

By Dwight Macdonald

SPARKS IN THE NEWS

KREMLIN KULTUR

"It seems to me that our intelligentsia are living in a particularly happy time. . . . The Soviet system alone gives the intelligentsia an opportunity to unfold its creative powers. . . . We shall release such forces that the mere thought of it makes us breathless. (Applause.) Comrades, on December 12 we shall all vote for the Communist Party, for him who expresses the aspirations of the people, Comrade Stalin. (Stormy applause, turning into an ovation. Shouts of 'Hurrah!') For the Soviet intelligentsia! For the creative work of the Soviet intelligentsia!"—Speech by M. Kallinin, president of the Soviet Union, before the representatives of the Soviet Telling Intelligentsia of Leningrad, Nov. 26, 1937. (Quoted from International Literature, No. 1, 1938.)

There is an aged joke about some state legislature which once repealed the law of gravitation. It now appears that in the Soviet Union, where anything can happen these days, something of the sort is actually in process. According to Harold Denny's report in the N. Y. Times for June 15 last, *Socialist Agriculture*, the official organ of the Commissariat of Agriculture, has just published a letter from twenty-four agricultural students denouncing as "bourgeois formalism" both the Mendelian law of heredity and the theory of genes and chromosomes for which T. H. Morgan was awarded the Nobel Prize. "The concept of the gene contradicts dialectical materialism," write the students, "We share the opinion of Academician Lysenko when he says, 'To my mind it is high time to extract bodily Mendelianism and all its equivalents from the courses of higher educational institutions.'" Denny points out that "the fact the editor of *Socialist Agriculture* publishes the letter under the heading, 'CHASE FORMAL GENETICS FROM THE UNIVERSITIES' strongly indicates that that is just what will be done—that the Mendelian law, so far as the Soviet Union is concerned, will be repealed. Unless the editor of *Socialist Agriculture* made a fearfully bad guess."

The Philistinism which has laid waste Soviet culture under Stalin appears clearly in the invidious comparison the students' letter makes between "formal" and "modernistic" genetics—which is dismissed as academic hocus-pocus, mere theory—and "practical" genetics. The "formal" school of Mendel-Morgan is led by N. I. Vavilov, an internationally famous plant expert. The "practical" school is led by T. D. Lysenko, who is in high favor with the Kremlin (and unknown outside the U.S.S.R.). Lysenko is thoroughgoing in his Philistinism, rejecting not only Mendelianism but even the science of genetics itself, which he terms "merely an amusement, like chess or football." (N. Y. Times, Dec. 14, 1936.) Lysenko and his followers charge the Mendel-Morgan-Vavilov school with placing a "fascist" emphasis on hereditary factors, and insist that any good Bolshevik must put the emphasis on environment. Several years ago they kicked up such a row that Vavilov was arrested as a "Trotskyist" and the Seventh International Congress on Genetics, which was to be held in Moscow in the summer of 1937, was abruptly cancelled on orders from the Kremlin.

Denny comments on the "remarkable" fact that such a controversy, involving cardinal points of political doctrine, should have been allowed to drag on for three years—indeed, that it should take place at all. I agree it is remarkable, and suggest that the Kremlin finds itself in a difficult position. For the more national consciousness the Kremlin finds it expedient to stimulate, the more expedient also it must find it to emphasize heredity over environment. And so, while on the whole inclining towards Lysenko's doctrines, the Kremlin cannot quite bring itself to summarily outlaw Vavilov.

For these very special reasons, the Vavilov school has been allowed to survive and even to dispute publicly with the dominant school. But this is a unique situation. In other fields of culture, the Kremlin never hesitates to lay down the law swiftly and with finality. In his intellectual pretensions, if not in other ways, Stalin is a twentieth-century Leonardo Da Vinci, settling out of hand the most abstruse problems of science and esthetics, turning his attention from astronomy to cubism to the expressionistic theatre—and with the most devastating effects in each field. Below I have catalogued a few of the Kremlin's more spectacular recent exploits in such matters. They will perhaps give some faint impression of what the intellectual atmosphere must be like at present in the Workers' Fatherland.

