

HISTORY AND LESSONS OF THE FIRST WORKERS STATE-THE PARIS COMMUNE

Each year in the month of March we celebrate the anniversary of the Paris Commune. We commemorate the establishment of the first workers state in history, and pay tribute to the heroism of its participants. By studying the Paris Commune, objectively evaluating it and learning its lessons, we ourselves contribute to its historical value. Through our actions, conditioned as they are by these lessons, the Paris Commune lives on.

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By 1871, almost a century after the Great Revolution, the relationship of forces in France was such that no revolution could break out without assuming a proletarian character.



In 1789 the propertyless masses were not an industrial proletariat, in the Marxian sense of the word but handicraftsmen and employees of small manufacturing enterprises whose suffering was increased by the destruction of the guilds. Even at that time however, they sought amelioration of their strife in the destruction of all class differences---not the privileges of the aristocracy alone. They were not constrained by the conservatism that comes with owning property and supported the most extreme left wing in the camp of the petty-bourgeoisie. It was this group which led them in the first Commune, that of 1791-93, which Kropotkin called "soul of the French Revolution". But their attempt at that time to give the slogan "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" meaning other than implied to it by the bourgeoisie was bound to end in failure. Capitalism in France was young; the productive forces were at a low stage of development and their own formlessness as a class in transition from handicraftsmen to wage workers precluded their developing and consummating an independent program.

As the decades passed the rapid development of the productive forces converted ever larger numbers of the masses into proletarians. But as the masses became proletarians so were they impoverished, and there was an extensive agitation for a solution of their desperate plight. It was during this period that the ideas of the Utopian Socialists, Proudhon, St. Simon, and Fourier flourished. One might say, that the French proletariat was experimenting during these years, gradually becoming more conscious of its needs as a class and trying to find a program to satisfy those needs. They utilized every struggle in the camp of the ruling classes to put forward their own demands. In the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 they rose in Paris in an attempt to realize them. By 1848 it became clear that the workers would advance their banner two steps forward for every one taken by the bourgeoisie.

When the Franco-Prussian War was declared in 1870, Marx and Engels supported Prussia, as a victory of this state would bring unity and nationhood to Germany. This was a prerequisite to the unhindered class struggle against the German bourgeoisie. They withdrew their support, however, when Bismarck turned what was a war of defense against the expansion of Louis Bonaparte, ruler of France under the Second Empire, into a war of aggression on his own part.

When the armies of Louis Bonaparte at Sedan, in Northeast France, headed by the emperor himself, surrendered to the German troops a revolution broke out in Paris (September 4, 1870) which declared the empire dead and proclaimed a republic. But Paris was still besieged by the enemy and the armies of the emperor were either surrounded or already captured. In order to defend the city the peoples of Paris agreed to set up a government of National Defense composed of the Paris deputies to the former legislative bodies. Engels, a qualified student of military science, offered a plan of defense to this government.

It was the Parisian working class, organized in the National Guard which played the most heroic role in the defense of Paris. They armed themselves despite the efforts of the French bourgeoisie to prevent it. They even raised money by subscription in order to purchase cannon.

Throughout the siege of Paris the bourgeoisie gave evidence of their fear of the armed workers and their anxiety for obtaining peace in order to deal with the working class. The bourgeois generals deliberately sent the National Guard to be slaughtered in hopeless offensives against the fortified positions of the Prussians. Finally, the French government negotiated an armistice with Bismarck in order to elect a National Assembly to speak as the representatives of the French people on terms of peace.

But the Parisian workers maintained their arms. For them it was only an armistice during which a peace could be negotiated. The armed National Guard of Paris inspired such fear in the ranks of the Junker conquerors that they only occupied a small corner of Paris, and that only for a few days. It was, as Engels said, that the "maintained their encirclement of Paris for 131 days, were themselves encircled by the armed workers of Paris."

In the election that followed, the French peasants voted overwhelmingly for the reactionaries who were pledged to an immediate peace. They were tired of the war and wanted peace at any cost so that their sons could return by spring to work in the fields. As a result, the National Assembly was overwhelmingly reactionary and monarchist--just the kind of body needed by Thiers, the head of the government, to strangle the working class.

