

The Grand Duchy of du Pont

How the dynamite dynasty runs the state of Delaware. Mr. Willkie journeys to Wilmington. Where men make gunpowder and whipping posts stand.

Wilmington, Del.

MY CYNICAL FRIEND remarked: "You don't have to worry about Hitler's conquering the world. The du Ponts will beat him to it." He laughed and glanced over his right shoulder at the booth where a little woman with dark glasses was sitting. She seemed innocuous enough, and he added: "Everyone knows they're in the *I.G. Farbenindustrie* in Germany. And Imperial Chemicals in England. And out in Borneo and the other East Indies with US Rubber. And ever since Eleuthere shipped over from France, they've kept their hand in the old country. Now they're opening a big office in Buenos Aires, and everyone is studying Spanish for the conquest of South America. Say . . . they've got so much money that you can't compute it. And power? They're above parties, above governments, and above the war."

Down in this neck of the Delaware woods, they don't talk about "dynamite" or "powder." They talk about "war industries." Beginning above Chester, Pa., extending ten miles inland from the Delaware River on the Pennsylvania side, crossing the river to the New Jersey shore and covering an area twenty by twenty-five miles, is the War Country—a huge industrialized core which is now being rapidly converted into the productive center for the vast American military machine. The other day, contracts for \$33,335,500 worth of tanks went to the Baldwin Locomotive Works above Chester. The great Sun shipyards of Joseph N. Pew, Jr., are making tankers for supply. Pusey & Jones, down here in Wilmington, are busy with orders for dredges. Malleable Iron Company's Wilmington plant, now in process of organization by the CIO, is making war machines.

Over the river, on the Jersey side, from Penn's Grove to Carney's Point to Deep Water, there in the heart of the du Pont empire, production throbs with life. And also with fear of death. Workers in this territory have no illusions. They know how hard life is, how small the pay, long the hours, dangerous the task. Many died back in '17 in a great explosion. News of the Kenvil disaster of early September sent a shudder throughout the community. Here on the ground, among the men and the women who must live on the bounty of the du Ponts and their allies, you find a fatalism. "A man's gotta live, ain't he? There's a job over there—I'd take it if I knew how. Sure there's a speed up. Oh, they take precautions, all right—they don't want no bloody mess. They're smart, they are. But the way they're building, it's a stroke of luck no more of us are knocked off."

You hear the drumming patter of such comment all the way from Penn's Grove to Wilmington itself. For here, where the ex-

plosives are made and where plans and plots are also conceived for the world empire of du Pont, many things are taken for granted. And one is that prosperity—you know the jade—has swished around the corner of Market Street, swinging her bag. It's wartime, boomtime. Elsewhere, from Addis Ababa to the latest crater hole on Regent street, people are being bombed to death. But here in Wilmington, prosperity—for those lucky enough to get a job.

THE WORKERS around here don't talk much. But they know their facts. They know their du Ponts. They know, for instance, that the du Pont profits speeded up during the 1914-18 war years at a rate 256 times greater than in 1913. Keep that in mind as we wander in the backyard of the Imperial Duchy of du Pont. It is a key to what the present war means to the du Ponts and to their plans for ultimate world power. Keep in mind, too, the generalized analysis which Julian Webb gave the readers of *NEW MASSES* in the issue of Sept. 10, 1940, the manner in which William S. Knudsen and Edward R. Stettinius, General Motors and US Steel executives, allied to Morgan and Morgan's ally, du Pont, have assumed command of the vast multi-billion-dollar war production drive. And with these thoughts in mind, let's study closeup the du Pont scheme of things.

WHEREVER THE DU PONTS go, the company town goes with them. Saturday night in a Jersey bar, an Italian laborer speaking: "I fill in three applications. It's all right then, I get the job." Over a beer, talk of how black powder is made of men's kidneys, lungs, and guts. The Italian says: "They don't want people from the Delaware side in the plants. Only office people. They don't have no unions, just the Association. Grievance committees? What you talking about?"

Riding in a battered motor car early Sunday morning over the wide Governor Printz highway beside the river: "I've seen 'em come out of the dyes buildings with faces and clothes blue or green all over. That stuff seeps into clothing and pores, rots your tissues and kidneys."

As they speak, the workers, the shape of things to come emerges for all America, a picture of what du Pont domination means. To many Americans the du Pont shadow seems slim indeed. To Wilmington it is all-pervasive, has substance, is penetrating, moves silently into every corner of life. It is the word you must not say, the secret police system which marshals opinion, softly chides, strikes quietly and effectively. It is a paternalism which offers controlled education, controlled recreation, controlled life insurance.

You can't kick, if you are a du Pont worker. You daren't kick.