Art
"Purification of Soviet art from 'decadent modernistic influences' as well as the 'sticky sweetness of romanticism' was demanded today in *Izvestia*. . . . Neither French impressionism nor post-impressionism nor bourgeois romanticism in the art of the French revolution, nor the spirit of eighteenth century painting, can harmonize with Soviet art." The philosophical basis of Soviet art was defined thus: "New ideas, new specters and new beauty are the principal accessories of socialist art. Its basic morality is Soviet humanism."—N. Y. Times, Sept. 3, 1938.

Astronomy
"Professor Boris Gerasimovitch, head of the Pulkovo Observatory in Leningrad, was accused today of 'servility' toward foreign science by the newspaper *Leningrad Pravda*. . . . Professor Gerasimovitch is the foremost astronomer of the Soviet Union, and he possesses an international reputation as one of the world's greatest astrophysicists. . . . The current campaign against servility is based on the fact that many Soviet scientists first publish their works abroad."—N. Y. Times, July 19, 1936.

"Having jailed Director Gerasimovitch of the Pulkovo Observatory and shot Director Numerov of the Astronomical Institute at Leningrad and removed and jailed so many 'wreckers' and 'traitors' of star-science that no Soviet astronomers could be sent to the recent meeting of the International Astronomical Union at Stockholm, the G.P.U. has now

turned its attention to the field of Soviet Art."—Bertram D. Wolfe, in *Workers Age*, November 19, 1938.

Cinema
"On March 17, 1937, the Central Administration of the Photo-Cinema Industry stopped the production of the much talked-of and eagerly awaited film, *Bezlin Meadow*, on which Sergei Eisenstein, of Potemkin fame, had been working for over two years. . . . In an article in *Pravda*, Boris Shumiatky, the head of the moving picture industry in the U.S.S.R., charged Eisenstein with having failed to 'learn from life', with having placed too much faith in his own 'scholastic profundities' and with 'harmful formalistic exercises'. . . . Eisenstein admitted many of the criticisms. He admitted having been possessed of the intellectual's quixotic illusion that revolutionary work could be done individually. . . . 'Fame came early to me,' he said, 'I overestimated myself, and that was a major error. I never advanced beyond the stage of elemental revolutionism. . . .'"—Joshua Kunitz in *Moscow News*, March 31, 1937.

"Boris Shumiatky, chief of the Soviet motion picture industry has been quietly removed. . . . The magazine *Soviet Art* charged that his political blindness permitted 'savagely veteran spies, Trotskyist and Bukharinist agents and hirelings of Japanese and German fascism' to perform their wrecking deeds in the Soviet Cinema. . . . He was also criticised for introducing the sex element into an almost completely masculine story, Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, by transforming cabin boy Jim Hawkins into Jenny Hawkins."—N. Y. Times, Jan. 17, 1938.

History
"One of the biggest problems confronting the Bolsheviks is to get a comprehensive history of the Communist revolution. None has yet been written, and no one appears willing to undertake the task because of the virtual certainty that whatever line of thought he pursued today would be unpopular five or ten years hence."—N. Y. Herald-Tribune, Jan. 10, 1936.

"The heavy guns of the Russian Communist Party have now been turned on the works of the late M. N. Pokrovsky, who until his death in 1932 was almost idolized as a Marxist historian, and on the younger Soviet historians who studied under him and now are accused of being active Trotskyists. . . . *Pravda* is especially angered by the low estimate of Peter the Great made by Professor Pokrovsky and his followers. . . . 'Pokrovsky's pupils,' writes *Pravda*, 'were fertile soil for all sorts of anti-party hesitations and wanderings. . . . Many of them became Japanese-German-Trotskyist agents of Rightist dissenters.'"—N. Y. Times, April 18, 1937.

"Nikolai Bukharin and Alexei Rykov, former premier, are denounced along with Leon Trotsky and other one-time Soviet leaders as murderers of Mr. Kirov in a new textbook on the history of the Soviet Union just published. This is the winner of a government competition, and the group of historians who composed it received a premium of 75,000 rubles. . . . The textbook awards considerable praise to Peter the Great."—N. Y. Times, Aug. 25, 1937.

