

MEET MRS. LUCE

By VIRGINIA GARDNER

Washington.

IT IS very hard to hold onto the usual NEW MASSES objectivity when you sit face to face with Beauty. It was one thing to weather the blandishments of Rep. Sam Hobbs of Alabama or to withstand the charm of Rep. Everett Dirksen of Illinois even when he told me that he had not forgotten the days when he carried a dinner pail. I could keep my balance about Jesse Wolcott of Michigan even as he held out his pudgy hands—hands once calloused with toil, he said with tears in his voice. But the undermining effect of interviewing Clare Luce of Connecticut is something else again.

My only experience even remotely like it was an occasion years ago when I worked for a hardy Republican paper which opposed all New Deal functions, but particularly opposed the WPA. I confessed to the boss that it was very difficult for me to be funny about a park show to be given by WPA after a bunch of broken-down actors who'd been hungry for years had pleaded with me to give them a break. The boss then drew himself up, pointed heavenward and said with stirring intonation, "Harden your heart, girl, and write the truth."

It was not only the fact of sitting across the desk from the fragile quality and wistful blue eyes of Mrs. Luce that made it so difficult to recall that only an hour or so earlier her lovely voice was heard on the floor of the House: "Mr. Speaker, clear everything with Sidney."

I had tried so many times in the closing days of Congress to see Mrs. Luce without success that when her sturdy and protective secretary in charge of the press, Al Mirano, ushered me into her presence I was hardly prepared for it. I was conscious of my own unmanicured paws before the lacquered perfection of her blood-red nails, my sodden mass of straight hair. Hers was glowing, golden, and was unaffected by a three-day rain. I wriggled my toes in my wet Oxfords, edged out of a damp coat still reeking of mothballs and retrieved my papers and bundles and knitting from the floor as I sat down. But Mrs. Luce proceeded to make me feel right at home. She did this by assuring me that (1) I didn't look a day over twenty-five, after I had confessed to forty; and (2) that some of her best

friends were Communists. I was perfectly ready to believe that some of her best friends were Communists—and that I didn't look a day over twenty-five—until Miss Eredo Utley telephoned and Mrs. Luce, before answering, explained chattily, "One of my good Communist friends calling." Anyone who confused a Trotskyite with a Communist, I reflected sadly, might not be too reliable when it came to a discussion of ages.

"AL is furious at me for seeing you," said Mrs. Luce, laughingly, woman to woman. "He hates to see me talk to people who are going to take me apart." She glanced at my bright smile, which I trust was sympathetic but noncommittal, and glanced away, saying with self-pity in her voice, "Of course I can't expect to get a break in NEW MASSES. Why should I?" Then she told me why she should. Like so many Congressmen, she apparently thinks of herself as quite a radical when talking to a NEW MASSES correspondent.

It was at the end of the interview, though, after about an hour and a half of talk, that Mrs. Luce, standing and hitching up her tailored suit skirt over a beautifully flat stomach and slim hips, made her most telling appeal. "A Negro editor was in here the other day," she said. "Talking about discrimination, he said, 'But you wouldn't know what it is like.' I said, 'Oh, I wouldn't? Haven't I known it every day I've been in Congress?'" Here was a subject which struck home. We grew indignant together over the way reporters wrote about her latest hair-do instead

of what she said—although I admit now in cooler judgment that she has corrected that by toning down her hair-do and jazzing up her remarks. "And they always have a woman answer me instead of a man," she said irritably. But when I began speaking about age-old discrimination against all women, her attention wandered. I became aware of a look of distraction on those beautiful features, and then of her voice, cool and brittle, "I don't care what you say about me but I would like to see the direct quotes you use before you print them." After I said yes, and walked away down the corridor past the locked doors of amiable Congressmen who never asked for previews of quotes, I remembered ruefully that Representative Luce wrote *The Women*.

MRS. LUCE has heard that some persons make the fantastic charge that she went into politics because she was ambitious. The fact is otherwise. As she said, demure, her voice low, "I conceived this as a job to do. I've always worked hard. This is the hardest work I've ever done and it is certainly not glamorous." It seemed that the thing which hurt most deeply, though, was that some persons intimated that behind her political career loomed the figure of her husband, Henry R. Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune* magazines. "I ask you," she said in a tone as near impassioned as any I heard her use, "since when has a man ever sought the presidency or a political career, without ever going into politics? My husband never has made a political move in his life. Look at the way he runs his magazines—he certainly doesn't play them politically."

