

Within the Gates

past fortnight, he was becoming slightly annoyed. When I finally arrived at a big hotel in the center of the city, blood was flowing down my leg and there was too much glass in my shoes for comfort.

It was one o'clock in the morning. The jazz band was playing in the basement. Dancing couples, occasionally shaken against each other by nearby explosions, seemed in the best of spirits. They were pleased because the noise of the band swallowed up some of the war din. For a while I stood there at the entrance to the ballroom, wondering: did I admire this unconcerned gaiety, or did I think it a bit silly and cynical? I decided that it was at least impressive.

Hotel guests who wish neither to dance away the danger nor to spend the night in the cellar have their mattresses and blankets taken out in the corridors, for some superstitious reason or other. It was an amazing scene, more like an overcrowded field hospital than a chic hotel. Total warfare has strange manifestations: never before has a city been so constantly exposed to nerve-racking assaults of this kind. Even Rotterdam with its seven-minutes-long disaster and its 20,000 dead, even Warsaw, or the cities of Loyalist Spain, did not have to endure the appalling regularity with which London is being bombed for ten hours every night. A few hours of sleep can always be found around dawn, but the rest and awakening are those of an invalid who, after a feverish night full of pains and incredible nightmares, has been given some soothing drug to quiet him. He is exhausted, though happy, and even in his kinder dreams he knows that the peace will not last—that the struggle against death is not over.

It has hardly begun, the struggle. Everybody here realizes this, but nobody—I sincerely believe *nobody*—dreams of capitulation. The reactions of the people are of many kinds, and what is called "morale" varies. But neither hysteria, nor fear, nor the slightest sign of panic can be found anywhere. I watched a man whose house had been bombed while he was away. He stood there before the ruins shaking his head and repeating, in the tone of some highly civilized person who for the first time discovers that bestiality exists among human beings, "But this is disgusting, perfectly disgusting!"

Nor—strange as this may sound—is hatred, passionate hatred, of the enemy encountered. Rather there prevails a kind of pity mingled with astonished contempt. Stories are being told about captured German pilots who break down completely when they gradually realize that they have been misled by their leaders; that London is not by any means on the verge of collapse but is still a living city with buses running, people working, laughing, and dancing; with food distribution and all the services functioning, and the children playing in the streets. "What can you expect?" the people say to one another, "those poor fools *don't know London!*"

"**W**HEREVER in the world there is an Italian, there is, alive and present, Fascist Italy with her faith, her organs, and adequate means for action," writes Felice Felicioni, a high-ranking member of the Italian hierarchy, in an American newspaper. Many Italians living in the United States and many more American citizens of Italian descent disagree with the Fascist concept of inescapable allegiance to Italy, but Italian propaganda is constantly attempting to win them over. This propaganda, the best organized in the United States, is heard on the air waves, is found in both Italian- and English-language newspapers, is the inspiration of "cultural" societies and of "shirted" militant groups. It reaches youth, as this column pointed out two weeks ago, by insinuating itself into public and parochial schools disguised as education. Frequently when persuasion fails, it resorts to more direct methods.

The concentration of Italian immigrants in relatively self-contained communities in or near large cities simplifies the work of the Fascist propagandists. No fewer than 2,000,000 persons who fall within Mussolini's definition of Italian live within fifty miles of New York's Times Square, and can therefore easily be subjected to pressure by the propaganda machine headed by Consul General Gaetano Vecchiotti. Radio is perhaps the most effective instrument for propaganda among adults; certainly it is the cheapest. It is effective because it takes the form of objective Italian-language news broadcasts, and it is cheap because it is paid for by business firms which depend largely upon an Italian-American market. The radio stations which sell the time and the business men who buy it may be guiltless of ulterior motive, but the broadcasts are, in fact if not in intent, propaganda of the most flagrant sort. During the summer of 1940 two affiliated New York stations, WOV and WBIL, permitted four well-known Fascists to peddle propaganda in the guise of news. Giovanni Favoino di Giura, sponsored by the Parodi Cigar Company, was at one time secretary of the New York branch of Italian Fascists Abroad. Gaetano Ferri is listed in the Italian "Who's Who" as "a Fascist of the first rank." A third news broadcaster, Leandro Forni, boasts that he started the Fascist movement in Vincenza, Italy. The Italian "Who's Who" describes the fourth, Frank Polimeni, as "radio ambassador of Italianism in America."