"Joseph Stalin was characterized today as not only a great statesman but as a model historian and scientist by Emil Yaroslavsky. . . . 'Comrade Stalin personally executed a vast amount of the work of compiling 'A Short Course on the History of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union,' said Mr. Yaroslavsky. 'Isn't our admiration stirred by this work of Stalin, for which he found time amid gigantic State work? . . . The concrete instructions to Stalin to our historians, and concrete criticisms of their mistakes—all this caused a veritable about-face in our history.'"—N. Y. Times, March 13, 1939.

Law
"Serious charges are faced by Eugene B. Pashukanis, until a year ago regarded as chief theoretician of Soviet Justice. . . . Mr. Pashukanis had taught that the State was withering away. . . ."—N. Y. Times, April 4, 1938.

Lexicography
"The Lexicographical Institute in Leningrad is one of the latest institutions in the U.S.S.R. to suffer in the constantly widening purge. . . . Academician N. S. Derzhavin, editor-in-chief of the dictionary, who enjoys international reputation, has been removed from his post. His assistant, Professor Obnorsky and his secretary are likewise accused of 'counter-revolution' and 'wrecking' and there is no reason to doubt that all three have been arrested. . . . The entire work will be rewritten under the direction of new editors."

"Leningrad *Pravda* published a bitter attack on Professor Derzhavin, asserting he subtly introduced heretical Trotskyist theories into circulation. . . . It cited the definition of the word 'emigre' as 'one who lives permanently outside his own country' as a sample, pointing out indignantly that the definition 'said not one word about the treason of such people to their Socialist fatherland'. . . . Worse still, 'comparatively few quotations from Stalin were given', while they freely relied on quotations from Bukharin, Kamenev, and Radek. . . . The editors encountered difficulties a few years ago. They issued the volume, 'P', with a definition of the word, 'passport', explaining the hateful significance of this word under the Czarist regime. . . . The volume had gone to press when the Soviet Government suddenly announced the introduction of a law requiring every citizen to carry a passport."—Manchester Guardian Weekly, August 27, 1937.

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By arrangement with the author, Emanuel Garrett's column, "Out of the Past," is being held over this week so that the material prepared by Dwight Macdonald may appear at one time in its entirety. Next week, Garrett will present a biographical sketch of the great 19th Century abolitionist, Wendell Phillips.

W.P.A. Officials Start to Put Slash Into Effect

(Continued from Page 1)
Federal and \$50,000 if Federal. There are very few building projects which will be able to meet this requirement, as even an ordinary school building will generally exceed this amount by a considerable margin.

Effect of Slash
Reports from all over the country indicate the terrible effect Roosevelt's slash-relief policy is having upon those dependent upon W.P.A. jobs or relief checks for food, clothing, and shelter.

In New York the filling of vacancies by W.P.A. has been suspended, and Lieut. Col. Breton B. Somervell, W.P.A. administrator estimated that the new policy would reduce W.P.A. jobs in New York alone at the rate of 1,000 jobs a week. There are absolutely no prospects that those thrown out of W.P.A. will be absorbed by industry. Industrial activity is declining and the first effect of this decline will be slashed payrolls, drastic curtailment of staffs, and increased unemployment.

The only exceptions to Somervell's rule forbidding new replacements or assignments are in a few exceptional cases, nearly half of those now on home relief, will be dropped within the near future. Large scale cuts are now being considered by W.P.A. officials for immediate application.

Postcards Won't Help
In a speech before the National Conference of Social Work at Buffalo, Mayor La Guardia declared that he was opposed to the present slashes in relief. "We talk of democracy, but the freedoms of speech, press, assembly and religion cannot be enjoyed on an empty stomach."

He declared that the present bill for relief "would completely wreck our American system of work relief." But he proposed absolutely no way of obtaining an increased appropriation.

