LABOR BARON

Every man's major premise should be his realization that he is not God.

—Justice Holmes

LABOR BARON

A Portrait of

JOHN L. LEWIS

by

James A. Wechsler

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THIS book does not purport to be a definitive biography of John L. Lewis. It might best be called an interim study; there will be much more to say later when more of Lewis's private papers are available and when other men feel freer to describe their associations with him. The writer also recognizes that a good deal may happen between the time this manuscript is completed and the time of its appearance—an occupational risk confronting anyone who tries to write about a living person. I hope that the book itself indicates the justification for writing this much of the story now—apart from the author's interest in the subject.

Many people in various ways have assisted the writer in preparing this book. Most of all I am indebted to Mary Gion Kovner, who not only organized most of the historical research, but was in effect my collaborator in the writing of the book. I am also grateful for the generous assistance of Osgood Nichols, Edward Levinson, Edward F. Prichard, Edward Lockett, Barbara Price, Trude Pratt, Gardner Jackson, Max Lerner, Roberta Wollenhaupt, William T. McCleery, and Joseph Kovner; for the invaluable editorial advice of Helen King of William Morrow & Company, Inc., at whose suggestion the book was written; and for the aid of many others who would probably prefer not to be mentioned. Responsibility for interpretation and conclusions is, of course, entirely my own.

Although a bibliography is included at the end, I should especially acknowledge extensive reference to Edward Levinson's *Labor on the March,* an exciting and authentic record of the organization of the CIO; Herbert Harris's *Labor's Civil War,* an astute analysis of recent internal labor history; and McAlister Coleman's *Men and Coal,* a sympathetic portrayal

of the miners and their leaders. Much of the book is based on first-hand coverage of labor news for the newspaper *PM* from 1940 to 1943, particularly the coal strikes of 1943; and in that connection I am indebted to John P. Lewis, managing editor of *PM*, for making those assignments possible.

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As always I am indebted to my wife, Nancy Fraenkel Wechsler, for her constant aid and encouragement; and to Michael Barnaby, for his philosophical adjustment to the clatter of a typewriter.

J. A. W.

Washington, D. C.
April 22nd, 1944

CONTENTS

1

COMPLICATED COAL MINER

MY FATHER can't have any friends," Kathryn Lewis once said. "No great man can have friends."

As a young man John Llewellyn Lewis solemnly fashioned that image of himself—of an austere figure living in a world quite apart from that of ordinary mortals. And as he has grown older it has been increasingly difficult to distinguish the self-portrait from the real man. The youth who staged plays in an Iowa schoolroom has become an actor in his private dialogues as well as his public performances. Now, at sixty-four, he often resembles an aging matinee idol, playing the role of God's angry man. His cheeks are a little more ashen each month, his brooding, petulant manner is a little more pronounced. And he is lonely.

There have been moments during the Second World War when he has appeared lonelier than ever. Leader of four wartime strikes within six months, he was pictured in a *Fortune* poll as the nation's most commonplace "bad-man symbol." Of all the ballots cast in a survey to designate the nation's most "harmful individuals," Lewis got 70.6 per cent. His conduct, said that magazine, "has undeniably aroused latent fascistic tendencies in many people, and labor as a whole has suffered thereby." From the fox-holes, soldiers scrawl messages promising the vengeance they will inflict on him when they return. "John L. Lewis has become a symbol for this bitterness [against labor] among service-men here, the same as I found him to be in England and Africa last summer," wrote the late Raymond Clapper in one of the last dispatches

he cabled from the South Pacific. After the fourth coal strike, when Lewis had wrested at least surface economic concessions from a war-weary government, the press almost unanimously echoed a Washington columnist: "In effect, then, John L. Lewis has made the law in this instance in defiance of the will of Congress and of the people. What we are witnessing is a sample of anarchy." * But *Time*, calling Lewis "the greatest labor tactician in U. S. history," announced that he had "captured his own Kiev."

In some ways the tumult seemed the product of a national frustration. For once again 530,000 coal miners had struck at silent signals from a leader in Washington, flouting the righteous recommendations of editorial writers, civic leaders, and the Commander-in-Chief himself. The ordinary man asked cryptically, "What has that guy Lewis got?" The nation as a whole exhibited the futile fury which accompanies lack of comprehension, lack of ability to fathom the sources of his strength. Traveling in a club-car to Washington, a middle-aged minor executive exclaimed: "The biggest son-of-a-bitch in America is on this train." He meant John L. Lewis. Another passenger growled: "He'd better not travel without a bodyguard—somebody might get mad." Lewis rode alone and unmolested.

Two years before, when Pearl Harbor momentarily shook Lewis's self-confidence, it appeared that world war would finally blanket him. After months of sullen retirement, however, he emerged again, sharing front-page space with whole armies and major military offensives. If he was denounced, despised, damned, he was not ignored. Moreover, while in certain influential regions of opinion he was the national villain, there were important industrial areas in which war workers unfavorably contrasted their own leaders' moderation with the Machiavellian militancy of Lewis. Again he had come perilously close to oblivion; again he had avoided the final fall.

The bewilderment which his comeback created was not unprecedented. And the solitude in which he apparently oper-

* Merlo Pusey in the *Washington Post*, Nov. 10, 1943.

ated was no unfamiliar environment. For two decades journalists, politicians, and amateur psychoanalysts have tried to probe his depths, groping for the hidden character. Their findings are strikingly uniform. Each has discovered that Lewis has no full-fledged intimates, confidantes, or confessors. Associates who have worked at his side for years are startled and amused when asked whether they are his "friends"; his subordinates accept the relationship of John Doe to Superman. Aides may talk freely to Lewis and obtain a solicitous hearing, but he holds frank communion only with himself.

The men he sees most frequently are patently his inferiors, foils for his wit, stooges for his political plans; his ex-sparring partner, William L. Hutcheson, the burly boss of the Carpenters Union, is one of them, and not even Lewis's severest critics have suggested that Hutcheson is his mental equal. Nearly all the subalterns on his payroll are of similar caliber. He has yes-men, hirelings, lieutenants, toadies, but it is unlikely that any one of them is permitted to invade the private compartments of his mind or to approach the status of friendship.

In interviews he ostentatiously turns aside questions about his personal motivations. There are rare recorded instances in which he has acknowledged the possible mystery of men's impulses. One was a late afternoon session in his office when he is said to have turned to some of his devout lieutenants and asked, half-jestingly: "What makes me tick? Is it power I'm after, or am I a Saint Francis in disguise, or what?"*

There is no record of the answer.

A newspaperman who knew him well during the years of the CIO campaign tells of two hours he spent alone with Lewis in the latter's office. Again it was late afternoon, and as darkness approached Lewis made no move to provide any light. The interview became a séance. The reporter listened, but it was like listening to a Shakespearean monologue; Lewis's voice rose and fell in great waves, the tones blanketing the language. Little that he said proved to be memorable;

* John Chamberlain in *Fortune*.

of himself he pointed out only that "I might have been a Senator and sat on my goddam ass all day if I had wanted to." It was the setting that was unforgettable.

There was the occasion early in CIO history when Harold Laski, the British political scientist, met Lewis at a Washington dinner party. After dinner Laski, trying to draw Lewis out, said:

"Mr. Lewis, for twenty years I have been teaching my students that you represent the old, hopeless type of American labor leader, the corrupt racketeer who thinks only of his own power and lacks any progressive social vision. Now I have come back to America and my friends tell me you are the new Messiah. Was I wrong all those years? Or have you changed?"

Lewis hunched forward in his chair, bit off the end of his cigar, and talked for thirty minutes: of his childhood and youth in Iowa, of sufferings he had seen, of inequities that cried out for cure. As an answer it was oblique—a curtain-speech, not a confession. It might have been the autobiography of a social worker or any believer in uplift. Ignoring the contradictions and reversals of his career, it evaded Laski's real question. Lewis's response to another interviewer in that period seemed more candid and meaningful.

He said in effect that he lived for the present and immediate future; that it took everybody time to find himself in this vale of tears, but that it had taken him longer than most people.*

Five years later, however, he was to strike out on a new course, abandoning the CIO he had founded, parting with some of his oldest associates, joining embittered anti-Roosevelt ians at their wailing wall. Had he simply lost his way again?

As he severed relations with veteran lieutenants, the impenetrability thickened, the legends multiplied. Since the death in 1942 of his wife, for whom he exhibited a gentle and authentic devotion, he had lived in deepening seclusion. Although he occasionally attends fashionable gatherings, at the home of

* *Men Who Lead Labor*, by Minton and Stuart.

Mrs. Evalyn Walsh McLean and elsewhere, these appearances have become less frequent.

So it has seemed that the world of illusion that Lewis constructed to evoke awe and worship has become his real world, leaving him few compensations beyond those he can obtain in contests of power. At a dinner-party it was suggested to him that he join the local "little theater" group. "My life is but a stage," he replied grandly.

Neither a joyous nor a mellowed man as the twilight of his life approaches, he gives no sign that he has prepared himself contemplatively for the coming of old age. He is always moody and restless, and these qualities are growing more intense; he seems to have few sources of continuous contentment outside the arena of public affairs. If he is privately shaken by defeats he has suffered, he puts on uninterrupted shows of strength. If he misses the easy companionship of other men, he nevertheless commands an army of more than half a million miners who have marched in unison at a time of worldwide war. Perhaps he finds some gratification in directing this private battalion in the coal fields while other men, like Franklin D. Roosevelt, are guiding millions of troops across the map of the world.

The shapeless hat is still tilted pugnaciously and precariously over his furrowed forehead. He smokes and chews the end of cigars interminably, and he never laughs for the camera. He is, reportedly, still reading Shakespeare, although much of it must have been committed to memory by now; in periods of leisure he devours mystery novels, drops in on musical comedies or Wild West movies. There have been strikingly few changes in his routine, and no significant broadening of his horizon. Admittedly one of the nation's most photogenic men, each successive portrait now looks monotonously like the previous one. In private conversation people find him extraordinarily charming, and journalists agree that his press conferences are among the liveliest shows on earth. Fond of calling correspondents by their first names and quipping gently over stories they have written, he is a keen student of virtually

everything published about him, and he amazes reporters by the care with which he scrutinizes their copy. When Fred Perkins, Scripps-Howard labor writer, facetiously recorded the number of "no comments" in a single Lewis session, Lewis took pains to mention the count at his next press interview. Even those newspapermen who like him least admit that he is rarely dull. He can make "no comment" an intriguing observation.

His face and figure are a cartoonist's field-day, and his extemporaneous rhetoric is usually a relief from the dry prose of Washington handouts and the hackneyed pronouncements of self-conscious statesmen. More fascinated by the sound than by the sense of words, he has sometimes committed atrocious errors, but these have become less numerous in his later years. (When he errs he does not like to be reminded of it; after he told one newspaperman that "this decision requires great circumcision," his glower was so defiant that the listener remained solemn.) Unlike many public figures, he is exceedingly animated in private dialogues, and a session with him is never a chore. He conveys the atmosphere of intimacy without ever letting down his shaggy hair. Even men who have fought him bitterly in public affairs confess that it is pleasurable to pass the time of day with him. An expert raconteur as well as an adroit belittler, he usually makes his insults memorable; the victim, if he has a sense of humor, is tempted to appreciate the elegance of the epithet.

On the other hand Lewis is insistent upon having the last word and deeply resents exchanges in which he is plainly bested. Once, during a War Labor Board hearing, he cited an obscure Norwegian myth to prove his point; William H. Davis, the Board's chairman, picked up the reference and turned it against him. Completely upset, Lewis left the room.

Whenever he is pressed to self-analysis, Lewis extravagantly identifies himself with the coal miners. Once, when this writer asked him about his Republican Party alliances, Lewis replied: "Think of me as a coal miner, and you won't make any mistakes." This is another phase of the self-made Lewis

legend, and there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that it is a dramatic oversimplification. What is clearly true is that his periodic emergence as a national character stems directly from his leadership of the coal miners. It is as their president that he has been able to precipitate four national crises in wartime; it is as their president that he still remains a potentially challenging figure in both labor and national politics. Lewis's strength cannot be understood without an understanding of the men he leads.

The coal diggers are not really on speaking terms with the rest of American society. Almost since the emergence of the first mining "camp" they have lived as a community apart; the islands they inhabit are cut off from the mainland of national life. They have their own moods, loyalties, traditions, deriving from a collective experience and a common pattern of existence. They exhibit probably more group characteristics and a fiercer group consciousness than any other bloc of citizens. Conceiving themselves a separate tribe of sturdy people, they view the outside world as hostile, uncomprehending, often engaged in conspiracy against them. Despite sectional variations in surface details, the underlying elements shaping the coal miners' attitudes are strangely consistent. Racial cleavages prove less important than the solidarity engendered by the morbid, monotonous setting of the company-owned provinces and by the endless mystery of the tombs in which they work. Any native grandeur in the local landscape is usually marred by the row of desolate company houses; life is bounded by the company store and the vagaries of the company's business. In most mining communities the memorable legends are of violence, uncertainty, suffering, sudden death. The chronic sickness of the coal industry is a plague that may recur at any time. The sound in the night may be an explosion heralding community disaster. In 1942 alone, 1,480 miners were killed and 70,500 injured.

For decades the coal operators seemed determined to show that they were the least enlightened members of the American industrial hierarchy. The record of their deeds reads like an

inflammatory revolutionary manifesto; indeed it is difficult to overstate the story. Their incompetence as managers was usually equaled only by their imperviousness to human suffering. The classic revelation of the coal-magnate mentality was rendered back in 1900 by George F. Baer, president of the mine-owning Philadelphia & Reading Railroad Company. During the coal strike that year Baer derided reports of the miners' misery. "They don't suffer," he said. "Why, they can't even speak English!" * And this non-sequitur seemed to become the guiding philosophy of the coal industry for the twentieth century. In recent years some operators have relented. The most primitive abuses of company-domination have been wiped out in some areas, and a conscientious effort has been made to relieve the bleakness of the mining camp. On the whole, however, the community of coal remains a backward area; the coal miners have wrested few of the luxuries of life that have finally been attained by other industrial workers.

There is a temptation to overdraw the grim aspect of the coal camps, to represent the miners themselves as purely Dostoyevskian characters. But, like most groups living within a confining, oppressive space, they have devised their own compensations. They take a passionate pride in their work. The lamentations of the visiting social worker fortify their own conviction that they are doing the real labor of the world, which only strong men could perform. They have an earthy, fatalistic humor. Most of them are religious, and they have a deep sense of belonging to their communities, of having been destined for the labor in which they are engaged. And they have a union, which gives them dignity.

To the miners the union is more than a collective-bargaining association: it is the pillar of their hopes. As long as the union is preserved they are not serfs; they retain a glimpse of freedom and an awareness of potential power. The fortunes of

* Quoted in McAlister Coleman's *Men and Coal.* Baer is also author of another classic remark to this effect: you don't have to make laws to protect the miner's rights, for God in His infinite mercy has appointed the coal-mine owners the guardians of these, and *they* may be trusted to do what is best.

the union are completely entwined with their own personal histories. Many remember when it was broken and dormant, when the tyranny of the coal barons was unchecked, when "a miner was not a man." Each miner has silently vowed he will not let that happen again. For in the last analysis he has no firm faith in any other temporal institution. He recalls appreciatively the help that Franklin D. Roosevelt rendered in the reconstruction of the UMW, and he is grateful for the Wagner Act. These were temporary benefits, however; permanent security lies only in the solidarity of the miners themselves. The coal digger distrusts the press and the politician in any matters affecting the welfare of the UMW. He reads the newspapers for comic strips, not for editorial comment, listens to the radio for light entertainment, not for sermons in condemnation of union officials. He cannot be stampeded by what the newspapers or the Rotary Club orators call "public opinion." To the coal digger, "public opinion" is the mining family next door and down the street; he knows few men whose lives are not as completely identified with the union as his own—except the supervisory employees, whose homes are usually separate and slightly more elegant. (The miner devises terms like "Snobs' Knob" for the site where the overseers live.) His loyalty to the union is deep, unshakable, expressed in a vast array of primitive literature:

We will have a good local in heaven,
Up there where the password is rest,
Where the business is praising our father,
*And no scabs ever mar or molest.**

In his relations with outside society the miner's self-pity and martyr feeling are dominant traits. Sometimes these find expression in fantastically melancholy verse:

Pick! Pick! Pick!
In the tunnel's endless gloom,
And every blow of our strong right arm
But helps to carve our tomb.

* Quoted in *Coal Dust on the Fiddle,* by George Korson.

More often his temper is revealed in demonstrations of union power, staged with military precision, subject to no orders except those handed down by the UMW commanders.

Since 1933 the vast majority of miners have linked the fate of their union with the name of John L. Lewis. It wasn't that way in the era of internal warfare, when Lewis was a hated figure to thousands in the pits. But after the renascence his stature grew swiftly. There have been periodic revolts in the anthracite fields—one occurred in the beginning of 1943 over the dues-increase voted by the previous convention—but these were local and inconclusive. Although the miners showed in 1940 that they still reserved their right to form independent political judgments, most of them are willing to let Lewis make up their minds in union affairs. He is, as they frequently put it, their "attorney," hired to represent their interests, and he has brought home sufficient results in recent years to retain this trust. The union treasury totaled $6,346,852 in 1942, and a minimum wage of $35 a week had been won in the 1941 Appalachian agreement. This did not exactly represent the dawn of opulence, but it was a happy contrast to the long years of actual hunger.

Some miners acknowledge that their union is less than a working democracy. Yet those who see this point are reluctant to argue about it; after all, they had little intimate contact with democracy as long as the coal magnates ruled the fields unresisted, and they are easily persuaded that only a monolithic, tightly knit organization can preserve the progress they have made. There are other miners who stubbornly and vehemently deny any charges of autocracy in the UMW. Lewis, they will state with absolute sincerity, merely does as he is told to do by his followers. If sometimes his decisions have preceded their declarations of desire, this is because he has keenly foreseen and interpreted their inner thoughts. Lewis skillfully cultivates this illusion. He pompously describes himself in public as the mere humble spokesman of the men in the pits, no stronger than they, and acting only as their mouthpiece. He himself is, he often says, just a coal miner from way

back, and in his Alexandria home a miner's pick is proudly displayed.

Lewis acutely grasps the psychology of the miners, understands their moods, their prejudices, and their limitations, and he has done little to broaden their horizons. The paucity of educational opportunity for the coal miners has not provoked the UMW into any ultramodern experiments in trade-union education. There are still miners in many areas whose acquaintance with the English language is only casual, and conceivably the union might have tried to do something about it. It hasn't. Lewis considers such frills inconsistent with the sacred tenets of business unionism. He has similarly refrained from any large-scale attempt to secure better housing for the miners; this, too, is seemingly beyond the province of trade unionism. Lewis, of course, cannot be exclusively blamed for the squalor of the mining camps, for until recently the coal operators were pretty unanimous in believing in its perpetuation. But the UMW has displayed no apparent interest in the education and housing of its members or in the development of co-operatives as a substitute for the despised company store. In Lewis's mind the UMW has remained a collective-bargaining club concerned with executing wage and hour contracts.

The question has inevitably arisen whether Lewis fears the development of an educated rank-and-file as a potential source of future disturbances. Not that the miners are a band of idolatrous illiterates. But the culture of the coal fields is restricted by the nature of the UMW as well as by the circumstances of geography and history. Lewis has indicated no desire to break the isolation in which the miners live, to give them new lines of communication, or to subject them to outside influences. He has fought hard for increases in their pay envelopes, and most of the miners have apparently regarded this as fulfilling his function. He has not encouraged any tendencies that might induce them to ask for more from their union.

At all times, however, he has adroitly fostered the picture of himself as a simple coal miner who has made good, still retaining all the essential emotional and intellectual character-

istics of the mining-camp environment. Thus, a part of the bafflement over his behavior may be ascribed to the dual personality that he has himself presented to the world. On the one hand, he appears as the aloof, extraordinary, other-worldly man who occupies a special sphere above all others; on the other, he has persuaded many that both his character and his ambitions remain those of the humblest coal miner.

Both images probably contain fragments of the truth, but neither tells the whole story. It is difficult in any man's case to uncover all of the hidden impulses that have guided his acts. It is doubly difficult when the man is still alive, and when he has spent a lifetime repelling such inquiries. Yet in Lewis's single enterprises, in his relations with other public figures, and in his largest adventures, one can detect recurrent techniques and fixed assumptions about men and society. His talents and his limitations alike reappear, and his thinking assumes a pattern. He is most enigmatic in isolated reels, a pragmatist in battlefield maneuvers, but not in basic judgments about his adversaries and the world.

Any retracing of his steps becomes, in part, a record of the labor movement in which he has functioned and the era in which he has lived. The premises that guided his career may be a clue to his prowess, to his failure, and to his place in history. The record may reveal that he has been as much a phenomenon of his time as the industrial barons who have sat across the table from him. It may reveal also that he is neither more supernatural nor less complicated than most men "of more than natural size."

2

FAMILY ALBUM

THE sagas of Lewis's childhood are many and extravagant. His father was a Welsh coal miner who came to the United States in 1875 and settled soon afterward in Lucas, Iowa, a mining community of about 5,000 inhabitants. There Thomas Lewis enlisted in the Knights of Labor; there, too, he met Louisa Watkins, a second cousin, whom he married in 1878. John L. Lewis was born on Lincoln's birthday two years later. The coincidence of dates later stimulated his interest in Lincolnian literature, but the humility of the Great Emancipator apparently could not be inherited from books.

When John was two, the miners engaged in a futile strike and his father's name was placed on the dreaded black list. Though this incident has often been cited as shaping John's sentimental allegiance to labor's cause, it is worth some note that he has freely invoked the same weapon against miners who have mutinied against his leadership. Certainly, however, throughout his childhood, he absorbed the atmosphere, aspirations, and resentments of a mining community. After the strike the Lewises moved to Colfax, where a second son—Thomas, Jr.—was born. The family stayed here until the black list again robbed the elder Lewis of employment, and the migration was resumed. A few years later they were living in Des Moines, where a third son—A. D. ("Denny") Lewis—was born. During this retreat from the coal fields Lewis's father served as a night watchman and as a policeman. Howard Lewis was born in 1893, Hattie a year later. John left school at the seventh grade to find local employment. By 1897 the black list had

been lifted and the Lewis family were able to return to Lucas. With his father and his brother Thomas, John, now seventeen, went into the coal mines.

Out of the succeeding years come the real and the apocryphal tales of Lewis's youth that reverential biographers have passed on to posterity: of John L. as promoter of local theatricals (and leading actor), as shortstop on the local baseball team, as gallant dancer, as potential pugilist, as avid reader of the Bible and Shakespeare, as attentive listener to local sages, as a coal miner of extraordinary skill and toughness. Apparently most of these things were true; most of all he was heralded as a promising local boy inexorably destined to make good. In the desolate setting of a mining town he was a dramatic, audacious youth, standing out by virtue of his robust physical equipment. "I come from a long line of stalwart progenitors who bequeathed me a rugged constitution," he once told Louis Adamic. He also displayed an agile, inquisitive mind. (Many years afterward his brother "Denny" remarked without bitterness: "When the Lord gave out brains to the Lewis children He gave most of them to John.")

At twenty-one he found Lucas too small to hold him, so he roamed westward, working in copper mines in Colorado, in silver and coal mines in Montana. He helped dig for the crushed and mutilated bodies of four hundred miners caught in an explosion at Hannah, Wyoming—an incident which (along with the silicosis that shadowed his father's late years as a result of long hours in poorly ventilated mines) he has often cited as inspiring his passion for mine-safety legislation. This journey was also marked by his narrowest escape from death, an anecdote that has made its way into every major or minor comment written about him. Attacked by a vicious mule named "Spanish Pete," Lewis brained him with the sprag of a coal car, and then covered his wounds with clay. Later he told the foreman that the mule had died of heart failure. Presumably the eye-witness account is furnished by Lewis.

In 1906 he was back in Lucas to make his first entrance into the business of labor-leading. He was elected local delegate

to the UMW convention. A year later he married Myrta Edith Bell, a pretty, bright-eyed schoolteacher who had helped him find the right books.

From that moment the Lewis career began to suggest a master plan. He had been fond of drinking and poker-playing; he gave up all that. One associate who has known him longest says: "Lewis was the kind of fellow who saw the futility of all that kidding around; he realized that it might interfere with what he was after." Each step had to be weighed against large ambitions as the conviction of ultimate destiny deepened. He became "a young old man." Lewis expected big things for himself, and he had—at least at that stage—no assurance of immortality.

Three children were born to John L. and Myrta Lewis. Margaret Mary, the first, died in 1921. Kathryn was born in 1911; John L., Jr., seven years later. In the conventional portraits of Lewis as a young man, Mrs. Lewis—whom he called "Mother"—fills the composite role of tutor, inspiration, helpmate, and companion. At the height of Lewis's career the focus seemed to shift. Kathryn emerged, Mrs. Lewis receded. The shaping of Kathryn's life appears to be one of the rare private preoccupations which have obsessed him during the long period of his public life. Her strivings and disappointments may have been as influential as any other domestic factor in shaping Lewis's character.

Kathryn has suffered chiefly as a result of her obesity. Lewis has tried to protect and promote her, seeking perhaps to compensate for some of the cruelties which people of unusual appearance encounter. She, in turn, is dominated by her father in every aspect of her existence. Sometimes she has flared up in sudden resentment at the extent of her dependency: "He won't even let Sox [the family dog] have a sex-life," she once complained.

Graduated from Bryn Mawr in the early '30's, she drifted quickly into her father's realm, soon serving as his executive assistant, and later as his secretary. During the CIO era, groups and individuals seeking to influence Lewis often used

her as intermediary. When she is working for him the range of her operations is not rigidly defined. She wrote at least one of his major speeches—an anti-Nazi address he delivered at Madison Square Garden in 1937. At the CIO's San Francisco convention in 1939 he hoped to have her designated as national secretary of CIO, and this is one of the few occasions in CIO records in which his will was thwarted. She is a person of talent. She is also domineering, difficult to get along with, a recurrent victim of her own self-consciousness and insecurity.

Kathryn has frequently brooded over her inability to set out on her own. On one occasion she fled to New York, moving into a room almost barren of furniture or adornment; but she soon returned. There have been other "vanishing acts," and each time she returns "home"—to her father's office. She has undergone considerable medical treatment in an effort to lose weight, and to friends she speaks sadly and irritably of her obesity.

She is the most ardent practitioner of the Lewis cult, pouring out testimonials to her father's genius and infallibility. Her momentary rebellions are overshadowed by displays of passionate worship as she seeks, often successfully, to communicate to those around her the vision of Lewis as deity. Most of the other women who have worked with her at the Mine Workers Building are middle-aged, many of them brought in from outlying districts of the union to serve at the temple, allowed to stay only so long as they remain unmarried. When working in Lewis's office, Kathryn serves as emissary between such people and the man she alternately refers to as "Mr. Lewis" and "my father." For considerable periods she works with unremitting intensity, then slumps back into depression.

As a labor functionary her authoritarianism has been a grotesque imitation of "Mr. Lewis." When Lewis set up District 50 of the Mine Workers as a "catch-all" organizing unit, he appointed Kathryn secretary-treasurer. She, in turn, in establishing an intra-office union of the District's employees, designated herself president of the union. In effect, if an em-

ployee had a grievance, she would act both as employer and as complainant.

Her presence has created jurisdictional disputes within the family. Her uncle, "Denny" Lewis, joined the union payroll; but Kathryn jealously relegated him to an obscure office where he monotonously dictated letters all day long. This semi-retirement may be appropriate to his talents, but it is a festering irritant to his wife, who has frequently clashed with Kathryn. "Denny," however, accepts the exile philosophically. Once, when a reporter asked him how he spent his time, he replied gaily, "I sit up here all day looking out of the window, and I can tell what the weather is in every part of the country."

Although Kathryn betrays flashes of sensitivity and wit, these are obscured by her continuing deification of her father. She is blind to his vanities and utterly humorless about them. So is he. In 1936 Edward Levinson, the gifted labor editor of the *New York Post* and now publicist for the Auto Workers Union, wrote a series of eulogistic articles about Lewis. Levinson received this acknowledgment:

> I also want to express my personal appreciation of the two articles written, one in *Harper's* and one in *Today,* in which complimentary references were made to myself. I think the articles reflected a very fine grasp and understanding of the issues and personalities involved in the conflict of labor today.

The letter was signed with Lewis's florid, sprawling signature (a signature that is almost a self-portrait), and initialed by Kathryn Lewis; and neither of them seems to have detected its crude conceit.

Perhaps Lewis has hoped that Kathryn would glow in some of the light he cast off, or perhaps he needs her tense adoration to remind him of his stature. In any case, there has been a tragic quality in the relationship as each successive office and title fashioned for her has failed to bring major recognition or personal contentment. But Lewis has never abandoned the effort.

Mrs. Lewis, until her death in 1942, tried valiantly to fill

the role in which the biographers cast her. She was the shy, uneasy hostess at dinner parties in Alexandria—first in the house that had once belonged to George Washington's physician, and later in the more pretentious residence in which "Light Horse" Harry Lee had delivered his celebrated oration on Washington's death. She was a small, quiet, self-effacing woman, endeavoring with pathetic persistence to break down the hostility of aristocratic Alexandria families and to convert the Lewis home into a meeting-place for the great and the well-born. Many people wondered, however, whether she had not been much happier during the simple Iowa years than she ever was in the turbulence of Washington. She talked often and nostalgically of how she used to wash John L.'s back when he came out of the mines, and she seemed a little bewildered by the impressive activities in which he had become involved. When she died, *Time* noted cryptically: "As his [Lewis's] wife she laid out a program of study for him, encouraged him to read, led him to the classics—subsequently could not keep him from quoting them."

John L., Jr., entered Princeton during the time of his father's stormiest clashes with industry. On November 28, 1937, *The New York Times* reported that of 187 freshmen who applied for membership to the Whig Society young Lewis and 84 others were admitted and he "will serve on the labor committee." This was one of his few approaches to the world of John L. Lewis, Sr. Although he is reported to have been listed on the CIO payroll one summer, he has shown no desire to enter his father's business. In 1940, after graduation from Princeton, he entered medical school. Some suggested that Lewis had deliberately mapped a conventional career for his son, as a way of serving notice that the Lewis family had crashed the upper layers of society. A close family friend, however, likens John Jr. to Mrs. Lewis's father: "a country doctor and a pretty simple, regular guy."

Meanwhile Kathryn has faltered along, clinging to her father's hand. In his attitude toward Kathryn one might glimpse some of the private anxieties that beset Lewis. But

most of the time the blinds are tightly drawn. The inner furies that drive him forward, when it appears that he is bowed and beaten, are neither paraded publicly nor unveiled in private chat. There have been occasional rumors that he would remarry, but even in the flood of Washington keyhole gossip his name is linked with few others.

In one sense, at least, the family history has fulfilled Lewis's picture of the world. From Lucas to Alexandria, he has been the central character.

3

PORTRAIT OF A MACHINE

THE young Lewis swiftly sensed his own strength. Gradually he came to believe he had found the secret of other men's weakness. Nearly all of them, it seemed, could be bought and corrupted, bullied into obsequiousness, or terrified into submission by the rare resolute strong man in their midst. They could be awed by flying fists or bamboozled by elaborate rhetoric. (He once bewildered a hostile union assemblage by constantly repeating the word *imbroglio,* and on another occasion unnerved a critic by calling him a "damned publican" —whereupon the critic complained that he had always thought Lewis was a good Republican, too!) In most cases, however, results could be achieved by softer methods—food, funds, flattery. He quickly rejected the view that idealism might be a profound human motivation or that humility could stir men's loyalties. "He who tooteth not his own horn, the same shall not be tooted," he tells ambitious young men. He has consistently identified the meek with the mediocre. Discussing a mural of a bullfight with a companion who lamented the cruelty of such spectacles, he argued that a bullfight was the true replica of life: the fittest survived.

Power, he concluded, was not to be won through sentimental appeals to reason or pleas for a favorable show of hands. It was to be wrested by effectively manipulating a few key (but inferior) men, and perpetuated by creating a monolithic machine. "The People" might provide an attractive figure of speech, but their essential wisdom was not to be trusted.

The circumstances of his rise to prominence seemed to prove

the validity of this credo, perhaps helping him to crystallize its tenets. He is not the product of a democratic upsurge. There was no dancing in the street during his early triumphs; they were won in back rooms. He had held no high elective office before he became president of the Mine Workers Union, first achieving that post through the simple law of succession, retaining it afterward by referendum. On his way up he was seldom compelled to solicit the affection of the rank-and-file. Captivating, resourceful, furiously energetic, his talk and his talent captured the attention of "the right men," who paved his way.

His first—and most clear-cut—election triumph was a minor one. But it was all he needed. In 1909, moving from Lucas to Panama, Iowa, he was chosen president (with the active support of his brothers) of the Panama local. He was a one-man union: president, member of a one-man "pit committee," orator. Within a year he had wangled an assignment as state legislative representative of the United Mine Workers Union. At Springfield the landscape was wider and the audience no longer a home-town handful. Before a state legislature he could cultivate his forensic aptitudes—bellowing bombastically, modulating to stage-whispers—whether in tear-jerking pleas for mine-safety laws or in verbose sermons on lesser matters. He was nimble, dexterous, occasionally witty. He didn't take the town by storm, but his performance was sufficiently good to gain some outside notice.

Specifically, the noise attracted the attention of Sam Gompers, the shrewd, London-born ex-cigar-maker who headed the American Federation of Labor. Gompers, discovering Lewis in 1911, named him an AFL field representative, an assignment which opened new regions for exploration. Lewis flattered and fawned on the Federation leader, alternately dazzling him with quick shows of rhetoric and imitating him in slight mannerisms. New legends arose, such as the tale that Lewis ate three helpings of raw beefsteak for breakfast.

This interval may be important chiefly because of Lewis's futile efforts to organize AFL unions in steel, citadel of the

open shop. One night in 1912, attached in Aliquippa by five steel corporation thugs, he reported that he beat hell out of them. He could not unionize steel so long as the complex, self-defeating jumble of AFL craft unionism prevailed; he had other organizing assignments in rubber, glass, lumber, and copper.

While there were few spectacular achievements during this period, Lewis maintained steady and purposeful relationships with important influences in both the Mine Workers and the AFL. In 1916 he was appointed to the UMW's Interstate Scale Committee and at the union convention in the same year his gifts as high-flown hatchet-man were enlisted by the union officials. With the union administration under fire from Progressive and Socialist critics, Lewis was swiftly called on to act as chairman of several of the stormier sessions. He presided—as agent of the union machine—with the ruthless finality that he was to use in his own behalf so often in the future. They called him "Ironjaw."

Soon the tempo quickened. UMW president John P. White appointed him chief statistican of the union. In 1917 Lewis got his name in *The New York Times;* he was miscalled "James." The item, dealing with a conference called by the National Defense Council on wartime conduct of the coal industry, was a preview of many later Lewis utterances:

> James Lewis, of Springfield, Ill., representing the United Mine Workers of America, said the miners union did not believe the time had come for the government to take control of the coal industry. He said the miners believed the question of wages and working conditions could best be worked out by the representatives of the miners and operators, rather than through the government arbitrarily fixing wages and other conditions. He declared that as a coal miner he would surely object to power being given the Coal Production Commission to fix prices, wages, and conditions because the members had not an intimate knowledge of the industry.
>
> The transportation problem is the biggest problem confronting the country today. It is useless to talk patriotism to the miners

when they are compelled to remain idle owing to the lack of cars to carry the coal they produce.*

The statistician became president with startling speed. White resigned to serve on the War Labor Board. Frank J. Hayes, his successor, designated Lewis as vice-president, the international executive board confirming the selection as a matter of routine. With this stroke Lewis had in effect taken over the union. For Hayes was an amiable, ineffectual dipsomaniac who spent most of his hours with a bottle and the remainder in search of cures. As one of Lewis's sympathetic biographers pointed out: "He [Lewis] was so busy he never took time to sober Mr. Hayes" *—instead, he assumed Hayes's duties and inherited his job. Lewis's victory had been assured when he found that Hayes had a greater thirst for liquor than for power, and when he sealed his own alliances with the major members of the union's higher councils.

At forty, Lewis was a machine-made man, lacking any large-scale body of direct rank-and-file allegiance. He was also the youngest president of a big American union. The UMW was an opulent, flourishing organization, with deep traditions of internal democracy. Debates over advanced currents of social thought ran through the pages of its *Journal;* important sections of the union had been responsive to the appeals of the Socialist Party. The union had shattered some of the serfdom of company towns, bringing a glimpse of dignity to thousands of miners. It was a union nearly 500,000 strong, perhaps the most powerful labor unit in the nation.

Lewis had seized control at a critical time. In September 1919, with Lewis on the platform as acting president, two thousand delegates to the UMW convention roared their demands for a 60-cent increase in pay, the five-day week, the six-hour day. The miners were restive. "The leadership, its reputation staked on ability to negotiate contracts and make miners live up to them, was assailed as conservative, reactionary, 'pets of the coal operators,'" Heber Blankenhorn reported

* Quoted in Cecil Carnes, *John L. Lewis.*

in *The Nation.* The coal operators spurned the demands, precipitating Lewis into his first far-flung battle. Although the Armistice had been signed, the Government took the stand that the Lever Act, forbidding strikes, was still in force. The strike began on November 1. In the faded newspaper clippings of that period there are preludes to the more discordant sounds heard in 1943. "There will be no compromise," said Attorney General Palmer; "there can be no compromise with the strikers or others who break the law." Federal Judge Anderson issued an injunction in Indianapolis, headquarters of the miners' union. Lewis assailed President Wilson, calling the President's attitude "the climax of a long series of attempted usurpations of executive power." On a train bearing Lewis to Washington for negotiations, newspapermen reported that they found him reading the *Odyssey.* On December 3, eighty-four officials of the union were cited for contempt and Lewis was arrested. Within four days, however, the strike was at an end—a compromise had been drafted at the White House. Lewis spoke the line that so many observers predicted (incorrectly) that he would revive in 1943: "I will not fight my government, the greatest government on earth."

The terms of the settlement were not immediately announced. With some insurgents in the union accusing Lewis of betrayal, disaffection broke out in scattered areas in the coal fields. The agreement, like many of those which Lewis has subsequently fashioned, was neither total surrender nor clear-cut victory. While providing an immediate wage increase of 14 per cent, it left the disposition of all other issues to a newly created commission. Fewer than half of the demands had been won. Most of the miners drifted back to work, but in Illinois a die-hard detachment held out until December. Ultimately the commission boosted the increase to 27 per cent, but the demand for a five-day week, six-hour day, was ignored.

Sickness gripped the coal industry in the 1920's and Lewis had to wage a continuous battle for his life. The criticism he had already encountered did not melt away; instead, it mounted and spread within a union whose members were

accustomed to rugged, rough-and-tumble debate, and who regarded their leaders as instruments of their own choosing. At first Lewis appeared unaware of the precariousness of his position. Blinded by the swiftness of his rise, the flowering of his talents, and the first, welcome glare of nationwide publicity, he made a bold bid for larger stakes. In 1921 he opposed his sponsor, Gompers, for the presidency of the AFL. It was the first time that he clumsily overplayed his hand, exaggerating his own stature, underestimating his enemies, riding roughshod over old loyalties. A pink-cheeked, ingratiating character named William Green delivered the nominating speech for Lewis, tipping himself overboard in wordy eulogy:

> The candidate I am to present served as a boy in the mines, he grew up in the mines, he learned the lesson of the mines, his education was given him in this university, he learned to be courageous and unafraid as only a miner can learn these things. . . . I say to you that if I possessed the eloquence of a Demosthenes or the logic of a Lincoln I could not by anything I might say add a single whit to the qualifications he possesses.*

Lewis's candidacy was also endorsed by William Randolph Hearst. Although Mrs. Lewis pleaded with him not to enter the race, he plunged ahead. He was overwhelmingly defeated, Gompers getting 25,022 votes, Lewis 12,324. Even the miners' delegation split its vote, with two of Lewis's persistent foes—bellowing, incorruptible, simple-minded Alex Howat of Kansas and shrewder, calculating Frank Farrington of Illinois—siding with Gompers. Lewis had run ahead of his time-table. Trying to oust the man who had facilitated his entrance into the labor movement, he met his first major setback.

In defeat he was gracious, grandiloquent, outwardly unperturbed. "To those who supported me, I humbly extend my heartfelt thanks. To those who changed their minds after having promised to support me, I now may say that they exercised the prerogative that all men have." He denied that he had ever met William Randolph Hearst; and he wryly summarized his

* AFL Convention Proceedings.

"the departing Communist would be waylaid in the lobby of the hall and fists would fly."

The opposition was heterogeneous, including mavericks like Howat; ambitious, non-political rivals like Farrington; Socialists like Powers Hapgood and Adolph Germer; idealistic independents like John Brophy; and orthodox Communists who faithfully preached the esoteric ideology of their party but usually sided on specific issues with the non-Communist insurgents. Lewis drew no delicate distinctions. He fiercely labeled all his opponents emissaries of the Kremlin, "exposing" their alien machinations in long, pontifical sermons with an expression of injured innocence in his eyes.

Controlling the union treasury and the appointment of its field agents, Lewis had enormous tactical advantages in his crusade against the rebels. Most of his foes (despite all the allegations of Moscow income) had little money, few tangible resources of any kind. He picked them off, one by one, in remorseless guerrilla warfare, meanwhile building up his own fond family of "favorite sons" who executed his decrees. At Gompers's death in 1924 Lewis had overcome the delusions which had inspired his losing race three years earlier. This time he maneuvered in back-room confabs to secure the election of affable, pliable William Green. In Green's post as UMW secretary-treasurer, Lewis placed colorless, able Thomas Kennedy (who had been a Socialist in his forgotten youth). Kennedy and gentle, soft-voiced vice-president Philip Murray became the two leading junior partners in Lewis's enterprise.

None of the day-to-day devices employed in the suppression of internal revolt proved adequate; so "provisionalism" emerged as Lewis's blue-print for the perpetuation of his rule. Reduced to simple terms, "provisionalism" meant the replacement of elected district officials by Lewis appointees. Steadily "provisionalism" invaded the restless coal fields. The union was sagging and spiritless, but the Lewis machine was in the making. "Provisionalism" was instituted as a local, temporary "expedient." It proved neither local nor temporary.

It was a doctrine as classic in its simplicity as in its effective-

ness. The UMW had developed as a union of autonomous districts, each presided over by its own elected officials, the officials themselves customarily responsive to the murmurings of their own followers. Such autonomy, Lewis concluded, was bad business. It was irreconcilable with his conception of a machine, since it made men responsible to an authority (their own constituents) higher than his own. "Provisionalism" would enable him to fasten his control on the union without periodic appeals to the hordes of discontented miners.

Howat was among the earliest victims of the procedure. In 1920 the Kansas legislature had created a Court of Industrial Relations, vesting it with wide powers to enforce compulsory arbitration. Howat and three other District officials defied the court; when they were arrested, twelve hundred miners struck. Following the issuance of an injunction other miners walked out, and the coal operators appealed to Lewis to force a resumption of work in compliance with the contract. Lewis agreed, but the strike spread. He thereupon resorted to a technique which later became ritual. He appointed three members of his executive board to "investigate" the affairs of the Kansas district. Their findings were solemnly studied. On October 12, 1921, Lewis suspended the District's charter, ousted Howat and other district officials, and named "provisional" officers to reorganize the unit. At the 1921 convention his action was sustained after four days of turbulent debate, despite overwhelming evidence that most of the Kansas miners were in sympathy with their fallen leaders.

The verdict of the convention did not quiet the Kansas upheaval. Strikes continued. On November 16, 1921, the miners who had remained on strike were expelled from the union—by Lewis's decree. In actuality he expelled more than half of the locals in the District, revoking the charters of eighty-three local unions. Even the official estimates offered by the UMW acknowledged that 2,500 members had been expelled, that 1,500 had departed for other fields, and that only 5,000 returned to the pits.* The local union with which Howat was

* *The Workers' Party and American Trade Unions*, by David M. Schneider.

affiliated was one of those to lose its charter. The judicial Lewis hierarchy then ruled that Howat was no longer a member of the union. "Lewis didn't break the man's hold," Benjamin Stolberg wrote of Howat in 1925; "he broke the man."

After the purge of the rebel Kansas miners and their officials, the union executive board magnanimously restored the District's autonomy. This laboratory experiment in provisionalism had obviously revealed a serious defect. Lewis could not continue indefinitely to defeat oppositionists by eliminating their followers from the union, and then permitting the survivors to vote as he pleased. There was little real profit in that method. Gradually, as the decade advanced, "provisionalism" tightened its hold. Once a district lost its autonomy the effort to recapture independence proved long, arduous and usually futile.

The next testing-ground was Nova Scotia, where miners had struck in violation of their contract. Communist influence appeared to be strong in this district, which its leaders had aligned with the Red International of Trade Unions. "Provisionalism" was the answer. Revoking the District's charter, Lewis installed as "provisional" chieftains the same candidates who had been defeated by a five to one margin in the previous district election.*

As Lewis suppressed his rivals he grew more confident of his insight into men, became convinced that he was a supreme psychologist who could detect the inadequacies and infirmities of those around him. Yet at least one man baffled him in that period of ruthless advance, and Lewis's miscalculation led to greater disaster later. The man he could not fathom was John Brophy, who in 1926 challenged his rule of the UMW. He never genuinely comprehended Brophy because he could not grasp the nature of Brophy's aspirations. He mistook Brophy's humbleness for timidity, his philosophical patience for loss of hope and faith, his selflessness for mediocrity. In size Lewis was a good two heads taller; he could place his hand patronizingly on Brophy's shoulder in a father-son pose. The contrast between the diminutive, unassuming, ascetic-looking Brophy

* UMW 1929 Convention Proceedings.

and the man his aides described reverently as "the big fellow" was more than physical: it was a clash of ideas and attitudes and ways of life. In 1926 they collided head-on.

Son of a Lancashire miner, Brophy was three years younger than Lewis. He was born in St. Helens, England, emigrated to the United States as a child, and went down into Pennsylvania mines at the age of twelve. A Catholic in his youth, he was also attracted early to the writings of the Fabian Socialists. His learning and integrity won him recognition among the miners, and in 1917 he achieved the presidency of District 2 of the UMW, with headquarters at Clearfield, Pennsylvania. In many ways Brophy was a throwback to the early, evangelical, self-denying figures who prowled the coal fields as the first organizers of the Mine Workers Union, singing and reciting manifestos of human solidarity. He was not a glamorous, imposing figure, yet he rallied the allegiances of men and he fought with persistent courage. He was outspoken, sharp-tongued in his criticism of Lewis. In 1926 Brophy ran for the union presidency. It was the last serious contest for that office in the UMW.

Brophy had a plan and a program; Lewis had national headquarters, organizers, appointed officials, funds. When Brophy undertook the campaign he recognized that the odds were steeply against him. He knew that he had no safeguards over the conduct of the balloting, no machine-men to rove the fields in his favor, neither time nor money for an extensive personal junket. Uncertain whether he could get enough votes to win, he was convinced that even if he did get them they would not be counted. He was supported by the Communists, as the Lewis forces emphasized at every opportunity, and other dissident elements backed him for a wide assortment of reasons. His campaign planks were echoes of the annual debates in union conventions. He called for a large-scale drive to organize the unorganized (citing a government survey which showed a steady rise in the volume of non-union coal being produced); militant advocacy of nationalization of the mines (a goal annually embraced by the union convention and

studiously ignored during the remainder of the year); and creation of a Labor Party to end the union's alliance with "reactionary Republicanism."

In rebuttal, Lewis made few dramatic appearances and issued few major pronouncements. He relied on the machine. The balloting took place in the local unions and the results were submitted to national headquarters. Soon afterward it was announced that the Lewis-Murray-Kennedy slate had triumphed by 173,323 votes to 60,661.

The outcome was announced but the details were suppressed. It was customary UMW procedure to release, within a few weeks of the election, the breakdown of the vote as cast by each local. This information was withheld. At the ensuing convention Brophy demanded publication of the figures. When the report was finally issued some months afterward, the Brophy group immediately prepared charges of "gross irregularities, self-evident frauds, and vote-stealing." As exhibits it cited a series of districts in which every enrolled miner was listed as voting for Lewis, although it was well known in the UMW that not all miners had participated in the election and that a solid "Ja" response was beyond credibility. Brophy also pointed to discrepancies between statements of local officials on the voting of their members and the final figures released by the international office. He appealed to the executive board for an investigation. His letters were ignored. There was no investigation.

Blandishments were mingled with rough stuff in Lewis's struggle for survival. Aligned with Brophy was Powers Hapgood, graduate of Andover and Harvard, the dark-haired, personable, well-groomed son of a wealthy and forward-looking Indianapolis business man. Like a handful of others in that era, Hapgood went from Harvard into the labor and Socialist movement, working as a coal miner, then serving as an organizer for Brophy's district. Like Brophy, he mystified Lewis: what did Hapgood want? At the 1927 convention Hapgood was barred from a seat, and one evening during the sessions he was set upon and beaten up in a hotel.

A few months later, Hapgood met Lewis in the corridor of UMW headquarters, where the executive board was meeting. Lewis called him over, talked to him in purring tones, expressing pain and bewilderment at Hapgood's stubborn defiance. Saying he wanted to talk to him as "an older man to a younger man," Lewis recited the "great hopes" he had had for Hapgood's career and his anxiety at seeing him associated with "that degenerate from Kansas" (Howat). The sermon was full of sorrow and of subtle hints. Then the elevator door opened, and, as several members of the executive board emerged, Lewis resumed his official bearing. With a stern glance he reminded Hapgood that "no man can defy the discipline of the organization"—and marched off. There was no reconciliation; the gulf between the two men's ideas was too vast, and Lewis didn't know what Hapgood wanted.

Brophy was defeated or counted out, Howat lapsed into incoherent, flamboyant futility, the Communists were moving toward open and ineffectual dual unionism through the establishment of a National Miners Union, and Frank Farrington was put out of the way with one sudden exposure. Farrington was president of the Illinois district where anti-Lewis sentiment was tough and enduring. While Farrington was sailing to an international miners' convention, Lewis made public evidence that Farrington had signed a contract to serve as "labor representative" for the Peabody Coal Company at $25,000 a year. It was true. It was also true that many UMW officials had in their later years ended up on the operators' payrolls; and Farrington insisted that he was planning to resign in three months. The defense was useless. Farrington was out and his successor was an inept, verbose character named Harry Fishwick. Lewis at last saw the chance to end autonomy in Illinois. "Provisionalism" came to that state in 1929. Although Illinois was virtually the only area outside the anthracite fields in which the industry and the union retained any health, Lewis chose it as the battleground for a furious combat. He dismissed the elected officers, installing his puppet

regime in a sequence that was by now redundant as well as raw.

The insurgents made a last stand, rallying many of the men and groups who had earlier resisted his rule. Lewis had canceled the UMW's annual convention on the ground that the union lacked funds to hold one in the style to which it had become accustomed. So the progressives and other anti-Lewis elements issued a convention call in the UMW's name, setting Springfield as the meeting-place and March 1930 as the date. Lewis retaliated by summoning a simultaneous convention in Indianapolis. At Springfield, Alex Howat was chosen president (his salary was pointedly fixed at $6,000—half the amount of Lewis's) and Adolph Germer, battle-scarred veteran of the intra-union strife, was named vice-president. On the platform at Indianapolis, Lewis demonstratively tore up a copy of the rebel organ, *The Illinois Miner*, which warm-hearted, high-spirited Oscar Ameringer was editing, and growled this description of the Springfield assemblage:

"Over in Springfield there is a little band of malcontents, representing the offscourings of this organization. It is a ragtag-and-bobtail element gathered there muttering in their beards."

At Springfield an anonymous orator cried that Lewis had "destroyed the soul" of the union; at Indianapolis AFL president William Green piously blessed the Lewis conclave, assuring the faithful of the Lewis flock that the Federation would have no dealings with the opposition.

Commander of a ragged, disintegrating army, Lewis's pomposity was ludicrous: "I will come, I will always come, I will come on horseback even, if the miners of Illinois need me."

After the rival conventions had disbanded, Howat, Brophy and others were ordered by Lewis to appear before the union executive board on charges of fostering dual unionism. Failing to appear, they lost their union cards.

For a few fleeting months, however, it appeared that the insurgents, carrying forward the organization they had created

at Springfield, might finally wrest control of the union. The Lewis-Kennedy-Murray regime was imperiled as miners in Pennsylvania and Ohio swung into the progressive column. But the upsurge was as brief as it was bloody. Germer was savagely beaten on an Illinois street; men on both sides were slugged, waylaid, wounded. Lewis still commanded the union treasury; issues were slowly obscured in the general, paralyzing gloom which gripped the mining towns as the economic crisis deepened. It was too late and too early. As the Communist National Miners Union organized tattered remnants of the revolt, most of the insurgents returned to the fold or vanished from the coal fields, and only sporadic outbursts continued, particularly in Illinois. "Provisionalism" had prevailed.