Proletarian Paris had good reason to be suspicious of the Assembly sitting at Versailles where its own delegates were howled down by the monarchists and bourgeois reactionaries. The National Guard was not demobilized but remained alert. The Prussians refused to leave France until the indemnity payments began and the bankers refused to lend the money to Thiers until "order was restored in Paris."



During the war the workers of Paris had confined themselves to demanding the vigorous prosecution of the fight. Now that the war was over Thiers realized that the propertied interestes were endangered as long as the workers kept their arms. So he attempted to disarm them. He mobilized 15,000 troops of the regular army and 3,000 police, on the night of March 17, 1871 to seize the cannon of the National Guard in the early hours of the following morning. The attempt failed; the workers of the Montmartre district, where the arms were kept, fraternized with the troops. The orders of the officers to fire on the people were disobeyed and the officers were arrested.

Upon hearing the report of the mutiny at Montmartre, the ministry of Thiers and the larger part of the bourgeoisie fled to Paris. With the government gone, the city was in control of the Central Committee of the National Guard. The Paris workingclass responded to the situation, but their immaturity kept them from realizing what was happening. Not having a perspective of its own, it adopted the solution of the petty-bourgeoisie and attempted to reconstruct the Commune of 1791.

The Commune of 1791 was, legally, nothing more than the Municipal Council of Paris. It was elected by meetings of the citizens in each section and was therefore the governmental organ most responsive to the pressure of the masses. Thus utilized, it was a weapon against the National Assembly and its municipal character remained only a fiction. The execution of its leaders marked the beginning of the decline of the revolution.

Although the Commune of 1871 was theoretically like its predecessor, it was forced by the stern realities of the struggle to speak on all the economic and political problems confronting the Nation at that time. It soon began to regard itself as the spokesman of the whole nation. Even though it never defined its aims systematically, we can say that despite all its confusion the Commune desired the abolition of wage slavery. Exactly how this was to be accomplished it did not know.

The Parisian workingclass had, traditionally, many Jacobin illusions. Instead of looking forward to the socialist revolution, they fought their battles with their eyes turned backward to the revolution of 1789-93. Trying to reconstruct that revolution could always only end in failure, in spite of the heroism displayed by the workingclass and its leaders. The agitation of the Utopian socialists, beginning with Babeuf, and the experiences of 1830 and 1848 helped shed many of these illusions. Later, the work of the First International in organizing the workers into trade unions gave many of them an understanding of the role which they could play in future struggles.

But even while the workers in the trade unions followed the International the great mass of the Commune still followed the leadership of those who had distinguished themselves in past revolutions by heroism if not by program. Most of these leaders were followers of Blanqui, a man who believed that the revolution would be brought about by a small number of well organized, resolute men who would seize power and hold it until it was possible to draw the masses into support of these leaders.

The Commune became an arena of conflict between these two tendencies, the socialist and the Jacobin. Unfortunately most of the socialists followed the theories of Proudhon, father of French anarchism and a utopian. This conflict presents a key to understanding the strength and the weakness of the Commune and its tragic end. The weakness lay in the leadership who represented the petty-bourgeois past of the workingclass; the strength of the Commune was embodied in the small minority who were beginning to understand the socialist future which the workingclass had in its power to mold.

Most of the activities of the Paris Commune during the 72 days of existence were concerned, of necessity, with the war against the reactionary armies of the Versailles government. Nevertheless, when we examine its legislation we can see its general trend. The Commune fulfilled many of the uncompleted tasks of the bourgeois revolution. It separated the church from the state and declared church property state property. It prohibited the church from interfering in education and declared that a free education was the right of everyone. Besides these, the Commune carried out certain revolutionary political measures which were incompatible with the continued rule of the bourgeoisie. It did away with the bourgeois parliamentary system and established the most democratic system of government ever known before. The Commune was both a legislative and executive organ, thus doing away with the state bureaucracy. The sections of Paris elected their delegates to the Commune for short terms subject to recall at any time. In this way they were in direct control of the government. The standing army was abolished and the National Guard into which were enrolled all citizens capable of bearing arms was established as the only armed force. This did away with any special armed force which could be used as the instrument of a ruling class to oppress the ruled. Magistrates and justices instead of being appointed were to be elected and were also subject to recall. The Commune destroyed the myth of the "nation" and in a truly internationalist spirit gave all foreigners the right to vote and hold office. To further prevent the rise of any government bureaucracy it was decided that the maximum salary of any functionary, whether elected or appointed, could be no higher than that of a skilled workman.

