from Coast to Coast

ONE of the most important resolutions made at the National Theatre Conference in Chicago urged that **NEW THEATRE** print more news of workers' theatres. We have been trying to do this. We have asked, even begged the groups to send us news of their productions, analyses of their problems, reports of the solution of their problems—in short, we asked for a cross-section of the tremendous amount of revolutionary cultural work our groups are pushing forward. To date, the response has been very poor; less than half of the groups have sent in anything, and what they have given us is poor in content. Instead of telling us about productions, they write of their organization difficulties, of the factual matter which is the effect and not the cause of their existence. Send us detailed reports of your productive activities! Without them all our articles and reviews remain suspended in the air. We must know what you are doing as cultural forces if we are to help you.

To keep in step with the deepening crisis we must march forward, and we cannot do this, cultural workers, without your help! Discuss your articles among yourselves first, and then press your best writers into service! The deadline for the September issue (which will appear about August 25) will be August 1 for articles, August 10 for news and notes.

New York

The New York section of the League of Workers' Theatres announces the Theatre Arts Workshop, a series of talks by leaders in the revolutionary theatre. The first of these was given by Alfred Saxe on *Newsboy from Script to Performance*. John Bonn spoke on repertory June 18. Cleon Throckmorton will discuss theatre of action stage design July 2 and Sylvia Regan how to organize revolutionary audiences on July 16. The section bulletin *Our Theatre* will feature lengthy analyses of these lectures and will be available to all groups. Section headquarters are now at 114 W. 14th St.

Theatre of the Workers' School is now working on *Nanking Road*. Work in the group is, as elsewhere, handicapped by the lack of forces. New headquarters at 47 E. 12th St. are now ship-shape and new members are much in demand.

Groups of the Workers' Laboratory Theatre are at present rehearsing in each others' laps. In one room "three witches" scream with fury. Next door Pelley "fascist leader extraordinary" is having his seven minute intimate chat with heaven. In a loft across the street the *Revered Company Union* joins in holy matrimony the worker and the boss beneath a canopy bear-



Workers' Theatre, Tri-Cities

ing the legend "N.R.A." Technicians hammer, puppeteers model, the quartet sings—the tent show grows. More important politically, is the beginning of concentration work with the Marine Workers Industrial Union. The first outdoor performance, presented *Dr. Fixemup*, a take-off on the Seamen's Institution quacks. Of this however more later, when there will be more to tell.

New Jersey

The Newark Jack London Club theatre section is now composed of a theatre of action and a stationary group. A full evening of theatre, the Jack London group's first was held June 27. *Can You Hear Their Voices* was given by the stationary group. *America, America*, Alfred Kreymborg's mass recitation and the Rebel Dancers were also presented. George Sklar, co-author of *Stevedore* was chairman.

The New Brunswick Dramclub, a Yiddish speaking group, formerly the dramatic section of the I.W.O., is now an independent theatre group affiliated with the Jewish workers' clubs of New York. Presentations this past winter included *Socialism, Success, Dr. Krupps* and others.

Chicago

The Chicago section ran its first affair since the National Festival, a June play-fest. The Blue Blouses, the M. Winchevsky group, and the Nature Friends performed. Besides the arrangement of this affair the section is going at it hammer and tongs. They are making a drive for more street performances and are involving the Cultural Federation of Chicago and the vicinity in the preparation of a tent show or "circus" to be played at picnics, outings, etc. Not all of the groups are active, however. The others remained in self-imposed oblivion.

The Blue Blouses (personnel consists of eight men and two women) now have political, writing, pantomime, and make-up classes. The repertory includes, *Brain Trust*, a song and dance number and *Recruit* which has already had two street performances of which we would like to hear in greater detail.

Chicago Youth Club, although it has no permanent dramatic group, has produced several plays. In order to establish a permanent group the section has assigned the Blue Blouses to perform there regularly, lead discussions, and help the clubs' theatre work.

The Artes, although organized on the basis of a stationary theatre has, due to the lack of a director, been able to do only short agit-prop plays. Through the National Festival, however, a professional director has become interested in their work and is going to work with them. The play *Blood* will be presented in the fall. For the summer the group continues classes and holds picnics every Sunday at which individual and short numbers are performed.