The trick is simple. My Italian acquaintance spoke of a weeding out of all possible dissenters, a watchful spy system, a policy which embraces to kill. Of vast stretches of territory bought in order to keep trespassers five, ten miles away from closely guarded gates. Of eight years in a du Pont plant, the average work life of the du Pont employee. And of how, when the kidneys clog and the heart skips beats, the du Ponts, always careful to prevent their enemies from multiplying, never fire. Slowly the worker is skidded down the greased slide to lighter work at lower pay, then to a layoff, then to still lighter work, then—gently—into joblessness. The insurance—\$1500 in Metropolitan Life—paid for by the du Ponts while he was on the payroll, lapses now when it is most needed. And the man, a husk, lies like chaff on the soil, worthless.

THE DU PONTS RECOGNIZE that workers are the base of their mighty pyramid. Without workers, the du Pont factories, research laboratories, mills, mines, and offices cannot function. The du Ponts are not stupid, in the Ford sense. They need no service corps. They do not seek to crush; they seek to squeeze, gathering all the juices of the man, retaining for their own profit all the good, tossing aside the worthless residue. At Deep Water, at Carney's Point, in the Krebs paint plant, at the laboratories where chemists are ordered to find short cuts to higher profits, workers speak softly, avoid strangers. Pay is somewhat higher than elsewhere. Union organizers are not allowed within the du Pont fortresses, with the exception of complacent AFL building trades agents, representing workers not employed by the du Ponts but by outside contractors.

"We take what we get—pay. We got but one life to give for du Pont. Of course we take a chance . . . we can get burned by acid, or like some, get that tetraethyl lead in our pores or splotched with chemical dyes . . . but after a while it's all in a life time. . . ."

SPEAKING of Roosevelt's shadow-boxing opponent, Wendell L. Willkie—Willkie attended a Commonwealth & Southern directors' meeting here in Wilmington early this year. C. & S. is a Delaware corporation as are hundreds of others, for the Delaware charter fee is a trifling sum and the Delaware legislature, du Pont controlled, has never passed a state corporation income tax. Well, after Willkie talked business, it is said that he drifted over to the du Pont Hotel and talked turkey with the three brothers, Pierre S., Irene, and Lamot. They asked him ques-

tions and he gave the right answers. Wilmington says the three Grand Dukes of Delaware O.K.'d Wendie, and forthwith helped their Morgan allies to organize his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination. Word leaked out of the local telegraph office that hundreds of those "We Want Willkie" telegrams were sent from the du Pont Hotel to Philadelphia's convention hall. Donald Morton, chief du Pont fixer in the great eastern industrial states, visited the convention to help swing the deal. And ex-Sen. Dan Hastings staged a comeback. The du Ponts, you will recall, organized the Liberty League and backed Landon in 1936. Roosevelt swept Landon into oblivion and then set forth to "purge" certain cantankerous senators, including Dan Hastings. The duPonts, following their usual policy of absorbing and taking mastery over their enemies, began to move slowly and silently, as is their wont, toward their present position inside the White House and with their key men in the councils of state. When indiscreet Dan Hastings blared forth against FDR, they dropped Dan Hastings. But Dan reappeared inside the du Pont preserve this year at Philadelphia, where, it is said, he used certain unfailingly successful forms of inducement to move stubborn delegates toward that last ballot for Willkie. And it is also bruited that thousands of du Pont employees wandered into the Philadelphia convention hall and chanted in unison "We Want Willkie!" from the galleries.

MANY ARE the offices in the vast du Pont building. One is a branch of Francis I. du Pont & Co., commodities—including munitions—and brokerage. Newspapers were unkind enough to reveal that a desk in the New York office at No. 1 Wall St. was occupied by Avelino Montes, Jr., an expert on how to ship commodities—including munitions—to certain Latin American countries and thence to Franco's Spain and even to Italy and Germany. Another desk-holder is Jose M. Mayorga, representative in America of Juan March, the Spanish millionaire who backed General Franco's assault on the Spanish republic. Young Señor Mayorga maintains a town house in New York, a country home in New Jersey. He makes, it is said, \$100,000 doing something or other for the du Ponts.

IF YOU EVER NEED an easy index to the progress of the du Pont fortunes, look up Christiania Securities Corp., holding company for 40 percent of the du Pont empire. The three brothers are in it, and it is headed by their henchmen, R. R. M., and Walter Carpenter. CSC stock, sold over the counter, stood at 2500 before the war drive. It now is 2760 bid, 2860 asked. Among many other corporations which it controls are Wilmington's evening *Journal* and morning *News*. Did I hear someone say "freedom of the press"?