"What about the recent Bullitt article?" I asked, alluding to the article in *Life* by William Bullitt which had been used elatedly by the Nazi radio.

"*Life* contracted for two articles and is printing them, that's all," she began defensively, but admitted that it was political. "It's a devastating article. It represents the opinion of a good many people in this country who mistrust Russia." Asked what she herself thought of it, she said, "Well, I would have preferred it if Bill had presented these arguments as his own and not as the Italians'."



Eugene Larkin



"Ten Minute Break," pencil sketch by Seymour Kameny.

monopolies, and most of all from the unabated conflict and strife between the two main economic and social philosophies of life that exist today. We must elect or draft if necessary men who know and feel passionately the sufferings of humanity and are determined to put an end to war, to poverty, and all the malignant ills.

Only the undiscerning, the politically apathetic and illiterate will take this election lightly. Great events are on the horizon. The foundation of a better, happier, and truer civilization is about to be laid. For in meetings, decisions, and plans such as those of Teheran, Mr. Thomas E. Dewey is by no measure or means equipped or qualified to take part.

As an artist I must add that artists and workers in all cultural fields have at no time in recent history of our nation had a better friend and sponsor in the White House than President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Charlotta A. Bass

*Editor, The California Eagle,
Negro Weekly*

I AM supporting President Roosevelt and all candidates who agree with his war program.

I am supporting him because I think he has been all-out for equality of all types and all classes of people without regard to race, color, or creed; and because he has broken down discrimination in many places, especially in the army recreation centers.

Waldo Frank

Novelist and Critic

I SHALL support Roosevelt for reelection.

The alternative of Dewey and all he and his crowd stand for is a danger from which the country—and the entire world—must be guarded.

Sophonisba Breckinridge

*Former Professor of Public Welfare Administration, University of Chicago
School of Social Work*

I AM at the moment on a vacation and am as a matter of fact on the University retired list so that I should probably not be counted in your poll. I have, too, voted the Socialist ticket. I cannot now recall voting for either the Democratic or Republican candidate since the 1916 election. I have supported Norman Thomas whenever I had the

chance, but I feel especially strongly this time about the fourth term and about the differences between Mr. Roosevelt's pledges and his performances in the matter of our getting into the war and sending our boys over seas. I think that that's enough. I have never agitated but I have always supported.

Dr. Leo Eloesser

San Francisco Surgeon

ROOSEVELT and Truman—I'm sorry it's not Wallace.

Because the above seem to offer the only slender chance that the government will not revert to the old big business methods of the pre-war days.

Rev. Wm. Howard Melish

*Church of the Holy Trinity,
Brooklyn, N. Y.*

I AM for Roosevelt because:

Roosevelt knows that the world's most powerful nation has equivalent responsibilities; he will really back an international organization for security and well-being; he understands the need for a frank rapprochement with the Soviet Union and opposes the policy of quarantining which helped produce World War II and defeat collective security at Geneva; he knows that assistance in the rehabilitation of Europe and the industrialization of Asia will help provide markets for our postwar goods.

Roosevelt will win the war against both Germany and Japan, and will not make a political football out of the hopes of servicemen and their families for a premature homecoming.

Roosevelt will try to mobilize both federal and state resources to aid in easing reconversion, stimulating small business, protecting labor, cushioning inevitable temporary unemployment through social security, maintaining public purchasing power during the transition and continuing essential controls as long as necessary.

Roosevelt sees that domestic economy is related to the international scene, and makes a fetish neither of states' rights nor the priority of big business interests.

Roosevelt wants racial unity, a process undoubtedly to be speeded after Election Day.

In brief, I view the so-called "disunity" of the Democrats as the teamwork of divergent groups going some place; the "unity" of the Republicans as the placidity of milch-cows longing to chew their cuds under a ripe apple-tree in the late, late autumn.

Mrs. Luce campaigned in 1942 on the need of fighting a hard war, not a soft one. She denied she had changed in her attitudes since that campaign, or since any previous time, although she voted for Roosevelt in 1932. "My quarrel is that if we had had more honest leadership it would have taken us into the war better prepared and would get us out of it with—" she paused a second, then said, "less loss of treasure and life."