LaGuardia is scheduled to appear before the Senate Appropriations Committee today where he hopes "to salvage something out of the House bill."

One thing is absolutely clear, neither postcards nor LaGuardia speeches will obtain one cent for the unemployed. There is only one language which President Roosevelt and Congress understand, and that is the language of militant demonstrations.

Unless the unemployed begin organizing huge demonstrations in front of every relief office they can expect Roosevelt's slash relief program to gain new heights of fury in its drive to throw every unemployed person on the streets.

Publication of Luxemburg Work Begins in New Int'l

Editors Review National Scene in Comment On Republicans and 1940 Elections

The June issue of the *The New Internationalist* is now off the press, and once again the contents of the issue place the journal in the front ranks of Marxist thought. It is fully up to the calibre of other issues and is varied in content.

"The Republicans and the 1940 Elections" is the subject discussed by the Editors. The situation as related to the New Deal, etc. is fully reviewed.

The problem of imperialist war is dealt with explicitly and fully in two articles. The first contributed by the Editorial Board of the *Bulletin of the Russian Opposition* in an article entitled, "The Step toward Social-Patriotism", which concerns itself with developments arising from the Czecho-slovakian crisis.

The second is an article by Hal Draper on "F.D.R. and the Industrial Mobilization Plan."

The first installment of the famous work by Rosa Luxemburg, "The Socialist Crisis in France", appears also in the July number. Every reader at

all interested in Marxism and its method of analysis will be intrigued by Luxemburg's brochure.

The popular and clear-thinking writer, George E. Novack, contributes a most revealing and informative article on the oil industry, entitled, "The Struggle against the Oil Octopus."

Other important and stimulating articles are contributed by Dwight Macdonald in his monthly column, "Reading from Left to Right", and a discussion of the problem of Bolshevism and Democracy by A. Alper and Albert Goldman, with the latter upholding the basic tenets of Bolshevism.

Jan Buchar's article, "The National Question in Central Europe", is included in the July number.

Readers wishing to obtain a copy of the July number should do so immediately. The subscription rate is \$2. per year. Address The New Internationalist, 116 University Place, New York, N. Y.

Before the Party Convention

For a Three-a-Week Appeal-- On the Road to a Daily Paper

By JAMES P. CANNON

A program of expansion such as the party needs at the present time should be a rounded program which sets tasks to be fulfilled in all the most important fields of work. It should aim to push the party forward on all fronts. At the same time, if the program of expansion is not to remain on paper, as the product of irresponsible wish-thinking, it should combine the resolute will of the party to take a step forward with a realistic appraisal of the practical possibilities.

Every item of the program should be judged by the convention in this light. We cannot afford to indulge in idle speculation about what we would like to do if we had unlimited resources at our disposal. Rather, our plan, and every separate item of it, must be geared to the resources at our disposal in the shape of human energy and material and technical needs. There is one more proviso, however. In elaborating our plan we must take into account the imperative political necessities of the time which impose upon us, as a condition for advancement, a greater expenditure of energy, more sacrifices in the spirit of bolshevism and a faster pace all along the line.

No Question about Necessity

The proposal for a three-a-week Appeal, like all the other items of the program, must be weighed and examined within the framework established by the foregoing considerations. Many factors enter into the discussion of this somewhat ambitious project. Is it politically necessary and advantageous? Have we the technical facilities to produce it? Can we maintain it financially? And finally, can it be effectively distributed by the members of our small organization?

There can be no question about the political necessity and the enormous advantage of a three-a-week publication over the present two-a-week. Things are happening very rapidly in the world today. Problems multiply and questions arise in dizzying succession. A party which answers soonest and oftenest has an incalculable advantage over its slow-poke rivals. The two-a-week Appeal, which has so clearly put us in a commanding position in the radical labor field, is already inadequate for our needs. Here in this issue, for example, we are obliged to print two extra pages to take care of the convention discussion. Apart of that, the editors tell me, their desk drawers are choked with excellent and timely articles and stories for which they have no space; and other vital material, already set up in type, has to be left as hold-over on the printshop stone. The framework of the two-a-week Appeal is already too narrow for our political and agitational needs.