The Commune also carried out measures which were specifically proletarian in nature. Mercantile and industrial establishments which were closed by their proprietors were opened and operated by co-operative associations of all the employees. All articles which belonged to needy persons were returned free from the pawnshops; the pawnshops were forbidden to take the workers' tools as security. All rents for the period of October 1870 to April 1871, the period of the war, were declared remitted. Any payment which had already been made was applied to future payment. Employers were forbidden to fine their employees. As if this were not enough the workers of Paris designated the Red Flag as the official emblem of the Commune, giving to the armies of Versailles all rights to the use of the tri-color, the traditional flag of bourgeois France. Most of the bourgeois democratic and revolutionary political measures were re-enactments of the decrees passed by the Commune of 1791-93. The workingclass measures were proposed by the Internationalists, particularly by Fränkel and Vaillant, the members of the Commune most acquainted with scientific socialism.

The lack of a clear political goal spelled disaster for the Commune military operations. All political tendencies in the Commune were responsible, each in its own way, for the lack of centralization and organization necessary for the prosecution of the war. The Jacobins, revealing their faith in the spontaneity of the masses proposed it as a substitute for central authority. The Proudhonists were for de-centralization on principle, and the Marxists feared that centralization under the commune would mean the dictatorship of the Blanquists, that is of those who did not understand the socialist task of the proletariat.

The National Guard was elected on a democratic basis. The ranks elected their battalion commanders and their delegates to the Central Committee of the National Guard. This system although commendable proved impractical for the large scale, planned military operations necessary to defend Paris. The discipline of the ranks was based only upon the moral authority of the commander. The discipline of the battalion to the Commissioner for War was based on even less since there was a continual conflict as to whether the Commune or the Central Committee of the Guard was the higher authority on military matters.

The failure of the Commune to take the offensive against the Versailles armies proved a disaster. The National Guard outnumbered the troops of Thiers by about 7 to 1. On top of which the Versailles troops were demoralized and wanted to go home. But the morale of the National Guard was high. Engaged in a revolutionary struggle, the troops of the Commune were ready to fight for their cause with ardor. Delay could not possibly have gained anything, yet due to their narrow legalism, the Commune could not conceive of the government of Paris going beyond the city limits to launch an attack upon the National Assembly of France.

For the same reason the Commune refused to take over the Bank of France, whose holdings would have been a valuable hostage. They argued that the Bank belonged to the whole of France and not to Paris alone.

The narrow vision of the leaders of the Commune also led to its isolation. They made no attempt to rally the workers and peasants in the rest of France behind them. Had they made contact with the provinces and armed those willing to support them, the uprisings which took place in the cities like Marseille and Lyons might not have been suppressed so easily at the very least. They should have made some attempt at winning over the radicalized workmen who composed part of the Prussian army; instead they spent their time trying to refute the lies of the Versailles press.

The Commune further weakened itself by its treatment of internal enemies. Its members did not want to suppress within Paris, those rights for which it was fighting the National Assembly. As the situation grew worse they were forced to adopt more stringent measures. But they were not enough. Although they suppressed about 40 papers which were hostile to the Commune and two pro-Commune papers charged with irresponsible action, they did not see the need for arresting all open enemies of the Commune. They failed to prevent passage of per-

sons between Paris and Marseille until the last few weeks. Most important of all, they did not disarm the battalions of the National Guard from the bourgeois districts. These battalions later joined the Versailles troops when they entered the city. Because of mistakes such as these the fall of the Commune was brought about at the hands of Thiers.

Seeing no other way out, Thiers went to Bismarck begging for the return of all French prisoners of war from Germany so that they could be used against the Communards. In this way he was able to get together an army at least as large as that of the Parisians. He put at their head a vanguard of the old labor-hating policemen of Paris.

The Communards had been negligent in garrisoning the strong ring of forts around the city. When the attack of the Versailles troops came most of these forts were either destroyed by bombardment or captured. Advancing to the walls of Paris, the Versailles prepared to break through. However, the carelessness of the defenders of the Porte de St. Cloud sector permitted an agent of the Versailles to open a gate and signal them to enter. The masses were aroused to a pitch of determination and enthusiasm for battle not before experienced when it was learned that the Versailles troops had entered the city. But what little central organization previously had existed now fell apart when Delecluze the commissioner of War, called upon the people of Paris to set aside militarism and prepare to barricade their streets and defend their districts.