The style was different, but I asked her if the gist of what she said wasn't the same as that of her speech before the Republican national convention, when she blamed the war on Roosevelt. She denied the speech did this. Didn't she feel that the speech was a mistake politically, in view of the public reaction? Having read the many resentful letters on it from men in the armed forces and their wives published in the *New York Post* and elsewhere, I expected to find her chastened and subdued on the subject of that speech. But no. "Not from what I have seen and heard," she said. "The letters I got were four to one in favor. The New Deal press attacked it, the Republican press didn't." She considered it "non-partisan." She "did it entirely on my own," she said proudly, and added with a touch of venom, "They asked me to leave the subject of party policy and the party planks to Dewey and Warren. As a woman they wanted me to address the women of America. So I did."

I have a copy of the speech before me, with the changes made after it was mimeographed for the press. The speech purports to be in behalf of GI Jim, the dead American hero of this war, who is, along with George Washington's ghost, haunting the convention hall. "We have come together here to nominate a President who will make sure that Jim's sacrifice shall not prove useless in the years ahead." Some of the deletions are interesting. The line, for instance, that shows Mrs. Luce fails to distinguish between this and other wars: "And he died as his father died in 1918, and their fathers in 1898, 1861, in 1846, and in 1812, in 1776." A gruesome alliterative line, "His young bones bleach on the tropical roads of Bataan." And a long passage redolent of Mrs. Luce's basic cynicism, with its closing line, "For in the end, Jim also learned that the only perfect democracy is the democracy of the dead." This is reminiscent in its contempt for people of the speech she made in Los Angeles last January in which she said: "Under the



"Sorry, Buster, your ticket only goes as far as Albany."

tender ministrations of 'Old Doctor New Deal' America slowly became a nation of hypochondriacs, introverts, and psychotics."

SHE was bitter about our foreign policy in the years leading up to the war. But she was equally bitter about Russia for not fighting before it just "happened to be attacked by the Nazis." She admitted, however, that the USSR had tried to get agreement on collective security to halt aggression. I could not tell whom she hated most—Roosevelt, Churchill, or Stalin. "I always have thought Stalin a bloody dictator and I still think Stalin a bloody dictator," she said. One of her favorite gripes was British imperialism—"was and is," she said. She was bitter that her "Communist friends" who used to "cheer me on" when she spoke of India, felt that "the character of the war has changed." "For me it has never changed." She indicated that the Communists no longer talked of India. I hope she read Adam Lapin's column in the *Daily Worker* of September 21.

At another point she said: "Mr. Churchill fights for his people and his empire. It makes me very unhappy that we don't have a leader who is fighting just as hard for American interests, for

American culture." Again, she said she was not a nationalist.

Mrs. Luce had not been in the House long when in her maiden speech she attacked Vice President Wallace's concepts, particularly in freedom of the air in the postwar world, as "globaloney." At the same time her snide remarks on Stalin and on the British were in the best spirit of Goebbels. Wallace later chided her by declaring: "I am sure that the vast bulk of Republicans do not want to stir up animosity against either our Russian or English allies at the present time." *Newsweek* reported that Washington reporters had dubbed Mrs. Luce the American Lady Astor.

SHE told me she had been "consistent" about the USSR. "First let me say I'm not afraid of Russia. For its own security and the peace and welfare of mankind Russia and the United States must be friends. And when I speak of Russian aggression in Poland, and possible Russian aggression in the Balkans, or possibly in Manchuria, I am only saying that if confronted by an isolationist America, the Russians are naturally going to look to extending their borders in order to achieve security. Which doesn't mean I don't consider Russia a great and splendid country, full of

vitality. I think there is no reason why we can't be friends with Russia if we can believe her intentions about world cooperation."

I asked her whether that "if" didn't make another thing of her statement that we must collaborate. To which she replied that she also said "if" when it came to America's intentions to cooperate—as if that made everything all right. "I think America is more likely to cooperate with Russia if she knows toward what ends she is cooperating," she said. "In other words, I believe in realism—much as I hate the misuse of that word." But did she think what she was saying and doing was on the side of national unity, I persisted? "National unity comes when people are allowed to say what they believe," she said airily.

She wasn't afraid of the economics of Communism, but she was afraid in one field, "the field of religion." "Tell me," she said, "can you imagine that you, or I—" her hands fluttered expressively as she groped for some phrase that would include all of humanity outside myself and Mrs. Luce, "or even the elevator man, are all, are the best? My quarrel with Russia will end whenever they admit that there is something higher than man."

She summoned Al and asked for a speech she had given before a religious meeting, and underlined in ink what she said represented her quarrel with Communism. The gist was that "the brotherhood of man must presuppose the fatherhood of God." But I obtained the copy of the speech from her and found what she had not shown me, toward the beginning of the speech: "Nazi Germany did not exile God, as did the Russians, to shift for Himself."