The owners of WOV and WBIL, who incidentally are not Italian, disclaim all responsibility for the propaganda content of these broadcasts, and point to the fact that they have censored the material. But their choice of "censors" has hardly been impartial. The first man employed resigned under pressure from Italian anti-Fascists. His successor was recommended to the stations by the Italian embassy; the third was hired on the recommendation of Professor Peter N. Riccio, whose doctorate thesis at Columbia, "On the Threshold of Fascism," has been translated and widely distributed in Italy. Stations WOV and WBIL are not the only offenders. Propaganda masquerading as objective newscasts is heard daily in Philadelphia, Boston, New Haven, Pittsburgh, and a dozen other cities.

In the Wind

Few Italian communities are too small to support an Italian-language newspaper favorable to Fascism. In New York perhaps the most influential is *Il Grido della Stirpe—the Cry of the Race*—whose masthead admits quite frankly that it is a "Journal of Fascist Propaganda." Its publisher, Domenico Trombetta, is a man of sufficient importance to have been granted a long interview with Count Ciano in the summer of 1939. An Italian newspaper reported at the time that "His Excellency Count Galeazzo Ciano has received with warmth one of the sincerest and purest Fascist residents in America, Domenico Trombetta." So extensive is his newspaper's circulation among Italian-Americans in New York, and so important is Trombetta in the community, that business men who import Italian products or sell largely to Italian-Americans find it expedient to buy advertising space. Recently non-advertisers received marked copies of an issue which carried this announcement: "We shall publish in due time a list of all business houses which refuse and will still refuse in the future to help *Il Grido della Stirpe*. We shall bring them to the attention of our friends, who will know how to conduct themselves in making purchases." A subsequent issue was even more threatening. In a front-page story attacking those who had refused to be blackmailed, Trombetta wrote ominously that "Fascism will recognize in them its true enemies."

Ranking close to Trombetta in the field of printed propaganda is Generoso Pope, publisher of two New York Italian-language dailies, *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* and *Il Corriere d'America*. The editorial policy of these papers is a somewhat more restrained than that of *Il Grido della Stirpe*, but Mr. Pope's devotion to Italy is as great as Mr. Trombetta's. It is revealed in numerous statements of his quoted in his own newspapers. In one speech as reported by them he said: "First I wish you to shout with me, 'Down with the enemies of our country!' . . . When Italy can boast sons like you, then victory is here. Long live Italy, long live the King, long live Mussolini!" During the Ethiopian war Mr. Pope gave his readers thousands of fountain pens ornamented with the Fascist emblem. During his last visit in Rome he rated an audience with both the Duce and the King. Messrs. Pope and Trombetta are but two of the dozens of publishers who feed Italian-Americans their daily ration of Fascist propaganda.

The anti-Fascist Italian magazine, *Il Mondo*, recently listed forty-six Italian-American organizations in Greater New York whose direction stems from the Italian government. These groups, almost without exception, are under the supervision of a "cultural attaché" of the Italian consulate. Their leaders are invariably convinced Fascists. There is not space here to discuss their various activities, but the following telegram to the Italian press from the Morgantini Club indicates their loyalties: "Italians of Harlem, organizing today the Mario Morgantini Club, swear allegiance to Il Duce."

The graduate school of all Italian-American organizations is known as the Blackshirts, a group of 10,000 men who have taken this oath: "In the name of God and of Italy I swear that I will follow the orders of Il Duce and will serve with all my strength, if necessary with my blood, the cause of the Fascist Revolution."

DEMOCRATIC LEADERS are definitely worried about New York State, and Tom Corcoran is on the scene to do something about it. The chief source of concern is the hostility of C. I. O. unions, some following Lewis, some under Communist guidance. Incidentally, New Dealers think the trade talks with Russia will wipe out opposition from the Communists.

AT WILLKIE HEADQUARTERS, where Russell Davenport, ex-managing editor of *Fortune*, is key man, cynics have coined this phrase: "Willkie has made his Davenport—now he'll have to lie in it."

A CONSERVATIVE Pittsburgh lawyer recently agreed to act as attorney for Communists in a free-speech case. When he entered the courtroom an acquaintance murmured to him: "I didn't know you had become a Communist." The attorney flared back: "I've defended murderers in the courtroom for twenty years, and you never called me a murderer."

UNDER THE CAPTION "Americanism, El Paso County Style," the Colorado Springs *Advertiser* ran an item about the activities of a newly formed Americanism Council. The item said the council had set up a committee "to which citizens may report persons suspected of un-American activities. . . . It is hoped that such a service will . . . discourage vigilante groups."

IN THE FUROR raised by Nicholas Murray Butler's warning to members of the Columbia faculty who don't share his anti-Nazi views, this fact has been overlooked: the last student expelled from the university was fired for leading a demonstration outside Dr. Butler's home. The demonstration was in protest against Dr. Butler's appointment of a Columbia delegate to academic ceremonies at Heidelberg University. That was in 1936.