4

THE MAN WHO KNEW HOOVER

THE leaders of the union are safe-and-sane, conservative men and they have fought radicalism year in and year out," boasted Ellis Searles, editor of the *United Mine Workers' Journal.* This reassuring pronouncement appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* early in Lewis's regime. As the intra-union feuds mounted during the post-war decade, Lewis made strenuous efforts to justify Searles's boast. Manifestations of his economic and political outlook emerged throughout that period. His pronouncements sounded like a recording of George Babbitt. He faithfully voted Republican. His anti-Communist sermons were as violent as any delivered by William Randolph Hearst. He derided "visionaries." He pleaded with business men to recognize him as a sympathetic spirit. He aggressively resisted any "radical" solutions for the problems of coal. He hailed Herbert Hoover as the supreme example of American statesmanship. He drove heresy from the union hall.

On January 28, 1927, *The New York Times* disclosed that the UMW convention, under Lewis's guidance, had amended a basic tenet of its constitution. Abandoning the somewhat Marxian view that "the miners are entitled to the full value of their product," the constitution would henceforth declare that the miners merited "an equitable share of the fruits of their labors." While post-war union conventions had repeatedly gone on record in favor of nationalization of the mines, Lewis, testifying before a House labor committee in May 1922, defined nationalization to mean "government operation" but continued private ownership—a clear distortion of rank-and-

file intent. K. C. Adams, quoted in the *Literary Digest*, depicted Lewis as the reluctant inheritor of such extreme demands as nationalization, six-hour day, five-day week. Lewis himself, in the one book * of which he is author, wrote defensively in 1925:

> The policy of the United Mine Workers of America at this time is neither new nor revolutionary. It does not command the admiration of visionaries and Utopians. It ought to have the support of every thinking business man in the United States because it proposes to allow *natural economic laws free play in the production and distribution of coal.* (Italics mine.)

The same volume voiced the author's disdain for "sure cures by politicians and economic quacks" and for "short-cut, easy way or magic formula." In a passage that reads like a parody of more modern attacks on "brain-trusters," Lewis asserted:

> Let us admit at the outset that the coal industry was not conceived, planned and blue-printed by scientific supermen or young critics just out of Harvard, who are fully equipped to tell us all the mistakes our grand-dads made. . . . In time the [coal] industry, like others, was overdeveloped, and overproduction became chronic. This overdevelopment and overproduction would have been checked, as in most other industries, if economic laws had been given free play. . . . However regrettable planlessness and waste may be from an idealistic standpoint, many of us are so hard-headed as to suspect that America would never have been settled, and American industries would never have been developed to a point where it was possible or worth while to economize, if it had not been possible to exploit our natural resources under free conditions from the beginning. . . .
>
> It seems that it is now up to the Labor Unions to compel capitalists to act like capitalists, and to discharge the social functions of capitalists.

These were the themes Lewis sonorously reiterated through most of the post-war decade amid the perplexing chaos in coal.

* *The Miners' Fight for American Standards.* Discussing this book many years later Lewis privately remarked: "Would that mine enemy hath written a book." Yet he has remained remarkably faithful to many of its theses.

Someone has said that his book was as orthodox as a thesis prepared in a university chair endowed by a coal operator. It contained neither political nor economic radicalism. It was a polemic repeating the ancient doctrines of Adam Smith—"the free play of economic laws," the interplay of supply and demand as the answer to all economic ills.

The manifestations of coal's ailments were clear: over-expansion, too many mines, too many miners. To Lewis the solution was "survival of the fittest." The "natural laws" of economics would eliminate the marginal producers and push superfluous labor into other industries. Stabilization of wages at a high rate would facilitate the process.

Lewis saw the celebrated "Jacksonville agreement," signed on February 18, 1924, as the prelude to his new era. The agreement provided for maintenance of wartime wage rates in the central competitive field—$7.50 a day for miners in Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and western Pennsylvania. After the pact was initialed Lewis said: "Exactly as was foreseen by the United Mine Workers, the law of supply and demand . . . is working a cure." It was his belief that "a long-delayed adjustment" was finally at hand in the bituminous fields and that "when it is complete there will be fewer mines and miners and it will be a prosperous industry."

It was, however, a paper victory, dissipated soon by cynical violations on the part of the operators, by inability of the union to organize open-shop territory. UMW membership in West Virginia fell from 10,000 in 1920 to less than 600 in 1929. Unionized operators chiseled to compete with non-union fields, and capital flew into the unorganized South.

Lewis was the medicine-man watching, in disbelief and bewilderment, as his patients died. All of his incantations from the pages of classical economics were ineffectual. The automatic miracle of "the market" never occurred. Not knowing what to do, he embraced an ancient rationalization for doing nothing: "The pendulum theory of history."

One day early in 1925—the year before his clash with Brophy—he expounded the theory to three troubled men

seated in his office—Murray, Kennedy, and Brophy. Brophy had journeyed from the coal fields to Indianapolis for the meeting. He told Lewis of the decline of morale as employment sagged, of widespread suffering, defections from the union, loss of confidence in its leaders.

"I've been out among the people," Brophy said, "and I know what they're saying. And we aren't giving them any answers."

Lewis asked expressionlessly: "What would you do, John?"

Brophy acknowledged that there was no overnight remedy. He argued, however, that a bold campaign for immediate nationalization of the mines would give the UMW membership a goal to fight for and a hope to sustain its spirits. Lewis replied that the objective was "politically impossible," that the union could not win public support for the program, that government officials would ignore the proposal.

Conceding that the program would meet stubborn resistance, Brophy nevertheless held that it would fortify the miners, placing the Government—rather than the union—on the defensive and restoring some solidarity in the union's house. He pointed out that the British miners, enduring similar interludes of depression, had maintained their union by keeping alive a fighting faith in the ultimate goal of nationalization.

Later the four men went to lunch together. Lewis, a little shaken by Brophy's description of the mood of the miners, gave no immediate answer on nationalization. Instead he recited the pendulum theory, as simple and satisfying as the "law of supply and demand." The theory was that the "pendulum of history" swings to and fro with remorseless rhythm; if at some moments it seemed to have swung hopelessly to one side, it could not remain there indefinitely. Now the union's fortunes were low; but the pendulum would swing back.

Lewis must have required the consolation of this doctrine on many nights in the following months. In public appearances he proclaimed "No backward step" as the union's slogan while nationalization was soft-pedaled; wage rates must and would be maintained, but victories were invariably Pyrrhic. One observer noted:

Failure to capture the non-union areas has been fatal to President Lewis' policy of stabilizing the union by driving out surplus mines and miners. Steady and profitable operation has led to expansion in capacity of non-union mines and to growth of their orders at the expense of union mines. Whereas in 1924 union mines produced more than two-thirds of the bituminous coal mined, in 1926 they produced barely a third. . . . Today those in control of the union stand bankrupt of policy.*

The same writer pointed out that even total unionization would not have solved the industry's dilemmas. So long as capacity remained double the output, "the miners would suffer intermittent employment, attacks upon their wages, dangerous threats to their union." He added:

Organization of the industry perhaps offers more promise. Monopoly gives power to restrict output by shutting down unprofitable mines or by establishing production quotas for mines in operation. But the myriad desperate operators in the bituminous field are too numerous and too anxiously concerned with their separate interests to accomplish monopolization alone. If anything is done, the union must do it. Just after the war, leaders of the union paid lip-service to a plan for nationalizing the coal industry. Whatever its other merits, it involved compulsory unionization of West Virginia and compulsory public monopoly of coal. Now the public resents such a program and except for a small group led by a former district leader [Brophy] the union has dropped it.

It may be that the obvious failure of competitive mining will lead to its revival. It may be, also, that the miners, imitating labor organizations in the clothing industry, will bring pressure to bear directly upon operators to force them into industrial collaboration. Today there are few indications of interest in either policy.

Unless that interest develops soon, bituminous unionism seems likely to become so unimportant that no program it adopts will matter.

Lewis waited. At the 1927 convention he could only repeat that "the union miner cannot agree to the acceptance of a wage principle which will permit his annual earnings and his

* From a chapter by Corwin Edwards on "Coal Unionism" in *American Labor Dynamics*, edited by J. B. S. Hardman.

living standards to be determined by the hungriest unfortunates whom the non-union operators can employ."

There would be no formal "backward step"; but the union and its leader, standing their ground on a moving stage, were headed for the wings. Strikes were frequent and bitter, and their solutions solved nothing. The shadow of high wage rates was preserved in half-idle union mines; the substance of unemployment grew in the non-union fields.

To the 1927 convention Lewis insisted again that there was little hope of revival through legislation: "It must be worked out by the industry itself."

Waiting for salvation, he occupied his time with fiery polemics against real and alleged Communists. *Time* summarized his rhetoric at the unruly 1927 assemblage:

"Typically of the U. S. labor movement, great-faced Mr. Lewis can talk better against the radicals than he can for or against anything else."

A year later Lewis made a grudging concession. After a Senate Committee had listened to a procession from the coal-country, Lewis and his aides went to work on legislation. The bills they envisaged would suspend the Sherman anti-trust law, forbid operators to sell below cost and through other devices curb the competitive hara-kiri in which the operators were engaged. The GOP's Senator Watson introduced such a measure in 1928. It was blocked in the Senate. Lewis waited four more years before promoting the subject seriously again.

Although Lewis floundered through the 1920's with only mild, tentative adjustments in his thinking, it may reasonably be contended that no man could have put the jig-saw of the coal industry together with a single great stroke. Lewis had inherited the nation's sickest area in a period of comparative national health. Most of the coal operators were as unimaginative and inefficient as they were ruthless. "In a jumble of mines which the natives love to call the bituminous coal industry, it is proper for each individual to do good that evil may come of it," Walton H. Hamilton and Helen R. Wright wrote in *The Case of Bituminous Coal,* published in 1926.

It is at least debatable, too, whether sustained organizing campaigns could have conquered some of the feudal principalities in which the open shop prevailed. The operators ran company towns, company stores, company houses, company police; they controlled local courts, local police, local newspapers.

Perhaps the most revealing phase of Lewis's failure is not the laissez-faire economics to which he adhered so long but the provincialism of the unionism which he practiced. He failed to conquer coal, and throughout the failure he was never moved to broaden his view of why men organized and what they might do, through organization, for each other.

"Trade unionism," he wrote,* "is a phenomenon of capitalism quite similar to the corporation. One is essentially a pooling of labor for purposes of common action in production and in sales. The other is a pooling of capital for exactly the same purposes. The economic aims of both are identical—gain."

Lewis never relinquished this concept. In 1922 Brophy was writing: "What is it that makes a union indestructible? It isn't wages and hours alone. It is that union men are free men. Union towns are free towns. . . . The union is the answer to human fear and loneliness." But Lewis looked suspiciously at any realm beyond the bargaining-table. "Primarily," his book declared, "the United Mine Workers of America insists upon the maintenance of the wage standards, guaranteed by the existing contractual relations in the industry, in the interests of its own membership. It is acting in that respect exactly as any other individual, organization or corporation would do under like circumstances. . . . Trade unionism is an integral part of the existing system of industry first called by its critics capitalism."

The UMW district led by Brophy established co-operative stores; Brophy threw himself into the promotion of Brookwood Labor College, a pioneering venture in labor education, where young men and women from labor's ranks might study history, economics, journalism, before returning to their labor posts.

* *The Miners' Fight for American Standards.*

These enterprises were as alien to Lewis's thinking as was the larger crusade for nationalization. Brophy believed that union halls should be open to men of diverse origins who wanted to devote themselves to labor's cause. He visualized unions not as the exclusive property of born proletarians but as instruments of progressive social change. When Brophy took in Hapgood as one of his closest associates, Lewis looked on incredulously. Learning of Hapgood's organizing activities, Lewis asked him what he was doing. "Organizing," said Hapgood. "Not writing a book?" Lewis asked distrustfully. One writer remarked in 1925 that Lewis regarded labor unionism "not as a movement but as an economic grand lodge functioning to sign contracts." The *United Mine Workers' Journal* lost all the controversial liveliness it had possessed before his advent. For example, the issue of June 24, 1915, carried an editorial protesting the dismissal of Scott Nearing, leftist economics professor, from the University of Pennsylvania, excerpts from British labor papers, letters embodying fiery disputes over Socialism and other long-range issues. Lewis drastically curbed the *Journal's* interests. Throughout the 1920's rebels rose at union conventions to protest the transformation of the magazine into a banal house-organ, devoted chiefly to Lewis's life and works. In 1927 one delegate said that the magazine had become "as flabby a piece of literature as is put out on the American continent." Brophy called it a "stiff, one-sided organ," devoid of all "life and vitality." Lewis defended the magazine by pointing out that editor Searles had written articles for the *Saturday Evening Post.* And the deterioration of the *Journal* continued.

Meanwhile, Cecil Carnes noted, Lewis was "fighting Wall Street interests while voting the Republican ticket." There may have been prophetic coincidence in the fact that he became president of the UMW in the same year that Warren Gamaliel Harding entered the White House. More significant was his endorsement of Calvin Coolidge four years later, when leaders of liberal and labor blocs throughout the nation were backing the candidacy of "Fighting Bob" La Follette and Burton K.

Wheeler. Although previous UMW conventions had adopted resolutions calling for a Labor Party, Lewis voted against such a resolution at the AFL convention in 1923. In 1924, shunning La Follette, he blessed the tight-lipped man from Vermont who had won national fame by breaking the strike of Boston's police. And in 1928, while the coal industry was furnishing a preview of a greater depression, Lewis's enthusiasm for the Republican candidate was even more fervently expressed. He proclaimed that "Mr. Hoover penetrates to the very heart of America's industrial and economic problem when he declares for full and stable employment for the workers of the nation." The candidate, it seems, had come out for prosperity. A few weeks later, with unemployed coal diggers thronging the coal camps, Lewis went on the air, saying:

> Labor and industry require his [Hoover's] services and genius for constructive industrial statesmanship, so that the unprecedented industrial and business prosperity which he inaugurated may be properly developed and stabilized, and in order further that the way he has opened to human and social betterment may be widened and made certain for coming generations of the people.

During the campaign Lewis disclosed that he was especially impressed by Mr. Hoover's declarations in favor of "tariff schedules protective of American labor" and "continuance of immigration restriction."

As the president of a labor "corporation" Lewis quickly assumed that he was entitled to a significant share of its dividends. In the same tradition he did not wait until the dividends were assured to the stockholders. In 1921, after one year of official service, his salary was increased from $5,000 to $8,000. In 1927, as the union treasury declined, the Lewis stipend rose to $12,000, a figure from which there was "no backward step"—even in 1929 when Lewis announced that the union lacked funds to hold a convention.

In 1932 Lewis stubbornly supported Hoover once again; he refused to join other UMW leaders in a pilgrimage to Hyde

Park to see what kind of man was running against Hoover, and what he might be able to offer.

As that year neared its end Lewis was triumphant over his union enemies, but the domain over which he presided was a dreary wasteland. He had won uncontested rule of a ruined union. He had built a machine and lost a movement.

He was rereading Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* as 1933 approached. It was an apt commentary on the state of the UMW, whose treasury had shrunk to $75,000. The union membership was a forlorn remnant, more than four-fifths reduced during Lewis's presidency. His hair had turned, in a five-year period, from a "lustrous auburn" to iron-rust; he is said to have remarked later that those years were so continuous an agony that he could never survive a similar ordeal. On dull days, a few journalists recited Lewis memorial services.

It appeared as if the odyssey were nearing an uninteresting end, with Lewis an obscure footnote in labor annals. Lewis alone still took himself seriously.

5

CIO

I. Success Story

OUT of the bedlam that greeted the new Democratic president some moves were plainly forecast. An industrial code was the talk of the town. Lewis, his able economist W. Jett Lauck, and Henry Warrum, his legal adviser, had been toying tentatively with a lot of legislative ideas in the long interim since the burial of Senator Watson's coal bill in 1928. Nothing had happened in that period to justify Lewis's hope that the pendulum would automatically swing back—at the least it surely needed a gentle shove. Reluctantly Lewis set aside his faith and went to work. He threw his energies into the drafting and re-drafting of the National Industrial Recovery Act, plugging resolutely for section 7-A.

Section 7-A formally recognized the right of workers to bargain collectively and pick unions of their own choosing. Industrialists, having heard such well-intentioned phrases before, were not unduly alarmed. They assumed that after a polite interlude of legal wrangling the existence of company unions would be somehow protected. Lewis didn't wait for legal debates and esoteric redefinitions of 7-A. Like a groggy pugilist who sees his opponent momentarily relaxed, he summoned up all his resources for a frenzied counterblow.

Scraping the bottom of his near-empty union barrel in the spring of 1933, Lewis hastily recruited an army of UMW organizers and ordered a full-fledged invasion of the coal fields. He threw every available dollar into this supreme gamble,

knowing that if he lost it would probably be his last campaign.

Lewis didn't lose. It was a "flag-waving, beer-dispensing, injunction-defying" advance. From this period dated the strange duality in the miners' allegiance, equitably divided between Franklin D. Roosevelt and John L. Lewis. In Alabama miners sang:

In nineteen hundred an' thirty-three,
When Mr. Roosevelt took his seat,
He said to President John L. Lewis,
"In union we must be." *

Without formal White House credentials the organizers chanted the same slogan: "President Roosevelt wants you to join the union." The miners joined in great joyous waves, singing their defiance in the faces of bewildered company police. A union was reborn overnight.

Except in Harlan County and in certain "captive mines" owned by United States Steel, the tide was swift and irresistible. Lewis himself may have been amazed by what he saw. The Mellon-held domain in western Pennsylvania capitulated, and organizers swarmed the highways in West Virginia where no union representative could have safely walked a year before.

This was a time, said *Fortune,* when Lewis "made a noise like the whole labor movement." It was like watching an actor who, after playing two-bit parts for three dismal decades, suddenly achieves the role he has silently imagined since childhood. It was hard to recall the despair that preceded this performance.

Industry recovered slowly from the shock of labor insurgence. As its leaders regained their balance they began to fight back. Employers found many weapons. They found them in the "merit clause" of the auto industry code, giving management the power to hire and fire arbitrarily, without regard for seniority—an open invitation to the purging of unionists. They found them in the loaded steel code, which permitted the cor-

* *Coal Dust on the Fiddle,* by George Korson.

porations to ignore the anti-trust laws and simultaneously sanctify their open-shop traditions. And despite the bituminous coal code, the operators quickly proved no more able to live together in mutually beneficial accord than in earlier times.

At the 1934 UMW convention Lewis could report that the union's membership had soared above 400,000, but evidence of coal's recurrent maladies was being heard again. The price structure tottered and in labor ranks disillusionment reappeared and spread.

Lewis turned anew to the legislature, particularly to Senator Joseph Guffey of Pennsylvania. Even before NRA was outlawed by the Supreme Court, Lewis, Guffey, and their aides were mapping a "little NRA" for coal.

The Guffey-Vinson Act that finally emerged created a National Bituminous Coal Commission, composed of five men to be designated by the President. The Commission was empowered to fix feasible prices, with a Coal Labor Board formed to mediate disputes between operators and miners. A consumers' counsel division was established to guard the public interest, and co-operative marketing agencies were authorized. The Act was passed in August. Two months later, on the eve of a momentous American Federation of Labor convention, Lewis won a new contract with a 50-cent-a-day increase. He had another breathing spell.

Much of what happened afterward was unforeseeable, unexpected. The factor of spontaneity in the events that took place does not detract from—perhaps even enhances—the genius of Lewis's generalship. Almost always he was able to overcome his own surprise, reacting as if the script had been thoroughly rehearsed. The extent of his improvisation, however, was rarely appreciated, least of all by the frantic commentators who saw in the rapidly approaching events a conscious program of Lewis-schemed revolution.

Lewis's eyes were fixed on steel. There was solid as well as sentimental ground for his preoccupation. A leading participant in the AFL's abortive drive to organize the mills in 1913, he retained a sharp remembrance of both the violence

and the futility of that engagement. The violence was the expression of corporate power, the futility a by-product of AFL's craft setup in which rival bands of men competed for the spoils of steel-worker membership. He remembered, too, the failure of the 1919 steel strike.

More immediately, Lewis saw the newly acquired prosperity of his own union steadily menaced by steel's open shop next door to the mines. The price of coal was beginning to slide downward, sections of the industry were losing money again. Many operators were contemplating refusal to sign contracts again. The operators of the South, where the union was weakest, would inaugurate a new attempt to put the UMW out of business; the Northern operators would follow the example. The first Guffey Act had expired and some of the operators were "chiseling" again. Meanwhile, "as long as Big Steel is free to tack up a sign at a single pit-head announcing a wage-cut, the United Mine Workers are in danger of becoming, as they were once before, a mere 'rear-guard of labor's retreat to cooliedom,'" *Fortune* said. In the background, too, were the so-called captive coal mines—those that produced coal for exclusive use in the manufacture of steel. Their output was not for sale in the commercial market. Virtually all of the captive mines were owned by the steel companies. While union-shop contracts (requiring every miner to hold a UMW card) had been established in the commercial mines, the steel firms had steadily resisted the spread of this provision to their own coal properties.

Like a business man who senses the insecurity of his enterprise, Lewis studied the danger signals. He had just waged one successful fight for his life. He did not want to go through that cycle again.

So on a sultry Sunday in July 1935, breakfasting with some of his aides in his Wardman Park apartment, he planned out loud. The participants (eating fried chicken and biscuits) were veteran retainers like Murray, Lauck, Warrum, and Ray Edmundson. Kathryn was present, as was John Brophy, who had edged his way back into the union in 1933 (and would

not, according to the Lewis theory of human behavior, risk his union salary again). At this session Lewis pictured masses of restive workers clamoring for unionization. Most of all he stressed the mood of the steel workers and their yearning for a union of their own. He concluded that the UMW was at last in a position to do something about it. It could be done only through industrial unionism—one organization for all steel employees.

A year before, Lewis recalled, he had laid this case before the AFL convention meeting in San Francisco. He had exacted one formal concession: the delegates directed the executive council "to issue charters for national and international unions in the automotive, cement, aluminum, and other mass-production and miscellaneous industries as in the judgment of the executive council may be necessary to meet the situation." In the ensuing months, however, the council fumbled, stalled, carefully missed each chance. Now Lewis was ready for a showdown.

In October he was in Atlantic City renewing his remand for a real offensive. Industrial unionism, he insisted, was neither a new nor a revolutionary concept. The Federation itself had conceded, as far back as 1901, that this technique might be necessary in such a "special" case as the coal mines. William Green had written in 1917 that "the organization of men by industry rather than by craft brings about a more perfect organization and closer co-operation, and tends to develop the highest form of organization." This was no alien philosophy but a tactic of self-defense that Lewis was urging. It was recognized as such by the best brains of the Federation: among them Sidney Hillman, shrewd, enlightened leader of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers; David Dubinsky, able, progressive chieftain of the International Ladies Garment Workers; Charles P. Howard of the Typographical Union and others.

But the AFL patriarchs complacently fondled their gold watches and paid heed instead to the executive council's report—full of lame excuses and pious promises. Here, obviously, was a collision between the irresistible force and the immov-

able body. Too many of the delegates shared the statesmanlike view of Daniel J. Tobin, pugnacious boss of the Teamsters, that many of the workers seeking unionization were "rubbish."

With the craft-unionists holding an 8-6 majority on the resolution committee, the battle lines were drawn. Charles P. Howard was designated to present the minority report which contained this crucial passage:

> In those industries where the work performed by a majority of the workers is of such nature that it might fall within the jurisdictional claim of more than one craft union, or no established craft union, it is declared that industrial organization is the only form that will be acceptable to the workers or adequately meet their needs.

Lewis's speeches in support of that report were impressive public papers. The rambling grandiloquence of his earlier years had now given way to more disciplined declamation. He knew what he wanted. Some of his accusations were reminiscent of attacks that had been hurled at him by rebels in the UMW only a few years before. He described the AFL's organizing efforts as "twenty-five years of unbroken failure." His voice ranged from fervent appeal to withering sarcasm:

"A year ago I was younger and naturally I had more faith in the executive council. . . . Surely delegate Woll will not hold it against me that I was so trusting at that time. I know better now. At San Francisco they seduced me with fair words. Now, of course, having learned that I was seduced, I am enraged and I am ready to rend my seducers limb from limb, including delegate Woll. In that sense, of course, I speak figuratively."

While the rulers of AFL's building trades and other valuable properties nervously stroked their paunches, Lewis acted as prosecuting attorney. He frankly set forth the basic source of his concern—the non-union steel plants.

> We [the miners] are anxious to have collective bargaining established in the steel industry, and our interest in that is, to a degree, selfish because our people know that, if the workers were organized

in the steel industry and collective bargaining there was an actuality, it would remove the incentives of the great captains of the steel industry to destroy and punish our people who work in the captive coal mines throughout the country, owned by the steel industry. . . .

The steel industry is anxious to eliminate the United Mine Workers of America from its captive mines, so that it will constantly have that buffer between the coal-mining industry and collective bargaining in the steel industry.

I know that to be true, because I have conferred with the officers of the United States Steel Corporation in relation to our contracts at their captive properties, and they frankly admit that they oppose making collective bargaining contracts in the coal-mining industry because they do not want that power to follow them . . .

He besought the Federation leaders to "heed this cry from Macedonia that comes from the hearts of men," to "organize the unorganized and in doing this make the American Federation of Labor the greatest instrument that has ever been forged to befriend the cause of humanity." If this was not done, he warned, "the enemies of labor will be encouraged and high wassail will prevail at the banquet tables of the mighty."

But the contented men from the building trades imbibed their own spirits in their Atlantic City hotel rooms, paraded the boardwalk while fresh winds caressed their cheeks, neither hearing the cry from Macedonia nor knowing where that country was located. With little awareness that the occasion might be historic, the bulk of the delegates rejected the minority report, voting their satisfaction with things as they were, as they had done at so many previous assemblages. They believed in business as usual, and business was now unusually good. The vote for the status quo was 18,204 to 10,933.

Not many hours afterward Lewis delivered the punch that heralded the split more vividly perhaps than did the raucous language of debate. The convention was listening to the application of a group of rubber workers for an industrial union

charter, when Hutcheson—massive, monosyllabic czar of the Carpenters Union—rose wearily to a point of order.

"My point," he intoned, "is that the industrial union question has been previously settled by this convention."

There ensued a series of exchanges, until the harassed William Green upheld Brother Hutcheson's point. It was, he said, well taken. Howard objected. So did Lewis, adding: "This thing of raising points of order all the time on minor delegates is rather small potatoes."

Hutcheson, his bulk equaled only by his lack of wit, retorted hotly: "I was raised on small potatoes. That is why I am so small."

This sparkling dialogue threatened to continue indefinitely, with many of the elder statesmen ready to contribute their wisdom, when the focus abruptly shifted. Lewis had spoken from the center of the floor and, returning to his seat, had paused beside Hutcheson, who was still erect.

"Pretty small stuff," Lewis commented.

"We could have made *you* small, could have kept you off the executive council, if we'd wanted to," Hutcheson growled.

Although the full record of Hutcheson's next phrase was lost to history, his use of the word "bastard" was audible. It was greeted at once by a sight unprecedented in the long years that Federation leaders had gathered: the sight of Lewis's right fist landing under Hutcheson's gaping eye. For a moment the two huge frames wrestled awkwardly while partisans of both jumped into the melee. Then others intervened to separate the principals.

It was all over quickly. Friends led Hutcheson to the washroom where he cleaned the blood-streaks from his face. Lewis, unmarred, had remained in the hall. He walked slowly to the platform where Green, blinking his eyes and wringing his hands, said: "You shouldn't have done that, John."

"He called me a foul name," Lewis replied.

"Oh, I didn't know that," said Green, man of eternal adaptability.

It is doubtful whether Lewis landed the blow in a momen-

tary loss of temper, or without suspecting its possible repercussions, or because he resented the "foul name." It was probably one of the most deliberate punches in modern pugilism; Lewis let that one fly with an eye fixed on the history books.

Adhering to protocol, Lewis graciously renominated Green for the Federation presidency as the convention drew to a close. The gesture was meaningless. For in the interim Lewis had laid the groundwork for the Committee for Industrial Organization. He had already begun recruiting lieutenants.

Delegates and observers patrolling the lobbying of the Hotel Chelsea a few nights earlier had detected a clue to Lewis's plans. Powers Hapgood, who had survived Lewis's enmity to become a widely respected organizer outside the Lewis fold, was conversing with a group of friends when Lewis entered the lobby, walked over and tapped him on the shoulder. "Let's go upstairs, Powers," he said.

Inside Lewis's suite the UMW leader told Hapgood his intentions. He was ready to start the drive on his own, welcoming anyone who would join him.

"You weren't willing to go along with the machine and it had to run over you," Lewis said reflectively. "You and Brophy had a lot of ideas, but they were premature. A general who gets ahead of his army is no use to anybody. But now I'm ready to take up some of those ideas. Let's go, Powers."

The voice was compelling. Lewis similarly invited Brophy to assume the post of director of organization. He hired many of his past foes as the campaign progressed, certain that this time they would become permanent cogs in his expanding machine.

On the day after the Atlantic City convention adjourned, Lewis was closeted for seven hours with eight other men—Murray, Kennedy, Brophy, Hillman, Howard, Dubinsky, Max Zaritsky of the Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers, and Thomas McMahon of the Textile Workers. On November 9 the CIO was officially launched, bolstered by the addition of Thomas Brown of the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers and Harvey Fremming of the Oil Field, Gas Well, and Refining Workers.

The sponsors emphasized that the committee would function inside the Federation, promoting organization of workers in the mass-production industries and affiliating them with the AFL. A fortnight later, however, Green informed the committee members of his "apprehension and deep concern" lest it became a "dual" organization. On November 23 Lewis sent a one-sentence letter to Green: "Dear Sir and Brother: Effective this date I resign as vice-president of the American Federation of Labor." To reporters Lewis elaborated his distaste for the semiannual pilgrimages of the council members: "I have neither the time nor the inclination to follow the peregrinations of the council from the Jersey beaches in the summer to the golden sands of Florida in the winter."

When the council assembled in Miami in January 1936 it was confronted by a series of proposals from CIO: requests for immediate chartering of industrial unions in auto, rubber, and radio, prompt launching of a campaign in steel. The Federation hierarchy, between dips in the Miami surf and jaunts to the nearby race-track, demanded that the CIO be "immediately dissolved," its existence being a "challenge to the supremacy of the Federation."

Afterward there were the months of maneuver, of intrigue and double-talk, climaxed by the executive council's suspension from the Federation of the unions affiliated with CIO. In the vituperation that ensued Green was no match for Lewis. The AFL president mingled righteous wrath with tearful appeals. Lewis told appreciative newspapermen: "Alas, poor Green, I knew him well. He wishes me to join him in fluttering procrastination, the while intoning *O tempora, O mores!*" When Green blustered Lewis cooed: "I fear his threats as much as I believe his promises." He pictured Green sitting "with the women under an awning on the hill-top while the steel workers in the valley struggle in the dust and agony of industrial warfare." Green might poignantly recall the encomiums which Lewis had bestowed upon him in nominating speeches at AFL conventions, but his retorts were usually belated and banal.

Following the suspension of the CIO unions, Lewis threatened to oust Green from the Miners' Union (as he later did). Green replied that his AFL standing would be unaltered since he held an honorary card in the Musicians Union. "That," said Lewis, "is appropriate. Like Nero, Green fiddles while Rome burns."

Later Green was reduced to celestial analogies as he sought to justify the Federation's course.

"The first dual movement," he told his executive council as it increased its per capita tax to wage war upon CIO, "occurred in heaven itself, a place where harmony and peace prevail. Yet a dual movement began when as a committee of one Michael the Archangel rebelled against God and His authority. The executive council in heaven did not hesitate to act. After examining the facts it expelled his Satanic majesty and his dual movement from heaven."

Developments in heaven were less relevant to the conflict than events taking place on American soil. Neither the phrases, the formulas, nor the extraordinary legal flights by which Matthew Woll, wing-collared, heavy thinker for the Federation, explained the executive council's suspension of the CIO unions were of much consequence. The future was being shaped in a thousand cities and towns where men scrambled for CIO buttons as badges of freedom.

Any time-tables prepared by the founders of CIO were subject to change without notice. The truth was that tens of thousands of workers, in an incredible diversity of industries and localities, were hell-bent for unionization, whether or not the rulers of the AFL liked it, whether or not the advance-men of CIO were on hand to sign them up. This did not mean that neither planning nor perspective was required. It meant that no engraved invitations were needed. Labor was on the march, and the true test of leadership was one's ability to channelize the fervor to avoid blunders that might wreck the procession.

Although steel was the objective that had loomed largest in Lewis's mind, once the call had been sounded for CIO the workers themselves chose many of the battlegrounds. In Feb-

ruary 1936, rubber workers in Akron broke loose. One month earlier Lewis had appeared in that city personally delivering the message of industrial unionism. Adolph Germer, whom Lewis agents had pitilessly slugged in 1932 during the inter-union war, was assigned to the territory. There was growing unrest over wage-cuts and speed-up at Goodyear Tire and Rubber, scene of several flare-ups in the previous year. This time it started with the sudden discharge of 137 workers. When the walkout began, the union had enrolled only a fraction of the plant's employees, but by the second day 10,000 of the 14,000 employed were on strike. The world's biggest rubber factory was down.

There were threats of vigilantism, injunctions granted. A freezing winter wind whipped the faces of the pickets and snow whirled through the hastily constructed shacks where the strikers clustered. From CIO headquarters came $3,000 and four additional organizers. Goodyear's management had refused to talk to the strikers; but after four weeks the talks began. On March 22 peace terms were ratified at a jubilant union meeting. The dismissed workers were reinstated, working hours in some departments were reduced, shop committees were recognized, and the CIO union was henceforth the accredited spokesman for its members. The outcome cracked the Goodyear fortress.

The post-NRA wave of strikes that preceded formation of CIO had ended almost uniformly in vague AFL settlements; only the degree of disaster varied. CIO was different, and the difference lay largely in the skill and imagination of its leadership—Lewis, Hillman, Dubinsky, Murray, and the best labor talent they were able to employ.

While workers flocked to CIO recruiting offices and staged self-made demonstrations in widely separated plants, the CIO chieftains viewed 1936 as primarily the year of planning. Decisive events would come in 1937. But the schedule was quickly altered.

The offensive in steel was formally proclaimed on June 13, 1936. After Lewis reached an understanding with the archaic

Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee was set up. Murray was named director. Among his aides were to be Julius Hochman of the Ladies Garment Workers; Leo Krzycki, veteran spellbinder of the Amalgamated; Bittner, Bill Mitch, Brophy, and "Pat" Fagan of the miners. Clinton Golden, machinist who had been serving as regional director for the National Labor Relations Board, was named director for the eastern area. Vin Sweeney, capable labor reporter for the Scripps-Howard *Pittsburgh Press,* was signed up as public relations man. Into the steel towns went 433 full-time and part-time organizers, financed by the treasury of the Mine Workers and the needle trades unions.

Eleven days after the drive was formally set in motion, the American Iron and Steel Institute, public front for the steel magnates, inserted full-page advertisements in 375 daily newspapers charging—in advance—that "coercion and intimidation" were to be the tactics of CIO and reiterating the values of the industry's own "employee representation" set-up. The ads, designed to crush the campaign before it was genuinely under way, gave SWOC a nationwide build-up scarcely warranted by its efforts to date. Lewis exploited the challenge. On July 5 Homestead steel workers gathered at the graves of the men who had died in Homestead's "battle of the barges" in 1892—the battle in which Henry C. Frick, frank and mortal foe of unionism, turned loose on striking steel workers at the Carnegie works three hundred gunmen, who with the aid of the Pennsylvania State militia finally shattered the walkout. At the grave of William Foy, one of the victims, Fagan told the Homestead workers that "we have come to renew the pledge for which you gave your life, we pledge all our efforts to bring a better life for the steel workers." The next night, over a national network, Lewis roared SWOC's answer to the Iron and Steel Institute:

The statement of the Institute is an open warning to representatives of recognized and firmly established labor unions that if by

any legal and peaceful methods—public meetings, personal solicitations or otherwise—they are so bold as to attempt to persuade steel workers to become members of recognized, standard labor unions, the brutal and ruthless forces of the steel oligarchy will be unloosed against them. From bitter experience we know what this means. It means that meetings of steel employees will be disrupted by thugs and hoodlums employed by the steel corporations; that the organizers themselves will be brutally beaten; that the police and judicial authorities of steel manufacturing communities, who are designated and dominated by the steel companies, will be used to arrest labor union organizers, to imprison them on false charges, to maltreat them cruelly while imprisoned, and in many cases forcibly to drive them from the community.

. . . I wish solemnly to warn those who represent the steel industry that their unlawful, ruthless tactics of former years will not be tolerated by our committee. This organization drive in the steel industry will be conducted in full, open gaze of the public; or, in other words, through the radio and the press, the public will be continuously informed. . . .

Let him who will, be he economic tyrant or sordid mercenary, pit his strength against this mighty upsurge of human sentiment now being crystallized in the hearts of thirty million workers who clamor for the establishment of industrial democracy and for participation in its tangible fruits. He is a mad man or a fool who believes that this river of human sentiment . . . can be dammed or impounded by the erection of arbitrary barriers of restraint.

Lewis must have felt that this at last was a contest equal to his own dimensions. He was no longer haggling with backward coal operators, exchanging epithets with querulous union critics. Now he was in combat with men he called "the omnipotent overlords of steel," the outcome would affect "the security of every man or woman who works for a living by hand or brain," the stakes were incalculable. But the supreme trial of strength did not come in steel. It came in General Motors, and it brought one of those intervals when history seemed to pause, awaiting the result of a single engagement.

General Motors, controlled by du Pont and Morgan, was a proud pillar of American anti-unionism. The La Follette Com-

mittee later revealed that from 1934 to 1936 GM spent $994,-855 for the services of private detectives who occupied much of their time shadowing union leaders, attending union gatherings, investigating employee reading habits. In 1934 its net profit was $167,000,000, and while the average General Motors worker's annual pay in 1935 was $1,150, president Alfred P. Sloan was paid $374,505. These were the revelations that made union men—these, coupled with the incessant lash of the speed-up system and the endless cycle of seasonal layoffs.

As the push in steel got under way, the ferment in auto plants increased. The auto union convention in May 1936 was dominated by the spokesmen and spirit of CIO. When Howard and other CIO officials addressed the delegates, the response was invariably tumultuous. Throughout the summer CIO heads and auto union leaders labored patiently, and by autumn there were portentous signs. Strike votes were conducted at the Chrysler-owned Dodge plants after the layoff of several prominent union members. Preparing for a showdown, Lewis sent to Detroit chunky Allan Haywood, another ex-UMW functionary now serving in the CIO drive. In mid-October, Chrysler, third biggest auto producer, yielded some tangible ground: observance of strict seniority, reinstatement of three men discharged allegedly because they claimed that a wage increase had been won by union activity, and guarantees of continuous employment.

In the autumn sharp skirmishes occurred in other plants. On November 18, 1936 a rumbling that heralded the larger conflict was heard at the Fisher Body Plant in Atlanta, Georgia. A strike began over the firing of four men who had worn union buttons to work. The CIO heads were urged to extend the walkout through the General Motors empire. They resisted the pressure, conscious that a premature move might nullify the progress already made. By December, however, the unrest could not be smothered. On the 21st Lewis telegraphed to GM's William S. Knudsen a request for collective bargaining negotiations, citing Knudsen's declaration that "collective bargaining should take place before a conference, rather than

after." The reply was that each plant manager should be approached with the union's proposals. Thereupon each local presented a contract form to the managers. They got nowhere. Now a strike was inevitable. It spread slowly, paralyzingly, from plant to plant, starting on December 28 in the vital Fisher Body unit in Cleveland. Seven thousand men struck; one thousand of them "sat down" inside the plant. The siege lasted until February 11.

There followed much wordy speculation on the origins of the "sit-down" technique—whether it was imported from Europe or derived from earlier American industrial clashes. In any case its impact on American middle-class mentality was unmistakable, and in the public mind Lewis was its author and instigator. In reality it was a phenomenon presented to him, like so many other on-the-way developments in CIO—a classic improvisation of anonymous American workers who practiced and perfected the method with growing wonder at its simple effectiveness. Often they astonished their own leaders as well as their employers. Lewis accepted the gift. A lesser leader might have turned away in fright, even at the risk of humbling his own cause. Lewis saw the vastness of the struggle and reveled in the impotent abuse to which he was subjected. Pose and parade though he did for the organs of "public opinion," he knew that in climactic moments editorials might be less powerful than the exercise of power itself. Men working at his side knew he had not planned it that way, that the blue-print had been rudely revised by the workers themselves, that he would not have chosen that time or place for the struggle. But the decision was now out of his hands. An attempt to reverse the tide might have shattered the morale of millions. So Lewis concealed his anxiety, and only his closest aides were aware of it. Publicly he gave a superb imitation of a man who had worked everything out in advance—all by himself.

Throughout the conflict Lewis's tireless, hulking shape personified the vast prize being contested for; his phrases, flavored with a sense of history, voiced the human yearning that

walked the picket lines. He lifted himself to the emotional peak of each event, his private doubts and uncertainties concealed in a continuing display of resoluteness. One writer has remarked that "when he compromises it is with reality and not with his dread of reality." Dramatizing himself, he epitomized the newly won dignity of the auto workers; his demeanor mirrored their sadness and self-confidence, and his strident pronouncements fortified their spirit.

There was a false armistice on January 15. Governor Frank Murphy had assumed the task of peacemaker and on the fifteenth his grapples with corporate consciences finally produced the semblance of a peace plan. With the union agreeing to evacuate the plants, the corporation promised to enter collective bargaining negotiations at once on the basis of a set of demands already presented. The talks were to continue at least fifteen days and in the interim General Motors would not attempt to resume operations. On Sunday morning, before the vital Fisher Body plant at Flint had been evacuated, union officials learned by chance—from a newspaper reporter —of an exchange of telegrams between Knudsen and George E. Boysen, an ex-General Motors paymaster who, early in the strike, had set up an outfit called "The Flint Alliance" as a counter-bloc to the CIO. The Alliance was a compound of "company union and citizens committee." Now Knudsen had wired Boysen assurance that the corporation would not grant sole bargaining rights to CIO, that the interests of the Alliance would be "protected," that conferences would be held simultaneously with the Alliance. The CIO heads at once accused Knudsen of violating the peace pact, pointing out that he had in effect announced a decision on one of the points ostensibly to be negotiated—union recognition. Plans for evacuation of the Flint properties were abandoned. The strikers kept their seats.

The camera fluctuated feverishly between Flint and Washington. Secretary of Labor Perkins conferred with Alfred P. Sloan and Knudsen. In Flint the strikers chanted:

In the office they got snooty,
So we started picket duty—
Now the Fisher Body shop is out on strike!

General Motors had declared its readiness for a last-ditch fight. The press joined in a jungle call for armed force to halt the "lawless" sit-down. The company turned off the heat in the Flint plant: a "freeze-out" to stop the sit-down. There were bitter outbreaks in Flint's streets as police hurled tear gas.

William Green telegraphed to Murphy and Knudsen a solemn demand that the rights of the AFL be safeguarded in any agreement. "If you are going to deal with them at all," Lewis told the Governor and the corporation official, "you will have to bargain with them. If you wish to consider them, you may of course do so. And by the way, I suggest that one of you send a cable to Haile Selassie. He probably has as many members in the General Motors plant as Mr. Green. He has as much right to representation." Little more was heard about Mr. Green.

Murphy, hounded and harassed and frustrated in all his mediation moves, sought to stave off a deadly showdown. National Guard officers were coldly discussing methods of clearing the plants: one school of thought favored shooting the strikers out, another recommended pouring vomiting gas through the ventilating system. Finally GM obtained a court order setting three o'clock on February 3 as the deadline for the exodus; those who remained would be subject to imprisonment and a fine of $15,000,000—the value of the property. There was, moreover, the implicit threat that the court's ruling would be enforced by troops if the strikers held their ground.

The day before the deadline Lewis rode to Washington's Union Station in his Cadillac. Setting out for Detroit, where a blood-bath was momentarily anticipated, he delivered his celebrated farewell to Washington newspapermen: "Let there be no moaning at the bar when I put out to sea." In Flint the strikers remaining grimly in Fisher wired Murphy their verdict:

Unarmed as we are, the introduction of the militia, sheriffs or police with murderous weapons will mean a blood-bath of unarmed workers. . . . We have decided to stay in the plant. We have no illusions about the sacrifices which this decision will entail. We fully expect that if a violent effort is made to oust us many of us will be killed, and we take this means of making it known to our wives, to our children, to the people of the State of Michigan and the country, that if this result follows from the attempt to eject us, you are the one who must be held responsible for our deaths.

As the war of nerves neared its breaking-point, Lewis and Murphy were reported to have had a face-to-face discussion of the prospect of violence. It was subsequently related that Murphy told Lewis that the plants would have to be cleared at any cost before further negotiations could occur. Lewis is supposed to have replied reflectively:

"All right. You've got the National Guard. Try to get the men out of the plants. What kind of bayonets do you think they'll use? You know if they use the flat sharp kind they can push them in a long way, but they can't twist them. On the other hand, if they use the square kind they can twist them around and make a big hole, but they can't push them in so far."

The deadline slipped by. Overnight Murphy had persuaded Knudsen to confer again with Lewis; simultaneously he instructed the Flint authorities to take no action. "Flint's day of fear ended in hilarious, nervous joy for the strikers," Edward Levinson reported.

Possibly Lewis's stand reflected a morbid readiness to gamble with the human life crouching in the Flint plant; some leaders might have wavered and fled when the approach of troops was reportedly only a matter of hours. To those who charged him with cold-bloodedness, Lewis could simply retort that the welfare of millions hinged on the risk and that—at worst—some men might have to perish so that others could live in peace. There were plenty of historical precedents for this reasoning.

Anyway the worst hour was past. On February 11 the strike ended in an agreement unparalleled in the anti-union auto

industry. At the behest of President Roosevelt, Knudsen had consented to renew negotiations.

General Motors agreed to negotiate exclusively with the CIO for the next six months in the seventeen plants shut by the strike, unless Governor Murphy waived the restriction; strikers were to be re-employed without reference to union activity; union members would henceforth be allowed to talk unionism during lunch-hours and rest period; injunctions against the Flint sit-downers would be dropped; and conferences were to begin immediately on a signed contract embodying other issues.

In the immediate aftermath of the strike there was considerable controversy over the extent of the CIO triumph. Some literal-minded observers held that little had been gained for so great an expenditure of human and financial resources.

An editorial in *The New York Times* reflected that "the dominant fact which emerges from the automobile strike settlement is that Mr. Lewis has failed to establish his union as the 'sole' bargaining agency . . ." *Time* deduced that "on the basis of the agreement Mr. Lewis has been badly beaten." Lewis summed up without flourishes: "The situation boils down to this: seven weeks ago General Motors would not deal with or recognize a labor union—it never had, and it had publicly proclaimed that it would not do so in the future. Now, after seven weeks, it has made a contract that is entirely satisfactory and that paves the way for an adjusted relationship in the industry that is rational and constructive." Lewis noted that "part of the terms of settlement provides that members may wear their union insignia," adding slyly: "Previously men had been discharged for doing so, and this made for confusion." Asked if a strike impended in steel, Lewis replied: "I abhor strikes, as you know."

What most commentators overlooked was the far-reaching psychological impact of the settlement. GM workers had not only broken the reign of fear that had so long impeded the efforts of organizers—they had forced the corporate power of du Pont and Morgan to make peace with them. A five per

cent wage increase was abruptly announced by General Motors. The way had been pointed for other workers confronted by less formidable antagonists.

On the day of the settlement Lewis bowed to fatigue and grippe. He lay on a hotel bed, smoking a forbidden cigar. It was the eve of his 57th birthday. Some cynical observers hinted that his illness was part of the script he had written. He must have felt, as the telegrams of congratulation streamed into his room, that the time to dance a jig was near.

Then national interest swung back suddenly to steel. General Motors had held out for forty-two explosive days. In contrast, the tilt with "Big Steel" was to seem like a gentle parlor-game. It had begun in December when Lewis and Myron C. Taylor, chairman of U. S. Steel's Board of Directors, started informal talks in Taylor's Fifth Avenue home—talks periodically resumed in Washington's Mayflower Hotel. Lewis directed his appeals at Taylor's reason, insisting that CIO would ultimately prevail and that the only real alternatives were agreement without civil war or a protracted, costly struggle. The two men, who had known each other from the time of NRA, interrupted their conversations during the General Motors strike, but the intermission was temporary. At least one major factor, moreover, was said to have transformed their meetings from academic bull-sessions in December to practical business in late February. U. S. Steel was confronted by the fundamental fact that the SWOC had signed up a majority of the employees of Carnegie-Illinois and other corporation units.

The progress of the talks was an amazingly well-kept secret at the time. Murray was at Lewis's side during most of the conferences, and Taylor was known to be in consultation with Thomas W. Lamont and Edward R. Stettinius. Society-page interpretations of the incident have stressed the favorable impression which Lewis made on Mrs. Taylor. Lewis had other weapons. The Wagner Act was now national law, no matter how delayed its application; the Walsh-Healey Act denied armament contracts to firms which failed to conform to rigid

labor provisions. The national and political climate was favorable, too. In Pennsylvania, where much of the conflict would be waged if U. S. Steel decided to resist, UMW's Kennedy was now lieutenant governor, and Governor Earle himself had pledged that strikers would be guaranteed their civil rights. The La Follette committee was threatening to investigate the corporation's espionage system. Pressing for an amicable settlement while fostering the relationship between Lewis and Taylor was Tom Moses, president of the H. C. Frick Coal and Coke Company, one of the biggest of the "captive" mines. Moses, an ex-miner himself, had known Lewis long, respected and trusted him as "a man you can do business with." There was also the prospect of huge war orders as the armament budgets soared; but production was menaced by the troubled state of labor relations.

Out of these fears and pressures emerged the spectacular announcement of March 2: the leaders of U. S. Steel and of SWOC were jointly affixing their signatures to a contract. A thirty-six-year tradition, fixed when the corporation decreed in 1901 that "we are unalterably opposed to any extension of union labor," was at an end. Lives had been lost and homes ruined in unsuccessful attempts to reach this goal; now it had been attained without even a procession of pickets—a stunning blow to gloomy prophets who had forecast that SWOC's clash with "Big Steel" would provoke the most savage battle in American labor history.

The contract, like the General Motors agreement, was not a complete victory. Once again, however, the concessions were sufficient to serve SWOC's immediate purposes and to provide new momentum for CIO. U. S. Steel recognized SWOC as spokesman for its members and granted a general wage increase, boosting the minimum wage to five dollars a day. It also established a forty-hour week, with time-and-a-half for overtime; and it created grievance machinery. While the corporation retained the right to bargain with other unions, the fact of the agreement insured SWOC's growth and supremacy. Company unionism collapsed. The independent steel firms,

getting advance word of the terms, had hastily instituted similar revisions in wage and working conditions to cushion the blow. But SWOC's prestige was greatly augmented by these transparent gestures.

The *Times* was less disparaging than it had been after the GM accord:

> In addition to raising wages, one of the leading companies signed last night an agreement with the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, which is part of Mr. Lewis's CIO. The decision to take this step was doubtless motivated in large part by a desire to safeguard the present forward movement of business. . . . It is of course a significant fact that an important company in the steel industry has for the first time entered into an agreement of this kind. . . . Mr. Lewis's organization has made an entry into the ranks of the steel industry. But it has done so by abandoning . . . its demand for the closed shop.

Lewis graciously hailed the "farseeing vision and industrial statesmanship of Myron C. Taylor," adding without reticence: "Over a period of seven months in New York and Washington Mr. Taylor and I have engaged in conversations and negotiations. We were each conscious of the great weight of responsibility and the far-reaching consequences attached to our decisions. Labor, industry, and the nation will be the beneficiaries."

Despite the build-up of Taylor and other romantic storybook versions of the Lewis-Taylor man-to-man negotiations, the shrewdest post-mortem seemed to be that Thomas W. Lamont had primarily shaped U. S. Steel's conduct. Some muckraking spirits even suggested that the Taylor-Lewis tête-à-têtes had merely occupied the interval in which Lamont made up his own mind—and then Taylor's. Lamont, it was suggested, was chiefly impressed by CIO strength as revealed in the General Motors strike and by the increase in British rearmament orders; the time for statesmanship was at hand. So Lamont and Taylor framed the "Taylor formula" of industrial relations which, one writer noted, was equivalent to "what the average high-school boy calls union recognition." And

Lewis was enabled to observe privately: "I like Myron Taylor—he speaks my language."