Finnish Dram Group although doing more extensive work is in the same position as the Chicago Youth Club. With a view to correcting this the section is sending a speaker to discuss the importance of the revolutionary theatre at the Finnish Workers' Club of which the Drama Group is a part.

The Workers' Laboratory Theatre presented *Big Shot, In the Hog House*, and their new play *Sharecroppers Unite* at the Lincoln Center, June 15. Three other groups participated in the program. Although the group is growing rapidly and attracting new members they are cutting rehearsals down to once a week. The group would do well to reread Saxe's article on summer work in the June issue of **NEW THEATRE**.

Iowa and Illinois

(Davenport, Ia., Rock Island and Moline, Ill.)

The entire membership of the New Theatre group of the Tri-Cities, attended the National Festival and on the basis of the discussion following the festival reorganized their executive structure and prepared a nine months' plan.

The nine months' plan includes, doubling the bundle order for **NEW THEATRE**, obtaining twenty new subs for **NEW THEATRE**, raising the political and artistic level of the group, doubling the membership, building a permanent working class audience, increasing technical facilities, instituting a wall newspaper and establishing regular correspondence with **NEW THEATRE**.

Following the National Festival the New Theatre group presented the Los Angeles Blue Blouses in a program which was attended by about 100 people and at which

REPLY TO MICHAEL GOLD

By EDNA OCKO

\$20 was raised to help the Los Angeles troupe on their homeward trek. On May 8, Stanley Burnshaw of the *New Masses* lectured on *Culture and Fascism* and through the group was able to get a fifteen-minute radio broadcast over a local station. At the National Youth Day meeting the group presented the *Hall of Agriculture*. Plans for the future include participation in the August 1 anti-war meet and a full length program early in September. To raise the political and artistic level of the group more time is to be devoted to training, discussion of political problems, of NEW THEATRE and symposiums.

Gary

Gary Workers Dramatic Club: Owing to the cessation of activity for the summer by most local organizations the formation of a local Dramatic League has been postponed until October. Meanwhile the Gary group is working on *Eight Men Speak*, the play that was banned by the Canadian authorities. It will be presented in September or October.

Western District

The western district of the League has now begun its theatre school and is holding classes in all branches of the theatre arts at 230 Spring St. in Los Angeles. Important in the district is the formation of a Negro group, The Negro Workers Art Group, which is at present occupied with two scenes from *Stevedore*.

During the summer the Blue Blouses and the New Theatre of Hollywood will accept no bookings but will concentrate on the creation of a suitable repertory for the fall. *Tempo*, *Tempo* is being revised to be done in the style of *Newsboy*. The results should make interesting reading. *Oriental Malady*, a musical satire on the coming elections is being prepared by the Blue Blouses who may possibly tour the State with the Communist Party candidates. The Rebel Players have added the *Hall of Agriculture* to their repertory and are being bombarded with requests for bookings. New developments include an attempt to organize a new group in San Francisco and requests from Mexico City and Sacramento for plays and workers' theatre data.

San Francisco

Our organizer Peter Maccharini is now recuperating from a fracture of the skull and concussion of the brain. He was viciously clubbed by police while waiting to put on a play pertaining to the marine strike on the waterfront. We are holding a benefit for Peter Maccharini which will include the three scene play "Reds Not Yellow," written by a group member about the marine strike.

About Repertory

A full study of plays on file, as well as a plan for the enlargement of our repertory will appear in the next NEW THEATRE.

In the June 14 issue of the *Daily Worker*, Michael Gold in his column "Change the World" discussed the Workers Dance League Festival of the week before (reviewed elsewhere in this magazine). Since his column cannot acknowledge a response to his criticism, due to his absence, NEW THEATRE, as official organ of the Workers' Dance League, felt that one of the many letters of refutation should be printed. Not that the W.D.L. disagrees entirely with his criticism, but it disagrees with the manner in which he presented his point of view. Revolutionary criticism which is so destructive is not revolutionary criticism. Revolutionary criticism which shows almost a complete lack of knowledge of the medium which it attempts to criticize cannot be acceptable to those who are working in the field.