It took some ten days for the Versailles troops to capture Paris. Every street and house was stubbornly defended. But while the Parisians exhibited their heroism, the Versailles showed only the barbarism which the ruling class employs in suppressing its revolting slaves. Some 30,000 workers perished in the week of bloodshed that followed. The newly invented machine gun replaced for efficiency the traditional volley of the firing squad. Workers were shot for the crime----of being workers; a calloused hand was the ace of spades in post-Commune Paris. It has been said that the peasants living along the banks of the Seine on the outskirts of Paris, crossed themselves as they watched the river turn red. The international solidarity which all capitalists display when confronted with labor in revolt was symbolized by Bismarck when he refused to allow the refugees from Paris to cross the Prussian lines. That some got through at all was due to the action of individual soldiers in the Prussian army who sympathized with the escaping Parisians. Practically none of the leaders of the Commune escaped. Most were killed during the struggle, or shot in an attempt to escape. The rest were taken prisoner and held for the trials that followed, thereafter shot by a firing squad. A few, sent to the penal camp in New Caledonia, rotted away in the fever-ridden jungle.



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All that remains of the Paris Commune are the lessons which we can draw from it. It is these lessons which will make it possible for us to accomplish in our own day, what the Communards did not do in theirs. Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, looked upon the Paris Commune as a revolutionary laboratory. They drew from the Commune several important lessons. The Commune proved that the state machinery of the old state cannot be taken over and "wielded for their own purpose by the workingclass." It must be smashed and be replaced by the new state machinery that will correspond to the aims of the proletarian rule. The Commune showed that the proletariat has no use for a parliamentary republic with its division of labor between those who make laws and those who execute them. The Commune was a working body which both decreed and administered the laws.

A lesson learned from the Commune, the truth of which we appreciate so much today, is that the workingclass is helpless and its insurrection foredoomed if it does not have revolutionary Marxist party at its head. At every step of the struggle this was the greatest need of the Commune.

The Commune was the first revolution in which the middle class was faced with the choice between the bourgeoisie or the workingclass. In Paris in 1871, the middle class was caught between the Commune and the National Assembly in Versailles.

The conduct of Thiers and Bismarck showed that the bourgeoisie will cease its inter-imperialist struggles and unite to suppress a proletarian revolution. Class is thicker than nation.

Once begun, the insurrection must maintain its offensive. In stopping at the gates of Paris, the Communards left the rest of France to the enemy. It gave them time and resources to begin an offensive which dealt the Commune its death blow.

The Communards should have realized that to capture political rule is not enough; Marx said "The political rule of the producer cannot co-exist with his economic slavery." Once the political power has been wrested from the bourgeoisie, there can be no hesitation in taking economic power from them. The class struggle, particularly in time of civil war, permits of no sentimentality or hesitation, no magnanimity towards the class enemy.

These, then, are the lessons of the Commune. They became the most powerful weapons of the proletariat in the Russian Revolution. The Commune itself has become a tradition. Further than that we can only repeat the words of Karl Marx written upon the fall of the Commune:

"Workingmen's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are forever enshrined in the great heart of the workingclass. Its exterminators. History has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them."

Justin Graham

LOVER OF MANKIND

From "U.S.A." by
John Dos Passos

Debs was a railroad man, born in a weather-boarded shack in Terre Haute.

He was one of ten children.


His father had come to America in a sailing ship in '49, an Alsatian from Colmar; Not much of a money-maker, fond of music and reading,

he gave his children a chance to finish public school and that was about all he could do.

At fifteen Gene Debs was already working as a machinist on the Indianapolis and Terre Haute Railway.

He worked as a locomotive fireman, clerked in a store

joined the local of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, was elected secretary, traveled all over the country as organizer.



He was a tall shamblefooted man, had a sort of gusty rhetoric that set on fire the railroad workers in their pineboarded halls

made them want the world he wanted, a world brothers might own where everybody would split even:

"I am not a labor leader. I don't want you to follow me or anyone else. If you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of the capitalist wilderness you will stay right where you are. I would not lead you into this promised land if I could, because if I could lead you in, someone else would lead you out."