* * *

CIO's membership rolls bulged as 1937 passed. There were more learned exchanges over the legal validity of the sit-down strike; Leon Green, liberal Dean of Northwestern Law School, was among the minority who defended the tactic, insisting that "occupation in good faith and peacefully of a plant . . . awaiting the adjustment of differences growing out of the industrial relation is but an incident of the industrial relation and in no sense unlawful." Labor attorneys asserted that "the worker's right to his job" was the dominant consideration, and that he could protect this right against imported strike-breakers only by remaining at his post. Senator Wagner told his colleagues that "the organized and calculated and cold-blooded sit-down against Federal law has come, as always, not from the common people but from the vested interests." Heedless of the debate, employees sat down in mounting numbers. From September 1936 through May 1937, 487,711 workers were directly involved in such demonstrations.* Lewis neither fomented nor frowned upon most of the exhibitions. His attitude was expressed in the CIO *News:* if employers bargained collectively and obeyed the law, CIO would abide by the letter of its contracts. "The CIO," he said, "stands for punctilious observance of its contracts, but we are not losing any sleep about strikes where employers refuse to recognize the well-defined principles of collective bargaining. A CIO contract is adequate protection for any employer against sit-downs, lie-downs, or any other kind of strikes."

While the statistics of sit-downs stirred noisy indignation, the arithmetic of CIO's expansion was probably more noteworthy historically. In December 1935, its affiliates represented fewer than 1,000,000 workers. By March 1937 the figure had risen to 1,804,000, and in September Lewis professed to speak for 3,718,000. Only one serious defeat marred that year.

* Edward Levinson, *Labor on the March.*

It was administered by Tom M. Girdler, tough, cynical, and embittered over "Big Steel's" capitulation.

With the SWOC cockily sweeping into the towns run by "Little Steel," Girdler, czar of Republic, and other "Little Steel" barons mobilized their armies. Girdler had been associated with the Rockefeller Fuel and Iron Company at the time of the Ludlow Massacre in 1914. Now he was ready for another bid for immortality. He got it. His name was indissolubly linked with the "Memorial Day Massacre"—year, 1937. Unable to secure collective bargaining negotiations, late in May SWOC had called its members out of the mills of Republic, Youngstown Sheet and Tube, Inland Steel, and Bethlehem's plant at Johnstown. On Memorial Day there was a union parade outside the Republic mill in Chicago. Ten participants were mowed down and killed by police.

Liberal journals protested, motion pictures of the event showed that no violence by the strikers had provoked this assault, and the La Follette committee went to work. It had plenty of work that summer; later it told the whole story of Little Steel's war against unionism in long, heavily annotated volumes. But in the streets of steel towns Girdlerism pushed back the CIO. An invincible coalition of force, propaganda, and terrorism crushed the union.

Serious though the defeat was, it halted neither the SWOC nor the CIO. The loss of momentum in the CIO campaign was not immediately apparent. At the year's end the steel workers union had 510,000 members, second only in size to the UMW itself. And throughout the nation, men and women still awoke and sang the ballads of the CIO. New York taxi drivers and Southern textile workers, Woolworth counter-girls and Westinghouse employees, sophisticated newspapermen and illiterate tenant farmers, underpaid stenographers and undernourished shoe workers, seamen and shipyard workers, longshoremen and beauty-parlor workers—thousands in all these groups and others streamed into the ranks of CIO. In two years the appearance of the nation was irrevocably changed. It might have happened earlier if the AFL's leaders had been willing to

set their faces to the future; it probably would have happened later even if Lewis had not forced the issue. But the memorable fact is that it did happen, in an amazingly brief time, with convulsions that appeared much more ominous at the time than they do in retrospect.

There have been eternal quibbles over the degree to which Lewis was indispensable to the eventual triumph of industrial unionism. From the moment that NIRA gave him a reprieve from obscurity, through the long campaigns of CIO, he rose impressively to each occasion. He grasped opportunities that others might have missed. His personality imparted to the movement much of its emotional fire and grandeur. His poetry lifted the CIO from the prosaic terms of another union drive to the level of a great crusade. It was his name that workers scrawled on the walls of corporate tyrannies, his rhetoric that transformed drab caucuses into revival meetings.

But CIO was no one-man product. Scores of organizers carried the daily burden of organization, performed the tiresome routines, ran the mimeograph machines, wrote the leaflets, went through the essential but unglamorous business of putting unions together. Their names rarely got into print, unless they were victims of violence, and Lewis seldom posed for the cameras at their side. Philip Murray, Sidney Hillman, and many other top lieutenants undertook the laborious assignments and directed vital campaigns, with Lewis often arriving only in time for the triumphant finale.

Admittedly, CIO was the creation of many anonymous men, of industrial pressures, of forces that might not have been indefinitely suppressed. But Lewis was its founding father, its emotional symbol, its commander-in-chief. And nearly all of the rollicking recruits who signed CIO cards identified the movement with the name and person of John L. Lewis. So did Mr. Lewis.

6

CIO

II. Blind Giant

IN THE political cartoons of the CIO era Lewis was invariably pictured as leader of the assault on the citadels of capitalism. His melancholy image often invaded the sleep of sober citizens, and in the dream he was the personification of violent social change, a raging bull in the china shop of established society. Nervous residents of the Union League club would have spared themselves much anguish if they had troubled to study the evolution of Lewis's ideas. They would have found that any resemblance between his thinking and the doctrines of Karl Marx was rare and accidental. As his talents of leadership neared fulfillment, the horizon of his thought remained clear and definable. In the stormiest phases of CIO's advance he clung to the values of the competitive capitalist civilization in which he had been reared. And when the great campaign was over he was once again to kneel at the shrines of Adam Smith, Herbert Hoover, and Charles Darwin. He had traversed enormous ground as a political figure and as leader of labor. Yet much of his thinking had remained remarkably static.

At the outset of NRA Lewis was seemingly prepared to renounce the rigid orthodoxy of laissez-faire; his instinct for self-preservation had overridden the classic faith. Yet the conversion was no deep religious affair, and he never was entirely comfortable about the new doctrines. In December 1935,

Selden Rodman published this interview with Lewis in *Common Sense:*

Rodman: You don't agree now about the "free play of natural economic law"?

Lewis (a bit defensively): Well, I still more or less agree with that.

Rodman: But, Mr. Lewis, how about the NRA and the Guffey bill which you support—are they putting straitjackets on the supply of industrial energy?

Lewis (pondering a moment): When natural economic law doesn't operate in hard times for the best interests of industry and the public, then [he looks slyly from under those massive brows], then perhaps the time comes for a bit of regulation.

This sort of coy concession nourished the belief that Lewis of the CIO was first and fundamentally an opportunist, keeping a wet finger aloft to determine the wind's direction.

In the same interview he vehemently rejected the class struggle analysis of world history in general and of America in particular:

I'm not interested in classes. . . . Far be it from me to foster inferiority complexes among the workers by trying to make them think they belong to some special, rigid class. That has happened in Europe but it hasn't happened here yet. Of course it's true, as you say, that there is no longer equality of opportunity in this country, and it is conceivable that if this dangerous state of affairs is allowed to continue there will not only be "class-consciousness" but revolution as well. But it can be avoided. The employers aren't doing much to avoid it. But the United Mine Workers are doing everything in their power to make the system work.

Earlier the same year Lewis, explaining his advocacy of the Guffey coal bill, told Louis Stark:

"Labor does not want to undertake management's task. It does not want to run anybody's business. . . . Labor does not ask for a place on the directorate of business corporations. . . . Labor does ask for and demand a voice in the determination of those policies that affect the human element in industry.

. . . It wants a place at the council table when decisions are made that affect the amount of food that the family of a worker may eat, the extent of the education of his children, the kind and amount of clothing they shall wear, the few pleasures they may enjoy. . . ."

There was nothing conspicuously original or profound in these comments. They were essentially a variation on the familiar middle-of-the-road theme: businessmen should join hands with organized labor to bolster the established economic order.

To the succession of interviewers who ascended to his office in 1936 and 1937 what Lewis had to say was chiefly an elaboration of these simple homilies. He invoked the catchwords "industrial democracy," much as "natural law" had been the pet phrase of an earlier decade. Yet as Lewis expounded his conception of "industrial democracy" it was neither a ferocious nor a comprehensive creed; Girdler's periodic public readings of the Lewis mind produced far more sinister schemes than Lewis himself seemed capable of furnishing.

"The aim of our movement," Lewis informed a representative of the *Atlantic Monthly*, "is to organize the workers in order that they may obtain a large participation in the benefits of modern industry. They have a legal right to organize but this right has remained academic. . . . I am not blind to the fact that such a movement has other consequences. Its by-product is political, in the sense that through their organization the workers of America will acquire a greater participation in the government of this country. What we want to create is an industrial democracy."

Dorothy Thompson asked: "What does Mr. Lewis mean by Industrial Democracy, and what medium does he envisage through which labor may act politically?" Lewis did not favor her with a detailed answer. To S. J. Wolfe of *The New York Times* he said in March 1937:

"I think most people have come to realize that we cannot progress industrially without real co-operation between workers and management, and this can only be brought about by

equality in strength and bargaining power of labor and management."

In another monologue with Louis Stark later that year, when the CIO's strength was nearing its peak, Lewis declared:

"Increased interest and participation by labor in the affairs of government should make for economic and political stability in the future. Labor has a constitutional and statutory right to participate."

In inaugurating the steel drive in the summer of 1936 Lewis had bitterly condemned "an economic dictatorship" which "is focusing its efforts upon retaining the old system of finance-capitalism which was in operation before the depression and thus preventing the attainment of political and industrial democracy in America." These were strong words, yet they had many militant precedents in American oratory. The unanswered question remained: What was Lewis's long-term program? Organization of the unorganized would, he said, restore the balance in economic alignments, labor would presumably be able to check the unbridled sway of big industry, and in destroying the feudalism of company towns labor would acquire a new voice in shaping the nation's political affairs. Though all this might be indisputable, it was inescapably short-range. It was not an integrated social philosophy, nor was it commensurate with the proportions of the movement itself. There was no hint in these platitudinous declarations that he visualized any essential change in the character of unions themselves or in the organization of the nation's social structure.

What now seems one of the shrewdest commentaries on Lewis published in this period was written by Louis Adamic in *Forum* in March 1937. Adamic had joined the pilgrimage to the shrine, listening at length to Lewis, asking pointed questions, but refusing to accept melodic syllables for answers. Bluntly Adamic asked Lewis what he was after. Like a well-worn phonograph record Lewis "talked pontifically of industrial democracy—labor organized so as to face capital equally and to assume responsibility in industrial management." He

spoke for a "controlled" capitalism. Adamic was unimpressed. Lewis's thinking, he concluded, was palpably "limited." He had "no philosophy" and no "esthetic sense," and his mind was "heavily cluttered by the past." The writer sounded the warning that if Lewis's power grows faster than his philosophy, he would lead a kind of "labor fascism whose principal achievement will be saving capitalism from itself and pushing the American people deeper into a life based on . . . narrow materialistic and quantitative concepts." *Fortune,* steadily realistic analyst of Lewis's development, had reached a strikingly similar appraisal of the great gaps in his outlook:

"This period represents no conversion. . . . To make an industrial union or a group of them you need not a set of social objectives so much as a flexible tongue, a ready opportunism and a pitiless hand."

In December 1937, Edward Levinson was writing *Labor on the March.* Levinson's book was keenly appreciative of the influence exerted by Lewis in the new awakening of American labor. It was written at a time when Lewis had aroused the highest hopes of liberal Americans who visualized labor as the spark-plug of a broadening New Deal. Yet Levinson uneasily detected the unfinished sentences and the vacant spaces in Lewis's reflections on the future:

> Toward the end of the year [1937] unemployment started to mount again. Neither complete security of work nor adequacy of income had been obtained, although labor's position was immeasurably stronger than it had been before the CIO appeared. The constant menace to the gains of the CIO absorbed Lewis's attention but still he did not put forth any program for basic organization of the economic process.*

Addressing the CIO convention in October at Atlantic City, Lewis declared that "one of the great principles for which labor in America must stand in the future is the right of every man and woman to have a job." He added that "if the corporations which control American industry fail to provide them

* Edward Levinson, *Labor on the March.*

with that job, then there must be some power somewhere in this land of ours that will go over and above and beyond those corporations, with all their influence and power, and provide a job and insure the right to live for that American."

Nowhere in these passages, Levinson noted, did Lewis indicate "the power somewhere in this land of ours that will . . . provide a job and secure the right to live for every American." Similarly, Levinson observed, Lewis failed "to indicate what the program of that power would be." Levinson nevertheless refused to be unduly pessimistic about Lewis's omissions: "Pragmatist that he is, Lewis's program for the future will depend to a great extent on how far he is forced to go to win security for labor." With similar faith and charity most other liberals and laborites accepted the short-run elements in Lewis's manifestoes. After all, they could plausibly contend, he was still engaged in nationwide industrial war. Although the CIO had gained major triumphs and assurance of survival there were still many fronts on which the conflict continued. Why require Lewis to set down his blue-print for the distant peace while the shooting was still on? Moreover, had he not supported the President's plan for Supreme Court reform, indicating his awareness of the larger social crises which the nation had yet to confront? With such comforting thoughts as these the doubts were dispelled.

Not until many more months had passed were there painful indications that Lewis's intellectual adventures had come to a dead end, that his preoccupations had become increasingly political (in terms of collective-bargaining with the Democratic Party), that the "industrial democracy" he had proclaimed would not be redefined and amplified. By 1938 his dissertations on these matters had a stale flavor. He repeated his own truisms and looked contemptuously at those who asked for more. To each new danger or dilemma the answer was inevitable: more unions, more union members and free collective bargaining would banish the enemy. In one of his first and few declarations on the Nazi advance abroad he said: "If the fate of Germany is to be averted by this nation, we

must and we shall secure a strong, well-organized, disciplined, and articulate labor movement."

Meanwhile he cloaked his vagueness in verbosity. Asked to prophesy the CIO's course, he told C. L. Sulzberger in 1937:

"I think I know some of the things that a powerful labor movement will do. The virtue of some of them will be questioned by many who enjoy special privileges. It would be unwisdom to paint a picture that would only alarm our adversaries of tomorrow. Neither can I bond the purity of motive or the administrative rectitude of the labor movement of the future." *

Yet while the expansion of unionism was to solve all insolubles (perhaps by setting in motion again the free play of economic law) Lewis modified none of his tenets about the nature of the trade union. The philosophy of business endured. Discussing the campaign to organize Ford, Lewis cited the immense financial advantages which had accrued to members of the UMW as a result of their union affiliation. Unionization, he told Louis Stark, "has cut the hours in the mines from fourteen hours to seven and raised wages from $1.80 to $5.50 in four years. They got those benefits and a grievance committee to handle problems that could not have been handled before by paying $1 a month. For an investment of $12 a year the miner gets a dividend that is higher than he could get anywhere else."

The inflexibility of Lewis's unionism was being demonstrated inside the UMW even while he was delivering his boldest challenges to the "stuffed shirts" of the AFL. With the UMW back on its feet and unionism generally striding ahead, Lewis faced growing demands for elimination of the UMW "provisionalism" that caricatured his democratic pretensions. At the 1936 Mine Workers' convention pleas for relaxation of the dictatorship were strongly voiced. Lewis turned them aside with a singular exhibition of double-talk:

"It is not a fundamental principle [provisionalism] that the convention is discussing. It is a question of business expediency

* *Sit Down with John L. Lewis,* by C. L. Sulzberger.

and administrative policy as affecting certain geographical areas of the organization. It is a question of whether you desire your organization to be the most effective instrumentality within the realm of possibility for a labor organization, or whether you prefer to sacrifice the efficiency of your organization in some respect for a little more academic freedom in the selection of some local representatives in a number of districts."

Blandly insisting that the UMW "is the most democratic organization that I know of," Lewis then expounded a quaint view of the democratic system. It seemed to boil down to the notion that only quibblers would see a distinction between the appointment and the election of officers: "I am pointing out that the mere fact that a man is elected to office under our form of representation does not make him any more pure in his mind or capable in his judgment or efficient in his administration or honorable in character than if he was elected by the International executive board or the president of the International union. At least you have one recourse if a man who is elected by the international president . . . turns out to be untrue to his obligations. . . . You can always hold the international president responsible for it.

"What do you want? Do you want an efficient organization or do you want merely a political instrumentality?"

Once again Lewis maintained that provisionalism was a "temporary arrangement" and that boundless opportunities for "young men" within the union would soon be opened. But he warned that any precipitate action would imperil the UMW "when there is a continuing crisis in the coal industry."

So two more years elapsed, and in 1938, when the delegates reassembled, provisionalism again was under fire. And once more Lewis, apostle of "industrial democracy" in between conventions, produced the tedious rationalizations. Again there were promises that the way would be cleared for new leaders to rise from the ranks, on some bright but undesignated day in the future. Meanwhile provisionalism was preserved, the Lewis appointees grew older and more content in office, and

replacements would occur only if someone "got out of line" or died after long years of service, in which case an obituary was published in the *United Mine Workers Journal.*

"Provisionalism" had been defended as a desperate measure to unify the union in a time of economic distress and organizational disorder. In reality it was the lifetime Lewis method. Some Lewis apologists have contended that more polite procedures would have opened the gates to anarchy, leaving the coal miners defenseless against the onslaughts of the operators. Others have cited the blood-and-thunder background of the coal fields as impelling reason for ruthlessness in the Lewis-made structure. Yet even as a temporary expedient to maintain internal solidarity in time of industry-wide chaos the technique had failed; the union faltered and shrank. And when the sun lit up the mining camps in the Roosevelt revival, when the historic anti-unionism of the coal operators was curbed, there was no relaxation of the internal autocracy. "Provisionalism" remained intact.

After all the years of conquest, analysis of the little-publicized UMW financial records recently revealed that 71 per cent of the membership, located in twenty of the 31 UMW districts, were still living under the rule of "provisional" officers designated by Lewis. In only eleven districts, comprising only 123,926 dues-paying members, were district officers subject to election; 311,764 members retained no such liberty of choice. Of the twenty UMW districts denied the right to elect their own leaders, only five were permitted to vote for their own representatives on the executive board; the other fifteen lacked even this minimum control over the officialdom. The same report revealed other anomalies: Ora Gasaway, then president of District 50, was listed on the executive board a representative of District 8—a district with a membership of less than 500. On the other hand, the union's largest district—West Virginia No. 17—had no spokesman on the executive board for its 83,000 members, and its officers were Lewis appointees.

Of his aides Lewis demanded unquestioning loyalty and adulation. They might call him "Jack"; he might joke with

them and inquire about their children, lend them money when they were in difficulty, forgive them small sins or minor aberrations (like going off on a drunk); but at no time could they pretend to full partnership in the shaping of decisions and the running of the show. The household of the UMW came to resemble a glorified company union under the most paternalistic of bosses.

Much of that atmosphere was imparted to the CIO and to Labor's Non-Partisan League, the CIO's political auxiliary, in Lewis's regime. One night during that period Lewis was sitting in the lobby of a hotel with his wife and a young CIO official. When he found he had no cigars the aide went to purchase them. Lewis handed him a dollar. Returning, the young man offered Lewis the change. "Oh, keep it," Lewis said grandly.

Lewis, one of his current associates declares, "helps a fellow even if he's done him dirt, and he's very charitable about little mistakes. But I'll admit that once he makes up his mind to do something, he wants to get it done."

Into CIO he naturally brought with him many of his veteran subordinates in the Miners Union, placing them in strategic posts. This was both logical and fruitful in the organizing drive, for they were experienced troops. CIO appointees were required to accept the same code as Mine Worker officials. They were his hirelings, paid for specific contributions that they might render, not fellow-soldiers in a twentieth-century crusade. When signs of a split in CIO developed, he frequently invoked the dollar-sign as a threat and a moral. After the resignation of Eli Oliver from Labor's Non-Partisan League as a result of Lewis's anti-Roosevelt moves, Lewis acted quickly to challenge the incipient revolt. In swift succession he called in the League's employees, including stenographers, and demanded pledges of loyalty or resignations.

"I expect anyone who takes my money to be loyal to me," he told one of them.

On the morning of the 1940 day when Lewis delivered his radio address endorsing Wendell Willkie, August Scholle, CIO

regional director in Michigan, got a long-distance call from Washington. It was "Denny" Lewis breaking the news that Lewis was about to bless the GOP nominee. Scholle was "instructed" by "Denny" to prepare a wire of congratulations to Lewis for public use. Other CIO functionaries received similar calls. Some of them, like Scholle, refused to comply; many went along. The order was a characteristic Lewis decree, embodying his familiar assumption that men on his payroll had no right to read his edicts before registering their enthusiasm.

The great democratic insurgence of which he was leader had not given him any new reverence for democratic ideas; in his own union and in CIO the atmosphere of one-man rule remained. Still, the achievements were so enormous that few men were disposed to question how it was done; even some of those who had been most skeptical about him were reluctant to retain any doubts. Occasionally they felt a momentary fear, as on an evening in 1937 which Lewis spent with the Soviet ambassador and several CIO aides, during the period of his alliance with the Communists. Throughout the evening Lewis displayed what seemed like a morbid fascination for the mechanics of dictatorship. He wanted to know how Stalin handled all the details of politics and life, even how he conducted relationships with women. The patent routines of dictatorship were not repugnant to Lewis. He seemed to want all the data on an experiment much bigger than his own. Afterward, two of those present drove home together, asking each other whether they had heard Lewis correctly, uneasily agreeing that they had.

In the same period there were renewed efforts to interest Lewis in union education. Kathryn was impressed by these proposals. Lewis listened abstractedly, like a man with weightier things on his mind. And nothing was done. The leader of the most modern labor upsurge would adopt no "new-fangled concepts" in running his own business.

His ideas on such matters were not greatly different from what they had been two decades earlier. Life in the mining towns pursues its ancient patterns. With the immense influence

he commanded after the CIO's arrival, Lewis still undertook no major efforts to brighten the desolate landscape of the camps. There were no big drives for new housing projects, no cultural activities, no group health plans. In sentimental platform orations Lewis may depict the emptiness of the miners' lives, but he accepted none of the expedients which other unions have devised to enrich the setting of industrial life.

"Intellectual radicals," John Chamberlain wrote, "have often wondered why Lewis, out of his capacious eight-million dollar Mine Workers treasury, hasn't put co-operative stores and special miners' schools into every coal patch. . . . But Lewis believes in what he calls a 'tight, mobile union, with its funds in the bank and subject to check.' His argument runs this way: when unions tie up their funds in banking operations, real estate, co-operative stores, insurance companies, schools, summer camps, and amateur theatricals, they may be caught short in a depression period, which is just the time when they need their money to support action on the economic bargaining front."

So the bleak monotony of the mining towns was to be unrelieved by any deviations from the "practical" business-unionism of the most backward labor organizations.

Lewis had, it seemed, reached an intellectual impasse as the CIO became firmly established. Having embraced the slogan of "industrial democracy," his mental meanderings came to a halt. He was a very busy citizen, and he felt no urge to peer into the mists ahead. When in 1940 he was finally constrained to indicate the latest findings of his intellectual quest, he restated his admiration for Herbert Hoover.

Meanwhile, he was fabulously famous.

* * *

If Lewis's thinking remained astonishingly static during the CIO hubbub, his self-esteem soared and expanded. Few other Americans were given so much cause for believing in their own divinity. There was an uninterrupted flow of criticism and denunciation, there were praise and love. Each added to an

already excessive conceit, inflating an ego that was of no normal proportions before the uproar began.

Seated in his office in Washington's Tower Building, before moving to more impressive headquarters, Lewis confided to an assistant: "Remember, you're in the center—the world will come to this office." Neither of them laughed.

The world never arrived, but politicians, journalists, soothsayers of every sort made the pilgrimage to see the great, unsmiling Buddha. The indefatigable researchers of Time, Inc., serious-minded Vassar graduates with noses for infinite detail, stormed the Lewis headquarters. Emissaries of *Life* and *Fortune* clustered around in such droves that Lewis once said sourly that he felt like an employee of Henry Luce; but he was not displeased.

Even Westbrook Pegler called to see what manner of man he had been assailing in his column. Admitting later that he was momentarily "taken in" by the CIO leader, Pegler publicly berated himself for his innocence. Boake Carter, who had been delivering radio hymns of hate against Lewis, took the suggestion of youthful CIO secretary James B. Carey that he talk things over with Lewis. Long ago aware that his physical bulk was an invaluable asset in making smaller men quiver, Lewis seemed now almost to stand on his toes. (Actually, though he is just short of six feet, it is not his height that is impressive; it is the total, brooding bulk.) As the flash-bulbs popped he retained the fierce frown—it was intrinsic to the moody make-up which he applied before leaving the dressing-room of private life. Pictures of him smiling became collector's items, so unique as to be almost unrecognizable. One of his associates during that period confessed that Lewis evoked physical fear as well as idolatry in those around him. His demeanor was rarely impromptu.

The world stared and Lewis betrayed no self-consciousness. When he entered a restaurant every head turned, following his progress like spectators along a line of triumphal march. As soon as he was seated waiters began to bring envelopes or menus or bits of paper from people at other tables; they

wanted his autograph, perhaps to put into albums alongside Shirley Temple's. Waiters grasped his hand, unfurled their union buttons, gave thanks to their deliverer. Priests, politicians, and career-men-about-town padded over to introduce themselves, were granted brief, amiable audiences. Of course there were those who dreaded and damned him, yet their ineffectual rage merely augmented the build-up. "When I told some of my friends that I had seen John Lewis," a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* said, "they jumped as if I had announced that I had interviewed the devil himself." To be alternately considered Satan and God was not unflattering. The same writer described Lewis's bearing at a dinner party:

> The first time I saw John L. Lewis was at a dinner given just before the elections in honor of Miss Frances Perkins. John L. Lewis sat at the speakers' table, and although his mere aspect would have been enough, it was more his attitude of total detachment verging on solemn boredom that attracted attention. In the optimistic and radiant atmosphere that prevailed at this banquet . . . Lewis struck a note of silent pessimism which was positively ominous. He was singular and menacing, like a thundercloud at the end of a perfect day. . . . The next time I saw him was to interview him for my paper and this time, frankly, I liked him. . . . The word 'charm' does not seem to fit, and yet I can think of no other; John Lewis has charm, and plenty of it.*

Lewis floridly fumed against Mr. Moneybags, to the delight of the left-wing cartoonists. Yet in his social life, his conduct of the union, and his economic fetishes he aped the prevailing manners and morals of the upper classes. In 1936 his salary as president of the UMW had been increased to $25,000, and his expense accounts were commensurate with his position. "The miners," he explained, "pay me to live well and eat well. I would live well no matter what occupation I chose to pursue." A large limousine with a liveried chauffeur would arrive early at the Lewis front door to transport him to the CIO battlefronts. As his enterprises prospered he fashioned a lavish refuge on the sixth floor of the Mine Workers Building. Mem-

* John L. Lewis," by Raoul de Roussy de Sales, *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1937.

bers of a selected guest list who reached that height would find an enormous reception room, with an ornate chandelier for decoration, made of mine picks and shovels. There were three bedrooms, a dining-room, a completely equipped kitchen, and other modern conveniences. Lewis never concealed his belief that, to paraphrase Heywood Broun, nothing is too good for the leaders of the proletariat. Apparently confident that the miners get some vicarious pleasure out of his familiarity with the ways of wealth, he still naively flaunts his acquisitions. All are parts of the same portrait: union leader as successful man of business.

While anti-CIO outcries shook the editorial columns, he cavorted at select Washington gatherings whose hostesses found him a definite dinner-party asset. At their tables, meeting his "adversaries" from the other side of the railroad tracks, he reveled in the recognition. To Lewis all this may have offered dramatic compensation for the inequalities of childhood and youth, when he rode the coaches and "they" rode in Pullmans, when he lounged in dreary overnight hotels and "they" dressed for dinner. His demeanor in upper-class circles was deferential, charming, properly subdued, as if to show that he could walk with Kings without betraying the common touch.

Welcomed by Washington society, he encountered less hospitality in Alexandria. The coldness of the elder inhabitants was not always thinly veiled. There his severest critic was Mrs. Fleming Holland, who had been on the same boat with him returning from Europe in 1934 and had refused to sit at the captain's table because Lewis was present. In 1937, when the annual tour of Alexandria's historic houses was to take place, Mrs. Holland declared that she would not open her doors if the Lewis home was exhibited. "Although aristocracy may have suppressed the lower classes at one time, now the pendulum has swung the other way and labor is attempting to crush the capitalists of the country and trying to develop class hatred," she said, in unknowing affirmation of Lewis's pendulum theory. As a result of this crisis the annual tour was post-

poned. Later, when the Lewises moved into an even more historic site, another crisis threatened. Lewis bowed, withdrawing his house from the exhibit.

There were other rebuffs. Mrs. Lewis had sought admission to the fashionable Garden Club. A preliminary survey of its members, however, indicated that her application would be firmly rejected. She did not press the matter. A few more tolerant Alexandria matrons defied the taboo and exchanged visits with the Lewises. They found an elaborately furnished house, filled with antiques and carpeted with Persian rugs—the dwelling of an established, sedate citizen, removed an infinite distance from the gray huts of the company town. It was the reward of Lewis's strivings, the tangible product of an American success story. If the occupants of neighboring homes remained aloof, Washington was just across the bridge; chauffeur and Cadillac spanned the distance. In New York he stopped at the swank St. Regis. Occasionally, in the triumphant years, there were large receptions at the Lewises' where the baron of labor strutted, and Mrs. Lewis tried unhappily to sweep from circle to circle.

Many of his critics have cited Lewis's emulation of the wealthy as the proof of his insincerity. Yet his conduct should not have occasioned shock or horror. He had entered the business of labor-leading and, in terms of the prevailing values of his time, he had made good. In a commercial civilization he had built a flourishing enterprise of his own and launched a vast new empire called CIO.

Yet it would be an oversimplification to regard money as the single driving force. Lewis wanted the trappings of success, as wealthy men know them, but he would have been a far less interesting figure if this had been his sole motive. He might have gone over to the operators' payroll at an early age, as other UMW officials had done, and drawn a salary commensurate with his ability. He wanted all the toys of opulence because they were the criteria by which a man's progress is measured; but he could not be content with those things alone. Fame was as necessary as fortune—not fame as visualized by

a Debs, by the architect of some future co-operative commonwealth, but a significant place in the competitive here-and-now. As one of his critics observed, Lewis believes in collecting power, not selling it.

* * *

Meanwhile, in the letter columns of a Detroit newspaper, a worker wrote sarcastically:

> Boy, oh, boy, do I hate this man John L. Lewis and the CIO! Couple of months ago they organized the factory where I work and made everybody join the union. We used to get 60 cents an hour, but after the agreement was signed our new rate was 70 cents an hour with time and a half for Saturdays and Sundays. My raise amounted to 80 cents a day or $16 a month, and out of that I must pay $1 a month in dues. Do I hate this man John L. Lewis and his dirty CIO!

On occasions when he had nothing to say, Lewis's silence was interpreted as communion with loftier spirits; if he seemed to miss a point, it was presumed that he had done so deliberately. The malapropisms that had sometimes marred his florid speech in earlier years were now rare and unnoticed. He had learned to keep quiet and to exploit his own reticence.

There were big mass meetings, too, and the behavior of the crowds strengthened his suspicion of immortality. When he walked into Madison Square Garden in 1937 to address an anti-Nazi meeting sponsored by the American Jewish Congress, a blinding floodlight was thrown on him. The throng roared and some women wept. Probably nowhere outside of the Sportpalast in Berlin could a similarly ecstatic fervor have been witnessed. The stamping and the shouting continued for fifteen minutes, 20,000 people joining in the hysteria. Lewis stood there seeming to give each of the worshipers a gentle, understanding glance. With companions after the meeting Lewis seemed warm and mellow, like a man who had been drinking soft liqueurs.

To Lewis it must have appeared that the river of human adulation that he had unleashed could never dry up. On the

walls of countless workingmen's homes his picture hung beside that of the Virgin Mary, and each new public appearance was the signal for a great outpouring of devotion. On Labor Day in 1937 he went to Pittsburgh to address what was perhaps the largest labor assemblage ever held—the press estimated that more than 200,000 steel workers and their families had congregated to listen to the liberator. It may be that it was at this meeting that he reached the pinnacle of his power, the grand climax of his glory. It is said that at this point his hallucinations of grandeur began seriously to impair his judgment, that he was now to pay the price for having lost all perspective in viewing himself and the movement he led.

His conduct in the AFL-CIO "unity" negotiations that began soon afterward—on October 25, 1937—is cited as symptomatic. Initiative for the meetings had come from CIO and Administration officials who were warily observing the growth of middle-class anti-union sentiment amid the spreading of labor's fratricidal war. On CIO's side Dubinsky was known to believe that the time for reunion was at hand, that the CIO had largely fulfilled the purposes for which it was created. Hillman was carefully weighing the future. In some other sections of the CIO leadership there was at least a disposition to consider the claim that unity was imperative. As the conference started Father Haas, the White House's labor peace agent, outlined a proposal for creation within the AFL of a "CIO Department" embracing all its affiliates. The CIO implemented this plan with the demand that the Federation agree that industrial unionism was "normal and necessary in the mass-production, public-utility, marine, and basic fabricating industries." The AFL constitution was also to be amended to bar suspension of any international unions except by two-thirds vote of the convention.

Headed by Woll, who increasingly resembled in dress and manner a walking delegate from labor's past, the AFL committee rejected these terms. It contended that such a department would merely revive jurisdictional strife without correcting its causes. After a long interval, however, the AFL com-

mittee finally produced its own recipe for reunion. It said in effect that the twelve unions which had originally deserted AFL need not return (as the Federation had previously demanded) until all issues affecting the new unions had been resolved by committees representing both organizations. When this *modus vivendi* had been formulated to mutual satisfaction, the new membership of the CIO would be welcomed back to the Federation simultaneously with the twelve former AFL unions.

"When such matters of readmission have been settled," the Federation stated, "we will recommend that our constitution be changed as the CIO suggests. We will also specify trade areas where the industrial form of organization shall entirely prevail."

In his account of "labor's civil war" Herbert Harris later maintained that "the significance of these concessions can hardly be overestimated." * The CIO had three basic demands: adoption of industrial union practices in specified areas, the lifting of suspensions by the Executive Council, and the curtailing of its power to revoke charters. All these were virtually conceded by the AFL, which in turn clung to its own single basic demand: the abolition of the CIO as a separate entity.

Moreover, whatever haggling might yet ensue, CIO was in a position where its strength inside a reunited labor movement could not be denied. AFL had claimed only 2,500,000 members at its 1937 convention, whereas CIO boasted more than 3,700,000 as the new conferences started. There were, in addition, important AFL affiliates responsive to CIO's influence—the Brewery Workers, the Hatters, the Typographers. Conceivably the CIO, by returning to the Federation, could have swiftly become the dominant element in a united labor body. At least further exploration of the AFL bid seemed warranted. Nevertheless the conference blew up early in December. There were turbulent charges and counter-charges, and the precise facts are still hidden. The CIO maintained that the AFL com-

* *Labor's Civil War,* by Herbert Harris.

mittee was reluctant to put its proposition in writing and that it lacked authority to execute an agreement. Challenging this assertion, many laborites, including some inside CIO, blamed Lewis for the sudden collapse and with Harris concluded that he had "missed the opportunity of a lifetime." They deduced that he was simply unwilling to merge his identity while he still saw new triumphs ahead.

At no time afterward was CIO able to approach peace talks with the AFL in so commanding a position. By 1938 recession had set in, thousands of CIO members lost their jobs, and CIO's income declined. Internal wrangling, in which controversy over the Communists figured prominently, slowly damped the idealistic ardor of CIO's infancy. When the temporary committee was transformed into the Congress of Industrial Organizations in October 1938, Dubinsky's ILGWU was no longer present. By 1939, when "unity" conferences were again resumed at President Roosevelt's prompting, the AFL had at last captured some of the dividends of the decade of unionization. Its membership was over 4,000,000; and while CIO revealed no fatal signs of decay its period of unlimited expansion was over. Lewis might propose, as he did, that AFL, CIO, and the Independent Railroad Brotherhoods dissolve at once and merge into a single "Congress of Labor" under the presidency of an "executive type" like A. F. Whitney. While there was dramatic simplicity in the idea, Lewis must have known that it was impossible of fulfillment with the existing generation of labor leaders.

The AFL, its self-confidence restored by its rising income, monotonously demanded that the CIO show its records of dues-paying membership. Lewis had lost the initiative.

There are few heroes in the long, disastrous story of labor disunity—though Hillman and Dubinsky might claim that they were most alive to the dangers—and it is easier in retrospect than it was at the time to chart the course of wisdom. Nevertheless, as Lewis scrutinizes the past, he may well regard his role in the 1937 negotiations as a grave blunder. In a reunited movement he might have spared himself the repudiations he

met later in CIO, and he might have dominated the Federation for an indefinite period, shifting his alliances to suit his fancies. Admittedly the AFL leaders had not learned all their lessons by 1937. Neither, however, had Lewis—least of all the lessons of humility and of cold self-appraisal.

As if dazed and deluded by the bouquets cast in his path, he reached out for larger laurels. Perhaps only a handful of men could have reacted differently to the floodlights and the flowers. To Lewis these were the realization of destiny. Few things now seemed beyond his grasp. He had deceived himself, and most of those around him helped to embroider the fantasy. Certain of his invincibility, he went to war against Franklin D. Roosevelt.

7

LEWIS AND ROOSEVELT, INC.

THERE are dramatic contrasts between Franklin D. Roosevelt and John L. Lewis, and also ironic resemblances. One is well-born, Groton-Harvard educated, achieving in later years an authentic kinship as well as sympathy with the underprivileged; the other, with a coal miner's heritage, has finally hoisted himself to the tables of the patricians. One has confronted and overcome the torment of physical disability; the other glories in his brawn, leaping over desks to display his physical virtuosity. One is smiling and debonair when he faces a crowd (or a camera), the other pouts and glowers. One, an aristocrat, strives for common simplicity of speech; the other flaunts his set of Shakespeare. One is casual and unceremonious, the other studied and sententious even in private dialogues.

Nevertheless similarities in background and character are strong. Both men, even during the doldrums, liked to pose for posterity. Both are self-confident and, in varying degrees, arrogant. Both are willful, proud, tough-minded. Both believe themselves artful timers and strategists. Both are intrigued by the techniques of warfare. Both are fundamentally wedded to the existing economic order. Both ponder the precepts of *realpolitik*, scorning dreamers and perfectionists. Perhaps most important, both emerged in large roles at the same tubulent moment and, lacking blue-prints of ultimate goals, have often been forced to grope their way through uncharted territory. Each has insisted that the other has lost the way. Despite the eventual parting, their names have been affectionately linked

in the imagination of millions for the better part of a decade. Even after they separated, some men refused to recognize the split. The coal miners harbor their twin-allegiance, and some reactionaries continue to apportion their hatred between the two.

The initial alliance was created under pressure of events, soon after the 1932 election. Researchers and commentators have subsequently argued interminably over who saved whom. Was it Roosevelt who, by accepting NIRA, gave governmental escort to the UMW organizers and enabled Lewis to save his union? Was it Lewis who tenaciously forced Section 7-A upon a doubting, indecisive Roosevelt, thereby establishing a labor bloc on which the President could rely in subsequent conflicts? Conrad said that "vanity plays lurid tricks with memory," and in recent months Lewis has steadfastly disparaged Roosevelt's role. He is fond of telling interviewers that the President was weak and equivocal, resolute only under the Lewis lash. He maintains retroactively that he perceived Roosevelt's limitations at the start of the honeymoon, and knew that the partnership was temporary.

He told Dale Kramer in 1942 that "he [Lewis] wrote labor's protective 7-A, put it through Congress against the President's wishes, and singlehandedly obtained its enforcement while he conducted the organizational drive which brought back the membership and replenished the treasury. In all subsequent controversies between capital and labor, Lewis declared, the President 'equivocated.'" In January 1944, the *United Mine Workers Journal* officially retracted any tributes which Lewis had earlier paid to Roosevelt for the social reforms of the 1930's, insisting that it all would have happened the same way even it the President hadn't been around. "All of the social and control legislation which was enacted during the first years of the 'New Deal' would have resulted in time, out of necessity, for the very sound reason that it represented needed reforms long overdue." Moreover, the *Journal* confessed, Lewis had known as far back as 1937 that the New Deal was dead, but he had pretended to be a Roosevelt sympathizer because

"the Administration had three and one-half more years in office" and "the prudent thing to do was for labor to play its hand out and get along the best it could for the rest of the second term."

This belated analysis ignores many conflicting episodes. It is no more convincing than latter-day left-wing attempts to rewrite CIO history with Lewis relegated to obscurity. Perhaps the truest judgment of the relative Roosevelt and Lewis contributions to labor's revival was intuitively rendered by the coal miners themselves, singing of the restoration of UMW in 1933:

Give part of the praise to John L. Lewis,
*And the rest to Franklin D.**

If it was an accident that Roosevelt and Lewis ripened as leaders during the same period, it was no accident that their paths crossed. For both were measured by their ability to confront the anarchy of 1932, to restore some order in the competitive chaos, to check the suicidal corporate "individualism" that had produced the panic. Roosevelt needed Lewis's strength to co-ordinate the confused discontent of the propertyless as a counterweight against the pressures of business. Lewis could not have built a labor empire without the benevolent neutrality and overt encouragement of the White House. They were drawn together not by any common vision of the Promised Land, but by common peril. If Roosevelt had been forced to rely on the flabby minds and stodgy spirits of the AFL craft unionists, he would have had puny resources with which to wage the New Deal struggle. If Lewis had faced a hostile, upper-class-conscious administration exclusively responsive to the voices of property, CIO might have been crushed in the pattern of "Little Steel."

So the two men were, in a sense, thrown upon each other's mercy, and their collaboration evoked terror among believers in the old order. This was the "unholy alliance," dedicated (so conservatives said) to the overthrow of the profit system. The

* *Coal Dust on the Fiddle,* by George Korson.

earnest, genuine disclaimers by both men of any such intentions were treated as part of the plot.

Neither lost his identity in the combination. It was no Damon and Pythias affair, no one-for-all-and-all-for-one comradeship. Perhaps neither man was capable of such abdication. In 1933 word had raced through the mining camps that "John L. Lewis was having beer and sauerkraut with President Roosevelt every night, and to hell with the company guards." In December 1935 Lewis was telling an interviewer:

"Labor has gained more under President Roosevelt than under any president in memory. Obviously it is the duty of labor to support Roosevelt 100 per cent in the next election." *

As 1936 neared, there was every indication that the partnership was indissoluble.

At the same time, however, Lewis indicated that he was already looking beyond the 1936 political horizon: "This is not to say that the time will not come when labor may find it absolutely necessary to put a ticket of its own in the field. At the present time to talk about it is futile. Why? Because as long as the workers in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, don't dare vote against the dictates of the American Steel and Iron Tin Plate Company, how can they organize an independent political movement? First and foremost, the unorganized workers in the basic industries of this country must be organized along industrial lines."

To the supporters of CIO, to many liberals who remembered the La Follette-Wheeler enterprise of 1924, all this seemed like sensible and reassuring talk, in no way inconsistent with laudations of Roosevelt. The Democratic Party was beset with obvious internal contradictions, and a Third Party, despite all the precedents of failure, was still a recurrent progressive dream. Meanwhile, Lewis took the vows of constancy to Roosevelt. In 1936 the CIO, through Labor's Non-Partisan League, presented its $500,000 present to the Democratic war-chest. Of Alf M. Landon, Lewis said derisively: "This little man out at Topeka, Kansas, has no more conception of what ails Amer-

* *Common Sense,* January 1936.

ica or what to do about it than a goatherder in the hills of Bulgaria." When Lewis challenged the American Iron and Steel Institute's advertising campaign, he freely invoked Roosevelt's name:

"No greater truth, of present-day significance, was ever stated by a president of the United States than the declaration made by Franklin Roosevelt . . . to the effect that America was really ruled by an economic dictatorship which must be eliminated before the democratic and economic welfare of all classes of our people can be fully realized."

The 1936 landslide followed. A Lewis aide, discussing that election several years afterward, says Lewis was disturbed by the size of the plurality, that he would have preferred a closer contest which would have emphasized Roosevelt's dependence upon labor. More probably what Lewis wanted was a demonstration of Roosevelt's dependence upon Lewis. What happened—although Lewis may not have fully perceived it at the time—revealed the magnetic hold which the President independently exerted upon the great mass of American unionists. They read the pro-Landon press, listened to Republican propaganda, scanned the *Literary Digest* prophecies, and voted for Roosevelt. Lewis's later conduct indicates that, as far as the labor vote is concerned, he woefully minimized the degree to which it was personally captured by Roosevelt, rather than forwarded in bulk by the CIO leader.

In the tumult of the 1937 labor battles the first harsh words were spoken. While the Flint auto strikers held the fort and mediators commuted between Detroit and Washington, Lewis bluntly told newspapermen that the CIO demanded its pound of flesh for its gift to Roosevelt's campaign fund. His demand, whether morally justified or not, was couched in crude market language:

". . . for six months the economic royalists represented by General Motors contributed their money and used their energy to drive this administration out of power. The administration asked labor for help and labor gave it. The same economic royalists now have their fangs in labor. The workers of this

country expect the administration to help the workers in every legal way and to support the workers in General Motors plants."

At his press conference the next day the President delivered a blow to the strikers' hopes in an oblique but unmistakable rebuke to Lewis. A few days later, however, when Alfred P. Sloan refused to meet with Miss Perkins and Lewis for peace sessions, the President rapped Sloan's knuckles, restoring some of the balance. The tension in Lewis-Roosevelt relations seemed momentary, and settlement of the strike postponed any final reckonings.

In May, Lewis warmly endorsed the President's Supreme Court reorganization plan, declaring:

"In the past we have had confidence in the President, and that confidence has been justified by his unceasing devotion to the cause of the people of the United States. We have confidence in him now. . . . I need not recount to you the history of the Supreme Court during the last four years. One after another, in slow and deadly procession, it has struck down those acts which were designed by the President and Congress to alleviate the frightful economic and social misery of the people."

The "Little Steel" strike produced a more ominous exchange. The CIO's steel union was fighting for its life in the citadels controlled by Tom Girdler and Eugene Grace. The newspaper cliché—"violence flared"—was being tiresomely tortured, as the anti-union counter-offensive brought upheaval and death. The strikers were not Gandhiists and their actions did not faithfully comply with Marquess of Queensberry rules. Nevertheless, as the La Follette Committee hearings revealed, most of the initiative for violence and most of the atmosphere of terror was provided—without regard for expense—by the steel companies. In this setting, as blood soiled the streets of steeltowns, the President delivered his celebrated condemnation of the opposing armies: "A plague o' both your houses!"

The statement disheartened many of Roosevelt's followers, brought grief to the picket lines, criticism from the liberal

journals. It might have been one thing to lament the fury of the conflict; it was another to blame both sides without apparent distinction between cause and effect. In the moments after Roosevelt spoke his line, Lewis sulked and raged.

"Which house, Hearst or du Pont?" he commented privately to newspapermen, undoubtedly aware that they would not observe the confidence.

Roosevelt, possibly regretful at the rejoicing which his words had brought to some of his oldest critics, characteristically seeking to "even up" the damage, amended his remarks a few days later. A "spokesman" for the White House explained that the "plague" referred on the one hand to those who refused to bargain collectively with labor, and on the other to those who practiced violence. Presumably this exempted Lewis and responsible CIO officials. Nevertheless labor took the view that those who would not negotiate and those who had unleashed the violence belonged to the same house: Girdlerism. The President's declaration was regarded as unfriendly and gratuitous.

In July, Lewis, publishing a statement of CIO aims in the *New York Daily News,* referred to Roosevelt as the "champion of industrial democracy." But through the summer months, as SWOC fell back in "Little Steel," Lewis brooded over the Roosevelt rebuff, possibly blaming much of the setback on the White House stand.

He was scheduled to go on the radio on Labor Day. Some CIO officials urged him to be discreet in any references to the controversy. They argued that the CIO's prestige would be gravely impaired by any formal rift. Despite the President's harshness, they pointed out, his past blessings upon unionization efforts were still valuable assets. While Lewis, ignoring this counsel, prepared an address containing an angry thrust at the White House, an invitation to confer with the President arrived. Then the President postponed the appointment, avowedly because of other urgent business, until after the date set for Lewis's radio address. The CIO president had to decide whether to soften his indictment, pending the opportunity to

talk things over, or proceed with his original manuscript. He chose the latter course. Recalling the workers who had perished in the "Little Steel" strike and the scores who had been wounded, he recited this passage:

"Labor, like Israel, has many sorrows. Its women weep for their fallen and they lament for the future of the children of the race. It ill behooves one who has supped at labor's table and who has been sheltered in labor's house to curse with equal fervor and fine impartiality both labor and its adversaries when they become locked in deadly embrace."

Now the winds of rumor began to blow more violently. Lewis, however, nonchalantly called at the White House and conversed with the President shortly afterward. Lewis reported that they had had a "pleasant" talk. Early in 1938 Lewis once again paid tribute to Roosevelt; addressing the miners' convention he said that FDR was "the only President in our lifetime who has tried to give a square deal to the common people of this country." The delegates, who refused to take seriously the possibility of a split, lustily cheered this declaration. Many locals had submitted third term resolutions. In lauding the President, Lewis was articulating the deepest feelings of his union membership. It is doubtful whether, at this point, he could have done otherwise.

Still the rumors persisted. In March, when Senator Joseph Guffey, Lewis's close legislative ally and faithful White House tub-thumper, took pains to deny that there was any real threat of estrangement, the denial seemed only to stir new whisperings. At about the same time Lewis was privately complaining to C. L. Sulzberger, one of his admiring biographers, that Roosevelt was "getting nowhere fast" and was "out-Hoovering Hoover" (an ambiguous epithet in the light of Lewis's past and future estimates of Hoover). "America is moving in economic reverse," he lamented in a radio broadcast.

In May, Lewis was again seen passing through the White House gates and there were new flutterings of hope among those who feared an irrevocable break. The meetings, however, were apparently formless and fruitless; the participants

shadow-boxed. They were distrustful of each other; neither was endowed with excessive candor. Lewis began privately to refer to the conversations as "chit-chats," to express irritation and impatience when a White House summons arrived. On one occasion, when a presidential secretary informed him that Roosevelt wanted to see him, Lewis replied petulantly that he was about to leave for Illinois to visit his mother, and that if the President simply had another "chit-chat" in mind he would prefer to postpone it until his return. There are probably few instances in which a presidential invitation has encountered this sort of response.

The discourtesies grew more flagrant. Lewis was requested to participate in the 1938 celebration of the President's Birthday Ball Committee (whose proceeds went to aid paralysis victims). To Keith Morgan, chairman of the committee, he replied belligerently:

"Regret that I cannot accept membership on your committee this year. I am fully occupied in trying to get consideration and work relief and money for the millions now unemployed in labor's ranks."

Up till now the differences, in so far as there were coherent issues, had revolved around domestic problems. In crudest terms Lewis was saying that labor was not getting its money's worth out of Roosevelt. The investment of the 1936 campaign was not paying dividends, and mounting unemployment was jeopardizing the CIO's structure. In the General Motors and Little Steel crises Lewis implied a simple sell-out: labor's president had refused to come to labor's rescue. There were, as I have said, many who shared Lewis's resentment. Yet whatever the President's shortcomings from labor's viewpoint his conduct had to be evaluated on a wide, complex political canvas. As CIO president leading bold assaults on open-shop strongholds, Lewis could temporarily ignore the battalions of "public opinion"; as President of the United States, Roosevelt was caught in the crossfire of rival economic blocs. Lewis might legitimately decry the deeds of corporate tyranny and denounce John Nance Garner as "a whisky-drinking, poker-

playing, evil old man"; but the sour-visaged Garner, denouncing the sit-down strikes and intriguing with the New Deal's enemies, was a constant reminder to Roosevelt of the anti-labor passions that swept a large section of the people. It is not improbable that Roosevelt would have doomed himself politically by open alignment with the sit-down strikers, whether he sympathized with them or not. One wonders whether Lewis, flushed with organizing triumphs, appreciated the vast areas of American life in which CIO was anathema and his own name virtual incitement to riot. In a nation whose predominant psychology was middle-class, Girdler's "right to work" demagogy had more than a handful of adherents, and many of them did not belong to exclusive clubs. In a temporary crisis Lewis might casually damn the public. The President had to deny himself that luxury.