REPUBLICANS ARE talking hopefully of a swift "publicity blitzkrieg" in the ten days before election. It is said that plans have been made for a whirlwind drive, at big cost and under expert guidance, in a last-minute effort to salvage the election.

THIS NOTICE was displayed in a London block of flats: "Visitors wishing to be called during an air raid should leave their names with the hall porter."

AFTER THE New Deal apparently reversed its position on the issuance of defense contracts to firms violating the labor laws, a first lieutenant of John L. Lewis said privately that the chances against his indorsement of F. D. R. had risen to fifty to one.

[We invite our readers to submit material for *In the Wind*—either clippings with source and date or stories that can be clearly authenticated. A prize of \$5 will be awarded each month for the best item.—EDITORS THE NATION.]

A Native at Large

BY JONATHAN DANIELS

“THE last spasm was about safety,” the State Superintendent of Public Instruction said. He did not say it critically. He had approved teaching the children safety on the roads. Now he was planning with other public-education officials in other states to teach the children democracy in the schools. Everybody was for it.

“We’ve got to teach our children democracy here, just like the fascists have taught them to believe in fascism in their schools. We’ve got to make the children know that democracy is worth dying for, too.”

I am as much in favor of that as the textbook manufacturers who already are offering new texts on democracy to the suddenly, as it appears, democracy-conscious schools. In fact, I was asked to write one of the texts myself and almost agreed. It would have been fun and maybe patriotic, too. But I think we should be concerned about our public schools if the time has come when democracy must be taught in them as if it were something like the boundaries of Ethiopia, to be learned quickly out of a book.

Democracy has been taking a beating in our public schools for a long time, and the teachers and the books are not altogether to blame. Everywhere but in the smallest towns the old days when the doctor’s boy sat next to the laborer’s son long ago came to an end. The automobile has speeded our segregation of ourselves in classes based on the location of real estate. Some school officials have helped the process of segregation by a little gerrymandering of school-district lines.

And sometimes I think the social scientists have done as much harm as the snobs. We live in a modern world which has been very sure of itself, at least in the graduate schools of education. They got to know, so they said, more about the mind of the child than anybody had known before. As a result they made a profound change in the teaching. Down in the lower grades they took out the old heroes and their stories and put into the readers “more material from the environment of the child.” It sounds excellent, but it meant that the early training of the child as a part of a nation and a civilization extending beyond his scooter was discarded. He was no longer one who shared the mythology of little George beside the cherry tree or the little boy who saved Holland with a finger in a hole. I think he lost something important when he lost contact with them and swapped them for a story about a Scottie puppy.

And the process did not stop there. More and more in our schools, as far as I can discover, the child’s contact with history has been decreased to allow more study of the so-called social sciences, which put the intellectual digestive processes of a Ph.D. between the facts and the child. The scheme was designed to teach the child more with less pain, but it substituted the abstract for the concrete. There may have been pure gain in discarding the old business of memorizing dates for the new process of memorizing the 1, 2, 3, conclusions of the Ph.D.—I am not sure. The older I get the more I wish I knew more dates and the less certain I am of the social scientists’ deductions. Finally, the process brought the child from American history to what they call civics. I don’t know any delicate way in which to describe civics, but the general idea of it seems to be to convince the children that the Constitution was written by Y. M. C. A. secretaries and that the country has been exclusively conducted by the Boy Scouts. I do not in the least object to the purification of our history for young children, but I do despise draining the human blood from the processes of our democracy.

For that reason I’m fearful of the present spasm, as the educator called it, about teaching democracy in the schools in this crisis. My hunch is that there is going to be another book—a whole batch of other books—saying that democracy is nice. I certainly am not arguing about that. But to grow patriots we must have something more than a spasm. We have been, I think, afraid of patriotism. Sometimes even the D. A. R.’s and the American Legion have prejudiced us against it. Americanism has sometimes become—or seemed to become—a word in the almost exclusive possession of scoundrels or fools. We have had a crop of intellectuals who played Jack Horner every time they discovered a departure from the documents in our patriotic mythology.

We are apparently agreed, however, that in the schools and outside them, too, it is time for more enthusiastic patriotism about this land and its meaning in our hearts. Stirring such a patriotism is going to be a much more difficult process than getting some new textbooks. In some places, if it is to succeed, it is going to mean that the schools themselves will have to be democratic. And everywhere, I think, if it is to succeed, it must begin at the bottom. George Washington must have at least an even break with scooters and Scottie dogs—in the first grade and from that point on.