That was how he talked to freight handlers and gandywalkers, to firemen and switchmen and engineers, telling them it wasn't enough to organize the railroadmen, that all workers must be organized, that all workers must be organized in the workers cooperative commonwealth.

Locomotive fireman on many a long night's run, under the smoke a fire burned him up, burned in gusty words that beat in pineboarded halls; he wanted his brothers to be free men.

That was what he saw in the crowd that met him at the Old Wells St. Depot when he came out of jail after the Pullman strike,

those were the men that chalked up nine hundred thousand votes for him in nineteen twelve and scared the frockcoats and the top hats and diamonded hostesses at Saratoga Springs, Bar Harbor, Lake Geneva with the bogey of a socialist president.

But where were Gene Debs' brothers in nineteen eighteen when Woodrow Wilson had him locked up in Atlanta for speaking against war,

where were the big men fond of whiskey and fond of each other, gentle rambling tellers of stories over bars in small towns in the Middle-West,

quiet men who wanted a house with a porch to putter around and a fat wife to cook for them, a few drinks and cigars, a garden to dig in, cronies to chew the rag with

and wanted to work for it
and other to work for it;
where were the locomotive firemen and engineers when they hustled him
off to Atlanta Penitentiary?

And they brought him back to die in Terre Haute
to sit on his porch in a rocker with a cigar in his mouth,
beside him American Beauty roses his wife fixed in a bowl;
and the people of Terre Haute and the people in Indiana and the
people of the Middle West were fond of him and afraid of him and thought
of him as an old kindly uncle who loved them, and wanted to be with him
and to have him give them candy,

but they were afraid of him as if he had contracted a social disease,
syphilis or leprosy and thought it was too bad,
but on account of the flag
and prosperity
and making the world safe for democracy,
they were afraid to be with him
or to think much about him for fear they might believe him;
for he said;

"While there is a lower class I am of it, while there is a
criminal class I am of it, while there is a soul in prison I am not free."

OUR TOWN ○ ○ ○ ○

Wilmington is a small Ohio town some 60 miles from Cincinnati
and 18 miles from Xenia. With a population of about 5,000 it
owes much of its present size and industry to the blessings of
the last war.

Off hand, one would say that Wilmington, or as it is sometimes
called: Clinton County, is a farming center. Most of the farmers
here raise hogs and yellow corn for hog feed.

However, during the war the Army built an airfield just out-
side of town and private owners built a couple of new industries
in town. Even Henry Ford tried to establish a small concern in
C.C., but a Mr. Denver (owner of the Denver Bank and practically
half of the town's business) bought the ground which Henry was
eyeing and thus Ford expansion was somewhat stymied.



Folks in Wilmington are very friendly to-
ward one another. Everybody minds his
own business, sticks to his job, and stays
in his place. Negroes refrain from going
to the local white restaurants because that
would be out of place. Negroes always sit
on the right hand side of the theatre,
never in the center, because that's their
special place. To sit anywhere else would
upset the wonderful pattern which has be-
come a "tradition" in friendly Wilmington.

Prices on food and clothing in Wilmington stores are high, higher than many workers can afford. But workers at the Wilmington Casting Co. don't ask for a raise in pay from the present 70¢ to 90¢ an hour rates. Unthinkable. Farquahr Furnace workers start out at 65¢ an hour. Meat is 66¢, 77¢ and 80¢ a pound at Allier's Food Market, but workers don't demand more wages to meet rising prices. Of course not! To do so would upset the balance; folks would become excited; blood pressures would go up and profits would come down. Look at what happened at the Augur Bit Co. last summer in '46. Workers on strike up untill late September and a college student (Wilmington has a small Liberal Arts private College) on the picket line?

Poor union leadership however pulled the workers out too soon; company dismissed some of the more "radical" ones. The workers soon went back to work at original wage rates of 65¢ an hour.

One can't help but admire how neatly the pattern works out in friendly Wilmington. The well-to-do folks live in the finest homes, drive the biggest cars, and dress in the latest (and more expensive) styles. They also buy the choice cuts (and sometimes the only cuts) of meat in the stalls. They are the folks who own stock in the granaries, laundries, bakeries and factories in town.