In retrospect, Roosevelt's ability to maintain relative neutrality during the wave of sit-downs seems more notable than his failure to give public testimonials to the strikers. He diverted much of the wrath of press and citizenry to himself; his apparent "equivocation" lulled some of the shrill demands for armed intervention against the "lawless mobs." Newspapers and industrialists may have exaggerated the extent of popular alarm over the sit-downs and the later series of CIO strikes. Yet much of the anti-labor sentiment was undoubtedly real, and its latent fury was manifested at the polls in later contests.

As the strike chart dwindled and unemployment became the CIO's acutest headache in 1938, the tenor of Lewis's dissatisfaction with the President changed. He blamed Roosevelt and the Administration for the onset of the "recession" and for dawdling over recovery steps. His case for bolder measures was not unconvincing; yet once again there were factors he overlooked. There was the grave defeat the President had suffered in 1937 (despite labor support) on the Supreme Court plan, and in the autumn of 1938 his unsuccessful attempt to "purge" conservative legislators at the polls. Forebodings of greater political reversals were plentiful. Moreover, Lewis of-

fered no comprehensive economic remedy beyond pump-priming:

"I have no panacea for sharing the wealth. I want an increased purchasing power. I want an increased purchasing power so that everyone can buy that car and everyone may benefit; so that Mr. Sloan can make a million dollars instead of half a million: That's all right if he puts it into circulation—although he does appear to take unfair advantage of the worker along the assembly line who only makes a thousand dollars." *

Meanwhile, the President and other Administration officials were applying increased pressure on Lewis for the realization of labor unity. With war threatening in Europe, anti-union legislation being widely enacted here, and the political trend swinging to the right, New Deal strategists were increasingly distressed by labor's internal clashes. Piqued by the persistence of the White House emissaries, disavowing any personal responsibility for the continued split, Lewis sat down for the futile 1939 negotiations.

Germany's attack on Poland changed the whole character of the Roosevelt-Lewis controversy. Debates over domestic policy receded into the background, and the issue of isolationism versus interventionism took precedence in the nation's consciousness. The same issue became the great divide between Roosevelt and Lewis, hastening the final separation.

In October 1939 the CIO convention, with Lewis still at the helm, and with the Communists, converted by the Nazi-Soviet pact, seeing the new light of isolationism, adopted an anti-war manifesto: "Labor wants no war nor any part of it, and while countries in Europe are engaged in their barbaric orgies of conquest and aggression as they have been doing for centuries, it must ever be the purpose of the United States to remain out of these wars." As a concession to the followers of Sidney Hillman and to others who believed that the Nazi threat was not entirely a product of Roosevelt's imagination, the delegates also pledged "to defend our country and our free institutions against foreign invasion."

* *Sit Down with John L. Lewis,* by C. L. Sulzberger.

In January, on the eve of the UMW's Golden Jubilee Convention, Lewis called again at the White House. He emerged without comment. He journeyed to Columbus where the UMW delegates had gathered in festive mood, many of them bearing third-term resolutions from their locals, unaware and uninformed (as usual) of their leader's plans. Lewis was not in holiday spirit. To a startled, apprehensive assemblage he recited his full bill of complaints against the Administration. On the one hand he charged that "in the last three years labor has not been given representation in the Cabinet, nor in the administrative or policy-making agencies of the Government." He referred disparagingly to the "casual, occasional interviews which are granted its [labor's] leaders," asserting that labor had no other "point of contact with the Democratic administration" than these intermittent bull-sessions. He denounced the "unrestrained baiting and defaming of labor" by Democrats in Congress. Then the bombshell: "Should the Democratic National Committee be coerced or dragooned into renominating him [Roosevelt], I am convinced . . . his candidacy would result in ignominious defeat."

Having interred Roosevelt, he hauled out the candidate of his own choosing: Burton K. Wheeler. There were many ironies in the spectacle. In 1924, when Wheeler was La Follette's running-mate and a favorite son of most progressives, Lewis had spurned his candidacy. Now Wheeler had achieved new renown among conservatives as a result of his triumphant fight against the President's Supreme Court plan and his "constitutional" objections to a third term. Lewis and Wheeler joined in detecting "dictatorship" in the third-term talk (and the third-term resolutions brought to Columbus by UMW locals were pigeonholed without ceremony). Finally, perhaps most important, there was the bond of isolationism to unite them in hostility to the President. Lewis reiterated his stand against involvement; Wheeler seconded these emotions.

In February 1940, after the delegates to an American Youth Congress meeting had gathered on the rain-soaked White House lawn to listen sullenly to the President, Lewis addressed

them in Constitution Hall. Delivering another *"J'accuse"* against Roosevelt, he indicated that he might be ready to join hands in promoting a third-party venture. In April he dropped the same hint in his West Virginia speech. But June found him in Philadelphia, voicing a breathless apologia for Herbert Hoover.

This was an extraordinary pronouncement. In it Lewis produced a new version of modern history, according to which the nation was on the brink of prosperity when Roosevelt replaced Hoover in 1932, and had failed to achieve permanent economic stability because Roosevelt neglected to pursue Hoover's policies. He denied that Hoover was responsible for depression, or that Roosevelt had led us out of it.

"Mr. Roosevelt made depression and unemployment a chronic fact in American life," Lewis lamented. "It was a slogan of the 1932 Presidential election that Herbert Hoover was responsible for that depression. As a simple matter of justice let me say here and now that the workers of the United States realize that he had nothing whatever to do with it. It was laid on his doorstep when he came to the White House.

"It is only the self-seeking politicians that blame Mr. Hoover. The policies he pursued in co-operation with other nations had a powerful effect in the start at recovery in 1932. The New Deal did not fulfill their promises or complete their undertakings; it was their policies and their weaknesses which have kept this country in depression for seven more years." *

It is an oversimplification to label Lewis an unreconstructed Republican and to let it go at that. His instinctive Hooverism is significant as an index of his limitations, rather than as a record of party regularity. When he berated Roosevelt for allegedly failing to fulfill the promise of the New Deal, he did not set out on his own to cross new economic and social frontiers. He returned nostalgically to the comfortable, conventional Hoover household, with its unbroken faith in a self-starting, self-propelling, self-regulating economy.

In his Philadelphia appearance he also told members of the

* *The New York Times,* June 19, 1940.

Republican platform committee that the President's compulsory military service plan was "a fantastic suggestion from a mind in full intellectual retreat." Unmindful of his 1936 observation that Alf M. Landon's knowledge of America rivaled that of a Bulgarian goatherd, Lewis registered agreement with goatherd Landon's view that compulsory training was "an attempt to regiment the youth of this country into labor battalions." *The New York Times* said that Lewis's taunts against Roosevelt threw the GOP committee members "into a high pitch of excitement." Reiterating the CIO's opposition to war, Lewis declared that "the greatest menace to America are the shrunken bellies of this country who don't have enough to eat."

When Willkie was nominated Lewis went into a summer sulk. Administration politicos, striving for a reconciliation, hoped at least to prevent Lewis from endorsing Willkie. As autumn came it appeared that the latter purpose would be accomplished. Lewis was expected to invite a plague on both houses.

Not until the closing stages of the Willkie campaign, when newspapers reported a rumble of last-minute Willkie sentiment and Willkie advisers wistfully heard the same noises, did Lewis finally stir. He announced that he would deliver a nationwide radio speech on the night of October 25. It was to be carried by all three national networks, at an estimated cost of $65,000. The contents of the address were kept as impenetrable a secret as the identity of the financial sponsor. The dramatic build-up for the performance was brilliant. Not even top CIO officials were informed of what he would say, though the CIO's future might be shaped by the address. He was elusive when questioned, often answering in parables. Shrewder associates, however, finally deduced the worst from the trend of Lewis's unfinished remarks. He intimated that neutrality in the contest might not be enough, that what was required was an affirmative indication of labor's restiveness under the Democratic leadership.

A day before the broadcast President Roosevelt signed the

Neely mine-safety bill for which the UMW had aggressively lobbied. The gesture was variously interpreted as the belated blowing of a kiss at Lewis and as an effort to drive a wedge between Lewis and the miners. By the time Lewis took the air he had assured himself a radio audience of tremendous size. His listeners heard him say:

"I think the re-election of President Roosevelt for a third term would be a national evil of the first magnitude. He no longer hears the cries of the people. I think that the election of Mr. Wendell Willkie is imperative in relation to the country's needs. I commend him to the men and women of labor . . . as one who will capably and zealously protect their rights, increase their privileges and restore their happiness.

"It is obvious that President Roosevelt will not be re-elected for a third term unless he has the overwhelming support of the men and women of labor. If he is, therefore, re-elected, it will mean that the members of the Congress of Industrial Organizations have rejected my advice and recommendation. I will accept the result as being the equivalent of a vote of no confidence and will retire as president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations at its convention in November."

Lewis had delivered the sermon at his own political funeral.

* * *

Such, roughly, is the chronicle of the friendship and the separation. But it leaves many puzzling questions entirely unanswered about the collapse of the relationship and the transformation of Lewis into a rabid member of the hate-Roosevelt clubs.

As in many personality-struggles waged against a background of great events, there are not always clear rights and wrongs in the Lewis-Roosevelt cleavage. Certain characteristics of the two men, as has been remarked already, made it hard for either to get along with the other. The deterioration of their alliance may have been due as much to their similarities of temperament as to their dissimilarities. Both have

prima-donna foibles that accentuated the seriousness of each successive disagreement.

Lewis's official case against the President's handling of labor matters had many backers. Inadequacy of labor representation in government has remained a recurrent complaint among both AFL and CIO leaders. Creation of multiple and often overlapping agencies, gradual discarding of the Department of Labor, and lack of centralized authority in the administration of wartime labor affairs still plague the President. Similarly, during the 1938 economic reversal, Lewis's clamor for a large-scale public works program and other government expenditures reflected the thinking of most liberal economists and analysts. All of these were criticisms from the Left, symptoms of weariness with the middle-of-the-road being traversed. Yet apart from the political realities that encumbered the President and the limitations of the program that Lewis fostered, the salient fact is that Lewis looked to the Right for leadership when he deserted Roosevelt. If his essential dissatisfaction with the President grew out of White House timidity and conservatism, how can Lewis's reversion to Hoover in 1940 be explained? What of the 1940 Lewis discovery that it was Hoover who led the nation out of darkness before his retirement in 1932 and Roosevelt who banished the ensuing sunlight? How can one reconcile Lewis's lamentations over the inadequacy of New Deal planning with his re-embracing of the apostle of planlessness and "free enterprise"?

Lewis's defection could not be ascribed simply to the halfway habits of the Administration. More difficult to evaluate is the extent to which foreign policy was a vital breaking-point. Was it simply a club to wield against Roosevelt, or was it a primary motivation of the split? During most of his lifetime Lewis's rhetoric had stopped at the water's edge; in all his convention speeches, newspaper interviews, and private essays he had never revealed any extensive preoccupation with the world beyond America.

Newly appointed UMW statistician in 1917, he supported the First World War in the fashion of nearly all the leaders of

labor, and the UMW proudly recruited its contributions in men and materials to victory. At the 1919 AFL convention Lewis voted with the UMW delegation to approve the covenant of the League of Nations, but did not speak on the resolution. At the UMW convention the same year, however, a similar resolution was tabled, and again Lewis refrained from any statement. He visited England and Brussels in 1923, and several times afterward, in the manner of a prosperous executive, he crossed the Atlantic; but his voyages inspired no weighty words on the state of the world. Throughout the 1920's resolutions urging recognition of Soviet Russia were raised (and rejected) at UMW conventions. Lewis seemed more interested in using the issue as a springboard for trouncing American Communists than in exploring any of its other aspects. Traditionally the UMW had maintained close fraternal relations with the British miners union, and Lewis's regime continued these associations. He did not picture himself as a citizen of the world, and he used the words "foreign" and "alien" as frequent terms of opprobrium, much as George Babbitt was doing in the same period.

His background mirrored much of the preoccupied provincialism with which most Americans faced the new world turmoil of the 1930's. For more than half the decade he continued his reticence, showing no acute concern with the affairs of Europe or their possible bearing upon America. Domestic issues clearly took precedence in his thinking as he studied the maps of American industry for new organizational drives. His speech at the Madison Square Garden anti-Nazi rally in 1937 was his first major utterance on world politics.

Although he spoke eloquently of the fate of German trade unionists under Nazism, his dominant note was the imperative need for us to keep out of the war. "No one can tell what the next few years may bring forth," he said. "Europe is on the brink of disaster, and it must be our care that she does not drag us into the abyss with her." Condemning the "imperialistic ambitions of the Nazi dictatorship," his formula for resistance was, as observed previously, not complex: "I know

of only one means of ensuring our safety—the workers of America must find self-expression in economic, social, and political matters." In a message to an American Youth Congress meeting in May of the same year he declared:

"I believe that if the great masses of the people are articulate, if labor is articulate, we need not fear war. Labor does not want war. . . . It is up to the young people of this country who hold the greatest stake in the future to see that peace is guaranteed by a political and industrial democracy."

While the cause of the Spanish Loyalists stirred many labor groups here (particularly in the CIO) as throughout the world, Lewis did not figure prominently in pro-Loyalist activities. He listened attentively, with apparent sympathy, to a delegation of Spanish Loyalist representatives who came to his office to plead their cause. They departed with the feeling that Lewis would generously assist their struggle. As soon as they had left the room Lewis dropped the mask of compassion. The CIO, he told associates who had sat in on the meeting with him, could not afford to commit itself too deeply in the Spanish situation. Citing the roster of Catholics who held CIO posts, he pointed out that Catholic members might be offended. So disturbed was he by this possibility that he compelled one of his appointees to resign from affiliation with a Spanish Loyalist Committee before joining the CIO staff. There are few references to the Spanish conflict in Lewis's speeches of that period.

In his 1937 Madison Square Garden address he referred parenthetically to Nazi troops in Spain as an example of forced labor: "This forced labor is extended to the soldiers who have been sent as 'volunteers' to Spain. These soldiers were told that they were to be sent to other parts of Germany for secret maneuvers, and the absolute censorship of the press served again as a useful tool for the imperialistic ambitions of the Nazi dictatorship."

Apart from these fragmentary statements, in which Lewis seemed only to reflect the split-personality of the nation—opposition to fascism and opposition to U. S. involvement in

war—he exhibited no profound ardor on either side of the foreign-policy debate until 1939.

Then began a strange and still closely guarded chapter in the Lewis adventure, its ramifications touching more than one continent. The other leading figure in the intrigue was William Rhodes Davis. Davis, a kind of financial soldier of fortune, had build one of the biggest oil refineries in Germany after Hitler's seizure of power. Buying crude oil in the world market, he was able to continue doing profitable business with the Nazis. His sources of crude oil were Mexican properties. When the Mexican government expropriated all foreign holdings, Davis did not join Shell, Standard, and the other big companies in their effort to keep what they called "stolen" Mexican oil off the market. Instead, he arranged to buy oil from the Mexican government for his German refinery.

This is where Lewis came in. Some CIO lieutenants, and especially those with left-wing and Communist Party connections, had taken pains to encourage contact between Lewis and Latin-American labor leaders in general, and particularly with Lombardo Toledano, leader of the Mexican labor movement. Lewis helped Davis swing his deal with the Mexicans. Davis, simultaneously maintaining amicable relations with the Nazis, was thus able to supply the German armies with oil imported from Mexico and refined at his own plant in Hamburg. These dealings continued until the actual Nazi invasion of Poland.

What Lewis was to receive in return for his assistance has never been satisfactorily indicated. The atmosphere at the Mine Workers building during the time of the negotiations, however, suggested that there may have been more involved than an act of good neighborliness to Mexico. When newspapers and Congressional investigators began to manifest curiosity about the Lewis-Davis operations, all files and records dealing with this subject were abruptly removed from the Mine Workers quarters; several office employees were curtly told by Kathryn Lewis not to be inquisitive about these affairs.

Gardner Jackson, the incorruptible liberal who had served

as legislative representative for Labor's Non-Partisan League and resigned his post over Lewis's anti-Roosevelt shift, unmistakably referred to the Davis dealings in his letter of resignation:

"These are critical days when, more than ever, men seem to become captives of their personal ambition for wealth, social position and influence, and when their adventures in power politics and in finance politics, both at home and in the international field, also make them captives."

Some believe that Lewis saw in the Mexican enterprise a chance to enhance his prestige throughout Latin America by emerging as the savior of Mexico; speculation over the affair was varied and intense among Lewis's associates. In any case the tie-up with Davis was to have even wider repercussions. Soon after the invasion of Poland, Davis, who had contributed generously to the Democratic campaign fund in 1936, went to Washington with a lot of ideas for a negotiated peace. He had an obvious and urgent commercial interest in the termination of hostilities. He outlined his views to Lewis, Senator Guffey, and others, and they helped to get him a White House audience. Subsequently the oil magnate went to Germany, returning here with a bundle of papers ostensibly outlining the terms on which the Nazis would make peace with Britain. Davis asserted that these proposals had been made to him by Hermann Goering. Lewis was interested. Roosevelt was not. Lewis supported the Berlin-made peace plan in one of his last White House interviews. Later his daughter told friends that he had returned from the meeting heaping furious profanities on the President, who had again refused to be impressed.

It was William Rhodes Davis who provided the money for Lewis's Willkie campaign-speech in October 1940.

Many details of the Davis alliance have not yet come to light. Some may have perished with Davis, who died not long after the election, and whose death probably averted a full-dress Congressional inquiry. Others may be known to men who cannot reveal them without betraying their own connections with the dealings. But what is already known suggests

that, by 1939, Lewis was ready to visualize a peace with Nazism. Was this the end-result of his growing animosity against Roosevelt? Or was the hatred a product of the President's unwillingness to abide by his plans? Lewis's isolationism grew most intense in the darkest hours of British peril. Conceivably he glimpsed a favorable refuge for himself in the New World Order sweeping Europe.

These are some of the secrets locked in his private memoirs. Some critics have traced his rancor to a trivial rebuff he had suffered in 1939. When England's king and queen visited Washington in that year, Lewis was one of many local celebrities who were not invited to the momentous garden party, and who did not treat the omission lightly. Marquis W. Childs relates that on the evening of the event Lewis was the guest at a Washington party attended largely by people who had been at the afternoon's festivities. One of the ladies present asked Lewis whether he had enjoyed the garden party. Childs recalls that Lewis, "leveling his leonine gaze at her," said "in a voice cold with reproach, 'I do not know. Mrs. Lewis and I were not present at the occasion.' " *

Whatever the origin and the rationale of his isolationism, it plainly deepened as the war in Europe advanced and Pearl Harbor neared. Will Lawther, the spirited, chunky president of the British Miners Federation, toured the United States in 1941, visited Lewis at the Mine Workers Building. Later, in Britain's *Picture Post,* Lawther quoted Lewis as saying: "The British aristocracy is not worth fighting for."

Recording his own impressions, Lawther commented:

". . . One of my discoveries while talking to John L. Lewis was his ignorance of and indifference to labour as an international force. . . . There's not a miner in this country who wouldn't think that a new world was born if he was to get a rise of ten shillings a day, but the miner here knows that to go on strike today to get an increase of 10 shillings a day would mean that Hitler might win the war and that the miners of the world—including America—would be ground down into

* *I Write from Washington,* by Marquis W. Childs.

the dust. Why don't these considerations occur to Lewis? Because his whole life has been given up to power politics."

Lawther also related that Lewis voiced sharp resentment because other visiting British labor leaders had not called upon him in recent months. " 'Hello, Bill,' he said to me, 'you're not like a lot of other British labour leaders who have come to America. You have at least called to see me.' " *

* * *

Out of all these diverse background factors, the contours of the Lewis-Roosevelt feud began to emerge. It is as memorable as their alliance. Reviewing the substance of their quarrels, however, it is difficult to see the outcome as a last-ditch clash of principles. Lewis had often enough displayed his own flexibility; and the President, for compelling political reasons, frequently sought to effect a truce. It may be that by the time Lewis began dabbling in Mexican oil the gap between them was too wide to be spanned. But how did it get so wide?

One is inevitably forced to revert to the simplest analysis as containing perhaps the largest truth about the split. CIO had seemingly opened unparalleled vistas of political advancement to labor, and Lewis increasingly tended to identify labor with himself. With the possibility of his attaining the presidency a growing subject of discussion, Lewis could scarcely have been expected to banish the thought. The Carnes biography, published in 1936 and obviously reflecting the talk and temper of the Lewis household, said: "He [Lewis] would like to be President of the United States. . . . The prospect of leading perhaps 30,000,000 voters does not frighten him."

During the 1936 campaign for Roosevelt, Lewis's demeanor was that of a man who had a proprietary interest in the candidate, and who regarded FDR's re-election as only the preliminary to bigger things for himself. Childs, describing Lewis's appearance with Roosevelt at a campaign meeting in Harrisburg, wrote:

* *Picture Post*, London, May 22, 1943.

I seem to recall that he [Lewis] had a slightly possessive air as though this had been a *fête de Versailles* that he had ordered and paid for, as indeed he had. . . . On the platform on that blowy day, with his miner cohorts in the crowd before him, John L. may well have dreamed dreams of imperial grandeur. This was Franklin Roosevelt's inning. John L. Lewis' would come next.*

Sulzberger's portrait of Lewis, issued two years later, reported a little less bravado but made clear that Lewis's political aspirations were still very much alive:

. . . Lewis has no tremendous personal ambition to be President of the United States. He will run for the post if he feels it is a good thing for labor. He certainly intends to have a strong say in the selection of a 1940 contender. It is not likely to be himself. If—and he admits it is improbable—he should be able to cement a powerful enough alliance of dissatisfied farm and labor elements to make a plunge two years from now, he might be willing to do so.†

Publicly Lewis pooh-poohed discussions of the presidency in the ambiguous phraseology of a potential nominee.

He averred that he was not seeking public office; if he had he could have been Secretary of Labor years ago. But, when the workers organized, there might be a different story. When that took place there would be time enough for public discussion of the presidency—not before.‡

It was apparent, however, by the latter part of 1938, that Lewis would be neither presidential nominee nor the power behind the throne. He was not being permitted to throw his weight around Washington as he had anticipated. The President ignored many of his recommendations in matters of policy as well as in government appointments. Lewis was also reported displeased at being invited to lesser White House functions rather than the major state dinners. Roosevelt was "trimming" politically, and the CIO had settled down to a slower pace.

* *I Write from Washington,* by Marquis W. Childs.
† *Sit Down with John L. Lewis,* by C. L. Sulzberger.
‡ *Men Who Lead Labor,* by Minton and Stuart.

As the 1940 campaign neared, Lewis's outlook was not too bright. Re-election of Roosevelt, with or without Lewis's support, would have done little to bolster the CIO president's status. It would merely demonstrate anew that the Roosevelt magic was unbroken. At this juncture, Lewis is reported to have made his astounding bid. In either late 1939 or early 1940 he outlined the plan to the President. Pointing out that they were the "two most prominent men in the nation," he contended they would make an invincible ticket. The President is said to have inquired whimsically: "Which place will you take, John?"

They did not see much of each other from that time on.

* * *

There was nothing sinful or subversive in Lewis's dream of political supremacy; it is accepted as good Americanism for an Iowa coal miner to fancy himself in the White House. Perhaps the least plausible element in the scenario was Lewis's belief that he could defeat Roosevelt by casting his lot with Willkie. On this belief Lewis risked repudiation and exile. The mistake was a recurrence of his old ailment—inability to distinguish the real world from the phantom world in which he lived. Surrounding himself with sycophants, he refused to believe those who pointed to the Emperor's nakedness. He mistook political demonstrations for religious worship. Impermanent in his own loyalties, he discounted such tendencies in other men. Three events during 1940 helped to crystallize his decision; each dramatized the blindness of the giant.

The first was the American Youth Congress meeting in Washington. The Congress's policies invariably pursued the twists and turns of Communist Party dogma; so, after the Nazi-Soviet pact, it joined the isolationist chorus, condemning conscription, chanting anti-Roosevelt doggerel. Mrs. Roosevelt had been interested in the congress from its inception as one of the few agencies through which young people were showing any interest in world affairs; moreover, there was a bloc within the congress that was seeking to wrest control from its Com-

munist leadership. Possibly in an effort to encourage the latter group, the President agreed to address the delegates. Hundreds of them huddled on the lawn as he spoke. It was a patronizing address, stressing the idea that the young were too young to weigh decisions of foreign policy.

"To you who are voters and will soon be voters, don't seek or expect Utopias overnight; don't seek or expect a panacea, some wonderful new law that will give to everybody who needs it a handout or a guarantee. . . . Do not as a group pass resolutions on subjects of which you cannot possibly have real knowledge." Aware that the Youth Congress would not welcome his sentiments, the President denounced its stand on the Russo-Finnish war, calling it "unadulterated twaddle," and he assailed the Soviet regime as "a dictatorship as absolute as any other dictatorship in the world."

From the cold and uninviting lawn the delegates went to Constitution Hall. There Lewis and Mrs. Roosevelt were to speak. Lewis, exploiting the delegates' discomfort over the President's remarks, delivered an address that *The Daily Worker* recognized as statesmanlike. He assailed the President; called for a grand popular alliance of farmers, Negroes, and industrial workers; thundered against war. Shrewdly and mirthlessly Lewis answered the President's gibes at the delegates: "When the President of the United States calmly suggests today that the American Youth Congress has no right to say what it thinks about the Finnish question or the Russian question or the peace question, I wonder where we are drifting. . . . He said also, by implication, that perhaps there is too much furor being raised about jobs for young people, because ten, twenty, and thirty years ago young people also wanted jobs. Some answer!" The young men and women squealed their delight. The ovations were long and vociferous; the delegates sang, "Lewis is our leader!" When Mrs. Roosevelt rose to speak there were boos. She went ahead gallantly, stating that she was determined to make herself heard and that there would be full opportunity for jeers after she had finished. Her tones were firm and gentle; she said things for

which the same assemblage would have wildly cheered her before the Nazi-Soviet pact (and after the Nazi invasion of Russia); at this point in history her words were useless.

Lewis must have viewed the day's deeds with satisfaction. He had, in effect, taken on two Roosevelts, and when it was over the crowd was with him. What he underestimated (perhaps because it was pleasant to do so) was the high percentage of young Communists in the audience, who would have cheered anyone for the speech he had made, and who represented an infinitely smaller fraction of America than the publicity releases claimed. He did not realize how completely the house had been packed.

The second tableau took play in May. John Brophy had just returned from a tour of industrial regions and the convention of the Pennsylvania State CIO. Entering Lewis's office, he told the CIO leader he wanted to report to him on the political sentiment he had encountered in the field. Lewis appeared eager for the news; he came out from behind his desk, seated himself beside Brophy, and urged him to tell all. Brophy did, and Lewis's mellow mood slowly evaporated. Brophy started with the blunt declaration that he had found pro-Roosevelt sentiment strong and unshaken in every area.

"What do you mean?" Lewis asked disconsolately.

Brophy replied that his meaning was plain. "I don't know what others are telling you," he said, "I'm just trying to tell you the facts."

Then Brophy told him what had happened at the Pennsylvania convention. For two days of the proceedings there had been no mention of Roosevelt's name, and little animation among the delegates. The speakers were aware of Lewis's feelings and anxious to avoid any controversy on the issue. On the third day, however, Emil Rieve, president of the Textile Workers, had broken the silence. Citing Roosevelt's "record of achievement," he had announced that "in the absence of anyone better" he would again support FDR's candidacy. At this statement the rank-and-file representatives burst into wild enthusiasm. It was the first real uproar of the convention.

Brophy told dispassionately of how the delegates stamped, whistled, cheered.

Lewis glared incredulously. Then he demanded: "Do they want war? Don't they know that he'll send them to war?"

Brophy responded that "they" didn't want war, but that most of "them" instinctively felt that the decision of war or peace was not in their hands, that perhaps it rested largely with the fascist nations. As for Roosevelt, "they" retained their confidence in him because of his record and did not believe that anything of sufficient magnitude had happened to change their minds.

The interview lasted ninety minutes, with Lewis alternately resentful and skeptical. When it ended, Brophy said, "I gather that what I've said is not agreeable." Lewis made no response. Any uneasiness that Brophy had created was undoubtedly dispelled by others in the Lewis domain, ranging from his professional yes-men to the isolationist left-wingers.

The third act took place in St. Louis in July at the annual convention of the big, bumptious Auto Workers Union. Prior to the convention the union's executive board, under pressure from R. J. Thomas, Walter Reuther, and other pro-Roosevelt leaders, had gone on record for a third term. Lewis, on his arrival in St. Louis, made plain that he was angry over the decision. But his spirits were immeasurably lifted by the scene that greeted him in the convention hall.

His presence precipitated the most spectacular demonstration in labor annals. The din was violent and deafening—baseball bats were pounded on the tables, delegates paraded through the aisles, and a thousand lusty voices sang, "Lewis is our leader." Lewis responded appropriately. In an unusual display of ordinary humanity he adjusted one of the UAW overseas caps on his head. As the uproar continued he wept.

It went on like that for fifty-five minutes, and might have continued indefinitely if the hotel management had not submitted a protest: plaster was falling from the ceilings below.

There had never been a comparable tribute. Lewis, however, had missed the point. The demonstration was largely

fake. Its length and frenzy were dictated by the internal politics of the union. On the one hand there were the left-wingers, eager to convert the convention into a repudiation of Roosevelt, a gesture of labor dissatisfaction with his policies and an affirmation of Lewis's role. On the other hand there were powerful pro-Roosevelt factions still reluctant to show their hand in any anti-Lewis motions; they hoped to carry the convention without inviting an open clash with Lewis or indicating any disloyalty to him. So each faction eyed the other, and each determined to stay on its feet and wave its banners and sing its homage until the other stopped. The rival leaders would watch each other cynically and then let out another whoop for Lewis, until the management intervened. But all that Lewis saw was the sea of faces, and all that he heard was the sound of his name. His closest advisers had neither the effrontery nor the desire to explain the strings that were being pulled offstage.

Later in the week, after Lewis had departed, a majority of the delegates joined in upholding their executive board's third-term resolution. Lewis fumed, telling UAW officials that this action was "the most humiliating publicity I've ever received."

Nevertheless the memory of the meeting survived. When he decided to endorse Willkie his mind was crowded with such reminiscences. Admittedly the auto workers had later endorsed Roosevelt, but in doing so they had not assumed that this would deprive them of Lewis's leadership. Suppose the issue were put to them that way? Suppose they were told that Lewis would retire if they elected Roosevelt? Could that devout throng, and the others like it that he had seen, bear to see him abdicate?

In the early summer Lewis and Willkie had met at the home of a New York lawyer. Willkie has told this writer that they talked for only half an hour, cordially though without commitment. Many weeks later Paul Smith, editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and staunch Willkie partisan, conferred with Lewis in Washington. Willkie maintains, however, that no deal was made and that Lewis received nothing more than sym-

pathetic generalities about labor's preferential status in a Willkie regime. Although Lewis later hinted to associates that there would be important posts for laborites who went along with the GOP nominee, there is no evidence that any solid agreement was reached. Most observers have concluded, with apparent justice, that Lewis supported Willkie primarily because he hated Roosevelt.

The time had come, Lewis decided, for the great trial by ballot. After all, the laborites who had so far expressed support for Roosevelt as President had simultaneously emphasized their devotion to Lewis as CIO leader. Now they would have to realize that they could not have both, that loyalty to one precluded allegiance to the other, that re-election of Roosevelt must mean the loss of Lewis. Such a prospect, assuredly, could not be bearable to the appreciative thousands who had snake-danced and sung in tribute to the founder of the CIO. It would be shown that in the final test the working-people embraced their own and cast off the intruder. So he went on the air with more than a recommendation for Wendell Willkie. The alternative was the dread and decisive one: Roosevelt or Lewis.

They chose Roosevelt.

As he studied the election returns, showing that even thousands of coal miners had turned their backs upon him, Lewis might have recalled the fallen Cardinal Wolsey in *Henry VIII:*

> *I have touch'd the highest point of all my greatness;*
> *And, from that full meridian of my glory,*
> *I haste now to my setting: I shall fail*
> *Like a bright exhalation in the evening,*
> *And no man see me more.*

But Lewis did not plan to vanish.

8

LEWIS AND THE COMMUNISTS

THE CIO's convention was to be held in the same Atlantic City auditorium where only five years earlier Lewis had delivered his farewells to the AFL and trumpeted the call for CIO. This would be another solemn moment, full of opportunities for histrionic flights and curtain speeches; all the trimmings for a memorable performance would be at his disposal. It would be a great scene. There would be delegations pleading with him to retain the throne, tumultuous demonstrations, the accounting of his stewardship, the triumphant, tearful reckoning, and then a final clamorous cry for him to disregard his pledge and continue as CIO's leader. The resolutions adopted would show the sturdy imprint of his hand, giving little comfort to Franklin D. Roosevelt. The reaffirmation of Lewis's leadership would be some solace for the humiliation he had suffered a fortnight before. Men and women would weep as he spoke, and the bitterness of his recent defeat would be dissolved by this show of emotion. Of course the photographers would catch him as he dabbed gently at his own tears, clasped the hands of old associates, and accepted a scroll in tribute for the five years of service. In such a setting he could always be magnificent, and he knew it.

Yet as he awaited the proceedings Lewis must have detected a bitter irony in the alignments that were taking shape. Except for the members of his personal UMW machine, only the Communists and their followers were giving him much of an advance build-up, loudly proclaiming that he would be "drafted" for another term. Others might be reluctant to op-

pose him openly or to challenge him on the floor, but in contrast to earlier assemblages, he would be compelled to rely on the left-wingers as the chief voices in his cheering-section. Although he can hardly have enjoyed that prospect, he probably did not suspect how full of significance for the future it was. He had known many Communists for more than twenty years. He had fought them ruthlessly throughout the post-war turmoil; when he made his peace with them in the early CIO period it was presumably a peace of mutual cynicism. Back in 1923 the UMW publicist Ellis Searles had written six articles on "Communist Attempts to Capture the American Labor Movement," and during the 1920's the brochure containing them was virtually Lewis's textbook. In return, the Communist organs resorted to their most scorching epithets in accusing Lewis of every conceivable infamy. The brawl was continuous and violent. In 1927 William Z. Foster, the Communists' most important representative in the labor field, devoted extensive abuse to Lewis in his book called *Misleaders of Labor;* and in 1932, as official Communist spokesman, Foster wrote in *Toward a Soviet America:* "In the AFL the process of fascization is far advanced. In fact the top leadership of this organization —the Greens, Wolls, Lewises, etc.—are already practically open Fascists. They have become the chief strike-breaking agency of the employers." Meanwhile Lewis had been waging ruthless warfare against the dual National Miners Union which the Communists promoted.

All this changed, however, as the CIO upsurge crystallized. Lewis needed men. Brophy and Hapgood were joining forces with him, the ancient feuds ignored. Recognizing the immense potentialities of the organizing drive, Lewis could no longer pick and choose. The Communists had the zeal, tenacity, and discipline of a religious sect. They herded all their resources into the unionization effort. The advent of the "Popular Front" coincided with CIO's beginning; ultimate Communist goals were soft-pedaled for the more appealing doctrine of unity against fascism. It did not matter that the Communist strategy was a function of Soviet policy in world affairs; at this point

there was no serious contradiction between the Soviet theses and the campaign for industrial unionism. Lewis did not view CIO as a revolutionary assault on capitalism; and, in the new age of Popular Frontism, neither did the Communists. So the marriage of convenience took place. Soon it had acquired some of the flavor of true romance.

For the CIO left-wingers outstripped all others in the apparent ardor of their love for Lewis. He, in turn, disparaged those who expressed anxiety over Communist infiltration. "We have to work with what we have," he would reply. Nor did he seem irked by the adoration, which was neither restrained nor qualified. Reviewing Lewis's role at the 1937 CIO conference, David Ramsay wrote in the *New Masses:* "In a series of remarkable speeches . . . he [Lewis] demonstrated that in the leadership of the progressive trade union movement was his by right of ability and program."

In September 1938, following an address by Lewis at a "Congress Against War and Fascism" in Mexico City, Earl Browder commented: "Lewis emerged with this speech not merely as the greatest American trade-union leader, not only as one of the most potent representatives of American democracy, but as a leader of world democracy." This was a reciprocal treaty—at the AFL's 1935 convention it had been Lewis who blocked a resolution that would have barred any Communist-led union from representation at conventions, and he provided similar protection inside CIO when other groups sought to molest them. Communist writers called him "the Samson of labor." Left-wing politicos paid dutiful attention to Kathryn, who became—unlike her father—interested in some of their pet ideological projects.

As the CIO expanded, the Communists tightened their grip on several of its key unions, especially in the maritime and transport fields. Yet their numerical strength never approached the dimensions which some observers claimed. Their reliance on Lewis—for places on the payroll, for defense against criticism—seemed permanent. Lewis, meanwhile, remained confident that he could "handle" them if any difficulties arose.

When he felt that their demands were excessive he rudely shouted them down. They gradually began to act like members of his own machine; and for reasons of their own they agreed not to disagree with him publicly even when they felt that he was in error. They were obedient and disarming as they joyously glorified the "new Lewis."

On several occasions Lewis indicated to associates that he had not lost all his skepticism over his newly arrived adherents. During a factional clash in one CIO union a Communist intercepted and concealed a telegram which Lewis had sent to a non-Communist union official. The latter discovered what had happened and carried his protest to Lewis, who commented: "Why didn't you hit him? Physical force is the only language they understand." This was the old Lewis, veteran of the rough, riotous inter-union struggles. He vowed he was not deceived by the new Popular Front apparel which the veteran Communists were wearing; he recognized their voices. As far as the United Mine Workers Union was concerned, he showed no new compassion for the leftists. The UMW maintained a constitutional ban against Communists as members, even while Lewis was consorting with some of the leading Communist statesmen in labor affairs.

The Nazi-Soviet pact fortuitously coincided with the intensification of Lewis's own isolationism. His realism about the Communists could not survive the furious courtship which began at that stage. For now they saw themselves entirely at his mercy; and Lewis, finding himself deprived of some of his old pillars of support, could less and less resist their charms. The exchanges of flowers grew more frequent. By the autumn of 1940, when Lewis pledged his all to Wendell Willkie, it was the left-wing in CIO that refused to join in the chorus of repudiation and criticism. Lee Pressman congratulated him warmly; Harry Bridges lauded him for showing "the courage of a lion." The official Communist position was that Lewis should not have given his support to either candidate, but his indorsement of Willkie was treated with appropriate respect

rather than sharp reproach. Earl Browder, writing in the *Sunday Worker* on October 27, 1940, sermonized:

> There can be nothing but contempt for the howls and caviling against Lewis which come from the camp of Roosevelt's "labor" lieutenants. Among these Lilliputians, Lewis has stood forth as a giant. They have groveled at the feet of the war machine, and would deliver labor in chains for the reward of Roosevelt's smile. Lewis has at least tried to bargain for some definite gain as the price of labor's vote, even though such bargain is dubious and unsound and dangerous for the future.

So some of the left-wingers put on Willkie buttons, and others merely insisted that Lewis should not be condemned for so minor an infraction as the endorsement of a Republican. This was a welcome contrast to the ingratitude which Lewis detected in other aides. Jim Carey, CIO secretary often described as Lewis's protégé, defiantly announced support for Roosevelt. So did R. J. Thomas, leader of the Auto Workers, and many other CIO dignitaries—men whose labor careers had been fostered by Lewis.

After the Willkie disaster the fealty of the party-liners was even more welcome. CIO locals and councils under left-wing dominance initiated a stream of petitions and telegrams, entreating Lewis to regain his CIO presidency. At a meeting of the Greater New York CIO Council, Joseph Curran declared (according to next day's *Daily Worker*): "To get to the Lewis radio speech—which anybody who has any understanding as a labor man should have no difficulty in understanding. No one could fail to understand the salient point in this speech. He told us all that, so far as this administration is concerned, you, the labor unions, are in danger of losing everything that the people of America fought to attain over many years. . . . John L. Lewis finally arrived at a point where he saw that nothing could be done with this administration." With these rambling rhapsodies the members and friends of the left-wing bloc explained away the Willkie fiasco. Such devotion has been bestowed on few men.

Now, as the CIO convention opened, the left-wingers were ready to pay their most profound respects. Amid murmurings of doubt and sounds of discontent they prepared to stand up and cheer.

Much of it went off according to schedule. Many of UMW's old faithfuls and new left-wing devotees were on hand; there was a 43-minute demonstration; there were moving embraces. "Draft Lewis" placards were plentiful, and many of the delegates joined in the first-day parade through the aisles. Privately and publicly he was entreated to reconsider. Yet it was not quite so spectacular as he may have hoped. It was not especially distressing that the representatives of Hillman's Amalgamated kept their seats during the ovation; this was to be expected. But somehow it seemed that too many others were not joining in the real spirit of the affair, were casting about cautiously for a successor to him, were accepting literally—a little too eagerly, one felt—his pledge to step down. Men in such powerful unions as auto, steel, and shipyards could be detected caucusing with his known enemies. A notably attentive reception was given to Hillman when he spoke. Hillman—the advocate of labor unity, the man who had volunteered to serve in the nation's preparedness setup (without obtaining approval from Lewis), the man whom Lewis thoroughly despised—defended his own actions in a well-phrased, moving address. And except for the Communists and their cohorts, who had dubbed Hillman the nefarious agent of finance-capital, the audience showed no impatience. When Hillman, ingenuously taking Lewis at his word, expressed hope that Murray would be CIO's new president, the shouts of approval were ungraciously vociferous.

Not that anyone could authoritatively say that Lewis had journeyed to Atlantic City bent upon retaining his office. The loss of dignity, in view of the pledge he had given, would have been costly, left him too vulnerable to caricature. More probably he wished to step down after the formalities of a draft had been conducted (despite his own remonstrances) and after the world saw that the movement was still his uncon-

tested possession. So he let the Communists and whomever they could rally stage the draft parades. But the demand was neither loud nor insistent enough to carry the ceremony to its fitting conclusion; most of the noise was made by the Communists and by veteran henchmen in the Mine Workers delegation. Lewis was no longer able to deceive himself. On the convention's opening day he told the delegates that "yesterday is gone," and a substantial bloc among those present appeared ready to let that announcement stand. He would almost certainly have been unopposed if he had yielded to the first entreaties; no one was prepared for a public contest. But once he had said No, the Communists were unable to keep the tumult alive. There was no draft.

To that extent the proceedings were a little hollow and disappointing. While the demand for his leadership fell short of his expectations, his own performance was indisputably memorable; if there was coolness toward his continuance in office, he still inspired respect and sentiment. Even those who welcomed his departure had to concede that he was still a powerful figure of a man. In his opening address, signifying his intention to keep the pledge of retirement, he plucked all the strings of tragedy:

"Some great statesman once said the heights are cold. I think that is true. The poet said, 'Who ascends to the mountain-top finds the loftiest peaks encased in mist and snow.' I think that is true. . . . That is the way of men and life, and we cannot stop to weep and wear sackcloth and ashes because something that happened yesterday did not meet with our approval, or that we did not have a dream come true." The post-mortem was inadvertently a statement of his relationship to all the men who had followed him and might yet do so: he would stand serenely on a mountain-top while they rejoiced in the valley below.

Amid all the posturing there was inescapable dignity in his appearances; there was authentic sadness as well as party-line politics in the auditorium as he delivered his speeches and perorations. In defeat he evoked tenderness and nostalgia

among his detractors. He had, after all, led many of those men through the most serious battles of their lives. They had leaned upon him in crises, instinctively accepted him as leader throughout the CIO drive, seldom challenged his judgment. It was a new and somewhat painful experience to visualize CIO without him. As they watched him weep, they forgot the lessons in showmanship he himself had given. "Labor-leading," he had told many of them, "is ninety-nine per cent showmanship." He may well have moved himself by the effectiveness of his farewells.

His attacks were as devastating as his sentimentality; when he took the floor his critics were nervously silent. Though there was no draft, though Hillman was respectfully received, Lewis still formulated the basic policies adopted by the convention. He did not have to retreat or whimper. Taunting Hillman mercilessly, he held the door wide open for the Amalgamated's departure. He savagely rejected Hillman's moderate pleas for labor unity, compared him to Dubinsky "who swore loyalty by the bell, book, and candle" and then deserted CIO:

"And, now, above all the clamor and lamentations, the piercing wail of the Amalgamated. They say, 'Peace, it's wonderful' —and there is no peace. Because you're not yet strong enough to command peace. . . . Dubinsky took the easy way, Zaritsky took the easy way. And if there is anybody else in the CIO who wants to take the easy way, then in God's name, let them go!" He had harsh words, too, for the AFL high command: "Explore the mind of Bill Green? I have done a lot of exploring of Bill's mind, and I give you my word there's nothing there."

The resolutions condemned a large number of Administration policies, offered no olive branch to the AFL, gave little encouragement to the interventionist forces. And the Amalgamated did not withdraw. Behind the scenes there was feverish activity by some of his opponents, but they were primarily occupied with the selection of his successor. In the tone and spirit of its resolutions the convention was under Lewis's command.

The crown prince also was his choice. In the wings hid shy,

sad-eyed Philip Murray, reluctant to take the cue that would catapult him to the center of the national stage. There was, however, no real alternative—from Lewis's viewpoint or from that of other CIO leaders. Murray alone, it seemed, had any chance of maintaining peace inside the strife-torn house. Reconciled to the fact that there would not be even a formal draft, Lewis was determined that his successor should be a malleable machine-man. Fortunately his opponents were agreed on the same candidate.

Murray had been Lewis's lieutenant for two decades. As UMW vice-president he had done Lewis chores, run Lewis errands, remained steadfastly at Lewis's side during the dark years as well as the renascence, claiming no credit for victories and sharing the shame of defeat. Nearly everyone liked "Uncle Phil," and few feared him. He was a warm, genial, simple soul, possessing a quiet eloquence but content to remain in the shade, soft in his answers and generous in his humanity.

His contribution to the organization of CIO was probably far vaster than most men realized or than Lewis would have conceded. In steel and other important battles, Murray had carried an enormous share of the burden. His patient manner and his unassuming carriage were virtues difficult to dramatize, yet indispensable to the success of a far-flung operation. He did not "mug" the camera. He did not begrudge Lewis the credit which he allotted to himself for CIO achievements. He had an almost evangelical devotion to the ordinary worker, and apparently did not need headlines to sustain him.

Murray was acceptable to the Hillman group, partly on his merits but perhaps more because any choice was preferable to Lewis; he was acceptable to the left-wingers, who assumed that he would do Lewis's bidding; he was acceptable to the middle-roaders who saw no one else capable of holding the feuding family together—though they were none too certain that Murray himself could do so. Each group, in a sense, believed Murray would be as pliable as any man whom Lewis allowed to obtain the post.

To Lewis, Murray was an eminently satisfactory choice. He

was, after all, the model soldier. Possibly a trifle sentimental in some of his dealings, his gentle touch had often been useful, cushioning some of the Lewis blows without minimizing their effectiveness. He was a product of the UMW, and had learned to cling to the hand that fed him. Further, he was not ambitious, jealous of publicity and acclaim. He was a convenient citizen to have around, yet no permanent pretender to the throne. Lewis let the word be spread that Murray was to succeed him.

But Murray paced the Atlantic City Boardwalk irresolutely. At fifty-four he was driven by no desire to alter his accustomed ways of life. No one could have served Lewis so doggedly for twenty years unless he had inherited or acquired an enormous inferiority complex. To one of Lewis's aides who broached the subject of the succession, Murray said wretchedly: "I don't want the job, I'm afraid I'd make a horse's ass of myself in it." The post obviously meant dabbling in Washington's political high-life, and Murray genuinely preferred to sit on a Pittsburgh porch trading earthy epigrams with coal miners and other lifelong friends. He had no lust for power, no daydreams of grandeur. He could preach humility without sounding artificial. His friendship with ordinary people was no affectation. In their presence he was at ease and content. Outside their sphere, in the regal realms of politics and society, he was insecure and awkward. Why aspire to the higher levels?

He had, too, some forebodings of the later struggles. "Big John" was offering him the job, with assurance that it would be his alone, and that the lieutenant would henceforth receive the unstinting loyalty of his commander-in-chief. But it did not require great sagacity to doubt the literalness of this pledge. Why had Lewis tolerated the "draft" demonstrations? So Murray wavered, torn between his fear of leadership and the fear that he would not be permitted to exercise it; alternately apprehensive lest he bungle the job if left to himself, and concerned lest Lewis refuse to let him operate on his own; awed by power, and dubious that he would be allowed to wield it.

According to the Lewis formula, the problem should have been relatively simple. Murray belonged to the UMW machine. He had served it well. He had been amply rewarded (his salary had been doubled at the 1938 UMW convention from $9,000 to $18,000). He had been a partner in its progress and its reaction alike. When "provisionalism" was under fire, he had virtuously defended it. When insurgents challenged the Lewis rule he had often visited the trouble zones to soothe the malcontents. If more violent methods were required he was presumably not ignorant of what was taking place. It was true, as one veteran Lewis foe put it, that "Phil went out of his way to greet me in a friendly way" even during the conflicts. These amenities were tolerable, however, only so long as there were no fundamental departures from the rules of the machine. And there were none. Now, in Lewis's view, a new "assignment" was at hand. An unfortunate election miscalculation required Lewis to step down from CIO's presidency. Since the post could not be entrusted to an outsider, Murray was the logical choice to perpetuate the family reign. Of course he would do as he was told. This was the ritual of twenty years. There was no reason for Lewis to believe that anything might be changed.

Murray had told the convention on Tuesday that he was not a candidate, thereby leaving the chair vacant for Lewis, for whom he voiced "a wholesome respect and great admiration and affection bordering upon love." His disclaimer was not a routine do-not-choose-to-run. It was an instinctive reflex, a lifelong habit. Having operated in the protective custody of Lewis so long, he had no appetite for the top post.

In tense, emotional hotel-room conferences with Lewis he sought to escape. It was grim enough for Murray to contemplate this sudden exchange of parts; it was even more difficult to visualize a reconciliation of the warring wings inside the CIO. Only a miracle-man, it seemed, could bring order there, and Murray did not consider himself a man of supernatural talents. Out of this mingling of dread, humility, and insecurity stemmed his pathetic reluctance to ascend to the presidency.

Murray was disturbed not only by the possibility that Lewis would seek to dominate CIO from behind the scenes. He was also apprehensive of the influence wielded by the left-wing CIO leaders and he shrewdly foresaw the turmoil they would create. So, as Lewis slowly imposed his will, Murray clung to one basic condition: he would not accept the post unless the convention adopted a clear-cut resolution condemning Communism. The left-wingers bitterly fought this proposal; Lewis, fighting the leftists' battle for them, resisted the suggestion for several days. Finally Murray told him that the issue could not be compromised: "I have my manhood, I have my religion, and I am an American," he is reported to have said in a turbulent interview with his chief. Lewis yielded and the resolution was adopted.

They were a strange, almost grotesque pair, and yet the disparities were complementary: "Big John," remote, self-centered, his gaze always fixed on the critics in the front rows; "Uncle Phil," self-conscious and self-effacing, seeming to walk on tiptoe lest he stir undue notice. Lewis had seldom taken part in the spontaneous celebrations of the mining camps; Murray reveled in them. Their relationships suggested many crude analogies: big bully-boy and mild-mannered sidekick.

Like virtually all Lewis associations, it was not an intimate friendship, even after twenty years. The Lewises and the Murrays rarely saw each other socially, and there was little confiding of deep spiritual secrets between the two men. Murray was neither demanding nor defiant. He might disagree, but never to the point of insurrection. If there were moments when he doubted the wisdom of the leader, he refused to burn any bridges between them. Possibly the greatest strain on their association had occurred in 1932 when Murray made the pilgrimage to Hyde Park while Lewis endorsed Hoover. Murray was in despair over the decay of the union; Lewis was displeased by the act of heresy. But after Roosevelt's nomination the episode was forgotten as Lewis discovered hidden merit in the Democratic victor. Murray was also co-author, with Morris L. Cooke, of a book called *Organized Labor and Pro-*

duction, in which notions that Lewis must have considered "visionary" were set forth—for example: "Today only a reactionary fragment, gradually dwindling under the scythe of the grim reaper, questions the necessity of government aid to low-rent housing, of government intervention in the flow of purchasing power." In the same book some dim outlines of a trade-union philosophy larger than the "business" theory were sketched. But this had been written during the New Deal heyday, when Lewis was more tolerant of such excursions. Murray endorsed Roosevelt in 1940—but without any rude references to Lewis; and his action kept the UMW's foot inside the White House door. On the whole Lewis had no reason to see Murray as rebel or rival. When Lewis walked into a meeting-hall he marched to the raised platform—"the cold heights" from which he could look down at the starry-eyed flock. When Murray entered, he was one of the throng. They were not competitors.