We Have the Forces

Have we the journalistic facilities to produce a paper three times a week without too much difficulty? For one who knows the rich literary resources of our party, to ask that question is to answer it affirmatively. I don't think it is boasting but merely stating obvious facts to say that our staff of writers is second to none, in literary and journalistic competence and political quality. One has only to compare our bright and interestingly written Appeal with its dull, gray and spiritless rivals to satisfy himself on this point. And I refer not merely to the professional staff of the Appeal, who are all journalists who know their trade, but also to the occasional contributors, and the small army of voluntary workers and developing apprentices who wait only the call for full-time service.

In addition to that, we have a vast reserve in the shape of worker-correspondents in the field, a reserve which unfortunately has been all too little utilized up till now. Room must be found for the contributions of these worker-correspondents in order to give the paper a more proletarian stamp and make it a truer reflection of the workers' lives.

From a journalistic and technical point of view we could start the three-a-week tomorrow morning without any serious hitch in the schedule.

The Money WILL Be Found

Can we find the money to produce and maintain a three-a-week Appeal? This question is not to be airily dismissed. Money, like type, does not stretch; and nobody has yet invented a way of producing three papers as cheaply as two. But on this point our experience with the two-a-week Appeal is the best criterion we have to go by. In one 60-day campaign our comrades contributed close to \$3500 to launch this enterprise. Despite difficulties, accidents and miscalculations, this reserve fund was sufficient to carry us through to the present.

When the convention convenes the two-a-week Appeal will be five months old. With the exception of a crisis a few weeks ago, caused by delinquencies in the payment of bundle orders, we had no serious financial difficulty. Even in that crisis we did not have to appeal for contributions. All we asked was that special efforts be made to pay up bundle order accounts. And the really inspiring response of the branches to this emergency call was sufficient to alleviate the crisis. It demonstrated the determined will of our party comrades to maintain the two-a-week Appeal.

In consultation with the comrades responsible for the financial management of the paper, it has been estimated that we can safely undertake the three-a-week publication if we raise a preliminary fund of \$5000. That can be done, not because our comrades have more money than the members of other parties—on the whole they are poorer and have less—but

because they have a more serious and determined revolutionary spirit and are willing to pay more for any project which will advance their cause.

Distribution Is the Problem

It is noteworthy that in the comments I have heard and received about the project of the three-a-week Appeal, nobody has seriously questioned the capacity of the party to manage it financially. On the financial question, as well as on the technical side, we can speak right now with complete confidence in the feasibility of the enterprise. The convention delegates can be presented with facts and figures on all sides of these two aspects of the question which leave no room for doubt that, from a technical and financial standpoint, the proposal of a three-a-week Appeal is no pipe dream but a practical and feasible project.

It will be difficult. It will be a little more of a strain than we were accustomed to in the desultory days of the past. But it can be done. There remains one more question: Can the three-a-week Appeal be adequately distributed by the party members? Here we cannot speak with the same assurance as on the technical and financial sides. The convention delegates, who have already accumulated a considerable experience with the problem of distributing the two-a-week, will have to say the word. However, some provisional opinions on this point will not be out of order. The same question of distribution arose in connection with the project of the two-a-week Appeal. Many comrades who are not at all inclined to pessimism, had misgivings when the two-a-week Appeal was first projected, and even when the decision to launch it was finally taken.

The experience of five months of the two-a-week Appeal has been very illuminating. Despite difficulties, dislocations and maladjustments here and there, the two-a-week Appeal, on the whole, has been effectively distributed. It is a fact that we print and sell twice as many papers per week as we did five months ago. And no more than half of them, roughly speaking, go to the same people. We increased the circle of our literary propaganda by a good fifty percent at one stroke. And those who subscribe to the paper, or buy each issue regularly, get the message of bolshevism twice a week instead of once.