I asked if she considered Communism an issue in 1944, and she told, very charmingly, a story about how Australia is now spending huge sums to eradicate the prickly pear, all because an Italian emigrant fifty years ago brought with him one little potted prickly pear to remind him of his homeland. Admitting that Communism might be here in the distant future, I asked, was it an issue in 1944?

"Oh, it's nothing new," she said. "It was an issue in 1940, and in 1936, and in 1932."

"Every time there is an election?" But she made no reply.

I can report a number of little facts about Mrs. Luce. She carries a briefcase, a dainty one of fine red leather. She plays a lot of tennis—on the courts



There are Communists in the provisional government of liberated France. The Communists of the USSR have won the admiration of civilized and decent people all over the world. Communists are taking honorable places in the remaking of Rumania, Bulgaria and Italy, and are in the forefront of partisan battles against the Axis everywhere. Have you written to Governor Thomas E. Dewey at Albany, N. Y., to free the Communist Morris U. Schappes, who was imprisoned because of his political beliefs?

of her hotel, the Wardman Park. I can report that she is an Episcopalian, and that religion is the closest thing to her heart. She is charmed with George Santayana, is reading his *Last Puritan*. No, she doesn't think him a "genteel fascist," as Joel Bradford called him in NM. She likes to go home from her office at 7 or 7:30 three or four nights a week—when she's here—take a hot shower, order dinner on a tray, and read until 2, 3, 4 AM—philosophy or economics. She guesses Aristotle is her favorite philosopher. She also reads Plato and Karl Marx. But she was taking a train when I last saw her, armed not with Aristotle but with Stanley Walker—his new book on Dewey. "Stanley Walker is an old friend of mine," she explained rather apologetically.

Stanley High, the anti-Sovieteer with *Reader's Digest* and *Saturday Evening Post*, is one of her advisers. At least I alluded to him as such and she didn't deny it, and I heard her tell her secretary as she went over correspondence, "Send this to Stanley High." The conservative in her office is Isabel Hill, her social secretary for twelve years, who comes from one of the leading families of Fort Smith, Ark., and doesn't approve of radical Republicans like Mrs. Luce. "You wouldn't get a thing out of her," Mrs. Luce said firmly, after

having seen me speak with her. "The whole staff is close-mouthed about me. They are so fearful for my sake. You see, lots of reporters from pro-New Deal papers come in here to talk with me. I am not afraid to see them; I'm always glad to talk to them though I know, as my staff does, that as soon as they leave, in will go the knife into my back."

I CAN report that Mrs. Luce has met her Democratic opponent, Margaret Connors, who is reputed to have a good chance of winning. Mrs. Luce failed of a majority in 1942, getting in because a third candidate, a Socialist, polled 12,000 votes. Miss Connors, a lawyer, has visited Mrs. Luce with CIO delegations on legislation. Mrs. Luce claims "a liberal voting record." It has been fairly good, when she has been there. When she doesn't want to vote, she ducks. She has watched her labor vote carefully. She was good on the Dies committee, poll tax, Smith-Connally bill, bad on taxes and price control, and on setting up the omnibus Smith committee to investigate government agencies. She failed to vote on the Relief and Rehabilitation Administration appropriation, the bill providing mustering out pay for veterans, and the federal ballot for servicemen—the three measures she has described as the major pieces of legislation enacted by the 78th Congress.

When Pres. R. J. Thomas of the UAW-CIO was honor guest at a Dutch treat luncheon thrown by Rep. George Sadowski last June, some 150 Congressmen came, but none pleaded longer and more earnestly for his support than Mrs. Luce. How the UAW feels about Mrs. Luce is revealed in its August 1 *Newsflash*: "Clare Luce really is beautiful. And smart, too. But her tear-jerking speech at the Republican national convention about GI Jim had a familiar ring. . . . We found its source by going back to some Berlin radio broadcasts." Then it quotes from an April 21, 1942 official German broadcast: "Roosevelt's war . . . look at its bitter cost already in American lives." And from others, including this from the Jan. 8, 1941, German broadcast: "Several million American boys are already doomed to be cannon fodder. . . . There may be something glorious about soaking the soil of foreign lands with the blood of Iowa or Illinois boys . . . but what about the many, many thousands of them who will die like rats in a trap when their ships founder on a German minefield off the coast of France?"