In his own right Murray had the reputation of canny negotiator and student of industry as well as able organizer. Men who resented Lewis's remoteness might enjoy Murray's geniality; but fondness for Murray did not minimize their awe of Lewis. And Murray gave no sustenance to the idea that he might set out on his own. This Scottish-born, soccer-playing, church-going man knew his place and longed for no other one.

So on November 22, 1940, under Lewis's promptings and with Lewis's blessing, Murray accepted the presidency of CIO. Photographs of the occasion showed the men in a clumsy clinch, murmuring devotion to each other.

Lewis's "man-who" nominating speech for Murray, and the latter's acceptance, showed the gulf between their personalities. Lewis was inevitably condescending; he described Murray as "equipped with every natural and inherent talent, considerate of the feelings of all those with whom he comes in contact, a scholar, a profound student of economics, a natural administrator, a family man, and a God-fearing man." He paid him tribute, in fact, for everything except his most conspicuous virtue—his essential fellowship with workingmen. Murray, in

turn, felt constrained to assert the integrity of his mind and spirit, as if to persuade himself as well as others, while simultaneously affirming his loyalty to Lewis:

> I find that many of the news organs in this country observed and suggested that if this terrible man Lewis were pushed out of the way, this mild man Murray, this moderate, vacillating, weak individual, would immediately rush somewhere to perfect an agreement with the AFL.
>
> Well, I just want you to know, my friends—as I told you the other day—I think I am a man. I think I have convictions, I think I have a soul and a heart and a mind. And I want to let you in on something there; with the exception, of course, of my soul, they all belong to me, every one of them. . . .

It was obvious from the qualifications he inserted himself that Murray was not yet certain how he would fare on his own.

Despite the coolness in some quarters, Lewis had some reason to exult over the week's ceremonies. Retirement from office was no permanent exile; even in 1939 he had fleetingly contemplated resignation, perhaps to free himself for bigger pursuits while keeping his grip—through someone like Murray—on the CIO's controls. The play was not at an end; this was merely a brief intermission. Murray would fill in for a while. Murray would not be difficult to handle.

In all these Lewis meditations there were only two flaws. One was his assumption that Murray, in the years of service, had lost all self-respect as well as independence, and would not seriously seek to prove his "manhood." The other was his assumption that the Communists, who sang the Lewis ballads so lustily, would never change their tune.

* * *

In January 1941, Lewis lay ill in his Alexandria home. Murray was officially at CIO's helm. On the surface there had been a clear reversal of roles, with Lewis receding unobtrusively into the background. At least some newspapers took formal cognizance of the fact that Murray was president of CIO (although a *Fortune* poll taken many months later indicated that

most Americans were unaware of the change). In the winter the Steel Workers Organizing Committee rallied its resources for a new invasion of Bethlehem Steel; there were strikes at the wind-swept Lackawanna plant near Buffalo, and in the company's parent city of Bethlehem, where unionism had been considered dead after 1919. In April, Henry Ford's gigantic River Rouge works faced the first major strike in its history—the same territory where CIO organizers had been so brutally rebuffed in 1937. The second storming of "Little Steel" and the epic battle with Henry Ford were revivals of projects that had been launched under the Lewis regime. Now it was Murray who sped to the mediation conferences, conferred with state and national officials, blinking a little shamefacedly as the cameras went off. Heretofore he had rarely been photographed except at Lewis's right hand, or in variations of that pose. Now it was Murray who made the mysterious junket to Henry Ford's country home while 90,000 Ford workers remained idle, gaping in amazement as the machine-age hellzapoppin shut down. It was Murray's name that was linked to the first agreement Henrv Ford ever reached with a labor union.

Lewis, however, was not devoting himself exclusively to reveries over past glory. From his Alexandria bedside he had informed lieutenants in January that he would demand elimination of the North-South wage differential in the coming coal-wage conferences. As his vigor returned he found the affairs of the Mine Workers Union much too limited to warrant his full efforts. He had grown accustomed to operating in a far more spacious world. He had several urgent accounts to settle. He was unready to be relegated to a sideshow or a museum. His advice had been rejected in November. But there would be ample opportunity to vindicate the counsel he had given, to open the eyes of the unbelievers. The proud Hillman would be whittled down to his true dimensions, and through Hillman's exposure labor would come to see the character of the man in the White House.

In the Lewis-Hillman feud Murray was pinned precariously

in the middle. On the one hand he believed, as did many other laborites, that Hillman was excessively timid and conciliatory in speaking labor's piece inside the OPM. Continuing award of defense contracts to Ford and Bethlehem, while these companies maintained their defiance of the Wagner Act, was a perennial source of CIO indignation. Hillman, it was charged, was not protesting militantly enough. He was trying to avert undue friction. He was being "soft-soaped" and sidetracked. He was getting nowhere, and Lewis missed no chances to drive home the point. He depicted Hillman as bargaining away labor's liberties for the compliments of his business associates in OPM. It had been irritating enough when Hillman accepted a post in the former Defense Advisory Commission; now Hillman held co-status with William S. Knudsen in OPM. Lewis had never ratified these appointments, and he did not view them with any greater pleasure as time went on.

On the other hand Murray acknowledged, as Lewis did not, the outer peril confronting the nation. Lewis denied we were menaced by external enemies; we were endangered only by internal social distress—"by 52,000,000 shrunken bellies"—and by the encroachments of the preparedness program on the rights of labor. Kathryn Lewis affixed her name to the letterhead of the America First Committee as a token of her father's esteem for the Committee's opinions. Murray did not subscribe to the devil-theory of Roosevelt; he intuitively rejected Lewis's view that the President was engaged in a conspiracy to drag the nation into war. Murray was more fatalistic in his thinking, and less dogmatic. The fact of approaching war was unavoidable, and the Nazi advance through Europe forced at least a cursory concession to the fact. By now, however, Lewis no longer shared the national schizophrenia; he was an isolationist. Murray, while unwilling to yield as far as Hillman did in an effort to maintain internal peace during the preparedness program, grew increasingly fretful over Lewis's apparent indifference to danger.

In late spring a succession of strikes led by CIO unions in which the Communists and their sympathizers were most ac-

tive brought the first outward warning that the Lewis-Murray entente might not be eternal.

It had been obvious at Atlantic City that Lewis remained the spiritual leader of the CIO's left-wing bloc. Lewis and the leftists agreed on almost every matter. In common they were against Roosevelt, the British, the war, Hillman. The Communists may have gone a trifle farther than Lewis in their public excoriations of "Roosevelt war-mongering" and "British imperialism," but they expressed the essence of all Lewis's feelings. They accepted Murray as tentative replacement rather than full-fledged ruler; they still turned to Lewis with their master plans and their private plottings. They had influential friends at both the Lewis and the Murray courts. Lee Pressman, who learnedly traversed the twisting course of Communist Party policy, had remained as CIO general counsel; Len De Caux, who hung tenaciously on the same ideological merry-go-round, was CIO publicist. At the same time Lewis willingly voiced the Communists' chief complaints about life in an age of imperialist warfare. When the flurry of Communist-led strikes broke out, creating grave apprehension in government circles in Washington, Murray was deeply disturbed. Lewis was not. He gave the full benefit of his wisdom to the strike leaders.

Most of the conflicts centered on the National Defense Mediation Board, of which Murray was a member and of which Lewis, along with the left-wingers, was darkly critical. Early in June striking lumber workers in the Pacific Northwest, led by M. J. Orton, rebelled against a decision of the Mediation Board. Orton was a well-known member of the left-wing cabal. Rejecting the terms drafted by the Board—which Murray had approved—for settlement of the strike, Orton described that agency in the *Daily Worker* clichés of the period: "An all-out, labor-busting, strike-breaking device." Murray was not amused. Despite the fact that Lewis had similarly denounced the Board earlier in the year during a coal-wage dispute, Murray bluntly pointed out that he and Kennedy were

members of the Board and assailed Orton's statement as "a reprehensible lying defamation." Lewis provided no encouragement for Murray's stand.

The Mediation Board's troubles mounted rapidly. The agency, said the Communists, was "an instrument of the capitalist class"; apparently the barricades were now to be erected. In Cleveland members of the Die Casting Workers, another left-wing union, defied the Board; and in Inglewood, California, aircraft workers at the North American plant, informed by their left-wing leaders that the Board was "stalling" its consideration of their case—which wasn't true—struck before mediation efforts had been exhausted. With the Administration convinced that it was confronted by a miniature insurrection in time of national emergency, the President ordered troops to seize the plant.

Murray lunched with Lewis and Pressman on the eve of the seizure. It was reportedly not a pleasant lunch. Murray freely conceded during this period that the workers involved in each of the strikes had legitimate grievances. But he argued that the Mediation Board deserved a full trial, that its past decisions—including the wage increase which it had granted the coal miners earlier that year—revealed no anti-labor bias, that in fact the Board had rendered substantial contributions to labor's welfare while averting serious interruptions in the production of defense materials. What Murray hoped for was a gesture of support from Lewis to curb the irresponsible high-jinks of the left-wing CIO leaders. The strike virus was contagious; unless it was checked the industrial scene might become a shambles, with Murray forlornly picking up the remains.

The truth was, however, that the strike outbreaks, climaxed by President Roosevelt's armed intervention at Inglewood, fitted snugly into Lewis's plans. The President and Hillman were at last portrayed in their Lewis-painted colors; Murray could not condone the use of military force to break a strike, whatever his private misgivings. Kenneth Crawford mentioned

in *PM* the comfort that Lewis was deriving from these events: "His game will now be to say to the followers who left him when he endorsed Wendell Willkie: 'I told you so.'"

With confusion and disunion growing inside CIO, Murray was helpless as long as Lewis shielded the left-wing. On the week-end after the troops marched into Inglewood, however, there was a sudden, unverified report that Murray had prevailed upon Lewis to sever his ties with the Communists and to aid him in reducing their influence. The story appeared in the *Washington News* under the by-line of Will Allen. It said that Lewis had studied reports of the Cleveland and West Coast walkouts and had become convinced that they represented a Communist conspiracy. Hence he had decided to repudiate any liaison with the left-wingers; he would offer his full backing to Murray in an organizational purge and announce his unqualified loyalty to the nation's defense program. Lewis, said the *News,* was a "patriot first" who could no longer countenance the ructions of the Communists.

The story was a hoax. But the most illuminating phase of the incident was its private literary aftermath. Four days after the article appeared, Lewis began an exchange of correspondence with John Brophy, who was now director of Industrial Union Councils for the CIO. Lewis, accusing Brophy of having planted the *News* story, demanded an explanation. In actuality Brophy had not inspired the report; but the correspondence is interesting in its bright disclosure of the functioning of Lewis's mind at this stage. For one thing it showed his stubborn reluctance to be identified with the preparedness drive; he found the "patriot first" description objectionable. For another it indicated his determination to avoid a rift with the left-wingers, who were shocked and jittery after the article was published. It also disclosed Lewis's tacit assumption that his name was still sacrosanct and his deepening persecution-complex as he confronted the possibility that his hold on CIO was slipping.

The hitherto unpublished exchange follows. Brophy's letters appear in full; Mr. Lewis's, in view of the prevailing American

literary laws of privilege pertaining to letters, have been paraphrased.

On June 19, 1941, Lewis wrote to Mr. Brophy and attached to the letter a copy of the *Washington News,* dated Saturday, June 14, 1941, containing the story by Allen.

He began the letter "Dear Sir and Brother" and proceeded to charge Brophy with covertly inspiring the story and supplying the data contained therein.

He cited this action as tantamount to misfeasance and as one unbecoming an officer of the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

Perhaps, Mr. Lewis concluded, Mr. Brophy would care to offer an explanation. In any event, he would be waiting for a reply.

The letter ended with the noncommittal "Yours truly," and bore the signature John L. Lewis.

Brophy responded the next day:

> In regard to the Allen story appearing in the *Washington News* of June 14th, you have been misinformed. I had absolutely nothing to do with it in any way.
>
> Fraternally,
>
> JOHN BROPHY

Lewis's counter-attack was not written until July 3. He regretted, he said, the evasive quality of Brophy's reply. He accused Brophy of being the leader of a small group in CIO who had been systematically and maliciously spreading misinformation and propaganda to certain newspaper correspondents, radio commentators, and columnists.

This was reprehensible in that it was designed to taint the character and impair the standing of several leaders of international unions affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

Lewis continued with a few well-chosen words about such covert conspiracy being contrary not only to any precept of fair play, but also to any wholesome concept of treatment and respect due to officers of affiliated unions by the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

He firmly indicated that such nuisance must be quashed, and reiterated his rebuke that it was conduct unbecoming to an officer of the CIO and misfeasance of office.

His closing statement was a turgid one urging Brophy to discontinue such mischievous slander and activity.

There was no conventional ending this time. Merely the signature.

Brophy retorted on July 7:

My reply to your specific charge against me in your letter of some two weeks ago was a flat denial—not an evasion.

Your latest letter contains some general allegations as to my acts and conduct as affecting various leaders of our International unions. At the risk of repeating myself I again deny responsibility for what you term "slanders and malicious activities." Not having started them, if such there be, I can scarcely abate and discontinue them.

As you well know, I have had long years of service in the labor movement. It has been my life work. My record will show that I have maintained a fairly consistent middle-of-the-road course. This I have done openly and aboveboard though it brought me criticisms from both the right and the left. I have not in the past and am not now engaged in "secret machinations."

While you were president of the CIO, I served it and you with loyalty and devotion. I was frank with you at all times, even though sometimes it was not an easy task and I ran the risk of being misunderstood.

Since I got back to work this year I have given your successor the same undivided loyalty and support. I am sorry if those with whom I cannot agree take my position as a personal affront. I say, in good conscience, that in serving the labor movement I have not wronged you, nor anyone else. Neither shall I do so.

Sincerely,

JOHN BROPHY

The exchange ended abruptly on July 12. Lewis's final word was peremptory. Dispensing with any embellishment, he plainly stated that by "evasion" he simply meant avoidance of truth. He pled weariness with this endless quibbling and strongly suggested that Brophy discontinue his collaboration with what might be termed a poison squad in the headquarters of CIO.

He, Lewis, had expressed his view of the question; Brophy could do as he saw fit. But further correspondence was futile.

As might be indicated from his exchanges, Lewis regarded attacks on left-wing CIO leaders as attacks on himself; the leftists were his loyal legion, the advance guard for his recapture of power. There was also a hint of the mental double-standard which was to become an increasingly serious affliction. On his own he was widening the organizational base of the Miners Union, inviting jurisdictional conflict with the AFL building trades in the construction field; yet he harbored the belief that he was the victim of a major conspiracy. He had not written like a man who had surrendered the CIO leadership; he refused to admit that he was president-emeritus.

Not long before, he had been composing pronouncements on great industrial conflicts, dueling with nationally known figures of finance. Now he hurled epithets once more at the man who had plagued him throughout the lean 1920's, with a petulant pettiness—and arrogance—that seemed to prophesize the shrinkage of his size.

Undoubtedly part of Lewis's distemper was the product of fictitious tales brought to him by his left-wing lieutenants. They could not afford a reconciliation between Lewis and Hillman, or between Lewis and the White House—any such development would have left them isolated and ineffectual, their anti-Roosevelt, anti-war banners drooping. As long as Lewis spoke their lines for them, they were much safer—and more influential. The Communists unquestionably helped to implant in Lewis's brooding brain all sorts of inflammatory legends, thereby persuading him that the anti-Communist faction was basically an anti-Lewis bloc. Lewis avariciously devoured each such fragment, so that each time he fired a gun he could profess to be defending himself against aggression.

In those months Murray must often have longed for the simplicity of his earlier life. He wavered indecisively in the mad melee taking place around him. Within six months of his stewardship the CIO seemed to be crashing on the rocks of factionalism. On June 16, two days after the *Washington News* article predicting a purge of CIO leftists, Murray hastily dis-

avowed such an intention. "The CIO," he said, in a statement reportedly drafted by De Caux, "has never engaged in witch-hunting." He called the press reports "highly fantastic." Lewis was appeased and the left-wingers jubilant at Murray's capitulation.

This was on Monday, June 16. On the same day Lewis was photographed on the Princeton University campus, attending his son's Class Day exercises. In Washington, Labor's Non-Partisan League, now virtually Lewis's private property, was charging that President Roosevelt's administration was nullifying all of labor's gains and "violating its own pledges." Reid Robinson, left-wing president of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union, decried the use of troops at Inglewood as "regimentation of labor on the Hitler pattern."

The week proceeded eventfully. On Wednesday Lewis sent his first epistle to Brophy. Tension at CIO headquarters was manifested in virtually everyone's behavior. Murray showed the strain, but no solution was in sight. On Sunday, June 22, the Nazis attacked Soviet Russia. It was a date that Lewis would have reason to recall as more than a military landmark.

Labor commentators safely predicted that the left-wing CIO bloc would turn about-face in its foreign policy, as did the Communist Party a moment after news of the attack. How long would the Lewis-leftist alliance last?

The left-wingers—Joseph Curran of the National Maritime Union, Harry Bridges, Michael Quill of the Transport Workers, Reid Robinson—changed their minds about war. War, they had been saying, was hell; now it was holy. All other values were similarly revised. Yet the far-reaching impact of this event on CIO history—and on Lewis history—was not immediately felt.

Lewis, who should have known better, had succumbed to the spell of the left-wingers' love-letters; losing sight of the origin of their affection, he had begun to interpret it as the real thing. For years he had boasted his knowledge of the Communist movement, of Communist politics, of Communist ethics. All the boasting concealed his ignorance of Communists as a

human phenomenon. Hadn't they profited by his help and protection? How could they afford to leave his shelter? Previously he had said privately that he could "shake off" the left-wingers at any moment if they interfered with his plans. But gradually he had deluded himself into believing that this would never be necessary. Their identity was steadily being dissolved in the larger Lewis family. Of all the men who had shared the glory of CIO, they had proven least fickle.

Lewis therefore plowed ahead without changing his course. On July 7, at a legislative conference of CIO leaders, he pursued his war of revenge against Roosevelt and Hillman. Reporters standing in the corridors of the Mine Workers building, where the CIO chieftains met, could hear the Lewis voice booming furious condemnation of Hillman's conduct and of the Administration's labor policies. Unexpectedly they heard also the high-pitched reply of Jacob Potofsky, lean, bearded vice-president of the Amalgamated, protesting with unanticipated vigor that the Amalgamated's leaders were weary of "being invited to CIO meetings to be invited out of CIO." The sight of the frail Potofsky answering back was a sign of the times that Lewis might have carefully weighed. He might also have noticed that the anti-Administration belligerence of his left-wing colleagues was a little less dogmatic. But if he noticed he paid little heed. He still visualized himself as master in the house he had built.

The ordeal proved unendurable for Murray. He was stricken with a heart attack early that chaotic summer, and there was no certainty that he would be able to resume his labors soon, if at all.

This was Lewis's opportunity to recapture the position he had abdicated. If he had followed the left-wing bloc in its overnight shift from isolationism to war, the ensuing years might have been placid and prosperous. He did not know how to follow nor could he visualize a mass desertion of the kind that was about to take place. He refused to admit that his hold on the left-wingers had been the temporary gift of Soviet foreign policy, rather than the consequence of the hypnotic

spell and the "machine" system. He could not fathom the fanaticism that made men prefer the absolution offered by Joseph Stalin to the worldly rewards provided by John L. Lewis.

The Nazi invasion of Russia did not precipitate an overnight break. As on previous occasions when international Communist policy had to be drastically revised, there was a kind of cultural lag in the reaction of the faithful. The party functionaries, of course, responded with alacrity; but their members and sympathizers in other fields were given a longer period of readjustment. Thus, on July 10, a Communist rally in Madison Square Garden was being patiently told by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn: "A few weeks ago you might have looked at the imperialist war as a jurisdictional dispute. But now it is like a general strike. Thus it becomes a struggle for the liberation of the peoples of the world." This somewhat tortuous logic would patently require time before it could be fully digested. In the same week, the National Maritime Union convention in Cleveland kept a picture of Lewis on the platform. (One of Roosevelt was also included, however, as an omen that a new era was at hand.) Joseph Curran, traditionally slow to keep pace with theoretical developments, continued to inveigh against Hillman.

Clumsily seeking to adjust themselves to the new interventionism without severing all ties to Lewis, the left-wingers went through many unhappy contortions. Orton of the Woodworkers asserted that he was "opposed to armed participation in any foreign war"; Bridges said that he was against an "expeditionary force." Some of them hurled a few final epithets at the President and Hillman, though discovering new merit in the stand of both men on world affairs.

The reaction was further delayed by hope, persisting for many weeks in the left-wing camp, that Lewis might see the new light. For plainly life would be much simpler for the leftists if Lewis could be "reoriented." A number of them owed their jobs to his benevolence; it would be painful indeed if a public quarrel occurred. Moreover the left-wingers had a

healthy respect for his capacities as leader and could not readily bring themselves to accept Murray and Hillman—or a combination of the two—as his substitute.

Lewis remained silent on the Nazi-Soviet war until early August. In the intervening weeks Pressman, Bridges, and others endeavored to persuade him to haul down his isolationist flag. Pressman told associates afterward of his valiant effort to convince Lewis that he was "standing against the stream of history." The *Daily Worker* politely refrained from any discussion of Lewis while these negotiations went on, leaving party members in a state of suspended ideological animation, uncertain whether Lewis was leader or heretic. Lewis, on his part, argued vainly against any changed meaning of events. He urged the leftists who consulted him to proceed warily, cautioning against any grotesque flip-flops that would expose them to ridicule.

On August 6 the suspense appeared to be at an end. On that day Lewis joined with fifteen Republican leaders in affirming the doctrines of the isolationists and pointedly disclaiming any interest in the Soviet cause.

"Recent events," the statement said, "raise doubts that this war is a clear-cut issue of liberty and democracy. It is not purely a world conflict between tyranny and freedom. The Anglo-Russian alliance has dissipated that illusion. In so far as this is a war of power politics, the American people want no part in it. . . .

"The American people should insistently demand that Congress put a stop to step-by-step projection of the United States into undeclared war."

Lewis's name was joined with those of Herbert Hoover, Alf M. Landon, Clarence Budington Kelland, and Geraldine Farrar —among others—in support of this manifesto.

Still there were forlorn efforts to avert the collision. Some of the left-wingers renewed their pleas to Lewis to abandon the isolationist trail and to follow them on the new road of righteousness. The *Daily Worker* lapsed into reticence again on the subject of John L. Lewis, creating greater bewilder-

ment among its readers. On August 31, however, the *Worker* gave Lewis a preview of the wrath ahead. Roy Hudson wrote of the "desertion of John L. Lewis from the cause of anti-fascism to the camp of . . . the Lindberghs, Wheelers, Coughlins, and Hearsts." The next day the *Worker* prominently published on its front page a resolution adopted by a local of the Fur Workers Union, "censuring" Lewis for his "appeasement" stand; the resolution was obviously a signal to other groups under Stalinist control to open fire. Simultaneously photographs of Sidney Hillman returned to the *Worker's* front page —the imperialist agent had become labor's hero.

Yet there was still one more lull before the heavy cannonading began. Possibly concluding that Lewis would be impressed by these preliminary shells, the *Daily Worker* again spared his feelings during the early part of September while last-minute negotiations proceeded. On September 3 Len De Caux told this writer at the Electrical Workers convention in Camden that reports of a serious split between Lewis and the leftists were newspaper fiction; the press, he said, was seeking to provoke such strife. Throughout the week of September 8 there was no reference to Lewis's isolationism in the pages of the *Daily Worker.*

Lewis now recognized that he could not prevent the left-wingers from going all out for interventionism. He was reliably reported, however, to have offered them a simple deal: both sides would agree to disagree on the war, refrain from attacks upon each other, pursue their independent course in matters of foreign policy, but continue their mutual protective association on labor issues. This proposal betrayed Lewis's ignorance of Communist fundamentals. He failed to appreciate that the Communist movement tolerated no halfway measures, no pragmatic compromises on the central issue of foreign policy. Public officials were either with them or against them; there could be no tawdry trading. Nor did he understand that the Communists' shift to interventionism would change all their attitudes on domestic affairs—on Roosevelt, on strikes, on every major and minor aspect of contemporary existence.

The full blow came on September 17. The *Daily Worker* published a two-column front-page editorial decrying Lewis's opposition to President Roosevelt's foreign policy and declaring that his stand had disqualified him for leadership of the CIO. He was, said the *Worker*, giving "comfort to the foes of the United States." This was the *Worker's* answer to a *New York Times* story suggesting that the left-wingers were negotiating a pact with Lewis under which they would support his return to CIO's presidency while continuing their own campaign for aid to Britain and Russia. Lewis, the *Worker* announced, was beyond salvation.

At this cue Michael Quill and other left-wing chieftains took pains to deny that any negotiations with Lewis were being carried on.

Lewis was stunned by the scope of the defections and by the ferocity of the transformation among men who only a few months before had been prostrate at his feet. A long time afterward he confessed to an associate—in a rare moment of self-flagellation—that his trust in the left-wingers had been the major blunder of his career. He complained, more angrily than sorrowfully, that he had believed the left-wingers would remain personally loyal to him if a showdown came.

He had failed to grasp the inadequacy of any rewards he could offer to compensate left-wingers for excommunication from their temple. His own machine was held together by such prosaic considerations as salary, security, and old-age insurance; the left-wingers could not be purchased on that level. A few might have been pliable had they not been so deeply committed already in the party's private intrigue; but most of them were genuinely animated by devotion to a much higher deity than himself. They had a "machine" of their own, solidified by religious ritual, sanctified by a true faith. Having taken the vows, they could not easily break away. It would have been more convenient to remain in harmony with Lewis, especially since both sides probably knew some unflattering tales about each other. But a truce was inconceivable so long as Lewis clashed with a key tenet of their international pro-

gram. It did not matter whether the left-wing stalwart was a member of the Communist party or whether his affiliation was unofficial. Undoubtedly some of the left-wingers, for reasons of caution or convenience, remained nominally independent. Intellectually and emotionally, they were subservient to a power far more compelling than Lewis's.

Some might be regretful at the split; but, once it was decreed, their private remorse did not inhibit their public palpitations. Lewis should have understood this quick-change artistry. His own lifetime had been studded with broken friendships. He had turned on Gompers who gave him his start, and he had relentlessly punished old comrades who questioned the wisdom of his dictates. Now he saw his own cynicism about personal relationships reflected even more crudely in the behavior of the left-wingers. Since he had outlived his usefulness to them, no other fact was relevant. These were the precepts by which he had handled other men. He was shocked when the formula was applied to himself.

Like a wounded animal, Lewis struck back at his attackers. He had allowed left-wingers to infest the payrolls of District 50, the Gas, Coke and Chemical division of the United Mine Workers, through which he planned wide expansion of the UMW membership; they were to be purged now in methodical succession. In northern New Jersey the executive board of District 50 had defied his orders, joining in a call for aid to Britain and Russia. The rebellion had to be smashed swiftly. Simultaneously, the Construction Workers Organizing Committee—of which his brother "Denny" was chairman—was given the green light to raid existing unions. District 50 organizers were to recruit anyone engaged in manufacturing explosives, perfumes, cosmetics, gypsum—"anything that is not nailed down." With the CIO convention scheduled for mid-November, Lewis was racing against time to repair his battered lines.

The left-wing desertion was catastrophic. The Communists and their satellites did not represent anything approaching a majority of CIO. But they were a cohesive, disciplined bloc. As long as they were at Lewis's disposal he had a major bat-

talion within the organization. Together with the UMW delegation, hand-picked by Lewis, they could put up a formidable front on the convention floor against his enemies, block any significant display of unity behind Roosevelt's foreign policy, and snipe, harass, filibuster in the face of almost any coalition of CIO's other components. They might not triumph, but they could insure that no one else did. The paralyzing effect of the Lewis-left-wing combination had been amply demonstrated during the June strike wave.

With the left-wing aligned against him, Lewis was in serious trouble. Now he could see the outlines of Elba. If the CIO convention endorsed Roosevelt's foreign policy, the repudiation would be clear and pointed; the Lewis reign would be actually as well as formally at an end.

So he turned again to Murray, almost forgotten in the summer's turmoil, recuperating in Atlantic City from the half-year in which he had tried to play "Number One." Betrayed by the left-wingers, Lewis would rely again on the machine of his own making. Surely Murray would follow the leader.

9

MURRAY'S 'MADNESS'

IN ATLANTIC CITY, on the evening of October 18, the two men faced each other for the showdown Murray dreaded and Lewis decreed. Much of Lewis's life had been shaped in just such man-to-man dialogues, with hotel rooms as the stage-set. There was familiarity, too, in the waves that rolled up on the beach as they talked, as if in accompaniment to the rumble and murmur of Lewis's voice.

Lewis had dressed grotesquely for the meeting, in clothes that accentuated the hugeness of his body and the somberness of his mood. He wore a ten-gallon sombrero, a black-and-white-checked flannel shirt, and an incredibly wide belt. In contrast Murray was wan, frail, diminutive, barely recovered from illness, poorly equipped for an exhausting contest of will. Lewis was neither devious nor vague in describing his mission. What he proposed—what he finally demanded—was Murray's acquiescence in his crusade against Roosevelt's foreign policy. The CIO must register its opposition to further "involvement" in war; it must reject the course which the President had outlined in word and deed; it must flatly declare its unwillingness to tolerate embroilment in Europe's affairs. If labor took this stand, Roosevelt would have to draw back. He could not risk new clashes with the Axis unless labor was rallied behind him. The country and the people, said Lewis, did not want war. It remained for CIO to point the way to peace. Together Lewis and Murray could rout the "interventionist" forces in the CIO, at least forcing a compromise that would nullify the preachments of the Hillman-left-wing alliance.

This was Lewis's blue-print. Murray did not have to sign on any dotted line; he had only to nod obediently, as he had done so often in the long era of their partnership. Once he consented, the burden would be lifted from his own shoulders; Lewis would carry the fight. It was an easy, attractive course. It was like the old days. As Lewis outlined the plan, it did not seem possible that Murray could demur. They had been through many crises together, and—though there had been minor squabbles, moments when Murray looked troubled and uncertain—when the roll was called he always responded. Now the left-wingers whom they had fought together were once more in revolt, the old machine was imperiled. And Murray was tired, in no condition to fight his own battles, especially with Lewis in a hostile camp. This is what Lewis must have believed as he laid down his terms. There was no panic in his demeanor. He was purposeful, impassive, proud. When he had spoken Murray talked back.

The response was bewildering and implausible. It was not like Murray. It was not like the old days. It was plaintive and faltering, but what it added up to was defiance. Murray had made a decision on his own. Some time during that illness and convalescence, deep stirrings of conscience and belief had taken hold. Recovering his physical health, he had fortified himself with unsuspected tonic of another sort. He was not free or frivolous, but he was obstinate. The ancient Lewis magic did not work.

There might have been many reasons for the transformation: Murray's awareness that the left-wing had changed its colors, his dim realization that the balance of power was rudely upset. There was, also, the simple tenacity of a Scotsman who could not turn his back upon Europe and the world, of a mild man genuinely horrified by the Nazi nightmares. In sickness Murray had fashioned a decision that endangered all Lewis's plans. Murray was not mirthful over this belated revelation of integrity. He hoped—possibly knowing the hope was absurd—that Lewis would understand, that Lewis would forgive, that for once at least Lewis would let him go his own way. He did

not want to be "Number One," but he wanted peace with himself.

Late in the evening William H. Davis, wise, mellow, mop-haired chairman of the Mediation Board, entered the room. Murray had asked him to come to Atlantic City to discuss some labor business with Lewis and himself. The conversation was perfunctory. Lewis's fight for a closed shop in the captive mines was soon to be decided by the Board, and a bitter struggle between him and Davis was impending. The three talked listlessly about other matters for a while. Lewis and Murray accompanied Davis downstairs; after Davis left, they set out silently along the boardwalk toward Lewis's hotel. Neither of them spoke in the chill autumn night. They plodded along for ten minutes—a melancholy, muted pair. Suddenly Lewis thrust out his hand:

"It was nice to have known you, Phil," he said with emotionless finality.

Murray could think of nothing to say as Lewis marched off.

The next morning Murray, breakfasting with Davis, tearfully described the episode. "That was all he had to say after twenty years—'It was nice to have known you, Phil,'" Murray lamented.

Meanwhile, Lewis was on his way back to Washington, nursing another idea.

* * *

The trap was closing, Lewis recognized, and there was not much time. With the CIO convening on November 17, he could anticipate only humiliating defeat as matters stood. The newspapers would not be charitable in interpreting the result; the headlines of "repudiation" would be black and cruel. All the dreams were in danger now, disaster beckoned.

Conceiving himself wronged and betrayed, innocent victim of cynical aggression at the hands of men he had helped and rewarded, Lewis saw one chance of at least temporary salvation. The captive-mine case was the weapon. In it he could either win a resounding victory, recovering some of his pres-

tige on the eve of the CIO convention, or achieve a martyrdom with which all labor would have to sympathize.

The steel barons felt that if they yielded to the UMW they might soon be forced to make a similar concession in the steel industry, where they had stubbornly maintained the forms of the open shop. Lewis saw that, too. He saw that if he could impose a union shop in the captive mines he could legitimately boast that he had paved the way for a new victory in steel. He had launched his campaign in September with a seven-day strike; it had ended with a thirty-day truce pending a decision by a panel of the Mediation Board. Now he was ready to force the issue.

Actually more than 95 per cent of the employees in the captive mines were UMW members. There was consequently strong basis for Lewis's demand for a genuine union-shop agreement. Only a handful of men would have been required to enlist in the union, from which they were meanwhile getting a "free ride"—obtaining without cost the same benefits which the union wrested for its own members. Yet the whole dispute did not seem like a life-and-death cause to the union. Few had anticipated, when Lewis called the September strike, that the status of this small group of unorganized miners would be the signal for a first-rank national crisis. Most of the country was steeped in growing uncertainty over America's future part in the war. In mid-October the Nazi armies were less than a hundred miles from Moscow; clamor for repeal of the American neutrality act was steadily rising. The U. S. Navy was in fact engaged in a war at sea with Germany as U-boats sent two more American ships to the ocean's bottom on October 21. This did not seem a propitious moment for any labor group to conduct a nationwide stoppage over an issue that had little dramatic or moral appeal to a war-worried people. But by the end of that week Lewis was ready to call out the 53,000 employees of the captive mines again.

On Friday, October 24, the Mediation Board issued its panel's report, declaring unwillingness to recommend a union shop. The Board offered, however, to arbitrate the dispute and

render a conclusive verdict if both parties would agree in advance to abide by the finding.

The next day—while the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was adopting a resolution authorizing American ships to roam into war zones—Lewis issued his strike summons at a crowded press conference. He denounced the Mediation Board as "casual and lackadaisical." He denounced Hillman, who had no formal connection with the Board but was known to be supporting its mediation moves. He ignored Roosevelt, who had appealed for a peaceful settlement to keep the mines open.

The President made another plea on Sunday night. It was directly addressed to Lewis: "I am as President of the United States asking you and your associated officers of the United Mine Workers of America, as loyal citizens, to come now to the aid of your country."

Lewis told reporters: "I have no comment to make."

On Monday morning the captive mines were shut tight.

It was, some said, a great gamble; others regarded it as a sure thing. Certainly Lewis perceived the dilemma in which he had placed all his enemies. The President would be damned by the anti-labor bloc in Congress, already in the ascendant, if he equivocated; he would invite condemnation throughout labor's ranks if he took drastic measures to crush the strike. Murray, as CIO president, could not disavow the action of the UMW, a powerful CIO affiliate. As UMW vice-president he could not forsake his union. And as leader of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee he had a big stake in cracking the open-shop policy of steel. The CIO left-wingers, in their new patriotism, might be incensed over any stoppage; but they too had to abide by labor protocol, paying lip-service to the justice of the miners' cause.

Once again Lewis inhabited the climate that suited him best. There were photographers, newsreel men, Washington correspondents; there were occasions for majestic phrases. On Monday he replied to Roosevelt:

"If you would use the power of the state to restrain me as

an agent of labor, then, sir, I submit, that you should use that same power to restrain my adversary in this issue, who is an agent of capital.

"My adversary is a rich man named Morgan, who lives in New York."

Perhaps the most effective passage in Lewis's statement, however, was his assertion that he had tried unsuccessfully over the week-end to arrange a conference with U. S. Steel's Myron Taylor "so that the mines could work Monday."

The President went on the air that night. In a grim address he reviewed recent Nazi attacks on American shipping, warning that "the shooting has started." Then he jabbed at both the steel magnates and Lewis in terms reminiscent of "a plague o' both your houses":

> Our nation must and will speak from every assembly line. Yes, from every coal mine. . . . Our output must be multiplied. That output cannot be hampered by the selfish obstruction of a small but dangerous minority of industrial managers who hold out for extra profits, or for "business as usual." It cannot be hampered by the selfish obstruction of a small but dangerous minority of labor leaders who are a menace—for labor as a whole knows that that small minority is a menace to the true cause of labor itself as well as to the nation as a whole.

At his press conference Tuesday the President was plied with inquiries about the strike. He hinted that he might at last succumb to the pressure for anti-union legislation—that he would stop protecting labor from the ire of Congress. But he implied that he would give Lewis one more chance. A conference between Lewis and Taylor had been set for the next morning.

The rendezvous recalled the gaudy Lewis days of 1937. Lewis and Taylor met at the Mayflower. The newspapers described in great detail the lavish luncheon that was delivered to the Lewis-Taylor suite: oysters on the half-shell, broiled steak smothered with mushrooms, green peas, apple pie with cheese, wine. A Department of Agriculture dietary expert was

reported aghast. "That's not the kind of meal to promote a rapid decision," he said. "It's too heavy for one working on a difficult problem."

Taylor, like many of the men with whom Lewis has successfully done business, was reticent, unsure of himself, happiest when ensconced in his Italian villa, pondering the past. Yet at the same time he derived boyish delight from participating in such "big events" as a hotel-room drama with Lewis. Meanwhile Lewis, deriving similar pleasure from the theatrics, always fond of momentous meetings with captains of industry, was indisputably the dominant character. He flattered Taylor without losing sight of his own objective. After they had talked at length Davis—unknown to the press—joined the conference. Later the three adjourned to the White House to confer with the President.

Arranging for the White House meeting had produced a characteristic Lewis gesture. When Taylor suggested that the three of them meet with Mr. Roosevelt, Lewis said he would do so only if he received a specific bid from the President. Taylor telephoned the President and asked him if he would like to receive their report; the room was silent enough for Lewis to hear the affirmative reply. Taylor, putting his hand over the 'phone, turned to Lewis to inquire whether this was a satisfactory invitation. He nodded grudgingly.

It was the first time that Lewis and Roosevelt had seen each other in many months. They shook hands cordially at the outset. But by the time Lewis left his professional dourness had returned.

It had not been an affable meeting. Although some details remained carefully guarded, the President was known to have been sharp and brusque. Lewis did not get what he wanted—approval of a direct "deal" between himself and Taylor at the expense of the Mediation Board. Moreover he was reported to be injured by the President's attitude, which he regarded as especially humiliating in the presence of Taylor. Lewis's subsequent crusade against Davis may also have had its origins

at that White House session; he is said to have blamed Davis—erroneously—for the stiffness of the President's stand.

However, the conference did produce digestible terms for a brief truce. Earlier the Mediation Board had suggested that the issue be arbitrated; now it was agreed that the Board would review the merits of the union-shop demand, but that neither side would be obligated to accept its ruling. Lewis felt reasonably confident that the Board would decide in his favor. If it did not, he could renew the war.

On Thursday the strike was called off with Lewis reciting an ostentatious ode in praise of himself and Taylor:

"I may say that the entire basis of the agreement was the conference between Mr. Taylor and me yesterday. Once again Mr. Taylor and I have been able to render a service at a time when it is in the national interest, and in a manner that has secured the gracious approval of the President.

"It may be recalled that seven years ago Mr. Taylor and I settled the captive-mine controversy of 1934.

"In later years we substantially negotiated the contract covering present relations in the steel industry.

"At that time I stated in a public statement that Mr. Taylor is an industrial statesman of far-seeing vision. I reiterate that today."

Taylor was present at the press conference at which these compliments were distributed. The two men pawed each other affectionately, and Taylor left for New York. Several commentators asked skeptically, however, why it had been necessary for Lewis and Taylor to spend an hour and three-quarters at the White House if the agreement they had reached beforehand was the one that was finally announced. It was also notable that Lewis had never divided credit for an achievement with a fellow labor-leader so generously as he shared the honors with Taylor.

Although he anticipated a favorable award, Lewis was not unmindful of his larger campaign plan. After the formula for the truce had been set he wrote to Davis informing him that

the UMW would allow the Mediation Board exactly seventeen days to render its decision.

This time-table was not carelessly framed. It meant that the tribunal would have to decide the case by Saturday, November 15. The CIO convention was to open on Monday, November 17. Lewis could not lose. If the Mediation Board granted him the union shop, he would go to Detroit as conquering hero, flaunting the dividends of intransigency; if it ruled against him, a strike in the coal mines would accompany the CIO meeting, embarrassing all the anti-Lewis factions.

Neither alternative offered much comfort to Philip Murray.

The Mediation Board decision was announced in late afternoon on November 10. The vote was 9 to 2 against a union shop in the captive mines. The three representatives of the public—Davis, Dr. Frank Graham, and Charles E. Wyzanski, Jr.—joined with the four industry members and two AFL spokesmen in rejecting Lewis's case. Only the two CIO delegates—Murray and Thomas Kennedy—dissented.

Davis said that the majority considered the union strong enough to protect itself in the mines without benefit of a union shop; as long as the steel companies were unwilling to sign such an agreement, he did not believe it wise or necessary for an agency of government to change the existing relationship. Inevitably, many observers looked beyond the formal reasoning for explanation of the Board's action. Many pointed out that anti-union forces in Congress were eager to seize on any pretext for adopting restrictive laws, and that a verdict favorable to Lewis might have provided the cue. Others held that the Board was reluctant to engage in a showdown struggle with the powerful steel companies at a time when anti-labor sentiment was running high. Still others believed that Lewis had invited this reprisal by holding a pistol at the heads of honest men. Nothing in the background of the three public representatives hinted at anti-labor prejudice. Yet it was pointed out that the same Board, in a case which many deemed equivalent, had extended the union shop to certain Bethlehem shipyards on the West Coast to conform to the pattern pre-

vailing in other yards. Why had it spurned a similar doctrine in the coal decision?

There was no paucity of theories, speculations, post-mortems. But whatever the origins of the decision, its effects were catastrophic. Lewis alone could find any solace in the melee that followed.

Overnight the Mediation Board was wrecked. Labor chiefs who had grown increasingly hostile to Lewis's views on foreign policy were suddenly tongue-tied; they could not attack him in this hour. Liberals who had been condemning his apathy to foreign perils were now divided among themselves, uncertain whether to fix the blame on the UMW president or on the Mediation Board. Within twenty-four hours of the decision Murray and Kennedy had submitted their resignations from the Mediation Board, insuring the collapse of that tribunal. Lewis summoned his Policy Committee to meet in Washington Friday—three days before the CIO convention was to start. He was not altering his schedule; the suspense would be continued until the fateful week-end.

In the interim CIO's internal life had become woefully complex again. Roosevelt's friends (and Lewis's enemies) in CIO now ranged from the Bridges left to the Hillman right—both of them momentarily stricken into silence. They might believe that Lewis had pressed his fight too hard, risking national strife, putting private interest above national solidarity. Those who believed this did not say it. They said nothing. In denying a union shop in the captive mines the Administration's mediation machinery had established a precedent that might thwart similar CIO demands in steel and shipbuilding. No CIO leader could rationalize this decision.

It was a nerve-racking week, proceeding against the background of climactic international events, some of them known, others unseen. It was a week of intrigue, proposals, countermoves, with Administration officials feverishly seeking a formula that might avert another shutdown and with Lewis implacably watching the panic. It was the week in which the President made his extraordinary offer—to write a letter, under

his own signature, to each non-union man in the captive mines, citing the values of unionism. Lewis was cold to the suggestion. Most of all it was the week in which the Southern Democrats in Congress laid down their drastic conditions for continued support of the President's foreign policy. Smooth, shrewd Howard Smith of Virginia announced he would oppose revision of the Neutrality Act unless the right to strike were outlawed. Smith's words were echoed by other members of the Southern bloc. There was disunity across America; there was disunity in the Administration; there was disunity in the CIO. Much of it was traceable, at this grave moment, to Lewis's insistent, one-track, irreconcilable struggle.

Had he planned it that way? Possibly not in every detail. Victory in the captive-mine case would have served his purposes; but defeat offered compensations. Murray had hesitantly suggested, at a luncheon conference with Lewis, K. C. Adams, and Kennedy, that this would be an inopportune time for another major strike; that it would subject all labor to abuse, jeopardizing the future of unionism. Adams, speaking Lewis's mind, lashed back, accusing Murray of "cowardice," pelting him with insults. Murray held that the President's letter-writing offer was a generous and honorable solution. Lewis scowled his reply.

As in so many other crises, Lewis's enemies were inwardly torn, shifting indecisively from one foot to the other. They saw right and wrong on both sides. They questioned his motives but were impressed by his arguments. He was plagued by no such doubts. He was passionately convinced of his own rectitude. He was rousing labor from its stupor of submission, showing that it could triumph only by manifestations of its might. Had not the *United Mine Workers' Journal* declared as far back as Labor Day: "The United Mine Workers will not accept the defeatist attitude of some union leaders. . . . What's more, President Lewis plans to finish the job of organizing the mine workers employed in the captive mines." World war was remote, a scare-headline that tortured the timid. Would middle-class minds be indignant if the miners struck

again? Let them sputter; labor would watch Lewis's way attentively and respectfully, and profit from the example.

The President had called a final conference of the steel leaders and the UMW officials for Friday; afterward the Policy Committee would meet and ratify Lewis's decision. In the meantime Lewis gave no hint of his plans. Some speculated that he was preparing to retreat, to accept a minor compromise and proclaim the Administration's villainy to the CIO convention. On Thursday, Lewis deliberately let it be known that he was planning to spend the afternoon riding through the Virginia countryside and making up his mind. The *Daily Worker*, mirroring the predicament of the left-wing laborites, editorially criticized the Mediation Board decision but insisted that the problem be resolved "without a strike." On Capitol Hill, the House, by the narrow margin of eighteen votes, supported revision of the Neutrality Act, but only after receipt of a letter from the President, declaring that "coal must be mined" and "the Government proposes to see this thing through." It was reported that the Administration had privately agreed to approve anti-union legislation in return for Southern co-operation on foreign policy. Nevertheless, fifty-three Democrats bolted the party leadership. Murray, while publicly tagging along behind Lewis in the coal dispute, had quietly permitted CIO secretary Carey to send a telegram to every member of Congress urging them to vote favorably on revision of the Neutrality Act.

The White House conference on Friday brought no settlement but did bring a promise that negotiations would continue over the week-end. Meeting with Lewis and the steel magnates, the President told the labor bloc that anti-union legislation might still be headed off if the strike were avoided. On the other hand he upheld the Mediation Board decision, insisting that the Government could not force the unorganized mines to join the union without imitating the tactics of a dictatorship.

The conferees trooped over to the Wardman Park Hotel for further negotiations. Lewis did most of the talking at the start.

He declared that Roosevelt was eager to crack down on management as well as on labor. He played on all the anti-Roosevelt instincts of the industrial contingent. But he did not sweep them off their feet.

In Detroit the advance guard of CIO delegates was assembling. Lewis and Murray were still in Washington where the negotiations dragged on. Saturday passed without agreement; technically the strike began at midnight—the deadline which Lewis had set a fortnight before. In Detroit, as the arriving CIO delegates went through the routines of committee meetings, their attention was riveted on the Washington crisis. The conference was resumed on Sunday for a final effort. It was hopeless. Murray had departed for Detroit, knowing what the outcome would be. At 4:30 P.M. Lewis strode out of the conference, his face sullen and ominous. The talking was at an end. He was asked whether this meant a strike. The question was superfluous: the strike was on.

That afternoon Murray reached Detroit for the executive board meeting that would fix CIO policy on the strike. Any possibility of CIO repudiation of Lewis hinged on Murray; he banished it quickly. In a closed executive board session Murray faithfully recorded Lewis's version of the UMW case, flaring up at the suggestion that his union president was animated by impure or devious motives. The issue was the union shop; nothing else was relevant. When Potofsky of the Amalgamated called attention to Lewis's isolationist ties, Murray said that was beside the point. Rieve of the Textile Workers asserted that the President's offer to write pro-union letters to the miners should have been hailed and accepted. His remarks were duly noted—and discounted. Word of the final breakdown of negotiations had not yet reached the CIO board when it adopted a resolution declaring that "the cause of the United Mine Workers is just and reasonable" and praising the UMW leaders for their "fortitude and fidelity to the cause of labor."

It was true that Murray's report to the convention, written many days before and distributed to reporters that day, contained this declaration: "Today labor has become more deeply appreciative of the dangers to democracy through Hitler's aim

of world conquest. It is clear to labor that a single task looms ahead—the defeat of this menace to humanity." Such words were overshadowed by the affirmation of support for the UMW, by the bigger news in Washington. The Army, it was reported, might march in as soon as the strike got under way.

In the coal fields one Joseph Stanson, checkweighman at the Morgan mine of National Mining Company, told a reporter: "In my opinion, if they can load coal with bayonets, the privilege is theirs."

In Washington, Lewis decided that he would be unable to attend the CIO convention because of an urgent previous engagement: the strike in the captive mines.

* * *

For a week these two labor shows ran simultaneously, with the strike usually commanding bigger press notices than the CIO deliberations. Murray's week of triumph had been converted into a grueling ordeal; Lewis had won immunity from criticism as an isolationist by putting on the garments of embattled labor leader.

Remaining in Washington, his image nevertheless hovered over the convention hall. Murray paid his respects to Roosevelt's foreign policy without any direct criticism of his former leader. Thus on Tuesday he told the delegates that he espoused strong measures against Hitlerism, adding significantly: "The convictions which I recommend have not come to me as a result of pressure from any group within or without. I am one individual, as you know, who resents the exercise of pressure from individuals or groups. I stand upon my individual integrity as a man." But on the next day he pledged allegiance to the miners and to Lewis: "Never have I betrayed them and, so help me God, never shall I betray them, lending whatever support I can toward the constructive assistance of the president of my own organization, for whom I have the greatest affection, love and admiration." Lewis did not reciprocate this tenderness. Throughout the week he sent no public or private communication to Murray.

The undercurrent of conflict, however, was not always con-

cealed. Lewis's chief emissaries at Detroit were two members of his family—Kathryn and "Denny"—backed by nearly all the UMW delegates and those from Denny's Construction Workers Organizing Committee. In the resolutions committee Kathryn quarreled ineffectually over the foreign-policy statement. When it was adopted by the convention, the Lewis contingent remained seated while the other delegates rose to cheer. The Lewisites were a glum handful. Toward the end of the week some of their more aggressive spirits prowled the hotel bar late at night, slugging former friends. "Denny" himself, after a loss for further profanities, so he let loose a wild swing and one of his aides rushed in to complete the blow. Although there were no serious casualties, the incidents crystallized some of the latent tension between the Lewis and Murray camps. At the end of one convention session a Negro worker from the Ford plant, introduced to Murray with a delegation of other Ford employees, cried out: "Don't let John L. Lewis kill you! We love you, Phil." Murray, smiling a little, replied softly, "Don't worry—I won't!"

Lewis was far removed from these antics. There was another sharp exchange between him and the President. Replying to an arbitration appeal from the White House, Lewis exploded: "Your recent statements on this question, as the chief executive of the nation, have been so prejudical as to the claim of the mine workers as to make uncertain that an umpire could be found whose decision would not reflect your interpretation of government policy, Congressional attitude and public opinion."

Meanwhile, nearly 100,000 coal-diggers employed by commercial mines had joined in sympathy walkouts with the captive-mine strikers. On Thursday Charles E. Coughlin's *Social Justice* carried a front-page headline: "American Labor, Stand by Lewis." At the White House there were further conferences between the President and Congressional leaders on the subject of anti-strike legislation.

The coal strike had hypnotized the CIO delegates during the first days of their meeting; but, as the week wore on, hos-

tility to Lewis began to emerge in at least symbolic gestures. Victims of sluggings were tumultuously cheered on the convention floor. Murray brought down the house with most of his orations. Still withholding any direct thrusts at Lewis, he hinted broadly that the partnership was not flourishing any longer. Lewis's hold on the assemblage seemed to falter as the week progressed. There was no explicit repudiation on domestic affairs—there could not be while the coal strike lasted. But, despite the efforts of "Denny" Lewis, no criticism of Hillman was embodied in the resolution on OPM. Most important, the CIO's anti-isolationist stand was intermittently reaffirmed, with the left-wingers now noisiest in their applause.

The CIO convention ended Saturday. So did the coal strike.