Humdrum Routine Disappearing

These facts outweigh all other considerations. The publication of the paper twice a week acted as a form of mechanical compulsion upon the branches to devise new and more effective means of distribution. The old humdrum routine had to give way before the deluge of papers coming to the branches twice as fast as before. The system of handing out the weekly bundle order at branch meetings, and perhaps assigning a comrade or two to cover some radical meeting or other, broke down. In order to dispose of the papers the comrades had to get on the street with them. They had to break into new fields. This, in turn, resulted in the establishment of new contacts, and a general invigoration of the life of the party branches. We have seen, in this transformation of the method of distributing our paper, the beginning of a transformation of our methods in general from routine propaganda to mass-agitation.

Our party and youth members, by and large, have taken the distribution of the two-a-week Appeal in their stride. There is good reason to believe they will tackle the still more difficult problem of distributing the three-a-week Appeal and solve it in action.

If the problem of distributing the paper three times a week looms in the minds of some comrades as an insuperable obstacle, it is pertinent to ask: How and when are we going to distribute a daily paper? We are by no means three-a-week fanatics. We see it only as another transition step on the road to the Daily. That is the direction in which we must be pointing all the time. In a country like the United States, above all others, it is somewhat ridiculous to hope to become a serious factor in the political life of a country without a daily paper. It is only when a party ceases merely to contemplate events and to comment on them long afterward, through the columns of a monthly or weekly review, and begins to give answers and to pose actions from day to day, that it breaks out of its propaganda shell and becomes a living political movement.

With the Will to Move Forward

We must aspire towards a Daily, and exert every possible ounce of energy to take another step in this direction by the decision of our anti-war convention. The political and agitational advantages of the three-a-week publication do not need to be labored. They are obvious enough on the face of it. The moral effect of the two-a-week Appeal on our members, on sympathizers, on the radical labor movement in general, has already been enormous. A further step forward to a three-a-week Appeal will operate similarly, with cumulative force.

A decision by our convention to establish a three-a-week Appeal—which everybody will understand is going to be carried out to the letter, for we do not make idle gestures—will ring throughout the progressive labor movement like a clarion and rally new supporters to our movement. It will be felt and said on every side: These Trotskyites stop at no obstacle; they have the determined will to move forward and to conquer. And that's the truth of the matter, too.

SOCIETY NOTES

Aged Man Ejected From Burrow In California

MODESTO, Calif.—Ejected from the underground burrow in which he had lived like a mole for ten long years, Hans Hansen, 77-year-old man, who tried to earn a meager living doing odd-jobs, is looking about for a new home.

Police reported that Mr. Hansen had dug out a space under the floor of a warehouse. There he had lived since the depression began in 1929, eating, sleeping, and reading, but receiving no visitors. He burned wax paper bread wrappings when he cooked in order to make as little smoke as possible and so avoid discovery.

By accident he struck the roof of his home which was also the floor of the warehouse. A loyal company man hearing the rap investigated and discovered the aged man in his strange home.

Police came in response to a call from company officials and ejected Mr. Hansen. They found little force necessary. "They would come and get me some day, I figured," Hansen said. "But they were a long time coming."

Angier Biddle Dukes Entertain At Tuxedo Park

Of all the luxurious estates in Tuxedo Park, America's most exclusive residential district, the most luxurious of all is the estate of the Angier Biddle Dukes. It is situated on a slope of the rolling fairytale Ramapo hills. The still waters of the tarn below reflect its palatial lines.

Angie and his blonde wife, Prune, are very proud of their summer home. The front door, opening onto the cobblestone court, leads into a formal white marble hall on the second floor. Prune's own room is a dream-boudoir in blue with a huge canopied four-poster bed quilted in blue satin.

By contrast the bar is informal and cozy. It is filled with trophies and ribbons which the Dukes have won at various horse and dog shows, and the walls are lined with photographs of their round-the-world honeymoon.

Few know how to entertain as well as the Dukes. The hospitable young couple keep constant open house and the six bedrooms are usually overflowing with guests. Their bar is the most popular in Tuxedo Park with its swirl of gayety and laughter.

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See Miller, Labor Bookshop, 116 University Place