Dear Michael Gold:

For quite some time now, the revolutionary dance has been a pathetically neglected hybrid trying to squeeze itself a place among the thoroughbred revolutionary arts. In your column it seems to have achieved that questionable distinction. But your broadside attack shows neither understanding of nor sympathy for its difficulties; instead you exhibit a painfully emotional violence which completely detracts from your critical acumen.

First you deplore our subject matter: moribund, depressive; next you bemoan our technic: Graham—decadent, tortured; or Wigman—which you fail to analyze; or Duncan, which you fail to mention. You list our "high-sounding" titles: *Scottsboro*, *Anti-Imperialist*, *Dance of the Red Army*, which latter two titles were not on the program, incidentally. Then you conclude with your most damning questions, "Where is the élan, the courage and passionate warmth of the revolution? Is this rattling dance of corpses on Walpurgis Night around the coffin of a corrupt world *our* revolution? Can you inspire the workers to struggle with such a dismal message?"

May I essay a meek refutation? Has it ever occurred to you that when a young artist or student enters a revolutionary movement, he first does so out of a realization of the sordidness, decadence, and putrescence of the bourgeois world, not out of a sudden glowing vision of a new social order arising on the not-so-dim horizon? You must admit it requires a greater depth of focus to envision the future with "passionate warmth" than to depict the present which exists in all its cruel idiocy before our very noses. Dance groups that are formed for the express purpose of furthering the revolutionary cause are stirred first by capitalist crimes: *Scottsboro*, War, Fascism, Hitler, which stare them in the face. Their initial dances therefore are invariably reactions to these issues. And had we not so many new groups performing that night (four of the six groups were less than a

year old and were showing their first attempts in revolutionary ideology) you would have noticed, surrounded by the other dances, revolutionary fervor in *Uprising*, and proletarian courage in the winning dance, *Van der Lubbe's Head*. "Do you think you can keep this up forever?" Indeed! Such a question contains an outrageously false implication.

As for technic—again I make exception to your hasty analysis. Most of these dancers are professional students. Technics do not pop out of a Jack-in-the-box. They are the product of years of training, and it requires many more years of training to destroy what one has lived by and to build anew. The young revolutionary dancer has neither time nor inclination at present to sit down and consciously plan an uncharted technical course to pursue for herself merely because an artist who has already evolved a complete system of body training happens to be bourgeois. She uses what time and talent she has to compose dances based on those issues she deems revolutionary. I am as impatient as you are that these ideas deal less with the bitter and disillusioned side of the class struggle, but I know that it is the inevitable first step toward fuller development. Ask anyone of the out-of-town dance groups, who have had no contact at all with Graham or Wigman, what they're dancing about and the answer without exception is Lynch, Strike, Anti-War, Depression, Bread Line, etc. All dismal subjects.

And now we come to our final point. As our dancers develop, as their contact with the struggles of the working class becomes increasingly involved and all-encompassing, as their political education intensifies their point of view to include vaster implications and broader themes—in short, the more revolutionary they become, and I reiterate mildly, that takes time, the more they will find the bourgeois technic they employ inadequate and sterile, and out of the pressure of new, exciting, courageous, revolutionary ideas will come the urgency to discard old technics and create a revolutionary one peculiar to their needs. At any rate, they will have used Graham and Wigman and Duncan and have found it wanting; they will not have regretfully chucked it overboard willy-nilly because Michael Gold thought it stultified. Give them a chance.

THE first issue of the new magazine, *The International Theatre* (No. 1, 1934), enlarged from its previous bulletin form and published by the International Union of the Revolutionary Theatre (I.U.R.T.) as a 64-page bi-monthly, has appeared with information on the development of the revolutionary theatre all over the world.

Dance Convention

By GRACE WYLIE

Newsboy

(Continued from page 13)

ALTHOUGH the Dance Festival of June 2 showed a decided step forward generally in the work of the Workers Dance League, the convention held the next day, June 3, not only was an historic occasion, being the first convention of the League, but also it laid the basis for an organization that should be a splendid addition to the cultural forces of the revolutionary movement.