Lewis consented to arbitrate after the President designated Dr. John R. Steelman, head of the U. S. Conciliation Service, as impartial member of a three-man tribunal. The other members were to be Lewis and Benjamin Fairless, president of U. S. Steel. In labor circles the Steelman appointment created astonishment, and wiseacres winked. For Steelman was known to be staunchly pro-labor, with no theoretical inhibitions about the establishment of union shops and with no personal antagonism toward Lewis. He was one of the few government officials who still remained on good terms with the UMW leader. It was in the bag.

The President's selection of Steelman might have caused less bafflement if the seriousness of the Far Eastern crisis had been fully appreciated at the time. Looking back, it seems evident that the President could have had only one one immediate aim in those late November days: the prompt resumption of coal production. He had told his Cabinet with unprecedented gravity that war with Japan was inescapable. If Lewis was willing (as he seemed to be) to let the mines remain shut for an indefinite period, the President could not afford to disregard the time problem. Lewis believed that war was distant and improbable; the President knew it was near and inevitable. Conceivably the strike might be broken by armed force—but not overnight, not without enormous risks, not with-

out new delays, not without disastrous reduction in coal supply. Admittedly a Lewis victory might further upset the nation's labor relations. The vaster events ahead would require reshuffling of the labor relations setup anyway. These may well have been the President's calculations when—in effect—he handed the decision to Lewis. Lewis had guessed right. The Army never marched.

It was Thanksgiving week-end. Lewis had reason to be thankful for many things. He had escaped too decisive a reckoning at the CIO convention; he had won another breathing spell in which to retrieve his power. At the same time he had gained almost certain triumph in a conflict that had rocked labor's world. Some might say he had won by irresponsibly disregarding the national interest; but many in the ranks of labor would call his strategy daring, resourceful, militant, a brilliant vindication of Lewis generalship, a blow to the meek men who had advocated caution.

It is doubtful, too, whether Lewis appreciated the extent of the sub rosa defection which had occurred at Detroit. His colleagues were rarely candid in describing such events to him, and he may well have imagined that the captive-mine victory would reduce the opposition considerably. There would be retribution now for those who had lightly thrown aside loyalty; the moral of his victory would be obvious in every mill and factory.

Jubilantly Lewis sat down with Fairless and Steelman to "arbitrate" the dispute. It was a mock-trial. It took just two weeks for the jury to review the evidence, weigh the facts, solemnly reach its verdict. The vote was two-to-one for a union shop, Fairless dissenting. The outcome was announced on Sunday, December 7. The next day's papers, however, were unable to give this event the space that it might normally have been worth, and there was little room for photographs of a triumphant Lewis.

We were at war.

10

ANOTHER NEW LEWIS

FOR once Lewis was shaken, slow-footed, flustered. His day of personal vindication, so long and patiently planned, was ruined by the calamitous news from the Pacific. Immersed for weeks in labor diplomacy, he saw his achievement suddenly rendered inconsequential. He needed time out to think, to recover his balance. Like many Americans he first doubted the authenticity of the report. To newspapermen who confronted him with the news in late afternoon, he could only stammer his incredulity: "I can't believe it; how did they [the Japanese] get there?" When the fact proved to be inescapable, he perceived its devastating import: no one's life would be quite the same any more, all preconceptions required overhauling, the best-drawn blue-prints were obsolete. We had been attacked, despite the legend of invulnerability which Lewis himself had helped to spread; we were at war, despite the width of the oceans. As the brilliant sunlight of that crisp December afternoon faded, even he may have momentarily felt the sense of impotence and fear which the sudden reality of war implants in most people.

After his faltering though little-noticed first reaction, he remained silent for twenty-four hours. In the intervening time he may have wondered, as did many isolationists, whether the event included any "escape clause." He may have mentally rehearsed the argument that the Japanese blow did not minimize Roosevelt's essential responsibility for the war; he may have groped for other theories to camouflage his embarrassment and justify his earlier stand. But there was no longer any

realm of indecision. Few Americans would be responsive to recriminations and post-mortems; during that split-second there was an emotional tide of authentic national solidarity. In panic men turn to each other; and, whatever his bitterness, Lewis could not stand silent in a corner On Monday evening, after nearly all other leaders of labor and other groups had crowded into print with pledges of unequivocal loyalty to the nation's cause, he authorized a statement:

> When the nation is attacked, every American must rally to its defense. All other considerations become insignificant. Congress and administrative government must be supported and every aid given to the men in the combat services of our country.
>
> Each true American will co-operate, and unified effort become a reality. With all other citizens I join in the support of our government to the day of its ultimate triumph over Japan and all other enemies.

It was one of his least eloquent pronouncements, reflecting his inner intransigence, significantly omitting any reference to the nation's Commander-in-Chief, barren of the rhetorical flourishes that he had so often invoked in times of stress. Of all the isolationist proclamations issued that week, Lewis's seemed among the least inspired. Yet for purposes of propriety it was enough. It was enough to raise cautious hope in many quarters that he would end his spiritual sit-down strike against Roosevelt's administration. On Tuesday the *Times* reported: "Following the lead of John L. Lewis the United Mine Workers' District 50, led by Ora E. Gasaway and Mr. Lewis's daughter Kathryn, who had been a member of the America First Committee, directed its members to withhold strike action without authorization from the top district officers and to give their co-operation in every way possible to the government."

It might take time, many believed, for all the sores of the Roosevelt feud to dry up; but Lewis was apparently on his way toward a reconciliation. This impression steadily gained ground as the opening phases of war were enacted. With the nation philosophically adjusting itself to a long struggle, many

of his former worshipers were happily anticipating his resurrection. Many held that Pearl Harbor offered him another monumental opportunity to escape extinction as an American labor figure. It was true that war had robbed him of the immediate political dividends of the captive-mine decision; labor was too preoccupied with other events to ponder the lessons of his victory, and many felt, anyway, that only the imminence of war had persuaded the President to capitulate.

On the other hand Lewis had been inexorably losing his hold, and it was questionable whether the captive-mine case could have permanently reversed the tide even if war had been delayed. While the UMW *Journal* might exult that the strike was "a poll of the daring and strong, the weak and the hesitant," there were powerful forces arrayed against him, both in and out of CIO, barring the way to any quick restoration. The CIO convention had provided a preview of his decline; only the staging of a nationwide strike had saved him from outright condemnation. His isolationist attitudes were subjecting him to growing abuse, with few laborites willing to speak out in his defense. American labor remained overwhelmingly pro-Roosevelt. Nothing that had happened since 1940 had created any substantial defections from White House leadership. In effect, the captive-mine strike showed that Lewis was being compelled to take increasingly big risks for diminishing returns. Whether he fully realized it or not, he needed more than a single success to win back his crown. But Pearl Harbor changed all that.

He was no longer the "untouchable." The pariah had turned patriot—publicly, at least—and no one questioned the reality of the conversion. Eight years before, during NRA, he had seized a national economic crisis to flee from exile and rebuild his disintegrated labor empire. Now, in an even more catastrophic period, he had another chance to display his resilience.

Before the year ended Lewis was the dominant participant in a momentous national conference of industry and labor leaders summoned by President Roosevelt to create machinery for the settlement of wartime labor disputes. There was a neat

irony in the proceedings: Lewis, having destroyed the Defense Mediation Board, was now to be the architect of a new agency performing similar functions. In the fraternal post-Pearl Harbor atmosphere Lewis's appointment to the committee occasioned little surprise. The President asked Murray to choose the CIO representatives for the conference, and Murray named Lewis. It was only a month since the sluggings at the CIO convention, the apparent break between the two men; now Murray was full of forgiveness again. His appointment of Lewis seemed like an automatic gesture. Some of Murray's aides said that he had named Lewis in order to commit the latter to support of any mediation structure that might be fashioned; Lewis's hostility to the NDMB had caused Murray ample trouble. Lewis did not examine closely the motives involved in the appointment.

Once the conference began such considerations were forgotten anyway. One of the six CIO and AFL delegates, Lewis loomed up at his old height, towering over the other conferees. The meetings were held in a spacious, high-ceilinged room of the Federal Reserve Building, with reporters barred. Participants admitted afterward that Lewis was in superb form: firm, witty, agile. No longer labor's recluse or outcast, he was tacitly recognized as the leader of the AFL-CIO bloc. The AFL contingent—William Green, Matthew Woll, George Meany—as well as Murray and Jules Emspak, left-wing secretary of the Electrical Workers Union, seemed to bow to Lewis's pervasive presence, as if all negative developments of recent months and years had been swept aside. Lewis paid a few private debts while engaging in the bigger business at hand. The President, in an oblique thrust at Lewis, had named William H. Davis as co-moderator, along with Senator Elbert D. Thomas. Before the sessions began Lewis advised Woll to oppose any suggestions that Davis hold daily press conferences to summarize the work of the conferees. Woll dutifully obeyed, and Davis was deflated.

Pleased with this little success, Lewis bounded ahead through the interminable week of wrangling and counter-

moves. It was obvious from the start that this would be no management-labor love-feast. The underlying issue that defied solution was whether or not the new mediation board to be created should have the power to grant union-shop or closed-shop agreements in plants where the open shop prevailed at war's outbreak. The industry representatives, including lanky, genial Cyrus Ching, Charles R. Hook, and Walter Teagle, militantly pleaded for maintenance of the status quo; the laborites insisted that they could relinquish the strike weapon only if they were assured that all issues would be open to mediation and if the new board were cloaked with authority to grant "protection" for unions against open-shop attacks. Lewis and Murray also jointly pushed for adoption of a war labor program, including restrictions on working-hours, equal pay for women, and formation of industry councils with joint labor and management representation. This, too, met resistance; it is curious, in the light of later events, that it was Lewis who fought most aggressively for the drafting of comprehensive principles to guide the new agency and most harshly ridiculed the notion that each case be treated on its merits.

While the conference dragged on inconclusively despite White House pleas for speed, Lewis was alternately buoyant, sarcastic, bellicose. When he first rose to speak he introduced himself solemnly: "My name is John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers" (a line which never failed to bring down the house). When Hook pleaded for preservation of the open shop, Lewis addressed him scathingly: "I have heard this open-shop talk before. The open shop is a harlot with a wig and artificial limbs, and her bones rattle. But how much production will she give us, Mr. Hook?" When Ed Prichard, the booming-voiced young New Dealer who acted as conference secretary, issued a luncheon announcement in stentorian tones, Lewis inquired facetiously: "Are you in training to be a Pullman conductor?"

All the carefully cultivated Lewis mannerisms were once again on view in this small but significant gathering: the drawled sarcasms, the loud roar, the expressive grunt. During

recesses the photographers lined up awaiting his exit, ignoring the other participants, until finally Lewis urged them to snap the waiting Woll. "Let Matty do all the talking—his words are more trenchant than mine," Lewis told them. The camera-shy Murray would trot along behind Lewis, in the ancient formation, as if to deny that there had been any great strain between them; and Emspak, whose left-wing colleagues had been so noisily assailing Lewis only a few weeks before, appeared young and respectful as he walked behind the leader. Sometimes, during brief adjournments, Lewis would pace the corridors in mock meditation, and at other times reporters could overhear his voice raised in a colloquy at the conference table.

Ultimately the President was forced to step in to break the deadlock, a development which Lewis obviously did not desire. But when the industrialists had rejected all compromise on the union-shop issue, Mr. Roosevelt issued an executive order settling the point. He settled it on labor's terms, empowering the new War Labor Board to "finally determine" any industrial disputes "under rules established by the Board." Chagrined at the President's unexpected action, the industrial bloc nevertheless yielded without further argument. The conference was over by then anyhow.

From the standpoint of wartime industrial relations the meetings had not been a resounding triumph and the outlines of future controversy were already sketched; but in terms of the rejuvenation of John L. Lewis the week had been eminently satisfactory. Not even the necessity of final intervention by the President could have spoiled Lewis's enjoyment of the episode. He seemed to be doing very well in the part of peerless patriot, contributing his statesmanship to the services of his nation while also serving as labor's most forceful advocate. By New Year's Day a growing number of laborites were saying to each other that "the big fellow" was still head and shoulders above his contemporaries, and they were saying so without bitterness.

A new and pleasing portrait of Lewis was being mentally

painted by his critics. He might not yet be reconciled to Roosevelt, he might still be reluctant to conclude that he had been in error, but he was not flaunting any of his old grievances. Murray left Washington for a Southern vacation. Labor settled down to the grind of war production. The tantrums of labor politics seemed to have subsided.

The calm lasted for the first sixteen days of January. It ended on the 17th with a great noise—Lewis's sudden proposal for immediate renewal of AFL-CIO peace negotiations.

Overnight it was revealed that Lewis's post-Pearl Harbor interlude of model behavior had signified neither the end of personal ambition nor the mellowing of private feuds. True, he had made all the proper concessions to the patriotic amenities. He had endorsed the no-strike agreement. He had acknowledged the worthiness of the nation's war cause. But he had not neglected his private pursuits.

He had, in fact, been very much occupied with the reordering of his own affairs. The man whom he had chosen for partnership in a new and grandiose enterprise was the same man whom he had punched so righteously at the AFL's 1935 convention. His name was William L. Hutcheson. Big, shambling Hutcheson was still more than a match for Lewis in size, but in no other dimension. His long, lucrative career as head of the AFL Carpenters and ruler of the Building Trades Department had not been marked by any flowering of intellect or wit. He was bullying, bombastic, as slow-moving as a clodhopper, yet well-versed in the machine politics by which the building trades were run. He was a Republican in all political weather, and he had the elephantine touch. But the building trades were the solid rock of AFL financial stability; as their ruler Hutcheson wielded more than one man's influence in the AFL hierarchy.

Being a Republican by prejudice, a business unionist by profession, and not too bright by nature, Hutcheson was responsive to the new Lewis approaches. In Hutcheson's world (as in Lewis's) one brawl did not make a lifelong enmity, especially since the economic origins of the dispute no longer

existed. Nor could Hutcheson avoid a certain naive respect for the elegance of Lewis's machinations. Lewis, on the other hand, was undismayed by dullness or lack of charm in a business associate; his most satisfactory lieutenants, it often seemed, had been those least graced with spiritual refinements or wide imaginations, and some of his best warriors were dolts. It was therefore quite possible for Lewis and Hutcheson to do business together.

It is not yet clear at precisely what point they resumed the association that Lewis had so rudely interrupted in 1935. But Lewis's motive in reviving the alliance was clear. He had seen the CIO turn its back on him. He had suffered ingratitude and impertinence at the hands of subalterns. He had watched the left-wingers change from obsequious admirers to ruthless critics. He had been rebuffed by Murray as well as all the others. The CIO was plainly no longer his possession. He might regain some influence in its councils, but only by playing the game according to the Roosevelt rules. Otherwise he would be reduced to further wrangles with the sniping men of limited size. Why not plunge now for much bigger stakes, in one grand offensive, with a scheme as reasonable and innocent on its face as it was far-reaching in design?

If, through his prodding, AFL and CIO could be united, the strength of his enemies within CIO would obviously be reduced; they would be lesser animals in a much bigger kingdom. If he could dictate the selection of the leader of the united movement (obviously it could not be himself), he could be the man behind a bigger throne than either CIO's or AFL's. Then there could be no more White House insults, no more taunts from the Lilliputians. At the labor-industry conference he had shown his ability to dominate the conduct of AFL and CIO officials alike. Put them together in one labor house, under a ruler acceptable to both Hutcheson and himself, and the whole balance of labor power would be shifted. The left-wingers would become an impotent sect within the larger federation; Murray, having tasted the pains of leadership, would be content to accept a vice-presidency at a comfortable salary;

Green would be handsomely pensioned, free to address women's clubs in his declining years; and some robust, practical product of the building trades would be hoisted into the presidency, fully appreciative of his debt to Lewis and Hutcheson.

Thus, it may be assumed, Lewis unfolded the plan and the phlegmatic Hutcheson nodded, like a man inspecting the terms of a real-estate transaction. Having assured himself of Hutcheson's co-operation, Lewis did not bide his time. How many other men were apprised of the details is still a subject of debate and disclaimer. Certainly Murray was not, nor was anyone else who might have prematurely carried the tale to him. So on January 17, toward midafternoon, newspapermen were summoned to the Mine Workers building to receive sensational tidings. It was Saturday, and Lewis has always found the Sunday papers a pleasant canvas for his portrait. He released the text of a letter he had mailed to Murray and Green, proposing immediate resumption of unity conferences as a preliminary to an early "accouplement" of the two labor forces.

For twenty-four hours Lewis was jubilant. The politicos of labor floundered foolishly, uncertain what attitude to assume, looking alternately pleased and petrified, some issuing statements and regretting them, others remaining incommunicado because they did not know what to say. The shock was only a little less stunning than the Pacific communiqué a few weekends earlier, but this time they were unsure whether to be indignant or cheerful. On the one hand many of them genuinely favored early unification of labor; but the suddenness of Lewis's action, his apparent failure to consult CIO associates, the inexplicable turnabout in his own attitude, all stirred uneasiness. On the afternoon that Lewis released the letter Murray was aboard a train returning north. He bought a Sunday paper during a stop-over and learned that Lewis had written him a letter.

Lewis held the initiative all that day. Most of the laborites reached by reporters confessed that they saw no way of turning down the Lewis formula. With the nation at war the pros-

pect of labor united was an appealing one. Having long accused Lewis of blocking reunion, few labor leaders felt disposed to condemn him for proposing peace—even if the origins of his conversion were shadowy. Moreover, since Murray was inaccessible, it was not immediately known whether he had any advance knowledge of the step.

So it looked on that turbulent Sunday as if Lewis had scored; and not all men were convinced that the aim of his program was sinister. Once again he held a huge tactical advantage: there was surface merit, compelling wartime logic in his letter. But was this the whole story?

The midnight edition of *The New York Times* brought the first strong intimation that Lewis had omitted some salient details. A front-page story, under the by-line of A. H. Raskin, reported that Lewis and certain AFL leaders were so confident of labor unity "that already they have reached an understanding on officers to lead a unified labor movement." According to Raskin, Lewis had held "unofficial" conversations with top AFL spokesmen to clear the way, and jobs, salaries, and other prosaic matters had been amicably adjusted. Green had agreed to step aside "in the national interest," enabling George Meany to ascend to the presidency of a united federation; Lewis would become first or second vice-president on an expanded executive council; Murray was to be named secretary-treasurer (at $18,000 a year).

Not all details of Raskin's story survived subsequent inquiry, and there is serious question whether the plan had been so widely disclosed or so finally sealed as he suggested. But its essence was unmistakably true; it bore convincing signs of having been "leaked" by someone well-versed in current labor intrigue. It sounded plausible; it sounded like Lewis. Later events have clearly confirmed the existence of a Lewis-Hutcheson axis, and not all the disclaimers by others said to have been involved are entirely convincing.

Publication of the article created greater bedlam than the original Lewis letter. It confirmed the darkest suspicions that had arisen over the week-end. It gave Lewis's critics some

tangible basis for complaint. Most important, it offended Philip Murray's most sensitive instincts—it implied that he could be "had," without prior notice or consultation, if the salary were high enough, and that he would ratify any deal which made ample provision for his old-age and social-security fund. In this respect, at least, Lewis had grossly misjudged his human materials again.

With the passage of each hour Lewis saw the effects of his paralyzing coup wear off, the shock giving way to anger. He had reckoned with almost everything but a premature revelation. Murray, who had declined to say anything at first, regained his voice. "No one has the right to trade me for a job," he said. "Jobs are not sufficiently alluring where principles are concerned." And he added: "I believe in doing things the democratic way. There have been no peace meetings in over two years, and I thought that if peace conferences should be held no Pearl Harbor should ensue." He would not, he insisted, be "Pearl Harbored" into any overnight deal.

Taking up a refrain which he was to repeat many times, Murray protested that "my manhood requires a little reciprocity—and, by God, despite this feeble frame of mine, I will fight any living man to maintain my manhood!"

A meeting of the CIO executive board was hastily summoned for the following Saturday. Throughout the preceding days Murray reiterated the belief that any unity conferences should have been initiated through his office, as president of the CIO, rather than at Lewis's whim. Administration officials, scenting a Republican labor coup in the Lewis-Hutcheson venture, actively entered the fray. Murray and several AFL leaders were called to confer with the President, who left the plain impression that he believed the worst about Lewis and Hutcheson.

Lewis remained stonily uncommunicative. By midweek he knew that the plan had fizzled. The President, as adept at improvisation as Lewis, quickly formed a "labor cabinet," composed of three AFL and three CIO leaders. This cabinet, he indicated, would adequately unify labor's role in the war effort

until a full merger could be democratically fashioned. CIO unions rallied to Murray's side, issuing heated criticisms of Lewis's conduct.

By the time the CIO board convened on Saturday in New York, its stand was clearly fixed. Lewis had been invited to the session to explain his action. He knew that any explanations were superfluous. Instead he sent a surly communication in defense of himself. In this missive he relied heavily on the CIO's "constitutional" procedures. He pointed out that the last AFL-CIO talks had adjourned in 1939 subject to call by the chairman of the committee—and he was still the chairman. There was nothing in the CIO constitution which stripped him of this authority; two succeeding conventions had left the peace machinery intact. He took no notice of the fact that there were two other CIO members of the committee—Murray and Hillman—and that presumably they were privileged to receive advance word of any major move. Except for this detail, his legalism appeared sound; few men could pose more piously as literal "constitutionalists" than Lewis when circumstances so decreed. In this letter, for the first time, he also took occasion to deny the "plot" which had been attributed to him:

"Your letter and public statements imply that without consultation I have taken it upon myself to assume the authority to blue-print some plan for labor peace between the CIO and AFL. That, in addition, I have tentatively agreed to the acceptance of certain leadership that might in the end dismember the CIO if such a coalition were formed. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have no commitments of any character to anyone that affect any phase of this problem." Then, as if stamping his foot, he added: "I will not attend your board meeting. I am not a member of the executive board. The board has no power to negate convention action. . . ."

The denial, however, came late and ineffectually, and the "constitutionalisms" were similarly unimpressive. The truce was over. Before the CIO board acted there were a series of addresses assailing Lewis and his latest works. The board voted

to endorse the newly formed labor cabinet and expressed the hope that labor unity might one day be realized.

* * *

So once again Lewis's soaring star abruptly descended. In the two months after Pearl Harbor it had momentarily seemed he would recapture actual control (if not formal leadership) of large sections of labor. But again he had tried to go too far too quickly. He had discounted the human obstacles, assuming they could be purchased or ridden over. He had relied on the old back-room method, oblivious to the danger of exposure. Compressed in those two months was almost a miniature of his life story: the conspiratorial craftsmanship, the big risk, the fatal miscalculation about men. Yet he had come close to success, and he might still blame accident as much as error for the débâcle.

He gleaned some satisfaction even out of the defeat. In a private conversation with David Dubinsky a few days later he did not appear bitter or morose. Dubinsky had just seen the President, and Lewis, learning of his presence in Washington, visited him at his hotel room. Reviewing the scuttling of his peace ship, Lewis pointed out that it had required the intervention of the nation's Commander-in-Chief to thwart his outline of labor's future. There was honor in a defeat suffered on so grand a scale, Lewis suggested. Franklin D. Roosevelt had taken time out from the affairs of a worldwide war to deal with John L. Lewis. The victim of this defeat was obviously not puny. Moreover, wasn't the panic his plan had aroused an inadvertent tribute to his power? If he were one of the small men, there would have been no such fear of a labor unity scheme that he had devised; the fear was an admission that he could effortlessly dominate any combination of the two labor houses, a recognition that the satellites of the administration would be impotent to handle him in the new federation he had projected. Fume and fret though they might, his foes recognized his stature. They could compete with him only by exiling him; feel secure only when he was absent; they

had to summon the Commander-in-Chief to keep him out of their councils. Certainly there was some comfort in these musings.

But in the outcome there was tragedy for labor. For Lewis's precipitate move had indefinitely delayed, rather than hastened, a reunion, and many dormant feuds had been revived. He might argue that this was because other labor leaders lacked the imagination and courage to accept him on his terms; that they were so terrified by his shadow that they could not see the real virtue of his program. But there was another reason for the skepticism. It had become impossible for most people to distinguish his principles from his pursuit of power; he had so entwined the verbal goals with his private machinations that men always looked for hidden meanings in his words.

Now he faced exile again.

11

THREE-MILLION-DOLLAR FLOP

AFTER the "accouplement" plan had failed, the war in which the United States was engaged no longer seemed to be John L. Lewis's war. Many wondered whether he would have acted differently if the maneuver had succeeded; whether, had he wrested the credentials of chief wartime spokesman for labor, he would have sung all the patriotic hymns and aggressively interested himself in the battle for production. The inescapable fact was that he could not emotionally identify himself with a crusade in which he was assigned an obscure role. When it became apparent that he was not to be labor's leading voice in the councils of war, he appeared to grow almost apathetic about the struggle. He shunned public appearances, saving his public voice for strictly union business, allowing the *United Mine Workers' Journal* to degenerate into a carping carbon-copy of the *Chicago Tribune.*

Not that he had lost his interest in military affairs; of all the amateur strategists who devised private theories for the conquest of the Axis, Lewis was among the most active. In April he told an associate of the plan he had presented only a few weeks earlier at a stag party attended—he said casually—by four or five Senators, an Admiral, and a General. During a discussion of vast military and naval alternatives, one of the diners abruptly asked Lewis what course he would pursue. "I hesitate to raise my voice in such company," Lewis replied (according to his own recollection), but without further provocation he outlined his grand maneuver. He would, he said, rally the

greatest armada in naval annals; he would take every American and British ship from every theater, organize one huge flotilla, and set sail for Japan. The rest would be easy. Extinction of Japan would require a relatively brief period; once accomplished, the war with Germany could be resumed. The Germans might have created some havoc in the interim, but it would not be disastrous.

Unfortunately, Lewis brooded, his view was not likely to be accepted because "Great Britain dominates our councils." However he noted with some satisfaction that the select audience to which he had outlined his program was deeply impressed. "The old admiral," Lewis recalled pleasurably, "finally said: 'Mr. Lewis, you're right.' " Apparently the others silently assented but were powerless to do anything about it.

As he told the story Lewis made swooping gestures, personally imitating the armada which would first crash through all Japan's outer defenses and finally land on Nippon's shores. He was plainly enamored of the project; he had worked it out carefully. He had recently acquired a large map of the world, which hung behind his chair. When he sat back his right shoulder blotted out the Pacific, his left shoulder the Atlantic, and his massive head pretty well obliterated the Western Hemisphere.

But his participation in the war was largely restricted to such vicarious adventures. There was no one of sufficient eminence ready to listen to his counsel; the war was being run without him, and the strategy employed was plainly at variance with his own. Like any frustrated military genius, he was bound to look a little uninterestedly at a campaign which he had done nothing to plan and in which he was not directly involved.

Yet he fiercely resented any aspersions upon his loyalty. On one occasion, when asked what he thought the nation's military outlook was, he replied grimly: "We have got to win this war, no matter how long it takes—to labor's good or not, we have got to win this war." He could not resist adding that the

people would be very irritated when they perceived the errors in our strategy.

He rationalized his own apparent indifference with the reply that his services had been offered and rejected. Frequently he complained of the administration's "black-list"; it was well known that after the death of the unity plan the President had forcefully admonished Murray not to give Lewis any key post on labor committees dealing with the White House. So Lewis sulked. He disavowed any responsibility for the status of the home front, beyond the realm of the coal fields; the rest was Roosevelt's property. He derided the war fervor of other labor officials and the concessions which they made in the interests of national harmony. Murray and Green, he confided to interviewers, had got themselves in a hell of a hole; they didn't have the guts or ability to work out a program; they were letting Roosevelt control labor, and get away with everything. Hillman was on the way out; even the President knew that he was through, but still charitably kept him around, regarding him as "an ill-favored thing but mine own." With contemptuous observations of that sort Lewis regaled those who still came to visit him.

Lewis was not consciously a "defeatist," yearning for his nation's doom as punishment for those who had cast him off. He cited White House neglect, his omission from any responsible war post, the treatment of his unity plan as evidence that his help was neither solicited nor desired. Stealthily, with daily doses of self-justification, he became the prisoner of his petulance. While other laborites toured industrial areas rousing their followers to greater productive efforts, Lewis scorned such activity. Through the spring and summer of 1942 he rarely ventured into the public spotlight.

All his intuitive isolationism was revived by the rebuffs he had suffered. His frame of mind was not unlike that of many others who had shared his pre-Pearl Harbor views—those who were torn between a native loyalty to their country and a sullen conviction that all the shooting was unnecessary, between hope that the war might be swiftly won and an irre-

pressible displeasure at any events that brought credit to the Commander-in-Chief. He was prey to all the clashing emotions of those who saw Roosevelt, rather than Hitler, as the enemy; who identified the Soviet armies with the American Communists; who regarded the British Empire as indistinguishable from the people of Britain. These phobias were not unique to Lewis; they afflicted thousands of Americans through the long months of war. The personal frustration which Lewis had encountered made him susceptible to each device of disaffection. But he flared up angrily at any suggestion of disloyalty, as if some misty inner guilt had been touched by the charge.

While blaming his troubles on the White House "palace guard," he bought war bonds for his union, accompanying the purchase with flamboyant announcements. Would he have diverted all his energies to the single task of war if he had received a properly cushioned seat at the White House? Perhaps the uncertainty of the answer is the strongest justification for the President's attitude. Lewis had never exhibited any capacity for collective endeavor; he had to be at the helm while others did his bidding. Could he have adjusted himself to the notion of Roosevelt as his commander? Was it labor representation or Lewis representation for which he hungered?

By spring of 1942 the questions were academic.

As the thin twig linking him to the common effort snapped, he resumed his private wars. No longer would he make any pretense of loyalty to CIO or dissipate his strength in futile attempts to reunite AFL and CIO. Having created a great labor organization which now sought to devour its maker, he would begin over again, in new terrain. He would demonstrate that the Lewis hand was still firm, the touch still magnetic. There would be snarls of rage from many camps and nasty questionings of his patriotism for undertaking so large-scale an organizing drive in time of war. He had heard all that before; results alone counted.

So in March the trumpets were tuned up again to announce that John L. Lewis was ready to lead the nation's dairy farmers out of the valley of despond. Kathryn Lewis asserted that

30,000 of them, in New York and Michigan, had already enrolled in the Lewis column. These new recruits were added to the rolls of District 50—the weird conglomerate which became the recruiting office for the new Lewis army. The dairy-farmer campaign had many novel and captivating aspects. It was an attempt to organize a group deemed congenitally hostile to labor unionism; it created the obvious specter of Lewis control of the nation's milk supply. There were, Lewis estimated, 3,000,000 dairy farmers to be rallied, a sizeable base for new operations.

Although the theoretical link between milk and coal required heavy-handed elucidation, Lewis was impervious to the cartoonist's view of events. In the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* Fitzpatrick depicted Lewis in Napoleonic dress astride a cow, riding past a farmhouse, under the caption "Return from Elba." Other commentators found the vision of Lewis in the dairy-farm belt less ludicrous, and there were as many editorial writers who wept and wailed as there were those who snickered. The conservative farm organizations joined with spokesmen for the dairy interests in expressions of alarm. The drive provoked indignation as well as laughter.

Among those who palpitated most feverishly over the new Lewis enterprise was Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York. Dewey called Lewis's dairy-farmer recruiting campaign "the desperate scheme of a frustrated man whose every previous effort to fasten himself and his views on the American people has been repudiated." He pictured Lewis drawing $27,000,000 annually in dues from the 3,000,000 men he planned to organize. Concluding this arithmetic exercise Dewey issued a warning that must have given Lewis a sense of pleasurable anticipation:

"Here is the most staggering slush fund ever placed in the hands of any American, to say nothing of a dangerous and ambitious one. Over a four-year period this will amount to $108,000,000. Both political parties put together spent about $30,000,000 during the last presidential election. For any man who might want to be a dictator here would be available a

sum more than three times that amount. In addition he would have control of the food supply of the nation. By such a throttle-hold on the lifeblood of the nation he would be in a position to dictate America's destiny."

Like many others, Dewey was virtually conceding that Lewis's announcement of his plans was tantamount to success. Lewis did not disagree.

On March 6 Lewis held a press conference to introduce some of his new dairy-farmer followers to Washington newspapermen and to signalize the big organizing push. The conference was hardly a dramatic triumph; the dairy-farm representatives seemed ill at ease in the strange environment of the Mine Workers building, and Lewis himself lacked some of his customary composure in dealing with this alien band. The session, however, was notable for several things. It marked the beginning of a "war of nerves" against rival labor leaders. To all questions about his long-range plans he answered tersely, but with veiled significance, "No comment." Was he really starting a third labor organization? When would the miners withdraw from CIO? Would he deny reports of growing friction between himself and other CIO leaders? Invariably: "No comment." Only one inquiry evoked a candid Lewis reply, and it was given by Kathryn. When a reporter asked why the dairy farmers had chosen to join District 50 rather than sign up with CIO, Kathryn answered quickly, "They wanted to come under the direct leadership of Mr. Lewis."

There was, of course, more than milk in unorganized territory. District 50 agents were released from any restrictions as to where—or how—they garnered recruits. "I have no desire to enter into an academic discussion of jurisdictional rights," Lewis said; "I know of nothing of less consequence today." His field-men muscled in wherever they saw a half-opened door: they raided existing unions, prowled open-shop territory, signed "sweetheart" compacts with some acquiescent employers, challenged AFL and CIO unions alike. Lewis spared no expense. In 1933 he had risked his last $75,000 to rebuild the UMW; he was far more opulent when this new

drive started. Money flowed freely. New organizers were engaged, often without any careful scrutiny of their past records, and some whose training had been interrupted by prison sentences grabbed prominent posts. Lewis spokesmen boasted that 700 organizers had been employed. The rule was "organize anything that isn't nailed down." "Denny" Lewis confided to reporters: "The new Lewis movement will be bigger and more important than the whole CIO." Established in 1936 as a UMW subsidiary for workers in coke, chemical, and allied industries—estimated at 1,000,000—District 50 now declared its determination to rally the 3,000,000 dairy farmers and 2,000,000 utility workers as well. "In the hands of another union leader this extended domain would mean little or nothing," Will Chasen and Victor Riesel wrote in *The Nation*, "but Lewis's daring and pertinacity, fed by the UMW's $5,000,000 treasury and $900,000 monthly income, may swiftly transform it into the nation's mightiest labor group."

Lewis opponents invariably exaggerated his gains in those early months of the new offensive. In actuality the campaign was a fabulous flop. It was sustained almost as much by the outcries of the fearful as by any tangible dividends which it yielded. It was a far more formidable movement in the imaginings of CIO leaders than in any dues-paying roster that could be cited. To an amazing degree the "third labor movement" was a myth, rendered menacing by the inscrutable Lewis manner and the unpredictable Lewis strategy.

Not until recently was the fantastic scope of the hoax revealed. It was evident, however, as 1942 progressed that the Lewis magic was encountering many difficulties. None of the feverish spontaneity and warmth of the CIO was visible in this 1942 movement that he had visualized as a return engagement with destiny. Many theories were advanced for the desultory nature of the drive. Lewis had lost many of his ablest lieutenants—Murray, Bittner, Brophy, Hapgood, and Haywood. Ora Gasaway, who was fond of dictating letters but revealed no latent brilliancy in any field, was nominally directing District 50's affairs until Lewis was finally forced to send him

back to Indiana for refurbishing. Kathryn intermittently held leading posts in the new organization, but her accomplishments were not noteworthy. Her absences became more extended as the drive failed to recapture the gaudy colors of the CIO.

Meanwhile dairy farmers did not seem to shed all their anti-union prejudices overnight. Workers in other fields appeared frightened by the anti-Roosevelt stigma which Lewis carried. Lewis's war-cries evoked distrust or apathy in most areas.

Underlying the failure was the negative, nebulous spirit in which the new crusade had been undertaken. There was no Messianic overtone to this adventure, none of the fiery idealism and the flame of emancipation which had accompanied CIO's growth. Despite an abundance of organizers, of funds, of all the routine paraphernalia of unionization, there was a great vacuum in the whole effort. Grimly seeking to emulate the CIO performance, the Lewis machine lacked heart and spirit. This was an unadorned business proposition, devoid of intellectual or romantic fiber. In many places Lewis representatives sought to spare themselves the drudgery of organization by buying up the leaders of existing dairy-farm groups, who were then to deliver their followers en masse into the Lewis legion. This was not a new tactic; but as the main method, rather than an incidental technique, it was woefully insufficient. The campaign seemed to mirror the vengeful, irascible mood in which it had been initiated by Lewis.

Gradually observers began to suggest that District 50 was no new CIO, no vast stirring of the multitudes. Did this mean that Lewis was through, that his touch was lost? Perhaps, instead, it permitted a fuller, more realistic appraisal of Lewis as organizer. The miracle-man legend had been tested and debunked. He had extracted maximum gains from the favorable historical climate of 1933 and 1936; no one could question that. His personality had given depth and dignity to movements that sprang from deep social roots. Now, however, with no historical momentum at work, the mere Lewis presence

proved no automatic inspiration. The artful strategist floundered.

Still he concealed the true scope of his predicament. Even while the suspicion of failure grew, he perpetuated the element of suspense. So vast and ill-defined was the potential domain of District 50 that no one knew where he might invade next—and Lewis carefully nourished the fear that he might strike at almost any place. Going nowhere, he conveyed the impression that he was going everywhere. His name imparted an ominous quality to even the most feeble gestures of District 50. When it tried to organize custodial workers in New York schools it made virtually no headway, but the local directors of the campaign threatened to call a strike anyway. The New York *Herald Tribune* carried a grim page-one headline: "Lewis Union Threatens School Shutdown." Other newspapers were similarly impressed. Parents worried about their children, editorial writers protested, a sense of impending crisis spread. The strike was finally called, increasing the uproar. But virtually nobody struck. The District 50 "organization" was a handful of men—not enough to close one building in the city.

While American troops scattered around the world, Lewis deployed the hired mercenaries of District 50 in a succession of sham battles. Not until late in 1943 did the full truth about the futility of the venture emerge. Then a study of the UMW's financial records disclosed that Lewis had spent $3,024,956 on District 50 in the period from December 1940 to June 1943. The largest part of that sum—more than $2,500,000—was expended after Pearl Harbor when he launched his attempt to found another labor kingdom. Despite these expenditures, District 50 was paying per capita tax to the UMW for only 48,000 members as of June 1943. This was all Lewis could show for his huge investment. His "three-million-dollar baby" was a sickly creature, the new empire another unrealized dream.

12

"THE BIG FELLOW"

THERE have been few enduring friendships in the long Lewis journey that began in Lucas, Iowa, yet nearly all those associates who parted with him in 1942 suffered real mental agonies. Although these acquaintanceships had often appeared cursory and businesslike, Lewis seldom left a light mark on the lives he touched. After the formal separations had occurred, his ubiquitous shadow seemed to trail the footsteps of the ex-lieutenants, no matter how swiftly they walked or what detours they took. Some of them lapsed into bleak bitterness, damning him and all his works; others, in mellow moments, still nostalgically retained their recollections. Virutally no one was able to stride from his house without looking backward with furtive fascination. There was awe in the hatred Lewis aroused, and fear was blended with the anger. The allegiance he inspired was much more profound than many of his colleagues realized until they had left. They wrote resolutions condemning him and aped his style; they ridiculed his wrath and inwardly trembled over what he might do next. To nearly all of them the Lewis association had been the memorable fact of life.

Of all the renegades from the Lewis mansion Murray suffered the greatest torment. After the "accouplement" uproar, possibility of a reconciliation vanished. Although Murray retained his office in the UMW building, the proximity was painful, productive only of frayed nerves. One morning soon after the public row, Lewis and Murray met by chance in the lobby of the Mine Workers building. They nearly came to blows.

Lewis, recalling Murray's suggestion that he would not be "Pearl Harbored," construed this as a veiled way of saying that Lewis was a Jap. Murray retorted hotly, and they traded epithets and denials for several moments on that level. After that they rarely spoke.

Lewis mapped his moves deliberately, unencumbered by sentimentality over the CIO or Murray. He instructed Kennedy, his pliable secretary-treasurer, to cease payment of the UMW per capita tax to the CIO—amounting to $30,000 a month. He contended that no further payments ought to be made until the CIO should repay the miners a debt of $1,665,000 which had allegedly accrued from earlier loans. This was a crude afterthought. During Lewis's tenure as CIO president this sum had been recorded on the CIO books not as a debt but rather as a gift similar to many made by the UMW and other powerful unions during the infancy of the new movement. In effect it represented money which John L. Lewis, UMW president, had transferred to John L. Lewis, CIO president. Having declared war on CIO, Lewis was not disturbed by such details. He no longer had any reason to subsidize the enterprise he had founded. He had other plans. So he hauled out labored legal language to justify his course.

Murray understood that Lewis was serving notice that he intended to sever any lingering ties with CIO. Lewis would choose the time of his withdrawal, delay the act until it fitted his plans. That was simply an issue of time and place. Nevertheless Murray shunned any step that might have labeled him aggressor. At this point the Administration was ready to back him in a full-fledged effort to wrest control of the miners' union. Governor Neely of West Virginia was prepared to aid in the West Virginia fields, and other circumstances favored such a campaign. Murray balked. He would not countenance any actions by the CIO officialdom to penalize the UMW for its default. He awaited Lewis's next move. He wanted to keep the record of non-aggression unsullied. Expecting the worst, he declined to precipitate a showdown, tried to go about his daily business as if nothing were happening.

Lewis proceeded slowly, imposing a sort of spiritual third-degree on Murray by the dilatory steps he employed. He told Murray nothing, let him suspect everything. Then late in April he announced that the UMW Policy Committee would be convened on May 25. Lewis neglected, however, to indicate the nature of the agenda. Murray was permitted to sweat during the intervening days, imagining the most diabolical conspiracies and unable to document his fears.

It was effective punishment. Still occupying his uneasy chair at UMW headquarters, Murray was steadily made aware that he was being watched and studied. On May 7 he removed all his papers from the building, transporting them to CIO headquarters a few blocks away. The Murray office at UMW was a beleaguered island, facing hostile glances and oblique threats; his assistants went to their desks like conspirators in a novel of the Underground. There were no overt acts, but the atmosphere of impending doom was skillfully developed.

By the time the Policy Committee met, the drama was growing tedious. A few days earlier Murray had visited his home UMW local in Cokeburg, Pa. There, in the presence of affectionate miners who had known him throughout his career, he wept as he pleaded his case. He also touched on the controversy in an address to the Pennsylvania Industrial Union Council, recalling how Lewis (whom he did not name) had promised to support him as CIO leader and had broken the pledge. In all his performances Murray stressed his reluctance to have an open break, affirmed his innocence of any aggressive designs, implied that he was prepared to make almost any sacrifice to effect a reconciliation. Lewis said nothing.

Finally the Policy Committee assembled, its members squatting in closely packed chairs in the unforgettable UMW basement. It is in the Mine Workers building that the full magnificence of Lewis's paternalism can be felt. There, in the smoke-filled basement, members of the Policy Committee periodically assemble to ratify his conclusions while gazing at four walls thickly plastered with photographs and cartoons of John L. Lewis. There, as they meditate, hundreds of bellicose, bushy-

browed Lewises seem to be glaring at them, so that each man must feel he is seated in a weird hall of mirrors.

With the committee members Lewis acts like a stern and domineering yet sympathetic and affectionate father handling devoted but not-too-bright children. After one committee session while reporters clustered around Lewis asking questions, some of the committee members remained behind, conversing audibly. Lewis interrupted the interview to shout gaily but firmly at the intruders, "Cheese it, fellows, cheese it!" They subsided promptly. Then to the sophisticated reporters, with a wink, "That's off the record."

The Policy Committee members come to Washington in their Sunday clothes, glimpse the great man, make formal obeisances to his wishes, and then retire to their hotel rooms where they can drink, swear, and express themselves without fear of serious social error. Lewis figuratively pats their heads and sends them off to bed before they leave the UMW building. There are no rowdy arguments or conflicts of ideas. All such belong to the past.

Most of the faces in the picture of the high council are old and familiar—Thomas Kennedy, James Mark, Martin Brennan, Percy Tetlow, William Mitch, John T. Jones. Virtually no young recruits have been elevated to top positions, and most of the survivors are amiable, undistinguished men content to accept the Lewis-decreed order or things. There is no premium on brilliance in the UMW hierarchy; the thinking is done by Lewis, sometimes after colloquies with K. C. Adams, his publicist and statistician, a salty, gruff, anti-intellectual who maintains a measure of independence by threatening to resign and who boasts that he never voted for Roosevelt. Adams is genuinely skillful in juggling the complicated arithmetical equations of the coal industry and has no large personal ambitions. There must be no contenders for the Lewis throne, and any succession must follow death or retirement.

This is the Lewis machine, the product of two decades of experimentation, elimination, and spiritual streamlining. Nearly all its components are well fed, well paid, well satisfied, rarely

disturbed by any such abstract issues as whether Lewis is right or wrong. Lewis in turn rarely solicits their advice or consultation (even his daughter was somewhat embarrassed when the newspaper issued by District 50—of which she was still secretary-treasurer—published a sharp attack on the AFL in an issue appearing on the same day that Lewis announced he would lead the miners back into the Federation).

The subordinates carry out their assignments with supreme faith in the wisdom of the Big Shot and with assurance that their posts are secure as long as they let him do their thinking. In their own minds many of them may well feel that it is in this way that they can best serve their people. They have so long watched the Napoleonic generalship with their own eyes, so long listened to the melodious, learned sentences, that they have concluded that Lewis is far above the stature of simple men like themselves.

Inevitably the solemnity of their worship is open to caricature, but they tolerate no humorous situation in which he is the victim. Lewis once told of walking down an Alexandria street and stooping to pick up some pieces of broken glass. "I suddenly turned around and found that two sightseeing buses were parked, with the occupants craning their necks out of the windows to stare at the posterior of a great man." Lewis related the story with a glint of gaiety and it was subsequently recounted at a party attended by labor officials. None of the Lewis henchmen laughed. A disinterested eye-witness commented later: "They had been kissing that posterior for so long that they couldn't possibly regard it as a joke."

This was more than a local Tammany that Lewis had built out of the Miners Union. It was a tightly knit cult, a fanatical follow-the-leader corps. As it finally emerged the machine looked like a confirmation of the theory that the world has few strong men and many mediocre ones; perhaps he confused the UMW building with the world and the faithful ones around him with all humanity.

In any case, he believed, it was at last a machine that would not easily crack up. During his post-Pearl Harbor reverses the

atmosphere was unaltered. The newspaper published by District 50 portrayed Lewis bursting through the clouds to organize the still unorganized. There would be a Second Coming.

This was the "jury" before which Murray went on trial—a jury of which he had often been a member in the past. He attended the meetings like a man who knew his doom was decided but insisted on a last plea. At the outset he extended his hand to Lewis, who responded stiffly. Throughout the long first-day session (these conferences last as many days as Lewis decrees), Lewis steered the deliberations away from the subject that obsessed everyone. Routine business was listlessly conducted. The only hint of an internal quarrel was given by Murray when he referred to his recent election as president of the Steel Workers Union and voiced the "hope" that he might retain his vice-presidency of the UMW. Lewis commented meaningfully, "I've been a one-union man myself since 1940." That was all. The meeting recessed in late afternoon without confronting the major business. Lewis seemed eager to ascertain how long Murray could endure the suspense.

Tuesday was different. This time Lewis restricted attendance at the meeting to the fifty-odd members of the executive board. For three tense hours he and Murray alternately held the floor. Nominally the issue up for discussion was the UMW's financial relationship with the CIO, and the status of the so-called debt. This was the pretext for an airing of all the resentment and self-righteousness which had accumulated in both men. They debated the "accouplement" plan as well as the debt, ranged over other matters which had figured in the feud. Lewis was arrogant, relentless; Murray was tearful, defensive. There was no compassion in Lewis's voice; this was clearly a time for a demonstration of power. When, grimly and without embellishment, he referred to Murray as "my former friend," all the nervous men in the room knew that the decision had been reached, that the executioner was on notice. Thenceforth it would be only a matter of form, of what technicality would be invoked. The jury had been given its cue.

Men who attended the meeting (the press was not ad-

mitted) said that Murray was twice overcome by emotion in the course of his oratory; his eyes filled, his body wilted in the smoky, confining room. Lewis sat impassively until it was his turn to rebut again. Murray repeated anew that he had neither sought nor desired the CIO presidency, that he had accepted only under compulsion and regretted that the post had taken his time from his UMW labors. Seeming to plead for mercy rather than justice, he provided Lewis with valuable ammunition for later use. At one point, for example, referring again to the excessively labored issue of whether he had called Lewis a Jap, Murray let loose a flood of fond words:

"Now as to the constant reference about Phil Murray calling John Lewis a Jap. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I don't know how often it should become necessary for me to repeat and repeat and repeat that as a man and as a citizen and as an American I have always regarded Mr. Lewis as without a peer in the realm of America. I dislike and I resent, no matter whose mouth it flows from, the implication that I made any filthy, insinuating remark concerning President Lewis's Americanism."

The transcript of this passage was carefully preserved by Lewis.

Despite this tremulous tribute Lewis responded with neither pity nor tenderness. His bearing remained ostentatiously aloof, as though he felt no reason for remorse. Why should he? According to all the rituals of the Lewis machine Murray was guilty of high treason. It was Murray who had refused to take orders. It was Murray who had criticized his leader in public. It was Murray who had upset the best-laid plans because of some silly vanity about the way he had been left out of the planning. It was Murray who was the usurper. No business organization could tolerate such disloyalty. The disciple had tried to act as if he were bigger than the master. Well, now we would see. Tears might budge little men, but in Lewis they provoked contempt rather than softness. Never prodigal with pity, he gave no sign now that Murray had touched any old sentiment.

Still no decision was announced. Overnight the tension was increased by a brawl in the lobby of the Ambassador Hotel. Anthony Federoff, an ex-miner working for Murray's Steel Workers Union, was slugged by some zealous Lewis lieutenants. Meanwhile reports were afloat that President Roosevelt might have something to say about the threatened ouster of Murray, that he might at least issue a statement lauding Murray's support of the war program, thereby implying that any action against him was an evidence of subversion.

Wednesday the play continued, again without climax, but the end was in sight. Formal complaint against Murray was laid before the delegates as the spokesmen of District 50 accused him of "treason" to the miners' cause. Murray, worn by the strain, began to fight back. He charged that the hearings "did not conform to common decency"; he protested the procedure being employed. Lewis let his henchmen do most of the answering, confining himself to a few cryptic denunciations of CIO leaders (he described R. J. Thomas as a "dunderhead blubbermouth") and to a review of the vast contribution he had rendered to CIO. He asked Murray bluntly whether he intended to retain his vice-presidency of the UMW in view of his other duties. Murray pointed out that he had assumed his other posts only at Lewis's request—first chairman of SWOC, then the presidency of CIO; and that Lewis himself had at one time held several jobs besides his UMW title. Finally Murray rose to leave, asserting that he had on hand many matters related to the war which could not wait. Lewis asked archly whether he considered them more important than the affairs of the UMW. Murray wearily replied that he did. Michael F. Widman, Jr., District 50 representative, delivered a long anti-Murray oration, concluding with a tribute to Lewis. Lewis praised Widman. It went on that way for a long time.

The verdict was returned on Thursday. The previous evening reporters had been told that the decision would not come until the end of the week, but Lewis unexpectedly altered his time-table and program. The executive board assembled at 11 A.M. Lewis, serving as prosecutor, key witness, and judge,

had decided to scrap the original charges and to oust Murray on simpler "constitutional" grounds of his own; and under the UMW constitution Lewis could do as he pleased. He informed the board that he was acting under two clauses in the UMW constitution defining "presidential authority":

> He may suspend or remove any international officer or appointed employe for insubordination or just and sufficient cause.
>
> He shall interpret the meaning of the international constitution but his interpretation shall be subject to repeal by the executive board.

So Lewis rendered his "interpretation" with great pomposity. His "interpretation" was that Murray had become ineligible to continue as UMW vice-president by accepting the presidency of the Steel Workers union. The UMW constitution "transcends any sentimental and personal considerations." He said all this without a flicker of humor or self-consciousness. He explained it afterward to reporters as if expounding the true, timeless essence of democracy, and as if only incorrigible agitators would fail to accept his decree in that spirit. And no amount of questioning could wring a smile from him. The action, of course, had been ratified by the executive board, in time-honored fashion. One board member—Martin Wagner—dissented, but this had been anticipated; Wagner had decided to join up with Murray and the CIO. The others obediently and hastily approved after a few well-chosen words in praise of Lewis from various functionaries. Kennedy, long the third member of the triumvirate, rose to pay his respects to Lewis and Murray alike, piously explaining that he endorsed Lewis's stand only because a strict reading of the UMW constitution compelled him to do so.