Men and women who work in the laundries, granaries, bakeries, and factories can't expect to mingle with their betters. Consequently, these men and women establish themselves in residences suitable to their means. An amiable solution to a simple problem. Most of the Negroes restrict themselves (and not without outside persuasion) to the ghetto of Grant street. Poor whites live a few blocks away and in homes scattered along the back roads. In many instances entire families (grandpa and grandma too) live under the same roof. Newly weds often arrange to live with their in-laws, so it is quite clear to even a casual observer that there is no housing problem in Wilmington.

Folks from out of town always remark about how nice and friendly and quiet it is in Wilmington

Logan J.

SOCIALIST YOUTH REVIEW

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"BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES"

Reviewed by JACKIE ROBBINS

HOLLYWOOD HAS RECENTLY created a big splash with the production of The Best Years of Our Lives. Hailed unanimously by the press, granted all the usual awards, it supposedly is a fearless and moving exposition of the problems of the returning GI. The movie follows the lives of three veterans from the time of their arrival in the U.S. through the throes of homecoming to final contented readjustment. And it does show that the process is not at all peaches and cream -- that our society does create problems for the veteran. But beneath the veneer that a few realistic touches create, what is the real statement of this movie?

EACH OF THE three returning veterans has initial misgivings and fears. The most obvious problem is that of the sailor, Homer, who has had both hands burned off. How will his family and his girl receive the sight of his metal hooks? The returning bombardier comes from an impoverished background, was a soda jerk, has a certain native intelligence, has been an officer, and is unwilling to return to an economically and mentally unrewarding occupation. He hopes for a good job and a home, neither of which materializes.

THE SERGEANT-BANKER, Al, returns to a luxurious home, an understanding wife and daughter, but is worried about his adjustment to them.

THESE EXPERIENCES ARE very real and most of the tragic human reactions are genuine.

HOMER HAS TO contend with a family which cannot contain its pity and embarrassment for him, as well as with his subjective anxiety which does not allow him to accept the love of his fiancée. Eventually his girl's love overcomes his misgivings and they marry, but not till after a series of harrowing experiences during which "they either kept staring at the hooks, or kept staring away from them."

REHABILITATION TROUBLES

FRED, THE BOMBARDIER, comes home to find out that his wife is no longer living in his father's shanty, but has gotten a job in a night club. Not finding her in at once, he goes on an all night drunk with the sergeant, who has been having some rehabilitation troubles of his own. Fred was married to blonde Marie for twenty days before leaving and when he finally does find her, he learns that she is more interested in his captain's uniform and salary than in helping him establish himself in civilian life. He looks diligently for a fairly decent job but is forced back to his nightmare of soda-jerking for lack of money or opportunity. His wife is a shrewish slut and he finds himself falling in love with Al's daughter, Peggy; he is constantly disturbed by dreams of his traumatic war experiences; he is fired from even this detested job for knocking down a customer who angers him; and his wife leaves him because he hasn't enough money. About to leave town, to try to make a fresh start, he discovers a gang working on the demolition of planes for use in pre-fabricated houses and begs a job with them. He is then called to Homer's wedding where he and Peggy are reunited.

AL HAS HAD his entire world broadened by his experience in the infantry. When called back to his bank job (with a promotion attached) he finds himself acting more in terms of human experience and less within the protocol of banking procedure. He gives a destitute veteran a loan despite the lack of collateral, and is rebuked by his superiors. But at a club dinner he gets drunk enough so that he has the courage to make a dinner speech defending his own behavior in the bank.

THE FILM'S SOLUTION

THUS THE FILM takes very real and vital issues and poses their solution in this manner: If you are sent out into war and get your hands burned off -- 1) you will receive a pair of hooks and superb training from the navy in how to manipulate them; 2) you must not be a fool and rebuff your girl friend if you have one, but should realize that you can easily find a woman who will cheerfully accept a married life of that sort; and 3) you will get \$200 a month for life from the government.

IF YOU WERE born into poverty and come back from army life without a seat on the stock exchange waiting for you -- 1) you may get some hard knocks in the beginning; but 2) you will sooner or later find a steady job "in your class" even if it is not the most creative one in the world; 3) banker's daughters are just like people, even more so, and a pretty one is sure to want to marry you -- junk business or no.