Represented at the convention were fifteen dance groups, ten from New York City and five from out-of-town groups. There were fifty-six delegates present at the opening of the convention at ten o'clock in the morning at the New Dance Group Studio, as well as many non-delegates who came to watch, listen and participate in the discussion. The entire group membership of the League was not present, most conspicuous by their absence being the trade union dance groups and the Harlem groups. Chicago and Los Angeles could not attend. The convention lasted until midnight, taking up through excellent reports and substantial discussion many of the problems facing the League as a whole as well as the individual groups. A fine feeling of unity existed between the groups, together with an eagerness to learn from each other, and the resolutions that were adopted were voted upon with sincerity and enthusiasm.

Organizationally, the establishment of the Eastern Section with bureaus and councils in each important city, was the most important achievement. The League is now equipped to work outside of New York City, which has been its concentration point during the two years of its existence. In the past year the League has drawn into its membership many outstanding young dancers from the bourgeois dance world, equipped technically to proceed with the work of developing the proletarian revolutionary dance. The problem now for the League is to concentrate on the building of dance groups in the mass organizations of workers, the trade unions, etc., so that it can be of direct use in the work of these important organizations, so that it will have in its membership more of the proletarian elements who are essential to the realization of its goal. Resolutions embodying this idea were adopted.

For the purpose of drawing into our work more of the leading dancers in America, and for having a forum for discussion on the work of the revolutionary dance, it was decided to form a club of revolutionary dancers. This club is to have its autonomous organization but will be represented on the Executive Committee of the League through the membership secretary who will be responsible for the formation of the club. Members of the League may also be members of the club.

The decided necessity for organization within the groups was brought out very clearly. It was pointed out that the New Dance Group was able to maintain a headquarters (the most important problem for a dance group), to raise the political understanding of its members, and to keep the majority of its important members within the group only because this group from its very inception recognized the need for collective, organized activity, and this ability to organize and educate their members, was reflected in their artistic work.

One of the most interesting results of the discussion on educational work was the decision to call the membership of the League together before all important events, campaigns, and during major struggles of the working class, to participate in an evening of mass dancing. The dance, to be improvised on the same evening, is to have as its content whatever the particular issue is at that time. Through the medium of the mass choric dance, we will educate our members to the importance and sig-

nificance of the issue. This will not only accomplish the task of developing the political understanding of our membership, but also it will lay the base for the growth of the mass dance, which has been seriously neglected. This activity lend itself to the presentation of a huge mass dance for the evening of May 1, 1935, one which we believe will be far ahead of previous joint presentations of the League on the same occasion.

The Artistic Commission also discussed the decision of the judges of the festival the previous night. The decision was: First place, *Van der Lubbe's Head* (New Dance Group), second place, *Anti-War Cycle* (Theatre Union Dance Group), third place, *Kinder, Kueche, and Kueche* (Nature Friends Dance Group), honorable mention *Contempo* (Rebel Dancers of Newark) and *Uprising* (New Dance Group). The discussion brought out the need for dances of a more specific nature, dealing less with the general theme of depression and revolt. We hope that by next year all our groups will have gotten a *Revolt* (sometimes called *Uprising Uprising, Red Tide*), off their chests and find means of bringing forward themes which are of direct import to our audience.

The Publications Commission thoroughly discussed the question of *Bulletin* and *NEW THEATRE*; Edna Ocko, in her report, pointed out that we need the pages of *NEW THEATRE*, the readers of *NEW THEATRE*, the technical equipment of *NEW THEATRE*, in order to give us a very necessary medium, the press, with which to make new contacts, to clarify our own ideas, etc. But, this will be impossible unless *NEW THEATRE* is giving the full support of all the groups, and this support must be a double support—buy and sell *NEW THEATRE* and help increase its circulation, and write for *NEW THEATRE*. (The *Bulletin* is to be an inner organ of the League, to carry more of the direct organizational and educational material as well as be a means of intergroup correspondence). A special committee of representatives from each group and each city was set up for the purpose of gathering and writing the material that would make *NEW THEATRE* vital to the work of the groups. A business manager, Catherine Silbert, was elected. It now remains for this committee and every member of the League to support *NEW THEATRE* and to make this resolution meaningful.