None of the executive board members giggled while the farce was being concluded; they had gone through this all many times before (with Murray himself a participant) and they had never been struck by ironies or incongruities in the proceedings. They could not help admiring the way "the big fellow" had once again dressed up his deeds in ornate con-

stitutionalisms. Murray was not present for the finale; he was at the White House, reportedly conferring with the President "on matters of grave importance to the war," when the verdict was announced at the Mine Workers building.

Whatever inspired Lewis's change of tactics, the operation was performed with precision. Having eliminated Murray, Lewis named John O'Leary, an unspectacular, lusterless citizen, to fill the vacancy. O'Leary had earned the reward by many years of regularity. The selection was of course submitted to the board for approval, which was granted without disturbance. So the coal miners had a new vice-president, whether they knew it or not, presented to them by John L. Lewis.

Throughout the long wait for the day of Lewis's judgment, Murray had shown increasing symptoms of strain. Lewis had not. It was Murray who apparently felt driven to prove his virtue and to establish his innocence; Lewis went through his act without any great exhibit of emotion. Once again Lewis seems to have aroused in his victim a sense of guilt and indecision, a disease from which he rarely suffered himself.

Only once during that week did Lewis betray any outward anxiety, and the cause was far removed from the Murray matter. Abruptly and mysteriously leaving the Mine Workers building during one of the sessions, Lewis strode past the reporters with a glum stare and hailed a taxi. A host of rumors circulated. Actually Lewis had taken time out for a hasty visit to the hospital where Mrs. Lewis lay stricken with what proved to be her fatal illness.

A few days later the CIO executive board met to denounce Lewis, openly accusing him for the first time of obstructing the war drive. Triumphantly Lewis exhibited a record of the UMW meeting at which Murray had eulogized the UMW leader's patriotism. Lewis added angrily that no man could show he had detracted "one whit or jot" from the war effort, and he charged Murray with "casting his lot with Communists." (He did not explain that Communists were those whom Murray had inherited from the Lewis regime.)

Van Bittner and "Pat" Fagan were subsequently purged in

order to eliminate any semblance of disunion within the machine; Bittner was excommunicated through the ancient processes of "investigation," while Fagan was defeated several months later in a spirited election battle in the Pittsburgh fields. The rest had remained cautiously in line and no serious rebellion confronted Lewis as a result of the episode. There were, it is true, periodic reports after the ouster that Murray might seek vindication by opposing Lewis in the next UMW election. A few UMW locals passed resolutions urging him to do so. But these murmurings were stilled by Murray himself on August 20 when he declared: "For reasons which must be clear to all, I am compelled to announce that I cannot be a candidate at the present time for any office in the United Mine Workers."

Murray's statement disappointed many of his followers. It was a sharp letdown after the verbal pyrotechnics of May. Some felt that Murray was obligated to continue the fight, that his refusal seriously impaired his standing with the miners and demoralized latent anti-Lewis elements within the union. But many held that he had made a realist's decision: Lewis could not be defeated. Murray knew better than anyone else the lengths to which Lewis would go to preserve his dynasty, and a full-fledged contest within the union would have provoked civil war in the coal fields, leading only to chaos within the UMW and paralysis in the coal mines. There was no way of measuring which factor shaped Murray's course—his awe of Lewis, or his sober appraisal of the struggle, or a combination of the two.

But the strange Lewis-Murray conflict did not end with Murray's withdrawal from the affairs of the UMW. Their battleground became a larger one—the whole American labor scene. The mental scars which Lewis left upon his victims deepened, like reminders of a childhood illness never fully recovered from. Changes of partners are not uncommon in the politics of organized labor. But nearly all Lewis's ex-associates now revealed a fatalistic conviction that he would re-enter their lives and exact a further price for their disaffection. They

denied that he still influenced their actions, and the vehemence of the denials seemed calculated to reassure themselves as well as the listener.

Lewis did not swiftly forget, either; but his memories were seldom flavored with sentimentality or regret. He clung to his earliest interpretation of men's motives: if they betrayed him, it was because they had been offered a higher price elsewhere. He explained nearly all "disloyalty" by the simple psychology of dollar-and-cent motivations. He told this writer some months afterward that John Brophy's unwillingness to see the merit of Lewis's anti-Administration crusade was due to the per diem wage he received as a member of the War Labor Board. In the same terms he explained the hostility of conscientious Dr. Frank Graham, public member of the Board. There are few men who have been demonstrably so indifferent to financial reward, so plainly motivated by broad humanitarianian impulse, as Brophy and Graham. Even Lewis should have perceived how easily Brophy could have spared himself many woes by "selling out" to Lewis himself. But Lewis had few other criteria for evaluating men's behavior. Either they were insane (and dark hints as to Murray's balance frequently emanated from the UMW building) or they had been purchased.

In October, at the UMW's convention, Lewis officially led the miners out of the CIO. The occasion was singularly devoid of drama, a continuous performance of self-justification (and self-praise) by the UMW president. "Had there been no United Mine Workers of America," he told the delegates, "there would not now be any Congress of Industrial Organizations. Perhaps the child has become greater than the parent. Perhaps the pupil has become wiser than the master. The convention will decide." The convention listened and assented. The miners withdrew from CIO, leaving in Lewis's hands the decision as to future affiliation. Apart from this action, the assemblage chiefly afforded Lewis an opportunity to denounce the critics of his patriotism. Pointing out that millions of other Americans had held anti-interventionist views before Pearl Harbor,

Lewis proclaimed that after the Japanese attack "I abandoned every other consideration and stated publicly and acted accordingly in support of our government, of our institutions, of our policies."

Only faint echoes of the Lewis-Murray split were audible at the convention. There were only a few murmured "nays" when the delegates voted to strike out all references to the CIO from the UMW constitution; there was no change wrought in the "provisional" structure which now blanketed the overwhelming majority of the union's districts. Lewis once again insisted that "new leadership" was being trained so that provisionalism might be relaxed, but he was vague about the training and about the date when some measure of internal democracy might be restored. No formidable revolt on this issue developed, however, and Lewis could note with satisfaction that his grip on the "corporation" had not been imperiled by the defeats he had suffered in other fields.

As a measuring-rod of Lewis's status in the national labor picture, the AFL and CIO conventions that autumn were possibly more illuminating than the conclave of his own union. For his name remained the most provocative theme of discussion at both the AFL and CIO gatherings. The Federation convened in Toronto in the same week that the miners were meeting in Cincinnati. At Toronto nothing created so much animated discussion as the latest antics of the man who wasn't there—John L. Lewis. AFL officials studied dispatches from Cincinnati more avidly than reports of their own deliberations. While the AFL sessions proceeded monotonously along their unchanging course, the possibility that Lewis might appear in Toronto with a dramatic bid for reaffiliation relieved the boredom. At least three delegates vowed they had seen Murray scurry through the lobby and vanish into an elevator, presumably seeking to get back into the Federation before Lewis did. No one claimed to have seen Lewis, and Lewis did not appear. Nevertheless, the chance that he might soon ask for readmission was a lively topic. Taking cognizance of the reports, William Green extended a cautious hand of welcome.

In Cincinnati, Lewis promptly announced that he would not come back as long as Green was around. Such exchanges and exclamations continued throughout the somnolent AFL outing.

And when the CIO assembled in Boston in November, the absent Lewis got an equally impressive share of attention despite the fact that his departure had now been formalized. Murray made repeated orations fervidly condemning his former chief, comparing Lewis to Judas (with a somewhat unfortunate implication as to his own identity) and reciting anew the circumstances of their split. Then the delegates rose for a moment of silence in mock-reverence to the departed Lewis. But though they had come to bury Lewis, not to praise him, and though the burial was officially pronounced a success, they did not seem confident he would remain below ground. Subsequent speakers, apparently viewing him as a very lively ghost, filled the convention transcript with prophecies of the evil that Lewis would yet perform.

Although it was two years since Lewis had personally attended a CIO convention, his name still clung to many tongues, and apprehension as to his future conduct still gripped his former associates. Murray, beset by all the difficulties of wartime labor leadership, acted as if he expected the Lewis lightning to strike him in some unpredictable form at some unforeseeable moment. Having irrevocably broken with Lewis, he nevertheless imitated some of his mannerisms and kept at his side in vital posts some of the orthodox left-wingers—notably Pressman and De Caux—whom he had inherited from Lewis, along with the title of CIO president. Some believed that Murray regarded their presence as insurance against a Lewis revival, as if their familiarity with Lewis methods would help him forestall attack.

Murray's lot was not a happy one. He would be damned if he aped Lewis's militancy in time of war, and ridiculed if he did not. Always one detected in Murray a consciousness of inadequacy which his long service to Lewis had fostered. He was convinced that virtue, justice, and reason were on his side. But "Big John" was ruthless and resourceful.

The same nightmares afflicted many others besides Murray. They had followed Lewis and then fled from him, scorned him in his absence but quivered in his presence, dreamed of "telling him off" and stammered when he told them off, visualized ways of overpowering him but instinctively doubted their own ability to carry out the idea. Murray was ashamed of his own gentleness, eternally questioning himself, devising tests of his own integrity.

Lewis abandoned men without undue pain or feeling of great loss. Few partings were occasions for sorrow; men were the instruments of politics, and only the soft let sentiment guide them. But of all the men he had ruled, few could achieve an equivalent freedom. Most of them glanced backward as they turned each corner, wondering whether he was still in pursuit and whether they could ever successfully elude him. These refugees from the Lewis empire acted like men who had deserted a ruthless Maffia and were haunted by their knowledge of its secrets. Yet their obsession was more profound than that—they really suspected that the leader of the "mob" was a man not quite like any other they had ever known.

13

ONE MAN'S WAR

I. Battle Plan

DISTRUSTING the rest of humanity, convinced they are the victims of society's deepest wrongs, scornful rather than envious of men who have found easier ways of life, certain that they can win redress of grievances only by relying upon their own tough hands, the miners were uniquely prepared for the offensive that Lewis planned in 1943. Added to their traditional dissatisfactions were new, urgent causes for complaint. Prices were rising despite all the rules and rhetoric emanating from the Office of Price Administration. In many mine communities price-ceilings were a myth, the subject for wry and raucous laughter. What good were ceilings, the miners grumbled, if there was not enough meat to sustain a man for his labors below the earth? Amid widespread reports of war profiteering, the miners, from long memory, were inclined to believe the most gruesome accounts. It was one thing for the President to talk about stabilization of the national economy; it was another for a coal digger to try to support himself and his family when prices were skyrocketing. He had more money than before, but much of it was being used to pay off old debts. In many towns in western Pennsylvania miners showed me their pay-slips, listing the deductions made by the company-store for past obligations. In some instances they had about two dollars in cash left by the time their accounts had been cleared up.

Consider the impact of all this on coal-miner Steve Kerik,

resident of Frederickstown, Pa., employee at Republic Steel's captive mine and father of two American soldiers and of five school-going kids. Russian-born, an American coal miner for a couple of decades, Kerik is not fluent, reads little except the *United Mine Workers' Journal.* He faithfully buys war bonds, keeps a picture of Franklin D. Roosevelt on his wall, has few interests outside his home, family, and the mine a few blocks from the house. In the spring of 1943 he found the issues of life reduced to bitter simplicity. He stammered his lament:

"You know why there be strike. Two months ago we paid 45 cents per peck of potatoes, now we must pay 75 cents for same thing. If you work and can't buy food, then one day you strike. . . . Everybody still like Roosevelt. Maybe he understand our problem. But that is not enough. Suppose you eat big dinner and I say I am hungry. Maybe you understand, but you don't suffer. If Roosevelt is good father, then he won't keep us from getting more money. Just because Roosevelt good man, if he tell miners to jump in the river, they don't jump."

It is a long ride from Frederickstown, Pa., to Washington, D. C. where harassed men were trying frantically to avert a disaster called inflation; but the complexities of economic theory did not make simple or inspired reading in a mining town. In Washington, though the Administration was desperately endeavoring to hold the line against the inflationary tide on a vast front, a restive, irascible Congress was going its own way. Everyone admitted the peril of inflation—but everyone insisted that his own special interest could be met without increasing the danger.

And in the coal fields there were thousands of Steve Keriks, gloomily pondering the ruthless arithmetic of their food-bills, watching their own children go off to higher-paying jobs in war factories, suffering life's latest indignities. The miners' wages had always been low in comparison with those in other key industries, and not even the steady income insured by war work seemed to close the gap. In this frame of mind they waited for word from a leader named Lewis, studied their

one trustworthy source of information—Lewis's *Journal,* kept their faith in the only institution which was their own—Lewis's union. They were as unaware of the machinations of high labor politics as they were of the intricacies of current economic doctrine. They had been sold out too often by men who posed as their friends. This was union business at hand, and they looked to the union alone for guidance.

A long time had passed since Lewis had made an extended pilgrimage through the coal fields, and he had no impulse to travel now. He knew the discontent that was stirring in the minds of the miners; no mental telepathy was needed to estimate their reactions to the rising cost of living. He also knew the extent and the boundaries of the miners' knowledge. He could speak freely.

Time after time, journeying through the coal fields that spring, I asked the miners why they had not set up committees to enforce price-control in their own communities. Actually the compactness of the mining camp was ideally suited to just such a venture; whatever the problems of OPA enforcement in large metropolises, in its own bailiwick the UMW could have acted as a formidable police force. Each time that I asked the question the answer was the same: "The union didn't tell us to do that." The union had asked each miners' local for information on price increases in the locality, but it had never told them what they could do to keep prices down.

Lewis withheld any such instructions for reasons best known to himself. But one reason may be inferred: the success of price control would have wrecked his 1943 offensive. With discontent breaking loose in the coal fields, he had an army to lead and a private war to win.

In fact the *United Mine Workers' Journal,* bible of the coal belts, ridiculed the effort that OPA had initiated to enforce its rulings—the volunteer price-warden program. This was described in the *Journal* as "the lowest kind of snoopery and snitchery, copied right out of the books of fink detective agencies, and enough to turn the stomach of any genuine union man." On another occasion the *Journal* wrote: "It is folly to

talk about rolling back prices." And finally, deriding the whole anti-inflation concept, it evolved this formula:

"To keep prices down for one set of people means that the pay of other people and producers must be kept down also, and more than that, it means that production of goods for regulated prices will decline and that means that somebody's job has to be taken from him."

Obviously, then, take the lid off everything—let prices, wages, rise, give the merry-go-round another push.

Lewis had foreseen many months earlier the dilemma in which pro-Administration labor leadership would find itself as the war progressed. War, he knew, would intensify and dramatize many of the inequities of peacetime society. War rouses all sorts of basic questions in the minds of those whose sons and brothers go off to fight. The Administration had proclaimed "equality of sacrifice" as the slogan of the times, but few believed that even a rough approximation of that goal could be swiftly achieved. The issue confronting each labor leader was whether to strike out blindly in the general melee, demanding for his own followers dividends equivalent to those being gained by the best-entrenched pressure-groups; or to exercise restraint in the hope that this would set a pattern for the rest of the community and ultimately bring about a certain degree of economic stabilization. The first course was simple, spectacular; the second was difficult, without prospect of immediate reward.

Yet each labor leader knew that if he joined in the general tug-of-war, pleading only the cause of his own group without reference to the larger national economy, the outcome might be disastrous for his own followers as well as for the nation. There was no escape from the fact that vast increases in mass purchasing power would prove illusory. With a steadily shrinking volume of available consumer goods, prices were as certain to rise as the next morning's sun. Apparent victories could be total defeats; wage increases, if multiplied long enough, could actually reduce standards of living. Murray of the CIO and Green of the AFL accepted these premises. They sought

to steer a course between the necessary concessions which labor had to make and the exorbitant demands which professional labor-baiters would propose. Once they had chosen their course, Lewis charted his own. They had chosen the hard way—which left the easy path open.

Playing the role of the irresponsible offered innumerable tactical advantages. Lewis didn't have to condone or explain weaknesses in Administration policy. He didn't have to counsel patience in the face of mounting profit figures and other inequities. He didn't have to rationalize mistakes that were made on the home front. They were not of his making. He had warned all along that it would happen. He had "told you so." As the war advanced, as casualties increased, as the inevitable toll of war was recorded, he would be a prophet with new honor in labor's house. For it was he who before Pearl Harbor had stood out alone against the Administration's foreign policy, he who had warned that labor could only lose if war came. The men who had challenged his wisdom would have to bear responsibility for the war's effects.

There were other weapons, too. Those who resisted his crusade for wage increases for the miners would be torn by guilt and indecision. For of all labor causes, that of the miners was the most difficult to condemn; past injustices were well known, and the bleakness of mine labor was generally acknowledged. The country's conscience would be uneasy during the whole controversy.

As 1943 began and the coal negotiations approached, the operation was proceeding according to plan. Signs of restiveness among widely scattered labor groups were emerging; AFL and CIO heads were bitter over what they termed the distortions of the stabilization setup, the effectiveness of wage controls contrasting with the weak curbs on corporation profits, and the flexibility of price ceilings. The "Little Steel" formula, which prevented most workers from obtaining more than a 15 per cent wage boost over January 1941 levels, now meant that substantial wage increases belonged to the past; yet living costs had risen appreciably more than 15 per cent

in the same period. Pleas for relaxation of the wage formula came with growing frequency and insistency. The Administration did not yield, and neither Murray nor Green was ready for any major test of strength that would require abandonment of the no-strike agreement. They had risked their reputations on their ability, in co-operation with the White House, to force a rollback of prices. Lewis had taken no such risk; he was counting on slow decomposition of the Administration's program. Some of the nation's most powerful influences had placed their bets on the same proposition.

Like the author of *Mein Kampf,* Lewis boastfully announced in advance the major objectives of his coming campaign, cloaking in secrecy only the detailed strategic decisions. Wage discussions with the Northern and Southern Appalachian operators were to begin on March 10. (Although the bituminous contracts expired March 31 and those in anthracite a month later, Lewis refused to advance the date of the conferences as requested by government officials.) One week before the meetings began, Lewis addressed the tri-district convention of the UMW, meeting in Scranton. There he served notice on the U. S. Government of the character of his war aims:

"It has been up to the United Mine Workers to break new ground for American labor. They always have. They always are breaking new ground for other unions and industry to follow. We are glad to render that service and will be glad to do it again—in the interest of the flag and the country. . . . Mine workers have to eat, they have to live, they have to keep their families, pay taxes—and therefore they must be paid sufficient wages to sustain themselves and carry them through."

Economists agreed that under the provisions of the "Little Steel" formula the miners had small prospect of substantial gain; their earnings since January 1941 had risen the specified amount. True, there was some elasticity left in the formula: Lewis could conceivably plead that the coal diggers represented a "special case" owing to the hazards of their labor, to the inequities between their wages and those of other war workers, to the irregularity and uncertainty of employment in

earlier years, and to the huge accumulation of debt in the depression period. But not even a victory on any of those counts would do much to increase Lewis's prestige. His real targets were the "Little Steel" formula and the War Labor Board (headed by his old whipping-boy, Will Davis). If he could rout the wage-limitation policy and the Board that administered it, large sections of labor would contrast his accomplishment with the behavior of other leaders. So, in his Scranton address, Lewis let it be known that he would not recognize any formula or agency that barred the demands he was prepared to present. Having outlined his goals, he told the delegates ominously:

"If that is what you want, then that is what I will fight for."

He did not discuss the possibility of a strike. He left that to the imagination of his listeners and of the jittery government officials responsible for the production of coal and the maintenance of peace in industry. Artfully, deliberately, weighing each word and motion, Lewis had begun the classic build-up of the crisis atmosphere in which he thrived. Not even his most prominent subordinates were entirely sure of his plans. They assumed that Lewis knew what he was doing, that the offensive was fully blue-printed, that all contingencies were anticipated by the matchless Lewis mind.

On March 10, as the operators and UMW representatives assembled in a New York hotel, Lewis elaborated his demands. Although trade union leaders normally set excessive goals as the basis for further haggling, Lewis's were bigger than anyone had forecast—so big as to be especially staggering in view of the principles on which the stabilization program rested. Lewis asked a $2-a-day increase, double time for Sunday work, vacation pay, compensation for occupational charges (lamps, tools and other instruments heretofore purchased by the miners), and—most significant of all—payment for the time the miners spent traveling to and from their posts underground. In 1941 the UMW had asserted that "portal-to-portal" pay was unworkable in the mines, because it varied too

sharply with each mine and miner. Now Lewis said that he had been ill at the time his attorney had taken this stand, and that the union no longer accepted that thesis.

Simultaneously Lewis rendered his judgment of the WLB, of the wage policy it was enforcing, and of the "weak and vacillating" leadership of other unions. He also outlined what he regarded as the legal and moral justification for all future acts. Through the establishment of the "Little Steel" formula, he declared, the WLB had violated the terms of the labor-industry agreement which created that agency. Labor had abandoned its right to strike on condition that an impartial tribunal be set up to weigh each of its grievances against management. Now the Board had adopted a fixed, inflexible doctrine:

"Under its arbitrary and miserably stupid formula, it chains labor to the wheels of industry without compensation for increased costs, while other agencies of government reward and fatten industry by charging its increased costs to the public purse. Assuredly labor, despite its present weak and vacillating leadership, cannot long tolerate such economically paradoxical and socially unjust treatment."

Then, in sarcastic and sentimental terms, Lewis assailed the tenets of the anti-inflation "theorists." It was the Government, he declared, that was "creating inflation in this country by its cost-plus quantitative purchasing policy on the part of the Army, Navy and Procurement. . . . For every billion dollars' worth of expenditures by the Government—and there are many such billions—industry is given a billion dollars of profits, and profits are inflationary." The Office of Price Administration had woefully failed to perform its functions—company stores in the mine fields were still setting their own prices. In order to serve his country the miner needed strong food and especially meat; he was unable to get it now.

"When the mine workers' children cry for bread, they cannot be satisfied with a 'Little Steel' formula. When illness strikes the mine workers' families, they cannot be cured with an anti-inflation dissertation. The facts of life in the mining

homes of America cannot be pushed aside by the flamboyant theories of an idealistic economic philosophy."

Lewis bitterly denounced the patriotic advertisements being currently published by prominent corporations. These ads, he pointed out, were usually charged up to the Government at the year's end, "and our coal miners pay for some of it in the 5 per cent Victory tax that is deducted from their pay checks. . . ."

Like all Lewis tracts, this one contained unassailable truths as well as dubious logic. It was calculated to appeal to others beside the miners; it voiced the unrest of many laboring groups, and it pointed to many of the valid origins of discontent. And yet closer study revealed the demagogy beneath the indictment. At no point did Lewis squarely confront the issue that troubled the "theorists" in the Capital: granting all the inequities of the war economy, wasn't it true that a major increase in public purchasing-power would render hopeless any chance of averting inflation? If the miners won, would not other labor organizations be entitled to similar treatment? And if they all got what they were after, would the increases have any meaning—or would they simply create a delusion of false prosperity? War profiteering may well have assumed the proportions of a scandal, and its immorality was beyond dispute. But could Lewis seriously contend that corporation profits contained the same inflationary potential as dollars brought directly to market? And finally, why had he shunned steps to establish union police-forces over the prices in mining villages?

These questions remained unanswered throughout the turbulent and tedious months of the ensuing struggle. When Lewis was summoned to appear before the Truman committee on March 26, he amplified his charges without filling in the holes in his own testimony. In New York the operators had spurned the UMW proposals, and the collective-bargaining process had deteriorated into a time-wasting sham. It was overwhelmingly clear that the operators had no intention of coming to terms, that they were relying upon government agencies to settle the dispute, and that they would assume

all sorts of patriotic stances with the confident knowledge that the stabilization agencies would have to whittle down the UMW demands to a tiny fraction of what had been asked. At the same time there were nervousness and confusion in high places as Lewis plainly indicated that he would not take no for an answer. Pressed repeatedly for definite word as to whether he would resort to a strike, Lewis studiously avoided direct reply. Finally, however, he made the casual observation that the miners obviously had no right to "trespass" on company property without a contract. Angered by the growing suspense, the Senate Truman committee summoned Lewis to testify; when he did not respond immediately, a subpoena was issued.

The hearing-room was crowded. Lewis arrived on time, flanked by K. C. Adams, brother "Denny," and other adherents. The committee, in a somewhat clumsy attempt to put Lewis in his place, allowed the venerable John P. Frey of AFL to ramble on interminably, concluding an oration that had begun the previous day. Lewis sat silently on the side while the committee members laboriously prolonged Frey's stay. Finally Lewis's name was called. Rising deliberately, he plodded to the witness chair. The Senators seemed to be gloating in anticipation of a gleeful inquisition. Although several of them were liberal and pro-labor, they regarded Lewis as a definitely special and subversive case. And at last they had him where he could not escape or equivocate. Or so they imagined.

Lewis converted the hearing into a private forum. Not in many months had he had the chance to perform on a stage like this one. At the outset, Senator Truman suggested that the committee was interested to learn Lewis's views on the problem of absenteeism. In low, deferential tones, Lewis remarked that absenteeism "is a question that runs to the human equation," that a worker's physical ability usually determines his working habits. Then in a gentle undertone:

"I have been told that absenteeism is higher in Congress than in industry. I do not know. I know that absenteeism prevails on this committee this morning. I do not know why some

of the Senators aren't here, but I am sure they are away for perfectly competent reasons." *

The audience—predominantly hostile to Lewis—snickered at the Senate's expense. Lewis expanded the views that he had stated at the opening of the wage conferences: profits were soaring, the Government was promoting inflation through cost-plus contracts which provided "excessive rewards to industry." How could the same Government freeze the wages of labor?

Senator Ralph Brewster of Maine, listening with obvious impatience, could not restrain himself long. He stumbled into the trap that Lewis set. After Lewis had decried the cost-plus contract setup, Brewster said:

"Under the existing tax legislation and proposed tax legislation and under renegotiation . . . we still hope that the rich would not be getting richer out of this war."

Lewis interposed: "We all hope with you, but hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

Brewster returned impetuously to his theme:

"If we had waited until we had negotiated fair contracts, Mr. Hitler would be on our shores today."

Lewis turned on him triumphantly:

"Do you mean to imply American industry wouldn't provide essential war goods to a nation that needed them unless guaranteed profits first?"

Brewster faltered his reply: "I mean it was impossible for a governmental agency to negotiate fair contracts."

Lewis (dryly): "I will say they gave the corporations the benefit of the doubt."

Brewster, ignoring the warning-signals, lunged back a few moments later:

"You aren't under any illusions that we are prejudiced in favor of United States Steel after the performance of last Tuesday?" (The committee had just exposed defective production at a U. S. Steel subsidiary.)

* The direct quotations in the following are from the transcript of the hearing before the National Defense Investigating Committee, U. S. Senate.

Lewis: "I have no illusions on that, sir, but I couldn't think until I came here that you even knew about it, because otherwise I am sure I would have heard that golden voice of yours raised in Congress denouncing such a situation. [Laughter] Congress can't condone a policy in this country that fattens industry and starves labor, and then calls upon labor patriotically to starve."

Brewster subsided. Senator Joseph Ball, the somber, sad-eyed Minnesotan who had been waging a courageous battle against all inflationary moves, stepped into the breach. The colloquy made headlines.

Ball: "Mr. Lewis, you are not seriously trying to tell the committee that any large number of workers in the United States don't get enough to eat? That is demagoguery, pure and simple, and you know it."

Lewis: "You make your asseverations before you wait for a reply. If you have an opinion that I am a demagogue, then you don't need to ask the question because you have got your own idea."

Ball: "All right, how many of your Mine Workers are hungry?"

Lewis: "If you ask the question, I will answer it. But when you call me a demagogue before I can reply, I hurl it back in your face, sir."

Ball: "All right."

Lewis then unfolded his picture of malnutrition among the coal miners, asserting that they were suffering from "a dietary deficiency" because their wages could not purchase enough of the "proper foodstuffs." He concluded with subdued anger:

"That is what is happening to the coal miners . . . and when you call me a demagogue I will say you are less than a proper representative of the common people of this country."

Senator Truman hastily intervened, admonishing Lewis to refrain from "sassy remarks." Lewis shifted his glower to Truman, retorting, "Who cast the first stone?"

Truman (wearily): "I am stopping it right now. . . . Proceed with your statement. We will leave personalities out of

the picture. That won't help the situation we are trying to remedy."

Lewis: "I shall try to follow the lead of the distinguished Senators on matters of courtesy."

Lewis slowly pressed the offensive. He said ingratiatingly that he needed the committee's help. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals had recently handed down a decision in a case involving metal miners, holding that they were entitled, under the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act, to payment for all time spent underground, whether in travel or at work. This decision created a dilemma: since the court had so ruled, how could Lewis sign a contract with the mine operators which failed to include portal-to-portal pay? Yet the WLB and the coal operators were unsympathetic to such a contract. What would Senator Brewster—"you having a very alert, capable mind on these things"—suggest? The Senator had no definite remedy.

The committee's most galling experience, however, grew out of its attempt to extract a clear-cut statement from Lewis on the issue of a strike. Lewis had repeated his charge that "the War Labor Board breached its contract with labor and with industry when it adopted the 'Little Steel' formula as an arbitrary formula to fix wages and threw equity out the door." This, declared Lewis, violated the principles formulated at the labor-industry conference at which the no-strike agreement was fashioned. After Lewis asserted that the pact had been "breached," he was asked whether his union no longer felt itself bound by the no-strike pledge.

"Not necessarily," he replied enigmatically.

For most of the remainder of the session the Senators tried to wring from him an elucidation of "not necessarily." Without smiling he parried their questions. Senator Ferguson made the most earnest effort.

Ferguson: "Therefore, the agreement not to strike is not binding."

Lewis: "Not necessarily binding."

Ferguson: "We are coming back again to the words 'not necessarily.'"

Lewis: "That is right."

Ferguson: "Can you make that any clearer to me?"

Lewis: "I wouldn't care to at this time."

Ferguson: "Why not?"

Lewis: "Because it is academic, and any later conclusion reached in reference to it must necessarily be based on existing circumstances."

Ferguson: "In other words, you want to hold the right to strike against that contract."

Lewis: "Oh, no, don't get me wrong. Don't get me wrong."

Ferguson: "I don't want to get you wrong. I want to get what you have in mind."

Lewis: "You have it in good, sound American English."

Ferguson: "'Not necessarily.' Do you think that is—"

Lewis (interrupting): "Not necessarily binding us because the Board breached the contract when they abandoned equity in favor of arbitrary formula which somebody hoped would restrain inflation."

Ferguson: "Do you think the American public can understand that language as clear, concise language when you use the words 'not necessarily'?"

Lewis: "I think the American public can understand our form of English as well as I can."

Then, as the hearing neared its close with the Senators looking like thwarted, unhappy men, Lewis picked up the thread of his basic argument. All wars breed inflation, and this one was no exception; inflation had already arrived; industry and finance were collecting all the dividends, and labor would have to get its share. Q.E.D. Senator Burton asked hopefully:

"If we restrain industry and finance, you are willing to work on holding down the wages?"

Lewis quietly asked the Senator to telephone him when industry and finance had been restrained.

The hearing was a success—for Lewis. Instead of clarifying his attitude toward a strike, it had increased the tension and

uncertainty. If the suspense could be sustained long enough, he might win a remarkably inexpensive victory. In addition, the committee had presented him with a well-publicized platform from which he could say what he thought about the inequities of wartime life. His words were extensively quoted and undoubtedly reached many union men besides his own followers. He had struck a pugnacious pose, in meaningful contrast with the performances of other labor leaders before the same committee; his quiet insolence had stunned the committee and entertained the audience. The press-table was in agreement with the reporter who remarked that Lewis had conducted a thorough investigation of the Truman Committee.

While the editorial writers favored him with new abuse, their attentions, as usual, won him converts in labor ranks. Meanwhile, he had demonstrated again that he was the only labor leader in town who could duel single-handed with a Senate committee and inflict more scars than he received.

Men might still contest the rationality of his stand. Granting all he had said about profits and prices, what would labor gain through pay increases that merely boosted prices higher? But most working-men were not interested in long-range logic. They wanted larger pay-envelopes in the here-and-now, they distrusted promises that sounded like pie in the sky, they began to look with misgivings upon leaders who urged patience and restraint, they shared a suspicion that the war was being waged primarily at their expense. Many of them recalled the years of idleness and want that had followed World War I. This time they hoped to build up a post-war reserve. But the "Little Steel" formula stood in the way.

Lewis was again maneuvering himself into that comfortable place where he would have everything to gain and little to lose from a seemingly huge gamble. If he broke the wage line, the plaudits of labor would be loud, while defeat would once again be equivalent to martyrdom—and it would be Roosevelt who had nailed labor to the cross. Not that Lewis could conduct his campaign without daring. Unless he won through an overnight coup, he would be subjected to the most savage at-

tack that any labor leader had ever faced. If his bluff were called, he would have to strike, and no man could fully visualize the consequences. But in times like that Lewis could summon up all the disdain for the middle class that runs through the thinking of the coal miner. In such crises, at least, he resembled the men he led, with their instinctive contempt for the clamor of the men of property.

There would be, moreover, no real unity against him. On the one hand liberals in the Administration would be torn between their distrust of Lewis's motives and their awareness that his indictment contained what were at least half-truths. Meanwhile some influential enemies of the Administration would be divided between their anti-labor lust and their pleasure at any development that seemed to discredit the White House. Some of them, at least, despised Roosevelt more than they dreaded Lewis; when the showdown came they would find it difficult to choose the Roosevelt side. In addressing the miners, Lewis pointed his finger at the coal operators, rather than at his real antagonist—President Roosevelt. The operators played their part perfectly. Many of them being as unsympathetic to Roosevelt as Lewis was, they had little to lose from a contest in which the two men might destroy themselves or each other. They displayed little zeal for a prompt settlement.

Lewis did not prematurely inaugurate the struggle. In late March he consented, at the request of the President, to extend the existing contracts until April 30, having obtained assurance that any subsequent wage-increases would be retroactive. In the interval almost anything might happen. Secretary of Labor Perkins had assigned John R. Steelman as conciliator in the coal conferences; Steelman had proved abundantly sympathetic to Lewis in the captive-mine case. While some government officials supported the coal operators in urging that the dispute be certified immediately to the War Labor Board, Perkins and Steelman insisted that there was still hope for a peaceful settlement at the bargaining table. Lewis was in no hurry. Each day's passage intensified the crisis, made some

men more eager for compromise, stimulated the general discontent of labor. Engaged in his supreme adventure of World War II, Lewis had few distractions to occupy his mind; this was a full-time campaign, and he relished each of its ramifications. He had broken the National Defense Mediation Board, and only the untimely Pearl Harbor incident had blurred his achievement. At least he knew that it could be done.

On April 8, however, the Administration gave him formal warning that he faced a life-and-death battle. On that day the President signed a new executive order, reaffirming and tightening the principles of the stabilization program and appreciably reducing any area of flexibility in wage policy. The order was widely interpreted as being the Government's answer to the UMW wage demands, as well as to the mounting pressure of the farm bloc for general relaxation of anti-inflation policies. Under the new order Lewis seemed to have less chance than ever of obtaining concessions. The authority of ex-Justice James F. Byrnes, then Director of Economic Stabilization, was expanded.

There was a brief intimation of peace a few days later. Madam Perkins was reported to have recommended establishment of a guaranteed six-day week in coal, and the UMW construed this as advocacy of an annual wage guarantee, which would have been viewed as a spectacularly successful outcome. The coal operators promptly rejected the proposal, and grave doubt arose as to whether the annual wage was ever explicitly embodied in the plan. The incident nevertheless underlined the confusion in the Administration's labor structure. There was an undercover tug-of-war between Madam Perkins and the War Labor Board; the WLB was increasingly irritated at her delay in handing the case over to its jurisdiction, and she in turn was apparently hoping to re-establish the shattered prestige of her Department by settling the dispute on her own. The intra-mural jurisdictional feuds both strengthened Lewis's scorn for the Administration's labor program and increased his belief that he could snatch a sudden victory out of the muddle.

The deadline of April 30 was ominously approaching. On the 21st the President appealed for another extension of the contract, but this time he was rebuffed. On the 22nd Madam Perkins finally turned the case over to the WLB, admitting that all hope of a private accord was gone. Two days later the WLB inaugurated open hearings. Reporters and photographers assembled early outside the hearing-room, chiefly wondering whether Lewis would appear. He didn't. The UMW boycotted the session. The Board proceeded solemnly to draft an order calling for indefinite extension of the contract but with future increases retroactive to April 1. The operators accepted. That was on Saturday—one week before the deadline.

Actually the strike began on Monday.

14

ONE MAN'S WAR

II. The Long Campaign

IT BEGAN with scattered walkouts, like the first distant notes of thunder. There was no authorization from the UMW Policy Committee. There was no comment by Lewis. There were no formal instructions, no public incitements. First a few hundred, then a few thousand miners stopped work.

On Sunday I had traveled through a dozen mining communities in western Pennsylvania. It was a warm, sunlit afternoon. The miners were dressed in their best clothes. They sat in front of their homes playing with their kids, talking with their neighbors, seemingly oblivious to the imminent crisis. They did not seem nervous or unduly grim. No, they were not sure what they would do, they were waiting to hear from Lewis, they would do as the Policy Committee decreed. Yes, prices were way up, the miners never got a break anyway unless they fought for it, maybe they would have to fight again. They still thought Roosevelt was okay, but this was their own affair and Lewis was president of their union. They didn't like to strike, only newspaper editors thought miners liked strikes. They knew there was a war going on, look at the service flags on our windows, Mister. But, well, they might have to strike the way things looked. There was no tumult or hysteria, it was just Sunday afternoon in the coal fields, not the eve of great events.

But on Monday the isolated strikes began. In some places

it looked as if UMW representatives might have promoted them, with sly winks and whispered remarks; in others the explosions were ignited by some small incident or some minor irritation. Whether the stoppages were quietly inspired or genuinely spontaneous, it required no coercion to get them under way. The mood of the miners had been attuned to this probability for many weeks. It was only five days until the contract expired anyway. Meanwhile, a rumor was sweeping the coal fields. The rumor was that John L. Lewis might be sent to jail if the UMW sent out an official strike call. Miners repeated the same tale throughout that region. The implication was obvious: they might have to strike on their own, without a formal signal, to protect their leader. Unless he explicitly told them to remain at work, they might just have to take a holiday that week-end, perhaps sooner. The rumor was contagious; so were the strikes.

In Washington, as the cacophony mounted, Lewis inveighed against the War Labor Board, demanded that Madam Perkins order resumption of private negotiations, boycotted the panel meetings being conducted by the WLB. Madam Perkins replied by asking Lewis to recognize the WLB machinery and to curtail the spreading strikes. On Thursday the President issued an ultimatum ordering the miners to return to work by 10 A.M. Saturday. His statement stirred immediate reports that Army troops would be dispatched to keep the mines open if the miners defied his edict. In the coal fields these reports were greeted with the union's historic battle-cry: "You can't mine coal with bayonets."

Still, in the nation's capital and elsewhere, men predicted that Lewis would yield before 10 A.M. Saturday. Congressmen were denouncing him in angry chorus and loud solos. The cartoonists were merciless, the radio commentators broadcast his infamy, and ordinary citizens vied with each other in selecting expletives. The heat was terrific, but Lewis concealed any fright. On Friday the UMW renewed its assault against the WLB, accusing that agency of having "prejudged" the case. The statement seemed like an indirect but unmistakable an-

nouncement that the miners would be idle the next day, that no back-to-work proclamation would be issued. The strike was already far-reaching; most of the miners had decided not to wait until midnight, when the contract technically ran out. Still a faint hope persisted that Lewis would surrender at the final moment, that before he retired on Friday night he would call off the walkout. As if in answer to these hopes, newspapermen were informed an hour before midnight that Mr. Lewis was on his way to sleep. He had nothing to say.

Having squeezed the last ounce of drama out of the build-up, he momentarily turned the stage over to the President. It had been unnecessary to formalize the strike; Lewis's silence was the word for which the miners had been waiting.

Now the next move was clearly the President's; however thoroughly Lewis had diagramed his plans, he could only wait now until the morning, which would bring full defiance of the President's deadline. Rumors of Army seizure of the coal mines blanketed the mining towns throughout the evening. The miners gathered calmly on street corners, congregated in the saloons, stayed up late in the sure knowledge that they would not have to work the next day.

"You can't mine coal with bayonets."

Saturday, traveling through the towns between 9 and 10 A.M., one encountered few signs of life, no symptoms of upheaval. The streets were nearly deserted. On the porches of most miners' homes lay unopened milk bottles, untouched copies of the morning papers, their editorial pages quivering with unnoticed indignation. This first great stoppage of work in World War II was provoking black headlines throughout the nation, but the coal diggers were using this historic occasion to sleep late, a rare event in a miner's life.

In Lawrence, Pa., a small mining community atop a hill about twenty miles outside of Pittsburgh, the local bartender was wearily cleaning up. Long rows of empty beer glasses remained to be washed. Over the bar, where scores of miners had gathered the night before, hung a picture of Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was unmarred and unmolested—the miners had

stood beneath it all evening, preparing to ignore his orders the next day, and the inconsistency had not seriously troubled anyone. They had stubbornly refused to charge any of their woes to the President. They blamed the War Labor Board. They blamed the coal operators. They blamed "the politicians." But, with relatively few exceptions, they did not blame the President. He was misled; or he did not know the details; or he was being deluded "by those rich fellows on the War Labor Board." Lewis, perhaps remembering the 1940 disaster, continued to encourage this version of events. He had delivered no anti-Roosevelt sermons; he had concentrated his fire on the "rapacious, predatory Park Avenue patent attorney"—Chairman Davis of the WLB. (Lewis well knew that on Park Avenue Davis was viewed as a "traitor to his class," much like the Groton man in the White House.) The WLB, he said, was "a court packed against labor." Even as the moment of wholesale defiance approached, the miners gazed affectionately at the portraits of FDR, condemning everyone else in government.

At 10 A.M. the rebellion was official, nationwide, and dull. Virtually the only animation in the streets of Lawrence, Pa. (as in hundreds of similar towns) was provided by the visiting journalists groping for news, awaiting violence, foreseeing great clashes. Nothing happened. The outcries of indignation that greeted the coal strike could not be heard in the coal fields, where all men were miners—fatalistic, firm, phlegmatic. As reporters clustered on the town's main street, a miner joined the group, commenting, "Well, all quiet on the western front." An announcement from Washington was expected shortly in view of the failure to meet the deadline. But few radios were turned on in Lawrence. The miner explained, "It doesn't matter what the radio says, we'll hear direct from the Policy Committee when they want us to do something." There were no picket lines in this strike, because there was no threat of a back-to-work campaign. There were no parades or pep-rallies because few miners needed any urging to join the silent strike procession.

If the strike dragged on and some dissidents grew weary, such demonstrations might be required. For the moment a half million men were acting as a unit. There was a minority who would tell you privately that John L. Lewis was not their hero, that they remembered him from way back, that they had fought against him in the intra-union combats. But as far as this strike was concerned they too were following him, relying on his orders. It was not, for them, a matter of loyalty to Lewis. It was an issue of loyalty to the union they had so proudly made. Any break in the solidarity of the strike would do more than embarrass Lewis—it would imperil the United Mine Workers Union. So whether they believed, as many of them did, that Lewis was a leader without peer, or whether they harbored ancient grievances against him, the coal miners on May 1, 1943, were unanimous, uncoerced, ready for virtually anything.

And Lewis's great strength, in those hours, was the sense of safety and confidence he imparted to these men, as he had to a much larger legion during the CIO days. Even his critics in the coal fields were willing, for the duration of this dispute, to let him act as their "lawyer." To all of them he appeared nerveless, resolute; everything was under his control. He never seemed to falter or flinch, and when he spoke it was in righteous, austere phrases appropriate to the event and expressive of the miners' outlook. Possibly part of the explanation for his hold, too, lay in the narrow insight and vision of the coal operators themselves. They could not understand the depth of the miners' feelings, nor did they know how to talk to these employees in revolt.

There was a party given by one of the coal companies for the newspapermen that week-end. None of the executives could fully explain why the miners followed Lewis; they were frankly baffled. One of them argued at length that mine disasters were no responsibility of the operators; they happened because the miners were careless, like pedestrians crossing against a red light. The operators admitted that some of their past policies might have accentuated the bitterness of the

men—especially the attempts they had made to break the union, the unsavory deeds of the Coal and Iron Police. But, though admitting this, they still could not grasp the fact that these memories survived in an era of collective bargaining. They knew the outlines of the past, but were impervious to the ruthless details that clung to each miner's consciousness.

This was the tragedy of the coal strike. For the miners, with relatives in the armed forces and with an authentic devotion to their country in spite of all inequities, were not disposed to heed anyone or trust anyone outside of their own ranks. Their government was a remote institution; their employers were impersonal devils; their newspapers and radios were untrustworthy. They struck with misgivings, defensively, in no holiday spirit; they struck because this, it seemed, was the only way they had ever been able to gain justice for themselves. If they deserted their union they would have nothing left.*

Soon after the Saturday deadline passed, the President ordered government operation of the mines and named Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, as custodian. This was an astute move. The miners had expected an Army invasion, and had steeled themselves for it. None of the rancor that military seizure would have aroused followed the appointment of Ickes and the hoisting of the American flag over the mines. But neither did the announcement change the miners' plans. They were somewhat confused by the order, unsure what form government operation would take; they knew that the Policy Committee would formulate their reactions for them. More important was the announcement that President Roosevelt would address them on Sunday evening. Slowly, uneasily, reluctantly, the fear was taking shape that this strike might resolve itself into a bitter-end struggle between their two leaders—FDR and Lewis. The miners evaded the issue. They had, it is true, in

* It is noteworthy that the most serious labor stoppage in Great Britain during World War II occurred in the coal mines; that many of the comments attributed to the British miners were remarkably similar to those I heard in the American coal fields. The heads of the British Miners Union, however, were far more reluctant than Lewis to press the fight, and the strikes were prolonged chiefly by rebellious rank-and-file groups.

ignoring the White House back-to-work summons already cast a vote for Lewis in the first test. But they did not view this as a final, fateful choice. It was only the first skirmish. And they had reacted as union men.

Lewis had a crowded, critical Sunday, while the miners waited.

He had survived the first round with indubitable success. He had shown that a mere back-to-work decree by the President could not undermine his army. The miners had put on an exhibition of their might; there could no longer be any suggestion that they had been intimidated into striking, or that they could be easily swayed, or that the mines could be reopened at a word from the White House.

On the other hand, Lewis knew the limit of his resources. He knew the hazards of a prolonged strike. He knew that while a short walkout would not interrupt war production (even if few newspapers acknowledged that fact), a long one might fix responsibility on him for any future military débâcle. There was no certainty, moreover, that the miners could indefinitely resist the pressures of patriotism. Although they were convinced, too, that a brief stoppage would not affect the fighting fronts, each day the walkout lasted increased the peril. A protracted strike was inconceivable.

On Sunday Lewis conferred with Ickes, and saw his great chance.

The meeting was arranged by Madam Perkins, still trying feverishly to act like a Secretary of Labor. Once seated in Ickes's office, Lewis drew on all his resources. He charmed. He flattered. He stormed against the War Labor Board and implied that only Ickes could save the nation from disaster. He appealed to Ickes's best instincts—his championship of underdogs, his sympathy for the coal miners—and played on all his vanities. It was a highly amicable session.

The liaison was admittedly incongruous: Ickes had been one of the nation's most vigorous interventionists when Lewis was aligned with America First; Ickes had been staunchly pro-Roosevelt while Lewis embraced his old Republican friends.

But Ickes was the unpredictable curmudgeon. He disliked the furious labor-baiting of the press. He resented some of the President's advisers—especially Harry Hopkins—who seemed particularly bent upon whipping Lewis. He knew the coal operators were not quite nature's noblemen. He had a compartmentalized mind—his assignment was to insure coal production, and therefore the stabilization program, labor politics, and national labor relations became extraneous. Many times afterward Ickes was to explain that, as far as he was concerned, the issue was simple: coal had to be produced, and Lewis alone could produce the miners. Ickes felt he was being realistic, practical, humanitarian, and Lewis assured him that he was being all three. For the duration of the coal case the two men were virtually inseparable.

The wooing and winning of Ickes was Lewis's major triumph, possibly the most important one in the long engagement. For it enabled him to bring into play his old but seemingly infallible tactic—divide and conquer. He invariably used it against the coal operators, against the Government, against his contemporaries in the labor movement. Once Ickes had swung to his side, the solid government front was split, and in subsequent crises Ickes could be relied on to help him escape. Previously Lewis had promoted friction between the WLB and the Labor Department; Ickes could be an even more invaluable ally.

When they parted Lewis had an enormous sense of relief, and Ickes was pretty happy too. They had concluded they could do business with each other. Of course Lewis left without giving final assurance that the strike would be called off —he had to confer with his Policy Committee that evening, he was just one man, the spokesman of the miners, etc. But he would certainly pass on to the committee the suggestion Ickes had made: a fifteen-day truce. Ickes explained that he wanted a couple of weeks "to get my feet on the ground" and see if he could work out a solution. Lewis treated the suggestion with great sympathy.

Once again the actor carefully wove his climax. The return

flight from Washington to New York was the interlude before the final flourish. It was like many momentous journeys he had taken—the ride from Washington to Detroit during the sit-down strikes, when CIO's future hung in the balance, and the other deftly timed entrances and exits.

Upon his arrival he slipped past the reporters, went into session at once with his Policy Committee. The President's address was scheduled for ten o'clock. The nation watched the clock. Unless Lewis acted before Roosevelt's speech, the war was on, and no one could predict its scope or duration. At the White House the President and his aides were waiting; in New York, Lewis let the minutes drag by while he remained behind closed doors with his subordinates. The delay was arrogantly deliberate; any decision that Lewis wished to communicate could have been ratified much earlier. He was watching the clock, too.

At 9:30 the newspapermen were summoned.

Lewis stood there frowning, flanked by his old stalwarts, evincing not the slightest delight at the tension in the air. He acted as if time were plentiful, as if he were unaware of the race. He did not read from a text, but his words were measured, like the recitation of a carefully memorized address:

> The Policy Committee of the United Mine Workers has just agreed by unanimous vote of its membership to restore all mines to immediate operation for a period of 15 days beginning Tuesday, this period to be utilized in co-operation with the Co-ordinator for Solid Fuels for War [Ickes] and the authority of the United States Government to work out a new wage contract for the anthracite and bituminous coal industry. . . .
>
> The mine workers recognize that they have a new employer who has not yet had time to appraise the immediate problems facing the industry. It is our desire to co-operate with the Government and to relieve the country from the confusion and stress of the existing situation. . . .
>
> I salute you, coal miners! Your hearts are of oak and your patriotism can never be challenged.

There was not much time left before ten o'clock. An Associated Press reporter tried to bolt from the room as soon as Lewis had broken the news. He was promptly brought down by mine worker officials and other reporters. No one, Lewis announced, would leave the room until the conference ended. Were there any questions? Not many. But in response to one Lewis said significantly that the miners were being sent back to work on the basis of an "agreement" he had reached with Ickes.

It was about fifteen minutes to ten when radios carried the bulletins: Lewis ends coal strike.

The President went on the air as scheduled.

* * *

Joe Oresti, 45-year-old Italian-born miner, turned on the radio in the kitchen of his home in Library, Pa., at one minute to ten. His four daughters, ranging in age from ten to twenty-one, his wife, and his young daughter-in-law all clustered around the radio. A picture of his son in Marine Corps uniform adorned the wall, and in the next room his grandchild slept. Oresti, who had served in the U. S. Army in World War I and lived in the coal fields ever since, still spoke accented, rudimentary English. But he was not a talkative man anyway. Before the broadcast began he had shied away from questions about the strike; he was a union man, he was doing as the union had agreed, that was all. On the way to Library we had heard the bulletin revealing Lewis's action, but Oresti refused to believe it. His mystification increased as the President spoke.

The President was delivering the address that had been prepared before Lewis's announcement, ignoring the latest development. As the words came over, the women in the room involuntarily stared at the head of the family. He didn't return the glances. He kept his head down, studying his shoes. When the President told the story of a coal miner wounded in Tunisia, of another wounded landing in North Africa, of still others dead or wounded on the far-flung fronts, the women looked at the young marine's picture on the wall. Suddenly everyone was embarrassed because Joe Oresti was quietly

sniffling into his handkerchief. The President assured the coal miners that prices in the coal fields would be investigated and brought down. He told them that the War Labor Board would give their grievances a full and impartial hearing. He said he understood their devotion to their union and pledged that the Government would protect unionism. But he placed full responsibility for the coal crisis on "the leaders of the United Mine Workers" who had refused to recognize the WLB's authority.