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS . . . why, even Philadelphia's David J. Stern was unable to

start a newspaper in Wilmington. Certain people told him that he'd get no advertising from Wilmington stores. Moreover the du Pont papers hold the three press association franchises, UP, AP and INS.

A CHECK of directorates shows that the du Ponts head or are prominent in all local banks. In this fashion, they control all Wilmington retail business. They also own so much land that no unfriendly industrial organization can enter Delaware. They kept Ford from building in Wilmington, hence his choice of Chester, Pa., as an eastern base. On the other hand, in token of their control of General Motors, administrative offices of the Detroit motor firm will be moved to Wilmington as soon as necessary building space can be provided.

FACTORY WORKERS who are not on the du Pont payroll are flocking into the CIO. Nearly 400 employed in the Malleable Iron plant joined last week. The du Ponts place no obstacles in the way of union organizers in Delaware, provided they do not try to organize du Pont.

THE DU PONTS BELIEVE in democracy and maintain its forms. Voters are paid off on the streets on Election Day, \$1 and \$2 a vote. Down among the lower ranks, the Democratic and Republican battles for jobs take on quite a sanguinary hue. Up above, however, it's du Pont vs. du Pont and all for the greater glory of du. Pont. Voters are cynical—"What I want to know is—will I have a job if Willkie is elected?"

"It's like this—the du Ponts control the Chamber of Commerce, because du Pont banks control business. And business men are in the Council, so they control the Council. The banks own or control homes through mortgages, lend money for building, and so they have you coming or going. As for taxes, Pierre S. has spent his life trying to find loopholes in the tax laws. I know of one man who owed a million in state income tax on the books, but wrote it off by deducting his federal tax. I'm not saying what his name is. Tax surplus is supposed to go into a state sinking fund for housing. Last year it didn't—the banks got the surplus as interest, and a state housing program never saw the light of day."

THE DU PONT'S CITY COUNCIL in Wilmington has done nothing to increase the miserable \$5.00 weekly relief allowance for a family of five. Housing conditions in Wilmington's east end are unbelievably bad. The du Ponts have no money for the east end poor, who live in heatless homes, with outside toilets, shielded by seventy-five-year-old walls.

The old corner saloons, however, are well-heated, lighted, and patronized, for they are cheerful places in the slum gloom.

ON SATURDAY, September 21, five men were lashed at the Farnhurst workhouse just

outside Wilmington. Four of them were chronic lawbreakers; one was just a poor guy who got whipped. Delaware not only never repealed the ancient colonial law which provides for corporal punishment; Delaware uses this law quite frequently. But holdups go on, and crime is not infrequent, especially in the slum section where it isn't always easy to eat.

HEAD OF WILMINGTON'S POLICE is Commissioner of Safety Cavanaugh, anti-Red expert, who was summoned from Miami to Wilmington. He knows all the tricks but thus far the du Ponts have cramped his style. Their method is to list and blacklist all dissidents, to make it impossible for progressives to rent halls, to send them out to the woods when they seek a permit for a street meeting. Speech is thus free, the right to assembly permitted, and everything is hunky-dory in Wilmington—for the record.

ALTHOUGH FIGURES never lie, Wilmington is truly the richest city per capita in the US, yet the average person is poor. The trick is accomplished by adding the vast income of the small group of du Ponts and their executives to the city's total wealth and then dividing by the total population. But the du Ponts will never share their wealth in that fashion.

SLOWLY, AS YOU SPEND TIME in Wilmington, the shape of the du Pont scheme emerges. From the great mansions down to the humblest ancient brick houses, all things are dictated by the needs of du Pont, all except the will of workers. The workers, when they can meet, when they and the union come together, are eager to join hands. They look forward to the coming of an organizing drive in chemicals by John L. Lewis' own United Mine Workers of America. For they recognize that the only power which can restore to them their democracy and successfully challenge the du Pont system of industrial authoritarianism is industrial democracy, trade unionism of the kind that has changed the face of Detroit, of McKeesport, and of many another American town during recent years.

If in Wilmington may be seen the shape of things to come—a possible authoritarian dictatorship of the du Pont type for all America—there may also be seen the future union city. The taxi driver said: "I work thirteen hours a day. Sure we'd join the union, the whole bunch of us. But they ought to organize the other two companies, too. Then we'd all be sure of better pay and shorter hours." The old-timer, who had lost most of his teeth, told me: "You can get a job over there in the shipyards. Say you're a skilled helper. Remember, skilled. There's no place for the unskilled . . . anywhere. I worked up at Ford—that's hell—and over at du Pont, too. That's a special kind of hell. Union? It oughta be . . . it oughta be . . ."

JAMES MORISON.