The Workers Dance League now has the following organization: Executive Committee (consisting of the Executive Secretary, the Organization and Financial Secretary, Educational Director, Chairman of Publications, and Membership Secretary) and the Eastern Council (consisting of two delegates from each group).

The functionaries elected for the coming year are:

Executive Secretary, Grace Wylie; Organizational and Financial Secretary, Sylvia Hammond; Educational Director, Nell Anyon; Chairman of Publications, Edna Ocko; Membership Secretary, Rose Miltz.

New York City also elected its officers for the City Bureau: Organizational Secretary, Lily Verne; Educational Director, Ezra Friedman; Service Manager, Belle Shane; Children's Director, Rebecca Rosenberg.

A representative from one of the many C.W.A. dance classes made an appeal for the League to participate in the struggle of unemployed dancers for relief. This was unanimously decided in the affirmative and was followed by a resolution of the groups to mobilize their members at 50 Lafayette Street the following Saturday when a delegation was to present their demands to the government authorities. The convention was adjourned after spontaneous singing of revolutionary songs.

third movement—simple mechanical transition accomplished. Sometimes these transitions are violent. In *Newsboy* for example—a line of the poem:

Two hundred white men take a black man for a ride and string him up a tree and shoot his body full of holes because a white woman said he smiled at her.

Action—Negro breaks from group back stage and runs forward to audience. The position of the figures on the stage all grouped at the back—the figure of the Negro worker at the front of the stage makes it very difficult to change to the next scene which is from *Merry Go Round*. Four of the figures must leave the stage—four others who are at the moment class-conscious workers must become thugs. The position of Negro and white workers must be completely reversed. The scene is a third degree. Very well. We will make our transition violent. While the Negro worker has been speaking, those not in the scene shuffle quietly and quickly off. At the same time, the white men turn their back to the audience, and as the Negro finishes a white man grabs him and hurls him back.



Crash—the Negro finds himself thrown to the floor into a frame-up scene—the backs of the white men loom ominously and obviously tell the story of the change. There are hundreds of transition methods. Many of them have not been touched at all—the actors' problem, of thought, imagery, concentration, etc., is a book in itself. I have merely attempted to open new avenues of thought and have tried to give a picture of the thorough study and concentration necessary to solving the vastness and scope of our problems. These problems will develop and grow with the development of Workers' Theatre. Every attempt must be made to clarify these problems. Groups and individuals can help by asking technical questions which will be answered here or analyzing their own experiences for publication in *NEW THEATRE*. In the meantime we must forge ahead. Our basis for development lies in an eagerness to delve into new fields, to learn from the theatre of the past—to draw in professionals and semi-professionals to assist in this clarification, to gain strength in a new scientific Marxist understanding of life and its application to the artistic problems of the theatre.

Eight Men Speak

By WILL FERRIS

THE Canadian Government, anxious to stop the exposure of the terror and slander against class-conscious workers and the Communist Party, used every trick in its power to stop the presentation of *Eight Men Speak*.

It is necessary to examine this play closely because of its power and its political importance. The play has errors which dull its weapon edge.

The play is a confusion of styles. If four particular styles are used on the same material, the result will be four different forms, consequently four different plays which will relate to each other in the general and not in the particular. They will only be coherent in relation to their subject matter. The unity of the four will be accidental and beyond the intention and power of the playwrights. As a consequence, uneven development of the dramatic idea, confusion of conflicts, and lack of political clarity inevitably follow.

Act I is a realistic satirical play centering around the petty bourgeois who live in or around the Kingston Penitentiary. The dramatic problem is solved: a parole is given to the banker, and Tim Buck, general secretary of the Communist Party, is kept in prison on framed-up charges.

The vast intention of the second act demands a new style because it wants to present the rotten conditions of the political and other prisoners, the perversion of the prison demonstration by the yellow press, the reading of the news account in a street car, the comment of a man and woman in a cabaret, and the actual trial of the political prisoners. Scene 6, the next to the last in the act, is a composite of all previous characters in the act, is a composite of all previous characters in the act, each one yelling his anger at Tim Buck and the "Russian Com-yunist." The style is that of the scene in *Newsboy* when all the street characters mingle and go into the ballet. The final scene is a court scene of four main speeches by the Judge, Mounted Police and Tim Buck. This act is a play in itself. The form of the play derives more from the pressure of events which followed the Kingston Penitentiary demonstration than it does from the formulation of the dramatic problem.