After the President concluded his appeal, *The Star-Spangled Banner* was played. Oresti stood up; so did the others in the room, carefully looking away from him. As soon as the anthem was over the bulletins were rebroadcast: the Policy Committee had called off the strike. Now it was official. Oresti smiled happily. The terrible choice had at least been postponed. We asked him what he thought of the President's address. "Wonderful speak, wonderful speak," he answered. Would he have returned to work after that speech if the Policy Committee had not so decreed? He shrugged dubiously. He said he would have done what the other men did. No, he didn't think there would have been work even though the President had spoken, he decided after some meditation. The women said nothing. Their relief was obvious.

Tens of thousands of coal miners had endured the same experience that night, and their reactions were not unlike Joe Oresti's. Some of them resented the fact that the President had criticized only the UMW leaders, overlooking the coal operators. Most of them, however, were impressed by his plea; and most of them would have remained on strike—at least for the immediate future—if Lewis had not given them the back-to-work signal. Many now hoped and believed that they had won, that once again Lewis had overwhelmed his—and their —enemies with an audacious blow, that further walkouts would not be needed.

* * *

From New York on Sunday night Lewis telephoned Ickes the "decision" of the Policy Committee. Two days later Ickes was asked at a press conference:

"Could you tell us, Mr. Secretary, if and when Lewis informed you in that telephone conversation that night that his Policy Committee had called off the strike for fifteen days, did he have anything else to tell you?"

"Nothing," replied Mr. Ickes.

"Could you tell us what your response to him was?"

"Well, I said 'Fine.'"

Ickes added off the record that, after the conversation, "I took a big slug of Scotch, let out a whoop, and fell back into bed."

Although Ickes had rescued Lewis from a precarious limb, it was the Interior Secretary who obviously felt lucky to be alive.

Lewis may have believed (as some newspaper reports hinted the next day) that the battle was virtually over, that Ickes would work out an agreement with him and that other government agencies would quickly fall in line. There were even intimations that they had already reached an informal understanding. Whether Ickes gave Lewis reason for believing this, or whether Lewis deliberately exaggerated their discussion, is not yet entirely clear. But it soon became evident that the WLB would not yield without a fight, that it would have White House support, and that the struggle would be a long one. Nevertheless Lewis had gained substantial ground by splitting the enemy's ranks. The under-cover conflict between Ickes and the WLB was to become almost as fierce as the feud between Lewis and that agency. Ickes wanted peace in the coal fields at any price (including higher prices for consumers); Lewis persuaded him that the only obstacle to peace was the pettifogging of the WLB members in contrast with his (Ickes's) statesmanship. Ickes wanted coal production; the WLB held that the stabilization line would become untenable if the Board—and the no-strike pledge—could be successfully defied. Lewis convinced Ickes that the objectives of high coal production and the maintenance of the "Little Steel" formula were irreconcilable.

There were some who believed that, at one point in May,

Lewis could have attained a substantial portion of victory if he had been willing to sacrifice his long-range drive to break the WLB. On Friday, May 14—the second strike deadline was midnight on the next Monday—the WLB ordered the resumption of direct negotiations between the operators and UMW. This had been Lewis's key demand, and the Board finally acquiesced, stipulating only that Lewis come before it to discuss the procedures of future negotiations. He did not reply at once. Through most of the week-end it was widely believed that he would agree. Admittedly this would have entailed his recognition of the WLB's jurisdiction in the case. On the other hand, there seemed to have been a mellowing of Administration attitude toward some of the miners' demands. Investigation of prices in mining towns had sustained many UMW charges. If Lewis had been willing to go through the motions of an appearance before the Board, thereby forestalling a general labor imitation of his strike strategy, many felt that he could have exacted substantial concessions. The WLB, once assured of its own survival, might have been disposed to compromise.

On Sunday Lewis announced that he would not appear before the Board. His decision destroyed any hope that the dispute might be judicially and temperately resolved. The WLB promptly issued a fiery attack: "The issue now confronting the nation is whether Mr. Lewis is above and beyond the laws which apply to all other citizens of the United States. . . . In demanding a wage increase and at the same time refusing to seek the approval of the National War Labor Board, Mr. Lewis is defying the lawfully established procedures of the Government of the United States. . . . This defiance challenges the sovereignty of the United States and gives aid and comfort to our enemies." Lewis's attitude, the WLB stated, was "the only thing that stands in the way of the working out of a new contract for the mine workers by orderly peaceful procedures."

In response to a letter from Ickes—Lewis contemptuously avoided correspondence or communication with any other

government official—the UMW formally extended the truce until May 31. Once again he appeared hopeful that Ickes—under pressure of a strike threat—would deal directly with him, negotiating a contract behind the WLB's back. But the Board prevailed at the White House; Ickes was compelled to issue a statement disavowing any intention of settling the coal case on his own. On the 25th the WLB handed down its first decision in the coal dispute. It granted the miners increased vacation allowances, payment for occupational charges, and a few other secondary concessions; on what had become the central issue—portal-to-portal pay—it directed renewal of negotiations between the operators and the union. These were promptly resumed.

Scattered new strikes had already begun. They had begun on May 20—on the same day that Lewis revealed he was applying for readmission of the Mine Workers Union to the American Federation of Labor.

His move for reunion with the AFL emphasized that he had not lost sight of other matters while seemingly burying himself in the miners' wage-battle. His revived association with Hutcheson had continued, and the announcement indicated their joint belief that the deal could now be swung. By suddenly linking his name with AFL's Lewis created a number of diversions. It was widely assumed that his application was tantamount to readmission. He ceased to be one man against the world, and Federation leaders would have to absorb some of the heat that his coal strikes aroused. The step unnerved many of his enemies within the Administration and CIO. Although William Green exclaimed, "Isn't it wonderful!" at Lewis's announcement, soberer reflection made many wonder whether it was. For if Lewis came back the miners' wage-battle would become AFL's; Lewis's strikes would carry the Federation imprint.

The gesture was characteristically staged, without advance tip-off to his own associates, without discussion or debate in the union's councils, without preliminary consideration by the rank-and-file. The previous convention had empowered Lewis

to do as he pleased. It pleased him now to return to the Federation—but on his own terms. He would not crawl or beg or beseech; he would give the AFL hierarchs, whom he had so ruthlessly condemned on so many occasions, a minimum measure of satisfaction. Because he was proud and unyielding, because he believed that the mere fact of his return would outweigh all other circumstances, he was thwarted again. Too many AFL unions were alarmed over the UMW's encroachments on their own provinces; the Progressive Miners Union (now progressive only in title) claimed the Federation charter in the coal fields. None of these obstacles were insuperable if Lewis had been ready to scrap the fiction of District 50 and to resume his old place in the AFL structure. He wasn't. He wanted to return under circumstances befitting his past glory. His intransigence simplified problems for pro-Administration forces within the AFL, and they were able to forestall any immediate action on his petition. The check that Lewis had written, paying the UMW's per capita in advance as a token (and as an incentive to early readmission), rested in the AFL treasury. It remained idle capital until Lewis finally withdrew the application a year later.

Meanwhile he remained in exile.

On June 1 the mines were down again, the miners remained home with grim and angry resoluteness. Again Lewis turned to Ickes. They met with Charles O'Neill, spokesman for the Northern operators, that evening. Ickes afterward boasted that they were within fifty cents of full agreement. The conference, of course, violated the WLB principle that no negotiations should occur while men were on strike; but Ickes regarded that rule as another silly shibboleth. He wanted to produce coal, and he was increasingly irritated over what he viewed as the excessive formalism of the WLB. The next evening the members of the War Labor Board were at the White House, with James F. Byrnes and Ickes also present. In a secret session with the President, the WLB members and Ickes exchanged insults and recrimination, while Lewis awaited the result. The Board took the stand that its authority had to be

upheld once and for all, that any negotiations would have to cease until the strike was called off; Ickes was accused of conspiring with Lewis to undermine the WLB. Ickes maintained that he had nearly fashioned an agreement, that only a difference of fifty cents still divided the UMW and the operators. If left alone he could work things out; if the WLB intruded, he could not guarantee coal production. The President sided with the Board. He could not afford to let Lewis wreck the nation's wartime labor machinery as he had destroyed the Defense Mediation Board. Reaffirming his support for the War Labor Board, Mr. Roosevelt insisted that the miners' demands be adjusted by that agency. Ickes had been rebuffed. So had Lewis.

The strike ended inconclusively, as the earlier one had, with another deadline set for June 20. As the dispute dragged on it became a statistician's holiday and a newspaperman's headache. The formal points at issue grew increasingly complex, so that an individual coal miner must have shared public confusion over where things stood at any given time. As each deadline approached, government officials once again convinced each other that Lewis would draw back before the fatal moment; they were usually wrong. The details of the controversy slowly became less interesting than the picture it afforded of Lewis as military tactician, manipulating his army through a long, trying campaign. Although some believed that he had mapped each move in advance, it is doubtful that he could have anticipated every counter-stroke. More likely his gift for improvisation was again being displayed. He seemed neither indecisive nor frightened, maintaining the initiative and revealing no inner doubt as to the ultimate outcome.

Was Lewis consciously seeking, as his enemies charged, to doom the nation's war program? Was he a willful insurrectionist creating havoc behind our lines? He would have thundered his denial of such accusations. He could point out convincingly that each coal strike had been of brief duration and that only a long walkout could menace production—competent military authorities acknowledged this fact despite the scare-headlines.

Lewis's critics might say that he had called off the strikes because he lacked the courage to finish what he had started, leading the miners over the hill and then letting them straggle back without any major accomplishment. Lewis's contention was that he had used the strike weapon only to the point at which shipments for our fighting men might have actually been imperiled. The debate was endless and unsatisfactory.

But it was overwhelmingly clear that Lewis's actions could not be divorced from larger issues. For whether or not a single coal strike retarded production, its impact on the nation was vast. It deepened the cleavages in American society. It shifted the nation's eyes from the war fronts to the home front. It subjected labor to unprecedented hostility among both the men in the armed services and their relatives at home. In peacetime Lewis's assumed apathy to popular opinion might have been the attribute of a fearless labor leader; in war it was the mark of the irresponsible. Lewis's talent for professing to see only that part of the truth which he wanted to see—in this instance the inequities of the national economy—enabled him to reconcile the coal strikes with his protestations of patriotism. He can be as simple-minded as a child in rationalizing his own conduct.

As a clue to Lewis's mind in those stormy months, John Chamberlain relates the story of the UMW president's encounter with a soldier in Washington's war-jammed Union Station. It took place at the time when soldier resentment against the miners was reported at its peak. The young draftee saw Lewis and walked up to him belligerently.

"Mr. Lewis," said he, "I had a good hundred-and-ninety-dollar-a-month job which I've had to give up to go into the Army for fifty dollars a month. Do you think it's right for your miners to strike for more money when I'm giving up that much?"

"Well, son," Lewis replied, "let's talk about this. One hundred and ninety dollars is a lot of money. What did you do with it?"

"I used it to support my family. A mother, father and sisters."

"Who has your job now?"

"Well, I guess we're pretty lucky. My brother's got the job, so he's taking over in my place. But he has a lot of obligations and it's pretty hard to make ends meet."

"Should your brother get less money?"

"Certainly not. He ought to get more because the family needs it."

"I think you've answered your own question," Lewis said triumphantly.

Lewis exhibited the same shrewd power of oversimplification when this writer talked to him at length during one of the interludes between strikes. The conversation took place in his drawing-room on a train from New York to Washington. I asked him whether he would admit that a prolonged strike might have serious military consequences. He replied with a question: why didn't the Government "give the miners justice" and thereby end the dispute overnight? It was just as easy as that; Lewis had reduced the whole conflict—with its implications for the stabilization program and its possible effect on future labor behavior—to that comfortable, wide-eyed level of right and wrong. I asked him why he had repeatedly refused to appear before the WLB, when that gesture alone might have broken much of the resistance to his demands. Again his reply was full of naive self-justification. Was I unaware, he said, that the WLB had violated the Wagner Act when it ordered suspension of direct negotiations? Why was no one concerned over this illegality? His tone was full of injury, as if he were a simple citizen seeking the most elementary justice from a loaded court. No, he was not "bitter" at the President, as so many people asserted; he was rather sorry for him in view of the wretched mess on his hands. But was he, Lewis, to blame for the bureaucratic rivalries and the general bungling of wartime Washington? Plainly he felt no such responsibility; he was just a coal miner trying to work

things out as best he could in a wilderness of governmental intrigue.

It was an artful pose, and undoubtedly Lewis—as in many other situations—had quite overcome himself by the effectiveness of his own rhetoric; by now even he found it difficult to differentiate what he believed from what he said. Yet he could not completely hide his own awareness of other issues involved. I pointed out that the rank-and-file in other unions seemed to have been stimulated by his example. He was obviously pleased at hearing his own impression confirmed. It was true, he acknowledged solemnly, that men in other unions were getting fed up with their own leaders. They admired the fight he was waging; he was getting thousands of letters from them. If his designs were really as sinister as his enemies painted them, he observed, he could probably stage a pretty big mass meeting in Detroit right now, and tens of thousands of auto workers would come to listen. But of course he had no such intention. He was interested only in promoting the miners' welfare.

A dismal rain splashed against the window as the train neared Washington. Occasionally Lewis stared through the glass, as though his thoughts were remote and beyond drawing-room expression. At other moments he reminisced scornfully about some of his former CIO aides who had deserted him. He had made nearly all of them what they were, hadn't he—Quill, Curran, all those other "second-raters" who now presumed to challenge him? Now they were learning again that perhaps they were not so wise as their maker. Listening to him I was reminded of Kenneth Crawford's remark that Lewis had come to believe that his own birthday should be celebrated instead of Christmas. He was not ill-tempered; only when I cited questionings of his patriotism did his voice become at all agitated. On that point he would tolerate no debate. Didn't I realize that only decently fed, decently treated war workers could effectively turn out the weapons of war? Well, he was trying to obtain such conditions for them.

It was, again, just as simple as that.

But despite Lewis's insistence that nothing more was at stake than the economic future of the coal diggers, other issues repeatedly intruded. For the country could not assign a private battleground to Lewis and the WLB and let them fight it out while we went on with the war. A coal strike, whether two days or two weeks long, meant a national furor, as Lewis well knew from long experience. It touched off all the latent anti-labor emotions that war had intensified. It meant, in June 1943, the enactment of the most stringent anti-union legislation ever adopted in the USA.

The Smith-Connally law was directly produced by the second coal strike and the threat of a third. It gave the WLB power to subpoena any witness (meaning Lewis); it required a formal filing of strike notice thirty days before a walkout; it provided for a strike ballot under government auspices; it outlawed strikes in Government-operated plants, with criminal penalties for violators. In the ensuing months the law proved less important as an anti-labor club than as a barometer of the national attitude toward labor and as an incitement to further attacks on unions. From Cairo a CBS commentator broadcast an editorial from *Stars and Stripes* which concluded: "Speaking for the American soldier, John L. Lewis, damn your coal-black soul!"

The third strike was called off in less than forty-eight hours. This time Lewis gave himself a long breathing-spell. He announced that the miners would remain at work until October 31 on condition that the Government continue its operations of the mines. The new deadline was a long way off; and while President Roosevelt formally refused to recognize its existence anyway, the Capital relaxed. National interest turned temporarily to other things, including the fortunes of American forces in battle. There was growing suspicion that Lewis was reconciled to defeat; when the Government returned some of the mines to their owners, the UMW did not fulfill its threat to strike if that happened.

But throughout Washington's sweltering summer Lewis clung to his task. Having tried spectacular tactics without ap-

parent victory, he now seemed determined to bore his opponents into submission. The coal case had become a deadly chore for almost everyone concerned—government officials, newspapermen, labor officials. "Wildcat" strikes broke out in western Pennsylvania, and the Department of Justice, acting under the provisions of the Smith-Connally law, proceeded to get indictments against some of the local ringleaders. There was much speculation as to whether Lewis himself might be prosecuted. He did not deign to comment on such reports.

While the thermometer soared and government clerks were sent home early, Lewis refused to give up. With Ickes apparently powerless, Lewis concentrated on the problem of dividing the coal operators, as he had done so many times before. On July 21 he was able to announce an agreement with the Illinois operators calling for an extra hour of work each day at overtime rates and settlement of the portal-to-portal pay issue at $1.25 a day. This contract, he hoped, would become the model for the industry. On August 3, seeking to gain approval of the agreement, he abandoned one of his cherished principles. He appeared jointly with the Illinois operators before the WLB. Presumably the passage of the Smith-Connally Act had settled that issue. He could not boycott the Board any longer. He was outwardly chastened when he testified. He seldom raised his voice. He was courteous to the point of obsequiousness. He neither talked nor acted like the man who had led three nationwide demonstrations of defiance. He spoke so low that the stenographer had to ask him to raise his voice. He wanted a contract very badly. Perhaps he was finally seized by fear that the long battle might end in desolate defeat.

Nevertheless on August 25 the WLB rejected the Illinois agreement as a violation of the stabilization program. Lewis seemed cornered; he went doggedly back to work with the pliant Illinois group. For more than five weeks the talks continued; Lewis was on a six-day-week routine, sometimes seven. On September 23 he produced a new Illinois compact—a daily wage increase of $1.75, much of it for additional work-time as

well as travel-time. Once again he had to await the WLB's answer.

Lewis was tired. He said so frankly to visitors and interviewers. The spring was missing as he trod across the carpet in his office; his tie was carelessly knotted; he was reflective, a little vague, less dogmatic in his answers. This battle had been officially on since March 10, and at sixty-three Lewis was not inexhaustible. He was not too boastful about the contract. But it was good enough. It was enough to warrant hope that the WLB would approve and let the agreement become the standard. Would there be another strike? He never answered questions like that. He would promise only this: the UMW would not do anything that would permit the country to suffer from a shortage of coal in the winter.

The Lewis whom men interviewed in late September, as the heat lifted and the trees turned, was neither blustering nor fierce. He was somber. He said he anticipated that the Government would seek to indict him—either for violation of the Smith-Connally Act or in connection with an alleged conspiracy with an Illinois employer several years earlier when the UMW was fighting the Progressive Miners. Both subjects were known to be under investigation. But Lewis did not seem perturbed; such an action, presumably, would merely guarantee his martyrdom, and the processes of law were long and cumbersome. Meanwhile, he was pretty confident that a coal contract was in sight, the end of that struggle near. On the whole he was satisfied with this latest performance; he had retrieved a good deal of his old status, and all the suspense, alarums, and crises were the stuff that made life interesting. In his weariness he still retained the playwright's point of view, remarking banally to a newspaperman, "The curtain is about to come down on the coal drama of 1943."

He was wrong. For once again the WLB was balking. While Ickes was returning the mines to the possession of their owners, the first fortnight of October passed without any Board decision on the Illinois pact. In Alabama and Indiana "wildcats" were breaking out again. There were reports that the strikes

were being spurred by Lewis agents to needle the War Labor Board; whether true or not, the miners themselves required little needling. On the 16th Lewis ordered the strikers back to work, expressing confidence that the WLB would approve the Illinois agreement and that it would be extended throughout the industry. But ten days later the Board rejected the Illinois terms and advanced a counter-proposal of its own. Under the Illinois contract the bituminous miners would have received 37½ cents more a day than the WLB proposal allowed. On October 28 Lewis sent a telegram to UMW district presidents interpreting the WLB offer as "a wage-reduction." Forty-seven thousand miners were already idle; Lewis's telegram was the signal for spreading the stoppage.

Now the weariness was gone. Lewis seemed to be summoning all his remaining energies for one vast and final effort. Having granted the WLB offer a wage-cut, he somehow had to extract something more or confess that the eight months of warfare had been wasted. On the night of the 29th the dispute was again certified to the White House. But the fourth strike began, without formal call, at midnight of October 31. There were no dissenters; the UMW army marched as it had three times before—530,000 anonymous men saying to hell with everything except the unspoken orders of Lewis.

This was the big throw. The President was armed with the criminal provisions of the Smith-Connally Act; and inasmuch as the Government had seized the mines again on the evening of November 1, indictment of Lewis again became a live possibility. Although he had not called the strike, many lawyers felt that a case could be made to show that he was "inciting" the stoppages. Senator Byrd and other heated citizens cried for Lewis's scalp, damned the Administration for delaying action against him. Lewis's movements were leisurely and deliberate. The UMW Policy Committee had been scheduled to meet at 11 A.M. Monday; the session was postponed several hours owing to "transportation difficulties."

When the President ordered the mines seized, he simultaneously empowered Ickes to negotiate a contract with the

UMW—within the terms of the stabilization law. The theory behind this move was that, if Lewis rejected the Government's terms, a contract would then be offered to individual locals of the UMW. The hope was that groups of UMW men would begin to break away from the Lewis leadership. In the rush of events the executive order granting Ickes this authority contained one glaring omission: it neglected to state explicitly that no agreement could be negotiated until the strikers resumed work. Subsequently Administration officials insisted that this was implicit and that it had seemed unnecessary to stress the point. Nevertheless it was a costly oversight. It was the blunder for which Lewis had waited so long. Now he could really do business with Ickes.

They conferred briefly on Tuesday, with no announcement forthcoming. At the Mine Workers Building, however, optimism grew; K. C. Adams told a reporter that "something would happen" in thirty-six hours. The conferences were renewed Wednesday, while the clamor for governmental action mounted. Yet somehow the noise had lost some of its meaning. The tension that had surrounded the first three strikes was noticeably lacking; it was as if the nation had almost grown accustomed to the spectacle and realized the futility of righteous indignation. By now, too, many newspapers took more pleasure in lampooning the ineffectuality of the Government's labor policy than in deriding Lewis; and in some sections of the upper classes, where men once again felt perfectly free to hate Roosevelt as the tide of war turned in our favor, the possibility that Lewis might trounce the President was viewed with a slight tingle of delight. Anyway, it was like a play that had been seen three times before, and the audience knew there would be a happy ending. Had not the three earlier strikes ended without any shedding of blood or national disaster? There were the same actors, the same lines, the same situations. Newspapermen yawned, waiting for the "break."

It came late Wednesday afternoon. Reporters at the Mine Workers Building were told that a settlement would be an-

nounced shortly at Ickes's office in the Interior Building. When they assembled there they were told that Lewis had already returned to the Mine Workers Building for the ritual of obtaining the Policy Committee's ratification of the agreement. But now the question of the War Labor Board's status was inescapable. A reporter telephoned Osgood Nichols, the WLB's talented press representative, to ask him whether the Board was aware that an agreement was being signed. Nichols dropped the 'phone and hastily reported the news to Chairman Davis. It was the first formal word he had received; Ickes had proceeded entirely on his own, in the fashion which Lewis had favored from the beginning.

Only one piece of detailed business remained that day. At a little after six Bob Horton, Ickes's aide, told the newspapermen that the UMW had "ratified" the pact and that a messenger was bringing Lewis's signature from the Mine Workers Building to the Interior Building. The courier arrived safely. A few moments later mimeographed releases embodying the terms of the agreement were handed out.

The agreement was a grotesque, half-comic finale to the months of national strife. Lewis had wrested back the 37½ cents which the WLB had pared from the Illinois contract. He had done so by the expedient of curtailing the miners' lunch-period from 30 to 15 minutes. The additional fifteen minutes of work, Ickes's statement explained, would greatly increase the nation's supply of coal. It also gave Lewis (as Ickes did not explain) at least the surface appearance of victory. Labor writer Fred Perkins called it "the dyspepsia formula."

Under the Lewis-Ickes accord the miners would receive $56.74 for a six-day work-week of 48 hours, in contrast with the $45.50 they had been earning for a 42-hour week. Thus one hour had been officially added to the work-day, and the coal diggers would get $1.50 for the added time. The new work-week included a 45-minute allowance for portal-to-portal travel.

Now the War Labor Board was finally on the spot. The arithmetic of the agreement caused the Board less anguish

than the fact that the terms had been negotiated and announced before the miners resumed work. The precedent was obviously full of peril; other unions would quickly conclude that the no-strike pact was dead, that results could best be obtained while men marched on the picket line. Labor members of the Board realized how their own followers would react to the development; it had been difficult enough to keep the rank-and-file in line in recent months. Wayne L. Morse, wiry Oregon University law dean and public member of the WLB, argued at length for rejection of the contract on the ground it had been signed by Ickes "under duress." He predicted dolefully that a wave of strikes would follow WLB approval and that the Board could not survive the incident. But the other three public members felt that they could not say no this time. Philosophically, after intense soul-searching, Davis, Taylor, and Graham yielded and declared they would ratify the contract. It was one thing to fight Lewis; it was another to risk a strike over a contract Ickes had signed. There was a tense interlude inside the Board when it appeared that the industry members might swing behind Morse, splitting the Board wide open. Finally the contract was approved. The industry and labor representatives all unhappily voted for it. Only Morse dissented.

Had Lewis won? As in so many wage-contracts he had negotiated after much puffing and stress, the settlement was open to a flood of conflicting interpretations. Some noted that he had clearly gained 15 minutes' extra pay in his deal with Ickes, since the miners would not take seriously the admonition to cut their lunch-period (and since lunch in the mines is no formal or standardized affair anyway). But another observer commented: "Lewis bargained for eight months and the miners lost their lunch." It was clear that the peace terms fell far short of the aims Lewis had proclaimed in March—a $2 daily increase "no more, no less" for a seven-hour day. Most of what the miners would gain in pay under the Ickes formula would result from increased work. For many months men were to debate whether Lewis might not have obtained as much by peaceful means in the early stages of the dispute.

It was not even immediately certain whether all his gains would endure; for the contract was approved subject to the findings of a commission investigating actual travel-time conditions in the mines.

At best the miners had won a limited economic victory, and Lewis was aware of its limitations. The *United Mine Workers' Journal* did not try to portray the settlement as a magnificent triumph; it recorded the terms in factual form, and Lewis merely pronounced the pact "satisfactory." He knew that in the mines there would be no wild celebrations, that the miners themselves could not be deluded into believing that they had gotten what they asked for. Most of them would accept the award, however, with the fatalistic feeling that Lewis had obtained as much as a hostile society could be forced to yield.

Yet while the miners had gained only a fragment of their objectives, Lewis had unmistakably won a political victory of important dimensions. The WLB was still in existence, but its vaunted formula of "no-negotiations-with-strikers" had been shattered. The "Little Steel" formula had not been officially abandoned, but over a wide area the impression prevailed that Lewis had dealt it a fatal blow. And outside the coal fields Lewis's lungs blew great gusts of wind through the Lewis horn. The details of the settlement were swiftly forgotten—and never widely understood anyway—and the illusion of complete victory was skillfully promoted. While the UMW *Journal* refrained from hallelujahs over the outcome, the District 50 newspaper—addressed to workers in other fields—portrayed Lewis as a victorious prize-fighter, his arm held aloft by Ickes, while the WLB absorbed smelling-salts in the corner. It was captioned: "Technical knockout." Lewis did not dwell upon the technicalities.

The headlines helped in the build-up. *The New York Times* reported: "Coal Strike Called Off as Ickes Grants Lewis $1.50 a Day Rise in Pay." Most other newspapers carried similar headlines, and few readers wallowed through the morass of detail to discover that most of the increase was compensation for added work. Lewis's critics within the labor movement did not contribute any clarification; they accepted the prevail-

ing judgment and demanded at once that their own members receive similar treatment.

Perhaps the luckiest circumstance, from Lewis's viewpoint, was that the CIO's annual convention was meeting in Philadelphia during the week of that fourth strike and settlement. For the third year the absence of Lewis marred the party. The ghost was still parading the corridors and stalking the convention floor, his private affairs heatedly discussed. When news of the Ickes agreement reached Philadelphia the gloom was general. Few CIO leaders took pains to scrutinize the terms. They reacted like men who had known all along that Lewis would somehow emerge unscathed, bearing the equivalent of victory. Some said that the timing of his latest triumph, coinciding with the CIO sessions, was proof that Lewis's star was still with him. Others wondered whether he had planned it that way all along.

Once again he had given a complex compromise the bright glow of spectacular success. Other labor leaders might have accepted the same agreement and slipped forlornly down the street to escape public examination of its terms. Lewis simply stood self-confidently in the center of the stage, his arms folded, and waited for the applause; and when it began he knew that it would be contagious, that the ripple would become a roar, and that men would soon forget why they were applauding but would assume that he merited the acclaim. And he would continue to bow graciously, until the illusion of success indeed became indistinguishable from reality.

Before that year's end other labor leaders were citing his victory as evidence that their own self-disciplined ways had failed, and the imitations began. Thousands of steel workers struck, in much the same way the miners had, and the railroad workers carried their strike threat to the verge of an actual walkout, compelling Government seizure. Workers in unions throughout the nation were saying that "Lewis got his for the miners by being tough." By that time few remembered, if ever they had known, what it was that Lewis had won—and failed to win—by his toughness.

In the aftermath Lewis had a chance to rest and to contemplate the imitators. He had led four wartime strikes, and his name had been assailed from one end of the land to the other; he won unpopularity contests in fox-holes, and servicemen of all types and stripes were quoted in vehement denunciation.

Yet the man who had been pictured so often in recent months as the leader of insurrection and the pillar of the Fifth Column was not a social outcast. As the pace of life slowed down a little, he discovered that he was still welcome in many familiar haunts where people of property gathered. As Lewis had foreseen, the cleavages in American life were so deep that a man who had seemingly defied and defeated Roosevelt was bound to have many admirers in those social circles where coal miners are not normally received. Had not Lewis exposed the frailty of all the economic theories on which the Roosevelt war economy was built? Wasn't Roosevelt (steered by his sinister "palace guard") the real villain?

So on the evening of December 4, little more than a month after the fourth strike and the great outcries, Lewis arrayed himself in evening clothes and left the coal miner's pick in his Alexandria home. At a few moments before eight he alighted at the door of "Friendship," the celebrated Washington home of Mrs. Edward R. McLean. White-tied and well-pressed, he joined what the society page of the *Washington Post* described the next day as "a small group of Congressional and residential Washingtonians." Among those present, according to the *Post*, were Senator and Mrs. Arthur Vandenberg, Senator and Mrs. Burton K. Wheeler, Senator Alben W. Barkley, Justice and Mrs. Stanley Reed, Representative and Mrs. Hamilton Fish, Senator and Mrs. Harold Burton, Senator Arthur Capper, Charles Michelson. As at all of Mrs. McLean's soirées, there was a generous representation of die-hard anti-Roosevelt society, but with enough balance to make conversation stimulating. The guest of honor, the *Post* noted, was Alf M. Landon of Kansas.

15

POST-WAR PLAN

DURING an intermission in the coal conflict Lewis took a long look at the future and meditated out loud for the benefit of visitors. It was early autumn of 1943, a few weeks before the fourth strike. His eyes were momentarily fixed on a realm much vaster than the coal fields; he was trying to construct a picture of the post-war world. The outline that emerged suggested the part he visualized for himself when peace—or a reasonable facsimile thereof—should return.

Throughout the country, he told his private audience, everything was in an extraordinary state of flux; things were changing fast, competing possibilities arose so swiftly that it was difficult to make head or tail of events. There was almost a note of humility in this confession as he surveyed the impact of war. This war was unlike anything we had known; it had set in motion deep and imponderable forces, and no one could chart all its consequences. Yet even as he reflected on the range of possibilities, he felt he could detect some signposts and certainties, ahead. The most intriguing certainty was that millions of people, stirring out of the shock and stupor of war, would begin to ask questions.

The bricklayer, Lewis remarked, would ask what he had gotten out of the war besides long hours; the mechanic would ask the same thing. The questionings would be universal. There was no evidence, he said, that British vested interests had yielded any power, and the old dissatisfactions would recur. Throughout the world doubts would multiply. Meanwhile, in his opinion, Stalin would play a lone hand; and as

millions restlessly reawakened, the world would become a fallow field for Communism.

These were the speculations that he passed on to associates during the lull. Formally he deprecated discussion of any large place he might still achieve in the bitter new world he prophesied. He would be sixty-four, perhaps sixty-five or more, before hostilities ceased. The robust frame had lost much of its vigor and there was no assurance that he could indefinitely carry on. His health had sagged in recent years so that there were times when he had to pause, and his pallor caused increasing comment among those who saw him. The dream of 1936 and 1937, when it had seemed that the Presidency might not be beyond his grasp, was now dead, so dead that he denied it had ever existed. He told his subalterns that he no longer harbored ambitions of higher office; he was content, he said, to continue as leader of the miners and to serve as "elder statesman" in labor politics. It was late and he was—he said—satisfied with his present surroundings.

The earnest disclaimers were somehow unconvincing. Throughout the storms of 1943 he had not acted like a man who was giving his farewell performance. Too many of his moves were plainly calculated in terms of the future; too often he seemed still to be preparing for a magnificent climax, and nothing that had happened so far deserved that name. If the journey ended now, he could hardly call it the fulfillment of destiny. There had been so many detours and disappointments, and the final seizure of power had always eluded him. Surely the dramatist in him rebelled against a story that just trailed off inconclusively. Even the four coal strikes had each ended before the great clashing of arms that might have led to great tragedy or a triumphal march. They were primarily significant as preludes to another campaign.

The long-range quality of his thinking was similarly revealed in his negotiations for readmission of the UMW to the AFL. On the one hand he longed for a bigger platform from which to orate, a chance to function directly in the Federation's high councils, a seat from which he could influence the AFL's

political course during the 1944 presidential campaign. He was tired of exile; it narrowed his sphere of operations. On the other hand he was unwilling to sacrifice his private organizing schemes. Coal's post-war future outlook was uncertain; he still visualized vast expansion of chemical plants and related industries, with thousands of chemical workers forming the nucleus of a new Lewis army. But other AFL units challenged his jurisdiction over these fields. He could not batter down the opposition.

While the Federation executive council demanded that the UMW restrict its activities to its traditional territory, Lewis insisted that the Miners Union be readmitted and all jurisdictional matters settled afterward (confident that he could dictate the terms of settlement once he had both feet inside the door). The negotiations dragged on in a hopeless stalemate. In a surprising gesture of fellowship Lewis even visited Green, seeking to hypnotize the AFL leader into acquiescence. But Daniel Tobin, George Meany and others within the Federation who had no love for Lewis and feared his Republican alliances, resisted any concessions; Hutcheson fought valiantly but vainly in Lewis's behalf. When the Federation executive council, meeting in Philadelphia in the spring of 1944, reaffirmed its stand, Lewis abandoned the effort. He was unwilling to scrap his dream of a widely expanded UMW under his command; he would return to AFL only if it left his organizers free to roam where they pleased. He had a hunch, too, that he might exploit the role of lone leader, unfettered by any ties with the pro-Roosevelt labor organizations.

So on May 8 he announced withdrawal of his application for readmission. He demanded that the Federation give him his money back at once—the $60,000 deposit on per capita tax which he had confidently sent along with his application. His decision was communicated in a letter to Green, a letter which reads like a verbose, ponderous parody of the missives he addressed to the same citizen in the early CIO days:

"Solely with the desire to make a contribution toward the constructive unification of American labor, the United Mine

Workers of America, a year ago, filed its application for re-affiliation with your Council. Throughout this period of a year, the majority of members of your Executive Council have lacked the courage to either vote 'Yes' or vote 'No' on the question of acceptance. Instead they have constantly muttered and mumbled and indulged in fearsome incantations over the fallacious and hoary question of jurisdictional rights. It is an amazing exhibition of base hypocrisy approximating moral turpitude."

He charged that "New Deal executives" and "the members of its Palace Guard" had "clandestinely counselled" with certain AFL chieftains to thwart his reaffiliation and "to insure the consummation of their shameful plans to betray the interests of the men and women of labor." The AFL, said Lewis, had become a "political company union." He demanded the UMW's $60,000 "without further procrastination or hypocrisy."

The statement was a forecast of the role he was planning to play in the ensuing months, the renewal of his war against Roosevelt. In some ways the language was that of an irascible, wordy, wrathful old man who imagines all sorts of stealthy conspiracies and lives continually in a state of suppressed anger. But it was not the language of a man who had lost his lust for combat and was ready for tranquil retirement. It was not his last word or his exit-line; obviously, he still had plans for himself and this statement was part of the build-up.

And if his post-war predictions were realized, the unspoken implication was inescapable. If labor everywhere grew restive, if the longings of common men for security and betterment were to go unrealized, if the post-war era were to be one of disillusion and ferment, wouldn't there be a place for Lewis in the turmoil? He was adept at the uses of discontent; he had few rivals. Almost certainly there would be some soil in which he could function, whether or not the outcome was as bleak as he foresaw. Any war, no matter how lofty its aims and how salutary its long-range result, left some disenchantment in its wake: the dead and the wounded, the broken homes, the disparities of sacrifice, the spiritual hangover. This one might

also breed new acceptance of violence and disdain for the polite rules of order. At best there would be chaotic years of reconstruction; there might be serious breakdowns along the way.

Lewis would not be ill at ease in such a setting. The gentle men of goodwill would be rudely pushed aside in a time like that; it would be a time for the strong and the ruthless, a time that would challenge Lewis's conception of himself. Huey Long had recognized him as a spiritual mate many years before: "Lewis is the Huey Long of labor, that's what he is," Long had said. "Reasonable folks is against some people taking, all the others getting little in a land of plenty. That's why it has got to be Huey Long or Lewis to help them. . . . Anyway, there is going to be hell to pay when he gets going."

One could not blue-print the form which the convulsions would take. It is in such an atmosphere, however, that Lewis normally flourishes. If the confusion were great enough, he might again find a private playground.

Where would he stand in the post-war debates? He had refrained from many personal pronouncements on post-war organization; but the *United Mine Workers' Journal* had spoken for him on a wide variety of issues. As the war went on the *Journal* became Col. Robert R. McCormick's echo in the coal fields. It recited and reiterated the latest pieces of anti-Administration, anti-British, anti-Russian gossip; it scorned the pretensions of post-war planners and derided the vision of Allied post-war unity; it echoed each of the prejudices that filled the columns of the Hearst, Patterson, and McCormick papers, transmitting the same thoughts to the coal miners in "folksy" language. The *Journal* descended to dreary levels of incitement, perhaps bolstered by the knowledge that the miners had access to few conflicting sources of information. On November 15, 1943, for example, the magazine published the gory (and fictional) tale that millions of American children might be crippled because of American shoe-shipments to Russia.

Meanwhile, baby specialists tell us that the restriction of American children to two pairs of shoes per year, which is now coming into force, may make millions of future cripples. Babies should have six pairs a year to accommodate their foot growth. But we haven't got the leather and the main reason why we haven't got the leather is that we are shipping so much leather to Russia. And we are shipping our best leather, because the Russians will not take any but the best grades.

The *Journal* repeatedly magnified the extent of American lend-lease shipments, blandly dismissing conflicting evidence:

As for all those figures about how we haven't shipped but nine or ten per cent of this or that out of the country—who can eat percentages?

In Washington with truffles, terrapins and champagne—just to mention a few items that call for no points—it is not hard for a big shot to think that everybody is getting all he can eat. Especially if the big shot is a foreign diplomat or agent who is really being paid out of lend-lease money to panhandle for more lend-lease.

On October 1, commenting on a report that the United States crop of peanuts would be plentiful, the *Journal* observed:

Well, we never believed in being pikers, so we don't blame Dictator Stalin or Mr. Churchill from [*sic*] refusing peanuts. Just leave the peanuts to the Americans.

We have thought all along that peanuts would be about what we'd get at the war's end.

Steadily this became the *Journal's* motif: Englishmen and Russians waxing healthy and wealthy while Americans fought the war. It was a theme sometimes expressed as crudely in the *Journal* as in the professional pro-fascist press; it was mingled with attacks on "refugees," on "international bankers" and other favorite targets of the now-defunct *Social Justice*. The *Journal* even protested moves to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act, complaining that sponsors of repeal were "a gang of capitalists" and "moon-eyed fanatics."

While seizing (or inventing) a host of opportunities to

arouse contempt for the British, the Russians, and even the Chinese, the *Journal* rarely told any other phase of the story. There were seldom two sides to a question as presented in Lewis's sheet, and the possibility that Russian resistance had saved thousands of American lives was not likely to be acknowledged. The hope of post-war amity among the United Nations was greeted with derision; the *Journal* seemed bent upon helping to destroy any basis for the hope. At the same time it followed Col. McCormick's lead in carrying the flag for General Douglas MacArthur, assailing the military strategy being pursued in Europe. Few papers would have published so sweetly treasonable a charge as the *Journal's* declaration on October 15:

> In the meantime our war "against Japan" in the Far East is to be waged mainly by invasion of Burma—as far away from Tokyo as San Francisco, for all practical purposes. But Burma has oil—good "British oil" which must be recovered from the Japs if it is ever to be sold to Americans at fancy prices.
>
> Gen. MacArthur wanted to attack Japan direct and through the Philippines *but that wouldn't do the Rockefellers any good.* (The italics are the *Journal's.*)

Of course Lewis disapproved of the way in which the war was being run; he had made that clear in 1942 when he outlined his private program for the conquest of Japan. The *Journal's* commentaries, however, suggested more than the irritation of a frustrated amateur general; they were a reaffirmation of Lewis's cynicism, his contempt for Europe, his distrust of all schemes for world organization, his emotional affinity for the doctrines of the most rabid "nationalists." Nearly all of the *Journal's* essays were unsigned, most of them coming from the pen of K. C. Adams; nevertheless the magazine was a mirror of the Lewis mind. There was scant place in its pages for any vision of international labor friendship, and there was nothing but scorn for the notion that men of different nations might build jointly a better order after the war. Twice a month the *Journal* circulated its nightmare gospel through

the coal fields, where men had grown accustomed to relying on the union magazine for the lowdown on national and world affairs. Like the publishers of some larger papers, Lewis admitted no inconsistency between the wailings of his scandal-sheet and the full-fledged prosecution of the war. On its next-to-the-last page the *Journal* invariably published patriotic poems.

Apart from the simple indecencies committed by the *Journal*, its pages reflected Lewis's conception of the war. Nowhere did it suggest that any real clash of ideas or systems was taking place; nowhere was it indicated that the issue might be democratic survival. The war, it seemed, had to be supported because America was at war, and no consideration more profound than this one filtered into the magazine. In its Labor Day issue in 1943 the *Journal* gloomily intoned: "There is not one scheme or device used in Berlin, Rome and Tokyo which doesn't have its imitations over here." As the conflict advanced, the *Journal's* fuzzy provincialism reached new peaks, as if setting the stage for the day when Lewis would throw his weight against any post-war effort to "involve" the United States in the establishment of permanent peace machinery. Henry Wallace's vision of a "people's century" was just "pie-in-the-sky" talk. "Wallace's speech," the *Journal* wrote, "boils down to the same old plea for international free trade that the Wall Street bank circulars have been putting out every month for the last twenty-five years. . . ."

Lewis tinkered a little, too, at problems of domestic economy, but his thoughts were no more original than those of the professional lecturer to women's clubs who inveighs against the hobgoblin of "government interference." They were an extension of Lewis's lifelong prejudice. The *Journal* hurled its sharpest barbs at "burrocrats," "young economists," and other familiar villains of conservative manifestoes. Privately Lewis expressed great and growing concern over the extension of governmental authority—the Hoover in him was irrepressible. He even intimated to friends that the Wagner Act had intruded too far into the private affairs of management and

labor. Yes, there would have to be some regulation after the war, certainly it would be necessary in the coal industry . . . but it was a question of how far, and so forth. There was little novelty in his apprehensions, and only rarely any hint that he knew with any degree of exactness what he really wanted. While admitting anxiety over the future of coal and fearing another post-war débâcle, he did not seem to link coal's prospects with any general reordering of the economic system. Things were moving so fast it was hard to make head or tail. . . .

His ideas were neither more distinguished nor more clear-cut than most of those emanating from the surliest critics of Rooseveltism; possibly he would one day again urge another conclave of business and labor to discuss methods of reinvigorating the tried and tested system of free enterprise. He looked with suspicion at the pronouncements of the planners, and later he might clamor for the lifting of most wartime regulation as essential to economic readjustment.

"Except for the fact that the politicians and the burrocrats cannot sell him on a slave market, the American workman finds that he is not much freer than Uncle Tom on Simon Legree's [*sic*] plantation," the *Journal* lamented. Nationalization of coal was a topic no longer even discussed in the UMW magazine.

Few men, of course, can assert that they know the highway to world order and national prosperity, and Lewis's wanderings are not unique. He is, after all, espousing generalizations which have found favor in many influential sections of American opinion; his hostility to the planners—both international and local—is a commonplace. The question is why, since his mind is filled with conventional confusion, his shadow is nevertheless thrown over so wide an area, why speculation as to his future role provokes such continuing debate? The answer is divided into many parts; and the total helps to sum up the man.

Perhaps the foremost part of the answer is Lewis's vast natural equipment. Few other men in this century can boast

the rudimentary physical and mental gifts with which he has been endowed. "His IQ is probably higher than any man's he has ever met," an associate once said. He stands out in any assemblage, and conveys a hint of vast latent resources that he seldom needs to use. He has the capacity to inspire, to frighten, and to charm, to create in his enemies a feeling of woeful incompetence and in his followers a sense of profound security. At a few moments he has plainly touched the outer rim of greatness, and even his failures have the aura of tragedy, which mediocre men are denied. Throughout his life those who have come to probe and debunk him have left with a conviction that they have been in a major presence; and long afterward, when they have forgotten what he said, a nostalgic feeling about the person remains. If the mask has momentarily slipped, if the visitor has caught sight of some of the predatory cruelties and mental blanks, Lewis can hastily recapture the external self-possession, so that one wonders whether the fleeting glimpse has been accurate. Ideas and theories are secondary in the impression he creates; it is not what he believes—it is the sense that he can carry out any belief he embraces. He can be—as the *Journal* so clearly reveals—maudlin, bigoted, vain, self-contradictory. Still there remains the feeling that this is not the whole man, that beneath the cold armor there is a lively and subtle spirit. Whether this is the skilled performer or the real man does not matter too much; the play has become so completely the thing that the effect is virtually the same. In an era in which so many public men have seemed inadequate to the events of their time, Lewis emerges by contrast. Especially in the labor movement, where leadership training has been so neglected and where the available material is so limited, his prowess has appeared disproportionately large.

His equipment gives him an enormous head-start, and the character of the period we are entering buttresses the belief that he cannot be counted out. For democracy's most perilous tests are still ahead; and the man who does not practice democracy has enormous advantages when tensions explode. Uninhibited by any punctilious observance of the niceties of demo-

cratic behavior, Lewis, as already suggested, may be better prepared than most to rise above the throng. Barring some unanticipated miracle, the post-war years will bring momentous challenges to the democratic theory; the fact that dictatorships have been crushed will not automatically usher in a golden age. There are too many forces in every nation which hope to proceed from the conquest of Nazism into an era of "rightist reaction," seeking regimes that may conveivably be indistinguishable from the tyrannies that have been defeated.

And Lewis's whole career has been a repudiation of democratic doctrine; the "leader" principle is the keystone of his administration of every movement he has led. More and more, in the twentieth century, men have been compelled to decide honestly whether they acknowledge the dignity and wisdom of the mass of men, or whether they believe in an all-wise and all-knowing leader. In his own sphere Lewis has given his answer. It may be asked how this can be reconciled with his tirades against government "bureaucracy" and his faith in natural economic law. The explanation is probably twofold: first, there is no iron consistency in Lewis's thought; second, his attitude toward bureaucracy is likely to be largely conditioned by who wields the controls. There is little laissez-faire spirit in the operation of the miners' union.

Assuming all that, what does he want? Everything that has happened so far indicates the crudest answer: power. In harboring this desire he isn't unique; what makes his a special case is the insatiable intensity of his craving for power. Other men have made their bids, succeeded or failed, but only rarely have their whole beings seemed to depend upon the ruthless accumulation of authority. To Lewis, power has become almost an essential physical requirement. Stripped of all of it, one suspects, he would wither and fade. Every office that he has held has become a private dynasty, with his daughter the crown princess, with court jesters and sycophants always at his side.

Possibly the extravagance of his yearning is symptomatic of his incompleteness. His range of interests remains relatively

narrow; after thirty years of public life, "human interest" stories about him are still forced to focus on his reading of Shakespeare as the most intriguing revelation, and the dropping of ashes on his lapels as his most formidable idiosyncrasy. He has found, it seems, little outside the public arena to give life any "hard, gem-like flame"; and now, in the closing years, he is almost frantic in his search for new territories of conquest.

The longing for power would appear less ominous if it were blended with a sure sense of social purpose; but power for its own sake, as a fundamental stimulant, seems to have been the object of Lewis's quest. Conceivably he may stage another political reversal of staggering proportions; for, though all his instincts have returned him to the house of Republicanism, it is doubtful that he would let even his prejudices overcome the temptations of power. The decision would probably depend upon the potentialities of the offer.

Knowing this, there are men on the democratic side who still flirt with the possibility that he may be recaptured. Awed by his abilities, they mentally envisage the services he might perform in their cause. Yet perhaps the meaning of his story—if a single meaning can be found in it—is that democracy cannot afford such dubious gambles, that a democracy must finally choose even the plodding and the mediocre who believe in men, rather than the brilliant disbelievers who mistake themselves for God. With the mask off, Lewis is a cynical absolutist. His loss of communication with ordinary men explains many of the defeats that have thwarted him as he neared the pinnacle. Distrusting men, he now finds that he has permitted virtually no young and aggressive leaders to rise within the UMW in recent years. As death claims members of his old guard, the replacements are neither robust nor promising. Meanwhile, after all these years of dominance, he has not been able to destroy the embers of revolt in Illinois. In the spring of 1944 a new movement for autonomy was developing in that region. There was a repetitive tone to the dispute;

some wondered whether Lewis was headed for another cycle of intra-union wars, and whether his machine was really as invulnerable as "provisionalism" made it appear.

Why do some men continue to follow him? The clues lie in the coal fields, and in all the corporate autocracies which have grown up in a competitive society. Some who have most piously deplored the Lewis methods are those who have applied the same tenets in their own industrial realms. They despise him not because he is a dictator but because he has invaded their principalities. And when his politics suit theirs, they covertly join hands with him. The worst in Lewis is the Girdler in him: the "rugged individualism" that has in its later stages become a ruthless disregard of the rights of individuals. He is no more immoral than many of the men who have sat across the table from him; his morality is the jungle law of the twentieth-century economic struggle. The editorial writers who wrung their hands when he swept aside the amenities of union democracy seldom displayed any similar hysteria when company police rode herd over union men. All the elegant rationalizations that could be fashioned for the latter act might similarly be invoked for Lewis. He accepted the rules. And when many of his wars had been won, when CIO had toppled its most uncompromising foes, he was middle-aged, a creature of the habits he had mastered.

Pure moral preachings against Lewis, if they are candid, must be critiques of our own national past and present. In his strivings are fused the elements of at least three deep strains in our history—the "public-be-damned" adventurism of our earlier industrial barons, the cynicism of our political bosses, and the anti-intellectualism that has flared up intermittently in sectional and racial movements. Like some of his industrial counterparts, Lewis has never conceded that a public figure must have a constant regard for the views of the anonymous multitude.

The analogy between his precepts and those of some industrial magnates is one root of the future danger. For the possi-

bility remains that "rightist reaction" may find ample uses for him. No such reaction was ever engineered without a spokesman of discontent who could rally the ragged millions. If the stakes seem high enough, this may be the last act. There is little in Lewis's background, his thinking, or his current temper to suggest that he would shun such an alliance. It would enable him to settle many old scores. It would give him—at least temporarily—the eminence he has been denied by Roosevelt. It would be "regimentation" with a front seat for him at the council table where the regimentation was organized.

It is his very unpredictability—his lack of any clear and devout allegiance to the ways of democracy, and his egocentric vision of the future—that makes men worry about where Lewis goes from here.

Yet in a sense the tragedy is already concluded. No matter what he does next, or what alignment he chooses in his last phase, or whether the journey ends abruptly, the waste and the loneliness are irretrievable. He might have been the prophet of a new place for labor in an expanded democratic society. He might have been one of humanity's thunderous voices, pleading for a better commonwealth after the war. He might have been a beloved international figure, his picture adorning the homes of men in other countries as well as his own. Surely he possesses the natural resources, and the audience has been waiting. Instead, he is playing out the string, and the men who might have followed him are fearful of his tread. While some may say that the CIO was achievement enough for one man's lifetime, the triumphs look almost puny in comparison with the hopes and the possibilities. There have been so many wasted words, wasted scenes, wasted opportunities. Most of the grandeur was compressed into the three formative years of the CIO—the other years have been full of frustration. Now, in what remains of his empire, he looks almost pathetically alone, divorced from the democratic mainstream, waiting for another era. As he sits there in solitude, amid the souvenirs of memorable days and the faded tributes from men who are no longer his allies, he may hear an echo

of the warning he addressed to the 1935 convention of the American Federation of Labor:

"The strength of a strong man is a prideful thing; but the unfortunate thing in life is that the strong do not always remain strong. . . ."

THE END

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INDEX