IF YOU WERE a banker originally but have had your eyes opened to a thing or two -- 1) you will come back to an extremely comfortable home and job, and certainly never have to worry about material concerns; 2) you may feel uneasy about some business practices, but if you have a few extra cocktails a day you can manage to be happy though bleary-eyed.

IN OTHER WORDS, the film, rather than dealing with the problem seriously, takes up each individual conflict and side-tracks it in terms of wishy washy relationships involving Hollywoodian goodness and badness. The movie has the conventional happy ending, the audience leaves satisfied -- on what basis? Because even though Fred's wife was a floozy, she left him just in time for him to marry sweet Peggy. Because even though we start out with a terrifying sense of isolation and dispossession of the working class veteran, just when he's most down and out there's a derrick waiting for him on which to work.

THE THOUSANDS OF veterans who were seriously jolted mentally and physically during the war and came back unable to find a home or a good job, are expected to project themselves into the fairy tale resolution of the typical (American Boone City boys). Hollywood has done nothing more than to exploit the plot opportunities offered by this living situation to construct a witty, humane but superficial romance. Instead of a mean uncle to provide the conflict, we have the veteran's problem. Serious social commentary? No.

HOW SOLDIERS TALK

SIGNIFICANT TOO IS the fact that in the film none of the soldiers even speaks of the war in the half-way analytical or wondering fashion as did the GIs in some wartime movies. The men are simply unquestioning on the subject, even though the picture attempts to present a portrait of their lives in relation to the war's aftermath. In one significant scene in a drug store, a fascist tells the disabled sailor that we fought on the wrong side, that "we should have minded our own business." The sailor shouts in desperation that he saw four hundred

POETS CORNER

A YEAR AFTER

Trees in bloom
And flowers glowing
Birds rejoice
Where love keeps growing

Through these days
of fearful watching.
Youthful hopes
Are bright - and touching.

Nature wears
Green, shining sashes
Half our world
Lies - gray - in ashes.

H. J-S.

REVIEW

continued
buddies in an hour, was that for
nothing?

THIS IS THE sum total of the
thought, the idea which Holly-
wood permits itself; a question
posed by a fascist and a reply
which, while emotionally under-
standable, is not logically rel-
event.

AND SO WE see that even if
Hollywood has here touched on a
vital social and human problem
and has expended a certain amount
of technical skill, its method is
still the same old simple good-
and-bad approach of the cowboy,
gangster and love story films. The complexity of life, the shadings
of actual characters, the realities of social relationships, the spon-
taneous and unsteretyped aspects of human emotion - all of these the
picture cannot grasp, for as virtually all of Hollywood's productions
it is not honest or serious in its intentions.

THE WHOLE TRUTH

The dead do not speak,
They are dust.
The weeping is done,
And the crosses
Stand on parade:
Symbols to our pride
And cared for
By a grateful nation.

The dead do not speak.
Who say that they do?
Let us laugh at him,
For we know better -
We who saw them die,
We who buried
And avenged them -
We declare:
The dead do not speak.

And if they could speak -
What, if they could speak?
Would they be wiser?
Did not so many of us live
And suffer more than they (?)
And longer?
And: do we speak?
Or: are we wiser?

The dead do not speak,
They are dust.
And we, who know about them,
Are tired and have lost
The courage
To speak.

H.J-S.

(This review was submitted to Labor Action, and printed, by a New
York Socialist Youth League member, Jackie Robbins.)

REPORT FROM THE PARTY ON: UNITY WITH S.W.P.

IN APRIL OF 1940 the Trotskyist movement in the United States was split. The majority group led by comrade J. P. Cannon retained the name of the Socialist Workers Party; the minority, led by Max Schachtman took the name, WORKERS PARTY. The split itself was the culmination of many months of factional struggle over the political course to be followed by the Trotskyist movement in the war. Central to these issues of dispute was the all important "Russian question".

IT WILL BE recalled that in April of 1940 all Europe was engaged in war. Russia had made a pact with Germany in the latter part of August 1939. Several days later Germany invaded Poland and met the Russian armies at a predetermined line in that country. Russia also invaded Finland and the Baltic countries.