The first two scenes of *Act III* are a Workers' Court with Capitalism on trial. The second scene is the deposition of Brown, prize witness for the political prisoners, relating how he was terrorized by being flogged. Scene three is a mass recitation of three miners who were murdered by the police. The last part of Scene 5 and Scene 6 demonstrate how Tim Buck was shot at in his cell by guards.

Although the contents of *Act III* are

powerful, the arrangement of material, the confusion of styles, results in poor and confusing development of the dramatic idea.

Act IV is a play in itself. It is a mass chant exposing the frame-up of the eight political prisoners and a demand that the working class call for their release.

Act V is the longest act in the play. The scene is the same as in *Act III*. Capitalism is being tried in a workers' court. *Act V* seems to be the actual transcript of the trial. Here again the events themselves overpower the playwrights. The true class relationships are there alright, but their definition is blurred.

The revolutionary drama must clarify the distorted reflections of the class struggle.

Act VI is the weakest in the play. It is a street scene in which the Canadian Defense League sums up the frame-up. Capitalism tries to defend himself, gets frightened and leaves under the protection of his guard. The audience is asked for the verdict. Capitalism is convicted.

Eight Men Speak is the confusion that comes with the birth of mighty things. Before these things can be expressed a new style has to be developed, and we see this style forming before our very eyes. We see, I think, the beginnings of this new style in the third act of *Peace on Earth*, in the flexibility of *Stevedore*. This style has reached its best development so far in *Newsboy*. *Nanking Road* is an attempt in the same direction. We see this style approximated excellently in *Dimitroff* by the Group Theatre.

This style is not a new nor a mysterious thing. Although it comes from the masses ultimately, it came before the revolutionary theatre. What I mean roughly is cinema technique. The cinema by its flexibility and freedom of choice developed into the style which is commonly called, "montage." As Eisenstein pointed out in an essay on "Cinema Technique" the medium of the cinema is the only medium that can approximate the dialectic flow of things.

We cannot do what the cinema can, yet we can apply the principles of "montage" as set down by Eisenstein to the extent of our medium. Since neither *Newsboy* nor *Nanking Road* are properly montage, the word, "lit-montage" has been coined. This word could be generalized to include all such approximations to cinema technique.

Only a correct theoretical statement of lit-montage can solve the difficult problems of reproducing for our audience the dialectics of things in motion. Only then can such plays of the scope and passion of *Eight Men Speak* have their necessary unity.

Eight Men Speak—published by the Progressive Arts Club of Toronto.

Brookfield Playhouse (Continued from page 8) to give them more than they'll take. Otherwise they fall asleep. During the previous summer some of the playgoers had found that a corpse on a stage, (which occurs in Geddes' *In the Tradition*) was more than they could take, and still keep abreast of the Joneses.

Virgil Geddes' *I Have Seen Myself Before*, was the first play, and the production was worthy of the three-month struggle of the builders. Faithfully and sincerely, on this crude 9' by 22' stage, the drama of the adjustments forced on six men and women by the killing of a pet chicken was acted out by the R.P.A. players.

Man's progress is not to make money but to make things. The Brookfield men for some months now had been making a thing, and making it without money. The American theatre is dead. Only by such modest experiments as the Brookfield Playhouse wherein dramatist and acting company team up without the infringement of middlemen, is there hope of revival.

The Brookfield Playhouse has been built. It has acquired a reputation. As it stands, it is something of a monument to plain labor, simple courage and two-handed resourcefulness. The way it was conceived, the manner in which it was built and the experience of its initial production may prove of benefit to the proletarian theatre. Its future lies with people who speak plainly and who see the theatre as a social instrument rather than as a means of private profit.

Marion Models (Continued from page 11)

If the actors were more mature and the drama more engrossing, then this impression of artiness would be conquered. Inexperienced actors, however, should not be impeded by an unbelievable mise-en-scene of a realistic play. This weighs down the acting, especially young actors. There is good acting material which in the hands of a competent director would have made a much better impression than this badly directed play. The role of the business agent was played with an artistic understanding and conviction that deserves respect. The two Negro actors managed to convey a human quality much broader than their meagre roles. If so much could have been achieved with bad direction a good director could have made them far more lifelike. The part of the model was played with temperance disciplined by intellect. The part of the secretary was played convincingly if somewhat monotonously. This monotony also weakened the roles of the bosses.

The Theatre Collective made an excellent start. This new group has justified its several months of training. There is material with which to work. The very existence of such a proletarian Theatre Collective should act as a stimulus to American revolutionary playwrights.

Translated from THE FREIHEIT.

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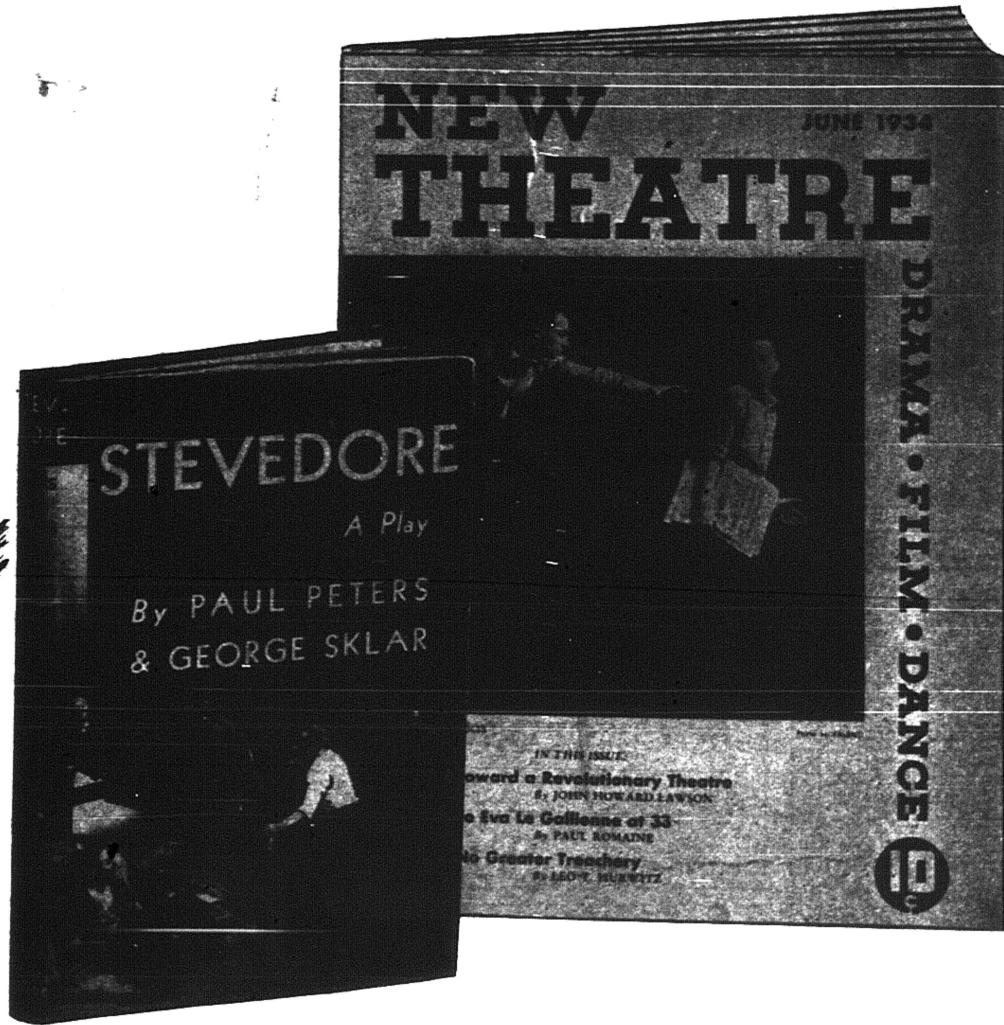
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