AT THAT TIME the official position of the Trotskyist movement regarded Russia as a Workers State. But not simply that. It held that This Workers State which retained many economic and social characteristics of the changes brought about by the revolution of 1917 (Nationalized property) etc.) was degenerating thanks to the international and national policies of the Stalin bureaucracy. Stalin had wrested the power of the Communist Party and the Russian State from its Leninist leadership and was inflicting vigorous hammer blows at the revolution. by physically exterminating the Leninist leadership; by destroying the Communist Party in Russia and elsewhere; by isolating Russia from the international working class; and by disarming the Russian Revolution by a systematic destruction of the institutions of expression and elimination of workers democracy. The Trotskyists characterized Russianas a degenerated Workers State. It called for a political revolution to overthrow the regime of Stalin and substitute the Party and principles of Lenin. It held that despite the distortions of the Revolution imposed by the reactionary Stalin it was the duty of all revolutionaries to defend the Soviet Union from imperialist attack. There were in the Fourth International groups which disputed that Russia was a Workers State but they constituted a small minority at that time.

WHEN RUSSIA INVADED Poland and Finland the minority in the Socialist Workers Party, condemned the invasion as "Stalinist Imperialism. As Russia became integrally involved in the imperialist war the minority vigorously opposed the old formula of "Defense of the Soviet Union". The Majority clung to the traditional slogan. Their cry for the defense of the "Workers Fatherland", was countered by us with a denunciation of the war as imperialist on both sides.

AFTER THE FORMATION of the Workers Party the character of the Russian State under Stalin underwent re-examination. The concept that Russia was a degenerated Workers State, was abandoned by us (but retained by the SWP). Our new analysis was codified in a resolution which characterized Russia as a "Bureaucratic Collectivist State", which we contended was anti-workingclass and counter-revolutionary.

A3 THE SECOND world war was drawing to its close, particularly after the end of the war in Europe, a new minority was crystalized in the SW P led by comrades Golman and Morrow. When comrade Cannon declared that the "Defense of the Soviet Union" (To which he and the majority of the SWP adhered) had receded into the background, and that the main task was now the defense of the European Revolution against Stalinists onslaughts, Comrades Goldman and Morrow called for the unification of the two Trotskyist parties (Workers Party and Socialist Workers Party) in the U.S. They argued that with the change in the world situation, and the recession of the Russian question into a secondary of passive phase, sufficient areas of political and programmatic agreement existed between the two parties to make unity not only possible, but mandatory. The Workers Party, immediately supported the proposition of comrades Goldman and Morrow and proposed the opening of unity negotiations.

THE SWP, ALTHOUGH agreeing to hold some meetings of the negotiating committees (to probe the areas of disagreement) did not declare for unity and after some months unification negotiations fell through. Comrade Goldman and a group of his followers then denounced the SWP majority for having blocked the unity, and despite many differences which the Goldman minority had (and still has) with the W.P., joined the Workers Party

IN FEBRUARY OF 1947, three months after the National Convention of the SWP had categorically rejected unity and expelled from its party the outstanding proponent for unity (Comrade Morrow), a series of swift developments occurred which reopened the question of unity once more. The Workers Party, in response to these developments, convened a special meeting of its national committee which went on record reiterating its former position for unity. About a week later, the SWP held a national committee meeting at which it too took a position for unification.

SINCE THEN, EACH party has elected three representatives to serve on a joint negotiating committee. This committee has met several times and have come to some agreements as to collaboration of the two parties in several fields of activity where such collaboration pointing toward unity is practicable. For example, the two relief organizations were merged. Local units of each party have been directed to elect joint local committees to direct collaboration in the mass organizations, to arrange joint public meetings where possible. Originally it was expected that our first joint public meeting would be held to celebrate May Day, but several weeks ago we were informed by the SWP that they are opposed to a joint May Day meeting on grounds that such a joint meeting would restrict their political propaganda and is therefore inadvisable. They also asserted that their membership was desirous of examining more carefully the implications of unity. The W.P. representatives disagreed with the argument and regretted very much the decision against a joint May Day meeting.

THIS IS ABOUT where matters stand today. The W.P. looks forward to the consummation of unity between the W.P. and the S.W.P. Such a merger will forge an instrument which will more effectively advance the interests of the American and International Working Class.

Nathan Gould
Dir. of Org.
Workers Party